

Moreover, the king, who seemed to have acquired a manhood that made up in some degree for his lack of it in the past, now established a power which compelled all parties to respect his will. This new power was a standing army, organized in great measure out of bands of mercenaries, brigands, and tramps, who during the civil wars and the struggle with England had pillaged the country.

To support this army Charles levied a permanent tax on the land of the middle classes. As the king now had a regular force of his own, he was no longer obliged to depend so entirely on the feudal lords. The result was that the latter became less and less warlike, for want of practice, and hence less and less able to resist the constantly increasing power of the crown.

86. Summary. — This period, embracing nearly two hundred years, was, as we have seen, productive of great events and great changes. The battle of Courtrai, the papal quarrel, and the establishment of the States-General, the suppression of the Knights Templars and the confiscation of their estates, all tended directly or indirectly to strengthen the king against the nobles or the Church.

The civil war and the Hundred Years' War reduced the royal authority for a time to its lowest ebb; but the reaction begun by Joan of Arc made France realize her nationality as never before. Finally, the triumphant close of the war and the organization of a standing army restored the power of the crown and greatly enhanced it.

The general results may be summed up as follows: France is more united; the nobles are less independent of restraint; the real strength of the country is becoming more centralized in the person of the king.¹

¹ Meanwhile Switzerland had appeared on the map of Europe. The western portion was formed from what once had been part of Gaul; the eastern portion was contributed by Germany.

SECTION IX

This was a period of decay and of new birth — a time for reforming itself and setting itself in order. — GUIZOT.

With the Italian wars, the discovery of America, and the Reformation, the modern history of Europe begins. — LAVALLÉE.

LOUIS XI — CONSOLIDATION OF FRANCE — THE REVIVAL OF LEARNING — FRANCIS I — WARS FOR THE BALANCE OF POWER — FRANCE AND THE NEW WORLD — BEGINNING OF THE REFORMATION. 1461–1559

LOUIS XI, 1461–1483.

LOUIS XII, 1498–1515.

CHARLES VIII, 1483–1498.

FRANCIS I, 1515–1547.

HENRY II, 1547–1559.

87. Power of the Duke of Burgundy; League of the Public Good. — The reign of Louis XI began with a struggle on the part of the nobles to regain the power they had lost, or were beginning to lose, during the latter part of the rule of Charles VII. Philip, Duke of Burgundy, pretended to be the friend of Louis, but in reality he was his most dangerous rival. Philip's domains not only embraced a large territory of the best land in France, but through inheritance or purchase he had come into possession of the greater part of the Netherlands, including the rich and prosperous cities of Ghent,¹ Bruges, Brussels, and Antwerp.

In point of splendor, wealth, and power, no prince in Europe could compare with him. Philip, with a magnificent retinue

¹ Ghent (gēnt).

of knights and noblemen as a guard of honor deigned with lofty condescension to escort Louis to his coronation at Reims. In the midst of this imposing pageant the French king made but a sorry figure compared with the duke, who seemed the more royal of the two; but Philip soon found that the young man whom he so arrogantly patronized was abundantly able to take care of himself.

Louis, however, made two serious mistakes at the outset. He dismissed the ablest statesmen of the preceding reign, and he endeavored besides to strengthen his position too rapidly. In doing this he alienated the nobles by reviving old and obsolete claims of the crown to certain feudal dues; he offended the clergy by restricting their privileges and requiring a strict account of their possessions; finally, he disgusted the citizens of the towns by a sudden increase of taxes for the support of his standing army.

The result of this discontent was the formation of a league against the king, called the League of the Public Good. In an attempt to crush this league Louis was completely defeated. That defeat was the most fortunate thing that could have happened to him. It taught him where his real strength lay. Henceforth he fought his enemies not by force of arms, but by craft.

He fairly earned the name he afterward received, of "the universal spider"; for certainly no spider ever wove more subtle webs or caught more victims. He fomented jealousies and quarrels which dissolved the league. Then he dealt with the chief men individually. He bought the loyalty of one, he coaxed that of another, he locked up a third in an iron cage, like a wild beast, and kept him there till his rebellious heart was broken.

88. **Louis XI; Charles the Bold.** — Meanwhile Charles the Bold had succeeded to the dukedom — we might almost say the kingdom — of Burgundy. Strong, rich, and feared as the



duke was, he yet had a weak point in his armor. His territory was not geographically united. Between Burgundy on the southeast and the Netherlands on the northwest, there was a wedge of the royal domains of France.¹ Charles wanted to make that triangular piece of property of Louis' his own; then, instead of being a wedge to split his power apart, it would serve like the keystone of an arch to bind it together. When that was accomplished he would take another step and erect his possessions into a new realm, occupying geographically a middle place between France and Germany, but in wealth and power greater than either.

With patience the Duke of Burgundy might have accomplished this; but patience was not one of his virtues. He was by nature what his name, or rather nickname, styled him, — Charles the Bold or the Rash. To accomplish his ends, he invited his brother-in-law, Edward IV of England, to aid him in his attack on France. Edward readily agreed, for there was prospect of both glory and pillage in such an expedition. There was besides the possibility of the entire conquest of France, in which case he and Charles agreed to divide the country between them. Edward landed with a large force at Calais, that convenient threshold on French territory still retained by the English,² but was disappointed in not meeting the Duke of Burgundy with his army.

The duke came, indeed, but only to say that the plan of campaign must be changed. Edward met with some further disappointments, and then the wily Louis managed the rest. He had already bought over a number of the leading English nobles; he now proceeded to buy over King Edward himself. A conference of the two sovereigns was decided on; but as neither would trust the other, the meeting was arranged to take

¹ Map No. IX, page 118, shows the situation of Burgundy, France, and the Netherlands, at this time as well as later.

² See Paragraph 84.

place at Pecquigny,¹ on the middle of a bridge over the Somme,² with a wooden grating for a barrier. Through this grating the monarchs affectionately kissed each other, and Louis' smooth tongue, bags of gold, and promise of his son as husband for the sister of the Prince of Wales, sent Edward back to England well pleased with his expedition. But it all came to nothing. The duke now found it expedient to postpone his assumption of the crown of Burgundy.

89. The Method of Louis XI contrasted with that of Charles. In this instance we have an illustration of the beginning of that new system of government which may be said to have originated with Louis. Charles the Bold represented the old feudal method. He tried to gain his ends openly, by force of arms. Louis, on the contrary, sought to attain his by cunning and stratagem. Charles would beat down his enemy by sheer power of muscle; Louis would outwit and entrap him.

There is nothing attractive, nothing noble, in the course pursued by the French king; there is, in fact, something revolting about it. It is the method of the serpent as contrasted with that of the lion. Yet in one way it was an advance: it saved life, and procured what the country then most needed for its welfare, — peace. Hence we may say that, in so far as Louis avoided war and used diplomacy instead, his course marked the beginning of a higher conception of government than that which characterized the Middle Ages,³ and which was based mainly on brute force.

¹ Pecquigny (pĕk-keen-yĭ): near Amiens.

² Somme (sōmm): a river in the north of France. It empties into the English Channel.

³ The Middle Ages, or that period which followed the fall of Rome in 476, may be considered to end at this time; that is, about the middle of the fifteenth century or from the fall of Constantinople in 1453. As the revival of learning, the discovery of America, and the beginning of a strong monarchical form of government, in place of the old feudal system, all date from this time or a little later, they mark, according to the majority of authorities, the commencement of a new period, — that of modern history.



LOUIS XI

90. **Consolidation of France.** — Louis was not satisfied with introducing a new system of government, and with extending the royal power; he wished to consolidate all the provinces of France into one great realm. The Capetian kings had labored to bind the country together by feudal ties. If they could compel each dukedom or county to acknowledge and maintain the crown, they were content; since, as we have seen, the great struggle during the whole Capetian period was to reduce the turbulent and insubordinate nobles to some recognition of a central ruling power.

But the kings of the house of Valois,¹ so ably represented by Louis XI and his successors, were resolved to accomplish far more than this. Their object was to break down the feudal system entirely and permanently. It was not enough for them to rule over a kingdom made up of an aggregation of provinces, each of which owed, first, allegiance to some powerful duke or count, and next such support to the sovereign as it found it convenient to give, or he might be able to compel. On the contrary, Louis, for one, was determined to render the whole of France obedient to himself as absolute monarch.

Many things favored such an undertaking. The power of the feudal nobles had, with some exceptions, been diminishing; while the king, on the other hand, through his standing army, supported by a fixed revenue, was becoming more and more master of the situation. Charles the Bold continued to thwart any such consolidation so far as he could prevent it; but Louis was patient. The duke had got into difficulty about the Archbishop of Cologne, which suited Louis exactly. "Let the duke go," said he, "and knock his head against Germany."

While he waited, Louis spun his web of wiles, and did not spin in vain. The duke was planning to unite Alsace,²

¹ House of Valois (vāl-wă'): beginning with Philip of Valois. See table, Paragraph 76.

² Alsace (älsäs') and Lorraine: provinces of Germany lying east of northern France. Charles the Bold held the first by mortgage and the second by

Lorraine, Switzerland, and Provence to his own states. Alsace became enraged at the cruelty of the governors imposed upon it by the duke, and rose in insurrection. Louis secretly stirred up the Bernese Swiss to aid them. Then Lorraine followed the example of Alsace. The duke besieged Nancy, its capital; the Swiss came to its relief, and a battle was fought in which Charles was killed.

The great duke left no son to succeed him, and so, by feudal law, his province of Burgundy fell to Louis, who next received Provence by bequest. He now planned to get possession of the late duke's domains in the Netherlands, which Charles's daughter, Mary of Burgundy, had inherited; but she married Maximilian of Austria, and so added the Netherlands to the house of Austria, from which they soon passed to Spain. Still, Louis had so far succeeded that he had now practically got the greater part of France under his direct control. After his death, his son and successor, Charles VIII, completed the work by marrying Anne of Brittany, so bringing that important province into the circle of the crown domains.

With its addition France became, geographically and politically, a united kingdom. A glance at the map opposite will show better than any description how royal power had grown since the days of Hugh Capet's humble beginnings in the tenth century. Still, we must remember that, though nominally one, the country was nevertheless made up of provinces having widely different laws and customs.

Though Louis XI did not accomplish the entire consolidation, yet he brought about by far the greater part of it. During the last of his reign we have the spectacle of the royal power of will of a feeble, paralyzed old man, whose body was already half dead, but whose scheming brain was fully alive to every opportunity and equal to every emergency. He fought

force. Eventually both provinces were annexed to France, but were restored (in great part) to Germany in 1870, after the Franco-Prussian War.

his battles in his head, and so rendered battles on the field in great measure unnecessary. By the bloodless victories he won, he made the French monarchy, temporarily at least, the foremost power on the continent of Europe.

91. The "New Learning." — But while Louis was building up the kingdom of France, other events were occurring which were destined to have an immense influence on the future of every civilized country. In 1453 the Turks took Constantinople, the capital of the Greek or Eastern Empire.¹ The result was that many learned Greeks fled to Italy, France, and other countries, carrying with them precious manuscripts in which were preserved the masterpieces of the great classical authors of antiquity. The desire to become acquainted with these works was already awakened, and the students of the University of Paris, like those of Oxford and Cambridge, eagerly welcomed men who brought to them the writings of Homer, Plato, and Aristotle in the original.

The study of Greek, or the "New Learning," as it was called, was to that age what the study of the natural sciences is to ours. So great was the enthusiasm that men of wealth were willing to pay any price for a manuscript of one of the philosophers or poets whose words had instructed and delighted the world. Others were ready to devote years of patient toil to translating and copying these manuscripts, both for their own use and for that limited number who could afford to purchase them.

92. Invention of Printing. — At the very period when this interest in the classics was at its height, means were discovered by which these books, which had been slowly and laboriously transcribed with the pen, might be rapidly multiplied at far

¹ The Roman emperor, Constantine, had established his capital, in the fourth century, on the Bosphorus, and named it, from himself, Constantinople. After the fall of Rome or the Western Empire, the Eastern or Greek Empire, with Constantinople as its metropolis, continued to exist until besieged and taken by the Turks in 1453.

less cost. After many fruitless experiments, a German, John Gutenberg¹ of Mentz, succeeded in making movable wooden types, which were later cast in metal. He was far from realizing the true significance of his invention, but none the less he had found in these little blocks, each representing a letter of the alphabet, the most effective of all agents for advancing civilization, and also, it must be confessed, sometimes the surest means of demoralizing it.

In 1469 three of Gutenberg's pupils came to Paris, and, with the king's permission and encouragement, set up presses in the college of the Sorbonne.² But the populace regarded their marvelous work with suspicion, believing it to be the result of magic. They looked askance on the uniformly printed sheets, so unlike manuscript in their perfect regularity. They whispered that it must be the black art, and that the devil certainly had a hand in it.

Stirred by this conviction, they would speedily have burned the unfortunate printers as sorcerers, had not Louis XI interfered. Later the clergy, fearing, perhaps with good reason, that the multiplication and circulation of books would spread heresy, — for independence of thought and free inquiry were even then beginning to make their power felt,³ — obtained a royal order restricting the whole number of printers in the realm to twelve. These were chosen by the king. Any one else venturing to set up a press was to be hanged. Thus did Church and Crown combine in the vain attempt to fetter the limbs of that young giant destined one day, for good or ill, to prove himself superior to both.⁴

¹ Gutenberg (goo'ten-běrg).

² Sorbonne (sôr-bôn'n').
³ One indication of this resistance to authority was the French Pragmatic Sanction (solemn ordinance or decree), which in 1268, and again with greater emphasis in 1438, set a limit to the spiritual power of the pope over the French clergy. The principle was destined to be reasserted still more explicitly by Bossuet in his Four Propositions, in the reign of Louis XIV. See page 204, note 1.

⁴ See Walter Scott's *Quentin Durward*, Chapter XIII.

93. **End of the Reign of Louis XI.** — To Louis XI is due the credit of having done much to encourage trade and commerce, by endeavoring to secure a uniform system of weights and measures, in which, however, he was but partially successful. He also established that most useful and important institution, the post office, though it was then employed for government purposes only.

Philip de Comines,¹ the king's trusted counselor and the able historian of the period, says of him, "If a prince knows good from evil, it is by the special favor of God, and particularly if, as in the king my master's case, the good carries the day." That is the cautious and complimentary language in which the courtier apologizes for the crooked policy of the crown. Louis himself, crafty and successful, has bequeathed the secret of his policy in his favorite maxim, "He who does not know how to dissimulate, does not know how to govern." Many a modern politician, both in France and out of it, who has not been able to imitate Louis in anything else, has at least made this royal maxim entirely his own.

94. **Charles VIII; Revolt of the Nobles; the Tiers État; Foreign War.** — Louis left a son, Charles VIII, who carried a brave heart in a puny body. The nobles, anxious to regain the power they had lost under his father, rose against the king in a war which they managed so badly, and which terminated so disastrously for them, that it received the name of the "Foolish War."

Meantime a new class began to get possession of political influence. In the first States-General or national assembly² of 1302 the inhabitants of the towns, but not the country people or peasantry, had obtained representation. These now obtained the privilege of choosing deputies (1484). Henceforth the peasantry and the citizens will unite in what will

¹ de Comines (dêh kô-meen').

² See Paragraph 71.

be known as the *Tiers État*,¹ or Third Estate or Class, — a name which three hundred years later will occupy the most conspicuous place in the history of the Revolution.

Charles, not satisfied with ruling at home, endeavored to conquer an additional realm in Italy. He began a war which was not to be concluded until nearly half a century after his death. He got himself crowned king of Naples, to which title he next added the empty ones of King of Jerusalem and Emperor of the East. Shortly after, he returned to France, where his death brought his cousin Louis XII to the throne. The expedition of Charles VIII to Italy amounted to nothing in itself, but it is important to note it, since it marks the beginning of those French wars for foreign conquest which were in the end to have far-reaching results.

95. Reign of Louis XII; Loss of Italy. — The chief quality of Louis XII was his good nature. He reduced the taxes, and so endeared himself to the nation that it somewhat rashly decreed him the title of "Father of the People"; his subsequent Italian wars proved that he was a "father" who spent his people's money and life with fearful prodigality. Louis conquered Lombardy, but in the end a Holy League was formed by the pope, the emperor of Germany, the king of Spain, and Henry VIII of England, all of whom dreaded to have France gain more power. Together their force drove the French out of Italy.

The campaign, however, was not wholly lost, for Louis and his companions were so inspired by the palaces and works of art of Milan, Florence, and Rome that they began many magnificent buildings, in the new or Renaissance order of architecture, some of which, such as the *Hôtel de Cluny*² in Paris, still survive to mark the age.

¹ *Tiers État* (tyâr-zâ-tâ'): the nobility, with the king and clergy, constituted the First and the Second Estates; the Third was the common people.

² *Hôtel de Cluny*: the name *hôtel* is often given in France to the palace or mansion of a person of rank or wealth. The *Hôtel de Cluny* is now a

96. Francis I; Further Development of the French Nation.

— In 1515 Francis I. came to the throne. Guizot¹ says of him that he "had received from God all the gifts that can adorn a man. He was handsome, tall, and strong, and his mind was equal to his body." He ruled over a country extending from the Mediterranean and the Pyrenees to the English Channel and the southern borders of the Netherlands.

It was a country, too, no longer made up, as in the past, of feudal provinces which had little sympathy with each other, which spoke widely different dialects, and which were often bitterly hostile. On the contrary, this great realm, now geographically united, was tending more and more to become one in every other respect. The royal power practically extended over the whole of it.

Hitherto the laws had been recorded in Latin, because there had been no grammatically formed national language; now they were recorded in French, which was also, as we shall presently see, about to become the language of literature. Formerly the great body of the inhabitants had no political rights, and nothing in common; now they were represented in the national assembly.²

However imperfect that representation might be, it was nevertheless a decided step forward. It showed that the kingdom was no longer made up of two or three privileged classes who monopolized everything. It meant that at length the PEOPLE had come into existence, and from this period France was to continue developing that unity of interest and of purpose so essential to true national life. Thus two great steps had been taken: first, the discordant baronies had coalesced into a kingdom; secondly, this kingdom was now becoming a commonwealth.

famous museum. It was originally built in the fourteenth century, but was entirely rebuilt in the reign of Louis XII. It is late Gothic, but has some Renaissance features.

¹ Guizot (gê-zo' or gwe-zo').

² See Paragraph 94.