

CHAPTER X

THE DEVELOPMENT OF FRANCE

I. THE ELECTION OF HUGH CAPET (987)

Louis V, the last of the direct descendants from Charlemagne, died in 987.¹ Many of the great feudal lords assembled to attend his funeral; before they dispersed they held a meeting, at which Duke Hugh (Capet) presided, to consider the general situation. The archbishop of Rheims, Adalbero, urgently recommended that the all-important matter of choosing a king should be postponed until all the great barons could be brought together. He moved that all those present should pledge themselves by an oath to the "great duke" (Hugh) that they would take no steps in the matter until the proposed meeting should be held. This plan was adopted.

Charles of Lorraine, the uncle of the late king, was, however, unwilling to wait for the decision of the barons, and attempted to induce Adalbero to secure the throne for him. The archbishop put him off on the ground that his companions and supporters were evil men, and that in any case nothing could be done without the consent of the great lords.

Meanwhile the nobles of Gaul who had taken the oath came together at the appointed time at Senlis; when they had all taken their places in the assembly, the duke, having made a sign to the archbishop of Rheims, the latter expressed himself as follows: "King Louis, of divine memory, left no

¹ See *History of Western Europe*, pp. 120 sqq.

children; we must therefore take counsel as to the choice of a successor, in order that the country shall not come to ruin through neglect and the lack of a pilot. Our deliberations on this subject were recently postponed, by common consent, in order that each one might here voice the sentiments with which God might inspire him, and that from all these individual opinions a general and collective decision might be reached.

"Now that we are once more assembled together, let us endeavor, in all prudence and rectitude, not to sacrifice reason and truth to our personal likes or dislikes. We know that Charles has his partisans, who claim that the throne belongs to him by right of birth. Regarding the question from this point of view, we reply that the throne cannot be acquired by hereditary right. Nor should one be placed upon it who is not distinguished alike by nobility of body and wisdom of mind, and by his good faith and magnanimity. We see in the annals of history rulers of illustrious origin deposed on account of their unworthiness, and replaced by incumbents of equal, or even of inferior, birth.

"And what is there to recommend Charles of Lorraine? He is feeble and without honor, faith, or character; he has not blushed to become the servitor of a foreign king [the emperor], nor to take to wife a girl of only knightly rank. How could the great duke bear that a woman belonging to the lowest rank of his vassals should be queen and rule over him? How could he give precedence to a woman, when his equals and even his superiors in birth bend the knee before him and place their hands beneath his feet? If you consider this matter carefully, you will see that Charles' fall has been brought about through his own fault rather than that of others.

"Make a choice, therefore, that shall insure the welfare of the state instead of being its ruin. If you wish ill to your

¹ Richer, a monk of Rheims, who was living at the time, gives the only good accounts we possess of the revolution which put the Capetians on the throne of France. See below, p. 220.

91. The archbishop of Rheims urges the choice of Hugh instead of Charles of Lorraine. (From Richer.¹)

country, choose Charles; if you wish to see it prosperous, make Hugh, the glorious duke, king. Do not let yourselves be misled by your sympathy for Charles, nor blinded to the common good by hatred of the duke. For if you blame the good, how can you praise the bad? If you praise the bad, how despise the good? Remember the words of the Scripture: 'Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness.' Choose the duke, therefore; he is the most illustrious among us all by reason of his exploits, his nobility, and his military following. Not only the state, but every individual interest, will find in him a protector. His great-heartedness will render him a father to you all. Who has ever fled to him for aid and been disappointed? Who that has been left in the lurch by his friends has he ever failed to restore to his rights?"

This discourse was received with universal applause, and by unanimous consent the duke was raised to the throne. He was crowned at Noyon on the first of June, by the archbishop and the other bishops, as king of the Gauls, the Bretons, the Danes [Normans?], the Aquitanians, the Goths, the Spaniards, and the Gascons. Surrounded by the nobles of the kingdom, he issued decrees and made laws according to royal custom, judging and disposing of all matters with success.

II. KING ROBERT AND HIS UNRULY VASSALS

King Robert, to whom the kingdom of the Franks then fell, was frequently subjected to the outrages of certain of his insolent subjects, especially of those whom Hugh, his father, and Hugh, his grandfather, or he himself, had, in spite of their base origin, raised from a humble condition to the highest dignities. At their head stood Eudes, the son of Thibaut of Chartres, known as the Trickster, who, with a great number of other less dangerous lords, seemed to revolt with

92. King Robert, Hugh's son (996-1031), and his troubles with his vassals. (From *Raoul Glaber, a contemporary*.¹)

¹ See below, p. 220.

the more pride the more clear their duty was to show themselves humble and submissive. Among these was Eudes II [count of Blois and of Chartres], son of the Eudes just mentioned, who outdid all others in power and perfidy. Now the count of Troyes and of Meaux, son of Heribert, and the king's cousin, having left no children, Eudes took possession, in spite of the king's opposition, of these vast domains, which ought in justice to have become part of the patrimony of King Robert. This same Eudes became involved in long contests and foreign wars with Foulques of Anjou. Both of them were puffed up with pride, and consequently were rarely in a pacific frame of mind.

William, stepson of Duke Henry and son of Adelbert, duke of the Lombards, was also for a time in revolt against the king. Among his partisans was his son-in-law, Landri, count of Nevers, and Brunon, his brother-in-law, the bishop of Langres. William's wife, Brunon's sister, had borne him sons and daughters. The oldest of the daughters had married Landri, the others were married to William of Poitou and William of Arles. One of his sons, Renauld, married Adelaide, daughter of Richard of Normandy.

This William was a stranger in France, for while still a child he had been carried off to the country of the Lombards; but, thanks to the sagacity of a monk, he had been restored to his mother, who was in Burgundy. In spite of his sojourn abroad, he was able, by his wealth and the number of his soldiers, to vie with the most powerful lords of the region. He encountered, it is true, a sharp resistance from Hugh of Lambert, count of Châlons-sur-Saône. This Lambert was a very remarkable man. Among other notable actions of his life he built in the county of Autun, in honor of St. Mary and St. John the Baptist, the monastery called Paray, where he was later to be honorably buried. Hugh was at the same time bishop of Auxerre, for the king had left him the administration of the county of his father of whom he was the only male offspring. Consequently he viewed all of King Robert's enemies as his own and faithfully maintained his fidelity to the king.

Robert took for wife Constance, a relative of this lord, whose soul was as constant as her name, and who well deserved the crown which she received. Her father was William, first duke of Aquitaine. She bore Robert four sons and two daughters. Now it happened that a certain Hugh, surnamed Beauvais, endeavored for some time to stir up hate and discord between the king and his wife. He even succeeded in rendering the queen hateful to Robert, in the hope that the dissension might turn to his profit. He also succeeded in inducing the king to grant him the title of Count of the Palace. One day, as the king was hunting in the forest accompanied by Count Hugh, who always followed him closely, twelve valiant knights in the hire of the queen's uncle, Foulques of Anjou, killed Hugh under the king's eyes. King Robert was for some time greatly saddened by this event. Nevertheless he reconciled himself with the queen, as he should.

King Robert's care in regard to the selection of bishops.

This prince was a wise servant of God. He always favored the humble and hated the arrogant. When an episcopal chair became vacant in his kingdom through the death of the bishop, he always exercised the greatest care that it should be given to a successor who would prove a useful person to the Church, however low might be his origin, and not to a nobleman accustomed to the disorders of the world. In this way he often aroused the strong opposition of the great of the realm, who despised the lowly and would have chosen men as insolent as themselves.

III. HOW LOUIS THE FAT (1108-1137) BEGAN, WITH ABBOT SUGER'S AID, TO GET THE UPPER HAND OF HIS VASSALS

93. Suger's account of Louis the Fat and his vassals.

The chief adviser of Louis was Suger, abbot of the great monastery of St. Denis, near Paris, who not only greatly aided the king in his task of strengthening the royal power, but wrote a life of him which is one of the most important of the French historical sources.

The young hero, Prince Louis,¹ gay, gracious, and so friendly to all that he passed with some for a person of no force, had hardly come to man's estate when he proved himself an illustrious and courageous defender of his father's realm. He provided for the needs of the Church, and strove to secure peace for those who pray, for those who work, and for the poor. And no one had done this for a long time.

Now it came to pass at this time that certain disputes arose between Adam, the venerable abbot of St. Denis, and a nobleman, Burchard, lord of Montmorency [his vassal], concerning certain customs. The controversy waxed so hot and reached such extremes of irritation that all ties of homage were broken between vassal and lord, and the two disputants betook themselves to arms, war, and fire.

When the affair came to the ears of Lord Louis he was sorely vexed. He delayed not, but ordered the aforesaid Burchard, duly summoned, to appear before his father in the castle of Poissy for judgment. Burchard lost his cause, but refused to submit to the judgment. He was not taken prisoner, for that is not the custom of the French, but having withdrawn to his estates, he straightway learned what manner of injury and calamity the king's majesty can inflict on his disobedient subjects. For this famous youth [Prince Louis] carried arms thither against him and his criminal allies, Matthew, count of Beaumont, and Dreux of Mouchy-le-châtel, vigorous and warlike men. He laid waste the land of Burchard with fire, famine, and the sword; and overthrew all the defenses and buildings, except the castle itself, and razed them to the ground. When his enemies undertook to defend themselves in the castle he besieged them with the French and the Flemish troops of his uncle Robert, as well as with his own. By these and other means he brought the humiliated Burchard to repentance, bent him to his will

How Prince Louis put an end to a quarrel between his vassals, the abbot of St. Denis and the lord of Montmorency.

¹ The earlier chapters of Suger's *Life of Louis* relate to the period before he actually became king. His incompetent father, Philip, appears to have left much of the hard work of government to his energetic son and heir.

and pleasure, and satisfactorily adjusted the dispute which had given rise to the trouble.

How Prince Louis aided a vassal against an oppressor.

Matthew, count of Beaumont, had long cherished hatred against Hugh of Clermont, whose daughter he had married. This Hugh was a noble man, but simple and easy to lead. His son-in-law laid hold upon a castle called Luzarches (a share in which was his by right of marriage), and took it altogether, and left nothing undone in strengthening the tower with arms and soldiers.

What could Hugh do but hasten to the defender of the kingdom, throw himself at his feet, and beg him with tears to have compassion on an old man and succor him, for he was grievously oppressed. "I would rather, O dearest Lord," he said, "that thou shouldst have all my land, because I hold it of thee, than that my unnatural son-in-law should have it. If he robs me of it, I wish to die." His sad misfortune smote the king to the heart. He gave the old man his hand in friendly wise and promised to aid him, and so sent him forth gladdened by hope. And his hope was not vain. For straightway messengers went forth from the court, who sought the count and commanded him, by authority of Hugh's defender, to restore to Hugh the estate of which he had been illegally despoiled; and they summoned him to appear at the court, upon a day appointed, to defend his cause.

The count did not obey this summons, so the defender made haste to execute vengeance. He gathered a great army and went forth against the rebel. He fell upon the castle and attacked it with arms and fire. By hard fighting he stormed and took it; he then placed a strong guard in the keep, and after he had fortified it he restored it to Hugh just as he had promised to do.

Thus the future king of France was ever busy, providing wisely for the administration of the realm, subduing the rebellious, taking or forcing into submission the strongholds which were centers of revolt.

For example, Guy Troussel, son of that violent man and troubler of the kingdom, Milo of Montlhéry, came back home from an expedition to the Holy Sepulcher, weakened by the hardships of the long journey and by many trials. He had been moved by exceeding great fear of Corbaran,¹ and had descended from the wall of Antioch and left the army of God beleaguered within, and so he was forsaken by all. Fearing that his only daughter might in consequence be deprived of her heritage, he yielded to the desire and persuasions of Philip, the king, and of Louis, his son, who ardently longed for his castle, and gave his daughter in marriage to Philip, the king's younger son. . . .

When the castle of Montlhéry fell in this wise into their hands, the king and his son rejoiced as if they had plucked a straw from their eyes or had torn down bars by which they had been confined. And, indeed, we have heard the father say to his son Louis, "Go, son Louis, keep that tower with all vigilance, whose ravages have well-nigh made us grow old, and whose wiles and criminal frauds have never let me rest in good peace and quiet."

Indeed, its unfaithfulness made the faithful faithless, the faithless most faithless. It brought together the treacherous from far and near, and no ill was done in the whole kingdom without its support. And since the territory of Paris was commanded on the river Seine by Corbeil, midway by Montlhéry, on the right by Châteaufort, there resulted such confusion and chaos in the communications between the men of Paris and of Orleans that neither could go to visit the others without the consent of these faithless men, unless they traveled with a strong guard. But the marriage of which we have spoken tore down the barrier and made travel easy between the two cities.

Suger well understood the duties of a monarch in that disorderly period, and gives many illustrations of the obstacles to be overcome before a real kingdom of France could be created.

¹ I.e. Kerbogha, Emir of Antioch.

How the French king gained possession of the castle of Montlhéry, which had long troubled the peace.

Suger's account of the position and duties of a mediæval French king.

A king, when he takes the royal power, vows to put down with his strong right arm insolent tyrants whensoever he sees them vex the state with endless wars, rejoice in rapine, oppress the poor, destroy the churches, give themselves over to lawlessness which, and it be not checked, would flame out into ever greater madness; for the evil spirits who instigate them are wont cruelly to strike down those whom they fear to lose, but give free rein to those whom they hope to hold, while they add fuel to the flames which are to devour their victims to all eternity.

Such an utterly abandoned man was Thomas of Marle. While King Louis was busied with many wars, he laid waste the territories of Laon, Rheims, and Amiens, devouring like a raging wolf. He spared not the clergy — fearing not the vengeance of the Church — nor the people for humanity's sake. And the devil aided him, for the success of the foolish does ever lead them to perdition. Slaying all men, spoiling all things, he seized two manors, exceeding rich, from the abbey of the nuns of St. John of Laon. He fortified the two exceeding strong castles, Crécy and Nogent, with a marvelous wall and very high towers, as if they had been his own; and made them like to a den of dragons and a cave of robbers, whence he did waste almost the whole country with fire and pillage; and he had no pity.

The Church of France could no longer bear this great evil; wherefore the clergy, who had met together in a general synod at Beauvais, proceeded to pass sentence of condemnation upon the enemy of the Church's true spouse, Jesus Christ. The venerable Cono, bishop of Praeneste and legate of the holy Roman Church, troubled past endurance by the plaints of churches, of the orphans, of the poor, did smite this ruthless tyrant with the sword of the blessed Peter, which is general anathema. He did also ungird the knightly sword belt from him, though he was absent, and by the judgment of all declared him infamous, a scoundrel, unworthy the name of Christian.

And the king was moved by the plaints of this great council and led an army against him right quickly. He had the

clergy, to whom he was ever humbly devoted, in his company, and marched straight against the castle of Crécy. Well fortified was it; yet he took it unprepared because his soldiers smote with an exceeding strong hand; or rather, because the hand of the Lord fought for him. He stormed the strongest tower as if it were the hut of a peasant, and put to confusion the wicked men and piously destroyed the impious. Because they had no pity upon other men, he cut them down without mercy. None could behold the castle tower flaming like the fires of hell and not exclaim, "The whole universe will fight for him against these madmen."

After he had won this victory, the king, who was ever swift to follow up his advantage, pushed forward toward the other castle, called Nogent. There came to him a man who said: "Oh, my lord king, it should be known to thy Serenity that in that wicked castle dwell exceeding wicked men who are worthy to lie in hell, and there only. Those are they who, when thou didst issue commands to destroy the commune of Laon, did burn with fire not only the city of Laon, but the noble church of the Mother of God, and many others beside. And well-nigh all the noble men of the city suffered martyrdom because they were true to their faith and defended their lord the bishop. And these evil men feared not to raise their hands against thy venerable Bishop Gaudin, the anointed of the Lord, defender of the church, but did him most cruelly to death, and exposed his naked body on the open road for beasts and birds of prey to feed upon; but first they cut off his finger with the pontifical ring. And they have agreed together, persuaded by the wicked Thomas, to attack and hold your tower."

The king was doubly animated by these words, and he attacked the wicked castle, broke open the abominable places of confinement, like prisons of hell, and set free the innocent; the guilty he punished with very heavy punishment. He alone avenged the injuries of many. Athirst for justice, he ordained that whatsoever murderous wretches he came upon should be fastened to a gibbet, and left as common

How the king took the castles of Crécy and Nogent.

food for the greed of kites, crows, and vultures. And this they deserved who had not feared to raise their hand against the Lord's anointed.

The king attacks a certain Adam in his tower at Amiens.

When he had taken these two adulterine castles and given back to the monastery of St. John the domains that had been seized, he returned to the city of Amiens and laid siege to a tower of that city which was held by a certain Adam, a cruel tyrant who was laying waste the churches and all the regions round about. He held the place besieged for hard upon two years, and at last forced those who defended it to give themselves up. When he had taken it he destroyed it utterly, and thus brought peace to the realm. He fulfilled most worthily the duty of a king who beareth not the sword in vain, and he deprived the wicked Thomas and his heirs forever of the lordship over that city.

The king brings the unjust Aymon to his senses.

It is known that kings have long arms; and to show that the king's strength was not confined within the narrow boundaries of certain places, a man, Alard de Guillebaut by name, a clever man, with an oily tongue, came from the frontiers of Berri to the king. He laid the grievance of his stepson before his lord the king, and entreated him right humbly, that he would summon by his royal authority a certain noble baron, Aymon by name, surnamed Vais-Vache, lord of Bourbon, who refused to do him justice. Moreover he asked that the king should restrain Aymon from despoiling, with presumptuous audacity, his nephew, the son of his older brother, Archambaut, and to fix according to French custom what portion of goods each of them ought to have.

Now the king loved justice and had compassion on the churches and the poor. And he feared lest these wars should make wickedness flourish, and lest the poor might be vexed and bear the punishment for the pride of others. So, after vainly summoning Aymon, who would not trust himself to trial and refused to obey the summons, Louis gave way neither to pleasure nor to sloth, but marched with a great army toward the territory of Bourges. There he directed his forces against Aymon's castle of Germigni, which was well fortified, and strove to reduce it by a vigorous assault.

Then did Aymon see that he could not hold out, and he gave over hoping to save himself or his castle. He saw only this one way to safety—that he should throw himself at the king's feet. There he prostrated himself again and again, while all the crowd marveled, and prayed the king to have compassion upon him. He gave up his castle, and, humble now as he had once been proud, submitted himself utterly to the king's justice. The king kept the castle and took Aymon into France to be judged there; and right justly and piously, by the decision and arbitration of the French, did he settle the dispute which had arisen between the uncle and nephew.

King Louis spent freely both of money and the sweat of his brow to relieve the sufferings and oppressions of many. He was used to make many such expeditions throughout the country for the relief of churches and of the poor, but we must pass over these, as it would but weary the reader to narrate them. . . .

Now Louis, the king of the French, by virtue of his superior dignity, bore himself toward Henry, king of the English and duke of the Normans, as toward a vassal. But the king of the English, for that he had wealth in marvelous abundance and a noble kingdom, was impatient of his inferiority. So he agreed together with his nephew Theobald, the count of the palace, and many other disaffected men of the kingdom, to cast off Louis' overlordship and strive to rouse the kingdom and stir up old troubles. The king of England and Count Theobald, because Normandy and the county of Chartres lie close together, united to attack the king's nearest frontier. They sent Stephen, count of Mortagne, brother of one and nephew of the other, with an army to another region, in Brie, for they feared that the king might suddenly occupy this territory while the count was absent. And the king of France did not restrain himself, nor spare Normandy, nor Chartres, nor Brie. Stationed in the midst of all these lands as in a circle, he laid waste now one, now another; and he often gave battle to make known the power of the king's majesty.

Troubles between the king of France and the king of England.

IV. PHILIP AUGUSTUS AND HIS VASSALS

94. Philip suppresses a rebellion and extends the royal domain. (From Rigord's *Life of Philip Augustus*.)

The extracts from Suger, given above, show feudal anarchy in France at the opening of the twelfth century, and exhibit the ideal king as a ruler who suppressed disorder and protected the weak, especially the Church, against the strong. The king as an *organizer* of the realm was a conception that could hardly exist until the more powerful of the turbulent nobles had been subdued. Philip Augustus (1180-1223) carried on the work of consolidation so well begun by Louis the Fat with Suger's aid, and was able before the end of his long reign to begin to play the rôle of a king in the fuller sense of the word. He had, however, like the youthful St. Louis later, to meet a general revolt at the opening of his reign.

In the first year of the reign of Philip Augustus¹ and the fifteenth year of his age, certain quarrels arose among the great of the kingdom. These were really a cloak for a league which the nobles of the realm — prompted by the enemy of the Church's peace, the devil — dared to form against their lord, Philip Augustus. They gathered an army and began to lay waste the king's domain.

When the most Christian king, Philip Augustus, heard of this iniquity he waxed exceeding wroth and led against the rebels an army — an infinite multitude. Before many days had passed, he put them all to flight. He pursued them with such vigor and might that, through the miraculous intervention of God, he forced them all to submit to him, and compelled them by his exceeding great strength to do his will in all things.

¹ The title "Augustus" was conferred on Philip by his biographer Rigord, a monk of St. Denis, who explains in his preface that Augustus is derived from the Latin *augeo*, "to augment," — namely, the bounds of the realm.

While the following extract from Rigord's *Life of Philip Augustus* is not correct in all details, it illustrates the way in which the kings of France increased their domains.

Philip Augustus acquires Vermandois

In the year of our Lord's Incarnation 1184, the fifth year of Philip Augustus' reign and the twentieth of his age, a dispute arose, as is not uncommon in times of change, between Philip, most Christian king of the French, and Philip, count of Flanders, about a certain district commonly called Vermandois.

The king claimed that all Vermandois, with its castles, villages, and vills, belonged by right of inheritance and succession to the kings of the French; and he offered to prove it all by the testimony of clergy and laity, — archbishops, bishops, counts, viscounts, and other nobles.

The count of Flanders replied that he had held the land in question during the lifetime of the most Christian king Louis, of blessed memory, and had possessed it in peace, without any dispute, during many years, and was firmly resolved never to give it up so long as he lived. For the count believed that, since the king was but a lad, he could easily divert his mind from this project by promises and flattering words. Besides, it is said that many nobles were ready to support him; but, as the proverb says, "They are sons of the winds, they weave cobwebs."

At length Philip Augustus followed the advice of the princes and barons and called together all the nobles of his lands in the beautiful castle of Karnopalis, commonly called Compiègne. He took counsel with them, and collected a very large army at the city which is called Amiens.

When the count of Flanders heard of the king's coming his heart rejoiced. He collected an army to oppose Philip, directed his forces against his lord, the king, and swore by the strength of his arm that he could defend himself against all men. Thus in the fifth year of his reign and the twentieth of his age the king entered into that land with his army,