Introduction, Further Reading, Manuscript Abbreviations, & Maps

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PHILIPPE DE COMMYNES: THE REIGN OF LOUIS XI 1461-83

THE PENGUIN CLASSICS
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PHILIPPE DE COMMYNES was probably born in 1447 at the castle of Renescure in the county of Flanders. In 1453 his father died leaving him an orphan with an inheritance burdened with debts. In 1464 he went to the court of his godfather, Philip the Good of Burgundy, and entered the service of Philip's heir, Charles. He was knighted in 1468 and became chamberlain to Charles the Rash. He was present at numerous military campaigns against the French and other enemies, and had ample opportunity to observe Charles and his counsellors. During the following years he played an increasingly important part in Burgundian court life and diplomacy but in 1472 he transferred his allegiance to Louis XI of France. Commynes lost all his possessions in Flanders but his losses were soon made good by his new master with a succession of gifts and pensions. More importantly, Louis rewarded him with his confidence, and Commynes became one of his most valued counsellors for several years. After a period of disfavour at court, when Commynes could not avoid entanglement in the devious power struggles of the French nobility, he was once more entrusted with official missions by Charles VIII from 1491 to 1495. From that date until his death in 1511, although still a very active man, he was given no more important assignments. He completed his memoirs in 1498, leaving a document of unique importance as a historical source for Western Europe in the second half of the fifteenth century.

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PHILIPPE
DE COMMYNES
MEMOIRS
THE REIGN OF LOUIS XI
1461-83
Translated with an Introduction by Michael Jones
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FOR RICHARD

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MEMOIRS

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M.C.E.J.
Bramcote Hills
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INTRODUCTION

THE proliferation of early printed editions of the work of Philippe de Commynes (first entitled ***Memoirs*** in Sauvage's edition of 1552) is a witness to its interest for readers in the second quarter of the sixteenth century. Its unique importance as a historical source for the politics and society of France and her werstern European neighbours in the last half of the fifteenth century has been recognized and appreciated since that time. Who was Commynes? What were his qualifications for providing an account which has seemed both authentic and authoritative to succeeding generations of readers, critics and historians? What are the most recent views of scholars on his work? These are some of the questions that will briefly be touched upon in this introduction.

Commynes was probably born in 1447 at the castle of Renescure not far from Aire, at that time part of the county of Flanders. His family had been rising in the world through service to the counts of Flanders and their successors, the Valois dukes of Burgundy, Philip the Bold, John the Fearless and Philip the Good. The family's modest fortunes were made when Commynes's grandfather, Colard van den Clyte married Jeanne de Wazières, lady of Commynes, around the year 1374. Colard and Jeanne had two sons, Jean, the elder, who succeeded to the lordship of Commynes, and Colard, whose second wife was Margeurite d'Armuyden. This couple were the parents of Philippe.

Colard de Commynes had a relatively short and stormy career in the service of Philip the Good. His harsh administration was the cause of riots on one occasion and when he died in June 1453, his wife having predeceased him, his son Philippe found himself an orphan and his inheritance considerably burdened with debts. It does not seem too extravagant to suggest that Commynes's later and very evident concern with money stems from the difficult times which he experienced in his youth. A law-suit over the costs of his father's funeral was still being disputed some years after his own death, and there is evidence that although his cousin and guardian Jean did his duty, Commynes's education and upbringing was limited by penury. The lordship of Renescure had been seized because of Colard's debts, and it was not until 1464 that Philippe was allowed to regain it. On 1 October 1469 Charles the Rash, duke of Burgundy, who had succeeded his father Philip the Good in 1467, finally remitted the

outstanding debts owing from Philippe's succession to his father. While in Burgundian service Commynes was normally referred to as the seigneur de Renescure.

The first definite date we have for Commynes's biography is 1464. In that year, probably in the late autumn, as he mentions in the first paragraph of his ***Memoirs,*** he went to the court of his godfather, Philip the Good, and was attached to the service of Philip's heir, Charles, count of Charolais. It was in the company of Charolais, on the campaign which that prince led against Louis XI in the War of the Public Weal, that Commynes first experienced warfare, fighting beside Charolais at the battle of Montlhéry (16 July 1465). He was later present at the distruction of Dinant (25 August 1466) and at the campaigns against Liège in 1466, 1467 (when he was at the battle of Brusthem) and in 1468. But as young esquire — he was knighted in 1468 and became a chamberlain to Charles the Rash — Commynes had no important role in the formulation of Burgundian policy. He must, however, have had ample opportunity to observe Charles and his closest counsellors in the two years before he succeeded his father — men like Guillaume Hugonet, Guillaume de Cluny, Philippe de Crèvecoeur and Guillaume Bische, who are frequently mentioned in the ***Memoirs.*** In the very first months of his service with Charolais he also witnessed the humiliation of the Croy family, which had exercised considerable influence over Philip the Good in his dotage.

During these early years in public life there are few glimpses of Commynes. He is extremely reticent and guarded in the personal details which he gives us, and his career has to be pieced together from the snippets of court chroniclers — Olivier de la Marche, for example tells us that in 1468 Commynes took part in the jousts to celebrate the marriage of Charles the Rash to Margaret of York — or from occasional administrative documents. In 1467 Commynes was at Ghent, where he received forty-eight *livres*[1] from the duke for his services, and in 1468 he was sent to Coutrai and Ypres on missions concerning the collection of ducal taxes. Then, in October 1468, came one of the most important events of Commynes's life. At the celebrated interview between Charles the Rash and Louis XI at Péronne, he acted in such a way (in what way it is still not entirely clear from his own cryptic remarks and from the independent evidence of other sources) that Louis XI believed thereafter that he owed his life largely to Commynes. In the following years Commynes seems to have played an increasingly important part in Burgundian court life and in diplomatic affairs, though again it is difficult to discern whether he had any influence on the formulation of policies which he was called upon to represent. He was present at the meeting between Charles the Rash and Sigismund of Austria in 1469 and in 1470, he fulfilled a mission to Calais to the English governor, John Lord Wenlock. Most editors of the ***Memoirs*** have assumed that Philippe visited England and have attempted to date this visit to 1470-1. But there is absolutely no evidence to support this view, and my own belief is that such vague allusions as are made to this supposed mission in fact refer to the jounreys to Calais, which was, of course, under English rule at this time. Commynes's acquainance with English conditions and politics may derive from the conversations he had with Lancastrian and Yorkist exiles at the Burgundian court, or from his meetings with English diplomats whilst he served Louis XI, and not from a personal visit to England. In 1471 he visited Brittany and Castile, probably on diplomatic business, though his stated reason was a pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostella. There is evidence to suggest that it was on these missions in 1471 that Commynes again came into contact with Louis XI, that a sum of 6,000 *livres tournois,* which was deposited with Jean de Beaune, merchant of Tours, in Commynes's name, probably came from the King and that the Burgundian was playing a double game. Again, the ***Memoirs*** say little or nothing about the purposes of these missions. The Castilian mission is alluded to simply in an aside when Commynes is describing a meeting between Louis XI and Enrique IV which took place in 1463.

The most important event in Commynes's life is dismissed in a couple of sentences: 'About this time in 1472, I came into the King's service…. He was at Ponts-de-Cé, where he marched and was making war on the duke of Brittany' (see Book Three, Ch.11,i) Commynes had been accompanying Charles the Rash on another campaign in northern France one which had left a trail of devastation behind it, when he suddenly left the duke beneath the walls of Eu on the night of 7-8 August 1472, and fled across Normandy to join the King on the Loire not far from Angers. Like so many events in Philippe's life this one is open to several interpretations. It has usually been assumed that Louis XI had gradually been increasing his pressure on Commynes to win him over as he had been winning over other supporters of the duke of Burgundy and of his other enemies (See Book Three, Ch.1) . This interpretation seemed plausible after the publication of evidence to show that Louis XI had seized Commynes's deposit with Jean de Baune shortly before his flight. Recently it has been suggested that this seizure (which can also be interpreted as an agreed ruse between Commynes and Louis XI to throw Charles the Rash off the scent of his chamberlain's double-dealings) was Louis's means of bringing to an end some even more subtle dealings on

Commynes's part in which he was trying to dupe both Charles and Louis. At the present time, since the evidence of such a view is completely lacking, we must return to a bare recitation of the known facts.

The duke's anger at the flight of his chamberlain is seen by the speed of his reaction. At six o'clock on the morning of 8 August he ordered the confiscation of Commynes's goods and gave them to the lord of Quiévrain. But if Commynes lost all his possessions in Flanders, his losses were soon made good by his new master, Louis XI. A succession of important gifts, pensions and grants (many of these of dubious legal validity resulting in years of expense and litigation for Commynes) quickly followed. On 28 October 1472 a pension of six thousand *livres tournois* was given to 'Sir Philip de Commynes, knight, lord of Renescure, King's counsellor and chamberlain'. In the same month Commynes received the principality of Talmont and the baronies, castles, castellanies, lands and lordships of Olonne, Curzon, Château-Gaultier, la Chaume and Berrye in Poitou. At about the same time the King gave him 30,000 gold crowns to help him purchase the lordship of Argenton (Deux-Sèvres) from his future father-in-law. On 27 January 1473 he married Hél;ène de Chambres and became lord of Argenton It is by the title 'sire (or seigneur) d'Argenton that he is usually referred to in French documents. In the meantime he accumulated a series of titles and offices, including the captaincy of Chinon. In 1476 he became senschal of Poitou and captain of the castle of Poitiers in succession to Charles d'Amboise, lord of Chaumont. Over the course of some four years Commynes had thus obtained a considerable landed fortune and achieved status in France through the favour of the King. After 1477 the gifts to him continued but they were on a smaller scale. He received a rent of 262l. 10s. 11d. from the confiscated goods of Jacques d'Armagnac, duke of Nemours, in September 1477, from properties in Tournai, 1,000 *livres tournois* for the fortification of Argenton and payments as captain of Chinon. In the meantime he invested money with merchants at Tours and probably with the Medici bank which had a branch at Lyon. But besides showing favours to Commynes this material way Louis XI rewarded him, more significantly, with his confidence.

In a remarkably short space of time Commynes became one of the most valued counsellors, if not the most valued, of the French King. Between the end of 1472 and the beginning of 1477 he was almost constantly with the King, exercising what one commentator has called powers of an all-powerful prime minister. It is doubtful whether Louis XI ever allowed himself to be manipulated by his ministers during this critical period of his struggle with Charles the Rash, but the personal knowledge of the Burgundian court, Burgundian resources and Burgundian attitudes which Commynes possessed would be invaluable in planning and executing the complex diplomatic schemes which Louis was using to entrap the duke. Commynes thus played a leading role in the events which led to the downfall of the count of Saint-Pol, the Constable of France (a dominant theme in Books 3 and 4 of ***Memoirs***); in the efforts to entangle Charles the Rash in German affairs; in the negotiations with Edward IV of England, leading to the treaty of Picquigny, after the abortive Anglo-Burgundian invasion of France in 1475; and in the exploitation of Charles's defeats at the hands of the Swiss in 1476. His diplomatic horizons were broadened by his journey with the King to Lyon in 1476, over the problem of the succession of René of Anjou in Provence, and by contacts with Savoyard and Italian statesmen, especially Cicco Simonetta, the powerful adviser to the duke of Milan. During the last six or seven years of Louis XI's life Commynes seems to have specialized in Italian affairs. He had many dealings with the Milanese ambassadors and, above all, with the Republic of Florence.

The tradition that Commynes remained the most trusted adviser of Louis XI from the time of his flight from Burgundy until the King's death (a view which Commynes does little to refute in his ***Memoirs***) has recently been very strongly challenged by M. Jean Dufournet. He has, to my mind, convincingly demonstrated that after a disagreement with Louis over the correct way in which to exploit Charles the Rash's death at Nancy in January 1477, Commynes never again held the position of influence which he had had during the previous four or so years from September 1472. Although I do not agree with M. Dufournet's ideas on the purporses and nature of the ***Memoirs,*** he correctly points out that Commynes's appointment as captain of the castle at Poitiers, and secondment to Poitou by Louis XI in the middle of the campaign to capture the Flemish and northern French territories of Charles the Rash, broke the close links between two men who had seldom been out of each other's company for five years. Like the reasons for Commynes's original defection, the reasons for his dispute with the King remain difficult to fathom. Can we take him at his face value and accept that it was principally a disagreement over the proposed marriage of he Burgundian heiress to the Dauphin or another French prince, as he states in his ***Memoirs***? Or was it, as M. Durfournet suggests, a dispute that had arisen as a result of Commynes's wish to take advantage of Charles's death to recover his own patrimony in Flanders, in return for rendering services to the Flemings by obtaining more favourable terms from Louis XI? Is it significant that Commynes after his mission to Picardy with the Admiral of France in January 1477 (see Book Five, Ch. 11) was never again given

a commission to do anything in this region which he knew so well? Deceived in his hopes of restoring his personal fortunes in Flanders, did this give him added reasons for condeming the King's lack of success in exploiting the Burgundian succession to the full? Louis had ignored his advice and listened to other agents whose incompetence he berates at some length. Commynes certainly admits to contacts with some of Louis's enemies in 1477 and mentions that the King entertained some 'small suspicion' about him. Again, the evidence for Commynes's role is lacking. On the other hand he definitely seems to have been displaced at court by a number of other leading counsellors. Among them were Jean de Daillon, lord of Lude, Louis d'Amboise, bishop of Albi (who is mentioned only once in the ***Memoirs***: see Book Six, Ch. 6), Boffilo del Guidice, Jean Bourré, Ymbert de Batarnay, lord of Bouchage and by 1479, Charles d'Amboise, lord of Chaumont, Pierre de Rohan, lord of Gié and Marshal of France and another ex-Burgundian, Philippe de Crèvecoeur, lord of Cordes. All these men received more extensive gifts and favours than Commynes from Louis XI in the last years of his reign and their names appear much more frequently in documents, if not in the***Memoirs.***

Commynes's fortunes began to revive in 1478. He was made a knight of the Order of Saint-Michel. He supported Boffilo in negotiations with Venice and in April he was sent on a mission to the duchy of Burgundy.[2] But once more Commynes was in danger of disgrace. After receiving the submission of Dijon with the lord of Bressuire in May, he himself informs us that the King was displeased with him because he acted unfairly in assigning billets for the occupying troops; probably he had accepted bribes from leading citizens. Luckily just then Louis XI felt it necessary to send an envoy to Florence to congratulate Lorenzo dei Medici on his escape from death at the hands of the Pazzi conspirators. Without bothering to recall Commynes to court, Louis dispatched him post haste to Florence, thus removing him from Burgundy and the problems created by the attempt to incorporate the late duke's lands into the kingdom of France. Travelling via the court of Savoy in Turin, and Milan, Commynes renewed on Louis XI's behalf various promises, used his influence to strengthen opposition to Pope Sixtus IV and hurriedly passed on to Florence, which he reached in the last week of June 1478.

In Florence Commynes's main task was, with the assistance of Lorenzo, to renew the French alliance with Milan. This was done on 18 August. But not a word of this appears in the ***Memoirs,*** although he does mention that when he returned through Milan he received the homage from the dowager duchess on behalf of her son for the duchy of Genoa, which the Milanese recognized was held from the King of France. Once more the discretion of the writer, his selective amnesia and a dearth of more reliable evidence make it difficult to judge what Commynes achieved by this mission. Certainly Lorenzo paid flattering compliments to Commynes in the letters which were sent to Louis XI, but the political crisis in Florence was not really stabilized in the struggle against the papacy and Naples until Lorenzo made his famous journey to Naples to meet King Ferrante in the following year. The military value of the Franco-Milanese alliance to the Florentines was minimal, despite its public reaffirmation of Milan on Commynes's return from Florence. The eulogies which followed Commynes from Milan likewise fail to cover up the slender results of his embassy, although they may have served to strengthen Commynes's advocacy of Milanese and Florentine interests once he was back in France. The death of Yolande of Savoy, Louis XI's sister, just before Commynes returned to Turin again, may have presented him with an opportunity to promote Louis's interests. He was in correspondence with the Milanese and others who were anxious about the fate of the young duke of Savoy. He may have helped to send the princesses of Savoy on to the French court and he gave evidence of his pro-Burgundian sympathies by intervening to help some Burgundian refugees, whom Louis XI did not want to employ, to get safe-conducts to go to Florence. On all these events the***Memoirs*** are largely silent, or where they do recount aspects of the very complex diplomatic negotiations between France and the Italian states Commynes's account sometimes conflicts with facts about which he has personal knowledge. As M. Dufournet has, for example, shown, he condemns Bonna of Savoy, dowager duchess of Milan, in his ***Memoirs*** for having applied a policy which he himself had advocated in 1478 and which had helped to bring about the death of Cicco Simonetta. Commynes was in correspondence with rivals in the Milanese state and his personal wishes may on occasion have led him to follow lines directly contrary to those Louis XI wanted to follow, as surviving letters suggest, illuminating his role where the ***Memoirs*** conserve a discreet silence.

Shortly after his return to court, where it seems that Commynes was welcomed more warmly than he had been by Louis XI for two years, the King suffered his first serious illness (see Book Six, Ch. 6). Commynes was able to serve him in a very personal and intimate way, looking after his bodily needs during his illness and interpreting the King's wishes and commands to his other servants. Despite this renewed intimacy Commynes's political influence seems to have been much reduced in comparison with the earlier years of their relationship, being confined almost entirely to Italian affairs. In 1479 he was giving his advice to the Milanese, informing them of plans to deceive the

English ambassadors with regard to the proposed marriage of the Dauphin and Edward IV's daughter (see Book Six, Ch. 1) and warning them to tread carefully as the Emperor and Louis XI were at loggerheads. On 11 March 1480 he wrote to Lorenzo dei Medici recommending a man to his service and referring to 'several important matters concerning the King about which he has charged me three or four times to write to you on his behalf'. A little later he wrote a pass for Francesco Gaddi, the Florentine envoy in France, which shows he still had some influence and gives us a confirmatory glimpse of the extraordinary life at Plessis during Louis XI's last years: 'Master gatekeepers, allow Francesco Gaddi, bearer of these letters to pass, whenever he wishes to come to visit the King or me. Farewell…. Yours Commynes.'

Previously, in May 1479, when Louis's illness probably served as a good excuse for him to avoid embarrassing diplomatic meetings and the Milanese ambassador was being frustrated in his desire to see the King, it was Commynes, together with Boffilo del Guidice, who showed him certain documents on their own initiative. Much of Commynes's correspondence at this time takes on a cloak-and-dagger aspect. Many of his letters are short and cryptic, several contain a request that they should be burnt or otherwise destroyed by the recipient and we know that he must have destroyed many confidential communications sent to him. As the ***Memoirs*** are largely silent about this period an example may not be out of place and the following autograph to Gaddi, possibly dated September 1479, will serve as one:

> Francesco, Jacques has written to me that you are coming on Wednesday and that you have been wanting to talk to me for a long time. I cannot come until Friday morning but you can write safely to me by the bearer [of these] for I throw all your letters on the fire and you can have a reply where you are or, if it is necessary, at Lyon. Farewell. From Montsoreau. All yours.

The letter is unsigned but it is in the characteristic large, angular handwriting of Commynes, writing which nearly all modern authorities have commented on adversely.

Besides his mental services to Louis XI and his involvement in the imbroglio of Italian politics, Commynes, in the last years of Louis, made journeys to Dauphiné in October 1479 and Savoy in the winter of 1481-2. Lorenzo dei Medici continued to address numerous letters to him. Louis XI favoured him by staying at Argenton in November and December 1481, after a second bout of illness and Commynes joined the King on his journey to Saint-Claude in 1482. But as the letters to Gaddi and other evidence illustrate, Commynes was not a constant companion of the King and on occasion he could be deceived by the King; he was not always aware of the King's movements. There is considerable evidence to show that in the last years of Louis's life, although on occasion he was found to be with the King, he was not a constant companion at Plessis, except during the last days of August 1483 when Louis lay on his death-bed. This helps to explain the strictures which Commynes both explicitly and implicitly levelled against those who were with the King when he was at Plessis. The death of the King, moreover, when Commynes himself was only thirty-six years old, inaugurated a period of misfortune for him which, since power in the state passed to the Beaujeus, his personal enemies began to recoup their losses now that his protector was dead.

This was not immediately apparent. Commynes continued to sit in the royal council until 1485 and he played an important part in the Estates-General called at Tours in January 1484. But shortly after Louis's death sworn affidavits were drawn up in which it was testified that the late King had admitted that he had fraudulently dispossessed the heirs of Louis d'Amboise, vicomte de Thouars, of Thouars and the principality of Talmont. A few days before he died, the King had asked the Dauphin to reinstate them, compensating Commynes for his losses. This legal dispute with the powerful Trémoïlle family was but one of the processes which Commynes was forced to fight in an attempt to vindicate his claims to the various grants made to him by Louis XI. In this case, he was forced, in March 1486, to restore Talmont to Louis de la Trémoïlle, but already he had begun to side with enemies of the regents of the young Charles VIII, his sister, Anne, and her husband Pierre de Beaujeu, younger brother of John, duke of Bourbon. By early 1484 Commynes was aligning himself with the Orléanist faction which rivalled the Beaujeus. In April he was sent to Brittany to give Duke Francis II the official French answer to a number of complaints he had made and it may have been on this occasion that the league of dissident princes, Orléans, Alençon, Angoulême and Brittany, which was to oppose the Beaujeus in the *Guerre Folle,* began to form. By October 1484 the factions crystallized as the Beaujeus sealed alliances with René II, duke of Lorraine, the duke of Bourbon, the lords of Albret and Comminges and others, while by supporting the Flemmings hostile to Maxmilian they hoped to weaken the foreign support for the Orléanists. In Brittany the Beaujeus suborned dissident Bretons with huge pensions and supported them against the duke. Orléans put himself at the head of opposition in January 1485 and issued manifestoes condemining the regents for governmental malpractices, much as the rebel princes had done in the War of the Public Weal some twenty years before.

Commynes observed these manoeuvrings and he managed to steer clear of being identified with the rebels until, once more for reasons which are not clear, he fell out with René of Lorraine and was chased from court. He was forced to throw in with the Orléanists and, on their capitulation in September 1485, a sign of Commynes's own renewed disgrace was his loss of the seneschalcy of Poitou and his replacement by Ypres du Fou. In October he sought refuge with the duke of Bourbon at Moulins where he was soon joined by René of Lorraine. He, in his turn, had fallen out with the Beaujeus and was about to pursue certain claims of his own in Italy. According to Lorenzo Spinelli, writing to Lorenzo dei Medici on 13 May 1486, Anne de Beaujeu had made an offer to Commynes that if he accompanied Lorraine to Italy he would have his office and lands restored. Commynes was in a quandary and he himself asked Lorenzo dei Medici for advice, 'for in the state my affairs are in I have great need of counsel like yours'. But Lorraine had already missed his opportunity in Italy and so Commynes was forced to rely on the duke of Bourbon for protection. He accompanied the duke to the French court in the summer of 1486. Yet Bourbon was playing a devious game and as a result of a public reconciliation with the Beaujeus he dismissed Commynes from his service, so that he was once again forced into the Orléanist faction. He joined the still rebellious princes who formed a new league in December 1486. But their resistance was disorganized. The conspirators split up and Commynes was arrested at Amboise in the middle of January 1487.

The next six months were spent by Commynes in one of Louis XI's famous iron cages at Loches castle, and then from July 1487 to March 1489 he was imprisoned at the top of a tower in the Conciergerie of the Palais de Justice at Paris where his conditions of imprisonment were only marginally better.[3] Almost immediately on tranference to Paris, Commynes confirmed the confession of his guilt which he had made earlier. But though a number of accomplices, the bishops of Périgeuex and Montauban and the lord of Bucy, were released in 1488 it was not until March 1489 that Parlement finally pronounced on his case. He gave a caution of 10,000 gold crowns, forfeited a quarter of his goods to the King and he was exiled to one of his estates for ten years.

Dreux was chosen as the place for Commynes's exile. He had obtained estates there through dealings with Alain, lord of Albret, in 1485. While he had been in prison the la Trémoïlle family had not only pressed ahead with their case over Talmont but had occuppied Argenton to compensate themselves for their losses in Poitou, and Louis de la Trémoïlle, leading the royal army, had finally defeated the duke of Orléans at the battle of Saint-Aubin-du-Cormier on 27 July 1488. This completely crushed oppostion to the regents and confirmed Commynes's enemies in power. Thus it was to Dreux that Commynes withdrew to begin his exile, to restore his private affairs to order and to prepare for he re-entry into politics. It was at Dreux that he began to write his ***Memoirs*** to while away what was left of his time. A few months later he was given permission to move around the kingdom again. In July 1490, for example, he left Lyon after a visit which was most likely connected with the claims he was pressing against the Medici branch bank there. A sentence in the ***Memoirs*** (see Book Five, Ch. 1.ii) may be translated as meaning that Commynes was at Lyon when he composed this part of his work.

In 1490 and 1491 he was gradually recovering favour at the French court. He accompanied Charles VIII to Brittany and was present at the handing-over of Nantes by Alain d'Albret in February 1491. His return to favour coincides with a general reconciliation of the various factions in the summer, and in July he received a gift of 30,000 *livres* to be paid in four instalments. In the meantime he tirelessly sought to establish his rights to his scattered estates against numerous rivals and to persuade the Medici to refund his deposits in return for offering them his political services.[4]His position at court was strengthened by the marriage of Charles VIII to Anne of Brittany in December 1491 which led to the reduction of Bourbon influence. But Commynes was more an observer on the periphery than a participant in policy-making. He may have been acting more cautiously after his bitter experiences since Louis's death but he was probably also excluded beacuse he was not trusted implicitly. He was a participant in the negotiations leading to the treaty of Senlis (23 May 1493), in which Charles VIII came to terms with Maxmilian of Austria and arranged for the return of Marguerite of Flanders[5] which was an essential preliminary if Charles were to invade Italy safely.

Everyone was aware, as the Italian ambassadors frequently pointed out, of Commynes's considerable abilities, but he was not permitted to enter the closest councils of Charles VIII and his intrigues and posturings cannot hide his lack of real influence. He could be useful on occasion. The Italian states, particularly Florence, used him to represent their interests at the French court. There is some evidence to suggest he was open to bribery. In France he sensed the way the wind was blowing and, although he was not a passionate advocate of Charles VIII's plans to invade Italy, he was ready to play his part, arming a galley for royal service and taking his place among the first to cross the Alps with the King. His most important task at this time was to represent France at Venice during the

critical months October 1494 to May 1495. Yet even here Commynes was not really trusted. Charles VIII starved him of information and ignored his warnings and advice. He was outmanoeuvred by rival ambassadors and he could not prevent the sealing of the Holy League on 31 March 1495 between Maxmilian, king of the Romans, Pope Alexander VI, the king of Spain, the duchy of Milan, and Venice, to chase Charles VIII out of Italy under the cover of an attack on the Turk.

On leaving Venice Commynes visited Florence, where he met the famous Dominican preacher Girolamo Savonarola who had recently come to power in a revolt which had led to the exile of the Medici family. He promised to use what influence he had on the Florentines' behalf in their dispute with Charles VIII over the future of Pisa, in exchange for promises relating to his own private financial interests. After rejoining Charles VIII on his return march from Naples, Commynes played a distinguished and courageous role in the battle of Fornovo (6-7 July 1495), both as a soldier and as a diplomatic negotiator. After the battle he was involved in very complex diplomatic overtures leading to the treaty of Vercelli (9 October) in which Ludovico il Moro, duke of Milan, was detached from the Holy League. Then Commynes was sent to Venice to try to obtain the Signory's adherence to his treaty. But he was unsuccessful and on his return to Milan he found that Ludovico had gone back on many of his promises, alleging similar failure on he part of Charles VIII. What promises Commynes could obtain from him were extremely vague and he returned to France, his mission fruitless, in December 1494. At court the peace party was momentarily in the ascendant and Commynes was heavily criticized. He continued to be consulted on occasion but he was not given any important assignments, and it was in the three years after his return from Italy that he wrote his account of Charles's expedition which makes up Books 7 and 8 of the full edition of the ***Memoirs.*** In the last years of Charles VIII's reign (he died in 1498) and the first years of Louis XII's reign Commynes cuts a rather pathetic figure. On the accession of his former rebel lord, Louis duke of Orlé, as King, Commynes's failure to achieve recognition may have been due to his criticism of Louis's plans to divorce his first wife, Louis XI's deformed daughter. Still a very active man, Commynes is to be found pleading and intriguing for court favours, but although for ever optimistic that his services will be us use to his sovereigns, he gets little satisfaction. Most of his time seems to have been spent on his private affairs, administering his estates, quarrelling with his neighbours, arranging the marriage of his daughter, pursuing the Florentine government or contesting several long-drawn-out legal battles. In 1505 the favour of Anne of Brittany (now married to Louis XII) resulted in the restoration of a small pension and his appointment as an ordinary chamberlain of the King, and in 1507 he accompanied Louis to Milan. But his last years were chiefly spent contentiously dealing with domestic matters. He died at Argenton on 18 October 1511, aged about sixty-four.

In judging Commynes's ***Memoirs*** it is important to bear in mnd the vicissitudes of his career, his imporverished youth, his service to Charles the Rash of Burgundy, his brief period of favour and importance under Louis XI from 1472 to 1477, the cooler relationship of the King's last years, his political misfortunes in the mid 1480s, his imprisonment, his partial return to active political life and the frustrations of his last years. A number of dates, 1472, 1477, 1483, 1487, and 1495, plot this chequered career, and we must now turn to the ***Memoirs*** to see how they fit into this sketch of Commynes's life.

According to the Prologue Commynes undertook to recount from his own experience what he knew of the life of Louis XI for Angelo Cato, archbishop of Vienne. Cato planned to write a history of the King's reign in Latin and he had asked Commynes to provide him with some of the material. Cato was a Beneventan who had come into the King's service as a doctor and astrologer in the late 1470s after coming north of the Alps in the entourage of Federigo, prince of Taranto, in 1475 (see Book Five, Ch. 3.i) He quickly established an important place at Louis's court (the King's increasing infirmities being one of the chief reasons for this) and he enjoyed a great reputation as an astrologer (see Book Five, Ch. 3.i). Louis rewarded him with the archbishopric of Vienne in 1482. But besides his scientific reputation Cato was also deeply interested in history. It was for him that Dominic Mancini wrote an account of Richard III's usurpation of the English crown in 1483, shortly after a visit to England, and Commynes's references to him in the ***Memoirs*** draw attention to this side of his career. [6]

On the face of it, Commynes had a perfectly justifiable reason for writing his ***Memoirs***. They were to be materials for a full-scale history and Commynes could afford to be more informal in the presentation of his account because this would later be shaped by other hands. But after a very short acquaintance with the work it can be seen that, despite occasional specific remarks addressed to Cato and references to events about which he knew Cato had personal knowledge, Commynes seems to be writing for a much wider public. Hence the lengthy didactic passages in which he directs remarks to princes, young noblemen and others who may read the ***Memoirs.*** In this respect,

therefore, his belong to a long medieval tradition of 'mirrors for princes', a fashion which humanist scholarship was to adopt on a considerable scale in the next generation or so. In France alone Commynes was soon to be followed by the more formal treatises of Claude de Seyssel (***La Monarchie de France,*** 1515) and Guillaume Budé (***L'Institution du Prince,*** 1518) while in Italy the most famous tract for the times, Machiavelli's ***Il Principe,*** was written in 1513. But besides the ostensible reason for his writing and the object which soon emerges from a study of his text, Commynes seems principally to have been writing to justify his own career. Far from providing a dispassionate survey of the events of Louis's career, approximating as closely to the truth as he claimed he would in the Prologue (see Prologue, opening para.), Commynes's account has been skillfully constructed to gloss over certain discreditable incidents in his own life, to hide facts about the changing nature of his relationship with Louis XI and the essential failure of his career. A case can be made for arguing that Commynes, in his ***Memoirs,*** was getting his own back on his numerous enemies. Far from being the simple, honest account of a faithful servant, it is the work of an extremely embittered, devious politician and the controversial textbook view — expressed as recently as 1966 by Professor Denys Hay — that Commynes 'had a detachment which gives his pages the very highest authority' and that he provides 'an anstonishingly cool analysis of the reigns of Louis XI and Charles VIII' is very wide of the mark. The great nineteenth-century German historian Leopold von Ranke noted that it was impossible for Commynes to be impartial and there is enough obvious criticism of Louis XI to make us aware that the bias is not all against his first master, Charles the Rash. The omissions and critical judgements on certain figures who are mentioned in the course of the work should make us wary about accepting them at their face value without a very careful scrutiny.

Commynes did not, as far as we are aware, use many of the traditional aids — earlier chronicles or documentary sources — for the compilation of his work though there are one or two interesting parallels between the account he gives of the battle of Montlhéry and some other contemporary accounts, which suggest that he may have had some earlier version before him when he compiled his own, and he could probably have had access to documents such as those in Cato's collection. But Commynes chiefly relied upon his memory. Unfortunately no *aide-mémoires,* jottings or early drafts for the ***Memoirs*** have survived and there is no one archive which contains anything in the nature of a collection of his private papers, though a corpus of estate documents from Argenton has survived through their incorporation in the archives of the Penthièvre family, whose chief representative, René de Brosse, count of Penthièvre, married Commynes's daughter in 1504.

Commynes possessed a library which contained an assortment of classical and medieval authors of a largely conventional type. The main feature of the surviving examples of this library are a number of *de luxe* manuscripts — a two-volume St. Augustine, ***City of God,*** in the French translation of Raoul de Presle, of which the first volume is at The Hauge [7] and the second at Nantes,[8] is possibly the most sumptuous. There is a two-volume Froissart (British Museum, Harley MSS 4379-80) and the same library possesses another French translation of the ***Facta et Dicta Memorabilia*** of Valerius Maximus (Harley MSS. 4374-5) which once belonged to Commynes as can be seen from the armorial bearings in the miniatures. In the first volume his arms (gules, a bordure and chevron or, three escallops two and one argent) are quartered with those of his mother, while in Volume Two his arms appear alone, in some instances painted over the earlier quartered arms. Commynes possessed the translation by Jean de Vignay of James of Voragine's ***Legenda Aurea*** [9] — a collection of saints' lives — and part of an epitome of classical historians, Jena Mansel's ***La Fleur des Histoires,***[10] as well as a number of devotional books — an Hours of Paris (B.N., MS. latin 1417) and another Book of Hours (B.M., Harley MS. 2863). It used to be thought that as early as Whitsun 1474 he commissioned Jean Foucquiet, the leading illuminator of his day, to execute a Book of Hours but this manuscript has not survived. Or, alternatively, it may have been confused with a very fine Hours of Paris now ascribed to Jean Colombe and his *atelier* (formerly in the Huth collection and still in private hands), done for Commynes and his wife, which was displayed as no. 327 in the exhibition 'Manuscripts à Peintures en France du XIIIè au XVIè siècle' at the Bibliothèque Nationale Paris, 1955.

Although Commynes commissioned a number of these works (the Froissart, for example), or obtained manuscripts which were not complete and had them finished (the ***City of God*** may have been begun for Jacques d'Armagnac, duke of Nemours, who was a great bibliophile), he does not seem to have had a great urge to collect books. At one stage in his dispute with the Medici he may have had an opportunity to obtain part of their library as a security but he did not take it. Nor did his acquaintance with humanist Francesco Gaddi, with whom Commynes had considerable correspondence, owned a rich library, which included both classical works and those of leading Italian writers of the previous two centuries, including Dante, Boccaccio, Lorenzo Valla and L.B. Alberti, and he was a friend of men like Politian and Ficino, Ermolao Barbaro and Pico della Mirandola, but there is nothing to

suggest that Commynes was aware of this. His literary tastes were thoroughly conventional. His acquaintance with classical history was second and third hand. Valerius Maximus' work has been described as 'a multitude of more or less edifying anecdotes' extracted from Livy, Cicero, Salust and other authors, while the part of Jean Mansel's work which Commynes owned (***Les Hystoires Rommaines***) likewise contained extracts from these classical authors or from Leonardo Bruni's fifteenth-century version of the first Punic war. There is little evidence that Commynes actually read any of these works, though there is a tradition that he did (see Intro. Footnote 28 and corresponding quote). None of the surviving manuscripts have any significant marginalia which could be attributed to him and several of them look in such suspiciously good condition that they do not appear to have received much use. Literary references in the ***Memoirs*** are very restricted — two mentions of Livy and one of Boccaccio in Books 7 and 8, those written after his visit to Italy in 1494-5. If he did, however, read some of them — the prologue to his copy of Mansel's ***Fleur des Histoires,*** for example — they may have helped to crystallize some of his own ideas and confirm him in his view (see Book Two, Ch. 6) of the importance of history as a training and education for rulers. But this was not a novel idea in fifteenth-century thought.

Many, indeed, of the ideas which Commynes used in the moralizing and reflective parts of his ***Memoirs*** were common currency in the thought of his time. The following passage could easily be part of the ***Memoirs*** with reference perhaps to Ghent:

> There was never a city, however, rich and flourishing, which did not fall into great dangers as a result of small errors. Some came to complete ruin in this way. Therefore if I seem to you and others to be hesitating and slow or even timid and diffident in these matters the reason is that I am deterred at the outset by examples from any conflict. A blessed and happy city should embrace peace and so avoid being exposed to fortune and mutability. But I think this is less dependent on the effects of fortune than on our own folly. Men who lack education and are not moderate in their attitudes can do a great deal of harm to their cities. They rule the state with more spirit than prudence and do not measure purposes or dangers.

It comes in fact from the preface to the ***Commentaria Rerum Graecarum,*** a translation from Xenophon by the famous early Florentine humanist Leondaro Bruni, written in about 1439. [11] Bruni goes on to say:

> I have been persuaded by these considerations to write the ***Commentaries*** — for I prefer to tell of others' errors than our own — in which you will see the diverse calamities and downfalls and the wonderful turns of fortune of the most powerful cities of Greece.

Such musings on Fortune and on the revolutions that occur in the lives of men find another mode of expression (but one which would be almost equally at home in the ***Memoirs***) in this extract from a letter written by Sir John Paston a few days after the battle of Barnet in which the earl of Warwick was killed on Easter Day, 14 April 1471:

> God hathe schewyd Hym selffe marvelouselye lyke Hym that made all, and can undoo ageyn whan Hym lyst; and I kan thynke that by all lyklyod schall schewe Hym sylff as mervylous ageyn, and that in schort tyme; and, as I suppose, offer then onys in cassis lyke. [12]

In an interesting essay Jean Liniger [13] sought to show that for Commynes God provided the stable element he could not find in the world. God replaces Fortune as reason replaces arbitrary action. Liniger emphasized the masculinity of Commynes's God. There is no mention of Christ in***Memoirs*** (though when the ambiguous phrase 'Our Lord' is used such an assertion may be false) and there is little suggestion in his work of the tenderness expressed in the artistic representations of the *Pietà* which became popular in Commynes's lifetime. He expected God's punishment in this world as much as in the world to come. The ***Memoirs*** make no mention of the Devil. All this may reflect, indeed almost certainly does reflect, Commynes's own experiences and his rationalization of them. Liniger tried to demonstrate that in the course of his imprisonment Commynes experienced some sort of conversion, that for the first time his faith, which had been superficial and typically representative of his social class, became something real. Readers may like to test this statement against the numerous discussions of Providence — whether it be God or Fortune — in this work. A few details of Commynes's private life, such as the disgraceful attempts to defraud the widow of one of his agents in Tours over the farm of the *gaballe* which she was managing for him (before his 'conversion' in the early 1480s) and the petty episodes (after his conversion) in which he smashed some church windows because they bore the arms of one of his vassals, or took part in a seigneurial jurisdictional dispute over the disposal of a dead body, not to mention his constant attempts to regain his influential position, exhibit little of the equilibrium and moderation which Liniger suggests are the principal characteristics of our author. There is little here to confirm that Liniger is right in suggesting that Commynes was a man who thought out his actions thoroughly and did not act rashly. We cannot dismiss the possibility of a spiritual conversion and the fact that the period of imprisonment was one in which, perhaps for the first time in his adult life, Commynes had adequate time for reflection. But it is difficult to interpret most of his remarks on God in the ***Memoirs*** in anything but a conventional framework, and this is one more illustration of his drawing on a common fund of ideas when he was not specifically thinking about ot describing matters from his own experience.

Very little in the literary make-up of Commynes prepares us then for some of the novel aspects of his own writings. It has already been suggested that it is probably valid to compare him with the writers of more formal treatises on government, while his break with the traditions of historical writing, especially by chivalric authors, was brilliantly demonstrated by Huizinga. Wheras Froissart, Monstrelet, Chastellain, Olivier de la Marche and others all begin their accounts with remarks about their intention to glorify feats of knighthood, and then proceed to catalogue indiscriminately a whole series of personal encounters and not a few bloody and treacherous deeds which do little to support the authors' high-sounding declarations, there is none of this in Commynes. Froissart's prologue begins:

> In order that the honourable enterprises, noble adventures and deeds of arms which took place during the wars waged by France and England should be fittingly related and preserved for posterity, so that brave men should be inspired thereby to follow such examples, I wish to place on record those matters of great renown.

However, from the start Commynes recognizes human imperfections: 'In him [Louis XI], and in all other princes whom I have known or served, I have recognized good and evil for they are men just like ourselves and to God alone belongs perfection' (See Book One, Ch. 1) Whilst when it comes to the description of a battle,

> Commynes abstains from all heroic fiction: no fine exploits, no dramatic turns; he only gives us a realistic picture of comings and goings, of hesitations and fears. He takes pleasure in telling of flights and noting how courage returned with security. He rejects all chivalrous terminology and scarcely mentions honour, which he treats almost as an inevitable evil. [14]

Contrast his account of the battle of Montlhéry (see Book One, Ch. 3 and 4) with that of the battle of Crécy, 1346, in Froissart [15] where,

> it is true that too few great feats of arms were performed that day, considering the vast number of fine soldiers and excellent knights who were with the King of France. But the battle began late and the French had a long and heavy day before they arrived. Yet they still went forward and preferred death to dishonourable flight.

Foissart gives us a tragi-comic picture of the death of the blind King of Bohemia who demanded to be led into battle by his retainers so that he could strike a blow:

> Because they cherished his honour and their own prowess his knights consented…. In order to acquit themselves well and not lose the King in the press they tied all their horses together by the bridles…. They were found the next day lying round their leader, with their horses still fastened together.

That these men about whom Foissart was writing were brave cannot be denied but their bravery was a form of charade masking political realities and plainly ignoring military science. Commynes mentions at the battle of Montlhéry some of the innumerable mêlées, which constituted the proper stuff of chivalric battles according to Foissart and his successors, but he did so not usually to single out individual feats of bravery, but to show in an objective way how the battle plans broke down. Yet at the same time he conveys a bird's eye view of the way in which the battle was fought and of the actual topographical details of the battlefield which is unique in the literature of the later middle ages. Commynes appreciated recent changes in the art of war — the increasingly impersonal character of warfare because of the introduction of effective artillery, the use of massed archers (not such a recent innovation but one which chivalric writers referred to, if at all, only in slighting terms) and of infantry. In these respects, especially in his remarks about the value of artillery throughout the ***Memoirs***, Commynes breaks with chivalric traditions and the nearest equivalent to his treatment of battles may be found in the factual newsletters which were frequently sent after them, where literary flourishes were not required. In a similar way Commynes's character sketches with their analysis of defects and motivations, especially the famous chapter on Louis XI (see Book One, Ch. 10), strike a new sophisticated note, far from the conventional eulogies or deprecations of princes by earlier writers. His remarks on the conduct of diplomacy probe beneath the ceremonial and artificial aspects of this form of human intercourse to the basic underlying motives of the men involved. Commynes may not have been such an astute diplomat as he likes to suggest in the ***Memoirs*** but his exposure of diplomatic realities (and ruses) again strikes a new note in historical writing.

All the evidence for dating the ***Memoirs*** has to be derived internally in the absence of other sources. The conditions of Commynes's imprisonment were hardly conducive to the composition of the ***Memoirs***, although he may well have planned them in outline. Even at Paris steps were taken, when he was given permission to hear mass whenever he wished, to see that he did not speak to the officiating priest and we may suspect that every effort would be made to stop him sending letters to his friends by depriving him of paper. We do not know when he actually began to write though it can be seen from internal contradictions and allusions that the work was

composed over a considerable period. John, duke of Bourbon, who died on 1 April 1488, was already dead by the time Commynes began to write (see Book One, Ch. 2, Footnote 8). In Book 2, Chapter 8, Commynes says it is sixteen years since the dispute between France and Aragon had broken out over Roussillon (see Book 2, Ch. 8). Since this began in 1473, it suggests that this chapter was written in 1489, while in Book 6, Chapter 12, Mathias Corvinus, King of Hungary, who died on 4 April 1490, is referred to as already dead. Hugues de Chalon, sire de Châteauguion, was alive at the time of the composition of Book 5, Chapter 2. He died on 3 July 1490. In Chapter 4 of the same book Charles de Savoie, who died 13 March 1490, is mentioned as alive. A passage in Book 6, Chapter 3, referring to the cession of the county of Ferrette by Sigismund of Austria to his nephew Maxmilian (see Book Six, Ch. 3) suggests an addition in 1493. From such indications it is generally accepted that the first six books of the ***Memoirs,*** those translated here, were composed between 1489-91 with a partial revision in the manuscript of 1493. By using similar internal evidence from Books 7 and 8 it has been agreed that the major part of them was written in 1495-6 with corrections as late as 1498.[16]

No autograph manuscript of the ***Memoirs,*** nor any part of them, nor any manuscript that can safely be ascribed to the lifetime of the author has survived. In the absence of such manuscripts there is plenty of room for hypothesis as to the actual process of composition and to the author's original text. It is usually assumed that Commynes dictated his ***Memoirs*** — he must have been very used to composing orally since many of his letters were written for him and he merely added an autograph subscription. Composition by dictation goes some way to explaining the stylistic idiosyncracies of the work — the long disorganized sentences, with numerous sub-clauses, the way in which the author mentions a point which obviously sparks off a new (and often apparently irrelevant) train of thought which causes him to incorporate long digressions within the same sentence or paragraph, and the meandering nature of some of the narrative. Some of the obscure passages and inconsistencies could be attributable to bad handwriting (see above, Letter to Francesco Gaddi) but it is probably significant that one of the best manuscripts (that kept at the Musée Dobrée, Nantes) has a frontpiece showing Commynes dictating his ***Memoirs.***

The Dobrée manuscript, which may be dated to the early sixteenth century, belonged to Jean d'Albret, lord of Orval, who in 1486 married Charlotte de Bourgogne, countess of Rethel, second daughter of Jean de Bourgogne, count of Nevers and a cousin of Philip the Good. We can easily understand why Jean d'Albret, who was once in dispute with Commynes over the county of Dreux and who died in 1524, thus had a copy of the ***Memoirs.*** The manuscript that can be most closely associated with Commynes, however, is one which was executed around 1530 and is the only one to contain the complete text of the ***Memoirs.*** This belonged to Anne de Polignac, niece of the author through her mother, Jeanne de Chambes, sister of Commynes's wife. The manuscript is now in the Bibliothèque Nationale [17] and the same library possess two other important manuscripts of the ***Memoirs,*** dating from the first half of the sixteenth century, [18] while a fifth manuscript is still in the possession of the representative of the Montmorency-Luxembourg family. Another in private hands (those of the comte de Vogué when B. de Mandrot described it) bears the date 1520. This manuscript contains the first six books of the ***Memoirs*** and is the only handwritten one to have a date on it, but the text adds nothing to the others previously mentioned. One final manuscript must be mentioned, although it is now lost. It is the one which Denis Sauvage used when preparing his famous edition of 11552 and which he referred to as an *'exemplaire vieil à la main'*. Its text was very similar to that of the Dobrée manuscript, although in its original state the manuscript was a much rougher one. It had some passages, later deleted, not in the Dobrée manuscript, which Sauvage was still able to read.

While examples of Commynes's ***Memoirs*** were still being produced in elegant manuscripts, with hand-written illuminations, the first published versions were appearing. The *editio princeps* came from the press of Balliot du Pré in April 1524 with the title ***Chronique et hystoire faicte et composée par feu messire Philippe de Commines.*** This contained the first six books, while the final two books appeared with the title***Chronique de roy Charles huytieseme de ce nom*** in 1528. In 1539-40 a number of editions combining the two parts appeared, and in 1552 the first critical edition, with the printed text divided into books and chapters for the first time (the Dobrée manuscript has a rather similar set of divisions) was published by Sauvage. This edition formed the basis of subsequent seventeenth- and eighteenth-century versions in which the text was often very usefully augmented by documentary proofs. One such edition was that produced by the efforts of Theodore and Denis Godefroy in 1649 for which the young Louis XIV went to the press in the Louvre and drew the first sheet, and it is particularly the case of the edition of the Abbé Lenglet du Fresnoy, ***Mémoires de messire Ph. de Commines,*** 4 vols., Paris, 1747. Many of his documents were republished, *in extenso*where necessary, by Mlle. E. Dupont who provided the earliest of the important modern editions of the ***Memoirs.***[19] She based her work on three manuscripts in the then

Bibliothèque Royale. [20] In 1881 R. de Chantelauze produced an edition, based on the Montmorency-Luxembourg manuscript, which also contains useful remarks on syntax and a serviceable glossary. This was followed in 1901-3 by the remarkable edition of B. de Mandrot which was based on the Polignac manuscript. [21] This also took into account all the other important manuscripts and added very valuable notes, identifying those mentioned in the ***Memoirs*** and filling in the historical background. The final modern edition and the one on which this translation is based is that of J. Calmette and G. Durville which takes the Dobrée manuscript as its basic text.[22] Ambiguities still remain. Perhaps some of them will be solved when M. Jean Dufournet has completed the new edition which he has promised, taking the orthography of Commynes's surviving letters as well as the manuscript of his work into full account.

Linguistic studies of Commynes's language tend to suggest that he preferred new and recent words to older ones, that he employed few latinisms (this of course ties up with his claim that he did not know Latin well, though it is unlikely that a leading fifteenth-century diplomat could have been entirely ignorant of this language) and surprisingly, in view of his upbringing in Flanders, he exhibits few traces of provincialism in his writings. Despite the use of homely and picturesque phrases and the constructural defects of the ***Memoirs*** they are written in what, for the late fifteenth century, was modern French. The most apparent defect, at least to the translator, is the limited nature of Commynes's adjectival vocabulary and the range of meanings that can be assigned to words like *grand, saige, fort,* and *tant*. Conversely, difficulties can also arise because Commynes uses a large number of synonyms; for example, there are at least six forms of the verbs 'to negotiate' or 'to think', twelve forms of the noun 'quarrel' and so on. When Commynes does borrow words it is usually from Italian, which he came to speak with considerable proficiency. Such words are most noticeable in Books 7 and 8, naturally, but an early example in Book 1 is the use of *conducteur,* an obvious gallicization of the Italian *condottiere*. But these borrowings are on a very limited scale.

It was about Commynes's writings that Michel de Montaigne, in his famous essay ***On Books,***[23] wrote, 'You will find the language smooth and agreeable, and of a natural simplicity.' He went on to give a critique of the author's work which, with modification, has been most widely accepted until our own day (except by certain Flemish and Belgian historians who could never quite forgive Commynes for his desertion of Charles the Rash):

> The narrative is clear, and the author's good faith shines plainly through it. He is free from vanity when speaking of himself, and from partiality and malice when speaking of others. His speeches and exhortations show honest zeal and regard for truth, rather than any rare talent; and he displays an authority and seriousness throughout which proclaim him a man of good birth, brought up amidst great affairs.

Sainte-Beuve, in one of his celebrated *Causeries du lundi,* reviewing Mlle DuPont's edition of the ***Memoirs,*** called Commynes the first truly modern writer and said that his work was the definitive history of his times, a monument of naïté, truth and finesse. His appreciation of the literary qualities of Commynes's work has probably not been surpassed but dissenting voices were heard about Commynes's historical veracity. These critics were roundly condemned by B. de Mandrot in an essay in the ***Revue historique*** (1900-01). This, while admitting minor imperfections (particularly with regard to inexactitude in the matter of dates — a serious enough fault in a historian), nevertheless sought to show that in terms of overall historical comprehension and judgement Commynes stood comparison with any of his contemporaries and that our own verdicts are remarkably like his. Far from providing us with a panegyric of his late master, Louis XI, he drew a portrait in which a lot more than warts appeared. His other judgements were equally judicious. Calmette, in his turn, was indulgent towards the errors of chronology and even rescued Commynes from unjustified slights on his reputation by showing that de Mandrot was at fault on occasion. For Calmette, too, the literary merits of the ***Memoirs*** were self-evident and already adequately covered in modern French literary criticism. He agreed with the views of Montaigne on Commynes's impartiality.

What has occured to shake these traditional views of the ***Memoirs?*** Two scholars, working independently and largely in ignorance of each other (as far as can be told from their publications) have recently begun to give us the fruits of their very considerable reseraches. Perhaps it is surprising that Commynes has avoided so long the eager attention of thesis-writers whon so many less interesting and less significant writers have received critical assessment. What is now certain is that Commynes scholarship can never be the same again, even if the results of these researches are not fully accepted or assimilated.

With great thoroughness Karl Bittmann is examining Franco-Burgundian relations during the reigns of Louis XI and Charles the Rash in an attempt to test Commynes's account against other documentary sources. His method

was first demonstrated in an article in the ***Historische Zeitschrift,***1957, in a critical analysis of the various sources for the interview between Louis and Charles at Péronne in October 1468. He found that the motives of the two men and the interpretation that could be placed upon their actions differed very considerably from the version given by Commynes (which may unwittingly be best known to English readers from Sir Walter Scott's ***Quentin Durward***). According to Commynes the interview at Péronne appears to be one link in an unfortunate chain of circumstances (see Book Two, Ch. 5, Footnote 17). Louis XI, forgetting that he had sent envoys to Liège to stir up revolt against Charles the Rash, sought an interview with the duke. News of the revolt at Liège when Louis was in Charles's power led to a furious outburst by Charles and only the King's *sang-froid* saved him from possible death. Charles obtained only illusory profits from the meeting. But Bittmann was able to show that Charles, far from wanting to revive a league of princes against Louis (as at the the time of the War of the Public Weal) was seeking to obtain Louis's neutrality so that he would be able to pursue his own designs on the Empire. The expedition against Liège can be seen against the background of a strategy in which Charles was attempting to extend his western borders. Louis had been outmanoeuvred and his main concern was to escape with his life, but Commynes's account is much too favourable to him. It also omits some important facts.

Bittmann's methods have since been elaborated in the first of several promised volumes, taking the story up to 1472.[24] He particularly concentrates on the episodes like the War of the Public Weal and the beginning of the Franco-Burgundian war in 1471, besides the Péronne incident. He shows how in 1465 Louis XI, far from keeping to an established plan in dealing with the uprising of the princes, in which he tried to avoid the hazards of battle at all cost, had seriously underestimated the strength of the opposition and the dangers facing him until it was almost too late. Then, if we follow the accounts of the Milanese ambassador who was with the King, he went through a period of depression and hesitation. Although he acted energetically in his southern campaign into the Bourbonnais, by early July 1465 he was undecided as to whether he ought to stop the Bretons, who were approaching the Île de France from the west, or to go against the Burgundians approaching from the north-east, which he eventually did. Some sixty years ago P. Bernus[25] showed that responsibility for fighting the battle of Montlhéry lay quite as much with Louis XI (which Commynes denies) as with Pierre de Breézé, *Grand sénéchal* of Normandy (whom Commynes blames for the battle). Similarly in 1471, when Commynes suggests that the two principals, Louis and Charles, were led into war by the intrigues of such people as the count of Saint-Pol and the servants of Charles of France, duke of Guyenne, who wanted to marry Charles the Rash's daughter, Bittmann has been able to demonstrate that this is far from the truth. His own challenge to the traditional view that Louis XI was a monarch who always preferred to use diplomatic means rather than war to gain his ends can be questioned on the grounds that there are few military preparations before the war of 1471, which suggest that Louis had a long-term policy to declare war on Burgundy to avenge himself, as Bittmann argues, for the humiliation suffered at Péronne. But at the same time the explanation offered by Commynes is still inadequate because it can be shown that Charles the Rash, far form rebuffing the overtures of Charles of France for his daughter's hand, was very sympathetic towards them and that it was on Guyenne's part that there was hesitation. In all this very detailed examination of the available evidence, in order to corroborate or to criticize Commynes's account, Bittmann has been able to show where the ***Memoirs*** fall short as a historical source of the highest quality for the establishment of an accurate narrative, or for divining the motives of the statesmen and politicians involved in the Franco-Burgundian disputes.

Why the ***Memoirs*** fall short in these respects has been the question which Jean Dufournet has tackled. His approach has in some ways been even more fundamental than Bittmann's, because he seeks to analyse the motives of Commynes in writing the ***Memoirs,*** and the structure of them. He questions almost every phrase and shakes out of almost every sentence new and subtle meanings which have been missed or misinterpreted by readers in the last four hundred years. Besides a couple of useful articles and a brief résumé of his ideas in the ***Dictionnaire des Lettres Français: Le Moyen Age,*** ed. R. Bossuat *et al*., Paris, 1963, Dufournet has published two volumes of his projected four-volume work on Commynes, preparatory to the new edition he has promised. The first volume to appear[26] examines at length (more than seven hundred pages) Commynes's treatment of persons, theses and topics such as his two masters, Charles the Rash and Louis XI, treason, myths about princes and chivalry, women and young people, comparing his methods with those of other contemporary writers. Although use is made of some of the same material that Bittmann uses (ambassadors' reports, Louis XI's letters, etc.), Dufournet introduces a very much more subjective, literary attitude into the criticism of the ***Memoirs.*** On the historical side he is not always on such sure ground. For example, much of his thesis depends on a particular interpretation of Commynes's desertion of Charles the Rash in 1472. For him Commynes committed treason against Charles because Burgundy was a state and Commynes joined the supreme enemy of that state. The rest of Commynes's career is then interpreted against

the background of this treason and the ***Memoirs*** are made to show some 'treasons' are premissible while others are not. It was as if Commynes suffered from an obsession with treason after 1472, particularly in view of the relative failure of his own 'treason' to benefit him substantially in the long run. Hence we get in the***Memoirs*** the detailed analysis of the downfall of the traitor, the count of Saint-Pol, and linking of Charles the Rash's ultimate defeat with the treason of Compobasso. Hence, too, the emphasis on lack of faith in the world where a man like Richard, duke of Gloucester, could swear allegiance to his liege lord and in almost the same breath give orders for his murder. But the idea of 'the state' when applied to Burgundy requires very careful handling. In practice, it may be argued that Charles the Rash, in setting up his own Parlement at Malines in 1471 from which to appeal to the Parlement of Paris was forbidden, was merely putting the finishing touches to a *de facto* independence in his duchy for which his predecessors had been striving for several generations. As Commynes himself points out, Burgundy's resources made it equal of many states in fifteenth-century Europe and Charles's attempts to gain the grant of a crown from the Emperor might, if they had been successful, have been decisive in establishing a new middle kingdom which could have altered European destinies. But from Louis XI's point of view the duchy of Burgundy was an integral part of his kingdom and its ruler owed him obedience. Consequently Commynes in leaving Charles for Louis was not betraying his country but merely breaking off a personal tie of loyalty to his first master and acknowledging the ultimate sovereignty of the King of France. The word 'treason' has a modern connotation which hardly describes the subtleties of this change of allegiance. There were indeed current abstract notions about 'the state' in the fifteenth century, but relationships between people and allegiance to individual rulers were the real cement of society. A king like Louis XI could build up a team of advisors consisting not exclusively of 'Frenchmen' but men devoted to him and his interests because their own private fortunes derived from their service to him, not to France. In this sense, therefore, to condemn Commynes for committing treason may be justifiable on the grounds that he owed much to the partonage of the dukes of Burgundy, in return for the service that his family had given them, so that it was morally reprehensible for him to desert Charles. But such changes of allegiance were not uncommon. Self-interest was at stake. If the ***Memoirs*** help to make this fact about fifteenth century society more comprehensible, and Commynes draws our attention most strongly to it, we must not judge from a purely twentieth-century point of view. There is evidence to show that Charles felt animosity towards Commynes for his desertion — he was specifically omitted from the truce of Soleuvre in 1475, when a number of other ex-Burgundians were pardoned by Charles — but such pardons in themselves show that 'treason' was not an indelible mark on one's career. We may more readily believe that the importance of treason for Commynes lay not in the moral stigma attaching to it but in his relative inability to exploit his change of side to the full.

It is here that Dufournet's smaller volume, ***Le vie de Philippe de Commynes*** (Paris, 1969), is useful. It traces the stages of his career, filling in holes in the ***Memoirs*** or explaining why they were left there, by reference to other documentary sources. Dufournet often strains to read the most discreditable implications for Commynes into documents which are in themselves extremely ambiguous and on occasion one gets the impression that Dufournet's machiavellianism has outstripped that which he imputed to Commynes. But the general outline of his career, as adopted in the earlier section of this introduction, is partly based on Dufournet's evidence. We may legitmately disagree with him, but there cannot be final agreement until, perhaps, one day a manuscript of the ***Memoirs*** which indubitably comes from the hand of the author, or has obviously been scrutinzed by him, is discovered. Until then we have to use our judgement in reading the ***Memoirs.*** Are they written purposely, with extreme deliberation, in an apparently naïve and informal manner in order to disguise their venomous content? Are the contradictions, the repetitions, the chronological errors, the misintrepretations, the false judgements, readily observable in the ***Memoirs***, the result of forgetfulness on the part of the author as he wrote down or dictated his recollections? Do the surviving manuscripts, apart from obvious clerical errors in copying, show signs of deriving from a very artfully constructed original? To follow M. Dufournet in some of his interpretations requires a very radical revision of views about Commynes. Referring to the famous pen-sketch of Commynes in the ***Recueil d'Arras,***[27] Liniger wrote, with the intention of paying high tribute to him: 'When we see that the physical features correspond exactly with his written work, we must declare that we are in he presence of a singular coherence.' Opinions may differ on what such a judgement means, but for Dufournet the unity of Commynes's thought and actions do cohere to produce a work in which his own qualities as a counsellor of princes are by implication extolled against all his rivals. Little or nothing appears in the ***Memoirs***, he contends, which is not directly linked to Commynes's aim to denigrate other people, their ideas, their pollicies, their actions and the myths of his generation, in order to justify his own career. Some readers may think that the lack of detection of these curcial characteristics over a period of four hundred years is significant. If Commynes intended to gain his revenge on his contemporaries, the subtle means he chose have not served him very well until the recent revelations. That M. Dufournet has opened new perspective to our understanding of Commynes cannot be denied, even though we may

not wish to accept the totalilty of his arguments. This summary can do scant justice to some very important new thinking and an almost overwhelming richness of hypothesis. In the final resort we must go back to the text.

The popularity of the ***Memoirs*** was soon apparent. Translation into Latin by Jean Sleidan, in an abridged form, of the first six books in 1545 ad the last two books in 1458 helped to bring the work to a European public. Sleidan added a brief biographical sketch to his edition, much of the information for which he picked ujp from one of Commynes's old servants. Allowing for the pardonable hyperbole it nevertheless gives us an idea of Commynes's character and temperment which it is well to bear in mind when considering Dufournet's remarks:

> Commines[28] was tall, fair, well shaped, and of a comely personage. He spoke Italian, Dutch and Spanish incomparably well; but his excellence consisted chiefly in the French, and he had read all the histories that were extant in that language, especially that of the Romans. As he grew in years, he extremely lamented his deficiency in the Latin tongue, and complained of the little care that had been taken of his education in that respect. He had a prodigious memory, and such a wonderful facility in expressing his thoughts, that he would at the same time dictate to four secretaries different things, all of them of great importance, and with the same ease and dexterity as if there had been but one. His conversation was chiefly among foreigners, as he was desirous to inform himself of all things and places, and very careful of employing his time well; so that he was never known to be idle.

In 1544 an Italian version of Books 1-6 had appeared, to be followed by a German edition in 1551. The late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries saw Dutch, Swedish, Spanish and English translations and by 1643 the work had appeared in ten languages. In the last twenty years there have been important new German and Italian versions.

The first English translation was done by Thomas Danett, and Elizabethan, who in 1596 revised an earlier rough translation for publication. In 1712 one appeared by Uvedale, based on the Godefroy edition and in 1855 A.R. Scroble produced a translation based on Mlle Dupont's edition. The most recent English version has been produced by a Franco-American collaboration between Isabelle Cazeaux and K. Kinser.[29]

This translation is based on the first two columes of the Calmette and Durville edition of the **Memoirs,** those covering the reign of Louis XI. As explained above, Commynes's original intention was to provide materials for a history of this reign and although there is evidence that the final two books were also written for Angelo Cato, their interest and scope is more restricted, partly because Commynes never enjoyed the full confidence of Charles VIII and his advisers as he had enjoyed that of Louis XI and partly because he deals simply with the Italian expedition of 1494-5, recounting events circumstantially and in great detail with more open criticism of his enemies, including Étienne de Vesc and Cardinal Briçonnet. Nor do these last two books contain quite the same contrasts of personality as that between Louis XI and Charles the Rash, such dramatic episodes as the interview at Péronne or the more extended suspense of the Constable's downfall, nor anything comparable to the horrifying account of Louis XI's last years. They do not possess the artistic unity or literary ipact of the first flush of Commynes's creativity in the first six books. These are good reasons for producing a full translation of the most important part of a work which is deservedly famous.

My main rationalization of what is a rather loosely constructed text — it has rightly been said that language was a just means to an end, not an end in itself for Commynes — has been to split his long sentences into more manageable ones and to omit pleonasms (the *said* court, or the *above mentioned* duke, etc.), superfluous phrases (some of the *as I have just said* variety), and titles (*the count of* Charolais) when they are used several times in the course of a sentence or paragraph and when they merely retard the narrative. I have inserted proper nouns where it helps to guide the reader through passages in which Commynes uses only pronouns, and have added within square brackets a few extra words or a date to make the sense clear when a sentence or phrase is left suspended. The spelling of names is based on the identifications in the editions of B. de Mandrot and Calmette and Durville, except that I have anglicized the Christian names of the leading figures where it would appear pedantic to retain the French, e.g. Philip not Philippe, duke of Burgundy. Chapter headings within square brackets are adaptations from Calmette and Durville's headings, otherwise they are translated from the headings in the Dobrée manuscript and are not, as far as we know, the author's, but since they do help to convey something of the spirit of his work I have kept them. For notes on technical phrases, coinage, measures and lengths used in this translation readers are referred to the Glossary.

I have tried to give a straightforward modern rendering but have preserved one or two phrases for which no satisfactory modern equivalent exists. The impact of the original has obviuosly been weakened where there is no appropriate verson of some fifteenth-century saying or proverb which the author uses. Inevitably, because

Commynes's French was very terse, there are some circumlocutions and it is sometimes difficult to convey the full irony or humour of a situation which is so destinctively, pithily or forcefully summed up by Commynes. But in other respects my difficulties have been the same ones that face all translators: questions of idiom, whether to sacrifice the style and flavour of the original in an attempt to preserve its meaning, and so on. I can only hope that where I have stumbled others will resort to the text and orry out the author's meaning, but a Commynes translation devoid of ambiguities and inconsistencies would not be a would not be a true reflection of the original text at all.

FOOTNOTES

1. See Glossary.
2. It must be remembered that the duke of Burgundy's lands were divided into two main blocs: the lands in Flanders, northern France and the Low Countries, and those centring upon the duchy of Burgundy (with its capital Dijon), owing allegiance to France, and the county of Burgundy, the present Franche-Comté, which in the fifteenth century owed allegiance to the Empire. Hence the distinction of the Two Burgundies. The duchy and county lay across the courses of the rivers of Saône and Doubs. These two blocs were intermittently linked by a thin chain of lordships which it had been the policy of Charles the Rash to extend and consolidate; see Map following "Note on Manuscript Abbreviatioons Used in Footnotes.
3. It is possible that towards the end of his period of imprisonment Commynes occupied a house within the confines of the Palais de Justice; see article cited in Footnote 16 below.
4. The best treatment of Commynes's confused financial dealings with the Medici is to be found in R. de Roover, ***The Rise and Decline of the Medici Bank 1397-1494,*** Harvard Univ. Press, 1963, pp. 103-6. By 1491 an agreement had been reached over the extent of the deposit (about 25,000 crowns) and by 1494 Commynes had recovered two thirds of this.
5. Maxmilian's daughter, to whom Charles had been betrothed at the time of his marrage to Anne and who is called Queen of France in the ***Memoirs;*** [See Book Six, Ch. 2, Ch. 6.iii, Ch. 11]
6. On Cato's death (probably in early 1496) it was found that he had an impressive list of documents in his possession which could have served as materials for a contemporary history. They included such items as a book containing an account of the differences between the King and the duke of Austria, letters from the Pope, numerous cardinals, bishops and chapters to the King, letters from the lord of Albret, Guiot Pot, the duke of Brittany and others to the King, a *mémoire* containing a list of statutes and ordinances relating to the Three Estates of Dauphiné, another *mémoire* relating to the embassy of the bishop of Lombez to Spain over the question of Roussillon and a list of the artillery of Paris. (Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, MS. français 2896, fol. 103.)
7. Meermanno-Westreeniamum Museum, MS. 10 A II.
8. Bibliothèque Municipale, MS. français 8. This still retains its original red velvet and wooden binding, with copper conch shells at the corners and center.
9. B.N., MSS. fr. 244-4.
10. B.N., MS. fr. 727.
11. Quoted in translation by G. Holmes, ***The Florentine Enlightenment 1400-50,*** p. 95.
12. ***Paston Letters,*** ed. J. Gairdner, no. 668.
13. ***Le Monde et Dieu selon Philippe de Commynes,*** Neufchâtel, 1943.
14. J. Huizinga, ***The Waning of the Middle Ages,*** Peregrine Books, 1965, p.125.
15. ***Chronicles,*** Penguin Classics, 1968, pp. 89-90.
16. Dufournet (see Intro. Footnote 26) has recently offered more precise dates for the composition of the ***Memoirs:*** for Books 1-5, end 1489-90; Book 6, early 1493; Book 7, December 1495-spring 1496; Book 8, Chapters 1-22, end 1497; Chapter 23 and beginning of 24, spring 1498, and the rest of Chapters 24-7 end of 1498 (***Mélanges… Jean Frappier,*** i (1970), 267-82).
17. B.N., MS. nouvelles acquisitions françaises 20960.
18. B.N., MSS. fr. 3879 and 10156.
19. Three vols., 1840-47 for the *Société de l'histoire de France*.
20. Now B.N., MSS. français 3879, 10156 and 23244 (which is in fact only a copy of the second printed edition of 1525).
21. ***Mémoires de Philippe de Commynes…,*** in the ***Collection de textes pour servir à l'étude et l'enseignement de l'histoire.***
22. ***Mémoires,*** 3 vols., Paris 1924-5, reprinted 1964, in the series ***Les Classiques de l'histoire de France au Moyen Age.***
23. Penguin Classics, 1958, pp. 172-3.
24. ***Ludwig XI und Karl der Kühne; die Memorien des Philippe de Commynes als historische Quelle,*** Göttingen, Vol. I in 2 parts, 1964. Vol. II, 1970, carrying the story to 1475, appeared too late to be taken into account here.

25. ***Revue de l'Anjou,*** 1911.
26. ***La destruction des mythes dans les Mémoires de Philippe de Commynes,*** Geneva, 1966.
27. Bibliothèque Muncipale, Arras, MS. 266.
28. Quoted from A.R. Scoble's preface to his translation of the ***Memoirs,*** Bohn's Classical Library, 1855, p.xxxvii.
29. University of South Carolina Press, Vol. I, 1969.

FURTHER READING

THE present Introduction has touched on only a very limited number of aspects of the ***Memoirs.*** An English reader might be interested to follow one or two more specialized papers on Commynes and his thought in such essays as W.J. Bouwsma, 'The Politics of Commynes', ***Journal of Modern History,*** III, 1951, pp.315-28 or K. Dreyer, 'Commynes and Machiavelli: A Study in Parallelism', ***Symposium,*** V, 1951, pp.38-61 or P. Archambault, 'Commynes, *Saigesse* and the Renaissance Idea of Wisdom', ***Bibliothèque d'humanisme et Renaissance,*** XXIX, 1967, pp.613-32.

The background to the ***Memoirs*** can now be obtained from R. Vaughan's three volumes on the dukes of Burgundy, ***Philip the Bold,***1962, ***John the Fearless,*** 1966 and ***Philip the Good,*** 1970; P.M. Kendall, ***Louis XI,*** 1971; and the more idiosyncratic but intensely readable book by P.S. Lewis, ***Later Medieval France: The Polity,*** 1968, while J. Huizinga's ***The Waning of the Middle Ages*** remains a classic (Peregrine, reprinted 1965). The translation by Cazeaux and Kinser contains a long introduction which is weak and sometimes misleading on the historical background but appears to be sounder in its treatment of concepts and historical methodology, although Dufournet's ideas get short shrift.

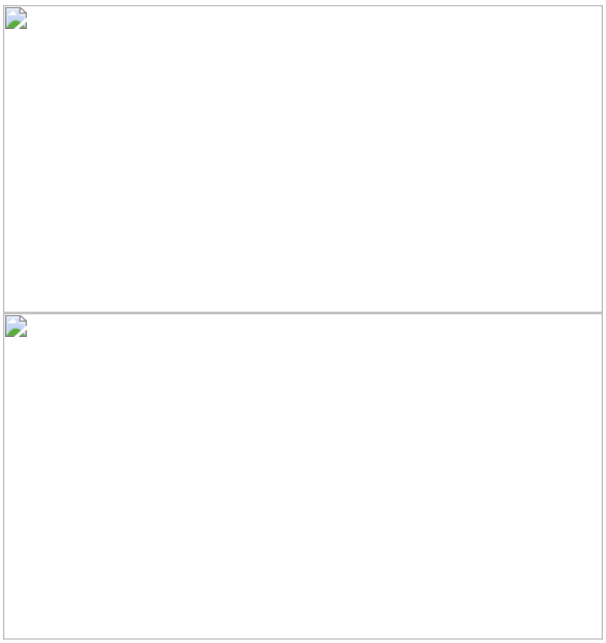
Besides the books referred to in the preceding pages G. Charlier's brilliantly concise ***Commynes,*** Brussels, 1945, is still valuable while E.F. Jacob's treatment of Anglo-French affairs in ***The Fifteenth Century,*** 1961, depends largely on J. Calmette and G. Périnelle, ***Louis XI et l'Angleterre,***Paris, 1930. The main collections of documents concerning Commynes are to be found in Kervyn de Lettenhove, ***Lettres et négotiations de Philippe de Commynes,*** 3 vols., Brussels, 1867-74; E. Benoist, ***Lettres de Philippe de Commynes aux archives de Florence,*** 1863; and L. Sozzi, 'Lettere inedite di Phillipe de Commynes a Francesco Gaddi', ***Studi di Bibliografia e di Storia in onore di Tamarro de Marinis,*** 4 vols., Milan, 1964, IV, pp.205-62 (together with J. Dufournet, 'A Propos des letres inédites de Commynes à Gaddi', ***Bibliothèque d'humanisme et Renaissance,*** XXVIII, 1966, pp.583-604). The best account of Angelo Cato is in the two introductions by C.A.J. Armstrong to his edition of Dominic Mancini's ***The Usurpation of Richard the Third,*** Oxford, 1936, pp.30-60 and second edition, 1969, pp.26-50. Finally, no one interested in the overthrow of Charles the Rash can afford to miss the magnificent catalogue by F. Deuchler, ***Die Burgunderbeute. Inventar der Beutestücke aus den Schlachten von Grandson, Murten and Nancy 1476/1477,*** Berne, 1963, unless of course, they can actually go to see the booty still conserved in Swiss museums.

NOTE ON MANUSCRIPT ABBREVIATIONS USED IN FOOTNOTES

AS explained in the Introduction the translation is based on the manscript now kept in the Musée Dobrée, Nantes, signified here as MS.D. The other manuscripts referred to in the footnotes are:

- Bib.Nat., fr. 3879, cited as MS.B.
- Bib.Nat., fr. 10156, cited as MS.A.
- Bib.Nat., nouv. acq. fr. 20960, cited as MS.P[olignac].
- MS. Montmerency-Luxembourg, cited as MS.M[ontmerency].

The value of these various manuscripts is discussed in the Introduction.



Prologue; Book One, Chapters 1-11

MEMOIRS

PROLOGUE

MY lord archbishop of Vienne,[1] you graciously requested that I should write an account for you about what I know of the acts of our master and benefactor, Louis XI (may God pardon him), a prince whom we both ought to remember. In order to comply I have done this as truthfully as my memory allows.

I can say nothing of his youth except what I have heard from him; but from the time when I came into his service until the hour of his death, when I was present, I resided continually with him longer than anyone else, serving him at least in the capacity of a chamberlain and often being occupied in his most important business. In him, and in all other princes whom I have known or served, I have recognized good and evil for they are men just like ourselves and to God alone belongs perfection. But when a prince's virtues and laudable qualities exceed his vices, he deserves great praise, since princes are more inclined to act arbitrarily than other men. This is due to deficiencies in their education and lack of discipline in their youth, and because, when they reach maturity, the majority of mankind accommodate themselves to their caprices and position in life.

Nevertheless, I do not claim in praising him here to detract at all from the honour or good name of others but send you a record of that which sprang promptly to my mind, hoping you asked for this in order to put it into a work which you have planned to write in Latin, which you do so proficiently. This work will demonstrate the greatness of this prince of whom I tell you, and also your own learning. Where my account is defective my lord of Bouchage[2] and others can inform you about it and express matters in better language than I, yet for the honour, great familiarity and kindness he ceaselessly showed to me, there is no man who has more reason to remember him than myself. Furthermore the losses and misfortunes which I have suffered since he died only serve to remind me of his favours, even though it is customary for momentous changes to occur after the death of so great and powerful a prince. Some lose, others, gain, because the gifts and

honours are never distributed according to the wishes of the suppliants.

In order to inform you of the time during which I knew this man, about whom you inquire, I must begin my story before I came into his service and then, in an orderly fashion, I will continue my account up to the time at which I became his servant and will continue up to his death.

Footnotes-Prologue

- Angelo Cato, see Introduction.
- Ymbert de Batarnay, lord of Bouchage, *c*. 1438-1523.

BOOK ONE

1

[Commynes enters the service of Charles the Rash]

WHEN I left my childhood behind me and at an age when I could ride, I was taken to Lille to Charles, duke of Burgundy, then called count of Charolais;[1] he took me into his service. This was in 1464.

Some three days later the King's[2] ambassadors, the count of Eu, [Pierre de] Morvilliers, Chancellor of France, and the [arch]bishop of Narbonne arrived at Lille. In the presence of Duke Philip of Burgundy,[3] the count of Charolais and all their council, the ambassadors were heard in open court. Morviliers spoke most arrogantly, saying that the count of Charolais, whilst he was in Holland, had taken a small warship from Dieppe carrying the Bastard of Rubempré that he had imprisoned Rubempré after accusing him of coming there to capture him and that he had the charge published everywhere, especially at Bruges where people of all nations gather, by Sir Olivier de la Marche,[4] a Burgundian knight. For these reasons the King finding himself accused, unjustly he declared, of responsibility for this plot demanded from Duke Philip that Sir Olivier de la Marche should be sent prisoner to him at Paris for punishment as the case deserved.

At this point Duke Philip replied to the ambassadors that Sir Olivier de la Marche, master of his household, had been born in county of Burgundy and was not subject to the crown at all. However, if he had said or done anything contrary to the honour of the King which could be proved by investigation Philip would punish him accordingly. With regard to the Bastard of Rubempré it was true that he had been captured because of his own and his men's strange actions and behaviour near the Hague in Holland, where his son, the count of Charolais, was at that time, and that if the count was supicious he did not inherit that characteristic from his father, because he was never suspicious, but from his mother,[5] who was the most distrustful woman Philip had ever known. But even though he himself had never been suspicious, if he had been in his son's position at the time Rubempré was in those parts he, too, would have had him taken. If the Bastard were not to

be charged with having intended to capture Charolais, as it was alleged, he would release him immediately and send him to the King as the ambassadors required.

After this Morvilliers started again and greatly maligned Francis, duke of Brittany,[6] by saying that the duke and Charolais there present had given each other sealed letters making themselves brothers-in-arms when Charolais was at Tours, where he had gone to see the King. The sealed letters were delivered by Sir Tanguy du Chastel, who has since become governor of Roussillon, and a great figure in this kingdom. Morvilliers magnified this incident so enormously and criminally that he did not omit to mention anything which could be alleged against this prince to shame and denigrate his name.

Several times the count of Charolais wanted to reply to this speech, being incensed by the injury which had been done to his friend and ally. But Morvilliers continually interrupted him by saying, 'My lord of Charolais, I've not come to speak to you but to my lord your father.' Several times the count pleaded with his father to let him reply. But he said to him, 'I have answered for you as it seems to me a father ought to reply on behalf of a son. Nevertheless if you really feel so strongly, think it over today and tomorrow say whatever you wish.' Then Morvilliers continued, saying that he could not possibly think what had moved the count to conclude this alliance with the duke of Brittany unless it was the withdrawal of a pension which the King had given him together with the government of Normandy.

Next day at the assembly and in the same company as before the count of Charolais, kneeling on a velvet cushion on the ground, spoke primarily to his father, beginning with the affair of the Bastard of Rubempré, and saying he would show by due process of law that the reasons for his arrest were just and reasonable. Yet as far as I know nothing was ever found against him, although the suspicions were very great, and I saw him released from prison where he had been for five years. After this Charolais began to exonerate himself and the duke of Brittany. It was true, he said, that Brittany and he had made an alliance and pact of friendship with each other and that they had become brothers-in-arms. However they did not intend this alliance to be in any way prejudicial to the King and his realm but to serve and support him when necessary. About the pension which had been withdrawn from him, he said that he had only ever had one quarterly payment of nine thousand francs and that he had never asked for the pension or for the government of Normandy and that as long as he had the goodwill of his father he could well do without all other benefits. But I believe that if he had not feared his father, who was present and to whom he addressed his speech, he would have spoken much more sharply. Duke Philip's concluding remarks were very modest and wise, requesting the King not to believe lightly things alleged against him and his son and to hold him in his good favour.

Afterwards wine and sweetmeats were brought in and the ambassadors took their leave of father and son. When the count of Eu and the Chancellor had just taken their leave of Charolais, who

was standing apart from his father, he said to the archbishop of Narbonne, whom he saw last, "Commend me very humbly to the goodwill of the King and tell him that he has given me a good dressing down here by this Chancellor, but that before a year is out he will be sorry for it.' The archbishop fo Narbonne delivered this message on his return to the King, as you will hear later on.

These interviews, together with the fact that it was very recently that the King had repurchased the towns on the Somme, for four hundred throusand crowns, aroused great hatred in Charolais against the King. By the treaty of Arras [1435] the towns of Amiens, Abbeville, Saint-Quentin and others had been handed over by King Charles VII to Duke Philip of Burgundy for his own use and for his male heirs. But since the duke was in in his dotage all his affairs were directed by the brothers my lords of Croy and Chimay[7] and their family. So he took his money from the King and restored the lands. This upset the count, his son, for they were frontier posts and boundaries of their lordships and they lost with them many good and potential warriors. Charolais blamed the house of Croy for this business and as his father, Duke Philip, became very senile, he banished all the Croy family from his father's territories and seized all their lands and possessions.

- Charles, eldest son of Philip the Good, duke of Burgundy, born 1433.
- Louis XI, king of France 1461-83.
- Philip the Good, who reigned from 1419 to 1467.
- The famous chronicler.
- Isabella of Portugal.
- Francis II, duke of Brittany 1458-88.
- Antoine and Jean de Croy.

2

[The start of the War of the Public Weal]

A VERY few days after the departure of the ambassadors, John, duke of Bourbon,[8] who died recently, came to Lille pretending he had come to visit his uncle, who loved the house of Bourbon above all others. This duke of Bourbon was the son of Duke Philip's sister, who had long been widowed. She, with several of her children, three daughters and a son, lived with the duke her brother. Yet the purpose of Bourbon's visit was to win over and persaude the duke of Burgundy to consent to raise an army in his land, saying that all the other princes of France would do likewise to remonstrate with the King over his disorderly and unjust government. They wished to be strong enough to force him to rememdy matters if he would not willingly do so. This war, undertaken on the pretext that it was for the public benefit of the kingdom, has since been labelled that of the Public Weal.

Duke Philip, who since his death has been called Duke Philip the Good, consented to raise troops, but the real purpose of this affair was never revealed to him nor did he expect that it would lead to direct action. Immediately men were enlisted. The count of Saint-Pol,[9] later Constable of France, came to Charolais, who was at Brussels[10] with his father. He joined him there together with the

Marshal of Burgundy, who belonged to the house of Neufchâtel.[11] The count of Charolais assembled his father's councillors and other advisers in the bishop of Cambrai's palace. He there declared all members of the Croy family mortal enemies of his father and himself, notwithstanding the fact that the count of Saint-Pol had, a long time previously, given his daughter in marriage to the lord of Croy. He said that he had been obliged to do so. In short all of them had to flee from the lordships of the duke of Burgundy and they lost many goods.

All this was most displeasing to Duke Philip whose first chamberlain, a very well-educated young man later known as my lord of Chimay,[12] was a nephew of the lord of Croy, and he left without saying farewell to his master because he feared for the safety of his person. Otherwise as someone warned him, he might have been killed or imprisoned. Duke Philip's extreme old age forced him to endure this patiently. The declaration against his servants was made because of the restitution of the lordships situated on the river Somme, which Duke Philip had returned to King Louis for four hundred thousand crowns.[13] The count of Charolais blamed the house of Croy for inducing Duke Philip to consent to this restitution.

Charolais reconciled himself with his father as best he could. Then immediately he put his troops into the field and the count of Saint-Pol accompanied him as his chief adviser and the general commander of his army. He had more than three hundred men-at-arms and four thousand archers under his command and there were many good knights and esquires of Artois, Hainault and Flanders under the count by order of Charolais. My mord of Revenstein,[14] brother of the duke of Clèves, and Sir Anthony, Bastard of Burgundy,[15] were put in command of similar brigades and equally large forces. There were other commanders but I will not mention their names for brevity's sake. But amongst the others were two knights who were highly esteemed by the count of Charolais. One was the lord of Hautbourdin, an old knight and bastard brother of the count of Saint-Pol,[16] who had been schooled in the former wars between France and England at the time when Henry V of England, with whom Duke Philip had formed an alliance, lived in France. The other was called the lord of Contay,[17] and was of a similar age: both were very valiant and wise knights and were of the highest command in the army.

There were plenty of young men, including among others the renowned Sir Philip de Lalaing. He came from a family whose members were almost all valiant and courageous and nearly all died in the active wartime service of their lords. That army totalled fourteen hundred poorly armed and inexperienced men-at-arms, for these lordships had been at peace for a long time and since the treaty of Arras had seen little prolonged warfare. I think that they had been at peace for more than thirty-six years, except for some small wars against the men of Ghent which did not last long. The men-at-arms were very well mounted and well attended, and you would not have seen more than a handful who did not have five or six great horses. There may have been eight or nine thousand archers. These were the best selection for when the muster was

taken there was more to do in dismissing men than in enrolling and the best were chosen.

At that time the subjects of the house of Burgundy were very rich because of the long peace which they had enjoyed and the great moderation of the prince under whom they lived, who taxed his subjects little. It seems to me that then his territories could well have been described as the Promised Land, more so than any others on earth. They were overflowing with wealth and they had a peace which they have not since experienced during the last twenty-three years. Men and women spent free and wore extravagant clothes. The parties and banquets were more lavish and more prodigal than anything which I have experienced anywhere else; there were even bathing parties and other entertainments with women of a disorderly and often immodest kind: I speak of women of low condition. All in all, it seemed to the subjects of this house that no prince was great enough for them or was capable of reducing them to powerlessness. But today I do not know in this world a people so desolate, and I fear that the sins of the time of their prosperity have brought them their present adversity; most of all because they did not recognize that all these favours came from God who distributes them as it pleases him.

The army, as I have described it, was mobilized immediately and the count of Charolais marched forward with it. All were mounted except for those who brought up his guns which were very fine and strong for those times, and there was such a number of wagons that his alone could enclose the greater part of his host. He drew towards Noyon and beseiged a small castle at a place called Nesle where there were some soldiers. In a few days he took it. Marshal Joachim [Rouault] of France, who had come from Péronne, was always shadowing him but he did not do him any damage because he had so few men and eventually he withdrew to Paris when the count approached.

All along the route the count refrained from acts of war and his men never took anything without paying for it. The towns of the Somme as well as all the others allowed his men to enter them in small numbers and gave them what they wanted for their money. The towns seemed to be waiting to hear which party would get the upper hand, the King or the lords. The count pressed ahead so far that he came to Saint-Denis, near Paris, where all the lords of the realm should have been as they had promised; but they were not there. The duke of Brittany had previously sent [Jean de] Rouville, Vice-Chancellor of Brittany, as envoy to the count and he had several blank letters signed by his master which he used to send news and information when necessary. He was a Norman, a very clever man, and he needed to be, to keep all his wits about him, considering the number of people complaining about him.

The count led a demonstration before Paris and there was a great skirmish right up to the gates, somewhat to the disadvantage of the beseiged. They only had the men-at-arms of Joachim and my lord Nantouilett,[18] later chief steward of the household. He served the King as well in this year as any subject ever served a king of France in his need. But if in the end he was badly recompensed it

was more by the malice of his enemies than by the King's default, yet neither the one nor the other can be entirely excused. Some of the common people were very frightened that day as I have learned since and, as many later told me, they cried, 'They have got in.' But this rumour was unfounded. Nevertheless my lord of Hautbourdin, of whom I have spoken before, was of the opinion that we should storm the city. He had been brought up there and it was not as strong then as it is now. The soldiers also wanted to do so, all holding the citizens in contempt since the skirmishes had reached right up to the gate. Yet it is possible that it would not have been captured. The count returned to Saint-Denis.

The next morning a council was held to decide whether they ought to march to meet the dukes of Berry[19] and Brittany, who were close by according to the Vice-Chancellor of Brittany, who showed letters from them. But he had written them himself on the signed blanks and did not know anything about them otherwise. It was conlcuded that they should cross the Seine as well. Great doubts were voiced by some about this, seeing that they had nowhere behind them to retire if necessary.

The whole army seethed with discontent against the count of Saint-Pol and the Vice-Chancellor. Yet Charolais crossed the river and lodged at the bridge of Sant-Cloud. The day after he arrived news was brought to him from a lady of this realm,[20] who wrote to him in her own hand, saying that the King was leaving the Bourbonnais and that he was making forced marches to encounter him.

A short explanation why the King had gone to the Bourbonnais is necessary. Realizing that all the lords of the kingdom had declared against him, or at least against his government, he decided to strike first against the duke of Bourbon who seemed to him to be more deeply committed than the other princes and his province was weak and could be reduced speedily. He took several places from him and would have captured the remainder had not help, brought by the lord of Coudres,[21] [Philip], marquis od Rothelin, the lord of Mantaigu and others, including in arms the present Chancellor of France, my lord Guillaume de Rochefort, a man of great merit, arrived from Burgundy. These troops had been gathered together in Burgundy by the count of Beaujeu[22] and the cardinal of Bourbon,[23] brother[s] of Duke John of Bourbon and they threw them into Moulins. From another direction, too, came help for the duke from the duke of Nemours,[24] the count of Armagnac[25]and the lord of Albret,[26] with a large number of men. Many of these fine soldiers from their lands had left the ordonnance companies[27] and gone over to their side. Most were badly equipped for they had not yet been paid and they had to live off the people. Yet despite this force the King harrassed them severely so that they treated for peace, especially the duke of Nemours. He swore an oath to the King, promising to serve him. Later he did exactly the opposite and, as the King often told me, he conceived that lasting hatred which he held against him.

Yet the King saw that he could not finish there as quickly as he wished, and that Charolais was approaching Paris; he also feared that they would admit him, his brother and the duke of Brittany, on

his way from Brittany, all of whom were joining together on the pretext of the public welfare of the realm. He also feared that whatever Paris did the other towns would do. So he decided to make a forced march in order to enter Paris and hold it before those two great armies could join up. He had no intention of fighting, as he often told me when speaking of these things.

- John, duke of Bourbon, *c*. 1427-88.
- Louis de Luxembourg, executed 1475.
- All MSS. read Cambrai, but he was in fact at Brussels; see Grunzweig in ***Le Moyen Age***, lxxii, 1966.
- Thibault de Neufchâtel, d. 1469.
- Philippe de Croy, d. 1492.
- In September 1463.
- Adolphe de Clèves, d. 1493.
- Anthony (1421-1504), call the Great Bastard, illegitimate son of Philip the Good.
- Jean de Luxembourg, cousin not brother of the count of Saint-Pol, 1400-1466.
- Guillaume le Jeune, d. 1467.
- Charles de Melun, executed 20 August 1468.
- Charles, younger brother of Louis XI, d. 1472.
- Marie de Clèves, duchess of Orléans.
- From MSS.M. and B.
- Pierre de Bourbon, lord of Beaujeu, later married to Anne, daughter of Louis XI.
- Charles de Bourbon, archbishop of Lyon 1444-88.
- Jacques d'Amagnac, executed 1477.
- Jean V, murdered 1473.
- Charles II, d. 1471.
- Ordonnance companies: see Glossary.

3

[The beginning of the battle of Montlhéry]

AS I said before, when the count of Charolais knew that the King had departed from the Bourbonnais and that he was approaching directly (at least so he thought) he also decided to advance to meet him. He then divulged the contents of the letter without naming his informant and said that all should resolve to conduct themselves well as he had decided to chance his arm. He then marched forward and lodged at Longjumeau, a village close to Paris and the Constable, with all his advance guard, camped at Montlhéry,[28] which was three leagues further on. They sent out spies and scouts into the countryside to learn of the King's arrival and his route. In the presence of the count of Saint-Pol a place was chosen for battle at Longjumeau and it was agreed between them that Saint-Pol would withdraw there when the King approached. The lords of Hautbourdin and Contay were also present. However it must be made plain that my lord of Maine[29] with seven or eight hundred men-at-arms was in the path of the dukes of Berry and Brittany. They had in their company many wise and famous knights whom King Louis had dismissed at the time of his accession, even though they had served his father well in the recovery and pacification of the realm. Later he repented many times of treating them thus, recognizing his error. Amongst them

were the count of Dunois, highly esteemed in all matters, Marshal Lohéac, the count of Dammartin, the lord of Bueil and many others. They had left the King's ordonnance companies with over five hundred men-at-arms. These had all withdrawn to the duke of Brittany, whose subjects they were by birth; they were the flower of that army.

The count of Maine did not feel strong enough to fight them and continually shifted his camp before them and came closer to the King. They tried to unite with the Burgundians. Some said that the count of Maine was in private communication with them, but I never discovered that this was so nor do I believe it.[30] When the count of Charolais was at Longjumeau and his vanguard at Montlhéry, he was warned by a prisoner, who was brought to him, that the count of Maine had joined the King and that they had with them all the ordonnance companies of the kingdom, which could well total about 2,200 men-at-arms, the feudal levy of the Dauphiné and about forty or fifty fine Savoyard noblemen.

The King held council with Maine, [Pierre de] Bréze, Grand Senschal of Normandy, [Jean de Montauban], the Admiral of France, who belonged to the house of Montauban, and others. He decided, in short, whatever views had been expressed to him, not to give battle but simply to enter Paris without ever coming near to where the Burgundians were encamped. In my opinion his view was wise.

He was suspicious of the Grand Seneschal of Normandy and demanded that he should tell him if he had given his seal or not to the princes who were opposed to him. To this the Grand Seneschal replied jokingly in his customary manner, 'Yes, but if his seal belonged to them his body belonged to the King.' The King was satisfied by this and put him in charge of the vanguard and of the scouts, as he wished to avoid this battle, as has been said. The Grand Seneschal, wanting his own way, said then to some of his confidants, 'I'll bring the armies so close to one another today that it will be an able man who can separate them.' And so he did; the first man to die was himself and his men with him. The King himself reported these words to me, because at that time I was with Charolais.

In fact, on 27 July 1465 [31] this vanguard found itself close to Montlhéry where the count of Saint-Pol was encamped. He speedily informed Charolais, who was three leagues[32] away at the place set for the battle, of its arrival and asked him to come to his aid quickly for already men-at-arms and archers had dismounted and enclosed themselves with his baggage train. If he were to retire towards him as he had been ordered to, which seemed impossible to him, it would appear that he was taking flight, which would be very dangerous for the whole army. Charolais sent Anthony, Bastard of Burgundy, and the large force he had under his command to join him with all haste. He even debated whether he should go himself and in the end he marched after the others and arrived there about seven in the morning. Five or six royal standards had already been placed on the side of the great ditch which was between the two armies.

Rouville, Vice-Chancellor of Brittany, was still in the count of Charolais's army together with an old soldier called Madré, who had surrendered the bridge at Saint-Maxence. They were very frightened by the complaints against them, seeing that they were drawn up in battle order and the men on whom they were depending for their strength had not joined them. Both took flight before the fight began along the road where they expected to find the Bretons.

Charolais found the count of Saint-Pol on foot and the rest drew themselves up in line as they arrived. We found all the archers with their boots off and with a stake driven into the ground before them, and there were many barrels of wine broached for them to drink. From the small amount I saw I have never seen men more willing to fight, which seemed a good sign and was very comforting. At first all without exception were warned to dismount. Then the plan was changed for almost all the men-at-arms mounted. Many good knights and squires were ordered to remain on foot, amongst whom were my lord of Cordes and his brother.[33]

Sir Philip de Lalaing dismounted because it was then the most honourable practice amongst the Burgundians that they should dismount with the archers, and always a great number of gentlemen did so in order that the common soldiers might be reassured and fight better. They had learnt this method from the English, with whom Duke Philip had fought in his youth in France for thirty-two years without truce. But the principal burden was borne by the English, who were rich and powerful. At that time they had the wise, handsome and very brave King Henry;[34]who had wise and brave captains like the earl of Salisbury, Talbot and others about whom I shall keep silent since they were before my time, even though I have seen the results of their work. For when God was tired of favouring them this wise king died at the Bois de Vincennes.[35] His imbecile son was crowned king of France and England at Paris. Thus the nobility of England grew restless and divisions sprang up which have lasted until today or almost so with the house of York usurping the kingdom. Whether they had a good title I do not know, for such things are decided in heaven.

Returning to my story, the Burgundians dismounting and then re-mounting had inconvenienced themselves and lost a great deal of time. And that courageous knight, Sir Philip de Lalaing, who was poorly armed, was killed there. The King's men came in single file through the forest of Torfou and there were no more than four hundred men-at-arms when we arrived. If we had marched immediately it seemed to many that they would offer little resistance, for those behind them could only some up in single file as I said. Yet their numbers were still increasing. Seeing this the wise knight my lord of Contay came to speak to his master, my lord of Charolais, saying that if he wanted to win this battle it was time for him to march, giving his reasons and saying that if he had done so already his enemies would have been beaten for he had found them in small numbers, which grew as he looked and in truth it was so.

Then all the previous orders and plans were changed as everybody began to give their advice, and already a large and serious skirmish was beginning at the end of the village of Montlhéry between archers of both sides. Those on the King's side were commanded by Poncet de Rivière and were all archers of the ordonnance companies, with gold-embroidered uniforms, and in good condition. Those on the Burgundian side were disorderly and without a commander as frequently happens when skirmishes start. On foot with them were Sir Philip de Lalaing and Jacques du Mas, a highly renowned man, who late became first squire of Duke Charles of Burgundy. There were more Burgundians and they captured a house, then taking two or three doors, they used them as shields and entered the street and fired a house. The wind helped them by blowing the fire in the direction of the King's men, who began to break up in confusion and ride away in flight.

Hearing this noise and shouting the count of Charolais began to march, abandoning, as I have said, the previously devised plan. He had said that we should march in three stages because of the long distance between the two battles.[36] The King's men were near the castle of Montlthéry and had a large hedge and moat before them, and beyond were open fields full of corn, beans and other very ripe cereal crops, for the land there was rich.

All the count's archers marched on foot before him in poor order, although in my opinion archers are the most necessary thing in the world for an army; but they should be counted in thousands, for in small numbers they are worthless. Also they should be poorly mounted, men who would not mind losing their horses or not even provided with them. Further those who have never had a day's experience of their job are more valuable than those who are well trained; this is the opinion of the English, who are the world's best archers.

It had been said that we should rest twice *en route* to give the foot soldiers time to catch their breath, because the way was long and crops so tall that they impeded their progress. Yet the contrary happened as if one wanted intentionally to lose. In this God showed that battles are in his hand and he disposes of victories at his pleasure. I think no man's wisdom can guide or give order to such a great number of men and that things in the field seldom turn out as they have been planned indoors. He who thinks they do does not understand God, mistaking him for a man. Although each should do what he can and his duty to his master, he should recognize wars as one of the methods God uses to achieve his will, commencing them on occasion by small means and movements and giving the victory sometimes to one side and sometimes to the other. This mystery is so great that realms and great lordships sometimes come to an end and desolation whilst others grow or come into existence.

To return to my story, the count marched at full speed without giving his archers and foot soldiers time to draw breath. The royal troops, all men-at-arms, emerged from the two ends of the hedge and when they were so close that the lances should have been dropped into the *arrêt,*[37] the Burgundian men-at-arms broke

through their own archers, who were the pride and joy of the army, without giving them time to shoot. But I do not believe that amongst the twelve hundred men-at-arms or thereabouts who were there fifty knew how to lay a lance in the *arrêt*. There were no more than four hundred armed men with breastplates and there were no armed valets, because of the long peace and because in Burgundy no mercenaries were kept so that the tax burden of the people might be lightened. And ever since that day that region has not had peace even up to the present when it is worse than ever.

Thus they themselves forfeited their chief hope of victory. But God who ordains such a mystery allowed the count on his side of the field, on the right towards the castle, to win without finding any resistance. That day I was with him all the time, less frightened than I have ever been anywhere since, because of my youth and because I had no fear of danger. But I was amazed that none dared resist this prince with whom I was and I thought that he was greater than all the others. Thus do men of little experience judge whence it happens that they sustain many poorly founded arguments with little reason; which justifies the use of the saying that one never regrets speaking too little, but often of speaking too much.

On the left were the lord of Ravenstein and Sir Jacques de Saint-Pol and many others who thought they did not have sufficient men-at-arms to withstand those whom they had before them; but by then they were so close that it was not possible to give new orders. In effect, they were soundly beaten and driven back to the wagon train, where some Burgundian foot soldiers rallied, but the majority fled as far as the forest, which was about half a league away. The principals in the pursuit were the nobles of the Dauphiné and the Savoyards and also many men-at-arms. They thought that they had won the battle. On this side there was a great flight from the ranks of the Burgundians, including some important figures, and they fled for the most part towards Pont-Saint-Maxence, which they thought was still held for them. In the forest many stopped, and amongst others who had retired there was the Constable who was well attended. The baggage train was quite close to the forest. Later Saint-Pol showed that he did not think the battle lost.

- Montlhéry, dép. Seine-et-Oise, arr. Corbeil, cant. Arpajon.
- Charles d'Anjou, 1414-72.
- But he was.
- Actually 16 July 1465.
- Leagues: see Glossary.
- Philippe and Antoine de Crèvecoeur.
- Henry V, king of England 1413-22.
- 31 August 1422.
- Battles: see Glossary.
- The *arrêt* was a pike or hook on the breatplate designed to prevent the lance being thrust back on impact.

4

[The end of the battle of Montlhéry]

ON the side of the field where he was in command, the count of Charolais pursued the enemy half a league beyond Montlhéry with

a very small company. He found large numbers of men, but no one resisted and he thought he had carried the day. But an old nobleman from Luxembourg, Anthony le Breton, sought him out and told him that the French had rallied on the field and that if he chased any further he would lose. Yet Charles would not stop for him even though he repeated his advice two or three times. Then unexpectedly my lord of Contay arrived and spoke to him so emphatically in similar terms to those used by the nobleman that Charles heeded his words and reasoning and turned round at once. If he had gone for another two bow-shots distance, I believe that he would have been captured like some who had gone ahead of him. On the way back, passing by the village he found a large troop of foot soldiers in flight. He pursued them even though he did not have more than a hundred horse in all. Only one foot soldier stood his ground and he gave Charles such a blow in the stomach with his pike that the mark could be seen in the evening. Most of the others fled to safety through the gardens, but this man was killed on the spot.

When we passed close to the castle we saw drawn up before the gate archers of the King's guard, who did not move. Charles was astonished by this because he did not think that there would be any more resistance and, as he turned aside to march to the field, fifteen or sixteen men-at-arms fell upon him, just when a party of his own troops had left him. Right away they killed the esquire who carved for him, Philip d'Olignies, who was carrying a pennant bearing the count's arms. Charles was in very great danger and received several blows, amongst them a sword cut in the throat, the scar of which remained with him for the rest of his life. This happened because he was not wearing his beaver which had been carelessly attached in the morning and, as I saw myself, fell off. Hands were laid upon him and there were cries of, 'My lord, deliver yourself! I recognize you! Don't let yourself be killed!'.

Yet he continued to defend himself and at this point the son of a Parisian doctor, Master Jean Cadet, a large, heavy, fat man who was with him, riding a horse of a similar type to himself, rode between them and drove them off. All the King's men now retired to the side of the moat where they had been in the morning because they were frightened by some men whom they saw marching towards them. Charles, all blood-stained, withdrew towards these in the middle of the field. There the Bastard of Burgundy's standard was so torn to pieces that it was reduced to a foot in length, and the same thing had happened to the standard of the count's archers. There were not forty men in all and we, who numbered less than thirty, joined them in great anxiety. Hurriedly the count changed his horse and he was given that of his page, Simon de Quingey, who has since become well known.

The count rode about the field rallying his men. But I saw such a half an hour that those of us who were there would have thought only of flight if a hundred men had marched towards us. Ten men joined us, then twenty, either on foot or on horseback; the foot soldiers were tired and wounded both by the demands we had made on them in the morning and by the enemy's attacks. They came in small groups. Our field, where only half an hour before the corn

stood strongly, was so flattened that in an hour it became the most terrible dust in the world. All the field was strewn with dead men and horses and the dead could not be recognized for the dust.

Unexpectedly we saw the count of Saint-Pol emerge from the wood, together with more than forty men-at-arms and his standard. He marched directly towards us and his numbers increased. But to us they still seemed a long way off. Three or four times a message was sent to him to ask him to hurry, but he only advanced slowly and picked up the lances of his men who had fallen. Then he came on in good order giving great comfort to our men, joining together with a large number and coming to the spot where we were so that we found that we now had eight hundred men-at-arms. But there were few or no infantrymen which prevented the count from winning a complete victory because there was a ditch and a great hedge between the two armies.

On the King's side the count of Maine and many others and more than eight hundred men-at-arms, fled. Some wanted to say that the count had an agreement with the Burgundians, but of the truth of this I beleive there is no evidence. Never was there a greater flight on both sides. Yet the two princes in particular, stayed on the field. On the King's side one man of some importance fled as far as Lusignan without stopping for refreshment and on the count's side another gentleman fled as far as Le Quesnoy. They took care not to bite each other!

The two armies being drawn up in front of each other, several cannon shots were fired which killed men on both sides. But no one wanted to fight on. Our force was larger than the King's. But his personal presence was very important, as were his words of encouragement to the men-at-arms. I truly believe from what I learned of it that had it not been for him alone all would have fled. Some of our men wanted to begin fighting again, especially my lord of Hautbourdin, who said that he could see a column of men fleeing and if he could have found a hundred archers to shoot over the hedge all would have been won for our side.

Whilst we were still considering these propositions and ideas without any skirmishing night began to fall. The King retired to Corbell but we thought that he stayed and made camp. By chance a fire was started in a barrel of powder where the King had been, and several carts and the whole of the hedge caught alight and we thought it was their camp fires.

The count of Saint-Pol, who appeared to be a warrior, and my lord of Hautbourdin, an even greater one, ordered all wagons to be brought to the place where we were in order to surround us. This was done. As we were there drawn up in ranks and orders, many royal troops who had given chase returned thinking that they had won. They were forced to pass through our camp and some escaped but the majority were killed. The royalists of note who died included Sir Geoffrey de Saint-Belin, [Pierre de Brézé] the Grand Seneschal, and Captain Floquet. On the Burgundian side Sir Philip de Lalaing died, as did many infantrymen and common people, more than on the King's side, but of horsemen, more of the King's party were killed.

Of important prisoners, the King's men had the best of those who fled. On both sides at least two thousand men died and it was well fought. On both sides, too, were brave men and cowardly ones. But it was a notable achievement in my opinion, to rally on the field and to confront one another for three or four hours. The two princes should have taken good note of those who kept them company in this crisis. But they conducted themselves as men not angels. Some lost their offices and estates for fleeing, yet these were given to others who had fled ten leagues further. One of our men lost authority and was banished from the presence of his master; a month later he had greater authority than before.

Enclosed as we were by the wagons everyone bedded down as best he could. We had a great number of wounded and the majority were disheartened and frightened, fearing that the Parisians, with Marshal Joachim, the King's lieutenant in the city, and the two hundred men-at-arms who were with them, would come out and we would be attacked on two sides. When it was quite dark fifty lances were ordered to see where the King was lodged. By chance only twenty went. There should have been the distance of three bow-shots between our position and where we thought the King was. Meanwhile my lord of Charolais drank and ate a little and each of us did likewaise where we were and he had his neck wound dressed.

At the place where he dined it was necessary to move four or five dead men to make room for him, and there were two trusses of straw. On moving them one of those poor naked men began to cry for a drink and a little infusion which the prince had been drinking was poured into his mouth; his heart revived and he was recognized as a well-known archer called Savarot, of the bodyguard of this lord, and he was taken care of and cured.

A council was held to decide what to do. The count of Saint-Pol spoke first, saying that we were in danger, and he counselled that at the break of day we should take the road back to Burgundy, having burnt that part of the baggage train and saved only the artillery, and that no one with less than ten lances should use a wagon. It was impossible, he said, to stay there between the King and Paris without victuals. Afterwards my lord of Hautbourdin gave a similar opinion, except that they should wait and hear the report of those who had been sent scouting. Three or four others expressed a similar view. Finally my lord of Contay said that as soon as this rumour reached the army all would flee and that they would be captured before they had gone twenty leagues. He gave several good reasons why his advice was that each one should prepare as best as possible that night, and that in the morning at daybreak we should attack the King and live or die then. He considered this way more certain than taking to flight.

About midnight those who had been sent out returned — and you might well know that they had not been very far — for they reported that the King was camped by the fires which had been seen. Immediately others were sent and an hour later everyone got ready for battle. The majority would have preferred to flee. When day came those who had been sent out of the camp met one of our

prisoners who had been captured on the previous day, when he was carrying a flagon of wine from the village. He told them that all had gone away. They sent the news to the army and went to the place, where they found what he said was true and they returned to tell the news. The company was greatly pleased by this and there were many people who then said that it was necessary to follow after them, yet an hour before they had been decidedly downcast. I had an extremely tired old horse. He drank a pail full of wine into which by chance he had put his muzzle. I left him to drink it: never did I find him so strong and fresh!

When it was fully day all mounted and the battles were sorted out. Further still more men who had hidden in the wood returned. The lord of Charolais forced a friar to come on his orders to tell us that he come from the Breton army and that they would be there this day, which comforted the army well enough. But not everyone believed him. Soon afterwards, at about ten o'clock, Rouville, Vice-Chancellor of Brittany, and Madré with him, of whom I spoke before, came and brought two archers of the duke of Brittany's bodyguard, wearing his livery, which greatly reassured the host. Rouville was questioned and praised for his flight in spite of the murmurings which there had been against him, and praised still more for his return; everybody treated him kindly.

All this day my lord of Charolais remained very joyfully on the field, thinking the glory his. This has since cost him dearly because never afterwards did he heed the counsel of anyone except himself. Up to that time he had little use for war and liked nothing to do with it, but subsequently his attitude changed because he continued fighting until his death. By it his life was ended and his house destroyed and if it has not been entirely destroyed, at least is is very desolated.

Three great and wise princes, his predecessors, had raised his house very high and there were few kings, except the King of France, more powerful than he was; no one had finer or larger towns. No one ought to think too highly of himself, especially a great prince. It is necessary to remember that all favours and good fortunes come from God. Two more things I will say of Charolais: I believe that never has any man been able to accomplish more work than him in all situations where it is necessary to exert oneself. The other is that, in my opinion, I have never known a braver man. I never heard him say that he was tired nor saw him appear frightened, and I was in his entourage for seven years on end during wartime, for the summer at least, and sometimes both in winter and summer. His thoughts and decisions were momentous but no man could have accomplished them if God had not lent his power.

The following day, which was the third day of the battle, we went to sleep at the village of Montlhéry. The inhabitants had fled from there to the church tower and some to the castle. Charolais made them return and they did not lose a pennyworth because everyone paid his way as if he were in Flanders. The castle still held out and was not attacked. When the third day had passed the count, following the counsel of the lord of Contay, left for Étamps which

was a good large town in a fertile part of the country, in order to be there sooner than the Bretons, who were coming by this route and in order to put tired and wounded men under cover and the rest into camp. This good resting place and our stay there saved the lives of many of his men.

5

How my lord Charles of France, duke of Berry, only brother of the King, the dukes of Brittany and Calabria and other lords of the realm, joined with the count of Charolais in the town of Étamps for the enterprise which they called the Public Weal

THEN my lord Charles of France, duke of Berry, only brother of the King, the duke of Brittany, my lords Dunois, Dammartin, Lohéac, Beuil and Chaumont and Sir Charles d'Amboise, his son, who has since become a great man in this kingdom, arrived at Étamps. The King had dismissed them and deprived all of them of their property when he succeeded to the crown, despite their good service to the King, his father, and the realm in the conquest of Normandy and in several other wars.

My lord of Charolais and the greatest men in his company welcomed them and going on before them conducted them to their lodgings in the town of Étamps, where their rooms had been prepared. Their men-at-arms remained in the open. In their company they had eight hundred well-equipped men-at-arms, mainly Bretons, who had just left the ordonnance companies as I have said here and elsewhere, who greatly strengthened their army. They also had a great number of archers and other soldiers armed with good brigandines[38] and could well have numbered six thousand very well-equipped men on horseback. Seeing this company it appeared that the duke of Brittany was a very great lord because all were paid from his coffers.

The king, who had withdrawn to Corbell, did not forget what he had to do. He marched into Normandy to gather men and out of fear lest that region should rebel. He also sent a troop of his men-at-arms to the outskirts of Paris where he saw that this was necessary.

The first evening after all these nobles had reached ftamps they exchanged news with each other. The Bretons had taken prisoner some of those who were fleeing from the King's side and had they been a litte closer they would have captured and routed a third of the army. They had held to their resolution to send men out to scout, thinking that the armies were close to each other; yet some censured them. But notwithstanding, Sir Charles d'Amboise and several others advanced further forward than their army in order to see if they could meet anyone. They took some prisoners and captured some of the artillery. The prisoners told them for certain that the King was dead; they thought this because they fled as soon as the battle had begun.

These reported the news to the Breton army which was very joyful thinking it was so and they anticipated rewards which they would have when my lord Charles [of France] was king. They held a

council, as a man of great worth who was present has since told me, in order to decide how they would rid themselves of the Burgundians and it was the opinion of almost all that they should despoil those whom they could. Their joy was short-lived, but by this you can see what intrigues there are in this kingdom during all disturbances.

To return to my account of the army at Étamps; when all had supped and there were many men walking about the streets, my lords Charles of France and of Charolais were at a window talking to each other very intimately. In the Breton force there was a poor man who took pleasure in throwing squibs into the air which, when they had fallen, jumped about amongst the men and gave off a little flame. He was called Master Jean Bouttfeu or Master Jean des Serpens. He threw two or three fireworks into the air from high up in a house so no one could see him. These dropped amongst some men, but one fell against the window frame where the two princes had their heads so closely together that there was not a foot between them. Both started and were surprised and looked at each other and a suspicion dawned on them hat this had been done expressly to cause them harm. The lord of Contay came to speak to Charolais his master, and as soon as he had had a word in his ear he went downstairs to arm all the household troops and archers of his bodyguard and others.

Immediately the lord of Charolais spoke to the duke of Berry, who likewise armed the archers of his bodyguard, and there were soon two or three hundred men-at-arms fully equipped and on foot at the door and a great number of archers. A search was made everywhere to find where the fire could have come from. The poor man who had done this threw himself on his knees before them and told them what had happened and tossed three or four others. In doing this he removed many men's suspicions and we began to laugh. Everyone went away to disarm and to sleep.

Next morning a very large and splendid council was held where all the lords and their principal advisers were present and they deliberated what to do. Since they came from many parts and were not obedient to one alone, as is necessary in such an assembly, they had many differing opinions. Among many speeches that were well received and noted down was one by my lord of Berry, who was very young and had never seen such exploits. He seemed by his words to be bored already. He claimed that he had seen that my lord of Charolais had a great number of wounded, thus showing by his speech that he was sorry for them and that he would rather that these matters had never been started than see such misfortunes already coming from his actions and cause.

These remarks displeased my lord of Charolais and his men, as I shall relate. Yet at this council it was decided to march to Paris in order to try, if they could, to induce the town to agree to help us for the good of the public welfare of the realm for which they said they had all assembled. It seemed likely to them that if those there listened to them all the other towns of the kingdom would do likewise.

As I said, the words spoken by my lord Charles [of France] in the council led my lord of Charolais and his men to a state of doubt where they could say, 'Have you heard this man speak? He was horrified by seven or eight hundred wounded men-at-arms whom he saw when coming to the town, who were nothing to him nor did he recognize them. He will indeed be astounded if the matter concerns him personally and he'll be the man to agree lightly to any agreement leaving us stuck in the mud. And because of the former wars between his father, King Charles, and my father, the duke of Burgundy, these two parties will together readily turn on us. For this reason we must provide ourselves with friends.'

And with this single thought, Master Guillaume de Cluny, the protonotary, who died bishop of Poitiers, was sent to King Edward of England.[39] who was reigning then, with whom my lord of Charolais had always been at loggerheads. He had supported the house of Lancaster against Edward because he was descended from it through his mother.[40] By his instructions Cluny was ordered to enter marriage negotiations with Margaret, sister of the king of England. He was not to conclude the bargain but only, knowing that the king of England wanted it very much, to do the least that seemed necessary to him so that Edward would do nothing against the count. If Edward responded Charolais would gain what he wanted. And, although it was not the count's sole wish to conclude this bargain and the thing he most hated in his heart of hearts was this house of York, yet this matter was so concluded that some years later the marriage was completed. Charolais, moreover, took the Order of the Garter[41] and wore it all his life.

Many such arrangements are made in this world, as I have said before, especially between great princes. They are much more distrustful than other people because of the doubts and rumours which they receive, often by flattery, without there being any need for it.

- Brigandines: see Glossary.
- Edward IV, king of England 1461-83.
- Charles was the great-grandson of John of Gaunt, duke of Lancaster.
- On 4 February 1469.

6

[i Crossing the Seine and the arrival of John of Calabria]

SO as it had been decided all the lords left Étamps, after staying there a few more days, and they marched to Saint-Mathurin de Larchant and Moret [-sur-Loing] in the Gâtinais. Lord Charles and the Bretons stayed in these two small towns. The count of Charolais camped in a large meadow on the edge of the river Seine and ordered everyone to bring a post to which to tie his horse. He had seven or eight small boats brought on carts and many wine-barrel staves to make a bridge over the Seine because the lords had no other way of crossing it. My lord of Dunois accompanied him in a litter because his gout prevented him from riding; his standard was carried behind him. As soon as they came to the river they launched the boats which they had brought and reached a small

island which was about in the middle. Some archers landed and skirmished with horsemen who were defending the passage on the other side where Marshal Joachim and [Jean de] Salazar were present. The place was very disadvantageous for them since it was very steep and covered with vines. There was a considerable amount of artillery on the Burgundian side under the care of the famous gunner Master Girault [de Samien] and others, who had been captured in the battle of Montlhéry fighting on the royal side. In the end it was necessary for Joachim and Salazar to abandon the passage and they withdrew to Paris. That evening a bridge was built as far as the island, and immediately the count of Charolais had a large tent erected and slept the night in it with fifty household troops.

At daybreak a large number of coopers were set to work to make barrels from the wood which had been brought and before midday the bridge was completed to the other side of the river. Immediately the count of Charolais crossed to the other side and had his many large tents pitched there. He ordered all his army and artillery across the bridge and camped on a hill sloping towards the river, and his army made a very fine sight for those who were still behind.

All day only his troops were able to cross. Next day at dawn the dukes of Brittany and Berry crossed with all their army; they found the bridge very fine even though it had been constructed quickly. They passed on a little further and camped on the same raised ground. As soon as night came we perceived just in sight, a large number of fires a long distance away from us. Some thought it was the King. But before midnight we were informed that it was Duke John of Calabria, only son of King René of Sicily, and he had with him nine hundred men-at-arms from the duchy and county of Burgundy, well accompanied by cavalry but with few infantrymen. For the few men which the duke had, I have never seen so fine a company nor any so seemingly well disciplined in martial affairs. He probably had some hundred and twenty full armed soldiers, Italians or others, schooled in his wars in Italy. Amongst them was Giacomo Galeotto, the count of Campobasso and the lord of Baudricourt, now Governor of Burgundy. All his men-at-arms were very skilled and, in truth, almost the flower of our army, at least in comparison with similar numbers. He had four hundred crossbowmen furnished for him by the Count Palatine,[42] all well mounted men who carried themselves like true soldiers, and five hundred Swiss infantry troops, who were the first to be seen in this realm. They were ones whose reputation prepared the way for those who came afterwards, because they conducted themselves very bravely in every situation where they found themselves.

This company approached in the morning and they spent the day crossing over our bridge. One could say that all the might of the kingdom of France was seen crossing the bridge except for those with the King. And I assure you that it was a very fine and great company with many noble and well-turned-out men. One could have wished that both the friends and well-wishers of the kingdom and their enemies could have seen them and could have had by this a true estimation of its strength, for there would never have been a

time when they would have been more frightened of the King and kingdom.

The Burgundian commander was my lord of Neufchâtel, Marshal of Burgundy, and with him were his brother, the lord of Montaigu, the marquis of Rothelin and many knights and esquires, some of whom had been in the Bourbonnais, as I said at the beginning of this account. All had joined together in order to come more safely with my lord of Calabria, who seemed as brave a prince and warrior as any I had seen in the army. He soon struck up a great friendship with Charolais.

ii How the lords laid seige to Paris for the enterprise they called the Public Weal

WHEN all this company, taking the good with the bad, numbered by some at a hundred thousand horses I believe, had crossed, the lords decided to set out for Paris and they placed all their vanguards together. The count of Saint-Pol led the Burgundians; Odet d'Aydie, later count of Comminges, and Marshal Lohéac led the troops of the dukes of Berry and Brittany, I think, and so they marched. All the princes stayed with the main army. The count of Charolais and the duke of Calabria took great care to command and keep order in their armies. They rode fully armed and seemed willing to fulfil their duties well. The dukes of Berry and Brittany rode at their ease on small palfreys wearing lightly armed brigandines. Some said that they only had little gilded nails sewn on the satin so they weighed less. But I do not know the truth of this. Thus all these companies rode up to the bridge at Charenton, only two small leagues from Paris, which was quickly captured from a few franc-archers[43] who were on it. The whole army crossed it and the count of Charolais camped between the bridge and his house at Conflans nearby, along the river, and enclosed a great stretch of country with his baggage train and artillery, putting all his army inside the enclosure. With him was the duke of Calabria. The dukes of Berry and Brittany camped at Saint-Maur-les-Fossés with a number of their men, whilst the rest were sent to camp at Saint-Denis, which was also two leagues from Paris. All this company was there for eleven weeks, and I will describe what happened later.

The next day skirmishes began up to the gates of Paris where my lord of Nantouillet, Grand Master [of the household], was stationed, who served so well, as I have said before, together with Marshal Joachim. The common people were very concerned and some of them wanted to let the lords in, thinking to themselves that this enterprise was good and profitable for the realm. There were others, who came from their lordships and were mixed up in their affairs, who hoped by their efforts to obtain some office or preferment; these are more desired in this city than in any other in the world. For those who hold offices make them worth as much as they can, not what they should. There are offices without wages which sell for eight hundred crowns and others with very small wages which are sold for more than the total of fifteen years' wages. Seldom is anyone dismissed and the court of Parlement[44] rightly upholds this principle, but almost everyone is

affected by it. Amongst the councillors are always found numerous good and notable persons, but also some bad ones, yet it is so in all levels of society.

- Frederick the Victorious, 1425-76.
- Franc-archers: see Glossary.
- Parlement: see Glossary.

7

[Events in England]

I SPEAK about these offices and positions of trust becaue they cause a desire for change, and not only in our times. From the time when the wars began in he days of King Charles VI which lasted until the peace of Arras, the English meddled in the affairs of this realm. So much so that in negotiating the treaty of Arras there were four or five princes, dukes and counts, five or six bishops and ten or twelve Parliamentary councillors representing the King; on Duke Philip's side there were as great people as on the other and many more of them; for the pope, two cardinals acted as mediators and there were great English representatives, and these negotiations lasted two months. The duke of Burgundy strongly desired to fulfil his obligations towards the English before separating from them, because of the allilance and promises he had with them. For these reasons the duchies of Normandy and Guyenne were offered to the king of England and his heirs, provided that he did homage to the King as his predecessor had done and handed over all that he possessed in the kingdom except the duchies. The English refused as they did not wish to do homage, things went badly for them afterwards for they were abandoned by the house of Burgundy and having lost their contacts in this realm they began to lose ground and weaken. The duke of Bedford, brother of King Henry V, who had married the sister[45] of Duke Philip of Burgundy, was then regent of France for the English. He lived at Paris and took at the very least twenty thousand crowns a month for the performance of this office. The English lost Paris and then, bit by bit, the rest of the kingdom.

When they returned to England no one wanted to reduce his way of living. But there was not enough wealth in the realm of England to satisfy all. War for power, which lasted many long years, broke out amongst them. King Henry VI, who had been crowned King of France and England at Paris,[46] was declared a traitor, guilty of treason and imprisoned in the Tower of London where he spent the greater part of his life and was finally killed. The duke of York, father of the late King Edward, proclaimed himself king. A few days later he was beaten and killed in battle and afterwards had his head cut off, as did the dead earl of Warwick,[47] who died recently and who had so much authority in England. Warwick took the earl of March, later called King Edward, by sea to Calais with a few men after fleeing from the battle. The earl of Warwick supported the Yorkists and the duke of Somerset supported the Lancastrians. The wars lasted so long that all the members of the houses of Warwick and Somerset had their heads cut off or were killed in battle. King Edward had his brother, the duke of Clarence, put to death in a pipe[48]of malmsey[49] because, it is said, he wanted to

make himself king. On the death of Edward his second brother the duke of Gloucester[50] killed Edward's two sons, declared his daughters bastards and had himself crowned king.

Immediately afterwards the earl of Richmond,[51] at present king, having been a prisoner for many years in Brittany, crossed to England. He defeated and killed in battle the cruel King Richard who shortly before had had his nephews murdered. Thus, within my memory, more than eighty members of the English royal family, some of whom I knew, were killed in these disturbances in England. The English, who were living with the duke of Burgundy when I was there, told me about the rest.

So it is not only in Paris or in France that men strive for the wealth and honours of this world. Princes or those who rule great lordships ought to be wary of allowing rivalries to develop in their households. For from there this fire spreads through the whole countryside. But my belief is that it only happens because of divine intervention, for when princes and realms are very prosperous and rich they forget from where these fortunes come. God sets up for them an unexpected enemy or enemies, as you may observe from the kings in the Bible and by what, in the recent past, you have seen and see every day in England, Burgundy, and other places.

- Anne of Burgundy, d. 1433.
- On 17 December 1431.
- Commynes means Richard, earl of Salisbury, father of Warwick the Kingmaker, who was beheaded after the battle of Wakefield in 1460.
- A cask of wine, or sometimes a measure of capacity, usually equal to half a tun or two hogsheads or four barrels.
- 1478.
- Richard, later Richard III, king of England 1483-5.
- Henry Tudor, later Henry VII, king of England 1485-1509.

8

[The War of the Public Weal: events at Paris]

I HAVE been digressing too much and I must return to my story. As soon as the lords arrived before Paris all began to intrigue there and offer positions and rewards and anything which could serve their cause. After three days there was a great assembly in the town hall of Paris. There were important and lengthy speeches and after hearing the requests and demands which the lords made in public, for the great good of the realm as they said, it was decided to send to them to treat for peace.

A great number of important citizens then came to the princes at Saint-Maur, and Master Guillaume Chartier, a very great man who was then bishop of Paris, acted as their spokesman. The count of Dunois spoke for the lords. The duke of Berry, the King's brother, presided, sitting on a throne with all the other lords standing around him. On one side was the lord of Charolais, fully armed except for his helmet[52] and his gauntlets. He was wearing a small very rich cloak covering his breastplate, for he had just come from Conflans, and the Bois de Vincennes was held for the King and

there were many men there; so it was necessary for him to come well accompanied. The requests and aims of the lords were to be admitted to Paris and to have friendly negotiations with the citizens over the reform of the realm, which they said was badly ruled, levelling several serious charges against the King. The citizens' answers were very sympathetic, yet given only after some delay. After that the King was not pleased with the bishop nor with those with him.

Thus they returned whilst important intrigues continued, for everyone spoke to them individually. And I believe that it was decided in secret by some that the lords, without attendants, might enter the city and their men could pass through in small numbers at a time if they liked. This agreement would not only have gained the town but the aims of the whole enterprise, because the people for many reasons would easily have come over to their side and as a result all the rest of the kingdom would have followed their example.

God gave wise counsel to the King and he executed it skilfully. Warned of all these matters, even before those who had gone to meet the lords had returned to make their report, he arrived in the town all prepared to comfort the people because he came with a very large company. He placed more than two thousand men-at-arms in the town, all nobles of Normandy, as well as a large force of franc-archers, his household troops and other men of quality, who are to be found with such a king in similar affairs. Thus the stratagem was defeated and all the people changed their opinions, so that there was no longer any man of those who had previously been to see us who dared any longer to speak about these bargainings; and some suffered for it. Yet he did not use any cruelty in this affair. Some lost their offices and others he exiled. I praise him for not using any other revenge because if what had been started had been accomplished the best he could have hoped for would have been to have fled the country. Many times later he told me that if he had not been able to enter Paris and he had found it lost, he would have fled to the Swiss or to Francesco [Sfroza], duke of Milan, whom he looked upon as a great friend — as indeed he showed by the help he sent him. This was led by his eldest son, Galeazzo, later duke, and consisted of five hundred men-at-arms and three thousand infantry who had come as far as Forez where they were making war on my lord of Bourbon. But they later went home because of the death of Duke Francesco.[53] He also showed his friendship by the advice which he gave him whilst the peace, known as the treaty of Conflans, was being negotiated. In order to break up the confederacy he told him to refuse nothing which was asked of him but only keep his own men with him.

As far as I can remember we had not been before Paris for more than three days[54]when the King entered the town. Soon afterwards he began to fight us vigorously, especially our foragers because they were forced to go long distances to forage and many men were necessary to guard them. But it must be said that the Île de France and Paris are well placed to maintain two such powerful armies. For never were we without victuals and those within Paris scarcely realized that there were men there. Nothing became dearer except

for bread, which rose a penny in price. For we did not occupy the three rivers above the city, the Marne, Yonne and Seine, and the several small streams which flowed into them. All in all I have never seen a city surrounded by more fertile and verdant country than Paris and it is almost unbelievable what goods arrive there. I have since been there with King Louis for six months without moving, staying at the Tournelles, normally eating and sleeping with him, and after his death I was held unwilling prisoner in his palace for twenty months when I saw from my window all that came up the Seine from Normandy.[55]From upstream came incomparably more than I could ever have believed possible if I had not seen it.

So every day troops of men sallied out of Paris and there were serious skirmishes. Our watch was fifty lances strong and was posted near La Grange-aux-Merciers. Scouts went as close to Paris as possible but were very often driven back, and it was often necessary for them to turn tail and flee back to our wagon train, sometimes retiring in an orderly fashion, sometimes at the run. And then others were sent out again and often they were driven back by the enemy from the gates of Paris. This happened at all hours because in the town there were more than two thousand five hundred well-equipped men-at-arms, with good quarters, a great number of Norman nobles and franc-archers. Every day the soldiers saw the ladies of Paris, who inspired them to show off.

On our side there were a large number of men but not so many horsemen because there were only the Burgundians, numbering good and bad about two thousand lances, who were not so well armed as those within the city because of the long peace which they had experienced, as I have said previously. Again, some two hundred men-at-arms of this number were at Lagny with the duke of Calabria. We had a large number of good infantry. The Breton army was at Saint-Denis and they committed warlike acts whenever they could. The other lords were scattered for provisions. Finally the count of Armagnac, the duke of Nemours, and the lord of Albret arrived, but their men stayed a long way off because they had not been paid and they would have deprived our army if they had taken goods without payment. I know full well that the count of Charolais gave them five to six thousand francs in cash and it was decided that their men should not advance further. They had more than six thousand cavalry which did very considerable damage.

- MS. reads *teste*.
- 8 March 1466.
- Eight in fact.
- See Introduction.

9

[Events around Paris]

TO continue with affairs at Paris, there is no doubt that scarcely a day passed without some loss or gain on one side or the other. But nothing important occurred because the King did not wish his men to sally forth in large numbers nor to stake all on the outcome of a

battle. He wanted peace and to break up this gathering wisely. Yet one morning four thousand franc-archers, Norman nobles and a few men-at-arms came to camp opposite the Hôtel de Conflans along the riverbank. Other men-at-arms from the ordonnance companies lodged a quarter of a league further off in a village, and between them and their infantry there was only a rich plain. The Seine was between us and them. The King's men then began a trench close to Charenton, where they made an earthwork of wood and soil towards the front of our army. This trench passed in front of Conflans, with the river between the two places as has been said. And a large amount of artillery was placed there which immediately drove all the duke of Calabria's men out of the village of Charenton; they were forced to come quickly to lodge with us. Some men and horses were killed. Duke John stayed in a small building right in front of the house of my lord of Charolais and facing the river.

This artillery first began to fire on our army and terrified the company because it killed men from the start. Two shots were fired, while he was dining, through the room where Charolais was staying and they killed a trumpeter carrying a plate of meat upstairs. After dinner the count of Charolais came down to the ground floor and decided that he would not move his lodgings but fixed them up as best he could.

In the morning all the lords held a council. This was always held, moreover, in the count's quarters and always after the council they dined together. The dukes of Berry and Brittany sat on a bench next to the wall and the count of Charolais and Duke John of Calabria sat facing them. So the count gave them all due honour and invited them to his table, as he ought to have done to one and all since it was in his quarters.

They resolved to collect together all the army's artillery, of which Charolais had a very large amount. The duke of Calabria also had some fine pieces, as did the duke of Brittany. Large holes were made in the wall on the side facing the river behind the Hôtel de Conflans, and all the best pieces were placed there, except for the bombards and some other large pieces which were not fired. The rest were placed where they could serve best. The lords had much more artillery than the King. The trench which the King's men had made was very long, stretching towards Paris, and all the time they were pressing ahead, throwing up earth up on our side to protect themselves from the artillery, because all were hidden in the ditch and no one dared show his head. They were in a fine flat meadow bare as a man's hand. I have never seen so much firing in so few days because on our side we intended to drive them off by the force of our artillery. On the other side supplies came every day from Paris which supported them valiantly, and they did not spare the powder. Many of our men dug ditches in the ground right outside their lodgings, yet there were others who had them already because they were lodged in a quarry. So everyone protected himself and three or four days passed. The fear on both sides was much greater than the losses, because no man of note was killed.

When the lords saw that the royal troops were not tiring it seemed to them shameful and dangerous; they thought it would hearten the Parisians, because on truce-days so many people came out of the town that it seemed that no one was left there. It was decided in council that a very strong large bridge should be built on large boats by cutting off the ends and laying down a gangway of planks across the middle, whilst on either end there would be great anchors to throw on to the the land. Thereupon several big Seine boats were brought up which would enable a large number of infantrymen to cross at a time: so it was resolved to cross the river. To Master Girault the gunner was given the task of completing this work. He thought it would be a great advantage to the Burgundians that the others had thrown up a trench on our side, because when they crossed the river the King's men would find their trench well below their assailants and they would not dare to sally out of the ditch for fear of the artillery.

These remarks put great heart into our men to cross and the bridge was all completed, except for the last two boats which were to one side ready to finish it, and all the other boats were brought up. As soon as it was completed a royal officer of arms came to say that building it was an infringement of the truce, because that day and the day before had been truce-days, and that he had come to see what was going on; by chance he met my lord of Bueil and several others to whom he spoke on the bridge. That evening the truce ended. Three men-at-arms with their lances lowered could easily cross the bridge abreast, while six large boats each carrying more than a thousand men at a time, and some smaller ones, could cross over. The artillery was deployed to help guard the crossing and troops muster lists were drawn up of those who were to cross. The count of Saint-Pol and the lord of Hautbourdin were in charge.

As soon as midnight had passed those who were to cross began to arm themselves and were all armed before daybreak. Some heard Mass whilst waiting for the dawn and did what good Christians do in such circumstances. That night I found myself in a large tent which was in the middle of the army where the guard was kept, and I was on guard because no one was excused. My lord of Châteauguion,[56] who later died at the battle of Morat, was in command of the guard; and we were waiting there to see the diversion when we suddenly heard those who were in the trenches begin to shout, 'Farewell, neighbours, farewell,' and immediately they set fire to their camp and withdrew their artillery. Day began to break. Some of those ordered to undertake this enterprise were already on the river, and they saw the others a long way off retiring to Paris. So everyone disarmed and rejoiced at their departure.

But in truth the King had sent the men there with no intention of fighting but only to bombard us with his artillery, because he did not wish to risk anything, as I said elsewhere, even though his power was as great as that of the princes put together. His intention was, as he plainly demonstrated, to treat for peace and disperse the company without placing his own position as King of this great and obedient realm of France in peril by a thing so uncertain as a battle.

Every day there were petty intrigues aimed at winning men from one side to the other and several days were truce-days when both sides assembled for the purpose of making peace. These meetings were held at La Grange-aux-Merciers close to our army. On the royal side the count of Maine and several others attended. The count of Saint-Pol and others, as well as all the lords, attended on their side. Many times they met without achieving anything. Meanwhile, the truce was prolonged and many men from both armies conversed together across a large ditch which was midway between them, some standing on one side, some on the other, because by the truce no one could cross it. There was hardly a day when through these interviews not less than ten or twelve men on the princes' side, and sometimes more, changed side. On other days as many came over to us and for this reason the place was later called the Market because such bargains were struck there.

To be honest, such meetings and communications held in this way are very dangerous, especially for the side which seems to be visibly declining in strength. Naturally the majority of men have an eye for a chance either to advance or to help themselves, which easily leads them to side with the stronger. There are some who are so upright and firm that they have none of these failings, but they are few in number. There is special danger when princes seek to win men over. It is a very great favour when God grants a prince the ability to do this and it is a sign that he is not tainted with this foolish vice of pride, which stirs up harted against all people. For this reason, as I have said, when one comes to such issues as the negotiation of peace it ought to be undertaken by the most faithful servants of the prince and men of mature years, so that their weaknesses do not led them to make some dishonest bargain or to frighten their master on their return more than there is need. He should employ those who have received some favour or benefit from him rather than others, but above all wise men, for a fool never brought a man any profit. And he ought rather to conduct his negotiations from a distance than from close by, and when the ambassadors return he ought to hear them alone or in a small company in case their words are frightening. Then he can tell them the sort of language which they must use to answer those who inquire of them. For everyone wants to know news from them when they come from such negotiations and many say, 'So and so will not hide anything from me.' But if the appointed ambassadors are such as I have described, they will do so and know they have a wise master.

- Louis de Chalon, prince of Orange, killed at Granson, 1476.

10

[Louis XI]

I HAVE entered upon this discourse because I have seen many deceptions in this world and many servants set against their masters. I have seen that haughty princes and lords who seldom listen to their servants are more often deceived than those who are humble and listen gladly. And of all those whom I have ever known, the wisest in extricating himself from a tricky situation in an adverse time was our master, King Louis XI, and he was the

humblest in word and attire and one who ever worked to win over a man who could serve him or do him harm. He was never put off by being refused once by a man whom he was attempting to win but continued in his endeavours, promising grandiosely and giving actual money and offices which he knew would please him. Those whom he had expelled and banished in time of peace and prosperity he would repurchase dearly when he had need of them. He made use of them and did not hold any grudge against them for past deeds.

He was by nature a friend of men of middling estate and enemy of all the great who were able to do without him. No man ever lent his ear so readily to others or inquired about so many things as he did, nor wanted to know so many men. For, truthfully, he knew all the powerful and influential men in England, Spain, Portugal, Italy, the lordships of the duke of Burgundy and in Brittany, as well as he knew his own subjects. And these manners and qualities which he had, which I have just mentioned, saved his crown for him, seeing the enemies which he had acquired at his accession to the kingdom.

But above all his great generosity has served him because wisely as he conducted himself in adversity, as soon as he thought he was safe, on the other hand, even if it was only a truce, he would begin to upset men by petty ways which served him ill and he was scarcely able to endure peace. He spoke lightly of men both in their presence and in their absence, except of those whom he feared, who were legion, for he was somewhat fearful by nature. When, indeed, by his manner of speaking, he had harmed himself or suspected that he had and he wished to repair the damage, he spoke these words to the person concerned, 'I'm well aware that my tongue has caused me great damage, but sometimes it has brought me much pleasure. Nevertheless it is right that I should make amends.' And he never used these words without recompensing the person to whom he was speaking and that he did in no small way.

Yet God grants a great favour to a prince when he recognizes good and evil, and especially when the good exceeds the evil as in the case of our master. For in my opinion, it was the hardship which he experienced in his youth, when he was a fugitive from his father and fled to Duke Philip of Burgundy with whom he lived for six years,[57] that stood him in good stead because he was constrained to humour those of whom he had need. Adversity taught him this lesson which was no mean thing. When he found himself powerful and a crowned King, he first of all thought only of revenge but soon this caused him injury and he felt quite as much repentance. He set right this folly and error by winning back those whom he had wronged, as you will hear later. If he had only had the education of other lords whom I have seen brought up in this kingdom, I do not believe that he could have recovered again. For they were only brought up to make fools of themselves in dress and speech. They have no knowledge of letters, not a single wise man is found in their company, they have governors to whom one speaks about their business, not to them, and these latter dispose of all their business. Such lords, who have not thirteen *livres* in rents, puff themselves up and say, 'Speak to my men,' thinking that by these words they imitate the very great. I have often seen their

servants make their own profit, giving their masters to understand that they were fools. And so if by chance one of them regains control of his own affairs and wants to find out what belongs to him, it is so late that it scarcely matters, because it is necessary to realize that all famous men, who have achieved great things, begin very young and their success springs from their education or from God's grace.

- From 1456 to 1461.

11

[Conclusion of the War of the Public Weal]

NOW I have dwelt for a long time on this subject but it is such that I could not leave it when I wanted to. To return to the war; you have heard how the King's men, who had taken up their position in the trench along the Seine, decamped at the very hour we should have attacked them. The truces seldom lasted more than a day or two. On the other days the war was prosecuted as vigorously as possible and skirmishes lasted from morning to evening.

No large bands sallied out of Paris, yet often they repulsed our watch and then we reinforced it. I do not recollect there being a day without a skirmish, however small it was. And I truly believe that they could have been much larger if the King had wished; but he was very wary of many people, though not without cause. He has on another occasion told me that he found the field-gate of the Saint-Antione bastille open one night, which made him very suspicious of Sir Charles de Melun, because his father was in charge of the place. I will say nothing more of Sir Charles than I have said already, except that the King had no better servant that year.

One day it was decided in Paris to come and fight us (this was not, I believe, the King's decision but the captains') and to attack us on three sides — on the first side from Paris, where the main force was to be, secondly via the bridge at Charenton (and those there would scarcely have caused any harm) and [thirdly] two hundred men-at-arms were to come through the Bois de Vincennes. This decision was made known to the army about midnight by a page who shouted from the opposite bank of the river that some good friends of the lords, whom he named, warned them of the enterprise, which you have heard about, and then he disappeared immediately.

Just at daybreak Sir Poncet de Rivière came up to the bridge at Charenton, whilst my lord of Lau[58] and others came from the Bois de Vincennes up to our artillery and killed a gunner. The alarm was very great. Everyone thought that this was the attack of which the page had warned us in the night. My lord of Charolais was soon armed, but not as quickly as Duke John of Calabria, for at every alert he was the first man to be fully armed and his horse was always fully equipped. He wore the uniform which all condottieri wear in Italy and appeared a worthy prince and leader. He always rode right up to the front line of our army in order to prevent men from sallying out. He received as much obedience as my lord of

Charolais. All the army willingly obeyed him, for in truth he was worthy of being honoured.

In a moment all the troops were in arms and drawn up on foot inside the line of the wagons, except for some two hundred horsemen who were outside on watch. This day excepted, I never knew a day when there was hope of battle, but this time everyone was expecting it. Hearing this noise the dukes of Berry and Brittany, whom I only ever saw armed on this day, arrived. The duke of Berry was fully armed. They had few men with them. Thus they passed through the camp and went a little way outside to find my lords of Charolais and Calabria and spoke together. The scouts, who were reinforced, went very close to Paris and saw many [royal] scouts who had been sent out to learn the reason for this disturbance in our army.

Our artillery fired heavily as soon as my lord of Lau's men had come close to us. The King had good artillery on the walls at Paris which fired several shots as far as our army, which was a remarkable feat for it was two leagues away. But I am pretty sure that they had elevated the muzzles of the cannons very high. The sound of this artillery convinced everyone on both sides that some great enterprise was afoot. It was very gloomy and cloudy and our scouts, who had got very close to Paris, saw several scouts and further off apparently a great number of lances upright, and they thought that it was all the royal troops in the field, together with all the people of Paris; this illusion was caused by the darkness of the weather.

They retired straight away to the lords who were outside the camp and told them the news and assured them about the army. The scouts who had come out of Paris came closer on seeing the withdrawal of ours and this made their report more credible. Then the duke of Calabria came up to the place where the standard of the count of Charolais was set up and where the majority of his leading retainers were ready to accompany it and to display his banner and his coat of arms, as was the custom of his house. Then Duke John said to us all, 'Well then, we have now all got what we have wanted. Look there, the King and all the people have sallied from the town, and they are coming on as our scouts report! For this reason may all take courage and as they march out we shall measure them by the measure of the town, which is a great measure!' So he went about encouraging the company.

Our scouts had cheered up a little on seeing that the others were few, and they approached the town again and found the troops still at the place where they had left them, which caused them to think again. They approached them as closely as they could. The day had brightened up a little by this time and become clearer. They found that the 'troops' were huge thistles, and they went right up to the gates and they did not find anyone outside. They sent to tell the lords who went off to hear Mass and dine. Those who had brought the news were ashamed, but they were partly excused by the weather and by what the page hd said in the night.

- Antoine de Castelnau, d. 1484.

Book One, Chapters 12-16; Book Two, Chapters 1-9

MEMOIRS

BOOK ONE

12

[Negotiations between the King and the lords]

THE negotiations for peace between the King and the count of Charolais were pursued more seriously than any others because they were the strongest parties. The lords' demands were considerable, especially because the duke of Berry wanted Normandy for his share, which the King did not want to grant. The count of Charolais wanted to have the towns situated on the Somme — Amiens, Abbeville, Saint-Quentin, Péronne and others — which the King had repurchased for four hundred thousand crowns from Duke Philip only three months[59]previously, and which the latter had held by the terms of the peace of Arras from King Charles VII. Charolais said that during his [father's] lifetime the King should not have bought them back. He reminded the King how much he owed the Burgundians, because when he was a fugitive from his father, King Charles, he had been received and maintained for six years, being given money for his needs, and then brought by them to Reims and Paris for his coronation. For this reason the count had taken great offence at the repurchasing of these lands.

However, these peace negotiations proceeded so well that one morning the King came by water to a point opposite our army, followed by a large troop of cavalry on the riverbank. There were only four or five people in his boat apart from the oarsmen. These included my lords Lau, Montauban (at that time Admiral), Nantouillet and others. The counts of Charolais and Saint-Pol were on the riverbank awaiting the King.

The King shouted to Charolais, 'My brother, do you guarantee my safety?' (He called him brother because the count had once been married to his sister.)[60] The count replied, "Yes, my lord.' I heard him and so did many others. The King stepped ashore with his companions. The counts paid him every honour as was his due and he, not lacking in courtesy, began to speak, saying, 'My brother, I know that you are a nobleman and of the royal house of France.' Charolais asked him, 'Why, my lord?' 'Because,' he said, 'when I

sent my envoys to Lille a short time ago to my uncle, your father, and you, and that fool Morvilliers spoke so kindly to you, you informed me through the archbishop of Narbonne (who is a nobleman and shows himself such by common consent) that I would repent of the words Morvilliers spoke to you before a year was out. And,' the King continued, 'you've kept your promise and that well before the end of the year.' He said this openly, laughing, knowing Charolais's temperament was such that he would be pleased by these words, and indeed they did please him. 'I would deal with men who keep their promises,' he added, disowning Morvilliers and saying that he had not charged him with saying any such words as he had used.

In fact the King walked up and down between the two counts for a long time whilst large numbers of armed men watched them from close by. There they asked for the duchy of Normandy, the river Somme and several other demands made by each one of them, and also some of the matters already discussed for the welfare of the realm, but that had become the least important question because the Public Weal had been turned into private interest. The King would not listen to any suggestion about Normandy but agreed to the count of Charolais's requests, offered the count of Saint-Pol the office of Constable as a favour to Charolais and then very graciously bade them farewell. He got back into his boat and returned to Paris and the others went to Conflans.

So the days passed, some in truce, others in war. But all the promises which had been made between deputies of both sides at the usual meeting-place, La Grange-aux-Merciers, were broken. Yet the negotiations between the King and the count of Charolais continued and men were sent from one side to another, even though they were at war. One of the envoys was called Guillaume Bische and another Guyot d'Usie. Both were on Charolais's side but had nevertheless previously received favours from the King because Duke Philip had banished them and the King had sheltered them at the count's request.

These transactions did not please everyone, and already the lords had begun to distrust each other and to become weary. They would all have departed shamefully had it not been for an event which happened a few days later. I saw them hold three separate councils in one room where they all gathered, and one day I saw that the count of Charolais was much displeased by this because it had already happened twice in his presence. It did not seem right to him to hold a council in his room without including him when his forces were the largest in the army. In speaking of this to the lord of Contay, that very wise man about whom I told you previously, Contay told him to bear it patiently because if he upset them they would make a better agreement with the King than he could; as he was the strongest it behooved him to be the wisest and prevent them from splitting up. He should hold them together with all his might and conceal his feelings. But in truth, Contay said, many were amazed, including his own servants, that such insignificant men as those two previously mentioned should be in charge of such an important affair. It was moreover a dangerous matter dealing with a King who could be as liberal as this one. Contay hated

Guillaume Bische. Nevertheless he only said what many others were saying. I believe it was not his suspicions that made him speak thus but only the importance of the matter. This counsel pleased Charolais and he joined the other lords more cheerfully and with better heart than before and had more to do with them than he had been accustomed to. In my opinion this was extremely necessary as there was a danger of them separating.

A wise man serves well in such company but he must be believed and he cannot be bought too dearly. But I have never known a prince who could distinguish between men until he found himself in need or very busy. If they did recognize them they ignored them and divided their authority among those who were more agreeable to them or of the same age as themselves or concurred with their opinions. Sometimes they are managed by those who know how to gratify their small pleasures. But those have understanding pull themselves together when they need to do so. I have seen the King do this, as well as the count of Charolais at that time, King Edward of England, and others likewise. I have seen these three in such critical hours that they needed those whom they had formerly despised. After the count of Charolais had been duke of Burgundy for some time, and his fortune had reached higher then that of his predecessors and was so great he had no fear that any prince could equal himself, God allowed him to fall from this glory and so diminished his senses that he forsook all other wordly counsel save his own. Almost immediately afterwards his life ended miserably with the lives of a great number of his men and subjects and his family was ruined as you perceive.

- All MSS. read *trois mois* but it was nearer two years, see Book One, Chapter 2.
- Catherine, d. 1446.

13

[Events in Normandy; negotiations continue]

BECAUSE I have here spoken much about the dangers which are inherent in negotiations and advised princes, especially the prince who has the worst of the situation, to be very careful and fully informed about the men who conduct them, now I shall demonstrate what caused me to dwell so long on this subject.

Whilst these negotiations were being conducted in assemblies and it was possible for both sides to communicate with each other, instead of treating for peace, some arranged that the duchy of Normandy should be put into the hands of the duke of Berry, the King's only brother, and that he should have his apanage[61] there and leave Berry to the King. This bargain was struck in such way that the widow of the Grand Seneschal of Normandy and several of her servants and relations allowed Duke John of Bourbon into Rouen castle and from there he entered the town. The citizens agreed to this because they wanted very much to have a prince who would live in Normandy. All except a few towns in Normandy did likewise, for the Normans always thought, and still do, that a great duchy such as theirs needed a duke. To tell the truth it is worth a

great deal and produces considerable revenue. I have seen 950,000 francs there [in a year], and some say more.

When the town of Rouen had come over all the inhabitants took an oath to the duke of Bourbon, who represented the duke of Berry, except Houaste (de Montespedon), the bailiff,[62] who had been brought up by the King as a chamber valet whilst he was in Flanders and was very close to him, and one Guillaume Picard, later financial administrator- general of Normandy. The present Grand Seneschal[63] of Normandy also did not want to take the oath but withdrew to the King against the wishes of his mother, who had organized the surrender as has been said.

When the news of this revolution in Normandy reached the King, he decided to conclude peace since he could not remedy what had already happened. Immediately he let my lord of Charolais, who was with his army, know that he wanted to speak to him and signified the time when he would go to the field before the army near Conflans. He rode out at the appointed hour with few men apart from about a hundred horse, the majority of whom were Scotsmen from his bodyguard. Charolais brought scarcely any and came without any great ceremony, yet so many followed him that soon he had more on his side than the King. He made them stay a little way off and the two of them walked together for a while. The King told him how peace had been made and what had happened at Rouen, of which the count was ignorant. The King said that he would not willingly have given his consent to deliver such an apanage to his brother but since the Normans had engineered this change themselves he was happy with it and would ratify the treaty in the form which had been proposed some days earlier. There was little else to be settled. Charolais was very pleased at this because his army was in very great need of supplies, and especially of money, and if agreement had not been reached all the lords there would have had to disperse ignominiously. Neverthelss that day or a few days later reinforcements arrived for the count which his father, Duke Philip of Burgundy, had sent under the leadership of my lord of Saveuses. There were a hundred and twenty men-at-arms, fifteen hundred archers and 120,000 crowns carried by ten pack horses, and a great quantity of bows and arrows, which greatly strengthened the Burgundians who were anxious lest the other princes reached accord [with the King] without them.

This agreement between the King and Charolais pleased both of them so much that I heard they were talking together so affectionately in settling the remaining differences that they did not notice where they were walking. They had moved towards Paris and had gone so far that they entered a large earthwork built of soil and wood. The King had ordered this to be made some distance outside the town at the end of a trench by which one could enter the town. There were only four or five people with the count. When they found themselves inside it they were astounded. However the count looked as unconcerned as he could. It may be believed that neither of the two lords obtained any pleasure from this although neither received any injury.

When the army received news that the lord of Charolais had gone into the earthwork there was great consternation. The count of Saint-Pol, the Marshal of Burgundy, the lords of Contay and Hautbourdin and several others blamed Charolais and the others in his company for this indiscretion. They remembered the unfortunate episode concerning his grandfather at Montereau-Faut-Yonne in Charles VII's presence.[64] Immediately they ordered all those who were walking about outside in the fields to return to camp. [Thibaud de] Neufchâtel, Marshal of Burgundy, said, 'If this mad, headstrong young prince gets lost, let us not ruin his family, his father's cause or ours. Let everyone go back to his quarters and get ready for anything which might happen without losing hope, for we are strong enough, if we keep together, to retreat in safety to the marches of Hainault, Picardy or Burgundy.'

So saying, together with the count of Saint-Pol, he mounted his horse and rode out of the camp to see if anyone was coming from the direction of Paris. After some time they saw forty or fifty horsemen, including the count of Charolais and royal troops, archers and others, who were bringing him back. When Charolais saw them approaching he dismissed those who were accompanying him. He spoke to Marshal Neufchâtel, whom he feared because he was used to being spoken to roughly by him. Neufchâtel was a good and loyal knight of his party and had dared to say to him, 'I am only on loan to you as long as your father lives.' The count's words were, 'Don't reprimand me further. I recognize my great folly but I only perceived it when I was close to the earthwork.' The Marshal then rated him more soundly in his presence than previously in his absence. Charolais hung his head, gave him no answer and returned to the army, where everyone was pleased to see him again and praised the King for keeping faith. Yet never again did the count put himself in his power.

- An endowment of lands, jurisdictions or money given to a prince for maintenance (from Latin*ad panem*).
- *Bailli:* see Glossary.
- Jacques de Brézé, son of Pierre and Jeanne de Bec-Crespin, d. 14 August 1494.
- A reference to the assassination of John the Fearless in 1419.

14

How the agreement called the treaty of Conflans was reached between the King and the lords

FINALLY, everything was settled, and the next day the count of Charolais held a general muster to find out how many men he had and how many he had lost. Without warning the King suddenly arrived with thrity or forty horse and went to look at all the companies one after the other, except that of the Marshal of Burgundy, who did not like the King. Some time before the King had given him Épinal in Lorraine and then he had withdrawn the gift to give it to Duke John of Calabria, which caused the Marshal great harm. Little by little the King was reconciling the good and notable knights whom he had dismissed on his accession, who had served his father. This was one of the reasons they were in this company. He recognized his errors. It was announced that the King

would be at the castle of Bois de Vincennes the next day and all the lords who held lands of him should go to do homage. For everybody's safety he would deliver the castle to the count of Charolais.

Next day the King and all the princes, without exception, were found there and the gateway was well guarded by the count of Charolais's armed men. This was the place where the peace treaty was concluded. My lord Charles [of France] did homage for lands in Picardy, and others for whatever lands they held. The count of Saint-Pol took the Constable's oath.

However good the feast someone always dines badly! Some got what they wanted, others got nothing. Some honest but only moderately wealthy men joined the King, but the greater number stayed with the new duke of Normandy and the duke of Brittany who went off to Rouen to take up their possessions. Departing from the castle of Vincennes all took their leave of each other and retired to their quarters. All the necessary letters, pardons and other things required to complete the peace were produced. Then on the same day the dukes of Normandy and Brittany set off for Brittany and Charolais for Flanders, and when the count was just starting the King came and escorted him as far as Villiers-le-Bel, which is a village four leagues from Paris, showing that he wanted very much to remain on friendly terms with the count. They stayed there together that night. The King had brought few men with him, but he had ordered two hundred men-at-arms to accompany him back again. Their arrival was reported to Charolais just as he was going to bed. Immediately he was very suspicious and ordered a large number of his men to arm. So you can see that it is almost impossible for two great lords to agree because of the reports and rumours which they receive at every hour. Two princes who wish to remain on friendly terms should never see each other but send good and wise men to one another, and these should maintain their friendship and amend any faults.

The next morning the two lords took leave of one another with a few well-chosen words. The King returned to Paris in the company of those who had come to fetch him and any suspicions entertained about their arrival were dispersed. The count of Charolais took the road for Compiègne and Noyon. Every town was open to him by the King's command. From Noyon he went to Amiens, where he received the citizens' homage, that of the Somme towns and the territories of Picardy, which had been restored to him by this peace treaty, although the King had paid four hundred thousand crowns for them not nine months previously.[65]

Quickly he passed on and went towards Liège, because the citizens had already been at war with his father in the region of Namur and Brabant for five or six months during his absence. The Liègeois had already pillaged the counties and becasue it was winter he could not make great progress. A large number of villages were burned and a number of small destructive raids were made on the Liègeois. So they made a peace[66] which they were obliged to keep on pain of a great fine. The count then returned to Brabant.

- And incorrectly, see Chapters 2 and 12.
- At Saint-Trond, December 1465.

15

How the duke of Normandy went to take possession of Normandy in the company of the duke of Brittany and what happened afterwards

LET us return to the dukes of Normandy and Brittany, who had gone to take possession of the duchy of Normandy. As soon as they entered Rouen they began to fall out over the division of their booty, because they had with them those knights, whom I have mentioned, who used to have great possessions and honours from King Charles. They thought that their enterprise had come to an end and they did not trust the King; each wanted the best possible position. The duke of Brittany, for his part, wanted a large share because he had borne the greatest costs and expenses. Their arguments became so serious that the duke of Brittany, fearing for his safety, withdrew to Mont-Sainte-Catherine near Rouen and the quarrel reached such a pitch that the duke of Normandy's men and the citizens of Rouen were ready to go there to attack the duke of Brittany. So he was forced to retreat directly towards Brittany.

Hearing of this discord the King marched straight to the borders of the duchy. You can well imagine that he understood the matter and helped to bring it about because he was a master of this craft! A number of those who held the strong places began to deliver them to him and came to terms with him. I do not know anything about this except what I have been told by him because I was not there. He had a meeting with the duke of Brittany, who held a number of places in lower Normandy, hoping to make him abandon his brother completely. They were together for a few days at Caen[67] and made a treaty by which Caen and the other towns were to remain, with a few mercenary troops, in the hands of my lord of Lescun.[68] But this treaty was so difficult to interpret that I think neither of them understood it very well. The duke of Brittany returned home and the King marched towards his brother.

When the duke of Normandy saw that he could not resist and the King had taken Pont-de-l'Arche and some other places from him he decided to flee to Flanders. The count of Charolais was still at Saint-Trond, a small town in the district of Liège, but he was heavily engaged with the Liègeois, with his army broken up and disbanded and it was winter time. He was very upset to hear of this quarrel, because the thing which he most desired in this world was to see a duke of Normandy because he thought that by this means the King's strength would be weakened by a third. He gathered troops in Picardy to put into Dieppe. But before they were ready the man holding Dieppe had come to terms with the King. So the whole duchy of Normandy returned to the King, except for those places which remained in my lord of Lescun's hands by the agreement made at Caen.

- 20-30 December 1465.
- Odet d'Aydie, lord of Lescun, 1428-98.

16

[The retreat of Charles of France to Brittany]

THE duke of Normandy, as I said, had suddenly thought of fleeing to Flanders, but soon afterwards he and the duke of Brittany were reconciled. Both recognized their error and that by quarrels all good things of this world are lost. It is almost impossible for many great people together and of like estate to agree among themselves for any length of time, unless there is someone over them all, and he would need to be very wise and well respected to keep their obedience. I have often seen examples of this myself and do not speak from hearsay. We are all as likely to fall out to our own cost, without having great regard to the consequences. I have seen this happen almost everywhere and I think that a shrewd prince with ten thousand men at his command and the means to sustain them is more to be feared and respected than ten who each have six thousand and are allied together. For there are so many things for them to sort out and agree upon mutually that half the time is lost before they have decided upon anything.

So the duke of Normandy withdrew to Brittany, poor, dejected and abandoned by all the knights who served King Charles and had made their peace with the King, and were better provided for by him than they had ever been by his father. The two dukes were wise after the event (as the Bretons say) and stayed in Brittany. The lord of Lescun, the most important of their subjects, had many embassies coming and going to the King, to the dukes, from the King to the dukes, to the count of Charolais (since called the duke of Burgundy) and from him to the dukes, from the King to the duke of Burgundy and from him to the King. Some went to obtain news, some to seduce men and to make bad bargains under the cover of good faith. Some went with good intentions expecting to pacify things. But it was foolishness on their part to think that they themselves were so clever and wise that their mere presence could pacify such great and subtle princes as these were, so set on their objects, and especially considering that neither one side nor the other would offer reasonable terms. But there are some good men, so vain, that they think they can accomplish things of which they understand nothing, for sometimes their masters do not tell them their secrets at all. Many of this type, as I said before, are often only sent to adorn the feast and often at their own expense. There is always some hanger-on who has a bargain to strike. At least I saw this happen everywhere at this time. And also, as I have said before, all princes ought to be very careful which men they entrust with their business, and all those who go abroad should think carefully how to execute these affairs. He who can excuse himself and get out of the affair is a wise man, unless he sees that he can do it well and is enthusiastic about the job. I have known many worthy men who have found themselves sorely hindered and troubled by such matters.

I have seen princes of two kinds; those who are so subtle and so very suspicious that one does not know how to live with them and they think everyone betrays them; and the others, who are so confident of their servants and so deaf and inattentive to their affairs that they never know who is doing them a service or an injury. The former are fickle, moving from love to hatred and from

hatred to love. And among all of the two sorts there are few good ones to be found and where they are found there is no great steadfastness or security. Yet I would always rather live under wise men than under fools, because there are more ways and means of excusing oneself and getting their favour. For with ignorant people one never knows how to do this because one does not deal with them but with their lackeys. Yet is is necessary to serve and obey them in their own countries, for one is obliged and constrained to do so. But, all things being considered, our sole hope should be in God, for in Him lies all our security and good fortune which cannot be found in any wordly thing. But each one of us recognizes this too late and after we have need of Him. Yet it is better late than never!

BOOK TWO

1

The beginning of the wars between the duke of Burgundy and the men of Liège

SEVERAL years passed during which the duke of Burgundy was at war with the Liègeois. Whenever the King saw he was occupied he tried some new attack on the Bretons or gave some small aid to the Liègeois. Sometimes the duke of Burgundy would turn against him in order to help his alllies, alternatively they would make some treaty or truce with each other.

In 1466, just before the death of his father, Dinant was captured by the duke of Burgundy. It was a remarkably strong town for its size and very rich because of its trade in copperware, called Dinanterie, in effect pots, pans and similar objects. It was situated in the province of Liège. Duke Philip died in June 1467, but in his extreme old age he had been brought to the siege in a litter because he hated the inhabitants so much for the cruelty which they had meted out to his subjects in the county of Namur, especially the men of Bouvignes, a small town a quarter of a league from Dinant, separated from it by the river Meuse. Not long before the men of Dinant had besieged the place on the other side of the river for eight months, committing atrocities in the surrounding districts. They had continually fired two bombards and other large guns into the houses of Bouvignes during this time and forced the poor people to hide themselves in their cellars and to live there.

The hatred between these two towns is unbelievable, yet their children married each other frequently because there were no other towns in the neighbourhood. The year before the destruction of Dinant, when the count of Charolais had just returned from Paris where he had been with the other lords of France, as you have heard, they made an agreement and peace with that lord, giving him a certain sum of money. They had deserted the city of Liège and made their peace independently. When those who ought to keep together separate and abandon each other this is a sure sign of the disintegration of a country. I maintain that the same holds for princes and lords allied together as for towns and communities, but because I think that everyone can see and read about these

examples I will say no more. Yet I would like to point out that our master, King Louis, understood this art of dividing men better than any other prince I have known. He spared neither money, goods, nor efforts to gain not only the masters but also their servants.

But the men of Dinant soon began to repent of the agreement and cruelly killed their chief burgesses who had made the treaty. War broke out again in the county of Namur for these reasons and because of the complaints of the men of Bouvignes. The siege was laid by Duke Philip but the command of the army was given to his son. The count of Saint-Pol, Constable of France, also came to help them there, having left his home not by the King's order nor with his men-at-arms, but taking those he had gathered on the marches of Picardy. The besieged sallied out over-confidently, much to their own cost. A week later they were overwhelmed by assault after being heavily bombarded. Their friends had not had time to decide whether to help them. The town was burnt and raised to the ground. Eight hundred prisoners were drowned before Bouvignes at the specific request of the inhabitants. I do not know whether God allowed this because of their great crimes but this was a cruel revenge.

The day after the town was taken the Liègeois arrived in large numbers to help. This was contrary to their promise because the Liègeois and the men of Dinant had mutually agreed to dissociate themselves from each other's affairs. Duke Philip withdrew because of his old age and his son and all the army drew up before the Liègeois. We met them sooner than expected because by chance our vanguard had lost its way through the guides' fault and we encountered them with the main body of our army, where the principal leaders were. It was already late, but nevertheless preparations were made to attack them. Thereupon, some men, whom they had deputed, came to Charolais and pleaded with him for the honour of the Virgin Mary, whose eve it was,[1] to have pity on those people and they excused their faults as best they could.

But quite contrary to the words of their ambassadors, the LièGeois appeared to be ready for battle. Yet after coming and going for two or three times they agreed to fulfil the treaty of the previous year and to deliver a certain sum of money. For the better keeping of this agreement in the future than in the past, they promised to hand over three hundred hostages named in a roll drawn up by the bishop of Liège and some of his servants who were in the army. They were to be delivered before eight o'clock the next morning. The Burgundian army was very anxious that night because it was not enclosed securely but was encamped in scattered positions in an area favourable to the Liègeois, who were all foot soldiers and knew the country better than we did. Some of them would have liked to attack us and in my opinion, if that had, they would have got the better of us. But those who had drawn up the treaty put an end to this scheme.

As soon as day broke all our army assembled and the battles were carefully formed; there was a grand total of about three thousand men-at-arms both good and bad, twelve or thirteen thousand archers and many foot soldiers from neighbouring regions. We

marched up to them in order to receive the hostages or to fight them if they defaulted. We found them already disbanded. They were leaving in small groups and in a disorderly way like badly led men. It was already practically midday and they had not delivered the hostages.

The count of Charolais asked the Marshal of Burgundy, who was present, if he ought to attack them or not. The Marshal said he should and that he would defeat them without any trouble, and he need make no pretence about this, since they were at fault. Afterwards he also asked the lord of Contay, whom I have mentioned several times, who was of the same opinion. Contay added that never would there be a better opportunity, pointing out to him that they had already separated into bands as they were leaving and urging him strongly not to delay. He then asked the Constable, the count of Saint-Pol. He was opposed to an attack, saying that it would be contrary to his honour and his promise since so many men could not possibly agree so quickly to such a matter as the delivery of the hostages, especially in such large numbers, and he advised sending to them to find out their intentions. The discussion between these three and the count on this difference of opinion was long and serious. On one side the count could see his powerful old enemies defeated and incapable of resistance, and on the other there was the matter of his promise. In the end a trumpeter was sent to them. He met the hostages who were being brought to Charolais. So the affair was brought to a close and everyone returned to his post. The Constable's advice displeased the men-at-arms because they had the prospect of great booty before their very eyes. An embassy was immediately sent to Liège to confirm this peace. The inhabitants, who are fickle, said to them that the count had not dared to fight them and fired their culverins at the envoys and insullted them in several ways. The count of Charolais returned to Flanders. Then his father died,[2] and he gave him a very grand, solemn funeral service and burial at Bruges[3] and sent word of his death to the King.

- 7 September.
- 15 June 1467.
- 16 August 1467.

2

[The campaign of Charles the Rash against the men of Liège]

ALL this time intrigues were being hatched by the princes. The King was exceedingly angry with the dukes of Burgundy and Brittany. The two dukes had great difficulty communicating with each other because their messengers were often intercepted and, in wartime, they had to go by sea; or at least it was necessary to go from Brittany across to England then by land to Dover across to Calais because, if they went directly by land, they proceeded at their peril. In all these years, and in other subsequent ones, God favoured this realm of France in that the dissensions which lasted for about twenty years or more, some spent at war, others in truces and prevarications (and each of the princes used to include his allies), the wars and divisions of England also continued, although they had begun fifteen years before. There had been great and

bloody battles in which many worthy men died. All were said to be traitors because there were two houses contending for the English crown, the houses of Lancaster and York. It cannot be doubted that if the English had been in the same condition as they had been previously, this realm would have had many more difficulties.

The King was still attempting above all else to bring Brittany to heel because he thought that it could be done more easily and it would resist less than Burgundy. Furthermore the Bretons had sheltered his enemies, his brother and others, who had contacts inside this kingdom. For this reason he contrived very hard to get Duke Charles of Burgundy to abandon them by consenting to various offers and bargains, agreeing in return to desert the Liègeois and his other enemies. But the duke of Burgundy would not agree to this and set out against the Liègeois once more. They had broken the peace treaty with him and taken the town of Huy, driving out his troops and pillaging it, in spite of the hostages which they had given in the previously year who would be killed if they broke the treaty, as well as the large monetary indemnity. He gathered his army round Louvain in Brabant and on the marches of Liège.

The count of Saint-Pol, Constable of France, arrived to see him there. He was by then reconciled to the King on all issues and kept company with him. With Cardinal Balue[4] and other envoys he announced to the duke of Burgundy that the Liègeois were the King's allies and included in his truce, warning him that the King could give them aid if the duke of Burgundy attacked them. Nevertheless they offered that if the duke would consent to allow the King to make war on Brittany the King would allow him to fight the Liègeois. Their audience was short and in public and they stayed only one day. The duke of Burgundy excused himself by saying that the Liègeois had attacked him and that it was they, not he, who had broken the truce and he would not abandon his allies on such a pretext. The ambassadors were dismissed. When they wanted to ride off the day after their arrival he called out to them to tell the King not to undertake any action against Brittany. The Constable spoke forcefully to him, 'My lord, you don't choose, but you take all and make war at your own pleasure on our friends and you want us to sit still, not daring to attack our enemies as you do yours. This state of affairs cannot continue, nor will the King tolerate it any longer.'

The duke bade them farewell saying, 'The Liègeois are in arms and I expect to fight them in the next three days. If I lose I believe you'll do as you please, but if I win you'll leave the Bretons in peace.' With this he mounted and the ambassadors went to their lodgings to prepare for their departure. He left Louvain in arms and with a very large company to lay siege to a town called Saint-Trond. His army was huge, since everyone who could came from Burgundy to join him. I had never before seen him with so many men at once.

A short while before his departure there was some discussion as to whether he should kill the hostages or what else he should do with them. Some said he should kill them all. The lord of Contay

especially urged this and I had never heard him speak so bitterly or cruelly as he did then. For this reason it is necessary for a prince to have several men in his council because even the wisest can err far too often. This is because they become emotional in discussion, through love or hatred, or because they want to contradict someone else, or simply because of their state of health; nor should anything said after dinner be taken for counsel. Some might say that men committing these faults ought not to be in a prince's council. But in reply to that I say we are all human and he who would seek out those who never fail to speak wisely, or who are never moved more on one occasion than on another must look for them in heaven, for he will not find them amongst men. But also, to compensate for this, there are those who will speak wisely and well in council who are usually unaccustomed to doing so often and so they redress the balance.

Returning to these deliberations two or three supported this opinion because they admired the authority and judgement of Contay — for in such a council there are found many who only speak after others, barely understanding the discussion and wishing only to please any powerful man who has spoken. Afterwards my lord of Humbercourt,[5] who was born near Amiens and was one of the wisest and most intelligent knights I have ever known, was asked his view. His opinion was that the duke, in order to have God entirely on his side and show everyone he was not cruel and vindictive, should release the three hundred hostages, seeing that they had delivered themselves in good faith, hoping that the peace would be kept. But on their release they should be informed of the duke's grace towards them, and told to use every effort to bring this people back to peace and, in case they did not want to do this, at least they should recognize their good fortune and desist from the war against him and their bishop who was in his company. This opinion was agreed upon and the hostages promised to do this when they were released. They were also told that if any of them took part in the war and were caught they would lose their heads. So they departed.

I think I ought to say that after the lord of Contay had given his harsh advice which you heard against the poor hostages (of whom a number had come in voluntarily and were present at the council), a companion whispered in my ear, 'You see that man? Although he's quite old, he's still healthy, yet I'll bet you anything he won't be alive in a year's time.' He said this because of his terrible advice. And so it happened, for he lived only a short while afterwards. But before he died he served his master well in one battle which I shall tell you about later.

Returning again to our account: you heard how the duke, after leaving Louvain, laid siege to Saint-Trond and set out his artillery. Inside the town were some three thousand Liègeois under the command of a very fine knight,[6] who had negotiated the peace which we made the previous year when we were drawn up ready for battle with them. Three days after we laid siege the Liègeois, in very large numbers — 30,000 or more all told and all infranty except for some five hundred cavalry, with a large number of guns — advanced to break up the siege. At ten o'clock in the morning

they found themselves in a fortified village called Brusthem, partly surrounded by marshes, half a league from us. In their company was François Royer, *bailli* of Lyon, at that time the King's ambassador to the Liègeois. The alarm was quickly sounded in our army. But to be honest it must be said that it had been a poor decision to send good scouts into the fields for we were only warned by our foragers who were fleeing. I was never anywhere with the duke of Burgundy where I saw him give good orders except that day. Immediately he ordered all the troops into the field except those whom he told to remain at the siege. Amongst whom he left there were five hundred Englishmen. He placed more than twelve hundred men-at-arms on both sides of the village and he remained facing the village, further off than the others, with a good eight hundred men-at-arms. There were a large number of gentlemen on foot with the archers and very many men-at-arms. My lord of Ravenstein led the duke's vanguard, who were all on foot, both men-at-arms and archers, with some guns up to the edge of the enemy's ditches which were wide, deep and full of water. There under the hail of arrows and gunshots they were repulsed and we captured their trenches and artillery. When our men shot and missed the Liègeois rallied and with their long pikes (very useful weapons) they charged our archers and their leaders in one mass and killed four or five hundred men in a moment. At that point all our standards began to give way almost as if routed. Immediately the duke ordered up the archers of his company, under the leadership of Philip de Creèvecoeur, lord of Cordes, and several other noblemen, who with a loud cry attacked the Liègeois, who were likewise defeated almost instantaneously.

The cavalry, about which I spoke, was stationed on both sides of the village and could not attack the Liègeois. Nor could the duke of Burgundy from his position because of the marsh; they were there only to stop the Liègeois if they defeated the vanguard and crossed their trenches in order to gain the open country. The Liègeois took flight through the marshes and could only be chased by the infantry. Some of the cavalry who were with the duke of Burgundy were sent by him to give chase. But they had to make a detour of two leagues before they could find a crossing and night fell upon them, allowing many Liègeois to escape with their lives. The others he sent to the town where he heard much noise, and he feared a sally. In fact they sallied out three times but each time they were repulsed; the English who had been left there fought very bravely.

The Liègeois, after their defeat, rallied for a short time around their baggage train. But they did not hold it long. More than six thousand men died. This seems a lot to men who do not want to lie, but since my birth I have seen in many places that where one man has really been killed it has been reported that a hundred have died in order to please someone, and with such lies many masters have been deceived. Had it not been, however, for the night, more than fifteen thousand would have been killed.

When this business was over, by which time it was already very late, the duke of Burgundy and all the army withdrew to camp, except for a thousand or twelve hundred cavalry who had been sent

two leagues away to pursue the fugitives, because otherwise they would not have been able to reach them, for there was a small river between them. The night prevented them from achieving any great success. Yet they captured and killed some fugitives. The rest and greater part of the army took refuge in the city. The lord of Contay served well that day in ordering the battle but a few days later at the town of Huy[7] he died, having made a very good end. He had been both valiant and wise, yet he lived but a short time after giving his harsh advice against the hostages of the Liꝛgeois as you have heard previously. As soon as the duke had disarmed he called a secretary and made him write a letter to the Constable and others who had left him at Louvain. It was only four days before that they had come as ambassadors, and he notified them of this victory and requested that nothing should be done against the Bretons.

Two days after the battle the pride of the stupid Liègeois was seriusly damaged, although they had lost little. But, whoever he is, it is well for a man to beware of placing his whole fortune on the hazard of a battle if he can avoid it, because the loss of a few men often causes an incredible change in the courage of the losers, both through fear of the enemy and through their mistrust of their master and his private advisers. They begin to grumble and plot and demand more brazenly than they are wont to, and they are more resentful when these demands are refused. Three crowns will not do as much now as one had done before. And if he who has lost is wise he will not attempt anything more this season with troops who have just fled, but will hold himself at the ready and try to find an enemy easy to defeat, where his troops can be the victors and restore their morale and banish their fear.

In any case a battle always has serious consequences for the loser. However it is true that the victors should seek opportunities for battle in order to complete their work more quickly especially those, like the English or Swiss as we might say today, who have better infantry than their neighbours. I don't say this to deprecate other nations, but these two nations have had remarkable victories and their men are not content to take the field for long without undertaking some exploit, unlike the French and Italians, who are more understanding and easier to lead. On the other hand the victor increases his reputation and standing with his people far above what it was before. His subjects obey him more readily, they give him whatever he asks for and his men become more courageous and daring. Sometimes these princes think so highly of themselves and become so proud that they come to grief later on. I speaking from experience.[8] All such good fortune comes from God alone who changes things according to the merits or failings of men.

When those who were at Saint-Trond saw that the battle was lost and that they were not surrounded on all sides, they surrendered the town, thinking that the defeat was more serious than it was. They left their arms behind and allowed the duke of Burgundy to select ten men to dispose of it at his will. He had them decapitated; amongst them were six of the hostages who had been released only a few days before on the conditions you heard about. He struck camp and marched to Tongeren, where the inhabitants expected to be besieged. But the town was not very strong and without waiting

to be attacked the inhabitants made a similar agreemnt with the duke, giving him ten men, including another five or six hostages. All ten were executed like the others.

- Jean Balue, bishop of Évreaux, 1465-7, and of Angers 1467-91, created cardinal 18 September 1467.
- Gui de Brimeu, lord of Humbercourt, executed 1477.
- Regnaut de Rouvroit.
- In fact he died at Brussels on 19 December 1467.
- Following MMS. A., B., and P. in this and the next sentence.

3

[Capture of Liège}

FROM Tongeren the duke marched towards the city of Liège which was in great turmoil. Some inhabitants wanted to defend the city, saying that they had plenty of men; a knight called Sir Raez de [Heers, lord of] Linter especially advocated this course. Others, on the contrary, who could see the burning and destruction of all their homeland, wanted peace at all costs. So as the duke approached the city a few unimportant men, mainly fishmongers,[9] made some small peaceful overtures. However these matters were taken in hand by some of the hostages who had acted very differently from those I told you about previously. These recognized the favour which they had received and led out three hundred of the chief citizens, clothed only in their shirts, with their legs and heads bare. They brought the duke the keys of the city and delivered themselves and the city to him unreservedly to do with as he wished, only begging him not to burn or pillage it. There were also present that day as ambassadors my lord of Moy,[10] and a secretary of the King called Master Jean Prevost, who had come to deliver similar demands and others to those the Constable had brought a few days before.

The same day that city capitulated[11] the duke, expecting to enter it, sent the lord of Humbercourt there to go in first because he knew the city intimately since he had helped to adminster it during the years when there had been peace. Nevertheless he was refused entry that day and he had to stay at a small abbey next to one of the gates. He had with him fifty men-at-arms and there were perhaps about two hundred soldiers in all of whom I was one. The duke of Burgundy sent word to him not to leave if he felt secure, but if the place was not strong to withdraw towards him, for since the area was very rocky it was very difficult to send help to him. Humbercourt decided not to leave because his position was strong and he kept by him in order to use them, as you will hear, five or six wealthy citizens who had come to deliver the keys of the city. At nine o'clock in the evening we heard their town clock strike, at which the citizens assembled, and Humbercourt feared that they were going to attack us because he had been accurately informed that Sir Raez de [Heers, lord of] Linter and several others did not want to consent to the peace. His suspicion was well founded; for this was their purpose and they were ready to sally out.

'If we distract them till midnight,' Humbercourt said, 'we'll escape because they'll be tired and want to sleep. Those who are our

enemies will flee, thinking that their enterprise has failed.' So in order to achieve this end he dispatched two of the burgesses whom he had retained, as I told you, giving them certain very friendly proposals. He did this only to give them a reason for calling the citizens together and to gain time because they had a custom, as they still do, of bringing all the people together at the bishop's palace when there is any news. They are summoned there by the sound of a bell from within. So our two honest burgesses who had been hostages proceeded to the gate, which was only two bow-shots away, and there found large numbers of armed men. Some wanted to attack them, others did not. They cried out to the mayor of the city that they had brought certain favourable proposals from the lord of Humbercourt, lieutenant of the duke of Burgundy in this district, and it would be a good thing to go to the palace and examine them. This was done. Immediately we heard the bell sounded in the palace which informed us clearly that they were fully occupied.

Our two burgesses did not return, but after an hour we heard a rather greater noise at the gate than before. Many people had gathered there and they shouted insults over the wall at us. Then Humbercourt, realizing that we were in greater danger than before, dispatched the four remaining hostages to carry letters which said that he, being governor of the city for the duke of Burgundy, had treated them in a friendly manner and would not consent in any way to their destuction since it was but recently that he had been made a freeman of one of their gilds, that of the Blacksmiths, and had worn their livery. For this reason they could trust what he said to them. In short, if they wanted to benefit from the peace and to save their homes it was necessary for them, after delivering the town, to do what they had promised to do in a memorandum. When he had fully instructed these four men, like the previous ones, they went up to the gate, which they found wide open. Some welcomed them with gross libels and threats but others were content to hear their message and returned again to the palace. So once more we heard the bell of the palace and were very relieved; the noise at the gate died down. They were, indeed, a long time at the palace — until two in the morning. There they decided to maintain the agreement which they had made and that in the morning they would open one of the gates for the lord of Humbercourt. They all then went to bed as the lord of Humbercourt had predicted. Straight away Sir Raez de [Heers, lord of] Linter and his followers fled the town.

I would not have spent so much time describing these things, since it is scarcely an important matter, had it not been to demonstrate that sometimes men drawing on their great experience, and using such ruses and expedients, are able to avoid great danger, damage, or loss.

Next day at dawn many of the hostages came to speak to the lord of Humbercourt and entreated him to go to the palace where all the citizens were assembled, so that he could swear to the two points which worried them, that is to say, the clauses concerning fire and pillage. Afterwards, they said, they would deliver a gate to his keeping. He wrote to the duke of Burgundy telling him of this and

went. Once the oath was taken he returned to the gate and made the garrison on it come down and replaced them by twelve men-at-arms and archers. He put one of the duke of Burgundy's banners on the gate. Then he went to another walled-up gate and placed it in the hands of [Anthony] the Bastard of Burgundy, who was encamped before it. Another he gave to the Marshal of Burgundy and a fourth he delivered to one of the noblemen who were still with him. In this way all four gates were strongly garrisoned by the duke of Burgundy's troops and flew his banners. For you must realize that Liège at this time was one of the most powerful cities in the country — only four or five others exceeded it — and it was more heavily populated than others, particularly so because many people had sought refuge there from the neighbouring countryside. The losses in the battle were hardly noticeable. They lacked for nothing although it was the very depth of winter, and the rainfall was indescribably heavy and the ground itself incredibly muddy and soft. We were in desperate need of supplies and money. The army had almost broken up and even if the duke of Burgundy had wanted to besiege them he could not have done so. If they had waited two more days before surrendering he would have had to retreat.

For this reason I conculde that the great glory and honour which he won in this campaign proceeded solely from God's grace towards him, contrary to all expectation, because he would never have dared ask for the success which he achieved. In the judgement of men he received those honours because of the grace and favour he had shown toward the hostages which you heard about before. I say this more readily because princes and others sometimes complain bitterly to themselves and regret that when they have done some good to someone it often rebounds to their disadvantage. They tell themselves that in the future they will not be so lenient, nor pardon so easily nor do any generous thing nor grant a favour, although these are all things inherent in their office. In my opinion it is badly argued and proceeds from an evil mind to say and do this. For a prince, or any other man who is never mistaken, can only be a beast knowing not the difference between good and evil. Moreover, men are not all from the same mould. For which reason the wickedness of one or two should not prevent us doing good turns to many when there is the time and opportunity. It would be well for all to have good judgement of character, for all men are not equally deserving. I can hardly believe that a wise person would not be grateful for some great benefit which he has recieved from another. Here princes often err, for an association with fools is never profitable for long. In my opinion one of the wisest qualities a lord can display is a close acquaintance and relationship with virtuous and honest men. For others will judge him by the type of man with whom he associates most closely.

To conclude this chapter, I think that one should never fail to do good, because just one man, or the meanest of those to whom you have once done good, may by chance do you a good turn or service which will recompense you for all the knavery and ingratitude which others would have done in a similar circumstance. Thus you have seen how the hostages acted, some well and gratefully, the

majority badly and ungraciously. Yet five or six alone sufficed to conclude this exploit to the duke of Burgundy's satisfaction.

- Following MS.P. MS.D. reads *prisoniers*.
- Colard, lord of Moy.
- November 1467.

4

[The entry of Charles the Rash into Liège and Ghent]

THE day after the gates had been handed over, the duke entered the city of Liège triumphantly after a hundred and twenty feet[12] of the wall had been knocked down and the moat filled up to the level of the main street. Over two thousand fully armed soldiers and ten thousand archers marched on foot behind the duke yet many men remained in the camp. The duke was on horseback and so were his household and the most important men in the army who were decked out as finely as possible, and thus he rode up to the cathedral where he dismounted. But to be brief, he stayed for some days in the city. There he had five or six of the former hostages executed, amongst them the town's messenger whom he hated greatly. He imposed various new laws and customs on them and taxed them heavily for the money which he said was owing to him because they had broken the peace agreements of previous years. He carried off all their artillery and arms and had all the fortifications of the city razed. Then he went home where he was received with great acclimation and loyalty, particularly by the men of Ghent who, with some other towns, a little before he entered the bishopric of Liège, had been in rebellion against him. But at this moment they welcomed him as a conqueror and all the town's banners were carried before him as far as Brussels by the most notable citizens. Those who carried them came on foot.[13] This was because after his father's death he had made his entry into Ghent before any other town in his country, as he thought it was the town which loved him most and that the rest would follow its example.[14] This was true.

Next morning, after his entry, the citizens armed themselves and gathered in the market place carrying a statue of a saint, who they called St. Lievin. They ran the carriage carrying the reliquary of the saint against the walls of a small house, called*la maison de la Cuillette,* where certain corn dues were levied to pay off the debts the town had contracted towards Duke Philip of Burgundy when they made peace with him, since they had been at war for two years with the duke. This meant, they said, that the saint wanted to go straight through the house without deviating from his path and instantly they knocked it down.

The duke went to the market place and went to the upstairs of a house to talk to them. Many important people acknowledged him as he went by and offered to accompany him. He made them wait in front of the town hall for him, but slowly the rabble forced them to go to the market place. When the duke arrived there he ordered them to take the reliquary back to the church. Some lifted it up to obey him but others made them put it down again. They complained to him about some of those who administered the

town's finances and he promised them justice. When he saw that the could not make them disperse he withdrew to his lodgings and they remained in the market place for a week.

Next day they brought him documents in which they demanded the return of all that Duke Philip had confiscated from them by the Peace of Gavere.[15] These included a demand that each of the seventy-two gilds should have its own banner as it used to do. Because he could see what a desperate situation he was in he was forced to give in to all their demands and allow them such privileges as they wanted. As soon as he gave his word, after much coming and going, they planted all the banners, which had already been made, in the market place, showing that they would have done the same against the duke's wishes even if he had not agreed to let them.

He was right to say that the other towns would do as Ghent did on his entry for many rebelled, killed his officers and committed other excesses. Had he believed his father's dictum that the Gantois loved their prince's son but never the prince, he would not have been so deceived. To be quite honest, after the people of Liège there are none so fickle as the Gantois. However despite their villainy they are honest in one thing; they will never harm the person of their prince and the burgesses and other leading citizens are very good people and much displeased by the madness of the common people.

The duke was forced to ignore all these acts of disobedience in order to avoid war with both his own subjects and the Liègois at the same time. But he reckoned that if the campaign he had undertaken turned out well he would soon bring them back to obedience. And so it happened. For as I have already said they carried all the banners before him on foot to Brussels, together with all the privileges and other letters which they had made him sign on his departure from Ghent. At an impressive assembly in the Great Chamber at Brussels, in the presence of many ambassadors, they presented to him the banners and all the privileges to do with as he saw fit.

His heralds and pursuivants at his command took the banners off the lances to which they were attached and sent them to Boulogne-sur-Mer, ten leagues from Calais. Those which had been taken away from them in his father, Duke Philip's time, after his wars with them when he had defeated and subjugated them were also kept there. The duke's Chancellor[16] took all their privileges and annulled the one they had relating to their law for in all the other Flemish towns the prince appointed new magistrates every year and heard their accounts. But in Ghent, by this privilege, he had only been able to appoint four men and the rest, twenty-two, since there were twenty-six *échevins* in all, were nominated by the city. When the magistrates of the towns favour the count of Flanders there is peace in that year and they willingly agree to his demands. But if on the contrary the magistrates are not good there are many disturbances. Above all this, the Gantois paid thirty thousand florins to the duke and six thousand to his officers and some men were banished from the town. All their other privileges were

restored. The other towns made their peace by offering the duke money, which he accepted because they had openly attacked him.

From all these things you can well see the good which accrues to the conqueror and the losses which the vanquished suffer. For this reason one ought to be very wary about allowing oneself to be drawn into the chance decision of a battle when not constrained to fight and, if forced to do so, to consider all the possibilities before fighting. Often those who readily do these things cautiously take good precautions and win, when those who proceed arrogantly achieve nothing. But when God interposes man's efforts are worthless.

The Liègeois had been excommunicated for five years for their quarrels with their bishop whom they dispised and they continued in their folly and hateful opinions without knowing what moved them to do so (in fact it was greed and pride). King Louis said a very wise thing, to my way of thinking, when he remarked that pride comes before a fall. But he had not the least trace of this vice himself.

When these disturbances were over, the duke left for Ghent where his entry was very expensive. He entered the town in arms. The citizens had come out to him in the fields so that he could put men out of the city or in to it at his pleasure. Several of the King's ambassadors came to him there and also went from him to the King. Similarly he exchanged envoys with Brittany. So that winter passed. The King was trying very hard all the while to get the duke to consent to allow him to do as he wished in Brittany, offering him certain proposals in recompense. But the duke would not agree, which was displeasing to the King, especially when he saw what happened to his allies, the Liègeois.

- MS. reads *xx brasses*. A *brasse* is the length of a man's outstretched arms, thus about six feet.
- Commynes confuses the events of 1467 and 1469 at Ghent where he was an eye witness on both occasions.
- Charles made his *joyeuse entrée* into Ghent in June 1467.
- 1453.
- Pierre de Goux, Chancellor of Burdungy, 1461-71.

5

*How the King made war in Brittany on the duke of Brittany and the duke of Normandy, his brother, who had retired to the duchy; and the agreement which followed*FINALLY, when summer came, the King could not remain patient any longer and he entered Brittany, or at least his men did, and captured two small castles. Chantocé and Ancenis. Immediately the news was brought to the duke of Burgundy. The dukes of Normandy and Brittany implored his aid and with all speed he raised his army and wrote to the King telling him not to persist in this enterprise because they were his allies and were included in his truce. Receiving no satisfactory answer the duke took the field close to the town of Péronne with a large number of men. The King was at Compiègne and his army remained in Brittany.

When the duke had been there for three or four days Cardinal Balue come to him as an ambassador on the King's behalf for a short stay during which he made certain proposals, saying to the duke that those in Brittany could well come to an arrangement wihtout him. The King's purpose, as always, was to divide the allies. Soon the cardinal, after receiving all due honours and entertainment, was dismissed. He returned with this answer; that the duke had not taken to the field to injure or make war on the King but only to help his allies. Both sides sugared their words.

Shortly after the cardinal's departure a herald called Brittany arrived before the duke, bearing letters to him from the dukes of Normandy and Brittany, containing the news that they had made peace with the King[17] and renounced all their alliances, especially with him, and that in a final settlement the duke of Normandy was to have an income of sixty thousand *livres* and renounce his share of Normandy, which had only recently been given him. This did not greatly please my lord Charles of France but he was forced to conceal his resentment.

The duke of Burgundy was very astounded by this news, seeing that he had only taken the field in order to help those dukes. The herald was in very great personal danger because the duke thought that since he had come via the King he had forged these letters. Nevertheless, he received similar letters from another source. The King thought he had achieved his ends and that he would easily bring Burgundy to abandon the other dukes as they had abandoned him. Secret messengers began to pass between them and eventually the King gave the duke of Burgundy a hundred and twenty thousand gold crowns, half of which were paid before he left the field, for the expenses which he had incurred in raising the army.

The duke sent a valet of his chamber, Jan Boschuse, with whom he was very intimate, to the King. This gave the King great confidence and he wanted to speak to the duke, hoping thereby to win him over to his way of thinking in all things, seeing the dirty way in which the other two dukes had treated him and the large sum of money which he had given him. He thus informed the duke of this by Boschuse and also sent with him Cardinal Balue, for the second time, and Sir Tanguy du Chastel, governor of Roussillon, who intimated by their words that the King really wanted this interview to take place. They found the duke at Péronne but he was not very anxious for such a meeting because the Liègeois once more showed signs of revolt, since two envoys had been sent by the King in order to incite them to do this a few days before the truce had been agreed with the two dukes and their allies. The Liègeois had replied to the ambassadors that they dared not revolt because the duke had defeated them and destroyed their walls the year before and when they saw this truce, even if they had any such wishes, they would have forgotten them. Nevertheless it was finally agreed that the King should come to Péronne as he desired. The duke wrote in his own hand a letter giving the King a safe conduct to come and go freely. So the ambassadors departed and went to the King, who was at Noyon. The duke, in the meantime, hoping to settle affairs in Liège, sent there the bishop of Liège, who was the

cause of the disputes, and he was accompanied by the lord of Humbercourt, lieutenant of the county, and several others.

- Treaty of Ancenis, 10 September 1468.

6

how the King came to Péronne to see the duke of Burgundy, how he was arrested there and how the duke forced him to accompany him to Liège

YOU have heard how it had been decided that the King should come to Péronne. So he came there and brought no guards but depended entirely on the assurances given him by the duke. He only wanted my lord of Cordes, who was then in the ducal service, to come to meet and accompany him with some ducal archers. This was done. Few men came with him. Nevertheless amongst them were some important figures, like the duke of Bourbon and his brother, the cardinal of Bourbon and the Constable, the count of Saint-Pol, who was not concerned at all with this interview and he was not now so respectful of the duke as he had once been. For this reason there was little love lost between the two of them. Cardinal Balue, the governor of Roussillon, and others were also there. When the King approached Péronne the duke, well accompanied, came out to meet him and brought him into the town, lodging him with the receiver, who had a fine house close to the castle, because the rooms of the castle were few and poor.

War between two great princes is very easy to start but very difficult to end because of the things which happen and their consequences. On each side many schemes are formed to harm the enemy which cannot be quickly countermanded. In this case these two princes had agreed to this interview suddenly without informing their own men in distant regions, who continued to execute fully all the orders which their masters had previously sent them. The duke of Burgundy had sent for the Burgundian army which at that time included a large number of the nobility. With them were three brothers, my lord of Bresse, the bishop of Geneva and the count of Romont,[18] who were all scions of the house of Savoy, several other Savoyard subjects[19] (the Savoyards and the Burgundians have always loved each other a great deal), and also some Germans who lived on the borders of Savoy and the county of Burgundy. You may remember that the King had previously held the lord of Bresse in prison[20] because he had had two knights killed in Savoy. There was no love lost between them! Also in the army were my lord of Lau (whom the King had likewise held prisoner for a long time[21] after he had been friendly with him; he had then escaped from prison and fled to Burgundy), Sir Poncet de Rivière, and the lord of Ufré, later chief squire of the household of France.

All this company drew near to Péronne when the King went to the town. The lord of Bresse and the other three I have mentioned entered the town wearing the cross of St. Andrew, thinking that they had arrived just in time to accompany the duke of Burgundy to meet the King, but they were a little late. They went straight to the duke's chamber, paid their respects to him and, with my lord of Bresse acting as spokesman, asked the duke that the three should

be given safeguard, notwithstanding the King's arrival, as he had granted it to them up to the moment of their arrival there. They said that they were also ready to serve him against all. The duke thanked them and granted their request by word of mouth. The rest of the army, which the Marshal of Burgundy had brought, was camped in the open as it had been commanded to do so. The Marshal had as many grievances against the King as the others, over the town of Épinal, situated in Lorraine, which Louis had previously given to the Marshal and then later taken from him to give to Duke John of Calabria; this has been mentioned often enough earlier in these present memoirs.

Soon the King was informed of the arrival of all these men and the uniforms they were wearing. He became very frightened and sent to ask the duke of Burgundy if he could stay in the castle because all those who had just come were his enemies. The duke was very pleased by this and gave him his lodgings and told him to have no fears.

It is great folly on the part of a prince to submit himself to the power of another, especially when they are at war, and it is very advantageous to princes to have read history in their youth in which they learn much about such meetings and the great frauds, deceptions and perjuries which some of the ancients have committed against each other, taking and killing those who have trusted them in such sureties. Not all have acted in this way but one example is enough to make many wise and warn them to mind what they are doing.

This, it seems to me (and for eighteen years or more I have seen this with my own eyes when I was with princes, and had full knowledge of the highest and most secret affairs of state dealt with in this kingdom of France and neighbouring lordships), one of the surest ways of making a man wise, by reading ancient history and learning how to conduct and to undertake one's affairs safely and wisely by the history and examples of our predecessors. For our life is so brief that it is not possible to have very many kinds of experience. In addition to this, as our lives are shorter than the lives of men used to be and our bodies are not so strong, so we are weaker in faith and loyalty towards one another. I do not know by what ties men can bind themselves to each other, especially the great, who are inclined to follow their own wishes without regard to reason, and, what is worse, are more often than not surrounded by men who have an eye for nothing except to please their masters and to praise them for all their acts whether good or bad. If anyone is found who wants to do things better, everyone gets upset. Again I cannot forbear from blaming ignorant princes. Around all lords are readily to be found clerks and lawyers, as is only right and proper when they are good men. But they are very dangerous when they are otherwise. For every occasion they have some precedent on the tip of their tongues or a story which they distort in order to present it in the best light. But wise princes and those who have read widely are never deceived by them nor are their councillors so foolhardy as to attempt to make them swallow lies. Believe me, God did not establish the office of King or of any other prince to be exercised by ignoramuses or by those who glory in saying, 'I am

not a clerk, I leave my council to take care of such matters, I trust them,' and then, without more ado, go off to have a good time. If they had been properly educated in their youth, they would think differently, and they would earnestly desire to be esteemed for their character and virtue.

I do not want to say that all prnces are served by such badly educated men, but the majority of those whom I have known have not been entirely free of them. In times of need I have seen some wise princes who have known how to use the best and to take the advice without complaint. And amongst all the princes whom I have known our master, the King, knew best how to do this and how to hold gentlemen of wealth and worth in the highest honour. He had read quite widely. He liked to ask about and understand all things. He had a natural good sense which was worth more than all the knowledge one could learn in this world. All books are valueless unless they bring a recollection of things past. Then one can learn things from a single book in three months which could not be seen or experienced by twenty men of rank living one after another. So that, to conclude this digression, I think God cannot send a greater plague on a country than an untintelligent prince, because from this all other ills proceed. First come division and war because he always gives away to other men the authority which he wought to want to keep more than anything else. From this division proceed famine and epidemics and other ills which spring from war. Just look and see whether a prince's subjects do not have good reason to be sad when they see his children badly educated by men of poor character.

- Respectively, Philippe, Jean-Louis and Jacques de Savoie.
- This phrase added from MSS. M. and P.
- 1464-6.
- 1466-8.

7

[The revolt at Liège and the interview at Péronne]

NOW you have been told about the almost simultaneous arrival of the Burgundian army and the King at Péronne, for the duke had not been able to countermand his orders to the army since they were already well advanced into Champagne when the interview with the King was being arranged. Their arrival aroused suspicions which disturbed the meeting. Nevertheless these two princes deputed councillors to assemble and negotiate together in as friendly a manner as was possible in the circumstances. These then got down to business and had already spent three or four days arranging matters when some amazing news came from Liège which I shall tell you about.

The King, on his way to Péronne, had quite forgotten that he had sent two ambassadors to Liège to seek their aid against the duke. The ambassadors had been so conscientious that they had already stirred up a great mob. The Liègeois had gone directly to capture the town of Tongeren where the bishop of Liège and the lord of Humbercourt were staying with two thousand soldiers or more. They captured the bishop and Humbercourt, killing some of the

bishop's servants. The rest had fled leaving all that they had as if they had been routed. The Liègeois then set off straight back to their city which was close to Tongeren. On the way back Humbercourt arranged to be ransomed by a knight called Sir Jean[22] de Wildt (in French we would say *'le sauvage'*). He saved Humbercourt from the mob, which would have killed him, and received his word of honour but he did not keep it long because he was killed shortly afterwards.

The mob was very pleased with the capture of the bishop who was lord of Liège. They hated several of the canons whom they had captured that day and they killed five or six of them as a preliminary gesture. Amongst them was a certain Master Robert,[23] a close confidant of the bishop, whom I have seen several times riding fully armed with his master, for such is the practice of German bishops. They killed Master Robert in the bishop's presence and cut him into little pieces which they threw at each other's heads in great derision. Before they had gone the seven or eight leagues which they had to travel, they killed up to sixteen canons and other notable men who were almost all servants of the bishop. For already there were rumours that negotiations for peace had begun, and they were content to say that they were only quarreling with their bishop whom they led prisoner to their city.

The fugitives I have mentioned spread alarm wherever they went and the news came quickly to the duke. Some said all had been killed, others contradicted them. When such events occur there is seldom only one account. Several people came, some of whom said that they had seen the canons carried off and that they thought that the bishop and Humbercourt were with them and all the rest were dead. They swore that they had seen the King's ambassadors, whom they named, with the mob. The duke was told all this and he immediately believed it and became extremely angry, saying that the King had come to Péronne to trick him. Straight away he gave orders for the town and castle gates to be shut on the rather poor pretext that a box containing valuable rings and money had been lost.

The King was alarmed when he saw that he was shut up in the castle, which was only small, and that archers were posted at the gate. He realized that he was lodged close to a large tower where a count of Vermandois had a king of France, one of his predecessors,[24] put to death. At that time I was still one of the duke's chamberlains and slept in his room when I liked, because it was customary to do so in that house. The duke, when he saw that the gates were closed turned most of his men out of his room and told those of us who were left that the King had come there to betray him, that he had strenuously avoided the interview and it had been arranged against his wishes. He related the news from Liège and what the King had achieved through his ambassadors and how all his men had been killed. He was terribly incensed and uttered savage threats against the King and I truly believe that if at this moment he could have found men who would have supported him or counselled him to commit some violent deed against the King, he would have done it, or at the very least he would have imprisoned him in that great tower. With me were only two

chamber valets, one of whom was a native of Dijon, called Charles de Visen, an honest man and well trusted by his master. We did not inflame him further but tried with all our might to calm him down. Soon afterwards he spoke in a similar manner to several people and the news spread around the town, eventually reaching the King himself. He was extremely afraid. Indeed so was everyone else as they foresaw some disaster, considering how many things had to be arranged in order to resolve a difference which had arisen between two such great princes and the mistakes which they had both made in not telling their servants, who were far away from them engaged on their business, so that something was bound to happen unexpectedly.

- MS. reads Guillaume.
- Robert de Morialme, archdeacon of St. Lambert's, Liège.
- Charles the Simple, d. 929 from illness, not at the hands of his captor, Herbert of Vermandois.

8

[The dangers of princely interviews]

IT is very imprudent for two great princes, of equal power, to meet each other, unless they are both very young, at which time they have no other thoughts but for their pleasures. But when they reach the age when all they want to do is increase their power at each other's expense yet at no danger to themselves — which is almost impossible — their malevolence and rivalry only increase. For this reason it would be better if they settled their differences by the mediation of wise and loyal servants, as I have said at some length elsewhere in these memoirs. But I will describe some examples of this which I myself have seen and learned about in my time.

A few years after our King was crowned, before the [War of the] Public Weal, there took place an interview[25] between the King and the king of Castile, who were the most closely allied princes in Christendom. For they were obliged to each other, king to king, realm to realm and subject to subject, to keep the alliance by oaths of a most fearful severity. King Enrique of Castile came well accompanied as far as Fuenterrabía to this meeting and Louis was at Saint-Jean-de-Luz, four leagues away. Both were at the extreme borders of their realms. I was not there but the King told me about it, as did my lord of Lau and several Castillian lords, who were there with the king of Castile, including the Grand Master of the Order of Santiago[26] and the archbishop of Toledo,[27] the leading Castilians of their day. He was also accompanied in great splendour by the count of Ledesma, his favourite, with all his guard of three hundred horsemen, who were Moors of Granada and included several Negroes.[28] The truth is that King Enrique cared little about his person and gave all his property away, or at least allowed it to be taken away from him by those who wanted it or were able to take it. Our King was also well attended as you have seen and as was his custom. His bodyguard was especially fine. The queen of Aragon[29] also attended the interview because of some dispute which she had with the king of Castile over Estella and a few other places in Navarre. Louis was to arbitrate. To continue my argument that princely interviews are unnecessary; these two kings had never

had any dispute nor was there any difference between them and they saw each other only once or twice on the banks of the river [Bidassoa] which separates the two realms, near to the small castle of Urtubie. The king of Castile crossed over it. But they did not get on very well together. Our King soon realized that the king of Castile could scarcely do anything unless it pleased the Grand Master of Santiago and the archbishop of Toledo, so he sought their acquaintance and they visited him at Saint-Jean-de-Luz, where he struck up a great friendship and understanding with them and despised their king. The majority of the followers of the two kings was lodged at Bayonne and from the start they quarrelled violently. Whatever alliance there was, their languages were different. The count of Ledesma crossed the river in a boat which had a sail made of golden cloth and he was wearing hose studded with precious stones when he went to meet the King. The French said he had borrowed the cloth from a church. But this ws not true as he was quite wealthy and I have seen that he has since become duke of Albuquerque and possessor of wide demenses in Castile.

Each nation began to mock the other. The king of Castile was ugly and his clothing was displeasing to the French, so they made fun of him. Our King was dressed in short clothes as poorly made as possible, and sometimes of the cheapest cloth, and he wore an unfashionable hat, different from all the others, decorated with a leaden image. The Castillians made fun of him and said it as due to his stinginess. As it happened this meeting broke up and all departed full of derision and contempt for each other. Never thereafter did these two kings like one another and great differences of opinion occurred between the servants of the king of Castile, which lasted a long time after his death. I saw him abandoned by all his servants, the poorest king I have ever seen.

The queen of Aragon was upset by the judgement which Louis gave in favour of the king of Castile. She disliked the King intensely for this as did the king of Aragon [Juan II], although a little while later in their need they used his aid against Barcelona. Yet this friendship was not long-lasting and the bitter war which broke out between the King and the king of Aragon has lasted sixteen years and still continues.[30] But I must tell you about other cases. Since then Charles, duke of Burgundy, at his own urgent request had an interview with the Emperor Frederick, who is still alive, and put himself to great expense to show off his magnificence. They talked about several things at Trier where the meeting was held [in 1473] and, amongst other things, about the marriage of their children which later took place. When they had been together for several days the Emperor left without saying farewell, to the great shame and humiliation of the duke. Never since have they or their subjects liked each other. The Germans were offended by the pompous and ceremonious language of the duke which they took for pride; the Burgundians were offended by the Emperor's mean entourage and poor clothes. These disputes developed so much that they led to the war over Neuss.

I was present also when the same duke of Burgundy met King Edward of England at Saint-Pol in Artois [in 1471]. He had married Edward's sister and they were members of each other's

Order.[31] They met for two days. The King's subjects were very quarrelsome and two factions appealed to the duke. He listened more to one side than to the other, whose anger increased. Nevertheless he helped the king and his kingdom by giving him men, money and ships because he had been driven out by the earl of Warwick. But notwithstanding this service by which he recovered his kingdom never afterwards did they love or speak well of one another.

I was present when the Count Palatine of the Rhine came to visit the duke.[32] He was at Brussels for several days where he was richly fêted, welcomed, honoured and lodged in sumptuous rooms. The duke's men said that the Germans were dirty and that they threw their boots on the richly furnished beds and that they were not as polite as we were. They thought much less of them than they had done before meeting them. The Germans also complained and spoke contemptuously about the Burgundians because they were envious of such pomp. In effect, never since have they liked or helped each other. I also saw Sigismund, Duke of Austria, meet the duke [in 1469], when he sold him the county of Ferrette, which lay close to the county of Burgundy, for a hundred thousand gold florins, because he was unable to defend it against the Swiss. These two princes did not get on well together and later Duke Sigismund made his peace with the Swiss and ousted the duke from the county of Ferrette and kept all the money. From this sprang infinite misfortunes for the duke of Burgundy. At this same time the earl of Warwick visited the duke and, likewise, neither were friends thereafter.[33] I was also present at the meeting at Picquigny [in 1475] between our King and King Edward of England, which I shall say more about in due course. Few of the promises made there were kept. They did business hypocritically. It is true that they were not at war any more and that the sea was between them, but they never achieved perfect amity.

In conclusion, I think that great princes should never see each each other if they want to remain friends, as I have said before. Troubles can arise for the following reasons; their servants cannot refrain from speaking about past events — one or other is sure to not be better off than the other, which results in mockery, which is very offensive to those who are mocked, and when there are two different nations, their languages and clothes are different and that which pleases one does not please the other. Of two princes, one is bound to be more polite and personable to men than the other, from which he will derive fame and take pleasure that he is praised, and this can only reflect badly on the other. The first few days after they have gone all these good points will be whispered about quietly. Afterwards, through familiarity, they will be discussed at dinner and supper time. Then they will be reported to both parties (for few things remain secret in this world, especially those that are discussed). So here are a few of my views on this subject, which have been drawn from my own experience.

- In 1463.
- Either Beltran de la Cueva, count of Ledesma, or Juan Pacheco, marquis of Villena.
- Alonso Carillo d'Acuna.

- This clause from MS. P.
- Juana Enriquez, second wife of Juan II of Aragon.
- cf. Introduction, for significance of this remark.
- Charles sent the Order of the Golden Fleece to Edward in 1468 and became a member of the Order of the Garter in 1469.
- February 1467.
- April 1469.

9

[The Treaty of Péronne]

I HAVE set out my reasons at length in order to tell princes what I think about such interviews before returning to my account of the King at Péronne where he thought he was a prisoner, as I said earlier. The gates were closed and the guards remained on duty there for two or three days. In the meantime the duke of Burgundy did not see the King and only a few royal servants entered the castle by a wicket gate. None of the King's men was taken away from him but few, if any, of the duke's men, especially if they were influential, were allowed to speak to the King or enter his chamber. The first day the town was in consternation and uproar. The second day the the duke was a little calmer. He held a council for most of the day and into the night. The King made an effort to approach all of those he thought might be able to help him and made many promises. He ordered the distribution of fifteen thousand gold crowns but the man[34] who was responsible for this kept some of them for himself and acquitted himself badly, as the King learned later. The King was frightened of his former servants who had come with the army from Burgundy and who were already declaring themselves supporters of his brother, the duke of Normandy.

At the council, which I mentioned, many differing opinions were expressed. The majority said that the safe-conduct which the King had been given should be honoured, seeing that the King agreed readily enough to the peace proposals which had been drawn up in writing. Others wanted his immediate imprisonment without further ado, and yet others wanted my lord of Normandy, his brother, to be summoned without delay and a peace most advantageous for all the French princes to be concluded. And it seemed good to those who made this suggestion that if it were approved the King should be held captive and a strong guard set over him, because when such a mighty prince has been captured he can never be released, or only with difficulty, after receiving such an affront. This advice was so nearly accepted that I saw a messenger, with his boots on ready to depart, with several letters addressed to my lord of Normandy, who was in Brittany, waiting only for one from the duke. Nevertheless this advice was rejected.

The King made some suggestions. He offered to deliver the duke of Bourbon, the cardinal (his brother), the Constable and several others as hostages, so that when peace had been concluded he could return to Compiègne. He also offered straight away to order the Liègeois to set all to rights; otherwise he would declare against them himself. The hostages the King named offered themselves

willingly, at least in public. I do not know whether they said anything privately; I think not, and truly believe that the King would have left them there and he would never have returned. The third night the duke never undressed. He lay down two or three times on his bed and then got up and walked about as was his custom then he was disturbed. That night I slept in his chamber and walked up and down with him several times. By the morning he was more furious than ever, making threats and ready to do some mighty deed. Nevertheless he quietened down and decided that if the King would swear to the peace and go with him to Liège to help him to take vengeance for the bishop of Liège, who was his closest relative, he would be content. Instantly he left to go to the King's room to announce his decision. The King was warned of this by a friend[35] who assured him that no harm would befall him if he agreed to these two propositions, but that if he refused he would place himself in such extreme jeopardy that nothing more serious could ever happen to him. When the duke entered his voice shook, so disturbed was he and ready to fly into a rage again. He bowed humbly enough but his gestures and voice were rough as he asked the King whether he would swear to this. The King said he would. In truth nothing, or very little concerning the duke of Burgundy was modified from the peace made previously at Paris. As far as the duke of Normandy was concerned much was changed because it was declared that he should renounce the duchy of Normandy and have Champagne, Brie and some other neighbouring districts for his interitance. After this the duke asked the King if he would accompany him to Liège to help avenge the treason which the Liègeois had committed against him at the King's instigation. He reminded the King of the close relationship between the King and bishop of Liège, because he was a Bourbon. The King assented, saying that when the peace had been sworn (which he desired) then he would be quite happy to go with him to Liège and take there as many or as few men as seemed good to the duke. This reply greatly pleased the duke and immediately the peace treaty was brought in and a piece of the True Cross, called the Cross of Victory, which Charlemagne used to carry about with him, was taken out of the King's coffer and they swore to keep the peace. Then the town bells were rung and everybody was very joyful. On another occasion the King graciously honoured me by telling me that I had rendered very great service at this pacification.

Immediately the duke dispatched this news to Brittany and sent a copy of the treaty to show that he had not dissociated himself from nor deserted his allies. So my lord Charles got a good apanage, especially since the treaty, which they had made in Brittany a short time before, left him with only a pension, as you have heard.

- Cardinal Balue.
- Probably Commynes himself.

Book Two, Chapters 10-15; Book Three, Chapters 1-6

MEMOIRS

BOOK TWO

10

[The expedition against Liège]

WHEN the peace had been thus concluded, the King and the duke departed next morning and marched towards Cambrai and from there to the province of Liège. It was the very beginning of winter and the weather was dreadful. The King had with him his Scottish bodyguard and a few men-at-arms but he ordered another hundred to join him.

The duke's army was divided in two, part led by the Marshal of Burgundy, to whom you have already been introduced, and with him were the Burgundians and Savoyards and also a large number of men from the territories of Hainault, Luxembourg, Namur and Limbourg. The other part was with the duke. As they approached the city [of Liège] a council was held in the duke's presence, where some advised that it would be better to disband part of the army since the city had had its walls and gates razed the previous year and there was no hope of them receiving any support. Also the King was there in person against them and had made certain proposals on their behalf which were almost the same as had been put to them.

This view did not please the duke, which was lucky for him because no man was ever so close to losing everything as he was. His suspicions of the King made him choose the wiser course, and he was extremely ill advised by those who spoke thus and thought that the army was too strong. It was a very good example of pride or folly and I have heard such opinions many times. Sometimes captains speak in this way in order to be thought brave or because they do not sufficiently understand what has to be done. But when princes are wise they take no notice. The King, our master (may God have mercy on him), was well aware of this truth. For he was slow and timorous in beginning a project but when he had begun it he did everything in his power to bring it to a successful conclusion so that he scarcely ever failed to gain complete mastery.

So it was decided that the Marshal of Burgundy and all those whom I have spoken about who were in his company should go to

take up quarters in the city, and if they were refused entry they were to force their way in if they could. For already men from the city were coming and going in an attempt to make a settlement. The Marshal's division reached Namur and the next day, when the King and duke arrived, they left the town. As they approached the city the foolish populace sallied out to attack them and quite a considerable number were easily routed. The rest withdrew, but their bishop escaped and joined us.

A papal legate had been sent to pacify them and to investigate the differences between the bishop and his flock who were still under the ban of excommunication for the offences and reasons I listed earlier on. This legate exceeded his powers and, hoping to make himself bishop of the city, sided with the citizens, ordered them to take up arms and defend themselves and gave them other stupid pieces of advice. But seeing the city's peril, he rushed out hoping to escape. He was captured together with his men, about twenty-five in all, who were all well mounted. As soon as the duke heard this news he sent to tell those who had caught the legate to carry him off somewhere without telling him anything about it and to sell him like a merchant for their own profit because, if he was publicly informed, he would not be able to keep him but would have to release him out of respect for the apostolic see. They did not know how to follow his advice but fell out amongst themselves, and publicly, at dinner-time, those who claimed a share in him came to speak to the duke. Immediately he sent word for him to be handed over to him, gave him back all his belongings and paid him every respect. The great bulk of the vanguard under the leadership of the Marshal of Burgundy and the lord of Humbercourt marched directly to the city, expecting to enter it. Moved by great avarice they would rather have pillaged it than have accepted the terms which they were offered. They did not think there was any need to wait for the King and the duke of Burgundy who were seven or eight leagues behind them. They advanced so far that by nightfall they reached the outskirts and entered a street which led directly to a gate which the citizens had partially repaired. They held a conference but could not agree. The night, which was very dark, surprised them before they made their camp; nor was there a suitable place for this and they were in great disorder. Some paced up and down, others called their masters or their company or the names of their captains.

Sir Jean de Wildt and the other captains of the Liègeois saw their mistake and their disorder and plucked up courage. Their misfortune, the destruction of their walls, now served them well because they poured out wherever they liked through the breaches in the walls and fell upon the first ranks. By using the vineyards and small hillocks for cover, they fell on the pages and valets who were at the end of the suburb where they had entered and where a great number of the horses were loose, and killed a large number of them. Many men took to flight, for the night knows no shame.

They exploited the situation so well that they killed nearly eight hundred men, including a hundred men-at-arms. The experienced and courageous men in the vanguard banded together (they were nearly all men-at-arms and came from good families). They

marched with their standards right up to the gate for fear the attackers would sally out by it. The mud there was deep because of the continual rains and the men-at-arms, all on foot, were ankle-deep in it. At one stage the rest of the citizens were thinking of sallying out of the gate by torchlight with much shouting. Our men, who were close by, had four good guns and they fired two or three rounds along the main street and killed many people. That made them withdraw and close the gates. All the while, in the fight throughout the suburb, those who sallied out used some carts which they had captured as defences, because they were close to the town, and stayed outside it from two until six in the morning. Nevertheless, when it was broad daylight and men could see each other, they were repulsed. Sir Jean de Wildt was wounded there and he died two days later in the town, as did one or two of the other leaders.

11

[Charles the Rash and Louis XI at Liège]

ALTHOUGH it is sometmes necessary to make sorties they are always very dangerous for the defenders of a place, since the loss of ten of their men is more damaging than the loss of a hundred beseigers, because their numbers are not equal and they cannot obtain reinforcements when they want. If they lose a commander or leader it often happens that the rest of his companions and the soldiers only want to abandon their position. This very serious affray came to the duke's notice when he was camped four to six leagues from the town. First he was told that everyone had been completely routed. Nevertheless he and the whole army mounted and he ordered that the King was to be told nothing. On approaching the city from another direction he received news that things were going better and that there were not so many dead as was first thought and no one of any importance had been killed except my lord of Sengneur, a Flemish knight. But the gentlemen of the vanguard who were there found themselves hard pressed because they had been standing all night in the mud close to the enemy's gate. In addition, some of the fugitives had returned (I am speaking about the foot soldiers) but were so discouraged that it seemed improbable that they would be in a condition to put up any stern resistance. The duke and his men were implored for God's sake to hurry up so that some of the citizens would be forced to return to their own particular part of the defences. He was also asked to send them food because they did not have any at all. Rapidly he dispatched two or three hundred horsemen to ride to reinforce and encourage them with as much food as their horses could carry, although he could only find them a small amount. It was two days and a night since they had eaten or drunk, except for those who had taken a bottle with them, and they had experienced the most appalling weather. There were a large number of wounded including the prince of Orange,[36] whose name I have forgotten to mention and who showed himself a man of honour since he would not yield. My lords of Lau and Urfé both conducted themselves bravely even though during the night more than two[37]thousand men fled from them.

It was almost night when the duke heard this news and, having dispatched the supplies, he went back to his standard and told the King everything, which made him very pleased for a different outcome could have caused him harm. Immediately they approached the suburb the noblemen and men-at-arms, including the Bastard of Burgundy, who had been given important responsibilities by the duke, the lord of Ravenstein, the count of Roussy,[38] the Constable's son, and several others, dismounted in large numbers to accompany the archers in an attempt to capture the suburb and take up quarters there. These were easily occupied in the suburb close to a gate which the citizens had repaired just like the other one. The duke camped in the middle of the suburb and the King spent the night in a large well-built farmhouse a quarter of a league from the town and many soldiers, both his own and ours, camped around him.

The city, which is about as large as Rouen, is situated in a very fertile region, amongst hills and valleys through which the river Meuse flows. It was for these times densely populated. From the gate where we were camped to that where our vanguard was lodged it was only a short distance through the town, yet it was more than three leagues by a route outside the walls. This was full of holes and had a poor surface. It was also the depth of winter. Their walls were broken down and they could sally out wherever they liked. There was only a small moat and this had never been dug out because the bottom was very sharp and hard rock.

The first evening the duke of Burgundy spent in their suburb our vanguard was very relieved because the defenders had already had to divide their forces in two. About midnight we were seriously alarmed. The duke of Burgundy immediately went out into the street and the King and Constable joined him there shortly afterwards. They had really exerted themselves to come so far so quickly. Some shouted, 'They're sallying out of such and such a gate.' Others uttered equally alarming things, and the weather was so bad and it was so dark that men became very frightened. The duke of Burgundy never lacked courage but he was often remiss in giving proper orders. Certainly, he did not behave, at this moment I am talking about, as well as his men might have wished, seeing the King was present. The King himself took control and ordered the Constable, 'Take the men you've got with you to such and such a spot, for if they come out they'll come that way.' And hearing him speak and seeing his appearance you could see that he was a King of great merit and intelligence and one who had much previous experience of such affairs. But nevertheless nothing happened, so the King returned to his lodgings, as did the duke of Burgundy.

Next morning the King moved his quarters to a small house in the suburbs close to the duke of Burgundy's. He had with him his guard of a hundred Scots. His men-at-arms were billeted in a village next to him. The duke of Burgundy became very suspicious either that the King would enter the city, or that he would flee before he had taken the town, or that he would even cause him some personal injury, since he was so close. Nevertheless between the two houses there was a large barn into which he put three hundred men-at-arms, including the pick of his army. They broke

the walls down in order to be able to sally out more easily. Those stationed there kept an eye on the King's house close by. These junketings lasted for a week for on the eighth day the town was taken and during that time neither the duke nor anyone else disarmed. The evening before the capture it was decided to assault the town on the following morning, which was a Sunday 30 October 1468 and we arranged with our vanguard that when they heard a bombard and then two large serpentines[39] being fired immediately afterwards, followed by no other shots, they would attack vigorously because the duke would likewise be leading the attack on his side. This was to take place at eight in the morning. In the evening after this had been decided the duke of Burgundy disarmed, which he had not done before, and ordered all men, especially those who were in the barn, to do the same, in order to rest themselves. Soon afterwards, when the citizens had been informed of this, they decided to make an attack on our side as they had previously done on the other.

- Guillaume VIII (d. 1475) or, more probably, his son Jean.
- All MSS. read *dix* but this is corrected to *deux* by most editors. It is still too high an estimate.
- Antoine de Luxembourg, died *c*. 1515.
- A form of small cannon.

12

[The attack by the Liègeois]

NOW note how a great and powerful prince can very suddenly fall into difficulties through very few enemies and that for this reason all enterprises ought to be very carefully weighed and considered before they are executed.

Within this city every single soldier was a native of the place. They did not have with them any knight or gentleman, for the few that were with them had been killed or wounded two or three days before. They had neither gates nor walls nor ditches nor a single piece of artillery of any value. There were none but the citizens and seven or eight hundred infantry from the hilly region behind Liège called the district of Franchimont, who had always been renowned for their bravery by the Liègeois. Seeing themselves without hope of help because the King was there against them in person, they decided to make an all-out attack and place all their hopes on the outcome of this gamble, since they recognized that otherwise they were lost. It was their aim to send out six hundred men of the Franchimont district, the best men that they had, through the holes in their walls which were behind the duke of Burgundy's quarters. Their guides were to be the owners of the houses where the King and the duke were lodged, and they could approach through a deep gully in the rock very close to the houses of these two princes before being discovered, provided that they made no noise. Although there were some scouts along the route they thought that they would kill them or reach the quarters as soon as they could. They hoped that the two guides would lead them straight to their houses where the two princes were and that they would not be delayed elsewhere. In this way they would surprise them so quickly that they would kill or at least take them before their men were

mustered and they would not have far to retreat. If the worst came to the worst and they were to be killed in carrying out this exploit, then they would willingly face death bravely because, as I have said, they saw no other alternative to their own destruction. Besides, they ordered that with a great hue and cry the whole of the town's population should attack through the gate which led directly to the main street of our suburb, hoping thereby to rout those who were quartered there. They were not without hope of achieving a great victory or at least, if the worst happened, a very glorious end. Had they had a thousand well equipped men-at-arms with them, their plans would have succeeded. Even so they almost did.

So, as it had been decided, the six hundred men from Franchimont sallied out through the breaches in he walls; I think it was just before ten in the evening. They caught the majority of the scouts and killed them and others, including three gentlemen from the ducal household. And if they had marched directly without being heard up to the spot where they wanted to get to they would have killed the two princes without difficulty whilst they lay in their beds. Behind the duke's house there was a tent where the present duke of Alençon was quartered[40] with my lord of Craon.[41] They stopped there a short while and thrust their pikes in and killed a valet. This gave the alarm to the whole army; thus few men had time to arm themselves but immediately got up and left their tents and went straight to the two houses where the King and duke of Burgundy were. In the barn, which was closest to the two houses, as I said, the duke had placed three hundred men-at-arms, and there they got into a fight and gave the garrison several hard pike blows through the holes which had been made for the men to sally out of. All the noblemen had disarmed themselves just two hours before, as I have described, in order to refresh themselves for the following morning's assault. So they found all but a few unarmed. Yet some had put on their breastplates on hearing the noise coming from my lord of Alençon's tent and they fought them through the holes and the doors. By this action these two great princes were certainly saved, for the delay enabled several of their men to arm and get out into the street.

I was sleeping in the duke of Burgundy's room, which was very small, with two other gentlemen of his chamber. Below us there were only twelve fully equipped archers on guard who were playing dice. The duke's main watch was some distance away from him near the town gate. In fact the owner of the house brought a band of the Legiègeois to attack his house with the duke still inside. All this happened so suddenly that it was only with great difficulty that we were able to put on the duke's breastplate and his helmet on his head. Immediately we went downstairs, hoping to get out into the street. We found our archers hard pressed to defend the door and the windows against the Liègeois and there was a fantastic noise in the street. Some were crying, 'Burgundy,' and others 'Long live the King,' and 'Kill.' We were there for two paternosters before the archers could break out of the house and we with them. We did not know how the King was nor on whose side he was, which worried us a great deal. As soon as we were out of the house, carrying two or three torches, we were able to find some other torches and saw men fighting all around us. But this did not

last long because men poured in from all sides, coming to the duke's quarters.

Their first man killed was the owner of the duke's house, who did not die quickly because I heard him speaking. Almost all of them were killed. At the same time they attacked the King's house and its owner entered and was killed there by the Scots, who showed themselves true men because they did not move an inch from their master and fired their bows so rapidly that they wounded more Burgundians than Liègeois. The citizens who were ordered to attack through the gate did so, but they found a large number of the watch already assembled there, who soon repulsed them, and they did not show themselves such keen soldiers as the others.

As soon as these men were driven back in this manner, the King and the duke conferred and, since many dead bodies could be seen, they feared that they were their own men. But few of them turned out to be so, although there were many wounded. And there is no doubt that if the Liègeois had not been delayed at the two places I have been speaking about, they would have killed the King and the duke of Burgundy, and I believe, routed the rest of the army. Both of these lords withdrew to their quarters very alarmed by this bold attack and immediately went into conference to decide what ought to be done the following morning about the attack which had been planned. The King became very fearful because if the duke failed to take the city by assault blame might fall on him and he would be in danger or, indeed, strictly imprisoned because the duke would be afraid that if he departed he would only make war on him from some other direction.

So you can see the miserable state of these two princes, who were unable to reassure themselves about the other's motives. The two of them had made a final peace only fifteen days before and sworn most solemnly to maintain it loyally. Nevertheless trust could not be established between them at all.

- René du Perche, duke of Alençon 1476-92.
- Georges de la Trémoïle, lord of Craon, d. 1481.

13

[The capture and sack of Liège]

THE King in order to dispel his fears, an hour after he had withdrawn to his quarters and after this attack, about which I spoke, sent word to some of the closest ducal servants, who were then at the council, in order to ask them what had been decided. They told him that they had already decided to attack the town on the following day in the way it had earlier been agreed upon. The King made known to him his great fears and made very wise suggestions which were very agreeable to the duke's men, for each of them greatly feared the outcome of the attack because of the huge number of people in the city, and also because of the great courage which they had seen displayed only a couple of hours earlier. They would have been very content to wait a few days longer or to negotiate some agreement with the Liègeois. They came to the duke to make this report; I was present. They told him

of all the fears which the King had, as well as their own, but they said these were all the King's, fearing the duke would take it badly from them.

The duke did take it badly and he replied that the King said this in order to save the Li&3232;geois. He said the outcome was not in doubt, seeing that those inside could not mount a bombardment and that they no longer had any walls. Those which they had repaired around the gates were already destroyed and it was unnecessary to delay longer. He would not hold up the planned attack in the morning. But if it pleased the King to go to Namur to await the capture of the town, he said he would be quite happy but he would not leave there until the matter had been resolved.

This reply did not please anyone who was present because everyone feared for the success of this attack. The King was told about this not bluntly, but as truthfully as possible. He understood clearly and said that he did not wish to go to Namur but would be with the rest on the following day. My opinion is that if he had wanted to escape that night he could easily have done so, since he had a hundred archers of his bodyguard and some gentlemen of his household, besides nearly three hundred men-at-arms stationed close by. But without a shadow of a doubt, because his honour was at stake, he had no wish to be accused of cowardice. Everybody rested a little whilst waiting for the day; we were all fully armed and some examined their consciences because the enterprise was very hazardous. When it was broad daylight and the appointed hour of eight o'clock approached (when the attack was to be launched, as I have explained) the duke ordered the bombard and two rounds from the serpentines to be fired in order to alert the vanguard, which was on the other side far away from us (that is by the route outside the walls, but only a short way through the town, as I said). They heard the signal and immediately prepared to attack. The duke's trumpets began to sound and the standards approached the wall accompanied by those who had to follow them. The King was in the middle of the street, well attended because all his three hundred men-at-arms, his bodyguard and some of the lords and gentlemen of his household were there. We expected to engage in hand-to-hand fighting but we met no resistance and there were only two or three men on watch because the rest had gone off to their dinner thinking that they would not be attacked simply because it was Sunday. In every house we found the table set. There is seldom need to fear a mob of people unless it is led by some captain whom all hold in respect and dread, although there are times in their fury when they ought to be feared. Even before this attack the Liègeois were dispirited (not only because of their losses in their two sorties, when all their leaders were killed, but also because of the great hardships which they had borne for eight days, as everyone had to be on watch because on every side they were defencesless, as you have heard.) I suppose that they thought that they could rest on this day as it was a Sunday. But the opposite happened to them and, as I was saying, hardly anyone was to be found defending the town on our side and there were even fewer on the side where our Burgundian vanguard and the others, whom I have mentioned, were. They entered before we did. They killed few people because the populace had fled over the Meuse bridge towards the Ardennes

and from there to places beyond where they thought they would be safe. On our side I only saw three dead men and one woman and I believe no more than two hundred people died in all and the rest either fled or hid themselves in churches or houses.

The King advanced leisurely because he could see plainly that there was no resistance and the whole army, which numbered about forty thousand men, entered by two routes. The duke had advanced further into the city but turned back directly to conduct the King to the palace. Then immediately he returned to the great church of St. Lambert, where his men wanted to force their way in to capture prisoners and booty. And although he had already deputed a guard from his household, they could not control the soldiers who were attacking those two doors. I know that when he arrived he killed a man with his own hands because I saw him. The rest fled, and the church was not plundered, but in due course all the men and goods inside were captured. As for the other churches, which were numerous — I have heard my lord of Humbercourt, who knew the city well, say that as many Masses were said there in a day as at Rome — the majority were pillaged on the pretext of catpuring prisoners. I entered no churches except the cathedral, but I was rold this and saw the evidence. A long time afterwards the Pope pronounced severe censures on those who had anything belonging to the churches of that city unless they restored it, and the duke appointed commissioners to travel throughout his territories to execute the papal sentence.

So, about midday, when the city had been captured and sacked, the duke returned to the palace. The King, who had already dined, showed great signs of pleasure at its capture and praised highly the duke's courage and bravery. He knew well that it would be reported to him. But he had only one desire — to return to his own kingdom. After dinner the duke and the King were seen making merry together and, as the King had praised the duke's achievements behind his back, so he praised him still more which greatly pleased the duke.

But I must digress a little to tell you about the poor people who had fled from the city, in order to confirm some things I said at the beginning of these memoirs, when I spoke about the misfortunes which I had seen happen to men after losing a battle or after some other less serious loss. The miserable people were fleeing through the Ardennes with their women and children. A knight living in that region, who had supported them up to that time, ambushed a large crowd of them. In order to gain credit with the conqueror, he wrote to the duke of Burgundy exaggerating the number of dead and captured (even though this was already a large number) and in this way made his peace with the duke. Others fled to Mezières-sur-Meuse which is in the kingdom of France. Two or three of their ringleaders were arrested there, including one called Madoulet. They were brought to the duke who had them executed. Some of these people died from hunger, cold and sheer exhaustion.

FOUR or five days after the catpure [of Liège] the King began to use those close to the duke whom he held to be his friends to obtain permission to leave. He himself spoke about it to the duke very discreetly, saying that if he had any further need of him he would gladly help him, but if he did not need him he would like to go back to Paris to register their agreement in the court of the Parlement because it is a French custom to publish all agreements there. Otherwise they are held to be invalid, even though the kings can still do a great deal there. Moreover he entreated the duke to meet him in the following summer to discuss things in Burgunday and to enjoy themselves together for a month. Finally the duke agreed to this, despite a little grumbling. He wanted the peace treaty to be read out again in the King's presence to find out whether he repented of agreeing to anything, offering to remove it or leave it as he wished. He made some small excuse to the King for bringing him there. In addition he asked the King to agree to the insertion of a clause in the treaty in favour of my lords of Lau and Urfé and Poncet de Rivière ordering the restitution of their lands and offices to the state they were before the war. This demand displeased the King, for none of them was on his side, and should not have been included in the peace as they served his brother, Lord Charles, and not him. However he said he was content to agree, provided that the duke agreed the same conditions for my lords of Nevers[42] and Croy. So the duke kept quiet and the King's answer appeared a very clever one because the duke hated the others so much, and held so many of their possessions, that he would never have consented. Otherwise the King replied that he did not want to change anything in the treaty and confirmed all that had been sworn at Péronne. His departure was agreed upon and he took his leave of the duke, who conducted him about half a league on his way. At the moment of separation the King made on further request, 'If by chance my brother, who is in Brittany, isn't satisfied with his share which I've given him out of respect for you, what do you want me to do?' The duke replied unthinkingly on the spur of the moment, 'If he won't take it, but you can arrange things so that he's happy, I'll fall in with both of you.' From this request and its answer stemmed very important results as you shall hear presently. So the King set off in good spirits, and my lords of Cordes and Aimeries,[43] the grand-bailiff of Hainault, conducted him to just beyond the duke's lands.

The duke stayed in the city which, in truth, was very cruelly treated in all respects. But Liège had similarly used all manner of excesses against the duke's subjects ever since his grandfather's day, without ever faithfully keeping promises or the treaties made between them. This was now the fifth[44] year that the duke had gone there in person, and each time peace was made and then broken by them in the following year. They had already been excommunicated for many years because of the atrocities they had committed against their bishop. They had never respected nor obeyed any of the church's orders concerning these differences.

As soon as the King had departed, the duke, with a few men, decided to go to the Franchimont district, which was a little way beyond Liège, in a very hilly and wooded area whence came the best fighters they had, including those who had made the sorties I

described above. Before he left the city a large number of poor prisoners, who had been hidden in the houses at the time the city was captured, were drowned. Further, he decided to burn the city, which at all times had been heavily populated and it was said that it would be burnt three times. Three or four thousand infantry from the county of Limbourg, who were their neighbours and similar to them in dress and language, were ordered to destroy everything, except for the churches which they were to guard. First, a wide bridge over the Meuse was destroyed, and then a large body of troops was detailed to defend the houses of the canons living round the cathedral, in order that they might stay there to continue celebrating divine services. Similar measures were taken to defend the other churches. When this was done the duke left for Franchimont. As soon as he was out of the city he could see a large number of houses alight from his side of the river, where he went to camp about four leagues from the city. The noise which the houses made as they fell and tumbled down in the town was a terrible sound to hear in the night because we had been on the spot. I do not know whether it was because the wind blew the sound from there or because we were camped at the riverside. Next day the duke continued his march and whose who were left in the town continued the work of destruction as the duke had commanded them. All but a few of the churches were saved, together with more than three hundred houses for the clergy. This was the reason why the city was repopulated so soon afterwards, because many people returned to live with the priests. Because of the great frosts and cold the majority of the duke's men had to go on foot to Franchimont, which was a district with no walled towns, only villages. The duke camped for five or six days in a small valley at a village called Polleur. His army was split in two in order to destroy the countryside more quickly. He burnt all the houses and destroyed all the iron-forges which were there and which formed the basis of their livelihood. They sought out all the inhabitants among the deep forests where they had hidden themselves and their possessions. Many were killed or captured and the soldiers took much booty. I saw the incredible effects of the cold. One gentleman, who lost the use of his foot, never recovered it and a page had two fingers drop off. I also saw there a woman and her newly-born child die of cold. For three days the wine, which was given to anyone who asked for it from the duke, had to be hacked out with an axe because it was frozen in the barrels. It was necessary to break the ice, which was whole, into pieces which the servants could then put in their hats or in a basket just as they liked. I could tell many other strange stories which would take a long time to write down. But hunger made us flee from there in great haste after staying for a week. The duke then marched to Namur, and from there to Brabant, where he was made very welcome.

- Jean de Bourgogne, count of Nevers, 1415-91, cf. Introduction.
- Antoine Rolin (died *c*. 1497-8), son of the famous Chancellor of Burgundy, Nicholas Rolin.
- In fact, the third.

How the King left Liège to return to France and about the agreement which was made afterwards by the King with my lord Charles of France, his brother, to whom he delivered the duchy of Guyenne

THE King, after leaving the duke, returned very joyfully to his own kingdom, and did not complain at all about the duke and the terms which he had been forced to accept at Péronne and Liège, seeming to bear them patiently. Yet, despite this, serious wars later broke out between them, though not immediately. They were not caused by what I have mentioned already, although this could have contributed to them, because the peace was almost the same as that which the King would have made at Paris. But the duke of Burgundy, on the advice of his officers, wanted to extend the bounds of his lands and some preparations were made to revive the disputes about which I shall speak at the proper time.

My lord Charles of France, the King's only brother and formerly duke of Normandy, who had been informed of the treaty made at Péronne and of the apanage which was owing to him by it, immediately sent to the King to ask him to fulfil the treaty and to deliver to him what he had promised. The King sent messengers to him about this affair and there was much coming and going. The duke of Burgundy also sent ambassadors to my lord Charles requesting him not to accept and territories but Champagne and Brie, which he had obtained for him. He reminded him of the affection which he had shown towards him when he himself had abandoned the duke and the duke had not wanted to do likewise, as could be seen. He had even named the duke of Brittany as his ally in this peace. Further, he sent to tell him that the position of Champagne and Brie was very favourable for both of them, for if, by chance, the King ever wanted to resume his gift, Charles could obtain help from Burgundy in less than a day because the two regions were adjacent to one another. He could even have the full value of his inheritance, because he could take the taxes and subsidies there and the King had nothing but homage and ultimate jurisdiction. My lord Charles was a man who did little or nothing of his own accord but was governed and managed by others in everything, even though he was more than twenty-five years old.[45]

So the winter passed, which was already well advanced when the King left us, with messengers coming and going on business concerning this partition because the King had resolved not to allow his brother to enjoy what he had promised him. He just did not want him and the duke to be such close neighbours. The King negotiated with his brother to make him take Guyenne with La Rochelle, which was almost all of Aquitaine, and was worth a great deal more as an inheritance than Brie and Champagne. My lord Charles was afraid of displeasing the duke of Burgundy, but he was also frightened that, if he agreed and the the King did not keep his promise, he would lose both his friend and his fortune and be left in a very sorry plight.

The King who was by far the ablest prince of his day in conducting such negotiations, saw that he would waste time unless he could win over those who had influence with his brother. He got in touch with Odet d'Aydie, lord of Lescun and later count of Comminges, a

Gascon by birth and marriage. He asked him to ensure that his master would accept this settlement, which was much larger than he had asked for, and that they should become good friends and live like two brothers; he and his servants would gain thereby, and especially Odet. The King fully assured them that he would not let them down in handing over the possession of the duchy. In this way my lord Charles was won over and he took Guyenne, to the great displeasure of the duke of Burgundy, and of his ambassadors who were on the spot. And the reason why Cardinal Balue, bishop of Angers, and the bishop of Verdun[46] were imprisoned was because the cardinal had written to my lord of Guyenne exhorting him not to take any other inheritance than that which the duke of Burgundy had procured for him by the peace made at Péronne, which had been sworn to and promised in his presence. He remonstrated with him over several other matters concerning this case which he considered necessary but which were contrary to the King's wishes and intentions. So my lord Charles became duke of Guyenne in 1469 and had firm possession of the duchy, together with the government of La Rochelle, and the King and he met and stayed with each other for a long time.

- Charles of France, born 28 December 1446, was thus about twenty-two.
- Guillaume de Harancourt was arrested with Balue on 23 April 1469.

BOOK THREE

1
How the King began war against the duke of Burgundy and what caused the war to start

IN 1470 the King wanted to revenge himself on the duke of Burgundy. He thought it was an opportune moment and he and others began to negotiate secretly so that the towns on the Somme — Amiens, Saint-Quentin and Abbeville — would rebel against the duke and call in his men-at-arms to garrison with them. Great princes, or at least the wisest, always like to look for some good pretext which will seem more or less plausible for their actions. In order that you may recognize the subterfuges which were used in France, I shall recount how this affair was handled, because both the King and the duke were deceived. War broke out again, lasting a full thirteen or fourteen years, and became in its later stages very cruel and bitter.

It is true that the King very much wanted the towns to make trouble and he justified his position by declaring that the duke of Burgundy was extending the limits of his territories further than the treaty allowed. As a result of this ambassadors passed from one side to the other, going time and time again through these ungarrisoned towns, discussing this matter. But there was peace throughout the kingdom both on the Burgundian duke's side and on the Breton duke's. My lord of Guyenne was very friendly with the King, or so it seemed. Yet the King would not have wished to start the war

again merely to take one or two of these towns. He intended to raise a great rebellion through all the lands of the duke of Burgundy, and by this means he hoped to obtain a complete mastery.

In order to please him many men busied themselves with this bargaining and told him that things had advanced much further than they had in reality. One boasted that he had gained one town and others said that they would cause the leading figures at the ducal court to desert and turn against the duke. There was something in all of this. But if the King had only thought what might happen he would not have broken the peace or started the war again, although he had good reason to be unhappy with the terms he had been forced to agree to at Péronne, but all the same he had had the peace published in Paris three months after his return to the realm. He began this diversion in some trepidation but his desire spurred him on to action.

These are the false arguments which they put forward. The count of Saint-Pol, Constable of France, a very clever man, some servants of the duke of Guyenne and certain others, desired war rather than the peace between these two princes for two reasons: first, they feared that the very great revenues which they enjoyed would only be reduced if peace continued. The Constable had four hundred men-at-arms, who were paid at each muster without a [royal] controller, as well as more than thirty thousand francs ever year, besides the wages of his office and the income of several fine preferments which he held. Secondly, they wanted to divert the King. They said amongst themselves that his nature was such that if he did not have some foreign dispute against powerful enemies he would necessarily have such disputes with his servants, domestics and officers, as his mind would never rest.

For these specious reasons they tried very hard to embroil the King in the war. The Constable offered to take Saint-Quentin any day they wished since his lands lay all around the town. He further said that he had very good connections in Flanders and Brabant and that he would cause several towns to rebel against the duke. The duke of Guyenne, who was there, and all his principal advisers pressed their services on the King in this quarrel and promised to bring with them four or five hundred men-at-arms from the ordonnance companies which the duke of Guyenne had. But their purposes were not what the King believed them to be; quite the contrary, as you will hear.

The King always wanted to observe the proper procedure, so he held the Three Estates at Tours in March and April 1470, a thing which he had not done before or since, but he summoned there only certain individuals by name who he thought would not oppose his wishes.[1] There he exposed several of the moves which the duke of Burgundy was making against the crown. He summoned the count of Eu[2]to appear as a plaintiff. The count alleged that the duke was keeping from him Saint-Valéry and other lands which he held of Charles, depending on Abbeville and the county of Ponthieu, and that the duke would not give him any redress for this. The duke was doing this because a small warship from the town of Eu had

taken a merchant ship from Flanders, although the count of Eu offered reparation for this. Besides this, the duke wanted to force the count to do him exclusive homage against all others, which he would on no account consent to do becasue it would be against the King's authority. At this assembly there were several lawyers both from Parlement and elsewhere, and it was concluded, as the King wished, that the duke should be summoned to appear in person in the Parlement of Paris. The King knew well that he would reply disdainfully or do something else contrary to the authority of the court, and that this would serve as an even greater pretext for levying war against him.

The duke was in Ghent and was on the way to Mass when he was summoned by a sergeant of Parlement. He was astounded and very offended. Immediately he imprisoned the sergeant and for several days he was kept under guard. In the end he was allowed to go free. Thus you can see how things were planned for the attack on the duke who, when he was warned of this, raised a large number of men. They were paid house wages, as they were called, because they received a small amount to hold themselves ready at home. Yet they were mustered every month where they lived and received their money. This situation lasted for three or four months until the duke became weary of the expense. He dismissed these troops, and banished all his fears because the King frequently communicated with him; then he departed for Holland. He did not have standing ordonnance companies ready for any eventuality nor garrisons in these frontier towns. This caused him great injury because[3] he did not realize that intrigues were being carried on at Amiens, Abbeville and Saint-Quentin to place these towns in the King's hands once more.

Whilst he was in Holland he was informed by the late Duke John of Bourbon[4] that war would soon be declared against him in Burgundy and Picardy and that the King had many informers both there and in his household. The duke, who found himself poorly provided with men (because he had dismissed the force which I have just mentioned and sent them all home), was very amazed at this news. Immediately therefore he went by sea to Artois and marched straight to Hesdin. There he became suspicious of many of his servants and about the intrigues in those towns, which I have spoken about. But it was quite a long time before he was fully aware of this because he did not believe all that was said. He sent for two of the chief citizens of Amiens whom he suspected of having a part in these negotiations. They excused themselves so cleverly that he let them go. Immediately some of his servants, including the Bastard Baudouin, and others, left his household and went over to the King, which frightened him in case more should follow them.[5] He ordered that all should appear in arms but few got ready because it was the beginning of winter and he had come from Holland only a few days before.

- Commynes conflates into one assembly of the *États* held at Tours in April 1468 and the Assembly of Notables at Tours in 1470.
- Charles d'Artois, *c*. 1393-1472.
- Rest of the sentence from MS. P.

- Bourbon died on 1 April 1488.
- Baudouin (d. 1501) was a natural son of Philip the Good. Guillaume Rolin, lord of Beauchamp, Colas de Gorle, lord of Monsures, and Jean de Chassa, ducal pantler, have also been identified in this flight.

2

[Seizure of the Somme towns and the marriage project between Charles of France and Mary of Burgundy]

TWO days after the flight of the duke's servants in December 1470, the Constable entered Saint-Quentin and made the citizens take an oath to the King. By then the duke recognized that his affairs were going badly for he had no army with him, but he had sent men to enlist troops in his lands. Yet with the few men he could raise and with only four or five hundred horse he marched to Doullens, with the intention of preventing Amiens from defecting. He had not been there five or six days when the men of Amiens began to negotiate, because the King's army was near by and presented itself before the town. But he did not dare to enter it, being so poorly accompanied, although several people in the town urged him to do so. When his opponents saw his prevarication and that he was not there in strength they carried out their plan and let in the King's men. The citizens of Abbeville thought they could do likewise but my lord of Cordes entered the town for the duke and reinforced it. Amiens was only five small leagues[6] from Doullens and so the duke was forced to withdraw as soon as he learnt that the King's troops had entered Amiens. He rushed to Arras in great alarm fearing that many other places would do likewise because he saw that he was surrounded by friends and relatives of the Constable. On the other hand, because of the Bastard Baudouin's defection, he also suspected the Great Bastard of Burgundy, [Anthony] his brother. Yet slowly but surely men were joining him. The King thought he was now master of the situation. He was relying on what the Constable and others had told him from the information which they had received. If he had not had this encouragement he would never have begun this attack.

It is time that I finished explaining what prompted the Constable, the duke of Guyenne and his principal servants to act in this way, seeing the good turns, help and great kindness which the duke of Guyenne had received from the duke of Burgundy; and what they would gain by provoking these two great princes to war whilst they and their lordships were at peace. I have already said something about it; that it would maintain more securely their position and stop the King stirring them all up if he was at peace. But that was still not the principal reason. The duke of Guyenne and the others very much wanted the said duke of Guyenne to marry the only daughter and heiress of the duke of Burgundy, who had no son. Several times the duke had been approached about this marriage. He had always agreed to it in principle but never wanted to conclude it and still continued to hold discussions about it with others. Now see to what lengths these men went in the hope of achieving their ends and forcing the duke to hand over his daughter! As soon as the two towns were captured and the duke had returned to Arras, where he gathered all the troops he could,

the duke of Guyenne sent a man to him in secret bearing a three-line letter, written in his own hand, folded up very small and hidden in a ball of wax, containing these words, 'Do your best to reconcile your subjects. Don't worry, you'll find friends.'

The duke of Burgundy, who was very frightened to begin with, sent a man to the Constable to ask him not to do him the harm that he could well do and not to prosecute the war ruthlessly as it had been started against him without a formal defiance or any other warning. The Constable was very heartened by these words and he thought that he had the duke at his mercy when he appealed to him in this anxious way. So he sent him this reply, that he could see that he was in a very dangerous position and that he knew one remedy which would enable the duke to escape – he shoud give his daughter in marriage to the duke of Guyenne. In so doing he would receive help from a large number of men and the duke of Guyenne and my other lords would declare for him. Then he, the Constable, would return Saint-Quentin to him and change to his side. But without this marriage and without seeing the duke's declaration he would not dare to change sides because the King was too powerful, had prepared his plans very carefully, and had many collaborators in the duke's lands. The Constable said many similar frightening things.

I have never known a man come to a good end if he has wanted to frighten or hold in subjection his master or any other great prince with whom he has dealings, as you shall hear about the Constable. For although the King was then his master, the larger part of his possessions and his children were in the duke's lands. He always used these tactics to frighten them and keep them in fear of one another. This eventually had serious consequences for him. Although everyone tries to escape from subjections and fear and hates those who hold him to this there are none who do this more readily than princes, for I have never known any of them who did not have a mortal hatred of those who wished to hold them in subjection.

After the duke of Burgundy had heard the Constable's reply he clearly recognized that he would find no friendship with him and that he was the principal instigator of this war. He thus conceived an incredible hatred towards him which never left his heart thereafter, principally because of his fears that the Constable wanted to force him to marry off his daughter. Already his morale was a little higher and he had got many troops together. You can now see from what the duke of Guyenne, and then the Constable, had written, that this action had been planned between them, because the duke of Brittany afterwards likewise sent similar or even more frightening messages and allowed my lord of Lescun to lead one hundred Breton men-at-arms in the King's service. You can thus deduce that this war was waged in order to force the duke to consent to the marriage, that the King was being deceived when he was counselled to make war and all that he was told about the understanading of those in the duke's lands was untrue and for the most part all lies. Yet throughout the expedition the Constable served the King very fatihfully and manifested a great hatred of the duke since he knew what the duke's feelings were towards him.

Similarly the duke of Guyenne, well accompanied, serverd loyally in this war and things were very perilous for the duke of Burgundy. But if, as soon as this difference had arisen about which I have been speaking, the duke had agreed to the marriage of his daughter to the duke of Guyenne, he, the Constable, and several others, with all their followers, would have changed their attitude towards the King and tried to make him powerless if it had been possible. But whatever things men plan in such affairs, God always disposes of them at his own pleasure.

- About thirty km.

3

[Operations in Picardy and Burgundy]

YOU have been told at length about the causes of this war and how the two princes, at the outset, were deceived and made war without understanding each other's motives. This was a result of the ingenious skill of those who were manipulating this affair and, as the proverb truly expresses it, one half of the world doesn't know what the other half is doing. Yet all these things which I have just mentioned happened in a very few days. For in less than a fortnight after the capture of Amiens, the duke took the field close to Arras, because he did not retreat any further, and then marched towards the river Somme and straight to Picquigny. On the way he received a messenger, who was only a footman, from the duke of Brittany, who told the duke on his master's behalf that the King had told him about a number of things including the sympathizers he had in several of the large towns, naming, amongst others, Antwerp, Bruges and Brussels. Also he warned the duke that the King had decided to beseige him in whatever town he found him even if he was in Ghent. I believe that the duke of Brittany sent all this information on the duke of Guyenne's behalf in order to expedite the marriage.

But the duke of Burgundy was very upset by these warnings which the duke of Brittany sent him, and replied to the messenger on the spur of the moment that it was his master who was ill-informed by wicked servants of his who wanted to inspire these fears in him so that he would not do his duty and send the duke the help which he was obliged to send by their alliance. It was he who was ill-informed about Ghent and the other towns which the King said he would beseige, for they were too large to beseige. He should tell his master about the company with whom he found the duke and that things were very different from what he thought, because Charles had decided to cross the river Somme and to fight the King if he found him barring his route. He wished his to ask the duke, his master, to declare himself in his favour against the King and to act towards him as the duke of Burgundy had acted in agreeing to the treaty of Péronne.

Next day the duke of Burgundy approached a very strong position on the Somme called Picquigny. He decided to construct a bridge near by in order to cross the river. But it so happened that there were four or five thousand franc-archers and a few gentlemen quartered in the town of Picquigny. These, when they saw the duke

of Burgundy passing by, sallied out to ambush him along an extended causeway. But they advanced so far from their base that Burgundy's men were given an opportunity to pursue them. They followed so close behind that they killed a few of them before they could regain the town and captured the suburb at the end of causeway. Then four or five pieces of artillery were brought up, although on that side the town was impregnable because the river separated from it. Yet because a bridge was being made the franc-archers were frightened in case they were beseiged from the other side. So they abandoned the town and fled. The castle resisted for two or three days and then all the garrison left it only in their doublets.[7]

This petty exploit somewhat encouraged the duke of Burgundy and he proceeded to camp around Amiens. He moved his camp two or three times saying that he was taking the field to see if the King would come to fight him. In the end he approached very close to the town, so close in fact that his artillery shot into it at random. He held this position for six weeks. In the town there were more than fourteen hundred royal men-at-arms and four thousand franc-archers, including the Constable and all the great officers of the kingdom, the Grand Master of the household, the Admiral, the Marshals, the seneschals and many other worthy people.

The King meanwhile, was at Beauvais where he raised a large force.[8] There with him were the duke of Guyenne, his brother, Duke Nicholas of Calabria (oldest son of Duke John of Calabria and Lorraine and only heir to the house of Anjou), and the nobles of the kingdom, called out by the *arrière-ban*.[9] And there is no doubt, as I have since been informed, that those who were with the King were very eager to fight. But the King was already beginning to realize the danger of this expedition. He saw that it was far from finished and he was more deeply involved in the war than ever.

The garrison at Amiens planned to attack the duke of Burgundy in his camp, provided that the King would send the army which he had at Beauvais to join them. The King, warned about this, sent word forbidding them to do so and completely scotched their plans, for even though the King seemed likely to gain the advantage it was still hazardous, especially for those who were to sally out of the town. They all had to come out through two gates, one of which was close to the duke of Burgundy's camp, and if they failed to defeat the enemy, at the first encounter, as they were on foot, they would be in danger of being killed themselves and of losing the town.

Meanwhile, the duke of Burgundy sent a page called Simon de Quingey, who later became *bailli* of Troyes, to the King, with a message of six lines written in his own hand, humbly excusing himself and saying that he was very sorry that he had attacked him at the instigation of others and that if he had been better informed about everything he would not have done it. For the army which the King had sent to Burgundy had completely defeated all the Burgundians who had taken the field, and captured several prisoners. The number of dead was not large but the effects of the defeat were serious. The army had already beseiged and taken

several places, which somewhat surprised the duke. All the same he informed his own army to the contrary saying that his troops had got the upper hand. When the King saw the letter which the duke of Burgundy had written to him he was very pleased, for the reasons which you have just heard and because long-drawn-out affairs bored him. He sent a reply and gave authority to some of those at Amiens to agree to a truce and they made two or three lasting four or five days. In the end a truce was agreed for a year,[10] I seem to remember, which displeased the Constable, the count of Saint-Pol, because, without doubt, whatever people thought or whatever opinions they held to the contrary, he was then a mortal enemy of the duke of Burgundy and never thereafter were they friends with one another, as you know from what happened later. But they continued to send envoys to one another to pursue their intrigues and to take advantage of each other.

Whatever the duke did he did it with the aim of recovering Saint-Quentin. Similarly when the Constable was anxious about or feared the King, he would promise to deliver it to the duke. There were several occasions when troops of the duke of Burgundy, at the Constable's wish, approached to within tow or three leagues of the town to enter it. But when it came to letting them in the Constable's courage failed and he sent them back. This was a cause of his final undoing because he thought that with his position and the large number of troops, for whom he received pay from the King, he could keep both sides in suspense by encouraging the discord that already existed between them. But his plan was very dangerous since both the King and the duke were too powerful, strong and clever.

After these armies had broken up the King left for Touraine,[11] the duke of Guyenne went to his own duchy and the duke of Burgundy to his. For a while things remained like this. The duke of Burgundy held a great assembly of the Estates of his lands[12] to explain to them the damage which he had suffered at the hands of the men-at-arms which the King always had at the ready and to say this if he had had five hundred men-at-arms permanently on duty guarding the frontiers the King would never have undertaken this war and they would have remained at peace. He outlined to them the harm that was likely to happen to them in the near future and urged them strongly to grant him oney to employ eight hundred lances. Finally they gave him 120,000 crowns over and above that which they had granted him before. Burgundy was not to contribute to this grant. But for several reasons his subjects were very afraid of allowing themselves to be oppressed, as they observed [their neighbours in] the kingdom of France to be, because of the French men-at-arms. And, in truth, their great anxieties were not without foundation, because when he got five hundred men-at-arms he wanted more and he schemed more rashly against all his neighbours. The 120,000 crowns increased to 500,000 and the number of men-at-arms grew enormously, causing his lands much hardship. Truly, I believe that regularly paid men-at-arms may be very usefully employed under the direction of a wise king or prince, but when he is not and he [dies] leaving young children the uses to which their advisers put them are not always profitable either to the King or to his subjects.[13]

The feud between the King and the duke of Burgundy did not diminish but continued as before. The duke of Guyenne, once back in his own lands, often sent to the duke of Burgundy and continued to press for marriage with his daughter. The duke humoured him over this as he did everyone who asked him about the marriage. I believe that he had no wish for a son-in-law nor for his daughter to marry whilst he lived. He always used her as a lure for men whom he wanted to use, because he planned so many great projects he could never have lived long enough to bring them all to a successful conclusion — and all these schemes were almost impossible to realize and half of Europe would not have contented him. He had enough personal courage to undertake anything and his physique could easily have borne the weight of work that was necessary to his plans. He had sufficient men and money but he did not have enough sense or cunning to carry out his schemes for, if everything else is propitious for making conquests, unless there is great wisdom all is lost. You can be sure that such wisdom comes from God. If anyone could have taken some of the qualities of the King, our master, and some of the duke's, he could have made a perfect prince, for without a shadow of a doubt the King had much more judgement than Charles had and he showed this in the end by his achievements.

- Péronne was taken about 25 February 1471.
- Between 19 March and 10 April 1471.
- *Arrière-ban;* see Glossary.
- On 10 April 1471 for three months in the first place and prolonged several times.
- The King left Ham after the middle of June 1471.
- At Dijon in April and May 1471 and at Abbeville 22 July 1471.
- Scarcely veiled references to the minority of Charles VIII.

4

Here I digress about the wars in England at this time

I HAVE forgotten, in speaking about these matters, to tell you about King Edward [IV] of England. These three lords, Louis, the duke of Burgundy and King Edward, were all powerful at the same time. I shall not follow the usual order used in historical writings nor specify the years nor exact moment at which things happened not recount for you[14] any earlier historical examples, because you know enough about these and it would be like speaking Latin to the Franciscans, but I shall tell you generally about what I have seen, learnt or heard of the princes I named. These things all happened in your lifetime, for which reason there is no need to remind you more precisely about the actual times when they occurred.

As I remember, I have spoken elsewhere about the reasons which led the duke of Burgundy to marry King Edward's sister. He did it princiaplly to strengthen his position against the King [of France]. Otherwise he would not have done so, because of the great affection he had for the house of Lancaster to which he was closely related through his mother, who was a Portugese Infanta, but her mother was a daughter of a duke of Lancaster.[15] He loved the Lancastrians as much as he hated the Yorkists. Yet at the same time

when the marriage took place the house of Lancaster had been totally destroyed and no one spoke about the Yorkists anymore because King Edward was both King and duke of York and everything was peaceful. During the wars between these two houses there had been seven or eight memorable battles in England and sixty to eighty princes and lords of the blood royal had died violently, as I have mentioned earlier in these memoirs.[16] Those who were not killed, all young lords, were fugitives at the court of the duke of Burgundy because their fathers had died in England. Before his marriage the duke had made his Lancastrian relatives welcome at his court. I have seen some of them before the duke knew of their plight in such great poverty that beggars could not have been poorer. I once saw a duke of Exeter walking barefooted behind the duke's train, begging his livelihood from house to house without revealing his identity. He was next in line of succession to the Lancastrian family and had married a sister of King Edward.[17] When he was recognized he was given a small pension for his sustenance. Amongst others there were members of the Somerset family. All have since been killed in battle. Their fathers and their followers had pillaged and destroyed the kingdom of France and possessed the greater part of it for many years. But they killed each other and those who were still alive with their children in England were finished off as you have seen. And yet people say 'God doesn't punish men like he used to in the time of the Children of Isreal and he puts up with wicked princes and men'! I firmly believe that he no longer speaks to men as he used to do because he has left sufficient examples in this world to instruct us. But in reading about these things and from your own experience moreover, you can see that of the wicked princes and other people who have authority and use it cruelly or tyrannically in this world, few if any escape unpunished although it is not always on the day or hour desired by those who suffer.

Returning to the King of England; the leading supporter of the house of York was the earl of Warwick, whilst the duke of Somerset[18] was the leading Lancastrian supporter. The earl of Warwick could almost be called the king's father as a result of the services and education he had given him. Indeed he had made himself a very great man, for in his own right he was already a great lord and besides that he held extensive lordships at the king's gift, both from the crown lands and from confiscations, as well as being captain of Calais and holding other great offices. He had, as I have heard it estimated, an income of eighty thousand crowns a year from these alone without his patrimony.

The earl of Warwick began to fall out with his master about a year before the duke of Burgundy besieged Amiens. The duke encouraged this because he disliked the great influence which the earl of Warwick exercised in England and they did not get on well together because the earl of Warwick was always hand in glove with the King, our master. Indeed, at that time, or a little before, the earl of Warwick was so powerful that he captured his master and had Lord Scales,[19] father of the Queen, and two of his children executed, and his third child was in great danger; all of whom were much liked by King Edward. He also had certain English knights executed. For some time he kept his master under guard but treated

him honourably and gave him new servants in order to make him forget his former ones. He considered that his master was a little simple. The duke of Burgundy was very worried by this occurrence. He intrigued secretly to enable King Edward to escape so that he could have an opportunity to speak to him. As it turned out King Edward did escape. He gathered some men together and routed a force of Warwick's supporters. The king was very fortunate in his battles because he won no less than nine serious encounters, all of which were fought on foot.

The earl of Warwick now found himself very weak. He told his intimate friends what to do and put out to sea in his own time with the duke of Clarence,[20] who had married his daughter and was supporting his cause, despite the fact that he was King Edward's brother. They took their wives, children and a large number of people and appeared before Calais [on 16 April 1470]. In the town was Warwick's lieutenant, Lord Wenlock,[21] and several of his domestic servants. Instead of welcoming him, they fired several cannon shots at him. Whilst they lay at anchor before the town the duchess of Clarence, the earl of Waarwick's daughter, gave birth to a son. It was only with a great deal of difficulty that Lord Wenlock and the others could be persuaded to allow two flagons of wine to be brought to her. This was great harshness for a servant to use towards his master for it must be presumed that earl was expecting to be equipped from this place, which was England's greatest treasure store and the world's, or at least Christendom's finest captaincy, in my opinion. I went there several times during these quarrels and I was told for certain by the mayor that, at the time about which I am speaking, he would have given the king of England fifteen thousand crowns for the farm of the [wool] Staple at Calais, because the captain took all the profit from what there was on this side of the channel, including safe-conducts, and himself employed the majority of the garrison.

The king of England was very pleased with Lord Wenlock's refusal to his captain and sent him letters appointing him personally to hold the office because he was a very experienced and mature knight and was already a member of the Order of the Garter. The duke of Burgundy, who was then at Saint-Omer, was also very pleased with him and sent me to Lord Wenlock and gave him a pension of a thousand crowns, requesting him to remain steadfast in the love which he had shown to the king of England.

I found he was very determined to do this and he swore an oath at the Staple house in Calais, placing his hands in mine, to be true to the king of England against all others; so did all those of the garrison and town. For two months I was employed going backwards and forwards keeping him to this agreement and for most of the time I stayed with him, whislt the duke of Burgundy was at Boulogne. There a large naval force was collected to oppose the earl of Warwick, who took several ships belonging to the duke of Burgundy's subjects on his departure from before Calais. This capture was instrumental in bringing us into another war because they sold their booty in Normandy. As a result the duke of Burgundy captured all the French merchants who had gone to the fair at Antwerp.

I want to expose here a deception or ruse (as one might like to call it) since it was cleverly done and because it is necessary to be as well informed about the deceptions and evil practices of this world as about the good things, not in order to use them but in order to protect onself against them. I also want everyone to hear about the deceptions of our neighbours as well as our own to show that there is good and evil everywhere.

When the earl of Warwick stood off Calais, hoping to enter the town as his principal place of refuge, Lord Wenlock, who was very clever, sent him word that if he entered he would be lost, for he had all of England against him as well as the duke of Burgundy, the people of the town and several of the garrison of Calais, including my lord of Duras,[22] the king of England's Marshal and some others, who all had men in the town. The best thing he could do was to withdraw to France. He told him that he should not worry about Calais because he would give him satisfaction at the right time. He served his captain very well in giving him this counsel, although he served his king very badly. No man ever served the earl of Warwick so loyally, considering how the king of England had made him captain and what the duke of Burgundy had given him.

- Presumably Angelo-Cato, cf. Introduction.
- Above, Book One, Chapter 5.
- cf. above, Book One, Chapter 7.
- Henry Holland (1430-1473), married to Anne, whom he divorced in November 1472.
- Edmund Beaufort, executed 1471.
- Commynes confuses Lord Scales, brother of Elizabeth Woodville, with his father, earl Rivers, and his brother John, who were executed in 1469.
- George, murdered 1478.
- John, lord Wenlock (*c*. 1390-1471).
- Gaillard de Durfort, d. 1487.

5
[The flight of Edward IV]

THE earl of Warwick followed this advice and landed in Normandy where he was very well received by the King, who gave him large sums of money for the expenses of his troops. The King ordered the Bastard of Bourbon, Admiral of France, with a large following to help protect these English against the duke of Burgundy's naval force which was so powerful that no one dared put to sea in the face of it. The duke was making war on the King's subjects and threatening them on land and sea. All this happened just before the King took Saint-Quentin and Amiens, as I have explained, and these two places were taken in 1470.[23] The duke of Burgundy's force was much stronger at sea than those of the King and the earl combined because he had taken at the port of Sluys a large number of Spanish and Portugese vessels, two Genoese ships, and several flat-bottomed German ships.

King Edward was not an outstanding man but a very handsome prince, more handsome in fact than any other I ever saw at that

time, and he was very courageous. He did not concern himself as much about the earl of Warwick's landing as did the duke of Burgundy, who was aware of the movements in England in favour of the earl and often warned King Edward about them. But he was not afraid. It seems to me that it was a very great piece of folly not to fear his enemy and not too want to believe anything, considering the preparations which he saw. For the King brought all the ships he had and could find, and placed large numbers of troops in them. All this force was ready to descend on England. He arranged a marriage between the prince of Wales and the earl of Warwick's second daughter. The prince was the only son of King Henry of England, who was still alive and imprisoned in the Tower of London. This was a strange marriage! Warwick had defeated and ruined the prince's father and then made him marry his daughter. He also wanted to win over the duke of Clarence, brother of the rival king, who ought to have been afraid lest the Lancastrians regained their position. Such events can never happen without dissimulation!

Now I was at Calais negotiating with Lord Wenlock whilst this fleet was being prepared and until that time I was not aware of his deception which had been going on for three months already. I asked him, seeing that he had heard some news, to banish from the town twenty or thirty domestic servants of the earl of Warwick, since I had been assured that the army of the King and the earl was about to leave Normandy where it already was. For if the earl of Warwick suddenly landed in England there could be a rising in Calais because of his servants, and Wenlock might risk losing control of the place by accident. I implored him to put them out of the town immediately. Up till then he had always agreed with me, but now he drew me aside and told me that he would indeed remain master of the town but he also wished to tell me something else to warn the duke of Burgundy. It was that he counselled him, if he wished to be a friend of England, not to spare himself in making peace rather than war. He said this because of the force opposing the earl of Warwick. He told me moreover that it would be easy to reach a settlement because that day a lady had passed through Calais, on her way to my lady of Clarence in France. She was bearing an offer from King Edward to open peace talks. He spoke the truth, but as he deceived others he himself was deceived by this lady, for she was going to carry out a series of negotiations which in the end were prejudicial to the earl of Warwick and all his supporters.

Assuredly you will never learn more from anyone than from me about all the secret schemes or ruses which have been carried out in our countries on this side of the channel since then, or at least about those which happened in the last twenty years. This woman's secret business was to persuade my lord of Clarence not to be the agent of ruin of his family by helping restore the Lancastrians to authority, and to remind him of their ancient hatreds and quarrels. He should consider very carefully whether Warwick would make him king of England when the earl had married his daughter to the prince of Wales and had already done homage to him. This woman exploited the situation so well that she won over the duke of

Clarence who promised to join his brother, the king, as soon as he came back to England.

This woman was not a fool and she did not speak lightly. She had the opportunity to visit her mistress and for this reason she was able to go sooner than a man. And however cunning Lord Wenlock was this woman deceived him and carried out this secret assignment which led to the defeat and death of the earl of Warwick and all his followers. For such reasons it is not shameful to be suspicious and to keep an eye on all who come and go, but it is very shameful to be deceived and to lose because of one's own fault. Yet one should only be moderately suspicious because to be too suspicious is not good.

I have told you before how the earl of Warwick's force and the one which the King had got ready to accompany him were ready to embark and the duke of Burgundy's, which lay at anchor ahead of them, was prepared to fight them. God arranged things that during the night such a great storm arose that the duke of Burgundy's fleet had to run before it. Some ships reached Scotland and others Holland. A few hours later the wind was right for the earl and he crossed to England without any danger.

The duke of Burgundy had informed King Edward clearly about the port where the earl would land and was keeping men with him expressly to remind him to look after his own interests, but he paid no attention and only continued his hunting. No one was closer to him than the archbishop of York[24] and the marquis of Montague,[25] brothers of the earl of Warwick, who had given him very solemn undertaking to serve him against their brother and all others. He had confidence in this.

When the earl of Warwick landed [at Dartmouth] a great number of men joined him and he was in a strong position. King Edward, as soon as he recognized the danger, began to look to his own affairs, although it was too late. He sent to the duke of Burgundy imploring him to keep his fleet at sea so that the earl could not return to France. On land, he said, things would turn out well. These words did not please the duke very much because he thought that it would have been better to have prevented the earl from landing in England than to be forced to bring him to battle. Five or six days after his landing the earl of Warwick found himself very powerful and camped about three leagues from King Edward. The king had more troops, had they all remained loyal, and he was expecting to fight Warwick. Edward was quartered in a fortified village, or at least in a building which could only be entered by a bridge. This was very useful to him, as he told me himself. The rest of his men were camped in nearby villages. When he was dining someone came to him suddenly and said that the marquis of Montague, the earl's brother, and some others, had got on their horses and had made all their men shout, 'Long live King Henry.' To begin with he did not believe it, but immediately he sent out several messengers, armed himself and placed men on the walls of his quarters to defend them. He had with him a very experienced knight called Lord Hastings, Lord Chamberlain of England, who was his chief adviser and was married to the earl of Warwick's sister.[26] Yet he

remained faithful to his master and contributed more than three thousand horsemen to the army, as he told me himself. Another man there was Lord Scales, brother of King Edward's wife. There were several good knights and esquires who all recognized that things were going badly, because the messengers reported that what the king had previously been told was true and that men were gathering to attack him.

By divine providence the king was camped close to the sea and some ships were following him, bringing victuals. These included two flat-bottomed merchant ships from Holland. He just had time to take refuge in them. His chamberlain remained behind a little longer and told his leading retainer and several others in the army to go to meet the enemy but he asked them to remain faithful towards himself and the king and then he went aboard the ship with some others who were ready to sail.

It is a custom in England that the victors in battle kill nobody, especially none of the ordinary soldiers, because everyone wants to please them as they are the strongest [part of the army] and no one is put to ransom. For this reason none of these men suffered any injury once the king had gone. Even King Edward told me that, in all the battles he had won, as soon as he could sense victory, he rode round ordering the saving of the common soldiers, though he ordered the killing of all the nobles, few if any of whom escaped.

So in 1470 King Edward fled with these two flat-bottomed boats and one of his own small ships, with seven or eight hundred followers who possessed no other clothes than the ones they were fighting in; they did not have a penny between them and scarcely knew where they were going. It was very strange for this poor king (as he can rightly be called) to run away in this manner and to be persecuted by his own servants. He was already by then accustomed, after twelve or thirteen years, to more luxuries and pleasures than any prince of his day because he thought of nothing else but women (far more than is reasonable), hunting, and looking after himself. During the hunting season he would have several tents brought along for the ladies. All in all he had made a great show of this and also he had a personality as well suited to these pursuits as any I have ever seen. He was young and more handsome than any man then alive. I say he was at the time of this adventure because later he became very fat.

It may be seen how this king came in for some of the misfortunes of this world. He fled straight to Holland. At this time the Easterlings[27] were enemies of both the English and the French and had several warships at sea. The English were very frightened of them and not without cause, for they were good fighters. Already that year they had caused them great loss and captured several ships. The Easterlings espied the ships in which the king was fleeing from a great distance and seven or eight ships began to give chase. But he was too far ahead of them and reached Holland or rather a little further up the coast because he landed close to a small town called Alkmaar in Frisia. He anchored his ship because the tide was out, and they could not enter the harbour but they came close to the town as they could. The Easterlings did the same,

anchoring close to him with the intention of boarding him at the next tide.

Misfortune and dangers never come singly. The king's fortunes and preoccupations had been turned upside down. Less than a fortnight before he would have been astounded if anyone had said to him, 'The earl of Warwick will chase you out of England and make himself master in eleven days' (since it didn't take him any longer to bring it under his power). Besides, he had poked fun at the duke of Burgundy for spending his money in trying to defend the sea, saying that he wished Warwick was already in England, but what excuse could he find after suffering this great loss through his own fault except to say, 'I didn't think that such a thing would happen'?

Any prince (if he is of age) should blush to offer such an excuse, which is completely out of place. This man is a fine example for princes who are never afraid or suspicious of their enemies and who think that such thoughts are shameful. The majority of their servants flatter their opinions merely to please them. They think that they will be well esteemed and men will talk about their courageous way of speaking. I do not know what men say in their presence, but wise men will hold such words to be very foolish. There is nothing dishonourable in fearing when one should and taking effective safeguards against danger. It is a great advantage for a prince to have in his retinue a wise man who is secure in his position and whom the prince believes, and that man should be allowed to speak the truth.

By chance my lord of Gruthuse,[28] the duke of Burgundy's governor of Holland, was then at the place where King Edward wanted to disembark. He was immediately told about this, for they had landed some men, and about the danger they were in from the Easterlings. Straight away he sent word to the Easterlings forbidding them to attack Edward, and went aboard the ship the king was in to welcome him. Edward then landed together with fifteen hundred men, including the duke of Gloucester, his brother, who later became King Richard. The king was completely penniless and gave the ship's master a robe lined with fine marten's fur, promising to reward him better in the future. There never was such a beggarly company. But my lord of Gruthuse dealt honourably with them, because he gave them several robes and paid all their expenses for the journey to the Hague in Holland, where he took them, and then informed the duke of Burgundy about the event. The duke was extremely alarmed by this news and would rather the king had been dead, since he was very uneasy about the earl of Warwick who was his enemy and now had mastery of England. The latter had found a vast number of supporters soon after his landing because the army which King Edward had left declared themselves all Warwick's men through either love or fear, and every day more joined him. So he marched to London. A great number of good knights and esquires who later served King Edward well fled to the sanctuaries of London, as did his wife, the queen, who gave birth to a son in great poverty there.

- Saint-Quentin was taken at the beginning of January and Amiens on 2 February 1471, n.s.

- George Neville.
- John Neville, killed at Barnet, 1471, cf. Book Three, Chapter 7, Footnote 31.
- William, lord Hastings (*c*. 1430-83), married to Catherine Neville.
- In French *Osterlins,* in English, literally, the Easterlings, who were the merchants of the German Hanseatic league.
- Louis de Bruges, d. 1492, rewarded for his services to Edward IV by the earldom of Winchester.

6

[Charles the Rash, Henry VI and Edward IV]

WHEN the earl arrived in London he went to the Tower and released King Henry from where he had imprisoned him on another occasion a long time before, proclaiming before him that he was a traitor and guilty of treason. Yet at this moment he called him king and led him to his palace at Westminster where he restored all his royal prerogatives in the presence of the duke of Clarence, who was not at all pleased by this.[29] Immediately he sent to Calais three or four hundred men, who invaded the region around Boulogne and were made very welcome by Lord Wenlock, whom I have spoken about earlier. His unswerving affection towards his master, the earl of Warwick, then became conspicuous.

The day when the duke of Burgundy heard the news of King Edward's arrival in Holland, I had just joined him from Calais at Boulogne and I knew nothing about this nor about the king's flight. The duke of Burgundy had first been informed that Edward was dead. This did not disturb him greatly because he had always had more affection for the Lancastrian family than for the Yorkist. He then had at his court the dukes of Exeter and Somerset and several other partisans of King Henry, and for this reason he thought it would be easy to come to some agreement with this family. But he was more scared of the earl of Warwick and did not know how he would be able to come to terms with King Edward, who had fled to him and whose sister he had married. They were also members of each other's Order, the king wearing the Golden Fleece and the duke the Garter.

The duke sent me back to Calais almost at once with one or two gentlemen of Henry's new party. He gave me fresh orders as to what I should do in this changed situation and strongly urged me to go, saying that he required good services in this matter. I went as far as Tournehem, a small castle close to Guines, but dared not go further because I found people fleeing from the English, who were in the field and overrruning the countryside. Immediately I wrote to Calais asking for a safe-conduct from Lord Wenlock — previously I had been accustomed to going there without any formalities and had always been honourably recieved because the English are very courteous. All this was a new experience for me for I had never before seen the ups and downs of this world. That night I again warned the duke of the fears which I had about going on, without telling him that I had sent for a safe-conduct, because I was very uncertain about the reply that I would get. He sent me a signet ring which he wore on his finger and told me to go on, for even if they

captured me he would ransom me. He was not afraid to place one of his servants in danger if it was necessary for achieving his own purposes! But my safety was well provided for by the surety and the very gracious letters which Lord Wenlock sent, stating that I could proceed as I had been accustomed to doing. I went to Guines and found the captain outside the castle. He gave me a drink without offering to take me inside as he usually did, and he treated the gentlemen of King Henry's party, who were with me, most handsomely. I went on to Calais where no one came out to meet me as they had done previously. Everyone was wearing the earl of Warwick's livery. On the doors of my lodgings and room there had been put for me more than a hundred white crosses and a number of rhymes stating that the King of France and the earl of Warwick were acting as one man. I found all this very strange and I sent word of the off-chance to Gravelines (which is about five leagues from Calais) ordering the arrest of all the English merchants and their goods because of the damage caused by their expeditionary force. Lord Wenlock, who was well attended, invited me to dinner and he had on his hat the emblem of a golden ragged staff, which was the earl's token; so did all the others, and those who could not afford a golden one had one made of cloth. They told me at this dinner that after the traveller who had brought them the news had arrived from England, within less than a quarter of an hour everyone was wearing that livery, so hasty and sudden was the change. It was the first time I ever realized that things are not very stable in this world. Lord Wenlock just spoke plainly to me and made few excuses for his captain, the earl, from whom he had received some rewards. But as for the others who were with him, never were they so uninhibited because those whom I thought were the king's loyallest servants were those who threatened him most violently; I truly believe that while some of them did so out of fear, others were speaking their minds truthfully. The domestic servants of the earl, whom I had previously wanted banished from the town, had at this moment much influence. Yet they never knew that I had spoken to Wenlock about them.

I replied to their questions that King Edward was dead and that I had full confirmation of this, although I knew the contrary for certain. I also said that, even if he was not, the duke of Burgundy's alliances were with the king and kingdom of England so that they could not be invalidated by what had happened. Whoever they took to be their king we would accept, because as a result of past revolutions these words, 'With the king and kingdom,' had been included in the alliances and they had pledged the four principal towns in England to us as a guarantee. The merchants were eager for my arrest because of the seizure of many of their goods at Gravelines, on my orders as they said. Eventually we agreed that they should either pay for all the animals which they had taken or return them, because they had an agreement with the Burgundians to use certain pastures, which were specified, and they could take cattle for the provision of the town on payment of a fixed fee which they did pay. They had not captured any prisoners. For this reason we agreed that the alliances which we had with the kingdom of England would remain fully in force, except that we should insert King Henry's name instead of Edward's.

This agreement was very pleasing to the duke of Burgundy because the earl of Warwick was sending four thousand Englishmen to Calais specifically to attack him and no way of appeasing him could be found. Nevertheless the great merchants of London (several of whom were at Calais) dissuaded Warwick from this course because the town was their wool staple and an almost unbelievable amount of money was produced there by it twice a year. The wools are stored there until the arrival of the merchants and they are sold principally to Flanders and Holland. So these merchants helped to arrange this agreement and stopped my lord of Warwick sending his troops. All this turned out very fortunately for the duke of Burgundy because it was just at this same time that the King took Amiens and Saint-Quentin. If the duke had been a war with both kingdoms as once he would have been overwhelmed. He worked as hard as he could to appease the earl of Warwick. He said that he did not want to oppose King Henry in any way, and that he was a member of the Lancastrian family and he used other such phrases to achieve his purpose.

Now to return to King Edward; he came to the duke of Burgundy at Saint-Pol[30]and strongly urged him to assist his return, assuring him that he had much support in England, and, for God's sake, not to abandon him, seeing that he had married his sister and they were brothers in each other's Order. The dukes of Somerset and Exeter advocated exactly the opposite course on King Henry's behalf. The duke did not know which side to favour; he feared he would alienate both parties, and he already had a dangerous war on his hands. Finally he favoured the duke of Somerset and the others and extracted from them certain promises against the earl of Warwick, whose old enemies they had been. When King Edward, who was present, saw this he was disturbed. Yet he was given such assurances as were possible. He was told that these dissimulations were being practised so that the duke would not be at war with both kingdoms simultaneously, because if the duke were defeated he would not be able to help him afterwards as he wished. Yet the duke, seeing that he could no longer stop King Edward going to England (and for several reasons he dared not anger him over anything), pretended to publicly to give him no aid and made a proclamation that no one should go to his help. But privately and secretly he gave him fifty thousand St. Andrew's Cross florins and hired three or four great ships for him, which he equipped in the free port of Veere in Holland, and he secretly paid for fourteen well-armed Easterling boats which promised to serve him until he had crossed over the England and been there a fortnight. This help was very expensive considering the general situation.

- 6 October 1470.
- 7 and 8 January 1471.

Book Three, Chapters 7-12; Book Four, Chapters 1-4

MEMOIRS

BOOK THREE

7

[Restoration of Edward IV]

IN 1471 King Edward set sail just as the duke of Burgundy was marching against the King at Amiens. The duke thought that, whatever happened in England, things could not go badly for him because he had friends in both parties. As soon as King Edward landed he marched directly to London because there were more than two thousand of his supporters there, hidden in sanctuaries, including three or four hundred knights and esquires, who were very important to him as he had landed without a large company.

As soon as the earl of Warwick, who was in the north with all his army, heard this news, he hurriedly returned to London, hoping to arrive there first. He expected the city in the meantime to remain loyal to him but the opposite happened, because on Maundy Thursday King Edward was very joyfully received by the whole city. This was completely contrary to what most people thought would happen as everyone thought he was lost. Indeed if they had shut the gates against him his fate would have been sealed, since the earl of Warwick was only a day's journey behind him.

From what I have been told three factors helped to make the city change its mind: first the men, who were in the sanctuaries, and his wife, the queen, who had given birth to a son; secondly the great debts he owed in the city, which made his merchant creditors support him; thirdly several noblewomen and wives of the rich citizens with whom he had been closely and secretly acquainted won over their husbands and relatives to his cause.

Edward only spent two days in the city because on Easter Saturday[31] he left with the troops he had been able to gather and marched out to meet the earl of Warwick, who he encountered next morning, that is Easter Day.[32] When they found themselves face to face, the duke of Clarence, King Edward's brother, deserted to him with more than twelve thousand troops, which greatly distressed the earl of Warwick and greatly reinforced the king who had few men.

You have already heard how this bargain was struck with the duke of Clarence; yet in spite of all this the battle was most bitterly and strenuously fought. Both sides were on foot. The king's vanguard was heavily engaged and the earl of Warwick's main force joined battle with the king's, so closely that the king of England personally fought as much, or more, than anyone on either side. The earl of Warwick was not used to dismounting to fight for after bringing his men into battle he used to mount his horse. If the battle was going well for him he would throw himself into the fray but if it was going badly he would make an early escape. This time however he was constrained by his brother, the marquis of Montague, who was a very courageous knight, to dismount and send away his horses. So it happened that the earl of Warwick was killed this day with the marquis of Montague and a large number of men of noble birth. The slaughter was exceedingly heavy because King Edward decided when he left Flanders he would no longer adhere to his custom of shouting that the common soldiers should be saved and that the nobles should be killed, as he had done in his earlier battles, because he had conceived a deep hatred against the people of England for the great favour which he saw the people bore torwards the earl of Warwick, and also for other reasons. So they were not spared this time. On King Edward's side fifteen hundred men died and the battle was well fought.

On the day of the battle the duke of Burgundy was before Amiens. He received letters from the duchess, his wife, saying that King Edward had written to her about these events. He did not know whether he ought to be happy or not. He thought that King Edward was not pleased with him because the aid which he had given him had been given with bad grace and much regretfulness and that little kept him from abandoning him. Indeed they were never such good friends afterwards. Yet the duke made the best of it and had the news widely published.

I have forgotten to say that King Henry was taken to this battle, for King Edward had found him in London. King Henry was a very ignorant and almost simple man and, unless I have been deceived, immediately after the battle the duke of Gloucester, Edward's brother, who later became King Richard, killed this good man with his own hand or at least had him killed in his presence in some obscure place.

The prince of Wales, about whom I have spoken previously, had already landed in England at the time of the battle. He had been joined by the dukes of Exeter and Somerset, several other members of his family and his former supporters. Those who were present told me that there were more than forty thousand people with him. Had the earl of Warwick waited for him it seems very likely that they would have remained lords and masters of the situation. But his fears of the duke of Somerset, whose father and brother he had killed, and also of Queen Margaret, the prince's mother, made him fight on his own without waiting for them. You can see, therefore, how ancient divisions survive, how much they are to be feared and how great are the losses they can cause.

As soon as King Edward had won the battle he marched towards the prince of Wales and there was another very big battle[33] because the prince had more troops than King Edward. But again the king was victorious and the prince of Wales was killed on the battlefield, together with several other great lords and a very large number of the common soldiers. The duke of Somerset was captured; next day he was beheaded.

In eleven days the earl of Warwick had won all of England, or at least got it under his control. In twenty-one days King Edward reconquered it, though there were two desperate and bloody battles. Such, as you can see, were the changes in England. In several places King Edward had many people executed, especially those who had banded together against him. Of all the people in the world the English are the most inclined to such battles. After this King Edward reigned peacefully in England until his death, although not without some anxieties and a disturbed conscience.

- 13 April 1471.
- At Barnet.
- Tewkesbury, 4 May 1471.

8

Here I stop talking about the wars in England and return to my main account, especially to the attempts made to persuade the duke of Burgundy to give his daughter in marriage, which was one of the principal reasons for the war, as you have been told already.

I WANT to tell you no more about the events in England until it is convenient later on. The last thing I was describing of our affairs this side of the Channel was the departure of the duke of Burgundy from before Amiens and also that of the King, who withdrew on his part to Touraine and that of the duke of Guyenne, his brother, to Guyenne. From there the duke continued to pursue the plans for his marriage to the daughter of the duke of Burgundy, as I told you before.

The duke of Burgundy always pretended that he wanted to entertain these, though he really did not want to, but he continued to listen to everyone, as I said. He also remembered the stratagem which they had tried to use to force him to consent to the marriage. The Count of Saint-Pol, Constable of France, still wanted to be the mediator of this match, and the duke of Brittany also wanted it to be carried out but through his mediation. On the other hand the King was very anxious to break off the match although there was no need for him to be so, for the two reasons which I have advanced elsewhere; that the duke did not want such a powerful son-in-law and that he wanted to use this marriage for bargaining with everyone. So the King was expending his energies for nothing, though he could not have known the duke's thoughts. Nor is it remarkable that he was afraid because his brother would have become so powerful if this marriage had taken place, and if the duke of Brittany had allied with them, that the power of the King and his children would have been imperilled. Meanwhile in connection with this many ambassadors came and went both secretly and in public.

It is not very safe to have ambassadors coming and going so much because they often discuss evil things. Yet it is necessary to send and receive them. Those who read this chapter might ask what remedies I would propose for this and say that it is impossible to provide any. I fully recognize that there are many who know better than I how to answer, but this is what I would do: for those who come from genuine friends and where there is no reason to be suspicious, I would advise that they be made very welcome and have permission to see the prince frequently, depending on the type of person he is. This is when he is wise and honest, for when he is not, the less he is seen the better. And, when it is necessary to see him, he should be tidily dressed and well briefed on what he should say and he should retire from there quickly, for the friendships of princes never last long. If the ambassadors come secretly or publicly on behlf of princes between whom the hatred is such as I have continually seen manifested by all these lords about whom I have been speaking, and whom I have known and lived with, then at no time is there any great security. My advice is that it is both politer and safer that they should be treated well and honourably welcomed by sending men to meet them, by giving them good lodgings and by ordering trusty and wise servants to attend them. For by this means it is possible to find out who goes to see them and to prevent malcontents from taking them news — for at no court are all content. Moreover, I would listen to them and dispatch them quickly because it seems to me a very stupid thing to keep enemies in one's own house. To feast them, to defray their expenses and give them presents is only polite. Again it seems to me that once war has begun one should not rebuff any peaceful overture because one never knows when it might be useful. They should all be welcomed and all the messengers who have anything to do with them should be heard. A good watch, although as secret as possible, should be kept on those who go to speak to them both day and night. For every messenger or ambassador sent to me I would send two in return, and if the princes become bored with them and say no more should be sent I would still send them whenever I had a chance or the means. For no better or safer way is known of sending a spy who has the opportunity to observe and find things out. And if you send two or three people it is impossible to remain on guard so constantly that one or other cannot have a few words, either secretly or otherwise, with someone. That is, I mean, if they conduct themselves appropriately as one should towards ambassadors. It is also to be supposed that a wise prince is always at pains to obtain a friend or friends in his adversary's party and to protect himself from him as best he can, for in such matters one cannot always do what one wishes. It might be said that this will puff up the pride of your enemy. But that does not bother me. I shall know more about his plans. In the final reckoning he who has the profit also had the honour. Although others might do the same to me I would not fail to return embassies. I would listen to all propositions without rejecting any of them so that I would have an excuse for sending embassies. Then, again, some princes are not as clever as others nor so knowledgeable nor have had so much experience of these affairs nor have they had such need to be. In these cases the wisest always win.

I will demonstrate this to you by clear example. There has never been a set of negotiations between the French and the English where the intelligence and cleverness of the French has failed to outshine that of the English. The English have a saying which they told me once when I was treating with them, that in all their battles, or nearly all, with the French, they have won; but in all the treaties they have concluded with them they have come away the losers. Certainly, at least in my opinion, I have known men in this kingdom more capable of conducting serious negotiations than any others I have known in this world, especially those trained by the King. For in such matters men who do not easily take offence, who disregard all things and words to achieve their purposes, are required and, as I said, these were the types he wanted. I have spoken a little too much about ambassadors and how one ought to keep an eye on them but this has not been without reason because I have seen so many deceptions and evil designs carried out under this guise that I could not keep silent nor speak less of it than I have done.

The proposal that the duke of Guyenne and the daughter of the duke of Burgundy should marry, which I spoke about earlier, had been carried so far that not only had verbal promises been made but some had also been put in writing. But I had already seen things progress as far with Duke Nicholas of Calabria and Lorraine, son of Duke John of Calabria, whom I mentioned earlier, likewise with the late Duke Philbert of Savoy[34] and later with Duke Maximilian of Austria,[35] the present king of the Romans and only son of Emperor Frederick. The latter had received a diamond and letters in the princess's own hand, written at her father's command. All these promises had been made in less than three years and I am quite sure that he would not have consented to keep any of them as long as he lived. But Duke Maximilian, king of the Romans, used this promise for his own ends, as I shall later describe. I do not recount these matters to criticize anyone whom I have mentioned, but only to describe things as I saw them happen. I know, too, that blockheads and idiots will not amuse themselves by reading these memoirs, but princes or courtiers may find useful warnings here, I think.

Whilst continuing to arrange this marriage they also discussed a new attack on the King. The lord of Ufré, Poncet de Rivière and several other lesser figures were at the duke of Burgundy's court or came and went on embassies for the duke of Guyenne. The abbot of Bßgar, later bishop of [Saint-Pol-de-] Léon, also resided there on the duke of Brittany's behalf. He pointed out to the duke of Burgundy that the King was intriguing with some of the duke of Guyenne's servants and by affection or force wanted to seduce them. He had already knocked down a castle belonging to my lord of Estissac,[36] a retainer of the duke of Guyenne, and several other violent acts had been initiated. The King had also suborned several of his household. From this they concluded that he wanted to recover Guyenne as he had previously recovered Normandy after he had given it as an apanage, as you have heard.

The duke of Burgundy often sent messengers to the King about this. He replied that it was his brother, the duke of Guyenne, who

wanted to extend his boundaries and had begun all these intrigues, and that he did not want to touch his brother's apanage.

Now you may see briefly how great (for such they can be called at any time) are the convolusions of this kingdom when there is discord and how very difficult and tiring to suppress and how far from being finished they are at the outset. Even if these disturbances were begun by only two or three princes or lesser persons, before jollifications had lasted two years all their neighbours would have been involved. Yet when these things begin everyone thinks they will finish in a short time, but they are much to be feared for the reasons which will become apparent as I continue this account.

At this very moment the duke of Guyenne or his advisers and those of the duke of Brittany requested the duke of Burgundy not to ask for any thelp from the English, who were enemies of the realm, because all that they were doing was for the good and alleviation of the realm and that when he was ready they would be strong enough as they already had a very good understanding with several captains and others. On one occasion I was present when the lord of Urfé spoke in this manner to the duke, asking him to raise his army with all speed, and the duke called me to a window and said, 'Look at the lord of Urfé who is urging me to build my army as large as I can and is telling me that we'll achieve much for the good of the kingdom. Do you think that if I enter France with the company which I'll be leading I'll do any good there?' Laughing, I replied that I didn't think so and he said to me, 'I love the welfare of the kingdom of Francee better than my lord of Urfé he thinks because instead of the one King there is, I would like there to be six!'

At this time King Edward of England, who actually thought that the marriage which had been mentioned would take place (he was deceived in this), schemed as vigorously as our master the King, in order to frustrate it. He pointed out to the duke of Burgundy that the King our master had no son[37] and that if he should die, the duke of Guyenne would inherit the crown. Thus if this marriage was completed England would be placed in great danger of destruction, seeing the number of lordships which would be reunited with the crown. King Edward became unneccesarily worked up about this, as did all the English council; nor would they believe any of the excuses which the duke of Burgundy made.

Nevertheless, notwithstanding the request of the dukes of Guyenne and Brittany that he should call for no foreign assistance, the duke of Burgundy wanted the king of England to play some part in the war and to do so without the duke appearing to know anything about it and without the duke being involved. But the English would not do so and wanted rather to help the King at that moment, so much did they fear that the house of Burgundy would be joined to the French crown by this marriage.

From my account you can see how involved with each other all these lords were. They were surrounded by so many clever men and those who could see so far ahead that their lives were not long

enough for them to see more than half of their prognostications come true, as indeed it quickly became apparent, for all of them died in anxiety and misery one after another in a very short space of time. Each was very pleased at the death of his companion as if it was the thing he desired most, and they all soon followed after and left their successors deeply involved, except for our King who reigns today,[38] who found his kingdom at peace both internally and with all its neighbours. His father had done better for him than he had ever wanted to or been able to do for himself, for in my time he was never without a war, except for a very short time before his death.

The duke of Guyenne fell sick at this time. Some said he was in danger of dying and others said it was nothing. His advisers pressed the duke of Burgundy to come into the field because the time was propitious. They said the King had an army in the field and his troops were beseiging Saint-Jean-d'Angely or Saintes and thereabouts. They prevailed upon the duke of Burgundy so effectively that they marched to Arras and there gathered his army before marching on towards Péronne, Roye and Montdidier. It was the most powerful and finest army he ever had because he had twelve hundred lances of regular troops with three archers for each man-at-arms, and all were well armed and mounted. There were, besides, ten extra men-at-arms in each company, without counting the lieutenant and those who were standard bearers. The nobles of his lands were there all well turned out because they were well paid and led by famous knights and esquires; his lands were very rich at this time.

- d. 27 April 1482.
- Maximilian (1459-1519) was king of the Romans 1486-93 and Emperor 1493-1519.
- Jean de Lesparre, whose castle of Coulonges-les-Royeaux (arr. Niort, Deux-Sèvres) was the subject of this attack.
- The future Charles VIII had been born on 30 June 1470.
- Charles VIII, reigned 1483-98.

9

How the duke of Guyenne, only brother of the King, died and the things which happened afterwards

WHEN the duke of Burgundy was ready to leave Arras he received two pieces of news. First, that Duke Nicholas of Calabria and Lorraine, heir to the Angevin house and son of Duke John of Calabria, was coming to see him about the marriage of his daughter. The duke welcomed him very much and gave him great hopes of success. The following day, which was 15 May 1472, I think, letters came from Simon de Quingey, who had gone to the King as the duke of Burgundy's ambassador, saying that the duke of Guyenne had died and that the King had already seized a large number of his possessions.[39] Almost simultaneously reports were received from several places, each with different accounts of his death.

The duke, made despondent by this death and urged by several other mourners, wrote letters to several towns blaming the King;

this did little good because nothing happened. But I believe that had the duke of Guyenne not died the King would have had his hands full, since the Bretons were ready and had more support in the realm than they had ever had before. Yet it all came to nothing as a result of his death. In his anger the duke took the field and marched towards Nesle in Vermandois and began to wage a more vicious and evil type of war than he had ever used before — he set fire to everything he passed. His vanguard laid siege to Nesle, which was not a very valuable town, where there were a number of franc-archers. The duke camped three leagues away. The besieged killed a herald who had gone to summon them. Their captain came out with a safe-conduct, hoping to reach an agreement. He was unable to do this and as he returned to the town there was a truce because of his mission. All the garrison were exposed on the walls without being shot at. Yet they killed two other men. For this reason the truce was terminated and the duke sent word to the lady of Nesle, who was inside the town, to come out with her domestic servants and goods. She did so and immediately the town was attacked and captured and the majority of its inhabitants killed. Those who were taken alive were hanged, except for a few whom the men-at-arms allowed to escape out of pity, and a large number had their heads chopped off. It upsets me to recount this cruelty but I was on the spot and I must say something about it. It must be said that the duke of Burgundy was incensed with anger to do such a cruel thing and that some great reason moved him to do it. Two causes were alleged: according to some the first was that he was speaking with suspicion about the duke of Guyenne's death, secondly, there was another thing which displeased him, about which you have already heard a little, he bitterly resented losing Amiens and Saint-Quentin.

At that time when the duke had been collecting the army about which I have been speaking the lord of Craon and the Chancellor of France, Master Pierre d'Oriole,[40] had been to him two or three times. Before this particular exploit and Guyenne's death they had been secretly discussing a final peace which they could never have agreed upon because the duke wanted to re-possess those two towns and the King would not release them. But the King, seeing the duke's preparations, agreed to release them in the hope of achieving certain ends about which you will learn.

The conditions of the peace were that the King would deliver Amiens and Saint-Quentin, which were in dispute, to the duke and would abandon the counts of Nevers and Saint-Pol, Constable of France, and all their lands to the duke's pleasure to deal with them, if he could, as his own subjects. Likewise, the duke was to abandon the dukes of Brittany and Guyenne and their lordships for the King to do with them as he liked.

I was present when the duke of Burgundy swore to keep this peace. The lord of Craon and the Chancellor of France swore to it on the King's behalf. They then left the duke after counselling him not to disband his army but to advance with it so that the King, their master, would be more inclined to deliver the two places promptly. When they departed they took with them Simon de Quingey who was a witness to the King's swearing and confirming all that his

ambassadors had done. Matters were delayed for some days and in the meantime the duke of Guyenne's death occurred. As a result the King sent Simon back again with very lame excuses, not wishing to swear to anything. Burgundy felt himself completely fooled and scorned and was extremely upset.

The duke's men, in levying war, as much as for this reason as for others which you have already heard enough about, uttered very villainous and incredible threats against the King, and his own men scarcely hesitated to do likewise. It could appear in future to those who see this either that I speak libellously of these two princes or that there was no great trust between them. I would not like to speak ill of one or the other, and as everyone knows I am very beholden to our King. But to continue the task which you, my lord archbishop of Vienne, have set me it is necessary that I say what I know, however it occurred. But, when one compares them with other princes, one finds them outstanding. Our King was very wise, leaving his kingdom increased in size and at peace with all her enemies. Yet let us see how each of these two lords tried to deceive his companion, lest in the future these memoirs should fall into the hands of some young prince who has to deal with a similar situation, so that he will be better trained for having seen this and able to save himself from deception. For although neither enemies nor princes will be the same yet their business is and it is good to be informed about past events. To give them my opinion, I am sure that these two princes were both trying to deceive each other and that their purposes were very similar, as you shall hear.

Both had their armies ready in the field. The King had already taken several places and whilst negotiating this peace he tightened his grip on his brother considerably. The lord of Curton, Patrick Folcart,[41] and several others had already left the duke of Guyenne and joined the King, whose army was in the neighbourhood at La Rochelle. He had many supporters in the town and they were busily intriguing, both because of rumours of peace and because of the duke's illness. I suspect that the King's intention was such that if he had achieved his ends, or nearly so, or if his brother happened to die, he would never swear to the peace, but that if he found strong opposition he would swear to it and implement his promise in order to extricate himself from danger. He timed his actions perfectly and accomplished them with a marvellous dexterity. You have heard how he prevaricated to Simon de Quingey for a week and how during that time the duke died. He well knew that the duke of Burgundy so wanted possession of those two towns that he dared not anger him and that he could easily make waste fifteen or twenty days as he did, and in the meantime he could plan his next move.

Since we have spoken about the King and the plans he had devised to deceive the duke of Burgundy, we must also explain what the duke was planning against the King and what he would have done if the duke of Guyenne had not died. Simon de Quingey was commissioned by him and at the King's request to go to Brittany after he had witnessed the swearing of the peace and received letters of confirmation of what the King's ambassadors had done, to inform the duke of Brittany of the contents of the peace as well as

the duke of Guyenne's ambassadors, who were there also, so that they could report to their master, who was at Bordeaux. The King wanted to do this in order to shock the Bretons very much. They would see themselves abandoned by their chief hope of support.

In Simon de Quingey's company there was an equerry from the duke's stables called Henry, a native of Paris, a clever man and well respected, who had a letter of credence addressed to Simon, written in the duke's own hand. But he received instuctions not to deliver it to Simon until he had left the King and arrived at the ducal court at Nantes. There he was to deliver it to him and publish his credence, which was that Simon should tell the duke not to be afraid nor to worry that his master would desert the duke of Guyenne or himself. He would help them in person with all his strength and what he had done was in order to recover the two towns of Amiens and Saint-Quentin, which the King had snatched away from him in peacetime and against his word. Simon was also to tell him that the duke, his master, would send important ambassadors to the King as soon as he had regained possession of what he was asking for; this he could do without difficulty. The ambassadors were to ask him to desist from the war and the other actions which he had begun against these two dukes, and he himself would not be bound by the oaths he had taken because he had decided to keep them no longer than the King had kept the treaty made before Paris, that is the treaty of Conflans, or the one which he had sworn to at Péronne which he had confirmed a long time afterwards. The King well knew that he had taken these two towns by breaking his promise and in peacetime. For this reason he ought to allow the duke to recover them in similar fashion. Concerning the counts of Nevers and Saint-Pol, the Constable of France, whom the King had handed over to him, he was prepared to declare that, notwithstanding that he had good cause to hate them, he would ignore their offences and let them enjoy their possessions freely. He requested the King to do likewise to the two dukes whom the duke of Burgundy had abandoned to him and that it might please him to let everyone live in peace and security in the way which had been promised at Conflans, when all were together. He would tell him that if the King did not wish to do this, he would go to the aid of his allies and that the duke ought to be already in the field at the moment this commission was delivered.

Yet things turned out otherwise. Man purposes, God disposes; for death, which divides all things and changes all decisions, brought other work to do as you have heard and will hear, because the King did not deliver these two towns and yet he got the duchy of Guyenne on his brother's death, as was only right.

- The duke of Guyenne died (of natural causes) in the night of 24-5 May 1472.
- Chancellor 26 June 1472 to 1483; died 1485.
- A Scotsman, seneschal of Saintone 1471-2 for the duke of Guyenne.

TO return to the war which I have spoken about previously and how the duke had cruelly treated a band of poor franc-archers who had been captured at Nesle: he went from there to invest Roye where there were fifteen hundred franc-archers in the garrison as well as a number of men-at-arms of the *arrière-ban*. The duke of Burgundy had never had such a fine army. The day after he arrived the franc-archers began to get frightened. Several jumped over the walls and came to give themselves up. Next morning the rest surrendered and left behind all their horses and equipment, except that each man-at-arms was allowed to bring out one docked horse. The duke left a garrison in the town and wanted to go to raze the defences of Montdidier. But because he could see the affection that the inhabitants of these castellnaies[42] had for him, he had it repaired and left a garrison there.

After leaving that district he planned to march to Normandy. But passing close to Beauvais, with the lord of Cordes leading the vanguard, he attacked it. Led by a very avaricious Burgundian, Sir Jacques de Montmartin, who had a hundred lances and three hundred archers from the duke's standing army, they immediately captured a suburb which was opposite the bishop's palace. The lord of Cordes attacked on the other side, but his ladders were too short and he did not have enough of them. He had two cannons which with two shots made a great hole in the gate, and if he had had enough stones to continue firing he would certainly have captured the town. But he had not come prepared or equipped for such an eventuality. The garrison at the beginning only consisted of the inhabitants of the town, except for Louis [Gommel lord of] Balogny, captain of the town, who had a few troops from the *arrière-ban*. Yet despite this they could not have saved the town had not God wanted the town to be saved from such a fate, as he made abundantly clear, for the lord of Cordes's men were fighting hand-to-hand through the hole which had been made in the gate. He sent several messengers to the duke of Burgundy asking him to come and telling him that the town would certainly be his. Whilst the duke was preparing to set out, some of the garrison took it into their heads to bring lighted faggots to throw in the faces of those who were trying to break the gate down. They put so many there that the gate caught alight and the assailants had to retire until the fire had been put out. The duke arrived. He, too, thought that the town would be captured, provided the fire could be extinguished, because it was very fierce and the whole gateway was ablaze. If the duke had placed part of his army on the Paris side of the town, it could not have escaped falling into his hands because no one would have been able to enter it. But God made him cautious where there was no reason for it. He became worried about crossing a small rivulet. Later when there was a much larger garrison inside he wanted to cross it, and would have put all this army in danger. It was only with great difficulty that he was dissuaded from doing so. The fire about which I was speaking happened on 27 June 1472 and lasted all day. In the evening ten lances only from the ordonnance companies entered the town, as I have been told, since I was still with the duke of Burgundy. They were not spotted because everyone was so busy camping down and also there was no one on that side. At dawn the duke's artillery began to advance and soon afterwards we saw a strong reinforcement of about two

hundered men-at-arms enter the town. I believe that had they not come the town would have needed little persuasion to capitulate. But, as you have heard before, the duke in his fury wanted to take the town by force. Doubtless he would have burnt it had that happened. That would have been a great loss, and it seems to me that it was preserved by nothing less than a real miracle.

After these new troops had entered the town the duke's artillery fired continually for about a fortnight. The town was bombarded as heavily as any other place has ever been until it was ready for assualt. Yet there was water in the moat and we had to make two bridges on the side where the gate had been burnt down. On the other side we were able to approach the wall without any danger except from a single cannon emplacement which we did not know how to destroy because it was set very low. It is very dangerous and foolish to attack so many men. Besides, above all, the Constable was there, I believe (camped close to the town, I'm not certain where) with Marshal Joachim, Marshal Lohéac, the lord of Crussol, Guillaume de Vallée, Meri de Couhé, [Jean de] Salazar and Estevenot [de Talauresse] surmaned Vignoles, all of whom had at least a hundred lances from the ordonnance companies, a large number of infrantry and many fine soldiers accompanying them. Nevertheless the duke decided to attack but found himself alone, for no one else supported his plan. In the evening, when he was lying on his camp bed fully clothed or as near as makes no difference, as was his custom, he asked some people if they thought the garrison was expecting to be attacked. Yes, he was told, especially considering the number of men who were there. Even if they had only a hedge in front of them there were more than enough to defend it. He laughed at this and said, 'Tomorrow you'll find no one there.'

At daybreak the attack was very vigorously and bravely pressed and even better fended off. A large number of men crossed the bridge and my lord of Épiry, an old Burgundian knight, was suffocated in the crush. He was the most notable man killed that day. On the far side some managed to scale the walls but some did not return. They were fighting hand to hand for a long time and the attack was prolonged. Other troops were ordered to attack after the first ones but, seeing that they were achieving nothing, the duke withdrew them. Those within did not sally out. They could see that there were many troops ready to welcome them if they did so! In this attack about a hundred and twenty men were killed, of whom the most notable was my lord of Épury. Some said more had died and there more than a thousand wounded.

The following night the garrison made a sortie but their numbers were small. Most of them were on horseback and got tangled up in our tent ropes so that they gained nothing and lost two or three gentlemen. They wounded a very brave and worthy man, Sir Jacques d'Orsans, master of the duke's artillery, who died a few days later. Seven or eight days after this attack the duke wanted to go and camp before the gate leading to Paris and to divide his army in two. He found no one else approved his idea because of the nubmer of troops in the town. He should have done this at the beginning for now it was no longer the time to do it. Seeing that

there was no other course open to him and, maintaining good order, he raised the siege. He fully expected the defenders to pursue him closely and cause him injury. But they did not come out. From there he marched into Normandy because he and the duke of Brittany had promised to meet each other at Rouen. But the latter had changed his plans because of the duke of Guyenne's death and he did not move from his duchy.

The duke of Burgundy approached Eu, which was delivered to him, and Saint-Valéry. He burnt the countryside up to the gates of Dieppe. He then took Neufchâtel, burning it and all or the major part of the district of Caux as far as the gates of Rouen, up to which he marched in person. He often lost his foragers and his army endured very great hunger. Then he withdrew because winter was drawing on. As soon as he had turned his back the King's troops recaptured Eu and Saint-Valéry and took seven or eight prisoners from the garrisons that had been put there by virtue of the surrender agreements.

- Castellany: the district belonging to the jurisdiction of a lordship or castle.

11
[The King makes peace with the duke of Brittany and negotiates with the Count of Saint-Pol]

i *Here the author tells how at this time he came into the King's service and also how peace was made with the duke of Brittany through the agency of my lord of Lescun, Odet d'Aydie, later count of Comminges*

ABOUT this time in 1472 I came into the King's service.[43] He had also made the majority of the servants of his brother, the duke of Guyenne, welcome. He was at Ponts-de-Cé, where he had marched, and was making war on the duke of Brittany. There some ambassadors from Brittany had come to see him and he had sent some of his own to the duchy. Among those who came were Philippe des Essars, the duke's servant, and Guillaume de Souplainville, servant to my lord of Lescun, who had retired to Brittany when he realized that his master, the duke of Guyenne, was close to death. He had left Bordeaux by sea for fear of falling into the King's hands, for which reason he had made an early escape. He brought with him the duke of Guyenne's confessor and an esquire of the stable,[44] who were suspected of causing the duke's death and who were held prisoner in Brittany for many years.

The embassies to and from Brittany lasted only a short while. In the end the King decided to conclude a peace and give the lord of Lescun so much that he would win him back as his servant and wipe out any thoughts he might have had of doing him down. Nothing sensible or virtuous was done in Brittany unless Lescun had a hand in it and the King thought that so powerful a duke, manipulated by such a man, was much to be feared but, provided that he treated with him, the Bretons would do their best to live in

peace. Indeed, most of the people there asked for nothing more, for there have always been some of them in this kingdom, who have been fairly treated and honoured and in turn have served well in times gone by. I also find the treaty which our King made a very wise one, although some, whose understanding was not so penetrating as his, have sought to blame him. He had a great regard for the character of Lescun, saying that he saw no danger in committing the things he did to his care. He considered him a man of honour because never in the recent troubled times had he had any understanding with the English or consented to the delivery of places in Normandy to them. This was the principal reason for his later success because he alone would not agree to that.

For all these reasons he told Souplainville to put in writing all that his master, the lord of Lescun, asked for both on the duke's behalf and his own. He did this and the King agreed to all the points. His demands were a pension of eighty thousand francs for the duke; for his master, six thousand francs' pension, the governorship of Guyenne, the two seneschalcies of the Landes and Bordelais, the captaincy of one of the two castles in Bordeaux, the captaincies of Blaye, the two castles of Bayonne, Dax and Saint-Sever and twenty-four thousand crowns in cash, the King's Order and the county of Comminges. All the conditions were agreed upon and fulfilled, except for the duke's pension which was cut in half and paid for two years only. Moreover the King gave Souplainville six thousand crowns, that is, I mean, the ready cash owing both to him and his master and paid over four years. Souplainville also had twelve thousand francs' pension, the mayoralty of Bayonne, the bailiwick of Montargis and some other small offices in Guyenne and both he and his master enjoyed all their benefits until the King's death. Philippe de Essars was made *bailli* of Meaux, Master of the waters and the forests of France and had twelve thousand francs' pension and four thousand crowns. From then until the King, our master's, death they enjoyed possession of these offices. Also my lord of Comminges remained a good and loyal servant to the King.

Having settled matters in Brittany the King marched soon afterwards towards Picardy. The King and the duke of Burgundy always had a custom that when either came they made a truce to last six months, a year or longer. So following their habit they made one,[45] and the Chancellor of Burgundy,[46] together with some others in his company, came to draw up the terms of it. The final peace which the King agreed upon with the duke of Brittany, in which the duke renounced the alliances he had formed with the English and the duke of Burgundy, was there rehearsed because the King no longer wanted the duke of Burgundy's ambassadors to name the duke of Brittany amongst their allies. They did not want to agree to this and said that it was up to him to declare himself for the King or for them in the usual length of time. They said that the duke of Brittany had previously abandoned them in writing but even then he had not left their company and friendship. They maintained that the duke of Brittany was a prince more influenced by other opinions than his own but that he always returned in the end to the side which served him best. All this happened in 1473.[47]

***ii** Here begins the account of the plans and preliminary negotiations of the King and the duke of Burgundy for the downfall of the count of Saint-Pol, Constable of France.*

WHILST this treaty was being arranged, there were complaints on both sides against the count of Saint-Pol, Constable of France. The King and his closest advisers had conceived a great hatred of him. The duke of Burgundy hated him even more and with better cause, for I was informed about the true reasons of both sides. The duke had not forgotten that the Constable had brought about the capture of Amiens and Saint-Quentin, and he suspected him of being the instigator and fomentor of this war between the King and himself. For in truce this time he had spoken to him the fairest possible words but as soon as fighting began he became his mortal enemy and had wanted to constrain him to marry off his daughter as you have heard before. He had yet another quarrel with him. When the duke was beseiging Amiens, the Constable led a raid into Hainault where, amongst other exploits, he burnt the castle of Solre which belonged to a knight called Sir Baudouin de Lannoy. At that time it was not usual for either side to lay waste by burning but the duke took this act as an excuse for retaliating with fire as he did throughout the summer. So began the intrigues leading to the Constable's overthrow. On the King's side negotiations were opened by men who got in touch with the Constable's enemies in the duke's service. The King was no less suspicious of the Constable than the duke and everyone said he had caused the war. They began to uncover and hurried forward with plans for his elimination.

Some might ask in the future whether the King could not have done this alone. I say not, because Saint-Pol was equally placed between the King and the duke. He held Sanit-Quentin in Vermandois, which was a very large and powerful town. He also had Ham and Bohain and other very strong places close to Saint-Quentain and he could put men in there at any moment and from any party he liked. He had four hundred well-paid men-at-arms from the King, of whom he himself was the commissary. He could take the muster and thereby obtain a great deal of money, for he never kept the full number. Besides all this he received ordinary wages of forty-five thousand francs and took a crown on every pipe of wine which crossed his territorial borders on its way to Flanders or Hainault. He had his own very exclusive lordships and many supporters both in the kingdom of France and in the duke's lands, where he had many relatives.

Throughout the year that this truce lasted the discussions over the Constable continued and the King's men got in touch with one of the duke's knights called my lord of Humbercourt, about whom you have heard me speak elsewhere in this book. He had always hated the Constable very much and this hatred had been recently stirred up again. At an assembly which had been held at Roye, where the Constable and others had come on the King's behalf and where the Chancellor of Burgundy, the lord of Humbercourt and others represented the duke, in speaking together about their business, the Constable twice contradicted the lord of Humbercourt very rudely. Humbercourt made no other reply except to say that in

suffering this insult the Constable was not to attribute this to Humbercourt's respect for him, but rather to his respect for the King, on whose surety he had come there as an ambassador, and also for his master whom Humbercourt represented and to whom he would report this affair.

This single piece of insolence and insult so quickly spoken cost the Constable his life and loss of his goods, as you shall see. For this reason those who are in high authority and princes should be very wary of doing or saying such outrageous things and mind whom they talk to. For the greater they are, the greater the injury, because they think they are more dishonoured by the greatness and authority of the person who has outraged them and if it is their master or lord they despair of receiving any further honour or favour from him. More men serve in the hope of future reward rather than for what they have already received.

To return to my account, advances were still being made to the lord of Humbercourt and to the Chancellor, since he had taken part in the discussions at Roye and he was a very good friend of the lord of Humbercourt. Matters advanced so far that a meeting about these proposals was held at Bouvignes, close to Namur. The lord of Curton, governor of the Limousin, and Master Jean Héberge, later bishop of Évreux, were there for the King and the Chancellor and the lord of Humbercourt represented the duke. This was in [May] 1474.

The Constable was warned that they were discussing how to get the better of him and he hurriedly sent messengers to both princes. He informed them that he knew everything and he did this so cleverly that he aroused a suspicion in the King's mind that the duke wanted to deceive him and win the Constable from his party. For this reason the King, with all possible speed, sent word to his ambassadors at Bouvignes not to conclude anything against the Constable for the reasons he told them; they were to proplong the truce according to their instructions for six months or a year, I do not know which.

When the messenger arrived he found that ll had been concluded already and the sealed documents had been exchanged the previous evening. But the ambassadors knew each other so well and were such good friends that they returned the documents. These contained clauses declaring that the Constable, for the reasons they alleged, was a criminal and an enemy of both princes. They had promised and sworn to one another that the first of them to lay his hands on him would have him killed within a week or deliver him to his companion to do with him what he liked and that, at the sound of a trumpet, he, as well as those who served him or gave him any favour or help, should be declared an enemy of both parties. Moreover the King had promised to deliver to the duke the town of Saint-Quentin, about which enough has already been said, and to give him all the money and other goods belonging to the Constable which could be found in the kingdom, with all the lordships held of the duke. Amongst others he gave him Ham and Bohain, which are very strong places, and on a certain specified day the King and the duke with their troops were to assemble

before Ham to besiege the Constable. Yet for the reasons which I have told you this agreemnt was quashed and a day and a place were appointed where the Constable would come to speak to the King in safety, because he was afraid for his life, as if he knew all about the decisions take at Bouvignes.

The appointed meeting-place was three leagues from Noyon on the way to La Fére over a small river. On the Constable's side the ford had been made impassable. On a causeway which crossed there a strong barrier had been erected. The Constable arrived first and he had with him all, or most, of his troops, for he had mustered there three hundred men-at-arms, and he wore his breastplate under a loose coat. With the King were more than six hundred men-at-arms, including my lord of Dammartin, Grand Master of the royal household, who was the Constable's mortal enemy. The King sent me on ahead to make excuses to the Constable for keeping him waiting for so long. Soon afterwards he arrived, and they spoke together in the presence of five or six men from both sides. The Constable excused himself for coming all armed by saying that he had done so for fear of the count of Dammartin. It was decided, in effect, that all past deeds should be forgotten and never mentioned again. The Constable came over to the King's side and a settlement was reached between him and Dammartin. He then came to lodge with the King at Noyon and next day returned to Saint-Quentin, fully reconciled as he said himself.

When the King had thought about this more fully and heard the grumbles of his men, he recognized it had been madness to go to speak to his subject had to have found him, with a barrier erected in front of him, well attended by troops who were all his own subjects and paid at royal expense. So if the hatred he had before was great it was now even greater, and on the Constable's part his pride had not been diminished in the least.

- cf. Introduction.
- Henri de Riche, esquire of the kitchen, and Abbot Jourdain Faure.
- Truce of Compiègne, 3 November 1472.
- Guillaume Hugonet.
- In fact, 1472.

12

[Reflections on the King's dealings with the count of Saint-Pol]

TO appreciate what the King did — he proceeded with great wisdom, because I believe that the Constable would have made his peace with the duke of Burgundy by giving up Saint-Quentin, notwithstanding the promises he had made to the contrary. But clever as the Constable was, he either grossly mishandled his affairs or God deprived him of his ability to see what he had to do, in allowing himself to be found in such a position and dressed in such a way before his King and master, to whom belonged all the troops who accompanied him. It seemed from his expression that he was also astonished and startled, for when he found himself in the King's presence with only a small barrier between them, he scarcely waited a moment before opening it and walking on to the

King's side. He was in great danger that day. I reckon that he and some of his servants thought this action admirable and thought it praiseworthy that the King feared them, for they considered him a timid man. It is true that he was, but never without cause. He had extricated himself from the serious wars which he had had with the lords of his realm, by extravagant gifts and even greater promises and he did not want to risk anything if he could find some other way out.

Many men have thought that fear and dread made him act thus. But many who thought this have discovered their mistake when they let themselves act against him, like the count of Armagnac and others who came to a sticky end. For the King well recognized whether it was time to be afraid or not. I praise him for this. I do not know if I have said it elsewhere or when, if I did, but it is worth repeating; I have never known a wiser man when faced by adversity.

To continue my account of the Constable, who perhaps wanted the King to fear him, at least I think so, for I would not accuse him or speak about this except to warn those, in the service of great princes, who do not all equally understand the business of this world; I would counsel a friend of mine, if I had one, to exert himself to gain his master's affection but not to make him fear him for I never saw a man who possessed great authority from his lord by holding him in dread who was not ruined, and that with his master's consent.

There have been many such cases in our own times or a little earlier; in France, for example, my lord of Trémoïlle[48] and others. In England there was the earl of Warwick and all his followers, and I could cite examples from Spain and elsewhere. But probably those who read this will know more of this than I do. Their arrogance often proceeds from having performed some great service. They think boastfully that their merits are such that one should put up with much more from them and that they are indispensable. But princes, on the other hand, hold the opinion that all are bound to do them good service, like to be told this and desire to be rid of those who rebuke them.

Again, I must quote at this point two remarks our master once made to me, speaking of those who have done some great service (and he told me the person from whom he got the sayings), that to have served too well somtimes ruins people and often great services are rewarded by great ingratitude. But that could arise as much from the faults of those who have done the service, wanting to use their good fortune too arrogantly against their master or companions, as from the prince's lack of recognition. He told me, further, that in his opinion to obtain a good position at court it is more fortunate for a man to be promoted by the prince whom he serves to some great office which he little deserves, for which he will remain very obliged to him, than to have done such good service that the prince was very obliged to him for it. He said that princes most naturally like those who are obliged to them rather than those to whom they are obliged. So in all walks of life there are difficulties in living well in this world and God grants a great favour to those to whom he gives a natural common sense.

The interview between the King and the Constable took place in 1474.[49]

- Georges de la Trémoïlle, *c*. 1385-1446.
- 14 May 1474.

BOOK FOUR

1
[Affairs in Guelders and Cologne and preparations in England]

***i** How Duke Charles of Burgundy set out to conquer the duchy of Guelders and what his rights to that territory were*

AT this time[1] the duke of Burgundy had set out to capture the province of Guelders, basing his claims on a quarrel about which some account will not be out of place as an indication of the works and powers of God.

There was a young duke of Guelders called Adolphe who had married one of the Bourbon daughters, the sister of my lord Pierre of Bourbon who is the present duke.[2] The marriage had taken place at the Burgundian court and for this reason they received various favours from it. But Adolphe committed a dreadful deed because he had taken his father (Duke Arnold) prisoner one evening just as he was going to bed and taken him to within five leagues of Germany without leggings on a very cold night. He then put him inside the bottom of a tower where he got no light except what came through a very small skylight, and he kept him there five years.[3]From this arose a serious war between the duke of Clèves, whose sister the imprisoned duke had married, and this young duke, Adolphe. On several occasions the duke of Burgundy had wanted to persuade them to conclude a treaty but he was not able to achieve this. In the end the Pope and the Emperor came down with a heavy hand and the duke of Burgundy was ordered on pain of very serious penalty to get Duke Arnold out of prison.

This he did because the young duke dared not refuse to deliver him to Charles, seeing so many important people were taking a serious interest, and also Adolphe feared the armed might of the duke of Burgundy. Many times I saw them both together in the duke of Burgundy's chamber before the great council assembly, pleading their cases, and I have seen the good old man throw down his gage of battle to his son. The duke of Burgundy very much wanted to reconcile them and he favoured the young man, who was offered the title of governor or *'mambourg'* of the country which with all its revenues would belong to him except for a small town situated close to Brabant called Grave which with its revenues was to remain the father's together with three thousand florins' pension. So all this would have been worth six thousand florins to him and, as was only right, he would keep the title of duke. Together with wiser men than me, I was commissioned to carry these offers to the young duke. He replied that he would rather have thrown his father head first into a well and then to have thrown himself in afterwards

than have made this settlement, and that his father had been duke for forty-four years and it was about time that he was. However, Adolphe, amongst other very ill-advised things that he said, very willingly agreed to allow his father three thousand florins a year on condition that he ever entered the duchy.

All this happened exactly at the moment the King took Amiens from the duke of Burgundy, who was with these two men about whom I have been speaking at Doullens.[4] The duke found himself deeply involved and left suddenly to retreat to Hesdin, forgetting all about this matter. The young duke disguised himself as a Frenchman and left with only one companion to go back to his own country. Whilst crossing a river near Namur he paid a florin for his passage. A priest who saw it became suspicious, mentioned it to the ferryman, stared at the man who had paid the florin and recognized him. So he was captured there and led to Namur, where he remained a prisoner until the duke of Burgundy's death when the men of Ghent released him. They wanted to force him to marry the lady who has since become the duchess of Austria[5] and they took him with them to the siege of Tournai, where he was killed miserably and in poor company, as if God had not yet been satiated with vengeance for the outrage he had inflicted on his father. The father had died before the duke of Burgundy and whilst his son was still in prison. He had left the succession to the duke of Burgundy because of his son's ingratitude. It was on account of this that the duke of Burgundy conquered the duchy of Guelders at the time I am speaking about, though he met with some resistance. But he was powerful and had a truce with the King. So he held it until his death and even today his descendants still do and they will do so as long as it pleases God. Now, as I said at the beginning, I have merely recounted this story to demonstrate how such cruelties and evils do not go unpunished.

***ii** Here begins the account of the wars and other exploits which the duke undertook in Germany, and especially of the siege which he laid before Neuss*

The duke of Burgundy returned to his own land and his pride was inflated by his acquisition of the duchy. He began to get interested in German affairs because the Emperor was very timid and would endure anything in order to avoid having to spend money. Also, on his own, without the help of other German lords, he could not do anything significant. For this reason the duke prolonged his truce with the King, despite the opinion of several royal counsellors that the King ought not to extend it or to allow the duke's property to increase. Good sense made them offer this advice but because of lack of experience and personal knowledge they did not understand this affair. There were some, with a better grasp of the situation then they had, and with a greater understanding from having been to these places, who advised our master, the King, to agreed boldly to the truce and allow the duke to go and exhaust himself by attacking the Germans (a task which is almost unbelievably great and daunting). They said when the duke had taken one place or brought one quarrel to an end he would undertake another. He was not the man ever to be satisfied with one exploit (being in this respect quite different from the King, for the more entangled he

was the more he got himself entangled) and that there was no better way of revenging himself on him than by allowing him to get on with it, even giving him some small assistance; he should give him no cause to suspect that he might break the truce. For given the size and strength of Germany it was impossible that he would not quickly consume all his forces and ruin himself in every way, for even though the Emperor was not a man of great valour, the princes of the Empire would see to that. And so it happened in the end.

In the dispute between the two claimants to the [arch-] bishopric of Cologne, one of whom was the brother of the landgrave of Hesse and the other a relative of the count-palatine of the Rhine, the duke of Burgundy took the side of the palatine and undertook to place the claimant in office by force, hoping thereby to capture several places. He besieged Neuss near Cologne in 1474.[6] The landgrave of Hesse and some soldiers were inside the town. The duke had so many great schemes in his mind that he was submerged by their weight, because at this same time he wanted to persuade King Edward of England to bring over the great army which he had prepared at the duke's urgent request; he did his utmost to finish off this German enterprise. This involved garrisoning Neuss, if he were able to take it, and another town or two above Cologne. The city would be forced to capitulate. Then after leaving there he would travel up the Rhine as far as the county of Ferrette, which he then held, so that all the Rhine, from there to Holland, where there were more powerful towns and castles than in any other realm in Christendom except for France, would be his. The truce which he had with the King had been extended for six months and already most of this period had elapsed. The King urged him to prolong it still further so that he could do as he liked in Germany, but the duke did not want to do this because of his promise to the English.

I would gladly have omitted to mention the siege of Neuss as it is not strictly relevant to our story, for I was not present, but I am forced to speak about it because of the things which stemmed from it. The landgrave of Hesse and many of his relatives and friends, with up to eighteen hundred horsemen as I have been told, had stationed themselves inside the town of Neuss. All of them were fine soldiers, as they were to demonstrate. They also had as many infantry as were necessary. The landgrave was brother of the elected bishop who was the opponent of the man supported by the duke of Burgundy. So the duke besieged Neuss in 1474.

He had the finest army he had ever had, especially his cavalry, because on the pretext of certain projects he had in mind in Italy he gathered some thousand Italian men-at-arms, both good and bad; these had as their leader a man of most perfidious and dangerous character from the kingdom of Naples, called the count of Campobasso. There was also Giacomo Galeotto, a very worthy Neopolitan nobleman, and several others whom I pass over for brevity's sake. Likewise he had more than three thousand fine English soldiers, as well as very large numbers of his own subjects who were well mounted and armed and who were already well trained in warfare. The artillery was very numerous and powerful. All this force he held ready to join the English on their arrival; these were rapidly preparing in England.

But this type of preparation takes a long time because the king cannot undertake such an exploit wihtout assembling his Parliament, the equivalent of our Three Estates, which is a very just and laudable institution, and on account of this the kings are stronger and better served when they consult parliament in such matters. When these Estates are assembled, the king declares his intentions and asks for aid from his subjects, because he cannot raise any taxes in England, except for an expedition to France or Scotland or some other such comparable cause. They will grant them, very willingly and liberally, especially for crossing to France. There is a well-known trick which these kings of England practise when they want to amass money. They pretend they want to attack Scotland and to assemble armies. To raise a large sum of money they pay them for three months and then disband their army and return home, although they have received money for a year. King Edward understood this ruse perfectly and he often did this. This army took more than a year to get ready and he then sent word to the duke of Burgundy, who was besieging Neuss at the beginning of the summer; he thought that within a few days he would be able to place his candidate in possession of the [arch-] bishipric and that several places, including Neuss, would remain his so that he could achieve his ends which I have told you about.

I consider that this was God's own doing, out of pity for this kingdom, because the duke's army was already very experienced by several years' campaigning in this kingdom without anyone offering it battle or taking the field in strength against it, unless they were defending the towns. But it is also true that this resulted from the King's actions, because he did not want to place anything in jeopardy. He did this not only because he was frightened of the duke of Burgundy but also because he feared the disaffection which could arise in his kingdom if he should lose a battle. For he knew he was not well thought of by all his subjects, especially the great lords. If I dare speak the whole truth, he has told me many times that he knew his subjects well and this would happen if his affairs went badly. For this reason when the duke of Burgundy invaded he did no more than strongly reinforce the towns on his route. So in a short time the duke of Burgundy's army broke itself up without the King imperilling his state. This, it strikes me, is to proceed intelligently.

Nevertheless, with the strength of the duke of Burgundy's army which I have told you about, and if the king of England's army had come, as doubtless it would have done, by the beginning of the campaigning season, had not the duke of Burgundy made the mistake of staying so obstinately before Neuss, it cannot be doubted but that this kingdom would have borne very serious hardships. For never before had an English king brought across such a powerful army at one time as this one of which I am speaking, nor one so well prepared to fight. All the great English lords, without exception, were there. They probably had more than fifteen hundred men-at-arms, a great number for the English, all of whom were very well equipped and accompanied. There were fourteen thousand mounted archers, all of whom carried bows and arrows, and plenty of other people, on foot serving their army. In all this army there was not a single page. Besides this the king of

England was to send three thousand men to land in Brittany to join the duke's army. I saw two letters written by my lord of Urfé ([later] chief esquire of France). He was then a retainer of the duke of Brittany. One was addressed to the king of England and the other to Lord Hastings, Lord Chamberlain of England, and amongst other things, they said that the duke of Brittany would achieve more in a month by his intrigues than the armies of the English and the Burgundians would achieve in six, however powerful they were. I believe that what he said would have been true had things been pushed ahead further. But God, who still loves this country, managed things as I shall show subsequently. These letters I mentioned were bought from an English secretary for sixty silver marks by the King, our late master.

- June 1473.
- Adolphe married Catherine of Bourbon (d. 1469) on 18 December 1463.
- Arnold, duke of Guelders (1423-73), was imprisoned from 1465 to 1470 at Thielt, Guelderland. All MSS. except P. read *mois*.
- Charles was at Doullens 17 January-3 February 1471.
- Mary, daughter of Charles the Rash, see Chatper Six, Book 2, Footnote 2.
- The siege began on 30 July 1474.

2

[Charles the Rash's mistakes]

*[**i** German forces]*

THE duke of Burgundy was already deeply committed before Neuss, as I told you, and was finding things more difficult than he anticipated. The citizens of Cologne, which lay four leagues higher up the Rhine, spent a hundred thousand gold florins a month because of their fears of the duke of Burgundy. They and the other towns above them on the Rhine had already put fifteen or sixteen thousand foot soldiers in the field. These, with their heavy artillery, were camped on the edge of the river Rhine opposite the duke of Burgundy. They were attempting to disrupt his food supplies, which came upstream by water from Guelders, and to sink the boats by cannon-shots.

The Emperor and the electoral princes of the Empire had assembled to discuss this affair and had decided to gather an army. The King had already sent them several messengers to urge them to do this. So, in return, they sent to him a canon of Cologne, belonging to the house of Bavaria, and another ambassador with him. They took to the King a detailed list of the army, which the Emperor intended to assemble if the King, for his part, was willing to be involved in it. They did not fail to get a favourable answer and promise for everything they demanded. Moreover, in sealed documents the King promised, both to the Emperor and to several of the princes and towns, that as soon as the Emperor arrived at Cologne and was in the field the King would send twenty thousand

men under the command of my lord of Craon and Slazar to join him.

So the German army, which was almost unbelievably large, got ready. All the German princes, both temporal and spiritual, the bishops and the towns sent a great number of men to it. I was told that the bishop of Munster, who was not amongst the most powerful, led there six thousand infantry and fourteen hundred horsemen, all clothed in green, besides twelve hundred carts. But, of course, his bishopric lay close to Neuss. The Emperor took more than seven months to gather this army and at the end of that period he went to camp about half a league from the duke of Burgundy. Several of the duke's men have told me that his army, together with that of the king of England, did not amount to more than a third of the one I have just been speaking about, in the number either of men or of tents, both large and small. Besides the Emperor's army, there was also that other army I mentioned on the other side of the river opposite the duke of Burgundy, which was harrassing his army severely and intercepting his supplies. As soon as the Emperor and the imperial princes were before Neuss they sent a doctor, who had great authority amongst them, to the King. He was called Dr. Hesler and later became a cardinal, and he came to request the King to keep his promises and send the twenty thousand men as he had agreed, otherwise the Germans would come to terms with Burgundy. The King made him very hopeful, had given him four hundred crowns, and sent back with him to the Emperor a certain Jean Tiercelin, lord of Brosse. Nevertheless the doctor did not go home entirely satisfied. Amazing negotiations were carried out during this siege because the King sought to make peace with the duke of Burgundy, or at least to prolong the truce so that the English would not come. The king of England, on the other hand, strove with all his might to force the duke of Burgundy to leave Neuss and to make him keep his promises to help him in the war in this kingdom, saying that they were in danger of wasting the campaigning season. Lord Scales, nephew of the Constable and a very fine knight,[7] and several others, were twice sent as ambassadors about this matter. But the duke was perverse, and indeed God had troubled his senses and understanding, because all his life he had laboured to get the English to cross the Channel and, at the very moment when they were ready and everything arranged to their liking, both in Brittany and elsewhere, he obstinately pursued an impossible objective.

With the Emperor there was an apostolic legate[8] who every day went from one army to the other trying to arrange a peace. Likewise to the king of Denmark,[9] who was staying in a small town close to the two armies, worked for the same end, so the duke of Burgundy could easily have arranged an honourable settlement which would have allowed him to withdraw to meet the king of England. But he did not know how to do it and sent excuses to the English, alleging that his honour would be slighted if he raised the siege, and making other feeble excuses. Yet these were not the Englishmen of his father's day and the former wars with France. They were inexperienced and raw soldiers, ignorant of French ways, so he proceeded very unwisely because if he had wanted to

use them in the future he should have guided them step by step in the first campaign.

ii *Here I speak about the King's intrigues against the duke of Burgundy and of the war he waged against him in Picardy whilst the duke was still occupied with the siege of Neuss*

While the duke was in this obstinate mood war broke out against him in two or three other places. One began when the duke of Lorraine, who was at peace with him, sent a defiance to the duke at Neuss at the instigation of my lord of Craon. Craon wanted to use the occasion to serve the King, and he did not fail to promise Lorraine that he would become an important figure. Immediately they took to the field and caused much damage in the duchy of Luxembourg, and razed a place in the duchy, called Pierrefort, two leagues from Nancy. Moreover, it was arranged by the King and some of his servants, whom he charged with this, that an alliance should be made for ten years between the Swiss and the towns of the Upper Rhine, Basle, Strasbourg and others, which had formerly been at loggerheads. A peace was also made between Duke Sigismund of Austria and the Swiss so that Duke Sigismund could recover the county of Ferrette which he had pledged to the duke of Burgundy for a hundred thousand Rhenish florins. All was agreed except for one difference between Sigismund and the Swiss, who wanted to have the right of passage through four towns in the county of Ferrette whenever they wanted, either with or without their forces. This dispute was submited to the King, who decided in favour of the Swiss. From all this you can appreciate the troubles which the King secretly stirred up for the duke. All these things were executed as they had been planned, for one fine knight Sir Pierre de Hagenbach, governor of the county of Ferrette for the duke of Burgundy, together with his force of eight hundred men, was captured. His men were released without obligation but he was taken to Basle where he was charged with committing certain excessess and acts of violence in the county of Ferrette. In the end he had his head chopped off[10] and Ferrette was handed over to Duke Sigismund of Austria. The Swiss began to fight in Burgundy and took Blamont, which belonged to the Marshal of Burgundy, who was himself a member of the house of Neufchâtel. The Burgundians went to his aid but were defeated and the Swiss caused much havoc in that region before retiring again after this attack.

- Anthony Woodville, lord Scales, was the son of Jacqueline de Luxembourg, sister of Saint-Pol.
- Alessandro Nami, biship of Forli.
- Christian I (1448-83).
- 9 May 1474 at Breisach.

3

[The war in Picardy and Artois: Emperor Frederick III replied to Louis XI]

THE truce between the King and the duke of Burgundy expired, much to the King's regret because he would rather have had an extension. Yet seeing that he could not obtain one, he went to

besiege a miserable little castle called Tronchoy. This was early in 1475 at the start and at the best part of the season. It was taken by assault in a short time. Next day the King sent me to parley with those who were in Montdidier. They left the town taking their baggage with them. The day after, together with the Admiral, the Bastard of Bourbon, I went to speak with those who were before Roye and they too surrendered the place to me because they were not expecting any help. They would not have given it up if the duke had been present. Nevertheless, in spite of our promise these two towns were burnt. From there the King went to lay siege to Corbie where they were expecting us. We made splendid headway and the King's artillery fired for three days. My lord of Contay and several others were garrisoning the place but they delivered it and marched away with their baggage. Two days later the miserable town was pillaged and fired like the other two. The King then thought he would withdraw his army and force the duke of Burgundy to accept a truce, seeing his desperate situation. But a lady whom I know well — and will not name because she is still living — wrote to the King, telling him to bring his men to Arras and its neighbourhood. The King trusted her because she was a lady of honour. I cannot praise her for this because she was under no obligation to do it. The King sent the Admiral, the Bastard of Bourbon, together with a strong force, which burnt a large number of townships between Abbeville and Arras. The citizens of Arras, who had suffered no adversity for a long time and were very haughty, forced the soldiers who were in the town to sally out against the royal troops. But their numbers were not eqaul to the King's men and they were so strongly repulsed that as large number were killed or taken, including all their leaders, Sir Jacques de Saint-Pol, brother of the Constable, the lords of Contay and Carency and others, amonst whom were the closest relatives of the lady who had been responsible for the expedition. Indeed she suffered heavily through it, although the King in time made good her losses out of his favour for her.

About then the King sent Jean Tiercelin, lord of Brosse, to the Emperor, to prevent him from coming to terms with the duke of Burgundy and to make excuses for the fact that he had not sent his troops as he had promised, and to assure him he would do so, and to exaggerate the exploits and the injuries which he was causing the duke, both in Picardy and in Burgundy. Besides this, he made a new proposal that they should promise each other not to make a peace or truce without each other, that the Emperor should take all the lordships which the duke held in the Empire and which should rightly be held of him, that he should declare them forfeit to himself and that the King should likewise take those which were held of the crown, such as Flanders, Artois, Burgundy and several others.

Although the Emperor was never noted for great bravery he was a man of some judgement, and as a result of his long life he had accumulated a wealth of experience. When these intrigues between us and him had lasted a long time he became tired of the war, although it was costing him nothing, because all the German lords had come at their own expense, as was usual when it was an imperial matter. The Emperor thus replied that close to a certain

German town lived a great bear who caused a lot of damage. Three drinking companions from the town went to the taverner to whom they owed money and pleaded with him to allow them credit just once more and said that within two days they would pay him back everything, because they were going to capture this bear which caused so much harm. Its skin would be worth a great deal of money, not to speak of the presents which everyone would give them. The landlord agreed to their demand and when they had eaten they set off for the place where the bear lived. They came across the bear's den more quickly than they had expected. Becoming frightened they took to their heels. One climbed a tree, one fled towards the town but the third was caught by the bear who trampled him to the ground and pushed its snout close to his ear. The poor man, prostrate and pressed against the ground, feigned death because by its nature this animal will leave whatever it is holding, whether it is man or beast, when it no longer moves, thinking it is dead. So the bear left this poor man, have scarcely injured him, and went back to its den. As soon as the man realized that he was safe he jumped up and set off back to the town. His friend who was in the tree, and who had seen this strange occurrence, climbed down and ran after him shouting to him to wait for him. He turned and waited for him. When they met, the man who stayed in the tree asked his friend to say truthfully what counsel the bear had given him, after it had kept its snout close to his ear for so long. He replied, 'It told me never to sell a bear skin before catching the bear.' With this story the Emperor reproached the King and gave no other reply to our ambassador. It was as if he has said, 'Come here as you've promised and we'll kill this man if we can, and then we'll share out his properties.'

4

[The adventures of Jacques de Luxembourg and the siege of Neuss]

***i** I speak about the Constable, who was already very suspicious, and mistrusted both the King and the duke, and what happened to him whilst the duke of Burgundy was besieging Neuss*

YOU have heard how Sir Jacques de Saint-Pol and others had been captured before Arras. This capture displeased the Constable considerably because Sir Jacques was a very good brother to him. This was not the only misadventure to befall him because at the same time his son, the count of Roussy, who was the duke's governor of Burgundy, was also captured.(11) The Constable's wife, a lady of great merit and sister to the Queen who protected and favoured her, also died whilst the intrigues, which had begun against him (as you have heard) and which had been brought to a successful conclusion at Bouvignes, were still in progress. Ever since that time the Constable had felt insecure and suspicious about both sides and especially he was fearful of the King. It clearly seemed to him that the King repented having withdrawn his consent to the documents agreed at Bouvignes. The count of Dammartin and others were quartered with the men-at-arms close to Saint-Quentin. The Constable feared them as his enemies and kept himself shut up in Saint-Quentin where he had just three

hundred infantry from his own lands, because he was not entirely sure of the reliability of the men-at-arms [of the royal ordonnance companies which he commanded]. He was very troubled because the King urged him several times to take the field to serve him in Hainault, and to lay siege to Avesnes at the moment when the Admiral, with the other force, was wasting Artois with fire, as I told you. Eventually he did so but in great dread, as he was very afraid. He was only there a few days and kept a strong bodyguard about him. He then retired to his own places and sent word the the King that he had raised the siege. I know all about this because the King ordered me to listen to his messenger. He justified himself by saying that he had been reliably informed that there were two men in the army who had been ordered by the King to assassinate him. He mentioned so many pieces of incriminating evidence that people were almost beginning to believe him and to suspect one of the two of having told him something about which they should have kept quiet. I do not want to name anyone or speak further about this affair.

The Constable sent frequent messages to the duke of Burgundy's army. I believe he was trying to get him away from this foolish expedition. When his messengers had returned he sent some news to the King which he thought would please him and let him know some of the small matters why he had sent to the duke. He thought that by doing this he would satisfy the King. Sometimes he sent word that the duke's affairs were progressing well, in order to frighten the King a little. But he was himself so frightened that he might be attacked that he asked the duke to send him his brother, Sir Jacques de Saint-Pol (who was at Neuss, prior to his capture), also the lord of Fiennes[12] and other of his relatives whom he could put into Saint-Quentin with their men, and who would not have to wear the St. Andrew's cross. He promised the duke he would hold Saint-Quentin for him and restore it to him some time later and would give him his sealed undertaking. This the duke agreed to do. When Sir Jacques, the lord of Fiennes and his other relatives twice found themselves within a league or two of Saint-Quentin and ready to enter it, the Constable found that his fear had evaporated, repented of his decision and sent them away. He did this three times, so much did he want to remain in this state of balance, steering between the two, because he was extremely afraid of both of them. I learnt these things from many people, especially from Sir Jacques de Saint-Pol himself. He told the King about them when he had been brought a prisoner before him; I was the only other person present. His willing replies to the King's questions did him a lot of good. The King asked him how many men he had to get into the town with. He replied that on the third occasion he had about three thousand men. The King also asked him whether, if he had found himself the stronger, he would have held it for the King or the Constable. Sir Jacques replied that on the first two occasions he came only to reinforce his brother but on the third occasion, seeing that the Constable had twice deceived both his master and himself, if he had got the upper hand he would have kept the town for his master without doing anything violent or prejudicial to the Constable, except that he would not have sallied out at his command. Consequently, shortly afterwards, the King released Sir Jacques de Saint-Pol from prison and gave him men-at-arms and

fine possessions. He employed him up to his death and this good fortune was the result of his replies.

ii *Here I return to speak about the siege of Neuss and about the agreement made between the Emperor and the Duke of Burgundy*

Since I began to speak about Neuss I have touched upon several matters one after another. All these happened at this time because the siege lasted a year. Two things in particular put extreme pressure on the duke of Burgundy to raise the siege; one was the war which the king was waging on him in Picardy, where he had burnt three small towns and wasted a quarter of the flat countryside of Artois and Ponthieu, and the other was the great and urgent request — the army which the duke had been striving all his life to lure across the Channel and which he had never succeeded in doing up to then. The king of England and all the nobles of his realm were highly discontented by the duke of Burgundy's delays. Besides the pleas which they sent to him they also issued threats, because of the great expense they had been put to and because the season was passing. The duke of Burgundy greatly delighted in opposing the huge German army composed of contingents from any princes, prelates and towns. This was the biggest army within living memory, or indeed for a long time before that. Yet all of them together did not succeed in making him leave his position. But he paid dearly for this piece of vanity because he who has the profits of war has the honour. All the time, this legate, whom I mentioned, had been coming and going from one side to the other and finally a peace was agreed between the Emperor and the duke. The town of Neuss was placed in the legate's hands, to be disposed of according to papal decree. But to what kind of a dilemma must the duke have been reduced when he saw himself pressed by the war which the King was waging against him as well as by the requests and menaces of his friend, the king of England? For on the other hand he could see that the town of Neuss was reduced to such a state that within fifteen days he would have a stranglehold upon it because of famine (and this could have happened in as few as ten days, as I have been told by one of the captains who was in the town, whom the King took into his service). So for these reasons the duke of Burgundy raised the siege in 1475.

- Antoine de Luxembourg was captured at the battle of Guipy, 20 June 1475.
- Another Jacques de Luxembourg.

Book Four, Chapters 5-13; Book Five, Chapter 1

MEMOIRS

BOOK FOUR

5

[The War of 1475]

A few words are necessary about the king of England, who had got his army at Dover ready to cross the sea to Calais. This was the biggest army with which any king of England had invaded France. All the army was mounted, and it was the best turned out and the best armed that had ever gone to France, for most if not all of the nobles of England were in it. There were fifteen hundred well-horsed men at arms and most of them were barded and richly accoutred after our fashion; they had many followers on horse-back. In their army there were more than fifteen hundred mounted archers, carrying bows and arrows, as well as large numbers of infantry, and others who both looked after all their tents, of which they had a great quantity, and attended their artillery and enclosed their camp. In the whole army there was not a single page and the English had ordered three thousand men to go to Brittany.

I have said before, but it serves my purposes to say it again that had God not wanted to trouble the senses of the Duke of Burgundy, in order to preserve this kingdom (to which he has granted more favours up to the present than to any other), who would have believed that the duke would have been so obstinate in besieging such a strong place as Neuss, defended as it was? In all his life he had never known the kingdom of England disposed to send an army across the sea, and he recognized clearly that they would be almost useless in was in France on their own. For if he had ever wanted to use them it would have been necessary not to let them out of his sight for one full season in order to help them to train and instruct their army in our most important methods of warfare. When the English first come over no one is more stupid or clumsy but in a very short space of time they become very good, clever and brave soldiers.

The Duke did exactly the opposite and, amongst the other dis-services he did them, he caused them to lose almost all the campaigning season. 13

As for him, he had so broken up his army and it was in such poor condition and so impoverished that he dared not muster it before the English, because he had lost four thousand regular soldiers before Neuss, including the best men that he had. So you can see that God caused him to do the contrary to what he should reasonably have

done against all that he knew and understood better than anyone else only ten years previously.

ii *How the king of England crossed to France and anded at Calais to wage war on te Kind, and what happened.*

When King Edward was at Dover waiting to cross, the duke of Burgundy sent him more than five hundred ships from Holland and Zeeland which had flat bottoms and low sides and were very suitable for transporting horses. They were called '*scutes*'14 and originated in Holland. Despite this great number and all that the kind of England was able to do it took more than three weeks to transport everything from Dover to Calais, which are only seven leagues apart.15 You can thus see what difficulties a king of England encounters in crossing to France; and if the King our master had understood naval as well as he understood military matters King Edward would never have crossed, at least not that year. But the King did not understand naval tactics and those whom he had put in charge of his military affairs knew even less than he did. The kind of England took three weeks to cross, and a single ship from Eu captured tow or three of the small transports. Before the king of England embarked and sailed from Dover he sent a herald called Garter, who was a native of Normandy, to the king.16 He carried to the King a letter of defiance from the king of England in fine language and elegant style (I believe no English-man could have had a hand in composing it!). He required the King to deliver the realm of France to him, to whom it belonge, sp that he could restore the Church, the nobles and the people to their ancient liberties and remove the great taxes and burdens which the King had imposed upon them. He also declared what evils would follow in the case of his refusal, in the form and manner which was customary in such cases.

The King read the letter to himself and then he withdrew all alone into a smaller room and called the herald to him. He told him that he was well aware that the king of England had not come of his own accord but had been forced to as much by the duke of Burgundy as by the commons of England.He could equally well see that the campaigning season was almost finished and the duke of Burgundy was returning from Neuss a defeated and much weakened man and that, with regard to the Constable, the King knew that he had been in communication with the king of England because he had married his niece, but warned that he woul deceive Edward. He told him about the rewards he had conferred on him, saying, The Constable wants nothing more than to live by dissimulation and to keep in touch with everyone so as to make his profit.' He gave the herald several other reasons for warning King Edward of England to make peace with him. H also personally gave the herald three hundred crowns and promised him another thousand if peace was agreed upon. Publicly he gave him a very fine piece of crimson velvet thirty ells long.

The herald replied that he would do all in his power to achieve this peace and that he believed his master would willingly entertain the suggestion; but nothing more should be said until the king of England had crossed the sea. When he had done so another herald

should be sent to ask for safe- conducts so that ambassadors could come to meet him; they should apply to Lord Howard or Lord Stanley and also to himself to help guide the herald.

There were many people in the hall whilst the King was speaking to the herald. They were all waiting eagerly to hear what the King would say or what his expression would be when he came out. When he had finished he called me in to entertain the herald until an escort had been found to accompany him back, so that no one could speak to him and that I should give him the thirty ells of crimson velvet, which I did. The King then addressed some of the others and told them about hte letter of defiance and , calling seven or eight people apart, he made them read the letter. He put on a very assured air without showing any fear because he was very pleased with the way the herald had received his proposals.

- 13: M.S reads *raison* but M.S.P. reads *saison* which seems the more likely reading
- 14: In Dutch *schuit*
- 15: This phrase added from M.S.P.
- 16: John Smert was Garter King of Arms at this time. Commynes has cinfused him with Ireland King of Arms, Walter Bellengier, a native of Dieppe, who accomplished the mission he describes p246

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Book Five, Chapters 2-15

MEMOIRS

BOOK FIVE

2

What happened after the battle of Granson and how the King, informed of this event, conducted his affairs sagaciously

IT is now necessary to examine how the world changed after this battle, how people changed their opinions and how our King conducted everything sagaciously. It will be a very fine example to those young lords who foolishly take up enterprises without realizing what can happen to them and disdain the counsel of those whom they ought to consult.

First, the duke himself sent the lord of Contay to the King with a humble and gracious message which was completely contrary to his nature. See how one single hour had changed him! He begged the King to keep the truce with him faithfully and apologized for not coming to the interview which had been arranged at Auxerre, assuring him that he would come within a short time there or anywhere else the King wished. The King made Contay very welcome and reassured the envoy on every point he raised, because he did not yet think it was the right moment to do otherwise. The King fully recognized the loyalty of the duke's subjects and that they would rally round, and he wanted to see the end of this adventure without giving the two sides an opportunity to come to terms. But however well the King treated the lord of Contay, he must have heard many gibes in the town because songs were sung publicly praising the conquerors and pouring scorn on the vanquished.

As soon as Duke Galeazzo of Milan, who was still alive then,[5] learned about this battle he was very pleased even though he was the duke's ally, because he had made the alliance out of fear as he could see the duke of Burgundy's great popularity in Italy. The duke of Milan very hurriedly sent to the King a very insignificant-looking burgess of Milan and through an intermediary he was directed to me, bringing the duke's letters. I told the King of his arrival and he ordered me to listen to his message because he was not pleased with the duke for having abandoned the alliance with him and joining the duke of Burgundy, especially considering that

his wife was the Queen's sister.[6] The ambassador's mission was to state that his master, the duke of Milan, had been informed that the King and the duke of Burgundy were about to meet each other to make a great peace treaty and alliance. This would have been most displeasing to the duke, his master, and he gave reasons, which were not very convincing, why the King ought not to do this. But at the end of his speech he said that if the King would agree not to make a peace or truce with the duke of Burgundy, the duke of Milan would give the King a hundred thousand ducats in ready money.

After the King had heard the gist of the ambassador's message, he sent for him. I was the only other person present and the King told him briefly, 'My lord of Argenton here has reported certain things to me. Tell your master I don't want any of his money, that once a year I raise three times more money than he does and that I make peace or war as it pleases me. But if he's sorry about abandoning an alliance with me for one with the duke of Burgundy, I'm happy to return to our former relationship.' The ambassador thanked the King very humbly and decided that the King was not avaricious. He strongly urged the King to proclaim the alliances unaltered and said he had authority to promise that his master would adhere to them. The King agreed to this. After dinner they were published and immediately a messenger was dispatched to Milan, where they were proclaimed with great solemnity. So here already was one of the changes brought about by adversity, with one powerful man changing his alliance when only three weeks previously he had sent a great and solemn embassy to the duke of Burgundy for a similar purpose.

King René of Sicily was arranging to make the duke of Burgundy his heir and to deliver Provence to him. My lord of Châteauguion,[7] who is now in Piedmont, and others were to take possession of the country for the duke of Burgundy. They were to raise troops and had at least twenty thousand crowns in cash. Immediately the news was known it was only with the greatest difficulty that they were able to avoid being captured and my lord of Bresse, who was in that region, seized the money. The duchess of Savoy, as soon as she had news of the battle, informed King René, explaining it away and reassuring him over the losses. The mesengers, who were Provençals, were captured, and by this means the agreement between the king of Sicily and the duke of Burgundy was discovered.

The King straight away stationed men-at-arms close to Provence and dispatched ambassadors to the king of Sicily to ask him to appear. He assured him of a good welcome; otherwise the King threatened to use force. The king of Sicily was so easily persuaded that he came to meet the King at Lyon.[8] He was treated with very great honour and given fine hospitality.

I was present when they exchanged greetings on his arrival. Jean de Cossa, seneschal of Provence, a wealthy man of good family from the kingdom of Naples, acted as spokesman, saying, 'Sire, do not be astounded that my master, the king, your uncle, offered to make the duke of Burgundy his heir, since was counselled to do so

by his advisers, especially by me, because you, his sister's son and his own nephew, have done him great injury by taking away from him the castles of Angers and Bar and by treating him so badly over all his other affairs. We wanted to press ahead with this agreement with the duke so that you would hear news of it which would make you give us justice and remember that the king, my master, is your uncle. But we never intended to bring the negotiations to a conclusion.' The King took the words which Jean de Cossa spoke very well and wisely, knowing they were true because Cossa had been in charge of negotiations. A few days later the differences between them were settled; the king of Sicily received a sum of money, as did all his men, and the King feasted him with the ladies, had him entertained and humoured him in everything according to his tastes as best he could. They became good friends and no more was heard of the duke of Burgundy, abandoned by King René and rejected everywhere else. This was yet another misfortune springing from this setback.

My lady of Savoy, who hated her brother, the King, for a long time, sent the lord of Monragny on a secret mission. He came to me to arrange a reconciliation with the King. He set out the reasons why she had broken off relations with her brother and voiced the fears she had of the King. Nevertheless she was very wise and a true sister to the King, our master, and did not intend publicly to break with the duke. It appeared that she wanted to temporize and to begin to pick up the threads of her relationship with the King. He had me convey to her all the appropriate replies and attempted to get her to come to see him. Her messenger was sent back to her. Here again was another of the duke's allies who was negotiating to abandon him. Everywhere in Germany men began to declare themselves against the duke and all the Imperial towns such as Nuremberg, Frankfurt and several others, allied themselves to the Old and New Alliances against the duke, and seemed that many wrongs would be righted by doing him harm.

The spoils from his army greatly enriched the poor Swiss who at first did not realize, especially the ignorant ones, the value of the wealth which they had acquired. One of the most beautiful and costly tents in the world was cut into several pieces. There were many who sold a great quantity of silver plate and silver dishes for two *blancs*[9] apiece, thinking that they were pewter. The duke's largest diamond, one of the biggest in Christendom, with a pearl pendant, was picked up by a Swiss then put back in its box and thrown under a cart. Then he came back to look for it and offered it to a priest for a florin. The latter sent it to the leaders who gave him three francs for it. They also acquired the identical rubies known as the Three Brothers,[10] another ruby called the *Hotte* and another called the Ball of Flanders, which was one of the largest and finest ever found, as well as other priceless treasures which have since taught them what money is worth. For their victories and high opinion which the King held of them from then on and the goods he gave them have enabled them to become very rich. Every one of their ambassadors who came to the King after this received very large money gifts from him. By this means he made amends for not having declared himself on their side and he dispatched them dressed in silk clothes and with bulging purses. He also agreed to

promise them pensions which he later paid (but not before he saw the results of the second battle) and promsed them forty thousand Rhenish florins every year, twenty thousand for the towns and twenty thousand for the men who governed them. And I do not think I am lying when I say that I believe that from this first battle at Granson until the time of our King's death the towns and individual Swiss received from the King, our master, a million Rhenish florins, and I mean by this only four towns: Berne, Lucerne, Fribourg, Zurich and their territories (that is their mountains). Schwyz is one of them but it is only a village. I have seen its representative, an ambassador with the others, but he was very plainly dressed.

- He died on 26 December 1476.
- The envoy was Giovanni Bianca and the duchess of Milan was Bonna of Savoy (cf. Introduction.)
- Hugues de Chalon-Arlay, d. 3 July 1490.
- April 1476.
- A small silver coin.
- Acquired by the contingent from Basle, these rubies passed through the hands of the Imperial banks, the Fuggers, in the sixteenth century, and were part of the English crown jewels from the reign of Henry VIII to Charles I.

3
[The battle of Morat]

i How the duke of Burgundy gathered his men and restarted the war against the Swiss by going to besiege Morat

TO return to the duke of Burgundy; he collected troops from all quarters and within three weeks he had reassembled a great number of those who had fled on the day of the battle. He stayed at Lausanne in Savoy[11] where you, my lord of Vienne, gave him good counsel during a serious illness, caused by this shameful defeat which he had suffered, which had made him very sorrowful and depressed. And indeed, to speak the truth, I believe that his mind was never again as sound as it had been before the battle. I am able to speak about this great new army which he had assembled from the reports which my lord the prince of Taranto[12] gave the King in my presence. About a year previously, this prince had come to the duke with a very large retinue, hoping to obtain the hand of his daughter and sole heiress. He appeared a true king's son by his bearing, his clothing and his company. The king of Naples, his father, showed plainly that he had not spared any expense. Yet the duke had not been completely open and was even then negotiating with my lady of Savoy over her son, Don Federigo of Aragon, was very unhappy at the delays and, together with his counsellors, sent a competent herald to the King to ask for a safe-conduct so that the prince could pass through the kingdom on his way back to his father, the king, who had sent for him. The King very willingly gave him one because he clearly thought it would diminish the duke of Burgundy's credit and reputation. Nevertheless before the messenger had returned all the German leagues had assembled and camped close to the duke of Burgundy. The prince took his leave of

the duke the evening before the battle, obeying the orders of the king, his father, for at the first battle he had shown himself a worthy man. Also, some say he was following your counsel, my lord of Vienne, for after he had arrived at the King's camp I heard him swear to the duke of Atri, Count Guilio[13] and several others, that you had written to Italy about the first and second battles and predicted what would happen several days before it did.

As I said, at the time of the prince's departure, the troops of these alliances were already quartered close to the duke. They had come to force him to raise the siege he had laid before Morat, a little town near Berne, belonging to my lord of Romont. The allies, as I have been told by some who were there, may easily have numbered thirty thousand well-chosen and well-armed infantry, eleven thousand pikemen, ten thousand halberdiers, ten thousand culverineers and four thousand cavalry.[14] The alliances had not yet all assembled and only those whom I have mentioned were at the battle. But they were enough. My lord of Lorraine arrived there with a few men and this turned out to be to his advantage later, because the duke of Burgundy had occupied all his lands. The duke of Lorraine realized that people were beginning to tire of him at our court, for a powerful man who has lost all his possessions usually annoys those who support him. The King had given him a small sum of money and had him escorted through Lorraine with a strong force of soldiers, who took him to Germany and then returned. This lord had not only lost his duchy of Lorraine but also the county of Vaudémont and most of the Barrois. The King held the rest, so nothing was left to him and, what was even worse, all his subjects, including his household servants, had voluntarily sworn an oath to the duke of Burgundy, so that it seemed he nad no means to restore his fortunes. But God always remains the judge of such causes if He wishes.

ii *The battle of Morat, where the duke of Burgundy was defeated for the second time by the Swiss*

When the duke of Lorraine had completed this journey, after riding for several days, as I said, he arrived at the camp of the alliances, together with a few soldiers a few hours before the battle. This journey brought him great honour and profit because if he had done otherwise he would have found a poor welcome. At the moment of his arrival the armies were marching out on both sides, because the alliances had already been encamped for three days in a strong position close to the duke of Burgundy. After some small resistance the duke was routed and put to flight and he did not come out of it as well as in the last battle, when he had lost only seven men-at-arms. This was because the Swiss did not then have any cavalry but on this occasion, close to Morat, the Germans had four thousand well-mounted horsemen who pursued the duke of Burgundy's men a very long way and their infantry fought his, which was very numerous. For besides his own subjects and some English troops, of which he had a good number, he had many troops newly arrived from Piedmont as well as subjects of the duke of Milan, as I have said. The prince of Taranto told me after coming to the King's court that he had never seen such a fine army and that he had himself counted and ordered others to count whilst the army was

crossing a bridge and they had counted more than twenty-three thousand mercenaries, besides all the rest who followed the army and were part of the artillery train. This number seems very large to me, although many people speak lightly of thousands and make armies much larger than they are.

The lord of Contay, who came to the King shortly after the battle, told him in my presence that eight thousand of the duke's regular soldiers had been killed in the battle as well as many common people. And I believe from what I could gather that altogether at least eighteen thousand people died. It is easy to believe this, considering the large number of horsemen present, who had been sent thither by many German lords, and the number who were still at the siege of Morat. The duke fled as far as Burgundy, totally desolated as he had reason to be, and stayed at a place called La Rivière, where he gathered what men he could. The Germans only pursued that night and then withdrew without marching after him.

- In April and May 1476.
- Federigo of Aragon, second son of Ferrante I, king of Naples, d. 1504.
- Ascoli in MS. Mlle Dupont identifies him as Guilio Antonio Acquaviva, duke of Atri, killed fighting the Turks, 6 February 1481.
- A gross exaggeration.

4

{Here I speak about the events which occurred after the battle of Morat and how the duke of Burgundy seized the duchess of Savoy and how the King, her brother, delivered her]

THIS disaster drove the duke to despair and he realized that all his friends were forsaking him because of the signs which he had seen after his first defeat at Granson only three weeks before this one I have just spoken about.[15] And because of his fears, following the advice of certain counsellors, he had the duchess of Savoy and one of her children, who is today the duke of Savoy, brought to Burgundy by force. Her eldest child was saved by some of the officers of the house of Savoy because those who did this kidnapping did so in fear and were forced to act quickly. It was the fear that she would withdraw to the court of the King, her brother, and that made the duke perform this deed, and he said that all his troubles stemmed from helping the house of Savoy. The duke had the duchess brought to the castle of Rouvres, near Dijon, where there was a small guard. Yet everyone who wanted to visit her was allowed to and amongst those who did so were the present lord of Ch&$226;teauguion and the present marquis of Rothelin. The duke had arranged for these two to marry two of the duchess's daughters. These marriages had not taken place but they have since. Her eldest son, Philibert, who was then duke of Savoy, was taken by his rescuers to Chamb&$233;ry where he found the bishop of Geneva, a member of the house of Savoy, who was a very wilful man and governed by a Commander of de Ranvers.[16] They placed the duke of Savoy and his younger brother, called the Protonotary, together with the castles of Chambéry and

Montmélian, in the bishop's hands and he kept another castle in which were all the duchess of Savoy's jewels.

As soon as the duchess found herself at Rouvres, accompanied by all her women and a large number of servants, she saw that the duke was very involved in collecting men together and that those who were guarding her were not as afraid of their master as they used to be. She decided to send word to the King, her brother, to arrange a settlement and to ask him to take her under his protection. Were it not for her present situation she would have been very scared of falling into his hands because the hatred between the King and herself was deep and of long standing.

The duchess sent a nobleman from Piedmont called Rivarola, who was master of her household. Someone directed him to me and, after I had listened to him and reported to the King what he had told me, the King himself heard him. Whereupon the King told him that he would not abandon his sister in this emergency, notwithstanding their past differences, and that if she wanted to ally with him he would send the governor of Champagne, Sir Charles d'Amboise, lord of Chaumont, to fetch her. Rivarola took his leave of the King and hurriedly returned to his mistress. She was delighted with this news. Immediately she had heard Rivarola's message she sent another man back asking the King to give her an assurance that he would allow her to go to Savoy and that he would deliver the duke, her son, and the other child, as well as the places, and that he would help her maintain her authority in Savoy. She, for her part, would be content to renounce all her alliances and to join him. The King promised her everything she asked for and immediately dispatched a messenger directly to the lord of Chaumont to carry out the plan. This was well organized and efficiently executed. The lord of Chaumont went with a strong body of men to Rouvres without harming the countryside and carried off my lady of Savoy and all her train to the nearest place owing obedience to the King.

When the King dispatched the last message to the duchess he had already left Lyon, where he had been staying for six months in order to break up the duke of Burgundy's schemes cleverly without infringing on the truce. But, recognizing fully the duke's position, the King caused him more harm by allowing him to go his own way and by stirring up his enemies secretly than he would if he had openly declared war on him, because if the duke had seen such a declaration he would immediately have abandoned his plans and what did happen to him would not have occurred.

The King, continuing on his way after leaving Lyon, embarked at Roanne on the river Loire and came to Tours. Immediately after his arrival there he learnt of his sister's deliverance which pleased him a great deal. He quickly sent word that she sould come to him and ordered the payment of her travelling expenses. When she arrived he sent out a large number of people to meet her. He himself went to receive her at the gates of Plessis-du-Parc[17] and greeted her in a friendly manner saying, 'Welcome, Madame Burgundy!' She recognized easily from his face that he was only joking and very wisely replied that she was a good Frenchwoman and ready to obey

the King in whatever he wished to command. The King conducted her to her room and had her treated very well. But the truth is he was very anxious to get rid of her. She was very shrewd and both of them knew each other very well. She was even more anxious to leave. I received the King's instructions about what had to be done, first, to find money to pay for her expenses and her return journey, then for a quantity of silk and for having their alliance and future relationship drawn up in writing. The King wanted to make her change her mind over the marriages of her two daughters, which I mentioned, but she excused herself and blamed them, saying that they were obstinate, as indeed they were. When the King knew their wishes he consented. And after the duchess had been at Plessis for seven or eight days she and the King swore an oath together to be good friends in the future and letters were exchanged. The duchess took leave of the King, who had her well escorted home and delivered her children, all her castles, her jewels and all the goods which belonged to her. Both were very pleased to leave each other and they remained as good brother and sister until death.

- The battle of Granson was fought on 2 March and that of Morat on 22 June 1476.
- Jean le Monchenu, commander of Saint-Antoine de Revel, nick-named M. de Ranvers.
- The castle of Plessis-les-Tours, near Tours, made notorious by Sir Walter Scott in *Quentin Durward*.

5
[The consequences of the Burgunidan disasters]

i Charles of Burgundy after Morat

TO continue my story, it is necessary to speak about the duke of Burgundy who, after his flight from the battle of Morat in 1476, had gone to the Burgundian frontier at La Rivière where he spent six weeks and still had enough courage to gather troops together. However he did not hurry and lived like a hermit. And it appeared that he did this more out of obstinacy than anything else, as you will hear, because the grief which he experienced as a result of losing the first battle at Granson was so great, and it disturbed his mind so much, that he fell seriously ill. His choleric humour and natural heat had been so great that he did not drink wine but, in the morning, he normally drank an infusion and ate rose-hip syrup to refresh himself. This sadness changed his disposition so much that he had to be forced to drink strong wine undiluted by water and, to make him more sanguine, some people put burning tow in a container which they placed whilst still warm above his heart. You, my lord of Vienne, know more about this than I do because you were the man who helped to heal him of this illness and induced him to shave off the beard which he had allowed to grow. In my opinion after that illness he was not as wise as he was before and his capacity was much diminished; such are the passions of those who have never experienced misfortunes and do not know how to remedy them, especially proud princes. For in this case and in similar ones a man's first refuge should be to turn to God and to

consider whether one had offended Him in any way, to humble oneself before Him and to confess one's misdeeds, because it is He who determines such events and one can attribute no error to Him. After that it does a lot of good to talk to a particular friend and to bewail one's griefs openly; one should feel no shame in exposing one's sorrows to a special friend, because that relieves and comforts the heart and revives a man's spirits. Since we are men we cannot avoid experiencing such sorrows with great emotion, either in public or in private, and one ought not to do what the duke did in hiding himself and remaining alone. Then, because he was so terrible to his servants, no one dared to approach him or give him any solace or counsel. They left him to do whatever he liked, fearing that if they remonstrated with him over anything he would take it badly.

ii *I speak about the duke of Lorraine, who had been expelled from his duchy by the duke of Burgundy and how, when he saw the duke in great difficulties because of the two battles he had lost, he undertook to reconquer Lorraine with Swiss help and the favour and secret assistance of the King and how the duke of Lorraine retook Nancy*

During the six weeks or thereabouts which the duke spent with so few troops — which was hardly surprising after losing two such large battles as you have heard — and after several new enemies had declared themselves against him, his friends cooled in their affections and his subjects, beaten and defeated, began to grumble about their master and to despise him, as is so often the case after such misfortunes.

Several small places were taken from him in Lorraine such as Vaudémont; (which had already been recaptured); Épinal and others were later. On all sides men were prepared to attack him and the most insignificant now became the boldest. The duke of Lorraine, hearing this news, assembled a few troops and came to camp before Nancy. He held the majority of the small towns in the neighbourhood. But the duke of Burgundy still held Pont-à-Mousson, which was about four leagues from Nancy. Among the besieged was my lord of Bièvres, a good honest knight of the Croy family.[18] He had some fine men with him, including one called Colpin, who was a very valiant man although from humble stock, whom he had brought with others from the garrison of Guines into the duke's service. Colpin had some three hundred Englishmen under him at Nancy and, although they were not feeling any great pressure from the siege or from attacks, they were annoyed that the duke was so slow in coming to help them. And, in truth, he was very wrong not to come to them, because he was at a place which was a long way from Lorraine and where he could not be of any assistance to them. It would have been better to defend what he still possessed than to attack the Swiss in the hope of avenging his losses. But his obstinacy, for which he would take no counsel but his own, caused him great loss. For whatever efforts were made to persuade him to succour Nancy he needlessly remained at La Rivière for about six weeks. Had he done otherwise he could easily have reinforced Nancy because the duke of Lorraine had no men there, and by guarding Lorraine he would always have had a route

to get from his other lordships through Luxembourg and Lorraine to Burgundy. Thus if his judgement had remained as acute as it had been before he would have acted more speedily.

Meanwhile, as the garrison at Nancy awaited relief, Colpin, who was the leader of the company of Engilshmen as I said, was killed by a cannon-shot. This was a serious loss for the duke of Burgundy because one man can sometimes save his master from great inconvenience, even when he is neither a member of his household nor from a great family, provided he has good judgement and courage.[19]In this particular respect I have observed that the King, our master, had great wisdom because no prince feared losing his servants more than he did. As soon as Colpin was dead the English, who had been under his command, began to complain and to despair of help. They did not know how small the duke of Lorraine's forces were nor how great were the resources of the duke of Burgundy for collecting troops. Futhermore, because the English had not fought outside their kingdom for so long, they began to press for negotiations and told the lord of Bièvres, who was the town's governor, that if he did not surrender they would do so without him. Although he was a good knight he had little strength of character and he begged and pleaded with them when, it seems to me, if he had spoken more boldly he would have done better, unless God had ordained otherwise (which I beleive to be the case), because had they held out for another three days they would have received help. But, to put it briefly, he gave in to the English and delivered Nancy to the duke of Lorraine, thereby saving their lives and goods. The next day, or at the latest, two days after the town had been handed over,[20] the duke of Burgundy arrived with a strong force, considering his position, because some men from his other lordships had come from Luxembourg to join him and he and the duke of Lorraine confronted each other. But no important action took place because the duke of Lorraine was not strong enough.

- Jean de Rubempré, killed 5 January 1477, was the son of Jacqueline de Croy.
- i.e. Commynes himself.
- Nancy surrendered on 6 October 1476. Charles arrived at Toul on 11 October.

6

How the duke of Burgundy, informed of the capture of Nancy from him by the duke of Lorraine, laid siege to the town in order to recapture it, and what happened during the siege

THE duke of Burgundy began to run after the ball[21] and once more laid siege to Nancy. It would have been better for him if he had not been so obstinate in remaining [at La Rivière]. But God makes princes act arbitrarily when it pleases Him to change their fortunes. If the duke had willingly followed his adviders and reinforced the small neighbouring places strongly he would have quickly recovered Nancy, because the town was very poorly provided with supplies and there were more than enough troops to reduce it; he could have refreshed his army and built it up again. But he tackled it another way. In the meantime, whilst he was undertaking this

siege, which turned out so unfortunately for him and all his subjects, as well as for several others for whom the quarrel meant nothing, some of his men began to intrigue. And already, as I said, enemies had arisen against him on all sides, including among others, Count Niccolò di Campobasso, a native of the kingdom of Naples (whence he had been exiled for his support of the Angevin family), and one of those servants of Duke Nicholas of Calabria to whom the duke had given refuge after their master's death.

The count was very poor, as I said elsewhere, in terms of goods and landed wealth. The duke of Burgundy had given him forty thousand ducats at the outset to go to Italy to recruit four hundred lances, which he paid through him. And from that point onwards Campobasso began to plot the death of his master, as I have already said, and had continued to do so right up to the moment I am now speaking about. When he saw his master in difficulties he once more began to intrigue, both with my lord of Lorraine and with other captains and servants whom the King had sent to Champagne, close to the duke's army.

He promised the duke of Lorraine he would see to it that the siege would not advance quickly and that he would make sure that the most necessary supplies for the siege and battery would be lacking. He could do this easily because he was the principal officer in charge and possessed great influence with the duke of Burgundy. With our men he bargained more readily, for he always offered to kill or capture his master, asking in return for pay for his four hundred lances, twenty thousand crowns and a good county. Whilst he was arranging this several of the duke of Lorraine's gentlemen arrived to enter Nancy, and some did so. The others were captured, including a Provençal gentleman called Syffredo [di Baschi] who had managed all the count's negotiations with the duke of Lorraine. The duke of Burgundy ordered Syffredo to be hanged immediately, saying that once a prince laid siege to a place and fired his cannon at it anyone who came to enter it and to reinforce it against him deserved to die, according to the laws of war. Nevertheless this custom is not applied in our wars, which are in other respects more cruel than the wars in Italy or Spain where the custom is used. Yet the duke wanted this gentleman to die. When he saw that there was no hope of escape and that they wanted to kill him, Syffredo sent word to the duke of Burgundy begging him to grant him an audience and saying that he would tell him something concerning the duke's person. Several gentlemen to whom he said this came to report it to the duke and by chance the count of Campobasso, whom I have mentioned, was present when they spoke to the duke. He may have been there by chance, but since he knew of Syffredo's capture he may have been there on purpose. He was afraid that Syffredo would reveal all he knew about him, since he was informed of all the count's intrigues with both sides and everything had been communicated to him; that was what he wanted to talk about.

The duke told those who had reported this to him that Syffredo only said this to save his life and he should talk to them. The count supported this view. There was no one with the duke except the count and a secretary, who was writing, for the count was in

complete charge of the army. The prisoner said that he would speak only to the duke of Burgundy. At once the duke ordered him to be taken out and hanged. This was done. When he was being taken away, Syffredo begged several people to plead with their master on his behalf and said he would tell them a piece of information he would value more than a whole duchy. Many who recognized him had pity on him and decided to speak to their master to ask him to listen to him. But this evil count was at the door of the wooden chalet where the duke was staying and stopped anyone entering and, in particular, refused entrance to those men, saying, 'My lord has ordered the hanging to be carried out.' He sent messengers to hurry the provost. Finally Syffredo was hanged, to the great disadvantage of the duke of Burgundy. It would have been far better for him if he had not been so cruel and had listened humanely to this gentleman. Perhaps if he had done so he might still have been alive and his house strong and much increased in power, considering the things which have happened in this realm since then. But one must believe that God had ordained otherwise.

You have heard already in these memoirs about the disloyal trick which the duke had played a little while before on the count of Saint-Pol, Constable of France; how he had captured him by granting him his own safe-conduct, then handed him to the King for execution and, moreover, delivered all the sealed documents and letters which he had received from the Constable to serve as evidence at his trial. And although the duke had just cause for mortally hating the Constable and procuring his death for many reasons, which would take too long to write down, he should have done so without giving him his word. All the excuses which I might make for this action could not atone for the disloyalty and dishonour which the duke showed by giving a good and valid safe-sonduct to the Constable and then taking and selling him out of pure avarice, not only for the town of Saint-Quentin and other places, lands and chattels of the Constable, but also for fear of not taking Nancy when he besieged it for the first time. After many prevarications he handed the Constable over at that time because he was afraid that the King's army, which was in Champagne, would thwart his attack on Nancy since the King was threatening him through his ambassadors, on account of their agreement that whichever one of them captured the Constable should hand him over to the other within eight days or have him put to death. Now the duke had already exceeded this time-limit by many days and it was only this fear and his ambition to take Nancy which forced him to deliver the Constable as you have heard. And just as it was at Nancy that he had commited this crime, after he had laid a siege a second time and had Syffredo executed (whom he did not want to listen to, like a man who had already had his ears stopped and his judgement impaired), it was quite rightly at the same place that he was deceived and betrayed by one in whom he had the most confidence and was by chance paid his just deserts for the things which he had done to the Constable through his greedy desire for Nancy. But such judgement belongs to God; I only mention it to make my account clearer and to show how a good prince should avoid such wicked conduct and disloyalty, whatever other advice he may be given on the subject. It has happened many times that whose who counsel in this way do it to please princes and because

they dare not contradict them even though they are very upset when the advice has been followed because they are aware of the punishment they could receive both from God and the rest of the world. Thus such counsellors are better at a distance than close at hand.

You have heard how God had established the count of Campobasso as his agent in this world to take vengeance on the duke of Burgundy for his treatment of the Constable at the same place in in the same way, even more cruelly. For just as the duke had delivered the Constable to be put to death, despite the safe-conduct and the trust which the Constable had in him, so he was betrayed by the most loyal member of his army (or rather the man in whom he trusted most). By the man, I say, whom he had welcomed when old, poverty-stricken, and friendless, to whom he had given a hundred thousand ducats a year, and whose troops he had paid for, besides the other great favours which he had given him. And when he began these intrigues he had gone to Italy with forty thousand ducats in cash, which he had received for recruiting, as they say, that is to raise his men-at-arms. In order to carry out this treason he had approached people in two places. First, he approached a doctor living in Lyon called Master Simon of Pavia, and secondly, a man whom I have mentioned in Savoy. On his return his troops were quartered in certain small places in the county of Marle in the Laon district. From there he started his intrigues again, offering to hand over all the places he held, or, if the King were to find himself in battle with his master, that there should be a certain signal arranged between the King and himself. When that was sent to him he would turn against his master and join the King's side with all his company. This second proposition would not have pleased the King very much. He also proposed again that on the first occasion that his master set up his camp he would capture or kill him whilst he was inspecting the army. And, in truth, he could hardly have failed in this third plan because the duke had the habit, as soon as he had dismounted at the place where he was going to camp, of taking off most of his armour, keeping on only his breastplate. He then got on a small horse and kept only eight or ten foot-archers with him. Sometimes two or three gentlemen of his chamber followed him and he went all round his camp on the outside to see whether it was securely enclosed. So the count could have carried out his plans without any difficulty with only ten horsemen.

After the King had seen the continual efforts of this man to betray his master and that his most recent offers had been made during a truce, and since he did not know for what reason he was making the propositions, he decided to be very frank with the duke of Burgundy and sent him word through the lord of Contay (who has been mentioned several times in these memoirs) about all the intrigues of the count. I was present and I am sure that the lord of Contay acquitted himself loyally towards his master. But he took it the wrong way and said that if it were true then the King would never have let him know about it. This happened a long time before he came to Nancy and I truly believe that the duke said nothing about it to the count.

- *Courir apres son esteuf* — a phrase borrowed from tennis meaning, picturesquely, that he was wasting his time.

7

[The duke of Lorraine obtains help; the mission of the king of Portugal]

WE must return to our main subject and to the siege which the duke laid to Nancy in the depths of winter with a few badly armed and ill-paid soldiers, many of whom were sick, whilst many leading officers were scheming against him, as you have heard. In general all were grumbling about him and condemned his actions as always happens in adversity, as I have previously said at length. But nobody except the count of Campobasso was planning to harm him personally or his position, and none of his subjects was disloyal. Whilst he was making his first preparations, the duke of Lorraine negotiated with the Old and New Alliances, which I have already mentioned, for troops to fight the duke of Burgundy before Nancy. All the towns were very eager to provide them. It only remained for him to find the money. The King reassured him through ambassadors he had sent to the Swiss, and also furnished him with forty thousand francs to help pay for his German troops, whilst my lord of Craon, who was the King's lieutenant in Champagne, camped with him in the Barrois with seven or eight hundred lances and franc-archers under a number of fine officers. The duke of Lorraine was able to do so much with the King's favour and money that he enlisted a great number of Germans, both on foot and on horseback and, in addition to those he paid for, they provided some troops at their own expense. He also had with him a large number of gentlemen from this kingdom; the King's army, which was encamped in the Barrois, as I said, was not fighting but was waiting to see who would get the upper hand. The duke of Lorraine camped at Saint-Nicolas, near Nancy, with the Germans.

The king of Portugal had been in this kingdom for about nine[22] months. Louis had formed an alliance with him against the present king of Spain.[23] The Portugese king had come in expectation that the King would provide him with a great army to use in a war against Castile, directed through the Biscay coast or through Navarre, because he held a large number of places in Castile, both on the Portugese frontier and in the districts bordering our territories, such as the castle of Burgos and others. I truly believe that had the King helped him, as he had sometimes wanted to do, the king of Portugal would have been victorious and successful in his enterprise. But the King changed his mind and the king of Portugal had been kept in a state of expectation for a year or more. In the meantime his affairs in Castile began to go badly. When he came to France nearly all the lords of the kingdom of Castile were on his side but when they saw him staying so long their attitude changed little by little and they made their peace with King Ferdinand[24] and Queen Isabella,[25] who reign today.

The King made excuses for not giving his promised aid, alleging that it was because of the war in Lorraine and because he was afraid that if the duke of Burgundy recovered he would come to attack him. The poor king of Portugal, who was a very good and

upright man, decided that he would go to visit the duke of Burgundy, who was his cousin. He planned to settle all the differences between the King and the duke so that the King would be free to help him and because he was ashamed to return to Castile and Portugal without this aid and without accomplishing anything here. For he had decided to come impetuously and against the wishes of his council.

So the king of Portugal set out in the middle of winter and went to find his cousin, the duke of Burgundy, before Nancy. He began to tell him what the King had told him in order to achieve this reconciliation. But he found it would be a very difficult task to get them to agree because they differed on every issue. So he only remained there two days before he took his leave of his cousin, the duke, to return to Paris, whence he had come. The duke begged him to stay a little longer and go to Pont-à-Mousson, which is quite close to Nancy, to guard the crossing, because the duke had already learned of the arrival of the Germans who were camped at Saint-Nicolas. The king of Portugal excused himself by saying that he was not sufficiently armed or well attended for such a military action and he returned to Paris where he spent a long time. In the end the king of Portugal began to suspect that the King wanted to capture him and turn him over to his enemy, the king of Castile. For this reason he disguised himself, and with two others decided to go to Rome to enter a religious order. While they were travelling in disguise they were captured by a Norman called [Robin] Le Beuf. Our master, the King, was very sorry and a little ashamed about this so he had several ships from Normandy armed and with George the Greek[26] as commander, they took the king back to Portugal.

The cause of his war against the king of Castile was his niece, his sister's daughter. His sister was the wife of the late King Don Enrique of Castile and her very beautiful daughter is still alive and unmarried today in Portugal. She was ousted from the succession to Castile by Isabella, sister of King Enrique, on the grounds that her mother had concieved her adulterously. Many people held this same opinion, claiming, for reasons I shall say nothing about, that the King Enrique could not have fathered her. Whatever the case may have been, and notwithstanding the fact that the daughter was apparently born in wedlock, nevertheless the crown of Castile was kept by Queen Isabella and her husband, the King of Aragon and Sicily, reigning today. The king of Portugal tried to bring about a marriage of his niece and our present King, Charles VIII. This was the main reason for his journey to France which was to his great detriment and displeasure, for soon after his return to Portugal he died.

Thus, as I have said towards the beginning of these memoirs, a prince should consider carefully what ambassadors he sends abroad. For if those who came here to make an alliance on behalf of the king of Portugal (at which negotiations I was present as one of the King's deputies) had been wiser, they would have informed themselves better about affairs in France before counselling their master to make this journey, which caused him so much harm.

- Alfonso V (1438-81) had been about two months in France at this point in November 1476.
- Ferdinand, King of Aragon 1479-1516.
- All MSS. read *Alphonse,* an obvious slip for Ferdinand.
- Isabella of Castile, eife of Ferdinand, and queen of Castile 1474-1504.
- George Paleologus, naturalized French 1477, died before 1500.

8

[The death of Charles the Rash at Nancy]

*[**i** The resistance of Nancy]*

I COULD well have left out this digression, had it not demonstrated that a prince should think twice before putting himself in another's hands, and that he ought not to go to seek help in person. So, to return to my principal concern, the king of Portugal had not travelled for more than a day after leaving the duke of Burgundy when the duke of Lorraine and the Germans who were with him, broke up their camp at Saint-Nicolas and came to fight the duke of Burgundy. And, on the very same day, to carry out his scheme the count Campobasso came out to meet them and joined them with about a hundred and sixty men-at-arms. He was very displeased that he could not do his master more harm.

The defenders of Nancy were informed of the count of Campobasso's intrigues, which encouraged them to resist. Also a man[27] who had swum the moat entered the town and assured them of help, for otherwise they were on the point of surrender. Had it not been for the count's dissumulation they would not have held until then. But God wanted to bring this extraordinary affair to a conclusion!

***ii** Here I begin to speak about the battle of Nancy, and how the duke of Burgundy was defeated and killed*

The duke of Burgundy, informed of the army's approached, held a short council, although he was not accustomed to doing so as he usually acted on his own judgememt. Several of those present said that he ought to retreat to Pont-à-Mousson close by and that he ought to leave some of his men at the places he held around Nancy, saying that as soon as the Germans had revictualled Nancy they would leave and the duke of Lorraine would run out of money, and he would be unable to raise such a large army again for a long time. The supplies which they brought would not be adequate, and before half the winter had passed they would be in as much difficulty as they were then. In the meantime the duke could collect his troops. For I have heard from those who considered themselves well informed that the army numbered not more than four thousand men, of whom not more than twelve hundred were fit to fight. The duke had plenty of money because he had more than four hundred and fifty thousand crowns at the castle of Luxembourg near by and he could have collected enough men. But God did not want to grant him the favour of recognizing this wise counsel, nor of realizing how many enemies surrounded him on all sides. He chose the

wrong course, regardless of all the arguments put to him about the great number of Germans who were with the duke of Lorraine and also about the King's army camped close to him. He decided to fight the battle with this small force of demoralized soldiers.

When the count of Campobasso came to the duke of Lorraine, the Germans told him to go away and said that they did not want any traitors with them. So he withdrew to Condé,[28] a castle and crossing place near by, which he fortified as best he could, hoping that when the duke of Burgundy and his men fled he could fall on them, as indeed he did.

The negotiations with the duke of Lorraine were not the count's principal intrigues, for a little before the count's departure he had spoken to some others and he had agreed with them that since he could not see a way of getting his hands on the duke of Burgundy he would change sides when the hour of battle came. He did not want to leave sooner because he wanted to give the biggest possible shock to all the duke's army. But he would make sure that if the duke fled he would not escape alive. The count would leave behind twelve to fourteen people who would be loyal to him. Some were to begin the flight as soon as they saw the Germans approaching, and others were to keep an eye on the duke and if he ran away they were to kill him as he fled. There was nothing wrong with this plan, because I knew two or three of those who had remained to kill the duke. When he had laid these treacherous plans, he returned to the camp and then turned against his master when he saw the Germans arriving, as I have said. Then, when he saw that the Germans did not want him in their company, he went to Condé.

The Germans advanced. With them was a large number of cavalry from France, who had been allowed to join them there. Many more lay in ambush close by to see whether the duke would be defeated so that they could seize prisoners or booty. And so you can see the position this poor duke had got himself into because he did not follow the advice given him.

When the two armies met, the duke's, which had already been defeated twice and was made up only of a few badly armed men, was immediately defeated and everyone was killed or put to flight. A large number managed to save themselves. The rest were captured or killed there. Among those who died on the field of battle was the duke of Burgundy. I do not want to talk about how he died because I was not there, but I was told about his death by those who saw him struck to the ground; they could not help him because they were prisoners. Yet in their view he was not killed then. But later a great crowd of people, who arrived at that spot, killed and stripped him, together with a large number of other people, without recognizing him. This battle took place on 5 January 1477 on the eve of the Epiphany.

- A draper from Mirecourt called Thierri.
- Condé-Northern arr. Metz. dép. Moselle.

[An assessment of Charles the Rash and his family]

I HAVE since seen a signet seal at Milan which I had many times observed hanging from the duke's doublet. It represented a lamb and a flint set in a cameo with his arms and it was sold for two ducats in Milan.[29] It had been taken from the duke by a dishonest chamber valet. I have often seen the duke dressed and undressed with great reverence by high ranking people, yet at this last hour all these honours were gone. He and his house perished, as I have said, at the place where only a little time before he had agreed through avarice to hand over the Constable. May God forgive him!

I knew him as a great and honourable prince, for a time at least, as highly esteemed and sought after by his neighbours as any other prince in Christendom, and perhaps more so. I have not discovered any reason why he should have so quickly incurred the wrath of God, except that he thought that all the favours and honours which he received in this world were the result of his own judgement and virtue and he did nto attribute them to God as he ought to have done. For, in truth, he had some good qualities and virtues. No prince ever exceeded him in wishing to maintain great men and to give them a pleasant way of life. However, his gifts were not very lavish because he wanted everyone to experience his liberality. Nobody ever gave audiences more freely to his servants and subjects. During the time when I knew him he was not cruel, but be became so before his death, which was a bad omen. He dressed and acted in all other ways very ostentatiously; a little too much so. He was very courteous to ambassadors and foreigners and they received a very lavish and warm reception in his court. He craved great glory, and it was for this reason more than for anything else that he was led into these wars. He would have liked to resemble those princes of antiquity about whom so much has been said since their deaths. He was as daring as any man of his generation. Yet all his schemes are finished and they all turned out to his dishonour and shame; for those who win always get the honour. I cannot say toward whom our Lord showed the greatest anger; to the duke who died suddenly upon the battlefield without lingering long, or to his subjects who have never since enjoyed prosperity or peace but have either been in continual warfare against people they could not resist or quarrelling among themselves in cruel and deadly strife. The hardest thing for them to bear has been that their defenders were foreigners who had previously been their enemies — the Germans. And, in effect, since the death of the duke there has not been a man who wished them well of those from whom they have sought help. Judging from their actions, their senses were as disturbed as their prince's. For, a short while before his death they rejected all good and sound counsel and followed the courses which were harmful to them. And they are still in a position where great troubles could beset them or there is at least a fear of their return.

I am inclined to agree with someone's opinion which I saw somewhere; that God provides the people with a prince according to the way He wants to punish or chatise them and He provides the prince with subjects whose hearts are disposed towards him according to whether to God wanted to exalt or humiliate him. And so in the case of this house of Burgundy He made everything equal. For after their long period of a hundred and twenty years of

happiness and great prosperity under three powerful, good and wise princes before this one, God provided Duke Charles, who kept his subjects continuously engaged on great, arduous and costly wars, almost as much in winters as in summer. Many rich and prosperous people were either killed or deprived of their possessions as a result of their capture during these wars. They began to incur great losses at the siege of Neuss and those continued through three or four battles up to the moment of his death. So much so that in this last battle all the strength of his country was destroyed by the death, destruction or capture of all the men who were willing or able to defend the position and honour of his family. And also, as I have said, it seems that this loss was equal to their former happiness. For as I remarked that I had seen him famous, rich and highly respected, so I can say the same about his subjects, for I have known and seen the better part of Europe, yet I have not known any lordship or country of an equal size, not many of even bigger size, which was so abounding in riches, possessions and buildings nor so free with prodigalities, expenses, feasts and entertainments as I experienced in the time I lived there. And if some who did not visit Burgundy in the time I am speaking about think that I have exaggerated, perhaps there are others who lived there as I did who will say that I say too little.

Yet our Lord in on fell swoop caused the overthrow of this great and magnificent edifice; this powerful house which has produced and maintained so many fine gentlemen and which was so renowned both far and wide for so many great and victories and glories than any of its neighbours in its time. It had enjoyed this good fortune and God's favour for a hundred and twenty years whilst all its neighbours like France, England and Spain were suffering. And all of them had on occasion come to seek help from Burgundy, as you have seen in the case of the King, our master, who in his youth in the lifetime of his father, Charles VII, had to withdraw to Burgundy for six years in the time of good Duke Philip, who received him warmly. I have seen there from England the two brothers of King Edward, the duke of Clarence and the duke of Gloucester, who later called himself King Richard. From the other party, that of the Lancastrian King Henry, I saw all or most of them there. On all sides I have seen this family honoured and then suddenly overthrown and turned upside down and its prince and people more desolated and defeated than any of their neighbours. These and similar works has Our Lord performed before we were born and He will continue to do so after we are dead, because we can be sure that the great prosperity or great misfortunes of princes proceed from His divine command.

- The lamb and flint were emblems of the Order of the Golden Fleece.

10

How the King was informed of the duke of Burgundy's death and how he proceeded after it

TO continue with my account, the King, who had already set up a postal service in this kingdom (there had never been one before), was very quickly informed about the duke of Burgundy's defeat.

He expected further news every hour, because he had been told previously about the arrival of the Germans and all the other things which depended on this. There were many people keeping their ears open to be the first to hear the news and to report it to him, because he frequently gave something to the first person to bring him important news, not forgetting the messenger. He used to take the pleasure in saying before the news arrived, 'I'll give so much to the man who brings me the news of this.' My lord of Bouchage and I jointly received the first news of the battle of Morat and together we told the King about it. He gave us each two hundred silver marks.

My lord of Lude, who was staying outside [the castle of] Plessis, was the first to learn of the arrival of the courier who brought letters about this battle of Nancy, which I have been relating, and he asked the messenger for them. He did not dare withhold the letters from him because he had great authority with the King. The lord of Lude came very early next morning, scarcely after daybreak, and knocked on the King's door. He was let in and he delivered the letters which had been written by my lord of Craon and others. But these first letters did not confirm the duke's death. Some said he had been seen fleeing and that he had escaped. The King was at first so overcome with joy when he received the news that he scarcely knew what attitude to adopt. On the one hand he feared that if the duke had been captured by the Germans, they would only ask him for a large ransom which the duke would easily be able to give them. On the other hand he was in some doubt whether he ought to take over the duke's Burgundian lands if the duke had escaped after this third defeat. He thought that he could easily do so, seeing that almost all the leading men of those lands had been killed in these battles. On this point he decided (as few people except myself, I believe, knew) that if the duke was safe and well he would have his army, which was in Champagne and Bar, enter Burgundy immediately and seize the country during this time of great fright. As soon as he was established there he would inform the duke that he had done this in order to safeguard his lands for him lest the Germans ravage them (because the duchy was held under his sovereignty and he did not want it to fall into the hands of the Germans at any price), and that he would hand back to him whatever he had taken. And he could have done this without much difficulty, although many people find it hard to believe, because they do not know the reason for his plan; but when he learned of the duke's death he changed his mind.

As soon as the King had received the letters I spoke about, which did not mention the duke's death, he sent for all the captains and many other important people in Tours and showed them the letters. All showed signs of very great joy but it seemed to those who were observing them closely that many forced themselves to act in this way and, despite appearances, they would have been much happier if the duke's affairs had turned out differently. This may have been because the King was greatly feared and they were afraid that if he found himself rid of so many enemies he would only want to change several things at home, especially honours and offices, because there were many present who during the disputes either

over the Public Weal or with his brother, the duke of Guyenne, had found themselves opposed to him.

After speaking to them for a while he went to hear Mass and then had a table set up in his room and made them all dine with him. His Chancellor and some of the members of his council were present and whilst he dined he spoke all the time about these events. And I know well that I and others took notice of how the rest ate and what kind of appetites they had. Yet truthfully I do not know whether it was for joy or sorrow but not a single person seemed to eat half his fill. This was not because they were nervous about eating with the King, because there was no one in the company who had not often eaten there. On leaving the table the King went off and gave away to certain people some of the lands which had belonged to the duke, as if he were really dead. He dispatched the Bastard of Bourbon, who was Admiral of France, and me, giving us the necessary powers to admit into his obedience all those who wanted to be admitted. He ordered us to leave straight away and told us to open all the letters coming by post or by messenger which we encountered on our way, so that we should know whether the duke was dead or alive.

We left and went very quickly even though it was the coldest weather which I have ever experienced in my life. We had not gone half a day's ride before we met a messenger. We made him hand over his letters. These contained the news that the duke had been found among the dead by an Italian page and by his doctor, Master Lope [de la Garde], a Portugese, who assured my lord of Craon that it was the duke, his master, and the King was at once told of it.

11

[The occupation of Picardy and Artois]

AS soon as we had learned all these things we proceeded to the outskirts of Abbeville and were the first to break the news to the duke's supporters in this district. We found that the townspeople were already negotiating with my lord of Torcy, whom they had liked very much for a long time. The soldiers and ducal officers negotiated with us through a messenger whom we had sent on ahead, because of their confidence in us they dismissed four hundred Flemings whom they had with them. But when the townspeople saw they had gone they opened the gates for my lord of Torcy. This was a great loss for the captains and other officers of the town because there were seven or eight to whom we had promised money and pensions (on the authority given to us by the King), and they were unable to receive anything because the places were not handed over by them. Abbeville was one of the places which King Charles VII had handed over at the peace of Arras, all of which were to be returned to France in default of male heirs, so it is not surprising that they opened their gates to us so readily. From there we proceeded to the Doullens and sent a summons to Arras, captial of Artois, long the patrimony of the counts of Flanders, which had always descended to daughters as well as sons.

My lords of Ravenstein and Cordes, who were in Arras, undertook to come to speak to us with men from the town of Mont-Saint-Éloi, an abbey close to Arras. It was decided that I should go, accompanied by several others because it was very much feared that they would not comply with all our wishes. For this reason the Admiral did not go. Shortly after I arrived at the abbey the lords of Ravenstein and Cordes, several other noblemen and some men from Arras arrived, and among others representing the town was their pensioner and spokesman, Master Jean de la Vacquerie, who has since become *premier président* of the Parlement of Paris.[30]On this occasion we asked them to open the town to the King and let us in, saying that the King claimed the town and the surrounding district as his by right of confiscation and that if they did not do so they would be in danger of being captured by force, seeing that their lord had been defeated and all the country lacked soldiers to defend it because of the three lost battles. The lords informed us through Jean de la Vacquerie that the county of Artois belonged to my lady of Burgundy, Duke Charles's daughter, and it was hers by direct succession from Countess Margaret of Flanders, who was countess of Flanders, Artois, Burgundy, Nevers and Rethel and had married the first Duke Philip of Burgundy, who was son of King John and brother of King Charles V.[31] They begged the King to respect the truce between himself and the late Duke Charles.

Our words were moderate because we had expected this kind of reply, but the main reason for my journey was to speak to certain individuals who were there to persuade them to join the King. I spoke about this to some of them who soon afterwards became good servants of the King.

We found the whole region very alarmed and not without reason, for I believe that in eight days they could not have managed to find eight men-at-arms nor were there any other soldiers in all the surrounding areas, except about fifteen hundred infantry or cavalry who were stationed in Namur and Hainault. They had escaped from the battle in which the duke of Burgundy was killed. They had changed their tune and now talked quietly and very humbly. I do not mean to say that in days gone by they had spoken more arrogantly than they ought to have done, but it is true that when I lived there they thought themselves so powerful that they did not speak to or about the King with the deference they have since shown. If people were always very wise they would so moderate their words in times of prosperity that they would not have reason to change them in times of adversity.

I returned to my lord the Admiral to make my report and I discovered there that the King was coming. He had set out soon afterwards and had had several letters written both in his own name and in those of his officers ordering men to join them. By this means he hoped to reduce these lordships to his obedience.

- Appointed president 27 February 1482, d. July 1497.
- See Book Four, Chapter 13-i, & fn. 33.

[Louis XI mishandles the Burgundian succession]

THE King was overjoyed at seeing himself triumph over all those whom he hated and who were his enemies. He had taken revenge on some like the Constable of France, the duke of Nemours[32] and several others. His brother, the duke of Guyenne, was dead and he had taken over his possessions. All the members of the house of Anjou like King René of Sicily, Dukes John and Nicholas of Calabria and their cousin, the count of Maine, later count of Provence, were dead.[33] The count of Armagnac had been killed in Lectoure.[34] From all of these the King had acquired both their lands and their belongings. But as the house of Burgundy was so much greater and more powerful than all the others and had fought his father, Charles VII, for thirty-two years without a truce, with English assistance, and because their territories bordered his own and the duke's subjects were disposed to wage war on him and his kingdom, so his pleasure and profit were much greater [from the duke's fall] than from all the others combined. He thought that for the rest of his life he would meet no more opposition in his kingdom or in neighbouring states. He was at peace with the English, as you have heard, and he desired to remain so and did all in his power to maintain the peace with England.

Yet although all his fears were allayed, God did not allow him to handle this affair, which was so important, in the way that he ought to have done. For through marriage and friendship he could easily have joined these great territories, to which he could not otherwise claim any right, to his crown. He could have done what he liked and forced the people to allow him his own way as a condition of the marriage, in view of the great discomfort, improverishment and weakening which these lordships had suffered. In this way he would have easily strengthened his kingdom and enriched it by the long peace which he could have maintained. He could have lightened its burdens in several ways, especially by limiting the passage of troops incessantly riding from one end of the kingdom to the other, usually for no very good reason, as they did then and still do now. Whilst the duke of Burgundy was still alive, the King told me several times what he would do if the duke would try to arrange a marriage between his son, our present King, and the duke's daughter, who later became duchess of Austria. If she refused (since my lord the Dauphin was much younger than she was) he would try to make her marry some young French lord in order to maintain good relations with her and her subjects and to recover, without a struggle, the things which he claimed were his. The King still intended to keep this plan a week before he learned of the duke's death. But he had already begun to change this wise scheme, which I have told you about, on the day he received the news of the duke's death and at the tme when he dispatched the Admiral and me. Nevertheless he said little about it although he made promises of lands and lordships to some people.

- Nemours was executed on 4 August 1477.
- René died on 10 July 1480 and Maine on 11 December 1481.
- 6 March 1473.

[The Burgundian succession]

WHEN the King was on the road following us he received heartening news from all quarters. The castles of Ham and Bohain were delivered to him. The inhabitants of Saint-Quentin took over the town and placed their neighbour the lord of Moy in it. The King was well assured of the town of Péronne which Guillaume Bische held and was confidant that, through us and others, the lord of Cordes would be won over to his side. He had sent to Ghent his barber, Master Olivier,[35] who was born in a village near Ghent, and he had sent numerous others of whom he thought highly to several towns because many served him better in words than deeds.

As the King neared Péronne I went to meet him, and there Guillaume Bische and others rendered the homage of the town to him, which pleased him greatly. The King stayed at Péronne that day and I dined with him as I usually did because he liked to have at least seven or eight people, and sometimes many more, eating at his table. After dining he withdrew and was not at all pleased with the little that the Admiral and I had achieved. He said that he had sent Master Olivier, his barber to Ghent, and he would bring this town to his obedience; Robin d'Ooudenfort had gone to Saint-Omer where he had friends who would obtain keys to the town and would admit his troops. He also mentioned people in other large towns and got my lord of Lude and others to dispute with me over this. It was not my place to argue with him or to say anything contrary to his wishes. But I told him that I doubted whether Master Olivier and the others whom he had mentioned would be able to succeed with these large towns as easily as he thought.

What made the King say this to me was that he had changed his mind, and the good fortune he had experienced at the outset gave him hopes that everyone everywhere would surrender to him. He was advised by certain people and was also himself entirely committed to ruining and destroying this house and dividing the lands up among several people, and he named those to whom he intended to give the counties, such as Nemurs and Hainault, which were situated close to his own lands. He was going to help some German lords to obtain other large territories like Brabant and Holland. They would become his friends and help him to carry out his plans. He was pleased to tell me all about this because I had on previous occasions spoken to him and counselled him to adopt the other policy, as described above. He wanted me to understand his reasons for changing his mind and why this policy was more beneficial to his kingdom, which had suffered so much because of the greatness of the house of Burgundy and the wide lordships it possessed.

From a wordly point of view there was much substance in what the King was saying, but as a matter of conscience, I thought the opposite. Nevertheless the King's judgement was so much greater than mine or any others in his company that we could not comprehend his affairs as clearly as he could himself. For without any doubt he was one of the cleverest and most subtle princes of his generation. But in these great matters God disposes of the hearts of kings and powerful princes which He holds in His hand so that they will follow the policies which lead to the results He

wants to happen. Had it been His pleasure that our King should continue this scheme, which he had himself formed before the duke's death, there would have been no great difficulty and the wars which occurred later, and still continue, would not have happened. But we on either side were not worthy of God's sight to receive this long peace and from that proceded the error which our King committed, and not because of a fault in his judgement, for that was very great as I have said.

I am speaking at length about these matters to demonstrate how, when one is about to begin some very important business, one should consult and discuss it fully in order to be able to choose the better course. One should, in particular, commend oneself to God and pray that it will please Him to point out the best way, because everything proceeds from Him and this is evident from writings and experience. I do not mean to blame our King by saying that he erred in this matter, for, perhaps, others who know and understand more than I do would have been, and indeed were, of the same opinion as he was, although the matter was not discussed at all there nor anywhre else. Chroniclers usually write only praiseworthy things about those of whom they speak and they omit many things or are sometimes ignorant of the truth. I decided to speak about nothing that was untrue or which I had not seen or learned about from such important people that their words can be trusted, whether or not these things are praiseworthy. For it is good to think that there is no prince so wise that he does not err once in a while, and very often if he lives a long time. This would be seen from their actions if the truth were always told. The highest and most important senates and consuls have frequently erred and still do as we have seen and still see every day.

After the King had stayed in the village close to Péronne, he decided to make his entry into the town on the following day, since it had been delivered to him as I said. The King drew me on one side just as he was about to leave and sent me to Poitou and the Marches of Brittany. He whispered in my ear that if Master Olivier's enterprise did not succeed, and if my lord of Cordes did not abandon his friends, he would burn the county of Artois around l'Alloeue along the River Lys and then return immediately to Touraine. I recommended to him some who had changed to his side as a result of my efforts, promising them pensions and other benefits from him. He took down their names from me in writing and he kept the promises I had made to them on his behalf. So I left him on this occasion.

As I was about to mount my horse my lord of Lude came up to me and shrewdly spoke some mocking words to me. He was very useful to the King in some things and was very concerned about his private fortune; he was never afraid to abuse anyone and was often deceived. He had been brought up with the King in his youth and knew very well how to please him, for he was a very charming man. 'What's this?' he said. 'Are you leaving when now's the chance for making your fortune, in view of the great prizes which are falling into the King's hands, and when he'll be able to advance and enrich all those he likes? For my part I expect to be governor of Flanders and to turn myself into gold!' And he laughed heartily.

I did not feel like laughing because I suspected that his remark stemmed from the King. I replied that I would be very happy if this happened and I hoped the King would not forget me, and then I left.

A knight from Hainault had arrived there to see me less than half an hour before and he brought me news from several people to whom I had written begging them to enter the King's service. The knight and I were related and he is still alive. For this reason I do not want to name him nor those from whom he brought me news. In a couple of words, he proposed to deliver the chief castles and towns in the county of Hainault and I briefly reported his message when taking my leave of the King. Immediately the King sent for him but he told me that neither he nor the others I had named were the sort of people he needed. One displeased him for one reason, another for another, and he thought that their offers were worthless and that he could get all he wanted without them. So I left him, and the King told the knight to speak to my lord of Lude. He was amazed by this and soon left without entering into serious discussions because the lord of Lude and he could never have agreed or understood each other, since he had come in the hopes of making a profit and enriching himself, and the lord of Lude asked him straight away what the towns would give him in return for looking after their interests.

Here again I consider the King's refusal and contempt of the knights to have been inspired by God, for I have seen him since in a position where he would have held them in high esteem if he could have come to terms with them. But perhaps Our Lord did not wish him to fulfil all his desires for several of the reasons I have mentioned. Or perhaps He did not want him to usurp the county of Hainault, which was held from the Empire, both because he had no title to it and also because of the ancient alliances and oaths existing between the Emperors and the kings of France. The King has clearly shown since that he recognized this because he held Cambrai, Le Quesnoy and Bouchain in Hainault but then he returned this part of Hainault and restored the neutrality of Cambrai as an Imperial town.

Although I was not on the spot I was informed about the events which occurred and I could easily understand them because of my experience and upbringing on both sides, and later I learned about them from those who were in charge on either side.

- Olivier le Dain, hanged 21 May 1484.

14

[The mission of Olivier le Dain]

MASTER OVIVIER, as you have heard had gone to Ghent with letters of credence addressed to my lady of Burgundy, daughter of Duke Charles. He had been commissioned to make certain secret proposals to her so that she would allow herself to be won over to the King's side. That was not his main commission, however, because he was afraid that he would be unable to speak to her alone and that even if he spoke to her he might not be able to persuade

her to do what he wanted. He intended rather to cause some great revolution in the town of Ghent, recognizing that it was always so inclined and that under Dukes Philip and Charles the town had been held in great fear and the townspeople deprived of certain privileges when they made their peace with Duke Philip after their wars. Duke Charles had also deprived them of one privilege respecting the creation of their own magistrates for an offence which they had committed against him on his entry into the town the first day he set foot in it as duke. I have discussed this earlier so I will say no more. All the factors gave Master Olivier, the King's barber, as I said, great confidence to carry out his plan. He spoke to several whom he thought would willingly listen to what he wanted to do, and he offered to get the King to return their lost privileges and to give other benefits to them. But he did not go to their town hall to speak about this publicly because he wanted first of all to see what he could achieve with this young princess. Nevertheless he learned something about it. When Olivier had been in Ghent a for a few days, he was asked to state his business. He came into the presence of the princess, dressed much better than his position warranted. He delivered his letters of credence. The lady was on her throne and at her side were the duke of Clèves, the bishop of Liège, many other high-ranking persons and a large number of people. She read his letters and Master Olivier was ordered to deliver his message. He replied that he had no orders but to speak to her privately. He was told that this was not the custom, especially with regard to this young lady, who had yet to be married. He persisted in saying that he would say nothing further except to her. They told him that they would make him speak and he became very frightened. And I believe that up to the moment when he presented his letters he had not thought out what he ought to say, because that was not his principal business, as you have heard. Some of that council made fun of him, because of his mean status and the sort of language he used, especially the men of Ghent since he was a native of a small village close to the town, and they made all sorts of fun of him. Then suddenly he fled from the town because he had been warned that if he did not do so he was in great danger of being thrown in the river and I believe that is true.

Master Olivier, who called himself count of Meulan, after a small town close to Paris of which he was captain, fled to Tournai after his departure from Ghent. This town is neutral and has a great affection for the King because it belongs to him and pays him ten thousand *livres parisis* a year, but otherwise it enjoys complete freedom and everybody is welcome there. It is a very fine and strong town as everyone in that area knows well. The churchmen and burgesses of the town got their income from and had all their assets in Hainault and Flanders, because the town is on the borders of these two territories. For this reason, they had always been accustomed, during the former wars between King Charles VII and Duke Philip of Burgundy, to giving ten thousand *livres* a year to the duke and I have seen them give as much to Duke Charles of Burgundy. At the time when Master Olivier entered the town it paid nothing and was enjoying great prosperity and peace. Although the mission which Master Olivier had undertaken was too difficult for him to carry out, he was not so much to blame as

those who gave it to him. The exploit turned out as might have been expected. But nevertheless he did show judgement and courage in what he did, because he recognized that Tournai was so close to these two territories that I have mentioned that it could not possibly have been closer and that it would be very easy to cause damage to either of them from there, provided he could place in the town the soldiers which the King had near by. Not for anything would the townspeople have agreed to this, since they had never shown themselves supporters of one side or the other but had always remained neutral between those two princes. Master Olivier, therefore, sent word secretly to my lord of Moy, whose son was *bailli* of the town[36] (although he did not reside there), to bring his company, which was at Saint-Quentin, and some other troops which were in the area. At the appointed time he came to the gate, where he found Master Olivier, accompanied by thirty or forty men who had the courage, half through love and half through fear, to open the gate. He placed the men-at-arms inside. The inhabitants were happy enough but the rulers of the town were not. Olivier sent seven or eight of them to Paris and they did not dare to leave as long as the King lived. After these troops had entered the town others did the same and they later did a tremendous amount of harm to the two territories by pillaging many fine villages and farms, altough this caused more loss to the inhabitants of Tournai than anyone else, for the reasons I have explained. And they did so much damage that the Flemings marched against them and released the duke of Guelders from the prison in which Duke Charles had put him, in order to make him their leader. They laid siege to the town but only for a short while, since they left in great disorder and fled from there losing many men, including the duke of Guelders, who put himself in the rearguard to help resist the attack. But he was badly served and died there. Thus the King gained honours as a result of Master Olivier and the King's enemies received much injury. A very much wiser and more outstanding person than he might well have talked to accomplish his mission.

I have said enough about the mission which was given by this wise King to this insignificant man who was unsuited to the management of such an important affair. It seems clear that God had disturbed our King's judgement in this matter, for, as I have said, if he had not thought his objectives so easy to achieve and he had restrained his passion and the vengeance which he desired upon this house, without a shadow of a doubt, he would today have held all this territory under his jurisdiction.

- Appointed 28 June 1484.

15
[Louis XI and the Burgundian lords]

***i** Operations and negotiations in Picardy and Artois*

PÉRONNE was handed over to the King by Guillaume Bische, a man of small estate. Bische, a native of Moulins-Engilbert in the Nivernais, had been enriched and raised to a position of authority by Duke Charles of Burgundy, who handed him over this place to

his keeping because close by was his property, called Cléry, which Bische had acquired and where he had made a very fine, strong castle. Afterwards the King received at Péronne certain ambassadors, representing my lady of Burgundy, who were the greatest and most important people on whom she could call for help, although it was not a wise decision to send them all together. But their grief and fear were so intense that they did not know what to say or do. The ambassadors included their Chancellor, Mast Guilllaume Hugonet, a very remarkable and wise man who had enjoyed great favour with Duke Charles and received great benefits from him. The lord of Humbercourt was there — enough has been said about him in these memoirs. I cannot remember ever having seen a wiser gentleman nor one more capable of handling the most important affairs. Also present were the lord of Veere, a great lord in Zeeland, and the lord of Gruthuse and several others, noblemen and churchmen as well as town officials.

Our King, before granting them a general or private audience, took great pains to win over each one of them and he got from them humble and respectful replies as is usual from fearful people. Yet those who held lands in places they did not expect the King to seize did not want to commit themselves in any way to the King, unless the marriage between his son, my lord the Dauphin, and the lady were to take place.

The Chancellor and the lord of Humbercourt, who had exercised great authority for a long time wanted to continue to do so and whose lands bordered on the King's, one in the duchy of Burgundy and the other just in Picardy in the direction of Amiens, lent an an ear to the King and his offers. They agreed upon certain limiting conditions to help him arrange this marriage and when it had taken place they were to put themselves entirely in his hands. And even though this was the best policy, all the same it did not please the King and he became dissatisfied with them when [he realized that] they would not remain on his side as soon as they knew this. But he did not let them see his feelings because he wanted to make use of them in whatever way he could.

Already the King had reached a good understanding with my lord of Cordes, who was commander and master of Arras. Counselled and advised by him, the King requested the ambassadors to order the lord of Cordes to open the citadel of Arras to him, because at that time there were walls and a moat between the town of Arras and a citadel and gates closed against the citadel, whilst at present it is the other way round with the citadel closed against the town. After making several representations to the ambassadors, saying that it would be for the best and peace could be achieved more easily by obeying these orders, they consented to do it, especially the Chancellor and the lord of Humbercourt. They sent letters discharging the lord of Cordes and allowing him to deliver the citadel of Arras, which he willingly did.[37] As soon as the King was inside the citadel he had earthworks thrown up against the gate and at other places near the town and by the terms of the agreement my lord of Cordes marched out of the town and made the soldiers who were with him do likewise. And everyone went where he pleased and joined whichever side he liked.

ii How the King drew the lord of Cordes into his service and how through his help he recovered the towns of Arras, Hesdin and Boulogne

The lord of Cordes, considering himself discharged from the service of his mistress by the agreement which the ambassadors had made that he should admit the King into the citadel of Arras, decided that he should swear allegiance to the King and to become his servant, bearing in mind that his name and arms were derived from this side of the Somme, close to Beauvais, because his name was Sir Philip de Crèvecoeur and he was the second brother of the lord of Crèvecoeur. Also these lands, which the house of Burgundy had occupied on the River Somme during the lifetime of Dukes Philip and Charles and about which I have said enough, returned without any difficulty to the King by terms of the treaty of Arras in which they had been handed over to Duke Philip for himself and his male heirs alone, and Duke Charles left only this daughter of whom I have spoken. So Sir Philip de Crèvecoeur became the King's man without difficulty. For which reason he would not have been considered in the wrong for placing himself in the King's service had he not taken a new oath of allegiance to the duchess and done homage to her for what he held from her. This has been talked about and will be discussed from many points of view, so I report merely what happened. All I know is that he was provided for, promised and put in high authority by Duke Charles, that his mother had partly helped to bring up the lady of Burgundy and that he was governor of Picardy, seneschal of Pontheiu, captain of Crotoy, governor of Péronne, Roye and Montdidier and captain of Boulogne and Hesdin for Duke Charles when he died; he still today holds these offices from the King in the form and manner which the King, our master, gave them to him.

After the King had done what I have described in the citadel of Arras, he left and went to lay siege to Hesdin, taking with him the lord of Cordes who had held the place only three days before. His men were still there and it appeared that they wanted to hold it for the lady, saying that they had sworn allegiance to her and they fired their guns for a few days. Then they listened to their master (and truthfully those both inside and outside understood each other well) and so the town was delivered to the King, who then went on to Boulogne, where the same thing happened. They held out, perhaps, for one more day. Yet this ruse would have been dangerous if there had been more troops in the district. And the King who told me about it later, fully realized this, because there were men in Boulogne who clearly knew what the situation was and were trying to put troops into the town if they could do so in time in order to defend it adequately.

Whilst the King was halted before Boulogne for five or six days, the inhabitants of Arras considered themselves betrayed on seeing that they were enclosed on all sides by considerable forces and a large number of guns. They tried to find troops to reinforce their town and wrote to neighbouring towns like Lille and Douai about this. At Douai there were a few horsemen, including the lord of Vergy and some others whose names I cannot remember. They were some of the survivors of the battle of Nancy and they decided

to station themselves in the town of Arras. They assembled as many as they could — about two or three hundred horsemen, all told, and five or six hundred infantry. The men of Douai, who were at that time still a little proud, urged them to leave in broad daylight whether they wanted to or not. This was a great mistake on their part, as it happened, for the countryside beyond Arras for about five leagues is flat as a man's hand. Had they waited until night they could have carried out their scheme as they had intended. When they were on their way, those who remained in the citadel, such as the lord of Lude, Jean du Fou and the soldiers of Marshal Lohéac, were warned of their approach. They decided to go out as quickly as possible to confront them and to risk everything rather than let them enter the town, because they thought that they would be unable to defend the town if others entered it. Their enterprise was very dangerous but they executed it boldly and destroyed the company which had set out from Douai. Those men were almost all killed or captured, including the lord of Verby who was taken. The King arrived there the next day and was very pleased by this exploit and had all the prisoners take into his own custody. He had several of the foot soldiers put to death, in the hope of frightening the few troops remaining in this district. He kept the lord of Vergy in prison for a long time. Nothing in the world would persuade him to take the oath to the King; so he was closely guarded and well-shackled. In the end, on the advice of his mother and after spending a year or more in prison, he wisely obeyed the King's wishes. The King restored all his own lands and those which he claimed and made him possessor of more than ten thousand *livres* in rents and other good offices.

Those who escaped the rout entered the town but they were few in number. The King had his artillery, which was very powerful and numerous, brought up to fire. Neither the ditch nor the wall offered much protection. The bombardment was heavy and everyone was frightened. There were few soldiers inside. My lord of Cordes had good informers there and since the King held the citadel, the town could not hold out against him. For these reasons they made an agreement to surrender the town; this was badly kept, partly through the fault of my lord of Lude. The King had several burgesses and many other wealthy men killed. The lord of Ludes and Master Guillaume de Cirisay made great profit there — the lord of Lude told me that he gained twenty thousand crowns and two martens' furs on this occasion. The townspeople made a loan of sixty thousand crowns which was a large sum for them. Yet I believe that the money was returned; because the people of Cambrai loaned forty thousand crowns, which was certainly returned to them later, and for this reason I believe that the other sum was returned.

- Royal troops entered the citadel on 4 March 1477.

Book Five, Chapters 16-20; Book Six, Chapters 1-2

MEMOIRS

BOOK FIVE

16

Here I speak about the lead taken by the men of Ghent, who wanted to govern the affairs of their princess after the death of Duke Charles of Burgundy, about the disorders and outrages committed by them and about the deaths of the Chancellor of Burgundy and the lord of Humbercourt, whom they killed

AT the time of the siege of Amiens my lady of Burgundy was at Ghent in the hands of these very unreasonable men. This resulted in losses for her and profit for the King, for one person's loss is another's gain.

As soon as they learned of the death of Duke Charles they thought that they were free and they captured all their magistrates, who numbered twenty-six in all, and put to death all or most of them. They alleged as their excuse that the day before the magistrates had had a man executed and although he clearly deserved to die, the magistrates had no power to do this, they said, because their authority had expired on the death of the duke who had appointed them. They also put to death as well several of the important and good people of the town who had been friends and supporters of the duke, including some of those who in my time and in my presence had helped dissuade Duke Charles when he intended to destroy a large part of the town. They forced the lady to confirm their former privileges which had been taken away from them by the Peace of Gavere, made with Duke Philip, and the others removed by Duke Charles. These privileges only caused trouble between them and their prince. Also their principal inclination is to want a weak prince and they do not like any of them once they become rulers although, very naturally, they are fond of them during childhood and before they become lords, as they had liked this lady whom they had carefully guarded and cherished until she was of age. It must also be realized that if at the moment of the duke's death, the men of Ghent had not caused trouble and they wished to try to defend the country, they could quickly have provided men to garrison Arras and, perhaps, Péronne. But they only thought of making trouble.

Yet while the King was besieging the town of Arras some ambassadors, representing the Three Estates of the territories belonging to this lady, came to visit him, because certain deputies to the Three Estates were meeting at Ghent. But the men of Ghent did whatever they liked because they had the lady in their hands. The King heard them and, amongst other things, they said that the proposals which they had made with the intention of forwarding the cause of peace proceeded from the wishes of the lady, who had decided to be guided in all matters by the wishes and advice of the Three Estates of her lands. Moreover, they asked the King to withdraw from the war which he was waging both in Burgundy and in Artois, and to appoint a day for a friendly peace conference; in the meantime the war should cease.

The King found he already had the upper hand and he thought that events would turn out even better for him, because he had been reliably informed that the Burgundian troops were dead or defeated everywhere and that many of them had joined his side, in particular the lord of Cordes, of whom he had a high opinion and not without reason; for he would not have been able to accomplish by force in a long time what he had achieved through him by collusion a very few days before, as you have heard. Therefore he did not pay much attention to their requests and demands. Besides he had also been informed, and realized clearly, that the people of Ghent were in such a state and causing so much trouble to their own side that they were in no position to give advice or orders for prosecuting war against him, for no wise man nor any who had held a position of authority with their former princes was consulted about anything, but all were persecuted and in danger of death. In particular, they hated the Burgundians very much for the great influence which they had enjoyed previously. Furthermore the King knew all about such matters for he could see more clearly than anyone else in his kingdom that the men of Ghent always desired to see their lord brought low, provided they did not feel any effects of this in their district. For this reason he decided that if they began to quarrel among themselves he would encourage the intensification of these divisions, because those with whom he had to deal were only stupid people (citizens for the most part), particularly ignorant of the subtle devices which this lord knew how to use so well. He did whatever was necessary to win and achieve his purpose.

The King seized on what the ambassadors said about their princess not doing anything without the deliberation and counsel of the Three Estates of her country, and told them that they were ill informed of her wishes and about other matters, because he was sure that she intended to conduct her affairs through some particular individuals who did not want peace and that they, the ambassadors, would be disowned. The ambassadors were thrown into great confusion by this, like men ill-accustomed to dealing with such important business and matters. They replied promptly that they were completely sure of what they said and they would show their instructions at the appropriate time. They were told that when it pleased the King they would be shown letters, written in such hands that they would be convinced by them, which said that the lady wanted to conduct her affairs through four people only. Then the King had them shown a letter which the Chancellor of

Burgundy and the lord of Humbercourt had brought when they had come to Péronne on the previous occasion. It was partly written in the handwriting of the princess, partly in that of the dowager duchess of Burgundy, Duke Charles's wife and sister of King Edward of England, partly in that of the lord of Ravenstein, brother of the duke of Clèves and a close relative of the young lady. So this letter was written in three hands but it ran only in the name of the princess and it had been written in this way to give it greater authority. The letter contained authority for the Chancellor and Humbercourt, and the lady had, moreover, declared that it was her intention that all her affairs should be managed by four people — the dowager her stepmother, the lord of Ravenstein, the Chancellor and Humbercourt — and she begged the King that whatever he wished to arrange with her should be handled by them, and that he should kindly address himself to them and have no communication with anyone else about this matter.

When the men from Ghent and the other deputies had seen this letter they were extremely angry about it, and those who were in touch with them helped to foment their anger. Finally the letter was given to them and they had no other message of much significance, because they would only think about their quarrels and about creating a new government and they did not think any further ahead, although the loss of Arras should have given them much to ponder. But they were people, townsmen for the most part as I said, who had not been brought up to deal with important affairs.

They took the direct road to Ghent where they found the lady and with her the duke of Clèves, who was a very old man and her close relative, through his mother. He had been brought up in Burgundy, that is at the Burgundian court, and he had always received from the family a pension of six thousand Rhenish florins so that besides being a relative had sometimes come to serve as a courtier. The bishop of Liège and several others were there attending the princess and looking after their own affairs. The bishop had come to obtain for his subjects the cancellation of the payment of thirty thousand florins or thereabouts which they used to pay to Duke Charles as a result of the agreement between them after their wars about which I spoke earlier. All these wars had taken place because of the dispute involving the bishop and his affairs. For this reason there was no great need for him to pursue this matter and he should have desired them to be poor (because he received nothing from his diocese except from a small estate), considering the greatness and prosperity of his diocese and its piety. The bishop was a brother to the dukes of Bourbon, John and Pierre (who is alive today),[38] and was a man who liked good living and his pleasures, little recognizing what was good or bad for him. He gave asylum to Sir Guillaume de la Marck, a fine brave knight, although a very cruel and bad-tempered one, who had always been an enemy of his and the house of Burgundy and a supporter of the Liègeois. The lady gave him fifteen thousand Rhenish florins in the name of the bishop of Liège and of herself to win him over. But soon afterwards he revolted against her and his master, the bishop, after undertaking to make his son bishop by force and with the King's approval. Later he defeated the bishop in battle, killed him with his own hand and had him thrown into a river, where his body remained for three

days. The duke of Clèves was there because he hoped to arrange a marriage between his eldest son and the lady, which he thought would be suitable thing for many reasons. And I believe that it would have been arranged if the young man had pleased her and her advisers, because he was of the same house and his duchy bordered hers and he had been brought up there. But his lack of success was perhaps due to his having been seen too much and known too well.

- The verb *regner* can mean either *to live* or *to reign* in Commynes. Here, in the third person plural *regnent,* it seems that Commynes is referring to Pierre de Beaujeu and his wife, Anne, the regents for Charles VII, because Jean de Bourbon died on 1 April 1488.

17

[Events at Ghent and the conquest of the duchy of Burgundy by Louis XI]

i *The violence at Ghent*

RETURNING to my account, the deputies arrived at Ghent. The council was called and the princess took her seat with several lords around her to listen to their report. They began to speak about the mission which she had given them and touched principally upon the point which would serve their purpose. They said that when they told the King she had decided to be guided in all matters by the counsel of the Three Estates, he replied that he was absolutely sure of the contrary and when they kept to their story the King offered to show them certain letters. The lady, taken by surprise, flew into a rage and said, on the spur of the moment, that it could not be true that the letter had been written or seen. Immediately the man to whom she was speaking, who was the Pensioner of Ghent or Brussels, took out of his shirt the very letter and, in front of everybody, handed it to her. He domnstrated that he was a very ill-conditioned man with little sense of honour to subject this young lady to such an affront; such a vile thing should not have happened to her. If she had committed such an error she should not have been publicly rebuked. It is not necessary to ask if she was very humiliated, because she had told everyone it was not so. The dowager, the lord of Ravenstein, the Chancellor and the lord of Humbercourt were present. The duke of Clèves and others had been carried along with fine words about the marriage and all of them were furious. Their quarrels increased and became manifest. Up to that time the duke of Clèves had always hoped that the lord of Humbercourt supported him over the marriage. But he felt deceived when he saw this letter and he became his enemy. The bishop of Liège did not like him because of things which had previously happened at Li&232;ge, where the lord of Humbercourt had been governor; neither did his companion, Sir Guillaume de la Marck, who was with him. The count of Saint-Pol,[39] son of the Constable, hated the lord of Humbercourt and the Chancellor because they had handed over his father at Péronne to the King's officers, as you heard about at length above. The men of Ghent hated them intensely, not because they had committed any offence

against them but simply because of the great authority they had seen them exercising. But surely they deserved it as much as anyone else who lived in their time, either in these regions or elsewhere, and they had been good and loyal servants of their masters.

Finally, in the evening, after the letter had been shown in the morning, the Chancellor and the lord of Humbercourt were captured by the men of Ghent, although they had plenty of warning. They, to their great misfortune, did not know how to flee as several others had. I believe indeed that their enemies, whom I have named, gave help in their capture. Master Guillaume de Cluny, bishop of Thérouanne (who died later as bishop of Poitiers), was also captured with them and all three were put into prison together. The people of Ghent held a semblance of a trial, which they did not usually do when seeking revenge, and ordered the lawyers and one of the de la Marcks[40] to interrogate them.

At the very outset they asked them why they had handed over the city of Arras through my lord of Cordes, but they did not dwell on this point, although they could not find any other fault with them. But their passion did not allow them to stop there because it did not matter to them in the first place to see their lord divested of such a town, nor was their sense or judgement sufficiently developed for them to recognize the harm that might in time happen to them as a result. So they concentrated on two points; first, on certain gifts which they said that they had taken, in particular, for a case which had previously been won by [Ghent as a result of] the judgement which they had issued and which the Chancellor had delivered against a certain individual, and for this these two [Hugonet and Humbercourt] had taken a gift from the city of Ghent. With regard to everything concerning this matter of bribery they answered very well, and about this particular point where the men of Ghent said that they had sold justice and taken money from them, the accused said that Ghent had won the case because the cause was good. With respect to the money which they had taken, they had never asked for it themselves nor had they got others to ask for it, but when it was presented to them they took it. The second point of their accusation on which the men of Ghent insisted was where they alleged that on several occasions during the time when they had been serving the late Duke Charles as his lieutenants, and during his absence, they had done several things inconsistent with the privileges and rights of the town, and that every man who infringed on the privileges of Ghent deserved to die. But such charges had no basis when levelled against these two because they were neither their subjects nor natives of the city, so they could not have broken their privileges. If the duke or his father had taken any of their privileges away from them it was through arrangements made with them after wars and dissensions. As for those which they had been allowed to keep, which were greater than was necessary for their own good they had been strictly observed by the accused.

Despite the excuses of thes two good and eminent men to these two charges (for they did not say much about the principal accusation which I mentioned at the beginning of the account), the aldermen of Ghent at the town hall condemned them to death on the grounds

that they had infringed their privileges and taken money after settling the case which was mentioned above.

The two lords, hearing this cruel sentence, were naturally downcast and they could see no hope of escape from it as they were prisoners. Nevertheless they appealed to the King in Parlement, hoping that this would at least obtain them some delay before their execution and that in the meantime their friends would help to save their lives. Before the sentence was pronounced they had been severely tortured, without any legal form, and their trial lasted no more than six days. And despite the appeal, immediately they were condemned, they were given only three hours to confess and put their affairs in order. At the end of that period they were led out into the market place where they were placed on a scaffold.

The lady of Burgundy, who later became duchess of Austria, learning of this condemnation, went to the town hall to present a request and supplication on behalf of the two men. But it was to no avail. From there she went to the market place where all the people had assembled and were armed and there she saw the two men on the scaffold. The lady was wearing her mourning clothes and a shawl on her head. She had on a humble and simple outfit in order to move them to pity and there she pleaded with the people, with tears in her eyes and her hair dishevelled, to have pity on her two servants and to return them to her. A large number of the people were prepared to grant her request and not to kill the men. Others thought differently and they lowered their pikes against one another as if they were going to fight. But those who wanted to kill them found themselves in the stronger position and finally they shouted to those who were on the scaffold to dispatch them. So in the end they both had their heads chopped off and this poor maiden returned to her house in a very sorrowful and distressed state, because these were the most important ones in whom she had put her trust.[41]

After the people of Ghent had done this they separated her from my lord of Ravenstein and the dowager, Duke Charles's wife, because they had signed the letter which the lord of Humbercourt and the Chancellor had delivered, as you heard. And they assumed complete authority and power over the poor princess, for so she could be aptly called, not simply because of the losses which she had already sustained in losing so many important towns, which she could never recover, seeing the powerful grip in which they were now held (for by favour, friendship or agreement she might still have some hopes for them), but because she found herself in the hands of real enemies and persecutors of her house; that was her true misfortune. In their actions generally there has always been more stupidity than malice and, also, it is always superior craftsmen who most often have influence and authority there; men who have no knowledge of great affairs or of the methods of governing a state. Their malice consists of two elements: one is that they want to weaken and enfeeble their prince by every means; the other is that when they have committed some wrong or great error and they see themselves the weaker party never do men strive for a settlement with greater humility than they do, nor give such large gifts, and they know better than any other town I have ever

known how to best find the people to whom they should address themselves to arrange the settlement.

ii *How at this same time the King had an army in the duchy of Burgundy and how he conquered it through the prince of Orange*

While the King was taking the towns, cities and other places in the marches of Picardy, his army was in Burgundy, nominally under the leadership of the prince of Orange, who is still alive at present,[42] a native and subject of the county of Burgundy, who had recently become an enemy of Duke Charles for the second time. So the King was making use of him, because he was a great lord both in the county as well as the duchy of Burgundy and was well connected and popular. But my lord of Craon was the King's lieutenant in charge of the army, and was the man in whom the King placed his trust. Also he was a wise man and loyal to his master, though he liked his own profit a little too much. Approaching Burgundy, this lord sent the prince of Orange and others ahead to Dijon to make the necessary requests and seek their obedience to the King. They accomplished their task so well, principally through the efforts of the prince of Orange, that the town of Dijon and all the rest in the duchy of Burgundy placed themselves in the King's hands, as did several in the county, like Auxonne and some other castles.

The prince of Orange was promised some fine estates and, in addition, all the places in the county of Burgundy which belonged to the succession of his grandfather, the prince of Orange, were to be put in his hands. He was in dispute over them with his uncles, my lords of Châteauguion, who, he said, had been favoured by Duke Charles.[43] For their dispute had been argued with great solemnity before the duke for several days and the duke, being well supported by his lawyers, gave a verdict against the prince, at least so he said. For which reason he left the duke's service and joined the King.

Despite this promise, when the lord of Craon found himself in possession of all the places mentioned above and had in his hands the best places of this inheritance which should have been given to the prince, he did not want to hand them over to him, whatever requests the prince made. So the King wrote to him about this matter several times without any sort of deception because he recognized well enough that the lord of Craon was on bad terms with the prince. But he was afraid of displeasing the lord of Craon who had complete control of the country and did not think the prince was brave enough or had the means to cause Burgundy to rebel as he did to a great extent later. But I will leave this story for the moment and deal with it again elsewhere.

iii *Here I return to speak about the men of Ghent*

After the people of Ghent had taken control of the government by force from the lady and put to death those two men, as you heard, and dismissed whoever they pleased, everywhere they began to appoint and dismiss people as they liked. In particular, they hunted

out and punished indiscriminately all those who had best served the house of Burgundy, ignoring those who might have done some disservice. Above all they picked quarrels with the Burgundians, exiled them and took as much trouble as the king himself to force them to become his servants and subjects. The King wooed them with fine words and wise arguments and with very great gifts and promises, as well as with superior forces. In order to start with some dramatic action they set the duke of Guelders free from the prison where the Duke Charles had held him for a long time, for the reasons you have heard about previously. They made him commander of an army which they raised from among themselves, that is from Bruges, Ghent and Ypres, and they sent him to Tournai to burn the suburbs, an action which did little to advance their commander's cause. It would have been better to have sent two hundred men and ten thousand francs in cash to support those others who had gone to Arras when it was besieged, had they arrived in time, than to collect ten such armies as that one which numbered twelve to fifteen thousand men and was very well paid. For it would not profit them much merely to burn a small number of houses in a place which hardly mattered to the King, since he raised no taxes there. But their understanding did not reach that far and I cannot think how God has preserved this town of Ghent for so long when it has caused so much evil, and when it has been of so little use to the country and to the public affairs of the county where it is situated and even less use to its prince. For it is not like Bruges, which is a great entrepôt for merchandise and a great meeting-place for foreign nations and from where, perhaps, more merchandise is dispatched than from any other town in Europe; it would be an irreparable loss if this town were destroyed.

- Pierre de Luxembourg, d. 25 October 1482.
- Everard de la Marck, d. 1506.
- Mary's plea was made on 31 March 1477, but she was not present at the execution on 3 April.
- Jean II, prince of Orange 1475-1502.
- The succession of Louis de Chalon was first disputed by Guillaume, prince of Orange, son of Louis's first marriage and father of Jean II, and Louis and Hugues, sons of Louis's second marriage.

18

Here the author talks about how wars and divisions are ordained and allowed by God because of the evil of men, principally for the correction of bad princes, and he cites several singular happenings worthy to be read about and understood, touching on the estate of such princes and their lordships

ALL things considered I think that God has created neither man nor beast in this world without creating something to oppose them in order to keep them humble and afraid. And so this town of Ghent is well sited where it is, for these are the countries of Christendom most given to pursuing the pleasures towards which man is inclined and to the most extravagant display and expense. They are good Christians and God is well served and honoured there. Nor is it only to this nation that God has given some sort of thorn. For to the kingdom of France He has opposed the English,

and to the English the Scots and to the king of Spain, Portugal. I do not wish to speak about Granada for the inhabitants are enemies of the faith, but nevertheless up to the present Granada has caused Castile a great deal of trouble. To the princes of Italy, the majority of whom hold their lands without any titles, unless it is granted them in Heaven (and about that we can only guess), and who rule over their people in a rather cruel and violent manner, especially with respect to their financial affairs. God has set in opposition the republican towns which there are in Italy like Venice, Florence, Genoa and, sometimes, Bologne, Siena, Pisa, Luca and others which oppose the lords as the lords oppose them and everyone keeps an eye open to see that his neighbour does not become too powerful. And to give some specific examples, to the house of Aragon God has opposed the house of Anjou; the house of Orléans is set against the Visconti, dukes of Milan; to the Venetians, these Italian lords as I said, and in addition, the Florentines; to the Florentines, the Sienese and Pisans, their neighbours, and the Genoese; the Genoese have their own poor government and from faithlessness towards each other and their factions arise from their own family alliances such as the Fregosi, Adorni, Doria and others. This is so evident that enough is known about it. As for Germany you have always had the houses of Austria and Bavaria against one another, and the Bavarians especiaally are split amongst themselves, whilst the Austrians have opposed the Swiss. At the start this division began over a small village called Schwyz which only contained six hundred men. But all the others now take their name from it and they multiplied so much that two of the best towns which belong to the house of Austria, Zurich and Fribourg, are in the confederacy and they have won great battles in which dukes of Austria have been killed.[44] There are many other divisions in Germany such as that between Clèves and Guelders, the dukes of Guelders against the dukes of Jülich, and the Hanseatic cities, which are situated so far to the north, against the kings of Denmark. And speaking about Germany generally, there are so many strongholds and so many people inclined to do wrong, to pillage and rob and to use force and violence against each other on the slighest pretext, that it is almost incredible. For a man with only a servant will defy a large city or even a duke in order to obtain a better excuse to rob. He makes some small castle set on a rock his base to which he can retire and where he as twenty or thirty horsemen, who will back up his defiance at his request.[45] These people are very seldom punished by the German princes because they themselves make use of them when they need to do so. But the towns, when they are able to catch them, punish them severely and on many occasions they have besieged and destroyed such castles. The towns also employ paid soldiers. So it seems that the towns and princes of Germany live in the manner I have described and behave in this way towards one another, and it also appears that this is the way it has to be here and everywhere else. I have spoken only about Europe because I am not well informed about the other two parts of the world, Asia and Africa. But we are reliably told that they have their wars and divisions like us and they are even more sordid, for I have learnt that there are several places in Africa where they sell each other to Christians and that this is true can be seen from the Portugese, who have had slaves and still do. And for this reason I doubt whether we ought to

reproach the Saracens very much; there are parts of Christendom where the same is done, although these parts are under Turkish rule or very close to it as in some parts of Greece.[46]

It may appear, therefore, that these divisions are necessary throughout the world and these points of conflict and opposing interests which God has given and ordained for each state and almost for each individual I have just spoken about are also necessary. And, at first sight, speaking as an illiterate man who only wishes to hold such opinions as one should have, it seems to me to be the case principally because of the stupidity of several princes and also because of the wickedness of some others who have enough intelligence and experience but who use them wickedly. For a prince or any man, whatever his position, who has power and authority over others, if he is well and widely read and experienced, will be affected for good or evil by this fact, for much knowledge makes the wicked worse and the good better. But nevertheless it is probable that knowledge does a man more good than harm, if only because he is shamed by a recognition of his own evil; that may be enough to prevent him doing wrong, or at least from doing it so often. And if he is not good he may not wish to appear to do evil or harm to anyone. I have seen many instances of this, when important people have often abstained from committing evil deeds because of their knowledge and, also, because they fear God's punishment, of which they are more aware than ignorant people who neither have experience nor have read about these things.

Thus I will say that those who are unwise enough through having been brought up badly — and perhaps their temperament does not help — have no idea how far the power and lordship which God has given them over their subjects extends, because they have never experienced it or heard about it from those who know. Few who know about this are to be found with such princes, and if there are any who do they never wish to say anything for fear of displeasing them. If anyone wants to protest to them, nobody supports him and, at best, he may be thought mad and perhaps his words may be interpreted in the worst possible sense for him. From all this one must conclude that neither our natural reason nor our intelligence nor our fear of God nor our love of our neighbours prevents us from using violence against one another, from keeping what belongs to another or from taking it from him by every way open to us. Or, if powerful men hold the towns or castles of their relatives or neighbours, they will not want to return them in any circumstances. And, as soon as they have once given their reasons on the pretext of which they hold these possessions, all their subjects accept their statements, or at least their closest followers and those who want to be well thought of by them, do. I shall say nothing about the quarrels between less important people because they have superiors who sometimes give justice to the parties involved (at least to the one with a just cause) and who will pursue and defend a cause well and spend a lot of money on it. In time one will receive justice if the court (that is to say the prince under whose authority he lives) is not against one.

So it is true that God is almost forced or summoned to show many signs and to afflict us in many ways for our stupidity or our wickedness, which I believe the more likely. But more dangerous and to be feared is the stupidity and ignorance of princes, for both the good and the bad fortunes of their lordships depend on them. Therefore, if a prince is powerful enough and has a large force of men-at-arms through whose authority he can obtain money at will to pay them and he can spend it on whatever else he likes without being concerned about public welfare, and if he will not in any way restrain himself from this mad, outrageous behaviour and expense, and if everyone, as far as he can, remonstrates with him without success and, what is worse, they incur his wrath, who but God can remedy things? God no longer speaks to men nor are there prophets who speak with His voice, for His faith is sufficiently accepted, understood and well known to those who want to listen and understand it for no one to be excused on the grounds of ignorance, at least among those who have lived for any length of time and have been endowed with natural reason. How, therefore, would these powerful men who do everything they want to do through force be punished if God did not lend a hand? Their least command is issued on pain of death. Some of them punish with a pretense of justice and they employ men of that profession who are ready to comply with their wishes and make a venial sin into a mortal one. And if there is no evidence they find ways of distorting the testimony of the parties and witnesses in order to trap a man and ruin him by running up his expenses, and they always give ear to anyone who wants to accuse the detained man whom they also want to charge. If this method is not sufficiently safe and convenient for attaining their ends they have other swifter methods. They say that it is very necessary to make an example of the man and they deal with the case as they see fit. With others who are a little more powerful and are their vassals they proceed by violent means. To one they say, 'You have disobeyed me and acted contrary to the homage which you owe me,' and they proceed to take his possessions away from him by force if they are able to do so (at least he no longer depends on them)[47] and they make his life very uncomfortable. As for the man who is only their neighbour, if he is powerful and aggressive they leave him in peace, but if he is weak he will not know where to put himself, for they will accuse him of supporting their enemies or they will want to billet their troops in his lands or they will acquire claims against him or find some opportunity of destroying him or support his neighbour against him by loaning troops. They will deprive of office those of their own subjects who have served their predecessors faithfully, in order to promote new men, because they take too long to die. They will molest churchmen about their benefices so that they might at least obtain some profit to enrich someone else, very often at the whim of those who have not been any use to them or of men and women who in some circumstances can be very influential and enjoy credit. They cause their nobles ceaseless troubles and expenses by undertaking wars capriciously without seeking advice or considering those whom they ought to consult before beginning them, for they are the people who are going to risk their lives, persons and possessions, and therefore they ought to know about them a long time before they begin. To most of their people they leave nothing; and after the people have paid far greater taxes than

they should, the princes still give no instructions for the way in which their troops should live. These live off the country continuously without paying anything, committing other crimes and excesses as we all know. For they are not content just to live but in addition they beat and abuse the poor people and force them to look elsewhere for bread, wine and victuals, and if any good man has a beautiful wife or daughter he would be very wise to protect her carefully.

Nevertheless, since there has to be some kind of payment, it would be easy to introduce better order so that the soldiers were paid every two months at least. In this way there would be no occasion or excuse for committing the evils they do on the pretext that they have not been paid, for the money is levied and collected at the end of the year. I say this about our kingdom, which is more oppressed and persecuted in this respect than any other land I know, and only a wise king would know how to rectify the situation. Our neighbours have other forms of punishment.

- At the battle of Sempach, 9 July 1386, Leopold III of Austria was killed.
- This phrase from MSS. A., M. and P.
- This sentence from MS. M.
- Kinser translates *au moins il ne tient pas a eulx* as 'or at least they try'. But presumably Commynes is thinking of the feudal concept whereby a man is discharged from his homage if he is attacked by his lord.

19

[The role of the Estates]

HOWEVER, to continue my account, is there any king or lord on earth who has the power, outside his own demense, to levy a single penny on his subjects without the approval and consent of those who are to pay it, unless he does so by tyranny and force? One could reply that there are times when it is impossible to wait for an assembly to gather because it would take too long to make preparations to start the war. I would retort that it is not necessary to be in such a hurry and there is usually enough time. I would also say to you that kings and princes have much more power when they undertake some enterprise on the advice of their subjects. They are then more feared by their enemies. When it is a question of defending oneself, that threat can be seen from afar, especially when it comes from foreigners. In such a situation, good subjects cannot complain or refuse to help. Crises never occur so suddenly that one cannot easily call together a few people to whom one can say, without using any deception, 'This is not done without cause,' and there is no need to begin some small war without any purpose, in order to have an excuse to raise money.

I fully realize that money is needed to defend and guard frontiers even when there is no war, in order not to be taken unawares, but this can be done inexpensively. A wise prince will know all about these things because if he is good, he will know that there is a God and a world and he will know what he should or can do and what he should not do. Now in my opinion, out of all the countries I

have personally known, England is the one where public affairs are best conducted and regulated with least violence to the people. There no buildings are knocked down or demolished through war, and disaster and misfortune befall those who make war.

Our King is one with least reason in the world to say, 'I have the privilege of raising from my subjects what I please,' and those who have said this to make him appear more powerful have done the King no honour, since this only serves to frighten our neighbours and make them hate him and want more than ever to avoid coming under his rule. But if our King, or those who wish to exalt or magnify him, said, 'I've such good and loyal subjects that they refuse me nothing which I ask of them, and I'm more feared and better obeyed and served by my subjects than any other living prince on earth, and they endure all misfortunes and afflictions more patiently and remember past injuries less than any others,' it seems to me that would be high praise and it would be telling the truth. He should not say, 'I take what I want because it's my prerogative and I must maintain it.' King Charles V did not say that. Indeed, I have never heard any king say that, but I have heard their servants say as much in the belief that they were doing their master a service. But in my opinion they misunderstood their master's interests. They said it in order to appear good servants and did not realize what they were saying.

And to give an example of the cooperativeness of the French in our times it is only necessary to mention the Three Estates held at Tours [in 1484] after the death, in 1483, of our good master, King Louis, God have mercy upon him! One might have thought then that this assembly would be dangerous. Some persons of low estate and small repute said then, and have said the same several times since, that it was high treason to speak about calling the Estates as it diminished the King's authority. But these are men who commit a crime against God, the King and the people. Such words help only those who are accustomed to whisper flattery in one's ear and talk about things of little value; men who fear large assemblies because they may be found out and their practices condemned. At the time I am speaking about, everybody, whether of high, middle or low rank, thought the kingdom very expensive to run because they had borne and suffered for twenty years and more heavy and appalling taxes, which amounted to almost three million francs a year more than they had ever paid before. For Charles VII had never raised more than 1,800,000 francs a year but King Louis, his son, was levying at the time of his death 4,700,000 francs besides sums for the artillery and other similar things. Certainly it was painful to see and learn of the poverty of the people but our master had one good quality; he never amassed a fortune. He took everything and spent everything. He built more imposing fortifications and defenses for towns and other places in the kingdom than any of his predecessors. He gave much to churches. In some respects it would have been better if he had done less, because he took from the poor to give to those who had not need of it. In short, no one in this world is perfect.

But in this kingdom, which was so oppressed in many ways, was there any opposition to the present King after our King's death?

Did the princes and people take up arms against their young King? Did they want someone else as King? Did they want to take his authority away from him? Did they want to bridle him so that he could not use his royal powers to command? My God, certainly not![48] Yet there were some who were self-opinionated enough to say that this might have happened had they not been there. Everyone did the opposite to the questions I posed, for they all came to meet him, princes and lords, as well as the inhabitants of the towns. All recognized him as King and swore allegiance to him. The princes and lords presented their demands to him humbly on their knees in the form of petitions, and they established a council to which they appointed twelve of their number. From then onwards the King gave orders, although he was only thirteen years old, on the advice of his council.

At the meeting of the Estates several requests and suggestions were made with great humility for the good of the kingdom, all of which were remitted to the good pleasure of the King and his council. They granted him whatever was asked of them and agreed to whatever was shown to them in writing as necessary for the King's business, without denying him anything. The sum asked for was 2,500,000 francs, which was enough to satisfy all his desires and if anything too much rather than too little, unless other matters cropped up. The Estates requested that after two years they should be recalled and said that if the King did not have sufficient money they would give him whatever he desired; if he had to wage war or someone were to offend him, they would place themselves and their possessions at his disposal, refusing him nothing he might need.

Is it over such subjects, who give so liberally, that the King should allege the privilege of being able to take things at his pleasure? Would it not be more just to God and the world to raise taxes in this way rather than by arbitrary desire? For no prince can raise taxes in any other way, as I have said, unless he does it by tyrannical means and is excommunicated. But there are many who are too stupid to know what they can or cannot do in this respect. On the other hand there are plenty of people who offend their master and neither obey nor assist him when he needs help. Instead, when they see him involved in diffuculties they despise him, rebel against him or disobey him by committing offences, thereby breaking the oaths of fealty they have sworn to him. Where I refer to 'kings or princes' I mean them and their governors and when I say 'people' I mean those who have high office and authority under them. The greatest wrongs are generally committed by the strongest because the weak only seek peace. I include women as well as men because sometimes and in some places they have power and authority, through their husband's love or their ignorance[49] or through having to look after their children's affairs or because territories have descended to them. If I were to speak about the middling and small esates of this world, this account would take too long. For my purposes a mention of the greatest is sufficient because it is through them that God's power and justice are revealed. But if bad luck befalls one poor man, or a hundred, nobody notices, because all is attributed to his poverty or to his lack of care or, if he is drowned or breaks his neck because no one

was there to help him, people hardly bother to mention it. When misfortune befalls a great city people speak differently, although they do not say as much about it as they would if it had happened to a prince.

One might ask why the power of God is more manifest against great people than against the insignificant. It is because the powerless and poor find enough to punish them when they have done something to deserve it. Very often they are punished without having done anything wrong, as an example to others, so that their possessions can be taken, or, perhaps, through the fault of the judge. At other times they well deserve it and justice must be done. But as for great princes and princesses, their powerful governors and provincial councillors, disorderly towns disobeying their master and their governors, who will investigate their lives? Even if the inquiry is completed, who will take the evidence to a judge? What judge would consider the evidence and impose the punishment? I am speaking of evil men, not good, but there are a few enough of them. And what are the resaons for which they and all the others commit these crimes about which I have spoken above, as well as many others about which I have said nothing, for brevity's sake, without consideration for divine power and justice? In such cases, I say, there is a lack of faith and in ignorant people a lack of sense as well as faith, though principally the latter, from which it seems to me all the world's evils proceed, especially the afflictions which cause people to complain of being hurt and downtrodden by other more powerful people. For if it is impossible for a poor man, who has a true and good faith and firmly believes the torments of hell to be truly what they are, to take something wrongly from another (or whose father or grandfather did so) and possess it himself (whether it be a duchy, a county, a town, a castle, chattels, a meadow, a lake, a mill, or whatever is appropriate to his rank), and still believe firmly, as we all ought to do, 'I shall never enter paradise unless I give full satisfaction and return, to the best of my knowledge, whatever I have that belongs to another;' then it is possible that any king, queen, prince or princess (or any other person in whatever state or condition he might be living in this world, either high or low, man or woman) would want to keep anything from his subject or subjects or from any other person whatsoever with a clear conscience to the best of his knowledge (as I said before) either from his closest neighbour or from another, or would want to put him to death wrongly and without cause, or keep him in prison, or would want to eject some to enrich others (which is the most common thing they do), or act dishonourably against their relatives and servants for their own pleasures, as with women and such like? Upon my word, no, it is incredible! If they thus have a firm faith and believe what God and the Church tell us on pain of damnation, knowing their lives are short and the torments of hell so horrible and without end or remission, would they be as they are? We must conclude they would not and that all these evils come from a lack of faith. For example, when a king or a prince is a prisoner and he is afraid of dying in prision, is there anything so dear to him in this world that he would not give it up for his freedom? He hands over his own possessions and those of his subjects, as you remember King John of France did after being captured by the prince of Wales at the battle of Poitiers. He paid

three million francs and delivered the whole of Aquitaine, or at least what he held of it, and many other cities, towns and places, a third of this kingdom, and plunged this realm into such great poverty that for a long time money made of leather with a small silver nail in it circulated[50] King John and his son, King Charles the Wise, handed over all this to obtain his release. Even if they had not wanted to hand over any of this, the English would not have killed him. At worst they would have put him in prison, but even if they had executed him it would not have hurt him by one hundred thousandth part of the least torment of hell. Nevertheless he gave up all these things I have mentioned and ruined his children and his kingdom becaue he believed what he saw and realized that otherwise he would not be freed. But perhaps in committing acts similar to that for which this punishment fell upon the King, his children and his subjects, people do not have firm faith and understanding of the offence which they commit against God and His commandments. For there is no prince (or hardly any) who, if he holds one of his neighbour's towns, will return it, either because of his protests or because of any fear of God or because he wishes to avoid the pains of hell. Yet King John gave up so much simply to get out of prison. Thus I say again the trouble is a lack of faith.

I have just asked who would make inquiries into what the powerful do, who would lay the information before a judge and which judge would punish the guilty. My answer to those questions is that the charges against them will be the complaints and protests of the people they trample underfoot and oppress in so many ways, without compassion or pity, the grievous lamentations of widows and orphans whose husbands and fathers they have put to death, causing suffering to those who survive; indeed, the accusation will come from all those they have persecuted either in their persons or through their possessions. This will be the accusation; their loud cries of complaint and their pitiful tears will bring it to Our Lord's notice and He will be the rightful judge of this. He, perhaps, will not want to punish them in the next world but will do so here and now. Thus we must expect that they will be punished because they refuse to believe and because they have neither firm faith nor trust. We must also say that God is forced to demonstrate to them by such examples and signs so that they and everyone else may be convinced that punishment has befallen them because of their cruel offences and that is it God who shows His strength, virtue and justice against them. For no one else in this world except Him has the power.

At first the punishments of God do not seem to be as serious as they eventually prove to be, but none of them befalls a prince, or those who have the direction of his affairs or those who govern a great city, without the consequences being far-reaching and very dangerous for their subjects. Unless their subjects are affected by them I do not call these things misfortunes: falling from a horse, breaking a leg, contracting a serious fever, are all curable, and such accidents do good by making princes wiser. Real misfortunes occur when God is so offended that He cannot endure it any longer and has to show His strength and divine virtue. First, He diminishes their senses. This is a great blow to those whom he afflicts. Then

He upsets their family and allows divisions and dissensions to spring up. The prince falls into such disfavour with Our Lord that he sets aside wise counsel and promotes men who are inexperienced and unreasonable and who flatter him and agree with all he says. If he wants to levy a penny tax, they say levy two. If he threatens a man, they say hang him, and so on in everything. They advise him above all to make himself feared and to show himself proud and courageous. They hope thereby that they themselves will be feared as if authority was their birthright.

Those whom princes have banished and dismissed on such advice, after they have served them for many years, and who have many relatives and friends in their territory, are very displeased, as also are their friends and well-wishers on their behalf. And perhaps they may be so oppressed that they will be forced to defend themselves or to flee to some petty neighbour, who may possibly be an enemy of the prince who banished them. When there are internal dissensions, outsiders can interfere. Is there any plague or persecutions so severe as a war between friends and those who know one another, or any hatred so mortal? It is easy to defend oneself against foreigners when there is unity at home. They have no informers or allies. Do you believe that an unwise prince, surrounded by stupid advisers, can foresee the misfortunes which might eventually befall him because of dissensions among his subjects? Or that he recognizes that they could harm him? Or that this proceeds from God? He is not less well dined nor is his bed less fine nor does he have fewer horses or clothes than other men, and he is always well attended because he attracts men both by his promises and by distributing the goods and estates of those whom he has exiled as well as his own in order to increase his renown. But at the moment that he least expects it God will raise up an enemy against him and it may be someone of whom he has never heard. Then thoughts and great suspicions about those he has offended will crowd his mind and he will be afraid of many people who wish him no harm. He will not make God his refuge but will prepare his army.

- From MS. P.
- Following MS. P.
- Commynes's remarks on the ransom of King John are based more on legend than historical fact. No leather money was ever issued and although he summarizes with some accuracy the terms of the treaty of Brétigny-Calais (1360), John's desire for freedom did not stop him from returning to captivity in England in 1363, where he died in 1364, after his son Louis, duke of Anjou, had broken parole.

20

[Examples of revolutions in other states]

HAVE we not seen in our own time examples of this in countries close to ours? We have seen King Edward IV of England, who died a short time ago, head of the house of York. Did he not overthrow the house of Lancaster under which both he and his father had lived for a long time and had he not done homage to the Lancastrian king, Henry VI of England? Later Edward kept Henry

in prison for many years at the Tower of London in the capital of the kingdom of England, and finally had him put to death. Have we not also seen the earl of Warwick, the chief and leading administrator of King Edward's affairs (who had all his friends put to death, especially the dukes of Somerset), after becoming the enemy of King Edward, his master, giving his daughter in marriage to the prince of Wales, son of King Henry VI and attempting to restore the house of Lancaster, finally defeated and killed in battle, together with his brothers and relatives? Similarly several lords in England at one time killed their enemies, then later the children of their victims got their revenge when times changed and favoured them and they killed the others.

Surely such strokes come about because of divine justice. But, as I said elsewhere, the realm of England enjoys one favour above all other realms, that neither the countryside nor the people are destroyed nor are buildings burnt and demolished. Misfortune falls on soldiers and on nobles in particular; thus nothing is perfect in this world.

After King Edward of England had obtained the upper hand in his realm and was receiving fifty thousand crowns a year from our kingdom, which was delivered to his Tower of London, and he had become so rich no one was able to rival him, he died suddenly, of melancholy it seems, because of the marriage of our present King and my lady Marguerite, the daughter of the duke of Austria.[51] As soon as he heard the news he fell sick, for he knew himself deceived over the marriage of his daughter, whom he used to call my lady the Dauphine, and the pension, which he received from us and which he called tribute, was stopped. But it was neither tribute nor pension, as I explained previously. King Edward left a wife and two fine sons; one called the prince of Wales, the other the duke of York. The duke of Gloucester, brother of the late King Edward, took control of the government of his nephew, the prince of Wales, who was about ten years old, and did homage to him as king. He brought him to London, pretending that he was going to have him crowned, but really to get the other son out of sanctuary in London where he was with his mother, who was somewhat suspicious. In the end, with the assistance of the bishop of Bath, who had previously been King Edward's Chancellor before being dismissed and imprisoned (although he still received his money), on his release the duke carried out the deed which you shall hear described in a moment. This bishop revealed to the duke of Gloucester that King Edward, being very enamoured of a certain English lady, promised to marry her, provided that he could sleep with her first, and she consented. The bishop said that he had married them when only he and they were present. He was a courtier so he did not disclose this fact but helped to keep the lady quiet and things remained like this for a while. Later King Edward fell in love again and married the daughter of an English knight, Lord Rivers. She was a widow with two sons.

At the time I am speaking about the bishop of Bath told the duke of Gloucester all about this affair and helped him a great deal in the execution of his evil plan. The duke had his two nephews murdered and made himself king, with the title King Richard. The two

daughters [of Edward IV] were declared illegitimate in a plenary session of Parliament and their right to the royal arms was taken from them. All his late brother's loyal servants, or at least those he could capture, were killed on his orders. The cruelty did not last long; for after he had become more filled with pride than any of his predecessors as kings of England in the last hundred years and he had killed the duke of Buckingham[52] and gathered a large army, God raised up an enemy against him who had no power. This was the earl of Richmond, at that time a prisoner in Brittany, today king of England.[53] He was a member of the house of Lancaster but he was not the closest claimant to the crown, whatever one may say about it (at least as far as I understand it). He himself told me on one occasion, a short while before he left this kingdom, that since the age of five he had been guarded like a fugitive or kept in prison. For fifteen years or thereabouts this earl of Richmond had been held prisoner in Brittany by Duke Francis, who died recently. He had fallen into the his hands during a storm when he was attempting to flee to France with his uncle [Jasper], the earl of Pembroke. I was at the duke's court at the time they were captured.[54] The duke treated them very gently as prisoners and on the death if King Edward, the duke gave Richmond a large force of men and boats and, with the cooperation of the duke of Buckingham (who later died for his part in this), he sent the earl to land in England. There was a great storm and contrary winds so he had to return to Dieppe and from there he made his way by land back to Brittany. When he returned to Brittany, he was anxious not to burden the duke with expenses because he had some five hundred English followers and he was also afraid the duke might reach some accord with King Richard which would be to his disadvantage. Indeed negotiations were in progress, so he and his company left withtout bidding the duke good-bye. A short time later he was paid just enough money for the passage of three or four thousand men. The present King gave those who were with him a large sum of money and some artillery. He was taken by ship from Normandy to land in his native Wales. King Richard marched to meet him but the earl of Richmond was joined by Lord Stanley, an English knight and husband of the earl's mother, with reinforcements numbering more than twenty-six thousand men. A battle was fought. King Richard was killed on the battlefield and the earl of Richmond was crowned king of England on the field with Richard's crown. Should one describe this as Fortune? Surely it was God's judgement. But still, to make it even more evident — as soon as King Richard had had his two nephews cruelly murdered, as I said before, he lost his wife; some say he had her killed. He only had one son who died immediately afterwards. (This account I have just related would have fitted better later on when I shall speak about King Edward's death, because he was still alive at the time with which this chapter deal. But I have included it in otder to illustrate my digression.)

Similarly we have seen the crown of Spain change hands after the death of the late king Don Enrique, who was married to the sister of the late king of Portugal — the one who was the mother of a beautiful daughter. Nevertheless she did not succeed but was deprived of the crown on the grounds of her mother's supposed adultery. But this was not accomplished without much strife and

bitter wars because the king of Portugal wanted to support his neice and so did several Castilian lords. But King Enrigue's sister, who had married the son of Don Juan, the king of Aragon, obtained the kingdom and still possesses it. Thus this judgement and settlement was made in heaven, where enough others are made. Likewise you have seen not long ago the king of Scotland and his son, who was thirteen or fourteen years old, fighting each other. The son and his supporters won the battle and the king was killed on the field. The king had had his brother killed and he was suspected of having caused several other deaths besides.[55]

- Marguerite was affianced to Charles VIII in 1483 but although called 'la Royne' in French documents she was eventually sent back to Flanders in 1491 when Charles married Anne of Brittany.
- Executed at Shrewsbury for rebellion, 2 November 1483.
- Henry VII (1485-1509)
- In 1471.
- James III (1460-88) was suspected of murdering John, earl of Mar, in 1479, and was killed in the battle against his son, James IV (1488-1513), and his rebellious vassals on 11 June 1488.

BOOK SIX

1
[The war of succession in Burgundy]

***i** Here the author returns to his narrative and tells how the duke of Guelders, at that time leader of the Flemings, was killed at the siege of Tournai and how the Flemings were put to flight by the Frenchmen who were in Tournai*

IT is time I returned to my principal concern and continued these memoirs which were begun at your request, my lord archbishop of Vienne.

When the duke of Guelders arrived before Tournai he set fire to everything up to the suburbs, where there were three or four hundred men-at-arms who rushed out and attacked the rear of his forces when they retreated, and immediately the people began to flee. The duke of Guelders, who was a very valiant man, turned round, hoping to make a way for his own men to retreat. But he was poorly supported and he was knocked to the ground and killed, as were a fairly large number of his men. It only needed a few royal troops to carry out this task. The Flemish host began to withdraw after this loss, although only a small band of them had been defeated. My lady of Burgundy, it was reported, was very happy at the results of this adventure, as were those who had her interests at heart, because it was said that the men of Ghent had certainly decided to marry her to the duke by force, because they could not have made her consent to this willingly, for several reasons which have been explained to you previously.

***ii** Here I speak about the King's dealings with the Engish, during the time when he was waging war in my lady of Burgundy's lands, to prevent them from interfering with his plans*

Those who read these memoirs in days to come and who understand the affairs and interests of this kingdom and its neighbours better than I do may be surprised that since the death of Duke Charles of Burgundy up to this moment, that is about a year later, I have not made a single mention of the English or how they could allow the King to lay his hands on towns which lay so close to them like Arras, Boulogne, Hesdin, Ardes and several castles, or to besiege Saint-Quintin for many days. The reason is that the intelligence and understanding of our King exceeded that of the reigning English king, Edward [IV], although King Edward was a very brave prince who had won eight or nine battles in England. All of these he had fought on foot, which speaks highly of his qualities. But these were disputes of short duration where King Edward's judgement was not necessarily exercised, for as soon as the battle was over he was in control until the next crisis, for if any conflict breaks out in England one or other of the rivals is master within ten days or less. But our affairs over here are not conducted in this way. It is necessary for our King, when he is waging war, to know what is going on in many parts of his realm and in neighbouring territories. In particular amongst all his other concerns he must be able to satisfy the king of England or to divert his attention by embassies, presents and fine words so that he will not interfere in our affairs. For our master was well aware that all the English nobles, commons and clergy are at any moment inclined to fight against this kingdom, using the excuse of the claims they pretend to have to it, and in hopes of winning profit here, because God permitted their predecessors to win several battles in this kingdom and to hold both Normandy and Guyenne for a long time; they possessed the latter for three hundred and fifty years up to the time when King Charles VII first conquered it. During this time they carried off great spoils and riches to England, from both the poor people and the lords of France, whom they had imprisoned in large numbers, as well as from the towns and other places they had captured in this realm. They always hoped to be able to repeat this. But it would only have been with the greatest difficulty that they could have done this during the reign of our master, King Louis, because he would never have risked his realm to the extent of making all the nobility of the kingdom dismount to fight the English as was done at Agincourt. And he would have proceeded far more wisely if things had come to such a pass, as you can see by the way he quickly handled matters when King Edward of England did invade. Now our master soon realized that the king of England and his closest advisers were more inclined to make peace and to take his gifts, so for this reason he promptly paid the pension of fifty thousand crowns which he delivered to the king of England at London (they called it tribute). To his closest advisers he paid some sixteen thousand crowns, that is to say, to the Chancellor, to the Master of the Rolls (who is the present Chancellor), to the Lord Chamberlain, Lord Hastings, a man of great sense, virtue and authority, to Sir Thomas Montgomery, to Lord Howard, who later became duke of Norfolk under that wicked

King Richard, to the Master of the Horse [Sir John] Cheyne, to [Sir Thomas] St. Leger and to the marquis [of Dorset], son of the queen of England by a previous marriage, and he gave very great gifts to all those who came to his court. Even when they came with very strict instructions he would dispatch them with such fine words and presents that they would be satisfied with him. On the other hand, sometimes, when they recognized that the King, our master, was only doing this to gain time and to forward his own designs in this war which he had begun, they disguised this fact because of the great profit they received from him. To all those just mentioned he gave gifts besides their pensions. I am certain that in less than two years he gave to Lord Howard, as well as his pension, both money and plate to the value of twenty-four thousand crowns, and to the Chamberlain, Lord Hastings, he gave on one occasion alone a thousand marks' worth of silver plate. Quittances from all these people could be found in the *Chambre des comptes*[1] at Paris, except from Lord Hastings, Lord Chamberlain of England (and there is only one of them, so it is an important office).

It was very difficult to persuade the Lord Chamberlain to become a pensioner. He did so eventually through me because I had helped to make him friendly with Duke Charles of Burgundy, whom I was serving at the time. Charles gave him a pension of a thousand crowns a year. I told the King about this and it likewise pleased him that I should be the agent to make him his friend and servant, for previously he had always been a great enemy, both while the duke was alive and after his death, for he supported the lady of Burgundy and if it had been up to him England would have helped her against the King. So I began this friendship by writing letters and the King gave him a pension of two thousand crowns, double what the duke of Burgundy had given him. The King, our master, sent Pierre Clairet, one of the stewards of his household, to him, strictly instructing him to receive a quittance so that in the future it could be seen and proved that the Lord Chamberlain, the Chancellor, the Admiral and the Master of the Horse of England, and several others, were pensioners of the King of France.

Pierre Clairet was a very clever man. He had a private conversation with the Lord Chamberlain in his room in London. When he told him whatever it was necessary to say and, on the King's behalf, presented him with the two thousand crowns in gold (for the King never gave money to great foreign lords in any other type of coin) and after the Chamberlain had received this money, Pierre Clairet asked him to sign a quittance for it so that he himself could be quit. Lord Hastings prevaricated. Clairet then asked him again to simply give him a letter three lines long addressed to the King, saying that he had received the money, which would serve as a quittance for him to the King, his master, so that he would not think that Clairet had robbed him of it, because the King was somewhat suspicious by nature. When the Chamberlain saw that Clairet's request was entirely proper he said, 'Master Clairet, what you say is quite reasonable, but this gift comes freely from your master, the King. I didn't ask for it. If it pleases you that I should take it you can put it here in my sleeve, but you'll get neither letter nor quittance from me because I don't want people to say of me "The Lord Chamberlain of England was the King of France's pensioner," nor

do I want my quittances to be found in his*Chambre des comptes*.' Clairet said no more, left him the money and came back to report to the King, who was very angry that he had not brought the quittance. But he praised the Chamberlain for his action and respected him more than all the other servants of the king of England. Thereafter the Chamberlain was always paid without him giving a quittance.

In this way our King dealt with the English. Nevertheless the king of England was often asked and urged by the supporters of the young princess to help and as a result he sent embassies to the King to protest about this matter and put pressure on him to make peace or at least a truce. For among the Englishmen in his council and especially in Parliament (which is their equivalent of the Three Estates) were to be found a number of wise, far-sighted men, who did not receive pensions like the others and they, and in particular the commons, were very anxious that the king of England should help the lady as much as he could, saying that we, for our part, were deceiving them and that the marriage would never take place. This could easily be seen because in the treaty made at Picquigny between the two kings it had been sworn and promised that within a year we would send for the daughter of the king of England, who had already been called my lady the Dauphine, and that this time-limit had long passed. But whatever representations his subjects made, the king did not want to listen to them; there were many reasons for this. He was a ponderous man who was much addicted to his pleasures. He had not known how to endure the rigours of war in this country and having seen himself escape from great difficulties he had no wish to return to them. On the other hand his greed had been moderated by the delivery of fifty thousand crowns every year to the Tower of London. Also when his ambassadors came [to France] they were made so very welcome and they were given so many fine presents that they went away satisfied, although in order to gain time they were never given any definite answers. They were always told that in a few days the King would send to their master good envoys who would give him such assurances about any matter which bothered him that he would be satisfied. Thus about three weeks or a month after the ambassadors had left, sometimes later sometimes sooner (and this is of no importance in such affairs), the King would send his envoys. They were always men who had not been on the previous mission so that if the former envoys had made some proposal which had not subsequently been carried out, the new envoys would not know what to reply. Also those who were sent took a great deal of trouble in every possible way to give the king of England such assurances about France that he would remain patient and not turn against her. For he and the queen, his wife, so wanted the marriage to take place that this, and the other reasons I have mentioned, made him ignore what some of his council told him was the great prejudice of his realm and made him fear for the breaking off of the marriage because of the scorn poured upon it already in England, especially by those who wanted dissension and strife.

To make this explanation a little clearer; the King, our master, never wanted to complete this marriage, for the ages of the couple were not compatible since the girl (who is the present queen of

England) was much older than my lord the Dauphin, out present King. So by these ruses, a month or two being gained with each coming and going, the King prevented his enemy from using the opportunity to harm him. For without a shadow of a doubt had it not been for the hopes of this marriage the king of England would not have been so tolerant of the King taking those places so close to him without exerting himself to protect them. And if right at the start he had declared himself for the lady of Burgundy, the King, who was afraid of placing things in jeopardy or leaving them to chance, would not have weakened the house of Burgundy as much as he had.

I recount these matters principally to allow one to understand how the affairs of this world are conducted, so that one can either take advantage of them or prepare oneself against them and so that it may be useful to those who have important business on hand and who read these memoirs. For although their intelligence may be considerable a little advice is sometimes useful. It is true that had my lady of Burgundy wanted to agree to marry Lord Rivers, brother of the queen of England, he would have come to her aid with a good number of soldiers. But it would have been a very unequal marriage for he was only a minor earl and she was the greatest heiress of her time.

Many negotiations were in hand between the King and the king of England and among them was a proposal from the King that if Edward would join him and come in person to invade part of the lands of the lady and take his share of them, then the King would consent to let the king of England have the county of Flanders, which he would hold free of homage, as well as the duchy of Brabant. The King even offered to conquer at his own cost the four largest towns of Brabant and hand them over to the king of England and, moreover, to pay him for ten thousand Englishmen for four months so that he might more easily bear the costs of the army. To help him, he was to lend him a large number of guns with horses and wagons to transport them and whilst the king of England conquered Flanders the King in the meantime was to attack the enemy elsewhere.

The king of England replied that the towns of Flanders were large and powerful and it would a very difficult country to keep once he had conquered it, and Brabant likewise, and anyway the English were not very much in favour of this war because of the strength of their commercial ties [with Flanders], but that since the King was proposing to give him a share of his conquests, would he be so good as to deliver to him some of the places he had already conquered in Picadry, such as Boulogne and the others, and that having done this he would declare himself for him and send men to serve him for whom he could pay. This was a very wise reply.

- The French equivalent of the English Exchequer.

2

How several marriage proposals were made to my lady of Burgundy and how she finally married Maximilian, the Emperor's

son

SO, I as I said before, bargaining between the King and the king of England went on all the while in order to gain time whilst the lady of Burgundy's position was weakening. For, of the few solderis remaining to her after her father's death, many joined the King, especially after my lord of Cordes had done so, bringing several over with him. Others changed sides of necssity, either because their estates were situated close to or within towns which were already in the King's obedience, or because they wanted to obtain rewards from him, for no other prince shared out his possessions so generously among his servants as he did. Furthermore, troubles daily increased in these large towns, especially at Ghent which stirred up everything as you heard.

In the lady's entourage many were talking about possible marriages for her, saying that she should either marry to defend the lands which remained to her or that she should marry my lord the Dauphin so that she would be able to keep all her lands. Some people very much wanted this marriage to take place and she did too, especially before the delivery of the letters which the lord of Humbercourt and the Chancellor carried. Others pointed out the Dauphin's extreme youth — he was only about nine years old[2] — they also mentioned that he was pledged to the English marriage and they recommended the son of the duke of Clèves. Yet others suggested the son of the Emperor, Maxilimilian, the present king of the Romans.[3]

The lady had begun to hate the King as a result of those letters which she thought had led to the death of those two good men, and to her own public humiliation when they were delivered to her in front of so many people as you heard. Also, it had inspired the men of Ghent audaciously to chase away her officers, separate her from her mother-in-law and the lord of Ravenstein and so petrify her ladies [-in-waiting] that they dared not open a letter without showing it to their mistress nor speak to her except in a whisper.

She then began to keep aloof from the bishop of Liège, a member of the house of Bourbon, who wanted her to marry my lord the Dauphin. This would have been a very suitable and honourable marriage for the lady had it not been for the Dauphin's extreme youth. Nevertheless the bishop was unable to achieve this, so he withdrew to Liège and the matter was dropped. Indeed it would have been very difficult to arrange to suit everybody and I believe that if anyone had got involved in the affair they would have failed and come away with no great honour. Afterwards, a council was held about this matter at which my lady of Hallwin,[4] the first lady-in-waiting to the princess, was present and she said, as it was reported to me, that what they needed was a man and certainly not a child. Her mistress was a woman capable of bearing children and that was what the country needed. This opinion prevailed although some blamed the lady for having spoken so frankly, but others praised her for it and said she only spoke about the marriage and what was very necessary for the country. Afterwards the talk was only about finding the right man. I really believe that if the King had wanted her to marry the present lord of Angoulême,[5] she would have done so, as she wanted very much to remain allied to

the royal house of France. Yet God wanted to arrange another marriage and, perhaps, we still do not know why He wanted to do this. We can see what has happened; as a result of this marriage, here in this kingdom and elsewhere much more serious wars have broken out (in which Flanders, Brabant and other regions have suffered great oppression) than would have done so if she had married my lord of Angoulême.

The duke of Clèves was at Ghent with the lady, eagerly looking for friends and thereby hoping to arrange the marriage of his son with the princess. She was not at all inclined towards this match and the character of Clèves's son did not please her nor her close advisers. So they began to negotiate for a marriage with the Emperor's son, the present king of the Romans, about which there had been some previous discussions between the Emperor and Duke Charles. They had come to an agreement about it. The Emperor also had a letter written by the princess on her father's instructions and he had been given a diamond ring. The letter said that she, in accordance with the good wishes and desire of her lord and father, promised to marry the duke of Austria, son of the Emperor, as it had been agreed, on the conditions her lord and father saw fit to arrange.

The Emperor sent certain ambassadors to the princess, who was at Ghent. When they arrived at Brussels they received letters telling them to wait there a while and that envoys would be sent to them. The duke of Clèves did this because he did not want them to come and he was trying to make them return dissatisfied. But the ambassadors, who already had contacts in the household, or at least with the dowager duchess of Burgundy, who had been banished and separated from the princess as you heard, continued on their way, for she had advised them, so I was told, that they should proceed despite the letters. She also told them what they ought to do when they arrived at Ghent and that the princess was very well disposed towards their business as were several of those close to her. The Imperial ambassadors followed this advice and came directly to Ghent, despite their orders to the contrary. This displeased the duke of Clèves immensely, but he was still ignorant of the ladies' wishes. It was suggested in council that the ambassadors should be given an audience and it was decided that after they had presented their credentials the princess should tell them that they were very welcome and that she would lay before her council whatever they said to her; a reply would then be given to them. In the meantime she would say no more. The lady agreed to this suggestion.

The ambassadors presented their letters when they were told to do so and announced the purpose of their mission. As the marriage had been arranged between the Emperor and the duke of Burgundy, her father, with her full knowledge and consent, as it appeared by letters written in her own hand, which they displayed, together with the diamond, which they said had been given and sent to him as a token of marriage, they strongly urged her, on their master's behalf, to be pleased to fulfil the terms of the marriage, according to the wishes and promises of her lord and father and of herself, and to declare before all those present whether she had written the letter or not and whether she wished to keep her promise. On hearing

these words and without asking for advice, the princess replied that she had written the letters at her father's command and that she had sent the diamond. The ambassadors thanked her profusely and returned joyfully to their lodgings.

The duke of Clèves was very upset by this reply which was contarary to what had been decided upon in council. He protested strongly to the princess that she had spoken ill-advisedly. But she replied that she could not do otherwise and, since it had been promised, she could not go against it.

Hearing her words, and knowing full well that there were several there who held a similar opinion, he decided, a few days later, to go back to his own land and give up his plans. And so this marriage was accomplished, for the Duke Maximilian came to Cologne where many of the princess's officers went to meet him. I really do believe that they found him almost penniless and had to take him some money because his father was a very mean man, more so than any other prince or indeed anyone else of our time. The Emperor's son was brought to Ghent, accompanied by seven or eight hundred horsemen, and the marriage was concluded. This, at first sight, brought little benefit to the subjects of the princess, for instead of bringing money it was necessary to give it to him. His forces were not powerful enough to face those of the King, nor did their characters afford them well with those of the subjects of the house of Burgundy, who had lived under rich princes, who gave away good offices and maintained a fine, splendid court with lavish furnishings, food and clothes for themselves and their servants. The Germans were just the opposite, for they are uncouth folk who live boorishly.

I have no doubt that it was with serious deliberation and wise counsel, and even owing to God's favour, that the French law and ordinance was made that daughters should not inherit the kingdom, in order to avoid it falling into the hands of a foreign prince and other foreigners, for the French people would scarcely have been able to tolerate it. Nor would other nations. And, in the long run, there are no lordships, in particular no powerful ones, where in the end the country does not remain in the possession of its own people. You can see from the example of France, where the English held extensive territory for four hundred years, but at the present time they hold only Calais and two small castles, which cost them a great deal to keep. The remainder they lost more quickly than they had conquered it because they lost more in a day than they gained in a year. The same thing is exemplified by the kingdom of Naples, the island of Sicily and the other provinces which the French had possessed for many years, and where signs of their former power are now only indicated by the graves of their predecessors. Even though a country could endure a very wise foreign prince with a small very orderly following it could not easily put up with a large number of men. If he were to bring them with him or send for them, because of the threat of war, and they were to come, it would be only with the greatest difficulty that he could avoid envy, discord and quarrels. These arise as much over the differences of customs and temperaments as over the violence which they often use, since they will not love the country as much as those who

were born there and, above all, they will want the country's offices and benefices and want to control its affairs. In order to act correctly a prince would have to be very wise when he comes to a foreign country to reconcile all these conflicting claims, and if a prince is not blessed with this ability, which above all others proceeds from God's grace alone, whatever other good qualities he has, he will scarcely be able to overcome this failing. And if he lives out a man's normal lifespan he will have great troubles and difficulties, as will all those who live under him, especially when he becomes an old man and his men and officers have no hope of him changing his ways.

When the marriage had been completed, their affairs hardly improved, for both were young. Duke Maximilian understood nothing, both because of his youth[6] and also because he was in a foreign country. Besides he had also been brought up badly, at least for understanding important affairs, nor did he have sufficient men to make any great show. For this reason the country has been in great trouble up to the present and looks likely to be for some time to come. There is great inconvenience, as I have said, for a country when it is forced to seek a lord from abroad. God has greatly blessed the kingdom of France with the law, which I mentioned above, that daughters should not inherit. A small family could grow in that way, but a great kingdom like this one could only suffer all kinds of inconveniences.

A few days after the marriage the county of Artois was lost — or at least while the marriage was being negotiated. It is only necessary for me to get the point of substance right — if I am mistaken over the dates by a month, one way or the other, readers must excuse me if they will. The King's position was improving all the time because there was no resistance. Every day he took another place, unless there was a truce or some peaceful overture, which never came to anything, because they were unreasonable; and so the war continued.

Duke Maximilian and my lady of Burgundy had a son in the first year of their marriage — Archduke Philip, who reigns at present.[7] In the second year they had a daughter — our present Queen Margeurite.[8] In the third year they had a son named Francis, after Duke Francis of Brittany.[9] In the fourth year my lady died after falling from a horse — or of a fever — though it is true that she had a fall.[10] Some said she was pregnant. It was a terrible blow to her subjects and they revered and feared her more than her husband. She was also the true heiress of the country. She loved her husband and was a lady of good reputation. Her death occurred in 1482.

In Hainaualt the King held the towns of Quesnoy-le Comte and Bohain, which he restored. Some were amazed by this, seeing that he had sought no agreement and that he appeared to want to take everything, leaving nothing to this family. And I truly believe that had he been able to dispose of it and give all away at leisure and completely destroy it, he would have done so, but two reasons made him deliver up these places in Hainault. First, it seemed to him that a king has more strength and importance in the kingdom

where he was annointed and crowned than he does outside it, and these towns were outside his kingdom (and were restored in 1478). The other reason was that between the kings of France and the Emperors there had been solemn oaths and agreements for the former not to undertake anything against the Empire and the latter, likewise, nothing against this kingdom. These places I mentioned were in the Empire. For a similar reason he restored Cambrai or placed it in neutral hands, being content to lose it. The citizens, in fact, had first of all agreed to allow the King in on these conditions.

- Actually about eleven. Mary was twenty, being born on 13 February 1457.
- Maximilian succeeded his father on 19 August 1493, although it was not until 1508 that he assumed the title 'Emperor-elect'.
- Jeanne de la Clite, lady of Hallwin (d. 11 April 1512) was a cousin of Commynes.
- Charles d'Orléans, count of Angoulême (d. 1 January 1496), father of King Francis I of France.
- He was eighteen, being born on 22 March 1459.
- Born 22 June 1478.
- Introduction Footnote 5 and Book Six, Chapter 6, Part ii, and Book Six, Chapter 11.
- Born 2 September, died 26 December 1486.
- Mary died on 27 March 1482.

Book Six, Chapters 3-12; Glossary

MEMOIRS

BOOK SIX

3

Here I go back to the war which the King was waging in Burgundy and tell how the country was eventually conquered and totally subjected to the King

ALL this while war continued in Burgundy and the King was unable to bring it to a conclusion because the Germans were giving some assistance to the prince of Orange, the lieutenant of the Duke Maximilian and my lady of Burgundy, although they did so for the money the prince of Orange gave them and not because they supported Duke Maximilian, for nobody supported him, at least at the time about which about which I am speaking. But the soldiers were companions-in-arms from the Swiss confederation and they had an eye on the main chance, for they are never friends or well-wishers of the house of Austria. Nevertheless there would have been much help for that country if payment had been forthcoming and no one could have done this better than Duke Sigismund of Austria, Duke Maximilian's uncle, whose lands lay close by, particularly the county of Ferrette which he had sold a few years previously to Duke Charles of Burgundy for a hundred thousand Rhenish florins and which he had then taken back again without returning the money. He still holds the county today on this basis.[11] He never had good judgement nor a strong sense of honour; and in such friends one finds little help. He was one of those princes whom I spoke about elsewhere, who want to know nothing about their affairs except what it pleases their servants to tell them and who always pay for this in their old age, as Sigismund did. His servants made him adhere to the side they favoured during these wars and almost all the time he supported the King against his nephew. Ultimately he wanted to give away his inheritance, which was very extensive, to another family and deprive his own, for he had no children, although he had been married twice. But eventually, three years ago, through a different group of his servants, he conveyed all his estates from that moment to his nephew, Duke Maximilian, the present king of the Romans, whom I have mentioned, retaining only a pension of about a third [of the annual revenue] and keeping no other authority or power over them. Several times he has repented of doing this, or so I have

been told. Even if that is not true, it is very probably so because such is the end of princes who live foolishly, and what makes them so worthy of blame is the great responsibility and duty God has given them in this world. Those who are crazy should not be blamed for anything, but those who have intelligence and are quite capable and who spend their time doing nothing but stupid things and being lazy cannot complain when misfortune happens to them. But those who spend time, according to their age, sometimes in deliberation and council and sometimes at feasts and entertainments, are the ones to honour and their subjects are very fortunate to have such a prince.

This war in Burgundy lasted a considerable time because of the small amount of aid from the Germans. Nevertheless the King was too powerful for them, and the Burgundians ran out of money. Garrisons one by one changed sides through subversion. On one occasion the lord of Craon, who was the King's lieutenant, besieged Dôle, the capital of the county of Burgundy. There were not many troops inside it and he had little respect for them; misfortune also befell him. For, when the defenders made a sally, he was taken by surprise and lost some of his guns and a few men. He was dishonoured by this and incurred the King's displeasure. The King, angry at this setback, started taking steps to replace him by another governor of Burgundy, both for this reason and for the great pillaging to which he had subjected the country, which was indeed very excessive. Yet, before he was dismissed from office, he achieved some success against a company of Germans and Burgundians in which the lord of Châteauguion, the greatest lord of Burgundy, was captured. The results of the battle were not spectacular — I am speaking about it from hearsay — but the lord of Craon gained a fine reputation from it.

As I had begun to recount, the King decided, for the reasons mentioned above, to appoint a new governor in Burgundy without any way diminishing the profits and benefits which the lord of Craon enjoyed, apart from taking away from him all the soldiers, except for six men-at-arms and twelve archers, who were left to attend him. The lord of Craon was a very fat man and easy-going, so he returned to his home where he was well provided for. The King appointed in his place Sir Charles d'Amboise, lord of Chaumont, a very valiant, wise and hard-working man. The King began to scheme to get all the Germans who were waging war against him in Burgundy to withdraw and to take them into his pay, not so much because he valued their services but in order that he might conquer the rest of the country more easily. He also sent messages to the Swiss, whom he called 'My lords of the Leagues', and offered them handsome terms; first twenty thousand francs a year which he would give for their profit to four towns — Berne, Lucerne, Zurich, and, I believe, Fribourg had a share, and to their three cantons (that is the villages around their mountains) — Schwyz (whose name they all bore), Soleure[12] and Unterwalden, which had its share also. He further offered to give twenty thousand francs a year to certain private individuals and those he had made use of in these negotiations. He asked to be made one of their citizens and to have it in writing, and also to become their chief ally. At this point they began to make difficulties because the

duke of Savoy had always been their chief ally. Yet they agreed to his demands and also to send him six thousand men for his permanent use, which he was to pay at the rate of four and a half German florins a month, and this number was always in his service up to the time of his death. A poor king would not have known how to manage this affair. Everything turned out profitably for him, although I believe that in the end it will harm the Swiss, for they have become so accustomed to money, of which they had little experience previously, and especially to gold, that they have come very near to falling out among themselves. Otherwise one would not know how to harm them, for their lands are so rugged and poor and they are such good fighters that few men have tried to attack them. When these negotiations had been concluded and all the Germans who were in Burgundy had been drawn into the employment of the King, the power of the Burugndians was reduced everywhere. And, to cut this account short, after several new exploits, carried out by the lord of Chaumont, he besieged Rochefort, a castle close to Dôle where Sir Claude de Vauldrey was, and it capitulated to him. Afterwards he besieged Dôle from which his predecessor had been repulsed and took it by storm. It was said that some of the Germans who had recently changed sides had planned to enter the town to defend it, but they had in their company so many franc-archers (who did not intend to be treacherous but only wanted to obtain booty) that when they had entered the town everyone began to pillage and the town was burnt and destroyed.[13] A short time after this capture he attacked Auxonne, a very strong town, but he had good contacts in the town, and he wrote to the King for offices for some whom he named before laying siege to it. These were willingly granted to him. Even though I was not on the spot where these things were done, I learnt about them from what was reported to the King and from the letters that were written about them to him, which I saw, and to which I often had to write the replies on the King's orders.

There were few troops at Auxonne and their leaders agreed with the lord of Chaumont, the governor, to deliver the town to him after five or six days.[14] So there was nothing more to do in Burgundy but to capture three or four castles, perched on rocks, like Joux, and to obtain the submission of Besançon, which is an Imperial town and owes nothing or very little to the county of Burgundy. But because it is an enclave in the county it obeys the ruler of the county. The governor entered the town on the King's behalf and the citizens performed the homage they had been accustomed to do to the other princes who had possessed Burgundy and then he left it. So Burgundy, where the governor had performed his duties so well, was completely conquered. But the King kept a very strict watch on him and was afraid lest the governor might continue to find some rebellious place ot other in the country, so that there would be more for him to do and the King would not be able to recall him from there to serve somewhere else. For the land of Burgundy was fertile and he treated it like his own. Both the lord of Craon, whom I have spoke about, and the governor, the lord of Chaumont, made their fortunes there. For a while the country remained peaceful under the rule of the lord of Chaumont. Nevertheless some places, such as Beaune, Semur, Verdun[15] and others rebelled afterwards, whilst I was there. (I was present there because the King had sent

me with the pensioners of his household and ever since then this tradition has been continued up to the present time.) These places were recaptured through the governor's good sense and conduct and through the difference there is between men, which derives from God, for He gives the wisest the cause He wants to support, or at least, He gives the ruler sense to choose them and He has clearly shown and demonstrated up to the present that in all matters He had wanted to support our King, both our late good master as well as the present one, although sometimes He has caused them difficulties.

The men who lost these places were sufficiently numerous [to resist] had they promptly placed themselves in the towns which had rebelled and revolted on their behalf, but they allowed the governor time to gather his troops, which they should not have done, for they knew well enough what his resources were, and what support the country would give them. They should have thrown themselves into Beaune, which is a strong town, and they could have guarded that, though not the others.

The very day the governor, fully informed of their position, took the field to lay siege to a troublesome little town called Verdun,[16] they themselves entered it, hoping to go on to reinforce Beaune. In all they numbered about six hundred chosen men on horseback and on foot. They were Germans from the county of Ferrette under the leadership of some wise Burgundian gentlemen, of whom Simon de Quingey was one. They stopped just at the time when they should have pressed on to enter Beaune, which would have been impregnable if they had once entered it. Lacking good advice, they stayed a night too long. They were besieged there and overwhelmed by the attack. Afterwards Beaune was besieged and completely recovered. Ever since then the enemy has been unable to build up its strength in Burgundy.

At that time I was in Burgundy with the King's pensioners, as I mentioned before, and the King made me leave because someone wrote a letter to him saying that I had spared some of the burgesses of Dijon in the billeting of the troops. That, and some other small suspicion, was the reason why he suddenly sent me to Florence. I obeyed, as it was right to do, and left as soon as I had received his letters.

11. Duke Sigismund died on 4 March 1496.
12. In fact, Uri.
13. Dôle was taken in May 1479.
14. 4 June 1479.
15. *Verdun* added from MS. P.
16. Verdun-sur-le-Doubs, arr. Châlon-sur-Saône, dép. Saône-et-Loire.

4

Here the author tells how he was sent to Florence by the King because of a dispute between the families of the Medici and the Pazzi

THE King sent me [to Florence] because there was a dispute between two very powerful and well-known families. One was the Medici family. The other, the Pazzi family, was supported by the Pope[17] and King Ferrante of Naples, and had tried to kill Lorenzo dei Medici and all his followers. Nevertheless although they failed to kill Lorenzo, they did kill his brother, Guiliano dei Medici and Franceschino Nori, a servant of the Medici family, who threw himself in front of Guiliano, in Florence cathedral. Lorenzo was badly wounded and withdrew to the [north] sacristy of the church, the copper doors of which had been made on the orders of his father. A servant, whose release from prison he had obtained two days earlier, served him extremely well in this crisis, receiving several wounds from blows aimed at Lorenzo. And all this took place whilst High Mass was being sung. Those who had been ordered to do the killing had been given the signal to do so when the priest celebrating the High Mass sang the *Sanctus*.

Things did not turn out as the conspirators had intended. For thinking that they had succeeded completely, some of them ran to the Palazzo [Pubblico] hoping to kill all the members of the Signoria who were there. (These men, nine in all, are elected every three months and they control all the administration of the city.) But the conspirators were followed by a few others and when they were climbing the stairs of the Palazzo a door behind them was closed. When they reached the top they found they numbered only four or five and were in such a state that they were at a loss for words. The members of the Signoria who were up there, and who had already heard Mass together with their servants, looking out the windows, could see the disturbance in the town and Jacopo dei Pazzi and others shouting out in the square in front of the Palazzo, 'Liberty, liberty' and 'People, people,' which were the words they hoped would stir up the people to side with them. But the people refused to riot and kept calm. So Pazzi and his friends fled from the square, frustrated in their plans. When they saw this the magistrates or governors of the town, whom I have mentioned as being in the Palazzo, at that moment captured five or six who had come upstairs intending to kill them in order to take over the city's government. Without leaving the building they immediately had the prisoners hung from the bars of the windows of the Palazzo and thereby strangled them. Among those hanged was the archbishop of Pisa [Francesco Salviati].

The members of the Signoria, seeing that all the town had declared for them and the Medici, sent orders straight away to the crossing places for the arrest and return to them of anyone found fleeing. Jacopo dei Pazzi was taken within the hour, together with a man who had been sent by Pope Sixtus to command a body of troops under Count Girolamo [Riario], who was also a party to the conspiracy. Pazzi was immediately hanged with the others from the windows. The other man, the papal servant, had his head cut off and several others, captured in the town, were hanged without delay, including Francesco dei Pazzi. I think that in all about fourteen important people were hanged and some insignificant servants were killed in the town.[18]

A few days after the event I arrived in Florence on the King's bahelf. I had hardly stopped since leaving Burgundy until I got there, for I only stayed with my lady of Savoy (our King's sister) for two or three days, despite the fine welcome that she gave me. From there I went to Milan where similarly I only stayed two or three days to ask them for soldiers to help the Florentines, who were their allies at the time. They generously agreed to do this, both at the King's request and in order to fulfil their obligations. At that time they provided three hundred men-at-arms, and later they sent still more.

To bring this account to a conclusion, the Pope excommunicated the Florentines immediately after these events and also sent the biggest possible army that he and the king of Naples could muster. It was a magnificent and large army, containing many noble soldiers. They laid siege to La Castellina, close to Siena, and took it and several other places. It was only by a stroke of good luck that the Florentines were not completely defeated, because they had been at peace for a long time and did not fully realize their danger. Lorenzo dei Medici, who was the leading figure in the city, was a young man and ruled with young men, although his own opinion carried much weight. They had few leaders and their army was very small.

The duke of Urbino,[19] a very wise man and good captain, was in charge of the forces of the Pope and the king of Naples. Also present were Lord Roberto [Malatesta] of Rimini (who has since become a powerful figure) and Constanzio [Sforza], lord of Pesaro, and several others, together with two of the king's sons, the duke of Calabria and Don Federigo, both of whom are still alive, and a great number of noblemen. So they took all the places that they besieged, though not as quickly as we do in this country, because they are not so expert at laying out a camp and organizing it, although in turn, they know better how to provide food and other necessary supplies for keeping an army in the field.

The King's support helped the Florentines a little, but not as much as I would have liked, because I had no army with which to help them, but only my retinue. I stayed at Florence, or in Florentine territory, for two months,[20] and was so well treated by them at their own expense that I was receiving better treatment on the last day of my stay than on the first. I was then ordered to return by the King, and whilst passing through Milan I received from the present duke of Milan, Giangaleazzo [Maria Sforza],[21] his homage for the duchy of Genoa. Or at least, my lady, his mother,[22] did homage to me, as the King's representative, on his behalf. And from there I returned to the King, who made me very welcome and took me more deeply into his confidence than ever before. I used to sleep with him, although I was not worthy to do so and there were many more worthy than I. But he was so clever that nobody could fail [to succeed], provided they obeyed his orders implicitly and did not try to add anything of their own to them.

17. Sixtus IV, 1471-84.
18. About eighty people, including the victims of mob violence, were killed.
19. Federigo di Montefeltro, duke of Urbino 1444-82.

20. All MSS. read *ung an*. Commynes stayed at Florence from the end of June till that last week in August 1478.
21. Duke of Milan 1476-94.
22. Bonna of Savoy, widow of Duke Galeazzo Maria of Milan, died 1503, cf. Introduction.

5
Louis XI and Maximilian of Austria

***i** Here I return to the affairs of the kingdom and the battle of Guinegatte*

I FOUND our master had aged a little and was becoming prone to sickness. Yet this was not apparent immediately and he dispatched all this business with immennse prudence. The war in Picardy, which concerned him a great deal, was still going on. Also his enemies in the district were still set on it, if they could have got control of Picardy. The duke of Austria (the present king of the Romans), having the Flemings at his command that year, came to besiege Thêrouane. And my lord of Cordes, the King's lieutenant in Picardy, collected all the forces the King had in that province from all the frontier posts and eight thousand franc-archers to go the assistance and defence of the town. As soon as the duke of Austria learnt of his approach, he raised the siege and marched towards him. They met each other at a place called Guinegatte. With the duke were a large number of men from Flanders, twenty thousand or more, as well as a few Germans and three hundred English under the leadership of Sir Thomas Aurigan, an English knight who had served Duke Charles of Burgundy.

The King's cavalry, which was very much more numerous than the enemy's, defeated the duke's cavalry and pursued it and its commander, Philip, lord of Ravenstein, as far as Aire. The duke fought alongside his infantry. On the King's side there were a good eleven or twelve hundred men-at-arms from the ordonnance companies of the army. Not everyone took part in the pursuit but both my lord of Cordes, who was the commander, and my lord of Torcy did. And altough it was a very gallant thing to do, it is not the place of commanders of the vanguard to pursue. Some withdrew on the excuse that they were going to guard their own towns, others simply fled with a clear conscience. The duke's infantry did not take to flight at all, even though this got them into difficulties, but they had with them on foot two hundred noblemen of quality who led them; these included my lord of Romont,[23] a member of the house of Savoy, and [Engilbert] count of Nassau, and several others who are still alive. The bravery of these men held the rest together, which was a remarkable feat, considering that they had seen their cavalry flee. The King's franc-archers started pillaging the duke's baggage wagons and those who followed them, the victuallers and suchlike. They, in turn, were attacked by some of the duke's foot soldiers who killed some of them. On the duke's side there were heavier losses, both among those slain and those captured, than on our side but he retained possession of the field. And I believe that had he been advised to return to Thêrouanne he would not have found a soul there, nor at

Arras. Yet he did not dare to do so, which was his loss. But in such cases one is not always well informed about essential matters and the duke, for his part, also had some grounds for fear. I speak only from hearsay for I was not present, but in order to continue my narrative I must say a little more.

I was with the King when the news arrived and he was very grieved at it; he was not used to losing but had been so fortunate in his affairs that he thought things always went according to his wishes. Indeed his good sense had helped him to achieve success because he never risked anything and never hankered after battles — nor was this one waged at his command. He made his armies so big that there were few princes who could fight them and he supplied them with better artillery than any previous King of France. He also tried to take places by surprise, especially those which he knew to be badly provided for, and when he had captured them he placed in them so many troops and guns that it was impossible to recapture them from him. If they had in them some captain or other who would be prepared to deliver the place in return for money and would bargain with him, he could be sure that he had found a merchant and no one should have been afraid to demand a large sum from the King because he would generously agree to[24] what was demanded, or most of it.

He was alarmed to begin with by news of this battle, thinking that he had not been told the truth and that it was a complete disaster, for he knew well that if it was he would have lost everything he had conquered from the house of Burgundy, in those marches and the rest would hang in the balance. Yet, when he knew the truth, he calmed down and decided to arrange things in such a way that in future such exploits would not be undertaken without his knowledge. And he was very pleased with my lord of Cordes.

ii *How after the battle of Guinegatte the King decided to make peace with the archduke of Austria and the princess of Burgundy, his wife, and the means he used to begin to negotiate the marriage of the Dauphin and my lady Marguerite, their daughter*

From the moment he decided to treat with the duke of Austria, provided he could make it to his own advantage and that in doing so he could curb the duke so well by means of his own subjects (whom he knew to be favourable to what he was seeking) that he would never be able to harm him.

During this period the King had a very strong personal desire, on which his heart was set, to bring about great reforms in this kingdom, especially with regard to the length of legal processes and, on this point, to limit the powers of the court of Parlement, though not to diminish its authority or numbers, but he had in mind several matters which made him hate it. He also very much desired that one law and one system of measures should be used throughout the kingdom and that all local customs should be translated into French in one large book in order to avoid the sharp practices and frauds on the part of lawyers which were more excessive in this kingdom than in any other, as the nobles know to

their cost. If God had allowed him to live for another five or six years, without suffering too much from sickness, he would have done much to benefit his kingdom. He had also taxed his subjects more than any of his predecessors. No one, no matter what his position or influence, would have known how to persuade the King to lighten this, so it was necessary that he himself should take this step, as he would have done had God saved him from illness. For this reason it is better to do good whilst one has the opportunity and God grants health.

The agreement which the King wanted to make with the duke of Austria, his wife[25] and their lands, was, through the mediation of the men of Ghent, to arrange a marriage between my lord the Dauphin, his son, the present King, and the daughter of the duke and duchess and, by this means, to get them to leave him the counties of Burgundy, Auxerre, Mâcon and Charolais, whilst giving them Artois, yet retaining the citadel of Arras in the condition he had established it (for the town was worth nothing now that the citadel had been enclosed and there were deep ditches and high walls between them). So the citadel was fully enclosed and held for the King by the bishop. But the princes of the house of Burgundy had always (or at least for the last hundred years) nominated a bishop and a captain of the citadel who suited them. The King did the opposite to increase his authority, knocking down the town walls and building up those of the citadel, for the citadel was closed against the town and there were huge ditches between the two. In this way the King gave away nothing [in the treaty].

No mention was made of either the duchy of Burgundy or the county of Boulogne or, similarly, of the towns along the river Somme and the castelanies of Péronne, Roye and Montdidier. So the proposals were made and the men of Ghent were very favourably inclined to them and acted most disrespectfully towards their duke and his wife, the duchess. And some of the other towns of Flanders and Brabant also favoured their way of thinking, in particular, Brussels, which is a remarkable thing seeing that Dukes Philip and Charles of Burgundy had always lived there and the duke and duchess of Austria were still keeping their court there. But the easy and pleasurable lives they had led under the rule of these princes had made them forget God and their master and had brought down on them the misfortunes which have since befallen them, as you have seen.

23. Jacques de Savoie, count of Romont, d. 1486.
24. Following phrase added from MS. P.
25. *'his wife'* added from MS. P.

6

[The illness of Louis XI and the death of the duchess of Burgundy]

i How the King fell extremely ill, losing the powers of speech and recognition for a while

IN March 1479 truces between the two parties were arranged and the King wanted peace, especially in this region I have been talking

about, as long as this was entirely to his advantage, as I explained. Already he was beginning to grow old and become sick and whilst he was at Forges near Chinon, eating his dinner, he had a stroke and he lost the power of speech. He was carried from the table and placed close to the fire and the windows were shut. Although he tried to reach them he was prevented from doing so by those who thought it for the best. It was in March 1479[26] that he became ill. He entirely lost his powers of speech, recognition and memory.

Within an hour you, my lord of Vienne, arrived, since at that time you were his doctor. And straight away he was given a purgative and you ordered the windows to be opened and air to be given to him. Immediately he recovered his powers of speech and reason a little. Then he got on horseback and returned to Forges, for this illness came upon him while he was in a small parish a quarter of a league from there where he had gone to hear Mass. The King was well looked after and he indicated what he wanted to say by signs. Among other things he asked for the official of Tours to receive his confession and made signs that I should be sent for, because I had gone to Argenton which was some ten leagues from there. When I arrived I found him sititng at a table with Master Adam Fumée, who had previously been King Charles's doctor and was at this time a *maître des requêtes*.[27] Another doctor was also present — Master Claude [de Molins]. The King understood very little of what was said to him, but he did not feel any pain. He made signs to me that I should sleep in his room; he could scarcely say anything. I helped him for fifteen days both at table and about his person as a chamber valet, which I considered a great honour, and I was highly respected for this.

After two or three days, his powers of speech and reason began to come back and he considered that no one could understand him as well as I could, for which reason he always wanted to keep me close to him. He confessed to the official in my presence because otherwise they could not have understood each other. He did not have anything of importance to say since he had been confessed a few days before. Whenever the kings of France wish to touch sufferers from scrofula[28] they confess, and our King never failed to do this once a week. If other princes do not do it they act wrongly because there are always many sick.[29] When he felt a little better he began to inquire who had held him down by force and prevented him from reaching the window. He was told. Immediately he dismissed them all from his household. He took away the positions of some of them and refused to see them again. From others, like [Jacques d'Espinay] my lord of Segré, and Gilbert de Grassay, lord of Chapéeroux, he did not take anything but he banished them.

Many were amazed by this strange behaviour. They condemned his conduct and said that they had done this for the best, and they spoke the truth. But the imaginations of princes are strange and not all those who talk about them can understand them. There was nothing which Louis, a powerful man, feared more than losing control so that no one would obey him in anything.

On the other hand, his father King Charles, when he caught the illness which killed him, imagined that someone was trying to

poison him at his son's request and became so suspicious that he would no longer eat. For this reason his doctors and his greatest and closest councillors advised that he should be forced to eat. So this was done through the careful deliberation and planning of those who served him, and broth was forced into his mouth. A short time after this outrage King Charles died. King Louis, who all the while had condemned the course of action, took it very much to heart because he had been held down by force, although he made more fuss about it then he really felt. His principal reason for doing so was his fear that he might be overruled, amongst other things in the direction of his government, on the excuse that his reason was not sound.

When he had treated all those people I mentioned in this remarkable fashion, he inquired about the council's activities and the dispatches which had been sent during the ten or twelve days when the bishop of Albi, his brother, the governor of Burgundy,[30] Marshal Gié and the lord of Lude had been in charge. For these men were present when he was taken ill and were all accommodated in two small rooms which were under his chamber. He wanted the letters which had arrived and those which were arriving all the time. He was shown the principal ones and I read them to him. He pretended to understand them, picking them up and making a show of reading them, although he had no idea what was in them, and in reply he spoke a few words or signified what he wanted to be done.

We did little to speed business whilst we waited for his illness to end, because he was master for whom one had to plough a straight furrow. He was ill for about a fortnight and then he fully recovered his previous powers of speech and reason, though he remained weak and was afraid of becoming ill again, for, naturally, he was reluctant to believe his doctor's opinions.

As soon as he was well he released Cardinal Balue, whom he had held a prisoner for fourteen years, as he had been asked to do on many occasions by the apostolic see and others, and in the end he requested and obtained a writ of absolution for this, sent from our holy father the Pope. When this illness struck him, those who were with him at the time thought that he was dead and they authorized several mandates cancelling a very excessive and cruel tax, which he had just levied on the advice of my lord of Cordes, his lieutenant in Picardy, for the maintenance of a force of twenty thousand paid infantry and two thousand five hundred pioneers (these men were called 'men of the camp'). He had also ordered fifteen hundred men-at-arms from his ordonnance companies to fight on foot with them whenever it was necessary, and had had a large number of carts constructed to enclose them, together with tents of all sizes. He got this idea from the duke of Burgundy's army. And this camp [at Famechon, near Arras] was costing a million and a half francs a year. When the force was ready he went to review it, drawn up on a fine plain close to Pont-de-l'Arche in Normandy. The six thousand Swiss whom I mentioned were there too. He only ever inspected them once and then returned to Tours, where his illness struck him again. Once more he lost his speech and for a good two hours he was thought to be dead. He was in a

gallery, lying on a straw bed, and there were several people with him.

My lord of Bouchage and I prayed to Saint-Claude on his behalf, as did all the others who were present. Straight away his speech came back and within an hour he was walking up and down in the house, but he was very weak. This second attack occurred in 1481 but he still went round the country as before. He stayed with me at Argenton for a month and he was very seriously ill there and then went to Thouars where he was similarly sick. He then undertook a journey to Saint-Claude [in the Jura], to whom he had been commended as you heard.

He sent me to Savoy, when he left Thouars, to oppose the lords of La Chambre, Miolans and Bresse, although secretly he favoured them because they had captured the lord of Illins in Dauphiné who he had sent to control his nephew, Duke Philibert. He dispatched after me a troop of men-at-arms which I led to Mâcon against my lord of Bresse. Nevertheless he and I came to a secret accord and he captured the lord of La Chambre, whilst he was sleeping with the duke, who was in Turin in Piedmont, and then let let me know. Immediately I made the men-at-arms withdraw, for he brought the duke of Savoy to Grenoble where my lord, the Marshal of Burgundy, the marquis of Rothelin and myself went to receive him. I was astonished to see him looking so thin and worn and I was amazed that he could still travel around the country. But his great spirit bore him up.

ii *How the King, on his way to Saint-Claude, received the news of the death of the princess of Burgundy, wife of the archduke of Austria, and how he continued to negotiate the marriage between my lord the Dauphin and my lady Margeuerite of Flanders*

At Beaujeu the King received letters saying that the duchess of Austria had died as the result of a fall, for she used to ride a fiery little horse. He had thrown her and she had fallen on a large log. Some said it was not the fall but a fever [that killed her]. But whatever it may have been she died a few days after the fall and it was a bitter blow to her subjects and friends because never since then have they enjoyed good fortune or peace. For the people of Ghent and other towns respected her far more than they did her husband because she was the lady of the country. This happened in 1482. The King, who was overjoyed by it, told me this news and also that her two children remained under the control of the men of Ghent, whom the King knew to be inclined towards causing troubles and disturbances against the house of Burgundy. The King thought the time was ripe, since the duke of Austria was young and because his father, the Emperor, was still alive. He, a foreigner, was involved in war on all sides and the Emperor was extremely mean. From that moment the King began to intrigue with the leading men of Ghent through my lord of Cordes and to negotiate for the marriage of his son, my lord the Dauphin, with Marguerite, the daughter of the duke, our present Queen.[31] Approaches were made, above all, to a pensioner of the town called Guillaume Rim, a crafty and malicious man, and to another called [Jan van]

Coppenhole, clerk to the aldermen, who was a hosier and had a great reputation among the townspeople, for there are plenty of such men when the citizens are so unruly.

iii *How the King, on returning from Saint-Calude, went to Tours and stayed at Plessis where his illness became more severe and where few people saw him, and about the suspicions and fears which he entertained during his last days when he saw he was prone to sickness, and how he lived at Plessis*

The King returned to Tours and so shut himself away that few people ever saw him. He became remarkably suspicious and fearful of everybody, in case anyone should take away or seek to diminish his authority. He drove away all his usual servants, even those who had been closest to him, though he took nothing away from them so that they went to fulfil their offices and duties or to their homes. But this state of affairs did not last long, for he died shortly afterwards. He did many strange things which those who did understand him considered devoid of reason, but they did not know him. As for being suspicious, all powerful princes are, especially wise ones and those who have numerous enemies and have offended many as he had. Moreover he knew well enough that he was not loved by the leading figures in the kingdom, nor, indeed by many of the common people, and that he had taxed his subjects more heavily than any previous king, even though he wanted to lighten the burden, as I said. But he should have begun to do so sooner.

King Charles VII was the first (through the assistance of several good and wise knights who had helped him and served him in his conquest of Normandy and Guyenne which the English had held) who gained the right to impose taxes on his country at will, without the consent of the Estates of his kingdom. And at that time there was good reason for this, both for the garrisoning of the reconquered districts and for ridding the realm of the companies of soldiers who were pillaging it. The lords of France agreed to this in return for certain pensions which they were promised in exchange for the money which was raised on their lands. If the King had continued to live and those who were then in his council had remained there, this scheme [for diminishing taxation] would have been far advanced by now. But considering what has already happened and will, in all likelihood, occur, the King had heavily charged his own soul and those of his successors and inflicted a cruel wound on his kingdom which will long bleed, by establishing, after the manner of the Italian lords, this terrible burden of a standing army.

Charles VII, at the time of his death, used to raise in all 1,800,00 francs from his kingdom. His soldiers consisted of about seventeen hundred men-at-arms in the ordonnance companies who maintained order by guarding the provinces of his kingdom, yet for a long time before his death they had not ridden around the country, which was a great relief to the people. At the time of our master's death he was receiving 4,700,000 francs and he had some four or five thousand men-at-arms and more than twenty-five

thousand infantry, either in camp or *mortes-payes*.[32] Thus it is no wonder he had several worries and fantasies and that he thought he was not well liked. Although, among those whom he had brought up and who had received favours from him, he would have found a great number who would have died before betraying him.

At first hardly anyone entered Plessis-du-Parc, which was the place where he stayed, apart from domestic servants and archers of whom he had four hundred, who in good numbers mounted the watch each day, patrolled round the place and guarded the gate. No lord or important person stayed inside, nor did many lords ever enter it. Nobody came except my lord of Beuajeu, the present duke of Bourbon, who was his son-in-law. All round Plessis he had a trellis of great iron bars set up and many-pointed spikes were planted in the walls at places where one could have got in from the moat. He also had four movable iron sentry boxes, called friars, made. They were pierced with holes through which one could shoot at leisure. This was a notable achievement which cost more than twenty thousand francs. And finally he positioned forty crossbowmen, both day and night, in the moat with orders to shoot anyone who approached at night before the gate had been opened in the morning. He thought, moreover, that his subjects were anxious to take over control as soon as they saw that the right moment had come. Indeed, some had discussed entering Plessis and expediting matters as they saw fit, because nothing was being attended to, but they dared not do so and they acted wisely, for he had taken good precautions. He changed his chamber valets and all the other officers often saying that fear of him and his reputation would be enhanced by doing these extraordinary things.[33] One or two men stayed close to him in there in the hope of gaining influence, but they were men of low estate with poor reputations who, if they had been wiser, would have seen that as soon as he was dead the least that would happen to them would be dismissal from their positions, and that is what happened. They told him nothing of whatever was written or reported to them, unless it concerned the preservation of the state and the defence of the kingdom for nothing else bothered him. He was at this time at peace or at truce with everybody. He gave ten thousand crowns every month to his doctor, who received fifty-four thousand crowns in five months.

He[34] committed his hopes for life to God and the saints, recognizing that without a miracle he could scarcely continue to live. And, remembering that our Lord extended the lives of some kings because of their own humility and repentance and because of the prayers of certain holy prophets, our King, who in humility surpassed all other princes of the world, sought out a religious or man of good life who lived austerely, so that he might mediate between God and Louis to lengthen his days. Everywhere such men were pointed out and he contacted several of them. Some came to speak with him and he talked only about prolonging his life. The majority of them wisely answered that they did not possess the power to do this. He offered great gifts [to the Church]; too large, according to the archbishop of Tours,[35] a Franciscan and cardinal of holy and good life. He wrote to the King and told him, among other things, that it would be better if he took away the

money from the canons of the churches to which he gave his great gifts and gave it to the poor labourers and others who paid these heavy taxes, rather than raising it from them to give to these rich churches and canons. In the course of a year donations from his vows, his offerings, his reliquaries and his shrines easily exceeded seven hundred thousand francs. They included the silver grille at St. Martin's at Tours, which weighed nearly eighteen thousand silver marks, the shrine of Saint Eutropius at Saintes and other reliquaries which he gave to the Three Kings at Cologne, to Our Lady of Aix [la-Chapelle] in Germany, to Saint Servius at Utrecht, and to the shrine of San Bernadino at Aquila in the kingdom of Naples, and the golden chalices sent to St. John Lateran at Rome as well as several other presents, both gold and silver, given to churches in his kingdom. He also gave extensive lands to the Church but these gifts were not permanent; the Church already had too much.

26. MS. reads 1480. Kendall, ***Louis XI,*** p. 383, argues for 1481.
27. *Maître des requêtes:* see Glossary.
28. Popularly known as the King's Evil.
29. This sentence from MSS. B., P. and M.
30. Louis and Charles d'Amboise.
31. Introduction Footnote 5, Chapter 6, Part ii, and Book 6, Chapter 11.
32. *Mortes-payes:* companies of troops, less well armed and paid at lower rates then the regular ordonnance companies (see Glossary).
33. MS. P. reads *'saying that nature rejoices in novelites'*.
34. This paragraph, apart from the last sentence, from MS. P.
35. Hélie de Bourdeille, archbishop of Tours, 1468-84.

7

[The visit of Francesco de Paulo to Louis XI]

AMONG the men renowned for their holiness, he sent for a man who lived in Calabria called Brother Francis.[36] The King called him 'the Holy Man' because of his holy life and the present King built, in his honour, a monastery at Plessis-du-Parc, in exchange for the chapel close to Plessis at the end of the bridge. This hermit had lived in a cave from the age of twelve until he was forty-three years old[37] or thereabouts, when the King sent a steward of his household [Guy de Lauzi&232;res] in the company of the prince of Taranto, son of the king of Naples, to fetch him, because he did not want to leave without permission from the Pope or his king, which was a sign of wisdom in this simple man who had built two churches in the land of the Moors. From the start of this austere life and ever since he has never eaten meat or fish, eggs, milk or any fat. I do not think I have ever seen a man living such a holy life nor one through whom he Holy Spirit seemed to speak more clearly, for he was literate although he had never been to school; though it is true his Italian tongue helped him. The hermit passed through Naples where he was fêted and visited as much as a great apostolic legate, both by the king of Naples and by his children, and he talked with them like a natural-born courtier. From there he went to Rome where he was visited by all the caardinals. He had three audiences alone with the Pope, sitting next to him on a beautiful throne for three or four hours each time, which was a great honour

for such an unimportant man. He answered so wisely that everyone was astonished. Our Holy Father allowed him to found an order called the Hermits of St. Francis. From there he came to the King who honoured him as much as if he had been the Pope himself, going down on his knees before him and beseeching[38] him to pray to God on his behalf that it might please Him to prolong his life. He replied as a wise man should reply. I have often heard him preaching to the present King [Charles VIII] and all the great men of the kingdom and even as recently as two months ago. He appeared to be inspired by God in what he said and advised; otherwise he could never have known about the things of which he talked. He is still alive and he could therefore change for the better or worse, so I will say no more. Several joked about the arrival of this hermit whom they called the Holy Man, but they were not informed about this wise King's thoughts nor did they know the reasons which induced him to do it.

The King was at Plessis with few companions, except archers, where he entertained the suspicions I have mentioned, against which he had taken good precautions, for he left no one in the town of Tours or in the countryside around of whom he had any suspicion, but he made them withdraw a long way from him and sent his archers to accompany them and conduct them away. No one spoke to him except about the really important matters which concerned him. Looking at him he seemed more dead than alive, and nobody would have believed how thin he was. He dressed more sumptuously than ever before and he wore only crimson satin robes trimmed with fine martens' fur, quite a few of which he gave away without being asked to do so, for nobody would have dared to ask him for them. In order to be feared he ordered harsh punishments because he was afraid of losing people's obedience, for he told me so himself. He replaced officers and disbanded troops, he cut down pensions or stopped them entirely, and he told me, a few days before his death, that he spent his time making and unmaking people. And he made himself more talked about in his kingdom than he had ever been; he did this for fear lest he be thought dead. For, as I have said several times, few people saw him. But when they heard what he was doing all were anxious and could scarcely believe he was sick. He sent men off in all directions outside the kingdom. To promote the marriage with England he promptly paid King Edward and the other Englishmen what he had granted them. In Spain it was friendship and fair words with presents for all. Everywhere he had good horses or mules bought, whatever the cost, or at least in those countries where he wanted them to think he was well, though not in this kingdom. At great expense he sent for dogs from every quarter; mastiffs from Spain, small greyhound bitches, greyhounds and spaniels from Brittany, small shaggy dogs from Valencia, all of which he bought more dearly than people usually like to sell them. He sent especailly to Sicily for a mule from a certain officer of the country and paid him double its value. In Naples he bought horses and strange animals from all over the place, such as kind of small wolf,[39] called a jackel, from Barbary, which was larger than a small fox. To Denmark he sent for two kinds of animals, one called an elk which has the body of a stag, is as large as a wild ox and has thick short horns. The other was a reindeer, which is like a fallow

deer in body and colour but had much larger antlers, for I have seen a reindeer with fifty-four points. For six each of these animals he paid the merchants four thousand five hundred German florins. When all these animals were brought to him he did not count the cost nor, in the majority of cases, did he even speak to those who had brought them. And so, in short, he did many similar things so that he was more feared by his neighbours and subjects than he had ever been, for that was his intention and he did it for that reason.

36. All MSS. read *Robert*.
37. In fact he was sixty-six.
38. *'beseeching…behalf'* added from other MSS.
39. Some MSS. real *lion*.

8

How the marriage was arranged and concluded between my lord the Dauphin and my lady Marguerite of Flanders and how she was brought to France

TO return to our principal purpose and the chief conclusion of all these memoirs; it is necessary to deal with the conclusion of the marriage treaty made between the present King, at that time called my lord the Dauphin, and the daughter of the duke and duchess of Austria, through the mediation of the men of Ghent and to the great displeasure of King Edward of England, who found himself deluded in his hopes for a marriage between his daughter and the Dauphin; a marriage which he and his wife, the queen, had desired above everything else in this world and they had never wanted to believe anyone, whether their subject or not, who warned them to the contrary. For the English council had protested to him several times when the King was conquering Picardy, close to Calais, and told Edward that when he had conquered that he would capture Calais and Guines. The ambassadors, who were constantly in England representing the duke and duchess of Austria, the Bretons and others, told him the same thing, but he did not believe any of it. My opinion is that he acted thus not so much out of ignorance as out of avarice, so that he might not lose the fifty thousand crowns the King used to give him nor have to leave the pleasures and delights to which he was very addicted.

A council was held one day at Alost in Flanders about this marriage, at which the duke of Austria, the present king of the Romans, and deputies from the Three Estates of Flanders, Brabant and other lands belonging to the duke and his children, were present. The men of Ghent did several things contrary to the duke's wishes, such as banishing certain people, dismissing men from his son's entourage and then telling him they wished this marriage about which I have spoken, to take place so they might have peace. They made him agree to it whether he wanted to nor not. He was very young and poorly provided with men of great discretion, for all of them, except for an insignifcant few, in the house of Burgundy had either died or come over to us. I simply mean by that important figures who would have known how to advise and help him. For his part he had come [to Flanders] poorly accompanied and then after losing his wife, who was the country's princess, he did not dare to speak as boldly as he had done on previous

occasions. To cut this account short, the King was informed of all this by the lord of Cordes and it pleased him very much. A day was set aside for bringing the daughter to him at Hesdin.

A few days before this (this was in 1482[40] Aire had been delivered to the lord of Cordes by the lord of Cohen in the county of Artois for a sum of money. He had held the town, which was a very strong one in Artois, for the duke of Austria and his captain, the lord of B&232;vres, and its surrender helped the Flemings a great deal to carry out their plans because it was situated on the frontiers of their territory. And although they wanted to weaken their prince they did not want to do the same to the frontier nor have the King so close to them.

When these things were agreed, as I said, the ambassadors of Flanders and Brabant came to the King. But all depended on the men of Ghent because of their strength and because they held the children in their power, and also they were always prepared to be the first to begin a disturbance. Some knights representing the king of the Romans also came. They were young like him and poorly advised, seeking peace for their country; Sir Jean de Berghes [lord of Cohen] was one and Sir Baudouin de Lannoy another, as well as a secretary.

The King was already very weak and it was only with the greatest reluctance that he allowed himself to be seen. He made a considerable fuss about swearing to the treaty completed over this matter, though it was because he wanted to avoid being seen. Nevertheless he swore to the terms, which were very advantageous to him, since he had several times wanted this marriage, together with only the county of Artois or the county of Burgundy, and lords of Ghent (as he called them) delivered both of them to him as well as the counties of Charolais, Mâcon and Auxerre. And if they could have delivered to him those of Hainault and Namur and all the French-speaking subjects of this house they would have willingly done so to weaken their lord.

The King, our master, was very wise and understood well enough the position of a count of Flanders who did not hold the county of Artois. For this county was situated between the King of France and the Flemings and could act as a bridle for them, because he could draw from it good troops to help punish them when they committed foolish acts and, by taking the county of Artois away from the count of Flanders, he would leave him the poorest lord in the world without any authority, except what the men of Ghent were pleased to allow him. The principal members of the embassy I mentioned were Guillaume Rim and Coppenhole, the governor of Ghent, as I said before. After the return of the embassy, the daughter was brought to Hesdin and handed to my lord of Cordes. This was in 1483. My lady of Ravenstein, a bastard daughter of the late Duke Philip of Burgundy, brought her and she was received by the present lord and lady of Bourbon, the lord of Albret and other representatives of the King, and they brought her to Amboise where my lord the Dauphin was living.

If the duke of Austria could have taken her away from her escort he would willingly have done so before she left his territories, but the men of Ghent accompanied her in large numbers and he had also begun to lose all authority. Many people joined the Gantois simply because they held his son and they dismissed or appointed his servants as they liked. Among those who stayed with him was the lord of Ravenstein, brother of the duke of Clèves. He was the principal governor of the child, Duke Philip. He is still allive and expects a vast inheritance if God grants him a long life.[41]

Whoever else was pleased by this marriage, the king of England was bitterly upset, for he felt greatly disgraced and mocked by it and feared very much that he would lose his pension (or tribute as the English called it) from the King. He was also afraid that contempt for him in England would be so great that there would be a rebellion against him, especially because he had refused to believe his advisers. He saw our King very much strengthened and much closer to him. This grieved him so much that as soon as he received news of the marriage, he fell ill and died shortly afterwards, though some said it was of apoplexy. Whatever it was, the grief brought on by the marriage was the cause of the illness from which he died in a few days.

It is a cardinal fault in a prince to esteem his own opinion more than that of several others. This sometimes causes them great grief and loss from which they cannot recover. His death occurred in April 1483. As soon as Edward was dead our master, the King was informed. But he showed no signs of joy when he heard it. A few days afterwards he received letters from the duke of Gloucester. He had had himself made king of England. He signed his letters 'Richard' and he had the two sons of his brother, Edward, put to death.

King Richard asked for the King's friendship, and I believe that he really wanted to have the pension mentioned above, but the King did not want to reply to his letters nor listen to his envoys and he considered him extremely cruel and evil. For, after the death of King Edward, the duke of Gloucester had done hoomage to his nephew as king and sovereign lord. Then immediately he had committed this murder and, in the full English Parliament, he had the two daughters of Edward degraded and declared illegitimate on the ground furnished by the bishop of Bath in England. The bishop had previously enjoyed great credit with King Edward, who had then dismissed and imprisoned him before ransoming him for a sum of money. The bishop said that King Edward had promised to marry an English lady (whom he named) because he was in love with her, in order to get his own way with her, and that he had made this promise in the bishop's presence. And having done so he slept with her; and he made the promise only to deceive her. Nevertheless such games are very dangerous, as the consequences show. I have known many courtiers who, if such good fortune had befallen them, would not have lost it for want of a promise. This wicked bishop kept thoughts of revenge in his heart for, perhaps, twenty years. But it turned out unfortunately for him, for he had a son whom he loved a great deal whom King Richard wanted to endow with wide estates and to marry to one of those two

daughters who had been degraded — the one who is the present queen of England and has beautiful children. This son was serving in a warship by command of his master, King Richard. He was captured on the coast of Normandy and, after a quarrel with those who captured him, he was brought to Parlement and imprisoned in the Petit Chàlet[42] at Paris for so long in poverty that he died of hunger.

King Richard did not last long; nor did the duke of Buckingham,[43] who had put the two children to death, for a few days later King Richard had Buckingham put to death.[44] God suddenly raised up against King Richard an enemy who had neither money, nor rights, so I believe, to the crown of England, nor any reputation except what his own person and honesty brought him. He had suffered much, since for the best part of his life from the age of eighteen he had been a prisoner in Brittany in the hands of Duke Francis, although he had treated him well for a prisoner. He, with a little money from the King and some three thousand of the most unruly men that could be found and enlisted in Normany, crossed over to Wales where he was joined by his father-in-law, Lord Stanley, and a good twenty-five thousand Englishmen. After three or four days they encountered cruel King Richard. He was killed on the battlefield. Henry was crowned and he is still ruling today. I have talked about this before, but it still serves a purpose to mention it here, especially to show how God has punished such cruelties without delay in our times. Many others have been punished for like offences in our time as anyone who knows can recount.

40. MS. reads 1481.
41. He did not; Philip died in 1506, but his son, the future Emperor Charles V (1519-56), inherited Maximilian's Austrian and Burgundian lands, together with Spain, from his mother.
42. Petit Chàlet — the official residence of the Provost of Paris.
43. This phrase from MS. P.
44. *'for a few…death'* from MS. P.

9

Here I return to speak about the King, who was at Plessis and was critically ill, and how he sent for my lord the Dauphin, his son, to see and speak to him, and how he sent for the Sainte Ampoulle from Reims

WHEN the Flemish marriage[45] which the King had so desired had been completed he had the Flemings under his control. Brittany, for which he had a great hatred, was at peace with him, although he kept the Bretons in extreme trepidation and fear of him by stationing large number of troops on their borders. Spain was at peace with him and the king and queen of Spain wanted nothing except his friendship, though he caused them anxiety and expense over the county of Rousillon which he held from the house of Aragon. The county had been delivered to him by King Juan [II] of Aragon, father of the present king of Castile, as a pledge for certain conditions which have not yet been fulfilled. With regard to the Italian powers, they all wanted his friendship and some agreement

or other with him and they often sent their ambassadors to him. In Germany the Swiss obeyed him like his own subjects. The kings of Scotland and Portugal were his allies and he did what he liked in part of Navarre. His subjects trembled before him and whatever orders he issued they were instantly executed without any hesitation or excuse.

The items which were thought necessary for his health were sent to him from all over the world. The late Pope Sixtus [IV], on hearing that the King wanted, for devotional purposes, to have the corporal[46] which St. Peter had used when saying Mass, sent it to him straightway together with several other relics which were returned to him. The Sainte Ampoulle,[47] which was kept at Reims and had never been removed from there, was brought to him in his chamber at Plessis and was standing on his cupboard at the time of his death. His intention was to be annointed with it as he had been at his coronation, although many thought that he wanted to be annointed all over. This was unlikely, for the Sainte Ampoulle was very small and there was not much [oil] in it. I myself saw it at the time I am speaking about and also when the King was buried at Notre Dame de Cléry.

The present Sultan[48] sent him an ambassador who came as far as Rhive[49] in Provence. But the King did not want either to receive him or for him to proceed further. The ambassador was bringing him a huge scroll of relics which were still in Turkish hands at Constantinople and he offered them to the King with a large sum of money, provided the King would keep strict watch over the Sultan's brother [Djem], who was in the kingdom in the hands of the knights of Rhodes. At present he is at Rome in the Pope's hands.

By all these things just mentioned one can recognize the wisdom and greatness of our King and how he was respected and honoured by all the world and how spiritual aids to devotion and religion as well as temporal aids were employed to prolong his life. Yet all of them achieved nothing and the time came for him to go where others have gone. God had granted him one particular favour for he had endowed him with more sagacity, liberality and virtue in all matters than any other prince who ruled at the same time as he did, whether they were his enemies or neighbours, and as he had surpassed them in all achievements so he exceeded them in length of life, although not by very much. For Charles, duke of Burgundy, his daughter, Mary, the duchess of Austria, King Edward, Duke Galeazzo of Milan, and King Juan of Aragon had all died a few years before, though about the deaths of the duchess of Austria, King Edward and him there is little more to say. In all of them there was good and bad, for they were all human. But without any exaggeration it may be said he possessed more of the qualities needed to be a king or a prince than any of the others. I have seen almost all of them and knew their abilities so I am not guessing.

45. In fact, only the betrothal ceremony, see Introduction, Footnote 5.
46. The cloth which held the consecrated host.
47. The phial containing the oil which had, according to later tradition, been miraculously brought down from Heaven for the coronation of Clovis in the late

fifth century A.D. and was subsequently used to annoint kings of France from the time of the Capetians until the Revolution.

48. MS. reads *Turq*.
49. MS. P. reads *Nice* over an erasure.

10
Louis XI's last days

i Louis XI and the Dauphin

IN 1482 the King wished to see his son, my lord the Dauphin, whom he had not seen for several years because he was afraid to let him be seen by many people, both on account of the child's health and for fear lest he be carried off and used to promote some rebellion in his kingdom. For certain lords of the kingdom had done this to him when he was only thirteen years old[50] against his father, King Charles VII, in the war known as the Praguerie, though it did not last long and was only a court dispute. Above everything else he commended to his son, the Dauphin, certain of his servants and ordered him specifically not to change any officers. He told him that when King Charles VII died and he succeeded he dismissed all the good and notable knights of the kingdom who had served and helped his father to conquer Normandy and Guyenne and to drive the English out of the kingdom and restore it to peace, order and prosperity, for so he found it [at his accession], but that it caused him much harm for he had to fight the War of the Public Weal about which I have spoken elsewhere, which, as he realized, could have cost him his crown.

ii How the King was struck by the illness which killed him, what orders he gave whilst sick and how he died, together with several notable digressions which the author considers worthy of being read and understood

Soon after the King had spoken to the Dauphin, and the marriage about which I have spoken had taken place, he was struck by the illness which carried him off. It was on a Monday and it lasted until the following Saturday, 30 August 1483. I was present at the termination of this illness, so I want to say something about it. As soon as he became ill he lost the power of speech as he had done on previous occasions. When it returned he felt weaker than he had ever been, although even before he was so weak he could scarcely lift his hand to his mouth and was so thin and broken that all who saw him had pity on him. The King realized he was about to die and right away sent of my lord of Beaujeu, his daughter's husband, the present duke of Bourbon, and ordered him to go to his son the King (as he called him) who was at Amboise, recommending him and those who served him to the King, his son, and giving him complete control and government over the King. He ordered him not to let certain people come near him and gave him several good reasons for this. And if the lord of Beaujeu had observed his orders to the letter, or most of them (for there were some extraordinary ones not to be followed), and kept to the majority of them, I believe that the realm would have benefited and he would in particular, considering the things which have happened since. Afterwards he

sent the Chancellor and all his followers to carry the seals to his son, the King. He also sent the captain and some of the archers of his who came to see him he sent to Amboise to the King, begging them to serve him faithfully. By all and sundry he sent messages to him and especially Étienne de Vesc, who had brought up the new King and served him as first groom of his chamber. Our King had already made him *bailli* of Meaux.

His powers of speech did not fail after returning, nor did his intellect which had never been so good, for he kept evacuating[51] continuously which cleared his head of vapours. He never complained throughout his illness, as all sorts of people do when they feel ill. At least I do and I know several others who do; anyway it is said that complaining alleviates pain.

50. In fact he was sixteen at the time of the Praguerie in 1440 and was a willing tool in the hands of the dissident princes.

51. The sense is ambiguous, it could mean vomiting.

11

[The death of Louis XI]

HE continued to say sensible things and his illness lasted, as I said, from Monday to Saturday evening. For this reason I want to draw a comparison between the ills and anguish which he caused many others to suffer and those which he suffered himself before dying, for I trust that they have borne him to paradise and will make up part of his time in purgatory. And if they were not so severe or long as those he inflicted on others he had a different and a greater office in this world than they did and had never been subject to anyone, but had always been obeyed so that it seemed that Europe had been created only in order to obey him. For this reason the little that he did suffer against his will and custom was more difficult for him to bear.

All the while he maintained his hopes in the good hermit who was at Plessis, whom I mentioned he brought from Calabria, and he incessantly sent messages to him, saying that if he wished he could easily prolong his life. For notwithstanding all the orders he had given to those whom he had sent to my lord the Dauphin, his son, his spirits revived a little and he had high hopes of escaping death. If this had happened he would have quickly dispersed the crowd he sent to the new King at Amboise. And because of his hopes in the hermit a certain theologian[52] and others advised that he should be told he was making a mistake, that in his position there was nothing to hope for but the mercy of God and that when he was told his doctor, Master Jacques Coictier, in whom he placed his full confidence and to whom he gave ten thousand crowns a month, hoping he would prolong his life, should be present. This decision was taken by Master Olivier [le Dain] and Master Jacques the doctor so that the King should concentrate on examining his conscience and he should forget all other thoughts and the holy man whom he trusted. And just as he had raised these two up too suddenly and without reason to much higher positions than they deserved, so they in the same way took it upon themselves without any fear, to tell this prince something which it was not their place

to say. Nor did they humbly respect the gravity of the situation as those whom he had long trained would have done, those whom a little time before he had driven away from him because of his fantasies. But just as he had treated two important men whom he had executed (the death of one of them preyed on his conscience though the other had not), that is the duke of Nemurs and the count of Saint-Pol, by sending them commissioners with instructions to inform them briefly that they were sentenced to die and giving them confessors to help them arrange their consciences in the few hours remaining to them, so similarly these three men [Olivier, Jacques and Philippe] told our King in brief and blunt words of his impending death. 'Sire,' they said, 'we must do our duty. Don't place any more hopes in this holy man nor in anything else, for your end is surely come. So search your conscience, for there's no escape.' And each of them added a few equally curt words to which he replied, 'I trust that God will help me, for, perhaps, I'm not as ill as you think.'

What sorrow it was for him to hear this news and sentence! For never was there a man who feared death so much nor did so much in an attempt to prevent it. Throughout his life he had always begged his servants, me included, when we saw him near to death, not to tell him but only to persuade him to confess himself without mentioning to him this cruel word, death, for he did not think he was brave enough to hear such a terrible sentence. Yet he bore it and everything else more valiantly up to his death than anyone else I have ever seen die.

He sent several orders to his son whom he called the King. He confessed very devoutly and said several prayers in keeping with the sacraments which he received and for which he himself had asked. And, as I said, he spoke as clearly as if he had never been ill, about everything which might help his son, saying among other things that he did not want the lord of Cordes to leave his son, the King, for six months and he should be asked to attempt nothing against Calais or anywhere else. He said that he had agreed with him that he should undertake such expeditions for the good of the King and kingdom but that they were dangerous, especially the one against Calais for fear of stirring up the English. Above all he wanted the kingdom to remain at peace for five or six years after his death; something which he never considered while he was alive. And truthfully, the kingdom had need of it, for although it was large and extensive it had become weak and poor, especially because of the movement of soldiers from one province to another, as they have continued to do since to an even worse degree.

He ordered that no quarrel should be picked with Brittany and the Duke Francis should be allowed to live in peace without him being given cause for anxiety, and neighbouring countries should be treated similarly, so the that King, his son, and the kingdom could dwell in peace until the King was of age and old enough to dispose of things as he pleased.

In a previous paragraph I started to make a comparison between the sufferings which he inflicted on certain people, and several of those who lived under his rule and in his obedience, with those similar

ones he suffered before he died (and if these were not so severe or long, as I said in that paragraph, they were very considerable in view of his temper which demanded more strict obedience than any other prince of his time. This obedience he received; so that the least word of opposition to his will constituted a very serious punishment for him to bear). I have mentioned how his impending death was announced to him with so little discretion. But some five or six months previously the King was very suspicious of everybody, particularly all those who were fit to exercise authority. He was afraid of his son and had him kept under strict watch. No one could see him or speak to him except with the King's permission. In the end he was even frightened of his daughter and son-in-law, the present duke of Bourbon. He wanted to know who entered Plessis with them and, finally, he broke up a council which the duke of Bourbon was holding there on his orders. When his son-in-law and the count of Dunois returned from conducting the embassy, which had come to the marriage of the King, his son, and the Queen at Amboise, and they came back to Plessis and brought many people with them, the King, who had the gates heavily guarded, was in a gallery overlooking the court. He called one of the captains of his guard and ordered him to go and touch the followers of these lords to see if they were wearing brigandines under their clothes and to to this whilst talking to them and without appearing to do it. Just see! If he had made many men live in fear and suspicion under him, how amply he was repaid! Whom could he trust when he was suspicious of his own son, daughter and son-in-law! I say this not only about him but about all lords who desire to be feared; they are never aware of revenge until they are old and then, as a penance, they fear everybody. What torment it was for this King to have such fears and passions!

He had a doctor called Master Jacques Coictier. He gave him fifty-five thousand crowns in cash in five months at the rate of ten thousand crowns a month, and to his nephew he gave the bishopric of Amiens,[53] as well as other offices and lands for him and his friends. This doctor was so extremely rude to him that one would not say to the meanest valet the outrageous and scandalous things he said to him. The King feared him so much that he dared not send him away. And although he complained to those around him about the doctor, he did not dare to change him as he had done all his other servants because the doctor had brazenly told him, 'I know very well that one day you'll dismiss me as you did the others but by…[and he swore a great oath] you won't live another week longer.' These words so shocked the King that afterwards he only humoured him or gave him gifts. This was extremely mortifying to him, considering the great respect which he had received from people, even powerful men.

It is true that the King, our master, had dreadful prisons made, including cages, some of iron and others of wood, fitted with iron bars[54] inside and out and with terrible locks, about eight feet wide and a foot higher than a man. The original inventor of such prisons was the bishop of Verdun. He was immediately put in the first of them to be made where he spent fourteen years. Many others have cursed him since, myself included, because I did eight months in one of them during the reign of the present King. Previously the

King had obtained horrible shackles from the Germans. These were very heavy and terrible and put on the feet, with one ring on each foot, and were very difficult to open, like a collar, having a thick, heavy chain with a huge iron ball on the end, much heavier then it need or ought to have been. They were called the King's daughters. Yet I have seen many well-born prisoners wearing them on their feet; they have since been released and enjoyed great honour and happiness and even received great benefits from him. Among them was a son of my lord of Gruthuse of Flanders, who had been captured in battle. The King provided him with a wife, made him his chamberlain and seneschal of Anjou and gave him command of a hundred lances. The lord of Piennes, a prisoner of war, was another and so was the lord of Vergy. Both received soldiers from him and were chamberlains to him or his son and had other great offices. So did my lord of Richebourg, brother of the Constable [Saint-Pol], and a man called Rocaberti from Catalonia who had similarly been a prisoner of war, to whom the King gave great gifts, as well as to several others from various countries whom it would take too long to name.

But this is not our main concern, and to return to that it must be said that, as in his time these evil and various types of prison were invented, so before he died he found himself in similar or even greater fear than those he imprisoned in them. This I hold to be a matter of great favour for him and part of his time in purgatory. And I mention it to show that there is no one, whatever his rank, who does not suffer either privately or in public, particularly if he has made others suffer.

Towards the end of his life the King had his castle of Plessis-les-Tours entirely surrounded by iron bars in the form of a thick grille. At the four corners of the house were placed the four large, strong, pierced, iron sentry boxes. The grille rested against the wall on one side and on the edge of the moat on the other, for it had a flat bottom and steep sides. He had many iron spikes fastened to the wall, each with three or four points and they were placed very close to one another. Furthermore he ordered ten crossbowmen from each of the sentry boxes to stay in the moat to shoot those who approached before the gate was open. He wanted them to lie in the moat and withdraw to the iron sentry boxes when necessary.

He clearly understood that this fortification would not be strong enough to withstand a large number of men or an army but that did not worry him. He was simply afraid that one lord or a handful might attempt to take the place by night, partly in collusion with those inside and partly by force, and that they would take away his authority and force him to live like an insane man unfit to govern. The gate of Plessis did not open before eight o'clock in the morning, nor was the drawbridge lowered. Then the officers entered the castle and the captains of the guards placed the normal gatekeepers at their post and ordered pickets of archers, either to the gate or around the courtyard, as if it were a closely guarded frontier post. No one entered except by a wicket-gate, nor without the King's knowledge, unless they were stewards of the household or people of this type who were not going into his presence. Is it possible to keep a king, in suitable state, in closer imprisonment

than he kept himself? The cages where he had held other people were some eight feet square and he, who was such a king, had a small court of the castle in which to walk about. Even then he hardly went into it but stayed in the gallery, not leaving it except to go into the rooms. He went to Mass without going through that courtyard. Who would want to deny that the King was suffering when he shut himself up and had himself guarded, when he was afraid of his children and all his closest relatives, when he changed and removed his servants and those he had patronized from day to day, when they owed all their wealth and honour to him, and when he dared not trust any of them but shut himself up with such strange chain and barricades? It is true that the castle was larger than a common prison but he was greater than any common prisoner. One could say that others have been more suspicious than he but this was not in my time nor were they, perhaps, such wise kings with such loyal subjects. They were probably cruel tyrants anyway. But the King never harmed anybody unless he had offended him.

I have not said these things merely to record the suspicious nature of our King but to show the patience which he displayed in his sufferings which were similar to those he had inflicted on others. I consider that it was Our Lord's punishment of him in this world so that he would have less in the next, both with regard to the things I have mentioned and to his illness which were great and sorrowful burdens to him. He feared them a great deal before they came upon him. I mentioned them, too, in order that those who follow might have a little more pity on people and be less keen to punish than he was, although I do not want to blame him nor say that I have ever seen a better prince. It is true that he oppressed his subjects but he would not allow anyone else, whether a friend or a stranger, do so.

After so many fears, suspicions and sorrows Our Lord performed a miracle and cured him in both mind and body, as He is accustomed to doing by His miracles. For He took him out of this miserable world in perfect health of mind, understanding and memory after he had received all the sacraments and without him suffering the pain that has been known but repeating a pater noster right up to the time of his death. He gave orders for his own burial, as to whom he wanted to accompany his body and as to what route was to be taken. He said that he did not expect to die until Saturday and Our Lady would obtain him that favour, for he always had great faith in her and prayed very devoutly to her. Also, on the following Saturday he was to be buried. And so it happened, for he died on Saturday 30 August 1483 at eight o'clock in the evening at Plessis where he had fallen sick the previous Monday. May Our Lord have received him into His kingdom of Paradise! Amen!

52. Phillipe, the monk of St. Martin's, Tours.
53. Pierre Versé, elected bishop of Amiens 16 August 1482.
54. MS. read *plates*.

THERE is little hope for poor and common people in this world when such a great King has suffered and borne so much and then left all, failing to add a single hour to his life, no matter how he tried. I knew him and had been his servant in the prime of his life and at the peak of his prosperity, though I never saw him free from cares and worries. Of all pleasures he loved hunting and hawking but nothing pleased him more than dogs. As for ladies, he never got involved with them whilst I was with him, for about the time of my arrival he lost a son which caused him great grief and he swore an oath to God, in my presence, to touch no other women but the Queen, his wife. And although this is no more than he ought to have done according to the laws of marriage, it was a considerable achievement, seeing he had so many at his command, to persevere in this resolution, since the Queen, though a good woman, was not one of those in whom men take great pleasure. Again, in hunting there was almost as much tedium as pleasure, for he took infinite trouble. He hunted the stag eagerly and used to get up very early, often riding long distances and not giving up whatever the weather. He frequently returned tired out and nearly always angry with someone, for hunting is a sport which does not always go according to the plans of those in charge. Yet in the opinion of some people he understood it better than any other man of his generation. This hunting continued unceasingly and he used to stay in villages until he received news of some war or other, for almost every summer there was some dispute between him and Duke Charles and they would make a truce every winter. He also had several disputes over the county of Roussillon with King Juan of Aragon, father of the present king of Spain. Although they were poor and much troubled by their subjects, like those of Barcelona and others, and the son possessed nothing (as he was waiting to succeed Don Enrique, king of Castile, his wife's brother, as he has done since), yet they put up a stern resistance, for the inhabitants of Rousillon were devoted to them. This cost the King and kingdom dear for [the dispute was not settled] by the time of his death and many good men had died and much money had been spent. So that the time he used pursuing his pleasures was little in comparison with all the rest, and even then it was very wearing on his person, as I said. Even when he was resting his mind was active for he had business in a remarkable number of places and, on purpose, he was also as much involved in his neighbours' affairs as his own and had placed men in their households to undermine their authority. When he was at war, he wanted peace or a truce; when he was at peace or truce he could scarcely endure it. He involved himself in many petty affairs in his kingdom, many of which he could have well ignored. But it was his nature and so he lived that way. His memory, also, was so good that he remembered everything and recognized everybody, both from his own country and from every other one. Indeed, he seemed better qualified to rule the world than a single kingdom.

I am saying nothing about his youth because I was not with him. But at eleven[55]years old he was involved by certain lords and others of the kingdom in a war against his father, King Charles VII. It lasted but a short time and was called the Prageurie. He was married to a daughter of [the king of] Scotland, much to his displeasure and as long as she lived he regretted it.[56] Afterwards,

through the factions and disputes in the household of his father, the King, he withdrew to Dauphiné, which belonged to him and where more gentlemen than he could support followed him. While he was there he married the duke of Savoy's daughter[57] and shortly after the marriage he was involved in a dispute and a very bitter war with his father-in-law.[58] King Charles, seeing his son so well attended by noblemen and raising soldiers at will, decided to go to Dauphiné in person with a large force to expel him. While he was on his way he took pains to disperse them by issuing commands to them, as his subjects and on the usual threats of punishment, to come to meet him. Several obeyed, much to the great annoyance of our King, and when he saw his father's anger, despite his own strength, he decided to go from Dauphiné and leave the country to him. From there, with a handful of followers, he went to Burugundy, to Duke Philip of Burgundy, who welcomed him most cordially, distributing his wealth among him and his principal servants such as the count of Comminges, the lord of Montauban and others, in the form of annual pensions.[59]And during the time that he was there, Philip gave gifts to his servants. Yet, because of his expenses and the large number of men he maintained, his money often ran out. This caused him great difficulties and worries and he was forced to look around and borrow money. Otherwise his men would have left him, and this was a great source of anguish for a prince who was not accustomed to it. And he was not without his problems with regard to the house of Burgundy. It was necessary for him to humour the prince and his principal advisers for fear lest they tired of the length of his stay there, as he was there six years.[60] His father, the King, continually sent ambassadors to get him either expelled from there or returned to him. So you can see that he did not have an easy time free from great fears and worries. Indeed, could one say when he was happy and when he enjoyed himself, after hearing all this? I believe that from his childhood he had nothing but toil until he died and I am certain that if all the days he had of happiness in his life when joy and pleasure outweighed annoyance and work were totalled up, they would be found to be few indeed, and I believe that for every twenty of pain and work there was only one of pleasure and ease. He lived for about sixty-one years[61]although he had always thought that he would not reach sixty and said that no king of France had reached that age for a long time, and some said not since Charlemagne. Yet the King, our master, was well into his sixty-first year.

Could one say Duke Charles of Burgundy enjoyed more ease and pleasure than our King? In his youth, it is true, he had little to worry him since he did not try to do much until his was about thirty-two and until then he had lived quite safely without disturbance. Then he began to quarrel with the advisers supported by his father. So he absented himself from his court and went to stay in Holland, where he was well received, and he got in touch with the men of Ghent where he sometimes went. He received no allowance from his father but Holland is a very rich country and made him handsome gifts, as did several large cities in other territories, in the hope of obtaining his favour for the future. It is a general custom to always curry favour more with men whose power and authority one expects will increase in the future than

with those who are already in such a position that they cannot become more powerful, and the affection of the former, especially among the common people, is always greater. And it was this that made Duke Philip reply, when he was told that the men of Ghent loved his son so much and they were handled by him so well, that they always loved their future master but when he succeeded they hated him. This proverb was true for, as soon as Duke Charles became their master, they stopped loving him; they made this abundantly clear to him, as I have described above. For his part, too, he did not love them, but they did more harm to his descendants than they managed to do to him.

But to get back to my account, after Duke Charles began war over the lands in Picardy which our King had bought back from his father, Duke Philip, and he and the other lords of the kingdom had plunged into the War of the Public Weal, what ease did he enjoy? It was all work and no play both in body and in mind, for the glory of it went to his head and spurred him on to acquire all that he set his mind on. Every summer he campaigned at great risk to himself. He took upon himself all the cares of attending to every detail of the army and he never had enough of it. He was first up and the last to bed, lying down fully clothed like the poorest soldier in his army. If he rested some winters, he did his best to raise money. For whom would working from six o'clock in the morning be pleasure? No one would do it unless there was some glory to be gained from this trouble and from welcoming and listening to a huge number of ambassadors. And in this labour and misery he ended his days, killed by the Swiss as you have heard. It could be said that he did not have a good day from the moment he began to scheme to aggrandize himself until his death. What did he achieve by it or why did he need to do it when he was such a rich lord with so many fine towns and lordships under his rule, where he could have been so contented if he had wanted to be?

After him we must mention King Edward of England who was a very great and powerful king of England. When he was very young he saw his father, the duke of York, beaten and killed in battle, and with him [the father of] the earl of Warwick. The earl of Warwick governed King Edward in his youth and directed his affairs. Indeed, to speak the truth, he made him king and was responsible for deposing King Henry, who had reigned in England and was (according to my judgement and that of the world) the true king. But in matters concerning kingdoms and great principalities Our Lord is in charge and He disposes of them as He likes, for all things proceed from Him. It was a factional dispute in the household of King Henry, who was hardly sane, which made the earl of Warwick serve the house of York against King Henry of Lancaster. The queen, his wife, who was a member of the house of Anjou, and daughter of King René of Sicily, supported the duke of Somerset against the earl of Warwick, for everyone had accepted King Henry, his father and grandfather, as kings. As it turned out that lady would have done much better if she had acted as a judge or mediator between the two parties instead of saying, 'I will support this party,' for there were many battles as a result and in the end almost everyone on both sides was killed. But princes are told that by means of such questions and disputes they will find out

certain information and be able to hold both parties in fear. I would agree if a young king were to do this among the ladies for it will pass the time pleasantly and he might learn something from them, but there is nothing more dangerous than to do it among such men as princes and men of virtue and courage. It is like setting fire to one's house for soon somebody will say, 'The king is against us,' and then take steps to protect himself and to get in touch with the king's enemies. At least the Orlé'anists and Burgundians should have made people wise in this respect, for the war lasted sixty-two years and the English were involved in it, hoping thereby to gain possession of all the kingdom. But to return to King Edward, he was very young and the handsomest of the fine princes of his generation when he achieved a mastery of all his affairs. No man ever took more delight in his pleasures than he did, especially the ladies, feasts, banquets, and hunts. I think he spent sixteen years[62] or thereabouts doing this until he began to fall out with the earl of Warwick. Although the king was exiled from his kingdom, the quarrel did not last long since he returned and obtained victory. Then afterwards he pursued his pleasures more than before, fearing nobody, and growing very fat and gross. And in he prime of his life he reached the limits of his excesses and died suddenly, as I said, of apoplexy, and his line died out shortly after him, as you have heard.

In our times other valiant and wise princes have also ruled, the king of Hungary, Matthias [Corvius][63] and [Mahomet] sultan of the Turks.[64] King Matthias of Hungary was the son of a very courteous knight called the White Knight of Wallachia, a simple gentleman but one endowed with great sense and virtue, who had long governed the kingdom of Hungary and won many victories against the Turks, who were neighbours of that realm because of the lordships they had usurped in Greece, Slavonia and Bosnia. Soon after his death King Ladislas,[65] to whom the kingdom belonged together with Bohemia and Poland, came of age. He was advised by certain men, so it is said, to take the two sons of the White Knight on the excuse that their father had exercised so much power and authority in the kingdom during his minority that his children, who were fine men, might well do the same. So King Ladislas decided to capture both of them, which he did. Immediately he had the eldest executed and the second one, Matthias, put in prison in Buda, the capital of Hungary.[66] But he was not there long (and perhaps it was because Our Lord found his father's services agreeable), for soon afterwards King Ladislas was poisoned at Prague in Bohemia by a woman of good family. I have seen the brother of the woman with whom he was in love. She was also in love with him, to such a degree that she was upset that he was going to France to marry the daughter of King Charles VII, the present princess of Viana, which was contrary to what he had promised her, that she poisoned him in the bath by giving him an apple to eat and putting poison on the knife handle.[67] As soon as King Ladislas was dead, the barons of Hungary assembled at Buda to elect a king, following their custom and privilege to elect when their king died without heirs, and there was great hatred and rivalry among them for this office. The widow of the White Knight and mother of Matthias came to the town with a large retinue, for she was a rich woman and with all the ready money that her husband

had left her she was able to raise a large body of troops quickly. And I certainly believe that she had good connections with some of the assembly and in the town, considering the credit and authority her husband had enjoyed in the kingdom. Some of the barons and prelates who were there at the assembly to elect their king fled in fear. The others elected Matthias as king;[68] he ruled in that kingdom in great prosperity and has been more praised and esteemed than any king who has reigned for a long time. He was one of the most courageous men of his generation and he won great battles against the Turks. During his reign they did not harm his kingdom in any way but he increased its size, at their expense, in Bohemia, which he held for the most part, and also in his native Wallachia and in Slavonia. On the side of Germany, he took most of Austria from Emperor Frederick, who is still alive, and he held it until his death which occurred at Vienna, the capital of Austria, in 1491.[69] He was a king who ruled as wisely in peace as in war. Towards the end of his life, when he found that his enemies no longer threatened him, he became very fond of pomp and ostentation in his household. He collected vast quantities of fine furniture, rings and plate for the decoration of his house. All business was done by him or at his command. He made himself much feared, since he became very cruel, and he then became incurably ill and died from the disease whilst still quite young, about fifty-three years old,[70] having spent more of his life in toil and trouble than in pleasures.

The Sultan I mentioned was a wise and valiant prince who used more judgement and craftiness than courage or boldness. It is true that his father, who was a valiant prince, left him a very strong position. He took Adrianople, that is the city of Adrian. The one I am talking about captured Constantinople, that is the city of Constantine, when he was twenty-three. I have a seen a painting of him and it looked as though he was a man of great spirit. To allow Constantinople to be lost was a great disgrace to all Christian princes. He took it by assault and the Eastern Emperor, whom we call the Emperor of Constantinople, was killed in the breach. Many another fine man was killed and many women of great and noble families were raped. No cruelty was spared. It was his first exploit and he continued to do great things, so many indeed that once I heard a Venetian ambassador in the presence of Duke Charles of Burgundy say that he had conquered two empires, four kingdoms and two hundred cities. He meant the Empires of Constantinople and Trebizond and the kingdoms of Bosnia, Serbia and Armenia. I do not know if he counted Morea as the fourth one. He had conquered many beautiful islands in the area where the Venetians still hold some, as well as the islands of Negropont and Mitylene and almost all of Albania and Slavonia. And if his conquests from the Christians were extensive so were those from the followers of his own faith. He had destroyued many great lords including among others, the [Emir of] Caramania. He conducted most of his affairs himself and according to his own judgement, as did our King and the king of Hungary. They were the three greatest rulers of the last hundred years. But our King's honesty, mode of life and the easy terms which he used with private individuals and foreigners were very different from and much superior to those of the other two. He was also the Most Christian King.

As for the pleasures of this world, the Turk had his fill and spent much of his time on them. Indeed he would have caused more harm if he had not done this and been so involved in fleshly vices. He was incredibly gluttonous. He also suffered all kinds of illnesses from an early age because of his way of life, as I have heard from those who have seen him, his legs swelled up. This used to happen at the beginning of the summer when they became thick as a man's body, yet there was no opening and then they subsided and no surgeon ever knew what it was. But it was well said that his enormous gluttony was a factor in causing it, though it could have been God's punishment. He died quite suddenly at the age of fifty-two or thereabouts.[71] Yet he had made a will and I have seen it. If the will is correct, he experienced some remorse over a new tax which he had recently levied. So you can see what a Christian prince, who has no legal authority to impose taxes without the consent of the people, should do.

Thus you have heard about the death of so many great men in such a short space of time. Men who laboured so much to aggrandize themselves and to acquire glory, who suffered so much from passion and difficulties and whose lives were shortened. And, perhaps, their souls have suffered. Here I am not speaking about the Turk, for I think this is pointless as he has gone to join his predecessors. But I hope, as I said, that Our Lord has had mercy on our King and will have on all the rest if it pleases Him. But to speak freely as a man who has no education save a little experience, would it not have been better, both for them and all other princes and for men of middling rank who have lived under these great men and who will live under those who rule, to choose the middle course in all these events? That is, if they had worried less, striven less hard and undertaken fewer enterprises and they had been more afraid of offending God and of persecuting their subjects and neighbours by so many cruel methods, as I have explained sufficiently before, and they had taken things more easily and enjoyed honest pleasures, then their lives would have been longer, their illnesses would have struck them much later, their deaths, less desired, would have been mourned more sincerely and by more people and they would have had less reason to fear death. Could one have better examples to demonstrate how small a thing is man and how miserable and brief is life, and that once dead there is little difference between great or small, that all men despise and insult their [dead] bodies and that the soul must perforce immediately go to receive judgement? Yet already the sentence has been rendered according to the works and merits of the body.

55. In fact sixteen, see above, Footnote 50.
56. Margaret of Scotland, daughter of James I, married Louis on 25 June 1436. died 16 August 1445.
57. Charlotte, married Louis on 9 March 1451.
58. March-September 1454.
59. Louis arrived in Burgundy in the summer of 1456.
60. 1456-61.
61. He was sixty years one month and twenty-seven days old at his death.
62. Ten years at the most — Edward IV succeeded in 1461 and went into exile in 1470.
63. King of Hungary 1458-90, son of John Hunyadi, *voivode* of Transylvania.

64. MS. reads *Octovien, emperour des Turqs*. MS.P. reads *Mehemet Ottavany* and MSS.A., B., and M. read *Ottoman*. Mahomet II reigned 1451-81.
65. Ladislas the Posthumous, born *c*. 1435, d. 23 November 1457. MS. reads *Lancelot*.
66. Ladislas Hunyadi was executed for killing an uncle of King Ladislas after the arrest of the two brothers on 14 March 1457.
67. *'and putting…handle'* from MS.M. Madeleine de France, married Gaston, prince of Viana, 7 March 1462. She died in 1496.
68. 24 January 1458.
69. In fact, 4 April 1490.
70. Age from MS.P. He was born in 1443 and was forty-seven at his death.
71. 1430-3 May 1481.

GLOSSARY

- *Arrière-ban:* The feudal levy of all vassals and freemen who owed military service to their lord.
- *Bailli* (see also *Seneschal*): A royal official entrusted with the administration of justice and the royal demense.
- *Battle:* Most later medieval armies were split up into three or four divisions — approximating roughly to the vanguard, the main force, the rearguard and the reserve — and these contingents were known as battles.
- *Brigandines:* A canvas shirt on to which were fixed by rivets overlapping small plates of light steel which usually faced inwards, leaving the rivet heads (which were often gilded for decorative purposes) on the outside.
- *Coinage:* Commynes usually mentions actual coins when talking about the value or cost of anything, although on a few occasions he refers to money of account, either the *livre parisis* or the *livre tournois*. The ratio between them was 1:1.25. These pounds each divided into the familiar shillings and pence in the ratio 1:20:240.

Crown (écu):

A gold coin worth about 5s. Flemish in 1470s.

Ducat:

A gold coin originally struck by Venice in 1284.

Franc:

A gold coin originally worth 20s.

tournois

and used for money of account in the fifteenth century, worth 3s. 4d. Flemish in 1488.

St. Andrew's Florins, Rhenish Florins, German Florins:

Gold coins current in Burgundian domains and worth 22s. 1d.

tournois

in 1471 and 25s. 10d. in 1475.

[Royal] Noble:

An English gold coin worth 10s. sterling to 70s.

tournois

in 1475.

Blanc:

A small silver coin.

Marks:

Silver by weight.

- *Culverin:* A type of cannon (from Latin *colubrinus* — of the nature of a snake).
- *Franc-archers:* A royal *ordonnance* of 1448 tried to establish an infantry force of archers by assigning to each *bailliage* and parish the responsibility for maintaining a specific number of archers, who would be quit of taxation, hence their name. After 1451 the levy was at the rate of one archer to every fifty hearths. These were to be mustered and inspected by royal officers and to be ready for service for which they were paid when required. The total of this force, which was divided into at least sixteen companies, reached perhaps eight thousand men in Charles VII's reign. Louis XI made strenuous efforts to increase its size but despite doubling numbers he did not increase efficiency. The companies continued to exist and to enjoy their tax exemption into the reign of Charles VIII but by then they had ceased to be effective as weapons of war and French kings resorted more to hiring foreign infantry (especially the Swiss) on a large scale and ignored the franc-archers, who were difficult to mobilize quickly and were useful only as a defensive force.
- *League:* A measure of distance, usually about three English miles. The standard French league was 2281 *toises* or 4445 metres, but provincial leagues (e.g. the Burgundian league) could be longer or shorter.
- *Maîtres des requêtes:* Lawyers who formed a tribunal called the *Requêtes de l'hôtel* whose job it was to present the requests of individuals for favours and justice and to act as intermediaries between the King's council and his subjects.
- *Ordonnance companies:* By royal *ordonnances* in 1445 and 1446 Charles VII created the nucleus of a permanent cavalry force. Individual captains (fifteen in the first instance and an additional five in 1446) each had a hundred lances under their control. Each lance was a tactical unit of six men and horses — one man-at-arms, one coutiller (armed with a knife), one page, two archers, and another page, valet or third archer, of whom four or five were effective soldiers. These men were recruited by the captain but swore an oath to serve the King and abide by the disciplinary *ordonnances* he issued. All members of the lance had to be present for musters held under

the supervision of royal marshals, when their names were enrolled. These units were known as the *Compaignies de l'Ordonnace du Roi* or more succinctly as *Compaignies d'Ordonnance;* their captaincies were eagerly sought after and they were distributed regionally through the provinces with special garrison duties when not actually engaged in expeditions. Created to meet a temporary need — to contol the soldiery made redundant by the truce of Tours 1444 — they soon became a permanent feature of French military life and by Louis XI's reign formed a force of about sixteen thousand men.

- *Parlement:* The Parlement of Paris primarily a royal court of justice, acting both as a court of first instance and also as the supreme appellate court, judging appeals from provincial parlements such as those at Toulouse and Bordeaux. It also played an important political role in French life, advising the King on a wide range of subjects, administering and registering his decrees and defending both the traditional rights of the crown and those of its subjects. On occasion it opposed the arbitrariness of individual kings, especially by obstruction and prevarication, although in the end a resourceful king like Louis XI could usually get his own way. It was staffed by professional lawyers.
- *Seneschal:* Fulfilling the same function as a *bailli* (see above). In general*baillis* (and their districts, *bailliages*) are to be found in Northern France and seneschals (with their *sénéchaussées*) in Southern France.
- *Subvention:* A subsidy levied by the state or a grant of money or other aid.