

Jean Froissart
Chronicles (extracts)

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Extract 2 ('Amiens', 'Abridged', and 'B'/'C' versions) was first published in Michael Livingston and Kelly DeVries (eds.), *The Battle of Crécy: a Casebook* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2015), p. 252–297, 306–337, 396–405, 407–411. The translation of the 'Rome' version is unpublished and is made after Froissart, *Chroniques. Dernière rédaction du premier livre. Édition du manuscrit de Rome Reg. lat. 869*, ed. by George T. Diller (Geneva: Droz, 1972), p. 704–712.

Extracts 4 and 5 are unpublished and are made after Chicago, Newberry Library, MS Case f.37, vol. 2, fol. 91r–93r and 237r.

Extract 8 is unpublished and is made after *Chroniques de J. Froissart, troisième livre*, ed. by Léon Mirot et Albert Mirot, vol. 13 (Paris: Société de l'histoire de France, 1957), p. 222–224.

Extracts 9 and 10 were first published in Froissart, *Chronicles*, selected and translated by Geoffrey Brereton (London: Penguin Books, 1968), p. 447–453 and 468–471.

1. Prologue

'A' version

In order that the honourable deeds and ventures accomplished by arms, which took place during the wars between France and England, might be aptly documented and commended to lasting memory, so that courageous men might follow such examples to inspire them to good, it is my wish to undertake to record this glorious history. But before I begin, I entreat the Saviour of the whole world, who created all things from nothing, that he may create and instil in me such exceptional insight and understanding that I may continue and persevere with this book which I have begun, in such a way that all those, men and women, who read it, see it, or hear it read, may take enjoyment and pleasure in it, and that I may prove worthy of their esteem.

It is said, and such is the case, that each edifice is built and constructed one stone after another, and all great rivers are formed and created from different places and from several sources. In like fashion, the sciences are compiled and derived by many learned men, for what one of them may be ignorant of is known to another; yet there is nothing that will not be known sooner or later. Now to address the matter that I have undertaken to commence, firstly, by the grace of God and of the Blessed Virgin Mary from whom proceed all succour and advancement, I wish to base myself on the true chronicles formerly composed and collected by that venerable and wise master Jean le Bel, canon of Saint Lambert's in Liège, who applied himself with the utmost care and diligence in this matter, and continued with it for his entire lifetime as accurately as he could. It cost him a great deal to acquire such material, but whatever expenses he incurred did not matter, nor did he lament them, for he was rich and powerful and so could well take them on himself for, being as he was a generous, honourable and courtly man, he would gladly spend his own wealth. During his lifetime he was also a beloved and intimate friend of my most noble and redoubtable lord Sir Jean de Hainault, who is rightly venerated in this book, for he was at the head of many fine ventures and a close companion of kings. For this reason, the aforementioned master Jean le Bel could in his company witness and hear of many exploits, which are contained in what now follows.

It is true that I, who have taken on the composition of this book, have been led to do so for the pleasure, to which I have always been inclined, afforded by spending time with many a great and noble lord, whether in France, England, Scotland, or in various other countries, so becoming acquainted with them. I have always requested and enquired to the best of my ability for true accounts of the wars and exploits that have occurred, and in particular since the great battle of Poitiers at which the noble king Jean of France was captured. For before that I was still young in both thinking and years. Yet despite this I undertook rather audaciously, having just left school, to compose and chronicle in verse the aforementioned wars, and to carry to England the completed book duly compiled, to present to that most

high and most gracious lady, lady Philippa of Hainault, queen of England, who received it most pleasantly and joyfully, bringing me much profit.

Now, it may well be that this book has not been researched or composed as meticulously as such a subject demands, for deeds of arms, which are so dearly bought, should be justly attributed and credited to those who accomplish them through valour. Therefore, to acquit myself with all, as is only right, I have undertaken to continue with this history according to the manner and foundation aforementioned, at the request and entreaty of one of my dear patrons and masters, my lord Robert de Namur, to whom I gladly owe my affection and obedience, and may God grant me to do as may be pleasing to him.

To encourage all noble hearts and show them worthy examples, I, Jehan Froissart, following on from the account made by my lord Jean le Bel, canon of Saint Lambert's in Liège, will begin by saying that while many noble and common people alike have often spoken about the wars of France and England, they did not know the truth, if questioned or interrogated on the matter, of how or why they began, here you will find the proper root of the matter. To that end I will not omit, forget, alter, or abridge anything at all in this history for want of language, but will rather enrich and elaborate where I am able, and thoroughly relate every event, point by point, from the birth of king Edward of England who reigned and participated in so many remarkable and perilous ventures and battles, and other feats of arms and great prowess since the year of grace 1326 in which this noble king was crowned in England. All of those who were with him in his battles and most fortunate encounters, or with his people when he was not present in person, which you will subsequently hear about, should rightly be renowned for their valour; notwithstanding that there are a good many of them who may well be deemed to have achieved the very pinnacle of valour amongst their peers, such as the person of the aforementioned noble king, the prince of Wales his son, the duke of Lancaster, Sir Gauthier de Mauny of Hainault, Sir John Chandos, Sir Franck van Halen, and several others who will be remembered in this book for their integrity and skill. For in all the battles in which they have taken part, they have achieved renown as the best, by land and sea, and have shown such valour that they ought rightly to be held up as valorous above all other. Not that the others, let it be said, who have served with them should be considered less worthy.

In France there are also to be found strong, robust and vigorous exemplars of chivalry, for the realm of France was never brought so low that one might not find those prepared to join in combat. And the noble king named Philippe of Valois was a bold and chivalrous knight, along with king Jean, his son, Charles, king of Bohemia, the count of Alençon, the count of Foix, my lord Saintré, Sir Arnoul d'Audrehem, my lord Boucicaut, Sir Guichard d'Angle, my lord Guichard de Beaujeu, father and son, and several others whom I cannot all name at this time and who will be honoured in timely fashion, for in truth we must

recognise the courage of all those who have been seen to do their rightful duty in such cruel and treacherous battles and stand their ground until defeat.

Translated by Keira Borrill after Besançon MS 864

[The Online Froissart](#)

'B'/'C' versions

In order that the honourable adventures and beautiful feats of arms achieved in the great wars between France and England – of which the kings and their advisors are the principal cause – may be memorably set down and be seen and known, now and in the future, I will exhort myself to write them down and put them into prose writing, on the basis of the trustworthy information which I have obtained from valiant men, knights and squires, who themselves have taken part in them and enhanced them. I also obtained information from some kings of arms¹ and their marshals, who, by the right of their office, are and should be the ones who make enquires about these things and report on them.

It is the case that the late Sir Jehan le Bel, canon of St Lambert at Liege, during his lifetime wrote some of this down as a chronicle, because it pleased him; and I have added further stories to his work and enhanced it, because it pleased me, on the advice and information provided me by the above mentioned, without taking sides or emphasising one at the expense of another, and my only aim was to make sure that the noble feats of all good men are clearly seen and known about. Indeed, forgetting about these, or not mentioning them would be wrong and this should not be done, as feats of arms are only achieved through great effort, as those who try their best know only too well. And so one should not lie about these things in order to please a particular person, or fail to accord the valiant and good the honour and renown which should be truly theirs, but assign it to somebody who has not earned it.

I have said above in the opening of my prologue that I want to speak and write about great and marvellous things that have happened. And truly, those who will see and read this book may — and must — wonder about all the great adventures they will find here. Because I believe that since the Creation of the world, and when man first began to use arms, one could not find in history so many marvellous deeds and great feats of arms as have happened of late during the above mentioned wars, both on land and on sea, and about which I will tell you further on. But as I am about to start writing about it, I want to dwell a little on the aim and purpose of Prowess, because it is such a noble virtue, and it cannot be recommended highly enough, so that it should not be glossed over. Indeed, this virtue is the

¹ Kings of arms represent the highest level in the hierarchy of heralds.

mother and guiding light of all noblemen: just like the bush cannot burn without a flame, so the nobleman cannot achieve perfect honour or glory in the world without prowess.

So it is that all young noblemen who are ambitious and want to get ahead, must work to perform deeds of prowess, must strive to achieve the reputation that they should be numbered amongst the valiant knights, and must consider and ponder how their predecessors (whose lordships they rule and whose coats of arms they bear) were able to acquire honour through their noble deeds. I am sure that if they look and read in this book, they will find so many great deeds and such beautiful acts of battlefield bravery, so many difficult battles, heavy attacks and fierce clashes, and every manner of other fighting which are the result of Prowess, more than can be found in any other book of history, be it old or new. And so this will provide them with material examples to follow in order to encourage them to perform acts of chivalry and bravery, because the memory of the good knights, and the records of the deeds of the brave, rightly fire up the hearts of the young knights-bachelor,² who aim for, and work towards perfect Honour, of which Prowess is the main control and the driving force.

And so I would be loath if there was any young knight-bachelor who could be excused from taking up arms and following this calling because of a lack of funds or money, if he is fit of body and talented to go down that path. But I would he'd stick to his calling with a strong mind and a great desire, because he will soon find great lords and noblemen who will keep him active, if he is worthy, and who will help him and promote him, if he deserves it; and they will make sure they provide him with what he needs, according to his achievements. On the path of chivalry so many great and marvellous adventures happen that one dares not, and cannot, predict the fates of those on it. You will see and find in this book, when you read it, how many knights and squires have made something of themselves more through their prowess than because they were highly born. The reputation of being a valiant knight is so great and so noble, and the virtue of prowess so clear and beautiful, that she [Prowess] stands out in these great halls and anywhere where great lords are gathered. There he [who has this reputation] will shine above the rest, and they will point at him and say: 'See there that man, he organised this raid or that armed attack, or commanded this battlefield formation so well and so intelligently, he jousting so fiercely with iron lances, and broke up the enemy lines two or three times, he fought as a true knight, or undertook this dangerous mission bravely, he was found gravely ill amongst the dead and wounded and never even considered fleeing the spot where he was found.'

Such seeds of praise are showered on the brave and valiant men as a result of their prowess. And even before this happens one sees the brave knight-bachelor sit at the high

² Knight-bachelor represented the middle rank of the knightly hierarchy, which includes squires, knights bachelors, and bannerets (or knights-banneret).

table with the king, prince, duke or count, where other more high-ranking noblemen, of higher birth or greater wealth, or not invited to take up a seat. Just like the four Evangelists and the twelve Apostles are closer to Our Lord than the other mortals, so the brave are closer to Honour and are more honoured than the others. This is right and proper, because they achieve and conquer honour, and the good reputation that comes with it, through great effort, sweat and tears, hard work, great care, being awake and paying attention, and through working day and night without rest. And when their effort is seen and recognised for what it is, then it is remembered and talked about, as is said above, and written about, and noted down in books and in chronicles. Because in the written record one finds the memory of the good and valiant men of times past, like the Nine Worthies,³ who defeated armies because of their prowess, the twelve knights who guarded the passage against Saladin⁴ and his might, the twelve peers of France, who fell at Roncevaux⁵ where they fought and defended themselves valiantly, and all the many others whom I cannot mention by name nor list their great deeds because it would get in the way of my main subject. And so everybody in the world has his own specific role: the valiant men work their bodies hard in battle, to improve their strength and to achieve honour; the common people talk about, establish, and discuss their achievements and successes; the writers then write down and register their deeds of chivalry.

I have considered in my mind many a time the situation of Prowess, and thought about how and where she has ruled and been in charge and in command, and moved from one country to the next. About these things I have also in my youth heard the opinions of some valiant men and good knights, who asked themselves the same questions as I do now. That is why I want to tell you a bit about this. It is true, according to the ancient writings, that after the Flood and after Noah and his offspring had repopulated the world, and after they first started to take up arms and fight each other and raid their settlements, that Prowess first reigned in the kingdom of Chaldea, through the deeds of King Ninus who founded and built the great city of Nineveh — which was so great that it took three days to go from one end to the other — and also because of Queen Semiramis, his wife, who was a noblewoman of great valour. After this, Prowess moved and came to rule in Judea et Jerusalem, through what was achieved by Joshua, David and the Maccabeans. And when she had reigned there for a time, she went to stay and rule over the kingdom of Persia and Medea, because of the deeds of the great King Cyrus, and because of Asserus and Xerxes. After that, Prowess came back to rule over Greece, because of the achievements of Hercules, Theseus, Jason, Achilles and the other brave knights; then in Troy, because of King Priam, and because of Hector and

³ The Nine Worthies were a series of nine ideal knights or princes and was a common theme or motif in medieval literature and art. Normally it included three pagan kings (Hector, Alexander the Great, Julius Caesar), three Jewish kings (Joshua, David and Judas Maccabeus), and three Christian kings (King Arthur, Charlemagne and Godfrey of Bouillon).

⁴ Muslim leader who fought the crusaders in the twelfth century.

⁵ Mountainous pass in the Pyrenees, where the vanguard of Charlemagne's army was defeated by the Saracens in 778. This episode was later recounted in the *Song of Roland*.

his brothers; and then in the city of Rome and amongst the Romans, because of the noble senators and consuls, tribunes and centurions. And these and their offspring held such power, for about five hundred years, and made nearly the whole world pay tribute and taxes to them until the time of Julius Caesar, who was the first emperor of Rome, and from whom all the later ones are descended.

After this, the Romans became wary of Prowess, and she came to stay and rule over France, because of her first king Pepin and King Charles [=Charlemagne], his son, who was king of France and Germany, and Roman emperor, and because of the other noble kings after them. After that, Prowess reigned for a long time in England, because of the achievements of King Edward [III] and the Prince of Wales, his son, because under their leadership the English knights and the others who were on their side and under their command, have achieved so many beautiful feats of arms and great knightly adventures and brave undertakings, more than any other knights have been able to do, as you will be told further on in this book.

I do not know if Prowess wants to travel any further beyond England, or trace back her steps, because as I have already said she has looked for, and travelled around, all these kingdoms and countries mentioned above, and reigned and kept court amongst their people, sometimes more effectively sometimes less, following her manner, but I have talked a little about it because of the marvels of this world. I will now shut up about it, and go back to the subject matter which I have adopted, and I will first speak about how and why the war between the English and the French first started. And so that in times to come people will be able to know who has written this history and who has been its author, I will tell you my name and who I am. People who want to please me call me Sir John Froissart, born in Hainault in the good, beautiful and free city of Valenciennes.

[‘C’ variant of the last sentence]

People who want to please me call me Sir John Froissart, priest, canon of Chimay and canon ‘en herbe’ of Lille.⁶ And I made, compiled, composed and organised this for the request I received from my lord, the high and renowned prince my lord Guy of Châtillon, count of Blois, lord of Avesnes, Chimay, Beaumont, Schoonhoven and Gouda, my good master and sovereign lord, so that he may read it and be please with it.

Translated by Godfried Croenen, after the edition by Siméon Luce (1869)
and Chicago, Newberry MS f.37

⁶ The phrase ‘chanoine en herbe’ was used in the Lille collegiate church to refer to someone who had received the papal grant of an ecclesiastical benefice but had not yet been installed in the actual office, as there had not yet been a vacancy.

2. Battle of La Blanchetaque (1346)

Note: Edward III had landed in the Cotentin (Normandy) with his army and was raiding the French countryside, challenging Philip VI of Valois to battle. Advancing along the Somme river, he tried to cross the Somme and advance into Ponthieu, where he would eventually fight the battle of Crécy; Philip tried to corner the English army.

The section numbers refer to the numbering in the edition by Siméon Luce (1872); they facilitate the identification of parallel segments across different authorial redactions.

‘Amiens’ version

[§ 267] When the marshals of England had spent a full day riding along the river Somme trying to find a crossing, and saw that nowhere could they find one, they returned to Airaines to the king their lord and told him about their raid and all they had seen. That evening the king of France came to stay in Amiens with more than 100,000 men and the countryside around the city was full of men-at-arms. When the English king had listened to his two marshals, he was not particularly happy and thought intensively about what he had heard. He then ordered that the next morning everyone be ready because he wanted to leave. So they spent the night there. Very early the next morning the English king heard mass and then the trumpets were sounded. Everyone mounted his horse and, with his scouts advancing before him, the king with his army rode through the Vimeu towards Oisemont and the walled city of Abbeville in Ponthieu. The land he passed through was burned and ransacked in the same manner as at the start of the campaign.

That same day the French king ordered Sir Godemar du Fay to leave Amiens with a great number of men-at-arms and go to La Blanchetaque downstream from Abbeville and guard the ford there against the English to prevent them from crossing there. Sir Godemar du Fay left with 2,000 men-at-arms and 5,000 foot soldiers including the Genoese and arrived at the place where he had been sent.

[§ 268] The king of France furthermore ordered that all the lords and everyone else be ready because he wanted to ride to Airaines, where it was said that the English king was. He left Amiens and crossed the Somme over the bridges there and rode to Airaines, where he arrived at noon, but the English king had already left that morning; all that the French found were plentiful victuals abandoned by the English. When the French king arrived at Airaines he immediately set up camp. He stayed there that evening and for the whole of the following day to wait for his men and the large army that was following.

The English king, who rode through the Vimeu, burning and destroying the land, kept advancing until he arrived at Mareuil-Caubert, where his men burnt the town and attacked the castle, which they took and razed completely to the ground, as they did with the rich

abbey they found inside the town. They then continued towards Oisemont, burning and destroying the land with such force that the wind carried the flames as far as Abbeville. The English kept advancing like this until they reached the town of Oisemont, where all the inhabitants of the Vimeu had gathered. When these people who were inside Oisemont, saw the English approach, they left the city and took positions in the fields because they wanted to defend themselves effectively against the English, who immediately attacked them fiercely. They had as captain a good knight banneret, the lord of Boubers, a very bold soldier. There was violent and fierce combat and the English met with great resistance. There were many wounded and the French conducted themselves very well, but they were so heavily attacked and fresh troops kept coming in so that in the end they had to concede and with great difficulty retreated in the town. The lord of Boubers fought as a noble knight should, in both attack and defence, but he was taken prisoner by Sir John Chandos. Also taken prisoner were the lords of Brimeux, Sains, Longvilliers and Sempy and several other knights and squires.

The king entered the town of Oisemont and took lodgings in the house of the Hospitallers and all his men lodged in the town or in the surrounding area near a small river. The same day when Oisemont was taken, Sir Godfrey of Harcourt, with a number of men-at-arms and archers, raided Saint-Valery. There was a great skirmish and fight because the town and castle were well guarded by good men-at-arms, commanded by the count of St.-Pol and Sir Jean of Ligny. The English were unable to take anything and returned to the English king, whom they found in Oisemont. The king was very preoccupied about how he would be able to cross the river Somme, because he was well aware that the king of France was in hot pursuit with a very large armed force. On the English king's behalf several of the French knights who were his prisoners were spoken to. They were promised great gifts if they would indicate a passage, somewhere between the Vimeu and Ponthieu, to cross the Somme. The knights said they could not honourably do so and also claimed they did not know any such crossing point.

When the English king, who was lodged in the house of the Hospitallers in Oisemont, saw that he was not able to convince any of the French knights from the Ponthieu who were his prisoners to point out a passage for him and his army to cross the river Somme, and that they all claimed they could not honourably do so, he was advised differently. He now summoned all the commoners born in the Vimeu that were amongst his prisoners and spoke to them in the following manner: 'If there is here a man who is willing to show me a passage across the river Somme for myself and my army, then I will set him free along with five or six of his companions of his choice, and I will give him one hundred English nobles.' There was one man called Gobin Agace, who knew very well the ford of La Blanchetaque because he had grown up close by and had crossed it in both directions many a time. When he heard the king's promise, he was overjoyed by the prospect both of earning the florins and of being freed. And so he said: 'Sir, yes, in God's name, if you keep your promise, I will lead you tomorrow morning to such a place where you and the whole of your army will cross before

terce, I swear on my own head. I know a ford where twice a day as many as twelve men can cross at the same time, without the water coming higher than their knees. When the tide is high, the water flowing from the sea fills the river bed upstream up so high that nobody can cross. But when the tide is low, which happens twice in a full day, the river there is so low that one can easily cross on foot or on horseback. There is no other place to cross, except the bridge in Abbeville. But the city is large and fortified and well-guarded by men-at-arms. Besides this, sir, at this ford which I mention, there is gravel of white marble on the river bed, which renders it hard and stable so that one can safely cross by cart. For this reason the ford is called Le Blanchetaque.'

When the king heard the words spoken by the man, he was exceedingly happy as if he had just been given 20,000 écus. He told the man that if what he had said was true, he would release him and the fellows he wanted, and do even better than he had promised. Agace replied: 'Sir, get ready for this so that we reach the river before sunrise.' And the king said: 'Of course.' Then the king let it be known in the whole army that everyone be armed and ready at the sound of the trumpet in order to leave and move on elsewhere.

[§ 269] The king did not sleep much that night. He got up at midnight and ordered the trumpet to be sounded. Everyone was soon ready, horses packed, carts laden, and the army left the town of Oisemont at dawn. They rode under the guidance of this man and his fellows through this area called the Vimeu until at sunrise they arrived at the ford called La Blanchetaque. But it was high tide and they could not cross, so the king had to wait for his men who were following him. He stayed there until after prime when the tide was lowest. While the tide was ebbing, on the other bank appeared Sir Godemar du Fay with a large number of men-at-arms sent by the king of French, as you have heard earlier. Sir Godemar had also assembled a large force of local men from the area, both on foot and mounted, who together with his own men took up positions on the river bank to defend the passage. This, however, did not stop the English king from trying to cross, and he commanded his marshals to stride forth in the ford and his archers to strike hard at the French.

There began a fierce battle as Sir Godemar and his men courageously defended the passage. Some French knights and squires from Artois and Picardy and from the retinue of Sir Godemar, in order to win honour, were fighting in this ford and were jousting against the English. There were performed many fine jousts and many feats of arms and I tell you that the English had a fierce fight on their hands because all those sent with Sir Godemar to defend the ford were élite soldiers and kept their battle formation very well at the point of passage at the river. As a result of this the English met with fierce resistance as soon as they reached the other side and came out of the river, where they found the Genoese whose firing caused heavy losses. But the English archers fired so incredibly strongly and incessantly, that while they were engaging the French, men-at-arms were able to cross. You should realise that the English were very keen indeed to fight them, because they had been told that the king of France was pursuing them with more than 100,000 men. Already some

of the mounted scouts of the French army had reached the English, who reliably reported back of the French advance to the [English] king, as you will hear.

[§ 270] The battle at the ford of La Blanchetaque was hard and fierce and the ford was well defended by the French. Many fine feats of arms were performed on that day by both sides. But in the end the English were able to make the crossing, difficult as it was, and they advanced away from the river bank and into the fields. Once they had conquered the pass and had been able to reach the fields, the French were soon defeated. Many of the men from Abbeville, Saint-Riquier, Rue, Montreuil-sur-Mer, Le Crotoy and Ponthieu who had gathered there were killed. Sir Godemar, badly wounded, fled with several knights and squires of his retinue, leaving behind many dead and captured. When the first English had completed the crossing, they made way for the ones who came after them and for their food supplies and baggage train. But not all of them had been able to make the crossing when some keen squires and lords of the French army arrived and attacked. These attackers, mainly Germans who were with the king of Bohemia and Sir Jean of Hainault, were able to capture horses and harnesses and kill some English on the riverbank who were trying to cross to the other side.

News reached King Philip of France, who that morning was riding hard from Airaines, that the English had crossed the ford of La Blanchetaque and had defeated Sir Godemar and his contingent. This news infuriated the king because he had expected to find the English at the ford. He asked if it was possible to cross at La Blanchetaque, but he was given the reply that it was not, since the tide was already rising. The king was therefore advised to cross the river Somme by the bridge at Abbeville. He turned around angrily and that Thursday took lodgings in Abbeville. The whole army followed and the lords lodged in the city and the surroundings. Because there were so many of them it was not possible for everyone to be lodged in the city itself.

Translated by Godfried Croenen, after the edition by George Diller (1992)

Abridged version

[§ 267] He also sent Sir Godemar du Fay to La Blanchetaque, between Saint-Valery and Le Crotoy and downstream from Abbeville, to defend the crossing point on the river Somme with more than 1,000 lances⁷ and all the men from the surrounding area.

The marshals returned to the king of England and told him how they had found all the crossing points and fords defended and well-guarded so that it was impossible to cross. This made the king very concerned. That evening the king of France came to lodge for the night in Amiens. He hoped to find the English in Airaines the next morning, but the English king

⁷ 'Lance' must refer here not just to a fully armoured man-at-arms but rather to a small battle field unit consisting of such a heavily armoured soldier accompanied by several others, including archers and squires.

and his men had broken up their camp and moved on towards Abbeville, reaching Oisemont that day. [§ 268] Around dinner time the king of France arrived at Airaines and set up camp.

When the English king left Oisemont, he was still unsure of where to cross the Somme. He halted in the fields and had his men ask if there was anyone, a prisoner or anybody else, who could point out a passage to him. A soldier, himself a prisoner, stepped forward and said: 'Sir, if you were to waive my ransom and set me free, I would show you a good crossing point where you and your whole army will cross in safety, I swear on my own head.' 'Yes, I promise to do that,' said the king. 'You and twenty fellows of your choice will be released.' Then the man said: 'Sir, here close by is such a place on the Somme called La Blanchetaque, where, if the tide is low, you can pass easily on horseback as well as on foot. But when the tide is high the largest Spanish ship will be able to navigate past this point. So let us go and hopefully you will find the crossing point in good order.' This news made the king exceedingly happy and he said: 'I promise you I will make you rich if I find that you are speaking the truth.'

[§ 269] He ordered his army to leave and move towards the ford and he kept them going until they arrived there, just at the right moment because the tide was already starting to ebb. The king stopped to wait for his men and the baggage and equipment train. He called the man who had told him about the passage to appear before him and he set him free along with all his fellows and gave him 100 écus. Then he said to his marshals: 'Ride on, in the name of God and St George! Go and fight those French who are waiting for us on the other side!' The marshals, followed by men-at-arms and archers, strode forth into the river, with the water nearly at its lowest level. On the other side of the river were Sir Godemar du Fay and his men. They wanted to do their duty and to guard the passage, so they started to engage them in the water.

[§ 270] At that ford in the river were performed many fine jousts and many feats of arms and several men were thrown into the water on both sides. Nevertheless the English advanced with such force that they conquered the river, reached the river bank and defeated all the soldiers and Normans who were there. The count of Dreux, the lord of Châtillon, the lord of Poix, the lord of Bruenne, the lord of Crésecque, the lord of Bourbouc, Sir Hector Quiéret and a large number of knights and squires were taken prisoner. Several knights and squires were killed there, more than 6,000. Sir Godemar fled to safety. The English were then able to complete the crossing without being challenged. They were just in time because the king of France and the French troops were in hot pursuit, so much so that they would have found them there if God had not provided them with a safe passage. As soon as they had all crossed, the sea began to rise again, as it is wont to do.

Translated by Godfried Croenen, after Paris, BnF, ms. fr. 10114

'B'/'C' version

[§ 267] When the marshals of England had spent a full day riding along the river Somme trying to find a crossing, and saw that nowhere could they find one, they returned to Airaines to the king their lord and told him about their raid and all they had seen. That evening the king of France came to stay in Amiens with more than 100,000 men and the countryside around the city was full of men-at-arms. When King Edward had listened to the report of his two marshals, he was not particularly happy and seemed even more preoccupied. He thought very intensively about what he had heard. He then ordered that the next morning everyone in his host should be ready to follow the banners of the marshals, wherever they went. The king's command was done. The next morning, before sunrise, the English king heard mass; then the trumpet signal for decamping was given. All manner of soldiers followed the banners of the marshals, who rode in front, as had been ordered. In this way they rode through the Vimeu towards the walled city of Abbeville until they arrived in Oisemont, where many people of the surrounding countryside had gathered because of the light defenses that were there. They hoped to hold the town and defend it against the English but they failed in their plans. When the English arrived, they attacked the town with determination, so that it was taken. The English captured the whole town and everything inside it. Many men from the town and from the surrounding countryside were killed or taken prisoner. The king of England took lodgings in the house of the Hospitallers.

The king of France was in Amiens and his scouts and riders were scouring the countryside and reporting back about the situation of the English. This is how that evening the king of France heard through his scouts that the king of England would decamp from Airaines the next morning —which he did — and ride towards Abbeville, because his marshals had reconnoitred upstream along the river Somme and had not found a crossing. This news made the king of France very happy and he hoped he would be able to corner the king of England between Abbeville and the river Somme and attack him at his leisure. The French king ordered a Norman baron called Sir Godemar du Fay to go and guard the ford of La Blanchetaque downstream from Abbeville, as this was the only place where the English could cross. Sir Godemar du Fay left with 1,000 men-at-arms and 6,000 foot soldiers including the Genoese. He rode forth until he arrived at Saint-Riquier and from there to Le Crotoy, near where the ford is. While on his way there, he took a large number of people from the surrounding countryside and commanded the burghers of Abbeville to come with him to defend the crossing point. By the time they arrived, there were very many of them and all were well equipped. There were there in total 12,000 soldiers, of different types, including 2,000 armoured men, to confront the English.

[§ 268] After this order, king Philip, who was eager to find the English and to fight them, left Amiens with his whole army and rode to Airaines, where he arrived around midday, but the king of England had already left that morning at the hour of the first Prime; all that the French found were plentiful victuals abandoned by the English, roasting meat still on the

spits, breads and dough left in the ovens, barrels and vats of wine and set tables that the English had left behind when they had suddenly left. When the French king arrived at Airaines he was advised to set up camp. He was told: 'Sir, lodge here and wait for your barons. Certainly, the English can't escape you now.' The king lodged in the town itself, and the lords took their lodgings as and when they arrived.

Let us now speak of the king of England, who was in the town of Oisemont and who was well aware that the king of France was in hot pursuit with a very large armed force and was keen to do battle. For this reason the English king would have been happier if he and his men had been able to cross the river Somme. In the evening, after the return of the two marshals who had ridden through the countryside right up to the gates of Abbeville and had also been before Saint-Valery, where there had been a good skirmish, the king convened his general staff. He summoned before him several prisoners from Ponthieu and the Vimeu, who had been captured by his men. The king asked them most courteously: 'Is there here someone who knows a passage downstream from Abbeville where we can cross in safety with our army? If there is anyone who is willing to show it to me, we will set him free along with twenty companions of his choice.' There was one man called Gobin Agace, who stepped forward to talk because knew better than anyone else the ford of La Blanchetaque because he was born and had grown up close by, and had crossed it in both directions many a time that year. He said to the king: 'Sir, yes, in God's name, I promise to lead you to such a place where you and the whole of your army will cross the river Somme in safety, I swear on my own head. In a certain spot twice a day as many as twelve men can cross at the same time, without the water coming higher than their knees. When the tide is high, the water flowing from the sea fills the river bed upstream up so high that nobody can cross. But when the tide is low, which happens twice in a full day, the river there is so low that one can easily cross on foot or on horseback. There is no other place to cross, except the bridge in Abbeville. But the city is large and fortified and well-guarded by men-at-arms. Besides this, sir, at this ford which I mention, there is gravel of white marble on the river bed, which renders it hard and stable so that one can safely cross by cart. For this reason the ford is called Le Blanchetaque.'

When the king of England heard the words spoken by the man, he was exceedingly happy as if he had just been given 20,000 écus. And he said to him: 'My good man, if what you tell me is true, I will release you and the fellows you want and give you 100 nobles.' Agace replied: 'Sir, yes, I swear on my head. But make sure that we reach the riverside before sunrise.' The king said: 'Of course.' Then the king let it be known in the whole army that everyone be armed and ready to move on at the sound of the trumpet.

[§ 269] The king did not sleep much that night. He got up at midnight and ordered the trumpet to be sounded to decamp. Everyone was soon ready, horses packed, carts laden, and the army left the town of Oisemont at dawn. They rode under the guidance of this man who led them, and made such good progress that around sunrise they were close to the ford called La Blanchetaque. But it was high tide and they could not cross, so the king had to wait

for his men who were following him. He stayed there until after prime when the tide was lowest. While the tide was ebbing, on the other bank appeared Sir Godemar du Fay with a large number of men-at-arms sent by the king of the French, as you have heard me tell earlier. Sir Godemar, on his march to La Blanchetaque, had assembled a large force of local men from the area, so that all in all there were 12,000 men, who took up positions on the river bank to guard and defend the passage. This, however, did not stop King Edward of England from trying to cross, and he commanded his marshals to stride forth in the water and his archers to strike hard at the French, who were positioned in the water and on the river bank. The two marshals of England let their banners ride forth in the name of God and St George, and followed immediately behind. The bravest knights and those with the best mounts jumped into the water first. In the river many fine jousts were fought and many men on both sides were thrown in the water.

There began a fierce battle as Sir Godemar and his men courageously defended the passage. Some French knights and squires, from Artois and Picardy and from the retinue of Sir Godemar, in order to win honour, were fighting in this ford and they did not want to be seen in the fields all around but would rather joust in the water than on land. There were performed many jousts, I tell you, and many fine feats of arms and at first the English had a fierce fight on their hands because all those sent with Sir Godemar to defend the ford were élite soldiers and kept their battle formation very well at the point of passage at the river. As a result of this the English met with fierce resistance as soon as they reached the other side and came out of the river and onto the land, where they found the Genoese whose firing caused heavy losses. But the English archers fired so incredibly strongly and incessantly, that all the while they were engaging the French, men-at-arms were able to cross. You should realise that the English were very keen indeed to fight them, because they had been told very clearly that the king of France was pursuing them with more than 100,000 men. Already some of the mounted scouts of the French army had reached the English, who reliably reported the French advance to the [English] king, as you will hear.

[§ 270] The battle at the ford of La Blanchetaque was hard and fierce, for the ford was well defended by the French. Many fine feats of arms were performed on that day by both sides. But in the end the English were able to make the crossing, difficult as it was, and once they had crossed they advanced into the fields. Then the king, his son the Prince of Wales, and all the lords crossed. The French were no longer able to keep their formation and those who could fled from the ford as a defeated army. When Godemar saw the dire situation, he, too, fled to safety as fast as he could, and so did many of his retinue. Some fled to Abbeville, others to Saint-Riquier. There were a large number of men killed, because the footsoldiers were unable to flee. Many of the men from Abbeville, Montreuil-sur-Mer, Rue and Saint-Riquier were killed or captured. The chase lasted for a full long league. Not all of the English had been able to make the crossing and reached the other side when some keen squires and lords of the French army arrived and attacked these last ones. These attackers, mainly Germans who were with the king of Bohemia and Sir Jean of Hainault, were able to capture

horses and harnesses, and kill and injure some English on the riverbank who were trying to cross to the other side.

News reached King Philip of France, who that morning was riding hard from Airaines, that the English had crossed at La Blanchetaque and had defeated Sir Godemar du Fay and his contingent. This news infuriated the king because he had expected to find the English on the bank of the Somme and to fight them there. He stopped in the fields and asked his marshals what course of action would be best. They answered: 'Sir, you can only cross by the bridge at Abbeville because the tide has already risen again.' The king turned around very angrily and that Thursday took lodgings in Abbeville. All his men followed and the princes and great lords lodged in the city itself and their men in the villages in the surroundings. Because there were so many of them it was not possible for everyone to be lodged in the city itself. Let us now speak of the king of England and how he fared since defeating Sir Godemar du Fay at the ford of La Blanchetaque.

Translated by Godfried Croenen, after Chicago, Newberry MS f.37

'Rome' version

[§ 266] (...) Sir Godfrey of Harcourt⁸ had effectively told them [Edward III and his commanders] that downstream from Abbeville there must be a crossing point, provided that one knew when or how to catch the tide at the right moment. He was asked which crossing it was, and whether he had ever crossed it himself. He replied: 'I have never crossed it. I only know of it by hearsay.' (...)

[§ 267] When they [the English marshals] saw that all the crossings were so well guarded and defended, they returned to the king and the rest of the army, who were waiting for them at Airaines, and reported what they had found. The king of England and his council understood that King Philippe, with all his forces, was pursuing them aggressively and had already arrived at Amiens, and that they must deliberate and take counsel on this matter. The king was advised to depart from Airaines and to march towards Abbeville and the ford of La Blanchetaque, where they hoped to cross; for it was far better for them to wait for the tide to turn at the crossing than for the crossing to wait for them.

They left the town of Airaines in the morning and rode towards Abbeville, burning and devastating the countryside. Those of the vanguard raided as far as Aumale, and the town was burned down. They then turned back toward Oisemont, where the king of England and the English had taken up their quarters for the day. Along their path, they came across an unfortified town called Senarpont, which supported itself entirely through the cloth-making trade. The town was completely overrun and burned by the vanguard, who then continued

⁸ Godfrey of Harcourt was a Norman nobleman who had defected from the French side and was fighting with Edward III in this campaign. In the 'Rome' version he is portrayed as an important royal adviser in this episode because of his local knowledge.

onwards to arrive at Oisemont, where they found the king and the rest of the army, and they also quartered themselves there for the day.

[§ 268] On the day that the king of England left Airaines to arrive at Oisemont, King Philippe of France left the city of Amiens and took the road to Airaines. It was his full intention that wherever he found the king of England and the English, he would do battle with them. He had already sent a great number of men-at-arms commanded by Sir Godemar du Fay ahead to guard the ford at La Blanchetaque as he had been informed that this would be the only place where the English could possibly try to cross.

When the King of France arrived at Airaines, the English had left there that very morning. The French still found many of their provisions left behind, bread in the ovens and meat on the spits, upon which many of them dined. The King of France remained at Airaines. Men-at-arms and Genoese crossbowmen were following him from all sides. Count Amadeus of Savoy and his brother, Sir Louis of Savoy, were still on their way, bringing five hundred men-at-arms with them. The good king of Bohemia and his son, Charles, along with their military units, followed the King of France and lodged as close to him as they possibly could. Such a mass of people was coming from all directions that it was a marvel to contemplate. The whole countryside was covered with people and baggage wagons following the king.

The king was then advised: 'Sire, ride forth in an orderly formation. The English are cornered: they cannot possibly secure the crossing of Blanchetaque so easily, especially since Sir Godemar du Fay and a great number of men-at-arms are on the other side of the river Somme to guard and defend it. You and your forces will fall upon their rear from this side. You can count on it: they are yours, for they are but a handful of men compared to your army. This time, you will have your reckoning with them; they cannot flee or escape you unless they hide themselves in the earth.'

Now let us return to the king of England, who was still in the town of Oisemont, at a distance of four leagues from Abbeville. He had learned from certain prisoners his men had captured that the king of France had arrived at Airaines with a massive force and was pursuing him aggressively. The king of England desperately desired to cross the river Somme before the French could fall upon him. On the night he lodged at Oisemont, it was ordered that they would strike camp immediately after midnight, and the order was given that everyone follow the banners of the marshals.

[§ 269] Everything was executed exactly as it had been ordered. The trumpets of the marshals sounded shortly after midnight. At the sound of the trumpets, all manner of men woke up and put their armour on. At the second sounding of the trumpets, they packed up their baggage and prepared, and all the men formed into the formation as they were supposed to march. At the third sounding, everyone mounted their horses and set off, taking to the road, by which time it was the dawn of day. They moved out into the landscape, leaving nothing behind and bypassing the road leading to Abbeville, following instead the

direction of La Blanchetaque. They made such good progress that by day break, the water of the river was at its highest point and when they finally arrived at the ford, they found that the tide was ebbing and retreating. Whereupon they said: 'This is good news! By the time the rearguard arrives, the vanguard will have already crossed.'

Sir Godemar du Fay and his contingent were on the opposite side of the river Somme. The men-at-arms had gathered and assembled reinforcements from the entire countryside and also had crossbowmen from Amiens, Abbeville, and Saint-Riquier and from the surrounding towns and some local defensive militia. They numbered at least twelve thousand men, and they fully expected to defend the crossing, yet they did not succeed, as I shall tell you. But first, I will speak for a moment about the King of France.

When Thursday morning arrived, the king of France, who had been lodged at Airaines, struck camp and sent his scouts ahead to reconnoiter the countryside and gather news of the English. They came to Oisemont and found great quantities of meat on spits, left there only half-cooked, along with an abundance of dough in the ovens, and hardly cooked meat in cauldrons and kettles over fires. Some of the French said: 'The English are cunning. They purposely abandoned these provisions in this state so that we would stop for them. They left here only a short while ago.'

The news reached the king of France as he was riding between Airaines and Oisemont with Sir John of Hainaut in his company, and he was informed of the situation of the English. The king made his men hurry, and he arrived at Oisemont around terce. He entered the town and into the house of the Templars; here he halted, as did the rest of the army. They unpacked the pack horses and the provisions, they ate and drank a little, and then immediately packed up and loaded the wagons again. Command was then given for all wagon drivers, baggage trains, and pack horses to take the road to Abbeville and turn in that direction, while all men-at-arms and infantry were to follow the banners of the marshals. Everything was executed exactly as it had been ordered. Everyone left Oisemont; they had only stayed there one hour. They all set out on the road in battle formation and, by all appearances, showed a fierce determination to find the English.

The English, who had arrived at the ford of La Blanchetaque to cross over, had no other window of time than what it took the French to march from Oisemont to La Blanchetaque, a journey of about five leagues. Now I shall tell you about the battle that the English fought in order to cross the river Somme.

Sir Godemar du Fay and his army were on the other side of the water – which was in Ponthieu – and the French were with him, all ready and waiting upon the bank to do battle. The king of England and his men were in Vimeu – for that is the name of the region where they stood. The French and the English could clearly see one another, and there the English waited for the river to fully recede.

Yet the English, who desperately desired to cross, pressed forward with great spirit, for they well knew that the French were pursuing them, and they could also see their enemies right on the other side of the river. And it so happened that several knights and squires, who desired to distinguish themselves and perform deeds of arms, spurred their horses forward, lances in hand and shields slung around their necks, and entered the river. On the other side, French knights and squires, seeing the English coming, wished to advance as well and threw themselves into the river to meet them.

Thus jousts were fought right in the middle of the river [...] ⁹ struck down and thoroughly soaked, and drowned, had they not been rescued. In the end, all manner of men threw themselves into the crossing, hurrying to pass. The English had to prove themselves as good men-at-arms and had to be highly disciplined, for the French, who were on the opposite bank, obstructed them and fought back fiercely as much as they possibly could. Before the English could all cross over, there was much fighting and many a man was struck down.

[§ 270] Nevertheless, the English made it across at whatever cost, and when they reached the other side, they stood on dry land and formed into ranks out in the fields. As soon as the commoners of the countryside, whom Sir Godemar had brought with him to help him guard and defend the crossing, felt they were being pierced by the arrows of the archers, they completely broke ranks and disbanded their formation, turning their backs and leaving the noblemen to fight as best as they could. If the English had been as intent on pursuing and capturing prisoners as they were on getting their baggage wagons and pack horses out of the river, they would have inflicted far greater losses upon the French than they did.

When Sir Godemar du Fay saw how disastrously it was going for them and that all the English were across, and that nothing was left of his own troops, with many of his men fleeing to save themselves, he decided that he too would save himself, for there was no hope of recovery. So he fled across the fields and ordered his banner to turn back with him. I was told that the man who was carrying it threw it into a bush, because it hindered him from spurring his horse, and that it was found there that very day by the English. Sir Godemar, utterly defeated and undone, along with some of his knights, made his way to Saint-Riquier in Ponthieu, and there they stayed to learn what the news was and where the King of France might be.

Translated by Godfried Croenen, after the edition by George Diller (1972)

3. The origins of the Flemish revolt (1379)

When the strife and trouble first arrived in Flanders the land was so rich and abundant that it was marvellous to behold, and the people of the chartered towns had such large estates they were a wonder to see. You should know that all of these wars and hostilities were born

⁹ Here some text is wanting in the Rome manuscript.

of the pride and envy the chartered towns of Flanders had against one another; Ghent against the town of Bruges, and Bruges against the town of Ghent, and other towns against one another besides. However, there was the judicial oversight was such that no war between them could flare up without the consent of their lord, the count, for he was so dreaded and so loved that none dared to anger him. Moreover, the count, who was wise and astute, was more fearful than any other lord of conflict and animosity mounting between him and his subjects, and was at first so firmly against inciting war and had absolutely no desire to jump into it, for he imagined that if any differences should arise between him and his country, he would be weaker and less formidable to his neighbours. He also feared war for another reason, although he was forced to it in the end, namely that it brings with it great destruction of people and of wealth. For in his time he had lived and reigned in great peace and prosperity and had enjoyed as many pleasures as any earthly lord could have done. The wars which followed were born from so trivial an incident that, to consider it justly, if the lord had had good sense and sound advice, there need never have been war. Those who read this account or have it read to them might say that it was the work of the devil, for you know, or have heard it said by the wise, that the devil toils day and night to rouse conflict and hatred wherever he finds peace, and broods intently over how, little by little, he might achieve his ends. And thus it happened in Flanders at that time, as you will clearly see and discover from the account of the matter which follows.

At the time when count Louis of Flanders was at his most prosperous, there was a burgher in Ghent named Jan Yoens, a wise, astute, and bold man who when required was cruel, enterprising and ruthless. This Jan was very much in the count's favour, so it seemed, for the count employed him to assassinate a man in Ghent who displeased him, and at the count's command Jan Yoens instigated a quarrel with him in secret and killed him. The burgher's action attracted widespread outrage, and for fear of this he went to reside in Douai where he remained for almost three years, and in grand circumstances paid for by the count. For his actions, in one day Jan Yoens lost everything he had in the town of Ghent and was banished from there for forty years. After this, the count of Flanders made such headway as to make peace for him in part and had him restored to the town of Ghent and its privileges. This had never been known to happen before and came as a great shock to many people in Ghent and in Flanders, but so it was.

On top of that, the count made him dean of shippers to enable him to recover his fortune and maintain his situation. This post could be worth at least one thousand pounds per year to him, if he dealt fairly. Jan Yoens was so high in the count's favour that there was none more smiled upon than him. At that time there was another family in Ghent known as the Mayhuus. They were seven brothers and the most powerful of the shippers. Among these seven brothers was one named Gilbert Mayhuus, a rich, shrewd, and prudent man who was more enterprising than any of his brothers. This Gilbert was privately very envious of Jan Yoens, seeing him in such fine favour with the count, so much so that he conspired night and day to find a way of depriving him of this grace. Many times he thought to have him killed by

his brothers, but he did not have the audacity, for fear of the count. Yet he schemed and plotted and planned so much that he found a way. I will tell you the chief cause of their mutual hatred, the better to get to the bottom of this matter.

In former times, in the town of Damme, there had been a grave conflict between two rich shippers and their families; one was named Jan Pied and the other Jan Bard, and as a result of their feud more than eighteen died. Gilbert Mayhuus and his brothers belonged to one family and Jan Yoens to the other, and this secret hatred had long been nourished between them, even though they talked, drank and ate together; but the Mayhuus made more of the matter than Jan Yoens did. Gilbert Mayhuus, who was plotting to bring down Jan Yoens without striking a blow, devised a cunning subterfuge. When the count of Flanders was residing once in Ghent, Gilbert approached one of the chamberlains who was closest to the count and acquainted himself with him, saying, 'If my lord of Flanders should wish, he could draw a great profit from the shippers each year, from whom he receives nothing at present. This profit would be paid by the foreign shippers, if indeed Jan Yoens, who is shipping master, were inclined to do his duty loyally.' This chamberlain said that he would take the proposition to the count, which he did.

The count, just as many lords are inclined by nature to their own profit and do not consider what may happen in the end, only that they may gather wealth, which only deceives them, replied to his varlet, 'Fetch this Gilbert Mayhuus to me and we will hear what he has to say.' This he did. Gilbert spoke to the count and presented many legitimate reasons, so it seemed to the count, to which he replied, 'This is how it should be; go have Jan Yoens brought here.' Jan Yoens, who knew nothing of the matter, was sent for and summoned to the count's chamber and into his presence and that of Gilbert. The count broached the subject with him and said, 'Jan, if it please you, we will gain great profit from this.' Jan, who was dedicated to his position, saw that this was not a reasonable request but did not dare to say anything to the contrary, and so replied thus, 'My lord, what you are asking, which Gilbert has put forward, I cannot do alone and it will be difficult to implement.' 'Jan,' replied the count, who was inclined towards the proceeds, 'if you wish to be dutiful in your work, it will be done.' 'My lord,' replied Jan, 'I will do everything in my power.' Thus their discussion ended.

Gilbert Mayhuus, whose one and only intention was to turn the count against Jan Yoens, went to his six brothers and said to them, 'The time has come for you to aid me in this business, as brothers should do for one another, because it is for you that I strive. I will crush Jan Yoens without striking a single blow, and cause him to be as despised by the count as he was once beloved. Whatever I may say or intimate in these discussions, when he asks you about this business, argue with him. I will dissemble and say firmly to my lord that if Jan Yoens were agreeable and prepared to fulfil his duty loyally, the matter would be settled. I know my lord at least this well, that before he succeeds in getting things to go his way, Jan Yoens will lose the count's favour entirely, and his office will be taken from him and given to me, and when I have it, you will endorse the decision. We are strong and powerful among

the shippers in this town. No-one will stand in our way, and little by little I shall work towards the complete destruction of Jan Yoens. In this way we shall be avenged without any direct involvement.' All of the brothers agreed to this.

Then came the meeting which all of the shippers attended, and Jan Yoens and Gilbert Mayhuus explained the will of the count concerning the new imposition he wished to raise on traffic on the rivers Leie and Scheldt. It seemed to them all that such a thing was very harsh and unprecedented, particularly to Gilbert's six brothers who were united in their opinion and more strongly opposed to the measure than anyone. Jan Yoens, who was their leader and wished to hold them as honestly as he was able to the old privileges, was jubilant, believing that the issue had gone in his favour while in actual fact it went against him.

Jan Yoens conveyed the shippers' response back to the count and said to him, 'My lord, it simply cannot be done, for great misfortune may come of it. Allow things to remain as they have always been and do not attempt anything new.' This response did not please the count at all, for as he saw it, if the tax was brought in as he had been told, every year he could make six or seven thousand florins in profit. So he remained silent for the time being, but did not reflect on it any the less, and had the shippers carefully pursued with words and arguments, so that Jan Yoens found them to be in rebellion.

Meanwhile, Gilbert Mayhuus came to the count and his council and said that Jan Yoens had put little energy into the matter and that, if he were to have his post, he would impose such a levy on the shippers that the count of Flanders would have the profits hereditarily. The count, who was not seeing clearly on account of the lust for riches blinding him, took counsel then removed Jan Yoens from his office himself, and installed Gilbert Mayhuus. As soon as Gilbert Mayhuus was dean of shippers, he turned all his brothers to his will and brought the count to his objective and to the profits on which he had been intent. Consequently he was not best beloved by the majority of the shippers, but they were forced to endure it since the seven brothers were in a very strong position with the count's assistance; so they were obliged to suffer in silence. Thus by subtle means Gilbert Mayhuus entered into the grace and affections of the count and Jan Yoens was denied and deprived of everything. Gilbert Mayhuus gave fine gifts and presents to the chamberlains and officers of the count which won him their affection, and also to the count with which he completely blinded him. All of these gifts and presents were paid for by the shippers under his direction, on account of which many were disgruntled but dared not say a word. Jan Yoens, who was excluded entirely from the good graces and favour of the count, remained at his home and lived comfortably on his own resources, enduring all that was done to him with great patience.

Translated by Keira Borrill after Besançon MS 865

[The Online Froissart](#)

4. The duke of Brittany returns to his duchy; Arundel's shipwreck (1376)

As you know John, duke of Brittany, was staying in England with King Richard and his uncles, who made him feel welcome while his own lands were feeling the brunt of the war. Cities, towns and castles were closed and were each other's enemies. There was no system of delivering justice, as the king of France had sent his constable with a large army, who were stationed mainly in Pontorson and on the Mont Saint-Michel, from where they were waging war on Brittany, its towns and its cities. For this reason, the Estates General, that is the clergy, the cities and the nobility – except the lords Clignon, Rohan, du Guesclin, Beaumanoir and Laval – had sent for the duke, dispatching letters and messengers to England. But the duke never dared to trust these messages and feared that it was a ruse, while the people in Brittany kept wondering greatly why he did not return to them.

The lords of Léon and Montbouchier, having thought about this and considered all aspects, said: 'The duke is right not to come because we have not approached him correctly. If we want him back, as we do, we need to send two or three honourable knights carrying letters of credence.' This advice was accepted. They therefore decided to send as representatives of the duchy, except for the aforementioned lords who were on the side of the king of France, Sir Geoffrey de Kerimel and Sir Eustace de la Houssoye. These two lords took this task seriously and prepared their mission. They received their letters of credence sealed by the cities, the lord prelates and the towns and went to Concarneau, a port on the sea, where they mustered a ship, boarded it and had good winds to make the crossing. They sailed and arrived in England, in Southampton. They disembarked and rode to London, where they found the duke and his wife in the company of the princess of Wales, the duke's mother-in-law and mother to the king. When the duke saw his knights, he was delighted and he realised they were there to see him. He opened the letters of credence which they handed over to him, and then asked them what their message was. The knights explained to him all the reasons why they had come. The duke accepted their message and said that he would talk about this to the king and his uncles as soon as possible. For this reason, the king commanded his three uncles to come to Eltham, as well as several prelates and barons of England to have better advice.

At the council meeting in Eltham near London, it was decided that the duke of Brittany would return to his lands having received such a clear request, but that he would leave his wife the duchess with her mother, the princess, with her brother the king and with lady Basset, the duke's sister, because that would be best. As long as the duke would support the English cause, he would receive support from England, including men-at-arms and archers. The duke had always had great affection for the English, for as long as he had lived there, and he really ought to because with their help and through their might he had become duke of Brittany. He responded saying: 'If I didn't think that my subjects would come over to my side and resist my enemy of France, by God and the saints, I would certainly not return. But this time I have high hopes that all of them, or least a good part, will do what I want. I will

keep you up-to-date about myself and the state of Brittany.’ With this the council meeting came to an end, and the lords took their leave of the king. The duke made his preparations and took leave of everyone. When he arrived at Southampton, he found ships ready to sail. He and his party entered the ships but took no horses. They had good winds and sailed from the port. In the company of the duke were Sir Robert Knolles, Sir William de Lisle, Sir Robert Neville, Sir Lewis Clifford, Sir Hugh Despenser, and hundred men-at-arms and two hundred archers. They sailed with good winds, which they had aplenty, and arrived at Gu  r  nde. There they disembarked from the ships. In the town they rested and were provided with horses, and then rode to Vannes.

News got around in Brittany that the duke had returned, which caused great joy and comfort. The duke rode from city to city, and the people clearly were delighted to see him, at least those who were on his side. Before he arrived, there had been great fear in Brittany that the king of France would force himself on the duchy and would have them adopt the customs of France, which the Bretons would have never wanted to do, because they wanted to follow the Breton customs, just as every nation naturally desires to be and live by its own customs, in which the people are born and which they learn through their upbringing. And they do not want to consider if these foreign customs would be good or bad for them, as they just want to keep their own customs.

Around the feast of St Andrew [30 November], after the duke had left England, the king’s council and the king’s uncles decided to send two hundred men-at-arms and four hundred archers, led by Sir John Arundel. With him would be sent Sir Hugh Calveley, Sir Thomas Banastre, Sir Thomas Trivet, Sir Walter Paul, Sir John Bourcher, the Lord Ferrers, Sir Thomas Clifton, Sir John Hulton and many others. All these men readied themselves and arrived at Plymouth. They loaded the ships but did not take horses. As the nights were already long and cold and the days short, several in England were not pleased that this expedition was sent out and thought that they should have waited until March or April. But as they did not know what the situation was of the duke of Brittany and if he was in danger, most of the lords of England though it would be good to send him reinforcements.

Great misfortune fell upon these English lords, when in the middle of winter, with the high winds and the stormy seas, they departed from their country to sail to Brittany, but they felt comforted by the mild winds who were blowing when they left the port. However, as soon as they arrived in open sea, this milder wind fell away, and there came another one that was far stronger, harsher and fiercer.

The further away they found themselves from England, the stronger and more contrary the wind became. They would have gladly returned to England if they could, and the sailors did everything in their power to do so. However, the wind was so strong and opposed to them that they could not go against it. This wind drove them into the Irish Sea, a sea that is highly dangerous due to storms and fierce winds and where there is a great many rocks. Then the sailors realised that they all were at risk of going down, and they could neither turn back nor

escape this danger. Fortunately for them and for the lords there was a smaller lifeboat in each of the large ships. Sailors do not willingly travel on long sea voyages without having these.

In this predicament they were approaching land. As it happened all the lords were together aboard one large ship. Yet, as it was larger and more heavily laden, it was in greater danger of being smashed and scraped against the rocks. This vessel struck the rocks and began to take on water. When the sailors noticed this and that their ship was growing heavy, they said to the lords: 'We are all doomed. Save yourselves!' 'Get into this boat,' they said to Sir John Arundel and to the others. 'We will set you safely on land, for it is not too far away. Our ship is cracked; it is beyond repair.'

Never, for any word that he heard or danger that he saw did Sir John Arundel become frightened, for he was strong-willed and courageous in all adversities. The lifeboat was launched into the sea, the sailors climbed in and shouted to Sir John Arundel: 'Get in! Get in!' He stood on the edge of the large ship, holding two very beautiful greyhounds, and said to those who were shouting: 'Be patient, I shall be the last to leave the ship.' 'But take my greyhounds,' he said to Sir Thomas Banastre, 'I do not want to leave them behind.'

The knight took them and placed them beside him in the lifeboat. During this delay, the large ship filled so rapidly with water that it foundered and began to go down. When Sir John Arundel saw the imminent danger, he leaped forward to jump into the boat. He landed with such force that the boat, which was already heavily overloaded, overturned. There was nothing that could have helped them. Everyone already on the boat drowned, as did those left aboard the large ship.

Sir Hugh Calveley and Sir Thomas Trivet were in another vessel, which also cracked and split open. They had the presence of mind to cut all the ropes securing the mast and freed it from the ship. Since they were not far from shore, they climbed onto the mast and straddled it. Driven forward by the force of the gale, they managed to reach land. However, they swallowed a great deal of seawater, whether they wanted to or not. At times they were so overwhelmed by the breaking waves, which the wind drove and slammed straight into their faces, that they could see nothing at all. Many times, they came close to being thrown into the sea.

Nevertheless, with God's help the ship's remnants came near the shore where it ground to a halt. The two knights then entered the water and waded on foot as best they could until they reached dry land, escaping from the perilous danger. Yet eighty noblemen, both knights and squires, did not escape. This was a sorry loss and when the news became known they were widely mourned and lamented throughout England.

Those who escaped and had survived this extreme danger returned as best they could to England, where they were joyfully received by their kinsmen and friends. The funeral rites for the dead and drowned were held in St Paul's Cathedral in London. As a token of

remembrance, their banners and pennons were placed in a chapel. This was the outcome of the expedition of Sir John Arundel, who was deeply mourned throughout England, for in his time he was a most valiant knight.

Translated by Godfried Croenen, after Chicago, Newberry MS f.37

5. Peace Treaty of Tournai; use of documentary sources (1385)

After all these issues were settled, and this document called the 'charter of the peace' was written out and sealed, it was read aloud in public before all the parties involved.¹⁰ And you must know that the people of Bruges were not well pleased with the article that states that the Ghenters would not make any restitutions for the seizures, pillaging, and robberies committed during the war, but rather that it was to be forbidden under penalty of arbitrary fines that ever any claim or mention of it should be made. Every man and woman who heard speak of the form and content of the peace concluded that whoever had contributed the most to the peace being restored had also lost the most; nevertheless, they could obtain no better terms.

Furthermore, they [the people of Bruges] had been plainly told in the city of Arras, when members of their city council had been sent there to speak to the duke of Burgundy,¹¹ that it was not up to them to break or violate the peace, and that it was because of them, their stubbornness, their envy, their trouble and their haughtiness which they had always held against the Ghenters that all these calamities had befallen Flanders. So they had better keep silent. And so they did; never since, so far as anyone knew, did they raise a word or syllable about it, suffering their annoyance and losses as best they could. And indeed, there was a very compelling reason for this as they cannot wage war entirely on their own if their lord is not on their side. But whatever appearance of peace there may be between the people of Ghent and Bruges, they will never love one another.

You should know that of the above-mentioned charter, the duke of Burgundy and his council received one original sealed copy, and the people of Ghent received another one. And whoever wished to have a further copy of the text could obtain it easily enough, provided they had it transcribed and paid the scribe. I know this well because as soon as news of the peace reached Count Guy of Blois, who was the instigator ('acteres') of this history – for he commissioned me, Froissart, to write it and paid me most willingly for all the labour – he sent me from the county of Blois, where we were at the time, to the city of Tournai. He gave me his letters of credence addressed to the city fathers who governed Tournai at that time. And at his request they complied and delivered a copy to me which they had at their

¹⁰ In the preceding section Froissart gives the full text of the peace treaty of Tournai, which ended the Flemish revolt of the towns against the count.

¹¹ The duke of Burgundy, Philip the Fearless, had by 1385 succeeded as count of Flanders because of his marriage to the heir of Flanders.

disposal. I transcribed it and then returned to him in Blois and delivered it to him, at which he had great joy.

Translated by Godfried Croenen, after Chicago, Newberry MS f.37

6. Inquiries and fieldwork in the south of France (1388/89)

I have put off speaking of the affairs of more distant lands for quite a long time now. My reason for having put them aside is that events closer to home have been so fresh and recent in my mind, and so much to my predilection. Yet in the kingdoms of Castile and Portugal, and just as much also in Gascony and Rouergue, in Quercy, Auvergne and Limousin, and in the marches of Toulouse and the Bigorre, there were bold men who were in no way reticent about pursuing their own advancement, endlessly hatching schemes and devising strategies for engaging with one another in combat and for scaling and capturing fortified towns, castles and fortresses. And for this reason I, master Jehan Froissart, having devoted myself to compiling and setting forth this history at the request and instigation of my good lord and master, the noble and illustrious prince Guy, count of Blois, concluded that there was little hope of any great feats of arms taking place in Picardy and Flanders, as these regions were at peace. Yet I had no wish to remain idle, for I knew full well that far into the future this history will still be in wide circulation, with all noble men surely still taking pleasure in it and finding in it precepts for good behaviour. Moreover I wished to find out about more distant wars as well as those taking place closer to home, and so I resolved to visit my lord the great and powerful count of Foix and Béarn. I knew full well that if I could be admitted to his household there would be no better place I could choose for gathering news, as it is continuously and keenly frequented by all manner of foreign knights and squires. And so I presented my proposal for this journey to my most dear and venerable master the count of Blois, who provided me with letters of introduction addressed to the count of Foix. So far and wide did I travel, gathering information from every possible direction, that by the grace of God I arrived safe and sound at his castle at Orthez in the country of Béarn, on St Catherine's Day [25 November] in what was at that time calculated as the year of grace 1388. The count of Foix greeted me most cordially as soon as he set eyes on me, saying to me, jovially and in flawless French, that he knew me well, for although he had never seen me, he had often heard me spoken of. He gave me leave to stay at his court at my leisure and for as long as I wished, thanks to the letters of recommendation I had brought him. It was there that I was informed of most of what had occurred in the kingdoms of Castile, Portugal, Navarre, Aragon, England, the area around Bordeaux and the whole of Gascony. When I myself asked the count anything, he replied very readily, and was prompt to tell me that in the years to come the history that I had written and was now pursuing would be held in higher esteem than any other. 'The reason being, my learned fellow', said he, 'that the world has seen more feats of arms and extraordinary things in the last fifty years, than it has in the previous three hundred.' So I was well lodged and agreeably

provided for in the household of the noble count of Foix, which is what I wished for, and was able there to gather all the news I wanted relating to those areas of interest it was my wish to explore. I had readily to hand all the barons, knights and squires I needed to inform me of these things, as well as the noble count of Foix himself. And so it is my wish to expound to you in well-wrought style all that I was informed of there, to augment our subject matter and provide examples of behaviour to those good men who wish to advance themselves by force of arms, for if at the outset I have introduced the theme of great feats of arms, the capture of towns and assaults on castles, brutal encounters and battles, you will find even more besides in the following pages, all of which, by God's grace, I hope to narrate both accurately and fairly.

(...)

I, master Jehan Froissart, (...) when I was in the county of Foix and Béarn, I passed through Bigorre. There I enquired about everything that had happened of which I had not been informed. I discovered that while the prince of Wales and Aquitaine was residing at Tarbes the mood took him to visit the castle at Lourdes, three leagues away amid the mountains. When he had arrived at Lourdes and had examined and explored the town, the castle and the country round about, he was full of as much praise for the strength of the place as for its position on the border with several countries, for Lourdes men could easily invade the kingdom of Aragon as far as Catalonia and Barcelona. The prince immediately called a knight of his household to him in whom he had great confidence and who had served him loyally. This knight was called Sir Pierre-Arnaut de Béarn, an expert man-at-arms and cousin of the count of Foix.

'Sir Pierre,' said the prince upon my arrival in this country, 'I appoint you castellan and captain of Lourdes and governor of the land of Bigorre. Protect this castle well so that you may give a good account of it to my lord and father and to me.' 'Certainly my lord,' said the knight. There he pledged his faith and homage, and the prince gave it into his possession.

Now, you are aware that when the war was renewed between the king of France and the king of England, as it can be found earlier in this history, count Guy de Saint-Pol and Sir Hugues de Châtillon, master of the crossbows at that time, captured the town of Abbeville and the whole country of Ponthieu. Two great barons of Bigorre, who are or were named Sir Monaut de Barbazan and the lord of Antin went over to the French and seized the city, town and castle of Tarbes, for they were weakly defended on behalf of the king of England.

The castle of Lourdes remained under the command of Sir Pierre-Arnaut de Béarn, who would not have surrendered it under any circumstances; instead he fought back hard against the kingdom of France, and sent for daring companions from Béarn and Upper Gascony to assist in the war, and many able men at arms came to him. He had six captains with him, each commanding fifty lances or more. First of all was his brother, Jean de Béarn, a dauntless and agile squire, Pierre d'Antin of Bigorre, the brother of the lord of Antin, who would never

turn French, Arnauton de Sainte-Coulombe, Ramon-Arnaud de Rostan, the Mongat de Sainte-Bazeille and the Bourc de Cardeilhac. These captains had made many forays into Bigorre, the Toulousain, the Carcassonnais and the Albigeois, for as soon as they were outside Lourdes they found themselves in enemy territory. They rode through the land, sometimes perhaps as far as thirty leagues from their fortress. On the way in they took nothing, but on their return nothing escaped them; sometimes they brought back with them so many prisoners and livestock that they did not know where to put them. They held the whole country to ransom except for the lands of the count of Foix where they would neither dare to take a chicken without paying, nor hurt any of the count of Foix's men or anyone who was guaranteed safe conduct, for if they had angered him, they would not have survived.

The companions of Lourdes rode wherever they pleased. Quite near there, as I have said, is the town of Tarbes which they terrorised so that it was obliged to enter a protection agreement with them. Returning from Tarbes to their fortress there is a large village with a fine abbey called Saint-Pé-de-Geyres where they caused much trouble, but they also entered a protection agreement. Elsewhere on the river Adour is a large walled town called Bagnères whose inhabitants had a very hard time of it, for they were harried and harassed by the men from Lourdes, and by men from Mauvezin who were closer still.

The castle of Mauvezin is situated on a mountain with the river Adour flowing beneath towards a fine walled town nearby called Tournay. The people of Tournay controlled the route taken by the men from Lourdes and Mauvezin. As a result no harm was done to the town of Tournay, for that was their way back and the townspeople found good bargains in their plunder. They knew very well how to turn a blind eye, and indeed they needed to if they wished to stay alive, for they did not receive aid or support from anyone.

The captain of Mauvezin was a Gascon named Raymonnet de Lespés, an expert man-at-arms. I can tell you that the men of Lourdes and Mauvezin were just as happy to hold the merchants of the kingdoms of Aragon and Catalonia to ransom as they did the French, unless they were paying them protection money.

At the time I embarked on my journey to visit the count of Foix, I considered the diversity of these countries I had never seen. Having set off from Carcassonne, I left the Toulouse road on my right hand and took the left-hand path. This brought me first to Montréal, then to Fanjeaux, then Belpesch, the first fortified town in the county of Foix, from there to Mazères, and then to the castle of Saverdun. After that I came to the fine and appealing city of Pamiers, which belongs entirely to the count of Foix, and stopped there to wait for company travelling to Béarn where the aforementioned count was in residence. I remained in the city of Pamiers for three days. It is a delightful place, situated amongst richly abundant vineyards and surrounded by a clear, wide river called the Ariège.

By chance I met a knight of the count of Foix's court by the name of Sir Espan de Lyon who was returning from Avignon. He was a courageous and astute man, and an excellent knight

of about fifty years of age in those days. I attached myself to his company which he was very content with as he wished to learn of affairs in France.¹² We spent six days on the road before reaching Orthez. As we rode, the noble knight, after saying his prayers each morning, would take pleasure in talking with me for most of the day, asking for news, and when I put any questions to him he was very willing to answer them. On our departure from the city of Pamiers, we crossed the mountain of Escosse which is arduous and difficult to scale. We passed close by the town and castle of Artigat, which belongs to the king of France, but did not enter it. We went instead to dine at a castle belonging to the count of Foix half a league from there called Carla-Bayle, which sits high up atop a mountain.

After dinner the knight said to me, 'Let us ride along together at our leisure. We have only two more leagues to cover in this country, equal to three of France,¹³ to our lodging.' 'Gladly,' I replied. Now the knight said, 'Master Jehan, today we passed by the castle of Artigat which has been in the possession of Pierre d'Antin for five years when he took it by surprise, and he has since gained sixty thousand francs at the expense of France.' 'How did he get such a sum?' I asked the knight. 'I will tell you,' he said.

'On the feast of Our Lady, in mid-August, a fair is held in this town, to which all the folk from the entire countryside resort, and there is a great deal of merchandise available there for that one day. Pierre d'Antin and his companions from Lourdes had long turned their attention to capturing this town and castle but did not know how to go about it.

Nevertheless, at the beginning of May they had sent two of their varlets, unassuming in outward appearance, to look for positions and masters in the town. They both found what they were looking for and were retained. The two varlets served their masters so well that they went in and out of the town to attend to business and other matters without any suspicion falling on them. It so happened that on this day in mid-August there were many foreign merchants in the town from Foix, Béarn and France. You will know that when merchants gather and have not seen one another for a long time, it is usual for them to drink heartily together for a long time and renew their friendships at length. This meant that many of them came to the houses of the masters where the two servants were staying. They drank there and stayed at their leisure with the masters and their wives.'

'At the stroke of midnight Pierre d'Antin and his band reached Artigat. They hid themselves and their horses in the wood we passed through just now, and sent six varlets with two ladders to the town. These men crossed the ditches where they had been told they were at their most shallow, reached the walls and positioned their ladders against them. The two varlets already mentioned were there and assisting them while their masters were sitting at table. No sooner had they helped them all to climb up than one of the two varlets who had been staying at the hostelry led the six men to the town gate where there were two men

¹² France here probably refers to the central region of the kingdom, the Île-de-France around Paris, or at least to areas of the kingdom outside of the major principalities and directly ruled over by the king.

¹³ Units of distance were not standardised and differed from region to region.

guarding the keys. This varlet said to the six companions, "Stay here and do not move until I whistle. I will make the guards open the door to their guardroom. I am certain they have the keys to the gate. As soon as I have made them open the guardroom door, I will whistle, and then you must spring out and kill them. I am very familiar with the keys because I have helped to guard the gate seven times or more with my master."

'They did just as he had planned and remained hidden. He proceeded to the guardroom door, listened and found that they were awake and drinking. He called them by name for he knew them, and said, "Open the door! I have brought you some excellent wine, the best you have ever had. My master has sent it to you so that you can do a better job of keeping watch." Since they knew the varlet and believed he was telling the truth, they opened the guardroom door. He whistled and the others immediately sprang out, pushing themselves into the doorway so that it could not be closed again. The guards were caught and killed so quietly that nobody knew anything about it. They took the keys, came to the gate and opened it, then lowered the drawbridge so softly that it drew no attention. Then they sounded one single blast on a horn; those who were waiting in ambush heard it, mounted their horses and spurred them on across the drawbridge and into the town. They captured all the townsmen who were sat at table or in their beds. This is how Artigat was captured by Pierre d'Antin of Bigorre and his companions from Lourdes.'

I then asked the knight, 'How did they gain the castle?' 'I will tell you,' said Sir Espan de Lyon. 'When the town of Artigat was seized, the castle governor was in town, unfortunately for him. He was taking his evening meal with some merchants from Carcassonne and was captured where he sat. The next morning at Terce, Pierre d'Antin had him brought outside the castle where his wife and children were, threatening to have his head cut off if she did not enter into an agreement. If the castle was surrendered to him then her husband would be restored to her and they would be allowed to leave unscathed with all their belongings. The governor's wife found herself in a very difficult situation, for she could hardly wage war on her own, and so to recover her husband and avoid any further harm, she surrendered the castle. Thus, the governor, his wife and their children left with all their possessions and went to Pamiers where they are to be found today. That is how Pierre d'Antin seized the town and castle of Artigat and I can tell you that when they entered the place, he and his companions gained thirty thousand francs from the goods they found there as well as from good French prisoners. All those from the county of Foix or of Béarn were released unharmed with their goods. Pierre d'Antin held Artigat for a good five years, he and his men often travelling as far as the gates of Carcassonne which is sixteen long leagues away. They laid waste to the land by ransoming towns which submitted to them, and by pillaging throughout the entire area.'

Translated by Keira Borrill after Besançon MS 865

[The Online Froissart](#)

7. Lifestyle of the count of Foix; death of his heir

We¹⁴ left the next day and reached Mongerbiel Bougarber in time for dinner, then mounted again, stopping for refreshment in Arthez and arriving at Orthez at sundown. The knight went to his own house and I found lodging at the Inn of the Moon kept by one of the count's squires named Arnauton du Pin, who made me very welcome because I was French-speaking. Sir Espan de Lyon, in whose company I had arrived, went up to the castle to discuss his affairs with the count. He found him in his gallery, as he had dined at that time, or a little while before, for it is or was in those days the count's habit, as it had been since his childhood, to sleep until the early afternoon, and to take supper at midnight. The knight told him that I had arrived. He immediately sent for me to be fetched from my hostelry, for he was – and remains, if he is still alive – more interested than most in meeting strangers and hearing their news.

When he saw me he gave me a warm welcome and made me a member of his own household where I stayed for over twelve weeks, with my horses fed and well tended in every way. What strengthened our acquaintance during this time was that I had brought with me a book which I had compiled at the request of and to gratify my lord Wenceslaus of Bohemia, duke of Luxembourg and Brabant. Contained in this book, entitled *Meliador*, are all of the songs, ballads, rondeaux and virelays the noble duke composed in his lifetime. Thanks to the imaginative way in which I had arranged these works in the book, they pleased the count enormously; and every night after supper I would read some to him. While I was reading, nobody dared breathe a word, for he wished me to be heard distinctly and also took great pleasure in being able to hear it well. When he found something he wished to dispute or discuss, he was most eager to talk it over with me, not in his native Gascon, but in exceptional and elegant French.

I will say something about his way of life and that of his household, since I was there long enough to learn a considerable amount about it. Count Gaston of Foix was about fifty-nine years old at the time I was with him. I can tell you that although I have seen many knights, kings, princes and other such people in my life, I have never seen one so finely built and well-proportioned, or with so handsome a face, high-coloured and smiling, with clear blue-grey eyes which shone with affection on what or whomsoever he chose to cast his gaze. He was so accomplished in every way that it would be impossible to praise him too highly. He loved what should be loved and hated whatever deserved his hatred. He was an astute nobleman, full of serious enterprise and good counsel, who never stood for wicked people to be in his presence. He ruled with great wisdom and honesty, and said frequent prayers every day: the Psalter at night, the Little Office of Our Lady, the Hours of the Holy Spirit and of the Cross, and the Office for the Dead. Every day he had five francs in small coins given away for the love of God, and these alms were handed out at his door to all kinds of people.

¹⁴ Froissart is here still recounting his journey to the court of the count of Foix in the company of the count's knight Espan de Lyon.

He was generous and munificent with gifts, and knew exactly how to take from the right source and to distribute where there was need. He loved dogs above all other animals and was very fond of hunting in the fields, come summer or winter.

He took great pleasure in arms and in love, but was never an admirer of foolish extravagance and required a monthly account of his wealth. He would choose twelve distinguished men of his country to receive his rents and administer his people. For every period of two months, two of them worked in his receiving office and at the end of those two months they were relieved and two others took their place in the office. He made the most exceptional of them all, in whom he trusted the most, his comptroller. All of the others were responsible for providing this person with the accounts of their receipts. This comptroller then presented his accounts to the count of Foix on rolls or in books, and left them for him to consider. He had a number of chests in his private chamber, and from time to time he had money taken out of them to give to a lord, knight or squire who had come to pay him a visit. Nobody ever left him without receiving a gift. He was always adding to his wealth as a precaution against the hazards of fortune that he feared. He was good-natured and approachable to everyone, speaking to them kindly and amiably, though the responses and advice he gave were to the point.

He had four secretaries to write and copy letters and who had to be constantly at hand whenever he came forth from his private apartments. He did not call them Jean or Gautier or Guillaume, but when they had given him his letters and he had read them, he would summon them with a call of 'Good-for-nothing', either to write his replies or to give them some other task.

This then is how the count of Foix lived. When he came out of his chamber at midnight to take supper in the hall, he had twelve burning torches carried before him by twelve serving men, and these twelve torches were held up in front of his table, providing bright light in the hall full of knights and squires; and there were always a great many tables laid for supper for whoever wanted it. Nobody spoke to him at his own table unless he invited them to. He usually ate a great deal of poultry, but only the wings and thighs, and the next day would eat and drink very little. He was very fond of the minstrel's art and well-versed in it himself, and was always ready to have his clerks sing songs, rondeaux and virelays for him. He would stay at the table for about two hours and also enjoyed outlandish centrepieces, tableaux or entertainments. After he had seen them, he would send them around the tables of the knights and squires.

I briefly considered all of this and reflected that before I arrived at this court, I had been to many courts of kings, dukes, princes, counts and noble ladies, but had never been to one that pleased me more, or one that was as passionate for deeds of arms as was the court of the count of Foix. Honourable knights and squires could be seen coming and going in the hall, the chambers and the courtyard, talking of arms and of love. Every notion of honour could be found there. News from any kingdom or country could be learnt there, for people

flocked and flooded in from many lands on account of the master's gallantry. It was there that I was informed of the majority of the feats of arms that had taken place in Spain, Portugal, Aragon, Navarre, England, Scotland and along the borders of the Languedoc, for while I was staying there, I saw knights and squires from all of those nations come to visit the count. In this wise I gathered information either from them or from the count who was always willing to speak to me.

Having seen the rich and lavish condition of the count of Foix's household, I became intensely curious to find out what had happened to Gaston, the count's son, and by what misadventure he had died, since Sir Espan de Lyon had not wished to tell me. I continued to inquire until an old and distinguished squire told me. He began his tale as follows.

'It is true that the count of Foix and my lady of Foix, his wife, are no longer on good terms with one another, and have not been for a very long time now. The quarrel between them was caused by the king of Navarre, who was the lady's brother. The king of Navarre pledged to settle the ransom of the lord of Albret, whom the count of Foix was holding in prison, for the sum of fifty thousand francs. The count of Foix, who knew the king of Navarre to be devious and cunning, refused to give him credit for the sum. The countess of Foix became extremely angry and offended by her husband's attitude and said to him, "My lord, you do little honour to my noble brother by refusing him credit for these fifty thousand francs. Even if you never have Armagnacs or Albressians in your power again as you have had in the past, his word should be enough. Moreover you know full well that you still owe my lord and brother fifty thousand francs for my marriage settlement, so you have nothing to lose."

"Lady," said he, "you are right, but if I thought for one moment that the king of Navarre might weasel out of this payment in that fashion, then the lord of Albret would not leave Orthez until I was paid down to the last penny. However, since you ask it of me, I will do it, not out of love for you, but for love of my son." Whereupon, on assurances given by the king of Navarre, who made himself responsible for the debt to the count of Foix, the lord of Albret was released. He allied himself with the French and came into France to marry the duke of Bourbon's sister. He paid the fifty thousand francs at his convenience to the king of Navarre, to whom he was obliged for the sum, but who did not in turn send the money on to the count of Foix. The count then said to his wife, "Lady, you must go to Navarre to your brother, the king, and tell him I am most displeased that he has not sent on to me the money he has received which is mine." The lady replied that she was very willing to go and left the count with her retinue and came to her brother at Pamplona, who received her there with joy. The lady delivered her message justly and accurately. When the king had heard her he replied, saying, "My dear sister, the money is yours, for the count of Foix owes it to you as your dowry, and it will never leave the kingdom of Navarre while I am in charge of it." "Oh, my lord! This is a sure way to stir up great hatred between my lord and ourselves. If you stand by your decision, I shall not dare go back to Foix, for my lord would surely kill me, saying that I had deceived him." "It is not for me to say what you should do, whether

you should stay or go back,” said the king, who was determined not to part with the money. “I am in charge of this money. I am holding it for you but it will never leave Navarre.” ‘

‘The countess of Foix could get nothing more from him so she stayed in Navarre, not daring to return. The count of Foix recognised the king of Navarre’s malevolence and began to be greatly displeased with and to detest his wife. Yet she could not be blamed for failing to return after she had delivered the message. The lady did not dare, for she knew how ruthless her husband could be when something displeased him. Things remained as they were. Gaston, the son of my lord the count of Foix grew up and became a handsome young man and was married to the daughter of the count of Armagnac. This young lady was the sister of the present count and of Sir Bernard d’Armagnac. Thanks to this marriage there should have been peace between Foix and Armagnac.’

‘The young man must have been about fifteen or sixteen years old and was a handsome squire, resembling his father very closely in physique. He became possessed by a strong desire to travel to the kingdom of Navarre to see his mother and his uncle, a most unhappy thing both for him and for this country. When he arrived in Navarre he was made very welcome. He stayed for a while with his mother, then took his leave of her since he could not persuade her by any word or plea to return with him to Foix. For the lady had asked him if the count of Foix, his father, had instructed him to bring her back. He said that when he had left there had been no mention of this, and yet the lady dared not risk it but stayed where she was. The young man of Foix then went to Pamplona to take leave of the king of Navarre, his uncle. The king welcomed him and kept him there for more than ten days, giving marvellous gifts to him and to his followers. The last present the king of Navarre gave him was to be the death of the young man and I will tell you how and why.’

‘When the time came for the young man to leave, the king took him aside to his private chamber and gave him a very beautiful little purse full of powder, of such a kind that any living creature who touched or ate it would instantly and inevitably die. “Gaston, my dear nephew,” said the king, “you must do as I will explain to you. You can see how the count of Foix has wrongly conceived a deep hatred of your mother, my sister, which is greatly distressing for me as it must be for you. However, to restore things to their proper state and put your mother back on good terms again with your father, when a suitable moment arises, take a little of this powder and sprinkle it on your father’s food, taking great care that nobody sees you. As soon as he has eaten some, his one and only wish will be to have his wife, your mother, by his side once again. They will love each for ever more and so passionately that never again will they want to be separated from one another. You must wish this to happen with all your heart. Take great care not to divulge what I have told you to anyone who might tell your father, for you would thereby lose your opportunity.” The young man, who gave full credit to everything his uncle, the king of Navarre, told him, replied, “Yes, certainly.” Then he left Pamplona and his uncle and returned to Orthez.’

'The count of Foix, his father, naturally welcomed him back. He asked him for news of Navarre and of the gifts and precious objects he had been given there. He showed him everything except the little purse containing the powder, which he knew well how to conceal. Now it was very common at the court of Foix for Gaston and Yvain, his bastard brother, to sleep together in the same room. They were very fond of each other, as young brothers are, and they wore the same tunics and habits because they were about the same size and age. It so happened that on one occasion, playing and jumping around on their beds as boys are prone to do, they exchanged tunics and Gaston's tunic, along with the powder and the purse, fell onto Gaston's brother Yvain's bed. Yvain, who was rather devious, felt the powder in the purse and asked Gaston, his brother, "What is this thing you are always wearing round your neck?" Gaston was not at all pleased to be asked this and replied, "Give me back my tunic, Yvain. That is none of your business." Yvain threw his tunic back at him and Gaston put it on. From that day on he was much more anxious than he had been before.'

'Three days later it so happened, as if God was intent on protecting the count of Foix, that Gaston lost his temper with Yvain over a ball game and slapped his face. The young man was outraged and offended and went in floods of tears to his father's chamber, where he found him just after he had heard mass. When the count saw him crying, he asked him, "Yvain, what is the matter with you?" "By God sir," he said, "Gaston has given me a beating, but he deserves one just as much as I do, and more." "Why is that?" said the count, who became immediately suspicious as he has an active imagination. "By my faith, my lord, since he came back from Navarre he has been wearing a little purse full of powder at his chest, but I do not know what it is for or what he is planning to do with it, except that he has told me once or twice that his mother will very soon be on better terms with you than she ever was." "Ha!" said the count, "Be silent and take care not to reveal what you have told me to a single soul." "Certainly not, sir," said the young man.'

'The count of Foix pondered deeply, keeping to himself until dinner time when he washed and sat down as usual at the table in his hall. Gaston, his son, was in the habit of serving him all of his dishes and tasting his food. As soon as he had set the count's first dish in front of him and had done what he had to do, the count looked at him, fully aware of his plan, and saw the strings of the purse at his son's neck. His blood boiled and he said, "Gaston, come close. I want to have a word in your ear." The young man approached the table. Then the count unfastened and opened the neck of the lad's tunic; taking a knife, he cut the purse strings and held it in his hand. Then he said to his son, "What is it you have in this purse?" The young man was shocked and taken aback and did not say a word, but instead went white through fear and confusion and began to tremble violently, for he felt as if he had done wrong.'

'The count of Foix opened the purse, took out some powder and put it on a trencher of bread. He then whistled to a greyhound that he had near him and gave it the bread to eat.

As soon as the dog had taken the first bite, it rolled on its back and died. When the count of Foix saw this he was livid, and no wonder. He got up from the table, took his knife and made to throw it at his son. He would have killed him there and then, but knights and squires jumped up in front of him, saying, "My lord, for God's sake do not be too hasty. Find out more about the matter before doing your son any harm." The first words the count said were in his native Gascon, "Zo, Gaston, traïtour! For your sake and to increase the inheritance that was to pass to you, I have incurred hostilities and animosity between us and the kings of France, England, Spain, Navarre and Aragon. I have stood my ground against them all, and now you want to murder me! There is evil in your very nature. Know that you will die by this blow." Then he leapt across the table, knife in hand, intending to kill him on the spot, but the knights and squires fell to their knees before him, weeping, and said, "Ah, my lord, for God's sake do not kill Gaston. You have no other heir. Put him under guard and investigate the matter. Perhaps he did not know what he was carrying and is innocent of any crime." "Quickly then," said the count. "Put him in the tower and let him be so well guarded that full account be given to me."

'So the young man was put in the tower of the castle. Then the count seized a number of those who served his son, but he did not get them all since many escaped. One of them is even now the bishop of Lescar, near Pau, outside this dominions, who was under suspicion as well as several others, but at least fifteen of them were put to death very horribly. The reason he gave was that they had been so ignorant of the lad's secrets, for they should have told the count what was going on, along the lines of, "Young lord Gaston carries a purse at his chest, and so and so forth ..." They had not done this and so several squires died horribly which was a great pity. In all of Gascony there were none as fine, as handsome or as well groomed as they were, for the count of Foix has always been served by an impressive retinue.'

'This matter affected the count of Foix very grievously and it showed. One day he summoned to Orthez all the noblemen, the prelates of Foix and Béarn, and all the distinguished men from those two realms. When they had all arrived, he explained why he had sent for them; how he had found his son at such terrible fault that he intended to put him to a death he richly deserved. All those gathered replied in unison, saying, "My lord, with all due respect, we do not want Gaston to die. He is your heir and you have no other."

'When the count heard his people begging for his son's life, he restrained himself a little. He resolved to punish him with prison and to hold him there for two or three months then send him on a two- or three-year journey until he had forgotten his anger and the young man had become more worldly wise with age. So he dismissed his people, but those from the county of Foix did not want to leave Orthez unless the count assured them that Gaston would not die, for they loved the young man very much. He gave them his word, but said that he would still keep him a while in prison as punishment. With this promise they all left and Gaston remained a prisoner at Orthez.'

‘News of these events spread far and wide and at that time Pope Gregory XI was at Avignon. He immediately dispatched the cardinal of Amiens as a papal envoy to Béarn, to settle the matter by placating the count and alleviating his anger, and in this fashion secure the young man’s release from prison. But the cardinal went about his business so slowly that he had only made it as far as Béziers when the news reached him that he was no longer needed in Béarn since Gaston, the count of Foix’s son, was dead.’

‘I will tell you how he died, since I have told you this much of the matter already. For ten days the count of Foix had him kept in a room in the tower at Orthez where there was little light. He drank and ate very little for he did not want to, despite enough being brought for him to drink and eat every day. When he got his food, he pushed it to one side and ignored it. Some say that the meals brought to him were left entirely untouched, and that he had not partaken of any of the food right up to the day of his death. It was surprising that he managed to survive so long, for several reasons. The count had him locked up there with no guard in the room to keep him company, or to advise or comfort him, and the young man wore the same clothes as the day he was put there, so he became very despondent and fretted a great deal, for he was not used to living like that. He cursed the hour he had been born, even conceived, if he was to meet such an end.’

‘On the day of his death, those who served his meals brought him his food and said, “Gaston, here is a meal for you.” Gaston took no notice of it and said, “Put it over there.” One of them, who served him as I have told you, looked around the prison and saw all the meals he had brought on previous days. He secured the door again and went to the count of Foix and said, “For God’s sake my lord, be aware of your son for he is starving himself in his prison. I do not think he has eaten anything since he went in there because I have seen all the dishes he has been taken lying untouched to one side.” The count was infuriated by this, left his chamber without a word and went to the prison where his son was. Most unfortunately he was holding a small knife with which he was wont to trim and clean his nails.’

‘He had the door of the prison opened and went up to his son. He was holding the blade of his knife near the point, so close to the point in fact that only a part of it no broader than the width of a coin from Tours protruded beyond his fingertips. By terrible mischance, as he thrust the point against his son’s throat, he wounded him in a vein, exclaiming, “Ha, traïtour! Why do you not eat?” Then the count left immediately without saying or doing anything more and went back to his chamber. The sight of his father terrified the young man, not to mention that he was weak from fasting, and saw or felt the point of the knife at his throat, small though it was, as it nicked a vein. He turned to the wall and died there and then. The count had barely returned to his chamber when news reached him from the one who had been serving the young man his meals, saying, “My lord, Gaston is dead.” “Dead?” said the count. “My God, my lord, it is true.” The count did not want to believe that it was the truth.

He sent a knight there who was by his side. The knight went and reported back that he was indeed dead.'

'Then the count of Foix was distraught beyond measure, mourning his son deeply and saying, "Oh Gaston! What a tragic business this is. It was a cursed day for you and for me that you should ever have gone to Navarre to see your mother. I will never again know complete happiness." Then he sent for his barber and had his head shaved to the skin. He humbled himself in great abjection and dressed himself in black, as did everyone in his household. The young man's body was carried amidst great weeping and lamentation to the Minorite Friars at Orthez, where it was buried. That is my account of the death of Gaston de Foix. It was his father who actually killed him, but the king of Navarre dealt the mortal blow.'

Translated by Keira Borrill after Besançon MS 865

[The Online Froissart](#)

8. Definition of historical genres; deontology of the historian

If I were to say 'This is what happened at that time' without explaining the event, which might be important and awful and likely to end disastrously, that would be a chronicle and not a history, and I would be perfectly able to do this. But I do not want to do this and will therefore explain the whole event, provided God gives me the time, the understanding, the memory and the opportunity to write a chronological and historical account of the whole subject. You know, as it is written in various places in this history, how sire Jean de Montfort, who was called duke of Brittany – and really he is duke as the result of his conquests, not because he is the rightful heir – has always, as far as he was able, strongly supported the king of England and his children in their war and aspirations [their claim to the French crown] against the king of France and the French. One could truly say that he was a member of the English party. He was often on the receiving end of the war as a result, and he did never anything without English support, not at Auray¹⁵ nor elsewhere.

You also know, as it is recorded and written down in several places in this history, how the duke of Brittany [Jean de Montfort] was not able to bend the noblemen of his land to his will, nor indeed most of the cities, in particular the lords Bertrand du Guesclin (for as long as he lived), Olivier de Clïçon, constable of France, the lords of Laval, Beaumanoir and Rez, the viscount of Rohan, and the lords of Dinan and Rochefort. Whichever course of action these lords would agree on, the whole of Brittany would follow. These lords wanted to side with their lord and duke against all enemies, but not against the French crown. I cannot truly fathom a way in which the Bretons would not have protected the honour of France, and you can read many examples of this in this history. And everything which is written here is the truth. Nobody should say that I have altered the story/history because of any favour which I

¹⁵ Battle fought on 29 September 1364 near Auray between the two claimants to the duchy of Brittany, Charles of Blois and Jean de Montfort, won by the latter with English support, which then brought an end to the Breton war of succession.

may have had towards Count Guy of Blois (who made me write it and who has paid me for it so that I can say I have been well rewarded for it) because he was the nephew of the duke of Brittany, that is the son of Louis of Blois, the brother of Saint Charles of Blois, who was duke of Brittany during his lifetime. Really, this is not the case. Because I want to discuss [the succession war of Brittany] only according to the truth and go about deciding on what really happened, without favouring one party or the other. And also the noble lord and count who made me write and compose this history would not want me to make it anything but truthful.

Translated by Godfried Croenen after Besançon MS 865
and the edition by L. and A. Mirot (1957)

9. Richard II taken by Henry Bolingbroke (1399)

News reached King Richard's army of the approach of Lord Derby¹⁶ and the Londoners. Many knights, squires and archers heard of it before the King, but those who knew would never have dared to tell him. As the news spread from mouth to mouth, many, including some nearest to the King, were in a state of great alarm. They saw at once that events were shaping in a way that was dangerous for themselves and the King, for they had many enemies in England and these, who had pretended to smile upon them before, would become open now that the Earl was on this side of the sea. Many knights, squires and archers, who had served the King for the season, hid their intentions and slipped quietly away. Some returned to their homes. Others, by the shortest road they could, made for the Earl of Derby and joined him.

As soon as Humphrey of Gloucester and Richard of Arundel learnt that their cousin of Derby and the Londoners were coming, they called their men together, left King Richard, and did not stop riding until they reached the Earl's force, which had passed Oxford and come to a town called Cicister. The Earl was delighted to see his cousins and they to see him. He asked for news of the King, his forces, his whereabouts, and how they had got away. They answered: 'We did not see him before we left. As soon as we heard you were coming we got on our horses and rode towards you. We wish to serve you and help to avenge our fathers whom Richard of Bordeaux put to death.' 'You are welcome', the Earl replied. 'You will help me and I will help you. The task is to take our cousin Richard back to London.'

When the facts could no longer be hidden, Richard's counsellors came to him privately and said: 'Sire, you must think what to do. A decision has to be made quickly, for the men of London have risen against you in force and are evidently coming to seek you out, accompanied by your cousin the Earl of Derby, whom they have made their leader. And since

¹⁶ Henry of Lancaster, earl of Derby, who would become King Henry IV after Richard's abdication.

he has crossed the sea on their invitation, there must be a close understanding between them.'

On hearing this, the King was shaken to the core and could find nothing to say. He realized at once that things would go from bad to worse if he could not take some forceful action. When at last he spoke, it was to say to the knights who had brought him the news: 'Quickly then, alert our men, archers and men-at-arms, and issue a general order for everyone to be ready to march, for I will not flee before my subjects.' 'Before God, sir,' the knights replied, 'things look very black, your men are deserting and slipping away. You have lost quite half of them already and those who are left are utterly dispirited.' 'What do you think I should do, then?' asked the King. 'We will tell you, sire. You cannot hope to face your enemies in the field, but must retire into some castle where you can hold out until your brother, Sir John Holland, comes to your support. He is brave and soldierly enough to do so and he will already have heard the news. Once he is in England he will so manage things, by force of arms or negotiation, that your prospects will be quite different from now. When he is known to be in the field, many who have deserted you will rally to him.' The King accepted this advice unreservedly.

At that time the Earl of Salisbury was not with the King, but in another place some way off. On receiving news of the situation, he at once saw how dangerous it was for himself and the King and those who had so far advised him. So he did nothing until he should hear more. The King's uncle, the Duke of York, had not been with the King's army, but his son the Earl of Rutland was with it for two reasons; first because the King was extremely fond of him, and secondly because he was Constable of England, which made it his duty to take part in the expedition.

More news was brought to the King soon after he had finished supper. He was told: 'Sire, you must decide now what you intend to do. Your army is nothing compared to what is approaching. A battle is out of the question, you could not hope to fight one now. You must get out of this corner by skill and good judgement, appease your enemies if possible, as you did once before, and then punish them in your own time. There is a castle twelve miles from here called Flint which is quite strong. We advise you to make for it and shut yourself inside there until you have further news of the Earl of Huntingdon and your other friends. We will send to Ireland and elsewhere for help. And if your father-in-law, the King of France, hears that you are in difficulties, he will give you support.'

The Earl of Derby and the Londoners had their spies coming and going who reported all the King's movements to them, and there were also the knights and squires who came over to the Earl of their own accord. The Earl thus learnt that the King had withdrawn to Flint Castle and had hardly any men with him, apart from the members of his household; also that he seemed to have no intention of fighting, but only wanted to escape from his predicament, if possible by negotiation. It was immediately decided to follow him to Flint and once there, to contrive to take him by force or otherwise. When the Earl of Derby's force had come within

about five miles of the castle, they found themselves in a large village. Here the Earl halted, took a meal and a drink, and decided solely on his own initiative to ride ahead with two hundred men, leaving all the rest behind. He hoped to induce the King to let him into the castle by peaceful means and, once there, to bring him out by persuasion. He would guarantee him protection against all dangers, except that of going to London and even there he would promise to preserve him against bodily harm and would mediate between him and the Londoners who were so enraged against him.

When the Earl told those around him of his plan, they approved of it, but said: 'Sir, make quite sure that there is no double-dealing in this matter. Richard of Bordeaux must be taken, dead or alive, with all the traitors who have influenced him, and brought to London and put in the Tower. Nothing else will satisfy the Londoners.' 'Of course,' the Earl replied. 'Everything that has been agreed upon will be done. But if I can persuade him to come out of the castle peaceably I will do so. If I cannot and he refuses to listen to me, I shall let you know at once. You will come and we will start the siege. We will go to work by force, since the place is not impregnable, until we have him dead or alive.'

This last statement was enough for the Londoners, and the Earl of Derby left the main body and rode forward with two hundred men only. They were soon outside the castle, in one of the rooms of which the King was sitting dazed and trembling among his men. The Earl and his troop dismounted before the castle gate, which was naturally shut and barred, and he went and banged loudly on it. Those inside asked who it was. The Earl of Derby answered them: 'I am Henry of Lancaster. I have come to take back my inheritance of the Duchy of Lancaster from the King. Go and tell him so from me.' 'My lord,' they said, 'we will do so willingly.' They went up to the room in the keep where the King was with the men who had so long been his advisers, and told him: 'Sire, it is your cousin the Earl of Derby who has come to reclaim his inheritance of Lancaster from you.' The King looked at his knights and asked them what he should do. 'Sire,' they said, 'there is nothing unreasonable in this demand. You can allow him to come before you, with a dozen followers only, and hear what he has to say. He is your cousin and a great man in this country. If he chooses, he can well make peace for you, for he is much loved in England, particularly among the Londoners who brought him back across the sea and who are supporting him against you so strongly at this moment. You must hide your real intentions until this trouble has blown over and your brother the Earl of Huntingdon is able to join you. It is a great pity that he is at Calais, for those who revolt against you in England would keep quiet and not dare to offend you if they knew he was with you. Also, he is married to the Earl of Derby's sister and through his mediation we hope and believe that you would reach a peaceful understanding with everyone.'

The King agreed to this suggestion, saying: 'Have the gate opened and let him come in, with eleven others only.' Two knights went down to the courtyard and out through the wicket-gate, where they bowed to the Earl of Derby and the knights accompanying him. They

greeted them with great courtesy, knowing that they were on the weaker side and that they had done very wrong and were hated by the Londoners. They wished to put things right if they could by flowery politeness, so they said: 'What is your pleasure, my lord? The King is at mass, and he has sent us to inquire on his behalf.' 'This,' said the Earl. 'You know that I have come to claim back the Duchy of Lancaster. I want to talk to the King about that and certain other things.' 'My lord,' they replied, you are most welcome. The King will be glad to receive you and listen to you. He said that you should come in with just eleven companions.' 'I am willing,' said the Earl, and entered the castle with his eleven men. The wicket was immediately shut, leaving all the others outside.

Now consider the great risk that the Earl was running, for he could have been killed in there with all his companions as easily as if they had been birds in a cage. But he thought nothing of the danger and went straight forward until he came before the King.

When the King saw him, he changed colour, like a man who felt he had done him a great wrong. Making no attempt to show him honour or respect, Lord Derby asked bluntly: 'Have you breakfasted yet?' 'No,' answered the King. 'It is still quite early. Why do you ask?' 'It is time you did,' said the Earl. 'You have a long journey before you.' 'What journey?' asked the King. 'You have to go to London. I would advise you to eat something now. You will have a more comfortable ride.' Depressed and frightened by these words, the King replied: 'I am not hungry yet. I don't feel I could eat.' But his knights, seeing that things were going badly and wishing to humour the Earl, said: 'Sire, do as my lord of Lancaster asks. He only means it for your good.' 'I will, then,' said the King. 'Have the tables laid.' The tables were prepared quickly. The King washed and sat down. He was served. The Earl was asked if he would eat as well. He said no, he had already breakfasted.

While the King was sitting there trying to eat – but he could swallow almost nothing, his heart was so heavy – the whole country round Flint Castle became covered with men-at-arms and archers. Those inside the castle could see them only too well from the windows. The King caught sight of them when he rose from table after a brief and melancholy meal. He asked his cousin who these people were and received the answer that they were mostly men of London. 'And what do they want?' asked the King. 'They want you,' said the Earl of Derby, 'to take you to London and put you in the Tower. There is no other way for you.' 'No,' said the King, who was terrified to hear this, knowing how the Londoners hated him. He went on: 'You, my cousin, cannot you do something to prevent it? I will never willingly put myself in their hands. I know that they have hated me for a long time, I who am their sovereign.' The Earl replied: 'I can see no way of preventing it, unless you surrender to me. If they know that you are my prisoner they will not harm you. But you must get ready, with all your people, to go to London and be imprisoned in the Tower.'

Seeing himself in this desperate situation and utterly cowed by the fear that the Londoners would kill him, the King surrendered to his cousin of Derby, promising to do whatever he asked. His knights and officers all followed his example, in order to avoid greater perils. The

Earl, in the presence of the men he had brought with him, accepted them as his prisoners and ordered them to be taken to the courtyard. Horses were to be saddled and the gates of the castle thrown open. When this was done, large numbers of men-at-arms and archers came crowding in, upon which Lord Derby, whom I will now call Duke of Lancaster, issued strict orders that no one was to presume to take anything in the castle or lay hands on man or servant, on pain of hanging and drawing. He led his cousin King Richard down from the keep to the court yard, talking to him all the time. He let him keep his whole household just as it was, without removing or changing any of his attendants. While the horses were being got ready, the King and the Duke continued to chat together, closely watched by some of the Londoners who were present. A thing then happened which was told to me and which I will relate.

King Richard had a greyhound called Math, a truly magnificent dog, which would follow no one except the King. Whenever he was about to go riding, the greyhound was loosed and came bounding up to the King and put his paws on his shoulders. Now, as the King and the Duke were standing talking in the middle of the courtyard, with their horses ready for mounting, this greyhound Math left the King and went to the Duke of Lancaster, showing him all the marks of affection which he used to show to the King. He placed his forepaws on his shoulders and began to lick his face. The Duke of Lancaster, who had never seen the dog before, asked the King: 'What does this greyhound want?' 'Cousin,' replied the King, 'it is an excellent omen for you and a bad one for me.' 'What do you mean?' asked the Duke. 'I mean,' said the King, 'that the dog is hailing and honouring you today as the King of England which you will be, while I shall be deposed. The dog knows it by instinct. So keep him with you, for he will stay with you and leave me.' The Duke of Lancaster understood perfectly and stroked the greyhound, which henceforth ignored Richard of Bordeaux and followed him. These things were observed or known by over thirty thousand people.

Translated by Geoffrey Brereton (1968)

10. Death of Richard II (1400)

It was said to the King [Henry IV] and his advisers: 'Be on your guard, for the French show signs of wanting war and are assembling a large fleet at Harfleur. It is to be led by the Count of Saint Pol and Sir Charles d'Albret. If the Earls of Huntingdon and Salisbury and the other who have been killed were still alive, it seems likely that the French would have come across already; they had powerful sympathizers in England.'

It was said to the King: 'Sire, as long as Richard of Bordeaux is alive, neither you nor the country will be secure.'

The King replied: 'I think you are right. But for my part I will never put him to death, since I took him under my protection. I will keep my promise to him until it becomes apparent that he is behaving treasonably.'

The King's knights said: 'It would be better for you if he were dead rather than alive. As long as the French know that he is there they will want to make war on you. They will hope to restore him to the throne, because he is married to the King of France's daughter.'

To this the King of England made no reply, but went out of the room and left them talking together. He went to see his falconers and, placing a falcon on his wrist, became absorbed in feeding it.

Not many days afterwards a true report ran through London that Richard of Bordeaux was dead. From what cause and how it happened I did not know at the time when I wrote these chronicles. His body was placed on a hearse with a black canopy over it. Four black horses were harnessed to it, led by two grooms in black, and four black-clad knights followed behind. So he left the Tower of London where he had died and was taken right through London at a walking pace until they reached Cheapside, the main street of the city. There in the middle of the street the hearse halted, and the grooms and the knights with it, and so remained for two hours. And over twenty thousand people, men and women, came to see King Richard lying there, with his head on a black cushion and his face uncovered. Some were moved to pity to see him in that state, but others not. These said that for a long time past he had well deserved to die.

Now, lords, consider well, kings, dukes, count, prelates, all men of noble lineage and power, how fickle are the chances of this world. King Richard reigned over England for twenty-two years in great prosperity, holding rich estates and fiefs. No King of England before had come within a hundred thousand florins a year of spending as much as he did on the mere upkeep of his court and the pomp that went with it. For I, Jean Froissart, canon and treasurer of Chimay, saw and observed it at first hand. I spent three months in his household and was treated extremely well, because in my younger days I had been a personal secretary of the noble King Edward, his grandfather, and of my lady Philippa of Hainault, Queen of England, his grandmother. And when I went to take leave of him – that was at Windsor – he gave me through one of his knights, called Sir John Golafre, a goblet of silver gilt, weighing well over a pound, with a hundred nobles inside it, which has made me a richer man for the rest of my life. I have a strong obligation to pray for him and I am grieved to write of his death. But since I have compiled and written this history and have continued it to the best of my knowledge and ability, I have recorded it to make known what became of him.

In my time I heard two things which came true, though in very different ways. I remember that I was in Bordeaux sitting at table, when King Richard was born. He came into the world on a Wednesday, on the stroke of ten. At that hour Sir Richard de Ponchardon, who was Marshal of Aquitaine at the time, entered and said to me: 'Froissart, write down and place

on record that her Highness the Princess has been delivered of a fine boy, who has come into the world on Twelfth Day. He is a king's son, for his father is King of Galicia. King Peter has given him that kingdom and he will soon be off to conquer it. So the child comes of royal stock and by right he will yet be a king.'

The gallant knight of Ponchardon was not wrong, since Richard reigned over England for twenty two years, but when he said this he did not know what the end of his life would be. These are things to reflect upon and I have thought much about them since. For also in the year I first came to England to enter the service of King Edward and his noble queen Philippa, the royal couple with all their children went to Berkhamsted, a manor belonging to the Prince of Wales about thirty miles outside London. Their purpose was to say good-bye to the Prince and Princess, who were about to leave for Aquitaine to hold their court there. That was in the year 1361 and I, who was then about twenty-four, listened to an old knight called Sir Bartholomew Burghersh sitting on a bench and talking to the Queen's maids of honour, who were from Hainault. This is what I heard him say: 'We have a book in this country called *The Brut*, which many people believe to be the prophecies of Merlin. Now, according to this book, the crown of England will not pass to the Prince of Wales, nor to the Duke of Clarence, nor to the present Duke of Lancaster, nor to the Duke of York, nor to the Duke of Gloucester, although they are sons of King Edward, but it will return to the House of Lancaster.

Now I, the author of this history, having reflected on all this, say that those two knights, Sir Richard de Ponchardon and Sir Bartholomew Burghersh, were both right. For I and everyone else saw Richard of Bordeaux on the throne of England for twenty-two years and, while he was still alive, the crown passing back to the House of Lancaster, when King Henry, in the circumstances I have related, became King of England. He had never thought of the crown nor would have done if Richard had behaved in a kinder and more friendly way towards him; and then it was the Londoners who made him King, to repair the great wrongs done to him and his children, which had aroused their sympathy.

When the hearse, with Richard of Bordeaux on it, had been in Cheapside a full two hours, it moved on. The drivers drove it forward and the four knights walked behind. When they were outside London their servants met them with their horses. They mounted and rode on more rapidly, until they reached a village called Langley thirty miles from London, where there is a manor belonging to the King and Queen. There King Richard of Bordeaux lies buried. May God have mercy on his soul.

Translated by Geoffrey Brereton (1968)