MS Valenciennes BM 197, f. 4v. Gilbert de la Poirrée's pupils: Jordan Fantosme (left)

JORDAN FANTOSME'S

VERAIE ESTOIRE

translated by Ian Short

http://www.anglo-norman-texts.net

In 1175, probably, one Jordan Fantosme composed a verse narrative in Anglo-Norman French describing the revolt by Henry II's son against his father in 1173-74. While still alive, Henry had had his son crowned as his successor, but then failed to adequately provide for him in terms of land, power and authority. In April 1173, Henry the Young King rebelled against his father and, with various allies, waged war on him for the next eighteen months or so. The revolt finally failed, and peace was restored in September 1174.

Jordan Fantosme was an historically-minded Anglo-Norman cleric, not a professional vernacular poet. This is visible first and foremost at the formal level in his use of non-standard versification in its rhyming stanzas. There is, in addition, convincing evidence that a number of his verse lines have been plagiarised from other contemporary literary texts. His originality, on the other hand, lies in his being the first known author in the history of French literature to record contemporary political events in the vernacular. He claims, moreover, to have been an eye-witness to some of the events he records. This does not, of course, automatically confer any superior historicity on his text. Its realistic narrative has, however, attracted the attention of several modern historians, most notably Matthew Strickland. It is clear that the poem is to be seen as a valuable, though not necessarily factually accurate, source for the events it selects for dramatization. Critics sometimes forget that Fantosme is, first and foremost, writing literature, not history. In its mixture of fiction and fact, in other words, we are allowed to consider it to be either history as literature or poetry as historiography, according to one's critical viewpoint. At the stylistic level, it is characterised by a mixture of discourses, one remote, learned and in Latinate prose, the other, more immediate, vernacular and in verse. In this sense Fantosme can be seen as successor to Geffrei Gaimar's *Estoire des Engleis* (1136-37) which Rosalind Field categorised as 'romance as history and history as romance.' Other manifestations of this admixture of discourses accommodating historiography to existing literature are Wace's *Roman de Rou* (1160-75), *La Geste des Engleis en Yrlande* (1187-1200), Ambroise's history of the Third Crusade (1190s), and the *Histoire de Guillaume le Maréchal*, which even in 1226 was still employing verse to celebrate the colourful life of Henry III's regent. The use of the generic term 'chronicle' to describe Fantosme's poem is a modern and misleading convention. The author himself calls his narrative a *veraie estoire*.

Various records allow us to reconstruct Fantosme's career in part. He was a pupil of Gilbert de la Porré, the scholastic theologian who taught at Chartres, Paris and Poitiers in the period 1142 to 1154, and he is mentioned in Gilbert's commentary on Boethius from the 1140s. Jordan was subsequently one of the clerics at the court of Henry of Blois, bishop of Winchester, brother of king Stephen and patron of the arts. After 1173 he was in the service of Henry's successor at Winchester bishop Richard of Ilchester. Jordan was also the author of a Latin poem on the Incarnation known as the *Rithmus Jordanis Fantasmatis*. Two other legal documents from the period 1150-80 confirm his presence in or around Winchester. One of them concerns an unlicensed school in the city, and invites the conclusion that Jordan was a senior teacher there. A linguistic analysis of his French shows him to be an insular Anglo-Norman rather than a continental Norman. Jordan's unusual surname obscures his family and origins, and has tempted commentators to see it as having originally been a nickname. His text reveals that he was particularly knowledgeable about the Northern border country, and perhaps had personal contact with the Scottish court.

As for what Fantosme's motives could have been in composing his history, we can only speculate. What could have inspired this learned cleric turned jongleur to innovate and straddle two cultures in the innovative way he does? Perhaps it was nothing more than his chance presence at some of the dramatic events he describes. In that case it would be the natural desire of an eye-witness to share his experience with contemporaries, especially if he happened to already possess some of the literary gifts to do so. Fantosme's clerical status would certainly have lent authority to his poem in the eyes of members of the nobility eager to keep abreast of the latest political developments in the 1170s. It would also, and more importantly, have been a guarantee of the story's veracity.

Fantosme wrote several decades before the rise of prose as a literary medium in vernacular historiography. He did so in the only register available to him, that of the epic poetry known as the *chanson de geste*. Indeed hyperbole is a rhetorical leitmotif exploited throughout his poem, and imagined dialogue is generously used to enliven the narrative. The chronicle is littered, especially in its battle scenes, with the same formulae and other linguistic features that would have been familiar to listeners of contemporary epic poetry, the *Chanson de Roland* for example. To this Fantosme adds other rhetorical devises: personal interjections, for example, and truth assertions which help authenticate the authorial voice. His religiosity, his homiletic and providentialist tone and his attraction to proverbs are routine feature of contemporary vernacular literature, romance as well as epic.

It is to be assumed that, as in all pre-literate cultures, Fantosme's history would have reached its largely aristocratic audience by way of oral recitation. Its structure needed, therefore, to be unilinear, and its characters more or less unidimensional. The principal theme of Jordan's history is loyalty. His political partisanship in favour of the old king is consistent, but does not exclude criticism. There is also the odd nod towards impartiality. Criticism of the Young king is muted. It is largely deflected away and onto king William the Lion of Scotland, whose hubris is punished by divine providence.

In terms of literary quality, it must be admitted that Fantosme's poem does not compare particularly favourably with much contemporary vernacular literature. He is certainly not in the same poetic league as Wace, for instance, or his contemporary historiographer Benoît de Sainte-

Maure. Leaving aside his plagiarism and the vexed question of his versification, Jordan can, however, be considered a poet of definite literary merit. He conveys a vivid sense of realism, and, despite his exclusively masculine focus, is an intellgent observer of the world and people around him. He succeeds, in particular, in maintaining a good, concise narrative dynamic, and gives a clear sense of direction to his story by judicious use of simplification and the omission of material he apparently judges extraneous. Some of his metaphors are occasionally striking, and flashes of humour and wry observations illuminate the dreary militarism of his subject matter. Certain of the set pieces he interpolates for light relief can reach an unexpectedly high literary standard, such as the fate of the Amazon-like, French-born countess of Leicester (969 ff.), or the lively dialogue between messenger and king in the royal bed-chamber (1956 ff.).

The preservation of Fantosme's poem in written form is to be seen in the context of growing literacy amongst the Anglo-Norman nobility, who played an active role in patronising works in the vernacular throughout the 12th century. There was social kudos, also, to be had from owning vernacular books. Constance fitzGilbert, Gaimar's patron, was literate and owned costly volumes which she read in her chamber. Wace admitted that he wrote for the rich in the hope that, having heard his histories read aloud, they would buy copies of them from him.

Only two manuscripts of Fantosme's chronicle have survived from the Middle Ages. For some critics, this could indicate that it had enjoyed only limited popularity at the time of its composition. The vagaries of manuscript preservation, however, would argue against such a hypothesis. Both extant manuscripts happen to have found their homes in cathedral towns in Eastern England. The older of the two (Durham Cathedral Library MS C. iv. 27) could well date from the closing years of the 12th century, within a few years, therefore, of when the poem was composed. Fantosme's work here forms part of an historical compilation in which his text is preceded by Gaimar's *Estoire des Engleis*, and then by Wace's *Roman de Brut* (1155) — a broad chronological sweep, in other words, of English history from its supposed Trojan origins down to 1174. The Lincoln manuscript (Lincoln Cathedral Chapter Library MS 104), which dates from the end of the 13th century, has the same contents in the same order. It may have belonged to Cerne abbey in Dorset.

Jordan's text was first edited in 1840 by Francisque Michel, and an English translation of it by Joseph Stevenson was published in 1855. A second edition of the French text by Richard Howlett appeared in 1886 in the Rolls Series. Another edition by Ph. A. Becker was made in 1944, and most recently a fourth by Ronald C. Johnston in 1981. Howlett's *pari-passu* English translation is painfully slavish, sometimes grotesque, Johnstone's much more scholarly and accurate. Both are literal, though to different degrees. The assumption behind them seems to be that the syntax, lexis and semantics of 12th-century French poetry can be adequately accommodated to 21st-century English prose simply by relying on word-for-word transposition. The risk here is of producing cribs rather than translations. The new version we offer below, on the other hand, attempts to convey the sense and tone of the original without mutilating the English language and without compromising accuracy. It is to be hoped that it might also better reflect something of the text's poetic qualities. An index of proper names has been added to enable historians to access specific individuals and places with ease.

Dean # 55. There is a bibliography on Fantosme up until 1992 in Strickland's article in *Medieval Knighthood IV.*

May God's blessing be on you all! Do you want to hear a true story about [Henry II] the best king who ever was? I consider it right and proper that I should tell all of you what happened, and this is why I have had the idea of writing it in verse. I admire people who are wise enough to learn from other people's mistakes. (4)

Your majesty, noble king of England, of most illustrious lineage, you will remember that, when you had your son crowned [in 1170], you had [William the Lion], king of Albany, swear homage to him with joined hands and in compliance with previous fealty. You said to both of them: "God's curse on anyone who severs the love and friendship between the two of you! William, support and stand by my son Henry with armed force and assistance against all-comers — saving my own sovereignty." Sometime later serious hostility broke out between you and your son, as a result of which many a noble knight lost his life, many a fighting man was thrown to the ground, many a saddle emptied, many a fine shield shattered, many a chain mail split open. After your son's crowning and your delegation of authority, you frustrated his ambitions and prevented him from exercising his power. This led to merciless war, God curse it! (20)

A king with no kingdom is in an impossible position. This was the case of the Young King, so noble and refined a man. Faced with a father preventing him from doing what he wanted, he made up his mind to rebel. He sneaked off to France, rode over the [upper course of the] Loire and, without stopping to eat or drink, reached Saint-Denis. There he gave an account of the situation in which he found himself to [Louis VII] king of France. Word was sent summoning Philippe, the warlike count of Flanders and his brother Mathieu de Boulogne, who was told to come along with him. They brought a huge number of troops with them; you never saw anything like it. (30)

At Saint-Denis king Louis of France held a grand council of all his allies. He was much preoccupied with the question of old king Henry, most unhappy, almost distraught, in fact, about the situation. Noticing this, the count of Flanders said: 'Don't be so downhearted. You have a huge army, brave and powerful enough to inflict considerable damage on your enemies. Let not a single vassal from your kingdom, providing he is of arms-bearing age, fail to swear by St. Denis that he is ready to come to your assistance.' This war with king Henry should never have been waged. (42)

Thibaut de France [count of Blois] rose to his feet and addressed the supreme commander before the whole assembly: 'Noble king of Saint-Denis, as your liege man in sworn fealty I am extremely troubled about all this. I am ready to fight for you myself and pledge my word to do so. I will serve you for forty days in the first instance. For the rest of his life, king Henry will not recover from the damage I intend to do him. If he fails to grant his son his rightful inheritance, namely the kingdom of England, he will not be safe from me wherever he hides, lowland or wood. If he is sensible enough to meet our demands, once your resentment passes, you could let him keep Normandy. If anyone here present were to speak up and explain to me that there is something wrong or out of order with what I am saying, I am willing to challenge him here and now in your court. Anyone seeking to bring shame on you should be considered guilty of swearing a false oath.' (58)

These are the reasons why they decided to declare war on king Henry and lay waste to lands that were once such attractive places. The king and his barons were quick to reach agreement, and

envoys were dispatched to several different regions. In April at Easter the French army was raised and, with pennons ready laced, rode into the borderlands. King Henry did not lose a moment in coming to confront them with as many as ten thousand Flemish mercenaries from Brabant, as well as a large number of noble knights from Anjou and Gascony. They can be counted on to put up a furious fight against the French. (68)

Louis' French army is huge also, and Henry's son wants to do everything in his power to defeat his father. He intends to beat him in battle, then have him taken to Saint-Denis as a prisoner of war. His father, however, has other ideas. He will fight many a joust against his enemies, see many a pennon, white, red and blue, flying in battle, many a strengthened shield, many a hot-blooded warhorse before there is any question of his being beaten and admitting defeat. (76)

The English monarch is heavy-hearted at the sight of his son, who he has brought up ever since he was a young child, waging war against him. As he sees it, the Flemings have led him astray by faithfully promising him the kingdom of England. However, in the event of his son being given that sort of power, Henry, as long as he can raise sword or lance, would prefer to die rather than go on living like that. A fierce pride lights up his face as he marshals his barons, then rides out to confront Louis, the mighty king of France, count Philippe of Flanders, of whom we have already spoken, and his valiant brother Mathieu. God's grace was much in evidence that day, and Henry's cause was greatly advanced by the aid which the Lord blessed him with. This was a welcome omen, also, of how this war was to end. The son's hopes for help from God were shattered that very same day when warlike Mathieu [de Boulogne] fell victim to the lance. No longer need king Henry go in awe of him. (92)

Another casualty is [Eustace IV] count of Boulogne. He dies from a wound that sends his crimson blood streaming right down onto his gilded spurs. Many people rush to his assistance, but it is not possible for him to recover. The more bitterly Philippe, his brother-in-law, grieves, the more alarmed he grows. He swears, by the precious blood of Christ, that never will he become reconciled with king Henry. (98)

Louis and the Young King counter-attack. Philippe of Flanders fights back in fury, as does the warlike Thibaut [V, count of Blois]. By now king Henry will be well aware of what change in tactics he needs to make. He is under attack from the French and from the Flemish and German mercenaries. The earl of Leicester [Robert de Beaumont] and all three of Henry's sons have joined in against him. Henry's sworn enemy [William] de Tancarville arrives with a hundred fully armed knights in his ranks. All these troops together represent a real danger for Henry and threaten to overwhelm him. Were he to lose this battle, all he will be left with is land not even worth the price of a hackney horse. (108)

To tell the truth, my lords, I find it most surprising that the king's own subjects should treat him as they are now doing. He is the most honourable and the most successful military leader there has been anywhere in the world since the time of Moses. He is second only, alongside Oliver and Roland, to the all-powerful Charlemagne of twelve peers fame. In neither fiction nor in historical record has anyone ever heard of a man of such strength and such power as Henry's. His proud boast is that, whatever danger may threaten him, nothing will stop him enjoying his hawking and hunting. (118)

Count Philippe of Flanders and his huge army move into Normandy and proceed to utterly devastate the countryside, lowland and wood. But you would never once have heard king Henry bewail his lot or look for an excuse to give up fighting. The Young King meanwhile is in his element and has many successes to his credit. Furthermore he has still got the barons from Brittany to call upon. When this comes to pass and news reaches his father, Henry is very angry and greatly displeased. He swears to his knights that it might have been better if such a thought had never entered his son's head. (126)

'Listen, my lords, to what I have to tell you. I have never, in the whole of my life, been as disturbed as I am now. In fact I am infuriated, and it is almost driving me out of my mind. The barons of Brittany have joined forces against me, increasing the number of those who hate me and wish to see me dead, the likes of king Louis of France and my eldest son Henry. They are bent on depriving me of the kingdom to which I have hereditary rights. They are trying to take my lands, my fiefs, my inheritance from me. It is common knowledge that I am not so old and debilitated that I should lose my lands because of my age. (136)

The moon is bright tonight, so make sure you are extra vigilant in standing guard, so as not to let the Flemings and locals set an ambush and attack us. As you know, the Breton barons are my subjects right up to Finistère, but Raoul de Fougères has rebelled against me together with Hugh earl of Chester, his sworn ally. I won't stop searching these men out wherever they are holed up. However much gold it might cost, I'll get my hands on them and their castles. Given that our enemies are so self-confident, the right thing to do is to attack them with all the ferocity we can muster. The siege-engine is a better weapon to use against an enemy that is behaving arrogantly than a feeble attack on an enemy that has lost heart.' To this the barons reply: 'There speaks a man of great courage. Your enemies are all in for a bad time. The country belongs to you. All you have to do is defend it. It is wrong of your son to be making war on you.' (152)

You should have seen those knights come hurrying down from the battlements, quickly snatching up their weapons, donning their hauberks and byrnies, lacing on their polished helmets, clutching at the straps of their shields of Viennese steel. You could then have heard king Henry invoking God and saying: 'Those treacherous knights will rue the day they ride out of the town in serried ranks only to find themselves confronting me in fields of stubble. There are more or less sixty thousand of them, each one convinced he is the equal of a Welsh kinglet.' (161)

King Henry and his troops make their way to Dol in Brittany. William de Humez, who is riding along with them, says: 'Let's not slacken our pace. Look! We're already within sight of the enemy's territory.' From up in their castle the Bretons have already recognised William's pennons and can already make out the men from Brabant that make up the rear-guard. 'Look! Here's the enemy from Normandy and they're going to crush us. They're great fighters, the Normans. No one can compare with them. History everywhere tells us that the Normans are conquerors. Bear this in mind, my lord Raoul [de Fougères], they are ferocious in combat. In his war against his father the Young King has failed us by straying from the highway and preferring to go fowling along the riverbank. What sort of defence can we put up here? I cannot see any. They won't be bought off by silver or gold, and begging for mercy is a waste of time.' (175)

Raoul answers him: 'We mustn't do anything rash. This is no joking matter, no time for levity or boasting. Anyone with a good suggestion should step forward and speak up. We are not afraid to

lose our limbs or even die. It is extremely foolish of old king Henry to demand that Brittany be annexed. His threats are a means of enriching himself and increasing his possessions. But such arrogant behaviour will get him nowhere. Let us have a discussion, without any quarrelling or conflict, about how best to avoid humiliation in present circumstances, and prevent our country being dismembered. This castle is not well fortified and not a place we can confidently defend. Let us go out, therefore, and face the enemy by mounting an attack against them!' (187)

The clash between lord William of Humez's troops and their foes took place in open countryside. Not a single self-respecting knight failed to break his lance in the battle. Anyone in search of an adversary to joust with was spoilt for choice. The Breton barons were repulsed and bundled back, all loudly lamenting, into their castle. (193).

Lord Raoul de Fougères is one of these. Another is Hugh earl of Chester, strident with self-pity. Catapults and siege engines are of no use to them now. They will pay heavily for the war they have been waging. An envoy is dispatched to king Henry at Rouen in Normandy, and he comes riding along the river bank on his black hawking horse. He gives a report of what has happened and how the king's valiant household knights have fared. He tells all about Raoul de Fougères and the earl of Chester too. Henry gives thanks to God in glory and to worthy St. Peter: 'My enemies are crushed! How sorry I am not to have been there myself!' (203)

Marshalling his faithful barons, he set out on the road to Dol in Brittany. Once there, he and his knights were happy to bask in the glory of his army's success. The people in the castle, on the other hand, were far from happy. Henry's arrival filled them with fear, as did the prospect of falling under his control. The provisions they had were not adequate to keep them alive for long. They therefore surrendered to king Henry, and he assumed authority over them. (211)

'My lords,' said king Henry, 'I am seeking your advice. You have every right to know that my son is doing me an injustice by trying to forcibly extract income from fiefs that belong to me. It is not right, in my view, that any of these monies should be handed over to him. No man of my authority has ever been known to be undermined in this way. Taking or obtaining anything by force is both unreasonable and illegal. This is a judgement that has been pronounced in many a court of law. I have been much maligned for safeguarding my rights. The Flemings in particular have criticised me, but that is no reason for this to continue and be to our disadvantage. (221)

I am asking you all, my lords, each one of you, to give me your support. Prove your courage in battle and in close combat! Fight for me, push yourselves to the limit! Show your love for me, and do not fail me in my hour of need. Take earl Hugh of Chester prisoner; make off with him and do with him what you will. As for Raoul de Fougères, I'll do what I please with him. I'll let him go without any reservation and let him occupy his castles, but only on condition that he first swear fealty to me. If subsequently he rebels against me or does anything amiss, he will no longer be the ruler of Brittany and will forfeit his fiefs and all that he has inherited. Put on your armour, my lords, and mount at the double! My son is waiting there, ready for battle. Let us pay him the money he is demanding with our steel swords, our javelins and freshly sharpened spears!' (235)

This call to arms gladdens the heart of many a knight, many a brave and sensible man. The earl of Chester, on the other hand, is feeling deeply unhappy and depressed. He will be lucky, he thinks, to ever get out of prison before he dies. The French army is terrified when they hear this alarming news. Even the bravest amongst them feels his heart miss a beat, and his body start shaking. Their leader [Louis], his blood boiling within him and his emotions in turmoil, attempts to soften the blow. He calls a meeting of his closest advisers. A letter is written in French and sealed with the royal ring. He summons the Young King's messengers into his presence, but it was king Louis himself who had instructed them on what they were to say. (247)

The envoys leave, carrying their message over the salt sea and the regions beyond, through forests, across plains and crossing rivers at swift-flowing fords. They arrive in Scotland where they catch up with the king. They present him with the letters on behalf of the Young King. Hear the actual words that were written in them: (253)

"To the king of Scotland, the most noble William, our blood relative with whom we share ancestors that go far back in time. Young king Henry, your liege lord, as you will remember, sends you affectionate greetings. I find it extremely surprising, amazing indeed, when I see a king as valiant and as powerful as you are, someone with such huge military strength at his disposal, failing, right from the start of my war against my father, to come with your barons to my assistance. In reward for your service, I would be willing to give you all the land along the coast [between the Tyne and the Tweed]. You never before possessed a fief of this size as part of your realm. I myself have never seen anything like it. You will enjoy full lordship over all of its towers and its castles. My condition is that you are willing to join forces with me, in which case I will give you Carlisle into the bargain and the whole of Westmorland, where there will be no one to challenge you. It will be your responsibility, though, to evict for me all those who are currently occupying these lands.' (270)

Hearing the Young King's message puts the king of Scotland in a real quandary. It is true that William does indeed owe him homage against all-comers. On the other hand, the Young King's greetings are those of a close family relative, one who would be willing to cede him territory, especially as, strictly speaking, the lands are already part of his kingdom and have been held over time by all kings of Scotland. What is more, it is a fact that William owes fealty, homage and service to the Young King's father. It would not, therefore, be right for him, on the strength of a mere promise, to dare take forcible possession of king Henry's land before first securing a formal grant of inheritance from him. If the king should refuse, William would then be free to do as he wishes and renounce his homage to Henry without further debate. If this course of action were to be acceptable to the king, there is no court in the land that would contest the agreement. What royalty wills is considered as good as a legal judgement. (286)

King William called a formal meeting of his council to discover whether the best brains of his kingdom recommended him to honour the homage he had sworn to the Young King. There is not a single voice of dissent, and no one advises him against it. In another meeting with his barons, the king of Scotland gave an account of what he had heard about the Young King of England being at war with his father Henry. His son had been continually asking Henry for more territory, but the king had consistently refused. 'My intention now,' he said, 'is to send word to Henry in Normandy demanding that he return parts of my inheritance to me, in particular Northumberland that he is currently occupying. If he does not comply and turns down everything I am asking for, I will renounce the fealty I have sworn him and bring our friendship to an end.' (299)

Bravely earl Duncan [of Fife] speaks out: 'Old king Henry is a reasonable person, so you should be reasonable yourself in your dealings with him. Avoid above all offending him or blaming him in any way. Tell him that, if this is what he wants, you will perform the service you owe him as your liege lord. But in that case, let there be no misunderstanding: Henry will have to return to you what is rightfully yours. Then, and only then, you will come to his assistance with all due speed. When making a request, sweet talk delivered with moderation is more effective than threats. To act otherwise is to look for trouble, argument, destruction, and even death.' (309)

Wise words indeed from earl Duncan. No one, I should think, could disagree. The king himself, the barons and everyone present join in to say: 'This is indeed good advice. I could not agree more. Let us send word in these terms, and may the envoys do their job like the valiant knights they are!' Off the messengers set. They take the main roads, spurring their horses on and letting them have their heads. You could not ask for finer horses than these. They reach Normandy where they

get on with their business without delay. They seek out old king Henry, greeting him politely in the name of the king of Scotland, then hand over the letters. (321)

The first to speak up is brother William d'Olepen who says to the king of England: 'I am a messenger from the king of Scotland. He is, may I remind you, your kinsman and a close friend of yours, therefore. He declares that he is ready to serve you in this emergency with a thousand fully armed knights and thirty thousand foot soldiers, as I understand it. There will be no delay, and they will be here in under a month from now, ready to inflict huge damage on your enemies. There is no question of your paying a single penny in exchange. All king William wants is for you, above all else, to restore the fief of Northumberland to him. This would be in accord with his rights, and these no one would find any reason to challenge. I am asking you not to defer your decision, but am standing here ready to offer anyone disputing my lord's claim to do so, here and now, by a knight in single combat. If you do not agree to this, you risk denying William his inheritance, in which case, I can assure you, my lord will renounce his homage to you without further ado.' (337)

When the king of England hears the contents of the letter and what his cousin from Scotland has in mind, he gives his reply to the envoy: he will have nothing to do with it. He has no need to justify himself to any relative of his, still less a foreigner. 'Tell the king of Scotland that I am not at all worried about any war my son is waging against me at present, nor am I intimidated by the king of France or his army, nor the count of Flanders who makes a habit of attacking me. I'll make them sorry they ever declared war on me, and they'll suffer for it. God willing, I will also make life difficult for your king William. But let his brother David, my kinsman, know that he is to come to my assistance with as many troops as he can raise. I will reward him with as much land and as many fiefs as he wants, and I will give him everything he asks for.' 'Sire,' replies the messenger, 'I'll do as you wish, so please give us the safe-conduct we need to leave.' (353)

The messengers immediately leave Normandy, and after a quick and calm Channel crossing, ride on through the whole of England to finally reach Albany. These envoys are serious people, and for the whole of their journey from Dover to the Orkneys do nothing reckless or meet anyone who threatens or harms them. They have a story of hatred and war to tell, one grim enough to bring tears to the eyes of anyone unaware of what is happening. (361)

'Sire, king of Scotland, God save you and your barons and grant you the courage to continue your valiant deeds! I am back from my mission to king Henry of England. Listen to what his reply is! It is something to be taken very seriously. He is most surprised to see you acting so insanely. He had always thought that you were a man of intelligence, not some immature youngster or someone whose devotion to him could do him harm. You have no business making excessive demands on him. You are asking him to hand over certain of his lands on the pretext that they are part of your inheritance. It is not as if he is some sort of prisoner locked in a cage like a bird. He is not someone who has been exiled and has taken refuge in the wild. No. He is king of England, king of the whole country, top to bottom. At this early stage of the conflict, he has no intention of extending your territory — these are his exact words. He will wait and see if you behave towards him as a friend, ally and loving cousin should; if you act wisely or do anything imprudent.' You should have heard the reaction of the young impulsive knights: there was much loud cursing and shows of bravado. 'If you don't join the war against a king like this who treats you so dismissively, you have no right to be king over us or rule our country. You would be nothing more than a lackey and a serf to Matilda's son!' (382)

The king of Scotland understands how hostile his barons are towards him, but these do not include bishop Engelram [of Glasgow], the most esteemed of all his clerics. Earl Waltheof [of Dunbar] is not among those advocating war either; he thinks it would be a foolhardy thing to do. The king himself, egged on by those in favour of war, repeatedly expresses his disagreement: 'By God the son of Mary', he swears, 'despite your cowardice, this war will go ahead. You are all wealthy people with

bulging treasure chests, so you should be defending your land and offering your assistance. If not, never again, as long as you live, will you get a single penny of anything I win!' (394)

Earl Waltheof replies: 'Think again about declaring war. I am your liege vassal, as all my ancestors have been, and we have little experience of war. This is what alarms me. Starting hostilities needs careful thought. Don't place your trust in reckless advice, especially if it comes from foreigners. If things turn out well for you, they will always take advantage of it, and if you are unlucky enough to lose, they themselves will have little to lose. As the proverb goes, "In the final reckoning, not helping is harming", and this is certainly true here. Don't think I'm saying this because I lack courage. If war were to come, you can count on me to fight until my dying day.' (406)

This was not the sort of advice king William wanted to hear. As far as he was concerned, the war was to go ahead even at the risk of bringing Albany to its knees. What he would do is send spies over the Channel to see how king Henry was faring in Normandy. Then he would dispatch envoys and letters to Flanders making it clear to his confidant and ally the Young King in what terms William had replied to Henry's letter:

> "This letter Henry sends me is extremely hostile, and also contains clear threats against me. If you are ready, William wrote, to come to an agreement with me and pledge your word, I will not hesitate to provide you with immediate assistance. If the Young King sends us his Flemings and has their fleet of fifty or a hundred ships with their brave crew brought from Flanders, I will see to it that the road is clear of opposition for their troops to attack our adversaries' castles."

This is William's message to the Young King, and it would be taken to Flanders by William de Saint-Michel and Robert de Huseville, both experienced envoys who have often given proof of great courage in emergencies. In royal courts they are highly proficient interpreters and negotiators. (424)

They set out on their mission. This is what king William wishes, and the messengers are more than happy to comply. At Berwick-on-Tyne [!] these excellent envoys engage the sailors who will take them to Flanders. They immediately board the boats, sails are hoisted, body armour removed, and soon they are on the high seas. They leave the English coast behind them. England was once their home, but now the English are their deadly enemies. (432)

They ride hard and catch up with the Young King who is with Louis, king of France and commander in chief. They deliver their message politely and with detachment, and the French nobles have no difficulty in understanding it. That noble warrior count Philippe reacts with high emotion and speaks up before anyone else. He gives a memorable speech to the French court, and everyone there pays rapt attention: 'Keep your word to the king of Scotland! Agree to his offer of assistance to you without delay! Let him crush your enemies! Let him devastate their lands! Let him set fire to everything in sight! And next day leave them nothing, not even a mouthful of food, anywhere, in wood or meadow, outside their castles! Let him get his troops to besiege their castles and prevent any help reaching them for thirteen leagues around! That is how the war should start, as I see it. First devastate the land, then crush the enemy. Within a fortnight, we will bring additional troops from Flanders, and reduce these Englishmen to impotence.' (452)

Count Philippe's rant met with the approval of king Louis of France who gave his assent, saying to our envoys: 'The letter you will take back to your country is already being sealed. Lose no time in informing the king of Scotland that all the land he asked for is now his.' When the envoys arrived back in Scotland, there was no longer any doubt that war was about to break out. You would not have needed to go far to hear people already shouting "Let's go to England and capture Wark castle!"' No one ever, not even a figure as memorable as Solomon the Wise or the psalmist David,

would have taken greater pride in the victory they were promised, but which turned out to be so much vanity and vainglory. (466)

The king of Scotland musters his army at Caddonlee, and there he organises his troops. Bugles blare, and warriors, now fully armed, stand ready poised to expel the English from the land. A huge army is summoned from Ross and Moray. Earl Colban [of Buchan] certainly does everything that is expected of him. [Gilbert] earl of Angus arrives with still more troops, more than three thousand Scots, my lords, under his command. As for foot soldiers, there are more of them than I can tell. A Scottish army of this size has never been seen since the time of Elijah. (476)

King William came to Wark in England, a castle in the border country. This was a place that was to give him a great deal of trouble, where the fighting would be fierce, causing him much distress and a number of serious losses. He asked the castle commander how he wished to proceed. Would he defend the castle or surrender it? Which did he prefer? (481)

The castellan was Roger d'Estuteville, an honest man and no friend of the Prince of Darkness. He realised that the number of men at his disposal was inadequate, and they would be of little help in fighting against the Scottish army if it were to attack. Surrendering the castle would not be an answer to his problems either. Little wonder if lord Roger felt anxious. He prays to the God of Glory and the Mother of God: 'The Scots are waging a merciless war against me. Advise me on what to do to avoid my losing my honour!' He then addressed his closest counsellors: 'Give me your advice, my noble knights! Here we are under attack from the king of Scotland's army. If we stay in our castle, we are mocked and humiliated, and we have no hope of getting assistance from any of our neighbours.' (495)

His mind turns to his lord, brave king Henry, and tears come streaming down his face. 'What was the point of all the power you used to have if now you are powerless? You are incapable of providing any sort of assistance to your barons. I will go to the king of Scotland and request a forty-day truce, the time to travel to Normandy. If I fail to find help there, it follows that you will lose the whole of Northumberland. That much is certain.' (503)

Surrounded by all his household courtiers, Roger d'Estuteville steps forward to address king William. He is an intelligent and humble man, unlikely ever to cause upset. With his closest advisers grouped round him, he chooses his words carefully: 'Listen, sire, to what I have to say! Do not do anything that would dishonour me personally. Compose yourself, please! I sincerely wish you every success, but only if it is not to my own disadvantage. Grant me a forty-day delay, fair lord, time for me to have a letter sealed and sent to Normandy. I might even go myself if I so decide. I will send it to my lord Henry telling him, in all seriousness, that, unless Jesus intervenes, the next time he sees his subjects will be when they are all corpses and dead martyrs.' King William understands how desperate Roger is, and how the whole of Northumberland is troubled and apprehensive. He sees that there is no one strong enough to withstand Henry and the power of his army. He has no option but to grant Roger the forty-day delay. (519)

God — at least in the opinion of Jordan Fantosme — took all the Northumbrians in the border country under his protection. Had it not been for the delay that Roger d'Estuteville requested, they would all be evicted from the land by the people of Albany. Wise lord Roger, so devoted to his overlord the king, saw to the drawing up of the letter he was sending Henry, and then got ready himself to begin the journey. He went off to England where he started enlisting men to provide Henry with aid. Well within the time he had been granted, he succeeded in raising a whole army, large enough to enable him to invite king William to come and attack him along with his Flemings. He was ready to fight. (529)

William addressed his knights: 'Listen, my men, to what I have decided. There is no one to stop me and I have no one to fear, so I intend to march through the whole of Northumberland. The messenger from the bishop of Durham [Hugh du Puiset] has just arrived and informs me that the bishop wants to avoid war, and that neither he nor his forces will attack me or give me the slightest cause for complaint. So let us make for Alnwick, if you all agree, and attack William de Vesci [castellan of Alnwick, sheriff of Northumberland] who I have never before succeeded in beating. If he is willing to renounce his rights to his father's castle and hand it over to me, I will let him go free without his risking life or limb. Alternatively he could make the same sort of promise as I exacted the other day from the warden of Wark castle, and he could undertake not to strengthen his fortification or reinforce his garrison. After that, I intend us to proceed to Warkworth, a castle I mean to raze to the ground.' (544)

Scotland's huge army makes for Alnwick without delay. William de Vesci, however, does everything that is expected of him. He repeatedly and devoutly prays to the Heavenly Father for help. His mind then turns to his lord, with more affection, even, than a knight who turns his thoughts to his loving mistress. To the men under his command he says: 'My brave knights, in an emergency all ideas, good or bad, are welcome. Let each of you come forward and tell us how we are going to manage against the army that is about to attack us.' (552)

A good son, whether or not he is conceived out of wedlock, brings joy to the heart of his father. I am, of course, referring here, in my way, to young William de Vesci and the courageous manner in which he ensured that his father's castle did not fall into enemy hands. The king of Scotland had no reason to stay there any longer. Sending his messenger ahead with a letter asking for reinforcements, he promptly left. On their way to Warkworth, the Scottish knights, men-at-arms and other foragers destroy and strip bare the land along the coast. They discover that the castle has a dilapidated wall as well as feeble earthworks, so do not deign to stop. A valiant knight called Roger FitzRichard was guardian, but he was unable to mount any defence. (564)

I have something additional to say about Roger FitzRichard. He was lord and master of Newcastle-on-Tyne, a brave and daring man. So passionate was he and so incensed at what had happened that he was not even willing to discuss peace with the king of Scotland. It would have been no laughing matter for him to have surrendered it. (568)

King William arrived with an army of armoured knights and foot-soldiers, and the hills and valleys trembled as he drew near. Oh that he had never made this reckless declaration of war! It will cost the barons of Northumbria dear. Before he returns home, William will have wrought such havoc on them that, outside their castles, they will not be left with even a single ox to pull their ploughs. (574)

But these [Newcastle] barons' attitude to sovereignty was one of inborn loyalty. They attach no more importance to personal possessions than to catching a common game bird. They would prefer to die an honourable death rather than become the objects of shame. They would never abandon their rightful overlord even if it entailed losing their land and the income they derive from cultivating it. They will do the wise thing: wait and suffer. And they will never surrender their castles, whatever they stand to lose. (580)

The king of Scotland sees that, without a siege-engine at his disposal, he will never finish capturing Newcastle. His counsellors say: 'Do not be downcast! Their people will all have starved to death before any help reaches them. Have your troops ready prepared by dawn tomorrow. Go and capture Carlisle, which we anticipate to be an easy task. Robert de Vaux [sheriff of Cumberland] will not have had time to finish his first meal of the day and his first drink, no time to put on his finery, before he catches sight of our brightly painted shields, all those helmets of Poitou steel. He wouldn't want to see himself in the position of a useless, outmanoeuvred bishop on the chess board.' (590)

King William replied: 'I'll be damned if I grant a truce or any delay to Odinel [d'Umfraville, lord of Prudhoe]. I would rather be beaten in battle, put to shame, or even formally excommunicated. What I want to do is make him as miserable as possible and see him lose everything he has. He was brought up at the court of my father, earl Henry [of Northumberland], who was particularly fond of him. Before I have finished, I'll make him regret that he ever set eyes on me. He has sworn allegiance to king Henry, but this will be of no advantage to him. I guarantee that he will get no help from him.' (598)

The king of Scotland gives orders for his tents and pavilions to be pitched. He then addresses a meeting of his nobles, his earls and his barons, and asks them: 'My lords, how shall we proceed? As long as Prudhoe castle remains standing, we will never have peace.' The Flemish mercenaries reply: 'We'll simply pull it down. Otherwise you will not be getting your money's worth paying our wages and our rations.' There are some who object to this. 'No more of this sort of talk! We will never agree to that. Let the king press on with his campaigns somewhere else! By the time we are back home, Northumberland is ours.' (608)

The king of Scotland's counsellors reply: 'Sire, Carlisle is the seat of power of all the lands to which you are asserting your right, and since the Young King has given you a free hand, our considered advice is that you go and seize such an important city. If lord Robert de Vaux refuses to hand it over, besiege the castle and swear that your army will stay as long as it takes. Then you can simply have him thrown down from the top of its ancient keep. That is how you will get your own way with him, without first needing to see the whole city go up in flames, or its wall demolished by your pickaxes of steel, or Robert himself strung up on a high gallows. If he prefers to fight, our view is that you will not find him strong enough to hold out for very long.' King William replies: ' That sounds like a feasible plan. Let us go and carry it out!' (624)

That night William has a close watch kept over his army. As soon as the next day dawns, he has the bugles blown to get the troops underway, while the squires and other servants take down the tents. Off king William rides with his barons. Before they are back home in the wilds of Scotland, they will have inflicted huge losses on the English from England. At least a thousand of them will have left their heads behind in pledge. The Scots are so pitiless in war and so vicious, as anyone they find in their way soon discovers. Anyone who comes up against them, wherever it may be, plain or wood, will not live to tell their tale to future generations. (636)

The king of Scotland was very skilled in military matters and good at wreaking destruction on his enemies in war. He was, however, too inclined to keep changing the counsellors he relied on. He was particularly fond of foreigners and attached great importance to the advice they gave him. He did not set great store by his native-born subjects whose duty it was to offer him advice on how to govern the kingdom. As you will hear shortly, it was not long before this particular war took a turn for the worse because of William's following bad advice. (644)

The king orders his army to prepare for battle. He is going to mount a head-on attack against the men defending Carlisle castle. There is uproar when the first assault is launched. Swords of iron clang, and steel crunches against steel. There is not a hauberk or a helmet that does not split apart. The defenders showed great courage that day. Their swords shatter shield after shield. The city wall is littered with the corpses of men destined never to get to their feet again. Inside the castle, the men have no choice but to bear the brunt of the assault. They have to keep battering away at their assailants' shields in defence of their defences. No room for any coward here today. (657)

There was the most spectacular of crushes at the castle gate, and tempers on both sides were beginning to flare. You should have seen all those knights covered in blood, brave men striking in a frenzy of violence. The clash of iron rings out in the general free-for-all. Robert de Vaux was putting up a strong defence. Wudard [du Pin]'s son loyally assisted him, showing great bravery in

repelling the crowds of people attacking his lord. There were forty thousand of them, unless Fantosme is very much mistaken. Every one of them really hated and detested Robert de Vaux. (663)

God! How terribly sad it is for noble king William that he is going to offend king Henry so inexcusably. I am so sorry for him, I swear by good St. James, for never did a more honourable king rule over any kingdom. It is my personal view — and I give you my word on it — that William would never himself have thought of waging war against bold king Henry, duke of Normandy and son of Matilda. He did so, however, because he followed bad advice and fell victim to envy which can drive even the most intelligent of men into acting recklessly. But once he had taken the course of action he did, it would have seemed like an act of great cowardice to abandon it. Holy Church instructs us to keep the peace, and the justice it metes out to those who break it is very severe. But this has virtually no effect at all. Those odious people from Galloway — God curse them! — think only about acquiring more possessions, while the Scots from elsewhere in Scotland do not believe in God, son of the Virgin Mary, and go around plundering churches and committing daylight robbery. (688)

Those barons who hold their lands directly from the king himself find themselves in jeopardy and are suffering a great deal of pain on account of their lord. Their enemies are already giving them a foretaste of what is to come. Unless God and Mary Magdalen take them under their wings, they will be fighting a war that will have dire consequences for them. Their lands, once so fertile and plentiful, are already unproductive and inhospitable. Where there used to be beer every day of the week, the only drink now is water from the spring. (698)

The king of Scotland is responsible for all this, not only as a result of his accepting bad advice, but thanks also to his own excessive rashness. But now he is facing an even worse failure, one from which he will certainly not emerge without bringing even more disgrace upon himself. Aid is due to arrive shortly to relieve those besieged in the castle. This is what happens to people who place their trust in God. (704)

Just listen, my lords, to what heedless behaviour can lead to, and also what the wild lands of Scotland had in store for those besieging the castle. It was a fine day, and there was no sign of any storm brewing. The king of Scotland was a first-class and highly courageous knight and a proudly aggressive man by nature. A messenger came before him, a canon and a very eloquent speaker, who breathlessly informed him of the reversal he was about to suffer. The king was in his pavilion with guards on every side and with his chamberlains and close associates in attendance. When the messenger gave them the news, a violent argument broke out. (717)

What the messenger had explained to them in detail was that he had seen a company of knights and heavily armed men whose intention was to come and attack him before dawn. ‘Before midnight you and your men will find yourselves under attack from an army raised by that wise and prudent [earl Richard] de Lucy. See to it, in the name of our Lord God, that you emerge from it without shame or dishonour! He is bringing with him the cream of your own kinsmen, those who have pledged their faith to him. The best advice I can give you is to make for Roxburgh where you will find a place of safety. If you stay here any longer, you will end up infamous and the object of popular song. That Saracen legend Thibaut de Balesgué never thrashed the French as soundly as you will be thrashed tomorrow by those rugged troops from the South if you stay and fight with them.’ (735)

When king William heard this, he erupted in anger and swore by St. Andrew: ‘We’re perfectly safe if we stay where we are! If a fight is what they want, a fight they will get. It is quite right that an honourable man should seek to recover lands that are his by inheritance. My Scottish ancestors held this land freely and unconditionally. I swear by the Lord whom we all venerate as

pilgrims that I will continue to hold it from the Young King, my liege lord, son of king Henry who first granted it to me. As long as I live, I will not give up an inch of it.' (746)

He was on the point of giving instructions to his army when his counsellors intervened. If he wished to avoid dishonour, he should abandon the siege and leave voluntarily. And this is exactly what he did. Without wasting a minute more, they all rode off at a gallop. The king arrived at Roxburgh, from where the army had originally set out, when it was still night. Of all the troops who had taken part in the siege of Carlisle, not one failed to consider himself a vile coward. They had left the siege without any challenge being issued, without any attack taking place, and without any damage being inflicted on the enemy. (758)

This hasty retreat was very profitable for Robert de Vaux who captured a large amount of booty from the fleeing army. He used what he had plundered to strengthen his fortifications, however much this might sadden the losers or gladden the winners. On bended knee and fancy shoes on show, he gives thanks to God and prays him not to turn his love for him to hate. (764)

Now the great English army can ride on with even greater assurance. There is no one better than sir Richard de Lucy to help his lord pursue his war. He is skilled in negotiating truces or pauses in hostilities when he sees the need and in emergencies. On he rides through the desolate wasteland of what was once the celebrated county of Northumberland. It used to be without equal between here and Spain, fertile and productive, its people honoured and respected. Now it is a land ravished by famine and on the point of total collapse unless the king of England comes to its rescue. Richard sighs as he sadly meditates on what Northumberland has become, and he curses the day the war ever began. The thought then comes to him, from deep within his heart, that, if it please God, it might be possible to take some sort of revenge. He can do so with God's help, and with the forces he himself has at his command. The local nobility in particular are yearning to avenge all the pain they are suffering. (781)

Sir Humphrey de Bohun, an extremely astute man, rides off as fast as his horse can carry him, leaving Richard de Lucy, the highly esteemed justiciar, behind. Richard is reluctant to upset the king of Scotland. One of his messengers has sent word that there is someone coming to attack him. It is [Robert] earl of Leicester who, with the help of hired Flemish, Frisian and French mercenaries, intends to take control of England. (790)

'God!', shouts Richard de Lucy, 'this puts me in a very dangerous position. If this should come to the ears of the king of Scotland, he would refuse us any truce or pause in hostilities, at whatever cost. It would not be in his interest to do so, unless he was stupid.' It is with a heavy heart that he rides off at full speed. But before Richard can manage to get an audience with the king of Scotland, or do what he has to, sir Humphrey de Bohun will already have been rewarded for his daring and dealt the king of Scotland a bitter blow at Berwick. (799)

A very enterprising man, lord Humphrey de Bohun brought certain of the Northumberland barons along with him. With fire and flame they burn the whole of Berwick to the ground. They destroy a large part of the surrounding land and roam round the border country like merciless lions. Lord Richard de Lucy, on the other hand, has no truck with this sort of tactic, and addresses Humphrey de Bohun in the following terms: 'Sir Humphrey, we are going to lose this war unless God intervenes. Let us go to the king of Scotland and ask him to forgive us and beg him to grant a truce to Henry our king, or to pause hostilities. Most of the English barons have renounced their fealty to him. Have you heard that the earl of Leicester has turned the tables on us? I'll have you know that he has landed at the river Orwell [in Suffolk] and imposed taxes in the region as if it were in his gift. He has extended his jurisdiction all the way to Dunwich.' (816)

Humphrey de Bohun found this news deeply disturbing. 'Lord Richard de Lucy, you are going to need all your experience now. Act with all possible haste, and with all the wisdom you are said to possess. Go and see the king of Scotland, but take care not to tell him about this latest development. If he hears that the earl of Leicester has crossed the Channel and landed here, he will grow even more confident and will certainly not grant you a truce, unless he is out of his mind. I shall go back to England and make earl Robert pay for all the harm he has done us. If it is God's will, I shall avenge the grievous wrong he has done us. Alas the day these people came over from the wilds of Flanders and landed here!' (826)

Richard de Lucy carried out his task very skilfully and obtained everything he asked for from the king of Scotland, in particular a truce in Northumberland that was to last until early summer. Lord Humphrey de Bohun went back to England accompanied by a large number of noble English-born knights. It will not be long before they all meet up with the Flemings. (832)

As each and every one of you is aware, earl Robert of Leicester had pressed on and reached as far as Suffolk. He had raised taxes on the people there, and his authority stretched all the way to Dunwich. Many Flemish nobles joined him at that time, and this is something that would later gladden and warm the heart of the king of England. (848)

Earl Hugh Bigod sent out messengers to assure the people of Dunwich that they could count on his friendship. If they become the earl's allies, life will be all gladness and joy, but if not, there will be trouble, and anyone lucky enough to escape with his life can expect to lose his head. They sent back a message rejecting the offer: it was something, they said, they would never consider, and they were quite prepared, in any attack on them, to fight to the last man. (844)

According to a proverb you will often have heard, anyone who is disloyal to his rightful lord, who commits any crime against him, or causes him any sort of trouble, can be certain to get punished for it. Anyone, on the other hand, who serves his lord loyally deserves to be held in the highest esteem. This is a saying that applies particularly appropriately to the people of Dunwich whose brave resistance I am recording here. (850)

The earl of Leicester had decided to besiege them, and, uttering his favourite curse, he swore that if any of the townsfolk or officials failed to surrender to him, not one of them would avoid injury or death. With everyone trying to speak at once, they replied: 'A curse on anyone who is in any way afraid of you! The good and rightful king of our country is still alive and well, and he'll bring this war of yours to an end in next to no time. For as long as we can stand and fight, we will not surrender this town, however frightening your attacks might be!' (860)

This greatly angered the earl of Leicester, and in order to intimidate them, he gave orders for gallows to be erected. He instructed his sergeants-at-arms and his squires to immediately take up their weapons. He put all his energy into attacking the town. You should have seen those courageous townsfolk leaping up to man the defences. Each one knew what was expected of him or her: some shot arrows with their bows, others hurled spears; the strong helped the weak by regularly giving them time to get their strength back; there was not a single woman, young or married, in the whole town who was not busy carrying stones and rocks up to the palisade to throw down onto the enemy. (870)

This is how the people of Dunwich defended themselves, exactly as the verses I have composed are written down here. Each and every one of the people of Dunwich fought with such bravery that earl Robert was forced to withdraw, embarrassed and deeply ashamed. As worthy a man as the earl of Leicester might be, he was certainly not appreciated as a friend by the people of Dunwich. None of the attacks he launched was of any use, nor did any of his men, be it baron or knight, sergeant or squire, prove capable of intimidating the townsfolk. Robert and earl Hugh [Bigod]

withdrew together, and it was not until dawn the next day that they reached where they were going. (880)

The earl of Leicester called for his commanders. 'Get our knights ready to leave,' he said, 'and let there be no delay! I myself will go to Norwich, God willing, and see what is going on and what the prospects are.' The commanders lose no time in carrying out the earl's orders. You should have see how many streamers were unfurled from their standards, how many pennons of silk there were flying from the tips of trusty lances, and all those noble warriors, men of such courage! (888)

Do you want to hear exactly how Norwich was captured? I myself was not in the neighbourhood at the time of the siege. The city was apparently taken by surprise thanks to a treacherous individual from Lorraine who let the attackers in. It is quite impossible for anyone to guard against treachery in all circumstances. King Henry, however, is an exception: he always ensures that evil-doers are brought to justice. With God's might at his back and Holy Church praying for him, he strives unceasingly to maintain peace insofar as he is able. May the one true God keep him for ever in his service! (896)

Jordan Fantosme is the first to swear, on whatever reliquary you will, that in all the lands between here and Montpellier there is none fairer than Norfolk. No clerk in the whole world, however skilled he might be at remembering the lesson he is reciting from the psalter or at holding forth on any of the liberal arts, could name a better. The Norfolk I am talking about here has more fertile soil, more celebrated knights, more gracious or more generous ladies, than anywhere else, apart, that is, from the city of London. The baronage of Norfolk is second to none. In the course of this war, you never heard of anyone, however grand his estates, who would dare lay siege to their castles or even point the finger of blame at them. If anyone did, he could expect to be punished for his pains. (911)

'Noble king of England, reflect for a moment on how much you should cherish London and its barons. They never failed their rightful lord by not being the first to come to his assistance. There was no lack of promises brought to them from across the Channel in Flanders offering to reward them with vast swathes of land. Your own son, someone you should love and cherish and whose natural reaction was to seek reconciliation, sent messengers to them with letters asking for their assistance in his war against his father. I will tell you what they said: he would cherish and honour them all the days of his life, and was willing to reward them handsomely. But the people of London refused to countenance it, seeing that it implied banishing you from your kingdom and sending you into exile. (926)

This is why you should love and cherish them, honour them by rewarding the loyalty they showed you at a time when they themselves were in grave difficulties. They stood firm even when they received unconditional promises from the enemy, and they took great pleasure in showing their love for you as best they could. Noble king of England, do as I suggest. Show your love for those who are prepared to serve you with loyalty. (932)

It would be wrong for any harm to come to the Young King. His good nature is such that he has expressed regret at ever having enlisted foreign mercenaries, thereby bringing shame on those of his fellow Englishmen whose duty it is to support him after his father dies. Before this world comes to an end, many other unforeseen things like this might happen. Whatever sort of war you have had to wage, your son may have an even worse one waiting for him. Let him now turn his attention to the wellbeing of his fellow countrymen! ' (940)

As I was telling you, the earl of Leicester is meanwhile carrying on devastating Norfolk. He cannot make any headway against king Henry in Normandy, so decides to do his best to sow discord back in England. He has brought hundreds and thousands of troops over from Flanders. Earl Hugh

Bigod is willing to give him every support. Earl Ferrers [Robert earl of Derby], a harmless knight more used to canoodling with fair ladies than to smiting another knight in the heat of combat, sent the earl of Leicester letters granting him the freedom to go anywhere in England without hindrance. Ferrers provided him with a list of all those willing to fight on his side: (952)

the king of Scotland, first and foremost, his brother lord David, a man of great renown, lord Roger Mowbray, someone always ready for a fight. 'He will come to your assistance whenever you need. The whole country is in turmoil. Take advantage of it! Old king Henry of England will need all the support he can get from his men. He is in deep trouble, thank God. There is no question of him coming back across the Channel. The moment he does, he will have lost Normandy for good. If you could get as far as Leicester before Easter, you could safely reach the Tower of London. The good city of York has declared for lord Roger, and he is now recognised as the lord of the whole of Yorkshire. In my part of the country there is scarcely a knight I would not bring down if he dare refuse me his aid.' (968)

'Ah, God!' said the earl of Leicester, 'It makes my blood boil to think how slow I am being in going to my lord's assistance, and taking revenge on the old king, his father, for all he has made me suffer. Will none of you noble knights dare speak up and approve of what I am intending to do?' ' I for one certainly approve,' said his wife [Petronelle de Grandmesnil, countess of Leicester]. God forbid that you should let fear of Humphrey de Bohun or that sweet-talker [William d'Aubigny] earl of Arundel stop you from carrying out this attack. The English are very good at boasting but hopeless at fighting. Where they excel is in boozing and guzzling huge tankards of ale. [William fitzRobert] earl of Gloucester would be a formidable enemy, but he is married to your sister [Hawise de Beaumont, countess of Gloucester]. For all the wealth in France, he would not do anything rash or cause you any trouble.' (983)

'My lady,' replied earl William, 'I hear what you say. In view of the great love I have for you, I will dutifully follow your advice. My lord [cousin] Hugh del Chastel [count of Châteauneuf-en-Thimerais], what have you got to say?' 'Your control over Leicester means that there is no one for you to fear in the whole of England. What is more, it would enable you to harass your enemies as often as you liked.' 'Then let's go ahead!' added Hugh. (990)

You should have heard the shout that immediately went up from the Flemings from Flanders and the French from France: 'We didn't come to England to waste our time. We're here to get the better of Henry, the old warrior king, and get our hands on all that English wool we hanker after.' The truth of the matter, my lords, is that most of these Flemings were weavers, with no experience of the sort of armed combat that knights engage in. The only reason they had come was to bag the spoils of war from around Bury St Edmunds, the most prosperous and productive place on earth. (999)

Hear now, my lords, what harsh revenge God visited upon the Flemings and the French army [in the Battle of Fornham]. The earl of Leicester may well have been an exceptionally powerful man, but this did not prevent him from having an immature, indeed child-like, side to his character. His quirk was a love of riding around through the whole country openly looting and plundering, and doing so with impunity. He even has his wife put armour on and fight with shield and lance. Such lunacy will eventually lead to his undoing. (1007)

[Walter FitzRobert, abbot of] Bury St. Edmunds, had in his service some extraordinarily fearsome knights, and he lost no time at all in having them take up their arms. This Walter, whose exploits I am recounting here, was the first to engage the Flemings, and had soon sent them scattering. The earl of Arundel, always quick to join the action, rode up with his company of knights flying the standard of St Edmund. Lord Humphrey of Bohun played his part in slaughtering the

enemy. Just see them clash at close quarters! There is no other possibility of separating them. (1015)

The earl of Leicester came to a halt and stood there watching the enemy's army draw closer. 'Advance with all available troops, lord Hugh del Chastel! As I see it, this is as far as we can go. We are now in for a very hard and fierce battle. Just look at all those hauberks and helmets glinting in the sun. In God's name, I order you all to fight like the bravest of brave knights. A curse on the first man to turn tail and flee! Let us never be accused of giving up the fight!' (1025)

The earl of Arundel, in an absolute fury, says to Humphrey de Bohn: 'Let's get at them in God's name and in honour of that true martyr St Edmund!' To which Roger Bigod replies: 'I agree, if that is what you want. I can't think of anything I have wanted more in my whole life than to slaughter those Flemings over there coming to attack us.' (1031)

The first to enter the fray is Walter fitzRobert. May God, the all-powerful, help him! He attacks the Flemings with ferocity, and they fearlessly strike back. They greatly outnumber his army by hundreds and thousands, and force him and his troops to retreat. Walter's men immediately rally to get their revenge. The Flemings will rue the day they ever set eyes on England, and all of them will come to regret it. Walter comes up to the earl of Arundel and bluntly says to him: 'You're one of the king's men, so get moving! You can see the enemy are getting the better of him. Come and join us, my lord earl, spur your charger on!' With his customary oath, the earl of Arundel swears by the Holy Lance: 'Robert will live to regret the day he ever brought these people over from Flanders!' (1045)

You should have seen him rush fiercely forward together with lord Roger Bigod, who fights like a hero, and lord Hugh de Cressi, who loyally does his duty. Before, however, they can fight as much as they would like, Humphrey de Bohun has already captured more than a hundred of the enemy. (1050)

Robert fitzBernard [of Waterford] is another one who fights superbly, mowing down large swathes of these foreign troops. There is not a single Fleming or Lombard able to raise a finger. They have left it far too late to get their hands on any English wool. Crows and buzzards come swooping down on their corpses and carry off their souls into the everlasting fire of Hell. There will be no perspiring priest to say mass for them there. It would be better for them to be hanging by their necks in Flanders. (1058)

If only God had come to their assistance, these Flemings would have been brave enough fighters. As it was, their utter rapaciousness disqualified them. What a catastrophe it was that the earl of Leicester and lord Hugh del Chastel ever had dealings with them! Lord Hugh del Chastel in particular had little to rejoice about [when he was taken prisoner]. They were left isolated in the thick of battle without any protection. (1063)

Lady countess Peronelle flees from the battlefield, finds a ditch to shelter in and almost drowns there. She loses her jewels in the mud, and for the rest of her life they cannot be found. The earl's wife is intending to drown herself when Simon of Odell comes to her rescue. 'Stop what you're doing, my lady, and come with me. This is what happens in war: you lose some and you win some.' (1071)

On seeing this, earl Robert is extremely worried. He has every right to fly into a temper when he sees his wife taken prisoner and hundreds and thousands of his companions lying dead on the ground. The colour drains from his face. Lord Humphrey de Bohun and the earl of Arundel took earl Robert and Hugh del Chastel prisoner, and lord Roger Bigod who had just arrived that day. Both he and Hugh de Creissi were happy men that day. There was not a villein or a peasant in the whole region who did not fall on the Flemings with fork and flail. The knights in armour had simply to knock

the enemy over then let the villeins finish them off. By the dozen, by the score, they pitched hundreds and thousands of them into the ditches. (1085)

Little wonder if this victory was seen as a miracle from God. I never in the whole of my life heard of anyone declaring war on old king Henry without ending up on the losing side. However daring a fighter it might be, however brave a knight, no one, even with the assistance of other Englishmen, could ever carry off such a victory. After the defeat and capture of earl Robert of Leicester, throughout the whole of England there was a feeling of greater security. The Flemings from Flanders have all got their comeuppance, and none of the king's enemies can feel safe. (1095)

Despite what anyone else might tell you — so bless me God! —, earl David of Scotland was the noblest of warriors. No holy church or abbey was ever plundered by him, and no one under his command would ever ill-treat a priest. Between April and May [1174], when spring turns the countryside green, he came down from Scotland with a fully armed body of troops. He had pledged fealty to his brother [king William the Lion] in the presence of all his barons. In exchange William had pledged to grant him the whole of Lennox for his lifetime, as well as the honour of Huntingdon. He will give him all of this, and much more even, if he undertakes to provide him with help in his war against king Henry duke of Normandy. (1106)

So there are David of Scotland's men riding into England with hauberk, helmet and brightly painted shield. The earl of Leicester's men welcome him and tell him how things have gone for their lord so far. Their support will be much appreciated. Their soldiers are to gain control of [Northampton] castle. If they succeed in taking it over, it will certainly be Bertram de Verdun who will pay the price, a very heavy one, and that will put him in a foul temper. (1114)

Just hear, my lords, what a clever tactician earl David was. He had left a certain number of his people in Huntingdon, while his position in Leicester was a very strong one. So much the worse, then, for the people of Nottingham, as we shall see. As brave as the Northampton men were, lord David of Scotland put them in a very difficult position. He could not extract money or anything else from the townsfolk, so decided one day to launch an attack against them. If anyone here wishes to hear what happened, I am able to give them an accurate account. (1123)

Earl David performed outstandingly that day, as did those who fought alongside him. The knights who came riding out from Northampton castle fought extremely well also. Lord Bertram de Verdun had arrived that very day. He wore a very fine suit of armour, and his warhorse was particularly frisky. He got the better of many of those he jousted with. Lord David of Scotland was happy to carry off as much booty as he wished. (1130)

While David was successfully pursuing the war in England, the king of Scotland was faring much less well. By following the bad advice he had been given, he ended up with a disaster on his hands. David, as well as being of such high nobility, was also an intelligent man. He was a firm defender of Holy Church, and would never willingly offend a priest or canon or any learned cleric, or do anything to displease a nun from whatever convent. (1138)

It was after Easter [at the end of March], as I have reason to remember, that the king of Scotland began his journey back to Northumberland, laying waste the countryside as he advanced and bringing shame on himself. Ah! God! What destruction I witnessed there! When William came to besiege Wark, he found that Robert d'Estuteville had strengthened all those parts of the fortifications through which the king had intended to attack. A curse on Fantosme if ever you hear me tell a lie! Lie or not, you can still hear how Roger took such pains to serve his lord. (1148)

Hear how the king of Scotland continued his war, and what was he had in mind as he left Wark. He used that night to assemble a large body of knights and sent them straight to Bamburgh

castle. I personally know the baron who commanded them and was their leader, but I shall refrain from naming him because he emerged from the expedition with very little glory. (1154)

The army had been raised in order to inflict severe damage on Bamburgh. Those poor wretches who were defending the castle were still sleeping soundly in their beds and had no idea what was about to happen to them. If only Jesus son of the Virgin Mary had given them some warning. In the early morning when day was still beginning to dawn, the fearsome knights donned their armour. They first attacked the town of Belford, and then spread out over the whole of the district. Some head for buildings to ransack, others to sheep pens to steal the animals. Yet others seek out anything they can set fire to. What more can I tell you? No one will ever hear tell of such widespread destruction. You could have seen Flemings tying the peasants up and leading them off as if they were pagan prisoners. Women are stripped and raped, others leave everything behind as the rush to seek refuge in the church. (1170)

All this happened without the knowledge of William de Vesci, Roger d'Estouteville and others. Ah! God! why did they not know about it? They would not have failed to return everything that had been looted, but, sad to say, they had no idea that any of this was going on. William's men made off with a tremendous amount of booty. They set the whole countryside alight. But God showed pity on those noble peasants who had lost everything. At least the Scots, their deadly enemy, were not there, and they were spared being thrashed, disfigured and killed. (1178)

The booty that the king of Scotland's men took away with them was enormous. They returned to their quarters in Berwick in high spirits. They had everything they could have asked for: cattle, oxen, horses, nice plump cows, ewes, lambs, clothes, cash, jewelled bracelets and rings. (1184)

The king of Scotland then gathered his knights together, the earls of the kingdom, the best fighters in the land. His intention is to besiege Wark, in accordance with the advice he has received from his trusty counsellors. His plan is to capture the castle using his Flemish mercenaries, with archers, sturdy catapults, fearsome siege engines and their crews, and his cross-bowmen. (1190)

Do you want to hear how Roger d'Estuteville reacted to the arrival of William's army? He was in no way unnerved. He had more than twenty household knights, and the best sergeants by far that any baron ever had in his service. The body of his army, consisting of Flemings and men from the border country, were of quite exceptional courage. Roger had seen to the supplies he needed, and is not in the slightest apprehensive at the prospect of the siege. He has an admirable company of barons in whom he has absolute confidence. As his duty demands, he gives them wise words of encouragement. (1200)

The men whose task it was to storm the castle, the Flemings, that is, got ready to launch their attack one Monday morning. You should have seen them snatching up their bossed shields and armour and heard them as they leap over the spiked stockade. With great daring, they penetrate as far as the ditches. Those defending the castle lose no time in fighting back, and both sides are soon exchanging blows and combatting hand-to-hand. I have never seen a better defence put up anywhere in Scotland or England. The Flemings fight with great confidence and energy, the defenders inside with great ferocity. You would have seen both sides clash and come to grips, shields and armour smashed, pennons flying. Some Flemings are wounded at the stockade and withdraw. Some are lain out on shields and carried away. No more will their battle-cry "Arras!" ring out. They die and are buried. (1215)

The attack lasted for a long time, but there was no clear winner. King William continues to lose men. Roger d'Estuteville makes a speech to rally his men and give them orders. His words are full of noble sentiments: 'By God our Creator, noble barons and companions, do not insult our

enemy, now or in the future. God will defend us against their assaults. They are acting illegally against king Henry, and the king has done no wrong. Your arrows are to be used only in times of great need. We do not know what their intentions are, or what their thinking is. They have all the highways, road and paths under their control. They are well provided for in terms of wine and ale, and as well as having plenty to eat and drink, they have a plentiful supply of arms and good war horses. On the other hand, all those of us in the inside, sergeants and soldiers, we also have provisions, but let us not waste them. To the archers I say this: use your weapons only when you need to, but in an emergency, when the going gets rough, defend yourselves like noble knights would do!' (1233)

Such were the instructions that Roger d'Estuteville gave his men. The king of Scotland grew increasingly angry when he saw his soldiers coming to grief and dying. He was getting nowhere, and this deeply upset him. Incensed, he shouted to his knights: ' Quick! Bring up the catapult! If the operator is to be believed, it will demolish the castle gate, and we will instantly be in control of the bailey.' (1241)

Listen, my lords, to what happened when the first stone was unleashed onto the enemy! Not only did it barely manage to make it out of the sling, but it also sent one of their own knights tumbling to the ground. Were it not for his armour and his shield, he would never have returned home to the bosom of his family. How he must have hated the mechanic who set up the contrivance. The same thing goes for the king of Scotland whose loss of face was even greater than the knight's. (1249)

It did result, however, in king William turning it into a memorable joke. 'What a priceless experience this has been! It has enraged me so much and, at the same time, inspired such fear in me that I would rather have been made a prisoner of war before the walls of Toulouse!' (1253)

No wonder king William has a heavy heart. What a disaster it is that he ever set eyes on the Flemings from Flanders, let alone the king of France! At last the truth dawns on him: he has lost king Henry's love, and irretrievably so. Whatever wrong he may do him, whatever war with shield and lance he declares on him, whatever engine of war he turns on him, he is incapable of seriously damaging him. (1259)

After his failure with the catapult, the king of Scotland ordered a second one to be fetched. He decided then to set fire to the castle. He could think of nothing better. But Jesus in glory, Creator of all things, saw fit to redirect the wind against him, and the noble Roger d'Estuteville's situation took a turn for the better. This made him very happy, happier than he had ever been in his life. King William declares: 'Let us give up this siege! I see my men cut down, and bad luck reducing our numbers. What is happening to us weighs heavy on my heart. Roger d'Estuteville has got the better of us.' (1269)

That night the king of Scotland had a close watch kept over his army until dawn broke and brought a new day. He then called all of his earls and barons together. 'Noble and valiant knights, listen to what I have to say! Let us give up this siege. There is nothing to be gained from it. Only terrible losses. Let us stop the rot! Light fires and set those wooden fortifications ablaze! Then pack up your tents and pavilions. Get all the men ready to march on Roxburgh!' (1278)

You should have seen the servants scurrying to and fro, dismantling the tents, packing up the pavilions, and you should have heard all those noisy shouting matches across the entire Scottish army. You would not have forgotten how great the impact was of king William's defeat and his decision to leave. There is no hiding the havoc the servants and squires caused throughout the whole of the king's army. The fighting men lost no time in setting fire to the buildings. (1286)

Roger d'Estuteville was no shirker when it came to fighting, no inadequate, no boorish knight. You never heard speak of a wiser, more moderate or more gentlemanly warrior. When he saw the Scottish army making off towards Roxburgh, he addressed his highest-ranking barons: 'Do not abuse our enemy! For God's sake, let's have none of that! No condemnation, no heckling the Scottish army. Instead give praise to God our Father for sparing our lives in our war against the king of Scotland and his ferocious army. It is right for us to give thanks. (1297)

I am not going to order you not to celebrate, not to have a good time when you see the king and his army march off. Let everyone in his own way show how happy he is. That is what I shall do, and everyone will hear me. A son who treats his father so badly does wrong by him.' You should have heard the bugles blare in concert. In place of scorn and insults, you would have heard popular chants, poems, songs of lost love sung, with horns and trumpets echoing round. (1306)

It will come as no surprise to you to learn that Roger d'Estuteville is overjoyed, as he should be now that the king of Scotland has left him with his property intact. Thanks to God, Roger can claim neither victory nor loss. None of his followers has been wounded or killed. No knight of his, no sergeant-at-arms has any sort of flesh wound that would need a single pennyworth of attention from a learned physician from Salerno. (1314)

This, my lords, is how king William came to leave Wark. The shame of his abandoning the siege will long continue to haunt him. The deep pain this causes him is such that he almost faints. But nonetheless he swears an oath, by St Andrew and St James, that he will not consider stopping the war even if it should mean losing his kingdom. (1319)

Look! Here comes Roger Mowbray. This is someone highly skilled in the art of war. He had left his lands, castles and his own home in the capable hands of his two eldest sons [Nigel and Robert]. He meets up with the king of Scotland and requests him to carry on his war with all confidence, as it is true that there is no one in the land who would oppose him. This makes the king happier than he has been in all his life. He could never refrain from doing the wrong thing. That night the decision is taken on what they should do next. The following day they would go back to Carlisle for a second time. Everyone agrees, but they are actually embarking on a venture that will end only in their undoing. (1330)

Roger Mowbray has now joined the king of Scotland, bringing him his assistance in the form of a large number of troops. Together they would pursue the war to the best of their ability. They were joined also by Adam de Port lord [of Kington] with a large company of knights famous in the past for being the best there was anywhere. What they do not know is that, from now on, God is no longer willing to overlook their crimes. (1337)

With the huge army he has raised king William sets off for the fair city of Carlisle, whose castle is especially well fortified. Sir Roger Mowbray with his knights and sir Adam de Port with his men from the border country add to the numbers. The earls of Scotland headed the forces of this loathsome people who never once felt sorry for the devilish deeds they did. (1343)

What more is there to say? On the rebels journeyed until Carlisle in all its beauty came into sight, its walls and turrets glowing in the sun. Colourful banners are gleefully unfurled, and bugles ring out in concert. You could have heard the noise from inside the city, and its defenders begin to shudder. Sir Robert de Vaux, however, calmly tells them not to take fright or act like cowards. As long as God keeps him safe and sound, he has nothing to fear from either the king of Scotland or his army. (1353)

King William calls a meeting with Roger and Adam, along with Walter de Berkeley, a close companion of his. 'Just look, noble knights, at what a fine show we are putting on! All those banners, red ones and white, shimmering in the sun, more than you can ever count. Go and see Robert de

Vaux, and tell him from me that I order him to surrender the castle, here and now. He cannot expect any help to arrive from any quarter, and he can no longer count on king Henry of England to protect him. If he does not agree to this, he can rest assured that he will lose his head, his children as well. Unless he obeys me, he will not have a single friend or relative left in the country. I will have exiled each and every one.' (1366)

Off the barons ride to get approval for the peace agreement they are trying to reach. They find Robert de Vaux standing with his back against a battlement, dressed in his hauberk and holding a drawn sword in his hand. It has a sharp cutting edge, along which he is idly running his finger. He saw the messenger who was calling out his name so as to put the plan to him. He asked: 'My friend, what is your business? Whatever it is, you may as well drop it.' [?] To this the messenger replied: 'This is no way to talk. An envoy bringing a message is not to be insulted or badly treated. He has the right to be heard.' Robert de Vaux said: 'Step forward, then, and say what you have to say. There is no need to be afraid.' (1380)

This, my lords, is how the messenger addressed Robert as commander in chief and all the assembled barons: 'Sir Robert de Vaux, brave and wise lord, I am the messenger of king William, my liege lord. Through me, he sends you his friendly greetings. Hand this castle over to him! It is part of his inheritance, and his ancestors had possession of it, unchallenged, for many years. It was the king of England who deprived him of his right to it. I am to tell you that he did so wrongly and illegally, and you are well aware — begging your pardon — that this true. No one in your kingdom, including you, was so young and so naive that they failed to recognise this. (1392)

Treat him properly now and, in full view of his barons, give him back the castle and its keep. In return he will give you as much money in silver coin as Hubert de Vaux ever managed to amass in the whole of his life. Surrender the castle to him and pay him due homage on the following terms: he will make you rich, in both ingots and gold coins, and give you much more besides, more than we could possibly say. If you do not agree to this, you run the risk of disinheriting him, and you will never be able to trust him again anywhere. He will give orders for his men to besiege the castle, and you will only ever emerge from it at your peril. In the event of William capturing the castle by force, the king of England will be of no use to you. All the gold he could raise from the whole of his kingdom would not be sufficient to prevent you from being drawn limb from limb and sentenced to a criminal's death.' (1408)

Sir Robert replied to all this in very measured tones: 'We have no intention to argue, nor do we pay any attention to threats. Those of us in this castle are good, confident fighters. A curse on anyone who surrenders, as long as our food holds out! Messenger, take this reply back from me to your lord the king of Scotland, and may God grant you good fortune! Tell him my answer is that I am not taking any land, any fief, or any part of his inheritance away from him, and that I never will. If he has a charge to bring against me, namely that I am defending the castle and keep of Carlisle by force of arms against an enemy at war with me, he has only to go and make it to king Henry himself. And if my lord the king is displeased with me, let him send me his personal messenger, someone he trusts, to tell me: "Surrender this estate", and I shall do so willingly and not seek any compensation. (1423)

And if this is not what king Henry does, let us come to some agreement. Let king William grant me a long enough truce to enable me to go to Normandy and tell my valiant lord Henry to hand over the estate William is asking for, namely Carlisle, its castle and all its appendages, to the king of Scotland. In that way, once I get the order from my king, William can be certain to have it. But if I do not get this order from my king, I shall not surrender my lord's castle, even though it might cost me my life first.' When king William's envoy heard this reply, he said to those around him: 'I've never seen anything like this before. If the lord my king does not take pity on Robert, I don't think much of the prospects of those barons Robert has summoned here to help him.' The messenger said to Robert de Vaux: 'We are going to leave now. What a sad day it was for you that you ever set eyes

on Carlisle and king Henry!' The envoys then rode off to give their lord an account of everything they had heard. (1439)

'Sire, king of Scotland, listen to the message I bring. Robert de Vaux wishes you to know, through me, that he is not at all intimidated by you. He will not surrender the castle, however much gold and silver he might be offered, and even if Scotland were thrown into the bargain. He would prefer to be put to death in front of all his people. He has a large store of flour and wine in the castle, and he and his men are unanimous in wishing to resist. What he also said — and it is my duty as an envoy to give you a full account — is that he had no wish to take away from you anything that belongs to you. However, if he were able to see his overlord, king Henry, the owner of the fief, and if Henry in person ordered him to hand it over, by saying directly to him (and not through any intermediary) "Surrender it to king William", then he would do so willingly, and immediately inform the king of Scotland.' 'He must be joking!' replied king William. (1454)

As was his wont, the king of Scotland followed the advice of his counsellors not to take any further action against Robert de Vaux on this occasion. Instead he marched on Appleby. There were no troops there to defend it, so he captured it straightaway. King William captured Appleby castle in no time at all. There was no garrison there and it was defenceless. The castle warden, Gospatric fitzHorm, a whitehaired old Englishman, lost no time in begging for mercy. (1462)

The taking of Appleby castle and keep helped the king of Scotland forget the painful situation he was in. He went on uttering threats against our lord king Henry, Matilda's son. May God grant Henry honour and give him the strength to defeat all those who oppose him and are attempting to steal his kingdom from him! (1468)

King William of Scotland, then, and his ally Roger Mowbray have taken Appleby, and installed their border troops and three wardens in the castle there. They are in high spirits and having a great time, convinced that they would not have to leave there until the Day of Judgement. The king's intention is to press on to Brough, and the decision to do so is soon taken. If the castle is not surrendered to them, not a single man will emerge from it alive. It does not entirely lack defenders, however, for there are five or six knights stationed in it. It is rapidly besieged on all sides, and the combined forces of the Flemings and the border men launch a fierce assault. On the first day they succeed in occupying the bailey, and the men defending it take refuge in the keep. (1482)

There they are, then, in the keep, but they will not hold out for long. The besiegers set it on fire and those inside will be burned to death. They do not know what to do about it. The fire has already taken hold, and it will not be long before they burn. 'But no they won't, I swear, if it is God's will to intervene. They will do what brave knights do: they see that they have no hope of anyone coming to their aid, so they will surrender to the king of Scotland.' They could, in fact, hold out no longer and gave themselves up. No, the deal was done. With a heavy heart, they gave in. (1492)

But one of their number was a young, newly dubbed knight who had arrived that day. Just hear what feats he accomplished, what brave deeds he did! After his companions had surrendered, he stayed in the keep, and held out for a long time. He took two shields and placed them between the battlements, and let fly with three sharpened spears that he aimed down at the Scots. He succeeded in killing one of the enemy each time. When he had no more spears, he grabbed some pointed stakes, threw them at the Scots, and registered several hits. All the time he kept shouting 'I'll beat all of you!' Never was there a better battle fought by one brave man fighting alone. Only when the fire reached the two shields he had erected to defend himself, did he surrender. And who could blame him? (1505).

With Brough destroyed and most of the keep, Robert de Vaux grows a little anxious. The very same day, he sends word to Richard de Lucy, informing him of how things stand: first Appelby

has been taken and now, hardly worse news, Brough castle has fallen. ‘I can expect no help or assistance from any quarter, and I am convinced that the king of Scotland is going to launch a wholesale attack against me.’ Richard’s reply to Robert was that he should do the best he can. In particular he should ensure that no one fails to do his duty. If he has any affection for his good lord king Henry, he should be ready to suffer hardship and pain on his behalf. ‘I send you my personal greetings as a friend, and give you news of the king: within a fortnight, with God’s grace, he will see Henry back in England.’ When this is reported to Robert, his face lights up. His despondency turns to delight. (1522)

You can now hear what action Richard de Lucy, that highly intelligent and ever loyal [justiciar], took. He sent letters to his lord Henry in Normandy. The arrangement was that they were to be delivered in person by the bishop of Winchester [Richard of Ilchester], a close friend of the king. He said to Henry: ‘Greetings in the name of God! Greetings also to their lord from the whole of England that supports you, from sir Richard de Lucy and all the other barons. To tell you the truth, there are fewer than ten barons in all who remain legally loyal to you, so help me God!’ Henry asks: ‘What about my loyal vassal Richard de Lucy? Is he with me?’ ‘Yes, indeed he is, sire. He will not give up without a fight. He would rather let himself be bound to a pole with a noose around his neck.’ (1536)

‘And how about [William d’Aubigny] earl of Arundel ? What is he doing? Is he with me? Is he fighting against you?’ ‘Sire, I swear that he is a follower of yours, and the first to take action whenever you need anything from him.’ ‘And what of Humphrey de Bohun? What is he doing? Is he fighting my enemies?’ ‘By my faith, sire, believe me: he is one of the loyalist barons you have.’ ‘How are the Yorkshire barons doing? And are Estuteville’s men keeping possession of their buildings?’ ‘Indeed they are, sire, so please you. We all know that the Estutevilles will never do anything disloyal.’ (1549)

‘How about [Geoffrey Plantagenet] bishop-elect of Lincoln? What role is he playing in the country? Is he any good at waging war against his enemies?’ ‘As someone related to you by blood, sire, he is certainly supporting you as he should. He contributes a good number of knights and tough border troops.’ ‘And are Thomas fitzBernard and his brother [Robert] regular allies of Richard de Lucy?’ ‘Indeed they are, so please you, sire. They are giving you excellent support. So also is the ever faithful Roger Bigod.’ ‘Tell me what is happening now in the North. Has Roger d’Estuteville come to any understanding with the enemy?’ ‘ Even if a thousand men were to die a violent death, Roger would never, rightly or wrongly, do anything to harm you, sire.’ ‘And is Ranulf de Glanville still at Richmond? And how about Robert de Vaux? How are these two barons doing?’ At which the messenger gave a deep sigh, and the king asked him: ‘Why are you sighing like that? (1565)

Has Robert de Vaux done anything to betray our cause? Has he surrendered Carlisle? Tell me the truth!’ ‘No, he is defending it most valiantly, as a noble baron should. I have, however, to report that he is in a very dangerous situation. The other day, the king of Scotland arrived at Carlisle and threatened Robert de Vaux by demanding that he surrender the castle to him. The understanding would be that William would reward him by making him a very rich man. If Robert did not agree, William would starve each and everyone in the castle to death.’ ‘That sounds a very good bargain,’ said king Henry. ‘As the peasant’s proverb goes: “God’s work is soon done” [Fortune can change unexpectedly.] (1577)

What did the Scot do then? Did he go on to besiege Carlisle? ‘ ‘No, sire, so please you. He did something even more monstrous. I am very sorry to have tell you that he has taken Appleby and Brough castle.’ ‘What!’ cried the king, ‘For Heaven’s sake! You mean Appleby has been captured?’ ‘Indeed it has, sire, and all the surrounding area. This was good news for your deadly enemies, and some of your supporters have gone over to the other side. (1585)

Sire, I have been sent here as an envoy of Robert de Vaux. He cannot get any more provisions, no more wine or flour, and is not counting on Richmond any more to come to his assistance. Unless he gets help urgently, they will all starve to death. The whole of Northumberland will then be completely laid waste, Odinel d'Umfraville will end up being driven out of his land, Newcastle on Tyne demolished, together with William de Vesci and all his lands. Those Scots devils are rampaging all over the place.' 'In God's name, that would be an utter disaster,' says king Henry. Tears well up in his eyes, and he heaves a deep sigh. (1596)

'And what, for the love of God, is the news of [Hugh du Puiset] bishop of Durham?' Came the reply: 'he is in king William's pocket.' 'May you keep my kingdom safe, St Thomas!', said king Henry. 'Other people are held responsible for the crime, but I plead guilty to you. Fair bishop Richard,' he continued, 'what about my barons in my own city of London? Hide nothing from me!' 'So help me God in holy Trinity, they are the most loyal of all your subjects. There is not a single man in the city old enough to bear arms who is not already fully armed to fight. Don't ever think that the Londoners could be involved in any sort of crime against you! But there is one thing I must tell you now: Gilbert de Munfichet [of Stanstead] has fortified his castle, and claims that he enjoys the support of the earls of Clare.' 'Ah! God!' said the king, 'have pity! Keep the barons of my city of London safe! (1612)

'My lord bishop, go back home now. If God grants me good health and I am still alive, you will see me in London within the next fortnight, and I shall take revenge on all my enemies.' King Henry issued orders for his army to be mustered, earls, barons, brave and highly valued sergeants, everyone available. Rouen had remained loyal to him, and he placed it in their safekeeping. The bishop of Winchester returned home, as I told you, and Richard de Lucy, ever eager, demanded news of king Henry. 'My lord,' said the bishop, 'we have a really admirable king. He has no fear of the Flemings, not even a crumb, and no fear, either, of the king at Saint-Denis. He is confident that he will overcome everyone who opposes him. You will see: he will be here within the next fortnight.' (1627)

This is good news for Richard de Lucy and it makes him very happy. He tells Robert de Vaux that his fears are now groundless. His fine king is to come to his assistance, just as a loyal knight should who is ready to honour his pledge. When Robert, still up in the castle keep, heard this, it was the happiest day of his life (1633)

This was on the same day as the king of Scotland arrived demanding that Richard hand over the castle and keep of Carlisle. Otherwise he will take it by force and refuse him any compensation. To this Robert de Vaux replied: 'In the name of God the Creator, grant me a truce and set me a deadline. If no help comes to me from my lord king Henry by a date you will choose, then I will surrender the castle to you and relinquish command.' King William replies: 'That does not scare me in the least. I am absolutely certain that no help will reach you.' (1642)

William then rode straight off to Odinel [d'Umfraville at Prudhoe]. His intention was to take him by surprise and capture the castle. However he found that it had been strongly refortified. Nonetheless Odinel was informed by the king of Scotland's official messenger that he was going to be besieged. Odinel had installed some first-class soldiers in the castle, and this made it among the most impregnable that I have ever seen. Odinel himself was forced to come out of the castle alone and unattended, because his men did not wish to see him humiliated by being captured inside. They knew just how resentful the king of Scotland was against their lord, and how he would show Odinel no mercy in court if his army succeeded in taking the castle. Odinel was extremely sad to leave his men, and they courageously remained inside to see to its defence. (1657)

The army of Scotland made an enormous din as they attacked, and they were then joined by the Flemings and the border men. The castle's defenders fought back fiercely and courageously.

Their adversaries outside suffered many casualties, and bodies, destined never to see their families again, littered the ground. Odinel managed to ride off on Bauçant, his charger with the flowing mane, to seek for the help he needed to save his castle. (1664)

On he rode, day and night, spurring his sturdy brown Bauçant on, and succeeded finally in raising a company of four hundred knights, fine, valiant men, with helmets glinting in the sun. They will be fighting with him at his side and saving Prudhoe with sharpened lance. The siege, I know, lasted for three days. Odinel's men inside the castle were brave fighters and put up a stout resistance against the Flemings. The losses inside the castle — and I am sure of this — amounted to very few indeed. They did, however, lose the surrounding fields and all the grain that they produced. Their planted gardens were stripped bare by the evil enemy. Some of them could think of nothing worse to do than to cut the bark off the fruit trees, a contemptible way of taking revenge. (1679)

When king William realised that he could make no headway, and was not able to capture the castle however many arrows they shot or rocks they hurled, he spoke to one of his counsellors in confidence: 'Let us drop this and head for Alnwick. Before the end of this month, you will see for yourself just how much difficulty Odinel will have in continuing to hold out. We won't leave without first capturing this castle. Let us now give orders for our Scots to devastate the land along the sea-coast, and demolish each and every house and church. Let us send the men of Galloway in the opposite direction, into Odinel's territory, where they can massacre all the men. As for us, we will go to Alnwick and besiege the castle there. Our armies can then join forces and go to the aid of the French. But not before they have caused great damage, and this whole area has been destroyed. Let us start as quickly as we can!' (1694)

It was on a Thursday evening that king William made this declaration, and the French and the Flemings gave their approval to the course of action he recommended. Early on the Friday morning the bugles rang out, and this great army, led by its bold barons, moved off. They arrived at Alnwick without stopping to rest. The Scots had set fire to the whole area and destroyed it. The church of St Lawrence had been desecrated the same day, and three priests brutally castrated there. It is no exaggeration to say that three hundred men were also killed. Never again will they set eyes on their nearest and dearest. Odinel d'Umfraville excelled himself by raising such a large number of fighters to relieve Prudhoe. So help me God, this will profoundly anger the king of Scotland. No one in his family ever suffered the humiliation that he is about to. (1708)

There king William was, at Alnwick with the army he had raised, as Odinel, with his fearsome band of warriors, draws closer and closer. William d'Estuteville gives fine support, and Ranulf de Glanville is eager for the fight. With his burnished sword, lord Bernard de Balliol [of Barnard Castle] will rain heavy blows on the Scots. William de Vesci, fight as you know how! [Roger de Pont-l'Evêque] archbishop of York will fight the fight by supplying sixty of his best knights. Just look at Odinel, at the head of his troops, arriving at Newcastle when night is already falling! That is precisely what happened, despite what anyone else tells you. There they learn the news that the king of Scotland is at Alnwick with a limited number of Flemish and French troops. There are no Scots there, as each one of them is busy setting fire to the fields. (1724)

If you wish to hear a good story of good deeds done by good men, I will tell you one that I know about. Odinel's men held a meeting to decide what to do and how to do it. The question was whether or not they should go on the attack against king William and the troops he had. Odinel's answer was: 'Shame on anyone who does not agree! I will be the one to strike the first blow, so please God! William has caused me a great deal of damage, and this has made me very bitter indeed. If God allows us to take revenge on him, then in my view we will be fully justified. Let us go and attack them! If he stays and faces us, he and his men our bound to lose.' (1735)

Says Bernard de Balliol: ‘Anyone who is not brave enough today to fight, does not deserve to earn himself any land in return and all that this entails.’ Ranulf de Glanville replies: ‘Let us not rush into this! We should first send a scout to find out how many of them there are, and then follow on ourselves, if so be God’s will. If there are no Scots among them, then we have nothing to fear.’ Odinel musters all of his best fighters, and Roger fitzRichard follows suit. With all the barons now encouraged and emboldened, they ride off through the night in tight formation. (1745)

By dawn next morning the king of Scotland, at the head of his company of five hundred knights, had already donned his helmet. All of his men keep saying to him: ‘Ignore what the cowards say. People can like it or not, but Northumberland belongs to you.’ The king says: ‘Let us wait for the rest of the army to join us, and then we can launch a concerted attack on the castle. It is very hot, my lords, so why don’t we have breakfast?’ He then takes his helmet off. We know that this is what happened, because the author of this story was there, and he is telling the truth. (1755)

King William has come to a halt in front of the castle. The servants bring him his meal, and he eats. Our knights, meanwhile, have taken up position in a nearby wood where they find the scout they had sent out earlier. He tells them everything they have to know. Ranulf de Glanville says: ‘Thanks be to God! Take up your arms! There is nothing to be afraid of.’ You should have seen the knights leaping into action, mounting their horses, seizing their weapons! Every one, without exception, is impatient to come to blows with the enemy. Each man is as willing as the next to enter the fray. (1765)

The king of Scotland was extraordinarily brave and daring. He stood there in front of Alnwick without wearing any armour. I am not making this up or basing my report on hearsay. I was actually present at the scene and saw it with my own eyes. Someone shouted out Vesci’s battle-cry and was joined by others shouting ‘Come on, the Glanvilles!’ and ‘Up the Balliol’s!’, then by that of Odinel d’Umfraville and the valiant Estuteville knights. When he heard this, William realised that he was most likely outnumbered and undone. But he quickly pulled himself together: this was no time for fear. (1775)

Without losing a moment, the king has his armour fetched. He mounts his fleet-footed charger and, with great daring, dashes straight into the fray. With his first blow, he sends his adversary crashing to the ground. William and his men fight with great tenacity. As I see it, things would have gone well for them but for a lone sergeant-at-arms who comes charging at him and plunges the spear he is holding into the king’s horse. No need to ask how much this distresses the king. Weighed down with the sins of the Scots, he falls to the ground, and his war-horse too. (1786)

There are the two of them, both on the ground. It was impossible for the king to get to his feet, as the horse had fallen on top of him. Seeing the servants and squires pass him by fills him with pain, anguish and despondency. But there is still something more for him to experience today, I fear, and there is little he, or anybody else, can do about it. (1792)

Fighting on both sides is fierce and bitter. You would have seen many a spear hurled and many an arrow shot, warriors warring and cowards cowering. The poor Flemings are massacred in large numbers, and their bowels, ripped from their bodies, lie scattered all over the meadows. They will never see their homes again, and never again shout out their battle-cry ‘Arras!’ (1798)

The king, as I was telling you, has been knocked to the ground, with his horse now straddling his legs. The horse is hampering him, and unless it is pulled off, he will never again stand on his own two feet to greet relative or friend. He will for ever be shamed and humiliated. As I saw for myself, he was immediately taken prisoner by Ranulf de Glanville, and the king formally surrendered to him some time later. The bravest of William’s knights were also taken prisoner. No mercy was shown on either side, and everyone remained enemies. Our incomparable English knights have no love for the

Flemings who had almost got the better of them, so they simply carried on killing them. There is no other way of putting it. (1810)

King William formally surrendered to Ranulf, as was inevitable. What else could he have done? Ranulf himself was extremely happy to see the war with the king of Scotland actually come to an end. England was at peace, and its good people would have nothing more to fear from the Scots. They would no longer have any reason to harm us. (1816)

Ranulf de Glanville, having accepted the king's surrender, was holding him prisoner. It was the happiest day of his life. He ordered William to be disarmed, and did everything else that was required of him. He had him mounted on a pony and led away with all due respect. This is what happened, whatever anyone else might tell you. The English then took up quarters in Newcastle. The Scots were returned to their country, as chivalry required, while a number of Scottish knights who had been selected for ransom were kept on remand. Both sides now considered the battle to be well and truly over. (1826)

Those of us on king Henry's side had fought an excellent fight, while the Scottish rebels also had very good warriors. When, however, the Scots lost what they most cherished, and had their rightful lord taken from them, when not all of them remained loyal to their king, and when they were knocked off their horses and defeated, it was inevitable that they should all have been captured on the battlefield. And it is little wonder if their happiness and joy then turned to sorrow and grief. (1834)

[The rebel] lord Roger Mowbray has fled the battlefield. It was the sensible thing to do. Why should he stay? All the others who were still fighting were his enemies. If they captured him, he could not be sure that the king of England would not take whatever revenge he wanted on him. Sir Adam de Port, a most valiant baron, fled with Roger, and off they went at a gallop. Luckily for them, they were under God's protection, and no one caught up with them. Adam would certainly have lost everything that day if he had not been out in front. But this was not what God Almighty wished to happen, and it would have been such a shame for a courageous man like him. (1847)

I will now give you the names of those who distinguished themselves at the siege of Alnwick, as I have described it. Lord Alan de Lascelles put up a strong defence on his charger before his fall. He was a very prominent knight, advanced in years, who had not fought in a joust for at least thirty years. He was, however, an excellent warrior highly skilled in warfare. If the king of Scotland had followed his example, he would have had much more success. Sir Alan was taken prisoner and, being an extremely rich man, detained in order to be ransomed. (1857).

William de Mortimer [of Aberdour] performed most courageously that day. He charged through the ranks like a demented boar, dealing many a blow and receiving just as many in return. He found himself face to face with the staunch sir Bernard de Balliol, who I have often referred to. William knocked Bernard and his horse to the ground, and demanded he admit defeat, as chivalry requires. Sir Bernard fought well and incurred no blame. After the battle he was highly praised as the best swordsman and the strongest combatant. Raoul Ruffus gave a good account of himself, but his contribution was short-lived. He was attacked by more than a hundred men intent on entrapping him, and it came as little surprise to see him surrender. Alas that he ever fought this war! The cost he paid was very high. (1871)

Richard Maluvel certainly fought a fierce fight. He dealt many a blow and took just as many himself. In the saddle he showed not the slightest fear. He had an excellent charger that was impressively equipped. He himself was a brave, exemplary knight, and this I can guarantee. I saw him fight as hard, that day, as all thirteen of the companions he had brought with him. He lost his horse, however, when it was struck down and immediately fell. This was a great loss to him, and it made

him extremely sad. A large crowd gathered round sir Richard, all of them crying out 'Surrender, quick!' And this is what he did, with a very heavy heart. What a sad day it was for him when he first met such a foolhardy king as William! It would take me too long to give you a list of all those who were captured and suffered such extreme pain. What I can tell you is that William de Vesci was able to ransom as many knights as he wished, and there were close to a hundred of them. Bernard de Balliol, Walter de Bolebec and Odinel were among those who also took prisoners ransom when it came to sharing out the spoils. (1892)

My lords, do not be surprised at just how crushing the defeat of the Scots was. On the day of the battle, they had butchered more than a thousand of our men, sons separated from their fathers in death. You should have seen the tears, the grief and heard the cries of sorrow from those poor souls in St. Lawrence's church, some with their bodies slashed to pieces, and not even the tonsured priests spared. You can imagine how much this must have angered God, and how much king William must have incurred God's wrath. The king of Scotland's sinful behaviour was the cause of many a death, and he himself paid the price with his defeat. (1903)

What you are hearing now is the truth; you have my guarantee on that. The English king had landed back in England. The next day [12 July 1174] was his day of reconciliation with St. Thomas [Becket], and it was the same day as the king of Scotland was taken prisoner and led away. William had spent that night in Newcastle, and from there Ranulf de Glanville took him to Richmond. That is where he will stay until king Henry decides what to do with him. (1911)

King Henry was well and truly reconciled with St. Thomas the Martyr, having confessed his guilt as a miserable sinner, expressed his contrition, and made the heavy public penance required of him. He was not willing to stay [in Canterbury] any longer, so he left. He set off for London, intent on seeing the city he regarded as his, and the good Londoners. He was extremely sad about the Scottish war. His people were very much afraid of king William, and this is something that saddened Henry. But it will soon be a different story as he learns that all his enemies have been defeated. (1921)

When the Londoners learnt that king Henry was due to arrive, everyone put on their Sunday best, and a profusion of silk clothes suddenly appeared. People took to their ponies and came cantering out of the city with great pomp. Having such subjects as these proved what a much-loved king Henry was. (1927)

Sir Henry le Blunt was the first to come forward and kiss his liege lord. The ceremony of greeting Henry and his barons took as long as it would have taken a man to walk a mile, or even more. The king of England began by telling them how much he appreciated their loyalty to him, and they in turn gave thanks to him as their rightful lord. 'Sire,' said Gervase [de Cornhill], 'no more of this! God our Creator forbid that anyone could accuse Londoners of being traitors. Even at the cost of losing their limbs they would never commit any act of treachery.' 'Yes,' replied the king, 'they can be justly proud of that, and if they should ever need my help, I shall repay them.' Thereupon the king was escorted back to Westminster. (1941)

The citizens of London are overjoyed to see their lord again. They heap presents on him, and other marks of their esteem. Henry, however, remains absorbed in his thoughts. He is anxious on account of the king of Scotland and the insane venture he is engaged on. He is very worried, too, about that brave warrior Roger Mowbray who spends all his time destroying the king's lands. But before Henry is due to go to bed that night, news comes to him that will very much redound to his honour. (1949)

The king was already in the royal bedchamber when the messenger arrived. He had had an exhausting journey and had gone three days and three nights without eating anything and without drinking. So important was the news he had to deliver that he had not slept at all. Day and night

passed, and he pressed on with painful diligence. He was right to do so, because a rich reward awaited him. (1955)

The king was propped up on his pillow. A servant boy was massaging his feet, and Henry was nodding off. Everything was quiet: harp and fiddle had fallen silent, nobody spoke or raised their voice. The messenger came up to the door and quietly called out. The king's chamberlain asked: 'who's there?' 'It's me, a messenger, my friend. Come a bit closer! Sir Ranulf de Glanville has sent me here with a message for the king's ears only, one that is essential for him to hear.' The chamberlain replied: 'It can wait until the morning.' 'No,' said the messenger, 'I swear, I've got to speak to him this very moment. I know my lord the king is very worried and anxious about something. Let me in, my good chamberlain!' 'I don't dare,' he replied, 'the king's asleep. Go away!' (1970)

When he heard them talking, the king woke up. There was someone shouting at the door: 'Let me in, let me in!' 'Who is it?', asked the king. 'Tell me, I want to know!' 'Sire,' said the chamberlain, 'I will tell you: it's a messenger from up North, someone you know well. It is a follower of Ranulf de Glanville called Brien.' 'This makes me very anxious, I swear', said the king. 'It means that Ranulf is asking for assistance. Let the messenger come in!' (1979)

The messenger, an educated and polite man, comes in and greets king Henry as follows: 'Your majesty, God of the Trinity save you, and, after you, all those who are close to you!' 'What news do you bring, Brien?' asked the king. 'Has the king of Scotland reached Richmond? Has the castle at Newcastle been taken? Has Odinel d'Umfraville been taken prisoner or driven out of his lands? Have all my barons been banished from their fiefs? Swear by your sworn faith to me, messenger, that you will tell me the truth! If my barons do not take vengeance on these rebels, they will not have served me as they should.' (1989)

'Sire,' says the messenger, 'just listen to my message! Your barons in the North are very worthy men, so please be good enough to listen to what my lord Ranulf has to tell you. Through me he sends his greetings of friendship to you, as well as those of his lady wife [Berthe de Valoignes] whom you know very well. His message is that you should stay where you are because the king of Scotland and all his barons have been captured.' King Henry replies: 'Is this true?' 'Yes, indeed it is, sire. You will be told of this formally tomorrow morning. The learned archbishop of York will send you two of his own messengers in the morning. As soon as I heard the news myself, I set off before them. I have hardly had any sleep for four days now, no food or drink, and I am starving. If you would be so kind, give me my reward.' To this the king replied: 'Fear not! If what you say is true, then you are already a very rich man. (2006)

Tell me, has the king of Scotland really been captured?' 'Yes, sire, I swear it's true. May I be nailed to a cross, strung up with a noose or burned alive on a pyre if the news is not confirmed before midday tomorrow.' King Henry replied: 'Thanks be to God and to St.Thomas the Martyr and to all God's saints!' The messenger then went off to find lodgings, and here he was given as much food and drink as he wanted. The king is so happy and elated that he goes to his knights and wakes them all up. 'Wake up, my lord barons! What a wonderful night this is for you all! I have received news that will gladden your hearts. The king of Scotland has been captured! I have been assured that this is true. The news just came to me when I was about to go to bed.' The knights all shout out: 'Thanks be to God! The war is finished, and peace has been restored in your kingdom!' (2022)

What a wonderful night that was for king Henry! Next day during midmorning the messengers arrived from the archbishop of York, Roger [de Pont-l'Evêque], with greetings to his lord, leader of the loyalists. The king had never been happier than when he heard what the messengers had to say. It confirmed what he already knew. He says to them: 'I got this news last night at a time when I was feeling very dejected. The man who brought it will get the reward he deserves.' He took

a baton in his hand and held it out to Brien, thereby investing him with ten square leagues of land in recognition of all the hardship he had endured. (2032)

The king immediately summoned his messengers and sent them to David, the king of Scotland's brother and as fine a man as I ever saw. This brave and exemplary knight was in Leicester, and when he heard the news, he was more miserable than he had ever been. The king of England lets him know how things stand: there is no alternative to his surrendering and throwing himself on his mercy. David realised that his only possible course of action was to hand over his castle and come to king Henry's court. My lords, this whole business was over and done with within a week. The king of England's war is over, and all his enemies captured. (2042)

King Henry gave orders for the king of Scotland be brought to him without delay. News had just reached him that it was necessary for him to cross over to Normandy because Rouen, his own city, was being besieged. He had no time to lose. He took David along with him and headed for the Channel. Brien had no desire to stay with the king, so returned home. He reported to lord Ranulf that he should immediately take the king of Scotland to Southampton, as Henry wished to take him over to Normandy with him. (2049)

Henry, son of Matilda, king of such auspicious birth, waited at Southampton for fine weather and favourable winds. Sir Ranulf de Glanville set off on his journey with all speed, bringing a heavy-hearted king of Scotland with him. Ranulf and the king of Scotland rode as quickly as they could to catch up with Henry and his flotilla. But a favourable wind had sprung up, and the king set sail without waiting for them. He was already in Normandy when they reached Southampton. Despite what other people might say, I can tell you exactly what happened then. The king left strict orders, on pain of mutilation or death, that Ranulf, with William of Scotland in his custody, should follow him across the Channel as soon as they were able. King Henry reached Rouen just as day was dawning, and before evening the terms of peace had been laid down. Henry then set off, with the large army he had raised, into the territory of [Louis VII] king of France.

The war in England is now over. (2065)

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