

## ***Bouvines and Beyond***

A fragmentary French Chronicle of 1214-1216

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Surviving only in a 17<sup>th</sup>-century copy made by André Duchesne from a now lost manuscript from Saint-Quentin is a fragment of a little known 13<sup>th</sup>-century vernacular prose chronicle in French. MS BnF Duchesne 49, ff. 163-168, was published by the historian Charles Petit-Dutaillis in *Bibliothèque de l'École des Chartes* 87 (1926), 98-141, under the encyclopaedic title of 'Fragment de l'Histoire de Philippe-Auguste, roy de France : chronique en français des années 1214-1216.' Its narrative covers two of the most momentous years in king John's reign, and includes an account of the Battle of Bouvines.

While the extant fragment shows occasional textual affinities with the contemporary *Histoire des ducs de Normandie et des rois d'Angleterre*, attributed to the so-called Anonyme de Béthune around 1220, the fragment in fact preserves an independent work from the same region and belonging approximately to the same time. Internal evidence points to the Anonyme's patron having probably been Robert VII de Béthune (d. 1248), who played a central role in some of the events described in the chronicle. Petit-Dutaillis suggests a possible parallel in the case of our fragment, namely that the original chronicle might have been written for Robert de Béthune's neighbour in Artois, Michel III de Harnes (d. 1231). Michel's name is already familiar to literary scholars as having commissioned, in 1207, a copy of the so-called Johannes translation of the *Pseudo-Turpin Chronicle* made for Renaud V de Boulogne in 1206.

Robert, Renaud and Michel were all active participants in the military campaigns of the time, Robert as a mercenary serving John in England, Michel as a loyal vassal of the French king, with Renaud intermittently hovering between each of the two camps as his self-interest dictated. On internal evidence, the fragment's date of composition can be assigned to somewhere between 1219 and 1226. As with the Anonyme, its author is likely to have been a secular, provincial minstrel, more at home with the popular literature of the day than with any historical discourse. His chronicle is, in any case, unlikely to have reached any public beyond its native Artois, though it was considered interesting enough to have been used in the 1240s by Philippe Mousket of Tournai in his rhymed history of the kings of France.

Some of the details of combat at Bouvines and of the arrival of the French fleet in England are such as to suggest that the author might have had access to an actual participant in both these events. Is it simply coincidence that Michel de Harnes is known to have been present on both occasions? The hundred or so personal names mentioned in the fragment (see Index) also point in the direction of privileged local information. While the fragment's sober narrative lacks the verve,

pace and humour of the Anonyme de Béthune's, it is clearly well informed by virtue of some independent sources contemporaneous with the events it describes. As such, it can claim the status of a credible, if minor, historical document, and thus finds a valid place in the early blossoming of vernacular prose historiography in French in the first decades of the 13<sup>th</sup> century.

The length of the original chronicle is unknown. The surviving fragment opens during a description of the Battle of Bouvines in July 1214, then follows king John's worsening domestic situation and the arrival of prince Louis in England, finally coming to an abrupt end in August 1216.

**Bibliography:** Charles Petit-Dutaillis, 'Fragment de l'Histoire de Philippe-Auguste, roy de France : chronique en français des années 1214-1216' in *Bibliothèque de l'Ecole des Chartes* 87 (1926), 98-141 (Molinier 2243); R.N. Walpole, *The Old French Johannes Translation of the Pseudo-Turpin Chronicle* (University of California Press, 1976), vol. 1, p. 11-12, 66-68 (and vol. 2, p. 259-82, 357-69 for surviving MSS). Cf. A. Demarquette, *Précis historique sur la maison de Harnes...* (Douai, 1856); R.N. Walpole, *Philip Mouskés and the Pseudo-Turpin Chronicle* (Univ. of California Publications in Modern Philology 26/4 [1947], p. 327-440, esp. 348, 364-65; A. de Mandach, *Naissance et développement de la chanson de geste en Europe*, vol. 1: *La Geste de Charlemagne et de Roland* (Genève, 1961), p. 294-99, 391-92; R.N. Walpole, *An Anonymous Old French Translation of the Pseudo-Turpin Chronicle ...* (Cambridge, Mass., 1979), p. 7-9 (Molinier 2522); Gabrielle Spiegel, *Romancing the Past ...* (Univ. of California Press, 1993), p. 12-13, 73-75, 270-71; Dominique Barthélemy, *La Bataille de Bouvines : histoire et légendes* (Paris, 2018), p. 219-24 ('Bouvines célébré dans l'Artois').

The French original can be read at: [Fragment de l'Histoire de Philippe-Auguste, roi de France. Chronique en français des années 1214-1216 \(readcube.com\)](https://readcube.com/doi/10.21203/rs.3.rs-1111111/v1)

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§1 ... In a fierce clash with the French [Thierry] de Ligne and Gerard de Grimberghe were taken prisoner. Eustache du Rœulx rode bravely into battle and was also captured, as were Gautier de Quiévrain and Arnoul de Landas, both sworn servants of king [Philippe Auguste], and who showed remarkable courage in combat. Michel [III] de Harnes performed many feats of arms in the service of his lord the king, but in an attack against count Ferrand [of Flanders'] men he was wounded by a lance that struck him directly in the thigh, and his horse was killed under him. Baudouin Buridan stood up bravely to count Ferrand in an encounter between the two of them, and he finally got the better of the count. Matthieu de Montmorenci performed extremely well for the king's side, as did Gautier de Châtillon and Guillaume des Barres who fought with great courage. The same is true of Hugues de Malanoi, Gilles d'Arci and Colard de Loisi. Bouchard d'Avesnes was another one of those who fought courageously, but he was finally captured. He managed, however, to escape, thanks to the intervention of a friend of his.

§2 What more should I tell you? The Flemings and the men of Hainaut who took part in the combat fought fiercely and bravely. The same can be said of many others, but to name them all would be tiresome and boring. The French, for their part, withstood valiantly, but they had only to place their hands on their adversaries' bridles to make them their prisoners.

§3 The emperor Otto [IV's] battalion set out to directly confront the king of France's battalion that was riding forward under the banner of Saint-Denis. While the king's troops concentrated all

their attention on Otto himself, Pierre Malvoisin and the hand-picked knights who formed king Philippe bodyguard launched an attack against the emperor's men, and fought with outstanding bravery.

§4 The crush from those surrounding the king as bodyguards was so great that his horse foundered and collapsed under him. Philippe was left standing on the ground, but another horse was quickly found for him thanks to the efforts of Pierre Tristan and his other friends around him. Gerard la Truie broke away from the king's troops and, with great daring, launched an attack on emperor Otto. He fought with great ferocity and succeeded in hitting the emperor's horse with a dagger he was holding. The blade pierced the beast's left eye right through to its brain. Gerard placed his hand on the emperor's bridle and kept it there for some time. The horse, however, had been mortally wounded and began shaking and tossing its head and neighing loudly. It became impossible to control. The emperor did all he could to defend himself and did so successfully, shouting out his war cry at the top of his voice: 'Rome, Rome for Otto!'

§5 Guillaume des Barres and Pierre Malvoisin then joined in the mêlée. They kept hold of Otto's bridle for some considerable time, but his hand-picked knights Bernard de Horstmar and Hellin de Wavrin the younger managed, with great bravery, to set him free. It was, however, at the cost of their both being captured themselves.

§6 Emperor Otto was led away from the fighting when he realised that his horse was dying under him. Gui d'Avesnes rode up to the emperor, dismounted then helped Otto up into the saddle. Fauvel, Otto's worthy steed, expired at the very moment Gui was leading the emperor off to safety.

§7 What more should I tell you? As soon as the emperor left the battlefield, the remainder of his army was defeated, and both the infantry and the cavalry turned and fled. Before fleeing, the Flemings loosened the horses' harnesses on the carts they had brought onto the battlefield, and abandoned them where they stood. They were all still loaded with arms, wine and food. Those fine fighters, the men of Brabant, were the last to be defeated. It was they who killed Gerard la Truie's horse among many other successes. Finally, however, a large number of them died or were wounded or taken prisoner. Among those captured were Arnoul d'Audenarde and Hugues de Watine, though by that same evening both had been released. Arnoul had been criticised by the Flemings for having been reluctant to enter the war, even though, when it came to the fighting, he and his men had shown great bravery. Arnoul had neither shown enthusiasm for the war between the count of Flanders and the king of France, nor given his approval to it. The fact that he had not been in favour of it greatly endeared him to king Philippe. Hubert de Burgh, [Gautier] de Sotteghem and [Gilbert] de Bourghelles, on the other hand, had left the fighting at a very early stage, despite having been the ones who did most to engineer the conflict in the first place. For this they, and many others besides, were severely criticised.

§8 You should know that God and the Virgin performed a miracle that day for king Philippe. Count Ferrand of Flanders' army was larger than king Philippe's by a third, and the count was fighting in his own territory, yet the king of France was still able to capture more than two hundred of his knights, not including mounted fighters or foot soldiers. In addition to which, Ferrand suffered a very large number of casualties.

§9 On the king's side, those killed included Etienne de Longchamp, who performed very bravely in combat, and Thomas de Montgobert, a courageous fighter reportedly killed by Sohier de Wavre. On Ferrand's side, Robert de Dizi was killed along with a great many others whose names are unknown to me. Pierre Harpin, a servant of the king's household, also lost his life. Numerous prisoners were taken in the final pursuit, and many horses, palfreys, pack-horses and sumpters were captured. The Flemings, the men of Hainaut and those from the Lower Rhine were all routed, and each person fled to where he could. Bouchard and Gui d'Avesnes took Otto to Saint-Saulve in the neighbourhood of Valenciennes, and this marked the final defeat of his army.

§10 King Philippe had no desire to pursue his enemies, so had his men return to the vicinity of Bouvines. There they dismounted and occupied all the tents and shelters around. The king informed his son that Ferrand and the emperor Otto had been defeated. It was at this time, [August 1214], that that fine warrior Henri le Maréchal died at Chinon. When everyone in the army had laid down their arms, the king issued a proclamation to the effect that all prisoners were to be brought to brother Garin's tent, and this was done. The king gave orders for them to be counted and their names taken, then placed them under guard until the following day. The next day the king left to return home, and the prisoners were taken along with him in wagons. Count Renaud de Boulogne was incarcerated in the tower at Péronne, and the others were imprisoned in different places in the region of Paris as the king directed. Count Ferrand was placed under particularly close guard. William Longespée, earl of Salisbury, was released in exchange for Robert de Braine who had been taken prisoner at Nantes. The king saw to it that his marcher lands on all sides were well protected, and then went off in the direction of Poitou to join forces with his son Louis, since king John was still in the vicinity. When Philippe reached Loudun, king John requested a five-year truce, which the French king was advised to grant.

§11 The truce was, then, to last five years, but it applied only to kings Philippe and John. The king's son Louis, the emperor Otto and the young [Frederick II] of Apulia were not included in it. King Philippe of France fortified all of his castles in Poitou and returned to the region of Paris, accompanied by Louis and his army. King John likewise sailed back to England, taking his English troops with him.

§12 Count Simon de Montfort had by now already conquered almost the whole of Provence as well as Toulouse. [Raymond] Roger de Béziers, who had been a significant power in the land, had died in prison, and a large number of other Albigensians had been either burnt alive, done to death, drowned or decapitated. When those who caused trouble were captured, they had their noses and lower jaws cut off, and were then allowed to return home disfigured. Many were killed also. [Peter II] king of Aragon and many of his men had also lost their lives [in September 1213]. The conflict had been extremely bitter.

§13 Prince Louis, as it happened, had taken the Cross sometime earlier [in February 1213], and he had courageously led a huge army to Toulouse along with Simon de Montfort. Toulouse, which had been held by [Raymond VI] count of Saint-Gilles from Louis' father king Philippe, surrendered to prince Louis. Louis had the city walls demolished and its towers torn down, and left the whole country in the hands of Simon de Montfort before returning home to the region of Paris. All the Albigensians had been suppressed and defeated with the exception of [Raymond Roger] count of Foix and [Raymond] count of Saint-Gilles and their armies, and a good many others besides. All this

was carried out under the authority of pope Innocent [III] on account of the heresy that was prevalent in the lands of the Albigensians.

§14 Back in his kingdom king Philippe was keeping his prisoners, Philippe de Maldeghem and the others, under close guard. Some of his prisoners had been released, though there were others whom no one was willing to ransom. Philippe gave orders for the fortresses of Flanders to be demolished, and the walls of Valenciennes to be razed.

§15 Countess [Jeanne] of Flanders had the fortresses demolished far and wide in many different places. The inhabitants of Valenciennes, however, were not willing to take orders from the countess, and held out against her for another two years and more. They recognised Gautier de Bousies as their lord.

§16 Prince Louis took up residence in the region of Paris with his wife, and also stayed at Saint-Omer, Hesdin and Arras. Hubert de Burgh had gone back to England to serve king John after the defeat at Bouvines. John granted him an extremely rich wife of the highest nobility.

§17 Emperor Otto was under excommunication at the time, and crippled with debt in every direction. After the defeat he went off to his homeland where he lived out his life of sadness and sorrow in Cologne.

§18 When news of king Philippe of France's victory had reached Frederick II, he was extremely pleased. He seized the opportunity to marshal as many troops as he could and marched on Cologne and Aix with the intention of confronting Otto. Otto was not, however, brave enough to face him. Everyone then converged on Frederick's court [at Aix]: present were [Henry I] duke of Louvain, [Henry III] duke of Limburg and his son Galeran, [Louis] count of Loos, [Thierry V] count of Clève, the other counts, princes, barons, young knights, townsfolk, villeins, archbishops, bishops, abbots and clergy. There were very few who failed to attend. Everyone there gave the appropriate guarantees of allegiance and did homage to Frederick. Some did so under compulsion, others because of the oath that some of them, or their ancestors, had sworn to Frederick's father. [Emperor Henry VI] had made them swear that Frederick would be emperor after his death, and had sealed letters from them to that effect.

§19 When the guarantees of allegiance had been given, king Philippe summoned [Jean de Béthune] bishop of Cambrai, a city that belonged to the emperor, and ordered him to attend the crowning of Frederick at Aix. This he did, and Frederick was crowned at Aix amidst great rejoicing [on 25 July 1215], thanks to the good offices of king Philippe of France. Frederick then set out immediately to bring the whole country under his control.

§20 Despite declaring his intention to join the crusaders, king John finally did not leave England. Nor had he any intention of honouring the oaths he had sworn or the promises he had made to his subjects, or of keeping faith with them. On the contrary, he treated them even worse than before. He took his barons' wives, daughters and female relatives into his bed, either by force or any other means available. As for his knights, he lashed out at them as if they were nothing more than peasants, confiscating their castles, disinheriting them or locking them away in prison for the rest of their days.

§21 The earls and barons of England came together and decided that they would no longer tolerate this state of affairs. They joined forces, and the citizens of London added their support. This is how the war between the English and their lord and king began. On the advice of Hubert de Burgh, John enlisted a number of Flemish mercenaries, but even this did not give him the strength in numbers that he required. He therefore made peace with the barons on the understanding that all foreign mercenaries were to leave the country, and this is what happened.

§22 This peace, however, was short-lived, and fighting broke out again. But king John could not prevail over his subjects, so he fortified the strongest of his castles: Scarborough, Corfe, Dover and Windsor and others. It was the barons who had the upper hand, and they were able to conduct raids over the length and breadth of the country, capturing the remaining castles, strongholds, villages, towns and cities. The king, however, still had control over his treasury, so he set out to sea in boats loaded with money. He instructed Hubert de Burgh to sail to Flanders with a huge amount of money, and by means of documents under seal, attempted to enlist mercenaries from all over the country.

§23 As it happened, when king John had taken the Cross, he had done so under the auspices of Robert de Courçon, cardinal of Rome. At that time John had handed over the kingdom of England to him as representative of pope Innocent; it was an insurance policy designed to secure the support of the papacy against king Philippe and his son Louis. The fact that John had taken the Cross still did not prevent him from bringing great shame and suffering to the barons of England, to the country's townsfolk and its peasants, to its ladies and young women, to its clerics and its monks. He exiled the archbishop of Canterbury [Stephen Langton] for a very long time, and he appropriated income belonging to Holy Church. This led to his being excommunicated for seven years, and he was finally restored to favour by virtue of his having taken the Cross, and thanks to the annual payment of one thousand five hundred pounds sterling which he made to Rome, in exchange for which he was able to hold the kingdom as a fief from pope Innocent. England had never before been held as a fief from anyone – except, that is, by conquest. William the Bastard was the last person to conquer the country, so his payment [of Peter's pence] to Rome counts as a conquest tribute.

§24 As I was saying previously, Hubert de Burgh arrived in Flanders with a huge amount of money provided by king John, and bringing with him sealed letters to give to the knights and men-at-arms there. This he did and succeeded in securing the agreement of Gautier Berthout to cross the Channel with a large contingent of men. Also enlisted were Robert de Béthune, Baudouin castellan of Aire, Gilbert d'Aire and a large number of other knights, mounted troops and foot-soldiers. These included Baudouin Buridan and Adam de Walincourt, in addition to many others whom it would be a hindrance and a laborious task to name.

§25 At Damme and Sint Anna ter Muiden the boats were loaded and ready to leave, and the wind was favourable. Hubert de Burgh gave the order to set sail. Among those to embark were Gautier de Sotteghem the younger, his brother Raoul, Baudouin who was still at that time a youth, and many others. In Hubert's own boat were Thierry d'Orchies, Jean Viellars, Gautier d'Hailli, and as many as thirty-seven other knights, not counting their squires.

§26 As they crossed over to England, a storm blew up of such violence that everyone was at a loss to know what to do, and the boats went veering off all over the place. Hubert de Burgh's boat struck a rock into which he had steered it head-on. It broke up and foundered, and Hubert and

everyone on board with him were drowned. Gautier de Sotteghem's boat ran aground on a sandbank [off Dunwich] known as Cliffsand, and its prow was split open. The crew were still unaware of what had happened as the tide went out. This was when they caught sight of a hunting hound swimming in the sea; it had fallen out through a hole in their boat. There was great consternation, and everyone came pouring out of the boat onto the sandbank close to the shore. From there they called out for help to the people on land. They did so without success, however, since no one was brave enough to come out to them by dinghy. Meanwhile a priest, a serving boy and another hound had managed to get out of the boat through the same hole. Some of the Flemings climbed back into the boat once they had repaired the hole as best they could. Some of the others who had taken the boat's dinghy were caught by the in-coming tide and reportedly drowned. Among the other boats that had set out, some made their way back to Flanders and elsewhere, and here men who had been sufficiently terrified to make them take the Cross disembarked. In several of the boats that landed in England there were some who had been crusaders, others not. On other occasions a large number of men came over to England to fight in the service of the king. John himself was deeply saddened by the death of Hubert de Burgh and the others who had drowned with him.

§27 In any event king John contrived to get the upper hand over his opponents. This was in large measure due to Savaric de Mauléon and Pierre de Craon who came over from Poitou to help him, accompanied by many other excellent knights, mounted and foot soldiers in addition to crossbowmen. From the Lower Rhine region came Gautier Berthout, Gautier le Blond and many others. There were a large number also from Flanders, Hainaut, Artois, Ostrevant and Arrouaise. Also present there were Gilles de Trie and Jean de Cysoing the younger, and a host of others.

§28 When king John saw that he had superiority in numbers, he attacked his barons and succeeded in wresting from them the whole of the country with the exception of London. Gilbert de Sotteghem and his brother Thierry were commanders of John's army and on very good terms with the king himself. John came to Rochester and laid siege to the castle. In the course of the fighting he captured more than one hundred of the country's best knights. He had the crossbowmen's feet cut off, and the foot soldiers and other troops suffered the same fate. As for the knights, he would have had them hanged, but was dissuaded from this by the Flemings and the men of Hainaut and other knights in his army, who disapproved and forbade it. Instead the king had the knights put in prison.

§29 Earl [Roger] Bigot, Robert fitz Walter and his relatives, the earls and barons of England and the inhabitants of London all saw that the king was in the ascendancy and that it was not possible for them to reach any acceptable settlement with him. They therefore conferred together and resolved to ask prince Louis, son of Philippe, king of France, to have pity on them and grant them the favour of his assistance, in exchange for which they would make him king of England. Eustache le Moine was sent to France as their envoy, and after due consultation prince Louis agreed to help them on condition that they provide sureties. Eustache returned to England and made his report to the barons. They supplied the sureties as requested and sent him back to France with the sealed documents that were necessary.

§30 Prince Louis accepted the letters and sent the sureties off to Bapaume before confirming in council that his intention was to go to the assistance of the English. He immediately summoned his knights and his mounted and foot soldiers and came to the Channel at Calais. He had three hundred

knights, four hundred cavalry and six thousand infantry as well as a large number of crossbowmen, all of which he sent over the Channel [in May 1216]. He himself swore on oath that he would follow them.

§31 Present in this fleet were [Guillaume] castellan of Saint-Omer, [Hugues] castellan of Arras, [Gerard] provost of Douai, Guillaume de Wismes and his brother, Hugues Tacon, and a large number of other nobles. Their crossing to the barons' land ended at Orwell [Harwich]. From there they proceeded, over dry land, to London where they were warmly welcomed. They were able to make sorties over the whole of the country from their base in London which they kept closely guarded. Almost a year passed without king John causing them any trouble. But then, because there were more than one thousand five hundred knights living in the city, not counting the French troops or the others living there, provisions started to grow scarce and wine was in short supply. The foot soldiers in particular suffered great hardship.

§32 During that time, pope Innocent was due to hold the [Lateran] Council in Rome [in November 1215], and had summoned archbishops, bishops, abbots and clerics, and everyone attended. King John sent envoys to the council, announcing to the pope, as his overlord in regard to England, that prince Louis was intending to cross the Channel to attack him, and that he had already sent troops over in advance. Because John was his vassal in respect of England, and because the king had taken the Cross, pope Innocent placed all the barons of England, and all those who assisted them, under excommunication. He also gave instructions to all clergy that prince Louis, and all those who collaborated with him, were to be excommunicated the moment they crossed the Channel.

§33 Then, in front of the whole council, the pope excommunicated [the Holy Roman] emperor Otto [IV]. He revoked his title and declared his crown legally forfeit. He also issued a condemnation of all those who had inherited Albigensian land, and set in train preparations for a crusade against them. The leadership of this was entrusted to Simon de Montfort, who was granted appropriate rights of inheritance. King John was now in the most powerful of positions, being in sole control of the whole of England except London which was in French hands and closely guarded. The council at Rome came to an end with all the barons of England excommunicated, and all the inhabitants of London in a perilous position.

§34 Prince Louis was well aware of the hardship his men in London were suffering, and declared that he would not fail to come to their assistance. He enquired after the boats that were in all the ports and gave orders for them to sail to Calais, and at the same time marshalled all his knights, mounted and foot soldiers, and his crossbowmen with orders to assemble there.

§35 Among those to answer the call were: Hervé count of Nevers, [Raymond] viscount of Turenne, Guichard de Beaujeu, [Adam] viscount of Melun, [Hugues] count of Rethel, Jean de Montmirail, Jean de Hangest, Robert de Braine, Robert de Courtenai, Enguerran de Couci and his brothers Thomas and Robert, Hellin de Wavrin his uncle, Michel de Harnes and his nephews, Michel de Boset, Baudouin de Beauvoir, Gerard la Truie, and so many other nobles that it would be tiresome to name them all.

§36 While in the port the French boats were loading and preparing to set sail, king John was at Dover where he had assembled all his fleet. He had filled his boats with troops, arms and provisions for the crossing to Calais, where his plan was to set fire to prince Louis' fleet.



§37 Shortly after John's fleet set sail, it was God's will that such a violent storm blew up that those aboard thought that they were about to drown. The boats were scattered in all directions, and king John was distraught at not knowing what was happening to them. Word of this setback reached prince Louis who gave orders for his boats to be made available to the knights and other troops. He had them loaded up with all sorts of goods, thus ensuring that each individual would have sufficient provisions to last him a whole month.

§38 The following Friday morning [20 May 1216] prince Louis boarded his own boat, and all the others followed suit in theirs. It was high tide, and they had a brisk, favourable wind behind them. Louis had his sail hoisted and the bugles sounded, issuing the order to proceed. Seeing the king's son setting out, the others all raised their main yards and fell in behind their lord. As many as three thousand boats might then have been seen putting to sea.

§39 It was, then, on the Friday that prince Louis set sail for England with his fleet to bring assistance to the English barons and to the French troops whom he had sent on in advance. Looking on from further down the port at Calais and watching the fleet sailing off were: count Hervé de Nevers, Guillaume count of Holland, Michel de Harnes, Baudouin de Beauvoir and Gerard la Truie. Their intention had been to follow on afterwards, but in the meantime the tide had turned and they were unable to leave. But count Hervé of Nevers, noble-hearted as he was, paid for his boat to be towed out to sea, and was thus able to follow his lord for the whole of the night.

§40 Alard de Croisilles and [his brother] Renaud and the others who had been able to take the boat from Calais were nevertheless due to suffer bitter disappointment. As they were crossing the Channel with prince Louis and were still three leagues off Sandwich, a strong gale blew up, and they were forced by the high wind to drop anchor.

§41 Because of the gale-force winds and because night had by now fallen, Hervé count of Nevers found that he was no longer capable of following the fleet, so he dropped anchor. This did not prevent him, however, from being driven back to where he had originally come from on Friday evening. He had no news of the fate of the fleet, and everyone grew despondent.

§42 Prince Louis, meanwhile, was still drifting around the Channel. Most of his men were urging him to return to Calais, but he, intrepid and self-confident as he was, refused. Enguerran de Couci, on the other hand, had already at this point been forced by the gale to turn back, taking with him more than three thousand fighting men. Hugues Havet, his men and many others were presumed drowned when one of the horses on their boat caused it to sink. Such was the force of the gale that boats collided, shattered and split, masts snapped off and sails were ripped to shreds. That Saturday more than four hundred men came back to Calais and joined the two hundred and more who had stayed behind. No one had any news of prince Louis, and the whole of Calais was grief-stricken and shed tears for him.

§43 Before Saturday dawned, the gale had already blown over. Prince Louis was extremely distressed about the men he had lost and about the boats that had turned back. Seeing no land ahead of him, he had his sail hoisted, contact made with those boats within hailing distance, and his bugles sounded for departure. He made landfall on the Isle of Thanet, further up the coast from Sandwich. King John and his forces could see him as he landed with only seven of his boats left. The first person to disembark was Louis himself, fully armed, and he then had his horse brought ashore

ready clad in iron. Louis' first act was to plant his lance upright in the ground. He was followed by the rest of his men who came leaping helter-skelter out of the boats. Confronting them was king John with his men and boats, and then each side began shooting off their arrows at the other.

§44 Count Guillaume of Holland, count Hervé de Nevers, Enguerran de Couci, Michel de Harnes, Baudouin de Beauvoir and Gerard la Truie in addition to a large number of other nobles met at Calais to decide what they would do. At the height of the gale in the Channel, some of the men had pledged to take the Cross and go on crusade rather than continue participating in the war against king John. At the meeting Michel de Harnes, Baudouin de Beauvoir and Gerard la Truie all declared that the very next day, even at the risk of imprisonment or death, they would seek to re-join prince Louis wherever he might turn out to be. Others, however, were of the opinion that they should wait until news of Louis arrived.

§45 As I have already said, on Sunday [22 May 1216] the boats that had stayed behind at Calais and those that had returned there after the gale – a total of one hundred and fifty craft, fully loaded with knights, other fighters and arms – set out for England. As they approached Sandwich, they saw so many boats drawn up on every side that they did not dare proceed towards the port. Moreover they did not know where prince Louis was.

§46 When king John's men saw, from the opposite bank, all these vessels arriving, they thought it was some of their own boats and men coming up from Dover. Prince Louis and his men made a similar assumption, namely that these were king John's boats, so they began arming themselves. The men in the French boats then launched a dinghy to go and ask the people on the shore whose men they were and where prince Louis was. One of the king of England's knights on the shore called Guy of Stamford broke away from his companions and came forward towards the dinghy under truce. He explained that they were the king of England's men, and informed them that prince Louis had landed on the Isle of Thanet. Guy re-joined his companions, and the information he gave the French was reported back to the people in the boats.

§47 Ready armed, prince Louis and his men, who were at anchor nearby, sent out some warships to the newly arrived boats to ascertain who they were. On seeing them approach, a certain number of these boats took fright at the size of what they took to be king John's fleet. They accordingly turned tail and sailed back to Calais, a decision for which they were severely criticised.

§48 The two warships I was talking about came up threateningly close to the boat in which [Guillaume] duke of Holland and Michel de Harnes were. Far from having fled, this boat was ready and prepared for combat. Recognising that they were both on the same side, they made their way to where prince Louis' boats were moored, and here they received a very warm welcome. Together the boats set sail and succeeded in capturing king John's vessels nearby. King John did not stay to fight back, but went off to strengthen his castles' defences.

§49 Prince Louis stayed in the Isle of Thanet for a further three days, then set out for Canterbury. The strongholds and castles on his route surrendered to him, and he left Gerard de Marque in charge of them. In addition he left a garrison of his men at Gillingham. From there he proceeded to Rochester to which he laid siege on the night of Whit Sunday and succeeded in capturing it. By this time lord Enguerran de Couci had landed and had already come to join Louis.

§50 Prince Louis continued on to London where the earls, barons and knights of the city swore homage to him, as well as the burgesses and villeins. In the church of St Paul he recognised the barons' rights, including their hereditary rights of succession. He spent the next eight days in the city.

§51 Leaving there Louis went on to capture Reigate, Guildford, Farnham, Winchester, Southampton, the city of Beuves in days of yore, Porchester, Odiham, Marlborough and numerous other castles. He reached Dover, to which he laid siege to prevent his boats from being captured and his messengers arrested. At Dover he erected his wooden siege towers, scaffolding, battering rams, stone-throwers, catapults, mangonels, assault galleries and other siege engines, all of which caused considerable damage to those defending the castle. Guichard de Beaujeu and other nobles were among those who lost their lives. While some of the besiegers were killed, many more decided to return home.

§52 The king of Scotland [Alexander II] came and swore homage to prince Louis before returning home to defend his country. Pope Innocent [III] died at the end of August in the year 1216, and was succeeded by pope Honorius [III].

§53 A truce until the following Candlemas was declared at Dover, during which time prince Louis went to the assistance of the king of Scotland who, so it was reported in certain circles, was being besieged by king John in some castle or other. News reached England of the death [in June 1216] of Henry [of Flanders], emperor of Constantinople. Elected in his place was [Pierre II de Courtenai], the son of the count of Auxerre [*sic*] who was the son of Henry's sister [*sic*]. Count Renaud de Boulogne and count Ferrand [of Flanders] continued to be detained in prison by king Philippe of France, together with a large number of others whom he had captured at Bouvines, at the bridge two leagues beyond Tournai on a Sunday in August [27 July] of the year 1214.

§54 Prince Louis remained in England, in pursuit of his conquest, for two years after the victory at Bouvines ...

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