



CHAPTER II

EARLY HISTORY OF BELGIUM AND FLANDERS

[51 B.C.—1384 A.D.]

THÉODORE JUSTE ON BELGIUM'S PLACE IN HISTORY

Placed in the central part of Europe between nations which have long disputed with one another for supremacy, Belgium has endured varying fortunes. In remote times she was extolled by Cæsar^b and Tacitus^c as the seat of force and courage; she was the home of the Carolingians, after having been the cradle of the descendants of Merovæus; she reigned in Jerusalem when Godfrey de Bouillon had opened to Christianity the gates of the holy city; she reigned in Constantinople when Baldwin of Flanders and Hainault donned the diadem of the Cæsars at St. Sophia; she equalled — perhaps, according to the testimony of Dante and Petrarch, she even eclipsed — Italy herself by the opulence and the indomitable energy of her communes; she was the home of western civilisation which shone resplendent in the cities of Flanders when the neighbouring countries were scarcely emerging from the darkness of barbarism; she was the rampart of popular liberties throughout the Middle Ages; she afterwards became the rival of the French monarchy under the last dukes of Burgundy.

All this greatness did not last. After having placed the imperial crown on the head of Charles V, and consolidated with the blood of her warriors the preponderance of the Spanish monarchy, Belgium felt the wounds of foreign dominion. Then she lost her wealth, her commerce, her industry, even her vigour, in that long revolution which brought forth the republic of the United Provinces, heiress of the force, the opulence, the prestige of the southern Netherlands.

Belgium seemed destined to expiate, if we may so express it, the prodigious elevation of the Austro-Spanish house whose cradle she had been. She had feared and hated Philip II; she despised the incapacity of his successors, who, not content with sacrificing her to the political and commercial exigencies of the United Provinces, handed over entire provinces to France. All the efforts of Louis XIV were directed against the existence of Spanish Belgium, which, situated a few marches from Paris, seemed to him an indispensable and easy acquisition. But Europe placed herself between him and these provinces, that she might dispute with him for the fragments.

Belgium, without a national dynasty, was thus the principal cause, the determining cause, of the wars of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, marked by so many upheavals, so many catastrophes. During a hundred and fifty years the armies of most of the nations of Europe came to fight in the plains of Belgium, to besiege her towns, to devastate her country districts; thousands of men perished on this everlastingly disputed soil: the gravestones of Walcourt, Fleurus, Seneffe, Rocoux, Neerwinden, Ramillies, Malplaquet, Lawfeld, Fontenoy are the monuments of these sanguinary struggles.

France, whose finances the genius of Colbert had tripled, exhausted herself in order to extend her frontiers to the Rhine and the mouth of the Schelde. The republic of the United Provinces, England, Germany, in like manner exhausted themselves to prevent this aggrandisement which would have destroyed the equilibrium of Europe, and surrounded with constant perils the states bordering on the Belgian provinces. Victorious, the adversaries of Louis XIV came to an understanding in 1715 in order to secure the success of a scheme which made of the Belgian provinces, now handed over to the German branch of the house of Austria, the barrier of the United Provinces and the *tête-de-pont* of the English on the continent. But, if the Barrier Treaty was a check to French ambition, the Belgians could not consider as a reparation the act which subordinated them to the Dutch republic and which legalised the abuse of force. In fact, far from restoring the territory which had been torn from them, Europe recognised the successive dismembersments effected since 1648. The country was obliged to resign itself, for it was powerless.

All these disasters had annihilated the ancient power of Belgium but had not destroyed the inalienable sentiment of nationality which was religiously transmitted from generation to generation, even when ten different flags floated on the walls of her conquered cities.

Regarded without prejudice and in its true aspect, the history of the Belgians presents a rare and imposing spectacle. Here it is not absolute monarchy which raises itself on the ruins of other powers and constantly absorbs the attention of posterity; on the contrary, we see the nation acting. Preserving the full enjoyment of provincial and municipal life, the nation really figures on the scene: it is the nation which we follow through the centuries, triumphant or vanquished, free or oppressed, but bearing all vicissitudes to preserve its original and distinctive character. From the dissolution of the Carolingian empire down to the fifteenth century, the various Belgian provinces were in the possession of different dynasties. Yet, in default of political unity, there was between them community of origin, of manners, of religious ideas, of patriotism. Belgium did not so far degenerate as to lose herself in the foreign dominion. She kept her fundamental laws, her usages, her traditions, her manners: she remained Belgian.^d

PRIMITIVE HISTORY

It would be neither possible nor desirable here to take up in detail the history of the various provinces and factions that make up the early Netherlands. From the tangle of town and family wars, the extraction of the single threads entire would be an endless task. To each family or town its own career was intensely important, and many of the events are picturesque enough to be of general interest, but their value in the world-chronicles is of the slightest.

It is well, however, before proceeding with the account of the Netherlands as a whole, to give some account of the principal divisions in order that the unities may be the better understood when the final separation of Belgium from Holland is accomplished. Of the land and the original peoples, mention has already been made in the introduction by Motley, but a brief account of the Roman influence in Belgium proper will not be amiss.^a

Under the Romans

Belgium, as we have said, was the cradle of both the Merovingian and Carolingian dynasties, and it was in this country also that the Frank nation prepared itself to carry out its brilliant destiny. The northern extremity of Gaul, which corresponds to modern Belgium and the Netherlands, was never conquered by the Barbarians as was the Celtic or Roman portion of the land — it is rather from here that conquerors set out. The original Belgians belonged to the great Germanic family, like all the Franks, and they took, in the exploits and settlements of the race in foreign lands, a part as large as it was glorious. It is true that the oldest inhabitants of Belgium were Celts, but history also teaches us that the Germans had invaded that part of Gaul and expelled the Celts long before Cæsar's time. The people found there at the time of the Roman conquest were all Germans; Cæsar^b himself affirms this.

When the Romans organised the administration of the southern portion of Gaul, they divided it into provinces. Under Augustus the Treviri, Nervii, and Menapii found themselves the sole occupants of the province of Belgium. Later, under Diocletian or Constantine, the province of Belgium created by Augustus was divided into the First and Second Belgic Provinces, and at the same time Upper and Lower Germany became the First and Second German Provinces. No portion of modern Belgium entered into the composition of the First Germanic Province, whose capital was Mainz, but to the Second belonged the territory of the Toxandri and Tungri. Cologne was its metropolis and Tongres its second largest town.

The Romans occupied Belgium for several centuries and founded numerous establishments, military colonies, and permanent camps, of which a small number developed into towns.

It is in the land of the Treviri, comprising a large portion of modern Luxemburg, that one finds the most remains of Roman occupation. Treves (Colonia Augusta Trevirorum) a military colony in the beginning, became one of the principal cities of the empire. We know it was the residence of the prefect of Gaul and that several emperors, among them Constantine, held court there. There were at Treves a famous school of literature, a mint, several manufactories of arms and cloth, and a workshop where women made military equipments. Ammianus Marcellinus,^c citing Cologne and

Tongres as the two cities of the Second Germanic Province, says that they were large and populous. But civilisation was able to exercise its influence only in the large centres of population, such as Treves, Bavay, Tongres, Cologne, and perhaps among the inhabitants of the east and south, neighbours of the stations and fortified posts. "Elsewhere," says Schayes,^f "in the north, centre, and west of Belgium, the manners, customs, language, and religions of the natives underwent little or no modification during the whole period of Roman dominion."

Christianity seems to have had considerable vogue in Treves, but was not introduced until later into the more or less romanised towns and villages. We know positively that there was a bishop at Tongres in the middle of the fourth century. But the Christian establishments disappeared entirely from the country immediately after the expulsion of the Romans.

It was both at Treves and on the banks of the Moselle that the Latin language made most progress; the Romans imposed their tongue upon the conquered nations as they imposed the yoke of their dominion. It is somewhat astonishing, after this, that the dwellers on the banks of the Moselle should not have adopted, like those of the Maas, a Roman dialect. Perhaps also the use of the Roman-Walloon in some provinces of Belgium does not date from the time of Roman dominion but from that when Christianity returned to the land after the conversion of the Franks and the establishment of religious houses whose inmates spoke a rustic Latin.^g

Under the Franks and the Dukes

"Dark is the fate of Western Europe, of the Netherlands especially, in the century of misfortune in which Rome finally ceased to be mistress of the West," says Blok.^h The Franks were ruthless conquerors, and the history of the Netherlands is for hundreds of years the story of the rise of their empire to the glory of a Charlemagne and the weakness of its quick disintegration in 843. The realm to which Lothair II succeeded was called Lotharingia, whence Lorraine — the mediæval name for the Low Countries except Flanders, which fell to Charles the Bald and suffered heavily from the Norse invasions.

The division into duchies, counties, and free cities was complex. Among the chief were the duchies, Brabant, Limburg, and Luxemburg; and the counties, Flanders, Hainault, and Namur. Liège was a bishopric. Hainault is described in the next chapter.

BRABANT

Brabant, once second to Flanders in importance and long honourable in the history of the arts, is now divided between Belgium and Holland; its first count was Godfrey the Bearded. His great-grandson, Henry I the Warrior (1190-1235), took the title of duke. At the important battle of Woeingen June 5th, 1288, the duke John I defeated an alliance of the archbishop of Cologne with the counts of Luxemburg, and Gelderland; he killed Henry of Luxemburg with his own sword and permanently added Limburg to Brabant. John II enlarged his people's privileges by a grant of the Charter of Cortemberg¹ and the Statute of the Common Weal. John III provoked

[¹ The charter of Cortemberg, granted by John II on the 27th of September, 1312, acquaints us with the concessions by which the duke paid for the services of his subjects. It institutes a life-council of forty persons, recruited from amongst the nobility and the towns and whose mission it was to see that the privileges and customs of the duchy were observed. This council was to assemble every three weeks and its decisions were to be sovereign. If the duke

a rebellion in which Brussels and Louvain had allies, but he crushed the uprising (1340). After his death the count of Flanders claimed Brabant, but was appeased by the gift of Antwerp. In 1404, however, all Brabant went over to Flanders. In 1430 it belonged to Burgundy, and from 1440 was ruled by the Austrian House. Brabant enjoyed a constitution known as the *Blyde Inkomet* or *La Joyeuse Entrée* — that is, “the Joyous Entrance” — because it was granted by John III in 1356 at the time when his daughter Joanna married Wenzel of Luxemburg and the two entered Brussels in state as prince and princess. It was this Joanna who, after Wenzel’s death in 1383, found support from Burgundy in resisting the demands of the cities. In 1389 duchess Joanna mortgaged certain of these cities to Philip of Burgundy. The next year she revoked the deed which gave Brabant to Luxemburg and made the duke and duchess of Burgundy her heirs. This deed was of the utmost importance to the destiny of the whole Netherlands.

LUXEMBURG AND LIÈGE

Luxemburg was originally called Ardenne, but the chief city gradually displaced the name of the county. It became a duchy in 1354 and kept its independence till 1451, when Philip of Burgundy seized it. It later fell into the hands of Austria; from 1659 its cities were frequently under French sway. Its possession was matter for frequent dispute as late as the nineteenth century, when a large part of it was incorporated in the Belgian kingdom, the rest being established as a neutral grand duchy under the protection of the crown of Holland.

Liège was chosen in 720 as the seat of the bishops of Tongres. In the tenth century it became the bishopric of Liège. Four centuries later, its bishops were made princes of the empire. They were usually despotic and the citizens were frequently wrought to bloody revolt, obtaining a substantial recognition of their rights only after a bitter civil war ended in June, 1315, by the Peace of Fexhe, a treaty of the greatest importance in the history of human liberties, and long taken as a model for the abridgement of the power of rulers and the precise limitations of all public functions and functionaries.¹

FLANDERS: ITS EARLY HISTORY

Flanders, to-day, has lost its national identity and simply makes up two of the provinces of the minor kingdom of Belgium. But for centuries it was in the very forefront of European politics and commerce, far overshadowing the England of that day, and rivalling France and the empire. Compared with Ghent, London was a third-rate town. England was then merely an agricultural district of small population, furnishing raw material for the great industries of the Flemings, whose trade was the envy of the world, whose rich men and women provoked the jealousy of kings and queens, and whose art, music, and letters glittered over the whole continent.

refused to observe them the country was absolved from all obedience to him so long as he persisted in this resistance. The charter of Cortenberg strongly resembles the Peace of Fexhe, to which it is anterior by only four years. At the same time it is distinguished from it by numerous traits. In the first place it was not, like that peace, the consequence of civil war; it is a concession granted by a prince as the result of a contract, or, better, of a concordat. Its object is not to cut short a long quarrel on the exercise of sovereignty itself. It confines itself to simply stipulating the conditions of that exercise. — PIRENNE.¹]

[¹ Pirenne¹ credits the equalitarian constitution of Liège to the absence of predominant trades, rather than to any special Walloon democratic sentiment “as alleged by some historians.”]

[864-1168 A.D.]

Its old counts were wont to trace their line back to Priam of Troy; but the first ruler of certain character is Baldwin Forester, the Iron Arm, who eloped with a daughter of Charles the Bald, and was finally acknowledged by his father-in-law as governor of the countship of Flanders, from 864 A.D. to his death in 378. His son was Baldwin the Bald, who strove against the Normans, and married the daughter of Alfred the Great of England. His son Arnold (918-989) had difficulties with both the Normans and the emperor Otto I. In this reign the first weavers and fullers of Ghent were established. His son Baldwin IV, the Comely Beard, defeated both the king of France and the emperor Henry II, adding to his realm Valenciennes, Walcheren, and the islands of Zealand. His son, Baldwin V (1036-1067) the Debonair, was also a remarkable ruler. His daughter Matilda was the wife of William the Conqueror; his son married the countess of Hainault and brought it into the control of Flanders; while another son, Robert the Frisian, was by marriage the ruler of the countship of Holland and Friesland. But the sons quarrelled, and a long and bitter feud broke out. Robert II (1093-1119) was a crusader and earned the name of "the Lance and Sword of Christendom." His death and the death of his son Baldwin VII "with the Axe" ended the old line of Flemish counts in 1119.

The power fell to Charles the Good, of Denmark; he was the son of King Canute, who had married the daughter of Robert the Frisian. Charles was assassinated by the merchants, because he threw open all the granaries at Bruges during a famine in 1127, thus breaking their monopoly. The people rose in horror, besieged the wealthy conspirators in Bruges, and taking them at length, tortured them to death. Charles left no heir, and six claimants demanded the throne. In the words of Moke,^j "this contest offers the most precious picture of the political condition of the country."

The king of France proposed for the throne, William of Normandy. The nobility elected him at once. The people were promised the abolition of certain taxes if they would consent. They did so, but William, after making most solemn promises, hastened to violate the independence of the bourgeois, whom his feudal training had unfitted him to understand. His exactions provoked risings in various cities, whose leaders chose for Count, Thierry or Theodoric of Alsace, the nearest relative of Charles the Good. After some fighting he was besieged in Alost, by William, who was, however, killed in a skirmish. Thierry was acknowledged in 1128 and was a liberal ruler as well as a crusader. His son's war with Floris III of Holland, whom he captured in 1157, has already been described, in the previous chapter. His rule is important in the history of Belgium on account of the development of the communes.^a

In the words of Baron Kervijn van Lettenhove, "The era of communes begins July 27th, 1128, and ends November 27th, 1382. Nicaise Borluut opens it at the siege of Alost. Philip van Artevelde closes it on the battlefield of Roosebeke. This epoch, signalised by numerous triumphs and by efforts the most noble and persevering, is that wherein Flanders, marching by rapid strides along the path of social progress, presents to all the nations the inviolable refuge of industry and liberty."^k

RISE OF THE BELGIAN COMMUNES

The first urban agglomerations were, in the full force of the term, colonies of tradesmen and artisans, and the municipal constitutions were elaborated in the midst of a population of immigrants, met from all quarters and stran-

gers to one another. But these immigrants, if they were the ancestors of the bourgeoisie, were not the oldest inhabitants of the towns. The colonies of traders, in fact, did not come into existence on a virgin soil. They everywhere grouped themselves at the foot of the walls of a monastery, a castle, or an episcopal residence (*civitas, castrum, municipium*). The new arrivals found, at the place where they had come to settle, an older population, composed of serfs, of *ministeriales*, or of clerics.

Thus two groups of men were everywhere to be found in presence of one another, but without interpenetrating. It was only very slowly that the fusion was accomplished and that the trading colony, increasing from year to year, becoming always richer, more exuberant, and more vigorous, finally absorbed all the foreign elements and imposed its law and institutions on the whole of the town. It took three hundred years to arrive at this. The evolution was accomplished only in the thirteenth century.



FLEMISH WARRIOR OF THE FOURTEENTH CENTURY

(From an old statue)

The Roman municipality had not perished with the empire of the west; it was still to be found during the ninth, the tenth, and the eleventh centuries in the cities of southern Gaul. But in Belgium, as in the other parts of northern Gaul, its influence scarcely made itself felt: here the communal privileges derived their origin from the ancient Germanic freedom combined with the *gild* or fraternal association of Scandinavia.

Under the empire of the Germanic institutions maintained by Charlemagne, the towns were subject to the power of the courts and governed as simple cantons. Now the freemen of the cantons had the right to join the courts in pronouncing judgments in criminal matters and decrees in affairs of civil and local interest. In 803 Charlemagne, desiring to regulate the exercise of this right which had become burdensome, organised the institution of the *scabini* (*schepenen* or sheriffs); they were to be chosen by courts and it required at least seven to pass a decree. After the triumph of feudalism the office of sheriff became in the country districts generally that of a simple official appointed by the seigneurs. In localities important by reason of their population and their wealth, this cantonal magistracy became the patrimony of the principal families, who preserved and extended their ancient jurisdiction; in the cities, notably in Brussels and Louvain, these privileged families took the generic name of *lignages*. This patrician and land-owning bourgeoisie, whose privilege was hereditarily transmitted, was a first step towards the commune.

The true commune, the glory of Belgium, was constituted during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries by the alliance of artisans, organised in guilds or fraternities, with the bourgeoisie properly so called.

There are, then, two periods in the history of the communes; the first witnessed the growth of a single class, the bourgeoisie proper; whilst in the course of the second a part of the power and the privilege became the conquest of the people. The lower classes would no longer content themselves with the sheriff's jurisdiction, which emanated from the privileged bourgeoisie. In order to defend their private rights they instituted a magistracy composed of *jurés* or *consaux*. In the towns where German or Flemish was spoken the two chiefs of the *jurés*, annually chosen by them, took the title of masters of the citizens or the city (*burgermeister*). The sheriff's jurisdiction, which belongs to the first period, offered civil guarantees; in the second

epoch (thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth centuries), the jurisdiction of the trades, combined with the civil jurisdiction, consecrated political rights.

In Belgium communal emancipation was less dramatic than in France, although more fruitful in its results. Since the eleventh century charters of franchise, liberty, immunity, friendship, *bourgage*, and the like had paved the way for charters of commune or *poorteryen*, for towns "with laws" (*à lois*) or gilded (*gildæ*). There was, as a rule, no necessity for the towns of Flanders to have recourse to arms to win for themselves free sheriffs and the other privileges attached to the commune. For, far from following the example of the German emperors and the kings of France, the counts of Flanders favoured communal emancipation; not only did they know how to respect the acquired rights of their subjects, but, more than this, they spontaneously accorded liberties to the towns which were still without them.

In Flanders, the laws of each city, granted or confirmed by the count, were called *keuren*. It would, however, be a mistake to regard these *keuren* as being all charters of communes, or charters instituting communes. "The *keure*," says Warnkönig,¹ "proceeded both from the territorial seigneur and the inhabitants; thus that which formed the fundamental law of a town was the common work of the count and the sheriffs who represented it. In the early days it was generally granted by the seigneur and accepted tacitly, or even under oath, by the citizens. But, in imitation of the count, the sheriffs and town councillors also formed *keuren* for their subordinates, so that this name was soon extended to every police ordinance, every municipal decree."

Several precious and characteristic rights were connected with the commune. The inhabitants enrolled in the registers of the privileged town were authorised to form a confederation; and all engaged by an oath to defend their own interests as well as those of the prince. The members of the commune possessed a college of sheriffs with jurisdiction, a common treasury and a town hall, called in several localities the house of peace (*maison de paix*); besides this they might employ a special seal and own a belfry, a lofty tower enclosing a sonorous bell. The belfry of Ghent was erected in 1183; that of Tournay was begun in 1190, that of Bruges in 1291. It was by the sound of the belfry bell that the inhabitants were summoned to a deliberative assembly. Here decisions were made on all affairs outside the province of the administration; here also the accounts of the towns were discussed. As to the cities which had no belfry, they could only convoke the people by *hui et cri*, or to the sound of the horn or trumpet.

The towns also enjoyed certain financial privileges; amongst these must be distinguished the market right, either of a simple weekly market, which was held on a fixed day of the week, or of fairs, or annual markets, which lasted for one or several weeks and served foreign merchants as a meeting place; these fairs were generally held in vast buildings called guild halls (*Gild-hallen*). From the twelfth century the citizens of most of the communes were declared exempt from the judicial combat and the tests by fire.

In exchange for these privileges certain charges were laid on the *bourgeoisies*; but most of those obligations resembled those in force in our own day: such were the impositions known by the name of *tailles* or excise, military service, etc. As to the dues which owed their origin to the state of servitude, they had been for the most part suppressed in favour of the municipal communities; the humiliating prestations (such as the right of *morte-main*, or *meilleur cathel*) had become the portion of the rustics.¹

¹ The *meilleur cathel*, *cathel*, or *catheu* was the most valuable piece of furniture. Custom, founded on servitude, accorded it to the seigneur on the death of each of his vassals.

From reasons of policy the counts of Flanders tolerated, favoured, and sanctioned the communal laws derived from the guild. Always obliged to keep a watchful eye on the French suzerainty or to combat it, they needed to keep in good humour not only the great property owners of the towns, but also the industrial class, whose importance daily increased. The concessions granted by Philip of Alsace have justly won for him the surname of the Legislator of Flanders. He abolished in several places the *main-morte* and the odious right of "half-have";¹ he also freed the still servile populations of Alost and Courtrai.

The cities which possessed no guarantee against the encroachments of power received *keuren* or statutes; those which already enjoyed some privileges obtained fresh ones. Orchies, Damme, Biervliet, Dunkirk, Nieuport, Hulst, and the castellany of Bruges, henceforth called the free (*le Franc*), were successively raised to the rank of municipalities. The privileges enjoyed by more ancient towns such as Ghent, Bruges, St. Omer, Oudenarde, Grammont, were either confirmed or extended. The town of Aire became a model commune; the charter of friendship (*Lex amicitiae*), granted by Philip of Alsace in 1188, instituted a veritable evangelical community. This charter laid down that in the confederation called *l'amitié* there should always be twelve chosen judges, who were to engage by oath to make no distinction between a poor man and a rich one, between a noble and a villein, between a relative and a stranger. All the members of the confederacy promised to aid one another like brothers² in all that was useful and honest; if one committed any wrong against another by word or action the injured party would not take vengeance, by himself or through his followers,³ but he would lodge a complaint and the culprit would repair the wrong according to the arbitration of the twelve elected judges.

The enfranchisement of the towns and boroughs of Flanders continued during the thirteenth century. In 1281 Bruges received a new *keure* from Count Guy de Dampierre. Alost passed to the state of a commune in 1281, Douai in 1286, Valenciennes in 1291, Messines in 1293, Bailleul in 1295, Sluys in 1328, Roulers in 1377.^d

FLANDERS versus FRANCE

Having thus sketched the methods in which town liberties were evolved, we may take up again the course of political events, where we left them — at the reign of Thierry.

Thierry died in 1168, leaving a son, Philip of Alsace, who was a notable warrior and also a crusader. He is known as Flanders' greatest lawgiver, and he increased the liberties of the people, especially of Alost and Courtrai. But he had no children, and his brother-in-law Baldwin of Hainault succeeded

¹ The *main-morte*, in the sense in which it was understood in the Middle Ages, was the state of vassals attached to the soil in perpetuity, and denied the power of disposing of their property. "Half-have" was a special right of servitude which accorded to the counts of Flanders on the death of each male serf three deniers and the half of all his movable property. For a female serf this right was only one denier. Even the nobles and freemen were subjected to this exaction; on their death two Flanders marks were paid to the count, who claimed, in addition, the half of their property.

² Not only were the members called "guild brothers," but the employee was called the "younger brother" (*jongere broeder*) of his employer. Blok^b says that "the Flemish workmen of that time plainly enjoyed far better conditions than the Belgian workmen of to-day."

³ The reader is aware that the manners and customs of this period permitted every man to pursue his vengeance openly. Certain days of the week only were excepted, and this time of respite was called the Truce of God (*Treuga Dei*).

[1191-1294 A. D.]

in 1191. The French opposed him, and he was forced to yield various cities and a large part of Flanders to France. On his death in 1195 his son Baldwin IX became count, but later founded the Latin empire at Constantinople. His career and death in 1206 have been recounted in Volume VII, chapter 9. He left two young daughters at home and in his absence the government was given to his brother Philip. In 1214, at the famous battle of Bouvines, the French defeated the allied forces of England, the emperor, Holland, Brabant, and Flanders. In 1279, owing to the failure of heirs, Hainault passed to John of Avennes, son of Baldwin's daughter Margaret who had married Bosschaert of Avennes. Flanders passed to Guy de Dampierre, whose father Margaret had taken for her second husband after Bosschaert's death.^a

During the two centuries which elapsed between the death of Godfrey de Bouillon [1100] and the battle of Woeringen [1288], the Belgian provinces had taken on practically the form and the character in which they were to continue. Flanders, stripped of her Gallican seigneuries (the county of Artois), found herself restored to her natural limits. Brabant, enlarged by the conquest of Limburg, ruled from the Schelde to the right bank of the Maas. The other states which had been built up from the débris of the ancient duchy of Lorraine had consolidated their independence and established their frontiers. Thus was the provincial formation accomplished.

But the internal organisation was far from evidencing the same stability, and the period to follow was to be signalised by the struggle of the commons against all other powers. Warnings of the imminence of the danger had been already sounded; it was in the fourteenth century that the storm burst in all its fury. The spectacle of this age is the most remarkable in Belgian history: all the great cities preparing one after another to struggle and to reign; the populace bursting the chains of country and breaking the yoke of law; fearful convulsions, ruthless wars, irreparable losses: but, as well, magnificent examples of energy and patriotism; of heroic efforts followed sometimes by glorious success — the very sufferings of the country revealing the grandeur of the national character.

Flanders was the principal theatre of the strife during this epoch. The rulers of this beautiful province had lost their power at Bouvines. Since that fatal day France, who held them in her grasp, made them feel all the weight of the humiliating conditions of the Treaty of Melun, and reduced them to an obscure vassalage.

Personal considerations seem to have dictated to Dampierre a timid and peaceful policy. Poor in the midst of riches, he never neglected an opportunity to levy contributions upon his communes. — Yet the beginning of his reign had seemed happy enough: he had braved with impunity the emperors of Germany, in refusing them the homage for imperial Flanders; and he succeeded in establishing brilliantly some of his children — the duke of Brabant and the counts of Holland and Jülich [or Juliers] were his sons-in-law, and one of his sons occupied the bishopric of Liège. But, faithful to the hatred which reigned between his house and that of Avennes, he mortally offended the count of Hainault, his nephew, in supporting against him the revolted commune of Valenciennes (1292). Soon after this he won the dislike of the proud Philip the Fair — or rather he afforded a pretext for the latter's projects of spoliation — by engaging in marriage his daughter Philippine with the son of Edward I of England (1294). Upon his invitation, the count repaired with his daughter to the château of Corbeil, where the court of France was assembled. But he had scarcely arrived when with all his retinue he was arrested and carried off to the tower of the Louvre, where he was

kept in close captivity, the king accusing him of alliance with the enemies of France and holding him for judgment by his court of peers. It found him innocent; but upon liberating him the king refused to render up his daughter: she was retained as hostage, and some years after she succumbed, the victim of misfortune.

Guy de Dampierre was wise enough at first to hide his resentment; but when it was perceived that he was making preparations for war on pretext of defending the people of Valenciennes, who had ended by giving themselves up to him, a royal edict forbade the communes of Flanders to follow his banner (1296). In revenge, the count assembled all his allies at Grammont (December 25th); and to this rendezvous came Edward of England, the emperor Adolphus of Nassau, the archduke Albert of Austria, Duke John II of Brabant, the counts of Holland, Jülich, and Bar, who all united to march against France. Guy then sent to Philip the Fair to declare that he no longer recognised him as sovereign; the king on his side ordered the confiscation of Flanders (January, 1297).

The cities did not fancy being obliged to take up arms in Guy's quarrel. Already a septuagenarian, he was unable to lead his troops to battle, and he confided them to his eldest son, Robert of Béthune. The French king entered Flanders at the head of ten thousand cavalry and a numerous infantry. A number of Flemish gentlemen openly embraced "the party of the lilies"¹ as were denominated those who desired the king's domination. Moreover, the English monarch had arrived in Flanders with so small an army that he dared not remain in Bruges, whose inhabitants inclined towards France. Guy, now deserted by all his allies, consented finally to put himself at the king's mercy, together with his eldest sons, Robert and William, and fifty of his principal barons. Upon his arrival in Paris he and all his following were imprisoned by order of the inflexible monarch; and nothing that Charles, who had promised Guy his liberty, was able to do, sufficed to prevent his brother from breaking the promise given in his name.

Flanders was confiscated. Philip governed it through his officers, and in May, 1301, went to visit his conquest, accompanied by his wife, Joan of Navarre, who appeared offended at observing so much wealth among a commercial people. "I thought myself sole queen here," she remarked at Bruges, "but I find a thousand others round me." Everywhere the partisans of France received the sovereign with extravagant demonstrations of joy; but already the people began to feel that they no longer had a country, and to fear that they were destined to fall heir to the fate of "those French provinces whose inhabitants were treated as serfs." These bitter thoughts gave rise among the bourgeoisie of the large towns to a sombre attitude which developed shortly into direct menace. Discontent fermented; the reaction had begun: it burst forth at the first signal. A month after the king's departure defiance looked forth at Bruges.

The "Bruges Matins" (1302)

At first thirty heads of trades waited on the French governor, Châtillon, and complained that payment was not made for the works ordered by the king. The great lord, accustomed to the rights of *corvée* and purveyance, considered remonstrance insolent, and had them arrested. The people took up arms, and rescued them, to the great dismay of the rich, who declared

[¹ The Flemish called them the *Leljaerts*, and the popular or nationalist party opposed to them, the *Clauwaerts*.]

[1302 A.D.]

for the king's men. The affair was brought up before the parliament. Here was the parliament of Paris, sitting in judgment on Flanders, as just before it had done by the king of England.

The parliament decided that the heads of trades should go back to prison. Among these heads were two men beloved by the people, the deans of the butchers and of the weavers. The latter, Peter de Conync¹ was a poor and mean-looking man, small, and wanting an eye, but a man of capacity and a bold street orator. Inflaming the passions of the artisans by his eloquence, he hurried them out of Bruges, and made them massacre all the French in the neighbouring towns and castles. They then returned by night. Chains were stretched across the streets, "to prevent the French from running about the town"; each townsman undertook to steal the saddle and bridle of the horseman who lodged with him. On May 19, 1302, all the people began to beat their kettles; a butcher struck first, and the French were everywhere attacked and massacred.² The women were the most furiously active in flinging them out of the windows, or else they were taken to the shambles, where their throats were cut. The massacre lasted three days; twelve hundred cavaliers, and two thousand foot sergeants perished.^m

At once the greater part of Flanders raised the old standard of the lion. Lille and Ghent, with several fortified castles, alone remained in foreign hands.

Leaders were not lacking among the people. Peter de Conync and John Breydel, head men of the weavers and butchers, had directed the revolt of the Brugeois. The army which they gathered counted nearly sixty thousand men.

Robert of Artois, brother-in-law to the king of France, marched against them with apparently superior forces. He had nearly an equal number of foot; and his cavalry, composed of the cream of the French nobility, counted not less than ten thousand combatants. Upon arriving at Lille he was joined by the knights of Brabant and Hainault, the former led by Godfrey of Brabant, uncle to their duke, the latter by John the Merciless, count of Hainault. He set out at once for Courtrai, burning and ravaging all in his path.

The two armies met on the 11th of July, 1302. The Flemings awaited the enemy on the plain of Groeninghe, east of Courtrai. About them stretched the marshy prairies, crossed by brooks; in their rear flowed the Lys, preventing retreat; but they were determined to conquer or to die. The arrival of a body of militia from Namur and of a troop from Ghent commanded by Simon Borluut had redoubled their confidence.]

The Battle of the Spurs (1302)

These artisans, who had hardly ever seen service in the open field, perhaps would have been glad to retreat, but the attempt would have been too hazardous in a great plain, and in presence of so large a body of cavalry. They waited, therefore, bravely, every man with his *goeden Tag* ("good day to you"), or iron-shod stake planted in the ground before him. Their motto was a fine one: *Scilt und Vriendt*, "shield and friend." They wished to take the communion together, and had mass read to them; but as they

[¹ This name, like most Flemish names and indeed English and other names of this period, is variously spelt as Koenig, Koninck, Conync and Deconing.]

[² The early morning massacre, resembling the "Sicilian Vespers" of the year 1282 in which the French garrison was similarly butchered, has been called the "Bruges Matins."]

could not all receive the host, each, according to Villani,ⁿ stooped down, picked up some earth and put it in his mouth. The knights who were with them, in order to encourage them, sent away their horses; and whilst they thus made infantry of themselves they made knights of the heads of the trades. All knew that they had no mercy to expect. It was told that Châtillon brought with him casks full of ropes to strangle them. The queen, it was said, had laid her injunctions on the French that when they were killing the Flemish pigs they should not forget the Flemish sows.¹

The constable Raoul de Nesle proposed to turn the flank of the Flemings and cut them off from Courtrai, but the king's cousin, Robert of Artois, said rudely to him: "Are you afraid of these rabbits, or have you indeed some of their fur on you?" The constable, who had married a daughter of the count of Flanders, felt the insult, and answered proudly: "Sir, you will ride far ahead if you keep up with me!" So saying, he made a headlong charge followed by his knights, in the thick dust of a July day. Everyone followed him impetuously, each eager to be up with the front, and the hindmost pressing upon the foremost riders, who, when they came up near the Flemings, found in their way, what is to be found everywhere in a country so intersected by canals and ditches — a trench five fathoms wide. They fell into it in heaps, without the possibility of escaping up the sides, the trench being of the half-moon construction. The whole chivalry of France found its grave there, besides the chancellor [Peter Flotte], who, doubtless, had not reckoned on falling in such glorious company.

The Flemings killed the unhorsed cavaliers at their ease, leisurely selecting their victims in the trench. When the cuirasses resisted their blades, they despatched the knights with leaden or iron mallets. Among them there were numbers of working monks, who conscientiously wrought at this bloody job. One of these monks asserted that with his own hand he had killed forty cavaliers, and fourteen hundred foot soldiers; but it is plain he bragged too much. Four thousand gilt spurs (another account says seven hundred) were hung up in the cathedral of Courtrai, unlucky spoils that brought mischief on the town: eighty years afterwards, Charles VI saw these spurs and caused the inhabitants to be massacred.

This terrible defeat exterminated all the vanguard of France—that is to say, the majority of the great lords.^m The total number of slain was estimated at 20,000.

Last Years of Guy's Reign

After the battle the French garrisons in the neighbouring towns were only too glad to capitulate. After a few small engagements a peace was concluded in the spring of the following year, to be immediately confirmed. The king even allowed the old count Guy de Dampierre to emerge from the fortress where he had been detained, in order that he might assist in the peace negotiations; but the old man, after passing several months among his sons, re-entered his prison rather than betray the interests of Flanders. The quarrel was to be settled by force of arms.

Never had the Flemings taken so determined a stand, and never had their hopes been more firmly fixed. Unfortunately the old hatred between the houses of Dampierre and Avennes was not yet assuaged, and this was yet to cause fresh disasters.

¹ *Vasa vinaria portare restibus plena, ut plebeios strangularet. Ut apros quidem, hoc est viros, hastis, sed suos verutis confoderent, infesta admodum mulieribus, quas suos vocabat, ob fastum illum femineum visum a se Brugis.* — MEYER.^o

[1304-1315 A.D.]

The account of the war between Holland and Flanders (in which the first Flemish triumphs provoked a general uprising of the Hollanders and ended in defeats for the Flemish on sea and land) will be found in the next chapter.^a

At sea, on the 10th of August, 1304, Guy of Namur sustained a bloody defeat opposite Zieriksee. His fleet was destroyed, himself taken prisoner, and the coast left defenceless. Eight days later the land army gave battle to the French at Mons-en-Pévèle (between Douai and Orchies). It was commanded by Philip de Thiette (or Teano), a son of Guy de Dampierre. The enemy's cavalry, instead of accepting combat, attempted to wear out the Flemings by skirmishes, and succeeded in capturing the provision and baggage wagons. This accident forced the communes to quit the field of battle, and towards night the greater part left for Lille. William of Jülich had perished in this attack.

The king increased his forces and besieged Lille with a most formidable equipment. The terrified inhabitants promised to surrender, if help had not arrived, on the 1st of October; but, two days before, the reunited Flemings arrived before the place, and John of Namur, their leader, sent forth a defiance to the king. The whole country was in arms; the factories were closed, the cities deserted; and the troops had vowed to conquer or obtain an honourable peace. The king, spying upon their outposts, was struck with the number of their tents: "One would think," he exclaimed, "that it had been raining Flemings!" He charged the duke of Brabant and the count of Savoy to treat in his name with the leaders.

The Flemings demanded and obtained the restoration of all their former privileges, authority to fortify their cities, and the liberty of their prisoners; as well as the restitution of those portions of Flanders still occupied by the French. They consented to raise a fine of not more than 800,000 livres (the value of the currency had been considerably depreciated by Philip's alteration of the denominations), and to leave in the hands of the king until payment of that sum the cities of Lille and Douai (October 1st, 1304).

Thus the fatal war seemed to have ended; but the negotiations were prolonged during several months, and, before harmony was completely established, Guy de Dampierre died, a prisoner in the castle of Compiègne, March 7th, 1305.

ROBERT OF BÉTHUNE (1305-1328)

Robert of Béthune, eldest son of Guy de Dampierre, was still a prisoner in France when his father died, both having given themselves up to the king at the same time. Philip released him only after having obliged him to sign to new conditions, much more severe than those stipulated before Lille. These outrageous demands had for result the rekindling of the indignation of Flanders. The infuriated people even accused of treason the lords charged to negotiate with the king, and a part of the nobility came under the suspicion of the communes.¹ A temporary understanding concluded with France in 1309 was followed in 1315 by a fresh rupture; and Louis the Quarrelsome (*Hutin*), who had succeeded Philip the Fair, failed completely in an expedition directed towards Courtrai and Cassel.

Still the war dragged on; and the Flemings, whose successes brought no results, drifted into new discords. The citizens of Ghent ended by declaring in favour of peace, and refused to support the count. He was obliged, by

[¹ Blok ^a says that the Flemish counts were from this time little more than the lieutenants of the French monarch, claiming his aid against their own cities.]

reason of this defection, to sign the treaty concluded at Paris in 1320. Lille, Douai, and Orchies remained in the hands of Philip the Tall (*le Long*), the reigning monarch, and his daughter was wedded to the grandson of the Flemish prince.

The end of Robert's reign presents a bloody and mysterious spectacle, which history has not yet succeeded in explaining. His eldest son, Louis of Nevers, it seems, nourished a profound resentment against the court of France, while the younger allowed himself to drift into its service. The latter accused his brother of a parricidal plot, and the unhappy Louis, dragged from one prison to another, ended by dying in exile at Paris in 1328. A few months after, the old count's flame flickered out; he had attained the age of eighty-two.

LOUIS OF NEVERS AT WAR WITH THE PEOPLE

The longevity of the later sovereigns of Flanders had singularly contributed to weaken the government. Guy de Dampierre had achieved the throne at an advanced age, and Robert of Béthune was sixty-four at his succession. Both were infirm old men before ceasing to reign, and the energy of the people was greater than that of the ruler. Out of this grew the rapid propagation in certain parts of the country of a spirit of local independence and an animosity towards the higher classes. Since the battle of Courtrai a number of the nobles had lived shut up in their castles, avoiding participation in public affairs; while the tradespeople and the craftsmen ruled the towns. Ghent almost alone possessed a powerful aristocracy, composed of patrician families, which, with the support of the wealthy middle class, kept the people within bounds. At Bruges, on the contrary, the ranks of the wealthy were swelled by artisans and the lesser bourgeoisie. The death of Robert of Béthune rendered an outburst inevitable.

His grandson, Louis of Nevers, or as he is often called Louis of Crécy, was only eighteen years old and had been brought up in France, where he possessed the counties of Nevers and Rhétel. Scarcely was he invested with the county by Philip the Tall, his father-in-law (who had begun by imprisoning him in the Louvre until he renounced all pretension to Lille and Douai), when he presented the lordship of the port of Sluys to his great-uncle, John of Namur. Thereupon the Brugeois, all of whose vessels entered this port, indignant at being exposed to taxation by that prince, attacked the castle of Sluys, carried it, and imprisoned John himself. This riot was followed by two others. Louis, ignorant both of the country and of his own forces, thrice sold to the city a complete pardon, profiting by the intervals of tranquillity to retire to his county of Rhétel. Thither the contempt of the people followed him, and the factions thereafter recognised no further restraint.

The Communes Defeated at Cassel (August 28th, 1328)

In 1324 two corps of the army of the bourgeoisie departed from Bruges to attack the castles of the nobles of maritime Flanders. These latter prepared to defend themselves; but of the two places wherein they sought refuge (Ghistelles and Ardenbourg), the one was taken and the other rigorously blockaded. Shortly all the country as far as Dunkirk fell into the hands of the popular army, whose leader was an exile from Furnes, by name Nicholas Zannekin. The pillaging and burning of castles attested to the irritation of the victors; on the other hand, a number of bourgeois who fell

[1324-1335 A.D.]

into the clutches of Robert of Cassel, uncle to the young count, ended on the gallows. As in all civil war, the hatred was mutual and the violence equal.

Louis of Nevers then returned to Flanders; and, supported by the men of Ghent, he at first obtained some advantages over the troops of the people. But having marched upon Courtrai with a body of about four hundred cavalry to assure himself of that town, it was not long before he was attacked by five thousand Brugeois. Infuriated because, in self-defence, he had set fire to the suburbs, the inhabitants fell upon him, massacred a number of his nobles, took him prisoner and delivered him over to the Brugeois (June 22nd, 1325). These latter carried him off to their city and kept him captive there until the end of the year. They only released him when a legate of the holy see launched an interdict against Flanders, and when the men of Ghent, led by Hector Vilain, had been victorious in some slight encounters.

Louis demanded help of King Philip of Valois, complaining that he was count of Flanders in name only. As his vassal, the monarch owed him assistance: he raised an army, which was joined by the nobles of Flanders and of Hainault, and marched upon Cassel, where was found the principal body of the bourgeois militia, under the command of Zannekin. Twelve thousand artisans, or peasants, formed these troops, which had been seasoned to war by the struggles of preceding years.

Far from refusing to give battle, they awaited the French, and, when these had arrived at the foot of the Mountain of Cassel, the intrepid Zannekin fell upon their camp. The attack was so sudden and so impetuous that the king was nearly captured and his army was thrown at first into the greatest disorder; but inferiority of numbers prevented the Flemings from following up their advantage. They soon found themselves surrounded on all sides; and after fighting with a courage amounting almost to frenzy, they all perished — not one among them endeavouring to escape.

This defeat discouraged the people. The cities which had taken part in the war surrendered. Heavy penalties were imposed upon them; and Louis, as terrible in his vengeance as he had been weak in his government, executed the leaders of the vanquished together with several hundreds of those who had fought under their banners. This bloody reaction led, if not to tranquillity, at least to the end of the civil war.

Unfortunately, the Flemish provinces were dragged anew into a European war (1335). The English monarch, Edward III, had already claimed the crown of France, but his pretensions had been set aside and Philip of Valois put upon the throne. Edward finally resolved to attack his enemy upon the continent; and he sought the support of the Belgian princes. But the count of Flanders evidenced so great a devotion for Philip and for France that it seemed impossible to alienate him from his lord.

Disputes having arisen between the sailors of the two countries, these served Edward as a pretext to interdict the exportation from England of the wool necessary to the drapers of Flanders in the manufacture of their cloths. The Flemish cities thus saw their principal industries threatened, and alarm became general. Persuaded by their entreaties, Louis made advances for the re-establishment of trade; Edward responded by an offer of a close alliance on condition that he should abandon France. Trapped thus between the interests of his subjects and his own political inclinations, the count could not bring himself to change sides. He looked upon himself always as a subject of Philip of Valois; and, far from being willing to abandon him, he would not even consent to hold a neutral position between the two kings. Commerce thus remained at a standstill, factories were closed, and

[1335-1340 A.D.]

a large part of the population found itself without bread. When matters were at their worst, Louis assembled his vassals "in parliament" to consult as to what should be done for the people; but the only remedy was to treat with England, and that Louis would not allow mentioned. He even went so far, some time afterwards, as to have arrested and beheaded Sohier le Courtroisin, sire de Tronchiennes, who had proposed the opening of negotiations with Edward. The assembly dissolved without having been able to come to a conclusion.

The English, however, disembarked on the island of Cadsand and cut to pieces the troops of the seigneurs who guarded the coast (this in November). Thereupon the men of Ghent began to murmur openly, and Jacob van Artevelde,¹ grandson of Sohier and one of the wisest among the leaders of the bourgeoisie, put himself at the head of the people and demanded the absolute neutrality of Flanders.

VAN ARTEVELDE APPEARS

The efforts of the count to overturn the national resolution proved useless. Artevelde, nominated Captain of Ghent, soon drew over the other cities to his party; and, displaying as much capacity as vigour, he everywhere checked the advances of the prince and of the partisans of France.

In vain did Philip of Valois send troops; in vain did he bribe the Flemings with offers of reimbursement for their losses through extended commercial privileges with France. They braved his soldiers, they scorned his offers; and Louis, urged thereto by his subjects, himself signed a provisory treaty with England. After this, the count might seek in vain to re-establish his influence over his subjects; everywhere he found the bourgeoisie intractable; at times, menacing. The Brugeois even attempted to take him prisoner at Dixmude, and he had scarcely time to flee to St. Omer.

The Flemings were beginning to wake up. It was understood that force alone could lead to recognition of the rights of Flanders; and negotiations were opened with Edward, who was then at Antwerp. These negotiations were not restricted to an alliance with England: the first and most remarkable treaty was concluded with John III, duke of Brabant, an ally of the English king. It was a confederation between Flanders and Brabant founded upon the common interests of the two states, and having for object their re-union into a single body. The greatest solemnity was observed in drawing up this act of alliance signed by seven cities and forty seigneurs.

It proved more difficult to force upon the Flemings the alliance with Edward, half of the nation raising scruples against taking up arms against France. They had vowed fidelity to the king, and even the pope had imposed upon them the fulfilment of this promise — relying upon Philip's vow to undertake a new crusade. To conquer their repugnance, Van Artevelde made Edward take the title of king of France,² he having, as we have seen, a certain right to it. Then the people hesitated no longer. Sixty thousand foot began action in the spring (1340), forced the French out of Hainault,

[¹ He was a man of good family, his father had been sheriff and he was himself a wealthy member of the clothmakers' guild. Froissart calls him a brewer; the fact being that he went to the brewers' guild later.]

[² Pirenne points out that in 1328 William de Deken, burgomaster of Bruges, anticipating Artevelde, had already offered to recognise Edward III as king of France if he would lend support to the popular party. He thinks equally local motives must have dictated the later English alliances of Flemish cities under Artevelde. He explains Artevelde's motive in alliance as a bold stroke to secure for Ghent a supremacy over Flanders, as a little later Bern won the predominance over the other Swiss cantons.]

[1340-1345 A.D.]

and at once returned to protect their coasts, threatened by the enemy's fleet. Soon afterwards this fleet attacked that of England. The English prince, who had accepted combat with inferior forces, owed his victory in part to the assistance of the Flemish marines. The French navy was destroyed, and Edward entered triumphant into the port of Sluys on the 24th of June, 1340.

The confederates having immediately undertaken the siege of Tournay, which was long protracted by the vigorous resistance of the inhabitants and the garrison, Philip sent his sister, Joan of Valois, to negotiate a truce; and she concluded it abruptly in the month of September. The conditions of this truce were advantageous to the Flemings. Philip proclaimed pardon for the past and remitted all sums due since previous treaties, then representing more than thirty millions. The original deeds were delivered to Jacob van Artevelde, who destroyed them publicly amid cries of joy from the crowd.

The remainder of this famous man's career offers a picture perhaps less brilliant, though not less remarkable. After having conquered for his country a glorious and firm position, the captain attempted to consolidate the popular government. The three principal cities, Ghent, Bruges, and Ypres, exercised the sovereignty in the name of the country. The trades dominated in the last two and openly supported Artevelde; but he met with more opposition in his own district, where the wealthy class exercised a powerful influence. Nearly overthrown by this class, he was only saved by the devotion of the people, who took up arms for him.

Following this revolution he organised upon a new basis the magistracy of Ghent, giving the preponderance of power to the guilds over the wealthy citizens. His authority then seemed without limit; but it was merely that of the head of a party. He boasted of ruling all by persuasion; nevertheless, he was not able to abstain from the use of arms, nor to enchain the violence of popular passions. Each trade formed an independent body in the city, as each city formed an independent body in the country. At Bruges the weavers massacred the brokers; in West Flanders the inhabitants of Ypres plundered Poperinghe. At Ghent the weavers and the fullers gave combat upon the occasion, and in the place of the Friday marketing five hundred corpses were left on the scene.

The captain, upon encountering these obstacles, experienced that secret irritation which tends to push beyond their real end most authors of political commotions. Weary of the continual struggle with Count Louis, whose authority, however despised, was still legal, he ended by attempting to dethrone him and to put a son of Edward in his place. This proceeding, however, was repugnant to the moral sense of the bourgeoisie of Ghent. They could not bring themselves to consent to it until it became obvious that the count absolutely refused to detach himself from the French cause. A sovereign was necessary to the country and Artevelde saw no other alternative than to propose to the people this change of princes. It proved his death. The idea of substituting a foreign family for the descendants of the old counts offended even the most discontented. Artevelde's enemies profited by it to accuse him of treason. A journey of some days' duration to Bruges and to Ypres prevented his perceiving the storm gathering against him at Ghent.^j

The account of Artevelde's personality and of his death is most vividly given by Sir John Froissart, who was his contemporary and also a native of the Low Countries; it must be remembered, however, that Froissart was an

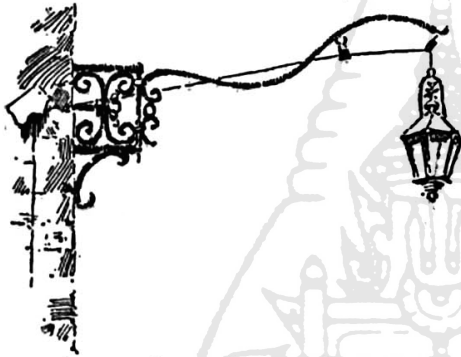
aristocrat thoroughly out of sympathy with the creed and partisans of this shrewd burgher whom his people had been wont to call *le saige homme*.^a

FROISSART'S ACCOUNT OF ARTEVELDE AND HIS DEATH

There was in Ghent a man that had formerly been a brewer of metheglin, called Jacob van Artevelde, who had gained so much popular favour and power over the Flemings that everything was done according to his will. He commanded in all Flanders, from one end to the other, with such authority that no one dared to contradict his orders. Whenever he went out into the city of Ghent, he was attended by three or four score armed men on foot, among whom were two or three that were in his secrets; if he met any man whom he hated or suspected, he was instantly killed; for he had ordered those who were in his confidence to remark whenever he should make a particular sign on meeting any person, and to murder him directly without fail, or waiting further orders, of whatever rank he might be. This

happened very frequently; so that many principal men were killed; and he was so dreaded that no one dared to speak against his actions, or scarce to contradict him, but all were forced to entertain him handsomely.

He had also in every town and castlewick through Flanders, sergeants and soldiers in his pay, to execute his orders, and serve him as spies, to find out if any were inclined to rebel against him, and to give him information. The instant he knew of any such being in a town, he was banished or killed without



ANCIENT STREET LAMP OF ANTWERP

delay, and none were so great as to be exempted, for so early did he take such measures to guard himself. At the same time he banished all the most powerful knights and esquires from Flanders, and such citizens from the principal towns as he thought were in the least favourable to the count, seized one-half of their rents, giving the other moiety for the dower of their wives and support of their children.

To speak the truth, there never was in Flanders, or in any other country, count, duke, or prince who had such perfect command as Jacob van Artevelde.

When, on his return, he came to Ghent, about mid-day [May 2nd, 1345], the townsmen, who were informed of the hour he was expected, had assembled in the street that he was to pass through; as soon as they saw him, they began to murmur, and put their heads close together, saying, "Here comes one who is too much the master, and wants to order in Flanders according to his will and pleasure, which must not be longer borne." With this they had also spread a rumour through the town that Jacob van Artevelde had collected all the revenues of Flanders, for nine years and more; that he had usurped the government without rendering an account, for he did not allow any of the rents to pass to the count of Flanders, but kept them securely to maintain his own state, and had, during the time above mentioned, received all fines and forfeitures: of this great treasure he had sent part into England. This information inflamed those of Ghent with rage; and, as he

[1345 A.D.]

was riding up the streets, he perceived that there was something in agitation against him; for those who were wont to salute him very respectfully now turned their backs, and went into their houses. He began, therefore, to suspect all was not as usual; and as soon as he had dismounted, and entered his hotel, he ordered the doors and windows to be shut and fastened.

Scarcely had his servants done this, when the street was filled from one end to the other with all sorts of people, but especially by the lowest of the mechanics. His mansion was surrounded on every side, attacked and broken into by force. Those within did all they could to defend it, and killed and wounded many; but at last they could not hold out against such vigorous attacks, for three parts of the town were there. When Jacob van Artevelde saw what efforts were making, and how hardly he was pushed, he came to a window, and, with his head uncovered, began to use humble and fine language, saying:

"My good people, what aileth you? Why are you so enraged against me? By what means can I have incurred your displeasure? Tell me, and I will conform myself entirely to your wills." Those who had heard him made answer, as with one voice, "We want to have an account of the great treasures you have made away with, without any title of reason."

Artevelde replied in a soft tone: "Gentlemen, be assured that I have never taken anything from the treasures of Flanders; and if you will return quietly to your homes, and come here to-morrow morning, I will be provided to give so good an account of them, that you must reasonably be satisfied." But they cried out, "No, no, we must have it directly, you shall not thus escape from us: for we know that you have emptied the treasury, and sent it to England,¹ without our knowledge: you therefore shall suffer death."

When he heard this, he clasped his hands together, began to weep bitterly, and said: "Gentlemen, such as I am, you yourselves have made me: you formerly swore you would protect me against all the world; and now, without any reason, you want to murder me. You are certainly masters to do it, if you please; for I am but one man against you all. Think better of it, for the love of God: recollect former times, and consider how many favours and kindnesses I have conferred upon you. You wish to give me a sorry recompense for all the generous deeds you have experienced at my hands. You are not ignorant that, when commerce was dead in this country, it was I who restored it. I afterwards governed you in so peaceable a manner that under my administration you had all things according to your wishes — corn, oats, riches, and all sorts of merchandise which have made you so wealthy." They began to bawl out, "Come down, and do not preach to us from such a height; for we will have an account and statement of the great treasures of Flanders, which you have governed too long without rendering any account; and it is not proper for an officer to receive the rents of a lord, or of a country, without accounting for them."

When Jacob van Artevelde saw that he could not appease or calm them, he shut the window, and intended getting out of his house the back way, to take shelter in a church adjoining; but his hotel was already broke into on that side, and upwards of four hundred were there calling out for him. At last he was seized by them, and slain without mercy; his death-stroke was given him by a saddler, called Thomas Denys. In this manner did Jacob van Artevelde end his days, who in his time had been complete master of Flanders. Poor men first raised him, and wicked men slew him.^p

[¹ Blok,^h who calls Artevelde "the greatest Fleming of all times," says that this charge was "absurd."]

KERVIJN DE LETTENHOVE'S ESTIMATE OF VAN ARTEVELDE

The power of Jacob van Artevelde lasted less than ten years, and yet in our memories it seems to fill the history of the Middle Ages: this is because his genius stirred more ideas, excited more hopes, conceived more profound designs than the men who had preceded him during several centuries. After having dared to dream of the reconciliation of Europe by peace and liberty; after contriving to unite in a single confederation all the neighbouring provinces of Flanders, he died at last, struck down by the arms he had endeavoured to break, by the resentment of the private hatreds and jealousies he had attempted to stifle in the unity of the development of human civilisation. He had thought that one lever was sufficient to raise the world, but the mission he had imposed on himself did not conduct him to triumph; he is but its martyr.

If Jacob van Artevelde had lived a few years longer, if he had been able by his own counsels to re-establish on a national basis the authority of the young prince who was born at Male, what might not have been his influence on the vast movement which broke out under King John? Did not a remarkable symptom of a pacific and industrial union already exist in the manifestation of those common sympathies for the traditions of the reign of Louis IX?

England, at least, preserved some traces of the bonds which existed between one of her princes and "the wise citizen of Ghent." Edward III, on becoming his ally, had subjected his own greatness and renown to the authority of van Artevelde's prudence.¹ It is to the period of Jacob van Artevelde that the foundation of the constitutional rule belongs, as it exists to this day in England, with the triple direction of the government by king, peers, and commons.

The voice of Artevelde had also resounded beyond the Alps, as far as the banks of the Tiber, which he had once visited when still young and unknown; the echo of the ruins of Rome answered to that of his tomb. A poet, who, in the silence of the nights, held sublime dialogues with the heroes of ancient times, had traversed all Flanders, enriched by the industry of her weavers, and the city of Ghent, so proud of being able to attribute its origin and its name to the conquests of Cæsar. Returning to his country and struck with shame at sight of the ancient queen of the world humiliated and enslaved, he welcomed with joy those accents of liberty which mounted from the banks of the Schelde to the summit of the Capitol, where his brow had been encircled with the laurel of Virgil.

"Hear this sound which comes to us from the West; the future is still veiled by clouds. Flanders, who seems never to cease fighting, allies herself with the peoples of England and Germany; from the Alps to the ocean all is in agitation. Ah, that we might find here the signal of our deliverance! Italy, unhappy country, doomed to eternal sorrows, once it was thou alone who disturbed the peace of the nations with thine arms, and behold thou art silent to-day while the fate of the universe is decided."

Petrarch remembered Jacob van Artevelde when he addressed his famous "admonitory epistle concerning the struggle for liberty" to Cola di Rienzi.

[¹ It is said that Artevelde first suggested the quartering of the lilies of France in the English king's arms; and that Edward III addressed him as *cher compère* and *grand ami*. In spite of this royal favour, however, Artevelde worked chiefly for the neutrality and independence of his country.]

[1346-1348 A.D.]

After Artevelde's death the blood-stained robe of Cæsar stirred the spirit of the people more forcibly than all the splendour of his genius. Scarcely had the men of Ghent learned that Louis of Nevers, congratulating himself on the success of the most odious treason, was sending his knights to occupy Hulst and Axe¹, when they ran to arms to repel him. Axel was at once taken by assault and Hulst shared the same fate. The militia of Ghent, supported by those of Bruges and Ypres, resolved to pursue their expedition in the direction of Dendermonde. Their number and courage, the enthusiasm which animated them, their ardour to avenge the death of Jacob van Artevelde on the men whom they accused of having prepared it, rendered their power irresistible. The count of Flanders hastened to flee to France, whilst the duke of Brabant hurried to the camp of the Flemish communes to renew his oaths of alliance and interpose his mediation.^k

THE REIGN OF LOUIS OF MALE (1346-1384)

Dendermonde was pillaged by the people of Ghent in punishment for having manufactured certain kinds of cloth, the monopoly of which Ghent reserved to itself. Thus the communes arrogated to themselves even that right of vengeance and of private quarrel which the nobles had lost little by little through the influence of civilisation. The chaotic condition of Flanders served only to gain for her the hostility of the neighbouring princes; in her state of anarchy the death of Count Louis, who survived only a short time Jacob van Artevelde, was perhaps a blessing. Faithful always to France, he had gone to join Philip's army, threatened anew by Edward. He found death (1346) on the bloody field of Crécy, whence the king of England went his way victorious.

He had left a son, bearing the name of his father, and only sixteen years of age. This young prince was then in France, where he had won his spurs against the English at Crécy; but Flanders did not hesitate to recognise him as her sovereign. The three principal cities, however, retained the direction of public affairs during his minority. They vigorously preserved their union with the king of England, and a project was formed to marry the count to the daughter of Edward. But the young prince obstinately refused to ally himself with the family of his father's enemy. In fear of being constrained thereto he escaped from Flanders directly after the betrothal ceremonies, and fled into France. Shortly afterwards he married Margaret of Brabant, second daughter of Duke John III, who had abandoned Edward to ally himself with France.

But the Flemings, irritated at this marriage, sustained only the more ardently the cause of the English king. They ravaged the frontiers of Artois, and a great body of the militia of Ghent, commanded by Captain Gilles de Rypergherste, a weaver, completely put to rout the French troops sent to besiege Cassel. Meanwhile Edward blockaded the city of Calais, to whose surrender he attached the greatest importance; Philip of Valois collected an army to march against him, but was obliged to retreat, having accomplished nothing. A treaty between the two kings suspended hostilities for a time.

The Brugeois began to be divided, and the wealthy classes to grow weary of the domination of the artisans. Count Louis was wise enough to profit by these divisions to attach the town to his party. He had been born near Bruges (in the castle of Male, whence his surname), and he promised to take up his residence there. Differences thus came up among the confederates, and all maritime Flanders having embraced the cause of the count, Ghent and Ypres were obliged to join him (1348). Louis, with an address and

firmness beyond his years, seized every occasion to re-establish the power weakened in previous reigns. He made himself feared without shedding over much blood, and had the wisdom to adopt a policy conformable to the needs of the country, declaring himself neutral between France and England.

His resolution was manifested upon the death of Philip of Valois (1351), when he refused to do homage to King John unless he restored to the Flemings those cities lost to them during long years. Negotiations begun with this end in view led to no result. Charles the Wise, who succeeded to the throne of France, comprehended the advisability of rendering justice to a people and to a prince whose resentments had not decreased with time. Lille, Douai, Béthune, Hesdin, Orchies, and other less important places were ceded to the count in 1369; and for this price his only daughter Margaret became the wife of Philip of Burgundy, one of the king's brothers. The duke of Brabant, Louis' brother-in-law, with whom he had had sharp disputes followed by open war, was forced in 1357 to cede to him Antwerp.

But in the midst of prosperity the count was poor. It was the state of most of the princes of that period: the greater part of their revenues accrued from taxes and dues. They thus fell into dependence on the communes, and therein lay perhaps the principal cause of the weakness of their government. Twice Louis went bankrupt, and the people paid his debts. A third demand for subsidies brought forth murmurs from the citizens of Ghent. The "White Caps" (such was the name they went by) let slip no occasion to foment strife; and the count having granted permission to the town of Bruges to open up a canal to the Lys, they attacked the workmen and dispersed them. All effort on the part of the influential middle classes to prevent a civil war proved futile.

Attacked upon all sides the nobles took up arms in their own defence; but their numbers proved too small to hold the country and the majority of them sought refuge in the city of Oudenarde, which became their headquarters. Besieged there by sixty thousand soldiers of the communes, they defended themselves vigorously until the duke of Burgundy came to interfere between the count and the people. A temporary reconciliation was effected, but the white caps having taken Oudenarde by surprise after the departure of the nobles, the quarrel broke out anew. Bruges thereupon withdrew from the alliance with Ghent and opened its gates to Louis of Male, though not without internal dissension and new massacres (1380).

Over the whole country, combat, attack, and siege shed patriotic blood. In the meanwhile the citizens of Ghent, whose animosity bade fair to eternalise the war, were beginning to pay dearly for the blood they had caused to flow; they lost a battle at Nevele (1381), and were abandoned by all the other communes. The count's soldiers succeeded in blockading the city in the midst of a conquered province: soon provisions gave out; indecision and discouragement crept in among the hitherto haughty population.

PHILIP VAN ARTEVELDE CHOSEN AS LEADER (1381)

It was then that the leaders offered the command to Philip van Artevelde, son of him whose name was still dear to Flanders. But the new captain, a stranger to the profession of arms and finding affairs in such a desperate state, seemed himself overcome with terror by the fate which menaced the inhabitants. He counselled them to surrender to the count and went himself to plead for them, consenting to every sacrifice on condition that no blood should be shed.

[1381-1382 A.D.]

Louis demanded that the citizens should surrender to him unconditionally and that they should come to him outside their walls, barefoot and with cords around their necks.

Philip van Artevelde, although educated to inaction, had from the first day of his command proved his character to be not without vigour: the extremity in which he found himself gave birth to an unaccustomed courage and energy. He returned to Ghent, assembled the people, "of whom a large part had no longer any bread," and having reported the result of the conference to the count he interrupted the wailings of the crowd by exhorting them to choose between death, submission, and a desperate attack; their choice was soon determined upon, their pride and resentment blinding them to the inferiority of their numbers. Of all Ghent's valiant defenders, five thousand alone remained; these set out with the young leader to attack Louis of Male within the walls of Bruges; the citizens closed the gates, resolved to burn their city and bury themselves in its ruins, if their comrades failed of victory.

It was on the 3rd of May, during the procession of the Eucharist at Bruges, at which the count and nearly all his nobles assisted, that the last army of Ghent approached the rival city.

Louis and his knights, transported with indignation at the news of the approach, hurried out of the city, followed by a number of the people, and precipitated themselves upon their adversaries. The latter, calm and resolute, easily sustained the shock of so confused and disorderly a multitude. All gave way before them, and after a short combat Artevelde entered triumphant into the gates of Bruges, where the smaller guilds came to join him. The fugitive count with difficulty found refuge in the house of a poor widow, and the next morning succeeded in escaping from the town.

THE BATTLE OF ROOSEBEKE, AND FALL OF THE GUILDS (1382)

For the moment this prodigious success seemed to have re-established the superiority of Ghent, and nearly all Flanders took up anew the cause of this powerful commune new-risen in all its might despite numerous reverses; but already a new storm was gathering in the distance. Louis, who had taken refuge in Paris, had found the young king, Charles VI, disposed to espouse his cause, and that very year the French army advanced along the Lys, led by the monarch himself. The leaders of Ghent marched to meet him with forty thousand men — all that the exhaustion of the city and the ill-will of a certain section of the country would permit him to gather. He camped at Roosebeke, near Roulers.

The two armies remained several days in their positions without giving battle, but Artevelde's impetuous character could not brook delay. On the 27th of November he left his trenches to attack the royal troops. The first shock gained him some advantage; the Breton infantry were repulsed and their banner fell into the hands of the Flemings. Soon, however, a body of cavalry attacked their rear, while fresh forces were brought into play in advance. After a furious battle, which lasted much longer than they could have foreseen, Artevelde and half of his forces perished before the French nobles,¹ and from that day the count's standard was raised anew in Bruges and throughout maritime Flanders.

[¹ "There is an important difference between the two great leaders from the race of Artevelde. But though the father perished miserably at the hands of a mob, while the son fell in honourable conflict against a foreign foe, the sympathy of posterity has gone out towards the father." — BLOK.^h]

[1382-1384 A.D.]

The war seemed ended, since the defeat at Roosebeke had dispersed the army of Ghent. But the indomitable courage of which that city had given so many proofs, did not desert her on this terrible occasion. Abandoned, defeated, without leaders and without resources, the tradesmen of Ghent still harboured no thought of submission. They gave the command of their troops to Francis Ackerman, a capable and intrepid leader, who held himself on the defensive until after the departure of the French army, and thereupon commenced hostilities against the defenders of the count. The winter passed in continued combats, whence those of Ghent reaped certain advantages. In the spring a large body of English disembarked at Calais and united with Ackerman to besiege Ypres, but Charles VI himself marched to its assistance. The besieged retired without combat and unpursued. The duke of Burgundy, who already regarded Flanders as his appanage, prevented the king from following up the war too eagerly, to the ruin of so rich a country.

The count of Flanders submitted with but indifferent grace to his humiliating position. A treaty for one year between England and Ghent was concluded, in spite of his efforts, in October, 1382; and he died a few months afterwards (January 9th, 1384), either from grief which hastened his end, or, as some historians say, from a mortal blow which he had received during an altercation with one of the French princes.

He was succeeded as count of Flanders, Artois, Nevers, and Rethel, by Philip of Burgundy, his son-in-law. The people were divided in the matter of acknowledging him, but after the murder of Ackerman, resistance ended and with it what is called "the heroic age of the guilds of Flanders."^a

With Louis of Male died in Flanders the house of Dampierre, which had governed the country for nearly a century, alternately persecuted by the kings of France and supported by them against the communes. Under this dynasty — whose reign had been signalised by so much commotion and so many vicissitudes — the authority of the count, undermined on the one hand by the jealousy of the sovereign, on the other by the encroachments of the people, had been so rapidly weakened that no tie remained firm enough to guarantee the unity of government, the submission of the cities, and the peace of the country. At this crisis Flanders had need, not of new liberties but of repose and order.

Philip of Burgundy [the son-in-law of Louis], with whom was to begin a new dynasty, was to have for life-work the creation of a more fixed order of things, the consolidation of a tottering throne, and the imposition of habits of obedience upon the almost entirely independent communes, whose pride — the growth of many victories — was not yet weakened by reverses; but it was scarcely to be hoped that either he or his descendants would succeed in re-establishing a firm government in a country where popular resistance had been so frequently victorious.

