

King John:

a Flemish perspective

by

the Anonyme de Béthune

(Histoire des ducs de Normandie et des rois d'Angleterre)

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... [90] During a truce between king Richard and [Philippe Auguste] king of France, Richard went off to attack [Aimar V] viscount of Limoges with whom he had a score to settle. There, in the course of one particular offensive, Richard was wounded in the chest by a shot from a longbow. There are many people who maintain that he was struck in the upper arm and died as a result of a wound that then festered. That, however, is just nonsense, for he was actually wounded in the chest between the shoulder and the breast. The bolt was extracted, but he died [on April 6 1199] as a result of the wound. Before dying, however, he made all his barons swear fealty to his brother John whom they were to make their king. Good king Richard then died and was buried at Fontevrault, that beautiful abbey for which he had such affection. He was interred at his father's feet, and his heart taken to the mother church at Rouen.

Richard's brother John, who was count of Mortain, hurriedly declared himself duke of Normandy on account of the king of France who had begun waging war in Normandy. John hastened to Normandy where he had himself declared king. Given the sort of war the king of France was waging, John quickly decided to cross back over the Channel [in May 1199]. Shortly thereafter the two kings concluded a peace agreement, according to the terms of which Louis, the king of France's son, [91] was to marry king John's niece [Blanche of Castile], the king of Spain's daughter. He would thereby peaceably gain control of the lands of the Norman Vexin which king Philippe has seized from Normandy when Richard was prisoner in Germany. After the wedding ceremony [in May 1200] in front of Boutavant castle, king John stood surety for king Philippe's son, who was at that time part of John's retinue. The peace between the two kings took effect in the aftermath of the wedding, but it lasted only a short time before war was resumed between them.

One day when John had agreed, out of friendship, to go to Paris for a short holiday, the king of France, using his niece and his son's wife lady Blanche as intermediaries, demanded that king John hand over all his land as far as the river Andelle. Despite feeling intimidated, John agreed to this and confirmed the transfer by charter. But once he was back home, John refused to

acknowledge the settlement, arguing that the king of France had intimidated him into agreeing to it in Paris. This was the pretext for the resumption of hostilities between them.

Repudiating his wife [Isabelle] countess of Gloucester [in August 1200], king John married instead [Aymer] count of Angoulême's daughter and rightful heir [also called Isabelle]. She had been betrothed to Hugue le Brun, count of La Marche, but this did not stop John stealing her from the count and marrying her himself. This was the reason why almost all Poitevins turned against king John.

Arthur, son of count Geoffrey and rightful heir to Brittany, was at Paris with Louis, the king of France's son, since he was betrothed to the king's daughter [Marie de France] whom Philippe had fathered with [Agnes, Berthold] duke of Merania's daughter. In [1202], the year that the crusaders set out to conquer Constantinople, [92] Arthur entered Normandy and captured several castles including Gaillefontaine and La Ferté-en-Bray, both of which belonged to Hugue de Gournay. Hugue's behaviour in this war was treacherous in the extreme, which resulted in him being driven out of the country by both John and Philippe, and he fled to Cambrai, at that time part of the Holy Roman Empire.

The bishop of Cambrai during this period was Jean, the son of Robert [V] lord of Béthune and the brother of lord Guillaume [II] who had set out on his holy pilgrimage and joined the other crusaders. The bishop had a companion, a resident of the town and well known for his many witticisms. One day Hugue de Gournay, for his own amusement, rode out of town into the countryside in the company of the bishop and his friend. Looking back at the town Hugue said: 'A fine city, Cambrai, my lord, and no mistake.' To which the bishop's companion replied: 'Yes indeed, a fine and good place – except it has one very bad custom.' 'And what is that?' enquired Hugue de Gournay. Came the reply: 'There's not a scoundrel or a traitor in the whole world it doesn't give refuge to.' There was great merriment in many different places when this story was repeated, since the noble and worthy Hugue, a naïve individual, missed the point and took what was said at face value. In fact he saw nothing wrong subsequently in re-telling the anecdote himself, and was well pleased with himself when he did so.

The following summer [of 1202] king Philippe dubbed Arthur, now betrothed to his daughter, a knight as count of Brittany. He then sent him off to Poitou with orders to form an alliance with the locals and to wage war against his uncle John. Philippe, meanwhile, would attack Normandy, [93] while Arthur would pursue his claim against his uncle for the counties of Poitou and Anjou. Arthur left and on arriving in Poitou was received with open arms by the Poitevins who adopted him as their leader. A fierce all-embracing war then broke out. The king of France entered Normandy and besieged the castle at Arques, which put up a stiff resistance.

By this time count Arthur and the Poitevins had arrived at a castle called Mirebeau where queen Eleanor, John's mother and Arthur's grandmother, was ensconced. No sooner had Arthur and the Poitevins arrived than the town surrendered, but the castle keep itself held out. Arthur arranged to speak with his grandmother and requested her to come out and to bring all of her belongings with her, and then to go in safety wherever she wanted. His one and only wish was to treat her honourably. The queen replied by refusing, saying that the courtly thing for him to do would be to

leave himself, for he would easily be able to find another castle to attack rather than the one she was living in. She added that she was astounded that he should besiege a castle in which she was living when both he and the Poitevins had a duty towards her as her liege vassals. They were, however, unwilling to leave and began to storm the castle, but they could not succeed in taking it. They took up quarters in the town and remained there for some considerable time.

That fine knight Guillaume des Roches, an Angevin by birth, had started out as a penniless youngster, but his military skill earned him a wife, lady [Margu rite] de Sabl , through whom he became a rich and powerful magnate. This Guillaume acknowledged Arthur [94] count of Brittany as his liege lord above all others except king John. On hearing news of the siege at Mirebeau, he headed straight for Le Mans where John was. He said to the king: ‘Sire, if as king and my liege lord you recognise me as your loyal subject, as you would your nephew Arthur, whose liege vassal I am above all others except you, and were you to act according to my advice, I would enable you to take Arthur prisoner together with all of the Poitevins.’ The king was overjoyed to hear this and quickly agreed, as king, to acknowledge Guillaume’s loyalty, and assented sincerely and willingly to follow his advice. Immediately the king with all his army set out to reach Mirebeau as fast as he could. Guillaume des Roches was in the vanguard and acted as their guide. They came close to sacrificing the lives of their horses, so rapidly did they cover the ground to Mirebeau. [In July 1202] John’s men took the Poitevins so much by surprise that they were unaware of what was happening and failed to react until their attackers were already within striking distance. When the men who were on guard duty saw them coming, they started shouting ‘To arms! To arms!’, at which the Poitevins grabbed hold of their weapons.

That most courageous of knights Geoffrey de Lusignan, whose numerous brave deeds had been witnessed both at home and abroad, was sitting down to breakfast, waiting for his pigeon pie to appear. He was told there was a large body of troops approaching that they suspected were king John’s men, and that he should get up from table and put his armour on. He replied by swearing by all that was holy that he would not budge until he had finished his pigeons. [95] This the men found very reassuring – at least until John’s men came swarming in between the rows of tents. Among the many magnates who pulled on their armour, mounted their horses and made straight for the town gates were Hugue le Brun and his brother Raoul d’Issoudun, count of Eu by virtue of his wife, and Andr  de Chauvigny, lord of Ch teauroux, also by right of his wife.

Guillaume des Roches came galloping up at such speed that he got in at the gate before the Poitevins could shut it. No sooner had he arrived than he knocked Hugue le Brun and his horse to the ground. The king’s men then came flooding in through the gates. King John himself came in as well, and the first blow he landed with his sword severed the hand of a fully armed knight. The fighting raged from the top to the bottom of the town. What more need I say? The Poitevins were defeated and were all taken prisoner, as was Arthur [in August 1202]. Not a single one of the magnates managed to escape.

Having completed his task, the king made for Rouen, taking all his prisoners with him except Andr  de Chauvigny who, once he had pledged his word, was released. When king Philippe, who was busy besieging Arques, heard the news, he abandoned his siege and withdrew. When John was back in Rouen, he incarcerated his nephew Arthur in the castle keep, and there he died [in April

1203]. When Guillaume des Roches saw that John had imprisoned his nephew in the tower, he came to the king and requested him to honour his promise. The understanding that they had reached had been that John would get the better of Arthur by following Guillaume's advice, but that this advice had included the guarantee that John would exact a pledge from Arthur to the effect that he would thereafter serve the king loyally. Arthur would then provide sureties in the shape of a number of magnates' sons from his own territories, [96] in exchange for which John would release him. This John had refused to do, the result of which was that Guillaume renounced his service and went over to the king of France. His reward was to be given the post of seneschal of Anjou. Thereafter Guillaume rendered excellent service to the king of France at the same time as inflicting great damage on the king of England.

King John sent Savaric de Mauléon over to England where he was imprisoned in Corf castle. He took pity on the others, however, in response to their meekly begging for mercy in the name of God and the promise that they would enter his service and loyally do whatever he wished. The king believed them and took them with him to Poitou in order to be sure of their sincerity. The assurances they repeatedly gave him, the oaths they swore and the pledges of good faith that they made all turned out to be hollow. No sooner had John left to go to Normandy than all of them, to a man, turned their backs on him and reverted to type. Count Robert d'Alençon, lord of Sées, also turned against John and went over to the king of France.

King Philippe, who took great pleasure in seeing these allies of his return, went back to Normandy and captured Arques, before going on to besiege the castle at Radepont. When king John learned this, he turned his army in that direction, and from the wood above the castle ordered his bugles to be sounded. On hearing the English bugles, king Philippe abandoned the siege of Radepont and instead [in September 1203] besieged Château Gaillard and Les Andelys situated below on an island in the Seine. While he was there [97], he had a ditch dug all around Château Gaillard to prevent provisions reaching the castle and to ensure the safety of the troops he intended to leave there.

After taking Les Andelys he went off, after first leaving a detachment to continue the siege of Château Gaillard. He then laid siege to Val-de-Reuil where two Englishmen, Robert fitz Walter and Saer de Quincy, had been left in charge. Much to their discredit these men surrendered very quickly, and this was a source of much bewilderment among the English who were used to boasting that, unlike the Normans, they would always be extremely reluctant to surrender any castle entrusted to them.

Having secured Val-de-Reuil, the king of France proceeded to Pont-de-l'Arche where he encountered no resistance. He returned to besiege Radepont which he succeeded in taking. At this point the majority of the Normans came over to his side, and this resulted in king John no longer daring to stay in Normandy. He turned for home, leaving Pierre de Préaux in charge of Rouen with orders to follow the advice of the bishop of Rouen in everything he did. He crossed the Channel to England, taking with him Baudouin de Béthune, who was count of Aumale, and William Marshal [I] earl of Pembroke. John was very fond of both of these men because they were fine upstanding individuals in whom he had full confidence.

As winter approached, the king of France withdrew from Normandy and disbanded his army. The following summer he called up his troops, formed a very large army and entered Normandy. He once more passed through Rouen and reached Caen which he took. On the same day he captured the castle at Pont-Audemer and the castles of [98] Bonneville-sur-Toques and Lisieux as well as the fortress at Coutances. He besieged the extremely well fortified castle of Falaise and took it. The keys to Domfront-en-Passais were brought out to him as he approached the castle. He met no resistance in the region, and on his way back laid siege to Rouen between the river and the wood.

At some point during this siege he had talks with Pierre de Préaux, and discussions progressed to the point where the king promised him two thousand pounds worth of land in exchange for him handing over Rouen. This promise encouraged Pierre de Préaux to arrange a truce between the king of France and the people of Rouen, under the terms of which they were to send word to the king of England summoning him to come to their assistance within a time limit that had been agreed with the king of France. Should he fail to come and help them by the date set, they would be obliged to surrender the town. The archbishop of Rouen agreed to these arrangements, and Pierre de Préaux received the appropriate authority in sealed letters.

As agreed, therefore, the people of Rouen sent letters to king John in England explaining the situation to him. John, however, refused to come to their assistance, with the result that Rouen was handed over to the king of France together with the Préaux castle and, in short, all other castles in Normandy with the exception of Château Gaillard. This was being besieged by the king of France's men, and the siege had already lasted for a very long time. It was being most loyally defended from within by [Ranulf de Blondville VI earl] of Chester. He was the officer in command to whom king John had entrusted the defence of the castle. [99]

When Rouen had been handed over [in June 1204], Pierre de Préaux came to the king of France and requested him to fulfil the undertaking he had given concerning the promised two thousand pounds worth of land. Philippe replied that he would be happy to do so and instructed his clerks, in everyone's hearing, to draw up a charter in Pierre's favour for the two thousand pounds worth of land which he owed him for surrendering his liege lord's town of Rouen. When Pierre heard the wording of the charter, he refused to accept it. He crossed over to England, came before king John and begged for mercy, requesting him with great humility not to be angry with him for handing over the town of Rouen. Whatever he had done, he explained, he had done on the advice of the archbishop of Rouen, advice which John had instructed Pierre to follow in all such circumstances, and Pierre possessed the official letter confirming this. King John was highly displeased with Pierre over this whole business, but nevertheless was willing to accept his denying responsibility and to overlook any resentment he might feel towards him. This did not prevent John from being very distressed over the loss he had sustained and feeling exceedingly angry about it.

Seeing what a poor show of defence the king of England was putting up when faced with the king of France's threat to overrun all of their estates in Normandy, those English barons who had already lost land met together. They came into John's presence and requested, in the name of God, permission to demand that the king of France return the Norman estates they had lost. They let him know that, even though they were actual vassals of the king of France, [100] their hearts, as he was well aware, would always be with him as king of England. John undertook to consult about it, and

subsequently summoned the king's council, brought before them the requests the barons were making, and asked what they advised him to do.

Baudouin de Béthune, count of Aumale, a good loyal and upstanding knight, had to be carried into the council because he was quite incapable of walking, being crippled with arthritic gout. This was a matter of great regret for king John, who had always found him a loyal and faithful ally. Baudouin was the first to address the meeting, and he asked the king: 'Can it be true, sire, that they requested your permission to go to the king of France to demand the return of the lands they have lost in Normandy, and that even though they are actual vassals of the French king, their hearts are with you?' 'Yes indeed,' replied the king, 'such was their request.' 'Of course,' replied the count, 'the decision is yours, but in your shoes, if I saw them acting against my interests even though their hearts were for me, if only I could get my hands on these dissidents' hearts, I'd chuck them all down the nearest privy!' This caused much laughter. The count's speech, however, did not put an end to the matter, for some time after the king granted the fine town of Stamford to his cousin earl [William V] de Warenne in compensation for the land he had lost in Normandy.

Savaric de Mauléon in the meantime was still a prisoner in Corf castle where he had four different men guarding him. One day they were given so much to drink [101] that they fell fast asleep in a stupor. When Savaric saw all four sleeping, he picked up a cudgel and killed all of them. He broke free from his shackles and sought security in the safest part of the stronghold. When people realised what had happened, a report was quickly sent to king John who happened to be only a day's journey away. He arrived at Corf the next day [in August 1205] with the intention of besieging the castle, but on the intervention of Hubert Walter, a fine, generous and courtly cleric who was archbishop of Canterbury at the time, John relented. He took mercy on Savaric who swore, on holy relics, that he would henceforth serve the king in all loyalty. As surety he handed over his wife and his mother.

Savaric left England and went to Poitou where he did indeed serve the king of England extremely well. He attacked the castle at Niort which at that time was in the king of France's camp, and he did so with great ingenuity. The people of Niort were in the habit of celebrating the first day of May each year, and of going to gather their may in a wood situated a league away from the town. Savaric was acquainted with this custom, and at the end of April deliberately stayed away and kept in the background so as not to arouse suspicion.

As May Day approached, he quickly made his way to Niort, and early on May Day stationed himself between the town and the people going to the wood who had no reason to pay any attention to him. Savaric and his men came back to the town gates hiding behind bundles of may that they were carrying, and in this way managed to trick the guards who assumed that they were townspeople returning from the wood and let them in. Once inside [102] Savaric hurried to the castle which he found undefended. He captured it and installed a garrison of his own men to defend it. He then emerged from the town and set out to meet those people returning from the wood. He had no difficulty in capturing as many as he wanted. Instead of putting them in prison, he held them hostage, making them swear that they would henceforth serve the king of England in all loyalty, and in that way they earned their release.

News of this reached the ears of certain very powerful barons, and although I cannot name them all, I will mention Hugue le Brun and his brother [Raoul d'Issodun] count of Eu, Hugue de Surgères, another brother and count of Châtellerault, Geoffrey de Lusignan, his uncle and viscount [Aimery VII] of Thouars, an exceptionally powerful man, Guillaume de Mauléon, Savaric's uncle and who was lord of Mauléon and Talmont, archbishop Hugue lord of Parthenay, Thibaut de Beaumont lord of Bressuire. The reaction of these barons, on hearing of the capture of Niort, was to send word out to one another in every direction in order to raise a huge army and to march on Niort. When they arrived, they attacked Savaric. This assault lasted a long time but with no success apart from giving rise to numerous feats of chivalry. One day there was a skirmish during which Savaric threw Hugue de Surgères together with his horse to the ground between tents just outside the town before then returning to the town proper.

King Philippe of France, in the meantime, had captured Château Gaillard [in March 1204] from its defenders who were dying of hunger even after eating their horses, so desperate were they in their need. [103] That loyal knight [Ranulf] of Chester used always to boast that, when required to hand over a castle, he would never surrender and would need to be dragged out by his feet. He was discovered in Château Gaillard castle in such a state of starvation that he had indeed to be dragged out by his feet, exactly as he had predicted.

When the king of France learned that Savaric de Mauléon had purloined Niort castle from him in the way he had, and that the Poitevins were besieging it, he raised his army and came to Tours. From there he pressed on to Chinon castle, and his troops besieged it. Hubert de Burgh, who was later to become justiciar in England, was in charge of the castle. Philippe, on his arrival, had constructed a large number of catapults and mangonels, and with these he inflicted considerable damage on the castle walls. So long did the siege continue, so often was the castle attacked, and so battered were its walls by the catapults, mangonels and sappers that it finally fell [on June 23 1205], with Hubert de Burgh still inside. Renaud de Dammartin, count of Boulogne, was put in charge of it.

After the victory the king stayed comfortably camped in front of the castle for a long time, during which he equipped the garrison and drew up plans for how he intended to restore the castle's fortifications. In the castle was one of the most beautiful chapels in the whole world, known under the name of the chapel of St Radegonde. When the Poitevins who were camped around Niort [104] saw they were having no success, they abandoned the siege and went to confer with the king of France at Chinon. His welcome was decidedly unfriendly, but he did in fact talk with them. When he had finished planning the castle keep, king Philippe, leaving behind the garrison he wanted, set off for the kingdom of France.

Around this time [April 1205] news reached France concerning Baudouin [I] emperor of Constantinople, previously count of Flanders and Hainaut, who had been defeated and captured by Johannitsa [Kaloyan] the [Bulgarian], and count Louis of Chartres and Blois who was killed at the battle [of Adrianople], and count Hugue de Saint-Pol who met his end in the city of Constantinople. Guillaume lord of Béthune and Baudouin d'Aubigny, an excellent knight, were among those who returned. When news reached king John, who was in England, that he had lost his castle at Chinon, and that Hubert de Burgh was forcibly held captive inside, it is hard to imagine how profound his distress was, though he gave no indication of it.

He gave himself over entirely to the pleasures of hunting and hawking, and enjoying the company of his wife the queen. He was very much in love with her despite the fact that she indulged in a great deal of tittle-tattle and often outsmarted him in what she said. Once, at the news of some setback or other that John had suffered, he said to the queen: 'Just listen, my lady, to all I've lost on your account!' Her immediate reply was: 'And I, sire, lost the best knight in the world because of you!' On another occasion he said: 'My lady, it doesn't really matter because, I tell you in all honesty [105], I know a clever move whereby, for the next ten years, you won't have to bother any more about the king of France, not for all his power.' To which the queen replied: 'What is certain, sire, is that you're looking to be the sort of king whose deviousness ends up getting him cornered and checkmated.' She would often speak in this way, and suffered a great deal from it as a result.

There was a very nasty streak in king John's character. He was the most cruel of men, and too easily attracted to beautiful women. He often humiliated the most important men in the land because of this, and this was the cause of a great deal of hatred. He would never willingly tell the truth. He did his utmost to create friction between his barons, and took great delight in seeing this develop into hatred. He was envious of all decent individuals to the point of hating them, and the sight of anyone doing good caused him great offence. Despite having many character flaws, he was extremely fond of spending money. His hospitality was wholehearted and generous, and at mealtimes the doors to his hall always stood open. Anyone at all wishing to eat at his court could do so. On the four major feast days he was happy to distribute fine clothes to his knights. This was one of his most conspicuous redeeming features.

One winter towards Christmas, Hubert Walter came to see John. He was a well respected archbishop of Canterbury, an exceptionally worthy and generous man and a person of considerable standing. He invited the king to his Christmas court at Canterbury which he intended to be a splendid occasion. He was someone who unsettled the king because he was so goodhearted, and of this John was extremely jealous. He nevertheless accepted Hubert's invitation and came to spend Christmas [1203] at Canterbury. The court was attended by a large number of important people, and was a sumptuous and ceremonious occasion. [106] The hospitality was superb, and king John spent three days there.

When the time came for John to leave, he summoned the archbishop and said: 'My lord archbishop, do you know why I have stayed here so long?' 'For what other reason,' replied the archbishop, 'than to honour me with your presence?' 'By all that's holy,' said the king, 'the opposite is true. You are so worthy, so generous and so hospitable that no one else could possibly reach the standard you set. Your aim is to have the monopoly of pomp and extravagance throughout the whole of England. But, by the grace of God, I've made arrangements to reduce you to penury so that you won't even be able to find enough to eat.'

When the archbishop heard this, he was most upset and replied: 'How could you possibly think you could ruin me like this? You haven't done what you say you have. You won't find me as easy as that to destroy. In view of what you've just told me, tell me where you intend to be at Easter.' 'What's it matter to you?' replied the king. 'I swear by St Julian that you can't hide information like that from me. Do you know why I ask? Because I want to be in the same place as you, and if the town in question is not big enough to accommodate your retinue and mine, then I'll

set up my quarters outside. But even then, I wager you that my court will be more splendid than yours, that there will be more money spent there, more clothes distributed, more aspiring knights knighted, and more good done to everyone than in yours. And, if I live that long, I'll do precisely the same at Whitsun. And you'll find that Hubert Walter still has enough to eat!

With this challenge still ringing in his ears, the king made his departure. [107] When Easter came round, the archbishop did not fail to fulfil the promise he had made to the king. Having set up quarters outside the same town as king John was in, he held a more splendid court than the king's, spent more money, distributed more clothes and dubbed more would-be knights, just as he had bet he would. He had wagered also that he would do the same thing at Whitsun, but was unable to do so when the time came. John had called up his army and was making ready his fleet to go over to Poitou, with the result that neither of them was able to hold court.

The fleet was drawn up at Portsmouth [in May 1206], and when the king's army arrived, fighting broke out between the archbishop's men and those of [Saer de Quincy] earl of Winchester. This angered the archbishop who swore by St Julian that he would not consider himself fully compensated until his archbishopric had received a payment of ten thousand marks. He called together his men from all over the country, and the earl of Winchester did likewise. When the king heard of this, he took his horse and came to the archbishop. He dismounted in front of him and begged him in God's name to show pity and not to start a fight at that particular time. Seeing that the king had dismounted, the archbishop did the same. He complied in every respect with the king's request. A person of great sincerity, he could not help feeling an acute sense of shame.

The king and his barons embarked and sailed to La Rochelle [on June 7 1206]. There John was joined by Savaric de Mauléon and the other Poitevins who supported him. [Aimery] viscount of Thouars joined him. [108] He had formerly been on the king of France's side, but had left him and come back over to his rightful lord the king of England. John gave him a warm welcome and lavished much attention on him, and he proved to be of great use to him in later times.

It was not long before king Philippe learned that John had landed. He immediately made his way to Chinon, but did not stay there long, setting out again quickly and leaving behind him [Odo III] duke of Burgundy and his brother-in-law the count of Poitou. The king of England, having conferred with [Aimery] viscount of Thouars, his dear friend Savaric de Mauléon and certain other Poitevins, left La Rochelle and rode across country to Angers. Here the festival was in full swing, so he captured the town without much delay, with his army acquiring a remarkable volume of booty. [In July 1206] he pressed on to the Gironde and Bordeaux, inspecting the various territories and receiving the homage due to him. He then completed his business in Bordeaux and moved back into Poitou.

Soon after he set out, the duke of Burgundy at Chinon learned that he was coming, and so requested the king of France to return to Chinon quickly since John was leaving Bordeaux on his way back to Poitou. He told him in addition that he should know that he had no desire to be besieged by John, and that no duke of Burgundy had ever spent as much time as he had on garrison duty, and that he was finding it very irksome. The king should be aware also that if he did not return to Chinon, the duke would be unwilling to stay in post any longer. [109]

The duke's message resulted in king Philippe raising his army and coming to Chinon, after which he crossed the Vienne river and entered Poitou. He headed straight for Thouars where the king of England already was. Setting fire to the countryside as he advanced, Philippe arrived at the town. The king of England, however, did not emerge to meet the king of France, and he allowed no one else to do so – and this despite the fact he did not have the numbers that Philippe had. The king of France was free to set fire to everything that lay outside the stronghold, and this he did before withdrawing. On seeing which, king John returned to La Rochelle from where he set sail for England [in November 1206]. It was here that he was later to perform many an evil deed.

Just listen to the sort of life John led after his return to England! He turned all his attention to having a good time, and frequently went out hunting and hawking, taking enormous pleasure in such activities. He also made himself so feared throughout the kingdom that everyone testified that never since the time of king Arthur was any king as feared as he was in England, Wales, Scotland or Ireland. Wild animals enjoyed such a peaceful existence that they were able to graze unmolested in the fields just as if they had been sheep. People walking along paths and seeing them grazing so close would make as if to catch them, but the animals condescended to move out of the way at no more than a leisurely pace or, at most, a gentle trot. Hunters would find that when they paused for a rest, the animals did precisely the same.

Baudouin count of Aumale had a daughter called Alice by his wife countess Hawise, [110] after which they had no more children. Alice was given in marriage to William, son of William Marshal early of Pembroke, and a very advantageous marriage it was.

Hubert Walter, the good archbishop of Canterbury died during this time [on July 13 1205]. The king came to the monks of Holy Trinity and told them that the archbishop of Canterbury, being the third highest official in the king's council, must be of such stature that any advice he gives can be relied upon without any possibility of error. Since the king's council enjoyed such great authority, his wish was to have the first voice in the election of the new archbishop. The monks complied, and John nominated [Reginald] bishop of Norwich. Some of the monks agreed, and others not, but the majority followed the king's choice.

On account of this lack of agreement among the monks, those on the king's side made ready twelve of their brethren whose task it was to go to Rome in order to conclude the business that the king had charged them with. Accordingly the twelve monks set out for Rome at the king's expense. When they arrived there, they failed to keep faith with their remit from the king, for they did not take enough trouble to advance his case. In contradiction with what they had agreed with John, they elected as archbishop a cleric from England called master Stephen Langton [on June 17 1207]. He was someone who had the ear of the pope, a good cleric and a man of outstanding learning. He had frequented the schools at Paris for some considerable time, and had been one of the most celebrated clerics in the city.

The king of England was extremely displeased when news of this reached him, and his immediate reaction was to take the archbishopric under his personal control, seizing all the monks' lands and [111] expelling them from their property. This caused pope Innocent III to place England under interdict, and this state of affairs lasted for five years. It came into effect during Lent [March

1208]. The previous September John's wife queen [Isabelle], daughter of [Aymer] count of Angoulême, gave birth to a son whom they called Henry and who was destined to become the next king. When the interdict came to an end [in May 1213], she had another son who was called Richard [of Cornwall]. In the course of the interdict news reached king John that the Irish had risen in revolt. He accordingly prepared his fleet to sail to Ireland, but before leaving he first attacked a magnate of his from the Welsh marches with whom he had a quarrel. The high ranking baron in question was William de Briouse.

William had a most worthy wife who had been born in the kingdom of France. She was the daughter of that fine knight Bernard de Saint-Valery, and was called Maud. She was a woman of beauty, wise and courageous and possessed boundless energy. She was incomparably more celebrated than her husband ever was. It was she who prosecuted the whole of the war against the Welsh, during which she brought off a large number of conquests. She served king John handsomely, even though she was to find she had wasted her time doing so. She also made him many a fine present. On one occasion she presented the queen with a bull and three hundred cows, all white except for their ears that were roan-coloured. This is a lady who once boasted to her nephew Baudouin d'Aumale that she possessed twelve thousand milk cows. She also boasted that she owned so many cheeses that, if a hundred of the strongest men in England were ever besieged in a castle, [112] they could use her cheeses to defend themselves for a whole month, on condition, of course, that they did not exhaust themselves doing so and always had a ready supply of cheeses at hand to hurl at their assailants.

When, [in 1210], Maud de Briouse and her husband William heard that king John was coming to attack them, they were not foolhardy enough to wait and face him but fled the country. William de Briouse went to the kingdom of France under safe-conduct, but his wife Maud and son William fled to Hugh de Lacy, a vassal of William's in Ireland. John seized their lands before himself crossing the sea to Ireland [in June 1210]. Landing in Dublin he was received with much rejoicing. He then rode across the country where he and his men witnessed a large number of extraordinary phenomena which, if they were to be recounted, would stretch the bounds of credulity.

[Cathal Crobderg] king of Connacht, one of the most powerful of Irish kings, came to enter John's service, bringing a large number of men with him, all of them foot soldiers kitted out in the most extraordinary fashion. The king himself rode a very inferior horse and was equipped in the same way as his men. King John had the Irish king presented with a splendidly accoutred warhorse with an elaborately decorated saddle and bridle. The king of Connacht thanked him and then proceeded to remove the saddle and mount bareback, being unfamiliar with the practice of riding with a saddle. This is how he rode at king John's side for some considerable distance, much to the king's delight and to everyone's amusement.

King John besieged the well fortified castle at Carrickfergus. Hugh de Lacy, Maud de Briouse and her son William had been living there, [113] but when they got wind of John's arrival, they were too afraid to face him. They set out to sea and fled to the Isle of Man, where they stayed for four days before pressing on to Galloway. Here Maud and her son were captured and sent back to Ireland to king John who was still besieging Carrickfergus. Hugh de Lacy was not captured with the others but managed to escape and fled to Scotland.

While king John was besieging Carrickfergus, another king of Ireland, [Aed Meith O'Neill, king of Cenel Eogain], came to enter his service. He did not, however, come right up to John's lines but camped in a meadow a league away. On hearing of his arrival, king John came to meet him, and when he was close enough to see him, he spent some time just staring at him. The Irish occupied such a small area of ground that it seemed that less than two thousand men could have fitted in there comfortably. In actual fact the army consisted of as many as forty thousand. When he saw the king of England approaching, the king of Cenel Eogain came to meet him on foot accompanied by part of his army. Seeing this, king John dismounted and came up to greet and embrace him. He gave him the warmest of welcomes.

John sent for his interpreter and had him request the Irish king to become his vassal and every year to pay him a tribute for his land. King [Aed O'Neill] replied that he would consider the matter. He moved to one side with his men, and there followed a hasty discussion before the interpreter returned and said to John: 'Sire, my lord's reply is that he is very happy with your request and is very keen to become your vassal [114] and do as you wish. However he asks you, as his lord, to grant him a delay, if you have no objection, because not all the members of his council are present. They are all due to arrive this very night, and he will give you his reply the following day once he has conferred with them. He will, of course, be very willing to do what you ask of him.' King John swore by all that is holy that his proposal was perfectly acceptable and that he was quite happy to grant the delay. Thereupon the two kings took leave of one another, and each returned to his army.

Very early on the next day the king of Cenel Eogain launched an attack against John's foragers and those who were bringing provisions to his army. He robbed him of a large number of oxen, cows, sheep, ewes, saddle- and pack-horses. He also seized huge numbers of squires, servants and peasants, and carried them off into the mountains which had been secured by his men. He then sent word to king John that he should send someone there to fetch his tribute, if he were to consider that acceptable. This is how king John forfeited the service of this particular king because of the acquisitiveness that was his – in abundance.

King John took the castle at Carrickfergus, then besieged all the baileys throughout the country before returning to England. Once back, he imprisoned Maud de Briouse and her son William in Corfe castle, placing in their cell a sheaf of oats and a side of uncooked bacon. He allowed them no more food than this. Ten days after, the mother was found dead, sitting bolt upright between the legs of her son but leaning back against his chest – the picture of a woman's corpse. As for the son, he was also dead, also sitting straight up but leaning [115] against the wall – the very picture of a man's corpse. The mother in her anguish had eaten both of her son's cheeks.

Shortly after William de Briouse, who was in Paris, heard the news, he died [in September 1211]. According to several witnesses, he had died of grief. His son [Giles] bishop of Hereford, buried him, and king John returned the father's land to the son. Baudouin de Béthune, lord of Aumale, died in the same year [in October 1212] at Burstwick, one of his manors in Holderness, and he was buried in the Cistercian abbey of Meaux. He entered the religious life and was clothed a monk before dying. Countess Hawise his wife gave five thousand pounds sterling to king John to avoid him having her

remarried against her will, and John did not in fact do so. She did not survive for long and died shortly after.

During this time Geoffrey fitz Peter was justiciar of England. He was an intelligent knight, despite not coming from a very noble family. He was an extremely rich and powerful man in right of his wife [Beatrice de Say] countess of Essex. Being justiciar of England he accrued large estates, and, wielding great power, was able to arrange influential marriages. He and his wife had both sons and daughters, and two of the sons later became earls. His eldest son was Geoffrey [fitz Geoffrey] de Mandeville, by virtue of his ancestors on his mother's side. The youngest was called William. The wife of the eldest, Geoffrey, was [Matilda] daughter of Robert fitz Walter, one of the most influential people in England. Geoffrey had well-placed relatives [116] and was much loved by his relatives. He incurred king John's anger for two reasons: firstly because his power posed a threat to John, and secondly because the king wanted to get his hands on his money, of which he had a great deal. This is why king John persecuted him financially and grievously ill-treated him.

Before he started extorting money from him, John was heard to have a quite extraordinary conversation. As he was riding along one day, he summoned a cleric from Flanders called Gautier, provost of Saint-Omer and the castellan's first cousin. Pointing to the justiciar John said: 'Do you see that man over there?' 'I do indeed, sire,' replied the provost. 'One thing is certain,' said the king, 'you've never seen a man who keeps an eye on someone else as much as that fellow does on me. He wants to be sure I don't get any of his money. But however hard he tries to keep his eyes peeled, I try just as hard to get my hands on his money.' When the king had finished speaking and the provost had withdrawn, the justiciar called Gautier over and said to him: 'My lord provost, I've just overheard what the king said to you. However keen he might be to get hold of my money, it's quite impossible for him to do so. You need to know – and so does the king – that I'll stir up such aggravation for him that he will go on feeling the painful effects of it long after I'm dead.' No more was said at the time, but subsequently the king extorted a fine of ten thousand marks from the justiciar. This had the effect of increasing still further Geoffrey's hatred of him and encouraging him even more to stir up all manner of trouble for him.

One day king John was riding towards Marlborough in the company of many of the country's most high-ranking people. Among them was Geoffrey [II] de Mandeville, son of the justiciar [Geoffrey I de Mandeville], who decided to send on some of his servants to Marlborough ahead of him. [117] When the servants arrived in the town, they found a very good lodging house and went in. William Brewer's servants, however, decided to put up in the same place, and they forcibly ejected Geoffrey's people. While this was happening, Geoffrey arrived in the town. When he reached the lodging house, his servants emerged saying: 'My lord, just look! Lord William Brewer's servants have thrown us out of the lodgings that we had taken for your use.' Geoffrey came straight up to William Brewer's servants and demanded that they clear off out of his lodgings. This they refused to do, and this led to a fight during which Geoffrey killed the opposing servants' supervisor.

This made him very fearful of king John who hated him because of his father. When William Brewer heard that one of his servants had been killed, he went to the king to make a formal complaint. The king was extremely angry when he heard this, and swore by all that's holy that, if he could get his hands on Geoffrey, he would see him hanged. Geoffrey, in the meantime, after leaving

Marlborough made his way to his father-in-law's, Robert fitz Walter, and explained to him what had happened. This news greatly upset Robert fitz Walter, but he nevertheless set out immediately to see the king. He requested him in the name of God to have mercy on Geoffrey, his daughter's husband. The king swore by all that's holy that Geoffrey would get no mercy from him, and, if he could catch him, he would have him hanged. 'In that case,' replied Robert fitz Walter, 'you would be hanging [118] my own daughter's husband. But no, I swear by almighty God that you won't do any such thing. Before you managed to hang my son-in-law, you would find your land overrun by two thousand fully armed men ready to defend him!' 'I see,' replied the king, 'are you defying me, then?' 'Far be it from me,' said Robert fitz Walter, 'to defy someone who is my liege lord, but what I do challenge is the possibility that my daughter's husband should ever be hanged in England as long as I'm alive. Set Geoffrey a date for a hearing, and I'll bring him to you and compensate you so generously for his crime against you that your sense of honour will compel you to accept.'

The king, who had other things on his mind apart from what Robert was talking about, agreed to set a date for a trial at Nottingham. Robert knew that king John liked nothing better than to be a winner, so was unwilling to come to court without adequate protection. He therefore brought along with him five hundred fully armed knights. When the king saw him arriving with that sort of retinue, he understood that he would not be able to deal with Geoffrey as he would have wished. This distressed John a great deal. He was unwilling to proceed or hear any talk of reconciliation, so he adjourned the hearing. On the next date set, Robert fitz Walter came to court with exactly the same show of strength, with the result that the king was powerless to do the harm he wanted either to him or to Geoffrey.

On realising this John grew very angry, and began to nourish a real hatred for Robert fitz Walter, and to turn over in his mind all the ways in which he could harm him. He surreptitiously told certain London burghers who passed themselves off as barons that, if they really wanted to gain his favour, they should attack and destroy Robert fitz Walter's castle [119] in London called Baynard's castle. When the burghers heard what the king was asking them to do, they were too afraid to disobey. They gathered together, came up to the castle and pulled it down [on January 14 1213]. This was only one of the many crimes that king John committed in the course of his life.

Robert fitz Walter was well aware that the Londoners had destroyed his castle on the orders of king John. Having done something like this, he thought, John was capable of doing something even worse – if he had the opportunity. Because of this, Robert did not dare remain in England, so he fled the country together with his wife and children. He had two daughters and one son. The elder of the daughters [Matilda] was, as you have already heard, married to Geoffrey de Mandeville, while the other [Christina] was still under age and unmarried. She later married Geoffrey's brother, William de Mandeville, who was younger than her. When Robert fitz Walter fled overseas [in 1212], he let everyone know that king John had designs on his elder daughter, Geoffrey's wife, and was seeking to seduce her by force. It was because Robert would not allow this that he had been forced to leave the country and see all his property confiscated. He went to Arras, where he left his wife and children, and then went on to confer with the king of France.

Here I will tell the story of the extraordinary experience that the king of France had before Robert fitz Walter's arrival. One night king Philippe was asleep in bed when he suddenly leapt up

[120] as if in great distress and said 'God! What am I waiting for to go and conquer England?' His chamberlains lying just in front of him were absolutely amazed, but they were afraid to say anything. The king straightaway ordered brother Garin to be brought before him, a Hospitaller and a very senior member of his council, and in addition he summoned Barthélemy de Roye, a knight who was an intimate friend of Philippe's, and Henri le Maréchal, a modest knight who had served the king well, whom he liked a great deal, and for whom he had done many favours. He was lord of Argentan in Normandy and other large estates. The chamberlains had these three men brought to the king's chamber together with several other members of his council.

The king ordered them to send word to all the sea ports in the kingdom, for all the boats they could find to be commandeered and a large number of new ones built, for his intention was to cross the Channel to England and conquer the country. His orders were carried out, and they sent word immediately to all the sea ports to have all the boats they could find commandeered, carpenters sought out and a large number of new vessels constructed. The king summoned all the magnates in the country to a conference and requested them to accompany him to England to conquer the kingdom. All agreed except [Ferrand] count of Flanders who would demur unless the king returned to him Saint-Omer and Aire-sur-Lys which his son Louis had taken from him. This refusal proved to be the undoing of the count who was thrown into prison in the Louvre tower in Paris.

It was during the time when king Philippe was calling up his army and equipping his fleet [in 1212] that Robert fitz Walter arrived. When he saw him [121], the king greeted him with great ceremony, enquiring how far he had come and what necessity brought him to France. 'Sire,' Robert replied, 'dire necessity brings me here, because king John has confiscated all my lands and has driven me out of England.' 'On what pretext?' asked the king. 'Sire,' replied Robert, 'he wanted to force one of my daughters, the one married to Geoffrey de Mandeville, to sleep with him. Because I would not allow this to happen, he destroyed me by driving me from my lands. I beg you, in the name of God, to have pity on me as someone who has been wrongfully deprived of his birthright.' 'By the lance of St James,' replied the king, 'this misfortune of yours has happened at just the right time, because I myself am about to cross over to England, and if I am successful in conquering the country, the inheritance you have lost will be restored to you, of that you may be sure.' 'Sire,' said Robert, 'I had already heard that you were to cross over to England, and this makes me extremely happy. I can tell you that, if you were willing to give me four or five hundred of your knights, I would cross the Channel in advance of you. I could land without John's knowledge, and my family is influential enough to ensure that I could easily stay out of sight for at least a month. We could prepare for your arrival, and in that way you would be able to cross in greater security.' 'By the head of St Denis,' replied the king, 'not a single one of my knights will make the crossing before me, and you, Robert, will bide your time and cross with me.' 'Sire,' said Robert, 'I shall be happy to do as you wish.'

Before all this happened, the king of England had sent Savaric de Mauléon to his brother-in-law Raymond de Toulouse. He had been in the count's service [122] for some considerable time until it came to his attention that Raymond had been excommunicated by the pope because of his support for the Albigensian heretics. What is more, people asserted that, on a personal level, the count was a fellow-traveller with the heretics – hence his condemnation by the papal court.

Knowing this, Savaric was no longer willing to stay in the count's service, so he left. He asked to be paid what was due to him, but the count refused. This is why Savaric then seized Raymond's son, nephew to Savaric's lord the king of England, and the son of John's sister queen Joan [of Sicily]. He ransomed him for ten thousand pounds. Savaric was subsequently informed that the king of England was exceedingly displeased with him for having ransomed his nephew, and that if John could get his hands on him, he would make him suffer for it. Savaric accordingly sought refuge with the king of France, and joined Philippe's army as it prepared to invade England.

Something quite remarkable happened in England at this time [1212]. There was an individual by the name of Peter of [Wakefield; MS Pontefract] who claimed to be a soothsayer, and he actually did make a large number of predictions that turned out to be true. One concerned king John: he was to take care and watch out for himself, because when next Ascension day [May 23 1213] came round, he would no longer be king. When the king was told of this, he flew into a rage and immediately ordered the man to be brought before him. The king then asked him if it were true that he said what he was reported as saying, and the man confirmed that it was, adding that he quite intended to go on saying it. The king had him arrested on the spot. He swore by God's teeth that if what he predicted turned out to be true, he would have nothing to worry about, but that if it proved to be a lie, he would have him hanged with no possibility of reprieve. The soothsayer was then thrown into prison together with one of his sons. Never for all the time he was in prison did he give the slightest indication by his behaviour that he had lost heart [123].

What he had said caused king John to be mightily afraid, because there were several aspects of his life where he was in deep trouble. In the first place, he said to himself, he had been excommunicated; secondly he fully realised that everyone in the country hated him. For another thing he knew that the king of France was about to attack him, and that such was Philippe's military strength with such excellent knights as he had in his service that, were he to land, John would not be able to mount a successful defence. Thinking over all the possibilities, he came to the conclusion that if he had any hope at all of redeeming the situation, then it could only lie in the hands of the pope. He immediately sent word to Rome requesting the pope, in God's name, to have pity on him and to send him one of his clerics in whom he might have confidence and who would advise him how he might make all possible amends for his ill-treatment of the Church. In that way the pope could be quite certain that a person who for so long had acted against his interests could legitimately assume the lordship of the kingdom of England.

The pope was extremely happy to hear this offer and immediately dispatched one of his clerics by the name of Pandulf. Crossing the Alps into the kingdom of France, the papal legate made his way to the Channel where the army was busy mustering. King Philippe's son Louis was already there, but the king himself had yet to arrive. Pandulf set sail from Wissant and landed at Dover [in May 1213]. At this particular time John was staying with the Templars outside Dover in anticipation of the king of France's imminent attack. The king's army was huge [124] and was estimated to comprise some twelve thousand knights. When king John learned that the cleric from Rome had arrived, he straightaway came into the town of Dover where he extended him a very warm welcome. By the end of their deliberations the king and the legate had reached an agreement whereby the king would hold England from the pope in exchange for a yearly tribute of six hundred marks, and hold Ireland likewise for three hundred marks. Furthermore Pandulf advised that those

clerics whom John had dispossessed should be indemnified for their losses. As part of the agreement John was to be re-admitted into the Christian community. This was how the king was rescued, and how he came to an understanding with the pope, whereupon he declared his intention of taking the Cross.

When the news reached John's army that the king had saved the situation and that the Interdict was over, you would have seen great rejoicing amongst the English troops. You might have seen them shouting out to each other and declaring that they were no longer in danger of losing their country since they were now back in the Christian fold. They had been very downcast before the news broke, but now they were in extremely high spirits. The legate Pandulf embarked, crossed the Channel and went to confer with the king of France who by that time had arrived in Gravelines. Pandulf refused Philippe permission to cross over to England to start hostilities, for the whole of the kingdom of England was now under the lordship of the pope. If Philippe were to go ahead, he should know for certain that the pope would punish him and confiscate his land. In view of this, the king decided not to cross the Channel. He left Gravelines in a foul temper and entered the territory of the count of Flanders who had refused to join him on his expedition against the English. He proceeded to inflict considerable damage on all of the count's boats and then placed them under heavy guard.

While the king of France was still at Gravelines, Robert fitz Walter [125], on hearing what was happening, came to the legate Pandulf and explained to him how he had left England on account of king John's excommunication, having been unwilling to remain in the service of someone who had been outlawed by the Church. As a result, he said, king John had confiscated all of his land. But now that circumstances had changed and John had good relations with the Church, Robert requested Pandulph to take him back to England with him so that he could reconcile him with the king and have his land restored. Pandulph agreed to Robert fitz Walter's request: he took him back to England with him, reconciled him with king John and saw to it that all his lands were restored to him.

A conference had been called at Reading between the king and the clergy, and there John handed over fifteen thousand marks to the archbishop of Canterbury in reparation for the damage he had caused the Church, and following the advice of Pandulf he made peace with the other members of the clergy. During this time Geoffrey fitz Peter, who had been justiciar of the kingdom, died [on October 14 1213], and the king appointed Hubert de Burgh, his former chamberlain, in his stead.

When Ascension day [in May 1213] came and went, king John's thoughts turned to the prediction that Peter of [Wakefield] had made. He lost no time in sending word to the castle where he was in prison, ordering him to be hanged. But before this news had even reached his guards, Peter had told them: 'My lords, the king has sent orders here for me and my son to be hanged. And hanged I will be, of that I am sure, but it will be an illegal act. It was precisely three days before Ascension when the king surrendered the kingdom to the pope [126], and seeing that he does not now hold the kingdom from any human being [but from the Roman Curia], it follows that he is not a king.' It was not long before the king's messengers arrived and informed the guards what his orders to them were. The king's command was duly executed, and Peter and his son hanged.

The king of France was deeply upset and angry with the pope for having forbidden him to march against the English. As you have heard, he afterwards launched an attack against the count of Flanders [in May 1213]. When Philippe reached Ypres, the count came out to meet him and begged him for mercy. It was, however, to no avail, and the count came very close to being humiliated and insulted. The count went off and came into the centre of Ypres where he informed the burghers that they should not attempt to defend the town against the king of France, but should surrender. Then he left and gathered together all his men from wherever he could. After the count left, Philippe entered Ypres, and straightaway the town surrendered to him. The townspeople provided the necessary sureties and swore the appropriate oaths. The king continued his journey through Flanders, stopping at Bruges and Ghent where the townspeople surrendered in due form. Realising that he could expect no mercy from the king, the count of Flanders consulted his men and sought their advice. Their recommendation was that he should send word to England, put their grievances to king John, then ask the English knights, in God's name, to help him out of his difficulties and assist him as far as they were able in his confrontation with king Philippe. A knight called Baudouin de Nieuport [127] was entrusted to deliver this message.

The count of Flanders to whom I am referring was called Ferrand. He was the son of the king of Portugal and held the county of Flanders by right of his wife, countess Jeanne, the daughter of the emperor Baudouin of Constantinople and the good countess Marie [de Champagne]. One of his aunts helped arrange this marriage. She was [Theresa of Portugal, countess of Flanders], the wife of good Philippe [I d'Alsace] count of Flanders, and she gave fifty thousand Paris pounds to the king of France to bring about the marriage, and the support of the king's counsellors also came as a high cost to her. This lady possessed a huge dowry consisting of Douai, Lille and Bailleul in Flanders, Cassel on its mountain and Bourbourg on the sea, together with all the appurtenances of these castles. Because of the war she had taken refuge in Furnes.

Baudouin de Nieuport, who had been designated as the count's messenger to go to England, set sail, crossed the Channel and landed at Sandwich in the dead of night. What I am about to tell you took place [in May 1213] before the conference at Reading at which king John made his peace with the clergy [in September 1213]. Since it is necessary for me to tell two histories, that of England and that of Flanders, it is not possible for me to recount all the events in [chronological] order. At the time when Baudouin de Nieuport landed at Sandwich, the king of England was staying outside Dover where, as you have already heard, he had come to an understanding with Pandulf the papal legate. As soon as he landed, Baudouin jumped on his horse and came riding up to the English army. He sought out the Flemish knights who were serving in the army. They were still in bed, and Baudouin, who arrived just as day was breaking [128], woke them up to talk to them.

There were six of them, all high-ranking Flemings as well as several other young knights. Among the six nobles was Robert [VII] de Béthune. Robert was the eldest but one of the sons of lord Guillaume [II], Daniel [the eldest son] having set out for Constantinople. The other Flemings present were: Guillaume [III] de Saint-Omer, the castellan's brother, Gilles Berthout, chamberlain of Malines [MS Gremines], Adam Quieret, castellan of Bierges, Henri de Bailleul, Gale de la Chapelle [?]. Baudouin de Nieuport spoke to these six men as well as to the young Flemish knights who were present. He told them how the king of France had seized the whole of Flanders and driven out the count, refusing to have pity on him and denying him his lawful rights. The count, he said, ordered

them, in the name of God, to speak to the king of England, begging him to intervene in the difficulties they were experiencing. If John were to be unwilling, the count required the knights to return to Flanders. The Flemish knights were very unhappy when they heard this, and they began discussing among themselves.

Robert de Béthune, the first of the nobles I mentioned, was not very well disposed towards the count of Flanders on account of his aunt, queen [Theresa] of Portugal [and countess of Flanders], on whom Ferrand had declared war because she had wronged his father. This queen was the same person I spoke of earlier, namely the aunt of Ferrand and wife of Philippe [d'Alsace] count of Flanders. She was called queen because she was a king's daughter, and she never lost the title of queen even when she was [a mere] countess. Robert de Béthune [129], fine knight that he was, was unwilling to allow his being on bad terms with the count to stop him from doing everything in his power to advance his cause.

Robert was the one designated to deliver the message to the king. Having spoken together and elected their spokesman, the Flemish knights came before the king [on May 25 1213]. As soon as king John saw them coming, he said to them: 'Bear with me. I know what your request is, and I will consult my council about it.' The knights withdrew, and the king summoned a council consisting of his half-brother William Longespée, earl of Salisbury, [Peter des Roches] bishop of Winchester and several other counsellors. Also summoned were [Renaud] count of Boulogne and Hugue de Boves, both of whom had been driven out of France and had all of their lands seized by Philippe Auguste. John consulted those I have named, and his council rapidly reached its conclusion. The king recalled the Flemings and said to them: 'My lords, I am well aware of what you want from me under present circumstances: you wish to request me to intervene in this business with your lord the count of Flanders, and this is something I am very willing to do. I would ask you to go to him, and I will send my brother, the earl of Salisbury, to accompany you. I shall also send some of my other knights together with some funds on condition that you return here to England as soon as I need you to.' When the Flemings heard what the king's decision was, they thanked him profusely and told him that, even if it meant swimming the Channel [130], they would immediately return to England as soon as he needed them. 'I am much obliged,' said the king. 'Now go to your boats and set sail!'

The knights mounted and set off for Dover at a rapid pace, and there they loaded their horses on to the boats. The king himself accompanied them as far as Dover where he allocated to his half-brother, the earl of Salisbury, one of his own boats that he personally had had constructed – a boat so beautiful, so spacious and so well made that everyone who saw it declared that they had never before seen such a fine one. Never in the whole of England had any boat been made that was even half as big as this one. The count of Boulogne and Hugues de Boves took this vessel along with the others, which included one of the king's counsellors by the name of John fitz Hugh. They set out to sea the day before Whitsun, but there was little wind and they did not make the speed they would have wanted. They spent the rest of the day and the whole night at sea, then the day and the night after that.

By Thursday [May 30 1213] they had got as far as Sint Anna ter Muiden, two leagues distant from the port of Damme. Those who had not put on their armour did so, disembarked into landing craft and attacked the king of France's fleet which they found there and which they proceeded to

destroy. They looted the boats they found there riding at anchor. There were more than four hundred of them. They then switched their attention to the large vessels closer to the town of Damme. These, however, had been drawn up on to dry land and were out of reach. On seeing this they pulled back and took all of their booty back to their boats.

The following day, Friday, having been informed of the attack, the count of Flanders arrived [131] and, with no more than forty knight accompanying him, came down the shore to meet king John's men. The men from England, on seeing them, left their boats and took the smaller craft to come ashore to parley with the count. They demanded that he enter into an alliance with the king of England, to which he responded by declaring he was the liege vassal of the king of France, and would not dare to do as they required unless he could secure the approval of his men, whereupon his men agreed that he could very well go over. The count, however, insisted that he first secure their sworn oath to this effect. He demanded that they gave their advice in accordance with the fealty they owed him, and swear that he could do what he had been requested to do without incurring any blame. His men confirmed that he could indeed go ahead without reproach in view of what the king of France had done to him.

The commitment was accordingly given, and the count swore on holy relics that he would henceforth and in good faith provide assistance to the king of England. He undertook never to fail him and never to make peace with the king of France without king John's agreement and that of the count of Boulogne. Those who had come in the name of the king of England reciprocated by swearing an oath to the count on his behalf, and the count of Boulogne did likewise in his own name and in that of the king. Thus was the arrangement concluded. Robert de Béthune then stepped forward on the count's side, and peace was duly made between them.

The Flemish knights who had come from England then busied themselves unloading all their horses from their boats and passed the night on dry land. The next day was Whitsun eve. The count of Flanders, the count of Boulogne [132] and those knights who had come ashore rose early in the morning and went to celebrate mass. They then put on their armour, mounted their horses and, leaving the boats behind them, made their way to the town of Damme. When they came within half a league of the town, they stopped to discuss from what direction it would be better to attack the town and the boats in it. Robert de Béthune and Gautier de Gisteles broke away from the others and went to the other side of the river at Damme. They arrived at the river Reie which runs between Bruges and Damme. When they came up to the river, they could get a good view, over towards Male, of a stronghold just outside Bruges belonging to the count. They saw a large number of people gathered there. They first of all thought it was the townspeople from Bruges who had come out to welcome their lord. At which point a woman who knew Gautier de Gisteles well came running up to them: 'Lord Gautier, what are you doing here? The king of France has come back to this part of the country with his army, and those are the people you can see installed over there.'

On hearing this, Robert and Gautier came straight back to their men and let the two counts know what was happening. The count of Boulogne said to the count of Flanders: 'My lord, let us draw back. This is no place for us to be.' They hurriedly retreated but not before asking Robert de Béthune to go back to the boats to fetch the earl of Salisbury, Hugues de Boves and John fitz Hugh in order to consult with them at the coast. [133] Robert accepted, exchanged his charger for a saddle-

horse and was about to leave when he heard a loud commotion behind him. Looking round, he saw two of the French king's archers coming up to attack his men, at which point he abandoned his palfrey and leapt back up on his war-horse.

Ancel de Roulers and Lambekin de Rosbecq, a companion of his, went galloping towards the archers, and on reaching them sent them tumbling to the ground. Both were taken prisoner. For a time peace was restored, but then five more archers came up and started repeatedly shooting at the count's men. After these five eight more arrived, and then a whole crowd of them, and after them some mounted soldiers followed by a swarm of knights. So many of the king's troops came attacking the count's men that they could no longer fight back, so they retreated. The defeat was severe. Among the prisoners taken were: Gautier de Furnes and his brother Jean, Gautier d'Aire, Guillaume d'Ypres, Thomas Chiere, Giselin de Haverskerque, Hugue de La Bretagne, a recently dubbed knight and a cousin of Robert de Béthune. There were as many as twenty-two knights taken prisoner at this rout in addition to a number of mounted soldiers.

The counts of Flanders and Boulogne boarded the boats along with all of the other high-ranking barons except Gilles Berthout, chamberlain of Malines, Roger de Gisteles and his brother Gautier [134], Herbert de Furnes, lord of Blaton [?], and Robert de Béthune. Robert helped the count of Flanders board his boat, and did not want to set out himself until the count was safely aboard. When Robert did set out, he took the count's horse with him for safety, as he did not want to let it fall into French hands. The counts of Flanders and Boulogne and the earl of Salisbury went off in the king of England's huge boat, and they landed without mishap on the Walcheren Peninsula. Hugue de Boves, John fitz Hugh and the whole of the fleet returned to England, and on the way they encountered so violent a storm that they came close to being shipwrecked. Those on dry land put as much distance as they could between themselves and the French, hoping to find a place of safety. Gilles Berthout, chamberlain of Malines, headed for Oudenburg where he was castellan, Roger de Gisteles and his brother Gautier went to Gisteles, Herbert de Furnes to his part of the country, while Robert de Béthune set out in the direction of Nieuwpoort.

By this time the Flemish barons had mustered at Courtrai, and those of Hainaut at Audenarde. Their numbers were considerable, and the army comprised their own troops as well as the count's. On hearing of the defeat at Damme, they immediately dismissed their foot-soldiers and then elected three high-ranking barons to go and seek out the count. The three were: Ernoul de Landen, one of the Flemish barons, Philippe castellan of Maldeghem, and [135] Philippe de Wastines. They set out and came as far as Nieuwpoort where they found Robert de Béthune with sixty knights. Before they reached the town, Thomas Chiere joined them. He had been taken prisoner at the time of the defeat but released, without the king's knowledge, with the help of some friends he had in the French army. On Whit Monday, early in the morning, Thomas Chiere arrived at Nieuwpoort. He gave Robert de Béthune the news that the king of France had set fire to all of his own boats and had withdrawn in the direction of Ghent.

The three barons I have just mentioned to you arrived at Nieuwpoort on the same day. They asked Robert de Béthune whether he had any news of the count. Robert replied that a fisherman had told him that he had last seen the count on the Walcheren Peninsula. The counts of Flanders and Boulogne and the earl of Salisbury were there with him, and count William [I] de Hollande, he

believed, was there as well. All four dismounted and conferred together. They decided to go early next day to the Walcheren Peninsula to look for the count, and this is what they did. Early next day all four of them climbed aboard a fishing boat and set out for the Walcheren Peninsula. As they were sailing along, they suddenly caught sight of the earl of Salisbury. He was in one of the seven boats that were returning to England, and he was easily recognisable as he sailed by in the king of England's huge boat.

That night they slept in a town called Wulpen [136]. They arrived next day at Middelburg, a fine city on the peninsula, where they found the count of Flanders together with the count of Boulogne and count William de Hollande, who had assembled all of his fellow knights in order to bring assistance to the count. Ferrand was extremely pleased to see these four suddenly appear. They all conferred together and took the decision to advance on Damme the next day.

The following morning they took to their boats and sailed back to Flanders. On arriving in Damme they encountered no opposition, as none of the king's men had stayed behind there. They left their boats and set up their quarters in the town. The count then sent messengers to Bruges, demanding that the townspeople surrender the town to him. The townspeople were afraid to hand the town over to the count on account of the hostages that the king of France had taken; for Philippe offering resistance was more important than anything else. There was a great deal of discussion on all sides, the upshot of which was that the townspeople agreed nevertheless to surrender the town to the count, and they joyfully acclaimed him as their lord.

When the knights of the surrounding region got to hear that the count had arrived, they gathered together from all around and came over to him. In this way his military strength kept increasing from one day to the next. His success at Bruges and the arrival of the local knights meant that he could now march directly on Ghent, and very quickly the town surrendered to him. There the news reached him that the king of France had taken both Lille and Douai, and had left a garrison in the castle keep at Douai [137] before setting out on his return to France. He had left his son Louis at Lille together with Gautier de Châtillon, count of Saint-Pol, Henri le Maréchal and several other senior barons.

That same day the count received the news that Louis was intending to come and burn down Courtrai. Immediately the count of Boulogne said: 'Quick, my lords, let us take our weapons, mount our horses and get into Courtrai. Once we're there, we can put up a good defence and see to it that the town is not set on fire.' The Flemings and the count himself hurried to arm and mount, and off they rode. They went by way of a town called Drongen [?] because they wanted to ensure that they kept the river Leie between them and Louis' troops. When they came to Deinze – a place where large quantities of flax / tiles were regularly produced – they could see the smoke from Courtrai which was already alight. A little further on they encountered some peasants who told them what had actually happened in Courtrai, how Daniel de Maarkedal and Philippe de Wastines had been trapped in the town, and how Louis had then left the scene taking the whole of his army with him. Much displeased at this news, the count of Flanders turned away from Courtrai and pressed on to Ypres.

They entered the town without encountering any resistance from the people there, who welcomed them with open arms. Once inside Ypres, the count and his men were very grateful to the townspeople for having been so co-operative [138], and this led them to decide to stay there, to strengthen the town's fortifications and to make it their headquarters for the duration of the war. They dug deep and sturdy ditches, erected solid [?] spiked stockades, thick wooden gates, good drawbridges, good barbicans, and good wooden towers spaced all around the town. Once their fortifications had been completed, they left to lay siege to a stronghold called Sotteghem [?] that the king of France had garrisoned. It belonged to Jean castellan of Lille who had built it on the river Leie. The siege lasted fifteen days but with no success, because the Leie ran between them and the fortress.

Seeing no prospect of success, they lifted the siege and headed for Ypres. From there they moved on once again to Lille which they attacked. This siege lasted four days, but they were unable to capture the town because the garrison of two hundred knights that the king had left there was too strong. The townspeople were very resolute and put up an excellent defence, and when the count saw this, he abandoned the siege and withdrew. As he began to move camp, the people inside the town came pouring out through the gates and engaged the count's men. Boisard de Bourghelles was captured between the tents and taken back into the town as a prisoner. Assembling a large army the count proceeded to the city of Tournai which put up hardly any resistance. When he had taken it, the townspeople paid him twenty-two thousand pounds on the understanding that he would not destroy the city's fortifications.

Some time after this the count took the decision [139] to go back to Lille. The king of France, because of the good behaviour of the townspeople towards his presence there, had by now removed all but a small number of his troops, and these he had stationed in a stronghold called Dergneau which was built into the city walls. This building had been constructed by the king in such a way that it could be used both as an entry into the town and as an exit. Having taken his decision, the count of Flanders came and laid siege to Lille. He stayed there until the town surrendered. The townspeople, this time putting on much less of a show of defending than last time, capitulated very quickly.

The count then turned his attention to the Dergneau stronghold and the king's men it sheltered. News of this rapidly reached the king, so he assembled his troops and set out for Flanders. Meanwhile the count had fallen ill, so much so that, as the king approached, he was unable to leave his bed, so did not dare stay in Lille to continue his assault on Dergneau, the key to the city. He accordingly had himself transported out of the town on a stretcher and disappeared into the depths of Flanders. The king of France arrived, burnt and destroyed Lille and had the Dergneau stronghold demolished, and the castle at Cassel also, before returning to France.

The following winter the count of Flanders crossed over to England [in December 1213], taking with him Arnoul [IV] d'Audenarde, Rasyon de Gavere, Gilbert de Bourghelles, Gerard de Sotteghem in addition to several other knights. [140] Robert de Béthune and Baudouin d'Aire were among those who had come over in advance of the others. The count arrived at Sandwich without a single horse to ride, but king John's men at Dover and Canterbury sent them as many as were required, and they rode these as far as Canterbury.

The king, who at that time was at Windsor, quickly got to hear of the count's arrival. He immediately summoned Robert and Baudouin to his presence and said to them: 'So, your lord the count of Flanders has landed in this country.' 'Why are you not going to greet him straightaway?' asked Robert. 'Just listen' replied the king, 'to this Fleming here! He's under the impression that his lord the count of Flanders' arrival is a big deal.' 'By St James', replied Robert, 'that's precisely what it is.' The king burst out laughing and said to him: 'Get your horses ready, because this very instant I'm setting off to meet him.'

Robert and Baudouin both immediately called for their horses in order to accompany the king. John headed for Canterbury at such a furious speed that most of his men were left behind on the way because their horses were completely drained by the pace the king set. On arrival at Canterbury king John immediately went to where the count was staying, and the count came out into the street to greet him. The king dismounted and went to greet and embrace him. He entered the lodging house and stayed there for some considerable time. John behaved in a very friendly manner towards the count and his men. He then left having invited the count to eat with him the following day. The count agreed, and they ate together. The count paid homage to John for the land he was [141] to hold in England. The understanding between the king of England and the count of Flanders was concluded and confirmed, whereupon the count took leave of the king and returned to Flanders.

Once he was back there, news came to him that Louis, the king of France's son, had set fire to Bailleul in Flanders and Steenvoorde, and much of his aunt [queen Theresa's] lands, and this caused him great resentment. The following Lent the count of Boulogne, the earl of Salisbury, Hugue de Boves and Robert de Béthune set out on a highly successful mounted expedition. They rode past Saint-Omer and entered the territory of the count of Guînes, and they set fire to the suburbs of the town of Guînes. [Adam II] viscount of Melun, who at that time was administering Louis' lands, raised a large number of troops and pursued the Flemings to a point between Guînes and Colewide. There Adam caught up with their rear-guard under the command of Robert de Béthune and came so close that he could have attacked them, if he wanted to, but in the end decided not to. From there the Flemings proceeded to Colewide which they burnt down. After spending the night at Gravelines, they returned home by way of Ypres. After Easter [1214] the count of Flanders raised an army and went to besiege the castle at Bornem. He took it and razed it to the ground. He returned to the area around Guînes which he set alight and utterly destroyed. Robert de Béthune rescued the countess, a first cousin of his, from the castle at Guînes. The count of Guînes had been holding her a prisoner there, and Robert took her back to Flanders with him.

It was during this time [April 1214] that Guillaume [II] lord of Béthune died. [Adam] viscount of Melun, who had captured [142] Béthune castle for Louis the king of France's son, handed it back to Guillaume's wife countess Matilda, Robert de Béthune's mother. It was she who had been holding the castle and the lands until her son Daniel returned from overseas. News of his father's death reached his son Robert while he was still on his expedition to Guînes. It was a source of great grief to him, and he immediately returned to Flanders. Afterwards he set out on another and equally splendid expedition. He penetrated so far into Louis' territory that he was able to set fire to Souchez, a town three leagues from Arras, and one night he managed to get as far as the castle at Lens. From here he set off to burn down the town of Houdain and the fine fortress that used to belong to Saer

[de Wavre] castellan of Ghent. Next he went straight to besiege the castle at Aire. The siege lasted almost three weeks, and this included one magnificent skirmish in front of the castle gate.

When news of this reached the king of France, Philippe gathered together his army and set off to have the siege around the castle lifted. When the count of Flanders realised this, he was unwilling to wait and face the king, so he withdrew back to Flanders. He then went to meet up with Otto [IV of Saxony], holy Roman emperor, who was coming to the count's assistance. Even though Otto brought very few troops with him, the count and his men were nevertheless very pleased to see him arrive and gave him a warm welcome. He was escorted as far as Valenciennes amid great rejoicing, and he stayed there for some time.

Now is the time for us to leave the emperor Otto and the count of Flanders, and turn our attention to the king of England. In early Spring [February 1214], as I was telling you earlier, king John drew up a huge fleet [143] and sailed to Poitou. Savaric de Mauléon found a way of making peace with king John and re-entered his service. The king and his army then headed for Nantes, at that time under the control of the count of Brittany. This was Pierre, son of count Robert [II] de Dreux – not, however, his eldest son, there being another, older brother also called Robert. This Robert was actually in Nantes when king John arrived there.

John positioned his army in such a way that the river Loire ran between him and Nantes. Robert de Dreux crossed over the bridge and came to where the king's army was. He stopped in front of the bridge's barbican and stayed standing there. This caused the king's men to come up closer and closer up to him. He was a young and spontaneous individual who had worked himself up into a furious temper. He suddenly rushed at the king's men, recklessly hitting out at them. He ended up being taken prisoner. And when king John had done what he had come to do, he withdrew, taking Robert de Dreux with him as his prisoner.

He then [on June 22 1214] went off to besiege a castle called La Roche-aux-Moines. During this time Louis, son of the king of France, was at Chinon. On hearing about the siege, he let his father know what was happening. Philippe ordered his son to march against the king of England and force him, if he could, into abandoning the siege. Philippe in the meantime had to go to Flanders to confront the emperor Otto who had come to the assistance of the count of Flanders. Louis, on receiving his orders from his father, made ready [144] to leave. In the company of Henri le Maréchal, he set off at speed for La Roche-aux-Moines. When the king of England heard that they were coming, he decided not to wait and face them and to abandon the siege. In so doing he lost some of his camp-tents, which the French carried off as booty.

Soon after John had abandoned the siege, he received the news that his nephew the emperor Otto had been defeated in battle by the king of France, and that his half-brother the earl of Salisbury, the counts of Flanders and Boulogne and many other high-ranking barons had been taken prisoner during the same battle, though the emperor himself had managed to escape. This battle had taken place [on July 27 1214] between the castle at Lille and the city of Tournai at a place called Bouvines, where there is a bridge [over the river Marque] and a church next to the bridge. This left king John furious, in great distress and in a hopeless position. But soon after, an English cleric, master Robert de Courçon, a cardinal in Rome, arrived in France. He arranged a five-year truce

between the two kings on behalf of the pope. The truce was readily agreed to [on September 18 1214] and was to last for five years dating from the following Easter.

Once the truce was concluded, king John made for the coast and returned to England [on October 13 1214]. He took Robert de Dreux along with him. He never once treated him harshly as a prisoner and behaved most honourably towards him. He took him hunting and hawking with him and invited him to share in his other favourite pastimes. He subsequently released him in exchange for his half-brother the earl of Salisbury [145], whom count Robert de Dreux the elder, of whom I have spoken earlier, was holding prisoner, the king of France having handed him over to him to secure the release of his son.

How the barons of England joined together against king John.

Anyone wishing to hear the causes of the war in which king John met his end after being deprived of the greater part of the kingdom of England as he had inherited it, can do so by listening to what is written here.

Soon after king John's arrival back in England [in October 1214] following the defeat at Bouvines, the barons whose names I list here met and spoke together: Robert fitz Walter, Saer de Quincy earl of Winchester, Gilbert son of the earl of Clare, Geoffrey de Mandeville earl of Essex, together with many other barons. Present at the meeting were a large number of Northerners, so called because they held lands in the North. Here are the names of some of them: Robert de Ros, Eustace de Vesci, Richard de Percy, William Mowbray, a man no taller than a dwarf but a most generous and valiant person. Roger Montgomery was also there, in addition to several others.

All those named came together to confer, and resolved that they would demand [146] that the king honour the charters that king Henry [I], his father's grandfather, had granted their ancestors and which king Stephen had confirmed. If he were unwilling to do so, they would issue him with a collective challenge and wage war against him until he was forced to comply. They then had some holy relics brought out on which all of them together swore an oath, and in that way they began their move against the king. They undertook at their meeting to send the king a messenger from among their number to inform him of what they were doing in advance of going to see him themselves. They dispatched a cleric who admirably performed the task of delivering the message they had entrusted to him.

On hearing this news, king John flew into a violent temper, and he was so aggrieved that he came close to insulting the cleric and failed to make any suitable response. So the barons sent John a second message announcing that this was something that they required him to do. The king was intimidated by the barons because he was fully aware of what was at stake. This time he did not dare refuse as flagrantly as he had previously, so he agreed to set a date for a meeting at Northampton [in April 1215]. The barons made preparations to come to the meeting armed. Knowing that they had so many troops at their disposal, the king did not dare wait and face the barons, so he cancelled the meeting and set another date for it. When that date arrived, the barons rode up fully armed with such a large body of men that the king again cancelled and set yet another date. Finally, as the days passed, they managed to arrange a conference with the king at which they

could talk to him face to face. The outcome, however, was that they failed to reach any agreement, and the meeting broke up in acrimony because of the king's attitude. [147]

Talks having collapsed in this way, the barons came together and attacked Northampton castle, which they, however, failed to capture. From there they went straight to London [on May 17 1215], only to find the city gates closed to them. Encountering no one outside, they dismounted and proceeded to cut through the beams that secured the gates. They entered the city without encountering any resistance. They extracted guarantees from the citizens, then made their quarters across the city.

By the time the barons were entering London, Robert de Béthune and his [half-]brother Guillaume – at that time a newly dubbed knight – and Baudouin d'Aire, accompanied by other knights, had arrived in the country. The distinguished knights that I am talking about had come to England to enter king John's service, and on the same day that the English barons entered London, the Flemings sent their servants ahead of them to find lodgings for them in London and see to their provisions. [In the commotion] these servants narrowly escaped being taken prisoner, and they took refuge in a church where they were obliged to spend some considerable time. Their lords, when they learned that the barons had already occupied London, did not dare enter the city. Leaving London on their right, they made their way to Windsor to spend the night. From there they pressed on to Freemantle [MS Froit-Mantel], a residence set on a hill in the heart of a forest, and there they found king John. He was happy to see them and gave them a warm welcome.

Shortly afterwards, news reached the king that [148] the Northern barons had besieged the city of Exeter [in May 1215]. John ordered his half-brother the earl of Salisbury and the Flemings to go and see to it that the siege was lifted, and they set out at top speed for Exeter. When they reached the castle at Sherborne, they learnt that the barons' army was so big that the earl of Salisbury's men ran the risk of being captured if they advanced any further. The rebels had constructed a stockade in a wood that lay across their path, and they had stationed in it a number of their knights, soldiers and archers, in addition to some of their Welsh mercenaries [?]. If the earl's men were to pass that way, they would not have any means of escape.

The earl of Salisbury dared not advance any further and, on the advice of his knights, he withdrew to Winchester [on June 8 1215] where his half-brother the king was. John was not at all pleased to see them, and jeered at them saying that even tackling a stockade was beyond them. This was a jibe that gravely offended the Flemings. A little later, after due deliberation, king John repeated his order to the earl of Salisbury and the Flemings to advance on Exeter and to clear out the Northerners who were still besieging it.

They set off, and when they reached Sherborne, they learnt that the Northern barons now had even more troops than they had had previously. The earl consulted his knights on what he should do. The English among them recommended that they should turn back. At this Robert de Béthune spoke up and said [149]: 'My lords, what sort of advice is this that you are giving the earl? Isn't the earl aware of what the king said to us last time we turned back, namely that even tackling a stockade was beyond us. The king fully realised, when we set out again this time, how many troops

the barons had and how many we have. My preference, I can tell you, is for us to take the risk of being defeated or even killed rather than turn back in such an ignominious fashion.'

This speech of Robert's resulted in everyone, both English and Flemish, deciding to continue their advance. Early next day they put on their armour, mounted their horses and set out for Exeter. When the Northern barons heard that they were coming, they did not wait to face them but abandoned the town and withdrew – all this despite the fact that they actually outnumbered the earl's men by ten to one. The king's army entered Exeter and they stayed there for at least four days before eventually returning to where king John was.

Now here is a truly remarkable event for you to listen to! When they had taken leave of the king, the archbishop of Canterbury [Stephen Langton] arrived to discuss with John how to re-establish peace between him and his barons. Discussions finally lead to John agreeing to a conference between him and the barons to be held at Staines [on June 10 1215]. There the king was obliged to accept the terms that the barons were demanding, and he did so without waiting to consult either with his brother or with the Flemings.

Under the agreement he was forced to undertake never to arrange a marriage that would result in the woman being disparaged [by losing her status]. This was the best of the concessions he was obliged to make [150], always assuming, that is, that he would keep his word. He was forced to promise also that no man would ever lose life or limb for having poached any wild animal [in the royal forests]; a fine could be an alternative punishment. These were two concessions that could be accepted without too much difficulty. As far as property transactions [involving heirs] were concerned, the reliefs the king imposed were too high, and he would be obliged to accept rates as set by the barons. They demanded also that high justice be available in courts in baronial jurisdictions [and not only in royal courts]. There were many other demands made by the barons, all quite unreasonable, which I refrain from listing here.

Most importantly of all, they demanded that a committee of twenty-five barons be elected, and that the king should conduct all business in consultation with this committee and in accordance with the decisions its members took. The king should also redress, through their good offices, all the wrongs that he might commit against them, while they for their part would take it upon themselves to redress all the wrongs they may commit against the king. In addition to all this, they demanded that the king would never be able to appoint any royal officials throughout his land without the approval of the twenty-five. All this the king was forced, under compulsion, to grant. In confirmation of this agreement, the king [on June 15 1215] granted the barons his charter, without there being any possibility of his amending it.

Only after this were the Flemings' squires, who had taken refuge in the church in London, released. The Flemings were incensed when they heard of the dishonourable agreement which the king had reached. They came to see him, but he did not welcome them in the same friendly manner as he had previously. They nevertheless accompanied him to Marlborough [on July 8 1215], and here he committed a most disgraceful act. He had a large part of the royal treasury removed from the castle keep and taken off to his apartments [151]. He did so under the noses of the Flemish knights

without ever giving them any money [in reward of their service to him]. After such disgraceful behaviour, the Flemings took leave of king John and returned to Flanders.

The king of England was bitterly resentful of the ignominious arrangement he had come to with the barons. Not content with having humiliated him, the barons continued to act so arrogantly towards him that everyone everywhere must have felt some pity for him. The barons were adamant that John should keep the promises he had made them, but they themselves were unwilling to keep the promises they had previously made to their own people. One day the twenty-five barons came to the royal court to pronounce a particular judgement. At that time the king was lying ill in bed because of his feet which made it impossible for him to move around. He asked the twenty-five to come into his apartments to make their ruling because he could not go to them. Their reply was to refuse to come as that would infringe their rights: if he was unable to come, he had only to have himself carried in. John, having no choice, had himself carried to where the barons were. They failed, however, to rise as he came in, for, as they put it, to have done so would not have been in accordance with their rights.

The barons indulged in this sort of arrogant and outrageous behaviour on many occasions. Such contemptuousness from his vassals caused the king to feel ashamed as well as infuriating him, and he began to plan how he might wreak vengeance on them. He soon realised that the only way for him to get his revenge lay in the authority of the pope. In great secrecy he appointed envoys to hurry off to Rome. As John recognised the pope as his overlord, he asked him [152] to take pity on him in the name of God and to intervene in the situation in which he found himself – namely how he was being badly treated by his subjects, and how they had coerced him into an agreement, the terms of which he described in the letters he was sending, and of which his envoys would give him a full account.

When the pope had read the letters and spoken with the envoys, he immediately sent word back to the king [in August 1215] that he should not respect the arrangement he had come to with the barons. It was neither good in itself nor such as could be considered legally binding. He was excommunicating all those who honoured the arrangement. He let the barons know that they should allow the king to govern the country in exactly the same way as his father Henry [II] and his brother Richard had done before him, and in the same way as John himself had done at the time he took the Cross and made the kingdom over to the pope. If the barons were unwilling to permit this, he would excommunicate them together with all their followers. To all those, on the other hand, who aided and abetted the king he granted absolution.

When they heard the papal pronouncement, the barons were incensed. All over the country they sent word to one another and, determined to do the king mischief, they set off to seek him out where they expected to find him. When he learnt that they were on their way, John was not minded to face them. He installed his wife [Isabelle] in Corf castle along with his eldest son Henry; Richard, his youngest son, he kept with him. He then made his way to Southampton.

At that time John had a Flemish knight with him called Baudouin de Haverskerque. The king entrusted a large number of letters to him, with the request to deliver them to Robert de Béthune in Flanders and to the other people to whom they were addressed [153]. Baudouin placed the letters

in two barrel-like containers which he had a squire attach to the back of his saddle. When he arrived at Dover, he told the people there that the barrels contained lampreys. He spent little time there before crossing over to Flanders. Here he found Robert de Béthune and handed over the king's letters to him, and the other letters he forwarded to whoever they were intended for.

Robert de Béthune broke open the wax of the king's seal and had his letter read out to him. Just listen to what it said! The king of England greeted Robert de Béthune as his most dear friend and vassal, and informed him that, even though he acknowledged that he had wronged him, Robert should attach no importance to what the king had done, and should instead have pity and forgive him and the English crown. Henceforth John was willing to take Robert's advice into consideration in everything he did. Robert was much moved when he heard what this letter had to say. He was prepared to overlook the wrong that the king had done him, and would now do everything in his power to enlist troops for him and advance John's cause.

At this point I must return to telling you about the king of England. When Baudouin de Haverskerque had left, John went to Southampton. Not daring to remain on dry land, he set sail for Dover along with Savaric de Mauléon and Hugue de Boves. Once there he disembarked and installed himself in his castle [on September 6 1215]. He sent Hugue de Boves off to Flanders [154] in an attempt to enlist some knights to fight with him. He gave Hugue a vast amount of money and begged him in God's name to make every effort he could to recruit the mercenaries by making them handsome payments. This was a price John was willing to pay.

Hugue crossed over and came to Sint Anna ter Muiden. He anchored there but remained on board, being too afraid to land in Flanders because of the king of France. He did, however, send out messengers and deliver king John's letters, and his own, throughout Flanders, Brabant and beyond. He succeeded in enlisting a large number of troops. On the fourth day after the feast of St Matthew the Evangelist, a Thursday [September 24 1215], Hugue de Boves, with a sizeable fleet of ships containing a large number of knights, set sail from Flanders to England. Among this contingent were Gautier Berthout, one of Brabant's highest-ranking barons, second only to the duke in eminence; he was also the half-brother of Gilles Berthout, chamberlain of Malines, though he was in fact older than Gilles. Also present was Gautier [III] de Sotteghem, who was to die when [Henri I] duke of [Brabant] attacked Liège. He was the half-brother of Arnoul d'Audenarde by virtue of his mother, lady Richilde [de Mortagne]. With him was his brother Evrart Radous [IV], half-brother to Arnoul d'Audenarde, and another half-brother of his called Baudouin who was not yet knighted at that time. There were other eminent barons as well as many aspiring knights. Robert de Béthune, however, was not among them, since he was still waiting to embark.

On Thursday [155] there arose a violent storm which struck fear into those crossing, for it continued for a whole day and a night without abating. On Saturday, the eve of the feasts of the martyrs St Cosmo and St Damien [September 25], the storm passed. Such had been its violence that no one aboard had been able to get any comfort or relief, and there was nothing that the sailors could have done to help. The storm had been as bad as that.

Off Dunwich Hugue de Boves' boat ran into a sandbank at such speed that it split and completely broke up. Everyone on it drowned, and not a single one of the thirty-six knights on board

survived. Gautier de Sotteghem's boat struck the same sandbank, where it stayed marooned on the sand, sticking out of the water when the tide receded. In the collision one of its planks shattered and left such a hole in the hull that a hunting dog managed to escape through it. Seeing this happen made the people on board even more apprehensive than before. They came pouring out of the boat and started running across the sand, frantically waving at the dinghies moored in front of the town.

Two such craft set out to come to their assistance, and when they approached the sandbank, the knights drew their swords to drive back the foot soldiers who were clamouring to get aboard. When the people in the lifeboats saw this scuffle, they were unwilling to come any closer, so turned back for fear that their boats would capsize with so many people trying to clamber on board, and that they themselves would be drowned along with all the others. On seeing the lifeboats on the point of turning back, a priest and a ship's boy who happened to be there [156] dived into the sea and started swimming towards the dinghies. The rescuers waited, then pulled them aboard, and thus the lives of two people were saved.

However much the people in distress waved, not one of the lifeboats came to their rescue. Seeing this, they ran to that part of the sandbank where Hugue de Boves' boat had broken up. There they found some timber that they brought back to their boat and they set about repairing and renovating it. The people on the shore could see all of this clearly, but next day they found no trace of this boat – no flotsam or any of the weapons that could have come from it. There were, on the other hand, plenty of remnants from Hugue de Boves' boat, such as drowned corpses, shields, lengths of wood and many other sorts of wreckage.

The remaining boats from the fleet came to land, some of them sorely damaged. Several of them, also in a sorry state, had turned back to Flanders. Gautier Berthout's boat was driven by the storm as far as Denmark, with everyone on board grimly crossing themselves in fear. Gautier then landed in the territory of count William de Hollande, and this caused him to be very fearful, since the count nourished a deadly hatred against him on account of the count of Looz, whose first cousin he was, who was in dispute with him over the county of Hollande on behalf of his wife [Ada]. Gautier, however, was clever enough to escape.

Those who survived the storm and landed in England went in search of king John who had left Dover and was on his way to Canterbury. He had received news that the Northern barons had left [157] London, that they were heading menacingly in his direction and had already reached Rochester. Once in Canterbury John had barriers erected in the streets behind which he hoped to defend himself, should his enemies arrive. As he was busy with these defences, he received news that the Northerners had already reached Ospringe, and were pressing ahead ready to launch their attack. The king was dismayed when he heard this because he had very few troops compared to the barons. He chose therefore not to face them, and instead left Canterbury in a hurry and withdrew to Dover. The barons in their turn were informed that John had left Canterbury in order to mount an attack against them, so they decided not to face the king but to go back to Rochester. In this way both sides were defeated without so much as a single blow being struck.

The barons left William [III] d'Aubigny, one of England's most distinguished magnates, to guard Rochester castle and city together with Thomas de Moulton, William of Eynesford, William

d'Avranches, Osbert Giffard, and as many as one hundred knights. They meanwhile returned to London. And who was best pleased with this? It was the king when he learnt that the Northerners had fled in the way they had. He took encouragement from this, returned to Canterbury from where he pressed on to Newington, a town on the edge of the forest of Chestnut, [on September 28 1215]. It was here that he first received news of Hugue de Boves [158] and the other knights who had lost their lives at sea, and this greatly upset him.

On the same day as the king reached Newington, Robert de Béthune and Baudouin d'Aire landed at Sandwich bringing with them a large number of troops. They caught up with the king on the following day; he was very pleased to see them and gave them a warm welcome. The army grouped around the king then began to grow even bigger as it was joined by the survivors from the storm who had landed in various different ports where the winds had driven them. It pleased the king immensely to see his army increasing with each day that passed. Returning to Canterbury, he took into his paid service a large number of knights who had come over to him, and he accepted their homage with the aim of being even surer of them. He also granted permission to those knights and men-at-arms who preferred a short-term service.

He then proposed to leave for Rochester where he assumed his enemies still were, and this met with the approval of his council. Putting on his own armour and seeing to it that the whole army was properly armed, he mounted his horse and made for Rochester. As he rode along, Robert de Béthune drew level with him and said: 'Sire, you certainly have a low opinion of your enemies if you attack them with such a small number of troops.' 'Ah, Robert,' replied the king, 'I know my adversaries extremely well: they are neither to be admired nor to be feared. Even with fewer men than we have at present, we could undoubtedly make a fight of it. One thing I can tell you for sure: what I find very sad is that our troops from abroad [159] are now going to see just how perfidious my fellow countrymen can be. This causes me even more grief than the damage they are already doing to me.'

With these words king John and the whole of his army arrived in front of Rochester. When the townspeople saw the size of the royal army, they ran to the city walls and appeared to be willing to mount a defence, which in turn caused king John to draw up his troops ready for an attack. The reaction of the townspeople was to spontaneously lay down their arms: they fled from the battlements and started running off in every direction. The king's men came in through the city gates and started to pursue the defenders throughout the town as far as the bridge. This they did so effectively that they drove all the knights into the castle keep. Many of these brave souls would have liked to cut and run to London – if only they had been able.

The king took up quarters in the town and had his troops camp in front of the keep where he had his catapults erected for his attack on the tower. Robert de Béthune came to the king and requested him to send for his [half-]brother Guillaume and have him come over to Rochester. That would be his advice and that of Baudouin d'Aire also. 'Sire,' said Robert, 'I'll willingly go myself, but send him a letter along with my message, and he will be that much more ready to come.' The king immediately had the letters written and sent to Guillaume de Béthune in Flanders. When Guillaume received the king's letters, he lost no time in crossing the Channel and joined John at the siege of Rochester. It was at this point that Gautier Berthout joined forces with the king's army, thus

increasing [160] the numbers by one hundred knights, and every day thereafter the army grew in size.

The Northerners in London were dismayed when they learnt how big the royal army was. They understood only too well that unless someone else came to their rescue, they could not rely on themselves to fight their way out. They held urgent talks and finally decided to send word to Louis, the king of France's son, requesting him to come to their assistance. In return for this they would make him king of England.

Two earls were selected to take this message, the first being Saer de Quincy, earl of Winchester, and the second earl [Henry de Bohun] of Hereford. They announced to Louis that, if he were willing to pack his bags and come to England, the barons would confer the kingdom on him without any dissent and make him their overlord. The messengers crossed to France and secured the promise from Louis that he would come to England at Easter. In the meantime he would send as many knights as he could get in order to help them.

Louis summoned as many young knights as he could throughout France, and came as far as his castle at Hesdin. Here he requested his barons to provide him with aid in the shape of knights willing to go to England, and he asked several of his men individually to go themselves. Among these were: Guillaume castellan of Saint-Omer, Gilles castellan of Beaumetz, Hugue castellan of Arras, Eustache de Neuville the younger, son of that fine knight of the same name [161], Guillaume de Wismes, a most valiant young knight, Hugue Tacon, a Flemish baron, and many other knights. From the Ile-de-France came Baudouin Berthout, Gilles de Melun, the viscount's cousin, Guillaume de Beaumont[-Gâtinais], a knight of short stature nicknamed Piés-de-Rat [Rat's Foot], and several others, all under the command of Rat's Foot.

Louis then came to Calais where he ordered his knights – more than one hundred and forty of them – to set sail. They landed at a harbour in England called Orwell [Harwich]. From there they came to London where they were very warmly received and were able to lead a very comfortable life. Their luck did not hold, however, because it so happened that they ran out of wine and had only beer to drink – something for which they had no aptitude. This state of affairs lasted for the whole of the winter.

Shortly before the arrival of the French knights, the king of England had granted Robert de Béthune, as his commanding officer, the county of Clare. John did not recognise that the current earl had any legitimate right to it since he had gone over to the rebel barons and was away in London. Robert quickly made his way to the castle at Tonbridge where the earl of Clare had left a garrison. He managed to speak with those inside the castle and demanded that they hand it over to him. They were foolish to hold out, because they could not count on any help from the barons in London. They should know as well that king John would come to Tonbridge with all his army just as soon as he had taken Rochester, and that was imminent.

The reply came that there was only a handful of them and that they were badly equipped. They begged him, in God's name, [162] not to force them to do anything so dishonourable as surrendering. Let him give them time, for God's sake, to send word to their lord the earl in London

requesting him to come to their assistance on the following day. If he were not to come and help them, then they would hand over the castle to him.

This Robert agreed to, and messengers were promptly dispatched to London. Robert sent with them one of his knights, Michel de Belleaise. He then sent Baudouin de Haverskerque back to John's army to ask for reinforcements. These arrived in the shape of Jean de Cysoing, who was married to his cousin, Libous [?] de Plusengien [?] with many followers, Thierry de Sotteghem, commander of the army, and a number of others. The messengers who had gone to London delivered their message to the earl. He was very confident he could rescue the castle, but in the end did not do so. It was handed over to Robert de Béthune who stationed some of his men in it.

It was soon after this that the French arrived, as I have already told you. Louis then sent another contingent of one hundred and twenty knights to England. They sailed up the Thames estuary as far as London bridge. Before they got there, however, Rochester castle had been taken, and king John had set out for Scotland [in December 1215].

Once Robert de Béthune had secured Tonbridge castle, he joined up with king John's army again. The king came to greet him, all smiles and happy. 'Welcome,' he said, 'my lord earl of Clare. You may have stolen [163] Tonbridge castle from me, but you won't steal Clare castle. Before you do that, I'll take you by the scruff of the neck and lock you up in it.' Whereupon they re-joined the army.

John was merciless in increasing pressure on those defending Rochester castle. He ordered the sappers to start undermining the tower, and soon half of it had collapsed, leading to the capture of all the knights who had been in it [on November 30 1215]. The king had some gallows set up outside the camp, declaring that he would hang them all – to a man. The leading barons who were with him advised him against such an action. They explained that it would be the wrong thing to do, since if the defenders were to capture any of the king's men, they would reciprocate by having them hanged. John accepted what they said and did not hang any of them.

He then left Rochester for Belvoir, a castle belonging to William d'Aubigny which had surrendered to him. From there he proceeded to Pontefract which was held by [John de Lacy], constable of Chester, who had been in the baronial camp. However John threw himself on the king's mercy, and, thanks to the intervention of [Ranulf] earl of Chester to whom he had given excellent service, the king forgave any resentment he felt towards him. After this, John headed for York, a royal city in which, even though it had rebelled against him, he encountered no hostility. He then continued on to Durham.

Here he was minded to turn back when news reached him that king [Alexander] of Scotland had set fire to Newcastle-on-Tyne. This greatly angered John, and he swore by God's teeth that they would stay there until he had avenged this act of vandalism. He then prepared to march against the king of Scotland, swearing that he would drive that puny little fox-cub back into its lair. [164] By this he meant he would compel king Alexander, who was a youth and had ginger hair, to get back to Scotland where he belonged.

John arrived in Newcastle [on January 8 1216] to find it burnt to the ground, but the king of Scotland had by this time retreated. He continued on and took Thirsk which he conferred on Philip of Oldcoates, guardian of Durham castle. He crossed the river Tweed at Norham, where the castle belonged to the bishop of Durham. He came to Berwick where he captured the town as well as the castle, after which he took Dunbar castle, at that time held by the Scottish earl Patrick [of Dunbar]. On he rode, laying waste to the countryside, reaching a town called Haddington [on January 17 1216]. He wished to go no further than this, so turned back, burning and destroying Berwick as he passed by. Making his way towards London, John entered the territory of Roger Bigod [III earl of Norfolk], which he utterly devastated because he nourished a profound hatred against the earl.

During this time [February 1216] something quite exceptional happened in London. The knights there organised some jousting contests for their own amusement. Geoffrey de Mandeville earl of Essex was among those participating, but he did so without putting on either his protective tunic or his padded doublet. A certain French knight, known under the nickname of Swordtipsnatcher [MS: Acroce-Meure], came galloping up to him wielding a lance-stump. On seeing this the earl shouted out: 'Tipsnatcher, don't attack me – I'm not wearing any protection!' The French knight, however, was unwilling to rein back despite this appeal, and struck him with such force in the midriff that he killed him [on February 23 1216]. Though this caused widespread lamentation, the young Frenchman was not in any way [165] condemned for what he had done.

News of the reached king John at Framlingham, a fortress he had captured from Roger Bigod, and John immediately informed Savaric de Mauléon to whom he had granted Roger's lands. John then went on to besiege Colchester castle which he succeeded in taking. From there he made straight for Castle Hedingham, Robert de Vere earl of Oxford's castle. Robert de Vere threw himself on the king's mercy and swore on holy relics that he would henceforth serve him loyally. But this was a promise he did not keep, for, true to his deceitful character, Robert failed to keep faith with him. King John then made his way to Odiham [? MS Watchem], a castle seven English leagues from London. The London rebels were convinced that a battle or a siege was in the offing there, and they were ready armed and their troops drawn up. The king, however, decided against engaging. Leaving the castle on his left, he proceeded to Windsor.

It was here that he received news that Louis, the king of France's son, was marshalling his troops at the ports of Boulogne, Wissant, Calais and Gravelines. This caused John to come down to Kent, and there he received first-hand reports that Hervé count of Nevers was at Calais with a large force of one hundred knights. Also there, with a company of fifty knights, was Enguerrand de Coucy together with his two brothers Thomas and Robert, both most valiant knights. Others present were William count of Hollande with his thirty-six knights, [Enguerrand III] count of Coucy with ten knights, Guischard [I] de Beaujeu [166], also with ten knights, [Raymond IV] viscount of Turenne with fourteen knights, Etienne [II] de Sancerre with twelve knights, Robert de Dreux with thirty knights, Jean de Montmirail, lord of Oissy, with fourteen knights, seven of whom had been sent on ahead and were in London with the rebels. Also there was Arnoul [II] count of Guînes with ten knights, five of whom had been sent over in advance. Daniel lord of Béthune, who had recently returned from overseas, brought along six knights in addition to the eight he had already sent over in advance. One boat was allotted to Michel de Harnes and Baudouin de Belvoir, and they embarked together with

Hugue de Miramont, Robert de Bailleul, Gerard La Truie, Boidin de Metres [?] and his brother Mailen, along with many other knights. Robert de Courtenay was also there with twenty knights.

There were also a large number of other magnates, but I am not able to say how many knights each of them brought along. Others present included Hugue [I] de Rumigny, a very important lord, Renaud d'Amiens and his brother Thibaud, Jean d'Hangest, Raoul de Nesle, Raoul d'Estrées, Raoul de La Tournelle, an exceedingly good knight, and his nephew Hugue d'Hangest, Aimery de La Fontenelle, Baudouin castellan of Lens, Alart de Croisilles and his two brothers Renaud and Jean. There were also many others, and I am incapable of naming them all. Accompanying Louis in his boat were Urse the chamberlain, [Adam] viscount of Melun, Hugue de Malaunay, Raoul Plomquet and several other knights. The estimated [167] number of knights in the army was at least twelve hundred, and the number of boats no less than eight hundred.

One of the people admitted to Louis' boat was Eustache le Moine. This Eustace was a knight from the region of Boulogne, but he had frequently waged war against [Renaud] count of Boulogne. His hostility was such that he eventually took service with the king of England, for no other reason than to spite the count of Boulogne whose allegiance lay with the king of France. Eustace's reward for his services to king John was to be granted the [Channel] islands of Guernsey. However he subsequently quarrelled with the king who had him and his wife taken prisoner and incarcerated for a considerable time. His resulting animosity towards John caused Eustace to go over to prince Louis. He put a great deal of effort into pursuing his objective and, being someone well versed in maritime matters, he made the Channel crossing on a number of different occasions. So extraordinary were Eustace's exploits, and the adventures that befell him time and time again, that there is no one who would find them believable.

Another passenger on Louis' boat was a cleric, brother to [Stephen] Langton archbishop of Canterbury whom king John had deprived of the archbishopric of Canterbury. Stephen's brother was called Simon, and John had also deprived him of his archbishopric, that of York. Stephen was due to be elected when the king decided simply to annul the election. This shows how intensely John disliked Stephen and sought to harm him wherever he could, either by what he said or by what he counselled others to do.

I need now to turn to the king of England. He had come as far as Dover where he had assembled a huge and redoubtable fleet: a single one of his boats was the equivalent in might of four of Louis'. He prudently dispatched envoys to Louis making him an offer of peace – which was turned down. On seeing this, John, on the advice of his men, resorted [168] to another plan whereby he himself would set out to sea and take his fleet to Calais where he would drop anchor, thus preventing Louis' fleet from setting out. He knew that Louis' small boats were no match for his own much larger ones.

No sooner had John worked out this plan than something quite unexpected happened. Towards evening on the eve of Ascension day [May 18 1216] such a severe gale blew up that it was touch-and-go whether all the boats would break up and be wrecked. Given the nature of the coastline around Dover, the only thing for the sailors to do was to find shelter elsewhere in different harbours. The next day found the boats scattered in so many different places that it was impossible

for the king to bring them together. So he made his way back to Canterbury, very unhappy and cursing his bad luck – it had been little short of a disaster.

The day after Ascension day [Friday 20 May], in the late afternoon, Louis set out to sea and sailed to England. The next day, a Saturday, he made landfall on the Isle of Thanet. The arrival of the French fleet could be seen from a great distance by the people on the shore. They sent word to the king at Canterbury to come and see. John replied that it was not Louis' fleet they saw but his own ships coming from Romney where they had taken shelter from the storm. The king then left Canterbury, and instead of heading for Sandwich, he made for Romney to greet cardinal [Guala] from Rome who had landed there. The pope had sent the cardinal as legate to England to assist and support king John and to punish the king's enemies, present and future. [169]

John was delighted to see the legate and gave him the warmest of welcomes. The cardinal was dressed in scarlet and riding a white horse in conformity with the custom which dictated that, when legates went overseas, they should dress and ride as the pope himself would. The king had already had it confirmed that Louis had indeed landed on the Isle of Thanet before he started talking with the legate. On meeting him, John first of all greeted and kissed him, paying him the greatest respect that he could. Straight after this he gave him the news that Louis had landed in his kingdom with an armed force – a fact that he deplored in the strongest possible terms, invoking God, the pope and the legate himself who had just arrived in England. The legate promptly excommunicated Louis and all his associates. He also gave orders that all the major churches should close their doors wherever Louis or his soldiers should appear. He required that all parts of the country which recognised Louis as their lord should be placed under interdict, and this was indeed the case from then on.

The day after Louis landed was the Sunday before Whitsun [May 22 1216], and this was when king John came to Sandwich. From there he could see Louis' fleet in the place where it had landed on the Isle of Thanet. Among the first to disembark from the boats were [Hervé] count of Nevers, William count of Hollande, Michel de Harnes, Hugue Havet, Gui de La Roche, Robert [V] Bertrand, and over two hundred other knights. King John was extremely discouraged when he saw this. He rode up and down the coast for some time with his trumpets sounding, but being himself in low spirits, had little success in either emboldening or even encouraging his troops. [170] He remained there for only a short time before riding off, almost, as it were, surreptitiously. He set out, at a great pace, in the direction of Dover. His troops had ridden over a league before most of them realised what was happening.

Robert de Béthune, Baudouin d'Aire and his uncle Gilbert, and Gautier Berthout were extremely displeased when they saw that the king had decided to make off. Since they dared not stay there themselves, they followed after him. As well as being furious, they were in great distress almost on the verge of tears. They caught up with him at Dover. He was disconsolate and the next day moved on, leaving the justiciar Hubert de Burgh at Dover to defend the castle. With Hubert were Gerard de Sotteghem with a large number of Flemings, Pierre de Craon, Jourdain de Doe [?] and Hugue Ganche / Cange [?] with many other knights. A strong garrison was left in the castle: there were easily one hundred and forty knights, many men-at-arms, and plenty of supplies.

When the king left, he gave orders for the Flemings to form his rear-guard as he passed through territory controlled by bandits. These caused him as much harm as they possibly could as he rode by. He finally arrived at Winchester where he stayed for some time. From here the papal legate pronounced a formal sentence of excommunication on Louis in particular and on a large number of the prince's associates by naming them individually. The same harsh treatment was meted out to the English rebels.

I need now to return to telling you about Louis. As soon as king John had left, Louis had his men cross over to the mainland. They immediately took the town of Sandwich, and all the boats moored there were captured. They acquired a great quantity of wine and provisions [171], and loads of merchandise. Louis then proceeded to Canterbury which put up not the slightest resistance. He successfully besieged Rochester and was joined there by the London rebels and the barony of England whose homage he received. I shall name for you some of those who paid Louis homage: [Richard] of Clare earl [of Hertford], William Marshal [II] the younger, son of William Marshal [I] earl of Pembroke, Hugh Bigod [earl of Norfolk and] son of earl Roger, – Hugh was married to William Marshal I's [daughter Maud] – Robert fitz Walter, Saer de Quincy earl of Winchester, William de Mandeville earl of Essex, earl Robert de Vere, and many others.

On having received their homage, Louis immediately left Rochester and, on the Thursday of Whitsun [June 2 1216], came to London where he was received by the canons of St Paul's in procession. The townspeople, overjoyed at his arrival, came up to welcome him. Leaving St Paul's he crossed back over the Thames to Lambeth, facing the palace of Westminster across the river. This was the residence of the archbishop of Canterbury, and he spent four nights there.

At St Paul's there was a dean called Gervase of Howbridge. Following his advice the canons there declared themselves unwilling to stop chanting the offices, as the legate's interdict required – a decision that was later to bring great shame on them. The parish priests likewise refused to allow their churches to stay silent, and subsequently they also paid for it dearly. There were only five churches in the whole of London where the interdict was observed. These were: [172] Westminster, Holy Trinity [Aldgate], Old St Martin's [in Cornmarket], Temple, the Hospitallers' [Clerkenwell priory]. The canons of Bermondsey, those of St Bartholomew's and the nuns of St Mary de Fonte [Clerkenwell] did suspend their services after some time, but could not avoid getting into serious trouble over it. Louis' and the barons' chaplains were also unwilling to cease ministering, and services continued to be held throughout the army – much to the astonishment of everyone.

During Louis' stay in London he received the homage of Roger Bigod earl [of Norfolk], as well as that of the remainder of the barons who were there. He then dispatched a number of knights to Suffolk and Norfolk so as to bring these counties under his control. Those he chose were part of the English rebels together with the other knights who had been in London, and who were jokingly referred to as the Londoners. These set out and had soon completed their task by conquering Dunwich and Lynn and many other castles as well.

On the Monday after Trinity [June 6 1216] Louis left London to attack [William] de Warenne [V earl of Surrey]. He found Reigate castle totally deserted and granted it to Robert de Courtenay. The next day he took Guildford castle, after which he besieged Farnham, a castle that belonged to

the bishop of Winchester. He captured it the next day. From there Louis set out for Winchester where he was expecting to find king John. The king, however, had been unwilling to face him and left the city unmanned.

King John then proceeded to Corf castle, taking with him his wife [Isabelle] and Savaric de Mauléon. Fulk de Breauté had been sent [173] to Oxford by John to defend the region. This Fulk, who was of humble origin, was the illegitimate son of a Norman knight. As a servant of the king, he had served John extremely well, and this had resulted in him becoming one of the most powerful men in England. Despite being short, he was outstandingly brave, and he ended up being in possession of seven counties.

When king John left Winchester, some irresponsible individuals set fire to the city, and a large section of it burned down. All of this was clearly visible to Louis' army. The following day the prince had his troops armed and drawn up in battalions. Riding in battle-order, the French set out for Winchester and arrived, full of confidence and in style, only to find it already half burned down and defenceless. They could, therefore, enter unhindered, but then found both of the castles holding out against them. These were the king's castle – the larger of the two – and the bishop's which was known under the name of Wolvesey. In this second was Oliver [fitz Roy], one of the king's bastard sons and still, at that time, a young squire. Louis ordered [Daniel] lord of Béthune and Baudouin de Belvoir, together with their battalion, to go and set up quarters in the town in order to protect it and to see to it that the soldiers in the castles did not set fire to those parts that had so far escaped the flames. They did so and had to fight many a fierce battle there and suffer great hardship, but they nevertheless succeeded in emerging with their honour intact.

Louis set up camp directly under the larger of the two castles [174] from where he could launch his catapults and mangonels against the tower. The siege lasted all of fifteen days. They were joined there [on June 14 1216] by the most eminent and powerful of those barons who had remained loyal to John, and these placed themselves under Louis' orders. They were: William [Longespée], the king's half-brother and earl of Salisbury, earl [William] de Warenne, the king's first cousin, [William d'Aubigny] earl of Arundel, William [de Forz III] earl of Aumale, son of countess Hawise wife of the late Baudouin de Béthune. These four, along with many others, became vassals of Louis who, as their lord, then returned their lands to them. Savaric de Mauléon, benefitting from a safe-conduct, then arrived. He removed those of his knights that he had placed in the castle and arranged for both of the castles to surrender to Louis, after which he went back to join king John. Now in possession of the two castles, Louis granted the larger of them, the king's, to [Hervé] count of Nevers.

Adam [II] de Beaumont, nicknamed Brostesinge [Grazemonkey ?], held, at that particular time, the post of marshal of the army. However, William Marshal the younger came to Louis and informed him that the position of marshal should be his by inheritance, and asked for the title to be returned to him. If Louis did not grant this request, William thought that he might well lose the hearts and minds of the English.

From here Louis went off to besiege a castle called Porchester in the neighbourhood of Portsmouth. He captured it [in June 1216], then gave it to [Hervé] count of Nevers. From there he

went to Odiham, a small castle which king John had had built for his personal recreation, set in a beautiful meadow next to fine woodland. In the course of this siege, [175] Hugh de Neville, the warden of Marlborough castle, announced to Louis that, if he were willing to dispatch some of his knights to Marlborough, he would surrender the castle and its well situated town to him. In response Louis sent Robert de Dreux to Marlborough, promising to grant him the castle if he were able to capture it. William Marshal the younger, who laid claim to Marlborough castle, took grave offence at this offer [in July 1216]. He left the army and headed for Wales. He did not do so out of resentment, however, because at no stage did he renounce his allegiance to Louis.

Robert de Dreux set out for Marlborough, taking with him, amongst others, his uncle Enguerrand de Coucy, the count of Roussy and Raoul his brother, and Raoul d'Estrées, together with several other knights. Among those barons from Artois that he chose to accompany him were [Daniel] lord of Béthune, [Hugue] castellan of Arras, [Baudouin IV] castellan of Lens, Baudouin de Belvoir, Alart de Croisilles, and the two brothers masters Boidin [de Metres] and Mailen, in addition to many others. There were at least one hundred and twenty knights in this expedition. When they arrived at Marlborough, they could not gain entry, as they found the castle gates firmly shut against them. Eighteen or so knights were drawn up in front of the castle, ready armed and helmeted. They were also aware of mounted soldiers riding in and out of the nearby wood. This made them think that Hugh de Neville must have betrayed them, which unsettled them and left them feeling apprehensive.

Enguerrand and Robert conferred and [176] decided to immediately go back and join the main body of the army. But it was then proposed that they should set up camp and spend the night in the town, and this is what they agreed to do. The next day they put on their armour and rode out of the town on their way back to the army. As they did so, Hugh de Neville sent word asking them for safe-conduct so that he could come and arrange handing over the castle to them. They sent Robert de Poissy to fetch him. They then went back to Marlborough with him, and there Hugh de Neville handed over the castle to Robert de Dreux. In the late afternoon they put on their armour once more and left the town to go back to the army. Having ridden all night, they reached it on the next day. Robert de Dreux left the castle in the care of Jean de Lesdain and a garrison of ten knights.

Shortly after Marlborough was taken, [William] count of Hollande, having taken the Cross and wanting to put his affairs in order, left the army to return home. After the castle had been taken, Louis set off in the direction of Winchester, near where he had a meeting with the papal legate. He sent his representatives ahead, but despite a great deal of discussion, no agreement on bringing the war to a close was forthcoming. Back where Louis was waiting for the return of his envoys, Hugue Havet and a large number of the Artois knights decided to leave. They hurried [177] to London from where, in very high spirits, they set sail down the Thames into the Channel. During the crossing some English boats came to attack them, but no harm came of it, and the English were decisively repulsed and sent back where they had come from.

Following Louis' discussions with the papal legate Guala – I had forgotten to give you his name earlier – he came to London, but stayed only a short time before leaving to besiege Dover castle. He left the count of Nevers and Robert de Dreux in London with a large company of knights. Soon after Louis had left, these men went to Windsor to besiege the castle there [in June 1216].

They stayed a long time but with little or no success. As you will hear shortly, they were, in fact, to get quite a fright. The defenders of the castle made a series of damaging sorties, and twice they succeeded in severing the swing-arm of Louis' catapult. A knight from Artois, Guillaume de Cérissy, was killed during the siege. He was mourned by extremely few people, as he was widely detested.

Now hear this about Louis himself! When he came to Dover, he did not immediately besiege the castle, but took lodgings in a priory in the middle of the town. Some of his men also set up quarters in the town, while the others remained in their tents in the camp. At this point a large number of knights left and these included: the count of Roussy, Jean de Montmirail, Hugue de Rumigny, [Raymond] viscount of Turenne and many others. This very significantly reduced the strength of the army.

The castle's defenders made repeated sorties from the gates. Outside the main gate they had a barbican [178] with a very strong oak palisade and a deep ditch round it. It was under the command of Pierre de Craon, who was also the castle's gate-keeper. Armed soldiers from the castle were in the habit of taking up position in front of this barbican in full view of the besiegers, and some of Louis' crossbow-men were often to be found among them. On one occasion an exceptionally brave archer by the name of Ernaut came up so close to the enemy that they pounced on him. Rather than run off, he stood his ground and, with no help forthcoming, was captured.

It was soon after this [on July 19 1216] that Louis led his army to the top of the cliff and began his siege of the castle. He left part of his army in the town so that the castle would be completely surrounded, the sea below being patrolled by his own boats. Louis had his catapults and mangonels set up and directed at the main gate and the wall. He then built a high scaling-tower of wooden planks and a movable shelter to allow his men to reach the wall. He placed his sappers in the ditch, and their job was to undermine the stones and earth beneath the barbican. The army's knights launched their attack, and within a short time the barbican was taken. The first person to enter was a squire by the name of Buart [?] Paon, who was the lord of Béthune's standard-bearer. The barbican's commander Pierre de Craon, son of that fine knight Maurice de Craon, was so grief-stricken by the experience that he never recovered and died shortly after.

When king John learned that [Hervé] count of Nevers and Robert de Dreux [179] were besieging Windsor castle with such a small force, he mustered his army and went to Reading. Continuing on he came so close to Windsor that the besiegers there had every reason to think that there was going to be a battle. Under the cover of darkness some Welsh mercenaries came shooting into their army and causing panic. For a long time they remained ready armed for battle, but it was not to be. King John, for some reason or other, withdrew, and nothing happened.

Then [Alexander] king of Scotland arrived at the Dover siege with the intention of paying homage to Louis. Louis went as far as Canterbury to welcome him and was extremely happy to escort him to the army at Dover. The next day Alexander did homage to Louis for Lothian and then returned to Scotland with [Hervé] count of Nevers accompanying him as far as Canterbury. Having gone over to Louis, Hervé came to regret what he had done, so he went to the king of England and threw himself on his mercy. John readily forgave him. I had forgotten to tell you of another arrival at Dover, before, that is, king Alexander's, that of [Thomas] count of Le Perche who also entered Louis'

service. Pierre [I Mauclerc] count of Brittany also made his appearance, at which moment his brother Richard [III count of Dreux] decided to return to France.

Louis then instructed his sappers to turn their attention to the main gate, and they succeeded in undermining one of the two towers, which enabled a large number of Louis' men to break into the castle. They were, however, vigorously repulsed, and the defenders began blocking up that part of the wall that had collapsed with huge beams, cross joists and heavy oak stakes. Guischart de Beaujeu died [180] in the course of this siege, and was transported back to his homeland for burial. Just before him a knight from the county of Boulogne, one Jean de La Rivière, also died. His death was widely mourned, and he was taken for burial to the region of Boulogne. During the siege the news arrived that pope Innocent [III] had died [on July 16 1216], and that the new pope was called Honorius [III]. This news made Louis very happy indeed. The death [on June 11 1216] was also announced of Henry emperor of Constantinople at [Thes]salonika in Rumania. Henry was Louis' uncle on his mother [Isabelle of Hainaut's] side.

The siege of Dover castle lasted until a truce was finally declared [on October 14 1216] between the two parties – much to the chagrin of the king of England. Very soon after hearing this news, John fell ill and made his way to [Hugh of Wells] the bishop of Lincoln's castle at Newark, and there he died [on October 19 1216]. He was taken to Winchester to be buried in the cathedral. Before his death John had instructed William Marshal earl of Pembroke to place his eldest son Henry under God's and William's guardianship. He begged him in God's name to ensure the smooth-running of the royal administration. John placed his younger son Richard under the guardianship of Peter de Maunlay. Peter was warden at Corf castle where Eleanor [of Brittany], daughter of Geoffrey duke of Brittany, was being held prisoner. Peter had started off as one of king John's ushers, but grew to be so successful that he became a knight and warden of Corf castle. He was even powerful enough to wage war against [William Longespée] earl of Salisbury. [181] At the time of king John's death, queen [Isabelle] was pregnant with a daughter.

Henry, John's eldest son, was dubbed a knight by the papal legate shortly after his father's death and was then crowned king. William Marshall was designated as regent of the kingdom. Fulk de Breauté was granted the wardenship of Northampton castle, and held the sheriffdoms of Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Hertfordshire, Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire, which included all of their castles. In addition to this he was bailiff of the Isle of Wight in right of his wife, which meant that he had seven counties in all under his control. Robert de Gaugy, a royal official, was warden of Newark castle. Hugh de Balliol was warden of Newcastle-on-Tyne and a large part of the country North of there. Peter de Maulay was, as you have already heard, warden of Corf castle, and it was here that the majority of the royal treasury was kept. Savaric de Mauléon was made warden of Bristol castle and he installed his own troops in it. He himself had gone off to Poitou before king John's death. The wardenship of Windsor castle, from which [Hervé] count of Nevers had in the meantime withdrawn, was given to Engelard d'Athée and André Chanceaux. Hubert de Burgh was made warden of Dover castle, as I told you earlier.

Among those living in the [Kent and Sussex] Weald there was a squire whose bravery made him the undisputed king of the Weald. His name was William of Cassingham, but the French, to

whom the name Cassingham was unknown, called him Willikin of the Weald. He frequently waged war against Louis' army, and won himself a lasting reputation among the French troops. [182]

King Henry [III] was crowned [on October 28] 1216, at which time he was only ten years of age. After the coronation each of the castellans I have listed for you went off to their castle, for they were in great fear of Louis. After the truce at Dover Louis left and came to London. He continued on to Hertford castle, and when he had captured it [on December 6 1216], he granted it to Robert fitz Walter whose property it rightfully was. He next besieged Berkhamstead castle which surrendered [on December 13 1216] and which he gave to Raoul Plomquet. After this he took Colchester, Orford, Hedingham, Ely [? MS Le Plasseis], Cambridge and many other strongholds. He gave Orford castle to Gilles de Melun, Cambridge castle to Simon de Poissy. Hedingham went to Robert de Vere, its rightful owner, and Ely [? MS Le Plasseis] to count William [fitz Geoffrey] de Mandeville. Norwich surrendered to Louis, as did Lincoln. Here, however, the castle, which was under the command of a lady, Nichola [de La Haye], who had it by inheritance, held out steadfastly against him. Withdrawing to London, Louis sent Hugue castellan of Arras to Lincoln to patrol the surrounding countryside – which he did with great vigour and the help of the Northern barons who frequently joined forces with him.

At this time [February 1217] Louis learned from Geoffrey de Saye, an English baron who was warden of Rye [183], a fortification in the Weald close to Winchelsea, that the royalists had contrived, by some ploy or other, to capture it. Louis decided to go there, and on the way he spent the night in a castle belonging to the count of Warenne called Lewes. He continued on, but because he feared that his supplies might run out, he was unwilling to go as far as Rye. This well-fortified town was situated in the Weald, and supplies could not have been brought to the army on account of the Weald bandits. Louis therefore chose to go to Winchelsea, a fine town not far from Rye; the two were separated by no more than an estuary that was not very wide. When the townspeople of Winchelsea learned of Louis' arrival, they did not hesitate: they destroyed all the flour-mills, took to the boats and crossed over to Rye. There they joined up with Philip d'Aubigny, a naval commander who had at his disposal a large number of boats with armed soldiers on board, it being his duty to patrol the shoreline on behalf of the king. As Louis advanced, so the Weald bandits destroyed all the bridges and highways.

Louis suffered a great deal of hardship at Winchelsea. His men found large quantities of wheat but had no means of grinding it into flour. They continued to be hard-pressed for a long time, being reduced to grinding the wheat by hand using millstones in order to be able to make their bread. They could not survive on fish alone, and the only other food they could find in the town to eat for a treat were over-sized nuts. They arranged frequent truces with the soldiers from the boats who gave them an extremely hard time. They broke the truce they had agreed to as often as three times a day, even coming ashore in order to shoot at the prince's men.

When Louis [184] saw this, he sent his messengers off on foot to find a way through the Weald by stealth in order to reach London and those castles where he had men. He ordered them to come to his assistance, for his men were very hard-pressed, and the English were severely harassing them. The castellan of Saint-Omer, Raoul Plomquet, Hugue Tacon and Jean de Beaumont and several others were amongst those who responded, and they made ready to go to Louis' assistance. As

there were so few of them, they did not dare cross the Weald, but instead followed the main highway to Canterbury. There they changed direction and made for Romney. Once they were there, they sent messengers to the Boulonnais and to the prior of Saint-Vaast, a Cluniac monk who was administering the county on behalf of Louis. They asked him to send all the boats he could to the aid of their lord Louis who was in very serious trouble in Winchelsea. The prior dispatched more than two hundred boats, all of which landed at Dover, except one which, thanks to the daring of its sailors, put to shore at Winchelsea. It was greeted with great joy, and the news that the brave sailors brought was very much appreciated.

When news of the arrival of the boats at Dover reached the army at Romney, they decided to go to Dover with the intention of using the vessels there to sail to the aid of their lord. They were prevented from doing so, however, by a storm that was beginning to blow up and by a powerful headwind. This forced them [185], to their great annoyance, to idle away two weeks before they could set out. During this fortnight Louis and his men had been suffering a great deal because of their food running out. A decision was ultimately taken on what they should do next.

Among those present at the discussion was Eustache le Moine, and he addressed Louis: 'Sire, if you were to fit out a particular long-boat which is here at Winchelsea and which I know to be an excellent vessel, since it used to belong to me, you could inflict heavy losses on the English fleet. Here at Winchelsea there are some very large boats that we have acquired. My proposal, with your approval, is to construct on one of the largest ones a forecastle so huge and unique that everyone can only marvel at it. This boat would then be towed behind the long-boat as an escort in order to defend it from attack.' Louis replied that the plan seemed to him to be an excellent one, and that it had his unqualified approval. Eustace then set to work constructing so huge a forecastle on the boat that everyone who saw it could only gaze in wonder. Its dimensions were such that it jutted out from the body of the boat on both sides. On another tall boat Eustace installed a catapult with which to bombard the enemy's boats, and this armoured vessel was to sail immediately behind the boat with the forecastle. Louis had two catapults erected on the shore to shell the English boats right over on the other side of the estuary, and this inflicted grave damage on them. But before construction of the forecastle could be completed, the English, by some stroke of luck, found out about Eustace's scheme. They came over to Winchelsea in their boats one evening and simply commandeered the long-boat which they proceeded to smash to pieces under the noses of the French, much to their fury.

An exasperated Louis asked [Adam] viscount of Melun why the long-boat had been so poorly [186] guarded and why he had allocated so few lookouts to it. 'On my oath,' replied the viscount, 'your men are so starving that I can find no one willing to do guard duty, and this very night you wouldn't find even four knights willing to act as lookouts.' To this Louis replied that rather than have no lookout, the viscount should do the job himself. The prince began violently to upbraid the viscount when one Eustache de Neuville, the son of a fine knight and himself a very courageous knight, spoke up and said to Louis: 'Sire, the viscount doesn't know what he's talking about when he says that you wouldn't find even four knight to do lookout duty for you. You will find at least forty who would do it.' 'By my oath,' replied the viscount, 'I do know, sir Eustache, what I'm talking about. It's not true; he won't find forty.' 'By my oath,' said Eustache, 'it is indeed possible, my lord viscount.' 'Sir Eustache,' replied the viscount, 'then go ahead and find them! I've not been able to.'

‘With pleasure,’ said sir Eustache, ‘I myself will be on lookout tonight in addition to my forty knights, and tomorrow night also, and for as many nights as he wants after that. And it won’t be necessary for him to do lookout duty himself.’ Whereupon Eustache left Louis and went to his lodgings, and from there called together all of his friends. Then, fully armed, he came to where Louis was staying, bringing the forty knights with him. That night he kept guard, and did so in an entirely correct and proper fashion, which earned him prince Louis’ fulsome gratitude.

The next day help arrived from Dover in a timely and well planned operation. Raoul Plomquet and Jean de Beaumont’s boat was the first to arrive, and the English boats came up so close that it looked very much as if there was going to be armed conflict. A cog-boat [187] bore down on them, making a great show of joining battle, but the moment it was ready to strike, it veered off so abruptly that it smashed into a long-boat, sinking it, drowning all the sailors in it. All aboard were lost – much to the delight of the French. The English boats withdrew, and this was shortly followed by the arrival at Winchelsea of the entire French fleet. Louis and his men were overjoyed. They boarded and crossed over to Rye which they captured without delay [on February 28 1217]. They found it to be exceptionally well provisioned with food and wine, which was exactly what the army needed.

Louis then made preparations to cross the Channel to France, leaving behind him his nephew Enguerrand de Coucy to defend the country. He had orders to go to London to keep guard over the city, and on no account to leave it. At Rye Louis left a garrison under the command of Baudouin de Corbeil who had recently come from France in the boats sent by the prior of Saint-Vaast. Louis then crossed over to France where he stayed until after Easter – without once conferring with his father.

During the time that Louis was in France, his campaign in England took a serious turn for the worse. William Longespée, earl of Salisbury, turned against him and went over to his nephew young king [Henry], as did William Marshal and many others. The royalists mounted numerous raids throughout the country, besieging and taking a large number of castles. They took Farnham and Odiham [188] in addition to other strongholds. Ponce de Beaumetz, a knight from Artois, was captured at Farnham, and [Peter des Roches] bishop of Winchester had him thrown into prison where he inflicted a great deal of suffering on him. Fulk de Breauté attacked the Isle of Ely and took the castle with the brave and valiant Adam de Neuilly, one of Louis’ bailiffs, still in it. Adam had been bailiff of Saint-Omer and Aire and was on very good terms with Louis whom he had served with distinction in England.

Back in France Louis was far from pleased when he heard this news. Towards Easter he made for Calais with a small company of knights. He brought with him a special siege engine, a sling catapult, which was much talked about at the time since so few of them had ever been seen in France. In the evening of Good Friday [March 31 1217] Louis had his horses put on board the boats, and a little before dawn he himself set sail with his fleet. I can give you the names of the high-ranking barons who crossed the Channel with him: [Pierre] count of Brittany and his brother Robert de Dreux, [Thomas] count of Le Perche, [Baudouin III] count of Guînes, [Daniel] lord of Béthune, the seneschal of Flanders whose name was Hellin de Wavrin, [Gilles] castellan of Beaumetz, Guillaume de Fiennes, Hugue de Malaunay, Raoul Plomquet, Raoul d’Estrées, [Adam] viscount of Melun, Adam

de Beaumont, Jean d'Oissy, Florent d'Hangest, Gui de Morainville, son of Urse the chamberlain, and several others whose names I am not able to give. In all there were hardly more than one hundred and forty knights. [189] The next day, Saturday, they had a favourable wind and a calm sea, and they proceeded as serenely as if they were crossing a pond. They sailed so close to Dover that they could quite clearly see the quarters where they had previously camped, and which were still standing.

At the same time as this was happening, Oliver fitz Roy, king John's bastard son, arrived at Dover with Willikin of the Weald and a large company of men. They killed a number of those left guarding Louis' camp and set fire to the living quarters that very quickly burned to the ground. When Louis and his men, approaching from the sea, saw the smoke, they did not dare land at Dover for fear of the local militia who had every opportunity of shooting at the boats from the top of the cliffs. So they veered to starboard and came to Sandwich [on April 22 1217] and made their quarters in the town. The next day [Hervé] count of Nevers arrived there with a small company of men. Louis then went to Dover on horseback and took lodgings in the priory, where he learned that the young king and his troops had laid siege to four of the prince's castles, namely Winchester, Southampton, Marlborough and Mountsorrel, a castle belonging to the earl of Winchester. Louis reacted by arranging with Hubert de Burgh to extend the truce. He then returned to Sandwich where, having selected the best of his knights and his most experienced sailors, he gave his men permission to board the boats, all of which he then sent back.

On the same day he went to Canterbury [190] where he spent the night, before setting off at a gallop for Winchester. He spent the next night at a convent by the name of Malling abbey, and there he was joined by [Saer de Quincy] earl of Winchester, William de Coleville [MS Dingfueil], Simon de Longton and several other Englishmen. The next day, Wednesday, he had a long journey from Malling to Guildford. The baggage train, however, was not able to follow and spent the night at Reigate instead together with Gerard La Truie's rear-guard. The same day saw the arrival of Enguerrand de Coucy to join Louis together with most of the other knights who had been in the London garrison. The next day, Thursday [April 27], Louis reached Farnham which he found all set to resist him. It was on the same day that he learned that Winchester castle had fallen to the English, together with the castles of Southampton and Marlborough. Only Mountsorrel was holding out. Louis then attacked Farnham castle. He quickly overcame the outer bailey, but the castle itself was left impregnable. The baggage train arrived that day.

The next day the earl of Winchester came to Louis with a large body of English knights. He requested him to lend him some of his knights in order to go and relieve Mountsorrel castle. It was impossible for Louis to refuse, so he sent [Thomas] count of Le Perche, Simon de Poissy, Hugue de Roet, Hugue Céret, Guillaume de Fiennes, Ancel [de Béthune]'s two brothers, and Baudouin de Béthune, a young knight who was the son [191] of that fine knight [Baudouin] count of Aumale. Louis wanted [Daniel] lord of Béthune to go as well, so he summoned him. Daniel complied, bringing with him Gilbert de Coupigny, a knight of his who had strongly advised him against going on the expedition. Daniel, who was not in a position to go at that particular time, was easily convinced. At the same time his decision troubled him because, had he been able, he would have been pleased to go, being someone who was usually very anxious to serve Louis. In answer to Louis' request Daniel replied that it was not possible for him to go. Louis then asked [Hellin de Wavrin] seneschal of Flanders and Hugue Tacon, both of whom also declined to go because they were not free to do so.

Early next day the earl of Winchester, with a large contingent of English knights, left Louis, taking with him also as many as seventy knights from overseas that Louis had lent him. He came to Montsorrel castle and brought the siege to an end [in early May 1217]. On the same day as the earl of Winchester's departure, Louis left Farnham and set out for Winchester, having ordered the lord of Béthune and the seneschal of Flanders to form his rear-guard. This they did along with Hugue Tacon, Gerard La Truie and Florent d'Hangest. The lord of Béthune also took with him three knights from Flanders who had joined the garrison at London at his request: Eustache de Hersin, Jean de Paschau and Jean de Nue. The men stationed at Winchester pursued them for the whole of the day, but never dared engage or even come close enough to the rear-guard [192] for them to be seen.

Louis' men arrived safely at Winchester. The French squires, who had gone on ahead that morning to arrange for lodgings, found some of the young king's men still in the town, but on seeing the French they ran away in the most shameful fashion. When Louis reached Winchester, he found a large part of the castle walls demolished thanks to the efforts of the sappers. [Hervé] count of Nevers, to whom Louis had granted the castle, immediately had the walls repaired as best he could. Where there were gaps in the walls he had huge oak stakes driven in, while he had the ditches restored as far as he was able. While these works were being carried out, Louis stayed at Winchester from Sunday [May 20] until Ascension day on Thursday [May 24].

Then he left and rode to London where the count of Nevers installed his garrison in the Tower. As they were leaving, news came that the king's men at Dover were breaking the truce. Troops coming from France to join Louis had been prevented from landing at Dover [on May 29]. They had been driven back, some even killed. The count of Nevers' marshal came close to being killed himself, but Hubert de Burgh's powerful position guaranteed his protection. This news meant that Louis spent only two nights in London before coming to besiege Dover castle. This was on the eve of Whitsun [Thursday June 1st], the same day as a fleet of forty or more boats carrying Louis' men [193] attempted to land. A strong wind blew up, however, and the sea turned rough, and this drove them all back to Calais. But five boats succeeded in landing, though with much difficulty.

The following Monday [June 5] the boats that had been forced back to Calais returned and came sailing up to Dover. As they approached, Philip d'Aubigny and Nicholas Harangod [MS Haringos] came from the direction of Romney with eighty boats, both small and large, and attacked them with twenty large vessels fully provided with battlements and ready equipped for the fight. Louis' men, whose boats were smaller, preferred not to wait and face them, and started to retreat to Calais. Twenty-seven of these boats, however, did not make the return journey. They had to continue bearing down straight at the enemy, thus putting their lives in danger. Eight of these twenty-seven French boats were captured, and nineteen managed to escape in great fear. The sailors and soldiers who were on board the eight boats were soon all killed, while the knights were taken prisoner and put in the ships' holds where they were subjected to some very bad treatment.

The English then dropped anchor in front of the castle and stayed there undisturbed, keeping guard over the town and preventing any provisions or other assistance from reaching Louis via the sea. Louis then sent some of his troops to burn down Hythe and Romney. The Weald bandits attacked them, but they were defeated.

I will stop telling you about Louis here, and will concentrate instead on what happened to the contingent that, as you have already heard, went to Mountsorrel to relieve the siege. During the time [194] they were there when the earl [of Winchester] was having his stronghold repaired after the damage caused by the mangonels, Hugue castellan of Arras arrived. He had been at the siege of Lincoln with the Northern rebels. He requested the earl to come with his army to Lincoln castle. If they did so, the enemy would not be able to resist for much longer, for the earl was on the point of taking the castle, and if this were to be the case, they should know that Louis' cause would be much enhanced. There were some people who agreed to go, and some that were unwilling to do so. Finally agreement was reached, and they all marched off to Lincoln and set up their quarters in the town.

On hearing this news, William Marshal, earl of Pembroke and regent of the kingdom, his son William, the earls of Chester and Salisbury, earl [William] de Ferrers, Fulk de Breauté and Robert de Gaugy, and all the barons loyal to the young king who were in the region, came together from all directions. They ordered supplies to be made ready and set off for Lincoln in the wake of Louis' army. On the eve of Whitsun [Saturday May 20 1217] the battle took place. The royalists captured the town from Louis' men and defeated them. [Thomas] count of Le Perche lost his life, while those taken prisoner included [Saer] earl of Winchester and his son Robert, a fine upright young knight, Robert fitz Walter, William de Coleville [MS Dodinguell], Gilbert de Clare, William Mowbray and almost all the English magnates. Very few escaped. Among those from overseas [195] only three high-ranking barons escaped: Simon de Poissy, Hugue castellan of Arras, and the third was Eustache de Merlinghem constable of the Boulonnais. Hugue de Céret was taken prisoner but almost immediately released with the assistance of friends he had in the army. Among the English to escape were William de Mandeville and [John de Lacy] constable of Chester, and a handful of others whose names I do not know. The papal legate was in the neighbourhood at the time, and he was very pleased indeed with the outcome. Everyone agreed on a day when they would meet up at Oxford, and from there, so they said, they would go to London.

The survivors fled to London and were very relieved indeed when they reached it. News of this reached Louis at the siege of Dover on the Thursday after Whitsun [May 25]. He consulted his advisors on what he should do, and the unanimous agreement was that he should go to London and in the meantime ask for assistance to be sent over from France. He dismantled his sling-catapult and prepared to leave. But his advisors appealed to him to wait until the end of Sunday to see whether there would be any news from France. Louis followed this advice and waited passively until Sunday [May 28].

Sunday dawned bright, and they could see clearly out to sea. As they looked in the direction of Calais, they saw a large number of boats with full sails set, and this was a great source of encouragement for them. The next day, Monday, they clearly saw these boats sailing along in close formation, and there were easily one hundred and twenty of them. Most of them, however, consisted of foot-soldiers, merchants or sailors, and only eighteen of them contained knights. Aboard one of the largest boats [196] was Eustache de Neuville together with Eustache de Lens, the castellan's uncle, and some other knights.

When the English saw this fleet, they took to their boats and set sail out into the open sea. Eustache de Neuville and the others began to pursue them, and this they did with great energy but without being able to catch up with them. When the French saw that the English were out of reach, they turned their boats around and sailed back towards Dover. Seeing this, the English did likewise and attacked the French fleet from the rear. In that way they captured eight of their boats, and the rest made landfall at Dover. Louis came down to the shore to greet them, and was greatly upset to see what paltry assistance had been sent over to him.

That evening Louis took the decision to go to London on the following day. He had his letters drawn up and the next day sent back all of his boats. The letters were to be carried by Gui d'Athée, a clerk of his who was high chancellor. They were to be delivered to king Philippe and to other magnates, requesting help. He then proceeded to set fire to all the boats drawn up on dry land in front of the harbour, after which he went on to Canterbury where he spent the night.

On June 1st Louis came to London and was received with great ceremony. He lodged in the bishop's house, and his men found quarters in the town. The English and all their army passed through Windsor and went to Staines and then Chertsey. They set up their camp in the countryside around, and felt safe doing so because they were convinced that neither Louis nor his men [197] would dare leave the city undefended given their mistrust of the townspeople of London.

At this point the archbishop of Sidon [? MS Sur], who had come from abroad to preach [the crusade] in France, arrived in England. On hearing that there was a war on, he had come in order to broker a peace, if that were to be possible. Three Cistercian abbots accompanied him, one from Clairvaux, one from Cîteaux and the third from Pontigny. The four of them came to London to converse with Louis and to speak to members of the army. They succeeded in calling several meetings in which Louis' men held joint discussions with the young king's. But peace proved not to be possible. The reason was that Louis wished to appoint four of his clerics [to official positions] in the kingdom, but these were people whom the papal legate detested, and he was adamant that they would not be appointed. The four clerics in question were master Simon Langton, brother of the archbishop of Canterbury, master Gervase of Howbridge, dean of the canons of St Paul's, Robert de Saint-Germain, one of the king of Scotland's clerks, and Elias [of Dereham ?], one of the archbishop of Canterbury's clerks.

These four worked wonders. Before a cross on the altar of St Paul's they preached sermons to the people of London, telling them that the royalists had been excommunicated, that Louis and his men were good people, that the pope had been wrong to excommunicate them, and all of this they attempted to prove by rational argument. For their outrageous words and deeds the four were subsequently deprived of their livings and exiled from the country. Peace proving to be impossible, [198] the archbishop and his three abbots left London and crossed back over the Channel.

The royalists disbanded their army, and everyone went back to their own part of the country. Louis then sent [Adam] viscount of Melun to Bury St Edmunds with a large contingent of knights to harry the region. Eustache de Neuville, ever eager to do what needed to be done, joined this campaign along with Hugue Tacon and several others. They completed their expedition by

pillaging Bury St Edmunds, plundering the surrounding country, and winning vast quantities of booty, before returning to London.

At the time when this expedition was getting underway, Louis' wife, Blanche of Castile, was in Calais mustering as many troops and knights as she could to send to the assistance of her husband in England. Robert de Courtenay was one of those willing to make the crossing, as was Michel de Harnes and other knights. In all, however, numbers never even reached one hundred. As they prepared for the crossing, the English kept coming up to the harbour and shooting at them. One day as many as three hundred of them came over, and when the French saw them, they armed, took to their boats and confronted the English. However the English boats were undermanned, which resulted in their being captured. The French acquired at least one hundred and forty boats, and the remaining vessels fled to different ports in England.

One night the French sailed up to Dover and anchored there. [199] The next day their intention was to sail up to the mouth of the Thames, but a storm blew up and a raging sea forced them back, in great fear, to Boulonnais and Flanders. The royalists very quickly learned about this, and mustered their forces at Oxford. They marched past Windsor and set up quarters in the countryside around London – but much closer to the city than they had dared do the last time. The papal legate went to spend the night at Kingston, a town ten English leagues from London. There it was reported to him that the French had left London and were coming to attack the royalists. Immediately mounting a saddle-horse, he was careful not to forget to take his spurs with him, and he did not stop galloping until he had fled as far as Windsor.

Talk turned to peace once more, and the royalists agreed to a meeting with Louis' people. The meeting lasted for several days, but broke up without any declaration of peace. The legate then wanted London to be besieged, but the barons disagreed and all went their separate ways, each returning to his own home. Once they had gone, Louis left the bishop's house where he had been staying and went to live in the Tower for greater security. In the meantime both [William] de Warenne and [William d'Aubigny] earl of Arundel had gone over to the young king's side. William de Warenne had gone [in early June] to inform Louis, still at that stage in the bishop's house, that he no longer considered himself to be his man. Hervé count of Nevers [200] came to live in the bishop's house when Louis moved out. After this, [Pierre] count of Brittany led a brilliant campaign as a result of which the common people won a large amount of booty, and when they returned to London, they told everyone how pleased they were with him.

Around this time a certain Cistercian monk, who was also a papal penitencer, arrived in England. He came to London to consult Louis. Despite making every effort to bring about peace, this was not something he could ever achieve. Queen [Blanche] herself then came to a meeting called by the count of Nevers at a place between London and Windsor. The parties made polite conversation and left again on equally polite terms, but without there being any declaration of peace. The role played by lady Blanche in Calais, where she had done everything in her power to enlist help for her husband, was perfectly well known to William Marshal senior. The marshal then headed for Dover, taking with him William de Warenne and William's nephew Richard [de Warenne], king John's son. His mother had been John's first cousin, the earl of Warenne's sister [Adela], and this made Richard both John's son and his cousin.

On saint Bartholomew's day [August 24 1217] the troops raised by lady Blanche left Calais and came sailing towards the mouth of the Thames. There were almost eighty boats, both large and small. Ten of the large ones were already fully armoured, four consisting of knights, six of foot-soldiers, while the other smaller vessels contained equipment and supplies. On Eustache le Moine's boat [201] were, in addition to Eustache, Robert de Courtenay, that fine knight Robert de La Tournelle, who was to be killed subsequently in God's service at the siege of Toulouse, Guillaume des Barres, the young son of that fine and distinguished knight of the same name, Nevelot de Chanle, son of the bailiff of Arras, as well as other knights, making thirty-six persons in all. In the second boat containing knights was Michel de Harnes, and in the third [Guillaume III] castellan of Saint-Omer. The fourth boat was the mayor [?] of Boulogne's, and a large crowd of other knights boarded it. The six boats of foot-soldiers were fully equipped with battlements and well prepared for the fight.

When they arrived off the Isle of Thanet, they were spotted by the royalists who had gathered at Sandwich. They lost no time in boarding eighteen large boats that they had, and several smaller vessels, and sailed out to confront the French. Hubert de Burgh himself set out to sea, as did Robert fitz Roy and several other knights. William de Warenne, however, did not leave the shore, concentrating instead on making ready one of the boats containing knights and foot-soldiers and which flew his own ensign.

The English caught up with the French fleet and engaged. The boat containing William de Warenne's men was the first to attack the boat with Eustache le Moine and Robert de Courtenay on board, and the ensuing combat was a ferocious one. They continued fighting until three other English boat's came to William's assistance, and this resulted in Eustache's boat being completely surrounded. The English fought furiously, pelting the enemy with rocks and powdered lime [202] which had the effect of blinding them all, and they finally succeeded in capturing them. Among those taken prisoner were Robert de Courtenay, the queen's uncle – he was the brother of [Isabelle] countess of Angoulême's mother [Alice de Courtenay] –, Guillaume des Barres, Raoul de la Tournelle, Nevelot d'Arras, as well as all the knights who were on board. Eustache le Moine was decapitated, and his executioner was a sailor called Stephen Trabe who had been a long-term ally of his.

None of the larger vessels were captured, as they took advantage of their superior speed to make off. Of the smaller craft a large number were wrecked, and the people captured in them were unceremoniously slaughtered. What more need I say? The defeat was overwhelming, and the English spent a long time pursuing the enemy before returning to Sandwich with their prisoners and their booty – which was considerable. The knights were held prisoner in comfortable conditions in the town, while Eustache le Moine's head, stuck on the end of a pike, was taken to Canterbury and paraded there, before being put on display throughout the whole of the surrounding area.

This battle took place on St Bartholomew's day which was a Thursday [August 24 1217]. News of it reached Louis in London late on Saturday evening, and it roused him to great anger, as was only right. The following Monday Robert de Dreux was given a safe-conduct to allow him to go to Rochester to speak with William Marshal, and he arranged permission for Robert de Courtenay to go to London to speak to Louis. Robert de Courtenay arrived in London on the Tuesday, and Robert

de Dreux stood surety for him. Robert de Courtenay arranged to have Louis come and speak with William Marshal and [203] Hubert de Burgh in front of Rochester castle. They spoke, and as a result undertook to try, in all good faith and as hard as they could, to bring about peace – a peace that would be honourable for Louis.

Louis came back to London, while the others made for Windsor where queen [Blanche] had arrived on a second visit, accompanied by the papal legate. An assembly of barons was called, and a large number of troops came with them. William Marshal kept Louis waiting from Tuesday [September 5] to Saturday [the 9th] before making any move on the agreement they had come to together. On seeing this, Louis summoned those of his barons whom he trusted to a private meeting in his apartments to seek their advice on what he should do. The decision taken was that, before daybreak, he should move out of the city and take his whole army to do battle with the royalists. Better, they thought, to take the risk than to stay hemmed in for any length of time.

The sun was setting and it was already dark, and Louis' men were faced with the prospect of getting up early next day, wherever they happened to be staying, and having little time to make the necessary preparations. At this precise moment a letter from William Marshal was delivered to Louis' apartments. Listen to what it said! William Marshal sent greetings to Louis as his squire and requested him, in the name of God, to declare a truce for the whole of the following day, and to send Hugue de Malaunay to speak with him and the other royal counsellor. Louis himself read this letter out and then explained it to his barons. When asked for their advice, they all agreed that he should do as requested. In accordance with the decision of his counsellors, Louis sent Hugue de Malaunay to the royalist camp which now included queen Blanche and her barons.

When Hugue arrived, he reported that they were in agreement for the truce, and then began talks with William Marshal. Discussions developed to a point where a meeting was arranged [204] for Tuesday [September 12 1217], with the royalists demanding that the truce be extended until Thursday. The queen gave her formal approval to this arrangement, and it was officially guaranteed by William Marshal, his son William, the earls of Salisbury, Warenne and Arundel, and several other magnates. On Monday Hugue de Malaunay went back to London and gave Louis an account of what had been decided. Louis then summoned all of his counsellors, and those English barons who were still his allies – not forgetting the citizens of London, to seek their advice. The proposal met with unanimous approval, and the next day he left to attend the meeting which was to be held on an island upstream from Kingston towards Windsor.

The two parties faced one another on opposite sides of the river. Louis and his counsellors took a boat and were rowed over to the island to find both the queen and the legate, the latter dressed all in scarlet. The talks between Louis and the queen, the legate, William Marshal and the young king's second counsellor culminated in a peace treaty being agreed. The terms were that Louis should return to the young king all the land he had conquered in England, and that he should swear on holy relics that he would never come to England with the intention of harming the king. In this way Louis and all his men would be exonerated, and all his prisoners would be returned. Most importantly of all, he would pay ten thousand marks sterling to cover the income that Henry had been deprived of, and seven thousand marks for the defeat at Lincoln, making seventeen thousand marks in all.

These were the terms on which peace was agreed. That day, however, was not the only day of reckoning, since the bishops had not been represented at Kingston by their clerks [205], so the meeting was reconvened on the following day to complete the process of exoneration. While the royalists went back to their homes, Louis and his men returned to London. The next day, Wednesday, both sides returned to the meeting. The legate and the bishops dressed in their silk copes and put on their mitres, and the ceremony of absolution was performed. It applied to Louis and all of his men with the exception of the four clerics I have already told you about. These were excluded from the island for the duration of the ceremony. The legate sent the papal penitencer to London, where he had been previously, to absolve the townspeople and others who had not attended the meeting.

Louis remained in the city for some time until all the details of the peace settlement were ratified. When he left, he was accompanied by the legate and the barons as far as the coast. Before he reached there, the papal legate called a meeting at Canterbury [on September 13] where he imposed a penance on Louis and his men for the sins they had committed in the course of the war. For two years they were to forfeit one twentieth of all their income, including any legal awards made in their favour, or one tenth in the case of Louis. The resulting sum was to be sent overseas in support of the crusader states, which would earn them the same full pardon as crusaders. Around the same time as this was happening, news reached England of the capture, by the Greeks, of the emperor of Constantinople Pierre [II de Courtenay], who had previously been count of Nevers and Auxerre, and who was Robert de Courtenay's brother.

Louis then crossed the Channel [on September 29 1217] and returned to France. The barons in the meantime went back home announcing news of the king's peace over the whole of the kingdom. Woods bordering highways were cut down to foil the bandits. There followed a period of widespread peace [206] throughout the land, and holy Church was once more revered and honoured. The legate came to St Paul's in London where he had all the altars dismantled, the chalices broken up and the vestments burned. These he had replaced with new ones, he installed new canons and removed the benefices of the previous ones who had continued to celebrate church services against his instructions. He also had the city's parish priests replaced by priests from Huplandre [nr Boulogne].

[In July 1217] queen [Isabelle] went to Poitou and to her native city of Angoulême, which was part of her dower. She secured the allegiance of all the region, becoming thereby first lady of the whole county. She waged a very bitter war against one particular high-ranking baron by the name of Renaud de Pons. The well fortified castles that he possessed enabled him to defend himself, and out in the open country as well he had no reason to fear Isabelle. She arranged the marriage of her daughter [Joan] to Hugue [X] de Lusignan, son of Hugue le Brun count of La Marche, in order to secure his help. She reneged, however, on this marriage and married Hugue herself – a decision that set tongues wagging.

The summer that followed the peace settlement between young king Henry of England and prince Louis son of king Philippe of France, [Hugh of Wells] bishop of Lincoln came to William Marshal to make a formal complaint against Robert de Gaugy who refused to return the castle at

Newark to him. The marshal, therefore, as regent of the kingdom called up the king's army, attacked Robert de Gaugy and succeeded in having the castle returned to the bishop of Lincoln.

During this same summer, the Christians, under king Jean of Jerusalem, besieged Damietta [in June 1218]. Jean, who was also count of Brienne, [207] had been elected king of the holy city by the Templars, the Hospitallers, by [Leopold VI] duke of Austria, and several other leading figures. Also in the course of this summer, news reached England of the death at Brunswick [on May 19 1218] of Otto emperor of Rome. Simon de Montfort [the Elder] also died at this time [on June 25 1218] at the siege of Toulouse where he was killed.

William Marshal died the following summer [on May 14 1219], after which young king Henry was placed under the guardianship of [Peter des Roches] bishop of Winchester, and Philip d'Aubigny. What I forgot to tell you was that, before he died, William Marshal entered the order of the Templars. I also forgot to mention that, as soon as peace was declared, the English began to organise tournaments, and during the first two years a large number of tournaments were staged.

After the death of William Marshal in June there was a battle at Damietta on St John the Baptist's day [June 24 1219] in which the infidels defeated the Christians, capturing and killing a large number of them. This was a huge loss and one greatly to be deplored. Then shortly after All Saints' day [November 1st 1219] God took pity on his people, and Damietta was miraculously re-taken. News of this reached England and France the following Lent [February 1220].

Before this happened, the regent of England had sent Philip d'Aubigny, Alan Basset, the abbot of Stratford [? MS Estrafort] and a certain Cistercian abbot to the king of France to extend the truce which was due to expire at Easter [1220]. The king kindly extended it for four more years, and would accept no payment in return. Had he so wished, he could have asked for ten thousand pounds sterling. [208]

After Whitsun young king Henry was crowned in London [on May 17 1220] to universal rejoicing. After the king's coronation, the day following the octaves of the blessed martyrs and apostles St Peter and St Paul [July 7 1220] Stephen Langton archbishop of Canterbury officiated at the translation of the remains of the holy martyr Thomas Becket. His body was found to be uncorrupted, his wounds still fresh, and a sweet fragrance emanated from the grave. The written record reveals that Becket was born on a Tuesday, was consecrated as archbishop on a Tuesday, and was martyred on a Tuesday, and this is why it was on a Tuesday that his body was enshrined in a reliquary.

The ceremony was attended by king Henry and almost all of the high barony of England, in addition to the papal legate Pandulf. I forgot to tell you about the legate Guala: he left England just before William Marshal's death and returned to Rome. Pandulf, who had re-established spiritual authority in England during the reign of king John, was papal legate in England at the time of Becket's translation. In attendance from overseas were queen Berengaria, king Richard's wife whose dower included Le Mans; [Guillaume de Joinville] archbishop of Reims accompanied by three bishops from his archbishopric: the bishop of Amiens, the bishop of Tournai, and a third; count Robert de

Dreux and Gui [II] de Châtillon, son of Gautier [III] count of Saint-Pol, [209] and many other dignitaries from France.

The English barons made a splendid courtly gesture: a long time before the translation was due to take place, they issued a proclamation forbidding any Englishman to take lodgings in Canterbury. They did this so that visitors from abroad could have all the accommodation available. All the high-ranking barons of England, therefore, were obliged to find rooms outside the town – all, that is, except William Marshal who stayed in the town in order to ensure the safety of the overseas guests and to prevent any mishap occurring.

The archbishop of Reims sang vespers on the Monday evening, and the next day, during the translation ceremony, he celebrated a solemn sung mass. This had been arranged by both the legate and the archbishop of Canterbury, with the intention of honouring someone who was among the most illustrious archbishops in the world. It was in the year of our Lord Jesus Christ 1220 in the month of July that the body of the holy martyr St Thomas Becket of Canterbury was enshrined in a reliquary in the presence of a papal legate, two archbishops, twenty-five bishops, and a host of other clerical dignitaries.

End of the kings of England.

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