

René Jean-Paul Dewil

# **The City of Ghent**

## **1290-1315**

Ghent in the fourteenth century

**Golden Spurs**

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## The Characters

### The Vresele family

Andrew Vresele	(1230-1280)	merchant
Joan de Backere	(1234-1285)	wife of Andrew, married 1256
Fulk Vresele	(1256-1315)	son of Andrew, monk
Juris Vresele	(1260-1325)	son of Andrew, merchant
Mergriet Mutaert	(1265-1340)	wife of Juris Vresele, married 1284
Gerolf Vresele	(1285-1349)	son of Juris, monk.
Gillis Vresele	(1293-1360)	son of Juris.
Avezoete Wulslager	(1295-1349)	wife of Gillis Vresele, married 1311
Agneete Vresele	(1300-1335)	daughter of Juris
Marie Vresele	(1312-1388)	daughter of Gillis

### The de Smet family

Wouter de Smet	(1280-1348)	blacksmith.
Lijsbetten Mutaert	(1283-1349)	wife of Wouter de Smet, cousin of Mergriet Mutaert, married 1307
Veerle de Smet	(1308-1349)	daughter of Wouter
John de Smet	(1310-1395)	goldsmith, son of Wouter

### The van Lake Family

Raes van Lake the Elder	(1280-1349)	weaver
Zwane Bentijn	(1285-1349)	wife of Raes van Lake the Elder, married 1304.
Raes van Lake the Younger	(1310-1349)	son of Raes the Elder.
William van Lake	(1311-1370)	son of Raes the Elder.

### The Denout family

John Denout	(1283-1349)	fuller.
Selie Scivaels	(1284-1349)	wife of John Denout, married 1303
Pieter Denout	(1303-1365)	fuller, son of John.

### The de Hert family

Arnout de Hert	(1279-1349)	shipper
Marie Scivaels	(1280-1352)	wife of Arnout de Hert, sister of Selie Scivaels, married 1297
John de Hert	(1297-1361)	shipper, son of Arnout de Hert
Nete de Hert	(1298-1370)	daughter of Arnout de Hert
Kerstin de Hert	(1309-1370)	daughter of Arnout de Hert

**The van Artevelde family in this book**

William van Artevelde the Elder	broker of Ghent
Catherine van Artevelde	wife of William
William van Artevelde the Younger	son of William the Elder
Francis van Artevelde	son of William the Elder
James van Artevelde (1295-1345)	son of William the Elder

**Other characters:**

Zeger de Grutere	(1260-1302)	landowner-poorter
Lievin de Grutere	(1282-1332)	son of Zeger
Clais Panneberch	(1258-1312)	landowner-poorter
Jehan Panneberch	(1278-1330)	son of Clais
Diederic van Lovendeghem	(1256-1314)	landowner-poorter
Hugen van Lovendeghem	(1279-1308)	son of Diederic
Braem de Mey	(1258-1305)	silversmith
Sanders de Mey	(1280-1308)	son of Braem

## The feudal Lords

Note: the dates stated are dates of reign, unless otherwise indicated.

### Kings of England:

Edward I Longshanks (1272–1307), married (1) to Eleanor of Castile and (2) Margaret of France.

Edward II of Caernarfon (1307 – 1327), married to Isabel of France.

### Kings of France:

Philip III the Bold – Philippe le Hardi (1270-1285), married to (1) Isabella of Aragon and (2) to Maria of Brabant

Philip IV the Fair – Philippe le Bel (1285-1314), married to Joan I of Navarre

Louis X the Quarreler – Louis le Hutin (1314-1316) married to (1) Margaret of Burgundy and (2) to Clementia of Hungary.

John I the Posthumous – Jean I le Posthume (November 1316)

Philip V the Tall – Philippe I le Long (1316-1322), brother of Louis X, married to Joan II Countess of Burgundy.

#### *The brothers of Philip the Fair:*

Charles de Valois (1270-1325): like Philip a son of Louis IX with Isabella of Aragon.

Louis of Evreux: a son of Louis IX by Marie de Brabant.

#### *The sons of Philip the Fair:*

Louis X le Hutin (1289-1316): king of Navarre in 1305, knighted by his father in 1313.

Philip V the Tall: count of Poitiers and later king.

Charles the Fair: count of La Marche.

#### *The counsellors of Philip the Fair:*

Robert II of Artois (1250-1302): a nephew of Louis IX, died at the Battle of Kortrijk in 1302.

Duke Robert II of Burgundy (1248-1306, r. 1272-1306): married to Agnes, the youngest daughter of King Louis IX.

Guy IV de Châtillon (r. 1292 – 1317): count of Saint-Pol. His daughter married Charles de Valois, the king's brother

Jacques de Châtillon (d. 1302): brother of Guy IV count of Saint-Pol, governor of Flanders at one time, lord of Leuze, Bucqoy, Aubigny and Condé.

Gaucher de Châtillon (c. 1249-1329), count of Porcien, in 1286 *connétable* of the Champagne, in 1302 *connétable* of France, cousin on their father's side of Guy and Jacques de Châtillon.

Guillaume de Nogaret (1260-1313): councillor and 'Garde des Sceaux' or Keeper of the Seal for Philip the Fair.

Enguerrand de Marigny (1260-1315): chamberlain and counsellor, minister of Philip the Fair

### **Counts of Flanders:**

Guy I of Dampierre – Gwijde van Dampierre (r.1251-1305), married to Mathilda of Béthune.  
Robert III of Béthune – Robrecht III Leeuw van Vlaanderen (r. 1305-1322), married to (1) Blanche of Sicily and (2) Yolande II Countess of Nevers.

### *Regents of Flanders at various periods:*

Willem van Jülich (b. 1275-1304): grandson of Guy I of Dampierre from his mother's side, son of the family of Jülich (German), Gulik (Dutch) or Juliers (French).  
John of Namur (1297-1330): count of Namur, son of Guy I of Dampierre  
Robert of Cassel: second son of Robert III Count of Flanders. When Robert's first son, Louis of Nevers died, the succession to the county of Flanders passed on by French support to Louis's son, equally named Louis, who became Louis I of Nevers and count of Flanders.

### *Sons and daughters of Guy de Dampierre:*

Guy of Dampierre married Matilda of Béthune (d. 1264), daughter of Robert VII, Lord of Bethune in 1246. They had the following children:

Marie (d. 1297), married Willem of Jülich (d. 1278), son of William IV, Count of Jülich. She had a son, also called Willem. She married in 1285 Simon II de Chateaufvillain (d. 1305), Lord of Bremur.

Robert III of Flanders (1249–1322), successor to Guy de Dampierre as count of Flanders.  
William (1249 – 1311), Lord of Dendermonde and Crèvecoeur, married in 1286 Alix of Beaumont, daughter of Raoul of Clermont. They had children.

John of Flanders (1250 – 1290), Bishop of Metz and Bishop of Liège  
Baldwin (1252–1296).

Margaret (c. 1253 – 1285), married in 1273 John I, Duke of Brabant

Beatrix (c. 1260 – 1291), married c. 1270 Floris V, Count of Holland

Philip of Chieti (c. 1263 – 1318), Count of Teano, married Mahaut de Courtenay, Countess of Chieti (d. 1303), married c. 1304 in second marriage Philipotte of Milly (d. c. 1335), no children.

Guy de Dampierre married Isabelle of Luxemburg (d. 1298) in March 1265. She was the daughter of Henry V of Luxembourg. They had the following children:

Beatrix (d. 1307), married c. 1287 Hugh II of Châtillon, count of Saint-Pol.

Margaret (d. 1331), married in 1282 Alexander of Scotland (son of Alexander III of Scotland), married in second marriage in 1286 Reginald I of Guelders.

Isabelle (d. 1323), married 1307 Jean de Fiennes, Lord of Tingry and Lord of Bourbourg  
Philippa (d. 1306, Paris), promised and engaged to King Edward II but not married because imprisoned in the Louvre of Paris.

John I, Margrave of Marquis of Namur (1267–1330), married Margaret of Clermont, daughter of Robert, Count of Clermont, and Marie of Artois (1291–1365), daughter of Philip of Artois. They had children.

Guy of Namur (d. 1311), Lord of Ronse, Count of Zeeland, married Margaret of Lorraine, daughter of Theobald II, Duke of Lorraine. They had no children.

Henry (d. 1337), Count of Lodi, married January 1309 Margaret of Cleves. They had children.

Joanna (d. 1296), a nun at the convent of Flines.

### **Popes**

Nicholas III (1277-1280) – Giovanni Gaetano Orsini

Martin IV (1281-1285) – Simon de Brion

Honorius IV (1285-1287) – Giacomo Savelli

Nicolas IV (1288-1292) – Girolamo Masci

Celestine V (1294) – Pietro Angelerio, resigned after 5 months (July-December)

Boniface VIII (1294-1303) - Benedetto Caetani

Benedict XI (1303-1304) - Niccolò Boccasini

Clement V (1304-1314): first pope at Avignon - Bertrand de Got

John XXII (1316-1334): at Avignon - Jacques d'Euse

### **Kings of Germany and Emperors of the Holy Roman Empire:**

Rudolf I of Habsburg – (1273-1291): married to (1) Gertrude of Hohenburg and (2) Isabella of Burgundy

Adolf of Nassau – (1292-1298): married to Imagina of Isenburg-Limburg

Albert I – Albrecht von Habsburg (1298-1308) called Albert of Austria: married to Elizabeth of Carinthia.

Henry VII – Heinrich VII der Luxemburger (1308-1313): Holy Roman Emperor, married to Margaret of Brabant.

Louis IV – Ludwig IV der Bayer von Wittelsbach (1314-1347): Holy Roman Emperor, married to (1) Beatrix Swidnicka and (2) to Margaret of Holland.

Frederick the Fair – Friedrich der Schöne von Habsburg (1314-1325): rival king to Louis IV, married to Isabella of Aragon.

### **Dukes of Brabant, Lothier and Limburg:**

John I (1267-1294): married to (1) Margaret of France and (2) Margaret of Flanders

John II (1294–1312): married to Margaret Plantagenet, princess of England.

John III (1312–1355): married to Marie d'Évreux.

### **Counts of Holland**

Floris V the Peasants' God (1256–1296): Floris der Keerlen God, son of William II, married to Beatrice of Flanders daughter of Count Guy de Dampierre of Flanders

John III, Lord of Renesse (1296, regent)

Wulfart I, Lord of Borselen or Borseele (1296–1299, regent)

John I (r. 1296–1299), son of Floris V, married to Elizabeth of England daughter of King Edward I. After him, Holland passes into the hands of the counts of Hainault (John II of Avesnes).

### **Counts of Hainault and Holland**

John II of Avesnes (1280-1304): married to Philippa of Luxemburg, he inherited Holland (over which he ruled as regent in 1299) after the death of Count John I of Holland.

William III of Avesnes (1304-1337): married to Joan of Valois

### **Counts and Dukes of Guelders**

Reginald I of Guelders and Wassenberg – Reinoud I van Gelderland (1271–1318): married (1) to Irmgard of Limburg and (2) to Margaret of Flanders. Died in 1326.

### **Counts of Namur**

Philip II (1212 - 1226): nephew of the previous count, son of Peter II de Courtenay and of Yolande of Hainault.

Henri II (1226 - 1229): brother of Philip II.

Margaret (1229 - 1237): sister of Henri II, second marriage in 1217 to Henri, count of Vianden

Baudouin II (1237 - 1256): emperor of Constantinople, brother of Margaret, married in 1229 to Marie de Brienne.

Henri III of Namur [Henri V of Luxemburg] (1256 - 1264): count of Luxemburg and of Namur, married in 1240 to Margaret of Bar. In 1256, Henri V of Luxemburg conquered by surprise the marquisate of Namur.

En 1263, Baudouin II wanted to finance the defence of Constantinople, so he sold his rights on Namur to Guy de Dampierre, son of William II de Dampierre. Gui de Dampierre immediately attacked Henri V of Luxembourg and he conquered the county. In 1264, a peace treaty between Dampierre and Luxemburg was concluded in 1264, in which Henri V ceded his rights to his daughter Isabella, who married Guy de Dampierre.

Guy de Dampierre (1263-1305): margrave of Namur, equally count of Flanders from 1278 to 1305, first marriage to Mathilde de Béthune, second marriage to Isabella of Luxemburg, daughter of Henri of Luxemburg.

John I (1298 - 1330): margrave, son of Guy de Dampierre, associated by his father to the government of the county in 1298, married first in 1307 to Marguerite de Clermont, in second marriage in 1310 to Marie d'Artois.

## Counts of Jülich

William IV (1219–1278): successor to his father, married to Richardis of Guelders before 1250. Killed in a riot in Aachen in 1278.

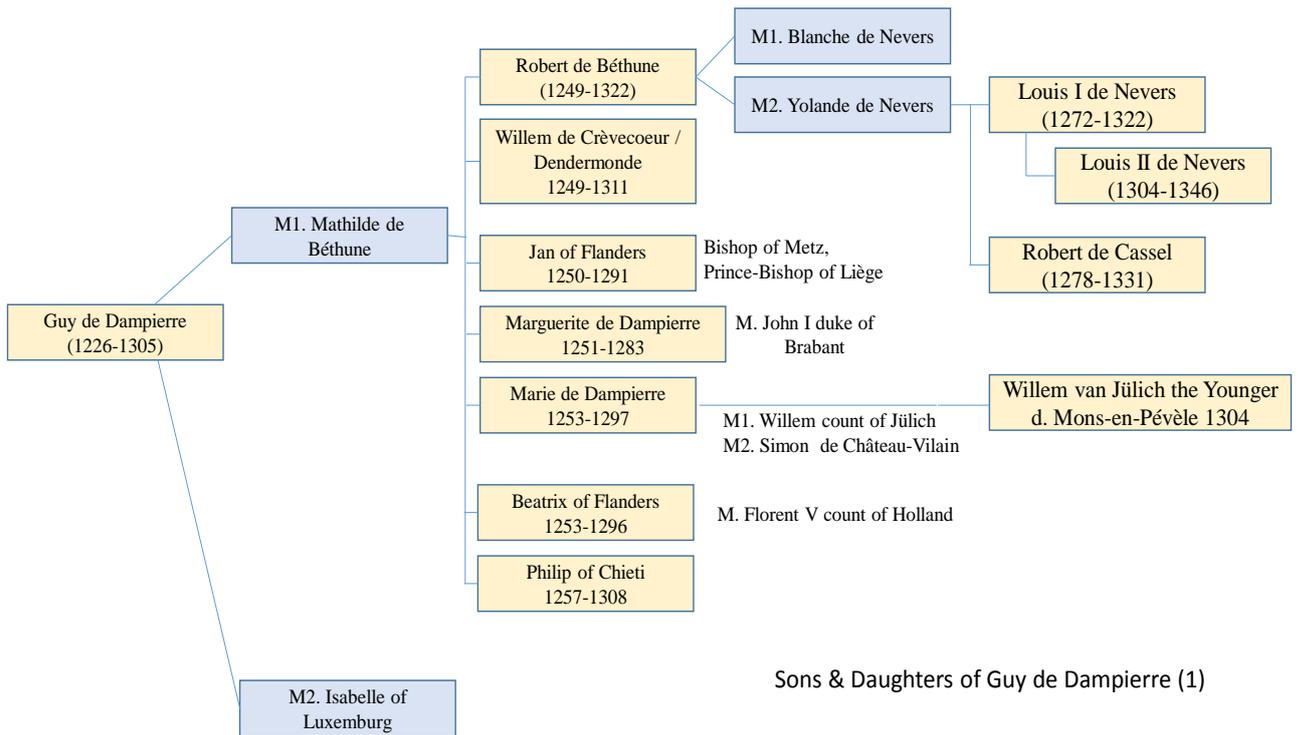
William (1240-1278): count together with his father, killed together with his father at Aachen in 1278. Married to Marie of Flanders, daughter of Guy de Dampierre count of Flanders.

Walram (1278–1297): second son of William IV, died in the Battle of Bulscamp in Flanders against the French army, married in 1297 to Marie of Brabant, daughter of Godfrey of Brabant, marriage without issue.

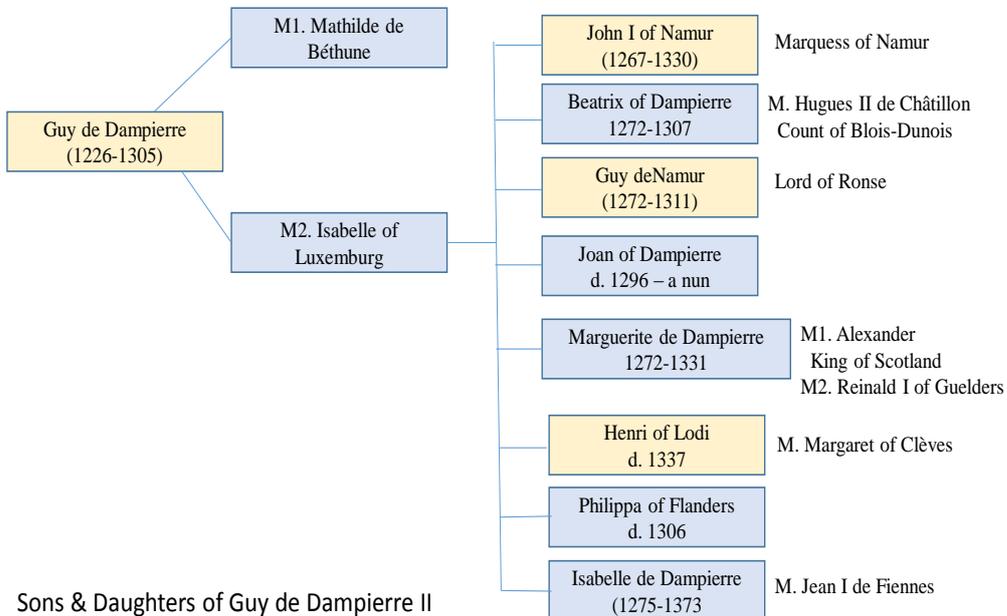
Gerhard V (1297–1328): youngest son of William IV, brother of Walram, married in 1299 to Elizabeth of Brabant, another daughter of Godfrey of Brabant. Count of Jülich after William IV and Walram.

William of Jülich the Younger: grandson of William IV of Jülich, only son of William IV's son equally named William married to Marie of Flanders, daughter of Guy de Dampierre count of Flanders. Nephew of Count Walram of Jülich. William the Younger died in the Battle of Pevelenberg, 1304. He was not count of Jülich, but played an important role in the Battles of Kortrijk and Mons-en-Pévèle for Flanders.

Sons and Daughters of Count Guy de Dampierre



Sons & Daughters of Guy de Dampierre (1)



Sons & Daughters of Guy de Dampierre II

## Chapter 1. King Philip the Fair and Count Guy of Dampierre. 1212-1302

### 1.1 Introduction. The Chronicles of Fulk of Ghent. 1212-1280

Man is a complex creature.

I will forever remain astonished at the marvel of complexity of man!

The organs in a body and the fluids circulating between them interact in ways we know nothing about. We can fathom even less how the mind works, and what kind of spirit inhabits it. We know merely that when the delicate equilibrium between these systems is disturbed, we begin to feel sick in mind or body. Such permanent loss of balance runs in many families, and also to some degree in my own.

We, the Vreseles, are inclined to a slight kind of melancholy. The unexpected that happens to us, the loss of dear ones, the set-backs to our status and well-being, the harm others subject us to – physically or spiritually – affect us deeply. We get used to the hurt, of course, like everybody else. We are quite resilient, but the scars run more profoundly with us than with members of other families.

This is what I have experienced. I became a monk not so much because of a very true fear for the absolute Great, out of respect or love of God, even though such should have been my prime reason for entering the order of the Friar Minors. I fled to the abbey because life forced me on my knees and obliged me to seek quietness and solitude. I should have known I only needed to hide myself from the world for a certain time, a few years perhaps.

When I understood I could leave the abbey again and embrace the universe of men, I had committed myself too far to the Church. I longed to return home then, to the buzz and loudness of real life, but I stayed on, knowing not really why, except that I had gotten used to the comfort of the abbey. It was not necessary to reflect very much on matters in there! My abbot recognised the dilemma, so he sent me on various missions, out into the world, more than any other of his monks and friars. Maybe my destiny was to live thus, among the Friar Minors. Maybe the hand of God hung over me and had guided me on.

The Friar Minors, the *Fremineuren* in our language, are housed in fine buildings in the heart of the city of Ghent, near the River Leie. I enjoy a very nice view from out of the window of my small room, of my monk's cell. I can see the river, and part of the quays in front, the continuous bustle of people strolling in the streets. The ever-flowing water of the river calms me and eases my pain. I cannot see most of the grand towers that form the pride of our city. They are on the other side of my view. That is good, for the sight would only feed my vanity and tempt me to the world. The belfry, still under construction, the tower of Saint John's and other high buildings that form the fame of the city, the wonderful façades of the Great Meat Hall or of the Cloth Hall a little farther, I can only imagine.

I have but to close my eyes, however, sniff the odours of the Leie, to call to my mind all the details of the walls, of the windows, of the roofs and of the massive gates of the vast halls. Most of these buildings stand on or near our inner port, called '*Tussen Bruggen*', for 'between the bridges'. Several bridges over the Leie line the river there. I can truly see the buildings of the quays of *Tussen Bruggen* before me, very clearly, with their friezes, statues

and other ornaments carved in stone, their symmetric fronts, their colours, and their crowds strolling about.

How wonderful is my city! And how well organised are we, the people who live within the walls of our beloved Ghent! I know of no other race that is so dedicated to bettering the life of its community by applying logic and dexterity. You can find only in Ghent the men and women who constantly seek to ameliorate their fate and their status by their intelligence, experience and hard work! Lord, forgive me my pride, but I can only talk in superlatives when I describe my wondrous city.

The *Gentenaars* hope for a better world, indeed. Ours is a city of rationality. We are an industrious and enterprising tribe. We work harder than any other people on earth. We trade far from home, even though we prefer to live inside our walls, in the warmth and the protection of our friends. Nothing is perfect in Ghent, of that we are very aware. It means, luckily for us, we can continually reach out to better the ways we live. We know for certain we can only manage getting there, ever advancing, by acting together rather than as individuals. There you have the character of the *Gentenaar* in a nutshell.

That is why, when our city is in danger, we run all together to our walls, without hesitation. This defence we have organised. Our artisans have assembled in guilds, and the guilds have founded and train their armed militia groups. Ghent has over sixty such artisan guilds! Who dares to attack Ghent, would be confronted with thousands of warriors, led by excellent captains, gathered behind the flags of the guilds. We take it for certain we can defend our liberties only together. Therefore, when our city is in danger, which happens very rarely, for our fame is known far, we all run to the high walls without hesitating.

We are proud, too, of what we have achieved, proud of our rights, our liberties, our freedom, as well as of the wealth and the welfare of our inhabitants. Few of us are very rich, but few remain hungry for long. We founded institutions, abbeys and hospitals to tend to the poor and to the sick. We do not allow individual persons to crush others.

Still, sometimes the strain becomes too much for some of us. So I ended up in the cosiness of the *Fremineuren* Abbey of Ghent. Luckily, my abbot regularly whipped me out.

My name is Fulk Vresele. The people call me Brother Fulk, although I am a monk and a priest. The wealthy and the powerful gave me the name of Foulques de Gand. They speak the French language mostly, the language of the nobility of the leaders of the county, the language of the kingdom our county of Flanders belongs to. The kingdom is the ancient realm of the Franks, the German tribes that conquered these parts of Gaul and of Germany. The Franks bred in with the local people, adopting also their language of Latin origin. They called it French, after the name of their tribe, the Franks.

I often wonder how many parts Frank I am, and I hope sincerely we, the Vresele family, have not too much of that perfidious breed in our blood. But I should not think that way! There are no good, bad or worse peoples. There are merely good, bad and worse individuals in every tribe. Nevertheless, I am proud for having been born in these lands of Flanders and in our beloved city of Ghent, speaking a Flemish language derived from our ancient Germanic tongue.

Before becoming a monk, I was a merchant, a trader, and so was and is my brother Juris, who is four years younger than I. We traded in everything that could grant us a decent profit in an

appropriate lapse of time. We could always gather the necessary funds. We were smart in business, as most people of Ghent are. We traded much in wine, sending ships to La Rochelle, to Bordeaux and to as far places as Bayonne in Gascony, to transport hundreds of barrels of the excellent wine to Ghent. The people of Guyenne have the sun, and the skill to turn the grapes of their vineyards into the beverage the wealthy men of Ghent love. Our issue was that we could bring Flemish cloth to Guyenne, but many traders did so and were in strong competition with us.

On one of those voyages, however, my brother Juris travelled in a cog to Bayonne, and he got curious about what lay beyond. He asked the captain to sail a little on, farther south. He did not get far, for he struck pure gold in a harbour close to Bayonne, in the lands of Castile! Juris found alum in the first port of Castile his ship entered, in San Sebastián.

Juris noticed immediately the alum was not of the best quality, not as fine-grained and not of the same composition as Italian alum, or as the alum from the Orient. Nevertheless, the Castilian alum could be useful in the tanneries of Ghent at a good, low price. It could less be used for the dyeing process of the high quality wool cloth our weavers produce, but decent quantities could be sold to that aim also. The alum could be imported, get a decent price, and be sold in moderate quantities for a nice profit. So, the alum provided us from that moment on a steady income. The greediest and most powerful men who rule our city did not soon notice from what exactly we grew wealthy. We were discreet in what we did. That has always been a hallmark of the Vreseles. We trade, never in huge quantities, never in the most spectacular goods, never in the very best qualities. But our inflow of money also ever remained steady.

The harbours we ended up trading with in alum, from San Sebastián to Santander, worked in peace with each other. They had formed an organisation, El Hernandad, to settle their disputes. We bought alum in the ports, and our ships brought fine Ghent cloth to Castile. We won from both sides, in and out. And competition was low.

So we sent every year a few ships to San Sebastián to buy Castilian lower quality alum, and sold it a less high price than the Genovese alum brought to Ghent. Our alum sold well, and we thrived.

Alum is the stuff that is in high need in Ghent! It is used as a mordant in the tanneries and in the weaving industry. Alum washes the last of animal greases out of the hides and out of the wool fibres. Dyes grip better into the wool after the mordant is applied. The colours are then more evenly spread and more brilliant. The wool must pass a bath of mordant alum before being coloured. The resulting wool cloth is the finest in the world! Without alum, Ghent would not exist.

Ghent would also not exist without the various artisans who prepare the wool for weaving. Our artisans also know how to weave tightly, and how to finish the woven cloth in various processes to form the bales that are the pride of our town and of whole Flanders.

Our bales are transported from Ghent over the Lieve Canal to the sea-ports of Damme and Sluis. They are then sent by the ships of the Hanze merchants of Bruges north to the Baltic ports and south to the ports of the Mediterranean. Ghent has become wealthy because of this industry, Bruges from the trade. Industry needs more hands than trade does. Our city attracted so many people from the countryside she is now one of the greatest cities of the continent, second only to Paris. I dare say Ghent is richer and more developed than Paris, as our

*poorters*, our inhabitants, are more aware of their power. Paris does not have a militia as large, as imposing and as well trained as the city of Gent. And like Paris, Ghent has grown to be so large! Ghent is now so powerful in militia warriors, she could not be conquered by any king, not even by the emperor.

I might as well immediately explain to you why I became a monk. I will lay my pain at your feet. I was a sturdy fellow, happy to work, keen on devising new schemes of trade. I fell in love with a girl. She looked like an angel to me, and not only to me. I was eighteen, she was two years younger. In the year we found each other, a group of hoodlums attacked her, gripped her, raped her, strangled her, and threw her body into the Leie. The bailiff arrested me, but I could easily prove I was not nearly in Ghent at the moment of her death. We suspected four young men of some of the wealthiest landowner-poorter families of Ghent. We knew some of them had coveted her for long, for she was probably the most beautiful maiden of the city. The names of de Grutere, Panneberch, van Lovendeghem and de Mey will forever burn in my mind. We had no proof of their misdeed. We found no witnesses, and certainly no witnesses willing to testify against the most powerful aldermen of Ghent.

Agatha Mensel, my beloved, was dead, and nothing could bring her back to me. She was younger, but stronger than I. I went mad for grief for a long while. I lost my mind. I cared for nothing anymore. I hated the world in which such injustice, such ignominious crimes could happen. I hid within the Friar Minors Order, the Franciscans of Ghent. They took care of me. I shut me off from the world. I know that now to have been a tragic weakness, a result of the melancholic streak in our character.

Me and my brother, we needed sometimes to isolate us from other people. We feel more intensely the sadness of life. Juris could better cope than I.

I ran into the abbey in the year of our Lord 1274, and I still live with the friars and the monks. We may be gloomy persons, my brother and I. Still, we were also very enterprising men. We had to express ourselves one way or another. We were not gifted with artistic talents, but we are intelligent and creative, so we traded. We devised daring projects to import new products from places to the north, south, east and west. That creativity seemed what I lacked most after a while in the abbey.

I had the chance to serve a very wise abbot. He allowed, forced me, to travel all through our continent and England, walking from abbey to abbey. I learned a lot and brought extensive knowledge to our abbey. I became an adviser to many a powerful but righteous man, and a councillor to our countesses. Finally, in the year of 1312, I started these writings to explain to the men and women of my family what the world is made of.

I will try to tell how the fate of our town and our county was modelled by a few powerful men and women.

I started to write this chronicle of our times with the insight the nearness of many important people provided to me, not only men and women of the highest and the smallest nobility of our lands, but also the common people from the cities and from the countryside. I write this chronicle to the intention solely of my own family, to the members of the Vresele family and to their friends. I do not have the ambition to be a poet like Jacob van Maerlant or Lodewijk van Velthem. These men wrote and are still working at the '*Spiegel Historiael*', the mirror of

our times. I want to write a few short, simple wordings, like a logical, humble working man of Ghent would do.

I hope, of course, my family might learn something from the lives of so many other persons who played roles in the tragedy that befell Flanders. Although many calamities threatened the survival of our county, we preserved our freedom. This must teach us how to live and act in the future, to preserve what our fellow-men have secured.

So, here follows the story of our Flanders, and of our grand city of Ghent, though I am not sure how far back I should start!

I must admit I do not write alone! I'm afraid my handwriting is nervous, fast, and therefore awful. I asked the abbot for a copyist. I had to explain why, of course. The abbot looked at me as if I wanted to steal from the brothers. I had to plead, to beg, to cajole, which pleased the abbot. I have not always treated the abbot with the great respect and deference he no doubt deserves! He made me eat the dust. But I got my copyist.

Brother Bernardus is an artist with the feather. I write my texts, add and cross wherever I want on the page, and Bernardus puts it all together. After a while, I understood why Bernardus. Brother Bernardus was even more critical of how the abbey worked than I. The abbot had thrown two nuisances together! Our reverend abbot considered Bernardus the most disobedient, irreverent monk of the abbey. Where else could he have put Bernardus to work? Bernardus is indeed something of a pain in the ass. He gave me his comments on everything I wrote. Nevertheless, he seems to be liking what he does. He has been a great help in looking up information for me in the archives of the abbeys of Ghent and in the city archives. His work came with a price. Brother Bernardus indicated my errors mercilessly. He also proffered his opinions on everything, usually unsolicited, and often acerbic, on the events I wrote about. I got used to him. I even got to like him, and now await his comments with alarm and joy.

What can be done with Brother Bernardus? I think he would make an excellent next abbot for the *Fremineuren* of Ghent! He is very intelligent, in an earthy, very logical kind of way, very pragmatic, but kind. I began to suspect our abbot sent him to me, to perfect Bernardus's education. I must smile when I imagine Bernardus copying also this evaluation!

It may well be there never has really been a beginning, just the ever-lasting greed, cupidity, egotism and obsessive craving for power in mankind to drive this story. The kings of France, England and Germany were seeking to win back some of the influence on their countries they had lost since the times of Emperor Charles te Great.

The kings of England, mainly King Edward I, fought and conquered Wales, Scotland and Ireland.

The German kings, who were usually also the kings of the Romans and therefore called emperors, the Caesars, were at constant strife within the lands they esteemed theirs by heavenly right, to fight and conquer Thuringia, Kärnten, Austria, Bohemia, and even regions in the Italian peninsula.

The popes, not all of them, sought to assert their ascendancy over all the kings, not only by the spiritual power invested in them by Jesus Christ, but also by the secular power they claimed as the representatives of God.

Worse for us, Flemings, the kings of France, and more in particular King Philip IV the Fair, sought to subject Flanders to their will. This king wanted of course to bring his most wealthy feudally submitted county, Flanders, into his personal domains. The king of France sought to become much richer and more powerful with the money and with the reserve of warriors of our lands.

## Flanders

Among all the lands mentioned above, whether in England, Germany, Italy or France, Flanders resisted most to preserve its independence. Flanders too emerged humiliated and diminished from the strife, but it remained its own master.

A strange land was our Flanders! It was a county in which many languages were spoken. In the southern parts, in Artois, Guines and Béthune, and in the cities of Lille, Douai, and Valenciennes for instance, French was spoken. In the northern parts, in the regions of Ieper and Kortrijk, Bruges and Ghent, the old German-tinted dialects of Flemish prevailed. The Flemish dialects continued in the Dutch dialects of Holland and Friesland, almost up to the Baltic Sea.

Although Flemish was spoken in Flanders' most populous cities, she remained a feudal land of the Frankish kings, owing duties to the French king. This was not true for all of the land possessions of the counts of Flanders. A few territories in the north of Flanders, the Four Crafts and the Land of Waas, east of the Scheldt, the lands of Aalst, and even for the disputed Zeeland, the count of Flanders owed allegiance to the German king. One can discuss about whether these lands truly belonged to the county of Flanders or were mere personal possessions of our counts and countesses. Still, we considered them all as being a part of our illustrious heir. The French king could exert no jurisdiction over these last German regions, and the count of Flanders had to do homage for them to the German kings. That was also the case in early times for the county called of Hainault, for Hainault was then equally a part of the larger Flanders! Maybe this is where we might start.

Our Count Baldwin IX of Flanders, who lived from 1172 to 1205, was probably our most brilliant and famous ruler. He was also Baldwin VI of Hainault, Baldwin V count of the Provence, and Baldwin I emperor of Constantinople! He was crowned emperor of the east in May of 1204, and he died already one year later, after having lost the Battle of Adrianople against Tsar Katoyan of the Bulgars. His younger brother Henry was his successor to the Eastern Roman Empire.

In Flanders, he left two daughters, the eldest of whom, Joan, ruled over Flanders after him. Joan of Constantinople, as she was called, ruled over Flanders after him. Countess Joan married Ferdinand of Portugal in 1212, barely 13 years old. They married in Paris. On their way back to Flanders, the newly-wed couple were captured by Joan's first cousin, the future King Louis VIII of France. Louis released them only after they had ceded Artois to him. Remark how the strife with the kings of France raged already in great intensity during the reign of Ferdinand and Joan! The loss of Artois was the first of many losses of territories of Flanders!

Ferdinand entered an alliance with King John Lackland of England, and with Emperor Otto IV. The alliance was already then directed against France. Armies clashed at Bouvines in July

the 7th of 1214. Bouvines is a small town lying between Lille and Douai, not far from that other place where, much later, another great battle took place, Mons-en-Pévèle. King Philip Augustus of France defeated at Bouvines an army consisting of German, English and Flemish troops, led by Emperor Otto IV of Germany. The French king won a very great victory. Count Ferdinand was taken a prisoner. He would have to remain in the hands of the French kings for twelve years, being released only after the Treaty of Melun was signed. Ferdinand returned from captivity only after the death of the successor to King Philip Augustus, King Louis VIII. Queen Blanche of Castile, who ruled the country for her young son King Louis IX, took pity on Countess Joan of Flanders and gave Joan's husband back to her. Ferdinand died in 1233. Countess Joan remarried in 1237 with Count Thomas II of Savoy, but this marriage too remained childless. Margaret of Constantinople followed on her sister as countess of Flanders, after Joan's death in 1244.

It is necessary at this point, I feel, to dwell a little on the Treaty of Melun signed in April of 1226 between Countess Joan of Constantinople and King Louis VIII of France. By this treaty, Joan was forced to subordinate herself and the counts of Flanders to the French crown. The treaty stated the counts and countesses had to serve the kings of France loyally. The counts and countesses had to force their knights and the cities of Flanders to swear fidelity to the French rulers, on threat of excommunication by the pope. Countess Joan pledged not to build new castles south of the Scheldt Stream, and she had to ask permission of the French king to modify - read fortify - the existing fortresses. Countess Joan had to pay the immense sum of fifty thousand pounds Parisis for the release of her husband, Ferdinand. Ferdinand and Joan had to cede Lille and Douai to the French king. The king would have to give back these towns after the payment of the fifty thousand pounds' ransom, but the fortress of Douai would be kept in the grip of France for over ten years, the garrison to be held at the expense of Flanders.

The kings of France repeatedly returned to the clauses of this treaty when they were in conflict with the subsequent counts of Flanders. Queen and Regent Blanche of Castile later eased the clauses of the treaty a little, mostly under pressure of the cities of Flanders. Only twenty-five thousand pounds had to be paid, and no French garrisons would be kept in Flanders. Nevertheless, the treaty oppressed and humiliated Flanders.

Margaret II of Constantinople became countess of Flanders in 1244.

While very young, in 1212, merely about eleven years old, she had married her then guardian Bouchard d'Avesnes, a Hainault nobleman.

Bouchard d'Avesnes had lived at the court of Flanders of Count Philip of Alsace, the former count of Flanders. Bouchard studied philosophy in Paris and in Orléans, received a doctor's title and he was a professor. He may have taken up ecclesiastical orders! He was appointed to a prebend at the Church of Our Lady at Laon, and was adoubed a knight by Richard the Lionheart. He was installed as tutor for Margaret, living with her in the Castle of Quesnoy. Was the marriage a love match, or had the ambitious Bouchard forced himself on the young girl by his authority (he was thirty years old in 1212, and twenty years older than Margaret), or had she preferred Bouchard over another nobleman the king of France had wanted to marry to her? Anyway, she rapidly gave birth to three sons by Bouchard, as soon as she could have children. They were Baldwin in 1217, John in 1218 and another Baldwin in 1219.

Neither Countess Joan nor Joan's husband Ferdinand gave their consent to the marriage. They even tried to stop the wedding, but failed. Also pope Innocent III condemned the marriage, but did not annul it.

After the Battle of Bouvines in 1214, the victorious king of France Philip Augustus advised the pope to declare the marriage illegal. In January of 1216, the pope indeed excommunicated Bouchard d'Avesnes. On the 27<sup>th</sup> of July 1217, a bull of Pope Honorius III called Bouchard d'Avesnes a perfidious and shameless apostate, and he too excommunicated Bouchard. Finally, in 1219, Bouchard was captured by Ferdinand's troops and imprisoned in Ghent for two years. Bouchard was only released after Margaret accepted the dissolution of her marriage. Bouchard left for Italy, returned in 1244 to Hainault, and was decapitated on command of Countess Joan at Rupelmonde. That same year, Countess Joan died, and Margaret became the new countess of Flanders.

Margaret of Constantinople had married a second time by then. She had accepted Lord William II of Dampierre, a gentle and courteous nobleman of the Champagne. He was the son of Guy II, the constable of Champagne. William already died in 1231, having given four children to Margaret: William III, the future count of Flanders, Guy margrave of Namur and later also count of Flanders, John I lord of Dampierre, and a daughter called Joan after her aunt.

This strange, cruel story is important, because it led to the ultimate separation of Hainault from Flanders. The Avesnes children of Countess Margaret were first-born and extremely ambitious. Margaret, however, had come to prefer her children by William of Dampierre, and to abhor her Avesnes sons. Had she understood by then, that Bouchard d'Avesnes had taken advantage of her? Had Margaret therefore developed an aversion to the children of her first marriage? The Avesnes sons of Margaret nevertheless claimed their right of primogeniture over both Flanders and Hainault.

In this conflict, King Louis IX of France acted as arbitrator in 1246, granting the right to inherit Flanders to the Dampierre children, foremost to William, and he gave the rights over Hainault to the Avesnes children. The king made this decision, on the advice by the pope's legate, Cardinal Eudes bishop of Tusculum, as well as on advice of the king's brother, Robert of Artois. Thus, Margaret's eldest son would become Count John I of Hainault. The decision forced the separation of Hainault from Flanders! This meant a second, huge loss of territory for Flanders.

Almost immediately, John of Avesnes protested against this ruling, claiming King Louis IX had judged without the consent of the German king. That consent was necessary, since Hainault belonged feudally to Germany, not to France. John found an ally in Count Florent V of Holland and Friesland.

Florent and the d'Avesnes attacked Flanders for Zeeland and the imperial territories. The northern regions of Flanders were devastated. Countess Margaret assembled an army. Her troops advanced against the armies of Holland. A little later, however, the countess of Flanders concluded a peace with John of Avesnes, by which the Avesnes men renounced on their territorial claims of Flanders.

The conflict over Zeeland continued when Count William of Holland was chosen as king of Germany in 1247! Margaret had to do homage for Zeeland to the German king, but she refused to do so, considering Zeeland hers and hers only. As a consequence, the emperor threw the ban of the empire over her. In a diet session at Frankfurt, the solemn assembly of the German nobility, Emperor William of Holland took away all the imperial territories from Countess Margaret. The emperor handed the lands over to the Avesnes, as well as the county of Namur, which was also his to give.

From then on, Margaret called her Avesnes sons bastards. But after a papal inquest, in April of 1249, the pope legitimised John and Baldwin of Avesnes. The pope also confirmed the donation of imperial Flanders to the counts of Flanders, however, and legitimised so Countess Margaret's claims over the territory. Most of these lands would later be won back, but much of Zeeland never fully returned. This was the third loss of Flemish territory!

William III of Dampierre was called count of Flanders together with his mother until his untimely death in 1247. William was assassinated during a tournament at Trazegnies by a group of knights hired by the Avesnes brothers. Countess Margaret hated her Avesnes sons all the more for this horrible act. Guy of Dampierre became count of Flanders, with his mother in 1251

Margaret did not forgive her Avesnes sons for the murder of her Dampierre son William. She began to harass Hainault with troops, sending hundreds of Flemish knights out to ravage for instance the town of Ath and various border regions of Hainault. Flanders also launched a campaign to take back Zeeland from Emperor William of Holland. To that end, Count Guy of Dampierre, John of Dampierre, Godefroid count of Bar and Count Thibaut of Guines formed an army and a fleet. Emperor William sent his brother Florent with troops to oppose the Flemish for Zeeland, augmented with six hundred men from Hainault led by Gerard of Jauche and Nicolas of Rumigny. They marched to Holland in the beginning of the summer of 1251.

Two years later, in 1253, the Flemish army was defeated in a great carnage in Zeeland, during which Guy and John of Dampierre and the counts of Guines and Bar were made prisoners of the imperial army.

Countess Margaret tried sending a delegation in July of 1253 to the German king, to negotiate a ransom for her dear prisoners, but the emperor at first refused even to see them. Emperor William travelled to Worms, declaring loudly Margaret to be rebellious, as she had refused to recognise the king of Germany and emperor of the Romans as her overlord. She had also refused to do homage to him for the lands she held from Germany.

In October of 1253, however, the Flemish delegates tried to meet again with the emperor at Frankfurt. The emperor set his conditions for peace. William now demanded of the countess of Flanders to admit she had willingly insulted the king of Germany. He wanted the island of Walcheren to remain to the count of Holland. The two Dampierre brothers, Guy and John, would have to ratify the decisions of the emperor given at Worms, and the ransom for the brothers was set to be two hundred thousand Florins, a huge amount!

The harsh conditions of William of Holland infuriated Countess Margaret. She demanded that Guy, although imprisoned, would fully be declared count of Flanders with her. She made the two Dampierre brothers swear to uphold the struggle against the Avesnes brothers John

and Baldwin. Thus was half-brother set against half-brother, and the hatred and strife between the houses of Dampierre and of Avesnes lasted.

Countess Margaret then devised a devilish scheme. She proposed to hand over Hainault in feudal fief to King Louis IX, in return for the release of her Dampierre sons. This would have meant that the French king would hold German lands in feudal loan from the emperor, an unheard-of scheme. The scheme might cause a new, fierce war between France and Germany over the rights on the land! King Louis IX wisely refused the poisoned gift. He departed on a crusade to the Holy Land.

While King Louis IX was absent, Countess Margaret complained to Queen Blanche of Castile, who directed her to Count Charles d'Anjou, the king's brother. Margaret laid the same proposal for a war with the emperor to Anjou. Anjou too at first refused, but later he offered in compromise to hold Hainault for as long as the countess lived. After her death only, he would present the county of Hainault back to the Avesnes. Margaret accepted this cunning agreement. She proposed her act of donation to Charles d'Anjou a year later, in October of 1253. A few months passed peacefully. Then, the bishop of Liège issued an act stating that Hainault still lawfully belonged to the Avesnes.

Anjou decided for war. He was a powerful, handsome knight. He gathered a large army at Compiègne. He summoned the German king to release the illustrious prisoners of Flanders, or to meet him on the battlefield at Asse, halfway Brussels and Aalst, on Flemish territory. Anjou delivered the ultimatum. If the emperor would not meet him with arms, he, Anjou, would attack Holland to conquer it.

The French army immediately set a siege to Valenciennes in Hainault. The city remained faithful to John I of Avesnes, even though other cities such as Mons, Soignies, Maubeuge, Binche, Beaumont and Ath surrendered to the French and the Flemish.

The knight of Hainault who offered the toughest resistance to Charles d'Anjou's troops was the lord of Enghien. When the French army set up a siege to Enghien's castle, he attacked by surprise the French camp with archers and knights, creating such chaos among the French Charles d'Anjou felt defeated. He retreated, but continued the siege of Valenciennes. During negotiations, the city decided to recognise the donation for the life of Countess Margaret to Charles d'Anjou. The city opened its gates to the French army, a nice victory for Charles d'Anjou.

Meanwhile, the imperial army had been waiting for three days at Asse, in vain. Charles d'Anjou had only about six thousand men left in his army, far too few to confront the emperor's troops.

William of Holland moved to Valenciennes, which Anjou quickly abandoned against the superior forces of the emperor. Anjou and the German leaders negotiated a truce, to the great anger of Countess Margaret.

The negotiations allowed Emperor William to march to Holland, to fight the Frisians who had revolted in the north of his fief. They also allowed Charles d'Anjou to return to Paris, to meet his brother King Louis IX, who had come back from his crusade.

In November of 1255, King Louis IX travelled to Ghent to discuss matters with the emperor, but William was retained in Holland, engaged in fierce skirmishes with the Frisians. In the winter of that year, the Frisians even killed William a battle.

The duke of Brabant mediated in peace talks between Countess Margaret of Flanders, William of Holland's son Florent and his regent, and also John and Baldwin of Avesnes. Margaret reluctantly reconciled with her d'Avesnes sons. Charles d'Anjou renounced the gift of Hainault by Margaret of Constantinople. The regent of Holland, the late Emperor William's brother, also called Florent, would marry Beatrix, the oldest daughter of Guy de Dampierre. If no son would be born from this union, a son of Count Guy would marry Mathilda, the daughter of Emperor William. Zeeland would be given as dowry to Mathilda. In this way, after Hainault, Zeeland would be forever separated from Flanders and lost to our counts. The agreement was signed at the end of September of 1256.

The agreement ended the open conflict between Countess Margaret, her Dampierre sons and her Avesnes sons. Dark resentments continued to run deep, however, between the houses of Dampierre and Avesnes. The grudges were not forgotten and even less forgiven at the death of John I of Hainault in 1257. His son, John II d'Avesnes, followed up on him as count of Hainault.

Flanders would know a relative peace, until near 1280! The wealth of Ghent from weaving and from the cloth trade augmented considerably in this period, and my brother, Juris Vresele, prospered.

The strong man of Flanders, Count Guy of Dampierre, born around 1226, was now just over thirty years old. He had married in 1246 Mathilde de Béthune. She brought him the county of Béthune and the castellany of Dendermonde. His mother, Countess Margaret, still ruled.

The only truly remarkable event for Flanders came in the 1260's from an unexpected place. The Greek nobility, led by Michael Paleologus, reconquered Constantinople from the Latin, Frankish rulers in 1261. The Emperor Baldwin II of Courtenay was expelled from the city, and the Paleologus family claimed the throne. Baldwin II, in lack of funds in the west, sold in 1263 the county of Namur for twenty thousand pounds to Count Guy of Dampierre. But Count Henry II of Luxemburg had captured Namur and chased from Namur Marie de Brienne, the wife of the emperor, who had lived in Namur. Negotiations ensued. Guy of Dampierre solved the issue by a scheme of marriages. Guy's first wife Mathilde of Béthune had died, so he could marry Isabella, the second daughter of Count Henry II. Claims on the county of Namur came as her dowry to Count Guy. With the money paid to the emperor, Count Guy could hold Namur in personal possession.

At the end of December 1279, Countess Margaret of Flanders, seventy-six years old, solemnly and officially handed over to her son Guy of Dampierre, then already fifty-three, the county of Flanders. Countess Margaret would die shortly after the ceremony, in 1280. A new era could start for Flanders, an era not anymore characterised by the strife between two half-brothers of different houses, but by the strife between the county and France.

‘That was a complex story,’ Bernardus commented, suggesting to me he found all chronicles – mine in particular - rather dull.

‘Of course. Many more complex and long stories will follow. All relations between humans are complex,’ I gave him.

‘Amen! Exceedingly complex,’ Bernardus sighed. ‘The poor woman!’

‘You mean Countess Margaret, I suppose,’ I said, drawing up my eyebrows. ‘Yes! Bouchard d’Avesnes abused of her. The best we can believe is he led her to become dependent upon him. Remark how such bad events followed his wicked act. The Dampierres and the d’Avesnes hated each other ever since, though they originated in the same womb. How terrible it must have felt for the d’Avesnes to feel rejected by their own mother!’

‘Sin always engenders crime. The d’Avesnes had been hurt in their pride,’ Bernardus continued. ‘People never overcome having been humbled, and especially not the great lords. We call the great, but their intentions are often low, based on the same vile traits of character as all of us show to some degree. We, monks, have much work to do to bring the paradise of love and forgiveness of God to the people,’ Bernardus concluded.

I then repeated, ‘Amen to that!’ and we both sighed. Bernardus was on the long, hard way to wisdom. Or was it simply the way of disillusion?

Bernardus did not yet give up.

‘When I mentioned complexity,’ Bernardus continued, ‘I also meant you have a serious issue on hand with the chronicles. You intend to explain what happened to at least five major geographical entities, to Ghent, Flanders, France, England and Germany, not to mention Holland, Brabant, Hainault, Guelders, Limburg, Jülich, Berg and Bar, and to many lands more. If you tell what happened in these kingdoms and counties in succession, knowing events are linked, sometimes inextricably, you are going to have to repeat yourself from one tale to the other, for an event happening in Ghent because of developments in France will appear twice in your text. You will have double, triple, and so on, tales! On the other hand, if you tell in one continuous story what happens in several of the entities together, you are going to end up with a very complex tale indeed. In the first case, your reader will remark you are uselessly repeating yourself like an old tottering man. In the other case, you will have a very complex tale in which the reader may lose himself and get bored.’

‘I am aware of the issue, my friend,’ I answered. ‘I have given the issue much thought. All chroniclers have to cope with the problem. I am no genius! I will neither avoid the one nor the other! I’ll tolerate double tales in my chronicle, and I’ll allow complex stories to happen. No other but intelligent readers will have read on so far already. They will excuse me for the first and see through the second. I apologise to them and to you, but they will have to bear with me the burden of repetitions and of complexity, or leave here!’

There, I delivered him my ultimatum.

Bernardus grumbled something I did not understand, and did not want to hear either. He stood and left our room. I still wonder whether he called me an idiot that day, but he copied the rest of my text with great patience, proving he was an intelligent young man indeed.

## England

In England, meanwhile, King Henry III had finalised his peace efforts with France. In 1260, the king, of a gentle disposition, dropped his ancestral claims on the continental territories of Normandy, Anjou, the Poitou and Maine, in exchange for the right to hold Gascony, usually called Guyenne by the French. The Plantagenet line of English kings thereby renounced to their parental lands in the centre of France, in exchange for their wealthier maternal lands of Aquitaine. King Henry III understood he did not have the means to hold on to all of his lands in France.

Not everybody in England agreed with this policy. Especially the lord Simon de Montfort, earl of Leicester, and other English noblemen, opposed the king. They reproached him for having conceded too much too quickly to the king of France. Simon was a French nobleman! His father was the famous equally named Simon de Montfort who was known for his Albigensian crusade against the Cathar heretics in the south of France. This Montfort had waged a cruel war in the Languedoc. The English Montfort's mother was Alix de Montmorency, and Simon inherited the earldom of Leicester from his maternal grandmother, Amicia de Beaumont, heiress of the earldom of Leicester by her brother, Robert de Beaumont earl of Leicester. Montfort may have nourished high ambitions on lands in France. Montfort and his friends of English knights formed a league opposing the king. They had a charter be written called the Provisions of Oxford, which expanded the Magna Carta and by which they aimed to limit the royal powers. The conflict between these nobles and the king resulted in a civil war.

The war with Montfort ended in 1265 by the Battle of Evesham, in which King Henry III and his son, the future Edward I, defeated the army of the rebelling nobles, as well as Simon de Montfort. The Provisions of Oxford were withdrawn, refuted, but the opposition to the king did not end. The civil war lasted until 1268. He had by then captured several castles to which the protesting earls had escaped. Edward had waged war already from his eighteenth to his twenty-eighth birthdays!

Edward was a typical knight of our times. His life had been devoted to war and fighting. After the internecine strife in England, he felt restless and embarked on a crusade to the Holy Land. He sailed off from England with his friends and with a small army in September of 1269, reaching the French harbour of Aigues-Mortes on the Mediterranean. There, he was to meet King Louis IX of France.

Louis IX had not waited for him, though, and had already left with his fleet, his aim being not the Holy Land, but Tunis. Louis IX had sailed to North Africa, instigated to do so by his younger brother, the same Charles d'Anjou who had conspired with Countess Margaret of Flanders. Charles d'Anjou was by then the king of Sicily.

When the English knights sailed from Aigues-Mortes, in October of the year, they were unaware of the untimely death of King Louis IX on the 15<sup>th</sup> of August near Tunis. The English arrived in North Africa on the 1<sup>st</sup> of November, but their Tunisian raid was over before it had even started.

The two fleets, the French and the English, returned by Sicily. The ships sailed into a storm, which destroyed the French fleet near Tropani, and sent Edward's ships battered but intact to Palermo. Edward sailed on from there to the Holy Land and the port of Acre.

In June already, the Mamluk Sultan al-Zahri Baybars had set a siege to Acre. By September, Edward gathered allies at Acre, such as the Templar Knights and the Hospitaller Knights, and men of the king of Cyprus. He also secured an alliance with Abagha Khan, the ruler of the Mongols, so that the Mongols attacked the Mamluks from the east.

Edward spent the winter at Acre, until he could force the sultan to a ten-year truce. Edward may have saved Acre by this truce, but he couldn't accomplish much else. In September of 1272, the English sailed from Acre via Sicily. They would only disembark in England in August of 1274.

Edward stayed on the mainland of Italy when he heard his father, King Henry III, had died. He was the new king of England!

In the winter of from 1274 to 1275, King Edward I ordered a great survey of England, to be done by his sheriffs. The work was finished in March of 1275, and became known as the Hundred Rolls. This contained information on the state of the kingdom. It allowed the king to publish the Statute of Westminster, a coronation statute, which held the promise to improve law and order in England and to restore the royal rights in the kingdom. Edward I clearly wanted to do things right for his subjects and for the continuation of royalty in England.

That same winter, a revolt broke out in Wales against the ruler of Gwyned, Llywelyn ap Gruffud. The English earls raged against Llywelyn, who had done homage for Wales to King Edward I.

Edward I moved to Chester with his household army. He wanted Llywelyn once more to prove his obedience. Llywelyn, however, stated he would only give his homage after Edward had addressed his grievances concerning the rebels of the March of Wales. These southern parts of Wales, a set of earldoms, were rather pro-English. They opposed Llywelyn.

Edward I waited for a week at Chester, in vain, to leave in a rage. The war with Wales was on!

At that moment, King Edward I had severe issues of funding for any war! One usually forgets how decisive money can be in the making of a war. Edward I had no money left in his treasury! He could not bring together an army and pay for it on campaign. The king had to introduce a new customs tax on wool, and he handed over the management of the customs receipt to his Riccardi, Italian bankers. These could lend him the money he needed urgently to invade Wales. By October of 1275, the king also banned Jewish moneylending, which allowed him to obtain the permission of his nobles in Parliament to levy additional taxes and to pay his debts from the crusade. In compensation, Edward allowed the Jews to become merchants, but the Jews could henceforward only live in the king's towns. They had to wear a

yellow mark, and no Christians could live among them. Thus, the Jewish quarters came to be founded in the English towns.

At the end of 1275, Llywelyn ap Gruffud let it be known he wanted to marry Eleanor of Montfort, daughter of the Simon of Montfort who had opposed King Henry III. Edward I felt insulted. The danger of a Montfort uprising in England and in Wales threatened. When Eleanor sailed from France to England, Edward's fleet captured her ship. Montfort banners were found, hidden in the cogs. Would the banners serve to incite a new Montfort rebellion? King Edward I imprisoned Eleanor de Montfort in the Castle of Windsor. She would remain there for three years. Her brother would linger for six years in his prison of Corfe.

At the beginning of 1276, Edward once more summoned Llywelyn to his court, this time to Westminster, but the Welsh leader did not show up. As a result, the English Parliament declared Llywelyn to be a rebel. At the start of 1277, Llywelyn offered eleven thousand pounds for the king's grace on condition that the former treaty between Wales and England would be upheld and he demanded his Montfort future wife to be released from prison. Edward's answer was to gather warriors and to penetrate once more deep into Wales. In mid-July of 1277, he was at Chester, and his army of more than three thousand men, backed by a fleet from the Cinque Ports of southern England entered Welsh territory. By August, the king's army had grown to fifteen thousand men, and it threatened Gwynedd.

Llywelyn surrendered in September. The treaty for the surrender of Wales to King Edward I was signed in November. A year later, in October of 1278, Llywelyn ap Gruffud was allowed to marry Eleanor of Montfort. Llywelyn submitted to Edward.

Once more, King Edward I was in trouble for lack of funds. The king sent his men out to look for people he could accuse of clipping the silver coins in the kingdom, men who filed chips of silver from the coins, yet used them to the current value. The sheriffs found, as expected, many Jewish coin exchangers to have indulged in clipping. Half of the adult male Jews in the realm were executed. Edward then initiated a re-coinage of his money and kept the profits of the operation for the treasury.

In May of 1279, King Edward I and Queen Eleanor of Castile travelled in France. Eleanor had to do homage for Ponthieu, which she had inherited from her mother. King Philip III of France accepted the homage, and ceded the Agenais region to Edward I, as due to him by the Treaty of Paris. Peace continued between France and England. Wales remained tranquil for a period of about three years.

Peace also reigned between England and Scotland in this period. In 1249, King Alexander III was crowned in Scone Abbey. Alexander and King Henry III lived on amicable relations. At Christmas of 1251, in York, Alexander even married Margaret, the daughter of King Henry.

England would suffer in the coming years from growing unrest in Scotland as well as in Wales, and King Edward I experienced more issues of funding for the considerable armies he had to bring in the field for his wars. This prevented him to play a significant role in the politics of the continent, and especially in Flanders.

Allow me to throw in a word, here. If a Parliament of England, France or Germany would truly have wanted peace instead of the constant wars the kings waged, they could have withheld money from their monarchs. Since no such thing happened, the Parliaments always sooner or later agreed on war taxes, and the kings always in the end received their money. I guess the nobility of these lands were either very devoted to their ruler, or they fully agreed with the war campaigns. I believe the last is the truth. A great national pride lay in the hearts of the noble knights of England, so that generally, they believed as much in the royal cause as the kings themselves. But what is a king more than the symbol of the nation?

## Germany

In Germany, after Emperor William of Holland had been killed in his war against the Frisians, two candidates vied for the throne. They were King Alfonso the Wise of Castile and Richard of Cornwall, the son of King John Lackland and brother of King Henry III of England. In France and England, the throne had become hereditary and the eldest son of the deceased king almost automatically received the crown of the realm. Not so in Germany. The king of Germany was chosen by seven electors, called '*Kurfürsten*' in German, '*Kur*' being an old word meaning choice by election. The seven electors of Germany were the archbishops of Mainz, of Köln and of Trier, three electors from the clergy, with four lay electors, being the king of Bohemia, the count of the Pfalz or Palatinate of the Rhine, the duke of Saxony and the Margrave of Brandenburg.

Richard of Cornwall would be crowned, though only two years later. He had to bribe the electors of Saxony, Brandenburg, Trier and King Ottokar II of Bohemia to obtain their voices. Richard became king of Germany in 1256, and king of the Romans or emperor in 1257. Richard resided almost never in Germany. He joined King Henry III of England against the rebel earls who fought the king under the leadership of Simon de Montfort, the campaigns during the rebellions of from 1264 to 1267. He was made a prisoner after the royalist defeat at Lewes of 1265 and died at the beginning of April 1272.

After Richard's death, another struggle for the succession to the throne started, which culminated in the election of Count Rudolph I of Habsburg. Rudolph had been installed as count of his fief since about 1240. He was the first Habsburg king of Germany. His ancestral castle of Habsburg stood in the Aargau region of the Alps. Rudolph was crowned in the cathedral of Aachen on the 24<sup>th</sup> of October of 1273. He was then fifty-five years old. To obtain the crown, he too had to form alliances with the electors, by marrying his daughters to Duke Ludwig of Bavaria and to Duke Albert of Saxony. A year later, Pope Gregory X also crowned him king of the Romans, or emperor. For this, he had to cede all imperial rights on the Papal States.

A co-candidate of Rudolph was King Ottokar of Bohemia. Ottokar did not turn up on a *Reichstag*, the Diet, a parliament of the nobles of Germany, given in Nürnberg in November of 1274. He refused to recognise Rudolph as king. Ottokar claimed Rudolph had not legally been chosen, because he had not received the vote of Bohemia. Ottokar also refused a second time to come to a *Reichstag*.

Emperor Rudolph had to assemble an army. He marched along the Danube and invaded Austria and Bohemia. Ottokar sought peace. Negotiations started, and were rather rapidly concluded in the autumn of 1276. Ottokar officially recognised being a vassal of the emperor. A double marriage sealed the deal. Rudolph's son Hartmann would marry a daughter of Ottokar, and Ottokar's son, the future King Wenceslaus or Wenzel II, would marry a daughter of Rudolph.

The Diet session at Nürnberg also decided that all crown estates seized since the death of Emperor Frederick II had to be restored to the emperor. Ottokar had refused to hand over the duchies of Austria, Styria and Carinthia, as well as the March of Carniola. King Ottokar was then thrown in the imperial ban, and war declared to him in June of 1276.

Two years later, Emperor Rudolph had to wage a second campaign against Bohemia. He defeated King Ottokar in the Battle of Marchfeld near Vienna. Ottokar lost his life in that battle.

The conflict was not over, however, for Margrave Otto the Tall of Brandenburg continued to oppose the emperor as regent of Wenceslaus II. Once more, peace negotiations followed, in which Rudolph gained Austria, the Steiermark and Kärnten, which he handed over to his sons to rule. Rudolph gave the duchy of Austria to his son Albert and the duchy of Styria to Rudolph II, who was then only twelve years old. This Rudolph was also to be made duke of Swabia. Rudolph finally gave the duchy of Carinthia to Albert's father-in-law, Count Meinhard II of Gorizia-Tirol.

From then on, Rudolph of Habsburg would wage campaign after campaign to install law and order in Germany. He acted against the robber-knights of Germany, in Swabia, Franconia, Bavaria, and foremost in Thuringia. He lacked the resources and the power to fully restore peace in these lands. He suffered the same funding issues as King Edward I encountered in England. Also the German emperors would not play a determining role in the conflict between Flanders and France in the coming years.

## Ghent

Our town of Ghent lived in peace from 1250 to 1280. The wars and campaigns were fought by the knights, by the nobility of the lands. Except for paying taxes, our *poorters* of Ghent were not directly engaged in the skirmishes and battles. The volunteers who engaged as warriors, were paid as mercenaries by the belligerents. Our city militia did not serve directly and in large numbers in the army of the count of Flanders or of the king of France.

The militias of the guilds of the city served to defend our rights and liberties, our walls, the liberties and privileges granted to us in charters by the counts. No invasions from neighbouring lands threatened our cities of Flanders. No army laid siege to the city. We did not really consider the conflicts of the counts and kings as ours. We did have political issues of our own inside the town, but we never felt insecure or unsafe within the perimeter of our walls.

In the beginning of our 13<sup>th</sup> century, the men who managed Ghent served their function for life, for as long as they wanted. The landowner-poorters ruled over Ghent, as members of the

families who had founded the city, owned land inside the walls, and had come to prominence merely by being among the first to establish at the confluent of the rivers Leie and Scheldt. Before the beginning of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, aldermanship had become hereditary in the landowner-poorter families of Ghent, primarily in the four knight families of the Ser Sanders, Ser Symoens, Ser Borluut and Ser Bette. The title of 'Ser' denoted the Flemish title of knights. Other families had joined the four.

A charter of 1178, given by the count, recognised the rights and duties of the aldermen. They could impose taxes and should secure the peace in the town. They were to hold the pleas to the count in his absence, or in the presence of his representatives. Vacant functions of aldermen could be filled up by other aldermen. This charter was confirmed and strengthened in 1191.

The form of government changed in 1212. Count Ferdinand ordained that the aldermen should not be chosen annually by the other aldermen, but by electors nominated by the count. The elections of the aldermen happened on the day of the Assumption of the Virgin, on the 15<sup>th</sup> of August. The institution of the annual aldermen to be chosen by the count augmented his power. It stopped the overwhelming power of the ancient ruling lineages. It provided the common inhabitants some hope of ever obtaining the office.

The countess and the guilds accused the aldermen of getting rich from the taxes wrung from the poor. The countess also demanded now from the aldermen the annual presentation of the city accounts.

An organisation known as of the Thirty-Nine came into existence in a charter of 1228, given by Count Ferdinand for the aid the aldermen and the wealthier *poorters* of Ghent had provided for getting him out of prison. The Thirty-Nine designated the number of aldermen. The aldermen now would be chosen for the first time by the aldermen who were in office, and they were to hold their office for life.

By this arrangement, the out-going aldermen were to choose the thirty-nine aldermen. Among them, thirteen aldermen would truly be the aldermen for one year, the thirteen aldermen of the previous year served as councillors, and then there were also the thirteen aldermen called the '*vacui*', of the year from before the councillors. The thirteen men of the year were called the Aldermen of the Law (of the '*Keure*' in Flemish). The thirteen men of the year before, were called the Aldermen of the Estate or of the '*Gedeele*' in Flemish. The 13 aldermen of the Estate were also called the '*paysierders*' in Flemish, as they guaranteed the public peace. They served as the judges of the city. The councillors without function, the '*vacui*', became the councillors of the next year. Five aldermen had to choose the thirty-four other aldermen.

When in 1244 Margaret of Constantinople was instituted as countess of Flanders, she was already for twelve years a widow of her second husband, William of Dampierre. She also had three sons and three daughters by William.

Ghent had signed in 1249 an agreement with most of the other towns of Flanders and of Brabant not to shelter artisans who had caused disorders in other towns. In 1274, these alliances were renewed. The Brabant towns were by the treaty not allowed to give asylum to people from Flemish towns who had sought to hamper our liberties and privileges.

The artisan guilds came more and more in conflict with the government of the aldermen, the members of the most prominent families. The artisan guilds complained to the countess. She was eager to exercise more control over the cities. Her interests coincided with those of the guilds in curbing the power of the aldermen.

In 1275, Countess Margaret suddenly abolished the organisation of the Thirty-Nine. She dismissed the current Thirty-Nine, and substituted them for a council of Thirty. She transformed the Thirty-Nine into two groups of 13 aldermen, and four treasurers. The aldermen thus became a group of thirty.

The Thirty-Nine thereupon appealed to the king of France. They wanted to hold on to their privileges.

Countess Margaret also sent a letter to the king. The letter was presented to the king by three well-known *Gentenaars*: William and Peter van Utenhove, and by Hugh Utenvolderstraete. In November of 1275, Countess Margaret had this letter sealed by the abbots of the abbeys of Saint Peter's and Saint Bavo's of Ghent. She added to the letter a mention of her honesty, written by the *Fremineuren*, the Order of the Franciscan Friars I belonged to.

In 1277, two of the king's counsellors, the count of Ponthieu and William of Neuville, delivered the royal answer to Ghent. They had to examine the behaviour of the aldermen and of the countess in this matter.

On the 22<sup>nd</sup> of July 1277, the king published his decision in the appeal of the Thirty-Nine against the countess. The king revoked the First Alderman of the Law, Everard de Grutere, as well as six of his colleagues. The others, to the number of thirty, as also the countess had ordained, remained in place. The old charters given to Ghent by Count Ferdinand and Countess Joan remained valid. With his judgement, however, the king refuted the basis of the new organisation of the aldermen as proposed by Countess Margaret. He suppressed the new organisation and confirmed the older charters.

The year 1279 saw the official foundation of the sea-port of Sluis in the Zwin bay. Sluis would become the main port of Flanders, a very large harbour. In December of 1279, Countess Margaret of Constantinople, countess of Flanders, 76 years old, solemnly passed Flanders to her heir, her son Guy of Dampierre.

Guy of Dampierre consented in 1279 to the continuance of the Thirty-Nine, but he demanded the annual rendering of the accounts of the city. This public presentation could lay bare the possible embezzlement and injustice in taxation organised by the aldermen of Ghent. He imprisoned several of his fiercest opposers among the aldermen.

Once more, the aldermen appealed to the king of France, and discussions began between the count and the king over the government of Ghent. King Philip referred the plaintiffs to the court of the count. This court sentenced them to heavy fines. Count Guy also declared the properties of these aldermen forfeited, even though the aldermen cried out their individual faults had been paid by the fine. When the aldermen presented their accounts, Count Guy refused to ratify them, saying the aldermen had tyrannised the common people. Matters remained this way for a few years.

The evolution of the government of Ghent showed the growing influence of the guilds, the countess and count seeking popularity with the guilds and with the common people against the ruling elite of Ghent. The landowner-poorters regularly sent appeals to the king of France.

### A grand design

I often wondered whether a grand divine design determines our deeds.

I did perceive a pattern in what was happening in England, Germany and also in France. The new kings, and even the popes, were consolidating their power over the lands they had been given to rule. Many will say I am naïve, but I truly and staunchly believe the new kings were more concerned with the royal function than with their personal glory. They had come to think they were the guardians of something far greater than their persons: of the God-granted institution of royalty.

Ego, vanity and greed were equally at work, of course, as always, but these new kings knew how to succeed, unlike the previous ones. They had received the gifts of intelligence, diligence, stubbornness for their causes, charisma, and they regarded themselves as responsible men. King Edward I had waged several wars to subdue Wales. Scotland would follow. King Rudolph of Habsburg had been gobbling up several territories of Germany, adding them to his personal fiefs, but he had also humiliated the king of Bohemia and kept him in the grip of the kingdom. He had destroyed the evil power of the robber-knights in Thuringia and other lands.

The new kings were trying energetically to win back the power and fame their forefathers had lost since the great Charlemagne had divided his empire. Emperor Charles the Great, the first and new king of the Romans, was their shining example. How they must have cursed the kings before them for having spoilt such power!

Counter-examples were men like Richard of Cornwall, who couldn't have cared less for Germany, the land of which he became king. Or like King Louis IX of France, who was a very pious man, probably more concerned with the loss of the Christian counties in the Holy Land, and therefore always very intent on his crusades.

Why then and at the same time, did powerful, intelligent, ruthless and brave kings like Edward I, Rudolph of Habsburg and later Philip the Fair emerge? Why suddenly were these men not as gentle as the knightly King Henry III or King Louis IX? Was a grand, divine design at work?

It was true that the lesser nobles of our countries enjoyed extorting taxes from their people. They enjoyed fighting each other for more glory, money and lands, thereby devastating towns, villages and the countryside, stealing, raping and killing with unfeeling zeal. Maybe it was a good thing the kings intervened to stop the many robber raids inside their kingdoms. Was this a sign of the divine design? I rather concluded the coming of a new breed of kings was a coincidence in which God's hand was not present. But, who knows? Are not the ways of God inscrutable?

In Flanders, we were not very concerned with what was happening in England and Germany, though our relations with these peoples were multiple and complex. I feared for what would happen to Flanders when also the French kings would begin to look with envious eyes at their

richest, but also very independent-minded and very powerful feudal land of the counts of Flanders. The insight struck me powerfully. Trouble was ahead for Ghent. I thought about what might happen next in more detail. I ran to inform my brother Juris Vresele.

Brother Bernardus was sceptic too. He admired God and prayed fervently, but his image of God was of an amorphous force pervading the universe. He did not really believe God had shaped us to his image.

‘God cannot but be spirit,’ he concluded to me. ‘How then can God have made me, ugly worm, to his image? Preposterous! And why would God bother so much about me? The new kings were as greedy, wicked and arrogant as the former ones. Their crimes were greater.’ My mouth remained open for quite some time. Bernardus had a strange view of his betters. It was hard to discuss such matters with Bernardus. Moreover, he was right. How can you say to a child it has wrong ideas, when you think the same?

I replied, ‘God is so enormous, he can well enough bother about you. Christ said so. About the kings, you are right. They were bad. They were not worse than we, though, feeble and doubting, and fearful of powers greater than they. Have some mercy for them. They did not have fine counsellors around them, either, only flatterers.’

Bernardus looked angrily at me, but he kept his silence. He did still respect me a little.

## 1.2. Juris Vresele. 1280-1284

Juris Vresele was a rather short man, short of height and sometimes short of temper. With his broad shoulders, heavy muscles and unusually plump but strong legs, he looked stocky, squat, not unlike the many strikingly hardy men who unloaded goods every day at the quays of *Tussen Bruggen*. When Juris walked, he gave an impression of easy strength, of solidness, of a man to whom authority came easy. He looked around with fierce, dark green eyes. The eyes flickered constantly, seemed often to scorn, flew from left to right and took in all. They inspired awe in men and strange, sensual stirrings in the loins of women. The ladies of Ghent and the girls sensed he was a dominating man, who had no difficulty in overpowering others. Any jolly face of a lusty girl would not turn Juris Vresele around her finger in an instant, and even less after flattering conversations. Obsequiousness slid along his body to the ground. Only a true, natural, and intelligent woman of full character could hope to keep her hold on Juris for a while. His thick, black eyebrows almost always frowned. Juris was a serious lad, not one to be trifled with. Only his small nose and thin, not much longer lips, might have indicated a good nature in character. His small ears stuck to his square head. Juris Vresele went with black, tousled hair that looked as if he had never known a comb. That was because one of his uncontrolled habits was to regularly tear his fingers through the ample, black locks that crowned his head. Interested women would remark his hair was always washed and dry, never greasy and dirty. He was usually also clean-shaven. He wore no beard.

At *Tussen Bruggen* and on the quays of the Lieve Canal that connected Ghent to Damme, everybody knew Juris Vresele for his cunning and for his commandeering demeanour. He could be arrogant and sceptical when need be, but also soft and forgiving when errors were made without malicious intent. He had not much patience with men who faulted more than once. In business, in price negotiations, he remained obstinately to what he had in mind. He stayed with a cost he deemed honest and right. Many brokers and men who sold to him found him devious at first, when they did not get what they wanted, but the traders he sold to and his clients got a decent price and good service always. When he could not deliver, he would move earth and heaven to hold his promises. Most merchants of Ghent and along the Leie would have dealt with him gratefully, for he delivered on what he promised. They knew him to be solid also in finances, a man of some wealth, of strong reserves in coins and land. Juris Vresele sought land. Was he not a landowner of Ghent, an owner of houses in the *kuipe*, the centre of the city, though not a member of one of the oldest families? His origins lay in the small town of Zele, not far from Ghent. He still had kept the ancestral farm there he was born in, although he had come to live in the glorious city of Ghent.

Andrew Vresele, Juris's father, had continued to live in Zele in the old farm, although he had given up farming and had become a broker and a trader. Andrew Vresele had died in 1280. His wife, Joan de Backere, a woman from a fine bakers' family of Ghent, did not enjoy good health. Mother Joan now lived with her son Juris in a large house of the *Kalanderberg*, one of the most respected streets of Ghent. She seldom left the house, and her bed. Few people knew her.

Juris had started trading on his own when he was still a mere boy of sixteen years old. He had rapidly made good money, so that now, in his twenties, despite his youth, he was generally regarded as one of the most promising young traders and landowners of the city.

He had only one close friend, a young man three years his elder, who also lived with his family in a large house of the *Kalanderberg*, a neighbour, in a house separated from the Vresele house only by three other dwellings. Had these lodgings become free of owners, Juris or his friend would surely have bought them and added them to their patrimonium.

Juris's friend, William van Artevelde, was also the son of a family that had not forever lived in Ghent. As the name indicated, William's family originated from Ertvelde. Ertvelde was a village that lay at about half the distance from Ghent to Zele, at less than ten miles from the centre of Ghent. Ertvelde lay to the north though, Zele to the east. Although they could be called landowner-poorters of Ghent, neither the Vreseles nor the Arteveldes belonged to the old lineages of founder-fathers of the city. Hence they did not enjoy the privileges of these men.

Juris Vresele liked William van Artevelde. William's character was similar to his own, rather more choleric even. They nurtured similar opinions about the government of their city and Flanders, about the haughty nobility and about how to trade. They convinced each other Flanders should govern itself by providing support to a strong-willed count. The city of Ghent should govern itself by electing honest aldermen, by men chosen among the knights as well as among the representatives of the guilds. They loathed the grip the ancient lineages held by whatever right over Ghent. They hated the corruption and greed of these men. They confessed being not a little envious of the power of the ancient founding families. Still, they mostly minded their own business. Their brain was not set to overthrowing the government of the city now. They coveted the power of the aldermen, but the envy did not drive them to violent action. Their heads were filled with a sufficient number of issues, with new, exciting trade projects at all times. Juris and William merely sought to be left in peace, and not to be remarked by anyone about how much money they had assembled. The aldermen had noticed them recently though, fearing the newly gained wealth of Juris and William, which one day might end in challenging their supremacy, as their authority seemed more and more to dwindle before such men.

Juris Vresele got most of his income these days from the trade in wine, peat and alum. He was best known in Ghent for his delivery of peat, the basic combustible in the houses of the city. Peat provided warmth in winter, for those who could afford better than a few blocks of wood to warm their houses. Juris Vresele brought the peat to the city from the peat bogs in the Four Crafts, from the environs of the towns of Axel and Hulst, farther to the north of Ghent. He owned peat bogs there, which he did not want to deplete too rapidly. He bought peat from other lands and farmers in the Four Crafts. His better clients were the abbots of Ghent. It was also peat that made him to meet Mergriet Mutaert.

Juris brought peat to the convent of the Bijloke. The abbess of the Bijloke was his best client. The Bijloke could have been the largest abbey of Ghent. It consisted of several large buildings, an immense courtyard, and it housed a popular hospital for the sick. Juris Vresele knew how to remain demure and polite with the nuns, how to charm the veiled women. He

had won the friendship of the Mother Abbess, who gave him large orders for the delivery of peat from the autumn to the winter. Juris guaranteed steady delivery at the lowest prices. He offered fine smiles and puns, a humble, bowed head, and discreet work in bringing in the peat himself into the store of the convent. To that end, he had been allowed to walk a length of the cloister to shorten his task.

One day of 1283, Juris Vresele brought to the store inside the convent his large reed baskets laden with peat from a *duerme*, a flat-bottomed boat on the Leie. While he walked in the cloister, bent over his heavy basket, he saw a divine apparition. When he passed one of the two doors of the chapter hall, a girl dressed from top to toe in a white tunic stepped out of the hall. Had Juris stumbled upon a shining white angel radiating light, he would not have been more surprised. His first impression past, he saw a nice, tall girl, lowering her head, two heavy volumes of books under each arm. She shot out of the door leading also to one of the small libraries of the convent. She had left open the doors of the library and of the chapter open, but Mother Abbess closed them after her.

Juris almost bumped into the white girl, but he could at the last moment swing his load to the right, aided by the weight of the basket. He skirted at the last moment along the wall and the columns of the cloister, avoiding the girl. The girl stood embarrassed. She laughed. Had she seen a black devil in the cloister, she could not have been more astonished. It was not the first heavy basked of peat Juris brought inside that day. The brown dust of the peat had settled on his face and clothes and when he sweated, Juris had wiped his face. Stripes of brown and grey streaked his cheeks in peat and sweat, as he had now and then been wiping with his arm over his head, only aggravating his not too clean appearance. Dirt had covered Juris while he had been placing the blocks of peat in his baskets.

Juris also dropped peat at the last moment while he skidded past the girl. A few blocks rolled to little farther than a few feet on the floor. Juris continued to stare at the girl, however. She might not have been the most radiant, delicate, pale beauty of Ghent, but her face struck him to outright admiration. The girl's traits resembled the images and sculptures of the Madonna he had seen in many churches. He found the girl very gracious, adorable, sweet, tender and fine. She was a striking woman, rather than beautiful. She looked at him with interest too, holding her head a little oblique, as if wondering why he studied her, and then her laugh pearly on. He stammered an excuse.

Mother Abbess advanced a little behind the girl. The abbess had been worrying about the girl. Mergriet Mutaert, as the girl was called, was one of the nicest, intelligent and pious girls the abbess knew. Mergriet had taken a liking to read books, many books. She was the only girl to ask for books to read, whether in Flemish, French or Latin. Mergriet was a very intelligent, erudite girl, who had already asked to take on vows in the convent. The abbess loved the girl as her daughter, but she considered her a little too lively, too smart, too outspoken, and too independent of mind to be buried in a nunnery.

Mother Abbess of the Bijloke also nurtured some interest in alchemy. She wondered what would happen when she pushed two ingredients together, an attractive, spirited girl and a smart, honest, charming, clever young man. She had thus contrived for Mergriet Mutaert to step into the cloister, which was not really necessary, for by another gate Mergriet could have left the convent more discreetly and more quickly. She had wanted Mergriet to stumble upon

Juris. The meeting had happened better than planned. The sauce seemed to mix well, for the two young persons looked at each other as if in trance for a few heartbeats. Then, Juris Vresele grabbed for his peat bars on the ground, one eye still on the enchanting girl, and groping around with an extended arm, unconsciously taking up the peat from the soiled cloister floor. The abbess noticed it all and she was astonished herself at the effect. Juris kept looking at the sniggering girl. He noticed not the twinkle in the eye of the abbess, not the slight grin of pleasure on the nun's face. The abbess' mood ameliorated considerably that moment. Her hopes in Christ's message of love and of the beauty of life improved a lot in her. She was all the happier, and more satisfied, as her little scheme had worked out to perfection. She would only have to improve on the divine scheme by bringing the two together once more, preferably with a cleaner and better dressed, less shy Juris Vresele.

The abbess cried out, 'Mergriet Mutaert, girl, take a little care with where you jump to! You have made poor young Juris Vresele from the *Kalanderberg* lose his peat blocks! Get along, Juris, don't linger, man!'

There, now the youngsters knew each other's names! The abbess muttered a silent prayer for God to take over from her, and bring the two to meet anew, outside the convent.

God the Father or the Madonna may also have been in a good mood that day and the next, for only a little later Mergriet Mutaert was loitering along the quays of *Tussen Bruggen*, when Juris Vresele hurried by. Juris recognised Mergriet instantly, noticed she was a little less of the radiant beauty he had since their first encounter held in his memory, but still a striking, unusual woman provided with a splendid profile. Juris was once more impressed by the girl. He had an appointment and he was late. Yet, he wished his rendezvous to hell, and went up to her.

His hello was clumsy, and she didn't say much in the first moments. Then, they talked some more and actually fell into an easy conversation. Juris learned Mergriet was the daughter of a fine bakers' family, well-known in Ghent, and Juris introduced himself not as a peatbog-man, but as a trader of Ghent. Juris had to gather all his courage to start talking thus to a girl. Mergriet lost her shyness at the sweetness of his words. She explained she was a friend of the abbess of the Bijloke. She loaned books from the abbess' personal library. When the girl heard Juris was a successful trader of Ghent, she promised to see him again the next day, right after noon, again at *Tussen Bruggen*, near the Great Meat hall. Juris promised more talk. Now, Juris truly reminded himself and Mergriet, he could not let his friend, William van Artevelde, wait too long for him. He had to go. They waved goodbye.

Juris ran to the *Kalanderberg* to meet with his friend. He was not only in love, but also in trouble. He had to seek the advice of William.

Juris and also William had begun to import beer and hops from Germany, also hop plants. A few breweries of Ghent had already been trying to imitate the darker, heavier beers Juris and William imported from the Rhine lands. Beers made from *gruit*, a mixture of various plants Juris didn't know the names of, were fruity and fine, but hop gave the beverage an additional taste of bitter freshness and of exquisite fullness one could not obtain with mere *gruit* mixtures. *Gruit* made beers, hops made great beers.

Juris had also bought *gruit* and sold some to other brewers, illegally. The de Grutere family held the exclusive right on the import and distribution of *gruit* in Ghent, hops were forbidden

in the city. The de Gruterer family were landowner-poorters, and members of an ancient lineage of founders of the city. Members of that family were permanent aldermen. Why should one family alone profit from the sale of a product? Juris and William had no afterthoughts and no scruples in selling the stuff. Nevertheless, the import of *gruit* and hops from Germany over Brabant was illicit, and punishment could be hard.

A young man called Zeger de Grutere would be the prospective, future alderman of the family. He held his head high and was known as a very arrogant youth. He made it his particular obsessive task to watch over his family's monopoly. The de Gruterer family had always tolerated some modest trade on other *gruits* than the ones they provided. They had not acted on all illicit sale of *gruits*, retaliated only when they esteemed the little that was going on behind their backs a growing threat to their business.

Zeger de Grutere had been following up on the sales of Juris Vresele and William van Artevelde. Juris and William had also invited other traders and innkeepers of Ghent to challenge the de Grutere monopoly, by bringing in *gruit* into Ghent from other channels than the warehouses of the de Grutere family.

Zeger de Grutere was the exponent of an important, well-known, and maybe the wealthiest landowner-poorter family of Ghent. He was also a major *Leliaert*.

*Leliaerts* was the name Ghent gave to the men who appealed to the king of France in case of conflicts with the count. The lily was the symbol of the kings of France. The landowner-poorters of Ghent had become *Leliaerts*, because they were in power in the city, were keen to hold to their power, and therefore tolerated neither insight, control nor mingling in the affairs of the city by the count of Flanders.

Juris Vresele and William van Artevelde were *Liebaerts* or *Klauwaerts*. The *Liebaert* was the name of the black lion on the golden banner of the counts of Flanders. This lion showed its claws ready to strike its enemies, who were at that moment mainly the *Leliaerts*, so men like Juris and William were called also *Klauwaerts* from the Flemish word of 'klauw' for the lion's claws. This was one more element because of which Zeger de Grutere vowed a particular disliking to Juris Vresele and William van Artevelde.

There was more. Juris Vresele and William van Artevelde had been buying several lands, pastures and polders, barren and wet lands near the Scheldt Stream. Zeger de Grutere had followed their acquisitions with dark, envious eyes. The de Grutere family also bought lands in the Four Crafts, and had stumbled a few times against better prices offered to the lord of Axel by the Vresele and Artevelde families. Zeger de Grutere was a big, fat, ugly, rough man. He dealt hard in his negotiations, with a reputation for being devious and not always honest in his dealing. The lords and farmers selling land in the Four Crafts preferred selling their terrains to Juris Vresele and William van Artevelde, in written contracts the conditions of which they could have confidence in. This success also angered Zeger.

A few months after Juris Vresele's first encounter with Mergriet Mutaert, Zeger de Grutere had Juris Vresele called to the meeting of the *paysierders*, to the judges of the aldermen of the Estate. Zeger accused Juris of having deliberately abused of the rights of the de Grutere family on the import of the ingredients for making beer, of *gruit* and hops. He also accused Juris Vresele of having incited the brewers of Ghent to produce beer made from these hops.

Juris Vresele had to stand the accused before the members of some of the oldest lineages of the city. Zeger de Grutere stood a little aloof of him, shouting his arguments, pointing with an outstretched arm and a threatening finger to the vile Juris Vresele. The aldermen of the Estate formed a court of justice competent for such cases, which did not involve manslaughter.

Manslaughter would have been brought before the count or at least before the count's bailiff. Zeger demanded from the aldermen they punished Juris Vresele by sending him in exile out of the city and on a pilgrimage of several years to Santiago de Compostela.

Juris answered calmly de Grutere proffered mere allegations. Juris demanded proof of what Zeger shouted. He did not deny having brought in a little *gruit*, as a by-product of bartering for other goods, but he said a little such trade had always been going on and was notoriously tolerated in Ghent. He asked for proof he had made a first and large trade of importing *gruit*. He denied having imported hops and German beers. He challenged Zeger de Grutere to show proof of his allegations, and testimonies of brewers against his person.

De Grutere stood alone. No brewer of Ghent had volunteered to testify against a Vresele or an Artevelde. De Grutere found little sympathy with the brewers, who also loathed the monopoly and the high prices of the de Grutere family. The inn-keepers and other traders of the city had refused to accuse Juris and William.

Zeger de Grutere had thought his mere assertion was proof sufficient. The van Arteveldes, however, had been talking to a few aldermen in the court of justice that sat here. These aldermen now spoke out, saying allegations were no proof. As a result, the aldermen, traders most of them, and therefore not really liking monopolies, knew very well what was going on, but they had been considering the de Grutere family had been becoming too wealthy, too powerful and too arrogant. The de Gruteres, though influential, would not tell the other aldermen what they had to do! They dealt a rare lesson in humility to Zeger de Grutere. They reminded him of the necessity to bring forward proof of what he claimed. De Grutere stood with empty hands.

The case against Juris Vresele was rapidly dismissed, though at least two aldermen sermoned him to restraint in his trade with the brewers in Ghent. They gave a warning to Juris, but he could leave the *Schepenhuis*, the aldermen's offices, and the meeting of the judicial court a free man. Zeger de Grutere seethed with anger.

A little later, Juris Vresele presented Mergriet Mutaert to his bother, the *Fremineuren* monk Fulk Vresele. Mergriet could entertain Fulk with such an inspired, erudite conversation, time flew by. Fulk came entirely under the spell of Mergriet. He thought Juris had done well indeed with Mergriet.

Juris and Mergriet married six months later. The religious ceremony took place in Saint John's Church, the parish church of the *Kalanderberg*. Juris organised the wedding banquet and a feast of dancing in the open space near the Bijloke convent, on the property of the abbey, the terrain graciously offered for the occasion by the abbess. The abbess of the Bijloke was one of the honoured guests at the wedding. She continued throughout the evening showing a happy grin, in the knowledge it was yet possible to enjoy a sweet secret, in divine conspiracy with her Lord and spiritual husband. She knew the marriage would be a happy one.

When Mergriet Mutaert entered for the first time her future home in the *Kalanderberg* in that year of 1284, she had expected to find little and only rough-hewn furniture. She was amazed to look at ornately carved oak tables and chests, reddish glowing wood panels covering the walls of her hall, and wonderful tapestries hanging above. In large, heavy chests, Juris showed her the silver cutlery that was now hers, and silver chandeliers glittered in the candlelight. When she marvelled at such beauty, also in other rooms of the house, and when she saw the huge bed in the bridal room, she hid in Juris's arms, tears of happiness in her eyes. No, she had not wedded in a poor family!

Mergriet Mutaert rapidly became herself and adornment to the *Kalanderberg*. People came to know her as a wise, erudite, saintly but not hypocritical woman, to whom everybody was welcome for a judicious advice and a laugh that chased gloom. If Juris remained a taciturn and somewhat austere, strict man, Mergriet soothed, and found many fine words. She heightened the pride of the Vresele family.

### 1.3. Fulk's Chronicles. Count Guy of Dampierre. 1280-1292

After the death of his mother, Margaret of Constantinople, countess of Flanders, Guy of Dampierre could fully exercise his authority of count. Flanders and Ghent were very prosperous already, their wealth grew steadily, and Ghent expanded. An army of labourers dug out and deepened the Lieve Canal that connected Ghent to the sea harbour of Damme. As the Ghent outer suburbs took in more people and built more houses, the aldermen erected new walls to incorporate the expanding quarters.

The towns of Flanders prided in the liberties and privileges graciously given to them by the count and written down in charters. Flanders traded with far-off lands. Foreign traders, such as the wealthy Lombards from the north of Italy, were welcomed. Many established in the Flemish towns and remained there to sustain the trade with their homeland. The large Flemish markets thrived. They attracted merchants, sellers and buyers from all over the continent. Trade and industry contributed to the growing wealth of Flanders, the industry being foremost the weaving and preparing of high quality cloth made from preponderantly the finest English wool.

The merchants of Flanders formed an association, well-known all over the harbours of the continent. This association received the name of the Hanse of London. The Hanse had not only as its members *poorters* of Bruges, though these were among the most numerous and wealthiest members. Also men from other towns, of Ieper, Damme, Lille, Sluis and Aardenburg worked and discussed matters in the Hanse. Even towns farther on the mainland joined the Hanse of the traders: men of Saint-Omer, Arras, Valenciennes, Amiens, Rheims, and other sites. The Hanse enjoyed its own liberties and privileges. For instance, a merchant could only be judged in a town for the crimes committed in that same town, not for crimes of elsewhere. Such clauses provided some immunity for the traders.

In this atmosphere of growing wealth, the cities became aware of their contribution to the riches of the county, and also of the power that accompanied the wealth. They sought yet more liberties from the count of Flanders. The urban knights, the landowner-*poorters*, the ancient city-founding lineages, identified with the cities, and represented them as aldermen holding the government. The majority of the population, the artisans, assembled in and represented by the guilds, opposed to the landowner-*poorters*. They did not share in the power of government. They resented this exceedingly.

In August of 1280, a terrible fire had destroyed the ancient halls of Bruges in which the aldermen stored the old charters of the city. The charters burned. The city asked the count of Flanders to renew the pledges of the old charters in new ones. Guy of Dampierre at first refused. Revolt fomented in Bruges. The count suppressed the protests in violence. He had five most notable *poorters* of Bruges decapitated. The bailiff executed Baldwin Priem, John Koopman, Lambert Lam and Lambert Danwiet. Guy of Dampierre did provide Bruges later with new charters of liberties, but the clauses in these documents were not exactly the same as they had been in the original documents! For instance, the count reserved for himself and for his successors the right to abrogate any decision of the aldermen. He also held the right to

demand of the aldermen to present at any time the accounts of the city. He kept the right to change the concessions given in the charters.

Bruges revolted. The militia of the city killed many men of the count. The same evolution of the count trying to limit the power of the aldermen happened in Ieper and in Ghent. In Ieper, the men of the guilds openly rebelled against the knights of the city who held the government. The count rode to Ieper with a small army. He punished the insurgents, and forced the aldermen and the guilds to the payment of a large sum of money. At that time, Guy of Dampierre had not yet sided with either the knights of the city or with the guilds.

The cities sought allies. Already in 1274, the aldermen of Ghent had signed an alliance with the towns of Brabant, such as with Leuven, Lier, Tienen, Brussels and Mechelen. These towns promised not to give asylum to people, also artisans of each other's towns, who had threatened or actually tried to modify their laws and privileges. The initiative for this alliance originated in Ghent, devised by the Thirty-Nine aldermen of the city.

The understanding could augment the power of the cities and lead to other agreements directed against the counts. Especially Countess Margaret had considered this alliance, signed behind her back, in particular dislike. She punished Ghent by abolishing the government of the Thirty-Nine, replacing it by a Council of Thirty, composed of thirteen other aldermen, thirteen councillors, and four treasurers.

The guilds of Ghent agreed with the countess! They even wrote a letter to the king of France, the overlord, lauding the actions of the countess, and asking for the support of the king for the measure. The abbots of the abbeys of Saint Peter and of Saint Bavo, and the leaders of the Orders of the *Fremineuren* and of the Preacher Monks of Ghent, co-signed the letter.

The Thirty-Nine aldermen, as they had by then the habit of proceeding, appealed to the king of France, claiming the countess had judged without hearing them. The court sent two envoys of France to Ghent to bring the king's judgement. They revoked the First Alderman of the Law, Everard de Grutere, together with six of his colleagues, but held the other aldermen in office. They suppressed the new organisation set in place by the countess of Flanders. Countess Margaret had to acknowledge the aldermen of the ancient lineages had won partly over her by appealing to the king to keep most of their aldermen and the principle of the Thirty-Nine in place, but the remaining council resembled much her proposal of only thirty aldermen. Nevertheless, her first attempt at limiting the power of the lineages had failed.

In 1280, when Count Guy de Dampierre had largely taken over matters of government from his mother, the count tried at a second attempt. The guilds had asked him to exert more control over the actions of the aldermen. They proposed the abolition of the hereditary aldermanship, some representation of the guilds in the town councils, and the restoration of the old jurisdiction of the count and of his bailiff over the aldermen.

Count Guy of Dampierre wanted to impose on the aldermen of Ghent the yearly presentation of the accounts of the city. He negotiated this modification. The count and the alderman concluded on a transaction. The count received forty-eight thousand pounds Parisis for his confirmation of the liberties of Ghent, and he would hold the control of the expenditures, as well as jurisdiction over the worst crimes of treason and rebellion against his office. Guy

rapidly extended the interpretation of these last clauses, imprisoning all of those *poorters* who opposed him. Once more, the aldermen appealed to the king.

This time, the king sided with the count of Flanders. The king rebuffed the aldermen. He sentenced them to the payment of a fine of sixty thousand pounds! Guy de Dampierre was not entirely satisfied. He told the Thirty-Nine had also forfeited their possessions in the conflict. The aldermen again appealed to the king. The court ordered the aldermen of Ghent could keep their lands and money, but they had to pay forty thousand pounds Tournois additionally. In one more judgment, the king ordered the fine to be paid out of the treasury of the city of Ghent, meaning not the knights of the city would pay the fine but the artisans, by taxes. Guy de Dampierre contested the principle these payments had to be made by the city instead of by the aldermen, arguing against the corruption of the notables. The king then appointed commissars to check on the allegations of the count. When somewhat later the Thirty-Nine presented the accounts of the city, Guy of Dampierre refused to approve them. The aldermen of Ghent, in a by then well-rehearsed mode, once more appealed to the king against the decision. The king of France ratified the accounts. Such decision must have come as a humiliation to the count.

In 1284, Guy of Dampierre accused the Thirty-Nine of having abused of their position. The king now allowed the count to hold a public inquiry into the matter. The count consulted the most important *poorters* of the city to learn of proposals for a better form of city government. Guy of Dampierre began the inquiry by throwing his major opposers in prison. A few aldermen fled from Ghent. Few of the interviewed men dared to speak in favour of the Thirty-Nine. Only the last aldermen interviewed, John of Wetteren, stated his preference for the old system of permanent aldermen. Others, among whom John de Grutere, supported his opinion afterwards. Most of the aldermen mentioned it might be better to limit aldermanship to a period of one year. The secret conviction of all remained that the Thirty-Nine formed the best government possible, because emanating from the best men of the city. The men from the old lineages, they esteemed, were the only ones who could defend the liberties of the city against the lord and against other dangers.

Meanwhile, the conflict between the House of Dampierre and the House of the Avesnes lasted.

The Dampierres wanted Hainault, the Avesnes wanted Flanders.

The German emperor still favoured the Avesnes, like his predecessor. He favoured his own nobles above those who depended in feudal submission to the king of France. He confirmed the gift of the imperial lands formerly held by the counts of Flanders, the Four Crafts and the Lands of Aalst, Geeraardsbergen and Waas, to the Avesnes. The count of Flanders had ignored his entreaties to do homage to the emperor for these lands.

On the 17<sup>th</sup> of June 1282, the German emperor shut Count Guy of Dampierre out of the peace of the empire. By the Edict of Worms, the German nobles threw Flanders in the ban of the empire. The archbishops of Köln and Mainz handed the imperial investiture for the territories to John of Avesnes. Emperor Rudolph of Habsburg promised men-at-arms from Luxemburg and Holland in the conflict with Flanders. Count Guy had forged strong alliances, however, annihilating the threat to Flanders. He avoided thus the war with Hainault.

Guy of Dampierre augmented his prestige by allying with the duke of Brabant. He also supported the lords of Beaufort against the people of Liège, linking them to his cause. In 1281, after the death of Bishop John of Enghien, he succeeded in having one of his sons be appointed to the bishopric of Liège. This might have cost him enormous sums, but he and Flanders were rich. Guy also sought and obtained as ally the count of Guelders. He gave the count his daughter, Margaret of Flanders, in marriage. Margaret was the widow of King Alexander of Scotland, and brought with her some far claim on the throne of Scotland. Guelders yielded to the Flemish knights all the fortresses of the duchy of Limburg, and later even of many other fortresses of Guelders.

The count of Flanders sought to build alliances through marriages of his sons and daughters. His elder son and successor, Robert of Béthune, was married to Blanche of Anjou, the daughter of Charles of Anjou king of Sicily. After her death, he married Yolande de Nevers, widow of Tristan of France.

Guy's son Philip, who had accompanied Charles of Anjou to Italy, received in wedding Mathilde de Courtenay, countess of Chieti. She was the daughter of Raoul de Courtenay and Alice of Montfort, who brought with her the county of Bigorre.

A daughter of Guy de Dampierre became countess of Jülich.

Count Guy proposed his daughter Philippa to marry the heir of the throne of England.

Florent V, the count of Holland, reconciled with Count Guy and married another of Guy's daughters.

Guy de Dampierre also acquired counties by buying them from their owners. He bought the lordships of Dunkirk, Bailleul, the castellanies of Cambrai and of Saint-Omer.

The emperor offered the arbitration of the bishops of Liège and of Metz over the matter of the imperial lands of the count of Flanders. The bishop of Liège was a son of Guy de Dampierre, and the bishop of Metz was a son of the count of Hainault, the one a Dampierre and the other an Avesnes. The judgement of the bishops provided no satisfactory common solution.

The German emperor repeated his sentence to give to the d'Avesnes all the lands of the count of Flanders north and east of the Scheldt. On the 7<sup>th</sup> of April of 1287, the bishop of Tusculum, the papal legate, summoned the count of Flanders to obey on penalty of excommunication. Guy de Dampierre persisted in refusing to comply. He protested, claiming rightly his ancestors had always held the imperial lands in feudal fief. Count Guy appealed to the pope. He continued to occupy the lands with his Flemish knights and warriors.

Guy de Dampierre had given large sums of money to the king of France for the royal expedition against Aragon, so Guy also enjoyed the goodwill of the king of France. Returning from his campaign from Aragon, Philip II the Bold died at Perpignan. Quite another period of strife with France began shortly afterwards for Flanders.

Also relations with other neighbouring lands worsened for Flanders. King Edward I of England moved the staple of all English goods from Bruges to Dordrecht, causing harm to the trade of the Flemish merchants. English wool was of prime importance for Flanders, so in April of 1292, Guy de Dampierre received a safe-conduit to travel to London. In May of the same year, he signed a treaty and reconciled with King Edward I. This treaty, however, angered King Philip IV of France. The discord between England and France had increased these last years.

In Zeeland, a revolt fomented, directed against Count Florent of Holland. Jan van Renesse, Diederik van Brederode, Hugh van Cruninghe with Wulfart, Florent and Rasse van Borseele, and other knights, prompted Count Guy to send an army to the Island of Walcheren. The duke of Brabant mediated in this dispute. Florent V of Holland acknowledged his feudal submission and dependence from the count of Flanders for the islands of Zeeland, thereby ending the dispute.

In 1283 died Ermengarde, the daughter and heir of the deceased Duke Waleran of Limburg. Limburg was in those times a small region situated between the River Maas and the town of Aachen. It bordered on the county of Dalhem in the west, the bishopric of Liège on the south-west and the county of Jülich in the east. Its capital was the small town of Limburg, and the other larger town was Eupen. Candidates for the succession were Waleran's brother, Count Adolph VI of Berg, Waleran count of Fauquemont and count of Luxemburg, as well as Raynald of Guelders, Ermengarde's husband.

Adolph of Berg quickly sold his rights on Limburg to Duke John I of Brabant. Adolph considered he was too weak militarily to make his claims on Limburg true. Raynald of Guelders sought and obtained the support of Guy de Dampierre, count of Flanders. He also received the aid of the bishop of Liège, Guy's son.

The German emperor appointed a group of arbitrators for the succession of Limburg. Guy de Dampierre count of Flanders and John d'Avesnes count of Hainault debated about the matter in this group, and decided to hand over Limburg to the count of Guelders. Emperor Rudolph of Habsburg thereupon recognised the rights of Raynald of Guelders on Limburg. The decisions did not end the dispute. Duke John of Brabant and the count of Guelders remained in conflict, and war threatened.

In early 1288, Raynald of Guelders had grown tired of the incessant discussions and skirmishes. He abandoned his claims on Limburg to Henry IV, count of Luxemburg. Guy of Dampierre's wife was Isabella of Luxemburg, so Count Henry was the brother-in-law of the count of Flanders. Raynald of Guelders, Guy de Dampierre of Flanders and the archbishop of Köln, Siegfried II of Westerburg, then sided with Luxemburg, against the duke of Brabant. Flanders did not actively take part in the ensuing war.

In May of 1288, the people of the city of Köln revolted against their archbishop. The archbishop threw his city in the ban of the Church. Duke John I of Brabant then marched to the aid of Köln. With him moved an army constituted of his knights, but also of the militiamen of the Brabant towns, of Leuven, Tienen, Brussels, Antwerp, Geldenaken and Nivelles among other. Duke John pushed forward to the Rhine and forced a battle on the 5<sup>th</sup> of June at Worringen near Köln. A group of warriors of Ghent, led by the poorter Jan Borluut, fought and distinguished themselves in the battle.

The Battle of Worringen raged particularly ferociously. At the end of the day, John I of Brabant prevailed. The duke of Brabant made of Archbishop Siegfried of Köln and of the count of Guelders his prisoners. The count of Luxemburg lay dead on the battlefield and the blood toll was particularly high on the family of Luxemburg. Count Guy of Flanders had to announce to his wife her three brothers had perished at Worringen!

Duke John I of Brabant being triumphant, he could add Limburg to Brabant. Powerful Brabant felt more independent from the German empire than ever before.

Quite later, Philip IV the Fair of France reconciled John I of Brabant with Guy de Dampierre. Guy had remained furious over John's victory. The king of France also secured the peace between John of Brabant and the house of Luxemburg.

During this period of from 1285 to 1290, the relations between King Philip the Fair and Guy de Dampierre remained courteous. When in 1290 the city of Valenciennes revolted against Count John of Avesnes, count of Hainault, the poorters appealed to the French King. Philip the Fair refused to march to the aid of John II of Avesnes, because the count had first appealed to the German emperor. Philip declared himself in favour of the people of Valenciennes, working in concert with the count of Flanders. He placed Valenciennes under the protection of Count Guy of Flanders.

A little later, French troops entered Hainault. More royal troops gathered in Picardy, joined by Flemish knights and their men. John II d'Avesnes submitted to the French king and gave himself up as prisoner of France. The king sentenced John to pay forty thousand pounds Parisis. John had to surrender his bailiff and his main sergeants as hostages to France, and to destroy the walls of the Castle of Bauchain, the strongest fortress of Ostrevent.

Also in the on-going strife between Flanders and Count Florent of Holland over Zeeland, France supported Flanders in the conflict. The Flemish army surprised Count Florent's troops in Walcheren. Florent abandoned Zeeland to Count Guy.

In 1280 and 1281, revolts broke out in several cities of Flanders, in Bruges, Ieper, Douai and in Tournai. Both Count Guy de Dampierre and his mother, Countess Margaret, had tried to tamper the domination of the poorter-knights over the Flemish cities. They seemed to favour the artisan guilds. The kings of France, mainly Philip III, had applied their appellate jurisdiction to support the knights.

In 1280, the artisans of Bruges and of Ieper rose against the poorter-knights, claiming the aldermen had brought the cities in heavy debt. The aldermen had squandered the tax money. The weavers protested against the high prices for imported wool of the merchants of the Hanse. These men were often the wealthy members of the ancient lineages who were in power of government. The artisans demanded the aldermen should give account each year of the treasury of the cities, a claim supported by the count. They also asked again for some share in the elections of the aldermen, and thus in the urban government. The populace rose to arms. They sacked the houses of the wealthy in Bruges.

Count Guy intervened. He executed six leading poorter-knights of Bruges to inspire fear in the other aldermen, and authorised the artisans to buy wool from other sources than the Hanse of London. If this last decree aimed at breaking the monopoly of the Hanse, it could hardly succeed, for no wool of the sufficiently high quality demanded by the Flemish weavers could be bought elsewhere than in England! Count Guy also refused to restore the charters of liberties that had recently burned in the fire of the city of Bruges. The aldermen once more appealed to the French King Philip III. Philip promised the restoration of the town's privileges.

Count Guy of Dampierre had to consent to grant a new charter to Bruges, but he reserved for himself appellate jurisdiction over all decrees of the Bruges aldermen. He imposed the obligation for the aldermen to present the annual accounts. The power of government in Bruges nevertheless remained with the aldermen. These last retaliated by declaring illegal all assemblies of more than seven artisans without their permission. Guy of Dampierre could have sought the confidence of the artisans against the poorter-knights, but he confiscated three quarters of the property of the drapers for his own benefit. The artisans of Bruges withdrew their confidence in the count.

### King Philip IV the Fair, king of France

Philip IV ascended to the throne of France on the 5<sup>th</sup> of October of 1285. Born in the Castle of Fontainebleau, he was merely 17 years old. He had already been enthroned as king of Navarre, having married in August of the year of 1284 Joan I of Navarre, who was then only 11 years old. Joan was also countess of Champagne and Brie, so she brought these prosperous lands into the royal influence. Later, the counties would be incorporated into the royal domains. Joan's mother was Blanche of Artois. Blanche had given her daughter in the protection of the king of France, so Philip and Joan had been bought up together at the French court.

During his first years of reign, the young King Philip was not badly inclined towards the count of Flanders. His views would evolve, and from early on Philip intervened in the affairs of Flanders, in the conflicts between the counts and the landowner-poorters who were in power in the cities, continuing the policies of his father, King Philip III the Bold. Philip IV was a very handsome young man, hence rapidly called the Fair.

Upon his accession, Philip the Fair began his reign by demanding Guy of Dampierre, the knights of the castellannies of Flanders and of the cities, to swear to uphold the Treaty of Melun. The king – or his court – sided with the landowner-poorters of the Flemish cities, against the artisans and against the count. To the French court, the count seemed to want to ally himself to the artisans and their mighty militias. King Philip demanded Count Guy to honour and strictly execute the almost forgotten Treaty of Melun. The demand was received with much reticence in Flanders.

On the entreaties of Count Guy, the knights of Flanders finally swore loyalty to the king of France. In a solemn ceremony at Bruges, they gave their oaths to the king's delegates, to James of Boulogne archdiacre of Théroutanne and to Colard of Maines.

Philip IV ordered an immediate stop to the construction of new castles in Flanders, except for the Castle of Petegem, which was to become a fine pleasure palace for Isabelle of Luxemburg, the count's wife. Philip also almost immediately began to exert his influence and authority in favour of the aldermen of Ghent, even though the city didn't care much about the Treaty of Melun. Ghent continued erecting several castles at Bramburg and other places, thus fortifying the access to her environs. Also the cities of Bruges, Oudenaarde, Ieper and Kortrijk repaired and strengthened their walls and defences.

In 1289, the court of France and King Philip IV ordered the provost of Saint-Quentin to Ghent. Was Ghent not the second largest city of the kingdom? The provost was to learn and report on the state of affairs in the city. Soon afterwards, the king issued an ordinance enforcing the French language to be used in the tribunal of the count whenever a French sergeant representing him was present. The king also decreed the goods of poorters of Ghent could not be declared forfeit merely for a crime of disobedience to the count of Flanders, at least not without the king's consent.

The same year, Philip the Fair sent the Royal Sergeant Honoré de Moustier to Flanders in protection of the knights of Ghent, who were by then definitely called Leliaerts. De Moustier would serve as ruwaard or guardian, to control the actions of the count and his bailiff. Moustier had the banner of France placed on the Belfort of Ghent. Similar measures were issued for Bruges and Douai.

Philip the Fair applied monetary measures in that period, which in the end proved detrimental to Flanders. He heightened the value of the royal coins, so that the Flemish coins with about the same content of silver and gold, but lower in value, fell in disuse. He arrested Lombard merchants in Flanders and grabbed the pious gifts made in Flanders for his treasury. King Philip IV also protected Jacquemon Garet called le Louchard, a man from a family of Hungarian Jews. Jacquemon was a usurer of Arras, to whom the count of Flanders and the Flemish cities owed extensive debts. Philip thus controlled count and towns indirectly on the financial side.

It was hard not to consider such measures and interventions of the king as unwanted interference with the affairs of Flanders.

Robert of Béthune, Guy of Dampierre's oldest son and heir, tried to call a stop to the involvement of the French court in the government matters of the Flemish cities.

In 1290, Robert proposed a reconciliation with the famous Thirty-Nine aldermen of Ghent. He proposed the Thirty-Nine to refer in all cases of dispute with the count to the aldermen of Saint-Omer as arbitrators. The Thirty-Nine accepted. The arbitrators pronounced against the exactions and demands of Guy de Dampierre, but Robert could persuade his father to live by their decision, as the king of France was held out of the procedure.

King Philip the Fair and his court of Paris, however, could flatter and cajole Guy de Dampierre until the count abided by the royal appeal and by the royal power. A peer of France, a nobleman of such high status as the count of Flanders could not allow his conflicts with one town to be settled by friendly aldermen of another town! Would this not be beyond the dignity of a great magnate? Guy de Dampierre agreed with this view instead of by the manoeuvre of his son. A decree of the royal court soon broke the arbitration procedure of the aldermen of Saint-Omer.

King Philip the Fair would in his life always side by the nobles of France, by his knights, rather than by his cities and their militias. The nobles rendered him the homage. Philip would never have to face such revolts and dangerous protests of his nobles, as King Edward I had to face in England. He did have to confront revolts in his cities, though. Maybe this was one of the reasons why urban militias never developed in the French towns as they did in the three major cities of Flanders, in Bruges, Ghent and Ieper.

From the moment on Philip the Fair had remarked how easy it was to turn around the count of Flanders by flattering, it seemed as if Philip the Fair had lost all respect for Guy de Dampierre. The king publicly sought the alliance of the count of Hainault. He announced his intention to give back Valenciennes to Hainault. By seeking a new agreement with Hainault, the Paris court also assured the support of the count of Hainault's nephew, Count Florent of Holland.

Guy of Dampierre felt betrayed by the king. He grew more than ever angry with the poorter-knights of Ghent. At the end of June of 1291, he ordered the arrest of several aldermen of the city. Other aldermen, fearing the same fate, fled from Ghent. The city was thus left without a governing body. The remaining aldermen handed over the seals of the city in the custody of the abbot of Saint Peter's Abbey.

Guy de Dampierre then turned his eye to England.

In April of 1292, the count obtained a safe conduit to travel to England. In May of the same year, he signed a peace treaty with King Edward I. In doing so, the count drew all the attention of the French court, for the tension between France and England had soared.

In 1292 started an almost ridiculous dispute in the south of France. The dispute would spread and have far-fetching consequences. A brawl broke out in the harbour of Bayonne between two sailors, a Norman and an Englishman. The quarrel brought to the surface the bad blood that had lurched between the English and the French sailors.

A few weeks later, Norman ships arrived at Royan to take on a load of wine barrels from the Saintonge region. They found four English ships in the harbour of Bayonne and sacked them. The *connétable* of Guyenne intervened. At Bordeaux, he made everybody swear to uphold the peace. The ships of Bayonne henceforth sailed out of Bordeaux, bound for England, in small convoys of from ten to fifteen cogs. The Normans arrived with a fleet of eighty ships and sank all the Bayonne vessels. The conflict escalated. As the Normans attacked yet other English ships, the English in their turn surprised the defences of the French harbour of La Rochelle. They pillaged the town and sailed back to England, laden with rich booty.

The king of France, Philip IV the Fair, summoned King Edward I to his court, as the conflict concerned Guyenne, a feudal fief of France. King Edward I twice refused. The Paris Parliament consequently sentenced the king of England, declaring his fiefs of France confiscated.

The decree amounted to a declaration of war with England!

King Edward I had already been seeking allies on the continent, as he had been expecting a violent issue with France.

He tried to make an ally of the German Emperor Adolf of Nassau. He succeeded in the effort, but Adolf greedily accepted Edward's money and then did not deliver on his promises of support with arms.

Edward was already allied to the Duke Henry of Brabant, who was married with the king of England's daughter.

He also sent the bishop of Durham and the Earl William of Pembroke to Flanders with a proposal of marriage of his elder son Edward of Caernarfon to Count Guy of Dampierre's daughter Philippa. The discussions about the marriage took place at Lier in Brabant, where the duke of Brabant recovered from a wound suffered during a tournament. For Flanders,

mainly Rasse van Gaveren and the Vidame John of Amiens took part in the negotiations. The final Treaty of Lier was signed only on the 31<sup>st</sup> of August of 1294. The bride's dowry would be about two hundred thousand pounds, to be provided by Count Guy of Dampierre. King Edward I would give the county of Ponthieu to the bride. Of course, the married couple would have to wait to consume the marriage until they were of age.

The marriage proposal and the acceptance of it, would start a major conflict between Flanders and France. No French fief could independently get allied to England! King Philip IV the Fair wanted no English nobleman married to a countess of Flanders. No English king could become the count of wealthy Flanders! Flanders could not be allied to England! The very idea was preposterous for the royal court of France!

I have always wondered about the sudden enmity that erupted between the Norman sailors and the sailors of Guyenne! In all harbours of the world, brawls happen and people get hurt or even killed. They remain private conflicts. Why did the brawls spread in this case, so rapidly and so violently?

For crimes remaining unsolved and mysterious, one is tempted to look for whom benefited from the crime. King Edward I and the English traders could not benefit from unrest in or over Gascony. The Norman traders might have wanted to eliminate competition in the western waters of France. Yet, the Normans seldom sold wine and other goods of Guyenne directly into England. They were not welcome there. They had their ships filled with goods for France and Flanders and Holland. They seldom sailed to England. Why would they have bothered with English ships so vengefully?

The people who would have benefited indeed, were mostly the French king and the nobles of the court of Paris! The king of France no doubt coveted the expanse of Guyenne. Guyenne was and is a very large and quite wealthy territory with enormous possibilities. Guyenne lay on the continent in the vicinity of the French royal domains. A foreign king governing over lands placed within the grasp of the courtiers of France may have been an easy temptation! Did King Philip IV the Fair enticed uprisings in Guyenne, to be able to intervene and grab Guyenne?

Another strange actor in the tragedy might have been Charles de Valois, King Philip the Fair's younger brother. When Charles was only thirteen years old, he had received the title of king of Aragon. France had the intention of making war to Aragon over the conflict about Sicily, to conquer it and place a French prince at the head of the state. By the actions of King Edward I in favour of a peaceful solution to the controversy over Sicily, Charles de Valois saw all hope of ever in reality become the sovereign of Aragon dwindle and disappear. He may have been the subject of much mockery at the Paris court. He hated England and its chivalrous King Edward I. We know how deviously King Philip the Fair could act. Such a character trait may also have been inherited by his brother.

'How perfidious these men were, then, to put the lives of thousands of men at stake for their own ambitions of grandeur and power!' my secretary, the venerable Brother Bernardus grumbled. 'How pernicious were the aspirations of such men. How dangerous it is to grant large power to men so that they can even stir up wars between peoples! Had and have they then learned nothing at all from the Gospels of our Lord Jesus Christ?'

At that time, I had no forethought about the terrible wars that would ensue, but I remember distinctly how uneasy I felt. Perhaps the Lord warned me of the horrors that would be in the making. I agreed with Bernardus. I did not fight him this time.

## England

From 1280 to 1282, England could bask in a rare period of peace. In March of 1282, King Edward I visited at leisure northern England and East Anglia. But a revolt in Wales broke the peace cruelly.

Dafydd ap Gruffud attacked, captured and burnt the castle of Hawarden near Chester, held by Roger Clifford. Many people were killed. Dafydd took the constable of England a prisoner. The revolt then spread wide and quickly in Wales. Flint, Rhuddlan and Olenystwyth were captured by trickery in the north, as well as the castles of Llandoverly and Carrey Censer.

King Edward I could not allow Wales to escape from his power. In June of 1282, Edward arrived at Chester with the aim to attack the Four Cantrefs, the northern fiefs of Wales, in a war campaign against Dafydd. The Welsh troops nevertheless succeeded in defeating the earl of Gloucester's army in North Wales.

King Edward I appointed William de Valence to wage war in Gloucester's place. The war in Wales intensified still when Dafydd's brother, Prince Llywelyn of Wales, joined in the revolt. The skirmishes raged in the summer of 1282. In the Battle of Climeric, on the 11<sup>th</sup> of December of 1282, Llywelyn fought against the army of the March of Wales, the southern pro-English counties. Llywelyn was killed in the battle.

King Edward then launched his own, third offensive against Wales in January of 1283. His main army marched out of Conwy in March, driving Dafydd out before him.

While Edward was on campaign, his queen, Eleanor of Castile, gave birth to a son, to Edward called of Caernarfon, the future King Edward II. A huge, new castle was being built at Caernarfon, and the queen resided in the Welsh town.

The English army caught Dafydd already in June of 1283 and by the end of August, Edward had once more conquered and pacified Wales. The king ordered Dafydd ap Gruffud, on charges of treason, to be executed on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of October of 1283. The king had once more subjugated Wales.

The revolt in Wales ended, in early 1284, King Edward I, restless and knightly as ever, decided to go on a crusade in the Holy Land. He had an issue with this intention. The other kings on the continent, mainly France and Aragon, were engaged in a dispute over Sicily. Edward would not be able to unite forces with the powers of the western continent.

I must here explain you some more about how Charles d'Anjou had come into the authority over Sicily.

Manfred, an illegal son of Emperor Frederick II, had usurped the throne of Sicily against the will of Pope Urban IV. He recruited his army from Muslim mercenaries. Pope Urban IV then preached a crusade against Manfred, and Charles d'Anjou had accepted the crown of Sicily and Naples proposed to him by the pope.

The campaign of Charles d' Anjou was linked to Flanders! Robert de Béthune led parts of Charles of Anjou's army.

Robert de Béthune was the eldest son of Guy de Dampierre, from the count's first marriage with Mathilde de Béthune. He was 18 years old in 1264, and he had married one of the daughters of the count Charles of Anjou.

The Anjou army marched in 1265 over Burgundy and Savoie, under the French *Connétable* Gilles de Trazegnies. At the end of 1265, near Brescia, the army fought against an ally of Manfred, the Marquis Palavicini. The French army devastated the marquis's lands, as well as the town of Brescia. Robert of Béthune proved an excellent war leader and warrior. The army advanced to Mantua, Ferrara, Bologna and Rome. In Rome, Charles d'Anjou received with much pomp the crown of Sicily from the pope.

On the 26<sup>th</sup> of February of 1266, the armies of Charles d'Anjou and of Manfred clashed in battle under the walls of Benevento. Robert de Béthune excelled in this battle too, turning the odds against the German and Muslim mercenaries of Manfred. Manfred was killed in the battle. Charles d'Anjou became also effectively king of Sicily.

By the end of 1267, Robert of Béthune had passed the mainland of Italy to arrive near Aquila with Charles d'Anjou. They soon confronted Conradin, the nephew of Manfred, to give battle with him at Tagliacozzo. Charles d'Anjou's army defeated equally Conradin, the young descendant of the House of Hohenstaufen, and Anjou's men captured him. Robert of Béthune wanted not to kill Conradin, but Charles of Anjou had Conradin nevertheless executed in the marketplace of Naples. Charles d'Anjou had suppressed all opposition to him by the end of 1268. He reigned over vast territories in the south of Italy, and over Sicily.

In the Spring of 1284, the Sicilians revolted against the harsh regime of Charles d'Anjou, their lord. The revolt happened on Easter Monday. It was since called the Sicilian Vespers. In a few weeks, over three thousand French men and women were massacred all over the island. Charles of Anjou was in his capital of Naples at the time. Whatever the reason of the revolt, whether the Sicilians had risen because of the high taxes exerted by the French, or by the behaviour of the French occupying troops towards the Sicilians, the power of the Angevin House over Sicily was broken. King Peter of Aragon, who had been eyeing Sicily since long, filled the void of power. He invaded Sicily and took over power from the Anjou dynasty.

Pope Martin V had strongly supported Charles of Anjou. He declared the war against Aragon, and called the campaigns against the king a crusade.

If King Edward I of England wanted the monarchs of the continent to sail with him to the Holy Land, he had to end the dispute over Sicily. Was also his wife, Eleanor of Castile not a noblewoman of Castile, the neighbour of Aragon? King Philip II of France urged Edward to stay in England, however, and not to intervene in the conflict with Aragon.

In May of 1285, King Edward I summoned his Parliament to meet in London. The king asked the funds necessary to move in the War of Sicily. Parliament, reluctant to install new taxes, proposed to discuss the matter first with the king of France. But Philip the Fair had only recently been given the throne – he would be crowned at Rheims in January of 1286 – and he

was still a very young boy. Pope Martin V had died in March of the year, nobody knew the intentions of the new pope, and France's armies marched against Aragon. Moreover, in November of 1285, King Peter of Aragon died, and in March of 1286 also died King Alexander III of Scotland, only a few months in his second marriage, without children or brothers, so that a conflict over the Scottish throne seemed probable. Parliament seemed very reluctant to give King Edward money for a military campaign in Sicily. The king was on his own.

In May and June of 1286, King Edward I sailed to France to do homage for his fief of Gascony to the young, new king. Edward received feudal rights on the Saintonge region, and he abandoned other rights on the Quercy territory. Afterwards, King Edward travelled in Gascony-Guyenne until Easter of 1287. At Easter, in Bordeaux, the king fell in the collapse of a tower and broke his collar-bone. He recovered.

In July of 1287 he negotiated a peace between Aragon, France and the pope. He discussed over the issue with Alfonso III, the son of Peter II. Alfonso was the new king of Aragon. With him, Edward signed the Treaty of Oloron. King Edward obtained the release of Charles of Anjou's son, Charles of Salerno. In June of 1284, off the coast of Naples, a naval battle had been fought between the fleets of Aragon and of Charles of Anjou. Charles of Salerno had been taken a prisoner in this battle, won by the king of Aragon.

The pope rapidly annulled the Treaty of Oloron, so new meetings of Alfonso III and Edward I subsequently happened at Jacca in September and October to settle the matter. Aragon finally released Charles of Salerno.

During the winter of 1288 to 1289, King Edward remained in Gascony. He stayed at Bonnegarde, which he fortified. He sailed back to England only in June of 1289.

King Edward sailed into other sorts of troubles in England.

Edward had launched immediately after his succession to the throne an inquiry into the rights of the English nobles on lands. The king's envoys had called landowners to court to defend their claims. The lord justices posed the question of 'quo warranto' or 'what prove can you offer over these lands'? Landowners could not always, even more often than not, prove they were the rightful proprietors of their lands. They could not always place charters on the table proving their claims. The procedure became known as the Quo Warranto issue.

The men from the higher nobility grew very disgruntled and agitated over the matter. These men had fought several wars in Wales for the king, but now the king's justice dragged them into court after court, daring them to prove their ancestral rights! The opposition to the king soared. King Edward I sat in a tight spot, the more so because he needed to pay his debts contracted over the promises he had made to Aragon. The nobles were not inclined to give any money to the king.

At first, Edward remained obstinate, but then he turned in a notable climb-down. When the landowners could prove they had held and used lands since 1189, the beginning of the reign of King Richard I, the knights received liberties for these lands.

The king's main opposer in this affair had been Earl Gilbert of Gloucester. King Edward gave his daughter Joan in marriage to Gilbert. The marriage ended the Quo Warranto problem. By the end of July of 1290, the English Parliament granted Edward I a new tax to pay his debts by.

The knights wanted to take some form of revenge on the Jews, though. Many knights had loaned money from the English Jews. King Edward could only appease Parliament by the exclusion from England of the Jewish community. The Jews had to leave the realm by November of 1290. About two thousand Jews left England. King Edward received his tax. The knights of England accepted to pay 1/15<sup>th</sup> of their possessions. Edward could pay his debt of one hundred thousand pounds to the Riccardi bankers.

During that time, the succession to the throne of Scotland had festered. In the spring of 1290, King Edward I and his councillors staged a special meeting at the Priory of Amesbury. Present at that meeting were the queen, Eleanor of Castile, Gilbert de Clare earl of Gloucester, recently married to the king's daughter Joan, William de Valence and Edmund of Lancaster, the king's brother. They discussed successions.

The English crown would go to Edward's eldest son! Edward hoped to secure the Scottish crown for his son and heir, Edward of Caernarfon. To make his claim true, Edward would have to marry the Maid of Norway, the daughter of the daughter of the late Scottish king Alexander III. Alexander's daughter had married the king of Norway. In March, the Scottish nobles assembled at Brigham. They ratified the scheme. They also swore to uphold the independence of their kingdom!

Then, fate struck! In October of 1290, the Maid of Norway got sick during her journey to England. She died at Orkney. The king's scheme to give Scotland to his son fell through.

Two contestants now vied for the crown of Scotland. The first was the about 40 years old John Balliol, English by his father and Scottish by his mother, a Scottish nobleman of fame. His claim was powerful, for Balliol's sister Eleanor was married to John Comyn, one of the wealthiest noblemen of Scotland, a magnate of renown. Balliol had a claim to the Scottish throne on his mother's side. His main challenger was Robert Bruce, 70 years old, and lord of Annandale. Robert Bruce's claim equally lay on his mother's side.

In October of 1290, a session of the English Parliament opened at Clipstone. King Edward received an additional income of one hundred and thirty thousand pounds from the crusading funds collected by the Church, and also of a new six-year tax from the people for the crusade set for 1293.

Eleanor of Castile, Edward's queen, died on the 28<sup>th</sup> of November of that same year 1290. The shock was deep. Eleanor was the beloved wife of Edward. She almost never left his side, not even on war campaign. Some nobles had criticised Eleanor, for she had amassed many manors and castles and terrains from the English nobles, paid by the money she received for the royal upkeep. She had bought many lands from nobles impoverished by usurer debts of the Jews. The issue led to no revolts, however.

King Edward had actively sought alliances on the continent, mainly with the duke of Brabant and with the counts of Guelders and of Holland. He met with little success in these endeavours.

In May of 1291, the leading Scottish nobles met at Berwick and King Edward had called together an English Parliament at the same time, but five miles farther, at Norham. King

Edward proposed for the Scots to accept him as overlord, and to let him decide over the several candidates for the Scottish throne. The Scottish nobles disputed over the issue, but Robert Bruce cut short by sending a letter to the king accepting the principle of overlordship. He had not declared this statement for the majority of the Scots, though.

By mid-June of 1291, all the Scottish nobles granted the overlordship to King Edward I, as main lord and guardian of the kingdom of Scotland until a new king had been elected. In all, there were thirteen claimants to the throne, of whom John Balliol and Robert Bruce were the ones to whom most probably the crown would befall.

In August of 1291, King Edward constituted a committee of one hundred and five men, among whom twenty-four were chosen by King Edward, and forty chosen each by Bruce and Balliol.

A surprise may have been the candidacy of Count Florent of Holland, whose son John was to be engaged to Edward's daughter Elisabeth born in 1282.

Count Florent could at first not present any convincing legal claim, but he received additional time to corroborate.

King Edward presented the final judgement on the succession. He chose John Balliol as king of Scotland on the 17<sup>th</sup> of November of 1292. John I Balliol king of Scotland was officially enthroned at Scone Abbey on the 30<sup>th</sup> of November 1292. On the 26<sup>th</sup> of December, Balliol swore fealty to King Edward I at Newcastle.

Henceforth, a relation of overlord to lord lay between the kings of England and the kings of Scotland, a subservience hotly contested at times thereafter.

## Germany

From 1280 to 1287, the German Emperor Rudolph of Habsburg solved by arms and diplomacy several conflicts with the knights of his lands. Contrary to the English king, he could confront each of these nobles separately, never had to face important coalitions, but he nevertheless had to face the nobles with arms. The insurgents were the lords of Würtemberg, Savoy, Sfort, and Burgundy, to name the best known.

As mentioned, Guy de Dampierre, count of Flanders, ignored in 1280 the appeals of the emperor to do him homage for the imperial territories of Flanders. As Count Guy didn't care to bother, Rudolph of Habsburg gave these lands then to John II d'Avesnes, the arch-enemy of the Dampierres. Count Guy also ignored this last order and continued to occupy the lands.

In June of 1282, the emperor placed Count Guy out of the peace of the empire. No war broke out over the matter between Flanders and Hainault, however, and in the end, also the count of Holland rather cautiously allied with his father-in-law of Flanders rather than with John d'Avesnes.

The Edict of Worms remained largely without effect in reality. From 1280 to 1290, Emperor Rudolph thus did not intervene militarily into the conflicts of the western lands of his vast empire.

In 1291, Rudolph called together a Diet at Frankfurt. He tried to obtain the agreement of the seven electors to choose for his son Albert as his successor. The electors politely but flatly refused. Albert was not popular. He was too strict, too rough, too dominant, too ugly. On the 15<sup>th</sup> of July of 1291, not long after this rebuttal, Rudolph of Habsburg died at Speier at the age of 74 years.

In May of 1292, the German electors crowned Count Adolf of Nassau as king of Germany. His main ally during the election was Gerhard von Eppenstein, the archbishop of Mainz. Albert of Habsburg, rebuffed for the second time, had to accept the nomination of Adolf.

Adolf of Nassau was not a rather wealthy nobleman. He consequently and immediately sought to expand his personal domains. Adolf received thirty thousand Marks from King Edward I of England to his support in the conflict of England with the king of France. But Adolf never delivered on the promise! With the money, he raised an army of mercenaries to conquer Thüringen and Meissen! A war that lasted more than 5 years ensued, in which Adolf did not win many successes.

Adolf of Nassau may also have wanted to win back imperial territories silently laid hands on by the king of France, such as Valenciennes. Maybe Adolf also thought to link Flanders again to Hainault, and then to wring Flanders plus Hainault into the German states. In June of 1292, the king of France gave back Valenciennes to Hainault, reducing a possible source of conflicts with Germany.

There would thus be no direct war between Germany and France. And there would be no war between France and England, for the English king was too much occupied by the strife on his own island with Wales and Scotland.

#### 1.4. Fulk's Chronicles. The French-Flemish Conflict starts. 1293-1297

After the first clashes of English and Norman traders in the harbours of Bayonne, Bordeaux and La Rochelle, the hostilities between England and France spread and deepened. Flanders was drawn inexorably into the collision of the French and English kings. France, England and Flanders became linked, so that what happened in these countries could no longer be described separately.

We seem to forget too often the prime concern of the kings and of the count in these conflicts: gathering the funds necessary to finance the war. How could the monarchs put their crooked hands on sufficient money to pay their mercenaries by, their knights and their men, the provisioning of the armies on campaign?

The kings looked increasingly to the Church to replenish their treasury! Only the church possessed sufficiently large wealth. Only the Church could provide a plausible excuse for getting coins out of the pockets of everybody.

Both in France and in England, the kings glared with greedy eyes to the riches of the bishops and the abbots and the priests. They sought to make allies of the guardians of the church's funds, allies to their cause. The kings sought to appoint as princes of the Church their own confidants. In doing so, they came in conflict with the popes of Rome and their cardinals. The popes jealously protected their own interests, and tried to affirm their views of dominance over the secular world. Thus, the popes too got involved in the general discord.

Finally, only Germany remained largely aloof, because the German emperors had many and important issues to settle within their realm.

Like Germany, England's internal enemies assailed its monarch from so many fronts, from out of Wales, Scotland and Gascony, it might have wanted to intervene more directly on the continent, but was unable to.

This could describe in short what happened in the years from 1293 to 1297, the crucial years, which determined the events that would follow for more than one hundred years. War erupted between France, England and Flanders in all its horror.

In October of 1293, King Philip the Fair demanded of King Edward I to deliver to France the sailors and captains who had destroyed French ships in Guyenne. The King of France summoned the duke of Guyenne, King Edward I, to justify his actions at the royal court of Paris. King Edward merely sent his brother, Earl Edmund of Lancaster, to negotiate.

Edmund could secure an arrangement, for the two kings were low on money.

The king of England would have to surrender to the king of France twenty Gascon officers, deemed guilty of the misdeeds. Edward I would have to yield six fortresses of the Saintonge and Agenais regions. The troops of the king of France would be allowed by the English to control large parts of Gascony. Finally, the widowed King Edward I would marry Blanche of France, the half-sister of King Philip IV the Fair.

Did the king of France really desire peace?

It became quickly clear the king did not send just a few French knights or royal sergeants to control the towns of Guyenne. He sent an entire army! Complete garrisons took control of the towns of Guyenne instead of only one or two men per town. King Philip IV did not receive all he had wanted, though. He did not receive the head of the mayor of Bayonne, and not the outright surrender of Bordeaux and of the Agenais.

In the winter of 1292 to 1293, Edward I assembled the fleet of the Cinque Ports and ambushed part of the Norman fleet. Early 1294, a new meeting with France was organised at Amiens. Edward I would have to cede Gascony to avoid a war with France, but King Philip IV would immediately and graciously re-grant Gascony to Edward, on new terms, to be defined in a new charter. Edward would indeed also marry Blanche of France, a princess of renowned beauty though the girl felt reluctant to marry the English king. Edward had been deceived, for Blanche would marry Rudolph II of Habsburg, the eldest son of King Albert I of Germany. Later, when Edward's envoy returned from France without the bride, King Philip IV proposed his younger sister Margaret in marriage to the king.

King Edward was to arrive on the 21<sup>st</sup> March of 1294 at the French court, but he never showed up. The skirmishes in Gascony were developing in an open war. The English garrisons in Gascony succeeded in taking back Castillon, Blaye, Bayonne and Saint-Sever, but large territories of Edward's fief on the continent remained in French hands. King Edward I received the support, at least in words, of Emperor Adolf of Nassau.

In fact, both kings were preparing for an all-out war. Yet, they were in dire need of funds. King Philip the Fair negotiated a 1/10<sup>th</sup> tax for two years with the local councils of the French clergy. He could obtain his agreement rapidly, and without too many protests, as no new pope had yet been elected in the period of from 1292 to 1294.

King Edward I seized all wool in England, and sold it to add money to his treasury. He also had his men search for deposits of money in the Church. The papal crusading tax was still being collected, so the English court knew the Church had money! The Riccardi bankers could not loan more money to the king, as they had not yet gathered money from the king's payment of previous debts. King Edward arrested them.

King Edward I had to give some attention to Scotland again, as an earl of Scotland appealed to him against John Balliol. Edward I, as overlord of Scotland, call Balliol to his court. He inspired sufficient fear into the Scottish king, so that Balliol mended his ways for a while.

At the beginning of 1294, the cardinals of Rome elected a new pope, who took the name of Celestin V. This pope was a pious but not very courageous man. He felt little for his function. He stepped down, abdicating barely a year later.

When the Treaty of Lier became known in France, the armies of England and France already opposed each other in limited skirmishes in Guyenne. King Philip IV and his court, especially his wife Joan of Navarra and Count Robert of Artois, had become very displeased. Count Guy of Dampierre tried to explain the marriage of his daughter Philippa was not directed against the interests of France. That could hardly have been the entire truth, even though the industry of Flanders already entirely depended upon English quality wool. As a sign of

goodwill, he and his advisors proposed to present Philippa to the French royal court, which at that time dwelled at Corbeil. Count Guy presented his daughter in person to the king of France.

King Philip the Fair instantly reproached Count Guy for having negotiated with the English without his royal consent, and without involvement of his envoys in the discussions. The king ordered to imprison the count of Flanders! The knights of the king took hold of Guy de Dampierre and his sons, and brought them to the tower of the Louvre in Paris. This was the first time Guy de Dampierre was taken in custody in a prison of France! He would feel how it was to be in other French prisons in the following years.

While Count Guy of Flanders was held a prisoner in the Louvre, King Philip IV confiscated the possessions of the English councillors who served the count. He ordered the Flemish merchants to be chased from the grand markets of Champagne. He sent his men to take back the town of Valenciennes.

The peers of France or the French Parliament should have judged the count, but King Philip IV avoided a sentence. He feigned to answer graciously the pleas of the Flemish nobles in favour of the count. The truth was, he was neither ready nor eager to wage a war with Flanders.

The better-known knights of Flanders, men such as Robert de Wavrin, John of Haveskerke, William of Locres, Walter of Renenghes and Gilbert of Piennes, urged for the release of the count of Flanders. King Philip understood Flanders stood by its count. Walter of Nevele and Walter of Hondschoote, two well-known Flemish knights had arrived at the French court with pleas from the Flemish nobles to release the count of Flanders.

Robert of Béthune, William Crèvecoeur and Philip of Flanders, three sons of Count Guy, also travelled to the pope in Rome, to demand the support of the pope for the release of their father. The pope granted them his aid and moral support. The Flemish envoys reported on the mediation of the new pope, Boniface VIII, and of Count Amadeus of Savoie.

On the 5<sup>th</sup> of February of 1295, King Philip accepted the solemn promise of Count Guy's son Robert of Béthune. Robert guaranteed his father would never ally with the English. He promised fidelity to the king. No marriage proposals would be made in the future without the permission of the French king, and no alliance with England or with other enemies of the king. The three brothers promised to remain in France until the release of their father.

Robert of Béthune pronounced the solemn promise in the presence of many French nobles, among whom the Grand Bottler of France Jean de Brienne, the duke of Burgundy, the archbishops of Rheims and Narbonne, and of the bishops of Beauvais, Laon, Châlons, Paris, Tournai and Théroutanne.

King Philip IV indeed released Count Guy of Dampierre on these terms, but the king ordered for Philippa to remain at his court, in reality a hostage of France. She would be raised together with Philip's children. Moreover, Philip the Fair allowed only Count Guy to return to Flanders, not his sons, and the Treaty of Melun would henceforth have to be respected scrupulously. The count's authority over the main cities of Flanders, Ghent, Bruges, Ieper, Lille and Douai, would have to be given to the king. King Philip would send his officers to

represent him in the cities. In this way, the king of France affirmed his dominance over Flanders.

Three months later, the king of France sent Albert de Hangest as his guardian for Ghent, with orders to destitute the count's bailiff and the bailiff's sergeants in the city. The grip of France over Flanders tightened, and the king ignored the authority of the count of Flanders.

Philippa of Flanders would live after this episode as a prisoner in the Louvre. She never returned to Flanders, and died in the Louvre in 1306.

Count Guy of Dampierre returned to Flanders in the spring of 1295. He had remained six months, imprisoned in the Louvre.

In the meantime, the main worry of King Philip remained still to obtain more funds. In 1295, he demanded of the count of Flanders for each person who owned more than six thousand pounds worth of land to cede within two weeks to the royal mint one-third of his or her possessions in gold and silver. The king's own men would determine the value to be handed over. The king also forbade bringing out of the realm any gold or silver, or any other of bullion. This ordinance was issued in July of 1295, but the results in value were not up to the king's expectations. The French court therefore insisted on a new general tax, a *maltôte*. On the 6<sup>th</sup> of January of 1296, Guy de Dampierre, count of Flanders, agreed on another tax of 1/50<sup>th</sup> of all the possessions of his subjects. Half of this tax would go to the king, and half to the count. By this last provision, King Philip sought the support of Count Guy for the collection of the tax. The tax would not have to be paid on the possessions of the count himself, and also not on those of the knights of his court. King Philip IV conceded moreover to a series of privileges for Flanders and the count. He needed new money urgently, for England had set its army in motion!

By the 1<sup>st</sup> of September of 1294, King Edward had assembled two armies to sail to Gascony. The king's nephew, John of Brittany and John of Saint-John led the king's first troops, his rapid intervention force. Edmund of Lancaster, the king's brother, and the earl of Lincoln, led the main force. The English fleets showed their flags proudly at Portsmouth, ready to sail. The first fleet set off into appalling weather conditions of heavy rain showers and frighteningly gushing storm winds. The gales blew the cogs back to the English coast by mid-September. King Edward then called off his second invasion.

Also Edward was lacking in money. On the 2<sup>nd</sup> September of 1294, he met with the English clergy and asked for half of their deposits of coins. Fearing the wrath of the king, the clergymen agreed.

A month later, by mid-October of 1294, Madog ap Llywelyn and Morgan ap Maredudd led a new armed revolt in Wales. It was directed against the high taxes demanded by the English monarch. The insurgents placed sieges to the castles of Harlech, Conwy and Criccieth. Caernarfon fell early. King Edward sent the army he had wanted to use in Gascony, thirty-five thousand men, to subdue Wales. By January of 1295, King Edward was still at war in Wales. With a small force of his own guard, he passed the winter at Conwy. His provisions were low. His situation became desperate. His French campaign was all but forgotten. The king had no means to intervene in Gascony!

In that same month, the Italian Cardinal Benedetto Caetani, born around 1230 in Agnani southeast of Rome, became Pope Boniface VIII. Pope Celestine V had abdicated on the 13<sup>th</sup> of December of the previous year.

In Wales, the events precipitated. In February of 1295, King Edward's second army relieved him at Conwy, arriving with ample provisions and food. In March, the earl of Warwick fought a battle with Madog ap Llywelyn, defeating the Scot. In April, King Edward captured and occupied the island of Anglesey in Wales. This large island was crucial for the provisioning of the Scottish rebels.

By the end of the month, King Edward could organise a truce with Count Florent of Holland, with whom he had also remained in conflict. Florent V's wife, Beatrice of Dampierre had died in March, severing the last links of Count Florent with Flanders. In April, Edward gave to Count Guy of Flanders more than one hundred thousand pounds he owed the count of Guelders. In this way, while on campaign in Wales, Edward did not lose his allies and held an eye on his interests on the continent.

King Edward's affairs in France worsened. John of Saint-John, the king's seneschal of Gascony, arrived in England around Easter with bad news. He told the king the intended plan of the court of King Philip IV was to hold Gascony firmly in their own hands after Edward had surrendered it to the French king. Despite promises, Philip had no intention to give Gascony back to Edward! This was treachery at play!

In the beginning of May of 1295, King Philip the Fair confirmed his sentence of King Edward for having ignored the royal summons of his liege lord to come to the French court and give accounts about the dispute over Bayonne. King Philip IV declared the duchy forfeit. Edward I could also not marry the beautiful daughter of the French king. The Bayonne dispute, a minor incident blown up out of proportions, merely seemed a subterfuge of the French king to start a new war over Guyenne, grasping it from the English king! The English Parliament discussed the matter a little later. The delegates were furious about the French insults. King Edward swore he had preferred peace with France, and had not accepted the compromise by France for lust of a young, beautiful French queen. Parliament decided for war with France.

At that moment, King Edward, once more being short of funds, definitely and finally annulled his crusade to the Holy Land.

The English presence in Gascony remained weak, due to the war in Wales, so that Charles de Valois could occupy for France the largest part of Guyenne.

In June of 1295, Morgan ap Maredudd surrendered to the English army. King Edward could return to England in July. The new revolt in Wales had been crushed. In Gascony, however, the French troops held on to Blaye, to Bourg in the Gironde region, and also to Bayonne. The main part of Gascony seemed lost to England!

At the end of June, more bad news arrived at the court of England. The new Pope Boniface VIII, King James II of Aragon, King Philip IV of France, King James II of Mallorca and

King Charles II of Naples signed the Treaty of Agnani near Rome. The main purpose of the arrangement was to end the war between Aragon, France and Naples.

The treaty was a complex one. It included the marriage of James of Aragon with Bianca, the daughter of Charles II of Naples, the return of Sicily to the pope – who granted it back to Charles II -, and aid of James of Aragon for the re-conquest of Sicily. This was necessary, for the brother of James II, Frederick II of Sicily, continued the war of the Sicilian Vespers against Charles of Naples. The pope lifted James of Aragon out of the ban of the Church. In France, Charles of Valois officially renounced to the crown of Aragon. The Balearic Islands were restituted to James of Mallorca. Charles of Naples received the lands captured by James of Aragon in Italy, and hostages were exchanged. Other clauses mentioned Corsica, and Sardinia would be passed to James of Aragon. The for England most damaging clause stated Aragon would provide military aid to France against King Edward I of England. Aragon had a large, dangerous fleet.

Charles II, king of Naples, was the Charles of Salerno King Edward had worked so hard for to be released from an Aragonese prison. King Edward had been very badly honoured for his efforts to work out the peace between Aragon and France and the papacy!

Charles of Valois, the brother of King Philip IV, received twenty thousand pounds of silver to renounce to the kingdom of Aragon, given to him by the late Pope Martin IV, but which he never had set foot on. King Alfonso of Aragon, with whom King Edward I had negotiated for such a long time with in the Pyrenees, had died in 1291. Alfonso's son James now ran to the assistance of the Angevin king of Naples!

Practically all the measures decided at Agnani seemed to be to the detriment of England.

Count Guy de Dampierre was barely back in Flanders from having been imprisoned in the Louvre, when he too heard bad news! The Flemish war in Zeeland had maybe not be lost entirely, but the troops of Holland had killed more than one thousand Flemish men-at-arms in the expedition. The victors had attacked and burnt the port of Sluis. A French fleet, sent by France in support of Count Florent of Holland, had arrived in front of the harbours of Flanders and had confiscated all the goods remaining at that moment in the ports, pretending they were English property.

Count Guy of Dampierre was not in high spirits during those times! He desperately sought ways out of the conflict with the king of France. Count John d'Avesnes of Hainault threatened Valenciennes, and Count Florent of Holland continued invading Zeeland, wining battle after battle over the Flemish army.

In August of 1295, at Westminster in England, discussions ran high also during a session of the English Parliament. King Edward I asked for new taxes and support for his war in Gascony. A few earls proved reluctant to fight in France. Among them was Richard Fitz Alan, earl of Arundel. At the beginning of September therefore, King Edward I ordered the confiscation of the properties of the recalcitrant earls.

Edward I had assembled a new fleet by then, a fleet of galleys, commanded by Admiral William de Leybourne. The French army, however, had already attacked Dover in August, and made now devastating raids to Winchelsea and Hythe.

At the end of September, King Edward had to admit he had over-played his hand in the conflict with his nobles. He backed down over his plea for new taxes of a 1/10<sup>th</sup> on the goods

of the clergy, and he issued pardons for tens of his magnates and earls who had refused to fight in Gascony.

In October of 1295, King Edward opened new negotiations with Flanders over the marriage of Count Guy's daughter Philippa to his son. Edward eagerly sought the confidence of Guy de Dampierre, as Flanders was a good place to start a second front in his war with France. This might relieve the pressure on Gascony.

The king of England learned the poorer-knights of Flanders were reluctant to support him, as most of them were *Leliaerts*. He banned the export of wool to Flanders, hoping that, as had happened before, the cities of Flanders, governed by *Leliaerts*, would rapidly turn to his side.

In that year of 1295, rich in events, King Philip IV the Fair augmented still his pressure on Flanders. He ordered a stop to all trade with England. In a devious way, he ordered Count Guy to issue this order, so that the Flemish would blame the count and not him.

The king also ordered Flanders to use French coins exclusively. These coins had been heavily devaluated lately.

Count Guy obeyed to all these orders of France, but his patience was heavily tested.

The cities of Bruges, Ieper, Lille and Douai petitioned Count Guy to give up his demand for a 1/15<sup>th</sup> tax in Flanders. They sent another proposal, only to the king of France. The cities promised to give more than half of their tax to the king, but to the king alone. King Philip the Fair accepted the offer, against the interests of the count. The arrangement was insulting and humiliating for Count Guy. The count and his court considered the decision an ignominy. He protested, whereupon the king grabbed the overlordship of the cities for himself, and he ordered Count Guy once more to come to his court of Paris to explain his actions. Count Guy retaliated by seizing the goods of the Scottish Merchants of Flanders. The count knew, of course, Scotland was recently allied with France.

On the 23th of October, in Scotland, the magnates of the land mauled John Balliol, king of Scotland. They imposed their will on the king, reproaching John Balliol for having allowed the king of England to be recognised as the overlord of the Scots. They signed on that day a formal alliance with France, promising to bring a war to England, together with France.

That was the reason why Count Guy had seized the goods of the Scottish merchants in his county. He also promised to marry his other daughter, Isabella, to Edward of Caernarfon, the English crown prince. King Edward granted military help to Count Guy in his growing conflict with King Philip the Fair.

Philip IV reacted immediately. When Count Guy of Dampierre renounced his allegiance to France, he had the county placed under the interdict of the church, according to the stipulations of the Treaty of Melun. Count Guy was to hand over Valenciennes to the king, so that King Philip could use the city in his negotiations of support by the count of Hainault. The tension mounted. The count of Flanders and the king of France were engaged in a growing spiral of hostile measures and counter-measures.

Not everybody in France wholeheartedly agreed with the policies of King Philip IV! Jean de Vassoyne, the chancellor of France, the bishop of Tournai and the provost of Saint-Donat mentioned issues with the royal command of putting Flanders under the interdict.

In January of 1296, although King Philip had secured the agreement of the nobility of France, as well as of the most important clergymen for, a one-fiftieth tax on the goods of the Church and of the people of France, the clergy protested vigorously. They refused to pay until forced to do so by arms, and they appealed to Pope Boniface VIII. They drew the pope into the conflict.

In October of 1295, King Edward I ordered all properties of Scotsmen in England to be seized. He summoned John Balliol to justify himself at court, but the Scottish king refused to honour Edward's summons.

King Edward needed funds to intervene in Scotland and ward off the French. He had the intention to march against the kingdom, because the Scottish king had violated his oaths of fealty to the English crown.

At the end of November of the year, King Edward discussed once more new taxes with Parliament. He met with little opposition. His only real opposer was a clergyman, Robert of Winchelsea, the new archbishop of Canterbury. Nevertheless, Parliament agreed on the additional 1/10<sup>th</sup> tax. The threat to England was real indeed, for in the winter of from 1295 to 1296, a small French fleet sacked Dover.

In Flanders and France, the protests against King Philip the Fair grew. The marks of sympathy with Count Guy of Dampierre soared. King Philip IV was urged to concessions. He banned all competition in the kingdom for Flemish cloth, and granted a two-year delay for the payment of the count and of his poorter-knights. The king also limited some of the rights of his sergeants in Flanders. He allowed Count Guy to have the court of justice of the count decide over men who were drawn to the royal court for crimes, and he refuted new appeals of the Thirty-Nine aldermen of Ghent to the Parliament of Paris. Philip IV gave back ninety thousand pounds to Flanders, to indemnise the poorters for the losses incurred by the rupture of commerce with England. The French court had fined Flanders with this amount for ignoring the royal ordinance on the use of French coins. The king equally promised to return to the Lombard traders what his men had taken from them. These concessions were made already in January of 1296.

Count Guy of Dampierre used the occasion to publicise a letter in which he told he had been forced to exert the new one-fiftieth taxes for the greatest good of Flanders. He could dupe nobody in Flanders!

At the end of January too, the bishop of Tournai stopped the interdict over Flanders. In Ghent, the *Leliaert* aldermen of the Thirty-Nine felt abandoned by the king of France. They fled, most of them to Holland. Count Guy appointed their successors himself. But he did not abolish the institution.

King Philip the Fair negotiated in January of 1296 with the counts of Hainault and of Holland, with John d'Avesnes and with Count Florent V. He wanted them to abandon their alliance with England.

In February of 1296, Philip the Fair ordered Flanders to hand over Valenciennes to Count John d'Avesnes of Hainault. This was the price of the d'Avesnes, to abandon their alliance with King Edward II of England. The poorters of Valenciennes, however, did not at all approve to hand over their city to the count of Hainault. They repeated their offer of

guardianship to Count Guy de Dampierre. Count Guy was flattered. He promised to consider Valenciennes fully as Flemish. He wanted to defend the town against France and Hainault. At the end of March of 1296, Valenciennes rang the bells of their city. The aldermen declared the city independent of obedience to the French king. They chose the count of Flanders as their true lord!

The revolt of Valenciennes angered much King Philip IV, of course, so he ordered Count Guy of Dampierre to withdraw the knights and the garrison out of the town. The count did not seem to want to obey the royal order. The king summoned the count to Paris. He had his herald for Flanders, the bailiff of Amiens, call out in all the cities of Flanders they did not have to recognise anymore the authority of the count. The enmity between King Philip the Fair and Count Guy of Dampierre had escalated to an open conflict.

Count Guy argued he could not be judged by the king, so he should not appear at the Paris court. He accused the king for having seized Flanders unlawfully. Count Guy asserted he could only be judged by his peers, the pairs of France. The king retaliated by stating only he and his Council had legal jurisdiction to judge the count, not the wider assembly of peers of France. He therefore, and once more, sentenced Count Guy to give up Valenciennes without delay. The count of Flanders defied the king by accepting the homage of the people of Valenciennes on the 1<sup>st</sup> of April of 1296.

A week later, Philip the Fair accepted to abolish the 1/50<sup>th</sup> tax on Flanders. He promised to hand over his half to the count. This ordinance, however, was never executed!

At the beginning of January 1296, King Edward I assigned his envoys for negotiations with France. In the spring, Count Robert of Artois finished his conquest of Guyenne. Edmund of Lancaster, and after him the earl of Lincoln, could not turn the events in their favour. Guyenne seems lost to the English, solidly in the power of France.

A new English fleet sailed in that month to Gascony, but the English army met very strong resistance by the French forces in place. Edmund of Lancaster died on the 5<sup>th</sup> of June of 1296. Henry de Lacy, earl of Lincoln, replaced him, but was not more successful in driving back the French.

Meanwhile, King Edward I had mainly Scotland on his mind. He gathered a large army of sixty thousand men-at-arms and knights, and he marched by the 1<sup>st</sup> of March of 1296 to Berwick. The English army attacked the town, and captured it. Many inhabitants of Berwick were massacred.

While the English advanced, John Balliol bitterly renounced to his homage of fealty to the English king. Scotland would wage a war of independence.

I recognised the trend.

The duchy of Brabant had fought wars, had proved its strength, so that the duke of Brabant acted largely independently from the German emperor, even though he recognised Brabant was a feudal loan. The growing tension between France and Flanders showed the desire of liberty, the atmosphere of independence existing in Flanders. An armed clash would have to determine just how much Flanders could feel independent from France! The wars in Wales and now in Scotland, pointed in the same direction.

‘The war proved the incredibly great ego of the kings, nothing else,’ Bother Bernardus commented wryly. ‘Why could the great lords not have left our and other land in peace, under a lord who did not seek to diminish their royal power? Our Lord Christ condemned the arrogance of these rich men.’

I had to agree.

‘It is strange,’ I added, ‘how the kings were out for expansion everywhere. Each king considered it his duty to expand the kingdom. Did they seek to be remembered by as great men who built great countries? How stupid and vain were such endeavours!’

‘They thought of devilish schemes in the name of the position they received from God. I would have liked to have been their confessor! How I would have scorned them!’

‘I’m sure you would,’ I smiled. ‘You would also not have been their confessor for long!’

### The Conflict of France with Pope Boniface VIII

At that moment in time, on the 24<sup>th</sup> of February of 1296, Pope Boniface VIII added to the number of conflicts that racked our lands. He issued the papal bull ‘Clericos Laicos’.

The pope reminded the monarchs, in the first place King Philip IV the Fair of France, that the canon law of the Church guaranteed the independence of the clergy from lay rule. The pope reminded the king the formal acceptance of the pope of Rome, the head of the Church, was necessary for all taxes on the clergy. Boniface VIII threatened the clergymen who would pay taxes without the consent of the pope; they would be excommunicated. The pope forbade the payment of taxes already agreed upon without his permission. He emphasized with his bull the independence of the clergymen from all temporal rulers.

The bull caused an upheaval at the Paris court. The four archbishops of France, of Rheims, Sens, Rouen and Narbonne, sent two prelates to Rome to remind the pope of Christ’s saying, ‘give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar’. They explained the risks for the bishops of losing their possessions when they would try to withdraw from the feudal duties for the lands they occupied.

King Philip the Fair reacted cleverly by forbidding all gold and silver to be moved out of the kingdom. With this ordinance, the clergy of France could no longer send gold to Rome. The pope asked for negotiations on the matter. He proposed as head negotiator for France Charles de Valois. Boniface VIII was on good terms with Charles, and hoped Charles could serve as a dignified French envoy.

Boniface VIII then issued another bull, ‘Ineffabilis Amor’, dated from the 29<sup>th</sup> of September of 1296. The pope gave the letter to the new bishop of Viviers, who returned to France. Boniface reminded the king of France all the temporal princes had to submit to the judgement of the successor of Peter. He reproached the king for the harshness by which Philip made his people suffer. If Philip IV had wanted to harm the papacy by his last measures, he would regret the imprudence. Boniface urged Philip IV to reconsider. Who was the prince, attacking France, who had not beforehand been attacked or insulted by the king? The king of the Romans complained, the county of Burgundy complained, the king of England complained for the lands of Gascony. I would add this was certainly also the case for the count of Flanders!

Boniface VIII thus affirmed the popes remained the guides and the judges of Christendom.

King Philip IV consulted his lawyers. These retorted with the obvious. The keys of the kingdom given to Saint Peter were those of the Kingdom of Heaven, not those of the terrestrial kingdoms. The liberties and privileges of the Church could be withdrawn for public necessity! The clergy worked inside the state. Moreover, the Church was not constituted merely by the clergy, for also by all people of the Christian religion.

The pope nevertheless came under pressure in his own city of Rome. Hugues Aycelin, one of the councillors of King Philip IV, supported the Roman Cardinals Colonna and Orsini, the leading men of the Roman aristocracy, which was always in conflict with the papacy over the dominance in Rome.

Pope Boniface VIII was forced to seek a reconciliation. He gave a dispense to allow the female heir of the county of Burgundy to marry a son of the French king. He proposed to canonise Philip's grandfather, the late King Louis IX.

In yet another papal bull, 'Romana Mater Ecclesia', issued the 7<sup>th</sup> February of 1297, Pope Boniface recognised the right of the king of France to demand contributions from the clergy for their fiefs. When a little later the count of Flanders openly declared against the king, a number of bishops asked the pope to be allowed to help the king financially, as the realm was in danger.

On the 23<sup>th</sup> of February of 1297, with the papal bull 'Coram illo Fatemur', the pope granted his authorisation.

On the 27<sup>th</sup> of July, the pope declared in the bull 'Ab olim' all tax demanded to pay the ransom of the king or his sons was perfectly legal.

On the 31<sup>st</sup> of July, with 'Etsi de Statu', the pope authorised the clergy to pay or loan money to the king for their fiefs, according to the custom of the land. The king could take money from the clergy when his realm was in danger, and could do so without the authorisation of the pope. The bull practically annulled 'Clericos Laicos'. The pope allowed the king of France to demand subsidies from the clergy as loans. The king obtained the right to demand new taxes on the fiefs of the clergy without any previous authorisation from the pope. The bull 'Etsi de Statu' in fact undid the regulation proclaimed in the bull 'Clericos Laicos'!

Finally, on the 10<sup>th</sup> of August of 1297, the pope canonised King Louis IX. This was how kings could be made into saints! The conflict between Boniface VIII and King Philip IV the Fair of France seemed solved and closed.

### England and Flanders

At the end of April, the Scottish and the English army desperately locked horns at the Battle of Dunbar. The English defeated the Scots. Dunbar Castle surrendered. King Edward I received the capitulation of other Scottish fortresses. Edinburgh gave itself up after a siege of only five days.

In mid-June of 1296, the bishop of Durham proposed an arrangement for peace. John Balliol would resign as king, receive the title of English earl, and leave the realm of Scotland

forever. King Edward hated the insurrection, which had distracted him from the war with France and cost him dear in money. He refused the wise deal.

On the 8<sup>th</sup> of July 1296, John Balliol and his knights surrendered to the English king at Montrose. King Edward I immediately demoted Balliol, and sent the former Scottish king first to the prison in the Tower of London, and afterwards to a castle in Hertfordshire. In August, Edward I was back in Berwick after a tour in Scotland. During a session of the English Parliament held at Berwick, the Scottish nobles, humbly and once more, swore fealty to him. The war was finished. Scotland would not get a new king soon!

Robert Bruce too did not become the next king of Scotland. Abandoned by the Scottish nobles, he departed for his estates in Essex and swore never to set another foot in Scotland. King Edward I decided to rule Scotland, as well as England, by himself. The Scots would henceforth be ruled by an English administration, based at Berwick. King Edward confiscated the Stone of Scone, upon which the Scottish kings were crowned. He sent it to the Abbey of Westminster, where the stone remains today, under the throne on which the kings of England are crowned.

In the meantime, in Flanders, the conflict between King Philip IV and Count Guy of Dampierre continued unabatedly. Philip was a master in mounting pressure, knowing in the end Flanders would yield. The king placed the five most important cities of Flanders under the guard of royal sergeants. He ordered the count to obey him without countersay. Did he really know the temperament of the proud counts of Flanders? It was remarkable, how the controversy between the king and the count concentrated on the cities of Flanders. I came thus to understand how powerful the Flemish towns were, compared to the overall relations of power of the countries. France and King Philip the Fair augmented tension, but the king waited long, very long before launching a war campaign in Flanders. This was, I guess, because the court of Paris feared the military might of Flanders. Contrary to the other countries and counties, the cities of Flanders had developed strong militia forces, feared by King Philip.

Flanders was still at war with Holland over Zeeland. The war was not very popular in Holland, either. In June of 1296, a revolt broke out in Holland. A number of noblemen, among whom Jan of Renesse, Gerard van Velsen, Gilbert van Amstel and Wulfart van Borseele, excellent warriors, rebelled against Count Florent V, count of Holland. They took the count a prisoner in the castle of Muiden. They would have moved him out of Holland, to a castle in Flanders or Brabant, had not Frisian ships blocked the sea access at that time. They killed the count. It was not very clear who actually killed Florent, maybe the three knights called Herman, Gerard and Gilbert van Velsen, but the count did not survive.

The heir of Holland, called John, the young son of the late count, was only 14 years old. He resided in England. He was the son of Florent V and Beatrice of Flanders. He was married to Elisabeth, a daughter of King Edward I of England. The young Count John returned to Holland. The main nobles of Holland deemed him too young to rule and hold the government of the country alone. An English fleet brought the young John to the port of Vere, a port of Wulfart van Borseele! Wulfart became the tutor of the count, the regent of Holland.

In this matter, John of Avesnes, count of Hainault, remained out of all attention for some time. John d'Avesnes kept an eager eye on Holland, though, for his mother Alix was an aunt of the late Count Florent. John d'Avesnes could formulate correct claims on Holland! John d'Avesnes hired assassins to murder the lord of Borseele. He then grabbed the tutorship of the young count of Holland for himself. He practically imprisoned John of Holland, and in the end, John died. He may have been poisoned! The perfidy of the d'Avesnes showed openly in this deed. The result of the hideous murder was that John d'Avesnes, count of Hainault, usurped the title of count of Holland.

Jan van Renesse and other nobles of Holland appealed to the king of Germany, who was at that moment Albert of Austria. They refused to accept a d'Avesnes as count of Holland. The German king, however, did not intervene. He allowed John d'Avesnes to keep Holland. Also King Philip IV of France was happy to allow the count of Hainault to rule over Holland, directed against Flanders and England. Jan van Renesse escaped to Flanders. King Edward I could not do much. He sent Humphrey of Bohun and Richard Clavinger to defend his interests in Holland. His Lord Hugh Spencer, supported by the duke of Brabant and the count of Bar, pressed Flanders to enter an offensive alliance against Hainault, but John of Avesnes augmented his power and authority over Holland by the day.

In July of 1296, Count Guy of Dampierre merely handed over the town of Valenciennes to his son, Robert of Béthune. King Philip the Fair ordered Bruges, Ghent, Ieper, Lille and Douai to not send troops out of the kingdom against Hainault. He warned the count of Flanders to make sure no such thing would happen.

King Philip IV felt he could not alienate the count of Flanders more than he had already done by then, however, so he officially gave back the authority over the county of Flanders to Count Guy. Philip needed Flanders, and the knights of the castellanies of Flanders cherished their count.

Count Guy understood bitterly the king was supporting his worst enemy, the House of d'Avesnes, masters of the Hainault region that had once been Flemish, and who now also ruled over Holland.

Count Guy still had to defend his interests before the Parliament of Paris instead of before a court of his peers. Philip the Fair continued to openly support the *Leliaert* poorter-knights of Flanders against the count. Philip thereby sought and obtained the aid of the men of the old Flemish noble urban lineages, who controlled the Flemish cities, the real might of Flanders. Count Guy turned to the only side he could. He remarked how eagerly now King Edward I of England sought his alliance. Edward I offered rich subsidies, fine marriages for his children, and the restitution of Artois to Flanders. Count Guy saw how King Edward gained other alliances with neighbouring, friendly rulers. The count of Guelders, the count of Bar, the lord of Fauquemont and the duke of Brabant had sworn loyalty to King Edward! The German emperor offered the support of the Roman empire.

By mid-July, and once more, King Philip IV of France ordered Count Guy of Dampierre to hand over Valenciennes to Hainault, his trusted ally. Count Guy considered this one more and last humiliation done to him, as everybody knew of the controversy between him and John d'Avesnes.

At the beginning of August of 1296, the poorter-knights of Bruges accused Count Guy de Dampierre of having surpassed his authority over the cities of Flanders. They appealed to the king of France. Also the aldermen of Ghent brought forward complaints against the count to Philip IV. The king summoned Count Guy to Paris. This time, the count intended to obey.

By the end of August, the king sentenced the count of Flanders. He ordered Count Guy to give back the seals of the city to the aldermen of Ghent, to the Thirty-Nine. The count had also to hand over to the king the rights of jurisdiction over the cities of Flanders. Henceforth, the king would be invested with those rights. Philip IV reserved the right to investigate into the conduct of the count in the management of the cities. Count Guy had to solemnly promise not to harm the poorter-knights, who had complained against him. In truth, such ordinances withdrew the authority of the count over the Flemish cities. Count Guy would not be able to use the militia of the cities during a war.

The how many humiliations of Count Guy of Dampierre were these commands? Probably in a mood of vengeance and bitterness, Count Guy then confiscated all the goods of the Scottish merchants, knowing well France and Scotland were allies against England. In September of 1296, the king of France reacted, ordering the count to give back all the confiscated goods. Philip IV threatened to order the bailiff of Amiens to force the count to comply by the force of arms. Count Guy merely repeated the ordinance of confiscation! And by the end of September, Guy of Dampierre sought to reconcile with the Flemish cities, with the Leliaerts knights, as well as with the *Klauwaerts*, the guilds of the cities.

In England, in November of 1296, King Edward I asked for a new tax in a session of the English Parliament held at Bury-Saint-Edmunds. He extorted a tax of 1/12<sup>th</sup>. He placed heavy custom duties on wool, and confirmed the purveyance of the army, the seizing of goods for his army without payment.

By the 22<sup>nd</sup> of November of 1296, the king of England visited Flanders. He resided first in Kortrijk, and then at Geeraardsbergen, for a grand conference with his allies on the continent. Present at Geeraardsbergen were representatives of all the rulers allied with him against the king of France. The count of Flanders, the Emperor Adolph of Nassau and Albert of Habsburg, duke of Austria, Henry count of Bar, John duke of Brabant, Wolfram of Jülich, as well as the then young count of Holland attended the meeting.

The duke of Brabant was King Edward's son-in-law. The then 12-year old count of Holland, still alive, agreed for Holland to support England. Count Guy of Flanders, tired of being bullied by France, openly allied with King Edward I. The agreement of Geeraardsbergen aimed for England and King Edward I to bring the war into the heart of France!

The war with France seemed for Count Guy of Dampierre, who had suffered insult after insult for two years in a row with resignation, to be the only issue of the conflict with France. How the war would be waged was unsure, the future could not be predicted, but the forces of the continent were aligned.

King Edward promised to send troops to Flanders to oppose the French. The English army would be paid for by the English, but Flanders would have to feed the men-at-arms, against payment. Upon any demand by England, Flanders would declare war in France. No truce

would be agreed with France without mutual agreement. England would yearly grant 60.000 pounds Tournois to pay for the war expenditures of Flanders.

In the winter of 1296 to 1297, Count Guy of Dampierre began to act in favour of the common people against the poorer-knights of the cities, in favour of the guilds of artisans. In Ghent, he ordered a new inquest into the accounts and management of the Thirty-Nine aldermen. Shortly after, he destituted the aldermen and banished them. Count Guy of Dampierre took the spiral of war with France one step higher.

On the 7<sup>th</sup> of January of 1297, at Ipswich, England, Flanders and Holland signed an offensive alliance. By the treaty, the son of Edward I, called Edward of Caernarfon, would marry the sister of Philippa of Flanders, called Isabella. Edward I married his daughter Elisabeth to the count of Holland. Edward I formally promised to send an English army in support of Flanders. King Edward also granted extended privileges to the Flemish merchants. The English wool staple would be re-established in Bruges.

King Edward I did not swear himself to the treaty. The bishop of Coventry and Count Amadeus of Savoie ratified the treaty with Flanders. Also Count Guy did not swear to uphold the agreement. His delegates, Henry of Blamont, John de Kuyck and James van Deize swore in his place in the Chapel of Our Lady at Walsingham. With the treaty, Count Guy de Dampierre of Flanders definitely chose England's side over France, and declared himself independent from France.

The French court rapidly heard of the details of the English-Flemish alliance. King Philip the Fair immediately sent Simon le Moine, provost of Montreuil, and Jehan le Borgne, his lieutenant at Beauquesne, to Guy de Dampierre. The delegates announced quite logically the king of France had received the rights by his Royal Council to take measures against Count Guy for having allied with England. They delivered the message to the count at his castle of Wijnendael. The two men placed their hand on Count Guy's shoulder, the official gesture of seizing a man and making him their prisoner. They ordered the count to give himself up at the Châtelet prison of Paris. Robert of Béthune and his brother, the sons of Count Guy, cried the two messengers would regret having put their hands on such an important nobleman as the count of Flanders. They would have killed the men, but Count Guy prevented the act by having his sons remind the messengers were merely valets of the king, on whom vengeance would be lost.

On the 9<sup>th</sup> of January, Count Guy of Dampierre asked the abbots of Gembloux and of Floreffe to bring his answer to King Philip IV. Count Guy wrote the king of France had committed misdeeds against his feudal servant, acts called in French 'des défauts de droit', errors against the law, as stipulated by King Louis IX in his charter of rights and duties of the kings and counts of the realm. The count of Flanders therefore deemed himself free of all alliances, conventions, obediences, services, and obligations of all kinds to the king. Count Guy added the long list of outrages committed by the king. He mentioned the arrest of his daughter Philippa, the alliance of the king with John d'Avesnes directed against Flanders, the refusal to allow the count of Flanders to be judged by his peers, the royal monetary ordinances for Flanders which had impoverished the county, the prohibition of commerce with England, so vital for the industry of Flanders, and the arrangements with the cities on the payment of the

1/50<sup>th</sup> taxes concluded without the count's involvement. Count Guy of Dampierre had brought the spiral of tension to its breaking point!

On the 21<sup>st</sup> of August of 1297, King Philip IV rejected the allegations of the count of Flanders. He sent the bishops of Amiens and of Le Puy to Flanders with letters addressed to Guy de Dampierre, Marquis of Namur and pretendant count of Flanders. Philip IV reminded the count of the Treaty of Melun. Everybody in Flanders knew the clause that stipulated Flanders could be excommunicated if it broke with France.

Count Guy then had a solemn appeal to the pope read loudly in the Saint Donation Church of Bruges, the city's main church. In the letter, Count Guy placed himself in the protection of the pope. The count sent his delegates to Rome, Michael Asclokettes canon of Soignies, James Beck and John of Franchiennes, with a letter for Pope Boniface VIII. In the letter he asked for the pope's protection against the insults and menaces of the king of France.

The conflict had by then already entered its final stage of arms! King Philip the Fair assembled an army of sixty thousand men, led by thirty-two counts of France and by the dukes of Burgundy, Bourbon and Brittany. John d'Avesnes, count of Hainault, joined these troops with a force of fifteen hundred men-at-arms.

Count Guy of Flanders received no help from his allies, no English troops, no German army. He could hire a few German mercenaries. The count's force consisted mainly of the knights of Flanders and their men-at-arms. Count Guy gave the leadership of his armed forces to his sons and grandsons.

Robert de Béthune and Guy of Namur marched with troops to Lille. Also the knights Kuyck and Fauquemont joined them there. William Crèvecoeur and Henry of Namur defended Douai. John de Namur strengthened the garrison of Ieper. At Bergues and Cassel led Walram count of Jülich, the count of Clèves and John van Gaveren. In Ghent, the duke of Brabant and the young count of Holland contained the *Leliaert* knights. Also the lords of Amstel and of Woerden joined the duke. These last men were among the rebels who revolted against the young count of Holland's father, so the count returned north, to his fate.

England could not hurry to the aid of Flanders! The move was still considered perilous in England. Moreover, at the end of January of 1297, the English clergy refused to pay the new taxes. King Edward I was infuriated over the insult. On the 30<sup>th</sup> of January, he practically outlawed the clergy of England. Royal agents seized the ecclesiastical estates, the food and the livestock of the clergy. Edward ironically announced the clergy could buy back his protection, at the same price as the income from the tax he demanded! At about the same time, by the end of January of 1297, he had dissolved a session of Parliament, because the nobles refused him subsidies. King Edward I then installed a new system of taxes to augment his treasury. He did not succeed, however, in gathering sufficient money for a large intervention force.

The two French bishops of Amiens and Le Puy met with Count Guy of Dampierre and tried to change the views of the count. The standpoints did not change.

The month of February of 1297 proved catastrophic for the English troops in Gascony. The French royal army defeated the English forces severely near Bayonne. Although Edward I asked of the nobles assembled in Parliament to fight in Gascony, many refused outright to comply. The earls of Arundel, Warwick and even Robert Bigod earl of Norfolk, a loyal friend of King Edward, refused. Bigod was the marshal of England, the man who, together with the constable, had to muster the king's armies. Also Humphrey de Bohun earl of Hereford and the constable of England, refused.

On the 12<sup>th</sup> of March 1297, the desperate King Edward I seized all the wool in England. Edward called for an immediate investigation into the debts of the crown. The clergy of England slowly turned to his viewpoints. In April of 1297, King Edward's men placed all the wool of England on board of ships, to be transported to Flanders. The earls of England then met in the wood of Wyre.

At Easter of 1297, the earls of Arundel, Warwick, Norfolk and Hereford met near Montgomery. They declared again they would not cross the sea to fight on the continent, also not for a war in Flanders. At Winchelsea, the men representing the shires of England conjured the king to renounce to expeditions on the continent. For all these reasons, King Edward I could not make true his promise to send troops to the aid of Flanders. Likewise, in Germany, the emperor was rising an army to lead it into Flanders, when a plot was discovered against him. The German princes won over to the king of France, initiated a rebellion paid by Philip IV, so that the emperor had to face a revolt in his realm. The emperor had to solve the issues in his own lands. He would not move an army to Flanders.

In May of 1297, King Philip IV of France threatened Flanders even more. The king promised honour and wealth to the lords of Flanders who would abandon the cause of Guy of Dampierre. The king urged Tournai to fortify the walls of the city better and more. The archbishop of Tournai, then the archbishop of Rheims and the bishop of Senlis threw the religious interdict over Flanders.

King Philip the Fair would not fight alone against Flanders. He had more allies than any other king! The counts of Holland, Hainault, Burgundy and Luxemburg were his allies. The kings of Norway, Scotland, Aragon, Mallorca and Castile pledged to support him. In the end, Emperor Adolph of Nassau promised to remain neutral in the war with Flanders. Philip the Fair married his brother Charles of Anjou with the daughter of the Scottish king, and he promised John II d'Avesnes to reconquer Namur for him.

By mid-May, the king called together a session of the Parliament of Paris, to be held in June. King Edward I also ordered his earls to muster their troops for June. The English king reconciled by mid-June with Archbishop Winchelsea of Canterbury. He restituted the confiscated possessions of the clergy to the archbishop. The king could hope on receiving subsidies from the clergy for his war on the continent. Those measures came too late for Flanders!

On the 15<sup>th</sup> of June of 1297, the glorious French army reached the frontier of Flanders. Count Guy of Dampierre had to confront the French army alone. The French troops rapidly

overtook the fortresses of l'Écluse and Tortequesne. They marched into the county of Flanders. Flanders was being invaded!

### 1.5. Arnout de Hert. 1297

In 1297, Arnout de Hert was eighteen years old. The year was to be one of the most remarkable in his life, for he was getting married. The wedding ceremony was being held on the fifteenth of June, the day the French royal troops invaded Flanders.

Arnout was not a tall young man. Many would have called him stout and stocky. Not an ounce of fat hung over his bones, however. Arnout was all muscles and sinews. He may have been one of the strongest men of Ghent. That was, because from a very young age on, he had to work hard for his family, pushing and drawing his boats on the rivers of Flanders. Arnout was a shipper. His father drowned when Arnout had only just become twelve years old. The accident happened on the River Scarpe, in French-speaking Flanders. By that time, Arnout had already been helping his father on boats for two years. Arnout had also learned a mouthful of French, the French of Picardy. After the accident, he brought the ship home safe, but without the body of his father, which remained lost in the waters. Twelve-year old Arnout sailed from Douai to Ghent all alone after the death of his father.

His mother was terraced by grief over her husband's death. She could not tell Arnout what to do next. Money was scarce in the family, reserves inexistent, so Arnout had to work immediately, or go hungry. He did not hire himself out to another shipper. He doubted another captain would have hired him anyhow, he being of such young age. He decided to continue his father's shipping business on his own.

Arnout had never attended any school. He knew how to count and to read from what his mother and father had taught him. He mastered a few notions of the geography of Flanders and France, knew where the waterways of the county started and led to, had an idea of prices of loads and of transport, and esteemed such knowledge sufficient to trade. He begged for new loads wherever he could, often speaking in the name of his deceased father, as if the family head still lived. Arnout was the family head, then, and his mother supported him in his challenge. There was nothing else they could have done.

Arnout de Hert owned two boats in those days. He foremost used a *duerme*, a larger Flemish river boat, to navigate between Ghent and Antwerp on the Scheldt and between Douai and Ghent. He also owned a *Lieveschuit*, a flat-bottomed boat to move on the Lieve Canal between Ghent and Damme. In the first years, he avoided Douai and other inland ports in the regions of Picardy and Artois. He did not understand the language sufficiently well. At first, he got little transport, but mainly the van Lake Family of Ghent took pity on the courageous youth. They gave him precious contracts for the transport of bales of cheaper cloth. Arnout asked lower prices than the other shippers, but the van Lakes treated him fair. Arnout never lost a load, so the van Lakes and also other traders gradually gave him their more expensive cloths to bring to Damme or to Antwerp. Arnout showed uncommon cunning in avoiding thieves on land and pirates on the waters. From early on he guaranteed transport not only over the waters but also over land. He survived barely in the beginning, but the confidence of the weavers and the traders in his ability to conclude a transport grew every month.

After a couple of years, though still one of the youngest shippers on the Scheldt, the Leie and the Lieve Canal, he began to thrive. He lost no shipment, could buy one more river boat, and employed other shippers.

He dreamt of the sea, where the big money could be made in far transport. At eighteen, Arnout had not yet gathered sufficient coins to buy a seafaring cog. Owning a seafaring cog remained a very far dream.

Arnout's face was square, weathered and wrinkled already at his young age. He was deeply lined in his weathered flesh by sadness and the strain of long periods of hard work and little sleep. Arnout dared to sail far into the night. He shunned no difficult mission, and he worked with very few hired hands.

He was a man who cherished cleanliness. He washed daily and thoroughly, if only by dipping under in the water of the rivers. His hair gleamed light brown, bleached by the sun. His grey eyes moved always, under thick, brown brows. His ears stuck close but long to his head. A straight, short nose and an equally short, thin-lipped mouth made him look oddly handsome, especially when his mild grin suddenly put all the lines of his face in motion. He was short in words. He spoke little and to the point. Often, his mouth, nose and eyes would suddenly twist to a mocking or laughing remark that relaxed whoever was dealing with him. He displayed a peculiar charm, the young shipper.

It was easy dealing business with Arnout de Hert, but the conversation over a transport could break off coldly when he understood he was being cheated or mocked at. Arnout nevertheless preferred to secure a load for a far transport than to discuss and quarrel over a few, small parts of the price. He could be lenient. He kept a lowest possible fare in his mind, and would not accept lower. Still, that amount could be much lower than what most of the other shippers wanted. Arnout preferred to have work, much work, rather than have little work at high prices. As he often went very low with a price, he proved soon not too popular with other shippers, with the less successful ones. Most of the shippers of Ghent allowed for his youth, however, and rarely bothered him. The last years, his prices had gone up, as his guarantee was among the very best the shippers of Ghent could offer.

Arnout's main transport business took place over the Lieve Canal. The drapers of Ghent used him to bring their cloth to Damme and Sluys, to the sea-ports of the magnificent traders' city of Bruges. The Bruges traders sold the cloth Ghent produced on to merchants of the entire world.

The Lieve Canal had been dug out between 1250 and 1270. Over the Lieve, substantial loads were brought to the Zwin, the sea-bay of Bruges. On the Lieve only the smallest of boats could move. The boats were fifteen feet long, eight feet wide and no more than three feet deep. That sufficed to bring most of the cloth of Ghent to the world. Many other goods the city of Ghent needed such as alum, peat, wine, wood, and much more, were brought to Ghent in the *Lieveschuiten*.

The Lieve Canal was an artificial waterway, even if it followed and used small, existing rivers for some of its length. The level of the water in the canal was maintained by two locks, one at each end. These docks were called *rabots* in Flemish. The *rabot* structures closed the ends of the canal, so the boats that navigated on the Lieve had to be unloaded there. A huge,

wooden crane heaved the *Lieveschuiten* over the lock, after which the boats could be re-loaded and continue their course, on the last stretch of rivers into Ghent or Damme.

The other shippers of Ghent not only appreciated the very hard working youth de Hert. They remarked he was intelligent in business. In 1297, Arnout was an accepted master-member of the guild of the shippers of Ghent. He participated in the meetings of the guilds and in the elections of the deans. The shipper's guild was the largest in the group of the small guilds, one of the three main guilds of Ghent with the guilds of the weavers and of the fullers. His fellow-shippers whispered he might be a dean in the making. Others, of course, grumbled about the trade he made them lose. Arnout was still young, but he was respected for his work, for his opinions and advice. He was known as a *Klauwaert*, a fervent advocate of Flanders and their counts.

Arnout's fate was sealed for the better when, at seventeen years old, he saved a girl from drowning in the Leie.

It happened on a fine day of late spring. The sun shimmered on the water of the Leie. The splendid buildings of *Tussen Bruggen* mirrored in the water. Marie Scivaels, a lively girl of fifteen, had been walking along the quays of *Tussen Bruggen*, the inner port of Ghent on the Leie. Arnout had brought his *duerme* along the quay, looking for a free space not too far from the *Lakenhalle*, the Cloth Hall. He wanted to moor and unload, then look for another contract. Arnout stood on deck and pushed his boat the last feet of water, towards the quay. Strident high screams of quarrelling drew Arnout's attention to behind him. He saw a group of young men flock around a girl. He recognised the boys in a flash, all young men of approximately his own age. Lievin de Grutere, Jehan Panneberch, Hugen van Lovendeghem and Sanders de Mey stood there, with two or three others Arnout didn't know so well. They were the sons of wealthy families, of some of the best names of Ghent. They were arrogant young men, who always cried out loud, boasted a lot, gesticulated with wide movements of arms, and who were often a little drunk. The men were well aware how rich they were, and how little everybody in the city, even the bailiff's sergeants, would dare to challenge them. They were also well trained in fighting, in handling the long knives at their belt, and occasionally the sword. They could speak their Latin, and had private teachers. All but the de Mey boy were wealthy landowner-poorters, Leliaerts and knights of Ghent. In their midst, being turned around by eager hands, stood one of the finest beauties of Ghent, a girl called Marie Scivaels.

Marie Scivaels was the daughter of a well-to-do broker family. The Scivaels frequented the better circles of Ghent, though they were no knights themselves. Marie went always well-dressed, and she was a fresh, lively girl. Arnout had noticed this Marie often in the streets near *Tussen Bruggen*, in the *Kuipe*, the centre of the city. He had secretly stared at her for long moments, for she was by far the fairest maiden of Ghent he had set eyes on. He also realised she was unattainable for him. He was too poor and uneducated. She was of a family that could look down on shippers. He should not dream of such a girl. She and her family would have taken him for any other workman loading and unloading at great effort at *Tussen Bruggen*.

Arnout had spotted a nice place to bring his boat close to quay, when the quarrelling mounted in tone. He had to give all his attention to how to glide his boat along the earthen walls and

the stones of the quay of *Tussen Bruggen*. He heard the high scream so loudly, however, he looked over his shoulders. He saw the girl in the brightly coloured tunic search for balance on the quay, throwing one foot in the air and over the water, and then falling down toward the Leie. The boys may not really have pushed Marie over the border of the quay, but the one standing closes to her, Hugen van Lovendeghem, was also not exactly holding her back. Arnout saw Marie flaying into nothing with her arms and one leg, trying to regain her balance. She remained one instant with one foot on the quay, and then, ever faster, she tumbled into the water. The boys merely laughed, ignoring her desperate cries. When she actually broke into the water, the boys seemed too stunned to do anything useful. They continued laughing harder.

Arnout did not think Marie could swim. He took two steps farther to the rear of his boat. He saw Marie right beneath him, thrashing in the not too clean Leie. Marie kept her head out of the water, as her clothes made of her a water-lily floating in the Leie. She could not stay long that way, Arnout knew. Her clothes were soaking up water, making her heavier. She would soon be dragged under. Arnout lay down on the planks of his deck, moved his body as far out as he dared, over the water, and extended an arm and hand.

He shouted to the girl, ‘grab my hand!’

Marie looked up to where the commanding voice came from, seemed to realise she was floating close to a boat. With a mighty splash of her arms and legs and body, she threw herself to security, to grab the outstretched hand of her saviour.

Arnout clasped the hand firmly and drew the girl nearer still. When she was close, he took hold of both her hands and began to draw Marie out of the water. It went slowly! Marie Scivaels was not a tiny maiden! She was tall and slender, but had quite some flesh in the right places, as Arnout had noticed before. Her thoroughly wetted clothes now augmented extremely the weight Arnout had to pull out of the Leie. He drew with all his might, fearing to tear the girl’s arms out of their sockets, but Marie, inch by inch, rose out of the water. When her head appeared above the deck of the boat, she grabbed the wooden border, acknowledging the boy’s tremendous strength. It was easier then, for Arnout to grasp her belt and getting her inside the boat completely. The waters had to abandon their victim to Arnout. Marie lay on deck like an oversized fish, through and through wet, panting and weeping.

Arnout received a first glimpse of her wonderful legs, then. He quickly pushed her robe down. He coughed too, did not yet try to stand, and both just lay here, Marie all wet and exhausted and soaked, sodden silk-covered shoes still at her feet. She moved to over the railing and retched her heart out, for she had swallowed a good deal of water.

Arnout stood, went to the side, and found a half-filled bottle of wine. He let the girl drink in long gulps. Her drinking made her convulsions worse. She quickly and once more threw her head over the water, and vomited the last contents of her stomach in the Leie. Arnout was satisfied with the result, for he did not find the water of the river very healthy here. He looked for, and found clean towels. He began to rub her back, hoping to dry and warm her a little. When he advanced to her front, she wrung the cloth out of his hands, dried her mouth and face first. Then, she sat. She watched him with big eyes. Who was the oaf who had saved her?

Marie looked, held her face a little oblique. She was surprised at what she saw. Suddenly, a broad smile widened her mouth.

‘Oh, it is you! I know you. I have seen you before. Thank you. You saved me. Yes, I know you. You are called Arnout de Hert. You’re one of the best captains of Ghent, I heard.’

Arnout smiled back. He went to sit next to her. He was exhausted, as much as the girl.

‘I am but a shipper, *Jonkver* Marie, not better than many others.’

‘You are better, I was told. How do you know my name?’

‘Everybody in Ghent knows the name of the finest maiden of the city. You are a Scivaels, aren’t you?’

‘Yes, I am. And you are a de Hert!’

‘Right. You might consider learning to swim if you want to bathe in the Leie. And the water is cleaner farther from the *Kuipe*!’

‘Will you teach me?’ Marie retorted as quickly, a naughty grin on her lips.

‘I didn’t jump in,’ she continued. ‘I didn’t fall by accident. That terrible Hugen pushed me in!’

‘The Lovendeghem boy?’

‘Yes, him. He has been harassing me, pursuing me, stalking me. He and his no-good friends. He wanted more of me than I agreed to give. That made him angry, so he pushed me. He is a violent one, Hugen. Quite ugly, too. How old are you? I noticed you before, you know!’

‘I am seventeen,’ Arnout replied, ‘and indeed the captain of this boat. How old are you?’

‘Sixteen. One year less than you. Do you have a girlfriend?’

Arnout had to swallow. He was not used to such direct interrogation by a girl.

He almost cried out, ‘no, I have no girlfriend! I am too busy with my boats on the rivers. I stay too little in one place to have a girlfriend. And I am poor.’

Marie laughed, ‘you live in the *Betsgravenstraat* with you mother, don’t you?’

Arnout was astonished once more, ‘yes, I do. How do you know that too?’

Marie didn’t answer. Then, she said, ‘I know more about you than you may think, Arnout de Hert. But I have to get home. Hugen and his friends seem to have run away. I’ll be fine. I dried at least a bit. I’ll be the laughing stock of Ghent from here to the *Veldstraat*, but I’ll be fine.’

‘I’m sorry. I can hardly offer you a shipper’s clothes to go home. I have no girl’s clothes on board, and you could not change on deck! You’ll have to walk home in your wet clothes. The sun is drying you. Wait just a while, and few people will notice you’re wet through and through, once your hair is dry.’

Marie smiled a bitter grin.

She stood up, ‘I’ll be seeing you,’ she cried, while she jumped on the quay with one long leap. She ran.

Arnout laughed silently, for Marie still dripped water while she reached land. She ran and didn’t turn her head.

In the next days, Marie Scivaels returned several times to *Tussen Bruggen* to look for Arnout de Hert. More often than not she found him in his boat, or on the quays, or in the Drapers’ Hall. When he worked on his boat, she jumped without fuss on deck. They talked, a little awkwardly at first, then in the warm confidence of a new friendship. Marie was quite open and straightforward explaining what she liked, and Arnout gave her the same no-nonsense frankness.

Marie told him about Huguen van Lovendeghem. Huguen had a few times tried to force himself rather rudely on Marie. Arnout looked intently, listening to her. He admired the fish he had angled out of the Leie. He studied her face, learned when small hollows appeared near the end of her lips when she smiled, how large her eyes were, and how they shone when she was happy.

He wondered what a girl like that was doing in his boat, why she even spoke to him, sat next to him, watched him work. There was nothing special about him, he was certain, that could attract a girl such as Marie. He was sure he was clumsy, a dull blockhead. Arnout dared not one moment believe such a fine lady could show any interest for him, even less take strolls with him and explain intimate things, but she did. So why did she come back often? A nice intimacy settled between them.

After a while, Arnout noticed they were being stalked. He felt eyes on his shoulders when he walked with Marie. The man who followed them was, of course, Huguen van Lovendeghem. Arnout had not much trouble spotting him.

Later in the week, Arnout started a little stalking of his own. One early night he caught up with Huguen in a dark alley near *Tussen Bruggen*, and beat Huguen's face to pulp. He shouted at Huguen to leave him and Marie Scivaels alone. He promised more beatings. Arnout was alone with Huguen in the dark alley, so he could always claim Huguen was a liar when the boy accused him of the beating. Moreover, Huguen would not grant so easily a shipper's son had beaten him up. Arnout would claim he had never been near *Tussen Bruggen* that night!

After the incident, Huguen didn't show himself for a few days. Afterwards, Arnout saw the bruised face in the Fish Market, but he feigned not to notice the Lovendeghem boy. Huguen reddened, drew his eyes and mouth in anger and hate, but avoided Arnout.

A week later, the patched-up Huguen van Lovendeghem emerged with two of his friends out of a side-street near the Betsgraven Bridge. The three of them tried to pin Arnout against the railing of the bridge, but Arnout was too strong for them. He drew himself out of their grip, and then he hit the heads of the three really good. He punched, kicked, bit, and bashed their faces, bellies and groins until they lay groaning on the stones. The three drooped off with sore ears and noses.

Only then did Arnout and Marie enjoy some rest and peace. Their walks lasted an entire month. Arnout had to tell Marie he would be away from Ghent, then, on transports to Antwerp and Douai for more than another month. Afterwards also, he would not often be in Ghent.

In fact, Arnout had decided to make an end to his beginning friendship with Marie. He despaired. He could not go on walking and joking with this girl! He thought a long absence, to which he was anyway obliged, would be the end of their seeing each other, and that was for the best. When he announced his absence, Marie kissed him abruptly on the lips, and she held the kiss. Arnout almost fainted, stunned to dizziness, however sweet the kiss. When he drew Marie closer to feel her body, she let herself melt together with him, rubbing her against him. Arnout had rapidly pushed her a little back, and Marie had run away, not without giving him a strange, soft look of regret.

Arnout had much to think of during his lonely trips on the rivers of Flanders. Marie didn't leave his mind. Still, he thought he would not ever see her back. The work on the river distracted him from too sad reflections.

When he returned, his mother told him a nice girl had brought her a large basket of fruit and vegetables right after his departure, telling her she was a friend of his. Arnout reddened when he asked whether the girl was called Marie.

'Of course,' his mother answered, 'Marie Scivaels. You should know! Would more than one girl have had to come to me?'

'No, no,' Arnout confessed, much embarrassed. 'Was she nice to you?'

'Oh, she was, yes,' Arnout's mother agreed. 'She was a really nice girl. Polite, respectful, gentle, charming, nice-talking, intelligent, a truly fine girl. Was she a bit too intelligent? She asked me all about you. I told her everything, from the times you were a baby to these last days. Somehow, it seemed right to tell her. She can draw everything out of the nose of another person, that girl, but I had a good feeling and was willing. Has that one any hooks in you?'

'She might have, indeed,' Arnout nodded, 'but she is no girl for me. She is a daughter from a well-to-do family of *poorters* of Ghent. No shippers' daughter.'

The reflection he burst out to his mother left him pensive and sad once more. He became a little worried. If Marie had come to his mother, she had not broken off ties, on the contrary. Was he ready for another woman in the house? Was his mother? He had been thinking of buying the house next doors, which was on sale. He had the money. That way, he could be living near his mother and still have his own home. The thought made him smile with his foolishness. It was only a far dream, never to come true. Not with the beautiful, elegant Marie! Marie and a shipper? He might as well think of a count's daughter!

His mother solved the issue.

'You have always done matters sooner than any other, my son, very young. You're ready for marriage. This Marie Scivaels looked so, too. You have my blessing with that one. She is a girl who will want to be taken special care of. She means business, that one, I can tell. You will not have much to say in your own house, but that too is not necessarily a bad thing. She may learn you to behave a little less roughly. Your business is growing. Slowly, I grant, but you are doing well. You need somebody to keep your accounts, to receive new customers while you're on the river, someone who can talk to traders and doesn't get cheated. She can do that. I can clean the houses. I don't mind doing so. We can buy next doors, even if we have to loan some. You can have your own house and I'll be around to help with women's things. I will cook for you and for her. I'll get along fine with this one, so much I know, even though she's not a shipper's daughter. She will come with a nice dowry, too, and don't you settle for the lowest! I know her family. They are good people. I can't imagine them giving up their daughter to a shipper, to a poor shipper at that, not easily. But Marie knows what she wants. Will they finally have you for a son? Even if Marie wants no one else? That is the crucial question! How strongly will they reject you? As for you, it was about time you started to see a girl seriously. I was worried about you being on your own too long on boats. As for me, I will have somebody to help in the house, and to talk to about other matters but boats, sails, winds, currents, loads and packaging and prices!'

Arnout had rarely listened to such a long, passionate speech from his mother. He was astonished. His mother seemed to have come back among the living. Had Marie conquered his mother and changed her in one visit?

As if she guessed his thoughts, reading his eyes, his mother continued, 'Marie came once, but I invited her to return. She has been coming to me at least twice a week. She is a really nice girl, Arnout. She is young, but she knows what she wants, and I think she wants you. You could do a lot worse. She is worthy of respect.'

'It seems much has been decided behind my back,' Arnout grumbled.

Arnout's mother smiled, 'isn't that good, too? It spares you a lot of effort you know nothing of, anyway. I told you how matters stood. She has not forgotten you. You only have to talk to her seriously, now. Of course, if you don't like her, you shouldn't marry her. Better to stay alone than try to get on with the wrong one. But this is a right one!'

'Marriage? Wo talks of marriage, mother? So soon? I merely met the girl for two weeks. We haven't talked of marriage. We are friends!'

'Don't talk nonsense to me, son. Who believes in friendship between a young man and a young woman? What normal man would not run his heart out to get a girl like that? I can see too well this girl has touched your heart. And marriage is on her mind, nothing less, Arnout! She won't settle for less! She is one like me. She knows. She doesn't need the hanky-panky and silly games children may play.'

Arnout left the conversation with his mother at that point by hastily escaping through the door. Marriage! His head spun. Outdoors, he drew a hand through his hair. Marriage, and children? Was that for him?

Soon, he did see Marie in the *Kuipe*. She ran to him in the Grain Market. He walked with her. They had only kissed once, at what seemed to him a long time ago. He asked her why she had returned. Marie didn't answer at first, then cried out he was too silly to understand she wanted to marry him. Arnout had the wisdom to not interrupt the words that came as a torrent out of her mouth. When she asked him whether he wanted to marry, he replied, stammering, of course he wanted her.

'Fine, that's settled then,' Marie laughed. 'You'll have to ask for my hand in marriage. Make it soon. I won't wait much longer. I want babies.'

He promised to go and see Marie's father within two days, and propose. Marie fell crying into his arms, and they kissed for the second time, astonishing and scandalising the people in the crowded main street of the *Kuipe*, the centre of Ghent.

Arnout asked to see Marie's father. He was introduced by a maiden servant to the hall of the Scivaels. He didn't stay long. He explained he loved Marie, thought she liked him too, and asked to marry her.

He received a flat no for an answer. Short and straight in his face, no polite wordings, just that single word of no. No never! Marie was promised to a young man of a wealthy family of landowner-poorters. No name was given, but Arnout surmised she was promised to a Lovendeghem. Marie was not destined at all to marry a poor artisan, and certainly not a shipper who smelled of fish and peat. Marie's father asked him to leave the house after the shortest of conversation. He opened the door himself for Arnout. The head of the Scivaels family made it clear Arnout was not ever supposed to talk to Marie again.

Two days later, Arnout was loading his boat near the *Betsgraven* Bridge, not at *Tussen Bruggen*, when he saw Marie running along the quay. She was obviously looking for him, but Arnout feigned not to have seen her coming. He considered their affair terminated. Better not to show how he felt. He only looked up when his boat rocked and after he had heard the thump of somebody jumping on deck. Marie stood before him, angry as ten wild cats, showing him a very red face, her hands turned into fists planted to her side.

‘Are you trying to avoid me, Arnout de Hert, you coward? Haven’t I clearly and loudly told I loved you? Are you giving me up so easily?’

Tears welled up in her eyes.

‘I want you, Arnout de Hert,’ Marie continued, ‘and I’ll have you. I want no other, not ever. Get me pregnant. My parents can’t refuse marriage when I have a thick belly!’

‘Are you out of your mind? I couldn’t do that, Marie! I can’t dishonour you. I won’t do such a thing.’

Marie cried, ‘oh you, idiot. There will be no dishonour when we marry. Besides, I want to go, to bed with you. Bed me!’

‘It might be simpler to tell your parents you are pregnant, but not actually do what you mean before our marriage. They might not check, and you can refuse to let them touch you.’

‘They may not believe me. It ‘ll have to be the real thing!’

‘Well, try it. If they want to examine you, we can still confer and decide on another course. Are you sure you are willing to go that far?’

‘Of course I am, stupid. I hate that Hugen van Lovendeghem. They want to drag me to church soon. I escaped out of a window. I almost broke my ankle. We must hurry.’

‘Try telling them you’re pregnant, then we’ll see.’

Arnout and Marie talked like conspirators for a long time, weighing all options. Finally, they decided Marie would lie to her parents. Lying was a sin, but their sin was for the best.

Three days later, a servant of Marie’s parents showed up at the shipper’s home in the *Betsgravenstraat*. Marie’s parents asked Arnout de Hert to come to the *Veldstraat* and talk. Arnout put on his best clothes and walked to Marie’s house. Her parents received him with grave and angry faces. They announced to Arnout Marie was pregnant. She had confessed the baby to be born was Arnout’s. They told Arnout marriage was inevitable and the right thing to do, the only dignified issue. Arnout nodded. Marie was called in. Marie feigned to be sad. The marriage would be concluded within the month. The dowry was minimal, but decent. Arnout and Marie didn’t really care for the money.

And so it came that Arnout de Hert and Marie Scivaels married in June of 1297, at the moment the French troops invaded Flanders.

In the following months, Arnout had a hard time surviving from his trade. Several poorters of Ghent who had been his customers withdrew their transport from him. No doubt they were urged to do so by the van Lovendeghem Family. He lost money and had no coins to save in those times racked by wars. Luckily, he far more navigated to Antwerp than to the southern rivers. He survived, because the Vresele and the van Lake families kept their confidence in him. He received more work from them, over the *Lieve Canal*, and to the sea-port of Antwerp.

Nine months later, Arnout and Marie's first daughter was born. They called the child Nete. The Scivaels parents understood they had been tricked by their daughter. They never forgave Arnout, until he had become one of the better-known and wealthy shippers of the city. For long and many years, he was not welcome in the Scivaels home in the *Veldstraat*. Marie eventually reconciled with her parents. The Lovendeghems never forgot the shame done to them.

## 1.6. Fulk's Chronicles. The first French Campaign in Flanders. 1297-1299

### The Battle of Bulskamp

On the 23rd of June of 1297, the Royal French army arrived at the walls of the city of Lille. King Philip the Fair led the army himself. He laid siege to the Flemish city. The French pitilessly showed their might. They used heavy ballistas to hurl large stones into the city, and so wreak havoc to the houses. The French army launched assault after assault, practically each day, to breach the walls. More troops, led by the king's brother Charles of Valois and by Robert of Artois joined the king. Lille defended itself well. So well, that the French lost more than four thousand men in the attacks. The garrison of Lille, led by Robert of Béthune, sallied even! They took three hundred French knights prisoners during this desperate counter-attack. Among their captured men was the king of Majorca. The defenders of Lille took courage from this feat. They hoped they could hold off the French long enough for an English army to relieve them.

The French, meanwhile, devastated the entire region, up to the River Leie. The Leie split Flanders in two parts. The French troops, led by the intrepid Charles of Valois and Guy of Saint-Pol, attacked and captured the bridge over the Leie at Komen. Then, they brought their warriors to near Kortrijk. Kortrijk surrendered quickly. The French retreated to the Leie, burning down the environs, as well as the town of Warneton and the mills outside Ieper.

The French army remained at the siege of Lille. In August, a second army led by Robert of Artois advanced towards Veurne. Artois captured several small towns of the south of Flanders: Béthune, Bailleul, Saint-Omer, Sint-Winoksbergen, and Cassel. The lord of Sint-Winoksbergen was a *Leliaert*, a Flemish knight dedicated to the cause of the French king. He prepared a sumptuous banquet for the French conquering nobility in his Castle of Bulskamp. The main leader of the French army, the count of Artois, sat still at the table, feasting on his glorious advance, when a messenger announced him Flemish troops were attacking the French army in a desperate counter-stroke.

The French had offered this possibility to the Flemish warriors. They had passed the bridge at Bulskamp in some chaos. Count Walram of Jülich and Lord Jan van Gaveren used the chaos to attack in good order. The lord of Melun, who commanded the French rear guard there, screamed for help. Artois sent him a large contingent of French footmen.

The first to arrive on the battlefield near the Bridge of Bulskamp was the count of Artois' son. The Flemish overwhelmed his troops, threw him from his horse, and took him prisoner. Robert of Artois then personally led his knights in what had been a skirmish, but was rapidly evolving into a true major battle. The battle was fought with much cruelty and obstinacy on both sides. The French fought finally with over two thousand knights.

The Flemish fought well. They only lost the field through treachery. The bailiff of Veurne, Baldwin Reyphins, held the banner of the count of Jülich throughout the first part of the battle. Suddenly, convinced the battle had come to a decisive point, he threw down the banner he had been defending. Accompanied by other Flemish knights, he rode to the French side and joined the forces of the *Leliaert* lord of Sint-Winoksbergen. He might of course have changed sides because he had received gold from the French court.

The Flemish lost heart at this defection. The French army attacked and forced the Flemish back. They could liberate the son of Count Robert d'Artois, but the valiant knight would die a little later from his wounds. His death sowed hatred in the heart of Robert of Artois, hated for everything Flemish.

The French army massacred the Flemish warriors at Bulskamp. The count of Spanheim and John van Gaveren perished among the Flemish army. Robert of Artois made prisoners of Count Walram of Jülich, of Henry of Blanmont, of John of Petersem and of Gerard van Hoorne.

It was said sixteen thousand men were killed at the Battle of Bulskamp. The dead bodies lay all along the road from the bridge of Bulskamp to the gates of the town of Veurne. Robert of Artois added to the atrocities committed by the French in burning down Veurne. He was so angry over the death of his son, that he put the count of Jülich ignominiously in chains. Walram of Jülich was a dignified and brave knight. Artois ordered Jülich to be placed in an iron cage on a wagon, next to a banner with the lilies of France, to be shown to the populace of France. The French led Jülich thus throughout the towns and the countryside of France, bound in chains. They brought him from prison to prison, in shame, until Walram of Jülich succumbed. Only a few years later, another Jülich, his younger nephew, would take revenge for this shameful deed.

The *Leliaert* knights who were traitors to the Flemish cause of Count Guy of Dampierre, were well known by that time. Among them were the bishop of Morins, Thomas viscount of Veurne, the bailiff of the Veurne Ambacht, and the lord of Sint-Winoksbergen. Sint-Winoksbergen was called Bergues by the French.

The news of the Flemish debacle of Bulskamp reached Lille. The lords of Hondschoote, of Gistel and of Saint-Venant were among the most distinguished Flemish knights at Lille. Lille had now been under siege for two months. Famine had set in. The knights appealed to Robert of Béthune to surrender the city.

Robert of Archies, another Flemish knight of the garrison, had already tried to betray the garrison. He had proposed and developed a stratagem for the French king to capture the city. The treachery came to be known in Lille. The Flemish troops set an ambush to a large group of French warriors who tried to enter Lille by stealth. It is said more than three thousand French warriors died in the ambush set to them by the Flemish at the walls.

Robert of Béthune could negotiate a good deal with the French to surrender the city. The inhabitants would be spared, and he and his troops were allowed to withdraw to Ghent. When he rode through the French knights, he noticed the count of Hainault, John d'Avesnes, wearing the badge of the lion of Flanders. The d'Avesnes of Hainault had already symbolically taken possession of the county of Flanders! Robert de Béthune left Lille on the 29<sup>th</sup> of August of 1297.

### The Advance of the French Campaign

The king of France brought his army to Kortrijk. There, he granted the right to the duke of Brittany and to the count of Artois to be considered pairs of France. By honouring John II of

Brittany as part of France, King Philip turned this potential ally of England into an ally of France.

The hope of Flanders was on the arrival of an English army. In the last days of August, on the 27<sup>th</sup>, King Edward I indeed arrived at Sluis with a small fleet. Edward fulfilled the conditions of the treaties of alliances. He kept his word! His arrival looked more as a stubborn sacrifice to his promises than to a glorious and triumphant aid. He was also worried for having left his realm while the war for Scotland was still on.

By the end of June, an English army had crossed the border with Scotland. The army marched against insurgent troops of Robert Wishart, the bishop of Glasgow, and against Robert Bruce, the earl of Carrick and grandson of the late Bruce. The current Bruce wanted to become king of Scotland, and joined arms with the bishop. The English army forced the Scottish rebels to surrender. On the 7<sup>th</sup> of July, the Scottish insurgents Wishart and Bruce submitted to the English war leaders at Irvine.

King Edward's other main worry was how to pay for his campaigns in Scotland and in Flanders.

At the very end of July, the pope of Rome published the bull 'Etsi de Statu', which sounded like a capitulation to King Philip the Fair. King Edward I of England could announce on the 20<sup>th</sup> of August he would tax the Church of England by royal authority.

At that end of July also, in search for more money for his expeditions, King Edward had once more seized all the wool sacks in the country, for the wool to be expedited and sold in Flanders. The recalcitrant earls of the kingdom burst into the Exchequer building at Westminster, forbade the seizure of the wool, as well as the collection of the one-eighth taxation. They cried they would not allow being commanded like common serfs. At that moment, King Edward was already at Winchelsea preparing his departure for Flanders. Two days after the incident, on the 24<sup>th</sup> of August, ignoring the issues in his own realm, he sailed to Flanders. He left the power in England to appointed regents, his most loyal earls.

The two measures to fill his treasury created much opposition to the King's initiatives in England. So much so, that Edward I had to admonish the earls who were recalcitrant to follow him into Flanders and France. These earls esteemed the issues with Scotland and the growing cost of the campaigns should keep the king in his country.

The earls may have been right, for while Edward was in Flanders in August, a new rebellion broke out in Scotland.

Andrew Murray, the son of a prominent Scottish lord, attacked the English garrisons in the north. William Wallace, the son of a minor landowner in Ayrshire, did the same in the south. Both armies linked forces. King Edward had left England by then. He felt the country on the brink of a widespread revolt, and not only in Scotland. He had made his decision, and executed on his decision. The regents he had put in place acted as they should. An English army led by John de Warenne, earl of Surrey, marched against the Scots. In view of the peril to the kingdom, the recalcitrant earls of England did not revolt against the king.

King Edward I thus arrived in Flanders with some English troops, barely about a thousand warriors and very few knights. Many of his earls had refused accompanying him.

No troops would be sent from Germany either. King Philip the Fair had sent Jacques de Châtillon to Köln with rich golden presents to Emperor Adolph of Nassau. Adolph, weak and lazy, would not bring an army to Flanders to face the French peril. Adolph wrote to Count Guy of Dampierre he could not at that point intervene in the war for Flanders, because of his own dire situation in Germany.

No help for Flanders would be sent from Holland, either. The country was divided in loyalty. Many noblemen of Holland, incited by bribes paid by the count of Hainault, opposed John I, the son of the late Count Florent. The opposers called upon John of Avesnes to become their head of state.

Count Guy de Dampierre would have to confront the French army practically on his own.

King Edward led to Flanders merely a contingent of Welsh mercenary archers and a number of Scottish prisoners to whom freedom had been promised in exchange for the service of war. The expedition started with bad omens. The sailors of the English ships quarrelled in port, and in the ensuing brawl about twenty-five fine English cogs went up in flames.

Edward moved his army to Bruges, where Guy of Dampierre was trying to prevent a revolt by the Leliaert poorters. These did not want the count to fortify the walls of the city. Had not the king of France ordered several times in treaties to demolish the walls of Bruges? The aldermen of Bruges feared retaliations of the French. King Edward proposed to leave the struggle in Bruges for what he esteemed it was, nothing but a minor nuisance. Edward wanted to march on, to face the enemy, to give battle, and take revenge for the defeat at Bulskamp. He wanted to relieve Lille, and call a halt to the French invasion.

Count Guy of Dampierre realised how small the English army was. He didn't think he could defeat the troops of Robert d'Artois with the forces at hand, and maybe not even a revolt in Bruges. He knew King Edward was probably not aware of the strength of the urban militia in Flanders. Guy proposed to the king of England to retreat with him to Ghent. Ghent was better defended, had strong walls almost all around, and waterways and marshes where no walls stood. King Edward gave in, and ordered his sailors to join him. The sailors, however, were once more involved in a fight, this time with the poorters of Damme. They were out for booty. They killed two hundred merchants and their men in the town, and stole the goods in the warehouses of the harbour. The nobles at the court of Flanders began to doubt they needed such allies!

In September, the issues at home of King Edward I rose to unexpected heights. Winchelsea, the archbishop of Canterbury, preached the excommunication of the royal officials who dared to collect the tax on the clergy. The regents of England summoned a Parliament session at London, but the recalcitrant earls organised a rival assembly at Northampton. The dispute between the rival factions could lead to a civil war in England.

To add to the bad news, in Scotland, William Wallace decisively defeated Surrey's English army in a fierce battle. The battle at the bridge over the River Forth near Stirling was lost for the English although the Scots were greatly outnumbered. The Scots let the English troops pass the river. They then seized and closed the bridge, and killed all the English that had crossed. The earl of Surrey, de Warenne, fled to Berwick. His forces had practically been annihilated in the pincers tactic of Wallace at Stirling on the 11<sup>th</sup> of September. Even King

Edward I must have asked himself then what he was doing in Flanders, but his resolution did not waver.

The French army continued its inexorable advance. It defeated easily a smaller Flemish army in September of 1297 at Veurne, occupied Bourbourg and Sint-Winoksbergen, and marched to under the walls of Ieper. Douai and Kortrijk surrendered to the king. Philip the Fair pushed through to Bruges. When he arrived at Ingelmunster, the aldermen of Bruges offered the keys of the city to the king. The French war leaders Charles de Valois and the *Connétable* Raoul de Nesle occupied Bruges. They immediately led their army on to Damme, hoping to destroy the English fleet that had moored there. The English cogs could flee to the open sea before the French troops arrived. Charles de Valois left a French garrison at Damme. The main French army stayed in camp at Ingelmunster.

By mid-September, the French led a siege to Ieper. The Flemish nobleman Philip of Maldegem defended the city against Charles de Valois. He was related to Count Guy de Dampierre, and a loyal warrior of the count. Charles de Valois lost many men in the siege, so that he decided to cut his losses and leave the town at peace. He returned to Bruges with his men, but burned down the quarters of Ieper that lay outside the walls. The abandoning of the siege of Ieper was but one of minor setbacks the French suffered.

Robert de Béthune, Edward Prince of Wales and a strong Flemish-English group of men-at-arms marched by surprise to Damme. The son of the count of Flanders took the harbour town, and massacred the four hundred French warriors of the garrison left there by Charles de Valois.

On the 21<sup>st</sup> of September, in England, the earls of Norfolk, Robert Bigod earl of Norfolk and Humphrey de Bohun earl of Hereford among the most prominent recalcitrant earls, met with fifteen hundred knights of their faction at Northampton. They discussed new charters limiting further the power of the king. In particular, they decided the *maltôte*, the general hearth tax, should be abolished. No taxation could be taken by the king without the ascent of the realm, to be agreed upon by the English Parliament.

The situation in Scotland worsened. The insurgents captured all the towns and castles of northern Scotland. Berwick and Roxburgh remained to the English. It became urgent for King Edward I to return to England! But England was still at war with France.

On the 9<sup>th</sup> of October, in view of the degrading situation in England, King Edward I sent Hugh de Beauchamp to Vyve-Saint-Bavon to negotiate a truce with King Philip IV. Count Guy of Dampierre tried to convince the English king that the heavy rains of the late autumn could force the French to withdraw from Flanders. This would place him and Edward I in a better position to negotiate with Philip the Fair. King Edward did not have Flanders on his mind anymore, though. He was too eager to return to England, having been disillusioned about his accomplishments in Flanders. He sought peace with France, caring not really for Flanders anymore. He remained worried about Scotland.

The truce concluded at Vyve-Saint-Bavon was a short one. But fifteen days before its expiration, the kings decided for true peace negotiations to continue. On the 23<sup>rd</sup> of November, they met near Kortrijk in the Abbey of Groeninge. They first agreed on a new truce to last until February of 1298. Then, a longer-lasting truce of two years was concluded,

a truce beginning at Epiphany of 1298. They agreed on a peace treaty. The kings submitted their disputes to the arbitrage of Pope Boniface VIII. Among the differences of opinion between the kings of England and France remained foremost the supremacy over Guyenne-Gascony.

Flanders and its count were also included in the long suspension of hostilities. The French were allowed to hold all the towns and castles they had conquered so far. After this agreement, the English and French armies could retreat.

Most of Flanders remained firmly under the dominance of the king of France. Count Guy of Dampierre only held to Douai, Ghent, Ieper, the Land of Waas and the Four Crafts, his German territories. The first invasion by King Philip the Fair thus ended, leaving a devastated and dangerously divided Flanders.

On the 5<sup>th</sup> of November 1297, at Ghent, King Edward I confirmed the Magna Carta and signed other charters of liberties proposed to him by his recalcitrant earls. This allowed him to rally more knights and men-at-arms to his cause against the Scots.

The Scottish troops had marched from success to success in the meanwhile. In November, William Wallace attacked Cumbria and Northumberland, acting very cruelly against the people of the regions, and bringing the war into English territory. He besieged Carlisle. The presence of King Edward became urgent.

King Edward had not succeeded in inciting revolts in France. He had asked the count of Savoie to bring his armed forces against Philip the Fair, and had still in November concluded other alliances with the count of Auxerre, the count of Montbéliard and other lords of Burgundy. The count of Bar had returned from Flanders to his lands to invade the Champagne, but the *Connétable* Gaucher de Châtillon of the Champagne had forced him back, so that nothing came from these attempts to involve Philip the Fair into new struggles in the east of his kingdom.

The Welsh archers at Damme were disappointed with the truce. They saw all hope on French riches vanish before their eyes. They decided to harass Flanders and take their booty here. They went so far as to want to put fire to Ghent and pillage the city. As soon as the men of Ghent saw the first fires, they ran in great numbers and in arms. They turned their wrath against the English. About six hundred men of the English troops were killed. The life of King Edward I was in danger. Count Guy of Dampierre had to intervene. The king could leave the city, accompanied by a small English escort.

On the 3<sup>rd</sup> of February of 1298, King Edward I fled to Aardenburg. From there, he and his men rode on to Sluis. His remaining ships had been waiting at Sluis for a month to sail the king back to Sandwich. The expedition of Edward I in Flanders ended in dishonour.

### The Period of the Truce of Groeninge. 1298-1300

The Truce of Groeninge was to last from Epiphany in January of 1298 to January of 1300. King Edward I had included Flanders in the cease of hostilities. King Edward left Flanders surreptitiously. This was a treasonous development, for Edward had sworn not to conclude a peace treaty with France until Count Guy of Dampierre had recovered his lands. Flanders

remained occupied by the French for her largest part. The treaty of Groeninge stated all the towns conquered by the French king would remain in his hands.

King Edward I then reconciled with King Philip IV the Fair! The largest part of the French army left Flanders, but strong French garrisons were installed in the captured Flemish towns. By the end of 1297, Guy de Dampierre fortified Damme, Ghent, Deinze, Oudenaarde, Ieper and Cassel. He signed a defensive alliance with his grandson, Duke John II of Brabant, and also with the count of Holland.

King Edward I returned to England. From out of Flanders he had ordered the regents in England to muster a new, large English army to be directed against the Scots. By the end of January of 1298, the regents had gathered an army of sixteen thousand men-at-arms. They had relieved Berwick and Roxburgh, and waited for Edward I to give the signal for the final assault. King Edward disembarked from his fleet at Sandwich only on the 14<sup>th</sup> of March of 1298.

In Germany, many nobles of the kingdom agreed Emperor Adolph of Nassau was unworthy to rule. The conspiracy went public in the Dom Church of Mainz. On the 23<sup>rd</sup> of June of 1298, the Diet of Mainz deposed Adolph of Nassau as German king. A part of the noblemen called in Albert of Habsburg, duke of Austria, son of the late Emperor Rudolph of Habsburg, to lead them and to replace Adolph as king of Germany.

Albert brought together Austrian, Italian, Hungarian and Rumanian plus other troops still, to confront Adolph of Nassau. The emperor-in-place could still count on strong support in the Rhine Lands. His main ally was the *Pfalzgraf* of the Rhineland, the Palatine Count Rudolph. Also Lewis of Bavaria, the count of Hessen and large cities such as Worms, Speier, Frankfurt and other declared for the reigning emperor. Adolph of Nassau gathered a strong army, but he was weaker in armour and armament than his opponents. A major confrontation, a civil war was in the making in Germany.

During the spring of 1298, the count of Flanders sent two ambassadors to Rome to plead his cause. Since the pope had been asked to arbitrate in the conflict between France and England, the voice of Flanders had to be heard in Rome. The count's delegates were Michael Asclokettes and James Beck.

Pope Boniface VIII was in favour of Flanders. The pope could not but hear King Philip the Fair had not honoured the truce as concerned Flanders. The French warriors continued to pillage the county, to devastate the countryside. France refused to release the prisoners of the Battle of Bulskamp. Its army had seized the possessions of the abbots who had remained loyal to Count Guy of Dampierre.

Later, also the count's sons Robert of Béthune and John of Namur travelled to Rome. They asked specifically for the release of the prisoners of Bulskamp, and once more for the release from prison of their sister Philippa. They asked for the *poorters* of Valenciennes? who had supported Flanders, but who had been taken by force out of the churches in which they had sought immunity, to be released from the prisons of the count of Hainault.

Pope Boniface didn't want to risk the peace between two of the largest Christian countries, France and England. The Flemish delegates of Count Guy of Dampierre achieved little for their county in Rome. Pope Boniface VIII preferred the peace to be sealed by the marriage of

the English Prince of Wales to King Philip the Fair's daughter Isabelle of France. The two kings, Edward and Philip, were to reconcile by a double marriage. Marguerite of France would also marry King Edward I. England definitely left the alliance with Flanders. The pope even relieved King Edward I of his promises and oaths to Flanders! The French and the English delegates continued their peace talks and concluded a peace treaty, the Treaty of Montreuil-sur-Mer. Flanders was not mentioned in this treaty, and the pope refused to insist for Flanders.

In the final judgement of the pope, given the 28<sup>th</sup> of June of 1298, Boniface VIII ordered Philippa of Flanders to be given back to her father, to Count Guy. King Philip the Fair also had to hand over the Flemish cities he occupied to Count Guy of Dampierre. When these conditions were read at the court of Paris, Count Robert d'Artois tore up the papal papers in anger. The ruling was never really executed.

The bishop of Vicenza, who presided over the peace treaty and over the conferences with France and England, arrived in Flanders. He handed over to Count Guy a papal letter. The letter reproached Count Guy for not having listened to the advice of the pope. Not much more.

In Germany, Albert of Austria advanced with his considerable army to the Rhine. He had assembled about fourteen thousand men. The dukes of Brabant, Guelders and Luxemburg accompanied him. He set a siege to Aachen, and then attacked the Emperor Adolph of Nassau near Worms. On the 2<sup>nd</sup> of July, Albert of Habsburg defeated the imperial army at the Battle of Göllheim. Adolph of Nassau was killed in the battle.

King Philip the Fair had hoped to place his brother, Charles de Valois, on the throne of Germany, but the seven electors of Germany crowned Albert of Habsburg to king of Germany.

Pope Boniface VIII excommunicated Albert almost immediately for felony. Boniface opposed the choice of Albert. He appointed the brother of the killed Adolph as archbishop of Trier. The pope could not accept Albert as emperor, but Albert nevertheless took on the title of emperor of the Romans.

In August of 1298, Albert also reconciled officially with King Philip the Fair of France at Vaucouleurs. This treaty also was sealed with a marriage, for Blanche, Philip's youngest sister, would marry Rudolph of Habsburg, Albert's son.

Count Guy of Dampierre hurried to Aachen to do homage to Albert of Austria for his lands of the Four Crafts, the Land of Waas and the Land of Aalst. He heard at Aachen the king of Germany would not take up arms against France. More than ever, Count Guy of Dampierre stood without the support of the two most important nations of the continent to confront King Philip IV of France.

By the end of May of 1298, the king of England and his parliament gathered in meeting at York. King Edward I had now at his disposal an army of twenty-six thousand footmen and three thousand cavalry. William Wallace applied a defensive strategy, but sooner or later the two armies would have to clash. Edward did not fear a battle. The decision fell on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of July of 1298, at the Battle of Falkirk. The Scots were defeated. Their nobility fled from the battlefield, and also William Wallace managed to escape. King Edward pursued the remnants of the Scottish army with his cavalry. He could dismiss his footmen.

A few of his earls were dissatisfied, because they received no Scottish lands from the king. The earls of Norfolk and of Hereford therefore returned to England, leaving the king and his army.

In October, King Edward I left Scotland too, though he had not entirely subdued the land. English garrisons held the castles in the south of Scotland. The Scots soon recaptured them. The king returned to England, to deal with his ever recalcitrant and grumbling earls, to face a new issue. The king had asked for his agents to constitute an inventory of the Royal Forest. The earls and other nobles who could not show papers proving their ownership of lands, lost them. Their lands returned to the Royal Domains, to the Royal Forest. Few earls had proven claims for all their lands. The king had illegally and vastly expanded the Royal Forest at the expense of the earls.

In February of 1299, the king summoned a Parliament at Westminster to advise him in the cause of action in Gascony. During the session of Parliament, Edward faced the direct and strong opposition of the earls over the Forest Charters. Robert Bigod led the opposition. King Edward left Parliament in anger, promising to revise the charters as soon as he arrived in London. He indeed re-issued them, but he also tampered with the contents. Many lands were anyhow added to the Royal Forests! A riot followed in London over the new charters. In April of 1299, Edward formally restored the City of London's ancient liberties, but the whole country spoke ill of the king.

In Scotland, on the insistence of Pope Boniface VIII, King Edward I allowed the deposed king of Scotland, John Balliol, to be handed over to the pope's representatives. These escorted John Balliol across the Channel, to France.

In August of 1299, a new dissension rose in Scotland. John Comyn, the son of the former supporter of John Balliol and Robert Bruce, the earl of Carrick, quarrelled. By November of 1299, these two young leaders started a new rebellion in Scotland. Yet another English army had to march into Scotland. The issues over the Forest Charters, however, made that King Edward failed to assemble the grand army he needed to subdue the Scots once more. He could gather only two thousand five hundred men-at-arms, whereas he would need more than fifteen thousand men! By mid-December of 1299, the king was left with a serious dilemma. He had either to give in to his earls on the Forest Charters, or let the Scottish earls enforce their grip over Scotland.

In Flanders, in the period of the Truce of Groeninge, during 1298 and also in the year 1299, the French army leaders consolidated their power over Flanders. They found themselves in increasingly hostile territory. Charles de Valois used the truce to add important fortifications to the city of Bruges, in which he stayed. The French king confirmed the liberties and privileges of Bruges. In July of 1299, the *Connétable* Raoul de Nesle brought letters of the king to Bruges to confirm the privileges of the city. The aim of these deeds was to show to the other Flemish towns how lenient France could be, and to affirm the French garrisons were here to stay. Raoul de Nesle lingered in the city, accompanied by Pierre Flote, another confident of Philip the Fair.

Count Guy of Dampierre was bereft of an important part of his resources. He could not even anymore sustain a war over Zeeland, so he relented, and gave John I, the young count of Holland, the authority over Zeeland.

The French had their own issues. They quenched a revolt in the *Brugse Vrije*, the Franc and castellany of the Bruges countryside. A few people of the *Vrije* were killed.

When Charles de Valois tried pillaging the environs of Ieper, the Flemish knight Philip of Maldegem endeavoured to stop him. A large force of French warriors attacked van Maldegem, defeated him and killed van Maldegem, as well as four hundred of his men. The castle of Maldegem was set to fire.

Charles de Valois seized Diksmuide in January of 1299, and ravaged the countryside of Ieper further and wider, advancing to Deinze and even to Ghent. He attacked Damme, so that William of Crèvecoeur, another son of Guy de Dampierre, had to retreat to Ghent.

In Ghent, the *Leliaerts* and their aldermen of the landowner-poorters showed more openly their allegiance to France. They were ready to disavow the count and hang the banner with the lilies of France over their walls. To whom could Guy de Dampierre appeal for help?

Count John I of Holland, a youth of merely fifteen years old, died on the 10<sup>th</sup> of November of 1299. He died at Haarlem, maybe of dysentery, maybe murdered by unknown assassins. He had been educated in England and was married to Elizabeth, a daughter of King Edward I. The marriage had taken place on the 7<sup>th</sup> of January of 1297, but the girl joined her husband in Holland only in 1298. In the beginning of his reign, Jan III lord of Renesse had been regent to him, and after him the Lord Wulfart I of Borseele. Wulfart van Borseele, regent since the 30<sup>th</sup> of April of 1297, was killed by a mob of Dordrecht on the 20<sup>th</sup> of August of 1299, trying to solve a conflict with this town. The Dutch counts were then looking for another regent. John I had no siblings.

The aunt of the deceased John I, Adelaïde, a daughter of Florent IV, the former count of Holland, had married John I of Avesnes, count of Hainault. Her son was John II of Avesnes, the current count of Hainault. This John was the nearest in the succession to Holland. The Dutch nobles accepted John II of Avesnes as the regent over the country for John I count of Holland. After John I's death, they chose John II of Avesnes as their new count. The choice once more proved how profitable aristocratic marriages could become, even generations later. The widow of Count John I, Elizabeth of England, married three years after John's death Humphrey de Bohun, the 4<sup>th</sup> earl of Hereford. It is remarkable how in chronicles like mine, the same names consistently prop up.

The d'Avesnes were the arch-enemies of the Dampierre counts of Flanders. More than ever, Count Guy of Dampierre felt surrounded by enemies. He despaired.

John II of Avesnes had taken possession of Holland without the permission of the king of Germany. The king held full feudal authority over Holland. By the end of 1299, John II of Avesnes and Emperor Albert of Austria led armies against each other. The armies stood in front of each other at Nijmegen. A revolt of other noblemen of the heartlands of Germany threatened. Emperor Albert had to retreat and face the new danger. He reluctantly granted Holland officially to the House of Avesnes, and withdrew his forces to where they were needed more.

At the very beginning of the year 1300, the Truce of Groeninge ended. This was a Jubilee Year for the Christian Church of Rome!

Charles de Valois had already gathered an army of fifteen hundred knights. He was ready to grasp the rest of Flanders from Count Guy of Dampierre. As of the 6<sup>th</sup> of January, Valois marched to Douai. He surprised the city defenders and entered it with his army. Valois moved north. The French army set fire to the town of Nevele, near Ghent. The militiamen of Ghent could in the far see Nevele burn. The French troops wreaked havoc in the environs of the vastest city of Flanders.

The aldermen of Ghent, *Leliaert* knight-poorters most of them, took a fright. They proposed the keys of the city to Charles de Valois. The aldermen opened the gates of Ghent to the French on the 8<sup>th</sup> of May of 1300.

### 1.7. Under the Leliaerts in Ghent. 1300

From 1298 to the end of 1299, the French royal army occupied large parts of Flanders. To Count Guy of Dampierre remained Ieper, Ghent, and the lands he held in feudal loan from the German Empire. The French did not advance because a truce had been concluded with the king of England. They had withdrawn most of their troops, but the truce was often broken by the French war leaders. They continued to ravage the county.

Count Guy hid in his German territories, into which he hoped the French dared not enter, because they feared antagonising the emperor.

In Ghent, almost all the members of the ancient landowner-poorter families, members of the old lineages and the knights of the city, still served in power as aldermen. The aldermen were twenty-six, in two groups of thirteen. The First Alderman of the Law wore the highest authority. The aldermen hung the French flag with the royal lilies above the walls, even though Count Guy of Dampierre sometimes resided in the city. Ghent continued to grow with people from the countryside, which was being devastated by the French raids. When the French army arrived close to the city and burned down Nevele, the aldermen panicked or were only too eager to surrender the city. They gave up the town to Charles de Valois, the king's brother. A garrison of French knights and men-at-arms occupied the *Gravensteen*, the count's castle near the *Kuipe*.

The best-known members of the guilds of Ghent, among whom Juris Vresele as trader in the small guilds, were far from happy with this state of affairs. They did not show particular fervour to the cause of the count, but Guy de Dampierre was still the head of state. They had also little sympathy for the French. The guildsmen mistrusted King Philip the Fair. They loathed the ravages caused by the French men-at-arms to helpless Flanders. They realised the French were out for booty. Commerce had dwindled to a trickle. On the rivers, only the waterways with Brabant and with Antwerp remained open. The river Scheldt and her eastern affluent rivers were more or less safe for transport by boat. The access to Douai and Valenciennes had become very perilous by land and by water. Picardy and Amiens was closed for Flemish merchants. Ghent had still some reserves of grain. Grain from Picardy seeped in only to Ghent by small, contraband quantities. The shippers who led their boats south risked their life on every trip. Famine might set in. The guildsmen also loathed the taxes and the extortions of the *Leliaert* aldermen. These exercised strict and cruel repression against all men who opposed them. The aldermen exerted total power, protests were quenched, and corruption reigned endemically. The aldermen and the families of the ancient lineages profited from the war. Who would have restrained them? The count was far and powerless, France had occupied the city, yet did not govern it. The people of Ghent were not sufficiently well organised to revolt against the aldermen or against the French garrison. The deans of the guilds were divided, irresolute, weak. These men had been forced upon the guilds by the aldermen and they were hence dedicated to the status quo in the city.

Juris Vresele tried to trade still in everything that could be brought in from Antwerp and from the Brabant towns. His reserves slowly diminished. He could not anymore feed his family from what he could sell in Ghent. Money slowly became scarce in Ghent. The landowner-poorters still had much gold and silver. They were making a fortune of houses they bought

from men and women who had to sell their properties to live. The families of the privileged of course preferred to deal with the traders they knew to remain sympathetic and subdued to their regime. They liked to be flattered. They liked to impose their prices. Juris Vresele was known as a *Klauwaert*, a man who remained loyal to Flanders and to the count. The powerful men of the city shunned him.

Juris Vresele's best friend, William van Artevelde, had participated in the skirmishes of the Flemish armies under Robert de Béthune in the south of the county, where France attacked first. He fought against the king's army. When he returned to Ghent, right after the proclamation of the Truce of Groeninge, the aldermen of the city had arrested him. The *Leliaert* aldermen accused William of having rebelled against the highest lord of Flanders, against the king of France.

William van Artevelde could claim his loyalty to the rightful count of Flanders. He could be outraged at the injustice as much as he wanted. The aldermen judged him and sentenced him in the shortest of times. Men from the ancient lineages had set their greedy eyes on the lands and funds of William. They banned him from Ghent and confiscated everything he owned, his money and his lands in Ghent and in the environs of the city. The aldermen took from him the Artevelde lands in the south, in Vyve. The French war leaders redistributed the lands among the knights they wanted to reward. The same happened to many other fairly wealthy traders and artisans of Ghent who had declared in favour of the count, to *Klauwaerts*. The *Leliaert* aldermen thus repressed the men who dared to oppose them publicly with words and deeds. They could of course not sentence men like William van Artevelde to death, as this remained legally a prerogative of the count and his bailiffs alone. Banishment and confiscation of one's possessions was the worst punishment they could inflict on men who thought otherwise than they. William left town in the beginning of 1298. He travelled to England.

Juris Vresele had met William van Artevelde again in 1299, when William visited Ghent illegally. William hid for a while in Juris's house, although the Artevelde dwelling stood in the same street, the *Kalanderberg* of the *Kuipe*. William had served as a crossbowman-on-horse for King Edward I of England. William had escaped over the sea, considering correctly France, Hainault, Holland and even Brabant were closed and dangerous to him. He brought money to his family.

Juris and William talked long evenings about the situation in Ghent. They concluded the well-to-do traders and guildsmen of Ghent should unite their forces. They should foment revolt against the *Leliaert* aldermen. They deemed the aldermen of the ancient lineages too powerful to be attacked openly at this moment. The aldermen could count on the support of part of the Flemish nobility, the men who were licking the boots of the French knights. The knights in the city were mostly *Leliaerts*. They enjoyed a large following of men-at-arms. They paid these men from their considerable means, which for a large part came from the town's treasury. To a certain extent, even Count Guy of Dampierre did not entirely oppose them, as he might want to involve the town's militia, still commanded by the *Leliaert* knights. Count Guy and his sons had gathered a very small army, consisting of the Flemish knights who had remained loyal to him, and their footmen. The aldermen of the cities held the city militias still firmly in their hands, and the aldermen repressed everybody who opposed their will.

William van Artevelde and Juris Vresele were convinced only the well-organised militias of the guilds, well-armed by the guilds, trained by the guilds, led by captains chosen by the guilds or by the parishes, ordered by able deans of the guilds, the deans chosen by the artisans, could form a power strong enough to oppose the aldermen and ultimately defeat them to the government of the city. William, from out of his hiding, and Juris Vresele in public, pleaded for this evolution in the meetings of the guilds. William became so passionate about this perspective, he decided not to return to England. He stayed in Ghent. He returned to his home. The aldermen must have feared his influence, for this time, they dared not act once more against William. William also was not anymore a wealthy man. He could do no more harm than a wasp. Juris knew, sooner or later, William would join the count's forces and fight the French anew.

### Juris Vresele's Pilgrimage

The heated discussions in the guilds' meetings must have drawn the attention of the aldermen to Juris Vresele. Juris had built a fortune with his family. He was a well-known, respected man. When in June of 1299 two messengers of the First Alderman of the Law knocked on the door of his house, he was not in. The messengers handed over a paper to his wife, ordering Juris to report and justify his deeds to the *paysierders*.

The *paysierders* were the other group of thirteen aldermen, the aldermen of the *Gedeele*, of the State, who formed the court of justice of the city of Ghent. Juris was to present himself at the *Schepenhuis*, the town's hall, two days later. Juris did not know what exactly he would be accused of, but he was well aware he had nothing good to expect from the aldermen. Among the aldermen served always an influential member of the de Grutere family. The de Gruterer had already in the past accused Juris several times of fraud against the recognised privileges of the de Gruterer in the making of beer, and a de Grutere was once more alderman of the city. The de Gruterer envied him his profitable trade in alum and peat.

Juris Vresele went with a small heart to the council of the aldermen of the Estate at the indicated time. The aldermen sat with grave faces in front of him. Juris did not expect leniency from these men. Only about three fourths of the chairs were occupied. Quite a few aldermen had not come to the meeting, to the sessions of court. A man who sat in the middle of the chairs, told Juris Vresele the aldermen accused him of having incited the people of Ghent to riot against the legal government of the city. Juris was not allowed to say anything, to contradict the accusation. The aldermen simply told him they sentenced him to be banned from the city for six months. Juris was to go on a pilgrimage to Our Lady of Rocamadour and return with the proof of his journey, or be banned forever from Ghent. He had to bring back a letter, signed by the priests of the Chapel of the Black Madonna, proving his presence there, before he could return. Moreover, all his possessions in land and money were confiscated.

Juris Vresele kept his freedom, but he walked home a beaten man. He felt very bitter about the very quick sentence. He understood the aldermen, probably the de Grutere family first and foremost, wanted him out of the way, his influence smothered and his power of money destroyed. The de Gruterer had eliminated a competitor by legal, though unjust means. They thus assured their dominance in the delivery of ingredients for brewing in Ghent.

The aldermen had also wanted to know where exactly Juris got his alum from, from which traders. Juris refused to answer, to tell the aldermen he bought his alum in Castile, in ports not far from the most southern ports of Guyenne. The aldermen had therefore not diminished his punishment. Juris had acted smartly, though. He brought his alum in by a Castilian transport cog, to place it in a large warehouse in Basque and English territory of France, in the port of Bayonne. Then, he fetched it out of his warehouse to put the alum aboard ships bound for La Rochelle or for Sluis. This way, no sailors from Flanders knew where his alum originated from. When his competitors interrogated the sailors and captains of the ships that unloaded the alum at Sluis, they could only trace back the alum to Bayonne and to Juris's warehouse, not any farther.

The sentence of the *paysierders*, by the authority of the aldermen of the Estate, ruined Juris Vresele. Even two loads on board of ships sailing to Sluis from France, were seized. Most of his acquired lands were confiscated. That should have been all the lands he had bought, but Juris had not declared in Ghent every stretch he owned. He kept a few terrains near Assenede and Hulst in the Four Crafts. He got his peat from there. Those lands would remain in his possession. He had to be careful, however, for if his secret was found out, he would lose those possessions too. He could save some money too, though only a few bags of coins. Most of his funds had been invested in shiploads, and were lost. His reserves were gone. He was not totally destitute. He kept the house in the *Kalanderberg*, in which his wife and family lived. His family could live on for a few months. He had the coins necessary to go on pilgrimage to southern France. He could return to Ghent. He would have very little funds left, afterwards, but he could start trading again on the meagre basis. Even if he sold his last profitable lands, he would not have the funds needed for further expeditions to Castile. Juris was bitter and he despaired.

William van Artevelde helped with encouraging words. William promised to look after Juris's family while Juris travelled on the pilgrimage. Juris did not want to walk away and go and live in another town forever. Ghent was where his friends lived. The family of his wife lived in Ghent. Mergriet would not like leaving behind her friends and the beloved members of the family on her side. Juris could not demand such sacrifices of Mergriet, so he had to go on pilgrimage and return. Juris's heart was filled with bitterness and with hatred against the aldermen. Justice had not been his share!

Juris talked to William van Artevelde about the hard journey he would have to make. William talked to a priest in his family. The priest talked to a canon of the Church of Saint John called Godfried van der Sanen.

Van der Sanen was a small, old man. He walked with a very bent back, as if hard work had plied his spine. Van der Sanen's back was bent from reading books, however! He said, 'all come to me, before and after pilgrimages. Two roads lead to Rocamadour. If you have money, take a ship to Bordeaux. From there it is only a short trip on horseback over Perigueux or Bergerac to Rocamadour. Bergerac is quickest, Perigueux the most enjoyable. Bergerac is less safe, too. If you don't have money, you can go on foot or ride over land. I have compiled a list of towns to ask directions for, which will bring you in the shortest of times to Rocamadour. Many pilgrims who walked the road before you, have attested this is the shortest way. Rocamadour is far from here, but then again, less far than other pilgrimage

sites such as Santiago de Compostela. You may deem yourself lucky not to have to go so far. It lies in the south of France, but on this side of the Pyrenees. You won't have to pass the highest mountains! Here is a list of what you should take with you. You could sew coins in the seams of your clothes. If you go alone, you will never be safe. Better to wait for a number of people to travel together in group. Wearing a sword attracts thieves, it seems. Most pilgrims who go over land show they are poor by wearing rags and only a wooden staff. The fastest route goes over Oudenaarde, Kortrijk and Lille to Lens and Arras. From there, you can go by Bapaume to Roye and Compiègne. Those roads are well frequented. From Compiègne on I advise to go to Port-Sainte-Maxence and Senlis to Paris. Many went over Amiens to Paris, but that road took longer. From Paris, you go by Étampes to Orléans, then to Châteauroux, Argenton-sur-Creuse and La Souterraine to Limoges. All this is walking south, mind you. From Limoges, you will reach Rocamadour over Brive-la-Gaillarde. I suggest you walk firmly for five or six hours a day, three in the morning, then rest a couple of hours, find some food, continue for two to three hours in the afternoon. Don't wait for dark to find a good place to sleep. Hide in the woods and sleep, or find an inn, but I heard inns are often dangerous. You might get to Rocamadour in about forty days, but you'll need to rest every five days for a day or two, on the road. If you get there in two months, you'll have walked among the fastest journeys I've heard of. You may be robbed of your money. You may have to work for your food. Don't expect to get much food from begging. The worst on the road will be the loneliness. I have heard of men who lost their mind. You are a trader. I don't think you will go crazy from walking. Still, it will be hard.

Nobody tried to do this on his own! All men who reported back to me waited everywhere to proceed in group on a road. It holds off bandits and thieves. I guess you'll have to find out for yourself. I understand you will go on foot, as the aldermen have taken all your possessions. Hard times!

The list I have put together provides most of the villages and towns you should pass. You'll have to ask for the best road between them from the local people. Go with God, my son, and on your return, please come to me and explain all. Tell me how it was. I'm interested in details of the roads, all details. Tell me what you've learned. You know how to write. Takes notes of the roads and crossroads you pass, and bring the notes to me. They can serve others. They will serve like the rutters of ships' captains. Come back here the day after tomorrow. I'll have copied the list for you.'

The canon appreciated not having been interrupted. Juris Vresele left some coins, which the canon eagerly accepted. Two days later, Juris had the list of names to follow on a parchment scroll.

Juris Vresele, *poorter* of the city of Ghent, set out for Rocamadour on the 1<sup>st</sup> of July of 1299, having informed the aldermen and his parish of his departure. He wanted to be back home by the end of December of 1299. He would have to throw the papers testifying he had prayed in the Chapel of the Black Madonna on the table of the *paysierders* by the 5<sup>th</sup> of January of 1300. One could not break Juris Vresele so easily! Juris decided to leave Ghent on foot. He had the money to buy a horse or a donkey, but he also had the time to travel.

Juris followed the roads indicated by the place names the canon of Saint John had given him. He reckoned he had a better chance on his own than in group. He wore a heavy knapsack on his back, and walked with a firm stride, helped by a sturdy wooden staff of six feet long. He

feared no sword with his staff. He avoided hostels, bought or stole food in farms, and advanced well in the first weeks. The roads were filled with people. Occasionally, warriors of the king's armies rode by or marched painstakingly on foot. Whenever he could, Juris avoided these too, by fleeing off the road and into the woods.

He passed straight south through the city of Paris, a city more formidable than Ghent. He saw the Notre Dame Church, still being built, and the palace of the king. He did not linger in Paris. The filth of the city, both physical and moral, disgusted him.

Everywhere on the roads, he avoided people as best he could. He didn't mind being a loner. He usually slept in the open, even when the nights went cold and wet. He escaped from being caught by two groups of bandits; four times he fled from farmers who seemed to want to rob him. He rarely joined other groups of pilgrims. He never slept with other people. He didn't mind being lonely, for he kept his return to his family in mind. He also met friendly people, who talked to him and helped him on. While he walked, he admired the landscapes and reflected on his life. How should he behave towards God and other men and women? Juris was a man rather given to melancholy, but he never despaired. He admired God's magnificent nature, the works of the hands of men, passed beautiful towns, glorious churches, and more wonderful villages.

Juris reached Rocamadour in sixty days, in about two months. He had carved the number of days on his staff. When he arrived in the pilgrimage village, he felt exhausted. He sought out a farm near the village and stayed there for a month, working with simple but honest people, who didn't try to steal from him.

Rocamadour was a small town. The houses of the pilgrimage site hung over a steep gorge. Down flowed a tributary river of the Dordogne. The site was splendid and surprising, situated in a stunning, spectacular landscape Juris Vresele was not at all used to. Such deep and steep gorges were unknown in Flanders! The buildings of Rocamadour rose on the side of a true cliff. Stairs, hewn out of the rock led up the slope to a sanctuary on which several churches and chapels had been built. One should ascend the stairs on one's knees.

Nobody, not even the Canon van der Sanen, had told Juris Vresele why Rocamadour was a famous pilgrimage site. He heard two contradictory legends, and still didn't know the true origins of the pilgrimage when he left.

Saint Amadour might have been another name of Zacchaeus, a tax collector of Jericho mentioned in the Gospel of Saint Luke. Zacchaeus was married to Saint Veronica, who wiped Jesus's face on his way to the crucifixion. Zacchaeus and Veronica were driven out of the Holy Land after Christ's death. Warriors pursued and persecuted them. Saint Amadour or Zacchaeus and Veronica escaped in a small ship. Guided by an angel, they landed in Guyenne. They met Saint Martial, a bishop, who was converting these parts of Gaul to Christianity. They travelled on to Rome. After Veronica's death, Amadour returned to Gaul to find this isolated, wild place in the Quercy region south of Limoges. He stayed here, and built a chapel dedicated to the Holy Virgin. This chapel stood now still on the top of the cliff, under the later Church of Saint Sauveur. Here, the relics of the saintly hermit were still preserved.

Other people said Amadour had been the Amator who was a bishop of Auxerre. Amator had studied theology in Burgundy. He had become a wise man. He married a woman of Langres, who later became Saint Martha. Though wedded, they decided to live on as brother and sister. Amator was ordained bishop of Auxerre. He longed for freedom of spirit, so he walked to this forsaken spot in the Quercy, and lived here. Out of wood, he cut a small wooden statue, a Madonna, which blackened with time. This statue soon proved miraculous. It was venerated in Rocamadour. Rocamadour thus simply meant the 'rock of Amadour'.

Had Amadour become a saint, living high on the cliff, next to his statue of the Virgin? The truth had been lost in the ages. Anybody could notice the crypt under Saint-Sauveur was very old, the statue of the Virgin even older, and blackened with time. The miraculous statue of Amadour and the relics of the saint were venerated in Rocamadour.

While he stayed in Rocamadour, Juris Vresele saw the hordes of pilgrims come and go. He had received a small place in a barn of a nearby farm. He slept and ate there. He worked with the animals, the cows and oxen and a horse in the barn next to him. He earned his bread and cheese, his broth and occasionally a few vegetables and some fruit. The weather stayed warm while he remained in the Quercy, unusually hot even in the month of September.

The loneliness of the journey had purified and chastened Juris. On a fine day, in the last rays of the afternoon sun, he sat on a rock overlooking the splendid and terrible site of Rocamadour. He saw the roofs of the houses gleam. The sun burnt down on him.

Maybe, he thought, God had destined him for this pilgrimage, because he had become too proud, arrogant even, in Ghent. He had seen so much misery on the road, in the towns and villages mentioned by Canon van der Sanen! Men who had been maimed in wars and in assaults of bandits, or who had been victims of accidents with sharp objects, begged in the streets for a little food or a coin. These men looked really emaciated, dirty, and they only wore true rags. Few people took pity on them. When it rained, they hid under porches, to be kicked out of the way by the more fortunate. Juris had also seen many women in rags, coughing their hearts out, unwashed for ages, begging, and offering their bodies to him. He had walked around them in horror.

Worst of all, Juris had seen the big-eyed children of from the youngest ages on, some barely able to walk, begging for a piece of bread. These children had been abandoned by their parents. They slept in barns or under bridges, in the open. Juris wondered how many of these poor creatures survived a winter or two. He had been attacked once by a gang of such boys and girls. Only the monks of the abbeys and the nuns of the convents cared for the children, but only for a few among them. He had seen dead bodies of men and women and children lying along the road. These had no doubt died of the worst of sicknesses. Their bodies just lay there, rotting in the sun, waiting until some service of the towns or of an abbey passed to fetch the bodies on handcarts, to bring them to a cemetery.

Juris Vresele had the mind of a philosopher and the heart of a saint. Maybe he should have become a Christian lay brother and have entered an abbey and stayed there, like his brother. He recalled the fine face of his wife before his eyes, then, and continued walking. Juris reflected on how violent the world God had created could be, how rare love and altruism had become. Was it for that reason God had sent his Son? Juris felt extremely happy when people were gentle and helpful with him. Such men or women were rare. Why should such good

feelings be so rare? When Juris thought about why the creation had deteriorated to violence, he could only conclude God must have abandoned his people. The message of Christ was too weak, and too few people heeded it. God should have inspired the people with more awe. Maybe a new deluge would be sent one of these days? In any case, Juris had found more human misery in poor France than in Flanders.

Juris also thought of how the powerful of the earth, the knights, barons, counts, dukes, princes and kings lived to their passions, ambitions, and greed. These cared not about how the people lived in their lands, how miserably. Yet, had God not made them powerful? Could God not bring more loving, warm feelings to mankind? Apparently only the cruellest of men gained power! What could be done to bring more love and security to the world, if love was Christ's message?

The common people must talk and unite, Juris thought. They should build their own armies and call a halt to the misdeeds of the powerful. Many times a little power could mean more power than the fewer knights could muster! How good it was to live in Ghent, compared to the dire poverty in the countryside of France! How well-protected were the *poorters* of Ghent by their walls and by the marshes around the houses! The city's militia could guarantee peace and rest, and stop the wrongs of the noblemen, of the knights. Who could form, train and organise the militias to God's work? Only the guilds had the capability to bring the idea of a better city to live!

Look where such thoughts have led me, Juris thought. They brought me far from home, to this hidden place in the poor Quercy! Nevertheless, Juris concluded the cities should become more powerful yet, and in the cities the guilds. The cities should be led by the wisest men chosen from the people, not merely by rich men with very old claims, not by the ancient lineages. Juris had work to do! Had God sent him to this wild Rocamadour, to this gorge of stones to make him realise all of this more acutely than before? Yes, he had work to do! He should return to Ghent, and start telling the guildsmen about his ideas.

Juris Vresele didn't want to lose more time in Rocamadour, then, and also not on the road back. He could learn nothing more on the same road back! He stood up from his rock, stretched, and wondered how he could return more easily and more quickly and more agreeably than he had come. He still had three months to go back. He did not feel for walking all that way again. Besides, it would be autumn and winter, soon, with cold and wet weather. He had seen enough misery on the roads. He could help in Ghent, not here.

The next day, suddenly in a hurry, Juris Vresele left Rocamadour. He walked due west. He asked for the fastest road to Bergerac, and walked on, straight westwards, to Bordeaux. He worked for a while in the harbour of Bordeaux, and found a boat the captain of which agreed to take him on as a sailor. The boat brought him to La Rochelle.

Again he worked a few weeks in the harbour, and found a ship that transported wine to Sluis. He arrived in December in Flanders. He decided once more to work in the harbour as a hired hand, giving a false name, until the time neared Christmas. He swore never to pass another Christmas far from his family. He had a little money left, took up his staff after Christmas, walked to Damme, followed the Lieve Canal, and arrived in Ghent at the beginning of January.

Mergriet Mutaert almost didn't recognise him when he pushed open the door of his house in the *Kalanderberg*. She threw herself in his arms, and wept for joy the rest of the day.

The next day, Juris went to see the clerk of the city. He showed his most prized possession now, the papers he had secured on his body from the Quercy region to here. He showed the papers signed by the priests of the Chapel of the Black Madonna of Rocamadour. The clerk noticed on Juris's weathered face the hardships the man had suffered on the roads. The clerk nodded, and agreed to write in the books of the city the *poorter* of Ghent called Juris Vresele had fulfilled his sentence of pilgrimage. Juris was once more a free *poorter* of Ghent.

Juris Vresele began to trade again. He started with digging out more peat from his lands in the Four Crafts, and selling them in Ghent. He promised money to a shipper, one Arnout de Hert, who knew him vaguely, and who accepted to transport his peat to Ghent while being paid only in Ghent. He was grateful. Money streamed in, for Ghent needed warmth in winter. Peat was welcome everywhere. From those sales, Juris obtained the money he too needed to warm and feed his family, for his reserves had dwindled completely. He sought ways to win quickly more money. He racked his mind, devised schemes of trading to gain much money.

Juris Vresele had to find out that with no funds left, one could grow one's fortune only very, very slowly. Starting from zero was very hard, as hard as it was easy to win much, much money when one possessed already much gold. Juris worked and thought, but foremost he was very happy to be back in Ghent. He began speaking to his friends in the guilds.

## 1.8. Fulk's Chronicles. France's occupation of Flanders. 1300-mid 1301

In the spring of 1300, Count Guy of Dampierre sunk into utter despair. He had attained the old age of seventy-four years. He should enjoy a peaceful old age. Instead, he had abandoned all hope of ever defeating the large French army that occupied most of his county. The king could advance his armies and win the rest of Flanders, and then annex Flanders to the Royal Domains. He had lost his county! The Truce of Groeninge ended at epiphany of 1300, on the 6<sup>th</sup> of January. The pope had prolonged the truce, but King Philip IV of France had proclaimed publicly his intentions to take up arms once more and wring the last territories of Flanders from its count. Charles de Valois had gathered an army of fifteen hundred knights to force a new assault on the rest of Flanders that was not yet in the hands of the king. This army marched, and launched a new assault on Flanders. It had rapidly taken Douai, Damme, and had obtained the surrender of Ghent.

In May of 1300, Count Guy of Dampierre called together a parliament of the noblemen and of the most prominent man of the county, to meet at Oudenaarde. Feeling old and weak, he handed over all authority over Flanders to his son, Robert of Béthune. His other son, William de Crèvecoeur, who had married a daughter of the *Connétable* Raoul de Nesle, urged the count to talk to Charles de Valois and seek a solution to his dilemmas. The aim would be to ask Charles de Valois at least to stop ravaging Flanders in the occupied territories. The court knights arranged for a meeting to take place between Count Guy and Charles de Valois. Charles was a valiant knight, an excellent war leader and an honest man who held Count Guy in great respect. Though ruthless in war, he was also true to his word. Charles advised Count Guy to ride to Paris and appeal upon the clemency of the king. Charles de Valois promised Count Guy that even if the count could not obtain a peace settlement, Guy would be allowed to return to Flanders in liberty.

Guy of Dampierre resided at that time at Rupelmonde. He left Rupelmonde, strengthened by the guarantees of Charles de Valois, and travelled to Paris. His sons Robert de Béthune and William de Crèvecoeur accompanied him. About fifty lords and knights of Flanders, the most loyal and finest noblemen of his court, also rode with him as a splendid escort. Among these men rode the lords of Hondschoote and of Gaveren, of Lovendegem and of Maldegem, of Steenhuyse and of van Vaernewijck, with also knights of Ghent.

When the count and his escort arrived in the courtyard of the Royal Palace on the Île-de-la-Cité, Count Guy remarked the stern face of the Queen Jeanne de Navarre looking down at him from behind one of the higher windows. Neither Count Guy nor his sons saluted the queen, but they did lower their hats. The doors of the palace opened, and King Philip the Fair came to stand near the doors, accompanied by the nobles of his court. Count Guy and his sons stepped down from their horses. Count Guy went up to the king and knelt. After a while, he stood up and declared himself at the mercy of the king. He implored the king's peace for Flanders, announcing thus immediately the aim of his visit.

Charles de Valois, the king's brother, stood next to Philip the Fair. He wanted to add a few words. The king held up a hand and interrupted his brother. He looked with very cold eyes and a twitch of triumph and disdain to Count Guy de Dampierre.

Philip the Fair said, 'I don't want to make peace with you, Guy de Dampierre! And if my brother has concluded any arrangements with you, understand he had no right to do so!' The king refused to listen to one further word of Guy de Dampierre. He ordered Robert d'Artois to lead Guy de Dampierre, his sons and all the accompanying Flemish knights to the Parisian prison of the Châtelet. The Flemish knights were filled with indignation by such bad faith. They looked at Charles de Valois, but the king's brother bowed his head and grinded his teeth. Men-at-arms ran to the knights and forced them out of the saddle. King Philip returned to inside his palace.

The count of Flanders and the Flemish barons remained locked in the prison of the Châtelet in the smallest of cells for more than ten days. During that time, the Paris court feasted the wedding of Blanche of France with Rudolph I, duke of Austria and Styria and king of Bohemia. They were married on the 25<sup>th</sup> of May of 1300.

After these days, King Philip IV deigned to think again about the count of Flanders and his escort. He ordered Count Guy and the Flemish Lord de Royère to be imprisoned in the Castle of Compiègne. Robert of Béthune and the Lord of Steenhuyse were sent to and imprisoned at Chinon. William of Crèvecoeur and Lord Thierry de la Barre were brought under guard to the Castle of Issoudun. The other Flemish knights remained all detained in France, sent to various French prisons in the castles of Loudun, Niort, La Nonette, Falaise, Montlhéry, Janville, and other.

At some of these prisons, the knights could present money as bribes and presents to the lords of the prisons, and enjoy a more agreeable imprisonment. At other places, the lords of the castles insulted the prisoners and treated them badly. They applied very strict regulations. Especially Perceval du Pont at Chinon and William de Rosières at La Nonette in the Auvergne, excelled in zeal. They gave their noble prisoners a hard time. The imprisoned men had to pay for their own meagre food. Meat and wine were held back from them. They were constantly humiliated.

Flanders annexed to the Royal Domains, the authority of the count annihilated, the last towns of Flanders still held by the count now surrendered to the French army. Oudenaarde, Dendermonde, Ieper and other towns, accepted the French garrisons within their walls. Another son of the count, Guy of Namur, had continued defending the Veurne Ambacht, but he too had to abandon the region in the face of superior French forces. He returned to Namur, to his brothers John and Henry.

From Namur and from these three Dampierre brothers would have to come the last hope of Flanders.

In Bruges, the French *Connétable* Raoul de Nesle held the reins of the French government over Flanders. He was married in second wedding of 1296 to Isabelle d'Avesnes, daughter of Count John II of Avesnes, count of Hainault. Nevertheless, he seemed to like Flanders. He treated the people of Flanders fairly and justly. He did not forget his daughter from his first marriage, Isabeau de Clermont-Nesle, had married William of Dampierre, lord of Dendermonde, of Richebourg and Crèvecoeur, son of Count Guy of Dampierre. Raoul de Nesle governed Flanders in the name of the king efficiently and generally with soft hands, so that the Flemish people learned to appreciate him. Nevertheless, Raoul de Nesle could also be ruthless. He was not a French courtier for nothing. He seized the properties of the supporters

of the count of Flanders. Some of these noblemen unconditionally surrendered to the king, and became *Leliaerts*. He returned the lands confiscated by the count to some of the *Leliaerts*. This led to confusion, as farmers had bought their lands or rented the lands from other lords than the original ones. The peasants of Flanders suffered.

At that moment, all hope of ever recovering his county, and all hope of ever leaving his humiliating prison seemed completely lost to the old Count Guy of Dampierre. He might die in prison of distress. French garrisons occupied all the towns and castles of Flanders. The king had added Flanders to the Royal Domains, and Count Guy had no illusions the king would ever come back on that decision. He was count only in title, and his peers of France might even take the title away from him. A French nobleman of great stature governed Flanders wisely. The people would not be eager to revolt. What did they care about who governed them, as long as taxes were mild and fair, as long as there was work for everybody in liberty, coins to be earned, as long as grain, vegetables, meat, fish and fruit to be had in abundance on the Flemish markets? Had not the king confirmed the liberties and privileges of the cities? In Gent, the weavers worked harder and more than before to gain back the losses they had made during the war. The drapers sold more cloth than ever, the waterways were open for transport, and peat warmed the houses in winter. From June of 1300 to June of 1301, Flanders lived at peace, worked frantically to build up new reserves of money, and did not feel too much hatred for the new rulers.

Count Charles de Valois was much upset by the imprisonment of the count of Flanders. He felt insulted by his brother, the king, for not having honoured his word given with much assurance to Guy de Dampierre. In January of 1301, he married the granddaughter and heiress of Emperor Baldwin II of Constantinople and the daughter of the titular Emperor Philip I of Courtenay. Her name was Catherine de Courtenay. The pope allowed the marriage, on the condition Charles de Valois came to Italy to the service of the pope. Charles did not hesitate. He left France! He helped the pope and Charles II of Anjou against Frederick II of Sicily, his cousin. Charles was appointed papal vicar, but became embroiled in Italian intrigues, was compromised in a massacre at Florence and involved in sordid financial schemes. Much later, he returned to France. He only returned when his brother desperately asked for him.

Charles de Valois having thus been rebuked by his brother, the king, had made him look a lot more sympathetic to the common people of Flanders. Count Guy imprisoned, was regarded as a martyr, no less. To some degree, this changed the attitude in the Flemish towns. Up until now, the people had remained rather tepid in supporting the cause of the count. They had considered the count with suspicion, as one more lord who rather oppressed them than eased their existence. The mood among the guilds evolved in favour of the count and against the aldermen, many of whom came to be considered as *Leliaerts*, lackeys of France and torturers of the old count of Flanders.

Count Guy of Dampierre and most of his important noblemen remained in prison all through 1300 and 1301. In May of 1301, Count Guy still imprisoned, King Philip IV decided to visit his conquered lands in the north of his realm. He wanted to assert his authority, show his

magnanimity and thus strengthen his grip over this part of his Royal Domains. He expected to be applauded by the Flemish people, and to be received with smiles and open arms.

On the 19<sup>th</sup> of May 1301, the king and his Queen Joan of Navarra arrived at their city of Tournai. The queen despised Flanders, for these were the lands where Robert d'Artois' son had been killed. In her court rode Jacques de Châtillon, her uncle, son of Guy III count of Saint-Pol. Joan of Navarra intended to urge her husband to place Jacques de Châtillon at the head of the government of Flanders. She wanted to replace with Jacques the too soft rule of Raoul de Nesle.

From Tournai, the royal couple proceeded with great pomp to Kortrijk, Petegem and Oudenaarde. From there, they rode to Ghent. They arrived at Ghent on the second day of Pentecost. In every town, King Philip the Fair promised to uphold the liberties and privileges of old.

The *Leliaert* aldermen of Ghent had spared no money to decorate the streets with flowers and painted triumphal arches. They had called in the people to cheer the king and queen. Great banquets were organised in the field of the Bijloke to honour the royal couple and the French court.

King Philip the Fair wanted to attract the good grace of the largest city of his realm besides Paris. To have the people on his side, he abolished the taxes on beer and on hydromel, on the sweetened, mulled wine the populace loved to drink. King Philip IV was enthusiastically cheered by the people of Ghent.

The abolishment of the taxes was, of course, less to the taste of the aldermen, who had greatly profited, personally, from these taxes. The aldermen knew better than to protest at this point. They consoled themselves with the knowledge they would find other taxes to extort money from the merchants and artisans.

It was said in Ghent the feasts cost the city the enormous amount of twenty-seven thousand pounds, a sum on which one could maintain in the field an army for several months. The reception of the king and queen remained cold. There were little cheers in the streets when the procession of the French nobles and of the aldermen passed by.

The king and queen stayed for a week in Ghent, and then rode on to Bruges. They arrived at Bruges on the 29<sup>th</sup> of May 1301. Bruges was even more splendidly decorated than Ghent. Here too, the aldermen were men from the ancient lineages, almost all *Leliaerts*. The richest tapestries hung from the windows of the fine, stone houses. The ladies of the wealthy merchants stood on their balustrades, showing off, dressed in the finest silk of the most beautiful colours. Expensive golden chains studded with gems hung around their neck. They wore rings and bracelets of gold and silver.

The beauty and wealth of these ladies stirred the heart of the queen with jealousy. She was not really a stunning beauty. She envied the grace of the Flemish ladies. She exclaimed it seemed to her she was not the only queen of France in Flanders. Almost a hundred ladies of Bruges were better dressed than she! The Bruges aldermen refused to allow the common people to bring forward pleas for the abolition as taxes, similar pleas as those proposed in Ghent. The people who had come to admire the spectacle of the royal entry in the city, therefore remained sullen and silent. Some even turned their backs when the king and queen passed. Scarcely a few *Leliaerts* cheered the royal procession. The silence of Bruges and

Ghent made Philip the Fair furious. He feared the power of Flanders, and understood the Flemish people did not accept his authority without afterthoughts.

King Philip IV returned to France via the Castle of Wijnendael. The king stayed nine days in this exquisite palace to rest from his journeys. Then, he rode with his court to Ieper. He stayed for four days in the third largest and wealthiest city of Flanders. From Ieper, the court returned to France. The royal couple travelled via Lille and Douai. At Douai, Robert d' Artois married in second marriage Margaret, the eldest daughter of John d'Avesnes, count of Hainault.

King Philip the Fair made of Jacques de Châtillon his governor for Flanders on the insistent pleas of Queen Joan of Navarra for her favourite. Robert of Boulogne would serve as de Châtillon's assistant. Boulogne came with a considerable army of twelve hundred knights. De Châtillon replaced Raoul de Nesle, whom the queen and the court of Paris deemed too soft and lenient for Flanders. Raoul de Nesle remained the *connétable* of France. After Charles de Valois, the royal couple thus insulted also Raoul de Nesle, two fine war leaders.

Jacques de Châtillon was a pure French court product. He was arrogant and violent, a rude warrior and knight who cared little for politics. He despised the people of Flanders, ignored the tensions between the *Leliaerts* and the *Klauwaerts*, and never learned a word of the Flemish language. He ignored the aspirations of the wealthy Flemish traders. He did not serve the interests of the county. The *Leliaert* knights of the countryside castellanies and the *Leliaert* poorter-knights of the large and rich cities flattered him, loaded presents on him, and obtained his ear for their personal interests. Jacques de Châtillon's government was corrupt. He imposed several new taxes, among which also taxes on the many foreign, mainly Lombard and German merchants. These protested, but were rebuked. The Flemish *Leliaerts* worked on de Châtillon mainly through the most important *Leliaert* nobleman, who was Jan van Gistel. When the king returned to France after his visit to Flanders, Jacques de Châtillon accompanied the king as far as Béthune. There, he heard of a revolt in Bruges. He had to ride back to Flanders in urgency.

## England

In England, in March of 1300, the English parliament met to rise to emergencies. The Scottish rebels had captured Stirling Castle! The Scottish raids into the north of England became more audacious as their troops moved southwards.

King Edward I presented a long list of additional demands for new taxes and more warriors at the Parliament sessions. In order to obtain what he wanted, he had to make more concessions on the charters that limited his royal power over the realm. After three weeks of vain discussions, the king agreed to the newly proposed articles in the charters of freedoms.

Edward I also finally appointed men to establish a correct perambulation of the Royal Forest, but on the vague condition that the rights of the crown be protected. The recalcitrant earls continued to state they would gladly agree to a twentieth tax to fight the Scots, if only their rights on their woods would be respected. The members of parliament also contested several provisions for military obligations of the men of landed wealth.

King Edward I and his loyal court had every difficulty to force the knights of the realm into service. Nevertheless, by midsummer of 1300, once more a considerable English army mustered at Carlisle. It consisted of about nine thousand men-at-arms on foot and a thousand cavalry. With these troops, King Edward I impetuously attacked Caerlaverock Castle in Scotland. The Scottish garrison soon surrendered. As Edward I advanced with his army, the Scots avoided battle, but the king's troops evaporated, because not being paid. Edward had to retreat to Dumfries and waited there. His infantry deserted in droves, for the king lacked the ready money to pay them properly and to feed them properly.

To add to the king's issues, Pope Boniface VIII sent him a letter, publicly read at Canterbury by Archbishop Winchelsea. The pope accused Edward of having ignored the Scottish claims for independence. Edward had committed outrages of injustice, causing heavy losses to the Scottish and their clergy. The pope told King Edward to leave Scotland alone!

The letter was a formal and unequivocal admonition of the English king's ambitions for Scotland. King Edward nevertheless continued the war with Scotland. Finally, he had to accept the expedition had failed because of his lack of money.

At the end of September 1300, Edward accepted the inevitable. He signed a six-month truce with the Scottish rebels, and returned to England a chastised monarch.

King Edward had called together a meeting of the English Parliament to be held in January of 1301 at Lincoln. During those sessions, Edward asked for more money, much more money. The perambulation of the Royal Forest had been finished in the meantime. It proved about half of the expansion of the Forest had been unjust. Thousands of acres of forest lands were marked to be returned to former owners. The king left the decision to a committee of twenty-six men, among which some of the recalcitrant earls. On the 14<sup>th</sup> of February, he ordered the Magna Carta and the correctly modified Forest charters to stand in all its points. The communities would receive their woods, as indicated in the perambulation. King Edward was well aware the men who had put the perambulation together had done nothing more in most of the cases than interrogate the local communities. These were all too eager to lay their hands on stretches of Royal woods. Nevertheless, the king had to relent, to obtain his resources for a new war in Scotland.

King Edward I then also held meetings at Canterbury with representatives of the pope. The pope, who he deemed now his enemy, came indirectly to his greatest help! The pope wanted to tax the English clergy by ten percent for a war on the king of Sicily. The pope had been trying to levy this tax on all the churches of Europe. King Edward I agreed for the pope to raise his tax in England for the next three years, but half of the innings would go to Edward! With an additional subsidy agreed upon by the Parliament, King Edward's monetary issues for the war on Scotland were solved.

In May of 1301, King Edward could start a new major campaign in Scotland. His son accompanied him. He had seven thousand five hundred English men-at-arms, fifteen thousand Welsh warriors, about one thousand English cavalry, one thousand Irish footmen and six hundred fifty Irish cavalry. The large army was divided in two parts, one led by the king and the other by Edward of Caernarfon, now called the Prince of Wales.

## Germany

Meanwhile, in Germany, King Albert of Austria tried to impose his will on the German noblemen. He mingled in the affairs of the countries at his eastern borders. He had to wage several wars and many campaigns to this aim. Therefore, his attention was primarily directed eastwards, to Germany and the lands beyond. He would never interfere in the wars of King Philip IV of France after 1301.

King Albert demanded of Gerhard II of Eppstein, archbishop of Mainz, to return the lands given to him. He abolished the taxes on the Rhine, which came hard for the bishops along the stream and even for the Palatinate Count Ludwig, Albert's son-in-law. Over their reluctance to obey, King Albert gathered a large army to attack the Palatinate, the Pfalz, and Mainz. Albert was an intelligent man, and a cruel but efficient war leader. He captured several towns in the region and forced Archbishop Gerhard to sue for peace. The archbishop had to hand over yet more towns to the king, and he had to promise to pay a hefty tax.

His next major conflict was over Hungary. The king of Hungary was Andrew III d'Este, also called Andrew the Venetian, because he had grown up in Venice. His grandmother was the heiress of Este in Italy, Beatrice d'Este, who had married King Andrew II of Hungary. Her son had been Stephen the Posthumous, but he was considered to be an illegitimate son of the king. He was never crowned as king of Hungary, that honour having gone to one of his half-brothers. Stephen's son, nevertheless, Andrew, had become king of Hungary.

When Andrew III died in 1301, the House of Arpad became extinct. A group of lords of Hungary had already asked of Charles II of Naples to send his grandson, the 12-year-old Charles Robert, to Hungary in order to become king. Charles Robert was also the grandson of Mary of Hungary, a daughter of King Stephen V of Hungary, so he held some claims on the throne of the kingdom. Charles Robert disembarked in Croatia in August 1300. Many Croatian and Slavonian lords and almost all Dalmatian towns recognized him as king before he advanced with an army to Zagreb. Some of the lords reconciled with King Andrew a little later, however, so that Charles' expedition failed. Pope Boniface VIII did not seem to support Charles Robert's claims at first. Within four months after King Andrew's death, Charles Robert was nevertheless provisionally crowned king of Hungary.

Most of the Hungarian noblemen did not agree, and proposed the crown to the king of Bohemia, to King Wenceslaus or Wenzel II. Wenceslaus accepted, but for his son, the future Wenceslaus III, who was engaged to a daughter of the former King Andrew.

Wenceslaus II was a powerful king. He had married a Polish princess, so that next to being king of Bohemia, he was also king of Poland!

King Albert of Germany found the conjunction of Poland, Bohemia and Hungary too great a neighbour. Charles Robert withdrew to the southern lands of his kingdom. King Albert accepted the choice of Charles Robert for Hungary. Albert had reconciled with Pope Boniface VIII a good while ago. He gathered an army and launched it against Wenceslaus II, into Bohemia.

Pope Boniface VIII acknowledged Charles Robert as king in 1303. When Wenceslaus III inherited Bohemia and Poland from his deceased father in 1305, he abdicated in Hungary in favour of Otto III of Bavaria. Charles Robert won important battles against Otto, was crowned formally with the Holy Crown in 1310, but only became the undisputed king of Hungary in 1321, as he had first to fight against several powerful lords who refused to recognise him as their sovereign.

On the death of Wenceslaus III in 1306, Albert of Austria secured the crown of Bohemia for his son, Rudolph II of Habsburg.

King Albert of Germany then tried to bring all the lands that formed Germany firmly under the king's rule. He renewed a claim on Thuringia his predecessor had made, and attacked Thuringia in 1307. He was defeated that same year at the Battle of Lucka. He attacked Swabia a year later, but he was murdered on 1 May 1308, at Windisch, by his nephew Duke John, afterwards called 'the Parricide', whom he had deprived of his inheritance. He died king of the Germans and king of the Romans, but he was never ceremoniously installed as emperor.

Because of the intense involvements of King Albert in the internal affairs of Germany, he never played a role in western European politics after 1301.

### 1.9. John Denout. 1300-1301

In 1300, the Ghent fuller John Denout was seventeen years old. He looked tall for his age. Maybe that seemed only so because he was so slender, yet strongly built. His face was square and angular, which gave him sometimes a frightening, stern appearance, making him seem older and more mature than he really was. The rest of his body too, his skinny arms and long legs appeared angular, more bones than flesh. He was not a great eater. His air hung straggly, deep brown over his light grey eyes. His eyes were topped by thick, brown eyebrows, which seemed to make one with his hair. He shaved every day, wore no beard or moustache. He disliked hair over his face, but took care of his head hair. He washed his hair almost daily, so that it hung dry, sleek, and took on a silken shine in the sun.

John may have had inordinately long ears. Only few men and less women had ever seen his ears! They were almost entirely glued to his head, most of the time covered by his thick, brown hair, as if he were ashamed of them. He was. He cursed God for having given him such ears.

His mouth was the only normal feature in his face. It was not long, his lips neither thick nor thin. His nose stood straight, long and proud and fine. His stern face transformed entirely when he laughed or threw you a glance. His eyes would glitter then, and one suddenly perceived the warmth of his character. Such a laugh or a smile make him seem quite handsome for the girls, but they did not know what to make of him. He looked sad, and smiled rarely. You could have seen John Denout many times, and have felt no glimpse of how gentle he really was.

John liked hearing what other people said. He would later reflect on what he had heard. He would weigh the opinion of others. He usually spoke little in conversations, gave his opinion only when asked for. Many took him for a rather taciturn man. Maybe he was just humble and wise, found he had nothing smart to add to the remarks of others. Generally, that was also the case. He did not have a high opinion of himself. His mind was not fast, and he knew it. He was sometimes slow in understanding what others meant, especially when the tone was sarcastic or cynical, or when something else was meant than truly said. He did not suffer much from the jokes played on him by the quicker of mind. The mockery glided along his shoulders and breast like raindrops. He was used to being considered a half-wit.

Yet, John Denout was far from stupid. He could surprise other people with keen logical reasoning, with proofs of implacable dry, calculated logic, with intelligent, even cunning deductions and decisions. His opinions were much his own, well reflected upon, founded by reason. He thought often contrary to generally accepted opinions. Yes, John Denout was a man who listened carefully to everybody, weighed what others said, and made up his own mind.

One could not accuse John of laziness. He worked from early morning to sunset. He did not linger in the taverns of the city. He like a beer in solitude. He went his own way, even as a youth. That may have led him into an air of aloofness, and to having few friends. Girls found him a strange kind of animal. The people who had met him generally qualified him as an obstinate young man. Still, he could change his mind fairly quickly when obvious by what happened in Ghent or in the rest of the world.

In reality, John was gentle and polite, a nice man overall. He was also devout and loved to hear the stories from the evangels and epistles, as related by the priests during mass. He feared the matters and concepts he could not fathom well, such as the image and the nature of God. Now, in Ghent, few people reflected on the nature of God, so John's interrogations could seem very profound and right. Maybe he was not half-witted at all, but took not for granted anything he heard, and asked himself what the words he heard really meant, deep in their meaning. How many words do we not pronounce without exactly knowing, deep, deep, what they meant?

John was quite superstitious. He feared angels and devils and ghosts, and staunchly believed these worked around us, throughout the day. It was the only concept you could scare John with, and a constant source of mockery by the youths he frequented. He was not entirely a loner. He sought company, as any other young man of his age.

At fourteen, John's father sent him to a master fuller to learn the art of fulling. He was an assiduous, but slow learner. When he knew a process or a product, he had mastered every aspect of it, and then he could start to experiment on his own. The desire to change, to modify, not to continue doing as the better fullers had taught, surprised his master. John was not yet fully a master fuller at seventeen, but he would be very soon, and his teacher had allowed him to go into the profession on his own. He had been accepted in the fullers' guild. John fullered better and quicker than his master, in fact better than most of the fullers of Ghent. He had worked and tried out many fullers' clays, trying to pierce the magic of the effect of clays on wool. He had found out a mix of several clays from different provenances, of different colours and sizes of particles offered the best results. It sufficed for John to feel a woollen cloth, freshly woven, turning it through his fingers, to know rather quickly which combination of clays would yield the finest result. That meant he did not always have to use the most expensive clays. John Denout made good use of the less expensive clays he bought from a trader called Juris Vresele. Those clays originated from Castile, as Juris had once explained him. They felt gritty to the fingers, but they worked well on coarse wools as first bath. John Denout could hold a secret. When other fullers asked him about how his wool softened so well and took on dyes so well, he merely smiled. Other fullers took him for a half-witted young man, but John knew extraordinarily well what he wanted of life.

John Denout wanted to become rich, very rich, maybe so rich as to receive a knighthood. At least, he wanted to be considered what the ancients had called a patrician, a man who was not a knight of old, but who might be supposed thus. A higher ambition did not exist in Ghent and in Flanders. Most other men, and all the other fullers, might have laughed with his ambition. They might have thought John Denout a crazy young man. John kept his teeth and his lips tightly together when it came to answering questions on what he believed in and what he craved for. Still, he wanted a loving wife, a family of his own, and he wanted to become a very wealthy poorter and a landowner.

At fifteen years old, other boys had harassed him so much, marked him for his being so different from them, that he had burst into a blind rage. He had then pushed another boy against the stone wall of a landowner-poorter family's home in the *Kattestraat*, in front of Saint Nicolas Church. He had exploded so quickly and so violently the other boy had hit his

head badly against a window lintel. The boy had fallen down without conscience. Two days later, the boy died.

The aldermen of the Estate arrested John Denout on suspicion of manslaughter. He had to appear before his judges, the *paysierders* of the city. John stammered he regretted the incident, he had had no intention of doing real harm to his adversary. He told his version of the accident. The *paysierders* had already heard the same account given by the bystanders. They showed some leniency, did not ban John from the city, and sentenced him merely to a heavy fine as retribution, to pay to the deceased young man's family. John Denout's parents could pay the amount demanded. He too contributed, for he had saved some money already. The amount demanded was paid in several instalments, but in full. It ruined John's parents, and John was left with nothing but debts. The payment might have surprised more than one. John worked hard and much.

Worse arrived afterwards. The family of the deceased young man continued to accuse John, calling him a murderer, screaming so every time he met someone of the family in the streets of Ghent.

'There walks the murderer! A most foul murderer!'

As a result, the other people of Ghent shunned John. He might have drawn up his shoulders, caring little about what others thought of him. But among the other people, he soon counted also most of the weavers of the city. And the weavers of Ghent were the men who had to provide him with cloth to full! John had lost his income. Soon, John's reputation of being a violent killer began quite badly to work against him. He was down to one single fuller's job a week. John, who had become after the incident a man who foresaw in his own needs, went hungry.

One day, a young man called Raes van Lake hurried into his workshop. Raes was older than John, thought only barely twenty years old, less than three years the elder of John. Raes was a draper. He was in a desperate mood when he ran into John's shop. The place was nothing but a small shed in those times, a stinking, dark hole of a place, in which John Denout also ate and slept with his dreams. He stood covered with clotted clay all over his body. The dust had settled on his clothes and then had glued to his body by the vapours of the fuller's baths. Raes van Lake had an urgent fuller's work for an important order of cloth. Raes had visited a few of his usual fullers, but none could take on the too important work within the timespan Raes insisted on. These fullers also knew how difficult Raes could be about the quality of the work. Raes had been tearing the hairs out of his head. Then, a fuller had directed him to John Denout. This fuller had taken pity on John, and he added to Raes John was a young man who could deliver excellent quality, just as Raes wanted so desperately.

'He is a strange one, that John Denout,' the fuller had said, 'some call him a fool, some call him a killer. Don't insult him, but the youngster is an excellent fuller when he wants to be. He is a bit in a tight spot for the moment. You could try him. I have too much work for weeks. John hasn't much to do these days. People don't like him too much!'

Raes had no choice left. He had run to the Denout shop. He explained to the young man what he wanted. The gruff, light-eyed boy had asked what kind of quality Raes van Lake was looking for, and of what kind of wool the cloth had been woven. Raes had told him in few words, then added he wanted only the best. There was something about the as few words in the boy's answers Raes liked.

Raes van Lake was not a weaver anymore. He found the work too tiresome. It did not bring in money quickly enough. He had become a draper, buying and selling cloth from other weavers. He had it fulled and dyed to his own quality standards, and then he sold it with a profit. The better quality he could offer, the higher his profit. He continued to despair when he brought his woven cloth to John Denout, for the cloth was woven coarsely. Raes did not expect the boy fuller to deliver much more than a normal, decent job. He rather feared the worse. The boy John did not flinch when Raes told him the enormous quantity he wanted fulled in the shortest of times.

‘I can bring the cloth to the quality you want,’ John Denout said, ‘but you’ll have to stretch it properly. Does that agree with you?’

Raes merely nodded.

John Denout worked day and night for four days, ate only once a day in that period. At the end of the fourth day, he hired a cart and brought bale after bale of the finished cloth, still wet, to the stretching lines and the frames near the *Reep*.

Raes van Lake lived not far from there, in the *Brabantstraat*. Raes came to look at the cloth and set his stretchers to work, to draw the cloth into the right measures, as demanded by the Cloth Hall of Ghent. He couldn’t believe his eyes and his fingers. He had never received such finely fulled cloth! The boy fuller had turned coarse woven wool into wool of the finest quality. He suspected the dyers would be able to place the most marvellous colours on this cloth, too! John Denout was not present at the stretching frames when Raes went there. So Raes ran to the workshop of John Denout, and paid him immediately, in full and with a bonus. Raes wanted John to work more for him. Cloth like as John Denout produced, he could sell everywhere, at any time! Could John work exclusively for him, Raes?

‘Of course,’ John answered, ‘if you can bring me enough cloth to work my days. My price is not cheap.’

‘No problem,’ Raes answered. ‘Your price will be mine. How did you full so well?’

‘Several baths, not one bath. Different clays each time, one after the other,’ was all John allowed to tell. ‘That is why my price is higher.’

He bowed his head, avoided Raes’s eyes.

‘I am known as a murderer,’ John whispered suddenly, warning Raes.

‘I know. I heard. It was more of an accident that happened, I believe. You are not planning on murdering me, do you?’

‘Not if you pay what I ask,’ Denout smiled wryly.

‘I pay what I promise,’ Raes told.

No more words were necessary. John Denout became the exclusive, expert fuller Raes had been searching for long.

Raes van Lake gave John Denout his finest cloth, to full even finer. John never deceived him, never cheated on the quality. Raes paid John well. They became friends. Soon, Raes took John with him when he bought his best cloth. He wanted John’s opinion on what he could do with the wool. The two men decided together which cloth from which weaver in which quantity had the best chance to be turned into the wonderful cloth Raes could sell. Raes van Lake and John Denout were the artisans and traders the Lombard merchants sought out for the best work of Ghent.

Raes van Lake used the shipper Arnout de Hert for his transport. John Denout also met Arnout. He had already seen the shipper a few times, for Juris Vresele also used Arnout to bring his fuller's clays and peat to John's workshop. John had equally remarked Arnout's girlfriend, Marie Scivaels. He instantly fell in love with her. When Marie walked arm in arm with her sister, John Denout fell even more in love with Selie.

Arnout noticed instantly what was happening between his sister-in-law and the fuller John Denout. The tingle in the eyes of Selie and John's nervousness when he stood before Selie told him of the attraction. Selie was sixteen then. Her hair glowed brighter, lighter brown in colour than Marie's. It fell to lower over her shoulders. Her features might not have been extraordinarily beautiful in the sense most people would look for, but they were very regular and particularly harmonious. Her open, good-natured character shone in her eyes and in her smile. She had a nice, fair, unblemished complexion, in which stood the same shape of eyes Marie had. Selie was neither tall nor short. She stood fine and pretty. She wore her head high, but with humility and intelligence.

Arnout and Raes couldn't well comprehend what Selie saw in the oaf of a man John Denout had become. John had bought his own house in the meantime. He had built a much larger workshop than the one Raes van Lake had first seen him in, but he was still up to his ears in debt. He also always smelled of peat and of his fuller's baths. Selie looked a bit haughtily at John at first. She softened with time, sought John out, and seemed to like talking to him. To Arnout and Raes it seemed the words then flowed more easily out of their young friend. To Selie too, John talked about his dreams. John now dreamt of building a fuller's mill. He might have enough money, he told Selie, if he could go on working for Raes van Lake like he did. He would build some of the mill himself. He had a few new ideas to push more force onto the fulling hammer. With a mill, he would be able to deliver even finer cloth.

John Denout had the same issue as Arnout de Hert when Arnout had chased Marie Scivaels. Selie was a daughter from the same well-t--do family. Selie was above John's class. John confided in Arnout.

'Don't worry about that,' Arnout told him. 'Her parents love Selie, as much as they love Marie. They don't want to see her miserable. It went rough for a while with me and Marie too. They'll yield to Selie as they did to Marie. Just be obstinate about it. Don't waver, both of you.'

John Denout also confided he had not yet touched Selie, and didn't know how to kiss her. Arnout laughed.

'You know what?' Arnout exclaimed. 'You don't know whether Selie really likes you. I happen to know she does. You don't know how to declare. You're a fellow of even less words than I, aren't you? Well, I suggest to take you two on a boat trip on the rivers and canals of Ghent. You'll stay in the boat, and I won't stop before you've kissed her. We can make a tour of the city. You two will sit in front. I cannot well see what you are doing from my place at the rudder, behind. There is nothing like a nice boat-trip to soften a girl's heart!' Arnout de Hert thus saved John Denout's life, for at the end of the boat trip, organised a week later, Selie and John turned to Arnout the shipper with triumphant looks. Selie had very red cheeks and blushed. John beamed. Selie's parents did not think other than that their youngest girl had been visiting her sister!

As with Marie, John Denout surprised Selie's parents entirely when he asked to speak to them. He proposed for the hand of their daughter. If possible, he was shuffled quicker out of the house than had happened with Arnout.

As with Arnout, the lamentations of Selie cut through her parents' determination. They had refused for two months to let her marry a scoundrel such as John, before they gave in. Selie's father heard bad and good things told of John Denout. Of course, John was a fuller, and fullers were the poor scum of the earth, but John was a fine fuller, one of the upcoming men in the fullers' guild. It pleased Selie and Marie's father that John seemed to be a *Klauwaert*. Men like Raes van Lake and Juris Vresele spoke the best of John. Selie's father finally gave his consent to the marriage. He asked of John, and made him promise, to wait for two years until Selie was a little older. So they did. They married in 1303, and much happened in those two years! John had begun building his fuller's mill by then, helped by Selie's father, who knew much about a carpenter's work.

One man who didn't like John Denout at all was Clais Panneberch. Clais was a landowner-poorter, a knight and a wealthy *Leliaert* of Ghent. He was a draper, like Raes van Lake, a very rich draper, though his fortune had been made not so much from this trade as from his activities in buying and selling land property. Clais prided in selling the highest quality woollen cloth of Ghent. He brought the thinnest, finest, tightest woven wool, almost resembling silk.

Lately, Clais Panneberch had discovered more than a few of his most interesting, better paying clients, Lombards who bought for the most respected houses of Genoa, Milan and Florence, had deserted him to buy from one young man called Raes van Lake. How could this up-and-coming, snotty-nosed youngster be selling more and better cloth than he? Clais knew the secret hid in the weaving, fulling, stretching and carding of the wool. The brain and skill behind the van Lake cloth seemed to be one John Denout, a younger still fuller.

Clais Panneberch went to the Denout workshop to snoop around. He offered the young man a large fulling job for his own cloth. Denout refused! He had enough work, he told Clais, fulling for mainly Raes van Lake. He did not mention Raes's name, mentioned only a draper from the *Brabantstraat*, but Clais understood. No law existed against a fuller working exclusively for one draper. Raes van Lake provided enough woollen cloth for John Denout to be occupied for Raes almost all the time.

John Denout had asked the name of his visitor. John knew Clais as the father of Jehan Panneberch. Jehan was a young boaster of about twenty-one years old in 1301, and a friend of Hugh van Lovendegem. Hugh had coveted Marie Scivaels. Arnout de Hert had told John Denout about who the Scivaels parents had preferred as son-in-law.

John suspected Jehan Panneberch to have a sweet eye for Selie Scivaels. He could not have that, as the competition for Selie was still on, for he had sworn not to marry Selie within another year at the best. Jehan was a tall braggart, a haughty youth, a liar and an impostor, a man who thought no better one than him existed in the world. John Denout absolutely refused ever to work for the Panneberchs! He remained polite but determined. No, he would not now or in the near future work for Clais Panneberch.

Clais Panneberch sought ways to force John Denout to work for him. He accused John of collusion with Raes van Lake. The conflict reached the paysierders. The paysierders could do nothing else but reject Clais's claims. If John Denout wanted, he could work exclusively for Raes. No law could force him to work for somebody in particular, nor exclusively for somebody. He had the right to refuse to work for any weaver or draper he wanted. Any other decision of the aldermen would have caused a riot by the fullers of Ghent.

Raes van Lake and John Denout feasted their victory with a lavish banquet paid for by Raes. Juris Vresele, William van Artevelde and Arnout de Hert were invited men of mark.

A little later, Clais Panneberch took his revenge.

It was the habit in Ghent for most of the fullers to leave part if not all of their fullers' clays in a heap in front of their house or workshop. John Denout worked alone in those times. He could not and would not pay for servants. He too let some of his clays pile up under his windows, next to the entry of his workshop. John usually took some clay in his hands before using it. He would feel the clay between his palms and fingers. This was an instinctive probing of the quality or nature of his clays. Now, when John ran his fingers through the heap in front of his house and when he felt the smoothness of the clay between his palms, he looked up in surprise. He felt a grain more coarse and abrasive than normal. That was very wrong for what he wanted to do with this clay. He smelled, putting his nose close to the heap. The clay stank of urine, maybe even of excrements. John went back into this shop, walked to a heap of the same load inside. That clay felt with another structure entirely, not grainy at all, smooth and not abrasive, entirely different from his reserve outside. The clay inside was very fine and soft, not gritty like the pile outside. It did not stink. John took a spade, and dug deeper in the heap outside. Also deep below, the clay felt wrong. John had to conclude somebody had tampered with this clay heap outside. Sand had been added, urine and excrements, the whole carefully turned over. He could not use this reserve! This clay should be disposed of! John hired a horse and a cart. He shovelled all the outdoor clay in the cart, rode to the marshes outside Ghent, and dumped the clay. The sand mixed in would ruin his work.

John knew then what to do. He built an extension to his shop, a crude hall. Thus, he could store more fullers' clays inside. From that day on, he never left anymore his reserves in a heap outside. He placed double locks on the gates of his warehouse and locked it at night, always.

John was rather certain the Panneberchs, or their hired hands, had sabotaged his clay reserve. His loss in value was not considerable. It was not a loss he would have difficult to recuperate from. Had he used this lot of clays for fulling Raes van Lake's cloth, he would have ruined it. Then, the loss would have been high for him and for Raes. John blamed himself bitterly. He should have foreseen such a vile deed. He told nobody of what had happened, not even Raes van Lake. He knew now what to expect of the Panneberchs.

John did talk to Arnout de Hert. He asked Arnout to watch over his shiploads of fullers' clay, and especially over the loads destined to him, John Denout.

Arnout de Hert swore a lot, found John's story more than probable, and promised to keep a watch on loads of clays for John.

The Panneberchs must have remarked soon they could not tamper anymore with Denout's fullers' clays, as he kept his reserve locked inside. An attack then happened on the Lieve Canal on a boat of Arnout de Hert, loaded with fullers' clays for John Denout. Arnout de Hert had pushed his *Lieveschuit* almost into the Leie River, out of the canal. He had moored his boat along a quay, near his house in the Betsgravenstraat. He went to eat in his house, but slept in his boat. Late in the evening, Arnout had to fight off two assailers, who leapt into his boat, armed with spades. Arnout stalked on them in silence, saw them wanting to pour sand into the clays. He used the dark of the falling night, and his stealth, to knock out the two men before they sensed what was happening to them. He threw the bodies in the water, watching as they came back to life, to fight for their life in the water. The two men got eventually out of the Leie, but ran as fast as they could over the *Betsgravenbrug* to the *Kuipe* of Ghent. Arnout had fended off his attackers, for he had been alert. Arnout then forced John to tell the story also to Raes van Lake and to Juris Vresele.

Raes van Lake and John Denout appreciated Arnout de Hert's willingness to defend their transports. They used Arnout as much as they could from then on, and discussed together to organise their transports. Henceforth, Arnout organised the transport of goods for his friends not only over the water, but also over land, to in the workshops or in their warehouses. Van Lake, van Artevelde, Denout and Juris Vresele told everybody in Ghent how honest and trustworthy shipper Arnout de Hert worked. Arnout's contracts for transport increased after he episode. John of course told Selie, and Selie told her parents how ugly the Panneberchs could be. Marie and Selie's parents were very upset about how malicious the Panneberchs could act, so vilely, to do harm to John Denout and Arnout de Hert. They added their comments in Ghent against the Panneberchs. Selie Scivaels treated Jehan Panneberch with open disdain. Jehan's and Hugen's hatred for John Denout and Arnout de Hert soared.

### 1.10. Ghent and Jan Borluut. 1300-1302

While the French troops occupied most of Flanders, the *Leliaert* knights of Ghent tightened their grip on the city. The men of the ancient lineages hung on to power. The thirty-nine aldermen continued to be elected among the men devoted to tradition. They schemed to leave no chance to change or to the common inhabitants of Ghent to take part in the government. Their weapons to achieve their aim were twofold. First, they were solidly in power, which provided them with a series of prerogatives and advantages to keep everything as matters stood. They could count on the powerful support of the king of France and his governor. Second, they sowed discord among the leaders of the guilds, who could turn the artisans into a better organised opposition.

The aldermen diminished the subsidies given to the guilds for buying and maintaining weapons, swords, crossbows, and armour in good order. They prohibited changes in the organisation of the city militia. They discouraged and hindered the military parades in the streets of the city. The parades might have incited more able men to join the militias, and thus grow the power of the guilds. The aldermen strengthened their own military force of the knights of the city and their squires and men-at-arms. They banned the men who were known *Klauwaerts* and destroyed the authority of such men by confiscating their possessions. Both Juris Vresele and William van Artevelde had suffered unjustly from this kind of oppression. The ancient lineages conferred with the French governor of Flanders, who stayed often at Ghent. In the meetings with Jacques de Châtillon, they discussed on how their forces could work together in the case of a revolt in Ghent. They decided on which troops could occupy which strategic positions in the city. Such discussions had as direct aim to quench revolts. The aldermen paid spies to remain informed about the activities of the leaders of the *Klauwaerts*. Who were the men who spoke out the loudest and the easiest and the most fervently for the cause of the guilds, and for the count of Flanders? Who rejected most obviously the government of the county by the French garrisons? The interests of the aldermen joined in this aspect the interests of Jacques de Châtillon. De Châtillon relied on the opinion of the aldermen, strengthened also in their support.

The *Leliaert* aldermen had their greedy hands on the treasury of Ghent. Flanders and Ghent were officially at peace. The economy of Flanders was booming. Trade was easy. The money from the diverse taxes on goods imported, such as wine, flowed into the Ghent treasury with ever increasing amounts. The *Leliaert* aldermen used these funds for their own purposes, to strengthen their power. They paid for the upkeep of their own military force from the city treasury. The receivers of the city worked in collusion with the aldermen, falsified the accounts, and grew richer in the act. The *Leliaert* landowner-poorters also voted new taxes to have the common folk of the city, and not the aldermen and the wealthiest families, pay for the lavish feasts, the banquets and the jousts, for instance staged during the visit of King Philip IV to Flanders. The aldermen made the poorer inhabitants of Ghent pay. They supplied the tents in the Bijloke Field for the banquets, the musicians, singers, dancers, tumblers and magicians who entertained the court and the French knights. They provided the food, the beer and the wine. Of course, they over-priced scandalously.

Corruption also soared in all the construction works ordered by the aldermen. Far too high costs were entered in the books of the city, and paid out, for the repair of the public buildings, for the works on the walls and for the new towers of the city defences. These works were planned in conjunction and with the agreement of Jacques de Châtillon.

The smartest *Klauwaerts* who spoke out in the guild meetings noticed the corruption. They had no access to the city accounts, so many of their outcries and accusations had to stay without proof. The city receivers worked together with the aldermen to falsify the accounts. Practically all the construction works of the city were over-estimated by outrageous amounts. Much less was actually paid out, the rest disappeared in the pockets of the old lineages. The *Leliaert* aldermen organised the construction works and drew in huge profits, at the expense of the Ghent treasury. This was particularly the case for the works on the waterways of the city. Works on the dikes, bagger works, maintenance of the canals, works on the inner harbour, the building of the Belfort, soared high.

Juris Vresele, William van Artevelde and Raes van Lake protested, but had to take care. They could once more be banned out of the city, arrested and be punished in the flesh.

The *Leliaerts* became aware of the growing discontent in the city. They spied more on the men who denounced the corruption and who called the guildsmen to action. Among these men were Juris Vresele, William van Artevelde and Raes van Lake, and their friends the *Klauwaerts*. They challenged the aldermen constantly to force them to show the accounts of the city. They talked of new government forms, in which the aldermen of the old families would have to share power with the guilds. The guilds were the only other organised power in the city. The *Klauwaerts* proposed to arm the guilds better, to choose able men among them as deans, instead of allowing the aldermen to assign their directors. The aldermen felt the wind turning. They hesitated in taking open action yet. They believed too rash and too strict or violent mass measures might at that moment trigger riots and revolt.

Also King Philip the Fair and his court felt the opposition grow in the largest city but Paris of the realm. The king's councillors thought of a solution that might to some measure satisfy both parties. They devised a new form of government for Ghent. In the new organisation, the king ordained he or his governor could in the future name four electors on the fifteenth of August. The old lineages of the city, represented in the aldermen, could equally name four electors. The eight electors together, all *poorters* of Ghent, inhabitants of the city, would then elect twenty-six aldermen. The thirteen aldermen who formed the reserve and next year's aldermen, the men called in Flemish the '*wapelingen*', the '*vacui*', were abolished. Only the double council of thirteen aldermen of the Keure, of the Law, and of thirteen aldermen of the *Gedeele*, of the Estate, remained. These last formed, as before, also the judiciary power of the city as the *paysierders*.

The election of this new form of government happened for the first time in the year 1300. The *Klauwaerts* concluded nothing had changed. The newly elected men might be a little more moderate in their opinions, maybe in their greediness too. The election by the eight men of the king and of the aldermen in power would still and always go to the old lineages, to the nobility of the city. Nothing had really changed in depth.

The *Klauwaerts*, the majority of whom had already suffered by fines, banishments, sentences to go on pilgrimages, as Juris Vresele and William van Artevelde, attacked the *Leliaerts* ever more openly, though only in words. The opposition spread. The *Klauwaerts* lacked the means to call their followers into open revolt. The forces of the aldermen and of the French army of occupation was felt as being far too strong to give the guilds a decent chance to prevail. Juris Vresele and other leaders of the opposition movement were looking for a well-known name, for a man of authority who might be courageous and show sufficient daring to oppose the aldermen and the French garrison with arms. Such a man would have to be wise, moderate, and a strategic leader. Many of the *Klauwaerts* thought a man called Jan Borluut could unite the guilds and the *Klauwaert poorters* against the aldermen and the French.

Jan Borluut was no knight. His family was wealthy and respected, though their reputation and wealth had diminished by the last French campaigns in Flanders. Jan lived with his family in a fine, large stone house in the Grain Market, in the centre of Ghent, in the Kuipe.

Borluut was born in 1250. He had just turned fifty in 1300, a mature man. He was no impetuous youngster. He continued the tradition of his family as a trader of woollen cloth. He was a draper. As such, he knew by name and face many of the *Leliaerts* of the city and could be a man acting as an intermediary. His badge showed three running deer on a blue field. He was married to a woman called Heldewin de Vos, and Borluut seemed loyal to his wife, though the couple remained childless.

Nobody could deny Jan Borluut was a courageous man. He was well skilled in handling weapons. His courage in battles had been proven. He had all the intellectual skills to prove a good captain. He had participated in the battle of Worringen in 1288 near Köln, the battle over the succession of the duchy of Limburg. The battle had been won by Duke John of Brabant. It was typical of Jan Borluut the count of Flanders had remained neutral in the conflict, but Borluut nonetheless fought. He threw himself without any regard or fright into such confrontations.

The issue with Borluut was that he was known in Ghent as a thoughtless man who quarrelled often with others, as a man who liked to fight for the slightest incident.

In 1295, in a case of a broken engagement, he had defended his sister Elisabeth's honour. He had fought against the family of Matthew van Sint Baafs. A particularly violent feud had resulted between the two families of Borluut and van Sint Baafs!

Borluut had not killed Matthew van Sint Baafs, the patriarch of the offending family, but another member of the family, Matthew's nephew, who was the bailiff of the village of Sint Baafs. The village lay at the outskirts of Ghent.

The murder demanded action of the *paysierders* of Ghent. Jan Borluut had been banned from Ghent by the aldermen. The feud had continued. Borluut fled from Ghent to Tournai. From out of Tournai, he had fomented a plot to kill another nephew of the Sint Baafs family. More murders had been perpetrated. In all, a total of five men could have been killed in the honour feud!

Jan Borluut was not even in Ghent in the years of from 1295 to 1301. He stayed in the city of Tournai, and continued to trade from there. He kept contact with some of the better known *Klauwaerts* of Ghent. These *Klauwaerts* liked the brash character of Jan Borluut. Here was a

man who defended himself terribly when offended, and who hated the *Leliaerts* of Ghent! He was a wonderful fighter, who could lead a revolt. He could inspire the militia!

Juris Vresele held William van Artevelde back to draw Jan Borluut to the foreground. The man was too impulsive, he argued. What was he more but a thoughtless fighter? How could a man involved in a violent, cruel family feud that had resulted in several crimes, have the moral authority to serve as an outstanding political leader? No, Juris Vresele convinced William van Artevelde this Jan Borluut was not the man who could lead the prestigious guilds of Ghent.

Vresele continued to regret he had not found yet any man capable of leading the *Klauwaerts* permanently with the needed moral and military authority. He agreed with the *Klauwaerts* Jan Borluut could lead a part, if not all of the Ghent militias, in the case of a violent conflict, for instance during a revolt in Ghent. As a captain of the militias, Jan Borluut might lead. He would be uncontrollable, though. He could play no preponderant role in the government of Ghent. The man was not even in Ghent! He merely acted out of Tournai and Kortrijk! Juris regretted, but he still sought a leader according to his criteria and had still not found one yet. He rejected Borluut. Hearing out Juris's arguments, William van Artevelde and some of the wiser *Klauwaerts* agreed.

### 1.11. Fulk's Chronicles. The Flemish Revolt. Mid 1301- mid 1302

Juris Vresele and William van Artevelde found no man dignified and capable to become the leader of a revolt against the *Leliaert* knights, the ancient lineages and the French garrison of Ghent. Bruges did.

The Bruges guilds had a man called Pieter de Koninck. He was an unlikely candidate. De Koninck looked quite unlike anybody would have qualified as a hero. He was old, about sixty years old, ugly as a back door, one-eyed, small of stature, walking awkwardly on stubby legs, sleek hair hanging down to his shoulders, and he always went dressed in rather shabby, black tunics. He was also the dean of the weavers of Bruges. His eye shone with an unquenchable courage, obstinate determination, and he had the cunning of a wise, old fox. He was the unlikely leader, but the guildsmen of Bruges showed him their confidence, their love, and they were willing to sacrifice their life to execute his orders. In the end, many of them would lose their life, indeed!

Pieter de Koninck was a poor man. He knew no French, but he was very eloquent in Flemish. He could convince people to action. Pieter protested openly against a tax the aldermen wanted to levy to pay for the expenses incurred during the visit of the French king in their city. When Pieter began to speak about revolt against the French invaders, the aldermen of Bruges arrested him and threw him in prison. The royal bailiff guarded the prison. Twenty-five more *Klauwaerts*, men who had equally protested against the government of the aldermen, were thrown in the same prison as Pieter de Koninck. Pieter was imprisoned in the *Steen*, the former prison of the count's bailiff, now a prison of the king. The royal bailiff, the *Leliaert* Pieter du Breucq, complied with the aldermen's wishes.

The arrest of de Koninck proved the signal for a sudden insurrection in Bruges. The people of Bruges ran in arms in the streets. They forced their way into the castle of the bailiff and liberated de Koninck and his friends. The *Leliaerts* took a fright. At the sight of so many men fiercely brandishing weapons, threatening to kill them all, they quickly sent messengers to Jan van Gistel, the leader of the *Leliaerts* of Flanders, and to Jacques de Châtillon, the French governor of the county. They sought for French help.

Jacques de Châtillon was still travelling with the court of King Philip IV at Béthune. The French court was on its way back to Paris. De Châtillon quickly assembled five hundred horsemen, and rode to Bruges. He feared correctly the gates of the city had been closed to him by the rebels. On the 13<sup>th</sup> of July of 1301, he decided to wait in the vicinity of Bruges, and wait there for a signal of the Bruges *Leliaerts* at least one gate of the city was in their hands and free for him to enter with his men.

The guildsmen heard the rumour. They heard the bell toll, the signal the *Leliaerts* had opened a gate for the governor's warriors. They feared Jacques de Châtillon, once master of the city, would abolish all their liberties, would rescind their privileges. They ran even in higher numbers at the sound of the bell, killed the aldermen they found and who resisted them, and took the ones who surrendered prisoners. They put these men in the same cells of the city prison Pieter de Koninck had stayed in a little earlier.

Jacques de Châtillon waited in vain outside the walls and gates of Bruges. Each day, his army grew in numbers. Many men who fought under the orders of de Châtillon's brother, the count of Saint-Pol, joined his troops. Also the French mercenaries of the garrison of Kortrijk joined de Châtillon's troops.

The guildsmen of Bruges feared a terrible bloodbath once Jacques de Châtillon had gathered a sufficiently large army to assault the city. The wisest men of Bruges offered their mediation with the governor. They went to talk with de Châtillon. An agreement was reached. All the men of Bruges who had taken part in and organised the revolt, would be banned forever from Flanders. No harm would come to them if they left the city now. Bruges would be spared. Pieter de Koninck and his friends accepted the conditions. They left the city.

Jacques de Châtillon entered a chastised Bruges. He did not feel very triumphant when he rode at the head of his army in the streets of Bruges. He realised how few his troops actually were. He ordered immediately to destroy the fortifications the king of France had begun, wanting to halt the assaults of the adversaries of France. It had come as quite a frustration for the French knights the city they had thought to be pacified to have rebelled. They had looked at the Bruges aldermen as their allies. How could a mob revolt with such quick result? Gates and towers of the city walls were torn down by the French. The rubbish was used to fill long stretches of the moats in front of the walls.

Afterwards, de Châtillon declared the city had, by the revolt, forfeited all her privileges and liberties. The city sent representatives to the royal court of Paris to plead their cause, but the count of Saint-Pol had preceded them to explain de Châtillon's point-of-view, and the Paris court refused to hear the city delegates.

At their return, the delegates of Bruges told even the bishop of Pamiers, Bernard Saisset, sent by Pope Boniface VIII to demand of the king the liberation of the count of Flanders and his sons, had been accused of lèse-majesté and been thrown in prison. The delegates had also noticed new fortifications were being built by the French at Lille and Kortrijk. Also at Bruges, a new French castle was being built to protect the French garrison and Jacques de Châtillon!

Meanwhile, the sons of Count Guy of Dampierre gathered in Namur. They had followed the events in Bruges with much interest. John of Namur, Guy of Namur and their cousin William of Jülich, called Willem van Gulik in Flemish, sought contact with the insurgents of Bruges. They surmised the militiamen of the city guilds could form the core of a formidable means of resistance to the French invaders, and maybe even form a powerful army to confront the king with.

In October of 1301, Pieter de Koninck dared to return to Bruges. He went to the fortifications of the city and ordered the construction workers to stop the demolition of the walls. The workers obeyed him immediately, and stopped filling up the moats. This feat frightened so much the royal bailiff and the aldermen of Bruges, they fled from the city. They assumed they were not strong enough to oppose the military power of the Bruges guilds. They dared not to try to expulse de Koninck once more from Bruges. The guilds realised with some astonishment how powerful they had become. Pieter de Koninck was the new master of Bruges. Entirely new power relations had been created in Bruges and in Flanders!

The discontent of the whole of Flanders against the government of Jacques de Châtillon then grew and became open and louder. He had exerted new, important taxes for the construction of the forts of Lille, Kortrijk and Bruges. The workers had to leave a quarter of their salary to the governor. Many of these workers had not enough income left to live. They went hungry. Also many merchants left Flanders because of the high taxes levied by the occupying forces, which made unemployment rise. Famine set in.

By the end of 1301, the Flemish delegates from the cities had to hear at the court of Paris the French Parliament had indeed declared the old liberties and privileges of Flanders forfeited. The court and Parliament had published the sentence and the regulations of Jacques de Châtillon.

Pieter de Koninck wrote a letter to the governor, telling him he had no right to destroy the fortifications of the free city of Bruges. These warnings and other pleas remained to no avail. The king and the governor were set on doing with Flanders as they pleased, despite charters of privileges and liberties.

In Ghent, the twenty-nine aldermen wanted to levy higher taxes in the city too. In March of 1302, they wanted to re-install the taxes King Philip the Fair had abolished during his recent visit. On the 1<sup>st</sup> of April, the aldermen had a proclamation officially be read in Ghent, ordering everybody to submit to the taxes and obey the aldermen, in the name of Governor Jacques de Châtillon.

The same evening, groups of armed guildsmen spontaneously appeared in the streets. The craftsmen stopped working. The aldermen quickly published a decree declaring they would arrest and imprison and punish anybody who did not go back to work.

In the middle of the night, the militia of the guilds revolted massively. They attacked and pursued their enemies, the *Leliaert* knights. They pushed them into the *Gravensteen*, the count's castle at Ghent. A battle was raging in the streets.

In the morning, the aldermen and the *Leliaerts* of Ghent capitulated. They swore fidelity to the revolted city. Had they not sworn, they would all have been massacred! The *Klauwaerts* were the new masters of Ghent!

The representatives of the count of Flanders arrived at Bruges. They were the son and grandson of the count, John of Namur, and Willem van Jülich.

The first relative of Count Guy of Dampierre to return to Flanders was the intrepid Willem of Jülich. Willem displayed great charisma. He was tall, broad, a magnificent knight. He looked very impressive in his shining armour. He was handsome and brave, and proved very gallant with the ladies. He won the heart of Bruges by storm.

Willem van Jülich was out for revenge for the death of his uncle Walram, who had been killed after the Battle of Bulskamp. The younger Willem of Jülich was a grandson by his mother of Count Guy of Dampierre, a son of the family that had become the rulers of the county of Jülich, lands lying between the cities of Aachen and Köln. Willem was an ecclesiastic, a priest, archdiacre of Liège and provost of the city of Maastricht. He was also a splendid warrior, a man who felt more comfortable among his men-at-arms on a battlefield than among his priests at mass.

Willem van Jülich soon took the military command of Bruges. His first campaign was directed against the port of Damme. It was crucial for this harbour and town to be under the control of the insurgents, so that the commerce of Bruges could continue unhindered. The

French garrison at Damme could not be allowed to hold the port and thus stop all supplies to Bruges. The Bruges militiamen rapidly took Damme. Willem van Jülich proved he could be an excellent war leader.

Subsequently, on the 1<sup>st</sup> of May of 1302, the militia of Bruges attacked the French garrison in the Castle of Male, the castle-palace of the counts of Flanders. The castle, a symbol for Flanders, was then guarded by a Gascon knight called Gobert d'Espino. He had received it for his good services to the king, for having captured the city of La Réole for the French army.

Jan Breydel, a member of the butcher's guild of Bruges, led the militia in desperate, raging attacks. He took the castle. His men massacred the garrison of Male. In the battle, the men of Bruges set fire to the proud castle.

On the 12<sup>th</sup> of May 1302, Pieter de Koninck tried to win Ghent to the cause of Bruges and the count. He advanced with an army towards Ghent. The *Leliaerts* of Ghent and the royal bailiff marched against him with all the forces they could gather. Pieter de Koninck retreated.

Jacques de Châtillon had learned to apply a little more diplomacy in Flanders. He sent letters to the *Leliaerts* of Bruges, insisting, ordering them not to use brute force on the inhabitants that had revolted. The *Leliaerts* had also heard the king had ordered a large army to gather at Kortrijk. This army would have to chastise the cities that had revolted. In France, the Chancellor Pierre Flote pleaded for hard and drastic measures to submit the Flemish people to the crown.

The *Leliaerts* of Ghent succeeded in mustering their knights and men-at-arms. In a surprise movement, they took once more control of the city. Not long after the recapture of Ghent by the old lineages, Willem of Jülich arrived at the gates of Ghent. He found them closed. The *Leliaerts* refused him entry to the city.

### The Bruges Matins

In Bruges also, Willem van Jülich considered the forces that were gathering against the city very strong. Despite the support of Pieter de Koninck, he retreated to the Four Crafts. The *Leliaerts* reproached Pieter de Koninck for having induced the people to revolt. Pieter de Koninck feared for his life. Hired murderers could reach him any time. For the second time, he fled from the city.

On the 16<sup>th</sup> of May 1302, the aldermen published messages everywhere in the streets, asking for all men who had helped the revolt to leave the city, to flee from impending persecutions. The result was spectacular. During the night of the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> of May, more than five thousand *poorters* fled the city. Resistance to the aldermen was thus eliminated. The aldermen seemed not to realise they had also handed over five thousand men in arms to Pieter de Koninck!

The fleeing militiamen marched in long columns to Damme, from there to Aardenburg, to Oostburg and to the coast of the Zwin, the sea-bay of the harbours of Damme and Sluis. Pieter de Koninck and Jn Breydel set up camp there.

The next day, the 17<sup>th</sup> of May, Jacques de Châtillon could enter Bruges unhindered. Seventeen hundred French knights, many men-at-arms and crossbowmen accompanied him. The lilies of France could once more flow above the city. De Châtillon refused to receive the magistrates of the city. He declared he would punish only the men who had participated in the sack of the Castle of Male. The guildsmen sent messages to Pieter de Koninck and to the fled militiamen. They wrote the men should return to save their families from the French terror, which would doubtless start the next day.

During the night, the exiled men from Bruges marched back. They gathered at the Church of the Holy Cross, near the city gate of the same name. Once assembled, the men conferred. Sixteen hundred men would take up positions at the gates of Bruges, to block the retreat of the Frenchmen and the *Leliaerts* out of the city. They would have to stop and kill anybody who wanted to leave the town and who spoke French. Another contingent of armed men, led by Jan Breydel, moved in silence to the hotel of Jacques de Châtillon. Yet another group of guildsmen would sneak in silence from the gate of the Holy Cross to the Market Place. At a pre-established signal, the guildsmen shouted, '*Schild en Vriend!* Our shields and our friends for the Lion of Flanders!' The killing would begin.

When the French warriors heard the noise, so suddenly in the middle of the night, they ran into the streets wondering what was happening. They ran in their night shirts, not in armour, not always carrying weapons. They were pitilessly massacred. The Bruges guildsmen ran through the streets shouting, '*Vlaanderen de Leeuw. Wat Waals is vals is, slaat al dood!*', meaning, 'Flanders the Lion. What is French is false. Kill them all!' The guildsmen cracked open the doors of the wealthy poorters with axes. They opened the houses where the Frenchmen slept. Without pity, they killed anybody who could not repeat '*Schild and Vriend*' without a French accent. The French could not pronounce the 'sch' sound and the 'V' sound; they said 'sk' and 'F'. No quarter was given to the Frenchmen. The guildsmen released in the shortest of times all the frustration, the heaped-up hatred, wrath and rancour they had amassed in their minds for ages. They killed without pity, before the eyes of women and children. Their revenge was terrible.

Jacques de Châtillon tried to organise some resistance against the raging Flemish, but his horse was killed under him. He and Pierre Flote could find asylum in the house of a *Leliaert*, where they stayed hidden for the rest of the night and the next day, unknown to the militia of Pieter de Koninck. Jacques de Châtillon and Chancellor Pierre Flote escaped around ten o'clock in the evening from the house, disguised as chaplains of the Bruges knight. They ran via the Gate of the Marshals out of the city. They had to swim over the moat to avoid the Flemish guards. Their servant could not swim, and drowned. Also the viscount of Lille and the royal bailiff Pierre du Breucq escaped one way or another. They went on foot as fast as they could to Kortrijk, where they joined Count Robert of Boulogne, Jean de Lens and Jean Vremyn, who had also fled from Bruges.

The men of Pieter de Koninck and Jan Breydel killed anyone who could not repeat without a French accent the words of '*Schild en Vriend*'. About fifteen hundred Frenchmen and *Leliaerts* seem to have been butchered during the night. The massacre was later called of the '*Brugse Metten*', the Matins of Bruges. It happened on Friday, the 18<sup>th</sup> of May of 1302.

Among the men taken prisoner during the massacre were the wealthy poorters Ghildorf van Gruuthuuse and Jan Stam. They were *Leliaerts*, and belonged to two of the best-known families from the old lineages of Bruges.

The poorters of Ghent would have followed the example of Bruges. The guildsmen, the *Klauwaerts*, had already gathered at the gates of the city. Delegates from France arrived at that moment, announcing extended privileges for the city. The *Leliaerts* used these gifts of the king, the good news from the court of France, to strengthen their dominance over Ghent. Had not the king been better-minded over Ghent than the count of Flanders?

### Willem van Jülich and Guy de Namur

Willem of Jülich had fled to the Four Crafts when the French riders of Jacques de Châtillon had arrived in Bruges. He now returned, accompanied by a large number of Flemish lords who had remained loyal to Count Guy de Dampierre. Also with him rode noblemen from Zeeland. These fled the oppression of John d'Avesnes, count of Hainault and Holland. They had opposed the previous count of Holland. Among these knights were able leaders, such as Jan van Renesse and Florent van Borseele. They brought a small army of knights and men-at-arms. These troops became the core of a new Flemish army.

Before he left the Four Crafts, Willem of Jülich fetched the sword of Guy de Dampierre. The count had given his sword in the custody of the lord of Moerseke when he departed for France. The lord of Moerseke refused to hand over the sword to Willem van Jülich. Willem took the sword by force and used it cleverly as a symbol to rally the supporters of the count. He entered Bruges triumphantly on the 25<sup>th</sup> of May, and was received with cheers by the people.

Willem van Jülich stayed only a few days in Bruges. By the end of May, on the 31<sup>st</sup>, he left Bruges with Pieter de Koninck and an army of guildsmen of Bruges. In his expedition participated men like the brewer Veys van der Biest, Jan Sailge, Gerard de Ketelboutre, Jacob de Vos, and the weaver Meus Dullekin. These men served as his captains. It came new to Willem van Jülich to order artisans instead of knights, but he got on well with his commoner assistants in war. He understood he had an entirely new kind of army at his disposal, and he rejoiced in it.

Willem van Jülich set a siege to the Castle of Wijnendael. During three weeks, the garrison of seven hundred Frenchmen defended the castle, and then surrendered. Willem and Pieter did not want to waste time on a lengthy siege. They continued the siege with part of their troops, and continued their campaign through Flanders. On the 1<sup>st</sup> of June, they arrived at Gistel. The next day, they were at Nieuwpoort. And on the 5<sup>th</sup> of June they reached Hondschoote. On the 6<sup>th</sup> of June, they stood before the walls of Sint-Winoksbergen (or Bergues in French). Willem van Jülich set a siege to the town. The French governor of Sint-Winoksbergen, La Payelle, had at its disposal a strong group of knights and footmen, yet he took a fright. The French garrison fled. The *Leliaerts* did not trust the local people, and surrendered rapidly. The inhabitants of Sint-Winoksbergen detested the French occupiers and threatened to revolt inside the walls!

On the 9<sup>th</sup> of June 1302, the Flemish army of Willem of Jülich appeared before the walls of Kassel. Kassel was held by the Flemish *Leliaert* Lords John and Gillis van Haveskerke.

These defended Kassel fiercely. For the first time in the campaign, Willem van Jülich and Pieter de Koninck experienced heavy resistance. The siege proved also to be the end of the campaign.

In the meantime, Pierre Flote had fled to Lille. There, he swore never to return to France before he had taken revenge for what had happened during the Bruges Matins. Jacques de Châtillon brought the news of the revolt of Bruges and Flanders to the court of Paris. The Bruges Matins were regarded in Paris as an enormous, traitorous betrayal, an outrageous conspiracy against the authority of the king. The attack had been foul and honourless, not knightly. Many noblemen also reproached de Châtillon for his incompetence. King Philip IV ordered immediately to assemble the royal army of France.

Did Philip the Fair at that time understand the warring party of Flanders had shifted entirely? Did he still believe noblemen, the Flemish knights who had remained loyal to the count, the sons of Count Guy de Dampierre and their supporting knights, had caused the revolt against his authority? How could the events have happened otherwise? Did the king recognise the army he would send into Flanders had now to be directed not only against the few *Klauwaert* knights, but much more against the people of Flanders? How could he really expect to win such a war against the regrouped militias of the towns? He might have thought, even had he realised the armed guildsmen warred against him, that he could crush these easily with his feudal army.

Count Raoul de Nesle had already moved fifteen hundred armed men to Saint-Omer to relieve the siege of Cassel. The Flemish army of Willem of Jülich had grown to such numbers in the meantime Nesle didn't risk attacking it. He waited for the rest of the royal army to arrive.

In the first days of June, also Guy of Namur arrived in Bruges. Guy was still a young man, like Willem van Jülich. He too was an impressive knight, who was aware of his dignity and status as a son of the count of Flanders. He was strong, powerful of character, and an experienced warrior. Even more than Willem van Jülich, he could inspire confidence in the people of Bruges and in the militia of the city. He was bold and courageous, and wanted to set off immediately for another military campaign in Flanders. Bruges received him in triumph. He arrived as the head of the government of the count. He too took a number of militiamen of Bruges and marched out for a raid through Flanders.

With Guy de Namur, in the expedition to Ieper and Kortrijk, came the cloth maker Colard de Garter, Diederik Lauward, Gillis Rommel, Boudin de Vos, the purse-maker Willem Wederick, Ghisel Handscoewerker, Jan Busard, the carpenter Jan Volcard, the broker Jacob van Beckine, the grocer and sack maker Clais van Oudenburch, and Colard de Jonghe. These artisans of Bruges were Guy de Namur's captains. With them, Guy de Namur freed Ieper of the *Leliaerts*. Around the 14<sup>th</sup> of June, the garrison of the Castle of Wijnendael, still under siege, surrendered to him. The *Leliaert* bailiff of Torhout who fought in the castle, was beheaded. Guy of Namur then attacked the Castle of Kortrijk with the militias of the liberated Flemish towns. He had heard the fortress was still held by a French garrison.

Inside the castle, the lord of Lens now led the French garrison. When Jean de Lens fled from the town into the castle, he had set fire to a part of the houses. The people of Kortrijk hated him for this act. Jean de Lens had also taken many provisions into the castle, taken from the local shops. He promised to pay for them later, but payment was never realised. The castle of Kortrijk had to be sieged. Jean de Lens had organised the defence well. The castle garrison did not surrender, and could hold out for months.

Guy de Namur sent for help from Willem van Jülich and Pieter de Koninck. Guy's expedition too had faltered in a siege. The Castle of Kortrijk held out against his troops.

On the 24<sup>th</sup> of June, Willem van Jülich and Pieter de Koninck left the siege of Cassel. They marched the same day to Poperinge and arrived in Kortrijk on the 26<sup>th</sup> of June to reinforce Guy de Namur's troops.

In total, in both of these expeditions, participated more than two thousand five hundred guildsmen of Bruges. This was only a part of the total number of militiamen Bruges could have sent! Still, the expeditions had realised fine successes, and shown the French had remained vulnerable in Flanders.

Count Robert of Artois arrived at Arras with a large contingent of French knights and men-at-arms, with the first part of the royal army. He too had wanted to move first against Cassel, to relieve the siege. He got a message from the lord of Lens, explaining the situation at Kortrijk. He changed his march to Kortrijk via Lille. Robert d'Artois ordered Raoul de Nesle to join him with his men. On the 30<sup>th</sup> of June, Robert d'Artois was still at Lens with his troops. On the 1<sup>st</sup> of July, he arrived at Seclin, south of Lille, and on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of July he arrived at Marquette. He lingered some time to fill up marshes which might hinder his advance. He arrived near Kortrijk on the 8<sup>th</sup> of July and set up camp on the Pottelberg, south of Kortrijk.

In those days, King Philip IV withdrew the governorship of Flanders from Jacques de Châtillon. He appointed as the new representative of the king Robert, count of Boulogne and Auvergne.

Willem of Jülich heard of the movements of the battles of Artois and Nesle. On the 26<sup>th</sup> of June, he too arrived at Kortrijk and joined the troops of Guy of Namur. Two relatively large enemy armies gathered at Kortrijk.

Soon, they would stand in front of each other. A battle once more might have to decide over the future of Flanders. The armies were very different from each other.

On the French side stood a traditional feudal army, the main force of which was constituted of thousands of knights and squires on horseback. This army also had a section of crossbowmen from France, and an army of men-at-arms on foot about as large as the Flemish army. The footmen of the royal army were mostly mercenaries.

On the Flemish side stood an army of men-at-arms on foot from Bruges, its environs, from the eastern castellanies, with men from Ieper and a small contingent of a few hundred knights and squires.

The French knights did not think an army of townsmen on foot could resist against the crushing charges of an army of knights. They did not realise the force of the army of the Flemish warriors on foot.

The Flemish men-at-arms also did not believe they had good chances to win from the French. They had no confident idea of their own strength. Willem of Jülich and Guy de Namur were young leaders, brave and somewhat rash and reckless. They did not think of defeat. They only knew they had to fight, and fight they would! When the Lord of Moerseke began to talk of retreat, Willem van Jülich refused to hear such thoughts. He answered this would not be battle for the faint of heart, but he refused to retreat. The battle – if a battle there would be – would be fought here, near Kortrijk.

### Edward I, Philip IV and Boniface VIII

At this crucial moment for Flanders, King Edward I of England lacked the means to intervene in Flanders. He had scarcely found the money to wage a war in Scotland against the noblemen who had rebelled, refusing this authority over the lands. He had not even enough money to pay for the troops he had brought to Scotland. The submission of Scotland remained his priority. His recalcitrant nobles, among whom some of the most powerful earls of his kingdom, refused to fight on the continent.

By early September of 1301, two thirds of King Edward's infantry on campaign in Scotland had deserted, for not paid. The king marched to Stirling, but with insufficient troops to realise much. He arrived near Stirling at the end of September. He remained stuck in the countryside, with the walls of Stirling in sight. There, the news arrived that Pope Boniface VIII had released John Balliol to France. Balliol had been mustering an army in France, to attack England and support the revolt in Scotland. King Edward I sent an emissary, Lord Walter Langton to negotiate with France. There was not much to negotiate, for King Philip IV knew well the financial issues of the king of England! Philip continued his efforts to bring the last towns and fortresses of Guyenne under his rule. In view of his quite desperate situation, King Edward agreed to a nine-month truce with the Scottish insurgent nobles. The territories captured were to be handed over to French intermediary knights during the truce. Luckily, the French envoys never arrived in Scotland!

In the winter of from 1301 to 1302, Robert Bruce rode to Lochmarlen Castle, and surrendered to the king of England. On the 20<sup>th</sup> of January 1302, King Edward I returned to England, a very tired man from his strenuous campaign.

During that same winter, also King Philip IV had difficult issues to solve, mainly in his conflict with Pope Boniface VIII. From 4 to 6 December of 1301, in the midst of the crisis with Flanders, the pope had a series of no less than thirty papal bulls be published from the palace of Lathran in Rome. The bulls were destined to the king of France. They reminded King Philip IV of the ecclesiastical immunity of the Church. The pope ordered the king to release the bishop of Pamiers, Bernard Saisset. Saisset had been imprisoned on orders of the king for various misdeeds.

King Philip answered by chasing Saisset out of the kingdom. Pope Boniface VIII then called together a council of the Church of France, to be held on the pope's terrain, in Rome, at All-Saints Day of 1302. The pope aimed to judge the government of France! Boniface VIII allowed King Philip to send a representative to the council. The pope annulled all the financial concessions granted by the Church to the king and his successors, even those

granted to defend the kingdom. This made the situation of the king in way of taxation on the clergy return to what was ordained in the papal bull of *Clericos Laicos*! The king lost the one-tenth tax, granted by the pope as a concession in 1297.

The bull '*Ausculata Fili*' of the 5<sup>th</sup> of December 1301 stated the authority of the pope as leader of the Church, was higher than the authority of the king. The pope meant in spiritual matters, but the bull did not really mention this. God, the pope stated, had placed the Holy See over all the peoples and kingdoms. The pope reproached the king for his sins, for having persecuted the Church, and abandoned the crusade to the Holy Land. Boniface VIII reproached the king for his sins, and as a sinner, the king had to suffer the admonitions of the pope. Boniface VIII wrote the cause of all this were the king's bad counsellors.

The court of Paris reacted with outrage. It sent the bulls to the lawyers and theologians of the University of Paris for comment. These brought together a paper called the '*Scire te Volumus*'. The paper stated Pope Boniface VIII wanted to bring France under the temporal sovereignty of the Holy See of Rome. The pope had not actually written this, only he had meant the king was submitted to the pope for his spiritual soul. Nevertheless, the court of Paris and many other nobles of France reacted as if they had been offended by the pope. An anti-papal campaign followed in France among the nobility. An assembly to discuss the issue was called together in Paris. One of the members of this forum shouted the pope had to be declared a heretic. The man called King Philip IV the defender of the Church against an indignant pope.

On the 10<sup>th</sup> of April of 1302, the representatives of the Church of France, representing the knights of France and of the towns, more than a thousand men in all, sat together in the Church of Notre Dame of Paris, with King Philip. Their discussions resulted in a paper directed against the bull *Ausculata Fili*. The document formulated a long protest against the allegations and claims of the pope, refuting most of the pope's points. The assembly accused the pope of bad faith. The paper was addressed to the cardinals primarily. It appealed to the cardinals to refuse to give their agreement to the foolish enterprises of Pope Boniface. More than thirty French noblemen signed the paper. A schism between the Church of Rome and the Church of France threatened. The king did not allow the French clergy to attend the Council demanded by the pope in Rome.

Pope Boniface VIII was very angry with the offensive reply of the court of France. He attacked Chancellor Pierre Flote, the brain behind the assembly of Notre Dame. He declared he was ready to depose the king! The pope confirmed the organisation of the Council of French bishops.

One of the cardinals in Rome at that time was the theologian Matthew d'Aquasparta. He was one of the few to plead for reconciliation. He was the wisest, maybe because the oldest, the dean of the cardinals. The French clergy begged the pope to renounce to his gravest pretensions.

The delegates of France sent by the assembly of Notre Dame, arrived in Agnani, the residence of the pope near Rome in June of 1302. Matthew d'Aquasparta pleaded for unity in the Church. Once more, the pope accused Pierre Flote, the counts of Artois and of Saint-Pol

for being bad counsellors of the king. He lauded the dukes of Burgundy and of Brittany for their loyalty to the Church. Boniface VIII repeated he was ready to depose Philip the Fair as king of France. The pope too felt insulted. He confirmed the Council of Rome for November of that year. The French bishops would have to travel to Rome to consult with him.

It was then one week from the end of July, two weeks from the confrontation of the French and Flemish armies near Kortrijk. Would the no doubt pending battle prove a God's Trial for the French king?

I waited a long time for some reaction from Brother Bernardus. None came. He was copying and kept on patiently copying until he had finished the chapter. He did not look up.

I asked, 'what did you think of Pope Boniface's conflict with King Philip the Fair?'

Bernardus looked up, surprised.

'I think the pope was right to have written what he thought. I am a little dubious about the pope's motives. Was it so clear for the pope to refer to the spiritual versus the temporal rights and duties? The pope is our spiritual leader. He is also the spiritual leader of the kings, even of the emperor. But we, *Fremineuren*, are Franciscans. We are vowed to poverty. Do bishops and cardinals believe in poverty? Apparently not Franciscus's own bishops! It is right to give to the king and to the emperor their due. One should pay the taxes, but the clergy have a duty to say to whether these taxes have been used justly or unjustly. The heavy taxes, levied to realise the ambitions of greedy noblemen, are unjust. What more did the pope say?'

Nevertheless, Boniface VIII wanted to have a new crusade. For the crusade, he needed money. Maybe he was only scorning the noblemen because their taxes would lower his income for the crusade! It is difficult to fathom a man's soul, his motives, also a pope's! The public actions of King Philip the Fair against the pope were scandalous. And more was to come.'

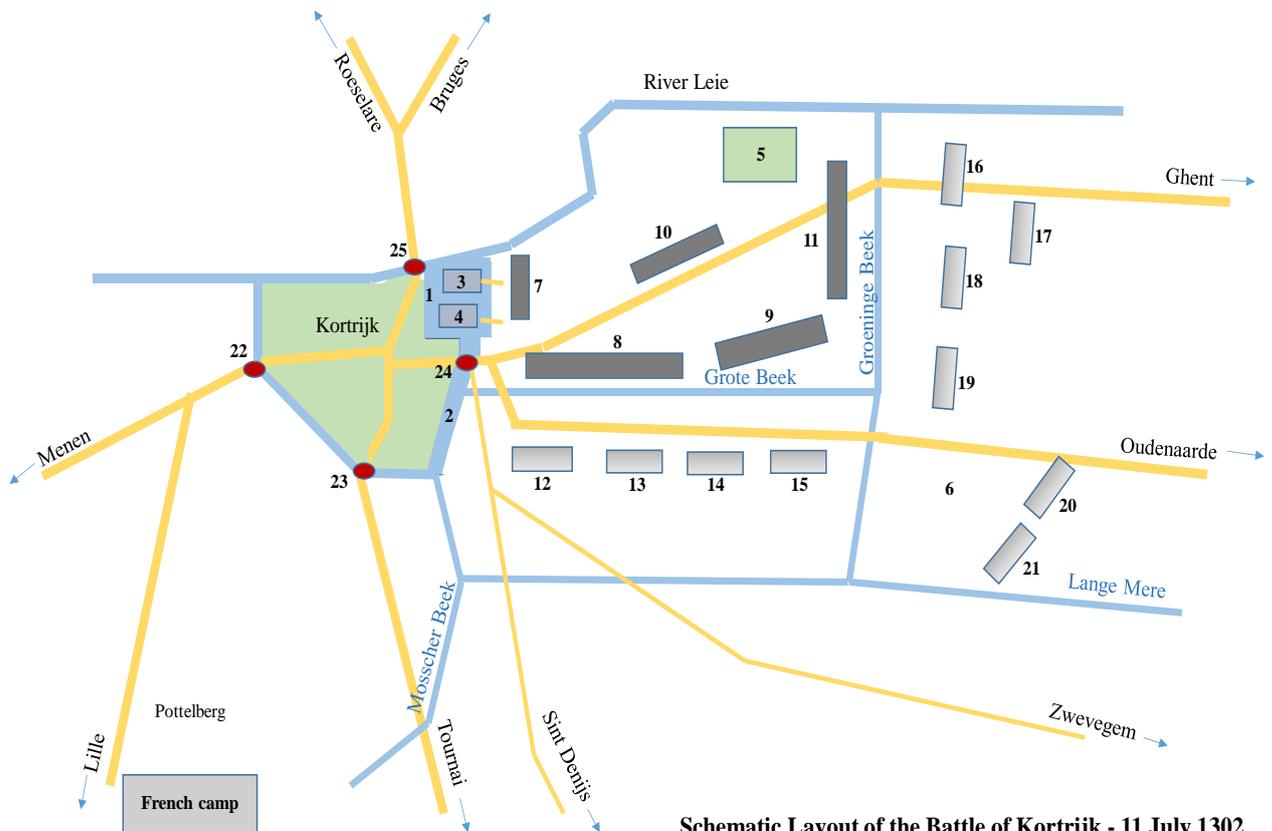
'Indeed, I sighed. 'More reprehensible acts of Philip the Fair would come. A picture of King Philip's character should have emerged by now. He was vindictive, very susceptible to critic, not too subtle in his retaliations, and of course extremely ambitious and greedy for his own needs. I don't imagine he could have felt anything at all about the harm he caused to so many people, hundreds of thousands of them. Was he immune to the pain, the tears, the misery he caused?'

'He must have been,' Brother Bernardus nodded. 'He could not feel the emotions of other people. The only emotions he recognised were his own, his pain, his need for revenge, his humiliations. And I surmise these were merely the result of calculations, of rational reasoning. Why did God allow such men in such high positions of power?'

'That mystery I cannot solve!' I regretted.

I too cried out my helplessness.

## Scheme of the Battle of Kortrijk. 11 July 1302



Schematic Layout of the Battle of Kortrijk - 11 July 1302

- |    |  |  |
|----|--|--|
| 1  | The Low Pond, or Lage Vijver, formed by the Leie   |  |
| 2  | The High Pond, or Hoge Vijver  |  |
| 3  | The Kortrijk Castle, held by the Viscount of Lille Jean de Lens for France   |  |
| 4  | Site of the Church of Our Lady   |  |
| 5  | Groeninge Monastery  |  |
| 6  | Marshy land called The Lange Mere  |  |
| 7  | The militia of Ypres, positioned to prevent sallies by the castle's French garrison                                    |  |
| 8  | The militia from Bruges, led by William van Jülich   |  |
| 9  | The militia from the Bruges Franc (Brugse Vrije), led by William van Jülich, and of West-Flanders, led by Guy de Namur |  |
| 10 | The Flemish reserve corps, led by John van Renesse   |  |
| 11 | The militia of East Flanders, Oudenaarde, Aalst, Kortrijk and Ghent (led by John Borluut), led by Guy de Namur         |  |
| 12 | French formation led by Jean de Burlats, Sénéchal of Guyenne   | } First French Battle, led by Raoul de Nesle   |
| 13 | French formation, led by Geoffrey de Brabant and his son John de Vierson   |  |
| 14 | French formation led by the Connétable Raoul de Nesle  |  |
| 15 | French formation led by the Marshals Renaud de Trie and Guy de Nesle   | } Second French Battle, led by Robert d'Artois |
| 16 | French formation (Champagne, Lorraine) led by Matthieu de Trie   |  |
| 17 | French formation led by Robert d'Artois  |  |
| 18 | French formation led by Jacques de Châtillon   | } Third French Battle, reserve corps           |
| 19 | French formation led by the counts of Eu, Aumale, and the Lord of Tancarville  |  |
| 20 | French reserve corps led by Robert, count of Boulogne-Auvergne   |  |
| 21 | French reserve corps led by Guy, count of Saint-Pol  |  |

● Town Gates: 22 Gate of Lille, Rijssepoort 23 Gate of Tournai, Doornikpoort 24 Gate of the Steen, of the Castle, Steenpoort 25 Gate of the Leie, Leiepoort

## Chapter 2. The Golden Spurs

### 2.1. The Preparations for the Battle of Kortrijk. 1302

The armies of Willem van Jülich with Pieter de Koninck and of Guy of Namur joined at Kortrijk. The Flemish troops did not enter the town. For one, the castle of Kortrijk was still held by a French garrison. The garrison might sally in the confusion of the crowded streets. The Flemish army leaders also feared looting and disturbances caused by quarrelling between the frightened inhabitants and the too cocksure Bruges militiamen. The militiamen were far from home, without women. Brawls over women or drink were bound to happen. Riots might be incited by eager *Leliaert* men who had stayed inside the town walls.

The Flemish army set up camp in the Groeninge Field. The field was a rather wet land lying east of the walls of Kortrijk. It looked ideal as a defensive position to Willem van Jülich. To the east, the Groeninge Field was limited by the Groeninge Brook. This small stream was not wider than ten to fourteen feet. It ran almost perpendicular to the Leie from south to north. It ended, and threw its waters into the Leie River. The terrain roughly formed a rectangle. To the west stood the walls and fortifications of Kortrijk. Only a small gate, the Gate of the Steen or the Castle Gate, the *Steenpoort* in Flemish, allowed men to enter and leave the town. To the north, the Leie bordered the Groeninge Field, to the east the Groeninge Brook and to the south the Large Brook or *Grote Beek*, also called the Saint John Brook. The site was called the Groeninge Field because of the Groeninge Monastery, which lay along the Leie, in the north-east corner of the field. The Leie flew from Kortrijk to the east.

The Flemish army consisted of about eleven thousand men-at-arms and knights. The militiamen formed three battle formations.

The militiamen from Ieper, about seven hundred warriors and a small number of crossbowmen, had been allowed by the aldermen of that city to join the troops of Willem van Jülich. The leader of the Bruges army assigned them a place in front of the castle of Kortrijk. The castle was still held by the French garrison of slightly over sixty knights and squires, two hundred and twenty crossbowmen and about fifty men-at-arms. The leader of the garrison was Jean de Lens, viscount of Lille. The men of Ieper, the Ieperlingen, would have to continue the siege of the fortress, though it was not expected they could capture the castle. They would mainly have to prevent Jean de Lens from sallying with his men-at-arms in the middle of a battle against the French army. They would have to hold the bridge that led to the Groeninge Field, and contain de Lens' forces there.

The first battle formation stood, positioned from the west along the Large Brook. The sun shone straight in their eyes as they looked south. The militias of the guilds of Bruges formed this battle. It counted about three thousand five hundred men-at-arms, all well trained, and determined to finish with the French. Pieter de Koninck stood with his men, but the formation of the militia of Bruges would fight under the command of Hendrik van Lontzen, a knight from the duchy of Limburg. Pieter de Koninck had wisely considered knights had been formed their entire life to lead military men, warriors. His was not the craft of warfare.

Everybody knew the Bruges Battle would do as Pieter ordered, but he had relented military power to Lontzen for the duration of the fight. Willem van Jülich had appointed Hendrik van Lontzen to marshal of Bruges. The ultimate leader of the men of Bruges, and of the men from the Bruges Franc, was Willem van Jülich. The battle of the militiamen of the city of Bruges was considered the most powerful battle in the Flemish army. It was the largest, the most compact, coherent and best trained group.

The huge banner of Bruges was carried with the formation, mounted on a wagon.

The landowner-poorters of Bruges, the very wealthy men, many of them knights, did not take part in the expeditions of Willem van Jülich and Guy de Namur. They limited their contribution to the war to lending money to the aldermen of Bruges. Thus, the militiamen and the knights who did participate in the campaign for Flanders, got paid by the city of Bruges.

Willem van Jülich also led the men who came from the Bruges Franc, the Brugse Vrije, the men from the countryside around Bruges, the Bruges castellany. These stood to the east in the second battle, at the left for the Flemish army. This battle was also positioned along the Large Brook, next to the Bruges militiamen.

The second formation curved to the north, to cover the part of the Groeninge Brook toward the east, past the conjunction of the Large Brook and the Groeninge Brook. Guy de Namur led these contingents, to the left for the Flemish, and of the second battle.

The Bruges Franc stood with about three thousand men in the second battle.

Guy de Namur also had the third battle under his command. This defended the Groeninge Brook to the east. Here stood the men from the militias of Kortrijk and of East-Flanders, the men from Oudenaarde, Aalst and Ghent.

The aldermen of the city of Ghent had not allowed the guilds to send their armed men to Kortrijk. The aldermen still held the city in their power. They had worked on the minds of the Ghent inhabitants to create feelings of mistrust and doubt for the count of Flanders and his sons. They remained in favour of the king, and expected the royal army to win all battles and skirmishes in Flanders.

The people of Ghent also resented the blockage by the men of Bruges of the River Scheldt south of Ghent. The grain from Picardy could not be brought in on boats. This had caused a dearth of grain and therefore of bread in the city. It lasted a while until more grain was delivered via Antwerp and Brabant. Some form of competition always reigned between the cities of Ghent and Bruges, and these sentiments added to the mistrust for what the army of Bruges was trying to accomplish against the royal army of France.

From out of Tournai and Kortrijk, Jan Borluut pleaded for volunteers from Ghent to join the militia of Bruges, and fight the French. In the last days before Wednesday, the 11<sup>th</sup> of July, quite a lot of more bellicose *Gentenaars* slipped out of the city and walked in arms to Kortrijk. In the end, Jan Borluut could lead over seven hundred men of Ghent. These stood along the Groeninge Brook, to the north, perpendicular to the Leie. The men of Ghent thus joined the men of East-Flanders, roughly of the Quarter of Ghent. Guy de Namur led also this battle. It held about three thousand men-at-arms in all.

One of their leaders was Simon van Vaernewijck. The van Vaernewijcks were a family of the old lineages of Ghent, and one of the wealthiest families of landowner-poorters. The van Vaernewijcks were respected in Ghent. They had almost ever provided aldermen in the organisation of the Thirty-Nine aldermen. They should have been *Leliaerts*. But Thomas and

Iwein van Vaernevijck, Simon's brothers, had accompanied Count Guy de Dampierre to the court of Paris, and were still imprisoned in France.

A *Gentenaar* called Zeger Lonke held the banner of Ghent, near where Jan Borluut stood proudly.

William van Artevelde had been among the first men of Ghent to leave the city to join Willem van Jülich. He had escaped the city sooner. He had participated in Willem van Jülich's campaign of June, as a leader of ten men-at-arms, as a *dizenier*. He now stood with the formation of the men from Bruges, in the first battle.

Arnout de Hert had not left Ghent. He was not in the city when the appeal of Jan Borluut reached Ghent. He was very busy at that time, bringing in provisions to Ghent from Antwerp and the towns of Dendermonde and Rupelmonde. Some of his journeys along the Scheldt happened with boats full of contraband grain. His voyages to and from Ghent were not without risk. His transport was crucial for Ghent, as the population of Ghent was starving. Arnout was not present at the battle-to-come. He profited well from bringing in grain and other provisions, for prices soared high.

The last battle formation of the Flemish army was a group of about five hundred men-at-arms, in which some knights on horseback. This battle stood in the middle of the Groeninge Field under the command of Jan van Renesse. The men of Jan van Renesse would form the reserve force of the Flemish.

The Flemish army could bring almost no cavalry in the field, as very few knights of Flanders participated in the battle. No more than sixty knights and thirty squires from Flanders stood among the urban militiamen. About a dozen foreign knights, men from Limburg, Brabant, Zeeland, and so on, had joined the Flemish knights, and seventeen squires.

At the very last moment, auxiliary troops sent by Marquis John de Namur, another son of Guy de Dampierre, arrived in the Groeninge Field. They rode in on the evening of the 10<sup>th</sup> of July. Three hundred horsemen rode in this group. In total the Flemish army had no more than about four hundred armoured horsemen of cavalry in the Groeninge Field.

In the afternoon of the 8<sup>th</sup> of July, when the French royal army slowly arrived and set up camp on the *Pottelberg*, its main force was formed by a mass of at least two thousand five hundred knights. The supreme leader, Count Robert d'Artois, divided these in ten formations of about two hundred and fifty knights each. The knights of France had obeyed to the king's call of feudal servitude. They came mostly from the royal domains, from the crown territories. They were knights of the court of Paris, of the Île-de-France, of Champagne, Normandy, Picardy and the Poitou regions. Robert d'Artois had welcomed reinforcements from other territories too, from Lorraine, Hainault and Brabant, a few men from Burgundy, Gascony, Anjou and Brittany. Men-at-arms on foot accompanied the knights. About one thousand crossbowmen walked in long columns, originating from the various regions of France, and they brought over three hundred helpers, men who would wear the large and heavy pavises to protect the crossbowmen while they armed their weapons. More often than not, crossbowmen confronted other crossbowmen in a battle. More men-at-arms then appeared on the Pottelberg, men weary and exhausted from the long march. The royal army

came with five thousand to six thousand footmen, mercenaries for the main part. They were men from the south of France and Spain, but who had lingered in groups under captains in the north of France. The French army was in all about the size of the Flemish army. The mass was grander, more colourful than the Flemish, however. A sizable group of women and even children followed them.

Robert d'Artois hoped to crush the Flemish commoners under the hooves of his far superior cavalry. The French knights rode on enormous destriers. Their horses, as well as they themselves, were armoured. Their weapons were terrible, long lances to charge by, long battle-swords, heavy axes and maces. The knights had been trained all their life to mount horses, gallop and kill. The charges of the knights could be halted by nothing. The French noblemen despised the scarce military forces of the towns of France. Militias of the towns had been feared as possible counter-forces to the power of the noblemen, so militias had been discouraged in the royal domains. The commoners living in the French towns were considered weak, untrained, cowards, not intelligent, a helpless rubble compared with an army of knights and squires. The French horsemen despised also the army of the city militia of Bruges and of other Flemish towns. Few knights were aware the Flemish militiamen had some training with their weapons. The knights were confident. Had they not won other large skirmishes against such troops with relative ease? No troops of commoners could stop an army of knights from doing whatever the knights wanted to accomplish!

Robert d'Artois rode closer to the Flemish camp. He saw many tents. He evaluated the strength of the Flemish forces, and could already see the Flemish would be deployed along the small brooks of the Groeninge Field. He organised his own troops of the ten formations in three major battles, two of which would attack the Flemish or ward off attacks from the enemy. One would form the reserve. Robert d'Artois did not believe the Flemish would attack first. The enemy sat in a defensive position. He would have to break those defences. He only wondered how.

The first French battle would be positioned south of the Large Brook, facing the militias of Bruges and of the Franc of Bruges. This battle would have to annihilate the Flemish formation of Willem van Jülich. It contained four of d'Artois' finest battle formations. Jean de Burlats, sénéchal of Guyenne led his knights in the first formation, and also many footmen. He commanded the crossbowmen of the army.

Geoffrey de Brabant and his son Jean de Vierson, viscount of Tournai, commanded the second formation. Here would fight the knights and the troops of Brabant, allied to the king of France. The king of France had promised to Geoffrey of Brabant the governorship over Ghent and its large castellany.

Raoul de Nesle, the *connétable*, held the third formation. He would ride with his knights and squires in the very centre of the battle.

Guy de Nesle and Renaud de Trie, the two marshals of France, commanded the fourth battle formation. Guy de Nesle was the brother of Raoul de Nesle, Renaud de Trie the brother of Mathieu de Trie.

The second battle would be placed to the east, on this side of the Groeninge Brook. These men would face Guy de Namur's men, his part of the Bruges Franc and the warriors from East-Flanders.

In the north-most position, D'Artois would position knights and squires from the Champagne and Lorraine. Mathieu de Trie, a brave knight, would lead these warriors.

Behind de Trie would stand a formation of knights Robert d'Artois would lead himself. D'Artois would not attack in the first line. He wanted to see what happened after the first attacks.

Next to de Trie, in the second formation along the Groeninge Brook, d'Artois would place the knights led by Jacques de Châtillon. De Châtillon had been removed from his governorship of Flanders just days before. His incompetence had been recognised by the king. D'Artois did not doubt the courage of de Châtillon, but he had lost some confidence in his intelligence and cunning. D'Artois would stand partly also behind de Châtillon.

The lords of Tancarville and of Eu, great warriors too, would lead the third formation in this battle, with the count of Aumale from Ponthieu. They would stand almost at the confluent of the two brooks, close to the last formation of the first battle, the formation of the French marshals.

The third battle, d'Artois would hold in reserve. It would be positioned between the road to Oudenaarde and the brook of the Lange Mere, behind the marshy lands equally called of the Lange Mere.

Guy, count of Saint-Pol led the first formation, the southern-most one.

Robert, count of Boulogne, led the other formation. Robert was the newly appointed governor of Flanders.

Louis de Clermont led a much smaller group of knights formed of the remnants of the two other. He would have to wait slightly between the two other battle formations.

Robert d'Artois had also asked the advice of his two marshals. They reconnoitred the positions of the Flemish. Together, they placed the formations as finally proposed by d'Artois. Artois would only make his final decision on the place of the three battles and their formations on the morning of the 11<sup>th</sup> of July.

The Flemish called such battle formations *bataelgen*. Each French formation held two hundred and fifty knights in full armour, seated on heavy destriers. Each formation was subdivided into groups, into banners or *conrotten* in Flemish, smaller units of about twenty knights commanded by a more important nobleman, usually of the same region as the majority of the warriors. Each of these units thus formed a block of twenty-one men on horseback, formidable knights, in three ranks of seven men each. A *conroot* or banner could also attack in two rows, or in merely one, to allow the knights sufficient space to ride without being hindered by men galloping in front of them.

Robert d'Artois held a battle council with his staff, with the fourteen formation leaders. The Flemish could not be attacked over the Leie in the north. In the west stood Kortrijk. The Flemish army could only be assaulted from the south and the east. On the south side, the French knights would have to pass the Large Brook. On the east, they would have to attack

over the Groeninge Brook. These two brooks were a nuisance. The destriers could not charge over the brooks. The brooks were too wide. It would be difficult to cross them. The horses would have to pass them, although the waterways were filled with drab water. The brooks were not unpassable, though. The main issue was double. One could not charge with all might over them, and once over the brooks, the formations would have to be re-formed. Only after that could a true charge be commanded and executed. But the Flemish might stand right on the borders of the brooks, wait for the riders to struggle out of the mud. The brooks would break the fine battle formations of the French, and throw them in disorder. The advantage of a knights' charge would be lost. Artois and his war-leaders recognised the Flemish had found a strong position in the Groeninge Field.

In one option, the French leaders proposed to lure the Flemish battles out of their positions from behind the brook. Nobody could think of a convincing way to lure the Flemish out of the Groeninge. The Flemish would not be so stupid as to leave their places behind the brooks!

In a second option, Jean de Burlats proposed to attack the Flemish first with crossbowmen and with his men-at-arms on foot, to push back the Flemish hordes. The French knights would then have more space before them as they passed the brooks. The knight formations would have some time to reform, and attack at a gallop in massive strikes.

This option left the advantage of the battle to the crossbowmen and to the footmen, led by Jean de Burlats! Most of the knights present around d'Artois' table rejected this option. They wanted to attack with the knights over the brooks immediately, as first strike. D'Artois held the option in consideration.

The third option, the one that was adopted, was to charge over the brooks with the knights on horseback, came what wanted. After all, the brooks were not too difficult to cross! Sufficient discipline could be held by the knights to mass in good order right behind the brooks. Then, the assault could be launched against the Flemish lines. The Flemish commoners would be impressed and flee in terror and disorder, as easy prey. Of course, the Flemish could be driven back some by a first, preparatory attack executed by the crossbowmen. The Flemish would recede, retreat from under the weight of the volleys of arrows and bolts. They would step back in the direction of the Leie. Enough space would thus be created in front of the French knights to charge.

The French leaders believed one mighty stroke would be enough to throw the Flemish in chaos and fear. They would become easy prey for the riders. Were not one hundred knights worth a thousand footmen? The militias of Flanders would not be able to hold out against a terrible, overwhelming charge on horseback. This would throw the Flemish in disarray and in despair, destroy their morale, destroy their hope on victory. The Flemish would be crushed in one formidable massacre.

The Flemish cannot escape, Robert of Artois remarked, for they were stopped by the Leie and by the walls of Kortrijk. They would have to fight to the last, desperately. They were unable to escape.

All the better, the leaders replied. There was only one small gate into the town of Kortrijk from the Groeninge Field. In front of that gate, chaos would build up, and the Flemish could all the more be easily slaughtered.

This proposal met with general confidence and support.

The next day, at the early staff meeting, Geoffrey de Brabant proposed yet a fourth option. He proposed to wear down the Flemish before the battle. The Flemish troops, he argued, could be forced to stay the entire day between the walls of Kortrijk, the Leie and its two brooks, in the Groeninge Field. The mere presence of a French army, comfortably at ease on the Pottelberg, would be enough as a threat. The Flemish would receive little or no food in the Groeninge. They would have to remain on guard in the ranks in the scorching sun and the heat of a July summer day. They would suffer hunger and thirst in the blazing sun. They would become irritable, start quarrels of bad mood, and lose their fighting spirit. The French knights could attack the day after, and defeat the enemy better.

Most of the knights in the staff refused this option, almost half accusing Geoffrey of cowardice. The garrison of the castle of Kortrijk had to be relieved, and the Flemish commoners punished for their revolt against their true lord, the king of France. There was no honour in waiting.

On the Flemish side, also Willem van Jülich, Guy de Namur, Jan van Renesse, Pieter de Koninck and the most important knights conferred. In a tent of the Groeninge Field, they sat with Hendrik van Lontzen of the duchy of Limburg, with Goswin van Gossenhoven of the duchy of Brabant, Diederik van Hondschoote and Robrecht van Leeuwerghem, Otto van Steenhuyse, Rogier de Lille and a few more. Their strategy was simple.

They had an army of footmen. Attack an army of knights on horseback with footmen was out of the question. They would not be lured out of their defensive position behind the two brooks. How could they outmanoeuvre such strong cavalry force of the royal army?

Impossible! No, they would stay put behind their pikes and *goedendags*. Most of the knights would even have to step down from their horses and fight like the urban militiamen. The French knights would have to traverse the brooks. The Flemish troops would stay close to the brooks, to hamper the French knights from entering a devastating gallop. The charges of the knights of France would have to be stopped at the points of the pikes and *goedendags*.

By general consent, the leaders elected Jan van Renesse as general commander. He would stay with the reserve on horseback. Willem van Jülich and Guy de Namur would fight as fiercely as they could, and hold the lines together. The main task of Jan van Renesse would be to send parts of his reserve into the places where the Flemish were pushed back, and where the French threatened to break through the Flemish ranks. While Willem van Jülich and Guy de Namur were fighting in the first ranks, Jan van Renesse should keep the general overview and decide on what to do at the right moment.

On the 10<sup>th</sup> of July, the Flemish stayed in the Groeninge Field. Their forces augmented with laggards. No attack was expected, as the French army had newly arrived. The French could be seen in the far, setting up their tents on the *Pottelberg*.

### [Juris, Raes, John and Wouter](#)

In July of 1302, Juris Vresele was forty-two years old. John Denout was nineteen, Raes van Lake twenty-two, as was Wouter de Smet. Juris was a married man; the others were not. John Denout was engaged to marry. Raes had a girl in mind, but was neither married nor engaged.

He merely dreamt of his possible lovebird. Wouter de Smet had not yet met any girl that had caught his attention and might fancy him.

‘Why do you want to join the army at Kortrijk?’ was the serious and difficult question Mergriet Mutaert had asked of her husband, Juris. ‘We have money enough to live. You will risk your life. How am I going to survive without a husband and with two eager boys and a girl in our family?’

‘I will not be killed or wounded,’ Juris Vresele answered almost in a whisper. ‘What can I accomplish in Ghent? All commerce has stopped, except for some contraband trade. It is every man’s duty now to defend Flanders and Ghent. We must free ourselves from the suffocating yoke of the French and of the *Leliaerts*. We must help our count defend our liberties and our rights. Our forefathers did the same. We would shame them if we did otherwise and stayed home like cowards. In a campaign, or in a battle – if it would come to that – booty is to be won. We can only become wealthier by gaining more funds. Little money, little profits. Big money, big profits. I must return home with booty. We lost too much, Mergriet, in the confiscation of our lands and houses. I cannot anymore invest in the amounts that bring in real money. Don’t worry. It may not even come to a battle, and I promise to be careful. Friends will be at my side.’

‘You do not have your destiny in your own hands during a battle,’ Mergriet sobbed.

‘Yes, I do,’ Juris retorted with great confidence. ‘I know how to fight well, and how to defend myself. I know how to wield a *goedendag* and the sword. We trained well in the militia. I fear no knight.’

‘You won’t listen to the sound advice of a woman, won’t you?’ Mergriet cried out, not without bitterness in her voice.

‘I listen to what you say, Mergriet. I have to do this, for Flanders and for us. I would be ashamed otherwise. I promise I’ll return, hopefully with gold in my purse.’

Mergriet had sighed. She had filled Juris’s knapsack with food that deteriorated only slowly, hard and black bread, hard cheese, dried meat, honey, and a small jug of wine Juris would only find when arrived at Kortrijk.

Juris sought his old helmet, his mail coat, a breastplate, greaves and iron gloves. Mergriet had scrubbed these with iron wire, vinegar and sand, until they shone like silver. Juris put these in a sack. The day he departed, he slung the heavy sack over his right shoulder. The knapsack hung on his back. He stepped out of the house, hugged Mergriet, and left despite her tears. His knapsack also held a few clothes, socks, a pair of boots, food and water, his shaving gear and two small, light copper pots, as well as a drinking beaker made of pewter. A long sword hung at his belt, and on the other side he wore his new dagger. Juris walked to Kortrijk all alone. He did not feel particularly in a hurry, for he had no idea when he might be needed. He walked one day and arrived in the late afternoon of the second at Kortrijk. He joined the militiamen in the Groeninge. He asked his way to where the men of Ghent gathered in the field. He came upon a *dizenier*, a leader of ten, who accepted him in his group. Juris knew a few of the men around. In his group, he found brokers and weavers. Juris noticed not many brokers and merchants had come to join the army. He was not surprised. Many of the men standing next to him were among the poorest of Ghent. He studied the faces of the men, knowing he could trust most of them in the coming battle. They were cheerful, confident, happy to be with honest and courageous fellow-poorters.

Juris had expected to march on a campaign through Flanders. He was somewhat disappointed to hear no campaign would be organised. A major battle was in the making. For weapons, he had brought an old, battered shield and a sword. He received a *goedendag*, though he was not used to fighting with this heavy club. The *dizenier* taught him a few tricks in less than an hour. He wore no pike or lance. Pikes had not been delivered to his group of ten. He felt rather satisfied he would only fight in the third rank of six. His formation would be six rows deep. He knew in a charge of massed knights the first two ranks at least would be thrown down immediately. Here, he had a chance to survive. When he talked to the men around him, he soon understood he was smarter than most of them. He hid his feelings of superiority to blend in. He agreed with what most of the men told him, even when he knew it could not be right. When he discovered the jug of wine in his knapsack, he became a popular man in the smaller group of four or five men with whom he sat and waited. He had a very small tent in his sack, but didn't need it the first day, for the sky remained dry. A large number of tents had been placed near the Groeninge Abbey. Many men could sleep there, but Juris preferred not to seek trouble and sleep in the open. He merely placed the tarpaulin under him, slipped part of it over his body to protect him from the morning dew. He slept under the stars in the Groeninge Field, his head on the knapsack.

Raes van Lake and John Denout slipped out of Ghent together. Raes thought it his duty to answer the call of Jan Borluut, to go to Kortrijk and fight the French. He had heard a battle would come there. He rather expected the count of Flanders to return to power in Flanders and in Ghent. He could not imagine the *Leliaerts* forever to hold on to power in the city. It was not natural. The rule of the aldermen who were in favour of the French could not last in view of so many people of Ghent who resented French rule. The count of Flanders had been French educated, but at least the old count and his sons had shown some sympathy for their county. They had not pillaged, not ravaged the countryside, and not killed the farmers. Raes was still very young and vigorous. He was also very intelligent and far-reaching in his visions of matters. He calculated his options with a razor-sharp logic. He had still some of the mind of an enthusiastic youth for grand causes, so he idolised the count of Flanders. Raes wanted to fight at least once in his life, and return scarred and wise to Ghent. He had convinced John Denout to join him. He regretted this now, while they walked on the way to Kortrijk. John Denout depended on Raes van Lake to receive the fine woollen cloth to full. Had Raes forced John to follow him? Had Raes the right to force a possible doom on John? Had he abused of the influence he had on John? Well, things could not be undone, and Raes hoped his friend had not come with him merely because they were friends. He would not have liked to walk with anybody else.

John Denout walked for about the same reasons as Juris Vresele, not because Raes van Lake had some power over him. He would have laughed had he known what Raes was thinking. John was ambitious. He wanted more money. He thought booty would make it possible for him to realise his dream, his fuller's mill. He also reckoned he had to show the parents of Selie Scivaels he was not a coward, not a fool and not a bum. Was Selie's father not a *Klauwaert*? Would he not be proud of his son-in-law when John returned as a hero of Flanders? Should he not show Selie he was a real man, so that she too could be proud of him?

John and Raes did not think one moment they might be killed on campaign or a battle for Flanders. Both friends decided not to stay away more than three months from home. They just knew they would not be killed. Being killed was not possible, not their destiny! They too walked with a knapsack and a sack in which they brought their armour. Raes van Lake's gear was of the same kind as John Denout's, only a little finer and of better quality. Like Juris Vresele, they wore a *goedendag* in one hand, and a sword hung at their leather belt. They wore simple tunics, but had chain mail in their sack. John Denout put his simple pot helmet, a *bascinet*, on his head, and Raes did the same with his more elaborate helmet from which hung side protections. With this gesture, they already thought they were warriors for Flanders and for Ghent. They walked quickly on.

At the village of Zulte, about halfway Deinze and Kortrijk, a faster walking man of Ghent caught up with them. He was a huge, strong man. Wouter de Smet was a blacksmith of the *Sint-Veerle Plein*, a square in front of the *Gravensteen*, the count's ugly, dark castle in Ghent. Raes van Lake recognised him, and called out his name. They sympathised and stayed together until they arrived in the evening of the same day as Juris Vresele in the Groeninge Field. They did not seek out the other *Gentenaars*. They stayed with a group of men who had come from Bruges. They would fight for Willem van Jülich. They were exhausted. They too slept under the starry sky. It was the 10<sup>th</sup> of July 1302.

## 2.2. The Battle of Kortrijk. 11 July 1302

### The Morning of the 11<sup>th</sup> of July

Early in the morning of the 11<sup>th</sup> of July, on Saint Benedict's Day, Robert of Artois rode out a last time from the Castle of Mosscher on the *Pottelberg* to reconnoitre the battlefield. The *Leliaert* knight Willem de Mosschere, the lord of the castellany of Kortrijk appointed by King Philip IV, served as guide to the French. Willem was born in this countryside.

In the glazy sun of daybreak the defenders of the castle of Kortrijk saw the group of French knights ride along the Large Brook in the Groeninge Field.

Robert d'Artois saw signs being made with torches high up on the walls of the French-held fortress. The defenders showed where the Flemish warriors waited, in the Groeninge Field. Also swords, brandished in the sun, shining silver rays, pointed to the Groeninge Field. This was the only place from which the garrison expected to be relieved. The castle could not be helped so soon, though, not without a major battle, for the Groeninge Field was filled with Flemish warriors.

Around six o'clock in the morning, Robert d'Artois ordered the battle formations to be placed as agreed the previous day. He held a last staff meeting in his tent, giving each battle formation its place. The Frenchmen feverishly started to prepare their men. Trumpets sounded, drums beat, orders were shouted. The crossbowmen and their helpers, as well as the footmen, ran quickly down the hill to their positions. Bringing the men on horseback in the lines took a lot more time. Putting armour on the knights and squires lasted longer than an hour. One knight and squire after the other then rode to his place. This happened in some chaos. Curses flew, horses had to be disciplined. The knights arrived with lances held vertical. A Flemish farmer in the formation of the Bruges Franc said he had seen less grain stalks on his field than lances on the other side of the brook.

The sudden activity on the *Pottelberg* to the fields on the other side of the Large Brook and of the Groeninge Brook could hardly escape the attention of the Flemish guards. They too sounded the alarm. The Flemish guildsmen ran to their positions. It lasted a while before the Flemish knights and militia leaders, Willem van Jülich and Guy de Namur succeeded in creating some order in the Flemish phalanxes. The captains and the *dizeniers* placed their men in long rows. The men came running from the tent camp, from near the walls of Kortrijk, from near the Groeninge Monastery, and from along the River Leie.

As well as in the French camp, holy masses started to be sung. On the Flemish side, the Friars Minor of Bruges celebrated and sang the masses in the formations.

The French noblemen meanwhile shared a slight breakfast, mainly still in their tents. The Flemish ate little, a meal of bread and cheese. Some wine was poured. A little bread was sipped in wine. The men finally stood in the lines, more or less as they should. The leaders straightened the lines and brought equal distances between them. The men stood, waited. Some began to talk to their neighbours, but most stood still. The fear of the battle had taken them in the grip.

The Flemish guildsmen of Bruges stood in fine ranks. The first two ranks of the two battle formations consisted of pikemen. These planted their long lances in the grass. Next to them, to left and right stood men with goedendags. They too rested their weapons on the soil. Most of the pikemen also held *goedendags*, for in full battle it was almost impossible to continue to wield a pike and still hope it to be able to be swung. A pike would be used the first seconds of a massed charge of knights, but be quickly discarded. The *goedendag* was the most common weapon of all the guildsmen of Bruges and of the other men who had joined them.

The *goedendag* was then a sturdy piece of wood of about five to seven feet long, round, broader at the end than at the hand. It ended in a steel point of about a foot long. In order for the wood not to break open when the steel point was driven at the top in the wood, a band of iron was usually fastened at the top of the staff, in a circle, constricting the wood there. The *goedendag* could be used for piercing flesh or armour with the steel point. One could also slam it down with the heavy, iron-protected upper end, using the *goedendag* as a club or a mace. It was a poor man's weapon, an inexpensive killing tool. It could be made in little time by any artisan, at home. One did not really need a blacksmith, but to forge the point and the iron ring. When a *goedendag* hit a man on the head, used like a club, the victim bowed double, as if he were saying 'good day', before falling unconsciously. Hence the name. The *goedendag* was inexpensive to produce, crude, simple, easy to handle. One could not use it in many ways in a battle, so it was easy to learn in training. It was the ideal instrument of killing for strong artisans and peasants. It was Flanders' most widespread weapon of choice for anybody who was not a knight.

Most of the Flemish artisans also wore a sword or an axe, and a knife. They felt protected by a long or short chain mail, and generally a pot helmet. Some, the less poor guildsmen, prided in better protection by having on their head a heavier, more elaborated helmet, and a mail coif that fell to their shoulders. They also wore a breastplate and greaves for the protection of their legs.

Almost all wore a wooden shield, a round shield of various dimensions. The *dizeniers*, the leaders of ten, held a lance on which floated a pennant in the early wind. Each battle, led by Willem van Jülich, Guy de Namur and Jan van Renesse, held a large flag of golden background with a clawing black lion, the badge of Flanders. These banners would be defended to the death. The French leaders immediately noticed three such banners indicated three battles.

The Flemish had detected with awe they could not retreat. The smartest and most cunning had looked for how they could flee, and these had remarked they could flee to nowhere. They stood with their backs to the Leie! Not all guildsmen had learned to swim, and those who could swim would have to throw off their mail and weapons or be sucked under the water of the river and so drown. What could they do without weapons in this territory, which would be swarmed over by French horsemen?

The castle walls of Kortrijk stood in the way of escape to the west. Only one small gate could allow you to reach the protection of the walled town, and that gate would become hopelessly congested during a massive flight. Only certain death would await there.

On the two other sides, the French warriors would guard impatiently and mercilessly slaughter the fugitives. Breaking through the French ranks to escape to the south or to the east was suicidal, sheer impossible!

The guildsmen would have to fight till the last man in the Groeninge Field, or be slain in the back by French horsemen during a dishonourable flight. Many Flemish man now wondered why he had come to this hellish place. He knew of no army of footmen that had ever won against an army of knights. Despair groped at many a heart.

Willem van Jülich and Guy de Namur rode on their horses in front of the ranks. They shouted orders to plant the pikes well, to hold them up against the wild charges of the French. They shouted also words of comfort, of courage and of bravery. Stand firm, my friends! The enemy will ride with force against you, but you can bring them to stop. Kill them all! Our cause is just, as we fight for Flanders and for our count, for our liberty. God will help us! Do not be frightened! Kill the horses first, then the rider. Do not let the enemy break through our ranks! A Frenchman who rides till in your midst will never get out from our ranks. Shout all together, 'Flanders the Lion! Groeninge! Groeninge!'

The battle cry of the Flemish thundered over the Groeninge field. The shouts frightened the birds, and startled the French who were still assembling behind the Large and he Groeninge Brooks. Would the Flemish attack? So soon? Where were the knights?

In front of the assembled Flemish formations, Guy de Namur knighted the most valorous leaders of the militia. He knighted Pieter de Koninck and his two sons, and about thirty more men of Bruges, among whom also Jan Breydel. Jan Borluut, the leader of the troops of Ghent, equally received this honour.

Then, as noon approached, and as the French battles seemed formed, Willem van Jülich and Guy de Namur, accompanied by a few loyal knights of their entourage, descended from their horse. They knelt in the Groeninge Field while the monks held high a crucifix. The monks blessed the warriors a last time. The horses of the noblemen were led away. The two Flemish leaders grabbed a *goedendag*, like all the men around them. They took position among the guildsmen. They had thus chosen to share the lot of the common men. Cheers rose from thousands of throats, and the confidence of the Flemish warriors rose. The Flemish hearts widened, breasts were held higher than before, eyes glanced to the French, and glistened with pride.

The companies of the Flemish crossbowmen ran to their places in front of the ranks. They stood and spanned their bows. A helper, holding a very large wooden shield, a pavise, accompanied each crossbowman. When the crossbowmen spanned their bows, they hid behind the pavises.

The last waiting in the Groeninge Field began.

Willem van Artevelde stood somewhat to the right of the Flemish centre, seen from the position of Jan van Renesse, in the long battle formation of the militiamen of Bruges. He would fight under Willem van Jülich. When he had arrived, he had the chance to talk to Willem van Jülich himself. Maybe van Jülich liked him because they had the same first name. Willem van Artevelde had brought a *goedendag* and a sword, so Willem van Jülich had given him a place in the Flemish right wing, right next to a group of pikemen. All the guildsmen in Willem van Artevelde's group wore *goedendags*. Willem showed his men how

to crouch, stick one end of their weapon in the earth, and hold the wooden staff with both hands at an oblique angle to catch the might of a French destrier's charge. He waited in the second line. Willem now stood very still. Actually, he was reciting in silence one Hail Mary after the other. He prayed he might survive the ordeal. He promised a pilgrimage in Flanders or Brabant if he might keep his life and limbs in the battle.

Raes van Lake, John Denout and Wouter de Smet stood at the right end of the battle formation of the Bruges Franc. Raes had recognised a few men from the countryside of Bruges when he had arrived. He knew the men, because he had bought a stretch of good, fertile land where they lived, not far from the Lieve Canal. He and his friends had not had the energy to look farther for the men of Ghent. They had been exhausted from the long march. They stood now, as Willem van Artevelde, in the second battle formation of the Flemish army. They too would fight under the banner of Willem van Jülich.

Raes van Lake felt strangely calm and serene, as he waited. John Denout shuffled with his feet more nervously. Raes saw John was praying, so he did the same for a while. He made the sign of the cross. John appreciated that. He fuddled his charm, the paw of a rabbit. They stood in the third row. They too had exercised a few times how to plant their *goedendag* in the grass to stop a French charge.

Wouter de Smet had brought a whetstone with him. He helped the men around him to sharpen their swords and knives. The dizenier showed them a few tricks on how to parry a sword with a *goedendag*, and also to hit one's opponent with the heavier part at the top. Raes van Lake was thinking of the inordinately beautiful girl he had recently met. She had not deigned to grant him the least direct glance, though he had sought her eyes. In the eyes one can discover instant attraction or aversion. He wondered what she would think of him the next time he would meet her. Meet they would, for Raes would seek her out. Raes was in love, but with no hope of ever daring to conquer such a wonderful creature. Maybe, if he conquered the French first?

Juris Vresele also stood with a *goedendag* at his side, far off from Willem van Artevelde, at the other end of the Flemish battles. He waited in the left wing of the Flemish army, almost near the Leie. He saw the walls of the Groeninge Monastery behind him. He did not know he would have to fight against the knights of France led by the formidable Mathieu de Trie. Later, he would have to withstand the charges of Robert d'Artois, the supreme leader of the French in person. Juris too was praying all the time in the Groeninge Field. He recited Our Fathers without stopping. He thought about his wife, Mergriet Mutaert, and his three children, his two sons and his beautiful daughter of two. Would he see them again? He too began to think he might have been wrong to come to this place and not have listened to Mergriet. He felt lonely in the ranks. He stood among men of Ghent, but he knew nobody around him intimately.

In front of the Flemish battle formations, the French battles had deployed completely. The view over the brooks was magnificent for the Flemish. More than in the Flemish ranks, the colours of the multitude of pennants and of the larger flags flashed in the sun. The armour of the warriors gleamed. Thousands of lances were held high by the knights.

Juris Vresele was looking east. The Flemish had luck with the weather, he was thinking. The night had been humid and fresh, but not cold. A slight fog hung over the Groeninge Field, yet was now rising and dissolving. The Flemish had the sun in their eyes, but white clouds shrouded the sun and dispersed the brightest rays.

Noon came, and some movement began in the French ranks in front of the Large Brook. A little later, French crossbowmen began to search for fords in the Large Brook, and still later also crossbowmen appeared behind the Groeninge Brook. These men did not pass the brooks, finally. Pavises were positioned behind the ditches. The battle could begin!

Juris Vresele had good hopes on the course of the battle. He had looked up to the skies, asked for help from God, and he had seen white doves fly over the Flemish ranks, croaking black raven over the French. Raven were a sign of death. Also Guy de Namur had seen fine forebodings. He had noticed a huge, rare, black sea gull fly over the French knights. Black as hell and death!

## The Attack of the French Crossbowmen

As agreed with his staff of counts of France, Robert d'Artois gave the sign for starting the battle by sending forward the crossbowmen and the *bidauts*. The *bidauts* were the light-armed mercenaries brought in the first contingent of warriors in the French army. They could protect the crossbowmen from sudden attacks by groups of Flemish militiamen. They could also harass further the enemy by throwing light spears, and some of these men carried bows and arrows. Crossbow bolts carried much farther than simple bows, and caused much more lethal force. Metal bolts could pierce armour.

Artois did not expect much from an assault by the footmen, but the crossbowmen might have a desired effect. The most important weight in his first attack on the Flemish would thus be delivered by the crossbowmen. The intention of the attack was to push the Flemish ranks backwards, away from the banks of the brooks. Artois needed more space on the other side of the small waterways to gain some time for allowing his cavalry to pass the brooks unhindered, and to obtain some open space in front of the formations to enter a gallop. Artois wanted to exploit the prime advantage of his army, his feudal cavalry of heavily armed knights, the impact of a massed gallop, the mass and speed needed to crush the waiting Flemish ranks.

In front of the two French battle formations, to the south in front of the Large Brook and in the east in front of the Groeninge Brook, more than a thousand crossbowmen ran forward. Helpers followed, carrying the large pavises or wooden shields for their protection. The *bidauts* ran after the crossbowmen. The orders of the crossbowmen were to harass the Flemish ranks, but not to pass the brooks. Robert d'Artois feared for a Flemish counter-attack to massacre the annoying crossbowmen. His cavalry of knights might have it very difficult to rescue his crossbowmen over the brooks, being themselves hampered by the broad ditches. Artois wanted the Flemish to be pushed back under the volleys of the crossbow bolts and arrows. He did not want the enemy to rush forward and occupy the space right behind the brooks with swarms of men, so that his knights would not be able to charge with full force.

The crossbowmen ran cautiously forward. They ran to the banks of the brooks and looked for places where the streams were less wide and less deep. Robert d'Artois was worried when he noticed this, for he did not want the men to pass the brooks. He was also quite satisfied, because the men thus indicated to his knights where the brooks could more easily be passed. The crossbowmen stopped. The helpers placed the pavises close to them, and volleys of bolts began to be shot against the Flemish crossbowmen. These, far less men than the French, had also run forward, to parry the first attack. The bolts that flew towards the Flemish archers were far more numerous. The showers of bolts forced the Flemish crossbowmen to safety behind their pavises.

The crossbowmen worked their ratchets behind the pavises, the implements that dragged the bow's cord tight. They lodged the cord on the trigger's hook. Then, they loaded a quarrel, a leather-fledged bolt or a somewhat longer steel arrow in the crossbow's shooting trough. They stepped from behind the pavise, aimed carefully, and drew the trigger to down the hook that released the projectile. They applied this drill on and on and on, as they had learned and trained, until they ran out of bolts. Other men ran to them with baskets filled with new bolts.

The French crossbowmen then began to release volley after volley of the dangerous bolts into the waiting Flemish lines. The French archers loosened their bows from quite a distance onto the Flemish footmen. They shot without accuracy. Many bolts went high, then came down and fell in the grass some distance before reaching the enemy ranks. Quite more bolts fell or flew directly to the men in the ranks. The Flemish warriors held up their shields to accept the bolts.

The global affect was not tremendous for a first attack. Still, the crossbowmen of France did inflict some pain to the Flemish militiamen. Bolts were caught on shields and pierced the wood. Short arrows entered boots and legs. The Flemish suffered their first casualties, ugly wounds on the warriors. When the French crossbowmen released their bolts in unison, the showers of arrows and bolts caused some harm. A man wounded had to limp backwards. He would be of little use in the battle. A few footmen also released long arrows now, and a few spears were hurled over the brooks. The first Flemish militiamen died in the attack.

The French crossbowmen, aiming to shoot far, rather than accurate, tilted their crossbows to the sky, shot high so that the bolts screamed. The bolts seared high, lost speed, hung a moment in the air, and then they plummeted down into the rear rows of Flemish men. These bolts came down almost vertically. Together with those coming in more horizontally, they formed a real threat. A Flemish militiaman could not hold his shield high and avoid the straight incoming bolts. Many bolts also came in low, skidded in the grass and slid, bumped up and flew in the men with some force still. Other bolts dropped powerless to the earth, the steel point still dangerous, for directed downwards. They fell down around the Bruges militiamen, or ended their trajectory into shields. The bolts made thudding sounds when they slammed into the shields. Many militiamen were thrown a step back by the impact.

Near Wouter de Smet, one of the skidding bolts hit a man in the lower calf. The militiaman wore no greaves to protect his shins. Blood erupted. Wouter helped the man to stem the blood. He drew a piece of red cloth from his knapsack, and wound it around the man's leg. The militiamen screamed, for the wound hurt. After a while, he realised he had only suffered a flesh wound. He would limp, but he remained standing in the line. He bit on his teeth and stopped whimpering. Wouter stood once again in the ranks. A little later, Wouter saw a man falling, right in front of him. The man fell very slowly, a crossbow bolt embedded in his forehead. Blood spurted upwards. Wouter started to shake nervously. That bolt might have been meant for him!

The French crossbowmen caused some chaos in the Flemish lines. The militiamen did not remain stoically suffering from the showers of bolts. They became nervous, looked to behind, sought places to escape to, and found none, for they stood in the flat, open field of Groeninge. After a time, the many bolts falling steadily from the sky formed a serious threat and nuisance. The Flemish first line stepped unconsciously back, bumped against the rear lines, and then the entire phalanx retreated. The men did not step back in the same way at all places. The straight lines of the Flemish ranks began to quiver, to undulate, but all retreated slowly and steadily. The Flemish captains shouted to stay put, but around them the ranks retreated! The Flemish ranks were thus pushed back in some disorder, noticed with satisfaction by

Robert d'Artois. This was the effect he had sought with his first attack. All went according to plan. He was pleased.

The French crossbowmen profited of the movement to direct their bolts more horizontally, and to take careful aim. They were out for the killing, now. More men continued to fall in the Flemish ranks. Also the Flemish crossbowmen suffered, and many corpses lay in front of the rows. The militiamen noticed the power of the enemy bolts diminished a little, as they drew back. Bolts simply fell, brushed off against the helmets and the breastplates. Bolts could be thrown aside by movements of the shields. The retreat of the Flemish lines generalised.

Two crossbow bolts whipped closely past Willem van Artevelde. Willem had stood arrogantly in the showers of bolts. Now, he was convinced a French archer had taken target specifically on him alone. It was a feeling shared and dreaded by many Flemish militiamen. Maybe that was, Willem mused, because, though not anymore a very wealthy man, he had retained his armour from better times, and drawn a jupon over his mail coat. On his golden jupon an embroidered, black, clawing lion had been depicted. He had drawn the attention of the crossbowmen as a leader! Willem shifted his position to the left. Less bolts then slammed past him.

The Flemish crossbowmen tried to stop their French counterparts from shooting so many bolts, but they could do little against the larger number of enemies. As the crossbowmen and the other French footmen advanced still a little farther, the Flemish began to suffer hard from the arrows loosened by the mass of enemy *bidauts* and other archers. The Flemish crossbowmen too plied back under the weight of the superior French forces.

The French attack had a considerable success on all fronts, as Robert d'Artois had hoped. The men shot so many bolts towards the enemy ranks, their quivers once more began to get empty. Helpers ran to them with filled quivers, but could not arrive sufficiently. William van Artevelde, Raes van Lake, John Denout, Wouter de Smet and Juris Vresele suffered no wounds. They too had stepped back. Unconsciously, they hid behind the men who stood in front of them. The first rows had suffered most. They cursed as they hid behind their shields too, still looking out for bolts coming from the sky. They remained all the time alert for the dangers of the bolts.

As the Flemish rows got compressed, their protection became more efficient. The first ranks stepped backwards, the rear ranks stayed at first where they were. The Flemish lines were pressed one upon the other. Men stumbled and fell. *Goedendags* had to be kept vertically to not wound the men that pushed back. Moving one's shield was not made easier in the *mêlée*. Men who were touched by a bolt shouted in pain. First blood flowed and tainted the grass. Raes van Lake saw the ugly wounds of grazing bolts and of bolts that plunged straight in flesh. The men got more and more gripped by fear and bad feelings. They could not fight and defend themselves! The French took target practice on them! Had they to endure this for long?

Little would have been needed at that point for the Flemish to run far backwards, to flee. The men were held in place only by the orders and curses of the captains, who shouted to stay in place. Yet, also the captains slowly stepped back.

The Flemish were saved from the ordeal by the boldness of the French crossbowmen. The French footmen noticed their success. They concluded they could easily throw the Flemish in further disarray, and farther back, into the Leie. Victory could be theirs! They instinctively advanced. That meant they had to pass the brooks. Several footmen had already jumped and climbed to the other side. The French footmen spilled over the brooks! One could not get over the ditches without getting wet, but that could not deter the hardened French warriors. They grouped together at the fords, where the Large Brook and the Groeninge Brook looked less wide. Soon, the French footmen and crossbowmen would flow over the brooks in great numbers.

Robert d'Artois feared a desperate counter-attack of the Flemish. Then, his hard-won advantage of open space behind the brooks would be lost. Jean de Burlats, the commander of the French crossbowmen and the leader of the *bidauts*, saw Robert d'Artois riding to his first battle. He rode up to Artois. He had guessed the sénéchal would order to withdraw his troops. He pleaded with Artois to let his men advance yet, as they were inflicting serious casualties to the Flemish.

'The Flemish want to keep their lines intact,' de Burlats shouted. 'Lord, let my men continue their work. The Flemish will soon flee in chaos. We can block the gates of Kortrijk with my footmen. The Flemish will be cut off from their provisions.'

Other noblemen gathered around Robert d'Artois. They wanted not to hear of this development, and also not Robert d'Artois. It would amount to a dangerous modification of their strategy. The consequences of such a development had not been thoroughly discussed. Artois stuck to his original plan.

He said to de Burlats, 'Monsieur de Burlats, draw back your men. Crossbowmen and footmen, draw them back. We must charge with the knights.'

Other counts and knights took up his argument. De Burlats was shouted down.

Artois cried, 'Footmen back! Footmen back!'

His cries were repeated along the brooks.

Artois now needed to profit from the confusion in the Flemish ranks and from their having retreated farther back from the banks of the brooks. He had some space cleared now, to launch the cavalry charges. The moment was now! He had not much time, for the Flemish ranks might yet advance. He ordered the knights in his two main assault battles forward. He gave the signal for the general assault by his knights. The banners were brought forward. Lances were not couched horizontally, for the knights spurred their horses on, to pass the brooks.

When the French knights moved forward, not all of the French footmen heard the orders shouted behind them. The crossbowmen and their helpers had all their attention still directed to their aims. They became aware of the advance of the formidable mass of knights on destriers. They realised the danger for them, too. They looked over their shoulders in fear, stopped sending their bolts into the Flemish ranks, and fled. They fled to the sides of the on-rolling, terrible battles of horsemen, or in between. Some got stuck in the mud of the brooks, came out too late and were crushed. Some men stumbled while they ran as fast as they could. Not many of them, however, were overthrown by the slow moving battles of armoured destriers and knights.

### The Beginning of the Assaults of the French Battles

The two imposing battles of the French army formation slowly moved forward. The left wing advanced on to the Large Brook, the right wing towards the Groeninge Brook. The order had been given on the left wing. Robert d'Artois had stayed there for a while during the attack of the crossbowmen, as de Burlats commanded these men. Satisfied with the result, he had set the army in motion. He was very nervous. He did not doubt the outcome of the battle. His army would win. But he feared the fight and the losses of valuable men. The *sénéchal* rode back to his own formation on the right wing. The order, though repeated by trumpets and drummers, had been understood sooner and better on the right wing, strengthened by d'Artois' shouts. The battle formations of Mathieu de Trie, Jacques de Châtillon and the counts of Eu, Aumale of Ponthieu and of the lord of Tancarville, lingered, started later, and advanced more cautiously. They also left quite some space between the lines.

The wonderful, colourful riders spurred their horses on to a slow canter. Their armour shone silvery in the sun, their lances glistened high at the end, their pennants flew in the wind and showed with pride the finest badges of France. They were eager to teach a hard lesson to the militias of rebellious Flanders.

The riders arrived and massed at the brooks. The knights and squires rode in blocks of three rows deep, seven riders per line, often followed by another such block. The battle on the left French wing was formed of about twelve or more such blocks of twenty-odd riders. Only four blocks could ride next to each other; then rode four blocks of the next battle formation, and four such formations formed the wing that moved.

The horses arrived at the brook, and stopped. Some of the horses pranced. A few threw off their riders, who fell heavily and pitifully to the grass. These knights lost their honour.

The first horses jumped, forced to do so by their riders. No horse reached instantly the other side. The brook was too wide! The most powerful and maybe the luckiest animals got over the brook with two front legs on the other bank, two legs in the water. The rider, if he had not yet been thrown off his animal by the jump, spurred the horse savagely on, over the bank and onto the dryer ground.

Some riders were thrown over the neck of their animals to the dry ground. A couple proud knights broke their neck in those first moments.

Some of the horses that jumped broke their legs. The riders then tumbled in the mud of the stream. When such a knight could grasp the roots of the dry grass on the other side, he might survive. He would then have to heave himself up the grass of the Groeninge Field, where, if he succeeded, he would lay long moments, panting heavily, until he found the courage and the strength to stand. If he was lucky, the riders following him did not stumble on to him. The horses of the next rows avoided the men standing or lying on the other side, but that was not always possible. A knight who rode on such a stranded man might curse, but he would and could not help the knight who fell again. A few knights got trampled over in those first moments.

A horse that had fallen in the brook whinnied piteously, thrashed around with its iron-clad hooves, tried frantically to get up and out of the water. More often than not, wounded, with

broken legs or neck, it drowned, or remained thrashing in the water without getting up, prisoner of the mud. Other knights used these obstacles to jump on. The water of the brook turned red. The noise of the poor horses in death throng pierced the air. The knights jumped on, rode, and refused to hear the neighing of the animals that had remained in the brook. Horses that could not make it to the other side, thus remained in the brook. Most of them dragged their riders with them in the water.

A knight who fell in the water might force himself to stand if the brook was not too deep where he had fallen. In deep places, the knights drowned. Without help and hindered by other thrashing horses, a knight could not walk in the mud. The men to which such pitiful lot befell, drowned, died of exhaustion, or could only reach the other bank with much luck and effort. Totally exhausted, weapons lost, horse lost forever, they stood stunned on the other bank.

Still other horses entered cautiously the water. They got stuck in the mud, and if they reached further, they could not climb the steep, marshy banks of the stream. A few horses refused to pass the stream when they saw the carnage below. They threw off their riders and stampeded back to where they had stood before. Their riders helplessly slid over the bowed heads of their animals, and flew in the water or fell heavily to the ground. They broke legs, arms and neck. Some landed, head first in the water. Other knights were being trampled over by their colleagues arriving too quickly behind them. The chaos at that point of time was terrible to watch. What was happening with the magnificent, proud royal army of France?

On the French left wing, the *Connétable* Raoul de Nesle saw the débâcle. His heart pained. He feared the loss without honour of many of his best knights. He wanted to call the disastrous passage of the brook off.

He saw the *Sénéchal* Robert d'Artois reining in, to also watch the gruesome spectacle with apparent astonishment. De Nesle rode to d'Artois.

'Lord,' Raoul de Nesle cried, 'stop that carnage! Our knights are dying in the marsh, in the water of the brooks; Our charge is already broken. Our men are dying without even having touched one Flemish warrior! Order the knights back! We can lure out the Flemish with attacks of our footmen! The brooks are impassable. We lose too many men! We should fight, not drown this way!'

'By the devil,' Artois interrupted Nesle's plea, 'that is the advice of a Lombard! The council of a cowardly man. On, I say! Over the brook! Do you have the hair of the wolves on the other side?'

Robert d'Artois, nervous, irritated and knowing no other way of commanding, in this way reproached Raoul de Nesle of liking the Flemish too much. He knew well one of de Nesle's daughters had married a son of the count of Flanders. He scolded de Nesle of cowardice and of treachery.

Raoul de Nesle spurred his horse to very close to Robert d'Artois. He pushed other knights of the entourage of Artois aside.

'What do you say?' shouted Nesle. 'You doubt my courage? You doubt my loyalty to the king? You jeer at me? I dare you! I double dare you! Follow me as far as I will go! I will then bring you so far into the lines of the Flemish, you will never return! I will show you what the courage of a de Nesle means!'

The two leaders stood angrily, one in front of the other, like fighting cocks, ready to draw swords and hack in upon each other. Other knights and counts rode to between them, and

pried them apart. They too pointed out how many men were being lost, how the battle lines of the knights had been thrown in chaos, how the charge had been broken early. They showed to the *sénéchal* the many men drowning, choking in the water, the horses massacred in the middle of the brook, the riderless horses running aimlessly over the battlefield. Robert d'Artois wanted to hear nothing of their protests.

'On! On,' he shouted, pointing with his sword to the Flemish. 'Over the brooks, lords. Only there awaits honour! On! On!'

Artois had seen many of the knights in his formations reach the other side of the brook, despite the difficulties. What mattered a few losses? Losses always happened in battles. He felt the men around him weak-hearted. He felt strengthened in his resolve by the knights that had reached the other side and waited to regroup.

He shouted a last time, 'charge! Charge! Forward!' and rode away from the group of knights he stood in, to the right wing, to his own battle formation.

Hundreds of knights did reach unharmed the Groeninge Field, and reformed. They already forgot the debacle that had happened behind them. The knights who had fallen in the brooks had not been fine riders. They were men with bad luck. They had been fools and clumsy. The knights who stood on the other bank, horses neighing and prancing, were true, valiant warriors. The knowledge they had passed the brooks provided them with added pride and courage.

Raoul de Nesle also reached the other side. He passed the Large Brook at a place that might have been a ford once, where stones lay at the bottom of the water, and where the brook was not very deep. The French knights that had gotten over the brooks unharmed reformed lines under his command. They checked on their horses from in the saddle, and couched their lances. The Flemish lines waited and did not move.

In front of the army lines, while the knights swarmed over the ditches, the Flemish crossbowmen had seen the enemy advance. They let loose a few bolts. Then, they noticed they had to flee to the Flemish ranks or be trampled over by the charges of the French army. They cut the strings of their bows, threw the heavy weapons down, and hurried to the spaces between the formations in the line or to the sides.

Raoul de Nesle had once more the trumpets sounded. He still had major battle formations at his disposal, though with less riders than he had hoped, yet enough to charge. His knights stood in line. More knights were still painstakingly clambering out of the mud of the brooks. They might yet find a horse and join the battle. Tens of horses ran wildly over the Groeninge Field, riderless, and neighing of fear. De Nesle, still extremely angry from his altercation with Artois, ordered the charge into the Flemish lines. He would show Artois how a Nesle fought!

The heavy destriers neighed when they were spurred on. They sprang forward. The knights bowed over the neck of their animals. They held their shields before them, their lances couched. Their pennants flew in the wind. Not an enormous open space lay between them and the Flemish. They pushed their horses immediately into a gallop to gather speed for the clash with the Flemish lines. This would be the final assault, the decisive assault that would grant them victory. Who could defeat the haughty French knights? At first, the knights only

saw from through the slits in their helmets the grim, dark colours of the tunics of the men of Bruges and of the Franc. They wondered where the knights of Flanders were. They did not think much, rode straight on. They charged. On! On! They did not think about the pikes that waited for them. They did not even see the lances directed towards them. The Groeninge Field thundered under thousands of hooves.

### The Charge of the French Left Wing

The battle formation of the *Connétable* Raoul de Nesle advanced from the left bank of the Large brook, the bank opposite the road to Oudenaarde, and in the Groeninge Field. These were the four formations of knights commanded from left to right by Jean de Burlats, Geoffrey of Brabant, Raoul de Nesle himself, and of the Marshals Renaud de Trie and Guy de Nesle. The formations had been thinned out by the difficult, disastrous passage over the brook. Now, they rode faster and faster against the Flemish militiamen of Bruges and from the Bruges Franc, the *Brugse Vrije*. Behind them, a few knights were still trying to get out of the muddy brook. Horses ran riderless between them and the Flemish lines.

The fast-approaching charge was impressive to the Flemish, as if death and destruction came thundering on. The few moments before the impact of the two armies were nerve-wrecking, fear-inducing and terrible for the Flemish. The thousands of heavy destriers, carrying their own armour, as well as the mighty, powerful knights in shining armour, gathered speed to slam into the enemy lines at full force. As the sun shone from behind the French assault, and as clouds had opened for the Groeninge, the Flemish warriors saw nothing on that moment but the bright sunrays, flashing from behind shadows that moved. Only when the horse riders were almost upon them, did they perceive the multitude of colours in the enemy's forces. Each rider held a lance couched horizontally.

Most of the long lances held a small pennant with the badge of the rider proudly shown, and flowing in the wind. Behind the lance points could be noticed the shields painted with the same badge, and behind the shields the same colours still on the jupons of the knights seated in the saddle. Also the trappers of the horses held the badges of the knights in multiple colours, so that the approaching knights showed a profusion of colours.

The knights bowed low over the heads of their warhorses, so the anxious Flemish saw the shining helmets of every shape possible coming to them, silver pig snouts, pot helmets, wolves' muzzles, lions' teeth, and even dragon and griffon heads. The plumes on the helmets flew backwards, and these too were of various colours, indicating the panache of the riders. The French knights charged.

This was really what war came to, to a charging mass of horses, the pale horses of death and riders the colour of blood! Among the horses also raced howling dogs, trained to jump on the enemy and bite their raging teeth into the Flemish men. Some of the destriers' heads were protected by leather face plates, on which were mounted silver horns, long and twisted like the unicorn's weapon. The knights charged for a few moments in a dense mass, forming a straight line of sheer horror, so that a tight wall of colours rolled towards the Flemish lines.

When the Flemish militiamen had heard the French orders to charge, they had abandoned their hope and soul to God's Grace. The pikemen needed no command to place their twenty-

odd feet long, iron-tipped wooden staff firmly in the ground. The pikes ended in a spike, with a hook or with a small axe head. These were simple tools to stop an armoured horse by, or to haul an armoured knight out of the saddle. The men in the rows behind the pikemen held shorter lances, and the rows behind these held *goedendags* of ten to twelve feet. Only the Flemish centre of the third battle showed a row of pikes. On both sides merely stood men brandishing *goedendags*. The pikes were directed almost horizontally. The lances and the *goedendags*, all sturdily planted in the grass, threatened at half a right angle. The French knights would ride into a hedge of steel points. Had they expected this? They certainly had not expected the Flemish to hold their ground against their massed attack!

The hooves of the horses thundered. The hooves bit into the grassy marshland of the Groeninge. The horses neighed under the effort. They raced neck to neck. The trumpets blew high, shrill tones over the Groeninge then, indicating the climax of the charge was near. The church bells of the monastery of Groeninge chimed, the bells of the towers of Kortrijk clang. Their sad sounds added to the noise of the hammering hooves.

On came the mass of riders. How could the militiamen, the weavers, fullers, dyers, bakers and butchers, the farmers and peasants of Flanders, not trained like the knights for a profession of killing people, remain standing in the path of the tremendous, rolling on wall of steel? The Flemings did not flee. Their lines did not waver. Fleeing now would have meant certain death. The militiamen remained as if frozen in their positions. They waited, seemingly impassive, for the oncoming wave to roll over them.

The Flemings had formed a wall of their own, another wall of steel. They howled back at the wolves that leapt at them. They shouted their war cries of 'Flanders the Lion. Groeninge! Groeninge!' at the riders, who were foolish enough to confront their ranks, their lances and *goedendags*, their determined wrath.

'Cut the French knights down like barley stalks,' the men of the Franc shouted, 'soak the field with noble blood, send the French souls to hell,' they cried.

The Flemings' voices roared as hard as the hooves of the horses in the approaching wall of death.

Raoul de Nesle and his thousand knights slammed into the Flemish ranks. The knights snarled and shouted their 'Montjoie Saint Denis!' The horses' hooves threw up clots of dirt and grass, as they jumped into the long rows. The riders forced their horses into the wall of Flemish spikes. The animals rode on.

The Flemish lines plied under the weight of the horses that crashed into them, under the fierce attack, under the terror of the heavy weapons of the knights. The Flemish phalanxes did not break, however.

Lances pierced bodies, maces slashed down, axes were swerved and long swords killed.

Helmets and skulls were shattered, but the Flemish lines did not break.

Flemish militiamen lay dead, wounded, maimed, covered with blood from terrible wounds, but the Flemish lines did not break.

No gap opened. The battle intensified in all its horror.

The assault instantly turned into a maelstrom of pikes and *goedendags*. Horses trampled upon men, avoiding lances and pikes. Horses snapped their teeth, lashed out with their hooves. Many a destrier was stopped on the steels shafts of the pikes and lances, and on the

*goedendags*. The Flemish militiamen smelled the stench of horse sweat mixed with blood in their nostrils. Heavy destriers were caught on the pikes, received long, steel points in their lungs and hearts, and died. Other horses were merely wounded, but got stuck with pikes or *goedendags* in their sides; Horses stumbled straight on the Flemish militiamen and continued to struggle with their hooves while on the ground. Whenever a horse was stopped, the Flemish militiamen ran as ants to the knights who had once galloped so proudly, in for the kill. Other Flemish defenders were crushed under the weight of falling horses.

The French knights charged. Flemish warriors were transpierced by the long war lances of the French knights. A man could be spiked thus and be dragged many feet on, his feet from the ground, while the shaft of the lance penetrated deeper and deeper. Ugly deaths were these! The French knights discarded such lances with human bodies on them quite rapidly. They groped for their swords or maces.

When the long lances bored into leather and mail and plate and when they reached body, skin and muscles and organs, only the high cantle of the knights' saddles held them on their horses. Many a militiaman of Bruges lived long enough to see a long knight's lance almost horizontally protruding from his breast while he expired on his knees in the grass. He knew a pennant had disappeared in his body. These men choked up blood and died as the air escaped from their shattered lungs. The massive blows tore holes in the Flemish defence, but the holes did not go deep.

Raoul de Nesle had crushed a pikeman in the first row. His horse had by pure chance avoided a pike's thrust. He rode on to the second row, where his lance pierced far through the armour of a Flemish knight who stood there with a lance, as if transfixed by fear. De Nesle let go of his lance, and took a morningstar from the side of his saddle. The morningstar was a short wooden staff, on which stood a heavy iron ball the size of a child's skull, from which protruded at the tip a long steel pike, a dozen shorter iron pints surrounding it. The ball was fixed to a wooden staff of about three feet long. It was a terrible weapon to be used from in the saddle of a huge war-horse.

Nesle hefted the weapon and slew a Flemish warrior by crushing the man's helmet into his head with the spikes. Then he and a few of his knights rode to into the fourth row. Nesle could see the wide, open space to the castle of Kortrijk from his horse. He swung the morningstar again to send another militiaman to his maker. This man was very agile, however. He threw himself under de Nesle's horse and stabbed his *goedendag* in the soft belly of the animal. Then, he ripped open. The horse ran on, and the man managed rolling away from its hooves. De Nesle remained sitting in the saddle. The last two rows of the Flemish army gave way in front of him. He exulted! Two more lances were stuck in his animal, and the horse's heart broke. Blood spouted out of its multiple wounds. The horse staggered and began to fall with a long, terrible neighing. De Nesle tried to jump out of the saddle, but one of his feet remained prisoner of a spur. When the horse fell down sideways, de Nesle's right leg broke under the weight of the destrier. He was trapped under the bleeding animal, unable to free himself. He still tried to break loose, but the pain he felt when he tugged at his leg was excruciating. A battle-axe wielded by a Fleming drew away his morningstar, and two *goedendags* were planted hard in his body. The foot-long spikes pierced through his armour and reached his heart. He tried to grab his sword, but another axe cut off his arm. Another *goedendag*'s point stuck deep in his brain through the opening of his

helmet. The *Connétable* of France, Raoul de Nesle, died thus in the first moments of the charge of his battle. He had indeed reached far into the Flemish ranks. But not far enough.

Near Raoul de Nesle, the Lord Geoffrey of Brabant dashed forward into the Flemish lines. He closed his eyes for a moment to not see death in the eye as the pikes of the Flemings were directed straight at him. He had participated in a similar charge in the Battle of Worringen, and he had forced a decisive path in the enemy with his group of knights. Here, the Flemings remained standing in his way, doggedly and determined.

Geoffrey felt no pike piercing through his armour, opened his eyes only when he had already passed unscathed the second Flemish row. He did notice a broken lance shaft stuck out of the neck of his horse, knew it condemned, but the animal pranced from pain and panic, and ran on. He rode to the third row, and knocked down two enemy knights with the impact of his horse. He never knew he had pushed Willem van Jülich and his standard-bearer, Jean Ferrant, to the ground. He saw a banner with a black lion go down next to him, but he would not advance any farther. Two more lances stuck deep in his horse's body. His horse once more reared, and fell backwards. Geoffrey was thrown high in the air. A *goedendag* received him when he fell and penetrated his back, cutting into his spine. A sword heaved at the hilt by two hands, then stuck through his armour and penetrated into his heart. A sword sliced at his throat, under the rims of his helmet. The world turned black in his eyes.

In the centre, at the place where the militiamen of Bruges ended and the rows of the Bruges Franc started, there was more room to manoeuvre for the knights. A large number of intrepid French knights had seen the space, and they had ridden to it. They filled the gap where they could kill somewhat more easily. They swung at the Flemish militiamen with maces, morningstars and swords or axes. They cleaved heads, swung lances and *goedendags* aside, and drew long, bloody slashes on the Flemings' breasts. When they could move their animals, they were sheer unreachable for enemy lances or pikes. The battle raged particularly at this spot.

Still, nowhere in the formation could French riders be seen coming out of the ranks at the back of the Flemish. The French horse riders had, despite their numbers, despite their wild force, been absorbed in the Flemish lines. They fought the Flemings, but the militiamen sprang upon them in twos and threes. At the junction of the two Flemish battle formations, gradually more space was being created for the French knights. Here, the French riders seemed to win some terrain. The Flemish warriors defended like mad dogs each morsel of the marshy grass land. No French horse rider emerged from the rear lines of the Flemings.

Willem van Jülich still fought on, wildly desperate. He had been knocked down, and had lost his sword. A crossbow arrow had hit his breastplate not so long ago, but the bolt had not penetrated his armour. He had suffered only a slight flesh wound. He would have a few bruises where Geoffrey de Brabant's horse had pushed him aside and thrown him in the grass. He remained lying for a few moments on the wet ground. Then he roared, pushed away the Flemish militiamen who had almost stepped on his chest.

Willem stood, and grabbed the *goedendag* of a Flemish man lying at his feet with a broken skull. Willem wielded the *goedendag*, a new weapon for him, and won very rapidly some dexterity with the unfamiliar weapon. He fought against French knights who could not advance anymore and who were engaged in a fierce battle to the death. The French riders had

been stopped by the throng of Flemish militiamen around them. A Flemish warrior ran with blood-treaded eyes towards the supposed Frenchman, and also Willem van Jülich approached. Willem fought at their side. He grinned at the Flemings, and received long grins in return. They were actually enjoying the killing! What were they? Butchers? Willem formed a group of five warriors. With them, he attacked one knight after the other with enormous, death-defying courage. His men killed together like a pack of wolves. Willem van Jülich speared, used his *goedendag* as a club, and hit armour and helmets. He and his men struck so vigorously, they soon felt exhausted from swinging their *goedendags*, parrying swords and maces, hitting knights and horses.

Willem van Jülich had strained his heart so much, blood began to pour from his nostrils. His face got covered with blood. He faltered. Militiamen, thinking he had been hit, caught him before he fell, and brought him to behind the lines. His servant, Jan Vlaminc, had bravely fought next to Willem. He remarked his master was a symbol of resistance, hope and bravery for so many militiamen. He drew Willem van Jülich's jupon with the badge of Jülich off his master. He put the jupon over his own armour, and ran back to where Willem's group desperately fought against other French riders. He closed his helmet. He shouted, 'Jülich is still in the battle! Make way! Kill, kill!' and he fought so energetically, as if Willem van Jülich had reappeared to lead the Flemings by example. The battle raged on.

In the meantime, at the junction of the two Flemish battle formations, the struggle evolved in favour of the French knights. A few knights had already spilled out of the opening at the rear of the lines. They attacked the militiamen not yet in the back, but sideways. A part of the men from the Bruges Franc began to flee, thinking the battle lost.

Also around Willem van Artevelde, the battle raged in full terror. The Flemish militiamen of Bruges had absorbed the charge of the French horse riders. After a few moments, battle-maddened men assailed the oncoming knights. The men from Bruges had already seen some of their friends fall. They now harassed each French knight who did not advance anymore, without exception. The men from Bruges only wanted to kill. They granted no quarter. They surrounded with several men each knight, and fought the man until they slaughtered him. The Bruges militiamen lost warriors in this battle, but no French knight could move to front or back, to left or right. He had to fight where he and his horse stood, to the death.

Willem van Artevelde snarled, teeth bare, at a richly adorned knight, who might have been a count. He grabbed a very large shield and threw himself, protected by the wood, into the snout of the animal. He heard bones crush. The horse pranced. He guessed right the animal would fall or shy away, so he applied a terrible force he was not aware he had in his body, to push the horse sideways with all this new-found might. He had to catch the swing of the knight's sword on his shield, and the large, wooden board was almost cleaved in two. The destrier indeed fell to one side. With extraordinary skill and power, the knight slid from the saddle, kicked his feet out of the stirrups, fell, rolled, and was on his feet in a heartbeat. He chopped with his long sword and sliced a long, deep, bloody line on the breast of a Flemish man. Delivered from so close, the cut slid through the iron chain mail! The horse still clinked and jangled its armour as it tried to get back on its feet, but other *goedendags* were planted in

its side, and the animal gave up. Its head touched the ground. It screamed a high tone of pain, a dead noise, which touched Willem to the soul, to his marrow and brain.

The knight backslashed his blade and killed with a sudden, fast thrust another Flemish warrior who had dared to approach him. The knight then slit the man's throat. Blood spat over him. The knight was a very strong man. He roared and bellowed, and sought out his next opponent. He looked out for help, but he stood surrounded by vengeful Flemings. He found at least four *goedendags* around him, challenging him to attack anew. As he parried one of these, to him ridiculous weapons, two spikes entered his back. He turned, swung his sword low and cut to the *goedendags*, diverting them, but two other *goedendags* entered his sides. The knight fell to his knees, sighing. Two more *goedendags* came down upon his helmet, crashed it open, and drove steel through his brains. The knight wielded still his sword, but he met only air. Another *goedendag*'s point entered his breast, piercing breastplate and chain mail, found his heart and pushed deeper. William van Artevelde leaned with his body against his *goedendag* and thrust as far as he could, leaning on with all his force. The knight did not move anymore. His head bowed, though Willem saw the man still lived. Willem withdrew his *goedendag* to let the blood flow freely and quicken death. Other French knights rode to his group. When the point left the body, a sprout of body fluid reddened the grass and the arms and hands of Willem van Artevelde. The knight's eyes saw in astonishment his lifeblood flow out of him. He began slowly, very slowly, to fall sideways. He brought his head higher. A last time he locked his eyes with Willem's, could find no pity, and then he touched the ground. He would die within a few moments.

Willem remained standing close to the French knight, panting, heart beating like a war drum. He was totally exhausted. He almost regretted having killed the French knight. He waited quite a long time, there, until other Flemings pushed him unwittingly back into a fight against another knight.

Everywhere on the battlefield, Flemish and French warriors thus died, locked together in a battle for life or death.

### The Charge of the French Right Wing

On the French right wing, the three battle formations of the counts of Eu and Aumale of Ponthieu, of Jacques de Châtillon and of Mathieu de Trie, had hesitated longer to pass the Groeninge Brook. They may have thought the Flemish lines would attack them over the brook, but no such thing happened. The Flemish battle under Guy de Namur stood and waited.

Finally, the battles of the French advanced. The *Sénéchal* Robert d'Artois urged them forward. The knights here had caught a glimpse of the difficulties on their left wing to pass the water, so they applied more caution. The Flemish did not move. The French knights therefore could look for places where the water was less deep and the under-water soil less muddy, the banks less steep. The Groeninge Brook ended in the Leie, so the water of the small stream flowed faster here. Much of the mud had been swept away. The knights expected the brook to be deeper near the Leie, so they passed more to the south. They found the places south of the Groeninge Monastery, used by the abbey for ages to pass the brook more easily. They also did not try to pass all at once. They rode over in line, lost less time

groping in the mud, to regroup in more dense formations on the other side. The Flemish granted them the opportunity. They did harass some more the French wing with their crossbowmen and stone throwers, but not with much confidence. The tactic did not bother the French much. They rode fast and in great numbers to the other side. They lost fewer knights than on the left wing.

When the Flemish crossbowmen saw they could not hinder the French, they knew a massive charge was imminent. Like in their right wing, they cut the strings of their bows, dropped their crossbows and ran to hide among the waiting Flemish rows. There too, the leaders and knights of Flanders had stepped down from their horses, following the example of Guy de Namur. The Flemish knights waited in full armour for the French charge. Guy de Namur stood not far from Baldwin of Popperode, the viscount of Aalst. Guy trusted this man, and had befriended him during the waiting in the Groeninge Field.

The French knights waited also longer to reform their lines, to bring good order in their ranks before they charged. They noticed more clearly the many pikes directed at them, the *goedendags*, and the sharp lances. They noticed the thorny hedge in front of them. They may have been more inspired by awe than their impetuous left wing. The Flemings stood packed closely to each other. No openings were left; orders had been given to let absolutely no French horse riders pass the lines and use the open space behind the Flemish to harass the militiamen of Flanders. The French were aware they had two advantages. They could use their massed attack to crush the Flemish under the hooves of their horses and throw the militiamen in chaos and panic. Then they could find open space to dart around the isolated Flemish warriors and exterminate them. Their aim was clearly to pass straight through the Flemish ranks at the gallop. From the assault on their left wing, the French commanders concluded the Flemish had received strict orders to stay in position come what may, equally in a compact mass, to grant exactly no advantage of space to the knights of France.

Trumpets in the French army announced the beginning of the wild charge. The French horses stepped forward, hesitantly at first, slowly, then they were spurred to a canter, and then, suddenly, they began their wild gallop. There was also not much space between the riders and the Flemish ranks here, so that the knights could not fully develop the speed they might have wished. They couched their lances now, charged, and fell in one mass into the Flemish phalanx.

In the ranks of the men of Ghent stood Juris Vresele, his *goedendag* at the side. He was wondering more and more what he was doing here. He felt he was no Hercules. He had come primarily for the booty, he had told his wife, but the Flemish commanding knights had shouted in front of the ranks that no one was allowed to take booty on the enemy. Whoever saw a fellow militiaman to pick up precious objects, or search the French warriors for coins on the battlefield, expensive stones or the like, finely engraved breastplates or helmets, was to kill the looter. Juris Vresele had grinned when he had heard this message be repeated in the ranks.

The leaders and knights of their camp wanted to keep the booty for themselves, he thought wryly. By the grins on the faces of the men standing around him, and the knowing glances quickly exchanged, he deduced the men were thinking like him. Booty would be taken. Juris concluded the matter would have to be done more covertly. No knight should see what would

happen. Luckily, he had quarrelled with nobody around him. Nobody would watch him with particular interest. Eyes would remain closed. Juris suspected nobody would be denounced for the purse of a French knight. He began to expect the French noblemen would have left most of their belongings, their treasure chests in their tents in the camp on the *Pottelberg*, guarded by trusted servants. The Flemish knights would pick these and get away with most. He had badly over-estimated the picking in this expedition, and the battle would be fought hard, at great risk of life.

Juris Vresele thus stood, with not much hope and in a bad mood. His only consolation was he had followed the example of his friend, Willem van Artevelde. He would be able to claim in Ghent he had fought for the honour of Flanders and of Ghent. He was rather certain he would survive this day. He knew not for what reason he nurtured this conviction. Nevertheless, he felt his life would not end today. Was this just a delusion? He too was praying in silence, while the French horse riders arrived in gallop. He suddenly realised the colourful flags that were approaching so rapidly flaunted lions and harts and dragons, stars and crosses, fleur-de-lys and carquois, stripes vertical and horizontal and oblique. The flags that stood proudly around him were as colourful, but they depicted looms and flails, saws and hammers, barrels and beakers, fish and meat, bread, cheeses and butchers' cleavers.

The impact was delivered with tremendous expense of energy. The first two rows of the Flemish warriors were overthrown. The Flemings standing there with pikes and *goedendags* and lances disappeared under or in between the charging knights. Immediately, the French knights tried to penetrate deeper into the Flemish ranks. Beyond the two rows, however, the charge was brought to an abrupt stop. All the knights were challenged and halted. The standard-bearer of the Ghent guildsmen, Zeger Lonke, was thrown to the ground. Behind the horse that almost trampled upon him, he sprang back to his feet and brought the standard up again.

Very many horses were falling in the front lines of the Flemish, stopped by pikes or lances deep in their bodies. The French knights had to admit some wonder and admiration for the Flemish militiamen. Not one Fleming had fled or dropped his weapon in panic. The Flemish lines simply endured the assault.

How could the Flemish artisans remain standing? They were not really warriors, they were mere artisans and housefathers, yet they halted the powerful charge, and absorbed it. They fought each knight individually, with a bravery that challenged the haughtiness of the French nobility. Where did these artisans and farmers find the bravery to resist knights? This was the greatest surprise of the French knights. The Flemings fought maybe clumsily, but with much more ardour and obstinacy than the best professional mercenary warriors. Where had the Flemings learned to fight like this? A peasant and a city-dweller should not be as vengeful, dogged, dangerous, stubborn, refusing to yield to a nobleman trained for war!

Juris Vresele and two other Flemings ruthlessly stuck their *goedendags* in the flanks of an armoured destrier. Their spikes entered the soft parts of the animal. Juris avoided narrowly a swing of a mace to his head. He jumped up, dropped his *goedendag*, and grabbed the shield of the knight to draw it aside. Another Fleming, almost at the same time, who had followed Juris's actions, used the opening in the defence of the Frenchman to push the point of his *goedendag* in the man's side, between the knight's breastplate and the other parts of his

armour. The French knight shouted out in pain, and cursed. Rage made him slam wildly around with his mace. Juris could grab the man in the saddle. He drew with great force of his arms. He was too close to the knight's body, now, for the man to be able to reach him with his weapon. Another Fleming sprang to the knight, and together, he and Juris hauled the knight from his horse. The Frenchman fell heavily in the grass. He groped there. He tried to roll on his belly and push himself back up with his hands, but Juris and the other Fleming had already thrust the points of their *goedendags* in his back. The knight shouted again a series of curses. The Flemings held him down under the spikes of their *goedendags*. Juris was astounded, then. A thought ran like a lightning flash through his mind. The fighters had lost all sense of humanity. They saw an opponent, fought him, but did not recognise the human in that opponent. They fought an object, and object that could do much harm, but that possessed no human soul.

Juris withdrew his *goedendag*. He held the weapon above his head and hit the man extremely hard on the head with the heaviest iron part of the weapon. He hit the knight several times with all his might, until he saw the French knight did not move anymore. Blood seeped from under the battered helmet. The other Fleming turned the knight over, noticed the man was as good as dead, and slit with the spike of his *goedendag* first at the man's throat, then at the leather straps that held a purse under the armour. The militiamen, a dark, bearded man, grinned, and Juris grinned back. Sharing would have to wait for after the battle.

Both men turned to attack the knight who had been fighting other militiamen at their back. They fought a few moments, and killed that man too, but not before the knight had maimed a militiaman and killed two others. This time, Juris won a purse. The two killed knights wore jupons with a badge, but Juris did not recognise the colours of the knights.

The two men sought another knight. They worked in unison, then. Two more strong Flemish warriors, covered in blood on their short chain mail haubergeons, joined them. They formed a group that worked together to confront yet another French knight. Juris shouted commands on how to tackle an adversary. The men seemed not to mind Juris's indications. They accepted the orders as if it was the most natural thing in the world, as if the orders were merely the more efficient way of winning the fight. They fought a long while like this. Together, they did not scream, they did not insult. They just killed. They worked in silence. They followed the ideas and instruction of Juris during the fights.

Juris told them to not do wild things, to save their energy, not to expose themselves uselessly, to strike only when the stroke was sure to bring harm. The fight would be long, he said, spare your arms! Use your brain!

After a while, more Flemings joined their group, and then they attacked several riders at the same time, one small group helping the other when a fight turned bad. They formed a castle of defence on walls of dead horses and knights, in the midst of the larger battle. They formed a small circle free of French knights, a space into which no knight could or dared to enter. Several slaughtered knights lay at their feet. As more Flemings joined them, they cleared more space of enemy riders. Juris fought, and the Flemings accepted him as their natural leader. He told which knight to attack, and how. He left one fight to help in another place, where French knights could break through the space freed of enemies. Still more men joined Juris's group. Juris fought on.

In the midst of the battle, Juris Vresele looked aside. His eye caught the glance of a Flemish knight, to his right, who fought like a lion. This looked like a very brave man who had, like Juris's group, hauled down several French knights from their horse. The Flemish knight nodded to Juris in an accolade of respect. Juris grinned and nodded back. He had shifted, while fighting, from the end of the formation of the guildsmen of Ghent under Jan Borluut to a contingent of men from the Four Crafts, fighting with the very bravest knight from that region, Willem van Boenheim.

Boenheim won great renown for his feats in this battle near Kortrijk. It was Boenheim who had seen with some astonishment Juris, as a leader, fight with as much success as he. He had shown his respect for what Juris had been doing on the battlefield. Juris organised his men further, without constraint. The men did as he told. Maybe they did appreciate how Juris also told what to take, rapidly, covertly, from the fallen knights. Purses filled with coins were taken, gold chains around necks, precious stones were pried with daggers from the pommels of swords, silver helmets were stacked in a heap in between the fighting men. It was not anymore only the efficiency in halting and killing knights that attracted militiamen to Juris's group. The men who joined in liked the systematic pillage of the knights around Juris's men. Some of the men paid for their joining in with their deaths by a French sword. The ones who lived, felt assured they would get their share of the pickings.

The battle lasted, and the killing continued methodically around Juris Vresele. The attacks they developed now rarely failed. Juris stood, the master of his small terrain. He stood, covered with blood, wielding his *goedendag*. Juris remarked only then what a marvellous weapon a *goedendag* was in a battle of close combat like this. A sword was practically useless for a militiaman in a close battle against knights. A sword could not pierce armour or chain mail, unless thrust straight forward with all might. It could not slam a shield aside. It was useless as a club to deliver terrible blows. It could not be held against the falchions or heavy swords of the knights. The simple, crude *goedendag* was the ideal weapon against armoured knights in a massed fight. The militiamen of Ghent and from the Four Crafts became experts in using the *goedendag* in the shortest of moments.

More men still came to fight with Juris's group. They cleared a larger area from French enemies. They continued to fight systematically. They chose their opponents by method and approached a knight in a rehearsed pattern. No French knight dared to challenge them by driving his stallion in their midst.

The battle lasted, and Juris and his companions killed methodically, calmly, sure now of their superiority. They also looted the knights systematically, grinning in that effort.

The militiamen of the towns and of the countryside of East Flanders stopped the charge of the French right wing. They almost annihilated the three French battle formations that had launched the attack against them. Not one French knight emerged from their ranks.

### The Castle Garrison's Sally

From the towers of the castle of Kortrijk, Viscount Jean de Lens followed the evolution of the battle. At first, he could not discern much more than the assault of the French battles, and then the *mêlée* of the belligerents in the Flemish lines. He saw the knights and the militiamen of Flanders fight. He had no idea of who was winning or losing, for the fighting seemed stuck

in a broad band of frantic struggle along the brooks. He cursed, bit his lips, frowned, and hesitated. The only development he could spot after an hour of dogged fighting, was that at a place at almost the eastern end of the Bruges militias, the French knights seemed to have gained the upper hand.

Lens saw at that place more French knights massed together, and a few knights had broken through the ranks of the Flemish. Could this be the turning point of the battle? Why had not many more French knights broken through the Flemish ranks?

What should he do now? Should he simply wait inside the castle and wait until the royal French army showed more signs of winning? Or should he help a little and gain honour, participate in the glory of victory? His instinct told him to wait; his mind told him to wait until victory was clearly at hand. His greed and arrogance urged him on to sally, and crush the militiamen of Flanders a little more between the anvil of the royal army and his own forces.

Lens had resisted several assaults of the Flemish. Those assaults had failed, of course. The walls of the castle were too high. The garrison defended too well. A castle like this could be held by a dozen men, and he had brought many more inside. The Flemish could starve the garrison out, he knew, but that would take many months. Stood a French army not at the walls of Kortrijk? Jean de Lens had expected much from the approaching royal army. He had seen *Sénéchal* Robert d'Artois send out limited contingents of footmen to capture Kortrijk, but two such assaults had failed miserably. The Flemish had defended the walls of the town. Artois attempted to storm the Tournai Gate of Kortrijk on the 9<sup>th</sup> of July, and the Lille Gate on the 10<sup>th</sup>. Both assaults had failed miserably. The crossbowmen of Flanders had easily thrown back and off the French mercenaries. No knight wanted to climb a ladder in full armour, Lens thought bitterly.

The French army had to win the battle here, in the Groeninge Field, or Jean de Lens would ultimately have to surrender.

Jean de Lens felt not the least bit of sympathy for the Flemish. He was a French courtier; he wanted France to win the war and the king to be satisfied with his deeds. He could not remain in the castle, doing nothing. France would not appreciate inaction. Lens had already set fire to a part of Kortrijk to cover his retreat. He thought he needed some more distraction for the contingent of Ieper he saw waiting in front of his gate. He could lure the militias of Ieper more to the town itself, away from the castle's gates. He therefore ordered to set fire to one of the largest and finest houses of Kortrijk, using fire arrows. He did not care the fire might set more houses to fire. Probably the whole street would go down in ashes and up in smoke. What did he care? This was war!

He saw with some satisfaction the arrows cause small fires to the roofs. Smoke billowed upwards. Then suddenly, huge flames sprouted out of the house near the castle, accompanied by huge plumes of black smoke. The dark smoke and the smell of burning houses would attract the attention of the men of Ieper. He ordered his small army readied for a sally.

The rising columns of heavy smoke did catch the attention of the men of Ieper. The captains of the militiamen regarded the fire as a sure sign the French garrison of Kortrijk would sally. They wondered whether the garrison had found a means to sneak out of the fortress on the

other side, the side of the town. Was the French garrison wreaking havoc in Kortrijk? The captains of Ieper had to make sure of what was happening in the town. They were cautious men. They sent a small group of men into Kortrijk by the *Steenpoort*, to have a look and report back. The formation of warriors of Ieper remained nevertheless in good battle order in the Groeninge Field, under the walls of the castle. The only difference Jean de Lens remarked was that the heads of the men were turned before to the side of the battling armies, now once more to the walls of the castle.

Jean de Lens could wait no longer. He noticed the French knights had a good chance to break through the centre of the Flemish formations. It was his duty to act. He had the gates of the castle suddenly opened wide, and he sent out his knights and squires and other men on horseback. They assaulted the tight lines of the Ieper militiamen. The knights clattered at full speed on their destriers over the wooden drawbridge.

At the same time, Lens ordered his crossbowmen to send bolts into the men of Ieper, as many bolts as could be released in the shortest of times.

Volleys of crossbow bolts had been expected by the men of Ieper, as the beginning of a new development of the hostilities, in which they also would have a role to play. They had brought their own crossbowmen. The Ieper crossbowmen were well trained. They positioned, and shot back to the castle battlements. To wind up their bows with the ratchets, the Flemish crossbowmen hid behind their pavises. The Ieper crossbowmen were far more numerous than those of the garrison. The Frenchmen on top of the battlements soon heard the Ieper bolts whistle dangerously close to their ears. Their shooting diminished to a trickle.

The small group of French riders, not much more than a hundred horse, galloped into the more than five hundred waiting Ieper militiamen. The Flemish received them with pikes and goedendags. The men of Ieper prevented the French knights from riding around their lines. Like the battles of the Flemish in the main army, they absorbed the horse riders with great loss of life. The shock between the two small army groups was enormous. The men of Ieper showed no less courage than the men of Bruges. They stopped the French cavalry assault in their midst, and then the slaughtering began.

Jean de Lens was much astonished and fairly disappointed by the show of dogged bravery of the Flemish. He despised the urban armies, but had to admit they fought well here. The battle in front of his eyes did not last long. His knights understood rapidly they could not defeat the men of Ieper, and also not even break through the enemy lines to be of some assistance to the main French army in the Groeninge Field. Jean de Lens noticed how his proud knights, one after the other, broke off the assault and returned in front of the castle gate to reform. He sighed, and gave his trumpeter the sign to call off the sally. The knights returned to the castle, rode over the drawbridge and into the castle yard. The gates closed just when the first Flemings run against them. The sally had failed!

## The French Breakthrough in the Flemish Centre

The men of the Bruges Franc held on tenaciously against the powerful French knights. They had conceded some ground when a large force of knights penetrated deep within their lines at a place where the Flemish militiamen were spread more thinly. The French had exploited that advantage to send more warriors into the breach.

Luckily for the Flemish, the breach, the opening at the end of their lines, was very small, and the battle raged very fiercely there. The leaders of the Franc and Willem van Jülich sent men from farther to the right, but it took some time for these men to arrive and make a difference. They arrived too late, for a great number of French knights had frayed for themselves a path to almost past the Flemish ranks. They defended the place and wanted to pry the Flemish away. The men of the Franc, sturdy young peasants and men from the small towns and villages, resisted bravely. They instinctively understood that when the French knights would spill out behind the Flemish lines in great numbers, these riders driving their horses free in the Groeninge Field behind the Flemish battles, might cause general panic in the army of Bruges. They fought on incessantly with the hope of the doomed. Many of the young men died fighting, their *goedendag* still clasped in their hands, attacked on two sides by knights of far superior power. The Flemish were being massacred in the centre, sacrificed in the battle. The men of the Franc also died in shame, for everywhere else the Flemish lines held on. Nowhere else were the French passing the ranks.

Among the men who had fought with the Franc men farther down the Flemish battle, were Raes van Lake, John Denout and Wouter de Smet. They had been fighting together. They ran to the centre, and assessed the situation. They caught the desperate atmosphere of the hard battle. The three men of Ghent fought with *goedendags*. Raes and John wore swords at their belt, but had not drawn their sword once. The *goedendag* was a more efficient weapon in the close struggle against the French knights. Wouter de Smet also had a sword. He had never really learned to fight with a blade. He had found a battle-axe on a dead French horse rider, and he had pushed that also in his belt.

The three friends knew well they should not let them become surrounded by knights on horseback. They could handle one knight at a time, not two or more. That was the issue where they fought now, Raes van Lake told them, while they swung their weapons around. Simply too many knights had amassed in this place. The knights had noticed they could force a decision here. Still, the Flemish held on tenaciously.

Raes van Lake arrived sideways at a French knight. The man had already rather easily and very fast killed three Flemish militiamen, and he was inviting more to come to him. The horribly maimed bodies of the Flemish lay almost under the hooves of his horse. The knight fought with a long, straight sword. He swung his weapon with particular dexterity, as fast as lightning, with extraordinary force in his arm. He had also mastered the skills to turn his horse. He held the reins of the animal in his left hand and flung his sword with his right. He made the horse turn and prance, and slash out with its hooves.

Raes managed to approach the knight, because the man was busy slicing through the face of a Fleming on his left side. The Flemish warrior was only wounded, but would be disfigured for

the rest of his life. The young man dropped his *goedendag* and brought his two hands to his face. Blood seeped through his fingers.

Raes used that moment to plant his *goedendag* deep in the flank of the horse's belly. It began to turn to the place of danger, a movement that surprised the knight. Raes turned with the horse, making sure he remained at the back of the rider. He saw John Denout and Wouter de Smet sneak up to the other side. The knight's destrier finished to turn perpendicular to its initial position. Raes then stood still behind the horse. John stood on the other side, and Wouter de Smet threatened with his weapon in front.

Raes van Lake withdrew his *goedendag* and rammed it again in the horse. Raes could not reach the front of the animal. He could not push his *goedendag* in the heart or the lungs of the destrier. He could not kill the horse, but he wounded it anew. The knight angrily stopped his horse and turned in the saddle, holding one hand on the cantle. While the Frenchman's attention was diverted backwards, Wouter de Smet stuck his *goedendag* deep in the neck of the horse, severing an artery. Wouter got covered with blood. At the same time, John Denout lunged for the animal's heart. Denout missed it, but he inflicted once more a painful wound to the horse. The knight turned to the other side, and slashed out at John. John Denout had expected the swing. He was on his knees, saw the sword pass over his head. He stabbed again and again at the horse. The animal would not be able to remain on its legs for long.

The horse did not move anymore, despite the knight punishing it badly with its spurs. The knight wanted to force it backwards. The horse lowered its neck. It was tired and wounded. The horse finally did retreat a little. John managed to stab his *goedendag* into the leg of the knight, through the greaves, at a place where the plate hinged.

The French knight bellowed a shout of pain. He wanted to take another swing from in the saddle to John, but the horse buckled under him. The knight came slowly down. He kicked his feet out of the stirrups, and had just the time to jump next to where his destrier would crush him.

The French knight confronted John Denout with closed visor. He did not see Raes van Lake who had run around the horse's back. Raes pushed his *goedendag* from behind through the knight's neck, under the rim of the Frenchman's helmet. Blood flowed profusely. The knight's helmet had not come low enough to down the shoulders.

John Denout saw the battle won, but the knight swung his sword once more high, ready to slice at John. John could not move. He saw his last moment coming, his death imminent in the last revenge of the French knight. A battle axe made a circle in the air, made an oscillating sound, and the axe severed the knight's head. Wouter de Smet had slammed at the head with the extraordinary power of a blacksmith. It had been a desperate swing, for also Wouter had seen John dead, but the movement succeeded. The head of the knight hung miserably on the back of the enemy body, attached only by the last tendrils. The knight fell to his knees. His headless body toppled over in a sway of blood.

'Sweet Jesus!' John Denout murmured to himself.

Raes, John and Wouter stood exhausted. Their *goedendags* hung to the grass of the Groeninge. They stood panting next to the knight. This was heavy butcher's work! Raes drew

the helmet from the face of the knight. He wanted to see what his opponent looked like. The French knight was a young and handsome man. But he had come to Flanders to lose his life. 'God be thanked!' John Denout whispered again.

He had seen death crawl upon him.

They had no time to rest. More French knights fought close to them. The knights could concentrate here. They were winning terrain.

One who had been watching out for any such dire development, was the Zeeland knight Jan van Renesse. He had remained on horseback during these early phases of the battle. He and his men had not participated in the defence of the Flemish lines. On horseback, Jan obtained a better view over the open, flat meadows of the Groeninge Field. He could also move more quickly behind the lines. He was constantly looking out for places where he should and could intervene with his reserve of knights. He had seen for some time the French knights had advanced more at a certain place in the centre of the battle formations along the Large Brook. He could easily imagine why, for he had remarked the Flemish militiamen were spread wider there from the beginning. Everywhere else, the French proud cavalry was being stopped and remained engaged in heavy fighting all along the Flemish ranks. He remarked with great satisfaction to his staff knights he did not believe the French enemy would be able to break out of the battle. Except at this one place that worried him.

Jan van Renesse had also noticed the French had left some reserves, powerful reserves, behind the brooks. One reserve was the battle formation of Robert d'Artois. Jan could distinguish the large Artois standard. Two more reserve battles lingered behind the Lange Mere, another brook in the meadows, farther off to the south-east.

Guy de Namur was resisting heroically to the assault of three French battles. He was doing well with his men. Robert d'Artois would not intervene immediately. If he did, Jan van Renesse saw the third battle formation of the Flemish, the left Flemish wing, would be able to absorb also this enemy formation.

The only place that worried Jan van Renesse remained the place where the French knights threatened to break through, in the centre. He wondered what he should do. He could make a difference in the centre. He was sure he had to intervene there. But what if the French reserves, the two strong battles to the south-east, also moved? To where would they move? They could not circumvent the Flemish lines. The battle raged from the walls of Kortrijk to the Leie. The only place where they could do some harm was in the centre, where the Flemish might be failing. No issue could develop then if he, Jan van Renesse, rode first to that place, before the French reserve arrived. Jan van Renesse decided not to wait anymore. He would attack, and try to stop the opening in the Flemish lines in the centre, before the French reserves beat him to it. He did not have to wait for the French reinforcements to arrive. He should act now!

Jan van Renesse ordered the attack of his formation. He stood on horseback, amidst a strong cavalry section. It was constituted of knights from various regions, good veterans from previous battles. His own Zeeland knights waited here, the knights of Namur, and other foreign knights. They stood on horseback, because the reserve had to be mobile, fast to intervene where needed. These knights were all eager to enter the fray. So be it! Jan van

Renesse ordered his knights on horseback to assault the centre, to follow his example. He pointed his lance to where he wanted his men to ride to. The troops of footmen would follow a little later.

On rode Jan van Renesse's knights, the last reserve and hope for the Flemings! Renesse's knights too entered a gallop, couched their lances, and fell on to the French knights who had emerged behind the Flemish ranks, and who were forcing a broader path through the Flemish ranks. Jan van Renesse's men rode on to the French like predators on their prey.

The French knights were utterly surprised by this impetuous attack. They were overwhelmed by the knights of Jan van Renesse. Jan had thrown in the battle far more knights than the French had been able to concentrate here. The French knights lost ground in an instant. More importantly, they lost many courageous warriors. The French knights that had been wounded and who had halted fighting the on-storming Flemish knights fled then, and retreated. Jan van Renesse's footmen floated over them, eliminating them rapidly. Jan fought the French knights. He fought against the lord of Moreul and against the lord of Aspremont. He sometimes disappeared in the fray, but his helmet and his banner emerged each time. The open space in the Flemish lines was plugged rapidly, after a short but intense and terrible fight. The situation had been turned in a few long moments. The Flemish militiamen cheered.

Jan van Renesse drove the French knights back to the very first lines of the Flemish battle. Raes van Lake, John Denout and Wouter de Smet, with the men from the Bruges Franc around them, let the Flemish knights pass with shouts of joy.

Jan van Renesse could have stopped his troops there and then, his objective having been attained. He could have withdrawn his men, back to behind the lines. He noticed the French reserves had not moved. Jan was a daring and dashing commander. He seized the opportunity.

Renesse continued the attack, slashed out at the French knights, and drew the men of the Bruges Franc with him. Together, they inflicted heavy losses on the French knights in the centre.

The Flemish centre that might have faltered, almost collapsed only a few moments ago, began to step forward. Raes van Lake, John Denout and Wouter de Smet shouted their battle cries. They no longer fought looking to the west, to the walls of Kortrijk, to the enemy knights that fought there. They were once more looking towards the Large brook! They hammered with all the force left in their bodies on the French knights, killing systematically, never stepping back. They pushed the French knights southwards. The Flemish centre advanced, whereas just moments ago it had been in danger of annihilation. The Flemish peasants and militiamen fought with renewed courage. They bit themselves into the enemy knights.

Three to four thousand Flemish warriors now fought in the centre battle against about a thousand French knights. The French had lost the advantage of a massed charge on the gallop. They fought in the great band of desperate battling, where they did not have the upper hand anymore. The battle ran about equally for a little time, but with each passing moment, the French lost men. With each knight, they lost some of their acclaimed superiority. The Frenchmen realised they should do what they were best at. They tried to win back some of their superiority by retreating, regrouping, and charging anew. They could only form small

such groups. While the Frenchmen reformed, the Flemish militiamen advanced more, allowed less and less space to the French knights, also on the sides, and they fought as if all devils had been released from heaven in their midst.

The Flemish warriors on foot pushed the French noblemen inexorably back. Could the French knights be thrown over the brooks once more? The French knights felt overwhelmed, overrun on all sides, and that up until the banks of the brooks. The French battles soon did not have even enough space to regroup and charge. They were caught in the band of fighting Flemish men. They were being decimated without any foreseeable chance of extirpating themselves from the massacre. The French began to realise they might not win today. The Frenchmen were defending their life. They had lost the initiative. The Flemish warriors on foot surrounded them. These warriors also seemed less and less to fear the might of knights on horseback. They fought with dark revenge in their eyes. They had seen so many of their friends fall, they gave no quarter to a fallen enemy.

The Flemish Franc of Bruges pushed back the French knights over a considerable length of the battlefield. They pushed the knights back into the brooks.

The French knights feared having a second time to pass the dangerous brook, to pass the streams in the directions they had come from. The battle had definitively turned.

### The Charge of Robert of Artois' Battle Formation

Count Robert of Artois still waited with his last battle formation to the east of the Groeninge Brook. He was at that moment extremely nervous, angry and frustrated. He had expected some development in the battle by now. He had thought his two main battles would have broken through the Flemish ranks. He had imagined to see French knights dart all over the Groeninge Field. He had expected these knights to regroup, reform, and launch multiple attacks around isolated Flemish blocks of warriors. Where were the large lanes he had imagined to have been fought in the enemy phalanx? Any opposing army of urban militias should have been struck by fear. The Flemings should have been sent on the flight! The Flemish ranks should have been thrown in disorder and panic. Nothing of the sort had happened! Robert of Artois merely saw a strip of fighting men, a strip as broad as fifteen, twenty rows of footmen, and that stretched from the walls of Kortrijk to the Leie. He saw his knights were fighting inside, but his army might well be struggling to the death inside the block, for no French knight rode out of it, not at the beginning and not at the end. Would his fine army be massacred inside that *mêlée*? Would the battle only stop when all his knights had been killed?

Robert's hopes soared when he noticed one point at which the Flemish were losing the advantage. A little later, his hope had vanished. A Flemish reserve had counter-attacked and pushed back the French at that same point. A large part of his left wing on the other side of the Large Brook was retreating to the water! This could not be! The Flemings could not be allowed to win. Artois had to turn the events.

Like Jan van Renesse, the *Sénéchal* Robert of Artois estimated it was time to intervene with his last forces. He had to avoid and turn a pending catastrophe. There was still time. His assault would give the time needed for his reserves to approach and enter the fray. He exposed his reasons for an attack of his formation to the knights serving in his staff. A knight from the Champagne warned Robert d'Artois of the dangers of the passage over the Groeninge Brook. He remarked to Artois how many knights had been lost in the left wing in passing the Large Brook. The Groeninge was wider and deeper. Artois agreed, but even if he would lose quite more men, he could no longer wait. He made his trumpeters sound the charge. Robert d'Artois charged from where he stood.

The horses jumped forward. The meadows on both sides of the Groeninge Brook had been churned up by the many horses' hooves. Where before green, soft grass had grown, now the Groeninge Field lay brown and muddy. It seemed as if the water in the marshy meadows had risen to the surface. Clots of mud were thrown up high. Mud spat on the splendid armour of the horses and of the knights.

Robert of Artois led the charge. He showed he was still the intrepid, invincible first knight of the kingdom. On the gallop, he spurred his horse to jump over the Groeninge stream, and his horse reached the other side without stumbling. Artois refused to look how many destriers to his left and right had failed to imitate his horse. Those animals and men remained stuck in the water and mud of the banks. He continued the gallop forward, to the ranks commanded by Guy de Namur. He did hear and saw many of his knights rode still at his side. They too had succeeded to pass on the gallop!

Guy de Namur was exhausted. He had been fighting for almost two hours very intensely against the French knights. Now, he saw the knights of Artois coming, and he despaired. He recognised the huge standard of Artois. He ordered the men of Ghent forward to meet the attack. Robert of Artois rode impetuously on. He penetrated deep into the midst of the Flemish troops. He forced his charge almost to the banner of Guy de Namur, reached it by sheer force and energy of weapons, grasped the banner with both his hands, and ripped it.

When the men of Ghent saw this feat, they rushed in great numbers to this place, towards Robert of Artois. They attacked Artois with a dozen enraged men, among which also Juris Vresele. The Flemings fought Artois with pikes and *goedendags*. Artois was forced to retreat. He could escape from the deadly embrace only by racing back. His horse was wounded. He formed a new group of knights, drawing them to him. He wanted to show the example. At their head, he once more charged into the Flemish battle at a place somewhat closer to the Leie.

A little later, two Flemings confronted Robert d'Artois in battle. One was a monk from the Abbey of Goes in South Beveland. The man had left his order to become a warrior for Flanders. The other was a lay brother from the Abbey of Ter Doest near Lissewege, a man called Willem van Saaftinge.

Willem managed to jump to Robert d'Artois and to hold both his strong arms firmly around the *sénéchal's* body, so that Artois could not move his arms anymore. Other Flemish warriors

then killed Artois' destrier from under him. Willem van Saafte and Count Robert of Artois rolled in the mud.

Artois stood, but saw himself surrounded by enemies. He called out he gave himself up, and asked to hand his weapons to a Flemish nobleman. The militiamen of Ghent shouted they understood no French, and hacked upon him with their battle-axes and *goedendags*. Soon, the dead body of Robert of Artois lay broken and mutilated in the mud of Groeninge.

Not long later, the knight Hugh Butterman from Arkel in Brabant captured Artois' standard and brought it triumphantly to behind the Flemish lines.

At almost the same time, a little farther, in similar circumstances, died the Chancellor Pierre Flote. Many other of the noblest knights of the kingdom, men who had ridden with the *sénéchal*, were killed in the assault of Artois' formation. Independently, but around that time too, died Jacques de Châtillon. Châtillon had killed many Flemish militiamen that day. Finally, towards the end of the afternoon, a group of Flemings had surrounded him, brought his destrier down, and then killed de Châtillon. He asked for no mercy, and received none. Too many Flemings from the Bruges Franc recognised his badge and knew of his reputation. Châtillon did not survive.

When Count Robert of Artois had succeeded in tearing to pieces the standard of Guy de Namur, the courage of the Flemish troops on that part of the battlefield sank terribly. At the same time, the militiamen thought they perceived some movement in the French reserve formations. The Flemish assumed Artois had defeated the Flemish left wing. The final major blow would be dealt now by the powerful two French reserve formations.

The French rear guard indeed moved forward! Their trumpets sounded the charge. The formations actually halted and turned around, but the Flemings entered a panic and feared a new devastating charge would be sent against them. Many Flemings threw down their heaviest weapons in the Groeninge, and fled. They did not really know where they could flee to, they ran as if they had completely lost their wits. Some even prepared to swim over the Leie, still clad in their chain mails.

Guy of Namur was busy fighting the French knights along the lines of the Franc of Bruges. He did not immediately notice a panic had broken out to his left. He too saw the French reserve formations approach the Groeninge Brook.

Guy de Namur rushed to the place where the Flemish militiamen seemed to have disengaged from the battle. He called the fleeing men back. He pleaded with them to return. He told there was still hope. They were needed in the battle! Not all hope was lost. Would they want to be treated as cowards and traitors?

Other knights of Flanders ran to help him. Jan Borluut had been shouting his soul out of his body to call his militiamen back. Also Goswin van Gossenhoven, Willem van Boenheim, Boudewijn van Popperode, Gerard Ferrant and Bangelijn van Aardenburg ran to the fleeing men and called them back in the ranks. They succeeded in having the men grab their discarded weapons, and return. The Flemish knights managed to force their warriors back into the ranks. They regrouped them.

Also the men of Ieper, who had defeated the garrison of Jean de Lens, drove the fleeing men back to the battle lines. They too joined the fight. The reinforcements lent new hope to the Flemings in the extreme left wing. All fleeing Flemings returned in the ranks. As the French

reserve battle formations never actually arrived in the Groeninge Field, the Flemish troops could counter-attack. This happened all along the Flemish ranks.

The battle raged in the Groeninge Field. When the French royal standard fell, and was torn to pieces, the French knights, in their turn, may have lost all hope. Few French noblemen saw this happening, however. They continued to fight. They could not hope on any new initiative in the battle.

The Flemish did not let them through their ranks, and also not retreat over the brooks. They surrounded the French knights everywhere. The noblemen who asked for surrender were slain immediately. No quarter as given. No prisoners were made of the French knights. Some French knights knelt in the battlefield and offered the hilts of their swords, not the blades, in surrender. The Flemings only took cruel revenge.

The battle turned into a carnage, a pitiless massacre. The killing of the French counts and knights and squires continued unabatedly. Nevertheless, more and more Frenchmen fled and succeeded in the act. They tried to get once more over the brooks. Some succeeded, many did not.

The brooks got filled with wounded and dead horses and knights. The water once more coloured red with the blood of the slain animals and men. Wounded knights shouted for mercy in the water, feeling their life's fluids stream away. Nobody bothered to save them. A few knights fled towards the reserves on foot. The battle seemed to have reached its end. The Flemings had won the victory. They could not lose anymore, now.

In the battle that lasted on the Flemish right wing, in front of the Large Brook, had already died Geoffrey de Brabant and Jean de Burlats. Guy de Nesle also, was now killed. Everywhere, the Flemish troops drove back the French knights. Also on the Flemish left wing, most of the French commanders were killed. Jacques de Châtillon had been cut to pieces some time ago. The counts of Eu and Aumale and the lord of Tancarville died ignominiously. Mathieu de Trie fought to the very end. He was made a prisoner at the last moments, when even the most bloodthirsty of Flemings considered they had been satiated with horror.

### The French Débâcle

While the battle was coming to an end in the Groeninge Field, the two last formations of the French reserves advanced. As the counts of Saint-Pol, of Boulogne and Auvergne and Louis de Clermont, count of Auxerre reached a little farther than their original position, they obtained a better view of the massacre in the Groeninge. Hundreds of knights fled from the brooks, on the eastern and southern sides of the streams. Many men were seen throwing off their armour, holding only to their chain mail coats and haubergeons.

The Flemish warriors were regrouping, reforming lines, readying an assault over the brooks. The counts and leaders of the French rear guard decided it was too late for a new assault on the Flemish positions. They would be outnumbered and massacred like the rest of the royal army. They were too few to change the course of the day. The rear guard would have to retreat, leave the field to the Flemings. The Flemish warriors could claim the victory of the

battle. Such was the rule on a battlefield: the forces that left the field first declared themselves defeated.

First, the knights wanted to give some time to their servants to pack the personal belongings of the knights in the army camp on the *Pottelberg*. They sounded their trumpets to charge. It was this call the Flemish had feared, thinking the French reserves would still charge against them. It had only been a ruse. While the Flemish ranks braced and waited, the French knights turned around and rode off. They did not risk charging anew.

The militiamen of Bruges, seeing the French reserves did not charge at all, crossed the Large Brook. They began to run in the direction of the French rear guard troops. The rear guard spurred their horses southward. A few noblemen of the battle formation of the count of Saint-Pol did not want to flee in dishonour. They rode into the men of Bruges, fought, and found their death near the Lange Mere. Their desperate action provided the fleeing Frenchmen with some more time to ride to safety. The Leliaert lord of Bourbourg was killed atrociously. The Flemings opened his breast from his belly to his head with the slicing spike of a *goedendag* and let him bleed to death.

Among the rear guard of the French army also rode knights from Brabant and Hainault. These men could speak some Flemish. They sought to escape by calling the Flemish battle cry of '*Vlaanderen de Leeuw*'. Guy de Namur heard of this ruse, and gave orders to kill all the men with spurs on, as they were most probably enemy knights. Many of the Brabant knights were killed in meadows since called the *Bitter Meersen* or the *Blood Meersen*, for the Bitter Meadows and the Blood Meadows.

The rests of the French army fled in chaos by the roads leading south, to Tournai and Lille, to Zwevegem and Sint-Denijs. The horse riders, knights and squires, had a decent chance to escape. They spurred their horses on, later made them run in a canter, then more slowly. They threw off the armour, chamfrons and trappers of their animals. Many of them outpaced the Flemish militiamen. The Flemish warriors caught the French footmen, crossbowmen and bidauts, the mercenaries in the royal army. The Flemish continued to massacre these men, even far from Kortrijk. The pursuit and the killing went as far as six or seven miles. Only then, the evening falling, the darkness lowering its veil over the roads, did the Flemish militiamen turn and did they walk back to Kortrijk, their revenge satiated.

From the towers and the embattlements of Tournai, the astonished poorters saw the remnants of the royal army stumble in long columns toward the town. The aldermen of Tournai did not understand what had happened. They gave orders to close the town gates early. Even the count of Saint-Pol was not allowed in. He had to spend the night in the nearby abbey of Saint-Nicholas.

The Frenchmen who arrived near Tournai and found some protection there, were in a state of shock. They were famished and exhausted. They exchanged gold and their expensive weapons for a piece of bread. The road to Tournai lay littered with pieces of armour, with vambraces and rerebraces, cuisses and greaves, shoulder pieces or espaliers, helmets breastplates and backplates.

The French footmen who could escape spent the night in the villages of the countryside, pillaging, raping and killing. At dawn, they continued their long journey south, to Picardy and Paris, or to whatever region they had come from.

The Flemish troops pursued the French warriors and killed still whatever group they could catch up with. The royal army was thoroughly annihilated.

The Flemings had been standing in the battlefield since early morning. They had fought strenuously, and they had won a great victory. In pursuit, some of the militiamen had run or marched fast for more than six miles. Now, they returned the same six miles. They too were hungry and thirsty. They had not eaten that day of Saint Benedict! On the Groeninge Battlefield, late in the evening, some food was distributed.

Most of the leaders of the battle, also notably Willem van Jülich and Guy de Namur, both wounded but satisfied, went to sleep early in the houses of Kortrijk. They were exhausted from the stress and the physical strain of the battle.

The next day, the Flemish knights organised the collection of the booty. The killed enemy warriors were stripped and left lying on the battlefield. The naked bodies would be gathered later, and buried.

The French army had had to abandon its camp on the *Pottelberg*. There, the Flemish found so much gold and silver, richly decorated tents, furniture, tapestries, weapons and utensils of all sorts, the *Pottelberg* soon became known as the 'Mountain of Wealth', or '*Berg van Weelde*' in Flemish.

The Flemish knights showed the captured banners of the French royal army ostentatiously to the defenders of the Castle of Kortrijk. Jean de Lens understood he had to abandon all hope on relief. On the 13<sup>th</sup> of July, he surrendered the French garrison of Kortrijk.

On the 12<sup>th</sup> of July, a monk of Oudenaarde arrived in the Groeninge to claim the body of Robert d'Artois. Willem van Jülich at first angrily refused. The monk insisted and appealed to the honour of the Flemish leader. Willem allowed the monk to bury in the Church of the Groeninge Monastery the counts of Artois, Eu, Aumale, the king of Melidas, and other French knights of the highest nobility.

The Flemings celebrated. Bread, cheese, meat and vegetables and fruit were brought in and bought with French gold. The Flemish men feasted their victory mainly on the 13th of July. The men of Willem van Jülich and Guy de Namur gathered more than five hundred golden spurs from the French knights on the Groeninge. These spurs, as well as the many French banners and pennants were hung in the Church of Our Lady, next to the castle. Later, the battle of Kortrijk would become known as the 'Battle of the Golden Spurs'. Two *sénéchals*, the constable, the chancellor and two marshals of France had been killed in the battle. Hundreds of the finest knights of France never left the Groeninge Field alive.

Willem van Artevelde led his ten warriors, reduced to seven, five miles south. He and his men took bloody revenge on the French fleeing footmen. The killing proved easy. The Frenchmen looked confused and dazed. They barely resisted. Willem returned late in the evening to Kortrijk. He slept in a barn of the monastery of Groeninge. The monastery had

been turned into a hospital. Wounded men lay up into the nave of the abbey church and in the corridors of the cloister. No French wounded were brought in. The Flemish men killed them mercilessly. Willem van Artevelde afterwards remained with Willem van Jülich's own troops.

Raes van Lake, John Denout and Wouter de Smet stayed together. They too ran in pursuit, caught two knights and a group of French mercenaries, fought them and killed them. They returned late in the night to the Groeninge Field. The next day, they participated as trusted men of Guy de Namur in the pillage of the French camp on the *Pottelberg*. They gathered a few small golden and silver objects they could hide under their mail coats. On the 14<sup>th</sup> of July, they decided to return to Ghent. They promised to answer subsequent calls for help from Jan Borluut. Jan Borluut told them he would march on Ghent to grab power from the Leliaert aldermen. Raes, John and Wouter promised Borluut they could count on them if needed, from within the city.

Juris Vresele and his men shared the booty they had gathered on the battlefield. Juris recuperated his knapsack, threw everything of little value out, and filled it with golden chains and a few precious stones. He had not nearly enough to make the battle worth its while. When the Flemings ran in pursuit of the French, he too ran from the Groeninge Field. He ran to the *Pottelberg*, to the French camp. Flemish guards had already been posted there to dissuade lone men from pillaging. The Flemish knights reserved the richest pickings for themselves. Juris lay in waiting until dark on the *Pottelberg*. For a while, he stood as if on guard.

He sneaked into the camp during the last light of the day, and collected some more booty. His knapsack got filled with fine objects. He found a golden crucifix, two heavy neck chains studded with bright stones, a beautifully crafted dagger, silver buckles, a few silver table pieces. He found a chest, a small one, under a knight's bed, and took it. He pried the chest open and found coins. The box held a few genoins and florents, some golden Parisis pounds and even a few golden Flemish Grooten. He reckoned then he had enough to subsist on for a few months in Ghent. He had enough gold to finance a few loads of cloth and other products of Ghent with. His booty covered some of the money he had lost during the war in Flanders. He considered staying for a few months with the Flemish army, but he esteemed that too dangerous with his booty. He set on his way back to Ghent. He promised himself, to the memory of his Flemish companions killed in the battle, to re-join the army in case of need. Juris Vresele returned alone to Ghent, taking much caution to walk by the smaller roads. He did not risk being overtaken by bandits on the main roads to Ghent. Two days later, with much joy, he saw in the far the towers of his beloved city of Ghent.

### 2.3. Raes van Lake. 1303

Raes van Lake was a real and true poorter of Ghent. He did not recall one man or woman of his family deceased or living, ever having lived elsewhere. He spoke the language of the city, a dialect of Flemish. What was Flemish other than a series of dialects, each town and each village having its own tongue?

Raes was not an imposing man. He was short and lanky, but with an agreeable, round, open face some women called handsome. He smiled often and enjoyed living. A beaker of wine often sufficed him to feel happy and content. He didn't feel particularly limited in his actions by others. He rather considered competition a healthy game, in which he usually won and seldom lost. Losses he regarded as temporary setbacks, soon to be forgotten by better pickings. Losses did not spoil his fine humour.

Raes van Lake was a weaver. At least, weaving was what he had learned as a boy. He was a master-weaver, but had not liked his six years of apprenticeship with the morose weaver his parents had placed him with. Raes's father had been a weaver too, and a very successful one. He had preferred Raes to learn his trade elsewhere. The father had not liked having his inquisitive son around him, and Raes already knew everything his father could have taught him. He had dwelled in his father's shop for days on end, watching what his father and the servants did at the looms.

Raes had not protested when he had to leave for long hours the home of his parents. Not much love was lost between him and his father. Raes had early on given up hope for the affection of his father. When Raes had become a master in his turn, his father had rather suddenly died from an illness, still relatively young. Raes was an only child, so he found himself at the head of a small family, though only constituted by himself and his mother. He inherited some money. He discovered then he could either continue being a weaver like his father had been, or become a trader. He could buy woollen, woven cloth from other Ghent weavers, have it fulled and dyed according to his own specifications, and then sell it with a profit. He chose to do this last. Nevertheless, he remained a member of the weavers' guild.

Raes van Lake was still a young man when he became a draper of Ghent. He was energetic, always thinking about opportunities for buying and selling. He sought to make his acquaintance with many people, weavers and Lombard cloth buyers. He sought friends. He soon developed into a well-known figure in Ghent. He liked to talk to people, ready to discuss trade, prices, cloth quality and the like.

Many people knew what Raes stood for. He was for family and for Ghent, and for the legitimate count of Flanders. He might be called a *Klauwaert*, a Flemish patriot. He preferred Flanders and its count over the French-speaking king of France, who stayed in far-away Paris. Raes knew the equally French-speaking count of Flanders, Guy of Dampierre, was of French descent too. He didn't mind. Raes van Lake spoke French excellently. He loved Ghent and Flanders, its people and their language.

Raes was an intelligent youth. He could cite the prices of cloth of all sorts in most of the towns of Flanders, Brabant and Hainault. He knew his Latin and a little Greek, had read a few books in both these languages, and he had also picked up enough Italian and German to close a deal with the Lombard and German dealers.

Raes was not always an easy-going man. He was of a rather sanguine character. He could flare up into a rage when somebody tried to trick him on a deal. Some said he was a bundle of nerves, always running through the streets in search of a business, sometimes intruding on people and imposing his views and – of course - his own cloth. Energy was his main characteristic. Energy he needed for what he did. He worked hard. He begged and cajoled for a business. He never gave up. He used his mind with cunning, and prospered.

Raes was a *Klauwaert*, but among his friends and colleagues of trade he frequented also many *Leliaerts*. He rarely talked politics with them. He did not refrain from doing business with them. The most extremist *Klauwaerts* therefore avoided him, as did the most fanatic *Leliaerts* of Ghent.

Raes could not but reflect rationally on the situation of Flanders. He thought Flanders and Ghent were in bad shape. The land was racked by wars. Maybe that was why his dark brown hair greyed early. He looked older than he was, which suited him well in his trade. He looked the dignified, trustworthy, poised merchant. Few of his partners noticed his rather thick, sensually moist lips, his short, snub nose, a chin a little too thick, the signs of a pleasure-loving man.

With Raes van Lake, you hadn't to watch your back in business. Raes disliked conflicts. He took a positive view while dealing with other traders, granting his opponents some joy of a small victory. His partners returned for more deals afterwards! Some thought him naïve, but only at first. Raes struck clever deals. He came to be a respected man in Ghent, though not one among the wealthiest. He was not a very powerful man. The truth was he had inherited some money, used it well, and grew slowly but steadily in funds. He had started with too little money to win big, so he did not stand in the way of the magnates of the city. The only feature in which he stood out, was that he delivered mainly some of the highest quality cloth in Ghent. This was attributed as much to his best friend and partner, the fuller John Denout.

Raes van Lake was twenty-three years old in 1303. He had fought in the Battle of Kortrijk. The battle had matured him. He held more conversations than ever with the serious Juris Vresele. Juris was his best friend. He told Juris about his awful nightmares after the battle. Often he woke in the middle of the night all in sweat, having dreamed of the battle scenes with giant French knights standing above him, armed with enormous battle-axes, ready to cleave his armour.

Raes had met Juris after the battle. They had sat at the same table during the banquet organised by the aldermen of Ghent to the honour of Jan Borluut and his men. The table in the tent of the Bijloke Field had been called the Heroes' Table. Here had been placed the more prominent poorters of Ghent who had fought with Ser Jan Borluut. Juris and Raes had talked much. Raes shared Juris's scepticism about the utility of wars and battles. Juris had proffered the opinion one battle was not enough by far to defeat the king of France. They had concluded that evening wars could only be justified when one had to defend one's own, one's family and one's community. Against the wicked ambitions of a king, it had been justified to oppose with weapons. Juris seemed to dislike wars and battles indeed, and Raes had agreed. The two men had become friends that evening. Later, they had begun putting funds together

for new trade ventures. More money, bigger trade, higher profits! Juris was as courteous and honest a trader as Raes was. They shared the same values in life.

Raes was a sensual man at heart. He was also a devout Christian, who lived by the meaning of the Book. His senses might have drawn him in those days to the redheads of the Golden Lion, to the buxomed blondes of the Tin Beaker, to the dark-eyed, black-haired and dangerous girls of the Spanish Cog, who could eat you alive and turn you around their little finger in one instant. He had so far refrained from frequenting these ill-famed but oh so exciting taverns. Still, his blood seemed to run hotter through his veins lately.

Raes woke sometimes in the morning with a basic panic of knowing himself without progeny, without sons to continue his name and his trade, a very lonesome man. Raes had been looking at many girls, furtively, secretly, but none of the plump, healthy girls of Ghent of the better families had been able to seduce him. Well, there was one girl he had watched with some more interest!

Her name was Zwane Bentijn. Zwane's mother must have possessed premonitory talents, for Zwane was the whitest and finest swan of Ghent! She was a petite girl, nicely buxomed, elegant and fine in the waist as no other girl of the better society of Ghent. She was blond of hair, of course, her hair the colour of a ripe field of grain at harvest time. Her eyes shone the lightest grey, almost transparent. She showed fine, delicate limbs and a pretty face. Her lips were thick as Raes's, moist always, and moving. She held them slightly open at all times. Her nose was small and straight. Raes had never seen a face with more equal, symmetric, harmonious traits.

Zwane Bentijn was not plump at all, light as a feather, her cheekbones just visible. She had a temper, for she sometimes frowned her front in anger. Raes thought he could hold her temper in check with a hug and a kiss.

Yes, Raes van Lake had been able to study her when she sat with her parents at another banquet in Ghent. This feast had been organised by the aldermen too. Only the most prominent men of the city had been invited. Raes had not understood well why he had been seated in this company, for his wealth was rather modest compared to what he knew of some of the other guests. Zwane's parents were very rich, so much he did know. He sat in front of Zwane that evening. He had conversed agreeably with her, but she had not shown more interest in him than politeness demanded.

Zwane was only eighteen. She was of course stunningly beautiful, a shining silver statuette, an alluring woman. Raes had liked her polite but lively words. He had found Zwane Bentijn wonderful. He might as well have craved for a princess of the royal French family! She was a girl far above his status, a girl intended for a knight, for a young man of the ancient lineages of Ghent, or for a lord of the castellanies. She was not destined for an uppity, small-time trader as he was. Her family was known for their pretty women in Flanders entire!

Nevertheless, Raes was drawn back to the pretty swan like a moth to the light. He sought to do business with her father. In that quality, he got invited to the office of her father, in Zwane's house in the *Brabantstraat*. She lived a mere few houses away from where Raes lived with his mother!

Raes had bought the house next doors. He had redecorated those rooms for his own family. Officially, he still lived with his mother. They took their meals together, but he slept next doors.

On one of the visits at the Bentijn house, Raes met Zwane again. The Bentijn office was simply the Bentijns' great hall. Zwane served her father and Raes some of the finest Bentijn wine from France. This time also, Zwane had a good look at the otherwise inconspicuous Raes van Lake. They did not exchange one word except please and thank you, even less a flirting glance. When Raes left the Bentijn house, he was not in a high mood.

But then, he heard feet running behind him and turned, and saw the girl Zwane, panting, standing in front of him. She gave him a paper her father wanted Raes to have, and which her father had forgotten to hand him over. She murmured, standing in front of him, head bowed whether they might have a walk together. She was going to her aunt in the *Hoogpoort*.

Raes had no business in the *Hoogpoort*, but he would have given an arm and invented whatever business she wanted to talk only for a few moments alone with Zwane.

The talk progressed more than pleasantly. It lasted many more streets than ran between the *Brabantstraat* and the *Hoogpoort*! When Raes van Lake brought Zwane to near the *steen* of her aunt, he was allowed to kiss her hand. Zwane agreed to see Raes van Lake again.

Zwane Bentijn said nothing about her true feelings to Raes van Lake. Still, the handsome young man with the elegant manners, who spoke with forceful arguments, had seduced her. She too had been thinking about marriage lately. She looked with her own intelligence at the sons from the old lineages of Ghent.

She was far from seduced by their haughty, condescending manners with women. She wanted a man who could build his own future, not one who would inherit a future. She wanted a man with firm and noble opinions and values. Could she really fall in love with any man? She was not sure. She did not know what love meant! She only knew a marriage was a project for life. Who did she want to share her life with? She was not in love with Raes van Lake, she thought, but she sensed she could have a fine life-time marriage with him. She perceived instinctively he would respect her, and what she could give him would be received good-heartedly and eagerly. Their children would be fine boys and girls. She thought she could be agreeable and passionate in bed, give lustily what a man would expect. She did not need a husband to confide in her about his business. That was a man's responsibility. Zwane was convinced Raes van Lake could give her what she sought in terms of money, fine robes and glittering jewels, a beautiful home, protection, and intelligent children. Yes, Raes van Lake would make a fine husband! Raes had potential, even more than he was aware of. Zwane would entice the potential in Raes to realise more than Raes suspected.

There was only one issue!

The issue was Zwane Bentijn's parents! Zwane's parents were *Leliaerts*, though no knights. Zwane's father would object to a marriage with a *Klauwaert*, with a not very well-to-do weaver of Ghent, even though Raes was a draper already. Raes was not a man of the old lineages. He was no knight.

Zwane had seen her father talking very recently to a young man of the better families, with Jehan Panneberch. Jehan was the son of Clais Panneberch, a *Leliaert* also, a man of the old families of landowner-poorters. Clais Panneberch had already been an alderman. He worked together with her father on business ventures. Jehan Panneberch was a tall young man, of

about six or seven years older than Zwane. She found him an insufferable bloater! Jehan was tall and lither, but as ugly in face and limbs as the backdoor of her house. She squealed inwardly in horror when she had to imagine that man above her, naked, making love to her in bed. Never! She wouldn't have Jehan. She felt her parents had already decided to marry her to this Panneberch. The Panneberchs came more often than necessary to her house in the Brabantstraat, and each time Zwane had to sit at the large table in front of Jehan. No, no, no, Zwane did not want Jehan Panneberch. She wanted Raes van Lake!

Raes met Zwane Bentijn more often, and several times in one week too! He wondered how Zwane continued to escape from her house alone and for hours. He didn't ask. He was too happy he could see and talk with Zwane.

After two meetings, they held hands. Zwane didn't object. After one meeting more, they kissed on the lips. The next meeting found them embracing passionately behind a row of trees on the *Reep*. Then Raes could move his hands over Zwane's breasts and press, and caress her lovingly over her back. He confessed he was in love. Zwane also told she loved Raes, although she did not know for sure what love was. She only felt her blood run hotter in her veins when Raes held her in his arms. When Raes had embraced her, he had brought to life new feelings in Zwane, of which she was absolutely unsure. She ardently desired Raes van Lake!

Raes began to speak of going to her father to ask for her hand in marriage.

'Yes,' whispered Zwane then, 'but we have something to do first. Can we meet and talk somewhere in a house without being seen and disturbed by anyone?'

'I have my own house,' Raes stammered, uncertain about what could come of such a visit. 'It would not be very seemly to bring you there.'

'Tomorrow, after noon, I want you to show me your house, Raes van Lake!'

Raes was not a little surprised. He merely thought Zwane Bentijn wanted to see for herself whether he had a fine house for her or not. Raes van Lake had no fears he could not satisfy Zwane on that point. He had decorated his hall and rooms with the finest of tapestries and beautiful old furniture, all in oak, of the van Lake family. He had bought silver vases and candelabras from a friend. Fine linen cloth lay on the table. He prided in a hearth of stone. The wooden beams gleamed waxen in his rooms.

The next day, Raes van Lake brought Zwane Bentijn to his house. He had dismissed his servants for the day, simply by sending them to the other house, to his mother's. Zwane could admire his house on her own.

Zwane entered Raes's house, her blood on fire and as hot as the flames in the hearth. She saw Raes's hall and thought well of it. She grumbled approvingly.

She asked immediately, 'can I see the bedrooms? Where are they? Show them to me!'

'Do you think that appropriate?' Raes objected, but Zwane had already taken his hand and pushed open a door she thought might lead upstairs. The door actually led to Raes's stables, but one could walk through the corridor and then to the stairs. Raes directed her to the right place.

Zwane looked around in Raes's bedroom.

She commented, 'this will do fine!'

It was cold in the room, but Zwane liked the tingling freshness. In a few odd moments, she threw off all her clothes, let them drop around her, and stood in a nick of time completely naked in front of Raes. Raes stood, still fully clothed, open-mouthed, staring at her whiteness. Zwane laughed, as Raes was so thunder-struck. She pushed her firm breasts higher by a movement of her chest. She curved her back more. She held her face somewhat oblique. She remarked clearly the lust in Raes's eyes. Then, she jumped against Raes and pushed him down on the bed.

Two days later, Raes van Lake asked to speak to Zwane Bentijn's father.

Ser Bentijn was no fool. He was not often at home, but his wife had told him about Zwane's unexplained, sometimes lied-about absences from home. He had seen the young van Lake turn a little too red in the face around his daughter. He received Raes van Lake solemnly in his hall. He remained seated, while Raes stood and stated, almost stammering, the subject of his visit. The young scoundrel wanted to marry his daughter! Zwane's father remained polite, but firm. He told Raes Zwane had already been promised to a young man of the lineages of landowner-poorters of Ghent.

Raes assured he too had some money. He explained he was working together with other well-known poorters and merchants of Ghent, with Juris Vresele and William van Artevelde. He explained his reputation in delivering some of the very best cloth in Ghent was unequalled. He worked together with the best fuller and the best dyers in town. Zwane's father was astonished at the amounts of profits Raes mentioned, and at the respected names Raes cited. The fortune of Raes was modest, but considerable for such a young man. Zwane's father mollified a little, but he still kept in mind the far greater fortune and reputation of the Panneberchs. He twice refused Raes.

Raes had expected a refusal. He could not add much more to what he had already blurted out. He pronounced a solemn greeting of respect to Zwane's father, and opened the door of the hall to escape.

In the door opening stood Zwane Bentijn! She had been waiting for Raes to leave the hall. When she saw Raes's sad, dejected face, she knew what had happened. She had expected no more. She took Raes's hand and drew him back into the hall. They stood hand in hand in front of her father. Zwane's mother also arrived.

'Father,' began Zwane, 'you refused us to marry. You must know Raes loves me, and I love him. If you truly refuse Raes, you must know shame will come over this house, for I am expecting a child by Raes. I am no virgin anymore. If necessary, my mother may confirm this whenever she wants.'

Zwane stamped with her foot on the stones in the hall, 'I want and I must therefore marry Raes van Lake. I shall not, you hear, marry any other man, however rich and important that man may be. I want a fine wedding. We must hurry, for soon, everybody in Ghent will see what Raes and I have been doing!'

For a few moments, the Bentijns' hall in the *Brabantstraat* sounded with angry shouts of indignation, and with the high shrieks of Zwane's outraged mother. Somewhat later, the shrieks turned to uncontrolled sobbing. Insults were thrown at Zwane's address, and even more to Raes van Lake's impudence. What kind of a man was he to abuse of a child? Zwane

grinned, called her father an old fool. That made Zwane's father almost choke in his chair. Grain brandy was needed to calm his nerves.

Raes stayed on. Nobody seemed to ask him to leave. He and Zwane argued. When Raes van Lake finally did leave the house, a long time later, the sky darkening to evening, he left in the knowledge he could marry Zwane Bentijn. Other members of the family had been called in, among whom a reverend priest, and Zwane had even secured a decent dowry.

Zwane Bentijn and Raes van Lake married in the Weavers' Chapel, not far from both their homes. They married rapidly. Although Zwane was no virgin anymore, she was also not pregnant at that time. Only Zwane and Raes knew that, but Zwane had made Raes swear to not reveal her secret. It was true Raes had wondered how Zwane could have been with child so soon after their first love-making. When Zwane Bentijn wanted something, she usually got her way. She had feigned being pregnant, and she had got Raes van Lake. In fact, Zwane became pregnant soon after their marriage early in 1304, but her two first children died at birth. Their first surviving son was born only six years later. Zwane sometimes thought of this as a punishment of God for having lied to her parents. She never regretted having done so. She also never in her life regretted having married Raes van Lake!

Two men raged far more than Zwane Bentijn's father. Clais Panneberch had still not digested the refusal of John Denout to full for him. Clais did not succeed in obtaining the same quality of cloth as Raes van Lake. He felt frustrated and disappointed in his efforts to be reputed for selling the finest cloth of Ghent. Now, he had been humiliated terribly, as his son had been rebuked by the Bentijns as their son-in-law. How could that be possible? And who would marry Zwane Bentijn? No less than the same Raes van Lake John Denout worked for! Raes van Lake and John Denout definitely were the tormentors of the Panneberchs! A lesson should be taught to that ambitious, upstart nobody called Raes van Lake!

Raes van Lake had only been married for a few days, when late in the evening, one of the cloth inspectors of the weavers' guild knocked on his door. Raes invited the man in, despite the late hour. Zwane served wine. The man told he had fought in the Battle of Kortrijk. Raes nodded. He had seen the man roaming on the battlefield, like himself, the evening of the remarkable 11<sup>th</sup> of July of 1302.

'Men who fought in that battle should help each other,' the man said.

Raes nodded again, waiting for what would come next. Did the man need money from him?

'There will be a special, unannounced inspection of cloth in the *Lakenhalle*, in the Cloth's Hall tomorrow,' the man continued.

Raes's eyebrows lifted.

'I will be one of the inspectors,' the man whispered, but there will be others. You must allow me some excuse. I looked at some of your lesser quality cloth. As it happens, some of that cloth does not conform to the right measures, up to the last inch.'

Raes said nothing, acknowledged nothing. He knew perfectly well some of the cloth did not conform. So would half of all the lesser quality currently stored in the Cloth's Hall. He had placed some cloth in stock at his usual place, under his better cloth. He had been certain there would have been no inspection at this time of the week. What the man told him was a special inspection on denunciation. His cloth would go to Brabant salesmen, who would still work to stretch the cloth. Raes had no rights to sell this cloth in Ghent, with the seal of the Cloth Hall,

but who cared? Measures of the lesser quality cloth didn't need to be so accurate. Still, would he be found out, he would have to pay heavy fines, maybe lose his permission to sell cloth from out of the Ghent Cloth's Hall. He had hoped on the seal.

'Tell me,' Raes asked, 'the men who asked for a special inspection, who are they? Could they be the Panneberchs?'

The man nodded. 'You guessed right,' he smiled. 'Since you could marry the Bentijn girl, the Panneberchs cannot tell one good word of you. Please do not tell anybody I warned you. I will be very early in the Cloth's Hall. You could come early to the Hall tomorrow, and remove the cloth that does not conform. I will put the seal of the Hall in your store. If needed, I can delay the other inspectors some, but ultimately they will want to measure your bales.'

'I understand,' Raes van Lake sighed. 'I thank you. I am in your debt. I will remove my cloth tomorrow, early.'

'Don't mention it,' the inspector answered. 'Like I said, men of the 11<sup>th</sup> of July should stick together.'

'So we should, yes,' Raes agreed.

They shook hands. The man did not stay. He took his coat, pushed his hood over the head, and left.

The next day, Raes van Lake brought a horse and a chariot to the *Lakenhalle*. John Denout was with him. Together, they placed the bales that were short in measure on the chariot. John Denout rode off to bring the cloth to the stretching frames.

Raes van Lake stayed in the hall. Late in the morning, the inspectors of the weavers' guild made a remarked appearance in the Cloth Hall. They announced a surprise inspection. Out of a corner of his eyes, Raes saw the Panneberchs, father and son, entering the hall at the same time. They walked at leisure, grinning, holding hands crossed at their back. They came to stand not far from where Raes van Lake showed his cloth to buyers. They had come to gloat. The inspectors measured Raes's cloth, and measured again, but they could not find other cloth than of the correct length and width. No discussions even ensued about the dimensions. The inspectors went on, but sent angry looks at the Panneberchs. One of the inspectors even went up to the Panneberchs and whispered a few phrases to them. The Panneberchs were obviously surprised and upset. Raes drew an innocent face. The inspector who had come to his house smiled encouragingly. The inspectors placed the needed seals on Raes's cloth, then they moved on to the next inspection.

The Panneberchs left the Hall in a hurry, perturbed, discussing angrily, and gesticulating wildly to each other.

A little later, Raes van Lake walked from the Weavers' Hall to his house. He had participated in a meeting of the weavers. He walked by small alleys. In one of those, a man sprang in front of him, swinging a long knife in his right hand. The man had run into the alley from the other side. He had known how Raes would walk home. Raes took off his coat, winded it around his left arm. He jumped to the porch of a gate and glued to the wall behind him. Raes sensed another presence. A second man had run into the alley from the other side. This man too showed his knife. They lunged. The two men were excellent dagger-fighters, but Raes also had his long knife in his hand, and he had fought in the Groeninge Field! He found twice the energy of each of the murderers. He slashed the first deep in the arm, and hurt the other

severely in the belly. He too had by then received a long slice over his breast. The wound hurt like hell, but he continued to hold his position.

The man who was hurt in the arm bled profusely. He couldn't keep his knife in his right hand steady. He placed his knife in his left hand, but he wasn't so good with the knife in that hand. Raes threatened him with a few thrusts at the belly. The man fled.

The other murderer was bent double, leaning against a wall. Raes wasn't sure the man would survive. Raes went over to the man, placed his knife under the man's throat and asked by whom he had been hired to do his gruesome work.

'Panneberch,' the man hissed.

Raes let him drop to the ground. He considered for a moment killing the man, but he ran out of the alley. He ran straight to his house, and collapsed in the arms of Zwane Bentijn. He was all covered in blood.

Zwane Bentijn washed the wound of her husband. She brought him to his bedroom with the help of two servants. She closed the wound as well as she could. A wound of the Battle of Kortrijk had been opened. Zwane Bentijn sent out a servant to call a barber. The barber arrived quickly. He sewed the wound tight. The man gave her some medicine. He said her husband would be all right.

Raes van Lake developed a fever that night, and the fever lasted for two days. His old wound opened again, but did not fester. The wounds healed well. Zwane stayed at her husband's bed for four days, until he definitely felt better. She prepared strong broths for him to take on force again.

Raes van Lake had been wondering whether Zwane truly loved him. When he saw the tears in her eyes, he no longer doubted. Zwane truly cared for him. Zwane also no longer doubted. She too had found love.

Raes van Lake's friends came to visit him. Juris Vresele and William van Artevelde came together to console him with their finest wine. John Denout and his wife came, and also Arnout de Hert. Many others came to say hello or to ask Zwane how her husband went. Two of these men had surely been sent by the Panneberchs, Raes knew. The Panneberchs had wanted to know how bad or how good Raes's health was. Raes let it be known to these men that if ever he got attacked still one more time, he would fight off his assailants as efficiently he had done this time. He knew very well who had sent the murderers, he told. He would kill the men who had sent the hired killers, burn down their house with everybody in it, at a moment they did not expect any harm. No more attacks reached him after this warning.

Juris Vresele and William van Artevelde appealed to the new aldermen to revoke the decision of confiscation of their lands and funds perpetrated by the *Leliaert* regime. The aldermen judged and concluded Juris and William had been unjustly sentenced to cede their possessions to the city treasury. They could recuperate what they had lost, as far as their possession had not been sold off yet.

Juris and William got only back about one third of their lands and less than one tenth of their money. They considered this restitution as a new beginning. With these funds and with the booty from the Battle of Kortrijk, however modest, they could take up their trading in earnest again, to the quantities they were used to.

Raes van Lake, Juris Vresele and William van Artevelde placed some of their funds together in new business ventures after this incident. Trading was very difficult in those years for everybody. The war between Flanders and France continued unabatedly. Especially grain was needed for bread in Ghent, but the roads to Picardy had been closed. Raes, Juris and William risked money in contraband grain from Picardy over the borders with Picardy. They smuggled grain into Hainault, then into Brabant, and from there to Flanders. The man Raes van Lake found willing to take great risk bringing the grain sacks over the frontier into Flanders, was Arnout de Hert. Only Raes van Lake knew which shipper had helped them.

## 2.4. Fulk's Chronicles. The Aftermath. July 1302 - August 1304.

After the Battle of Kortrijk on the 11<sup>th</sup> of July, the Flemish war leaders and the militiamen of the city of Bruges launched a series of expeditions to win back the south of Flanders from the French noblemen.

'Wait, wait,' Brother Bernardus exclaimed to me.

He ran into my cell while I was writing these parts of my chronicles. I sensed him quite excited.

'Why was the Battle of Kortrijk so important?' he wondered. 'After all, it was but a small battle in view of the numbers of warriors involved! Only Bruges invested in the battle, and then not even all the militiamen of Bruges were sent to the Groeninge. A few men from Ieper and from Ghent fought, and some knights I might call either adventurers or foolhardy idlers, knights who didn't know what to do with their life except killing. I may seem a little impudent here, but certainly not much. As to the inglorious French army, I take it for sure the royal army of Robert d'Artois had been called together in haste, one of the reasons why so many of the highest lords of the country rode in Artois' army. It was only a small part of what the king of France could normally call together. The other knights and barons simply could not make it in time. Had Artois waited some longer, he might have yet crushed the Flemish with larger numbers of knights. The French contingent of men-at-arms on foot was almost non-existent but for the crossbowmen, and played no role of any real significance.'

'All true,' I reflected. 'And yet, the importance of the battle was at the same time seismic and symbolic. I agree it was a battle of about ten thousand men against ten thousand other men only. We have heard of battles where many more men stood in front of each other, certainly in the ancient times. The battle proved the French royal army was not invincible. It could be defeated. It proved an army of the Flemish cities, an army mainly of commoners and but a few knights, could defeat a grand army constituted of the knights of France. The structure of society had been overthrown. Another kind of power had dared to challenge the power of the aristocracy of France, and what is more, it had won. The numbers and the quality of the knights of France killed was so high, a second or third such battle would have depleted France of its nobles.

Do you understand? The cities of Flanders could bring into the field new militiamen by the droves. French knights of the quality killed, like the Spartiates in the Peloponnesian wars of old, were in very short supply. The court of France had been decimated! It had been humbled by commoners! Also, the basic tactics of the French feudal army had failed! Wild charges with couched lances onto an enemy waiting in a battlefield, had been proved a thing of the past. King Philip IV must have trembled with fear. So many things had changed! The existing image of power had been demolished. France was suddenly shown to be not more powerful than the cities of Flanders! A giant had been slain, a giant had been born!

And there was more! The victory created an entirely different situation in the county and its relations with France. The revolts in Bruges and the battle, liberated Flanders' heartland of the French occupiers. The French fled from the county. Almost overnight, Flanders became from an occupied land a land in which the count could rule again. French garrisons continued to keep the cities and regions only in the southern parts, in those parts mostly where French

was spoken, even though the population there was not eager to recognise the king as their overlord. Count Guy also spoke French! The troops of the count had suddenly grown from a few hundred knights and warriors to a potential of tens of thousands of urban militia warriors! The sons of Count Guy could put an army in the field, larger than even the king of France could muster, and certainly larger than the king could pay for! The situation in Flanders had been turned over entirely with this one battle! The loss of power of the king had been shown openly. The Flemish, the sons of Count Guy of Dampierre would now wage and control the war, wherever they wanted. And they did just that, in the north and in the south! Of course, the king of France too had not said his last word. War was on.'

'I see,' thought Brother Bernardus, his hands around his cheeks and his arms resting on my table. 'It truly must have been earth-shattering for the king!'

He grinned, 'that suited him well. God punished him for being so wicked.'

I too grinned. Bernardus stood, picked up my last notes and disappeared through the door. It was one of the few instants I had been able to bluff him. But I thought I had been right, too, in my analysis.

### The Beginning of the Flemish Military Campaigns

The Flemish armies immediately started several military expeditions to the south of Flanders. French garrisons still held castellanies and towns in those regions.

The day after the battle, the people of Ghent revolted against the aldermen. This happened even before the triumphant arrival of Jan Borluut in the city. Some of the prominent Leliaerts were killed by the mob. Most *Leliaerts* had preferred to abandon power surreptitiously. They fled to where they could.

On the 15<sup>th</sup> of July, Willem van Jülich and Guy de Namur entered Ghent. The seven hundred guildsmen of Jan Borluut preceded the warriors of the grandson and of the son of Count Guy de Dampierre. They were triumphantly received by the commoners. The population cheered. According to the best of Flemish and Ghent tradition, the people feasted the victory at the Battle of Kortrijk with banquets and balls and much mirth. The relatives of the count stayed for seven days feasting in Ghent.

Around that time, a French fleet sailed into the port of Sluis with provisions for the French army. The Flemish men-at-arms and sailors captured the load of the fleet. They also pushed back a fleet from Holland that had sailed to Flanders in support of the French invasion. The count of Holland was Jean II d'Avesnes, allied to King Philip IV.

The English court received the news of the French defeat at Kortrijk with much gloating. In Rome, the pope's servants woke up Michael as Clokettes, the delegate of Flanders, in the middle of the night. They escorted Michael to the pope's palace. Boniface VIII himself presented the good news to the canon of Soignies.

In France, the cities immediately grasped the signification of the outcome of the battle. The people of Toulouse and Bordeaux revolted. They chased the representatives of the king from their towns. The victory of the Flemish commoners created hope for better living conditions. In the town of Tournai and in the towns of Brabant, the ally of France, and in Liège, the weaver guilds sought recognition of their political powers. They claimed participation in the

towns' administrations. Revolts to this end happened in Brussels, Leuven, Zoutleeuw and 's Hertogenbosch of Brabant.

In Bruges, the poorters feasted Pieter de Koninck and Jan Breydel, their two new knights. John of Namur, the oldest son in the second marriage of Guy de Dampierre, arrived at Bruges. The *Klauwaerts* recognised him as the foremost representative of the count of Flanders. He received a new army of guildsmen from Ieper and Ghent. With these, he marched to Lille and set a siege to the city. The French garrison of Lille rapidly promised to surrender if they were not relieved by an army of the king of France after two weeks. Lille opened its gates on the 6<sup>th</sup> of August of 1302. The Frenchmen of Douai asked for the same conditions. The Flemish entered Douai shortly after Lille. Béthune was the next town to surrender. The Flemish army then set up camp at Évin, near Douai. From there, the Flemings pillaged a few villages of Artois. John of Namur refused to tolerate such excesses. He simply sent the largest part of the Flemish army back home. He told he disposed of enough knights to hold the south of Flanders.

In France, King Philip IV, his first shock dissipated, convinced himself to a great rage. Flanders was not his only issue in the government of France. He was lacking funds for his initiatives - once more. He had run out of money - again. He had devaluated his golden coins by about one third in successive measures, which had made him hated in France, and he needed much, much money for his campaigns in Flanders and in Guyenne. Despite this issue, he soon sent out the *bans* and *arrière-bans*, the letters ordering to raise a new army that was to wreak vengeance for the insult done to him at Kortrijk. It took Philip the Fair one month to raise the second royal army.

In August of 1302, the Flemish army continued its program of re-conquest. The castle of Cassel surrendered. In the north-east, the fortress of Dendermonde, occupied by a French garrison under Godefroi de Vierson, resisted all attacks.

By the end of the month of August, on the 29<sup>th</sup>, the king of France had brought his new army to Arras. He marched it to near Douai. King Philip IV had succeeded in bringing together about twenty thousand knights, squires and mounted men-at-arms. A very large number of footmen marched behind his army of knights.

Instead of offering battle, the king proposed negotiations with Flanders.

The first talks took place in a ruined church near Douai. For France, the new *Connétable* Gaucher de Châtillon, count of Porcien, and the courtier Jean de Châlons, met with Jan van Renesse, Jean d'Escornay and Boudewijn van Popperode for Flanders. The Flemish proposed to discuss a peace treaty. They granted an overseas pilgrimage to be made by the sons of the count of Flanders with five hundred knights and one thousand poorters of the cities of Flanders. They would have a new monastery built at Groeninge. Jean de Châlons demanded much more. He wanted King Philip IV to be recognised as he Lord of Flanders. Flanders would thus be added to the royal domains, no less. The final aim of King Philip had been revealed shamelessly in all its intensity and ruthlessness. The French delegates also wanted the rebels of Bruges who had stood in the Groeninge Field to be punished, at the pleasure of the king, though the men would not be killed.

The sons and grandson of Count Guy de Dampierre could not accept such outrageous conditions. They understood King Philip IV had only wanted to gain time. The king and the court had hoped that the militias of Flanders would have disbanded if they could draw on the time long enough. The Flemish army had been formed near Douai to stop the king's progress. They waited patiently. The French court had hoped the Flemish militiamen would have returned home during the delays. The Flemish remained more tenaciously in place! They had found food and fodder for their horses on the other side of Douai, at the abbey of Flines. King Philip the Fair's ruse did not work. It backlashed. Soon, the French army ran out of food and fodder! The French had been caught at their own game.

Willem van Jülich wanted to attack the French at their camp of Vitry, for obviously the French dared not leave their camp and form their battle formations. He had already ordered the construction of a pontoon bridge over the River Scarpe.

On the 20<sup>th</sup> of September, the French army suddenly retreated to Arras. The French knights abandoned in their camp large quantities of wine and provisions of food. Why did the French army suddenly flee from giving battle?

Some scholars have argued Philip IV had received at that time a disquieting letter from his sister, the queen of England. Negotiations between delegates from Flanders and from England had indeed been undertaken. Among the Flemish delegates was one Gerard van Zottegem. The queen had heard the Flemish sought a new battle ardently. They desired to capture King Philip and hand him over in chains to the English king. Philip the Fair had taken a fright from this perspective.

Others have said the French king and his court heard false rumours of another Flemish army that was marching to surprise the French king from behind Arras. This might have been arranged with the duke of Brabant. The duke had changed sides! He must have heard from before the Battle of Kortrijk, that Philip IV had wanted Geoffrey de Brabant, his faithful ally, to rule over Brabant. The current duke John II, married to an English princess, had concluded a peace treaty with Jan Breydel of Bruges after the Battle of Kortrijk.

Both perspectives horrified King Philip IV the Fair after the Golden Spurs Battle! He retreated, and rode back to Paris.

### More Flemish Raids

On the 1<sup>st</sup> of October of 1302, after having remained with the troops in the field for more than forty days, the Flemish army still worked in the south of Flanders. It burned down the town of Sint-Amands in the Pévèle region. The army attempted a surprise assault against Tournai, but broke off the siege rather quickly. Tournai was too well defended.

A regular government was being set up in Flanders. John of Namur, the oldest son from Count Guy's second marriage, exercised the highest authority in the county. His brother, Guy de Namur, was elected as captain of Bruges.

Willem van Jülich receded to the background. The people of Flanders could accuse him of necromancy. He indulged in frivolous expenditures, and frequented bad company. An absurd rumour ran Willem thought the Black Arts made him invisible on the battlefield. In the last days of November 1302, he travelled to the Land of Waas. He fortified the Castle of

Rupelmonde. From there, he did not hesitate to pillage the environs. He sank in a bitter mood. He threatened to attack the Castle of Beveren. In the month of December, he reconciled with John and Guy de Namur, and swore loyalty to them.

The Flemish program of regaining previously lost territory continued. The sons of Count Guy de Dampierre fully exploited their new-found military resources of the militias of the Flemish cities. They almost considered these resources unlimited.

On the 14<sup>th</sup> of October, a Bruges military expedition marched against Gravelines. The Bruges men captured the town. Another army of the cities' militiamen moved out of Bruges as of the 2<sup>nd</sup> of November. The sons of Count Guy mainly used Bruges as the source for their military force.

In the winter of from 1302 to 1303, the king of France had kept still many French garrisons in the towns of south Flanders. The army of Flanders had to expel these garrisons one by one. The town and castle of Dendermonde were freed that same winter.

At the beginning of the year 1303, King Philip the Fair sacrificed Guyenne to the English troops. He neglected Guyenne for Flanders. He also wanted his army to be led by the able Otto of Burgundy, but the man was killed by a troop of Flemish warriors near the fortified church of Buyssechre, on the heights of Ballimberge. In June of 1303, in a bout of good mood and willingness to peace, King Philip ceremoniously restored the duchy of Guyenne to King Edward's representatives in the church of Saint-Émilion.

By the end of February and the beginning of March 1303, the Flemings launched an offensive against Hainault, the ally of France and arch-enemy of Flanders.

The Flemish leaders then turned their attention to Zeeland. Guillaume d'Avesnes, the son of John II d'Avesnes, had used the opportunity of the French-Flemish war in the south to march to Zeeland with a small army. That army had captured Vere, a town on the island of Walcheren. The town of Vere belonged feudally to the counts of Flanders.

Before Count Guy de Dampierre had been taken a prisoner, he had given Zeeland, still considered a fief of Flanders, to his son, Guy de Namur. Guy was eager to win the lands presented to him by his father. He longed to be called count of Zeeland in earnest. John and Guy de Namur gathered an army and left for Zeeland. Willem van Jülich stayed for a while alone to defend Flanders.

Zeeland had always belonged to Flanders, but was currently considered a part of Holland. Jean II d'Avesnes was count of Hainault and of Holland. He too considered Zeeland part of his fiefs. The expedition of the Dampierre sons was thus directed against their old enemies of the d'Avesnes family. Not only did Flanders attack Zeeland, a Flemish army also invaded Hainault and wreaked havoc there. A third Flemish army captured the bishopric of Thérouanne. The Flemish also sent an embassy to Rome to ask for a separate diocese for Flanders.

The Flemish army left the port of Sluis with a considerable fleet on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of April of 1303. They sailed to the port of Vere on the island of Walcheren. Two armies of Zeeland confronted them. Guy de Namur defeated the first army. The knights and friends of Jan van Renesse and of Florent van Borseele had returned to their fiefs. They actively supported Guy

de Namur. The second Zeeland army was defeated by this group of knights of Zeeland who had remained loyal to the count of Flanders.

The Flemish set a siege to Middelburg. Guillaume of Hainault, the oldest son of Count John of Hainault, defended the town. After ten days, Guillaume asked to withdraw from the town. He abandoned Middelburg to Guy de Namur.

The Flemish army continued its conquest of Zeeland. It occupied the island of Schouwen, except for the town of Zierikzee.

The count of Hainault then proposed a truce to Guy de Namur, abandoning all the conquered territories to Guy. Guy de Namur had conquered Zeeland. He could now call himself truly the first count of Zeeland from the House of Dampierre.

During these campaigns of the sons of Count Guy de Dampierre, Willem van Jülich had not remained inactive in Flanders. He was with a considerable army at Ieper. On the 4<sup>th</sup> of April of 1303, he marched with his men to Cassel. Willem moved his troops around in the region, fighting the garrisons of the French.

A French force rode to the Church of Bassée, occupied by the Flemish. Near Pont-à-Wendin, the Flemish forces surrounded them and nearly annihilated them. The war raged on with many skirmishes in the region.

In France, King Philip the Fair was once more short on funds. He had also run out of credit with his people. In a sign of appeasement, the king publicly proclaimed the principles of the constitution of France, as agreed to by the former King Louis IX, Saint Louis. This reformation and limitation of the king's powers in France, was published on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of March of 1303.

Despite the good intentions with the declaration, on the 25<sup>th</sup> of March already, Philip IV announced a new set of taxes for France! Everybody in the kingdom who had one hundred pounds of income from his lands, had to give twenty pounds Tournois to the treasury of the king. Other, existing taxes, had to be paid in higher amounts. Philip was squeezing his kingdom dry of money. Philip the Fair extorted many taxes on his people, in disregard of his duties to the people. This was one of the facts Pope Boniface VIII reproached the king for with his bull *Unam Sanctam*.

### Philip of Chieti

In a sense, the royal declaration was also an answer to this papal bull *Unam Sanctam*, in which the pope had reminded Philip the Fair there existed next to the temporal power a spiritual power. King Philip granted the clergy several privileges, such as their immunity. He did not accept many of the claims of the pope to the limitation of the king's power over the clergy.

Pierre Flote, one of the victims of the Battle of Kortrijk, had died. Guillaume de Nogaret remained the main counsellor of King Philip IV in this conflict with the pope.

Guillaume de Nogaret was born in the south of France, in the Haute-Garonne. His father was a citizen of Toulouse, and may have been condemned as a heretic during the Albigensian crusade. Guillaume was a scholar of law at the University of Montpellier. Later, he became a member of the king's court at Paris, due to his knowledge of law and jurisprudence. He thus also became a close counsellor of King Philip IV.

On the 7<sup>th</sup> of March of 1303, Nogaret proposed a new line of attack on the Pope Boniface VIII. The pope should be treated as a heretic, a simoniac and a liar! Philip IV decided to call together a Church Council to judge the pope, depose him, and have another pope be elected. At the end of May 1303, Guillaume de Nogaret arranged to this end an assembly of the clergy of France, to be held in the Louvre.

During this assembly, held on the 13<sup>th</sup> of June 1303, over forty bishops and abbots being present, Guillaume de Plaisians, another counsellor of King Philip IV, indeed accused Pope Boniface VIII of bad faith and of bad morals. He accused the pope officially of heresy, idolatry, of nepotism and of dilapidation of the patrimonium of Saint Peter. The king approved the line of attack of Plaisians and of Nogaret. He asked publicly for a Concilium to judge the pope. The paper finally drawn up was supported by the University of Paris. Nogaret was sent to Rome to hand over the summons to Pope Boniface VIII. The confrontation between King Philip IV and Pope Boniface VIII could not be more open!

Around this time, another famed son of Guy de Dampierre arrived in Flanders, equally an excellent war leader. This was Philip of Chieti. Philip was the second oldest son of Count Guy, a man laden with fame for his military feats in Italy. He had married before 1285 Mathilde, the Italian countess of Chieti and Loretto. Philip of Chieti's wife, Mathilde de Courtenay, had died in 1301. Philip had married a second time with Pérenelle de Milly. He returned to Flanders, allegedly on insistent appeals of Pope Boniface VIII. Boniface had been for some time in open conflict with King Philip IV of France. Philip would remain in Flanders for the next three years, before returning to Sicily in 1306. Philip was immediately appointed to the function of Administrator of Flanders. The population received him with much honour and joy.

In 1303, the artisans of Ieper revolted against the aldermen of the city. They wanted more participation in the government of the city. They killed several aldermen and men of the ancient lineages. They forced the wealthy men to pay money to the guilds. Philip of Chieti restored order in Ieper by allowing the guilds to choose the aldermen of Ieper. Somewhat later, however, Guy de Namur revoked these measures. He had the leaders of the revolt beheaded. Guy sought to win the support of the patricians of the town, counting on their funding of his military enterprises.

The count of Chieti joined his forces with those of Willem van Jülich at Cassel, where a large Flemish army had thus assembled. Philip and Willem had at their disposal about fifty thousand warriors. Their aim was Saint-Omer.

### The Battle of Arques

The new *connétable* of France, Gaucher de Châtillon, sped to the defence of Saint-Omer. The militiamen of Ghent were already attacking the town. Miles de Noyers and Pierre de Courtisot, two French knights, attacked the troops of Ghent with about eight hundred knights.

The militias of Ghent were utterly surprised by the attack. They fled to the bridge of Arques, which was narrow. Many men of Ghent jumped in the River Aa, and drowned.

Pierre de Courtisot rode on to Cassel, but there he stumbled upon the main Flemish army, and was killed.

The *Connétable* de Châtillon marched towards Flanders. Willem van Jülich sent a messenger to de Châtillon with a letter. He warned the *connétable* not to attempt an attack on Flanders. He threatened to stop de Châtillon already in French territory. De Châtillon merely answered Willem van Jülich could do what he thought God expected of him.

Willem van Jülich drew his army then to Arques near Saint-Omer. The Flemish army passed the River Aa, and set up its battle formations in front of Arques. Willem surprised the French garrison and put fire to the town. A few tens of French men-at-arms were killed. De Châtillon marched to meet the Flemish army.

The French rode out of Saint-Omer, and equally organised their battles. They had about five thousand horse riders and thirty thousand footmen. The French could also count on Italian mercenaries in their midst, the experienced warriors of the *Condottiere* Castruccio Castracani. Castracani's men wore lances of thirty-two feet long, which particularly impressed the Flemings.

Willem van Jülich placed his men in a triangular or crown form, a very defensive position, with pikes and *goedendags* stuck outward. The French tried to break the formation, but they didn't succeed.

Gaucher de Châtillon did not risk giving further battle! He suddenly turned his army and brought it to Théroouanne. The episode has been called the Battle of Arques. Willem van Jülich had stopped Gaucher de Châtillon from invading Flanders!

A few knights remained inside Saint-Omer, led by the lords of Fiennes, of Morteul, Brissac and van Haveskerke. The garrison held out for nine days, and then escaped to the rest of the French army. Willem van Jülich and Philip of Chieti took Saint-Omer!

The French army retreated farther. The Flemish took Théroouanne, which was defended for a while by the Italian mercenaries. Théroouanne was burnt, as well as a great number of French villages and castles in the environs. The Flemish had brought the war to France! The Flemings justified their incursions by saying the ravages served as revenge for the many Flemish villages destroyed by the French armies. For the second time, however, a major French royal army had fled before the Flemish militiamen!

King Philip IV meanwhile, had enormous difficulties to raise sufficient funds for the war. He asked the most important abbots and archbishops to defend the kingdom. The king of France also prohibited all relations with the county of Flanders. Again, the commerce between Flanders and Picardy was interrupted.

In September of 1303, the sons of Count Guy of Dampierre set once more a siege to the royal city of Tournai. The French garrison of that town had been pillaging the environs of Lille. Philip of Chieti held Lille with a Flemish garrison.

A French army set siege to Lille. King Philip IV proposed the town to surrender. Philip of Chieti accepted to abandon Lille if no relief had arrived by the 1<sup>st</sup> of October of 1303. The

French troops stopped their attacks on the town, but kept the siege. New French troops joined this royal army constantly.

King Philip IV had indeed gathered a new army!

This army camped at Péronne. The king, still not eager to confront directly the Flemish militias, sent the count of Savoy to propose a truce in the war until the 1<sup>st</sup> of May of the next year, 1304.

The Flemish leaders had no advantage in accepting a truce, but the count of Savoy could also promise to free Guy de Dampierre, the father of the three sons who ruled over Flanders. The liberty of Guy de Dampierre would not last long, for he would have to swear to return to France at the end of the truce.

The Flemish war leaders accepted. They broke off the siege of Tournai. The French army returned to France. Lille did not have to surrender, and remained Flemish.

This was the second time the king of France personally returned in shame to Paris, the third time for a major French army to retreat and avoid a confrontation after the Battle of Kortrijk.

The truce with Flanders began in October of 1303. At the same time, the French king had already started preparing a new war in Flanders. He ordered everybody in the kingdom who had an income of one hundred pounds of rent to bring one knight to the royal army and six footmen-at-arms per one hundred hearths. The barons of France would have to pay themselves for the men they brought to the army. With this measure, King Philip the Fair extended the number of noblemen and of prominent men who would have to bring warriors to his army.

The king published the *bans* and *arrière-bans* in the first two weeks of October 1303. He published them from out of Château-Thierry, where he then resided. He addressed the *bans* to his barons, to the men who were directly his vassals. The king could not really address the vassals of his vassals, but he wanted as many men as possible in the royal army. He transgressed the feudal code by also publishing the *arrière-bans*, to his *arrière-vassals*, one line lower in rank of nobility. Philip IV appealed to his dukes and barons to bring in more money. At last, he had collected about seven hundred and fifty thousand pounds Tournois in his treasury. He could wage a war with a large army!

### [The Incident of Agnani](#)

King Philip IV also returned to Paris because he had serious issues to solve with Pope Boniface VIII. Pope Boniface VIII wanted to excommunicate King Philip IV! The pope reproached the French king for having ignored his advice, for having shown no respect for the papal authority, and for having maltreated the pope's delegates.

At the beginning of September of 1303, the court of Paris sent the confidant of King Philip, Guillaume de Nogaret to the residence of Boniface VIII at Agnani near Rome. Nogaret was to hand over to the pope the decisions of the University of Paris and of the king about the papal status.

Nogaret sought the help of a small army of mercenaries held by a *condottiere* called Rinaldo da Supino. Another small army, the troops of the Roman Colonna family, accompanied them.

The Colonna were also hostile to Pope Boniface. They were allies of France and sought the deposition of the pope to grab power in Rome for themselves.

In the night of from the 6<sup>th</sup> to the 7<sup>th</sup> of September, Nogaret, da Supino and Sciarra Colonna forced a gate of the small town of Agnani and invested it with their troops. On the 7<sup>th</sup>, the pope had to negotiate with Sciarra Colonna. The Colonna demanded no less than the abdication of Pope Boniface VIII. Guillaume Nogaret delivered his own message from the court of France to the pope, summoning the Church Father to be judged in France by a special Council of the Church.

Everything changed on the 8<sup>th</sup> of September. The inhabitants of Agnani revolted against the occupiers. They chased the army of Ronaldo da Supino and of Sciarra Colonna from their town.

Guillaume de Nogaret fled back to France. His mission had merely been to summon the pope to the Council, not to arrest the man. His mission was accomplished just in time. The attack on the pope was later called the 'Incident of Agnani'.

On the 12<sup>th</sup> of September, Pope Boniface could show himself again in public. He was a free man. The captains of Agnani had captured Rinaldo da Supino. Rinaldo was a prisoner of the people of Agnani. Da Supino was beheaded shortly after.

The pope returned to Rome, accompanied by a strong escort. He had to fight off the last men of Sciarra Colonna. By the 20<sup>th</sup> of September, the papal court could meet again in the Vatican.

But Pope Boniface was mortally ill! He died on the 11<sup>th</sup> of October of 1303.

The Roman cardinals elected as the successor of Boniface the bishop of Ostia, the Dominican Cardinal Nicolas Boccasini, who took the name of Benedict XI. Benedict XI immediately pronounced the excommunication of all the accomplices in the attack against the authority of the pope at Agnani.

Guillaume Nogaret fled from Italy to France, where he arrived by mid-October of 1303.

In Rome then reigned Pope Benedict XI. He did not remain pope for a long time. He died from poisoning in November of 1303 in Perugia.

### Mons-en-Pévèle

In October of 1303, to May 1304, Count Guy de Dampierre could finally leave his prison of the Louvre in Paris. The court of Paris told him he would have to negotiate a peace with France. He rode to the castle of Wijnendael in Flanders. He was an old man. His sons were his joy. They led their armies from victory to victory.

In Zeeland, Guy de Namur and his allied barons marched from glory to glory. The bishop of Utrecht was the brother of the count of Hainault. On the 20th of March of 1304, the bishop advanced with an army to the island of Duveland and devastated it. Florent of Borseele attacked the bishop and defeated him. Van Borseele took the bishop a prisoner and sent him in chains to Wijnendael. Guy of Namur moved to Zierikzee, on the island of Schouwen, but

he stayed only three days at the walls. After the surrender of Middelburg, Guillaume d'Avesnes had moved part of his army to this town of Zierikzee.

The Flemish troops had inspired terror in Holland. Delft, Leyden, Gouda and Schiedam opened their gates to Guy de Namur. The duke of Brabant, allied to Guy, attacked Dordrecht from the south.

Many barons of Holland then revolted against the Flemish. Led by Witte van Hamstede, they gathered an army of Holland.

Guy de Namur returned to Flanders to ask for reinforcements. He brought a new, powerful fleet with him and set a siege to Zierikzee. The count of Hainault-Holland, of course, asked for the support of King Philip the Fair.

Guy de Namur was so successful in his campaign in Holland, Duke John II of Brabant began to fear his own plans for Holland could be thwarted. Duke John I had agreed in 1283 to renounce certain regions in South-Holland to the county. The current duke wanted these territories back. Duke John entered Holland with troops. He had not agreed with Guy de Namur about this, so Guy could think Duke John threatened his army. King Philip IV thought he could use the dispute to intervene in his own favour this same evening.

On the 2<sup>nd</sup> of April of 1303, John of Namur had sent a delegation consisting of four Flemish knights and about twenty prominent men of the Flemish cities to England. Gerard van Zottegem, the head of the castellany of Ghent led the ambassadors of Flanders to England. They wanted to conclude a new anti-French alliance with King Edward I. Edward was preparing his Scottish campaign. He had not enough funds to war on two fronts. The Flemish would have to return home with empty hands. On the 20<sup>th</sup> of May 1303, King Edward I even agreed to an alliance with the French king. Edward promised to remain neutral in the French-Flemish conflict. Philip the Fair promised to not intervene in and help Scotland.

In the winter of 1303 to 1304, King Philip the Fair travelled in the Languedoc region. He visited his barons in the farthest regions of his realm. He visited the Languedoc to gather support, money and men for his campaigns in Flanders. He also rode to Clermont-Ferrand, to Bourges and Le Puy, to many other towns and regions. Near Flanders, the war continued without him, with multiple skirmishes being fought despite the truce. The Flemish troops dared frequent incursions into Artois. They even attacked Tournai. The Flemish attacked the fortified Church of Buysseheure near Cassel. A skirmish took place near Ballimberge. During this fight, Duke Otto of Burgundy was severely wounded. He died a little later at Melun. In these clashes, both the French and the Flemish armies knew limited victories and defeats.

In March of 1304, Guy de Namur, with Willem van Jülich and Philip of Chieti, reorganised their troops. They formed two battle formations that could march independently.

The first battle formation was constituted by the militias of Ghent and Bruges, and led by John de Namur. This army attacked Lessines. The Flemish wanted to capture Lessines because the warriors of the count of Hainault had attacked Oudenaarde and Geeraardsbergen from out of this town. The Flemish army captured Lessines, set the town on fire and pillaged it. They destroyed the walls and dismantled the gates.

Willem van Jülich commanded the second formation. In it marched the militiamen from Ieper, Veurne, Sint-Winoksbergen and other towns. They operated freely on the confines of Artois to counter the raids of the French garrisons of Saint-Omer, Lens, Béthune and Calais. When the new French *Connétable* Gaucher de Châtillon arrived at Saint-Omer, Willem van Jülich tried to set a siege to the town. He abandoned the siege rather soon, and moved to Cassel.

Around Easter, these troops of Willem van Jülich got split. The militias of Ieper marched to Arques and set fire to the village of Saint-Bertin. The troops fought not far from the troops of Sint-Winoksbergen, but Willem van Jülich was near Cassel. A group of *Leliaert* knights who fought in the army of France attacked by surprise the isolated groups of Ieper, killing hundreds of Flemish militiamen. The Flemish army had not been careful. Willem van Jülich arrived too late to avoid the defeat. Willem got blamed for the disaster. The next day, the Friday before Easter of 1304, Willem entered Cassel, a defeated man with a dented reputation.

Philip of Chieti had to resolve the delicate issue. The militiamen of Bruges and of Ghent disputed over which battalion of warriors should hold the first role in the Flemish army. Philip of Chieti lost time in reconciling both groups.

At the end of April of 1304, the truce with France ended, Count Guy de Dampierre prepared to return to France, to his prison.

King Philip the Fair asked for a prolongation of the truce until Saint John's Day in June of 1304. Philip was still gathering money for his new army. In May of 1304, he sent out the *bans* and *arrière-bans* to summon his barons. Once more, the royal feudal army had to gather at Arras. The army could march as of July 1304. It moved from Arras to Pont-à-Wendin.

The Flemish troops of Philip of Chieti took the small town before the French could arrive, and the Ghent militias pushed back the French front guard to the walls of Arras. They burned down the outer suburbs of the town of Lens. The militias of all the towns of Flanders rallied to Philip of Chieti!

King Philip wanted to attack Lille. For that, he had to use the roads the Flemish had captured. He marched his army to Douai, but this city closed its gates and held out against the French. In the town was a Flemish garrison led by Henry of Flanders, the youngest son of Count Guy of Dampierre. The French army continued to Tournai. It had followed the left bank of the Scarpe. The Flemish army had followed the movement by marching along the right bank of the Marque River. The Flemish army stopped and prepared to give battle. It had been reinforced with the troops of Willem van Jülich and of John of Namur. John had left Zeeland to fight here.

King Philip IV entered his city of Tournai on the 9<sup>th</sup> of August of 1304. He passed the Scheldt with his army, and marched it towards Orchies. On the 11<sup>th</sup> of August, he reached the hill called *Pevelenberg*, Mons-en-Pévèle in French. The Pevelenberg was more a small, soft-sloping, grassy hill than a mountain. It was dry, and so was the land around it, excellent terrain for wild charges of cavalry. As the Flemish troops had advanced to Pont-à-Marque, the French army stood in front of the Flemish militias.

On the 13<sup>th</sup> of August of 1304, the two armies looked each other in the eye. The Flemish prepared for battle, when French heralds rode into the Flemish formations announcing they brought a peace proposal to the Flemish leaders.

The cities of Flanders arduously desired the peace with France. French ambassadors arrived in the Flemish camp a little later. For France negotiated the dukes of Burgundy and Brittany, with the count of Savoie. For Flanders talked Gerard de Moor, the lords of Roubaix, Zottegem, and a dozen aldermen. These Flemish representatives demanded immediately the ancient liberties of Flanders to be recognised by the king. They accepted to pay a fine for the damages caused to the king.

In order to lead the discussions on, the French proposed a truce from the 13<sup>th</sup> of August to the 15<sup>th</sup> of the same month. In fact, King Philip was merely waiting for news about the war in Zeeland. He was delaying a battle until he heard of the defeat or victory of the Flemish at Zierikzee. The negotiations were not supposed to have any sort of outcome!

### England and Scotland

Like King Philip the Fair of France, King Edward I of England lacked funds. He could not pay for large garrisons in most of the Scottish towns and fortresses. The Scottish barons soon noticed how thinly spread the English resources in their country were. Any weakness of the English would be soon exploited!

In January of 1303, Scotland rose once more in revolt. A Scottish army led by John Comyn ambushed an English force near Edinburgh. King Edward I reacted immediately. He found the necessary funds from various fiscal sources. He squeezed the money out of everywhere he could, to raise a new army and answer the Scottish revolt. King Edward wanted to attack Comyn's power in the north of Scotland first. He had three pontoon bridges built over the Forth to pass the water with his army. The building of these bridges was an enormous undertaking, but Edward knew he could only subdue the Scots by using large means.

In the meantime, the Scots captured Selkirk Castle, but they could not capture Linlithgow. King Edward had mustered an army of ten thousand English warriors, three thousand five hundred Irish men-at-arms, and a considerable group of men from Wales. Robert Bruce, allied to the king, brought about two thousand men-at-arms to the English. A fleet of about one hundred forty ships accompanied the army and provisioned it.

At the end of May, the English army started its campaign in Scotland. The Scots were still attacking in the south and in the north of their territories.

By the 6<sup>th</sup> of June, the king had reached Linlithgow. He then had to turn south, because a number of Scottish troops had attacked the border with England. They were ravaging northern England! Edward sent a force led by Robert Bruce and Aymer de Valence to stop these pillages. He, in his turn, ravaged Scotland even more.

By August, King Edward had run out of money and half his footmen had deserted for not paid. By the end of August, the money the king needed arrived by ship, so that Edward could continue his campaign.

In early October of the same year 1303, most of the revolt in Scotland had ended! King Edward's large army had conquered the north and the south of Scotland. The English troops captured Comyn's castle at Lochindorb. Comyn nevertheless still freely raided central Scotland with about one hundred riders and one thousand footmen.

In January of 1304, Comyn and the Scottish barons allied to him surrendered to the king. Negotiations began. King Edward proved unusually lenient. He promised not to take the lives of the rebels. He merely announced he wanted to exile some of the most hated ones. What mattered most to King Edward, was that the Scottish rebels swore loyalty to him. Edward showed his magnanimity as the monarch also of Scotland.

In March of 1304, during a session of the Parliament at Saint Andrews, more than one hundred and thirty Scottish leaders swore allegiance to the king. In February of 1304, also John Comyn had knelt before King Edward I.

This was not the definite end of the Scottish revolt, for Stirling castle held out until the 24<sup>th</sup> of July. Stirling Castle surrendered after twelve weeks of heavy bombardments in which also Greek Fire was used. The king spared the lives of men of the garrison. Only then could King Edward I of England tell his courtiers once more a Scottish revolt had been quenched.

For King Edward, the war in Flanders was least in his mind!

## 2.5. Wouter de Smet. 1303-1304

Wouter de Smet was of about the same age as Raes van Lake in 1303, twenty-three years old. He was a blacksmith. He owned an inherited house on the *Sint-Veerle-Plein*, the Square of Saint Pharaïldis, near the *Gravensteen*, the Counts' Castle of Gent. Many blacksmiths had opened their workshops on that square. The castle garrisons and the troops that passed through Ghent and came to the Counts' Castle needed weapons, chain mail coats, and plate armour. They found iron nearby.

While Juris Vresele and Raes van Lake were rather short, stocky young men, Wouter de Smet was a giant. A very strong giant, made of heavy bones and muscles that lay on his arms and legs like the thickest ropes of a ship. His face was weathered from working in the sun and in the heat of the furnace. Wouter often worked outside, in the street on the square. His face was square with a strong jaw, and wrinkled. Wouter's face showed his honesty. It stood massive on a short neck. Wouter made a physically very imposing figure.

His hair stood brown, always scraggly, wild and untamed on his head. His eyes were of the same deep brown and dark under bushy, brown eyebrows. His nose was planted prominently, long and straight above a long mouth that showed a fleshy under lip and a thin upper one.

Wouter de Smet was an affable man. He smiled a lot, and was fully aware of his own force. Women felt secure with such a man, but also quite afraid of his strength. So far, he had not met a woman he might have truly liked. The truth was, women shied away from him. Maybe he was too much what they liked.

Wouter de Smet was a nice fellow. He was merely a blacksmith, but he prided in the knowledge he was one of the best smiths of Ghent. He combined hands as large as spades with nimble fingers. He could forge the largest pieces of iron and ply them under heat, as well as the smallest threads of steel, gold or silver.

Wouter was a blacksmith by profession. That was the trade he had learned from a master blacksmith. His real passion was working with gold and silver. He liked creating jewels, crude at first, ever more intricate, fine, complex and truly beautiful later on. This art he taught to himself, starting with iron and then with the nobler metals. He could not set up a shop in one of the fancier streets of the city, because he lacked the funds. He had not enough money to form a stock of gold or silver. He could only produce the finest objects in gold and silver when somebody explicitly asked for it, and brought him the amounts of metal to work on. A few times already, he had worked precious stones and pearls in pieces made of gold and silver. Wouter had begun to work for the abbeys and churches of Ghent. He produced for them chalices, candelabras and reliquaries, and the abbots and priests told the angels of heaven only could produce such beauty.

Wouter particularly regarded as his friends the men he had fought with in the Battle of Kortrijk. He could tell stories for hours about that famous battle. He knew Raes van Lake, John Denout and Juris Vresele. Like them, he had remained loyal to the count of Flanders. The count represented the liberties of the people for Wouter, the independence of decisions he thought Flanders needed. He was a member of the guild of blacksmiths of Ghent, but would have liked to be accepted in the guild of gold- and silversmiths and of the money-changers.

Wouter was far from stupid, though he looked slow-witted to some. He could be a capable businessman. He occasionally traded in metals, and held a small stock of coins of every sort, so that he could change coins for you in a modest way. He knew how to count, to read, write, he spoke some French, could discuss prices and the weather like everybody else.

Many people passed in the sympathetic shop of Wouter de Smet. He talked freely with them, and learned from first hand, from the knights and squires and the sergeants who arrived at the *Gravensteen*. He talked, and invited conversation on many subjects. He digested all the information, and shared ideas and opinions with his friends. He was one of the best-informed men of Ghent!

Wouter de Smet worked hard and lived at ease. But he was a very lonely man. He lived alone in his house. He slept above his workshop. He decorated his hall with much good taste, decorated with his finest iron works and pieces of gold or silver he recuperated. He had no servants, but he cleaned his house himself regularly.

Wouter got invited a few times in the house of Juris Vresele. Juris organised small banquets for his closest friends. The banquets took place in Juris's house in the *Kalanderberg*. Wouter also met Mergriet Mutaert, Juris's wife. Juris and Mergriet were almost a generation older than Wouter, so Mergriet began to mother the young blacksmith. No offence was taken when she talked to him longer than to other guests. Mergriet liked Wouter, the good-hearted giant. She began to think about a niece of her, of one Lijsbetten Mutaert.

Lijsbetten was a girl of only twenty. She had so far refused all men around her. Lijsbetten, when challenged about men and her tastes, told she wanted a real man, and the real men seemed to have left Ghent. She became not very popular with such sayings, but she didn't care. Mergriet had started to believe Lijsbetten would remain an old maid forever, unmarried, a spinster, a woman destined to live on her own in a beguinage, in one of the *begijnhoven* of Ghent. Yet, Mergriet knew Lijsbetten as a fine, nice-hearted, intelligent girl. Lijsbetten was tall too, stout and strong for her age, a woman with a pleasant round face of nicely fleshy cheeks. Lijsbetten laughed a lot and her dark brown eyes glistened with mockery, intelligence and interest for what other people said. Some may have called her a little snub-nosed, but her features filled her round face well. Lijsbetten was an impressive, massive woman. She formed exactly the kind of girl that would suit Wouter de Smet like a glove.

Mergriet Mutaert's mind forged a plan. She would bring Lijsbetten and Wouter together, push them a little toward each other, and see whether the gold blended with the silver! One evening, when Wouter came to discuss the delivery of a series of iron works to sell by Juris Vresele, she told Wouter she would also like him to stay for supper. She had told Wouter he therefore should dress up smartly.

After Wouter and Juris had discussed their orders, she began to set the table for supper. Her niece, Lijsbetten Mutaert, helped her. This happened at the end of the year 1303, nearing Christmas. That time always was speckled with magic and mystery. Snow was falling early this year, and the weather proved a welcome introduction to the conversation at the table.

Lijsbetten didn't say much at first. She moved a little in awe around the big man. At table, she watched Wouter with growing interest. She exchanged a few words with him, as they sat

in front of each other as stiff as a broom. Lijsbetten liked what she heard. She was rather astonished to notice such a strong man could also formulate intelligent remarks and opinions. He commented quite to the point on the political situation of Ghent and of Flanders. She saw his eyes glitter when he talked of his creations in precious metals and fine stones. Lijsbetten liked what she saw.

After the meal, Lijsbetten had to return to her home. Usually, Juris Vresele would have proposed to accompany her at this late time of the evening. This time, Mergriet suggested Wouter might accompany Lijsbetten home. Wouter and Lijsbetten agreed. A little later, they stepped out of Juris's house, each enveloped in large, heavy cloaks. Mergriet noticed with great satisfaction they did not remain silent in the street, going together. Lijsbetten and Wouter continued talking vividly to each other. Mergriet thought she had spent her evening well and for a good cause.

She was right! Lijsbetten Mutaert and Wouter de Smet mixed like good wine and sweet honey. Their characters, both strong-willed, matched. They were fine, hard-working people, simple, positive in their way of thinking, rather thinking well than bad of others. Lijsbetten and Wouter continued seeing each other. They touched hands, kissed, and embraced. They were in no hurry to marry, though. They agreed to let some time pass to know each other better. They were careful people.

Soon, Wouter de Smet explained his intention to join the Flemish army, gathered once more by the count's sons and grandson. Lijsbetten did not like at all Wouter going to war again, but she also granted it should be a man's duty to defend the city and the county. She made him promise two campaigns would suffice to ease Wouter's conscience. They wanted to marry, but would wait until Flanders was a little more at peace and business in Ghent better. Wouter felt very happy he would not only enter a family of many members, but also into the family to which also belonged his friend, Juris Vresele. Lijsbetten loved her aunt, and had in her a willing confidant.

Wouter de Smet was successful in his trade of being a blacksmith. He also became more and more known as a goldsmith, and even as a money-changer. He found himself in a somewhat awkward position, in between two professions. His production of golden and silver artefacts of true art grew. He still had not enough income to change trades and guilds officially.

At a banquet of the blacksmiths together with the silversmiths, Wouter had a violent altercation with a silversmith called Braem de Mey. Braem was a *Leliaert*. He had not fought in the Battle of Kortrijk, and Wouter de Smet considered the man something of a coward. Braem de Mey was one of the best-known silversmiths and money-changers of Ghent. Braem had seen the talents of Wouter at work. He had wanted to hire the boy in his workshop, but Wouter had preferred to set up his own shop, even if only a smithy, working on iron. Braem de Mey had been scandalised Wouter had refused the great honour to produce in the de Mey workshop.

Braem de Mey was a silversmith, but he also worked gold, was a money-changer, and he was known for buying up quite some land in the Four Crafts and the Land of Waas. He was becoming a man of substance, a man of power in Ghent. He had several sons. His son called Sanders, of about the same age as Wouter de Smet, worked with his father. Sanders had

inherited no talent at all for working with his hands and fingers. He liked buying and selling land and houses. He worked with his mind, he told. Braem de Mey had looked at Wouter with great envy. He cursed the divine providence for not having granted him a son as dexterous and kind as Wouter de Smet.

Braem de Mey noticed he steadily lost customers to Wouter de Smet, also for his finest gold and silver pieces of art. Braem considered that when Wouter set up shop as a goldsmith, he might evolve into a dangerous competitor for Braem's business.

Braem de Mey convinced himself a blacksmith should not be allowed to forge also jewels or golden candelabras in the shop of a blacksmith. He talked everywhere about guildsmen of one trade encroaching on the trade of others. Such things were forbidden, by agreement among the guilds! Braem went as far as to accuse Wouter de Smet of selling gold and silver pieces as a blacksmith, which was forbidden by the laws of the guilds. He brought the matter before the aldermen of the Estate, before the *paysierders*. Wouter would have to explain himself!

Wouter reflected on some arguments to his defence. He asked for the right to work in-between trades. He spoke with Juris Vresele and with Raes van Lake to refine his arguments, and devised answers for possible questions the aldermen might ask him. He prepared his defence as good as he could. He asked for the advice of Lijsbetten Mutaert. Juris and Raes talked to friends of theirs, to deans of the guilds and to aldermen.

Wouter was called to the city hall, to a meeting of the *paysierders*. He was impressed, but he spoke well. He proved his main income came from being a blacksmith. He told he only made and delivered objects in other metals when asked to do so, but granted he ultimately wanted to evolve to becoming a goldsmith. He argued his case so well, the aldermen found the entire matter nothing more but a storm in a beaker of water. Were they not the *paysierders*, the guardians of the peace? Wouter de Smet could remain a blacksmith. He was allowed to create some objects in more expensive metals beside. The de Mey were told to mind their own business.

Braem and Sanders de Mey seethed. They had lost their case against Wouter de Smet. They began to talk slander against Wouter.

Wouter was too happy with his new-found girl, the proud Lijsbetten Mutaert, to care much. And then also, he, Wouter, could pride in having defended Flanders and Ghent at Kortrijk, whereas Braem de Mey had been a *Leliaert*, a traitor to the count, and a coward. The matter remained there.

Then, Wouter left Ghent to join the army of the sons and grandson of the count of Flanders. Wouter had complained about someone like Braem de Mey to Juris Vresele and Raes van Lake, but they had similar stories to share with him. Welcome to the world of the living, they exclaimed.

Wouter de Smet walked south in a contingent of Ghent militiamen, maybe up to a new battle for the independence of Flanders.

## 2.6. The Sea-Battle of Zierikzee. 10-11 August 1304.

The county called Zeeland was constituted mainly of a series of islands, which formed or remained in the estuary of the Rivers Scheldt and Maas. The Scheldt and the Maas were streams, of course, as they threw their waters in the Atlantic Ocean. Flanders was interested mostly in the southern islands, in the islands lying in the Scheldt.

North of the Zwin, the bay of the ports of Bruges, lay one of the smaller islands, called Cadzand.

Further to the north one found the largest island, Walcheren, on which many people lived. Walcheren was one of the richest and most dynamic of the islands. Its main city was Middelburg, a town wealthy from commerce, fishing, agriculture and the wool trade. South of Middelburg, a rising sea-port was Vlissingen.

At the north side of the island lay the town of Vere, small but important. Vere belonged directly to the counts of Flanders.

To the east of Walcheren, Zuid-Beveland connected to the mainland, to Holland, and north lay yet another island, much smaller, called Noord-Beveland.

More to the north yet, was the island of Schouwen, almost linked to the island of Duveland. Duveland and North-Beveland were almost of the same size. Schouwen was much larger, more densely populated, not unlike Walcheren. At the very south-east corner of the island of Schouwen, the Zeelanders had built the city of Zierikzee. Schouwen and Duveland were separated only by a narrow waterway. Some called it a canal, and to the south of that waterway, a small river of Schouwen added its waters to the space between the two islands. Zierikzee was a rather large town, walled and fortified.

To complete the description of the southern Zeeland islands, Sint-Anna-Land lay to the east of North-Beveland, and this land also continued into Holland.

The waters between these islands were large, but not very deep. The entire estuary was silting with sediments brought in by the Scheldt and by the sea. Sand banks loomed everywhere, close to the surface of the water, hidden to the eye, making navigation something of a nightmare for inexperienced sea-captains.

Zeeland was far larger still, as large islands lay yet farther to the north. These islands were named Deischier north of Schouwen, and north of the waters called the Greveninghe lay islands with names like Bommenee, Dideriksland, Grisoorde, Sommersdijk, and many more, too many to mention.

Zierikzee was a pretty town, and a strongly fortified one! High, strong walls defended it all around. Five massive gates linked it to the countryside, proud round towers had been built along the walls. Zierikzee might be called a fortress, for a large waterway also surrounded it everywhere like a moat a castle. Before each gate lay a bridge. A waterway entered deep into the walled city, running to almost the centre of the town. Here, the inner port of Zierikzee held many sea-going vessels, which provisioned the town and served to transport the products of its industry and commerce. Large quays had also been built to the south of the city, in the waterway that separated Schouwen and Duveland. Here, the largest sea-cogs could throw the

anchor, and very well protected from the storms of the ocean, load and unload their goods.

This port stretch of the town had no walls, it lay open to the water.

Zierikzee seemed to have been founded by a Hungarian nobleman exiled out of his lands.

Zierik may have been the name of one of its ancient rulers, and Ee the then name of the water between Schouwen and Duveland. The River Gouwe streamed into the Scheldt, and where the Gouwe entered the estuary, a small, but broader water penetrated into the land of Schouwen, where Zierikzee had been founded.

Zierikzee had ties with Ghent. In early times, the village of Zierikzee, or parts of the land, may have been the property of the abbey of Saint Bavo of Ghent. The main church of the town was dedicated to the mythical Saint Lieven, a saint introduced in Zeeland by the monks of Saint Bavo.

Zierikzee prided in many abbeys and convents, a beguinage and hospitals. The people of Schouwen were devote Christians. The *Fremineuren*, the Franciscan Monks, were the first to found a large abbey here, in the year of 1260.

Zierikzee was also renowned for its madder, a plant that offered a deep red powder when crushed. The powder was used to dye wool. A modest but fine wool industry had therefore developed in and around the town. Juris Vresele imported his madder from Zierikzee, and delivered it to the dyers of Raes van Lake. This madder was one of the secrets of Raes for his most beautiful red cloth, although many dyers of Ghent knew about the madder of Zierikzee. Salt, herrings, madder red and woollen cloth were the better products of Zierikzee.

After the Battle of Kortrijk of July 1302, the Flemish armies forced incursions into Hainault, conquering among other towns and villages the larger town of Lessines, destroying it. In retaliation, the count of Hainault and Holland brought the war to the north, to Zeeland. An army of Count John II d'Avesnes attacked and plundered Cadzand, and then the town of Vere on Walcheren. The count of Flanders had handed over his rights on Zeeland to his son Guy de Namur. Guy de Namur wanted truly to be called count of Zeeland, and in reaction to the actions of Count John's son Guillaume – or Willem in Flemish and Dutch -, he took a Flemish fleet and army to Zeeland. His fleet set off from Sluis at the end of April of 1303.

Guy de Namur was very successful with his Flemish army. Nobody seemed able to stop the Flemish militiamen of the cities at that time, not France, and not Holland. Walcheren was conquered. Its main city, Middelburg, surrendered early May of 1303. The war raged not only in Zeeland, but also in the western part of Holland. Many Zeeland noblemen had remained loyal to the count of Flanders. They joined the Flemish army. Their most important leader was one of the heroes of the Battle of Kortrijk, Jan van Renesse. The Flemish army warred through the winter of from 1303 to the spring of 1304.

In July of 1303, Guy de Namur and John d'Avesnes concluded a truce, but this armistice was broken in the spring of 1304. The Flemish army continued its campaign in Zeeland and Holland. The cities of Holland then feared the Flemish domination. Several Holland cities surrendered without offering resistance. At last, Witte van Hamstede, a bastard son of the late Count Florent V, brought the cities of Holland to form an army to fight against the Flemish invasion. The cities of Holland chose the side of their count, and of their count's son, Guillaume. Their armies pushed Guy de Namur's troops back, back into Zeeland proper.

As explained, one of the larger towns in the Zeeland islands was Zierikzee. Zierikzee had held out against the Flemish army. The Flemish wanted all of these parts. They set a siege to the well- defended town.

The Flemish leaders of the fleet in Zeeland appealed several times to the sailors of Flanders to join their army. The men they wanted in the first place were the experienced sea-navigators, captains, pilots and crew members. Many sailors who had the ports of Damme and Sluis or Aardenburg as their base, joined the fleet. Their pay was not bad, and booty might be expected. Also fishermen from the many, smaller ports on the coast of Flanders rallied the army. They brought many smaller boats to where the Flemish fleet manoeuvred. The sailors who arrived without a boat went to Sluis, and arrived at the siege of Zierikzee in the provisioning cogs that sailed from Sluis to the Flemish army.

When lesser and lesser men accustomed to the waters of the ocean, reported to the recruiters of Guy de Namur, the army also sought and accepted men working on the rivers of Flanders. This way, at the very end of 1303, Arnout de Hert, the shipper of Ghent, heard the sea-fleet of Zeeland sought to muster from the Ghent shippers who roamed the rivers, and not necessarily the coastal waters.

Arnout de Hert had no sea-legs. One of his dreams was to possess, and maybe even to navigate himself, one of the sea-going cogs he had often admired at Damme. That happened each time he brought in goods, mainly cloth, on his *Lieveschuit* from Ghent to Damme. For a shipper of very small, flat-bottomed boats, the sea-cogs, the castles of the sea, represented the ultimate in ships. Cogs were enormous, compared to what Arnout steered! They were plump beasts, hollow mastodons with huge, round bellies, into which could be loaded huge loads of about everything one could imagine, from wine and ale barrels to woollen fleeces, cloth, peat, you name it. One could grow rich from one only cargo transported in the cogs! How many travels would Arnout have to make to transport goods of such loads from Damme to Ghent and back? One hundred? More? How rich could he become from selling one such cargo? How small a man and a shipper was he, compared to a cog-owner of only one of those cogs?

Arnout knew nothing of cogs! He had never sailed in one, never sailed on the sea. He had heard terrible stories of shipwrecks, heard tales of the dangers of huge waves and of monstrous sea-creatures. He had heard of sea-mermaids, wonderful creatures who resembled the most beautiful women. Mermaid could lure a shipper to the depths! Arnout suspected the stories were terribly exaggerated. A sea-captain could easily survive hundreds of travels on the sea, like he on the rivers. At Damme, Arnout had met old men who were still captain on such cogs, and the ships themselves more often than not seemed very old. He had watched some of the cogs being hauled into dry docks, their keels being scraped off of all sorts of shells. Shells on the bottom of the cogs could diminish their speed and agility in the waters, and make her bottom timbers rot. Arnout very much admired the ships. He had looked at them with envy and longing.

Most of the cogs showed a large forecastle and aft castle. The timbers of the ships curved upwards at the front and rear, to end in the wooden platforms that were rightly called castles, high up. Here, the captain and the pilot would stand, looking out and steering the ship. On

war-cogs, these castles would be manned with crossbowmen and with warriors of the army wearing javelins that could be hurled towards enemy ships. Warriors also stood and no doubt slept on deck. Knights and squires, the captain and the sailors, would sleep in quarters built inside of the castles. War cogs were also different from other cogs in that crenelated embattlements ran all along the side of the ships. Embattlements also crowned the high castles. Some of the ships had a smaller castle built on top of or along the mast. Arnout had seen war-cogs on which catapults had been installed. The catapults could throw stones and even paniers of brushwood on fire onto enemy ships or ports. Arnout had only once in his life seen such ships, war cogs, months ago, when the first Flemish fleet left Sluis for Zeeland, in April of 1303.

Arnout de Hert longed to know more about sea-cogs. He might have sold his services on board of a cog in times of peace, but the pay would have been very low indeed. He would have to remain at sea for many, many months. His wife, Marie, would have objected ferociously. Arnout would also have to stop his shipping trade, and after his return he would have to start from zero. He could not afflict Marie with such absence of duty!

The situation now was different! Most of Arnout's friends and many guildsmen of Ghent had gone to the war. He felt increasingly frustrated for not doing anything to serve the liberty of the county. He might be treated as a coward by his returning friends! Was it not his duty as a Flemish man and as a guildsman to serve for at least a few months in the Flemish army, and help defend the lands to the best of his abilities?

Arnout discussed the matter with Marie. Marie understood how important it was for her husband to feel a courageous man, not a coward, to do what others had been doing and were doing again at this very moment. It was good to help one's country stay free. She was torn in her feelings, for she wondered what might happen to her when Arnout returned in a wooden coffin, or returned not at all, or returned wounded, maybe maimed. Still, she thought he would regret his entire life not having followed what he believed to be his duty. She also did not want for the rest of her life a morose, grieving man, wallowing in self-pity or remorse at her side. Marie told Arnout she would not object for him to join the Flemish fleet for a few months, three or four months at the most, if only he returned safe and well to Ghent and to the house. Arnout felt much relieved with this major obstacle out of the way. He would be a sailor then, he told Marie, not a militiaman in the army. He would stay on board of a ship. He would not take part in battles. He would help sailing the ships to where the warriors were needed. He would not take part in sieges and fights.

Marie believed him – half-heartedly. She too thought there was much less of a danger in being a sailor than in being a militiaman in the army. Also, Arnout could swim like a fish. His father had died in the waters because he couldn't swim. Arnout had learned the hard way. The fleet would follow the coasts of the islands of Zeeland. Truly rough weather at sea was rare in those waters, she speculated.

Arnout de Hert said goodbye to his tender wife in late 1303. He brought his *Lieveschuit* to Damme, secured it in the port of Damme, on the canal, and went on board of a cog that would bring a cargo of food and fodder to the army of Zeeland. His cog was named the *Sea Star*, her captain was one Symon Fretel.

Arnout immediately learned much about cogs and about navigating cogs on the ship that provisioned the Flemish fleet and the Flemish army. He worked as a common seaman on the same cog for months. Captain Symon soon remarked Arnout was not the common sailor. Arnout asked him hundred questions whenever he had a chance. This sailor shared Symon's passion for the sea and for cogs! Captain Symon told Arnout what he knew, and took pleasure out of the telling, seated in the sea-chairs at the forecastle of the *Sea Star*.

Arnout travelled several times from the islands of Zeeland, mainly Walcheren, to Damme and Sluis, also from North- and South-Beveland and Schouwen to Flanders. He worked for a time on a cog that transported troops between the islands. Sometimes he waited for long days in a port, doing nothing. He asked many questions to the captains of the ships, to the pilots, and to the more experienced sailors of the ocean-going ships. From Captain Symon, he learned much about the seas without actually having sailed them. The travels between the islands of Zeeland and Sluis were simple, uneventful, but always interesting to a curious eye. Arnout also interrogated the captain on prices of cargo. He listened to the advice of Symon, and heard his opinion on the trade of transporting cargo over the seas. Of course, he stayed on much longer than the three months he had promised his wife Marie Scivaels.

Arnout managed to send short notes to Marie, merely mentioning he was alive and well. He sent these letters by shippers he met at Damme, and who would return to Ghent over the Lieve Canal.

Except for what he learned, life passed rather boring on the sea most of the time. He did wander in a few ports of Zeeland, and took in how to navigate in the waters of the estuary of the Scheldt. He avoided the taverns and whorehouses of the ports, thinking of Marie. He saw the outskirts of Zierikzee and its fine harbour. He noticed with Captain Symon the Gouwe, the waterway between the islands of Schouwen and Duveland, was silting in. In years from now, Zierikzee could be separated from the sea. A new port, perhaps to the south, would have to be built.

King Philip IV the Fair of France was allied to the count of Hainault and Holland. He involved his army in the war in Zeeland. He sent a French fleet in support of the Hainault-Holland forces. The French fleet had been assembled at Calais under the command of the French corsair and Admiral Jean Pedrogue. It consisted of about fifty-four large cogs and galleys. About thirty, mostly Normandy cogs, sailed with Pedrogue. Eight Spanish cogs had been added to his force. The Spanish ships had sailed to Calais to take on trade cargo. King Philip's admiral hired them to sail in his fleet.

King Philip had also called in eleven large Genoese galleys under the Genoese Admiral Rainier Grimaldi. Pedrogue and Grimaldi had been working together for quite some time in the Channel, harassing English cogs and the English ports of the south of England.

Rainier Grimaldi and his brother Francesco had been involved in the internecine strives at Genoa between the Guelphs and the Ghibellines. The Grimaldi were Ghibellines, supporting the Holy Roman Emperor of Germany against the popes. They had to flee Genoa, and directed their fleet to the Provence region. Francesco Grimaldi, called the Cunning, seized the tock of Monaco by ruse in 1297. He was chased out of the citadel somewhat later, but his kinsmen continued the war against Genoa for the rule over Monaco, in which they ultimately

succeeded. The rock of Monaco became the headquarters of the Grimaldi. Rainier Grimaldi hired out his services as leader of the feared Genoese galleys to the king of France. Grimaldi was an excellent navigator of the Mediterranean, Jean Pedroque an experienced French corsair, a pirate with letters of assault granted by the king. It was the first time Grimaldi would sail in the Atlantic Ocean.

After the French fleet had sailed out of Calais, it entered the waters of Zeeland. There, five large cogs from Holland joined the French fleet. A large number of smaller ships also added to their power.

Guy de Namur had gathered eleven Flemish sea-cogs at Sluis, six larger ships from the Bruges Hanze, and a few – not more than three – foreign ships associated to the Hanze. Eight ships from Gascony, from the port of Bayonne, ships under allegiance to the English, had joined his fleet. Added came five Spanish ships and four more somewhat smaller Flemish cogs. In all, Grimaldi and Pedroque brought about fifty-four large ships, whereas Guy de Namur could bring to the sea no more than thirty-seven large cogs. Guy could bring into the sea a larger number of small ships. But Guy de Namur had an army of warriors from the Flemish cities with him, maybe as many as fifteen thousand men, a lot more than the French fleet could bring.

The Flemish army was so big, Guy de Namur had not to fear any French army disembarking at Zierikzee. The French army would have been mostly formed of sailors, with some mercenary forces. At most, the cogs of the French could hold about one hundred men. This fleet could not start a land-battle and hope to win from the Flemish army. The Flemish would have many times outnumbered the French forces.

John of Namur had left his brother not so long before the French fleet arrived in Zeeland. He had given his brother the advice not to move from Zierikzee and to hold his ships at anchor very close to the town. Jan van Renesse was at that moment also not at Zierikzee. He was in the city of Utrecht. He also gave the advice not to move the Flemish fleet, even though he wanted Guy de Namur to come to his help with a larger army. Holland could be conquered and captured, not just Zeeland!

The French fleet first sailed to Geervliet, to pick up a few more Holland ships, and some more smaller boats. They were held up for about fourteen days by lack of wind and then encountering contrary winds. They lacked provisions and the provisioning from the mainland of Holland had become very difficult. The men aboard the French ships grew hungry. Moreover, the large galleys and the bulkiest French cogs often ran aground in these shallow waters, forcing the ships each time to wait for the high tides to sail on. Finally, the French fleet penetrated into the waterway that separated the island of Schouwen and Duveland in the first days of August 1304.

Pedroque and Grimaldi sailed into the Gouwe, coming from the south, direction Zierikzee. They noticed the waterway between the two islands was too narrow for all the ships of the French fleet to form a line. On the 10th of August, moving to Zierikzee, they formed four squadrons of each about fifteen ships. First into the Gouwe sailed the squadron of Pedroque,

then the three other squadrons, followed by the Genoese galleys. In each squadron, the fifteen cogs were chained together to form a compact fighting platform. The ships were tied together at bow and stern with iron chains and thick ropes. They could also throw out anchors at both ends to secure the platforms in a flood or tide. The ships from each platform could not be dispersed by the waves. No small ships could wriggle their way to in between the cogs of each squadron.

The joining together of ships at stern and bow with cables, or bridling, had a purpose. Its objective was to concentrate as many warriors as possible engaged in the battle. The platforms formed castles the enemy had to besiege. The platforms could move forward, though slowly, and force a breach in enemy rows of ships, especially if the enemy ships were not bridled. From off such a platform, one could more easily deploy a concerted action. This tactic of smashing through the enemy lines with a strong platform, rather than allowing individual ships to pursue and engage one another, was used often at sea. Boarding individual ships seemed unproductive, hazardous, the outcome of a sea-battle made unpredictable. The tactic was based on the massed charges of knights smashing into the enemy ranks on land.

Guy de Namur watched the French fleet approach with awe. He recognised the danger of the French destroying his fleet. He needed his fleet for the provisioning and the transport of his army. He could not allow the French fleet to cut off his provisioning and transport lines. He also believed the Flemish army was invincible. He was sure of his men. Had they not defeated several times already the French land armies, first of all at Kortrijk, but also afterwards? He could teach the French admirals a lesson here too! How could he lose with such a valiant and numerous army? He organised his own fleet for a sea-battle. He too brought his larger cogs close to each other, and had them tied together to form fighting platforms. Castle would sail against castle, the battle would be fought on wooden ground instead of on grass, but with the same effect. He left his smaller ships in the wake of the platforms.

On the 10<sup>th</sup> of August, Guy de Namur waited for the high tide, so that his ships could advance unhindered in the Gouwe. He could see the French ships ran aground already. Four ships of Pedrogue first, in the French rightmost squadron coming from the sea, got stranded. They stuck in the sand. Guy de Namur could have ordered his numerous smaller ships to harass these now immovable platforms, but he decided to fight platform against platform, and to wait for the incoming tide. Were not his warriors superior to the French combatants on board the ships? The French fleet halted. The Gouwe had silted, sandbanks loomed not very deep in the water. The hours of the day passed. The tide would only rise in the late afternoon.

The Flemish began their attack on the French fleet by sending out fire ships. They had filled a few of their smaller vessels with brushwood, animal fat, oil and pitch. They sent the fire-ships downstream, southwards, to the stranded ships of Pedrogue. The French saw with growing awe and fear the flaming ships arrive at them. They were stuck, unable to move!

Luck ran out on the Flemish fleet. The tide rose quickly and powerfully, the waters heaped up into the Gouwe. The fire ships stopped their advance. Then, also a strong wind arose, forcing the fire ships back to the Flemish! By the time the flaming ships reached the Flemish fleet,

the fire had them largely consumed. The ships were so much ablaze, they broke into pieces and disappeared in the water. They did not harm the Flemish fleet, but they had not reached the French fleet either.

Arnout de Hert worked still on the cog he had first embarked on at the end of 1303. He had thought the cog huge, but he had seen in the meantime the really large sea-cogs, and a few still larger war-cogs. The Flemish army also had brought a few of these war-cogs with their fleet. When the French ships advanced, the *Sea Star* with Captain Symon and Arnout had anchored near the port of Zierikzee. They had brought provisions of ale, bread and cheese to the Flemish army. They should now have been on their way back to Damme, but were caught in the battle. Arnout had not seen much from the siege of Zierikzee. No assaults had been launched while he was near the island of Schouwen. The Flemish army and fleet merely blocked all the roads and waterways to Zierikzee. The town would soon be starved out. Everybody expected the garrison to surrender soon.

When the French fleet approached, Arnout had looked with growing anxiety at the huge ships, the largest he had ever contemplated in the sea. He hadn't cared much for that oncoming fleet in the beginning. The French ships blocked the south entrance to the Gouwe, but the northern route on the Gouwe, the canal between Schouwen and Duveland, had remained open. The *Sea Star* might have to travel a little longer, but she could still reach Sluis. She was a cargo ship. The sail on her mast was large. She could put on a yard-sail. She was a fast ship. The *Sea Star* could defend herself in the open sea, and escape pursuit. Why should the Flemish army bother about the French fleet? Let the French platforms sail to on to the wharf. The Flemish army could then all the easier destroy the French army! Why should the Flemish bother about the French fleet at all? The fleet was a nuisance, at the most! The French could not bring more warriors on shore than Guy de Namur had amassed on Schouwen. He could still bring his army to wherever he wanted on the north route. The provisioning of the French ships could be harassed. Patience was a good strategy. Arnout de Hert looked with open pride at the hundreds of smaller ships the Flemish had brought to Zierikzee, at this moment. Why bother?

And yet, when the word came all the ships had to prepare for battle, Arnout and most of the sailors had been astonished. The count's son was to give a sea-battle? Why was that necessary? Only pride and vanity had provoked a sea-battle, Arnout guessed, not reason. He became worried. He had told Marie he would not have to fight in a battle, and he had truly never envisaged a sea-battle. How was a sea-battle fought? Arnout received some basic clues when he noticed the larger French ships and the large Flemish cogs were being tied together. A sea-battle would resemble a land-battle, he understood. Platforms as castles were being built in the water. The real battle would be fights on board of those platforms.

The *Sea Star* took on about fifty militiamen, men from several cities of Flanders. The men that came on board in a long column were men from Ieper, Bruges, Veurne and from Sluis. Some of them had sailed aboard ships, most of them had only set foot on a ship for the transport to Zeeland. All men rather feared the water. Arnout suspected very few had learned to swim.

The *Sea Star* stayed in place. It was considered one of the smaller vessels, which would have to remain behind the larger cogs. Up until he saw the fire-ships being sent towards the French platforms, had Arnout not thought it probable the Flemish fleet would attack the enemy fleet. It was already evening when this happened, a strange moment to start a battle.

Arnout knew enough of the sea by now to know near the islands life was controlled by the tides. The tides rose! Did Guy de Namur fear his ships also would be stuck in the sandbanks, like some of the French cogs? Why then not attack earlier with his myriad of smaller ships, and harass the giant platforms? Arnout would not have waited to attack! Guy de Namur and his sea-leaders were giving the advantage to the French fleet, which was larger. Anyhow, the assault was on.

The fire-ships flaming red in the setting sun formed an eerie, out-worldly image. Arnout stood on the forecastle of the *Sea Star* to look at the spectacle. He saw the fire-ships being pushed forward by the stream of the water coming from the north, from that end of the Gouwe, to be sent back by the more powerful tides of the estuary of the Scheldt from the south. The southwestern winds, dominant in these parts of the sea, also pushed the boats inexorably back to the Flemish lines. The fire-ships looked like fiery dragons, dancing on the water, until they disappeared harmlessly in the sea. Arnout shuddered. He dreaded the water, though he lived from it, but fire was foremost what every sailor was instinctively and terribly afraid of. All ships were made of wood, and old wood took fire rapidly. Fire was a force of nature one couldn't beat on a ship! Arnout wondered how he would explain to Marie that despite his certainties, he had been forced to take part in a sea battle!

For the moment, he only watched the battle from far away. The larger cogs of the Flemish fleet had been ordered to advance. The smaller ships, like the *Sea Star*, had to follow. They sailed very slowly forward. The captain of the *Sea Star* was not too eager to win the race. He stayed well in the middle of the fleet of the smaller Flemish ships.

As the tide had brought high water, Admiral Pedrogue could sent his ships on to Zierikzee. He sailed in the offensive! Almost instantly, seven Flemish ships of Guy de Namur attacked the three Spanish ships in front of the French fleet. The Flemish platforms sailed slowly to the linked Spanish ships. Soon, the Flemish warriors boarded the cogs, damaged them and captured the ships. The attack took place while evening fell, in the fading light of the sun. Darkness fell rapidly. Torches were lit aboard the cogs. Fire pots were thrown from one cog to the other. The falling darkness, the fires thrown, the sounds of ships crushing into each other, the sounds of metal clicking, the shouts of the warriors, the first cries of pain of the men hit by projectiles filled the air. The battle had to last a good part of the early night, until the tide lowered, and the ships would all be stranded.

Not much later than midnight, the navy commanders of Flanders also ordered the smaller cogs of their fleet into the fray. Captain Symon Fretel moved slowly towards the mouth of the Gouwe. A little later, the *Sea Star* passed the first squadron of the French fleet. A Flemish platform of several large cogs was still attacking the French bridled ships. At least two French cogs were ablaze. The fighting aboard the ships seemed terrible. Arnout de Hert saw men like dark ants scrambling on board cog after cog on the platform. The Flemings swarmed over the French defenders. The French sailors were less well armed and armoured than the

attacking Flemings. The ships' castles were being defended ferociously. On the castles stood the lethal crossbowmen, who shot bolt after bolt onto the fighting Flemish militiamen. The decks were littered with bodies of wounded and dying men. Projectiles, everything that had weight and a sharp point, was being launched from one side to the other. Large stones were being thrown high through the air in the light of the moon and the fires. The Flemish ships had put aboard the catapults and ballistas they had used for the siege of Zierikzee. The French cogs had their own heavy weapons. Bricks, pieces of metal, parts of sawed-through beams, peat blocks red on fire were hurled onto the Flemish ships.

Arnout believed none of the cogs, here, would survive the night. As the *Sea Star* neared, crossbow bolts seared through the air near them. Javelins began to be jolted at them. On the French ships, desperate men were battling on the decks. Boarding hooks hung between the French and Flemish ships. The grapnels tied all ships together now. Arnout saw men being thrown overboard, men in chain mail! These would be drawn to the bottom of the Gouwe, they would not survive and drown. No man, even if he could swim, could hope to stay above the water with so much iron around him. The men would be drawn to the bottom of the Gouwe! Arnout had foreseen this. He had only put on a thick leather jerkin. He stood with a pot helmet on his head, but with the straps undone. On one of the French cogs, Arnout saw in the orange light of flames men fighting with swords and axes. On the Flemish ships, men thrust pikes over the embattlements. Other men climbed on ropes onto the higher French ships. Many men fell victim to crossbow arrows shot into their bodies. With shouts of triumph, the Flemish warriors sprang aboard yet one more French cog. Fierce fights with swords and *goedendags* against cutlasses ensued. Arnout looked, saw how fiercely the fight was on. He could not imagine a worse picture of hell than this battle in the darkness of the night. Still, Captain Symon, gritting his teeth, forced the *Sea Star* forward, deeper into the French fleet.

The *Sea Star* passed the second French squadron, on which also fierce fighting was taking place. The *Sea Star* sailed to the third squadron. The French cogs here were being attacked by a Flemish platform of a few cogs, and by scores of smaller Flemish cogs. Captain Symon decided he had sailed far enough. He would join the battle here. He directed his ship to the platform of interlinked French cogs. Two other, smaller boats, followed him. The *Sea Star* crashed into the rightmost French cog. Arnout heard a terrible sound of splintering wood. For a moment, he feared the *Sea Star* had crashed too far into the enemy ships, would take on water and sink, but the ship righted itself and came to lie along the length of the French cog. On that cog, heavy fighting was on. Arnout ran from the fore- to the aft castle. He stood next to Captain Symon.

From the forecastle of the *Sea Star*, the warriors of Guy de Namur's army were loosening one crossbow bolt after the other on the enemy. Crossbow quarrels and arrows came back. Men fell from the high castles into the sea. Shouts and cries of pain mingled in the night. The militiamen on board of the *Sea Star* had prepared a few fire-pots. Captain Symon had looked at their preparation with fear, but no fire or torch had fallen on his deck. The warriors hurled the first fire pots onto the deck of the enemy ship. Some of the fire pots crashed against the high embattlements. Long flows of fiery burning oil ran along the side of the boat. Grappling hooks were thrown to link the two ships tightly together. Men started to climb.

The *Sea Star* had built a small top castle, built in haste on the mast. Three crossbow archers stood there. They first threw stones on the enemy deck. A catapult on board of one of the French ships hurled a large stone in the air. Arnout saw the stone coming down like a dark shadowed comet against a field of fading light. With a terrible noise, the top castle of the *Sea Star* crashed from the mast. The beams that held the small platform broke. The men on it were flung into the water. Arnout could not see one of the seamen emerging from the boiling water. He wondered how long the *Sea Star* would be able to withstand this battering. Without its mast, the ship was doomed. Surely, one of such stones must crush through its deck and slam a big hole into its bottom planks.

Arnout could no longer remain standing passively on the aft castle of the *Sea Star*. He wanted to run down the castle to board the French ship and mingle in the battle of man to man on board of the French platform. Captain Symon held his arm tightly.

‘No!’ Symon cried. ‘Stay here, with me! You are a sailor. I need you here. You cannot do any damn good over there. The militias must fight. You stay here! I need someone to steer this damned ship if I fall!’

Arnout stayed on the castle of the *Sea Star*. The pilot stood at the steering oar. He seemed to need all his might to hold the oar, to hold the *Star* in position against the tides along the French cog. Arnout helped the man. Three men only controlled the ship now. They stayed on the castle, above the throng of fighting men.

The battle raged on board all cogs of the French platform. Captain Symon, Arnout and the pilot had to watch out for crossbow bolts too. It was very difficult to spot the dark shadows that came at great speed towards them. They held the ship along the French platform.

The battle raged throughout the first hours of the night. Churning masses of warriors fought on the ships in duels of death. The men fought on the decks in scarce light, in a mêlée of close-quarter fights of pure horror. The militiamen and the French sailors screamed like demons. Crossbow bolts whipped in the night. Arnout and Captain Symon stood merely as spectators of the horror. They needed all their force to keep the *Sea Star* against the French cog. The pilot of the *Sea Star* got hit by a crossbow bolt, shot from at least two French ships farther. He was suddenly snatched backwards. Blood exploded around his face. He staggered against the embattlements of the castle, to sag onto the crude, unplanned planks of the floor. Arnout had to hold the steering oar alone, at times helped by the captain.

The largest Flemish ship by far was the *Orgueilleuse*, manned with sailors and warriors from Bruges. A Norman war-cog, the *Jehanette*, tackled her. The Normans boarded the Flemish ship and captured her before nightfall. The loss of the *Orgueilleuse* came on hard for the pride of Bruges, for her crew consisted among others of many from the most prominent citizens of Bruges.

Far after midnight, all the fire pots had been thrown and burst and burnt. The moon disappeared behind the clouds. It became impossible to see anything in the darkness, though some fighting still went on in the small light of torches on board of the French ships. The battle went on even-balanced. The Flemings did not seem to advance anymore on the French

platform. Captain Symon yelled over the boats for all warriors to come back on board. He feared the *Sea Star* would soon get stuck in the sand.

The fighting men heard him. They swarmed back to the *Star*. Soon, the deck was filled with sweating, cursing, bleeding men. Arnout had noticed the tide had turned, to flood back out of the Gouwe to the waters between Walcheren and Schouwen. The tide would be low soon! Captain Symon did not risk being trapped the entire night against a French fighting platform. When no more men seemed to jump on board of the *Sea Star*, Captain Symon and Arnout de Hert steered the ship to more open water, some distance from the platforms of the French ships, in the middle of the Gouwe. There, they threw down their anchors at bow and stern. On the deck of the *Sea Star*, the men slumped to the floor. They bandaged the wounded as best as they could. They slept on deck. The hours passed.

Dawn saw an entirely different picture. The tide was slowly rising again, putting stranded cogs and galleys afloat. The French vessels still lay tied together by chains and ropes, forming the fighting platforms. The warriors slowly awoke, stood, stretched, saw they had slept in the blood of their comrades. Some ran to the latrine benches on one side of the ship. The French warriors readied to push forward once more, up the Gouwe to Zierikzee.

The large Flemish ships lay and floated in dispersed order, not tied together anymore! Had the Flemings thrown off the cables to seek more mobility during the night? Had the Flemish militias feared for one ship to be drawn under by the other? Some suggested Rainier Grimaldi and Jean Pedrogue had sent men swimming out in the darkness to cut through the Flemish cables. Some men even told spies on board of the Flemish ships had cut through the chains and ropes! Whatever the reason, the Flemish ships lay individually, separated and free, not forming anymore the formidable attack platforms. Some of the cogs had floated far away from the French platforms. Nevertheless, the Flemish ships sailed back and engaged anew the French platforms. As they could manoeuvre somewhat easier now, they penetrated to deeper in the French squadrons. Dawn also saw some Flemish ships sailing as fast as they could, out of the Gouwe. Were they fleeing?

On board of the *Sea Star*, all men had slept on deck, where they had stood before. There was scarcely place for everybody to stretch out. They lay and slept in the cold and in the humid fog of the night and morning. Captain Symon had slept last on the stern castle. He and Arnout had kept awake each a different part of the night. They had slept for not more than two or three hours. Arnout was awake when the first light of dawn showed through the light clouds. Gradually, he noticed a strange picture. The Flemish ships once more floated slowly in the growing tide. The French platforms too were afloat, and already slowly moving. Some of their catapults threw once more stones and debris, even beams the sailors must have sawed free on their own boats, onto the Flemish cogs.

The largest Flemish ships were no longer tied together. They sailed individually. They attacked like a swarm of hornets the French platforms. The French platforms held out well. They had the advantage of being able to concentrate many warriors from several ships on the points that came under attack. Many French warriors stood on the embattlements, concentrated along the sides where the Flemish single boats attacked. They could bring all

their warriors together on the sides they were being attacked. The battle had started again in all its horror.

The Flemish ships still bumped into the French cogs. They could bring far less militiamen to the French bridled ships. They were at a disadvantage in numbers. The Flemish warriors did not succeed anymore to board the French cogs. They were being massacred while they tried to board the French cogs. Some of the Flemish ships were on flames. The Flemish captains seemed to grasp they could not harm the French ships mortally by attacking alone. Some sailed together to the French platforms, but such initiatives were rare. Other ships abandoned. The French platforms of up to fifteen bridled cogs manoeuvred very slowly forward. They cut off the escape to Walcheren of the Flemish ships. They placed their cogs in such a way they blocked the Gouwe. A Flemish cog, large or small, caught against a French platform, was lost and its crew mercilessly massacred. Around the French fleet, the waters of the Gouwe and of the Scheldt turned red.

Captain Symon Fretel, and Arnout de Hert had at first forced the *Sea Star* to against a French platform, the same they had attacked the night before. They steered the ship to near the first French cog. Their warriors boarded the enemy ships. The battle on board the French squadron was fought tenaciously, as more Flemish ships neared and boarded too. Many men died on both sides. After more than an hour of heavy fighting, the Flemish militiamen were pushed back to their own ships. Crossbow bolts began to rain down on the *Sea Star*. Captain Symon saw his situation was hopeless. He and Arnout had seen everywhere around them the same situation develop. The Flemish warriors were being overwhelmed, for too few Flemish ships continued to assault the French platforms. Flemish ships were being destroyed one by one. General command seemed to have disappeared. No orders came from no ships. Everybody had to fight for oneself. More and more ships of the Flemish fleet tried to escape the ordeal. Many of the vessels sailed north, up the Gouwe. Luckily, they could make good use of the southwestern winds.

The Flemish cogs that were caught inside the French squadrons could not flee, for two such French squadrons effectively blocked the north route. Captain Symon put his sail to where the open sea invited him, to the south, out of the Gouwe. He could barely use part of the contrary winds to push his cog on.

The ship of Guy de Namur, a very large war-cog, struck among the Genoese galleys. It sailed so strongly, driven by the then still favourable wind, and so forcibly, into the squadron, it rammed the admiral's galley, shattering and splintering to pieces the lower embattlements and the hoarding along a side of the hull. The men of Guy de Namur swarmed over the ship. The Flemish warriors captured the galley and damaged it badly.

One of Jean Pedrogue's large war-cogs then attacked Guy de Namur's ship. Its men boarded Guy's cog. They killed most of the remaining seamen of Guy de Namur's ship. Guy de Namur fought on, despite warnings. The lord of Aksel told Guy to flee on board of one of the smaller ships alongside, but Guy didn't want to hear. To the last moment, he thought he could display enough energy to win the sea-battle still. Yet, most of the men around him, fighting at his side on his ship, got killed. When he saw himself surrounded by French crossbowmen and pikemen, he surrendered. He offered his sword. Pedrogue's men took him a prisoner. Much

later, the French admiral and Rainier Grimaldi sent Guy de Namur in chains to Paris, to King Philip IV.

The larger Flemish ships were destroyed one by one from out of the huge French platforms of tied-together ships. Very few of the larger Flemish ships could escape, assisted by the smaller Flemish vessels that had been kept at the rear. Hundreds of Flemish warriors died or drowned.

Captain Symon and Arnout picked up more than seventy Flemish militiamen. They had more men on board than they had brought. They manoeuvred their cog with no more than five sailors. The other seamen had either been killed or lay badly wounded on deck. The deck was littered with wounded, groaning men, but no barber or doctor was on board to help the unfortunate. Two of the men died quite rapidly. They were unceremoniously shoved overboard. Between the wounded, the deck tainted red.

Arnout steered the cog. He was no pilot. He did not know these waters well. Captain Symon gave him indications to avoid the sandbanks. The *Sea Star* sailed to the open sea. The huge, square sail hung weak, at the farthest angle possible to push out to sea in the contrary winds. The *Sea Star* made slow advance. None of the French cogs seemed to have the stomach to follow the ship. Maybe also the French had their belly full of the fighting on board of their own vessels. Arnout thought it as well the wind blew not too hard. The mast of the *Sea Star* had certainly been damaged when the massive stone had shattered the top castle. It creaked under the effort. Much of the rigging had been cut and broken. The ropes had been summarily repaired, often only with quick knots, by the remaining seamen. Under strain of a forceful wind, everything could break! Captain Symon also didn't dare to open the yard-sail, for fear of destroying the mast entirely.

It took them only a few moments down the Gouwe to understand why the French cogs did not pursue them. They didn't need to pursue the Flemish ships that had tried to escape this way. In front, at the very mouth of the Gouwe, loomed the remaining Genoese galleys!

The galleys did not need the force of the wind. Their sails were up, but they used the power of their oars to advance their ships as they wanted, turning fast. They attacked the last escaping cogs of the Flemish fleet, aiming to destroy them all. They intended to sink as many ships as they could of the Flemish fleet. The Genoese were clearly interested in the larger cogs that tried to escape, among them now the *Sea Star*.

Arnout de Hert blemished when he noticed a large galley row straight up to the *Sea Star*. He looked at the captain. Captain Symon grinned. He gave Arnout constantly indications. Arnout saw the water to left and right of him churn. The tide was lowering again. He remarked orange and grey glimmering to left and right! Captain Symon made Arnout steer down a narrow canal between sandbanks! A few moments later, the galley captain became aware of the danger. He too had seen the sand. He reacted too late in forcing the rowers to invert the speed of the ship. The galley slid into sand. She would have to wait for the higher tide to get afloat. The *Sea Star* escaped to the open sea. The men on board of the cog cheered. Other galleys didn't bother the *Sea Star* anymore in waters too dangerous to manoeuvre in. She reached the open sea. The *Sea Star* had escaped, but the Flemish army and fleet had lost the Sea-Battle of Zierikzee!

When the Flemish militiamen who kept the siege of Zierikzee became aware of the debacle at sea, they fled the environs of the town. They ran inland of Schouwen, to a part of the coast where they found a few boats. They boarded the small ships and took off to the sea. There was by far not enough place on these few ships for everybody. About three thousand Flemings remained stuck on the island, cut off from any provisioning.

After their victory at sea, the French army disembarked. The admirals took the stranded Flemish militiamen prisoner. The Flemish army of Zeeland had ceased to exist as an organised unity.

Meanwhile, the enemy forces of the count of Hainault and Holland reached Utrecht. Jan van Renesse tried to escape from the town. He had not enough men to withstand the new enemy army. He went aboard a small board and sailed into the Lek. There were far too many knights and warriors in the small boat. It sank, and Jan van Renesse, the hero of the Battle of Kortrijk, drowned.

The *Sea Star* sailed to the west of Walcheren, and then slowly, cautiously, on to Sluis. When she arrived, her mast had cracked and was not far from breaking. The *Sea Star* reached a quay. The men stepped warily from the ship to the town. Many of them had been severely sea-sick. Two monks and a barber came on board to help the wounded. Many men were brought on stretchers to a hospital in the port town. Underway, four more men had died on board.

Arnout de Hert stayed three more days on the *Sea Star*. Then, he said goodbye to Captain Symon. The captain thanked him. The men shook hands. Arnout went on foot to Damme, recuperated his small boat and brought it to Ghent over the Lieve Canal. He had to spend his last forces to run home. He fell in the arms of Marie Scivaels, and collapsed. He slept and rested for two entire days. Then, he had to tell everything he had suffered and seen. Marie made him promise never to go to any war again. He agreed.

The losses of the French fleet were about twenty-three large ships. The Flemish lost more than fifty-six smaller ships and a good part of their large ships. The sea-battle ended with the capture of Guy de Namur and his entourage, after which the Flemish command dissolved. The Flemish ships dispersed and fled the battle. The large Genoese galleys manoeuvred in between them, and sank several.

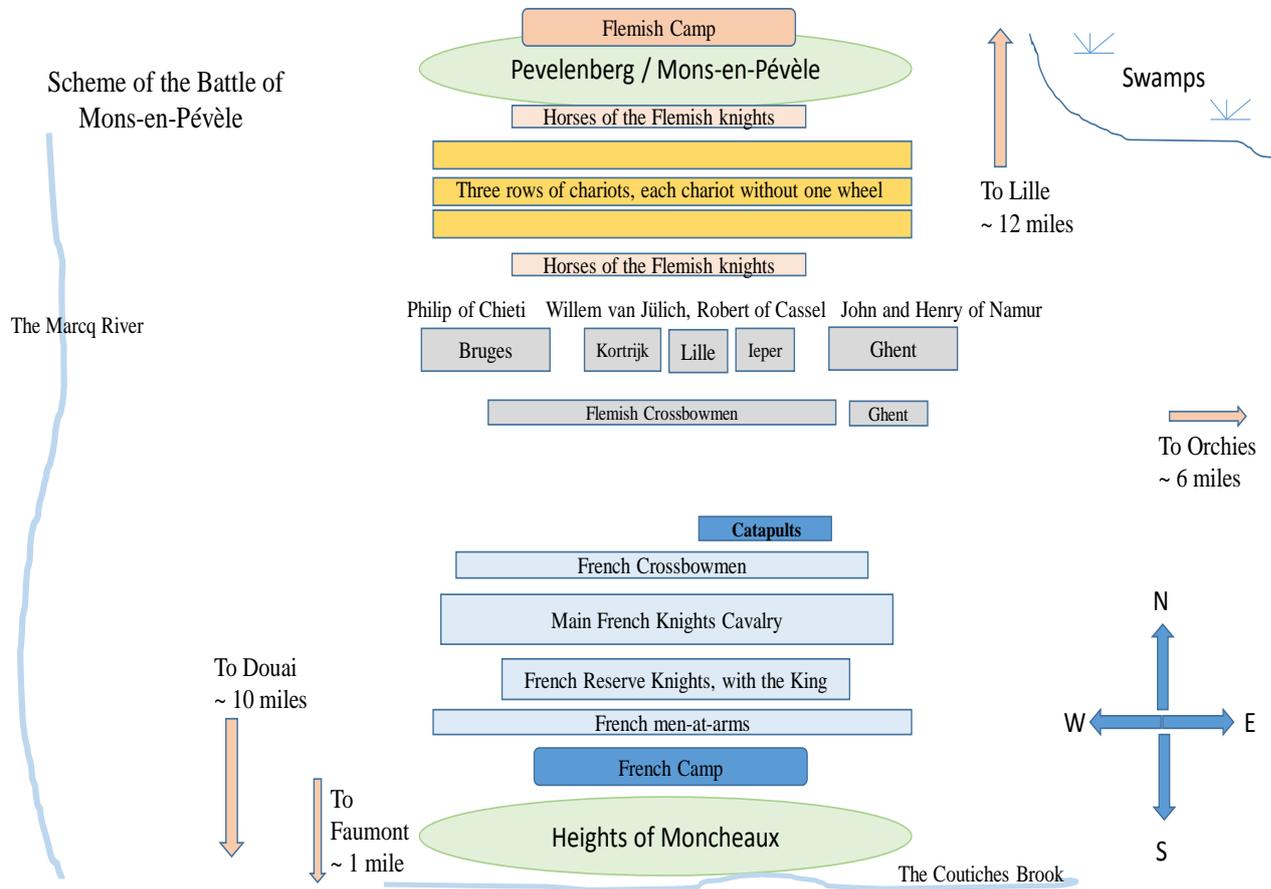
Guillaume d'Avesnes could enter Zierikzee in triumph. He became Count Willem III of Zeeland, and later Count Willem I or Guillaume I of Hainault and Holland, this after the death of John II d'Avesnes. Much later still, in 1323, at the inglorious Peace Treaty of Paris, the count of Flanders recognised Guillaume as count of Zeeland. Zeeland and Flanders were forever separated. Flanders lost much of her finest territory with Zeeland.

The French court released Guy de Namur fairly quickly, in September of 1304, after the Peace Treaty of Marquette.

The expedition to Zeeland of Guy de Namur ended in a catastrophe for him and for Flanders. He had used the militiamen of the cities for his almost private aims, but thousands of men lost their lives and Zeeland remained strongly in the larger realm of Holland.

The news of the defeat spread. It reached King Philip IV of France and his court at Mons-en-Pévèle. The news may have arrived at the Flemish army standing in front of him at about the same time. The king of France regarded the Flemish defeat as an auspicious sign. It had been proven the Flemish armies could be beaten! The atmosphere in Philip's land army grew to full confidence. He prepared to give battle on land too, there and then, at the Mons-en-Pévèle hill.

### Schematic Map of the Battle of Mons-en-Pévèle



## 2.7. The Battle of Mons-en-Pévèle

### The Preparations to the Battle

King Philip IV the Fair of France arrived on the 11<sup>th</sup> of August of 1304 along the road from Douai to Lille on the Mons-en-Pévèle. Mons-en-Pévèle was the French name of the site, as this was French-speaking territory of the county of Flanders. The Flemish called the hill the Pevelenberg. The royal army set up camp on the low-sloping hill that was scarcely higher than a mole's heap, but excellent, open terrain for charges of the knights' battle formations. The Flemish army had advanced to Pont-à-Marcq, somewhat more to the north.

On the 13<sup>th</sup> of August, both armies stood at a couple of crossbow bolts' flights from each other. The Flemish crossbowmen already prepared to start the hostilities of a battle, when envoys of King Philip the Fair announced the king offered peace proposals to the Flemish leaders. The king asked for negotiations. The belligerents organised a truce of a few days to discuss the proposals. The truce would last from the 13<sup>th</sup> to the 16<sup>th</sup> of August.

The talks, starting on the 14<sup>th</sup>, lasted for three days. They took place near the church of the small village of Mons-en-Pévèle. For France, the negotiations were led by Duke Robert II of Burgundy, Duke John II of Brittany, Count Amédée of Savoie, Lord Eudes Le Brun de Verneuill, Foulque de Régni, Guillaume d'Harcourt, and the French Marshals Miles de Noyers and Foulque de Merle. For Flanders negotiated Jan van Schoornisse, Jan de Kuick, Geeraard de Moor lord of Wesseghem, Alard lord of Roubaix, Geeraard van Zottegem, and twelve prominent poorters of the Flemish cities. The discussions led to nowhere and nothing. King Philip the Fair merely sought to win time. He eagerly waited for news about the outcome of the Sea-Battle of Zierikzee. King Philip hoped the Flemish fleet would have been defeated by his Admirals Rainier Grimaldi and Jean Pedrogue. He felt the Flemish army would be discouraged and return home at the news of a defeat.

The news of the Flemish defeat indeed reached the two camps on the 16<sup>th</sup> of August. King Philip stopped the peace negotiations immediately. Nevertheless, he wavered in his determination to give battle. He terribly feared a battle against the Flemish militias. He seemed to lack the courage to attack.

On the 17<sup>th</sup> of August, he withdrew his troops from the Mons-en-Pévèle southwards, though not for far. Had he yet changed his view?

The Flemish army did not seem discouraged by the bad news from Zeeland. The Flemish warriors felt more inspired to revenge! On the evening of the 17<sup>th</sup> of August, instead of leaving a larger distance between them and the royal army, they followed the movement of the French battles. They occupied strong defensive positions on the same hill the French had abandoned, the Mons-en-Pévèle.

On the 18<sup>th</sup> of August, before dawn, the Flemish troops took up their arms. They heard mass and ate a quick breakfast. Their leaders surmised the French army would never grant a battle uphill. So, the Flemish in their turn, marched down the Mons-en-Pévèle, to close to the French army. They invited to battle. They placed their ranks ready for the fight. They showed

they were not afraid of a confrontation. It was 6 o'clock in the morning. The sun rose bright over the horizon.

The Flemish camp, the tents and provisions of the knights and of the militiamen, had been left on the hill of Mons-en-Pévèle. The Flemish leaders feared being surrounded in this open terrain by the French knights on horseback. That would have meant they would have to place most of their men inside a defensive circle, unable to participate in the fight. It would leave their outmost men constantly harassed, outnumbered and killed by the French warriors. They feared the mobility of the French horse riders, whereas they would have been unable to move. They also feared attacks by French men-at-arms on foot.

In the Flemish army, from eighty thousand to one hundred thousand men stood below the Mons-en-Pévèle, among which not much more than one hundred knights. All the knights had stepped down from their horses. The knights would fight like the militiamen, on foot. As they especially did not want to be attacked in the back, they had placed three rows of chariots behind their lines. The chariots stood, shafts tugged into the next chariot. At least one wheel per wagon had been taken off, so that the chariots could not be moved easily out of position.

Henri de Namur had arrived late in the Flemish camp. He brought with him two hundred horse riders from the city of Douai. The Flemish leaders ordered these men also to step from their horses. Their coursers were placed in front of the chariot barrier, close to the rear ranks of the Flemish army.

Servants held together the horses of the Flemish knights behind the chariot rows.

The rows of militiamen stood in front of the chariot barrier. They were organised in three battle formations. On the right wing stood the militiamen of Bruges and of the Bruges Franc, with the men of the Four Crafts. Philip of Chieti led this battle.

On the left wing stood the men from Ghent, led by John of Namur and Henri of Namur, the two other sons of Count Guy de Dampierre.

The central battle consisted of the guildsmen of – from right to left – Kortrijk, Lille, Ieper and Douai. The grandsons of Count Guy led these troops, Willem van Jülich as the son of the count's daughter Marie de Dampierre, and the younger Robert of Cassel, son of the count's also imprisoned son and heir Robert of Béthune.

In front of the Flemish men-at-arms stood the crossbowmen of the cities.

Raes van Lake, John Denout and Wouter de Smet stood in the left wing of the Flemish army with the militiamen of Ghent. They had first travelled on foot from Ghent to Kortrijk. From Kortrijk, they had accompanied a sizable group of guildsmen to the Mons-en-Pévèle. They were tired. They had walked far and fast, and they had worn a heavy load all the way.

Wouter de Smet had forged them a particular armour, based on his experience of the Battle of Kortrijk. He had held two aims in mind: to forge armour that was stronger and yet lighter, and armour that granted them the agility needed on a battlefield.

Wouter had made three new helmets. Though simple bascinets, he had added a long rim behind, in the neck, and a visor in front. The visor could be lowered to protect the face from arrows. It could also be rolled back over the helmet's crest, or even altogether be withdrawn

from the helmet. When closed, the visor protected the face entirely. A narrow then allowed to see left and right, and in front. Wouter told his friends he in particular, didn't like visors in a battle, because vision seemed too limited to him in man-to-man duels. During an attack by crossbowmen and archers, it might come in handy, however.

Wouter had forged for each a breastplate and other body protections. These, he had forged from his own steel, carbon-hardened iron. Wouter's steel was of the best a master-blacksmith of Flanders could produce. The breastplate was relatively light, but stronger than the traditional ones. No sword or lance lunged at them could penetrate the breastplate, and no archer's arrow. It could only be pierced by a crossbow bolt shot from a very short distance. Raes van Lake and John Denout marvelled at how thin and light the steel breastplate was. Wouter guaranteed it would offer excellent protection. They also had a variety of vambraces and rerebraces for their arms, cuisses and greaves for their legs, with articulated protection at where the arms and legs plied. They wore steel sabatons on their feet, a luxury few urban warriors of Flanders could afford.

Wouter had given them a steel shield, which was much thinner and lighter than a wooden shield. Wouter had covered the shields with common, but thick, leather. Nobody could have guessed they held steel shields.

All three of them wore their own, old and mended chain mail coats, which hung to beneath their knees.

As Raes, John and Wouter stood now in the Flemish ranks, anxiously waiting for the first French attack, they might have been mistaken for knights, for they wore no less armour than many noblemen. The only difference between them and knights was they wore no gaudy, brightly coloured tunics, and no badges, as noblemen did. Their armour was black, plain black.

The three friends from Ghent wore *goedendags*. They had *goedendags* of wood, like everybody else, but on top of the wooden shaft, Wouter de Smet had placed an iron cylinder for some added weight, and a longer spike than was usual. Wouter found this modification more lethal. Raes van Lake and John Denout wore a sword at their belt, and a long dagger. Wouter de Smet also had a long dagger, but he preferred to fight with a heavy battle-axe. The men had to carry this heavy gear all the way, plus their personal belongings, in a knapsack. They also had brought a small tent and a thick cover. The leather knapsack hung on a long belt swung over their shoulder.

They stood thus, armoured and armed in the fields of Mons-en-Pévèle. They held another knapsack slung over their shoulder, a smaller one, in which they had some food, bread and cheese, dried fish and dried meat, a flask of water. They liked beer and wine, but had none with them in the battle. They had learned a few lessons from the Battle of Kortrijk. Drunkenness did not make great warriors! Their tent and heavier knapsack, they had left on the Mons-en-Pévèle hill. They hoped to recuperate them after the battle.

They stood together in the Flemish ranks. They had not wanted to be separated. They wore no armour on their back, so they would have to protect each other's back. In their black elaborate armour, they made a strange threesome among the other men. These were not nearly so well protected as they. Some guildsmen threw them envious glances. Were these

three wealthy merchants from Ghent? No, Raes and John shook, no, we are a weaver, a fuller and a blacksmith. Our friend made these protections. Our armour is homemade, not bought. The explanation satisfied the men around them, as well as the fact they wore no badges. They also had not told the captains of their previous experience. They stood, leaning on their *goedendags*, and waited for the first French attacks.

Juris Vresele and Willem van Artevelde were not with them. Willem had to trade and earn money, for his reserves had been depleted. Trade was very difficult in these times of war, but the rewards high. Willem had made easy money selling weapons forged by Wouter de Smet. Juris Vresele also had to trade to replenish his dwindled reserves. He too did not want to fight anymore. He had been disillusioned by the fighting. He had seen too many horrors in the Battle of Kortrijk. He had hesitated at first. Finally, he had given in to the entreaties of his wife to stay in Ghent.

Raes van Lake, John Denout and Wouter de Smet had not given much thought to the dangers of campaigns and battles. They had come, because they had heard the count's sons and grandsons were fighting for the liberties of Flanders. They had a good cause to fight for! Raes, John and Wouter leaned on their *goedendag*. They remained standing in the first, bright sunrises of the new day, which could become their last. Around them, many men sat in the grass. A few continued to sleep in the damp greenness. Raes, John and Wouter were too nervous. They were well aware of what was at stake in these beautiful meadows of Flanders.

The French warriors had moved to against the heights of Moncheaux. The French had set up their new camp there, not far from the village of Faumont.

In front of the battles, the French had placed five throwing engines, capable of throwing stones and large arrows on the advancing enemy.

Behind the catapults stood the French crossbowmen and a group of *bidauts*, men-at-arms holding long lances.

Behind these troops on foot, the Connétable Gaucher de Châtillon had positioned the main force of French knights, about ten thousand heavily armoured men on horseback.

Still behind the knights, waited a French battle that should form the reserve. Here stood King Philip IV. The *Oriflamme* standard of France was here too, guarded by the old knight Anselme de Chevreuse.

As last French forces, behind the reserve, stood a large group of footmen, of men-at-arms.

They formed the last battle formation, right in front of the French camp.

The royal army counted somewhat less men than the Flemish army, from sixty thousand to eighty thousand men.

The French army had been organised in fifteen battle formations, of which we know the names of the leaders.

Battle 1 was led by Thiébaud de Chépooy, the Grandmaster of the crossbowmen of France and their *bidauts*. Other leaders here were Jacques de Bayonne and the lord of Chauvegny.

Battle 2 was led by the *Connétable* Gaucher de Châtillon and the count of Foix.

The counts of Saint-Pol and Blois led the third battle. Here also would fight the famous French Marshal Miles de Noyers.

Battle 4 was led by the count of Boulogne and of Dammartin, and by the lord of Fiennes.

Battle 5 was led by the duke of Burgundy, the count of Auxerre and the lord of Vrégy.

Battle 6 was led by Count Charles de Valois, the brother of the king. Here also stood the counts of Poitiers and of Roussi. Charles de Valois had left France in anger in April of 1301. King Philip IV recalled his brother already in July of 1302, asking the pope to free Charles from his obligations in Italy. Philip needed his brother for counsel and support. The king felt comforted by the presence of his brothers. Charles de Valois had fought in Sicily at that time. He secured a peace, but left the island in the hands of the king of Aragon, though only in the form of a rent, leaving open the possibility the island could ever be claimed and return to the Anjou dynasty of France.

In Battle 7 stood King Philip IV the Fair, Jehan de Châtillon, Mouton de Blainville, Foulque de Merle and Enguerrand de Fréville.

Battle 8 was led by Louis de Clermont, by the lord of Soissons and the count of Couchy.

Battle 9 was led by the duke of Brittany and the counts of Montbison and of the Valentinois.

Battle 10 was led by the counts of Montfort and Vendôme, and by the lord of Sancerre.

The count of Savoie and the Lord Guillaume de Vagor led the 11<sup>th</sup> battle.

Battle 12 was led by the Dauphin de Vienne and the lord of Craon.

In battle 13 stood in front the count of Forest with the lords of Roquefort and Comboure.

Battle 14 was led by the viscounts of Melun and Touart, and by the lord of Partenay.

In the last battle, the 15<sup>th</sup> formation, stood the count of Armagnac, the viscount of Ventadour and the lord of Brion.

Most of the battles were led by three of the noblest names of France, a few by only two of such noblemen. Like in the Battle of Kortrijk, two years ago, the highest nobility of France, their barons, knights and squires would form the basis and heart of the French army. King Philip had an issue with these men. He could not again let many of them be slaughtered by Flemish common men! The most prominent men who stood around him at the beginning of the battle were his brothers Charles de Valois and Louis d'Evreux. His counsellors Guillaume de Nogaret and Enguerrand de Marigny also stood near. With him were the *Connétable* Gaucher de Châtillon and the two Marshals Miles de Noyers and Foulque de Merle, as well as the dukes of Burgundy, of Brittany and of Montmorency. The finest names of France had been summoned to the battle!

Enguerrand de Marigny was a nobleman of small nobility of Normandy. He entered the service of Hugues de Bouville, the chamberlain and secretary of King Philip IV as a squire. Later, he entered the household of the Queen Joan of Navarre, and he married her God-daughter Joan of Saint-Martin. In 1298, he received the custody of the Castle of Issoudun. After the death of Pierre Flote at Kortrijk and of Hugues de Bouville at Mons-en-Pévèle, he became King Philip's Grand Chamberlain and chief counsellor.

The two armies faced each other in a north to south direction, the Flemish army standing north to the French. To the north was Lille; in the south, the largest town near was Douai. Both these cities were Flemish, held Flemish garrisons, and belonged from old to Flanders, even though this was French-spoken country. The people living in these regions felt more sympathy for their count, the count of Flanders, than for the king of France!

## The Battle begins

The battle really started around 9 o'clock in the morning, and, as expected, by the advance of the French crossbowmen, archers, and a large group of *bidauts*. Thiébaud de Chépoyle led these troops. It was the royal army that started the hostilities. The crossbowmen sent showers of bolts and arrows into the Flemish army. The Flemish militias endured stoically. The bolts caused some casualties. Faces suddenly erupted in blood. Bolt penetrated deep in calves and lower legs. Occasionally, an arrow sank deep in a breast when a militiaman lowered his shield at a bad moment. Most bolts thumped in the soft grass and remained stuck there, later to be picked up and used by Flemish crossbowmen. In the first wave of attack, these hid behind their huge pavises, held by their assistants. They riposted after the first bolts had been released by the enemy. They were no less numerous than their French counterparts. They made sure the French crossbowmen did not advance too near the Flemish lines. They aimed straight at the French crossbowmen. Groups of French archers had also crept forward to lead on the *bidauts*. The Flemish crossbowmen targeted these men pitilessly. Their efficiency in reaching the less well protected French archers was daunting.

The French men-at-arms ran from behind the crossbowmen. They attacked the Flemish pikemen of the first row. The French crossbowmen then aimed higher in the air. Their bolts seared upwards, seemed to float in the air, and then fell almost vertically out of the sky on the staring Flemings. More victims slumped to the ground in the farther ranks of the Flemish militiamen.

The *bidauts* attacked the Flemish pikemen. They wriggled their bodies in between the pikes. Pikes were not handy weapons against enemy men-at-arms on foot! The French closed in on the pikemen, and they thrust their shorter lances at the pikemen. The militiamen dropped many pikes to defend with shield and sword. The attacks of the French men-at-arms came fierce, energetic, rapid. The Flemish guildsmen fought courageously. They did not waver; They held their ranks. They got wounded, died, and were killed where they stood. When a Fleming fell down in the first ranks, a man from the second row took his place. The Flemings thus confronted the French warriors-on-foot.

This kind of first battle became a test of power, a fight of attrition, which led to nowhere, except to weakening of the Flemish front lines, which maybe was the ultimate aim. Were the French sacrificing their footmen in order to charge easier into weakened phalanxes? The Flemish crossbowmen took more aim on the *bidauts*, then. Many victims dropped in the French attacking groups. Less dead could be regretted in the Flemish ranks.

John of Namur, Willem van Jülich and Philip of Chieti, the main Flemish leaders, watched this fighting with weary eyes. They did not quite understand the meaning of these skirmishes of footmen against footmen, which went on for long hours.

The French footmen attacked and withdrew, attacked and withdrew. The French crossbowmen advanced, loosened a few bolts, and retreated to their former positions. Each time they lost many men, for the Flemish crossbowmen had learned to take better aim. John de Namur, Willem van Jülich and Philip of Chieti grew nervous and impatient. What was happening? Why did the French knights not charge straight on, to deal a hammer blow to the Flemish militiamen? The three Flemish leaders met behind the lines.

‘The French knights are not charging,’ Willem van Jülich declared the obvious. ‘What do they expect? We have many more men in our ranks. We can lose many men before they will see thin ranks. The French leaders are sacrificing their footmen. Should we attack the knights, run forward, engulf and crush the French footmen?’

‘They do not dare to charge!’ John of Namur shouted above the din of the battle. ‘They fear to lose the battle like they did at Kortrijk. They fear being overwhelmed in our ranks, and they are right, too. They will not charge! The battle will not be like at Kortrijk!’

‘Our men fall without having a real battle,’ Philip of Chieti answered. ‘The French are answering our footmen with footmen. We cannot do much more at this moment than endure! They lose more men than we. Someone in this kind of battle is going to make a mistake. What the mistake can be I have not the slightest idea of. I say, just hold out. We are not losing in this kind of battle. Nor more than the French anyway, and we have more footmen than they. We are doing fine against these attacks. My group of Bruges are laughing at these futile attacks. They learn rapidly how to take on the French men-at-arms. It is all a matter of patience, now.’

‘It is going to be long battle,’ John of Namur added. ‘The day is hot. The sun burns already. We must encourage our men to hold out.’

Philip, John and Willem decided to go on fighting off the French. They would not attack, but defend. The French army was losing many men in the attacks. It seemed to the Flemish leaders the French men-at-arms on foot, by far not numerous enough to force a breakthrough, exhausted themselves. In front of the Flemish ranks the corpses of dead French *bidauts* began to heap up. The Flemish warriors threw dead bodies from inside their ranks to the front. Charging horses of knights would have to jump over the bodies! The attacks of the French, though incessant, could not push the Flemish ranks together, and the Flemings did not step back once. The battle continued this way for about three hours. Noon arrived.

At that time, a large contingent of French knights rode along the road from Douai to Lille. They formed a majestic group, riding in full colours of their badges and pennants, long trappers on their destriers. They seemed to be launching finally a major attack on the Flemish left wing, where the men of Ghent stood. The Flemish crossbowmen had seen the French riders come charging on in time. They fled into the ranks of the militiamen of Ghent. The French knights thundered on, in full gallop, their lances couched. The battle seemed to have taken another turn. The militias of Ghent were being attacked on the side, not frontally.

The French crossbowmen also cleared the space in front of the Flemish rows. They ran to behind their lines, followed by the last *bidauts* who had attacked the first ranks of the Flemings. The horses rode on with thundering hooves. The knights lowered over their lances and over the necks of their destriers. The Flemish waited for the shock. Their lines adapted, all pikes and *goedendags* out. The colours flashed and neared.

Then, trumpets sounded from deep into the French royal army. Drums rattled. The French knights looked up, and seemed to change their mind. They rode left in a large circling movement, riding at full speed parallel to the Flemish lines. They rode back into the French battle formations of cavalry on the left wing of the French army.

‘What was all that about?’ Willem van Jülich wondered, laughing at the ostentatious, but totally futile show of power. ‘Are they really so afraid to attack us, the proud French knights? Do they seek to spare their barons? What is this nonsense about? Did some French fool order the attack, to be called back by the *connétable* or by the king? Ludicrous!’

The Flemish militiamen made similar remarks. Loud cheers and derisive laughter went up from the Flemish ranks.

‘Come on, you cowards,’ shouted the ranks of Bruges.

The French war leaders continued their harassment of the Flemish waiting militiamen. They ordered more footmen forward. A large group of Spanish slingers, and slingers from the Provence region, ran now to close the Flemish lines. In their turn, they harassed the Flemish ranks with well-aimed stone and iron projectiles. The Flemish crossbowmen ran again to the front of the lines, to take aim on the nimble slingers who jumped from one position to the other. This game of hide and seek continued also quite some time.

Willem van Jülich cursed again. He saw men of his troops fall, treacherously hit by the small iron balls and the tipped stones whipped on by the slingers. Would this kind of nerve-wrecking fight last the entire day? What did the French hope to realise? The footmen, crossbowmen and slingers could definitely not force a decision on this battlefield. Willem gradually understood the French wanted the Flemings to charge on foot towards the French knights. The horse riders of the royal army could then catch the Flemish militiamen running in no order in the meadows.

‘Never give the enemy what he desires,’ was an old lesson Willem remembered. He ordered his men to stay in place.

‘This is a jolly battle, my friends! We are winning this. Just stay in place, defend, and kill those bastards of men-at-arms that come close!’

Willem encouraged his crossbowmen to answer the hails of the dangerous stones with deadly bolts. More Frenchmen fell victim to Flemish bolts. The groups of slingers shuddered. Their line broke. They retreated back into the French lines, but not before having lost quite a few men more. The Flemish had also endured and thrown off this attack.

Willem van Jülich then saw the French lines open. Five large catapults of wood and iron were being hauled to the front. The catapults were strung and armed. The French army had brought forward three so-called *perdriaux*, ballistas, which could send showers of stones to the Flemish rows. The French charged the huge catapults with stone projectiles as large as a man’s fist. Twenty, thirty of such stones could be placed in the panier. When the catapults slung their paniers, the stones opened to a shower, and the heavy stones fell on the militiamen. A flurry of stones flew like a string of birds to the Flemish ranks.

Two springalds had been brought forward also, large crossbows. These could send, almost horizontally, long iron arrows, arrows longer than three feet. Such arrows were shot with such power; they could pierce through several men standing one behind the other. The long, deadly arrows could fly farther than half a mile! They were driven by inhuman power. The catapults were in fact siege engines, used here against the militiamen of Flanders. The count of Boulogne commanded the group of men who handled the engines.

Flurries of heavy stones flew to the Flemish ranks. When the stones fell, they wreaked havoc in the Flemish rows. It took only a minute to load a catapult. Rains of sizable stones fell on the men from Ieper and Lille in the central Flemish battle. The bombardment of the French on the Flemish militiamen lasted about half an hour.

Then, Willem van Jülich and his men from Ieper could and wanted not to endure this kind of cowardly warfare any longer.

Instead of retreating, instead of fleeing, Willem van Jülich ordered a swift attack by the men of Ieper alone on the engines.

The men of Ieper ran forward, suddenly and fiercely. They ran so quickly, they seemed to have surprised the French entirely. The *Ieperlingen* too formed attack groups in the form of a triangle, the point directed against the French, to pierce through the French lines. In no time, the men of Ieper, enraged by the harassment of the catapults, engulfed the place where the machines stood. The *Ieperlingen* seemed not to care how close they ran to the French knights on horseback. The knights remained standing, as if frozen to ice a few hundreds of feet farther. Nobody urged them forward. The militiamen from Ieper killed the few French men-at-arms who had not fled back. The Flemings wielded axes. They cut in seconds all the chords of the wooden engines. With a few well-chosen hews, they also destroyed the wooden beams. One man even slammed his axe into the wheels, making it sheer impossible to move the machines back.

When all the catapults had been destroyed, the men from Ieper ran back to fill the gap in the ranks of the Flemish army. The French knights had not used the opportunity to break through the Flemish ranks. The Flemish leaders had to use some coercion to drive the *Ieperlingen* back into the ranks. The militiamen had looked with eager eyes at the French passive knights! Why turn back? Why not run on and give these cowards an Ieper handshake? Willem van Jülich had it difficult to call back his militiamen.

The battle evolved along the Flemish lines. Groups of French footmen armed with lances and battle-axes ran to the enemy. The French leaders did not launch these groups everywhere at the same time. One group of twenty to thirty men-at-arms ran into the rows of Bruges on the Flemish right wing. A little later, forty French warriors tried to pierce the Flemish ranks of Ghent. The Flemish men waited for the next point where the French *bidauts* might arrive and attack. They limited their involvement to a dogged, in-place resistance. The Flemings merely defended themselves against the French incursions. Their lines still did not move. They made no attempt at moving their rows. They did not step back. They also sought not to encircle the Frenchmen, and in doing so expose their backs to the main French force constituted by the knights on horseback. This force probably waited for the first error of the Flemish wings, for disorder in the Flemish ranks, or for any other evolution that changed the straight lines of the enemy. The French army of knights might have moved and attacked massively when the Flemish militiamen had broken their lines into knots or concentrations of fighting. The Flemish held their ranks straight. At the places that came not under attack, not one Flemish warrior moved. The militiamen who were being attacked fought, and endured.

The leaders of the Flemish army sensed these attacks were as many probes, tests of will power, pin-pricks to undermine the patience and determination of their army in the fields of Mons-en-Pévèle. The sons and grandsons of the count of Flanders ordered the men to stay put. They did allow the ranks to be pushed together at the places that were attacked. Then,

more Flemish warriors beat back the French assaults. The skirmishes along the Flemish lines lasted a long time.

Around 3 o'clock in the early afternoon, the limited attacks by footmen stopped as suddenly as they had begun. Trumpets sounded. The rattle of far drums called off the assaults. The French footmen who were still engaged ran back to their positions behind the French main army of knights.

The Flemish militiamen gathered the dead and the wounded. They drew the French corpses and the bodies of the wounded Frenchmen to in front of their rows. A long line of bodies lying broken in the grass ran along the Flemish front. The militiamen brought their own wounded to behind their ranks, to close the chariots. There, monks, doctors and barbers tended to the wounded.

A long line of wounded Flemings limped slowly back to the camp of tents on the Mons-en-Pévèle. For these men, the battle had ended.

The Flemish crossbowmen mercilessly shot down the French men-at-arms who tried to bring back French wounded warriors to the French battles.

The French attacks had so far served no purpose but to leave many victims on the battlefield. The Flemish war leaders did not feel their ranks weakened by the assaults. They regretted the losses of lives, but held confidence in their men.

Raes van Lake, John Denout and Wouter de Smet stood by then in the fourth row of eight in the Flemish army of Ghent. They did not suffer from the first successive attacks by the French. When the crossbow bolts flew to them, they experienced only some danger from bolts falling vertically out of the sky. Holding their slightly curved shields above their body sufficed for adequate protection. The men around them were surprised to see the few bolts simply bounce or glide off the shields. The arrows and bolts that came in horizontally, hit the men in the front rows. Again, the shields of Wouter de Smet provided them adequate protection. They did also not suffer from the catapults, as these engines only launched stones onto the central Flemish battle formation, not farther left than the men from Ieper. They tightened when the French footmen attacked also the ranks of Ghent. Fights only developed in the first ranks. The men in these rows sufficed to ward off the French men-at-arms. Raes van Lake had to admire the attacking Frenchmen, for these men must have been well aware they attacked in widely not enough numbers to harm the Flemish army decisively. A French man-at-arms who penetrated to some depth in the Flemish ranks, should have known he would not emerge out of the ranks! He would find certain death.

Raes, John and Wouter saw the first dead men of the battle in these assaults. Yet, they did not really participate in the actual fighting. After the French attacks, they realised the rows of the Flemish gradually had thinned out of warriors. Raes van Lake estimated about half of the Flemish men in the first row had disappeared, either killed or wounded and brought to behind the lines.

They saw the horror of the French dead bodies thrown in front of their rows. Wounded French men-at-arms had been thrown carelessly with the dead. Some of these men still groaned, some asked for mercy, and others cursed their enemies. Some slowly bled to death without complaining. Complaining anyway made no sense here, when feelings of mercy had been banned. Raes, John and Wouter grinded their teeth, drew their lips very thin. This was a

battle! They should not feel much compassion for enemies who would have killed them without thinking twice. Still, not helping the French wounded men with some charity, seeing their misery, seemed inhuman behaviour. They could not but close their hearts and hope the fate of the wretched men lying together on the grass, the wounded among the dead and dying, would slow down subsequent French attacks. Or did hate merely generated more hate? Their hopes were vain! The Frenchmen attacked in waves.

Raes, John and Wouter stood in the ranks. They thought of the softness of their wives, their hope on children. They abhorred the fate of the wounded men of both sides. They prayed to the Virgin, to Christ, and to God. Would He spare them from such sorrowful fate?

### Surrounding Assaults by the French knights

The Flemish leaders remained astonished at the tactics of the French *connétable* and of the king and his courtiers. Willem van Jülich had expected huge charges of knights at the gallop against his ranks at the centre, followed by attacks of the French footmen. Instead, his men had been fighting since early this morning, but only against French men-at-arms. These troops had not been thrown against his militiamen in overwhelming numbers. This kind of fight could go on all day, make many victims on both sides, but force no decision upon either side. Already, Willem van Jülich and John of Namur were talking about calling in more men from the towns and the countryside as reinforcements. They were both bewildered by the strange turn of events. It seemed the French did not dare or did not want to force a decisive all-out attack along the entire length of the lines. King Philip IV seemed to fear throwing the heavy weight of his army of knights forward. Did he want to spare noble lives? Yet, only these hordes on horseback could force a decision on the battlefield. Were the French knights waiting for a general attack of the Flemish phalanxes? Philip of Chieti shouted not to give in to such urge.

‘We positioned our army in a defensive stance,’ he cried. ‘We must keep standing here! The French can launch attack after attack. Look at what has happened! We have withstood assault after assault. Defence is our strength! We wait and hold our ranks! Sooner or later, the attack of all attacks will come. Or the French will leave the battlefield with the battle undecided. The French will not allow that to happen. The attack of all attacks is bound to come! He who can exert the most stubborn patience will win here.’

The Flemings straightened their ranks.

At that moment, some movement could be discerned in the French army of horse riders. A large group of French knights rode along the extreme left wing of the Flemish army. Then the riders turned abruptly and rode fast into the left flank, where the men of Ghent stood. The militiamen of Ghent had to turn. They had faced the French lines, now they turned east. A very fierce battle ensued.

The Ghent men had the time to crouch and hold pikes, *goedendags*, and lances high. Four side ranks of the left seemed to collapse when the knights slammed into the militiamen. More warriors of Ghent entered the fray. The knights of France were stopped in the Flemish ranks, but they had bitten deep into the Flemish army. A cruel confrontation took place on that side. The rest of the Flemish army watched in astonishment.

The guildsmen of Gent were struggling to hold their own. They tried to ward off the French knights. They did not allow the French knights to penetrate deeper into the Flemish army. The French knights had attacked in a large group, but many more Ghent warriors stood in their way! The men of Ghent first stopped the charge. Then they began a slow, ardent slaughter of the knights on their wing.

John of Namur mingled with his militiamen. He too fought on foot. He fired his militiamen on. Again, he could not believe such a limited, though strong force of knights could force a decisive breakthrough. Did the French even now know no better? Even this assault seemed to him merely a tactic skirmish, one more harassment aimed at making victims at the end of the left Flemish wing. The French were definitely trying to exhaust the Flemish, to destroy the Flemish determination and hope.

‘Well,’ John of Namur sighed, ‘we can play this game at two! We shall not move!’

He noticed a part of the French knights had ridden on, to far behind the Flemish lines. He could not see what these riders were doing behind the barrier of chariots.

At the same time, a large group of French knights also attacked on the other side, on the side of Philip of Chieti and of the militiamen of Bruges. Unlike on the left wing, these horsemen did not try to charge into the ranks. They rode on to the place behind the chariot barrier.

The French knights galloped to far behind the Flemish chariots! They cantered up the Mons-en-Pévèle hill. There, they attacked the Flemish camp, easy prey. In the camp stood the tents of the Flemish knights and the tents of the militiamen. The French riders killed the almost helpless servants the Flemish leaders had left in the camp to guard it. The French knights rode over these weak defenders, massacred them to the last man, destroyed the tents under the hooves of their horses, and threw the rests of the campfires around. They entered the tents of the Flemish barons and pillaged. Then, satisfied of their destruction, they drew themselves back on horseback. Their work finished, they returned, laden with their booty. The knights brought their plunder to their own camp. Then they took back their positions in the French lines.

Many Flemish guards escaped from the ordeal in the Flemish camp. The guards fled north, to Mérognies, and to the road to Lille. The French knights found many horses in the Flemish camp, and also still wagons loaded with provisions. They loaded these horses and wagons with the goods taken in the Flemish camp, the chests with coins, the sacks of food, the finest cloth, silk dresses, the silver candelabras, and the barrels with wine and beer. The Flemish thus had been deprived of their reserves of food and drink!

While the pillaging of the Flemish camp lasted, the fight worsened on the Ghent side, on the left wing of the Flemish army. The fight had been strenuous here. The Ghent troops had stepped back under the first shock of the charge. They didn’t break, and didn’t flee. They remained standing in the field a little more to the right, though not by much. They had let many horse riders pass into the midst of their lines, to slaughter them by other men.

In the ranks stood by then also many crossbowmen of the Ghent guilds. These men undid the chords of their crossbows and threw the strings into the legs of the destriers. The horses stumbled and fell.

In the very heart of this battle, a group of thirty very courageous French knights had forced their way to the middle of the Ghent ranks. They tried to break through the Flemish rows. More and more Ghent militiamen surrounded them, and stopped their advance. The thirty

knights found themselves caught in an overwhelming superiority of Flemish warriors. The Flemish militiamen toppled them, made the riders fall from their horses. They killed the horses with *goedendags* and lances, so that the knights plunged to the ground. The Flemish militiamen slaughtered these French noblemen to the last. No knight escaped out of the trap.

The French leader of the men-at-arms, Thiébaud de Chépoy, had also sent a detachment of men-at-arms on foot to the Flemish camp. These men reached the camp later than the knights. They assisted in the pillage of the food and valuables the Flemish had left behind. Their work done, the footmen retreated, back to their original positions.

The *Gentenaars* of John of Namur saw more French knights ride parallel to the easternmost side of their ranks. Instinctively, the men who stood at the edges of the rows had turned to the riders' wild gallop. This movement had been continued in the Flemish ranks. Then, Henri of Namur had called men who stood more to the right in the Flemish ranks to run and close the gap between the army and the chariot barrier. All these men now faced east, fearing, expecting the French knights to ferociously attack the extreme left wing. This truly happened, when nobody had expected so. The knights turned their horses west, and rode in full gallop into the Ghent ranks.

The Flemish knights might have been disappointed. The Flemish urban warriors, despite all better knowledge of battle tactics, expected hundreds of French knights on horseback smashing straight into the Flemish lines from the front, not from the side. New Flemish lines, parallel to the east had been formed quickly! The French knights could not cut through the Flemish urban militias like a blunt knife through butter of ill-positioned warriors. In fact, had the Frenchmen attacked from the front, they would not have been differently awaited. Maybe less pikes received their horses, but at least as many spiked *goedendags*! The Flemish side had rapidly been transformed from a listless, waiting group, to a prickly porcupine. The French knights jumped with their war-horses over the bristly wall of first defence, but as many horses remained stuck on the iron spikes of the Flemish *goedendags*.

Raes van Lake, John Denout and Wouter de Smet stood at that moment four rows from the south, four rows to the east of the left Flemish wing end. They saw the French riders come to them in full gallop, as in the Battle of Kortrijk. They kept their calm. They knew perfectly well what would happen now. They knew what to do. This was to be their killing hour! The onslaught of the charge of the French riders forced the first three rows of Flemish militiamen to ply together, be overrun, overwhelmed, be crushed, be thrown to the ground. Nevertheless, once the wild charge spent, most of the Flemings stood back up and started to fight the French knights that had reached their midst. The French knights were stopped in the dogged resistance of the defence. They did not penetrate deeper! This was the usual stance of the Flemish defensive army. The Flemish militiamen could endure, and resurrected. Most of the militiamen had not expected less. They had been overrun by the French knights. Now, as so many Lazaruses, they rose from the ground. They began to fight the immobilised Frenchmen in the midst of their ranks. The French knights saw opponents they had thought defeated, rise to the left, right, front, and behind them!

The tall Wouter de Smet saw a huge French destrier lose speed, but burst on, still with a tremendous energy, to confront him almost directly. While the horse came to a stand-still, he slammed his war-axe into the mouth of the animal. He crushed the head of the destrier, hurt the animal badly. He adroitly avoided the iron-armed hooves of the horse, and sprang aside to duck under the mace of the attacking knight. Wouter's friends fought with him. He was not alone. Raes van Lake to his left side, pushed his *goedendag* deep inside the right flank of the horse. He let his heavy spear stick in the animal's flesh, and he drew his long sword to face the knight. At the same time, John Denout, a trickle slower, had forced his *goedendag* into the left leg of the knight. The knight roared with pain, and swung his mace to John's head. Denout ducked, and caught the blow of the mace on the steel of his shield. His shield sang, shivered, seemed to oscillate, but did not split. In that moment, Raes van Lake had been able to swing his sword powerfully to the knight's chain mail hanging around the neck. Raes partially sliced through the protection, and reached arteries below. He may have opened a part of the man's jugular. Blood sprouted on Raes's shield.

John Denout obtained a few seconds of respite, in which he thrust the point of his sword also in the space just under the knight's helmet, in front. The knight sucked for air, heaved his head high.

Wouter de Smet had sprung aside. He swung once more his battle-axe, this time at the long, hard neck of the war-horse. He bit deep into the horse's neck. The animal would not survive this stroke, but it was still alive for a few heartbeats, and it ejected the blade with a wild movement of its head. Then, the horse pranced a last time. In doing so, it threw off its rider on the rear side. The knight fell on his back. He let go of his mace. Raes van Lake stood already above the French knight, then. He briefly looked at the finely embroidered badge of the knight's tunic, of a red background with a golden cross in the middle. He didn't hesitate further, and plunged with both hands his sword powerfully through breastplate and chain mail, to reach the heart. The knight gasped a last breath. Then, he expired.

Raes, John and Wouter stood panting, looking at the slain enemy. They turned to their next opponents. French footmen had received the time to penetrate behind their knights, into the ranks of the Flemish.

Two bearded French mercenaries confronted Raes van Lake and John Denout. One of the men swung an axe at Raes van Lake. He seemed confident in this blow. Raes van Lake diligently voided the axe's deadly circle at the last moment. In the same movement, when the axe had already whipped past Raes to the right, Raes thrust his sword along the man's shield, deep in his opponent's side. He drew much blood when his sword sliced and re-appeared from the flesh. Raes knew the man maybe mortally wounded, but the mercenary remained a dangerous opponent in his last breaths.

Raes withdrew his sword, turned and sprung aside the man's turning his shield, and he stuck his sword in the man's face. The face erupted in blood. The warrior slumped aside. He then too held a sword, but Raes van Lake was a far better sword-fighter. He retreated a step, which his opponent interpreted as sudden fear. No, Raes was not afraid! He was also no coward! The Frenchman still lunged at him. Raes grabbed his *goedendag*. He had dropped the weapon at his feet. Knees on the grass, Raes pushed the spike deep into the man's loins, piercing the mail coat. The *goedendag*, thrust with both hands, remained stuck in the belly of the

Frenchman. Raes tore and stuck deeper. With tremendous power, he tore at the *goedendag* to open the man's belly. He saw the astonished eyes of the foul French opponent widen, lower to his belly. The man brought his hands down to stop his guts spilling out, he sank to the ground. Raes left him to die on the grass of Mons-en-Pévèle.

Meanwhile, John Denout had killed his opponent too. He had killed equally with his *goedendag*. He was withdrawing his spiked weapon out of the throat of the French men-at-arms. He mercilessly pushed the spike then further into the Frenchman's neck. Blood sprouted over him. John heaved his *goedendag* high, and hit the man with a strong blow on the head. In doing so, he crushed parts of the iron helmet into the man's brain.

Another French man-at-arms lunged with an iron lance at John. For moment, John thought his life would end there and then. The lance never reached him, except for a bloody but superficial slice over his right leg. This was because a large war-axe planted itself once, then twice, in the man's breast.

Wouter de Smet wielded that axe, saving the life of John Denout! The French opponent sank to his knees, then fell to the grass, a huge gap in his breast. Wouter grinned. He did not really enjoy this gruesome work, but since it was demanded of him and necessary here, he did not hesitate!

The three friends formed one line again, to confront new enemies. Decidedly, no French warrior, whether on horse or on foot, would pass them! They fought on relentlessly for quite a time. Together, they killed several knights and as many French footmen. They lost all sense of time. They fought on methodically, forgetting how many successive attacks they halted at their rank. A solid line of other Ghent militiamen formed around them. They would later boast, I stood with three lions of Flanders in the field of Mons-en-Pévèle!

Later, much later, the French veterans of the Battle of Mons-en-Pévèle, also talked of three lions of Flanders, hellish black knights, who had stopped several assaults of French noblemen on the left wing of the Flemish rows.

The knights who had survived the duels in the Flemish lines suddenly retreated out of the enemy ranks. They gathered as if for a new assault, but turned their horses and rode back as quickly as they had come.

The Flemish militiamen licked their wounds. They brought the killed knights and the horses out of their lines. Once more, they transported their dead and heavily wounded comrades to the back, to the protection of the chariots. They re-formed their ranks. John de Namur and his staff ran to everywhere along his battle formation. They tried to inspire courage in their men. The lines were once more formed straight, facing the French army. The Flemish militiamen of Ghent stayed in the field, and in the same position as before. They held their ranks tight, and showed no sign of wavering. John de Namur wondered how long the militiamen would thus doggedly remain in place, resisting the incessant French attacks. The warriors of Ghent remained standing in the burning sun, scarcely without food and drink except for what they had brought themselves in their knapsacks. The Flemish waited for the next onslaught.

### [Negotiations for Peace](#)

The battle slackened. For a while, no French contingents attacked. There was a lull in the fighting. French heralds on horseback rode along the Flemish lines, calling for peace.

‘The king of France demands negotiations of peace or truce! No more victims should be made on this day!’ the heralds shouted.

The heralds continued to ride on and off and all along the lines, shouting their message. No war leader of the Flemish army reacted. What was this? How could the fallen militiamen be honoured by one more sham of negotiations? Negotiations had been held right before the battle!

Willem van Jülich looked to left and right. Philip of Chieti’s head shook of no, no new negotiations now. John of Namur also vigorously shook his head. Willem van Jülich shook back of no. Nobody in the Flemish ranks moved or stepped forward. The French heralds continued to ride along the lines. Willem van Jülich ordered a group of crossbowmen to the first ranks. The crossbowmen stood next to their pavises. The heralds drooped off. Not one bolt had been released from the bows. The crossbowmen ran back into the Flemish ranks. The militiamen jeered at the French royal army.

A single French knight then rode forward. He rode in full, splendid armour and wore a pennant with the colours of Savoie. Amédée, count of Savoie, though a French courtier, had always shown a special, benevolent friendship to Flanders. The knight who rode along the Flemish army wore the badge of Savoie on his breast, on his shield, on his flag, and on the long trapper of his horse.

He rode slowly, shouting constantly, ‘peace, peace, peace!’

John of Namur knew the count of Savoie. This French rider did not move like the count. John suspected a new ruse of the French. He shouted to Willem van Jülich what he thought. This was not the count of Savoie! Willem relayed the opinion of John to Philip of Chieti. Philip made a sign he had understood. He didn’t move. He remained standing with his men. He ignored the call of the French knight.

The horse rider rode three times the length of the Flemish lines. Nobody reacted. He then reluctantly rode back in a canter to the waiting French army. His ruse had not succeeded. The man was indeed not the count of Savoie! The count sat on his horse well within the reserves of the king. The messenger had merely been one of his squires, who had put on the count’s armour. Amédée de Savoie had allowed his squire to be dressed like him and be sent forward.

The lull in the battle lasted. The Flemish waited. Many militiamen sat down in the grass and tried a joke. They ate something, and chatted. A few men began playing at dice. The Flemish could also see the French knights were holding a pause. Many of the knights stepped down from their horses. They partially undid their armour, took off their helmets, and let their long lances stand against their destriers. The two armies waited for the next development in this very strange battle of Mons-en-Pévèle.

### Three massive assaults of the French Army

The pause didn't last for long. The French leaders launched three assaults at almost the same time.

A large French group of knights out of the main French battle formation passed in gallop between the small village of Bouvincour and the Forest of Thumeries at the west of the Flemish army, to emerge at the point where the militiamen of Bruges stood. The knights tried to force themselves a way through between the ranks of Bruges and the chariots. They hoped to force the men of Bruges farther away from the chariot barrier. Could they succeed in this breakthrough, larger cavalry forces still might penetrate deep behind the Flemish ranks. Then, they could attack their enemy in the back. The knights hoped to throw the Flemish in doubt and fear. Maybe also, when the militiamen found themselves with French knights in front and back, they might be terrified, stricken with sudden panic, and flee. Remaining standing in disarray, they could become the prey of a general French charge and be routed.

Philip of Chieti had understood the importance of the manoeuvre. He massed men in the breach, but only from the last Flemish ranks. Fierce fighting ensued therefore on the extreme right flank of the Flemish army. The Flemings succeeded in placing a barrage of militiamen in the path of the knights. The French horse riders, once again, disappeared in the Flemish masses. The guildsmen absorbed them in their midst. Heavy fighting began, in which no pardon was given. The Flemish warriors closed the gap. No French riders could pass in large numbers to between the chariots and the Flemish hordes.

At the same time, using the road from Douai to Lille, another strong contingent of French knights, followed by a large group of French men-at-arms and all the foreign mercenaries of the royal army, attacked the militiamen of Ghent. Once more these were outflanking manoeuvres. The last attack was also directed against what could be the weakest point of the Ghent defence: towards the back, at the point where the *Gentenaars* of the last rows stood closest to the chariot barrier. John and Henri of Namur concentrated the men of Ghent to hold back the knights and the French footmen. A regular battle thus also developed at the left Flemish wing. The fighting was fought very bitterly at these places.

Soon, the French knights realised they would not rapidly break through the mass of *Gentenaars* to reach the back of the Flemish army. They regrouped at a little distance. They charged again. When that next charge also did not succeed, they regrouped and charged again!

The fiercest fight of the day was fought here. The Ghent lines turned, so that instead of facing the main French battle formation, they faced east, towards Orchies and Tournai. The French knights launched wave after wave of wild charges into the Ghent ranks. They pushed the Ghent lines together in a heap, but they did not obtain what they sought. Also not on the left side of the Flemish army, they could not break through to behind the Flemish lines.

When the knights regrouped and launched a new attack, their numbers were replenished with knights from the main French battle. During that time, the French men-at-arms on foot relentlessly fought the militiamen of Ghent, often in duels of man-to-man fighting. The battle lasted for hours.

When the French knights regrouped, the guildsmen of Ghent could have advanced and form straight lines, facing the east. John of Namur hesitated to give this order, for he absolutely did

not wish to leave a gap in front of the chariots. Through there, also on his side, the French knights might have reached the rear of the Flemish militiamen.

The Battle of Mons-en-Pévèle raged at the two flanks of the Flemish army. The rest of the Flemings stayed imperturbably in place! A large group of French men-at-arms ran once more to behind the chariot barrier. They too attacked the Flemish army camp, devastating what had stayed upright, and pillaging the rests the French knights had not yet taken away. The last food and drink in the Flemish camp was destroyed. The Flemish would not only have to remain this day without anything to eat or drink. They also would not receive anything during the night, and most probably also no the day after!

At that moment, for several long hours, the two armies battled on the left and on the right wing of the Flemish army, and also in their back at the chariot barrier. Their intention remained the same as for the two previous attacks here, to reach the rear lines of the Flemish and thus to surround the enemy. The French warriors tried to turn over the chariots with their lances, and with lances which held not only an iron spike, but also an iron hook. Willem van Jülich and Robert of Cassel sent militiamen to stop the enemy from opening gaps in the chariot barrier. Man-to-man duels erupted in the corridors between the chariot rows. The fights lasted, but neither here nor on the left wing, nor on the right wing, did the French onslaught succeed in surrounding the Flemish army.

By the end of the afternoon, the Flemish militiamen began to lose hope. They did not believe anymore they could win the battle! They also did not think the French army would win. They simply could not foresee an end to the struggle.

The men of Ghent had fought for almost the entire day, as the battle had concentrated here for many, long hours. Also the men of Ieper, who stood near Ghent, had suffered much. The incessant attacks by the French had finally exhausted the militiamen. The battle of attrition forced on the Flemings by the French *Connétable* Gaucher de Châtillon, and no doubt also by the king, seemed to be realising a first result, even though all the signs were not yet clearly visible.

John de Namur also felt exhausted. He had ordered his men about most of the time, running from this crisis struggle to the other. He saw how tired his troops were. He sent his brother, Henri de Namur, to Philip of Chieti to ask for reinforcements. He wanted to defeat the French troops on his side, but lacked the men and means to realise this. He wanted fresh troops to surround in their turn the French warriors during a last attack. Neither Philip of Chieti nor Willem van Jülich could or would help John. The Flemish war leaders had foreseen no reserve battle formation!

When the French knights retreated some, maybe to launch a new assault, John of Namur ordered his men to retreat slowly but steadily to the north, to shorten their lines somewhat. His men stepped slowly to the north, giving in to the French pressure. His men began to walk to the Mons-en-Pévèle and to think of what lay beyond, to Pont-à-Marcq and back to Flanders.

Raes van Lake, John Denout and Wouter de Smet had several times fought off attacking French troops. They had lost count of the attacks. They had now been fighting for many

hours, against what seemed to them ever more, fresh, new French troops of knights and men-at-arms.

They were right in that opinion, for large parts of both armies had not even once used a weapon that day. Most of the serious assaults had been launched against the flanks of the Flemish army. The strongest, most ferocious attacks had been directed against Ghent's left wing.

Raes, John and Wouter were exhausted. Their muscles of arms, legs and breast hurt from the exertion. They had fought in the intense heat for most of the day. They were hungry, their throat was dry. They had eaten what they had kept in their knapsack, and that had not been much. They had drunk their last drop of water hours ago. They had heard of the foul water in the wells beneath the hill. Nobody brought in new provisions from the rear. Even the crossbowmen of Ghent stood without bolts. These men now fought with the *goedendags* of the killed.

The *Gentenaars* were tired to the bone. Between the last attacks in, more men dropped to the grass. They were exhausted, and sat. When the battle seemed to stop, or when negotiations for a truce seemed to have been taken up, the *Gentenaars* began to talk of returning home. The sun had lowered. She stood like a blood-red ball of fire on the horizon. It would be dark soon. What sense was there in fighting till the very end? Ghent had fought sufficiently! Let other groups now fight on. John and Henri de Namur issued no new orders. The battle seemed finished, over and done with. The *Gentenaars* realised no decision had been reached. They certainly did not feel they had lost the battle!

One man, then two, then four, and soon entire ranks, left the battlefield to walk slowly back to Mons-en-Pévèle. The men knew the road to Lille, to Kortrijk, and from there to Ghent.

'Should we not go too?' John Denout wondered. He sat with his two friends in the grass of the battlefield. He was the first who dared asking the obvious question.

'Why not?' Wouter de Smet answered, sighing, 'all my bones and muscles ache!'

'If we go,' Raes van Lake warned, 'we have to go now. It will soon be dark, then night. We must get at a fair distance from here before nightfall. We also must leave in good numbers until we reach Kortrijk. The French knights love retreating warriors. Single militiamen or small groups are easy prey for horse-riders. We must leave with tens, hundreds of men together.'

'Then lead us,' another man who had fought with them, intervened. 'You know the road. I too would feel better to move with a few hundreds of men together, marching in good order, under one command. You lead us! We 'll help each other.'

'Finding food on the way for hundreds will be almost impossible without the army's organisation,' Raes van Lake objected.

'We are all hungry,' the man retorted. 'We may find no food, but in two or at the maximum of three days, we can be in Ghent. We'll survive without food for so long. Water we will find in wells, at farms. Lead us on!'

Raes, John and Wouter looked at each other. They felt they had done more than their duty. Yes, it was now a good moment to start walking, and walking rapidly. Suddenly, everybody felt the relief of the end of the battle. They all thought of their homes, their wives, their

children, their duties to their families. They were glad to be alive. Many others had been killed, or wounded. They were the lucky ones. Was it not good to enjoy their good luck? When Raes van Lake stood, he took his *goedendag* and placed it on his right shoulder. A few men around him imitated him. Then more men stood up. Raes van Lake turned to the north. He, John Denout and Wouter de Smet began to walk. They passed the chariot barriers. They passed the Mons-en-Pévèle. Everything had been destroyed in the Flemish camp. They did not even try to find their tents and the knapsacks they had left behind. They should advance, put a distance between them and the horse riders of the French army. They marched on the road between Lille and Tournai. They feared also being attacked out of royal Tournai. They had looked to what John and Henri of Namur were doing before marching off. The two count's sons were hotly arguing, walking to the centre of the army. They saw the two knights confer with Philip of Chieti and Willem van Jülich. They noticed John and Henri of Namur calling their men together, and also march off, direction Pont-à-Marcq. The Ghent militias were leaving the battlefield, led by two of the count's sons!

Raes van Lake, John Denout and Wouter de Smet went their own way. They marched at the head of more than five hundred men, all *Gentenaars*. They moved rapidly. No French knights tried to stop them. They walked on the main roads for speed. They slept for only a few hours, three at the most, in a dense wood near the road. They marched on for two more days and two nights. Then, they reached the first towers of Ghent. They were exhausted, their column very long. They were famished. Their feet were bloodied, but they had survived the Battle of Mons-en-Pévèle.

In the centre of the Flemish battle formations, also the men of Ieper retreated, following the movement initiated by the militiamen of Ghent. Then, the men of Kortrijk broke their lines and moved backwards, through the chariot-barrier, in the direction of Pont-à-Marcq. The Flemings suffered terribly from thirst. They had thought to find water at the smaller sources in the valley right under the Mons-en-Pévèle. These wells and sources delivered only bracken, foul-smelling and badly tasting water! The militiamen grumbled. John de Namur could but lead them to Pont-à-Marcq, and from there to home.

On the right wing of the Flemish army, the situation had evolved differently. Here, less French knights had launched assaults on the guildsmen of Bruges, of the Bruges Franc and of the Four Crafts. Philip of Chieti disposed of more crossbowmen on the right wing. He used these to inflict heavy losses on the French knights, so that the attacks against his formation had raged less virulently than on the left wing. Chieti had been able to throw back all the attacks of the French knights and of the French footmen. As he saw the left Flemish wing retreat, he understood he too would have to retreat. He ordered his men to step back to the Mons-en-Pévèle. As the Flemings slowly stepped back, still fighting, the French attacks slackened. It seemed as if the French too had abandoned hope on a decisive victory this day. If the Flemish army completely retreated and left the field, the French knights could claim a victory. Still, the attacking knights also felt exhausted. The battle once more seemed to stall. Philip of Chieti halted his warriors.

## New Negotiations

During the new lull in the battle, men from both sides met in the opened, wider space between the two armies. Talks, discussions and negotiations resumed. Count Amédée de Savoie, the real count, played the role of mediator. It was forgotten who had really asked for these new negotiations to start, whether the French barons or the Flemish knights. Was it Philip of Chieti? Was it Amédée de Savoie?

King Philip IV assumed the negotiations marked the end of the battle. The Flemish were in retreat! One could talk about a truce. As the Flemings had left the field, he could claim a victory! He realised, of course, not much had been realised in the Battle of Mons-en-Pévèle. The Flemish army turned home, but it had not been annihilated. The king too had a day's work behind him, a full day of having to remain seated on a horse in his heavy armour, watching the developments of the fights. With his staff, he had avoided a very decisive attack of his main force of knights, sparing them, and he was still not sure he could have destroyed the huge Flemish army with his forces. The king, his staff, and his reserve troops, rode a short while back in the direction of their camp. They hoped on some results of the talks, after which they would be able to celebrate their victory in their tents.

The king sent a messenger to Gaucher de Châtillon, who rode still somewhere on the Mons-en-Pévèle hill. He wanted the *connétable* back at his side. The king put down most of his heavy armour. He placed his weightiest weapons in his tent. His staff did the same.

The negotiations with the Flemish had begun around 5 o'clock in the afternoon. They lasted about an hour and a half. The sun sank deeper towards the horizon. A messenger then rode into the group of King Philip IV. Amédée de Savoie notified the king the Flemish only asked to be pardoned for their rebellion against the king of France. They offered to have masses sung in one hundred churches of Flanders for the souls of the men who had died on this day. They wanted to retain all their liberties.

King Philip understood the Flemish leaders still refused to submit to his authority. They would grant him the cities of Lille, Douai and the lands of French-speaking Flanders around these towns, awaiting a final peace treaty.

The king discussed with the noblemen of his court on what to do next. Was the royal army to launch a new, last attack? Should the army continue to harass the Flemings who were in retreat or not?

Also on the Flemish side, Philip of Chieti and Willem van Jülich conferred with John and Henri of Namur. The militiamen of Ghent still slowly marched back on the road to Lille. Philip of Chieti and Willem van Jülich wanted to take up their positions of the beginning of the day. John and Henri of Namur told they doubted they would be able to bring back their tired, battle-weary militiamen. The men were marching home! How could John and Henri force their beaten, thirsty and hungry men back to the battle-field? John and Henri thought the task impossible! They declared they would bring their men to Lille and beyond, back home, in good order.

Thus, the militias of Kortrijk, Lille, Ieper, Douai and Ghent continued their full retreat north. Only the men of Bruges, of the Bruges Franc and of the Four Crafts remained on the battlefield. Also these troops had retreated some distance to against the Mons-en-Pévèle.

## The Flemish Attack

Evening came sombre. The sun stood low in the west as a blood-red ball of fire. The sun pointed towards the River Marcq. Philip of Chieti and Willem van Jülich conferred alone. They argued the men of Ghent and John de Namur had not been defeated. The men had been discouraged and tired. They had forgotten how important a battle to the end was for Flanders. The *Gentenaars* marched home in good order. They kept fighting off French groups of knights that tried to harass and destroy them. The troops would be preserved for other battles. Philip of Chieti pointed to his troops of Bruges, who stood still disciplined and would follow his orders. Should they continue the retreat over the Mons-en-Pévèle, to return to Flanders? Leaving the field to the French meant Flanders admitted defeat. Willem van Jülich remarked a good part of the French royal army had also advanced to Pont-à-Marcq. Willem van Jülich pointed to his remnants of the central battle, to the men who had refused to follow the fleeing men of Ghent and Ieper. He noticed a large part of the huge Flemish army still stood on the battlefield, watching them. Philip of Chieti finally told King Philip the Fair had broken the truce of the negotiations by sending his troops to pillage once more the camp of the Flemings on the Mons. Where had been the honour of the royal army?

Philip of Chieti possessed most of the authority on the battlefield. He was the son of Count Guy of Dampierre, the first representative of the count after Robert of Béthune, and Robert was imprisoned in France. The two other nobles of Flanders who stood at his side were grandsons of the count. He began to name his decisions. He split the remaining Flemish warriors in three battles, led by himself, Willem van Jülich and Robert of Cassel. He proposed to yet attack the royal army. They might surprise the French! Those were words to the heart of Willem van Jülich. Finally, some of the initiative would be taken back by the Flemish.

Willem van Jülich, impetuous as ever, took the about seven hundred men-at-arms who had stayed with him. He attacked the central wing of the French army. He ran into a large group of French footmen first. He pierced their rows with extraordinary energy. His men fought like lions. The French footmen had not expected an attack by the Flemish. They ran back, thrown in panic. Willem van Jülich ran on to attack the battles of the French knights that had stayed in place. His men fought so fiercely, with hatred, revenge and bitterness so clear in their eyes, they may have resembled demons released from hell. Many knights preferred to flee before this onslaught of berserkers. The exhausted knights galloped into holes in the meadows, and into the small brooks near the French camp. Many horses broke their legs in the flight. Even the count of Savoie fled in fright!

It took not long before the most courageous and observant among the French barons on that side gathered their last courage. The brother of the king, Louis d'Evreux, the Marshals Miles de Noyers and Foulque de Merle, the duke of Burgundy and the count of Boulogne called the fleeing knights to them. Then, they counter-attacked. They charged into the warriors of Willem van Jülich. While still many knights and squires drowned in the brooks to the south, they formed a battle in good order. They assaulted Willem van Jülich's men. Willem had to defend his men against the charge of the knights. He formed a circle, placed his men wearing

*goedendags* and lances on the outside. He continued the battle from out of this strong, defensive position.

Willem van Jülich fought with the hope of despair. He had thought to break through the French ranks and to attack the French camp, to drink from the king's golden beakers. That glory was denied to him. He saw his militiamen being slaughtered in the circle. He liked to notice the French suffered at least as many casualties among their finest noblemen. He fought in the middle of his Flemings against Count Renaud II de Trie, count of Dammartin. The two men fought in duel, until Willem of Jülich fell to the ground under the weight of the on-running Frenchmen. Willem saw Renaud standing above him, a bright-glancing, revenging angel shining silvery in the last sunrays of the day. He shouted he wanted to surrender his sword to the king. Renaud shouted back Willem had let his uncle be killed in the Battle of Kortrijk. Willem had granted no pardon. Renaud plunged his dagger deep in the breast of Willem van Jülich, and then again and again.

At the sight of the death of their leader, the Flemings tried to run back to the Flemish camp, to the chariot barrier. As their defensive circle broke, the French knights on horseback found easy prey. The remaining Flemings were massacred.

It was said the next day the body of Willem van Jülich was found, lying on the battlefield. The men-at-arms who found him recognised him for who he was. They decapitated him and brought the head on a lance to King Philip. Others claim this story not to be true. The head of a chaplain was found. The head resembled Willem van Jülich.

Willem's body was eventually discovered and brought by French noblemen to the Abbey of Flines near Mons-en-Pévèle. Nobody ever knew what had actually happened to Willem van Jülich in the final battle.

At the same time, Philip of Chieti surged forward with his militiamen of Bruges. When he ran, attacking with Willem van Jülich on the other side, he made a promise to the Virgin Lady. He promised to offer each year a candle of thirty-six pounds of wax to the Church of Our-Lady-of-the-Pottery at Bruges, if he and his men could return sound and safe to her city. This might have been one of the oldest religious oaths of Flanders. The 'Promise of Bruges' is still feasted each year in the city.

Philip of Chieti attacked. He made his men run straight into the French reserves where the king of France stood with the Oriflamme, near the French camp of tents. Here stood the highest nobility of France, and Philip's footmen smashed almost completely through their mass. The fifteen hundred French knights of the rear guard saw the Flemish run down the Mons-en-Pévèle, to where they stood at leisure. They all thought the battle over and done with. But suddenly, the war cries of the Flemings of 'Flanders the Lion!' sounded very near to their ears.

The last, cruel fight developed in and around the French camp.

King Philip had put off most of his heavy armour. He grasped a simple bascinet helmet, and a war-axe. His servant tore away his blue tunic with the white fleur-de-lys, so that the Bruges militiamen would not recognise the king among the other French knights. Philip IV faced and fought the on-running Flemings. He realised that if the militiamen succeeded in throwing his

knights in disarray, they could still claim victory. The king did not run away from the battle. Two Flemish commoners attacked him with lances. They killed his horse under him. The horse fell, and also King Philip rolled on the ground. All around him, knights were being killed by the enraged Flemish warriors. The king did not wear any breastplate, but he still had kept his long chain mail coat on. The king was slightly wounded. He sprang courageously to his feet. The nephews Gentien, ennobled mercenaries of Saint-Denis of Paris, helped the king on another horse. The new courser on which the king sprang with the help of the Gentiens was barely well saddled. Jacques and Pierre Gentien, member of the hotel of the king, assisted Philip IV to get on this new horse. Both were killed shortly after. The courser they had found was already wounded. The king could not master the animal. Philip IV had lost this weapons again. He grabbed a war-axe of one of his men-at-arms.

Around King Philip, the new French war-cry became, ‘the king fights! The king fights!’ Philip IV indeed swung his axe to hold back the Flemish militiamen. His wounded horse fled in panic. Philip IV could no longer control it. It ran backwards, in the direction of Faumont. Several barons of the king followed him, to serve as last protection. With him rode his brother, Charles de Valois, Count Amédée de Savoie, and the count of Saint-Pol. Knights died fighting near him. His Chambellan, Hugues de Bouville died, the count of Auxerre, and others. With the king was still then Eude Le Brun de Verneuil, who held the king’s reins while Philip used both his hands to ward off the Flemish.

Here also died the older knight Anselme de Chevreuse, who held the *Oriflamme* of France. Anselme de Chevreuse had courageously defended the *Oriflamme* until his forces fled from him. The French standard was torn from his hands. Anselme de Chevreuse died holding a corner of the *Oriflamme* clasped in his hands. The Flemish militiamen tore the Oriflamme to pieces, and threw the pieces in the mud. Which side now, won a victory at Mons-en-Pévèle?

A warrior of Bruges succeeded in approaching the king. He pushed his *goedendag* into the animal’s side. The horse was only wounded once more, but it pranced, threw off the man who held his reins, and ran away from the *mêlée*. It ran totally out of control. It ran to the French camp, to the south, and thus brought the king out of danger.

Was this story true, or had Philip the Fair panicked in his turn, seeing death near? Had the king simply fled and escaped the heart of the last battle? If so, who had really fled from the battlefield, the king or the Flemish?

The battle raged around the French camp. Charles de Valois called more knights to him. He counter-attacked with these the men from Bruges and of Philip of Chieti.

The last phase of the Battle of Mons-en-Pévèle continued for a long time. Many victims still fell on both sides. Philip of Chieti could have continued the battle. He might well have prevailed. He had seen the king ride away, followed by his most trusted courtiers. But darkness had placed its veil over the battlefield. It would soon be nightfall. It would be completely dark, the roads back to Flanders dangerous. Chieti did not deem it prudent to continue the fight against the French in the night. He also feared the entire French army to return and fight against him. He had proven the Flemish Lion could always bite deep! He ordered the retreat to the Mons-en-Pévèle hill. He also thought he could find there some provisions for his men. This hope proved vain, as the French had taken with them everything they could transport. The rest of the food lay destroyed on the hill.

In the almost complete darkness, the Flemish trumpets sounded the retreat. In good order, the men of Bruges and of the Four Crafts stepped slowly back to their camp. They marched past the chariot barrier. On the Mons-en-Pévèle, the Flemish found their camp pillaged. Their wine, their beer, their tunics, their cheeses, bread and hams had been stolen. Discouraged, the Flemish militiamen shouted to Philip of Chieti they too wanted to halt the battle and go home.

### The Battle's End

Philip of Chieti could not blame his valiant warriors. He took his men back north, together, protecting them from groups of French horse riders who had dared to ride so far north to yet harass him. He brought a small group of his men to Lille. He dismissed the rest of his troops, and sent them on their way home. The men were famished. They would have to find something to eat on the road.

The royal army did not pursue the Flemings. The French knights who had followed John and Henri de Namur soon returned to the French camp, disappointed for not having been able to decimate the Flemish on their flight. They forgot to mention the Flemish walked at ease, holding their columns intact. They would have thrown off any French troops that might have tried to pry them on.

The king ordered a group of men with torches to go to the battlefield and find the bodies of his barons killed during the battle.

The French army stayed for another day on the battlefield of Mons-en-Pévèle. The men-at-arms and the knights recuperated from the strain of the battle. The wounded men were picked up and brought to the doctors. The king forbade to give a tomb to the killed Flemish warriors. They had rebelled against their king, committed the sin of perjury against their oaths of obedience to the king of France. Their bodies were left to rot in the meadows of Mons-en-Pévèle. About eight thousand men had died on either side. France had lost about twenty barons and more than three hundred knights.

### After the Battle. The Truce of Marquette

King Philip IV rode to Arras, accompanied by the highest nobility of France. He was slightly wounded. From out of Arras, he had a letter sent to announce his resplendent victory over the Flemish armies. The Flemish had been defeated. It was true the Flemish army had left the battlefield to the French, but they had left in good order in the darkness of the night when fighting had become sheer impossible, and only after an entire day of intense battle. The Flemish leaders had kept their army largely intact, though diminished by the killed and the wounded. If the Flemish had fled, one might claim the same for the king. The glorious call of victory of King Philip sounded pretentious in these circumstances, especially in Flanders. Did the *Oriflamme* not lay in shreds in the mud of the fields of Mons-en-Pévèle? It had been a near thing!

King Philip remained at Arras for fifteen days. He ordered the French army on, and set a siege to Lille. Philip of Chieti had brought a part of his army to that city, while John and Henri de Namur occupied Kortrijk with another force.

The king wrote more letters. In them, he asked the French knights, and everybody else who wanted to pillage Flanders, to join him. From everywhere in France, more French warriors gathered at Arras. The king moved this new army to Lille.

The inhabitants of Lille were dumb-stricken when they saw the enormous French army pass by their walls. The royal army had grown to about one hundred thousand men. Without warning Philip of Chieti, the aldermen of Lille sent delegates to the French *connétable*. They promised to open the gates of their city by Saint Michael's Day of the 29<sup>th</sup> of September of 1304, if they had not been relieved by then by a Flemish army. This agreement was signed on the 14<sup>th</sup> of September. Philip of Chieti finally agreed with the arrangement. He expected a Flemish army to form again, and to arrive at Lille around the 20<sup>th</sup> of September!

Flanders entire had been disgusted by the victorious announcement of King Philip of France. Nobody in Flanders, hearing the stories of the combatants who had returned from Mons-en-Pévèle, felt the Flemish army had truly been defeated. John and Henri of Namur were gathering a new army. The men of Flanders were so much filled with indignation, they took up their armour and weapons and ran in great numbers to assemble as fast as possible at Kortrijk.

The Flemish guildsmen gathered to such numbers at Kortrijk, the towns and cities remained almost without men. Women, children and old men only remained in the towns.

John of Namur and Robert of Cassel could finally march with an army of more than one hundred thousand guildsmen from Kortrijk to Warneton, aiming to stop an attack the greatest royal army so far.

The royal army advanced on the road of Lille to Ieper. King Philip soon heard of another Flemish army coming to meet him. He immediately retreated to Wasquehal between Lille and Tournai. Did the king want to hide inside Tournai?

The Flemish marched on to each once more Pont-à-Marcq, at the confluent of the rivers the Marcq and the Deule.

King Philip rode to a hill from where he could see the marching Flemish army. At the sight of the new, vast urban army of Flanders, the king sighed.

'I have been told almost all of the Flemish warriors were killed at Mons-en-Pévèle! It seems to me they have been resurrected! It rains Flemish warriors in these regions!'

Around the 20<sup>th</sup> of September, John of Namur and Robert of Cassel managed to send a messenger to Philip of Chieti inside Lille. The message contained an action plan. The Flemish would hold about twenty thousand men inside Lille, to contain the poorters and the *Leliaerts* of the town who were favourable to the king. Then, the remaining Flemish troops would attack the royal army.

Philip of Chieti at first refused the plan. He would not open the gates of Lille to more warriors, he answered. He refused another battle and making more thousands of victims.

Also King Philip wanted to avoid another battle. He had understood too well battles could swing either way. He ordered his war leaders not to make aggressive overtures. He installed the French army in a camp, protected by a moat, surrounded by a deep, dug-out and wide ditch filled with water.

At dawn of the 20<sup>th</sup> of September, the Flemish army began to fill in the defensive moat of the French camp. At that moment, at the last instance before a new, terrible battle, the king's heralds proposed peace negotiations to the Flemish count's sons.

Marie de Brabant had asked her nephew, John II duke of Brabant, and her other nephew, Count Amédée de Savoie, nephew by his marriage to a Brabant princess, to mediate in the negotiations.

On the 24<sup>th</sup> of September of 1304, the French and the Flemish delegates concluded a truce at the abbey of Marquette. Flanders could keep its laws, its liberties, its privileges, and its frontiers. All prisoners would be released on both sides. A punishment fee would be paid by Flanders for having rebelled against its rightful supreme lord, the king of France. This fee would not be higher than eight hundred thousand pounds Tournois. The actual fee was to be determined by eight arbiters, four men from each side. The castellanies of Lille, Douai and Orchies would be handed over by Flanders to the king of France as guarantee of payment, until the full payment was made by Flanders.

The agreement of Marquette also contained a calendar for further negotiations to obtain a peace treaty.

The Truce of Marquette would last until the 7<sup>th</sup> January of 1305. New negotiations would be organised in Paris, as of the 8<sup>th</sup> of December of 1304.

The Flemish delegates deemed the conditions of the Agreement of Marquette scandalous. The only Flemish delegate in favour was John de Namur. Master Gerard de Ferlin, the seal-bearer of the county of Flanders, refused to sign the document of the agreement with the seal of Flanders. In the ensuing commotion, the seal fell to the floor. John of Namur picked up the seal faster than de Ferlin. He placed it in the still warm wax on the document.

Philip of Chieti had remained inside Lille, unaware of what was going on at Marquette. He learned of what he considered amounted to the surrender of Flanders only later.

Philip of Chieti had to hand over Lille without a fight. He did as he was told, having heard in detail of the clauses in the Agreement of Marquette.

The city of Douai also had to open its gates to allow a French garrison in. The inhabitants of Douai resisted. King Philip IV threatened Douai. The royal army brought its impressive siege engines to in front of Douai's walls. Douai surrendered.

King Philip the Fair placed in Lille a garrison led by Pierre de Galard, and at Douai one led by Baudouin de Lens.

Lille, Douai, Orchies and their environs would never thereafter really be returned to Flanders.

On Sunday, the 27<sup>th</sup> of September, King Philip IV signed the papers for the dissolution of his grand army. The war for Flanders was finished. The king went on a pilgrimage to Our Lady

of Boulogne, one of his favourite pilgrimage sites. He gave thanks to the Virgin for his victory at Mons-en-Pévèle. King Philip was at Boulogne on the 29<sup>th</sup> of September. On his return to Paris, he prayed to the Virgin at the Notre Dame Cathedral. He ordered a mass to be sung each year in remembrance of the great Battle of Mons-en-Pévèle.

## Chapter 3. The Treaty of Iniquity

### 3.1. In Ghent after the Battle of Mons-en-Pévèle. 1304

Raes van Lake, John Denout and Wouter de Smet arrived totally exhausted in Ghent. They needed several days to recuperate, to heal from their wounds and to be allowed out of their bedrooms by their angry but compassionate spouses. Before starting back to work, they visited their friends to hear about their mutual health. Also Arnout de Hert had by then returned to Ghent. He too shared his story with his friends. They had all heard of the glorious attack of Philip of Chieti and the men of Bruges on the battlefield, of the flight of Philip the Fair, and of the French claim of victory. They felt very bitter about this last claim, for they all agreed the French had not better fought than the Flemish. The end of the battle had been decided by the setting of the sun, not by the flight of the Flemish troops. And had not many French knights run away to the south at Chieti's attack? They felt a little ashamed now Ghent had retreated, whereas Bruges had attacked. This one more item added to the list of the competition between the two largest cities of Flanders.

The *Gentenaars* considered the Agreement of Marquette no less than an unjustified scandal. Why had the Flemish negotiators of that truce accepted such a shameful agreement? King Philip the Fair had so many times shrunk away from a direct battle! He had shown he was afraid of the Flemish militias. Why else had he and his *connétable* avoided a central battle at Mons-en-Pévèle? Why had an agreement been signed that treated the Flemish as having been defeated?

The *Klauwaerts* of Ghent considered the actions of the count's sons and grandsons as rather dubious. They accepted and admired the courage in battle of Philip of Chieti and of Willem van Jülich. They avoided talking too much about Guy of Namur. Guy, they esteemed, had abused of the power of the Flemish militias for his own purpose. Flanders should not have fought in Zeeland while being engaged in a war against France. The war in Zeeland had been a war of the noblemen of Flanders for their personal ambitions. It might not have been a justified, good war. Too many Flemish sailors and militiamen had lost their life, for a cause that had not been the cause of the cities, and not even the true cause of Flanders.

John of Namur had fought well. His decision to not stop the militias of Ghent and Ieper from withdrawing from the battlefield, was considered a wise acceptance of the courage of the Flemings. John had brought a large part of the Flemish army to safety, in all honour, and in good order of protection against the pursuing, vengeful French knights.

The men of Ghent agreed the young Henri de Namur also had fought well, as had Robert of Cassel. In Robert of Cassel, Flanders had found a new lion. The men of Ghent appreciated the leaders of the war present at Mons-en-Pévèle to have fought on foot, in their midst.

The conversations of the men served as their catharsis after the battle. By talking together, they came to terms with their traumatic experience. They talked of the misery they had seen, and coped better with the horrors by sharing their thoughts. They still suffered from nightmares about the fights they had led. They didn't dare too well telling the others how

they sometimes woke up in the middle of the night, in sweat, and screaming like berserks. They had dreamt their duels all over again in their heads! Such things remained in-house secrets. They only shared such experiences, their doubts and fears with Juris Vresele.

When the Truce of Marquette set in, commerce between Flanders and France became easier. The farmers of Picardy had suffered as much as the Flemish from the passage of the armies. The men of Picardy had waited as impatiently as the Flemish to take up trade in grains, and in many other products.

Juris Vresele stepped up his trade in agricultural products, in grains and in legumes. He also took risks in other endeavours of trade. He staked all his funds on large, single acts of buying and selling. He knew very well the larger the batch of trade, the larger the profits. He still traded in Spanish alum, in Gascon wine, in Zeeland madder and herrings, in peat from the Four Crafts, in selling armour and weapons forged in Ghent, and in almost everything else he could lay his hands on. His profits grew.

Raes van Lake and John Denout took up their weaving and fulling business. John Denout lived poorly, for he saved every coin to realise his dream of building fullers' mills in Ghent. Wouter de Smet forged. He bought old and dented armour to repair. He forged new swords and axes, and dreamt all the while of golden jewels.

For all these men, the realisation of their dreams would have to wait. Their ready funds and reserves had dwindled. They worked hard to replenish their small, personal treasury. In this, Raes van Lake and Juris Vresele, now often working together in business ventures, fared best.

Another constant subject of discussion in Ghent was the gradual return of the *Leliaerts*. By the Truce of Marquette, the *Leliaerts* who had been expelled from Ghent, were allowed to return. They could also claim back the properties they had lost. They made a lot of noise in the city about this. As some of the properties had found their way to *Klauwaert* hands, the restitution of those houses, terrains, warehouses and the like, became hotly disputed. The *Leliaerts* returned to Ghent with victorious smirks on their faces. They once more walked with long swords at their belt, their hand on the heft, whereas the other poorters merely wore a long dagger, a *knijf*. Many members of the old lineages walked haughtily on the quays of *Tussen Bruggen*, in the *Hoogpoort*, the *Veldstraat* and the *Kalanderberg*. They took up their places in the front rows of the Ghent churches during High Mass.

At the election of the new aldermen, the wealthier landowner-poorters returned in force in the government of the city. They introduced new taxes to pay for the damages of war. The wisest among these men realised the peace negotiations introduced by Marquette and being held at Athis-sur-Orge near Paris, would mean heavy payments to be made by Flanders to the king of France. How much would it cost to pay the ransom for Count Guy de Dampierre, for his sons Robert of Béthune, Willem of Crèvecoeur and Guy de Namur? How much for the other Flemish knights imprisoned in France? Sooner or later, enormous amounts would have to be paid! Who would pay? The noblemen of Flanders? The knights, including the urban knights of the old families? The *Leliaerts* esteemed not they should pay! The city and the guildsmen would have to pay! Had it not been the men of the guilds who had rebelled against their lawful lord, the king of France? The aldermen, members of the old lineages, were already

constituting reserves in Ghent. This meant additional taxes, and heavy taxes! Everybody in the city had to pay, but certainly not the *Leliaerts*, the wealthiest poorters, for these had not revolted against their lord. The aldermen had the receivers of the city eating out of their hands. Of the money received, large amounts were not inscribed properly in the books of account of the city. Such amounts were funnelled deviously to the aldermen families. News of the corruption slowly trickled down to the guilds. Juris Vresele heard of the growing fraud.

Raes van Lake and John Denout were walking one day at the end of 1304 in Saint-John's Street. They strolled together from the *Brabantstraat* over the *Kruisstraat* on their way to the Cloth Hall of *Tussen Bruggen*. In Saint-John's Street, just past the large church of the same name, they saw Jehan Panneberch, Hugen van Lovendeghem and Lievin de Grutere coming from the other direction. The three men each proudly wore a sword at their belt. They were in discussion as they walked, gesticulating wildly with broad movements of their open arms and hands. They walked as if they owned Ghent, occupying the width of the street just the three of them.

Raes van Lake and John Denout stopped talking while the three city knights approached. When the three landowner-poorters came near, Raes van Lake stepped to close to the walls of the stone houses, the beautiful *stenen* of the most famous of Ghent streets. John Denout made space, walking more closely to Raes van Lake than he should have. The three knights pretended not having remarked Raes and John.

At the moment the two friends passed the three knights, the three must have recognised Raes and John as their rivals of past times. An incident happened. Hugen van Lovendeghem passed closest to John Denout. Although Denout had made some way to let him pass, Hugen pushed his shoulder's bones in the side of John Denout. John received the blow, which hurt. He drew his lips in a surprise of pain, stopped, and looked with scornful eyes at Hugen. Hugen also stopped, and so did de Grutere and Panneberch.

'Watch out for your betters, you clumsy idiot,' van Lovendeghem shrieked, though it was he who had placed himself impudently in John's way and who had delivered the blow.

John's hand instinctively went to his dagger. Raes van Lake came to stand near to him. He placed his hand softly on his friend's arm, as if to call for prudence and patience.

'Oh yes, these commoners and shit-eaters have lost all manners while running about in France, haven't they?' Jehan Panneberch jeered, answering his mate. 'Some men get wiser and more civilised over there, some duck deeper in the muck!'

Jehan opened his arms to accentuate his argument, and as if by pure chance, his right hand landed as a slap on Raes van Lake's cheek. The cheek reddened instantly.

Raes dropped John Denout's arm. His hand moved also to his dagger. Immediately, three swords appeared in the hands of Lievin, Hugen and Jehan. The swords swung out of the leather scabbards. Raes and John reclined with their backs against the wall of a stone house. They kept a stand, daggers out, waiting for the first lunges of their opponents.

The Saint-John Street was one of the most frequented of the *Kuipe* of Ghent, the city's centre. A few women fled, screaming, away from the five men. A little farther, men kept watching. Others went their ways a little more rapidly than before.

Two sergeants of the count's bailiff had been watching the scene from a distance and from behind the backs of de Grutere, van Lovendeghem and Panneberch. They were not policing

the streets for the aldermen, but like the city's own guard, they preferred quiet and peaceful streets. When they saw the naked swords and the shining blades of daggers, they ran to intervene.

'Now, now, gentlemen, young sers,' one of the sergeants, a tall, strong man, appeased. 'None of you would do something you might regret a little later, do you? Keep down those swords and daggers! Put them back in their sheath.'

'These rebels provoked us, sergeant,' Huguen van Lovendeghem complained. 'These good-for-nothings would gladly have killed us, good *poorters* of Ghent!'

'Since they tried their arms against the king of France, they think they can push their daggers in the body of any loyal follower of the king,' Lievin de Grutere added.

'My good lord,' the sergeant grinned, 'do you really think I don't know who you are? You are one of the biggest brawlers of Ghent. You are landowner-poorters indeed. I saw you clearly drawing your sword first. You are three men brandishing swords, now, against two knives. Do you really want us, sergeants, to stand with Master Raes and Master John? We fought with these two good poorters of Ghent at Mons-en-Pévèle not so long ago, you know. We'll not let a comrade-in-arms be foully murdered! As I see it, you three drew first. What shall it be? Your choice! Do you want to fight our two friends here, plus us, two sergeants of the count? We have swords too, you know. Only, if you push your weapons at us, we shall have to hurt you badly. What remains of you, we will throw in the darkest cell of the *Gravensteen*. Make your choice. Quickly! I have not much patience with people who didn't do their duty to the count at Mons-en-Pévèle. On what side did you fight? Where were you?' Jehan, Lievin and Huguen blanched in the face. They stepped back, looked at each other, pushed their swords back in their richly decorated leather scabbards, and advanced to go their way towards the Saint-John Church, rubbing their thumbs at Raes and John.

The sergeants grinned, nodded a good day to Raes and John. Raes and John nodded back a thank you. They sheathed their daggers. Then they heard one of the knights call, 'when the king takes possession of Flanders, you sergeants will soon be out of a job. We will remember your faces!'

The tall sergeant then wanted to run behind the three knights, but the second one stopped him.

Jehan Panneberch shouted to Raes and John, 'we'll get you still, you *Klauwaert* scum!' Raes and John shook their heads at so much stupidity, thanked the sergeants, and walked slowly in the direction they had always wanted to go. The sergeants lingered in Saint-John's Street.

A little later, Raes and John explained their encounter with the de Grutere, Panneberch and van Lovendeghem youths to Juris Vresele. Juris could tell Raes and John confrontations like they had experienced had been going on all over the city. The *Leliaerts* were thus demonstrating their power once more. This led to arrogance and to violence on the part of the Leliaerts, the opposers to the rule of the count of Flanders. The men discussed how they could counter the trend.

### 3.2. Fulk's Chronicles. The Aftermath of Mons-en-Pévèle. 1304-1310

'The world our Lord created is vast and beautiful,' Brother Bernardus mused. 'Why do vanity and greed of the powerful turn our lives to misery? Could God not curb the passions of these men?'

I detected the birth of a new philosopher in Bernardus, and some judgement of God's ways. 'God's ways are impenetrable. Maybe God does intervene. Was King Philip not practically defeated? And vanity and greed are not only character features of the powerful,' I remarked. 'Also the meek can be ambitious, egoistic, vain and greedy. Those are universal sins everybody finds a grain of, in him or her. But you are right. I would say about one in five persons shows these bad qualities, with much higher proportions in the powerful. How else would they have been able to keep their status?'

'Had King Philip not waged war and not two ferocious battles, he would have found himself exactly in the same position as after the Battle of Mons-en-Pévèle. Flanders would still have remained a county in the full meaning of the word. In Philip's trying to conquer, to lay his hands on Flanders, he made about twenty thousand victims in the battlefields. Imagine the suffering and the sorrow the man caused! And after Mons-en-Pévèle, he stood no farther than at the beginning of the war!'

'He gambled,' I merely whispered. 'He gambled, caused those thousands of deaths, and lost. He might have won, though!'

'I don't quite well understand why people talk so much about the Battle of Kortrijk, whereas the battle of Mons-en-Pévèle was a so much larger battle. Seven to ten times more men confronted each other at Mons-en-Pévèle than at Kortrijk!'

'Battles have different symbolic and political value,' I offered, though Bernardus no doubt knew that answer. 'The Flemish talk about the Golden Spurs because they won. It is always nice to talk about a victory, especially about a victory not expected. Very many French noblemen died at Kortrijk, so the French talk about it with sadness and shame, like one seeks to talk about a large catastrophe to maybe conjure it a little. The Flemish don't like to talk about Mons-en-Pévèle because they didn't really win. They found it a cowardly battle of King Philip. Who likes to talk about a cowardly battle? The French don't like to talk about Mons-en-Pévèle, because they also didn't really win, and they know it all too well. Moreover, the French openly demonstrated their fear of charging straight-on against the Flemish lines. The *Oriflamme* was torn to pieces, and the king fled, though he later denied that. Mons-en-Pévèle resolved nothing, for a few days later a Flemish army as large or larger than the one the French called defeated and annihilated once more blocked their way. The only good thing that came out of Mons-en-Pévèle was a peace treaty, and rest for the Flemish common man, as well in the towns as in the countryside.'

'Peace is always to be preferred,' Bernardus nodded.

'Amen! It was,' I went on, 'but the peace treaty that followed the truce brought no love and no real reconciliation, nor true forgiveness between France and Flanders. For far more than a decade, the tensions, suspicions and even hatred between the two countries raged on. It was a very strange peace! Here is what happened during that period of uneasy peace. Read on!'

The four representatives of Flanders designated to negotiate a peace treaty with the delegates of the king of France were John de Cuyck, John van Gaveren, Gerard de Moor and Gerard van Zottegem. These men were knights, lords of castellanies of Flanders. They had been appointed by John de Namur and Philip of Chieti. Only Gerard de Moor, viscount of Ghent, could pride in some confidence of the cities. Their aims, given to them by their upper-lords, the sons of the count, were, in that order, to liberate Count Guy of Dampierre from prison, to liberate the count's sons Robert of Béthune, Willem of Crèvecoeur and Guy de Namur, to liberate the Flemish knights who had accompanied the count, and to make sure the counts of Flanders remained counts and pairs of France. The delegates had to make sure Flanders did not pass into the royal domains.

The representatives of King Philip the Fair were the king's brother, Count Louis d'Evreux, and the duke of Burgundy, the counts of Savoie and of Dreux. Gilles Aycelin, the archbishop of Narbonne and Pierre de Mornay, bishop of Auxerre, assisted the French representatives, especially in all legal matters. Their aims were to force the Flemings to pay very high ransom money, and to humiliate Flanders the most possible. Notice how different these aims were!

King Philip IV had learned to fear the power of the Flemish cities. He envied the wealth of Flanders, but respected the military power of the guilds in the cities of Flanders. The king sent Hugh de Celles, one of his counsellors, to the city of Ghent to explain his pacific intentions and his hopes for reconciliation. Hugh de Celles asked the aldermen of Ghent to loyally execute the results of the peace negotiations, as agreed by the arbiters of Flanders. The cities were not to support the count when the king objected, and to oblige – if necessary by force – the population to conform to the dispositions. Several aldermen of Ghent solemnly swore to uphold these wishes.

Despite such shows of good will and of appeasement, the will to discuss and negotiate, a complete peace treaty had already been dictated by the king on the 16<sup>th</sup> of January of 1305, and agreed upon rather rapidly by the arbiters. The meetings had taken place at Athis-sur-Orge, near Paris. The arbiters merely waited for more representatives of the towns of Flanders to arrive in France and place their seals on the final documents.

The peace treaty contained a clause for the liberation of Count Guy of Dampierre. But the count died on the 7<sup>th</sup> of March of 1305, still in his French prison.

Guy de Dampierre left in his testament eight thousand pounds to a knight who would go in his place on pilgrimage to the Holy Land, to fulfil a promise he had never been able to realise. Robert of Béthune, the future count of Flanders, would bring the body of his father to Flanders.

In the meantime, Philip of Chieti and John of Namur continued to rule over Flanders. On the 19<sup>th</sup> of April of 1305, a charter given by Philip of Chieti allowed one of the five cities of Flanders, - Bruges, Ghent, Ieper, Lille and Douai – to appeal to the other four in case of a conflict with the count over urban matters. Chieti thus allowed a jurisdiction higher than the count, the arbitration of the largest cities of the county.

In April of 1305 also, the new Count Robert of Béthune left his prison in France. He accepted the conditions of the Treaty of Athis-sur-Orge, signed by the eight arbiters of France and

Flanders on the 16<sup>th</sup> January of that year. The clauses of the Peace Treaty of Athis-sur-Orge were manifold, about two dozen. They were complex and hotly disputed for more than a decade. Here follow the most important conclusions, not necessarily in the order they were inserted in the original document.

1. Robert of Béthune would give to the king twenty thousand pounds in value of terrains in the county of Rethel, as well as four thousand pounds in coins. This last amount was to be paid within the next four years.
2. The king would receive six hundred Flemish men-at-arms to serve him wherever he desired, for one year, and at Flemish expense.
3. The king had the right to punish three thousand inhabitants of the city of Bruges by sending them on pilgrimages for the expiation of their sins of revolt against their upper-lord. This punishment was the expiation for Bruges of the revolt hence called the Bruges Matins.
4. All the fortifications of the five cities of Flanders were to be destroyed and never to be rebuilt.
5. Robert de Béthune and his brothers, the noblemen and the aldermen of the towns of Flanders would swear an oath on the Holy Scriptures to remain loyal to the king of France, and never to ally with the king's enemies.
6. Should Robert of Béthune or one of his successors be found guilty of rebellion against the authority of the king, their lands would be declared forfeit and handed over to the king.
7. The aldermen, noblemen, bannerets and other prominent men of the Flemish towns would have to swear an oath to uphold the peace treaty. This oath was to be repeated at each change of aldermen. The oaths would have to be given within forty days after the homage to the king, given by the noblemen of Flanders at Amiens. The men should swear an oath to help the king against the count of Flanders in cases of conflict, when the count would refuse to observe the peace. The oath would have to be repeated every five years.
8. The count of Flanders would hand over to the king the castles of Cassel and of Kortrijk, with the castles and castellanies of Lille, Douai and Orchies already occupied by the king's troops. All the costs relative to this guarding would have to be paid by Flanders, until the count had executed the agreements, in particular concerning the twenty thousand pounds for claims on Rethel lands, concerning the destruction of the fortresses, the pilgrimages of the men of Bruges and all the other mentioned obligations.
9. The lords and the men of the castellanies of Cassel and Kortrijk would have to swear an oath of fidelity to the king.
10. The count of Flanders and his brothers declared they would do all in their power to ensure the noblemen and the aldermen of the towns would submit to all sentences of excommunication. Excommunication would be called on Flanders when the noblemen and towns did not uphold the treaty. The count of Flanders and his brothers would ask the pope to confirm the sentences, from which they could not be absolved unless agreed to by the king.
11. Would the treaty be broken before its publication, the king could call the count of Flanders – by simple announcement in the king's palace of Paris – to appear to his

- royal court within three months. The count would be declared guilty of having broken the treaty, and Flanders would be forfeited.
12. The noblemen and the aldermen of the towns of Flanders would have to renounce to all alliances of mutual support against the king. They would have to swear an oath to not ever again engage in similar alliances.
  13. For all clauses of the treaty that might not be entirely clear or be doubtful, the four delegates of the king would meet with the duke of Brabant and with Willem of Mortagne to clarify and interpret.
  14. The expiation money, already foreseen in the Agreement of Marquette, was set at four hundred thousand pounds, the payment of which could be spread over four years. The yearly interest to be paid was set at twenty thousand pounds.
  15. As foreseen also in the Agreement of Marquette, all *Leliaerts* could return to Flanders. The count had to examine their eventual complaints of damages incurred, and they should be compensated for these damages suffered.
  16. As stipulated in the Agreement of Marquette, the castellanies and towns of Lille, Douai and Orchies would be kept by the king of France as guarantee for the execution of the peace treaty.
  17. A last clause specified the king and his Council could at any moment ask for additional guarantees. This meant the treaty, though accepted and agreed upon by both parties, could at any moment be modified by the king.

In a separate document, Robert of Béthune promised to come with his brothers to the castle of Pontoise before the Feast of All Saints, if the Flemish towns took up arms again. The count then would order his subjects to obey the orders of the king, to withdraw their oaths of homage to him, and to submit to the ecclesiastical punishments pronounced.

The count of Joigny, the lord of Piennes, the lords of Châteauvilain, of Mareuil and of Pecquigny guaranteed the good faith of Robert of Béthune. By these guarantees, Robert could become count of Flanders and take in his place among the pairs of France.

The independence of the county of Flanders was thus guaranteed, as well as the integrity of the borders, and the liberties of the land. The first aim of King Philip the Fair, the incorporation of Flanders into the royal domains, had been thwarted.

The Peace Treaty of Athis-sur Orge understandably caused instant indignation in Flanders. The towns accused the representatives of treason. Was it such a great crime to have defended the integrity of Flanders? Why should the county be thus oppressed? Robert de Béthune did not dare to publicly oppose this movement of contestation in Flanders. He confirmed the privileges given to Bruges by Philip of Chieti, and reminded Flanders of everything he had done to defend and liberate his father, Count Guy of Dampierre.

The negotiators for Flanders heard soon enough of the opposition to what they had accepted! Fearing for their life, they preferred to remain in France. The cities criticised most the doubling of the yearly interest to be paid, from ten thousand to twenty thousand pounds per year. They also found no mention of the general amnesty promised by the Agreement of Marquette. The departure on pilgrimage of three thousand men of Bruges on travels that normally lasted for several months, would disrupt the commerce of the city.

Soon, the Treaty of Athis-sur-Orge became known in Flanders as the Treaty of Iniquity.

Robert de Béthune continued to negotiate with King Philip the Fair. He took some distance from his brothers, who protested more openly against the clauses of the treaty.

King Philip IV protected Robert de Béthune against the complaints of the count of Hainault and the countess of Artois. He reconciled the count of Flanders with King Edward I of England, who had still the previous year, in alliance with France, sent twenty ships to threaten the coasts of Flanders.

The new Pope Clement V confirmed the Treaty of Athis-sur-Orge. Pope Clement V had been elected in Rome on the 5<sup>th</sup> of June of 1305. He was a Frenchman! He was born in France as Bertrand de Got. He was also a Gascon by birth, a former archbishop of Bordeaux, so he knew quite well the English and their king. Clement V conferred the right to excommunicate the Flemish to the archbishop of Rheims and to the abbot of the Abbey of Saint-Denis near Paris. He agreed with the clauses stating the ecclesiastical punishments laid on Flanders could only be alleviated or annulled on demand of the king of France.

In France, at that moment, came King Philip's attack on the Templar Order. The Grand-Master of the Temple, Jacques de Molay returned from the Orient to Poitiers, to justify himself and to defend the order against the allegations of the king. Philip the Fair had not been able to resist the temptation to lay his hands on the enormous riches of the Templar Order in France and other lands.

The Order of the Temple had been founded by Geoffrey de Saint-Omer, with others. Geoffrey owned a vast property at Ieper, which he had given to the order. In 1225, Countess Joan of Flanders had offered to the members of the Temple of Ieper their own jurisdiction. The Templars enjoyed several particular liberties in Flanders. The order enjoyed the sympathy of Flanders.

On the 13<sup>th</sup> October of 1307, the king had Jacques de Molay arrested and brought to Corbeil. Everywhere in France and in Flanders, the Templar Knights were arrested. On the 26<sup>th</sup> of March of 1308, the king announced to Count Robert de Béthune an assembly would be held at Tours three weeks after Easter to decide on measures against the Templars. Count Robert sent his young son, Louis de Nevers, to the assembly.

The pope was astonished to hear how the king of France had usurped the authority of the Church in the case of the Templar Order. The king answered he had only acted in defence of the faith. He had called together the assembly at Tours to counsel him on the fate of the Templars, accused of heresy. Clement V allowed the inquest at Sens to continue. The archbishop of Sens, however, was the brother of Enguerrand de Marigny, one of the close confidants of the king.

Amidst this new agitation at the court of France, delegates of the Flemish towns exposed to the king their issues with the Treaty of Athis-sur-Orge. Pope Clement V proposed to King Philip the Fair to discuss the issues over the treaty together. Both parties agreed. The meeting was organised at Poitiers in May of 1307. The delegates of Flanders, among whom Jan Breydel, joined the other delegations, of the king and of the pope, at Poitiers.

The Poitiers conferences on the subject did not fare well for the Flemish delegates. Clement V ran rapidly through the treaty. He concluded the king of France had been right in demanding practically all the clauses. The pope did not change one clause, but he allowed Bruges to buy off the obligation to send three thousand men on pilgrimage for the lump-sum of three hundred thousand pounds. The delegates of the towns of Flanders were terribly disappointed.

Nevertheless, on the 28<sup>th</sup> of March of 1308, King Philip declared, as the Flemish had objected, the notaries of the treaty had made a mistake of understanding at Athis, a mistake in the transcription of the decisions. In the designation of the pounds Tournois, should be read instead of '*monnaie peu forte*' or money less strong, the mention '*monnaie faible*', or feeble money, an important difference in times when the French money was devalued almost constantly. The change was to the advantage of Flanders.

Everywhere in Flanders, tensions around the Treaty of Athis-sur-Orge ran higher and higher. Punishments, and even executions of men who cried out the treaty was a scandal, didn't help. The guildsmen were particularly angry because they alone had to pay for the expiation money, and not the wealthier *Leliaerts*, who claimed they had supported the king in the conflict.

In the month of October of 1308, Count Robert de Béthune once more asked the towns of Flanders to name their representatives for a new round of negotiations with the king of France. At their arrival in Paris, the councillors of Philip the Fair demanded of the Flemish delegates to accept any judgement of the king. The delegates answered they could only do so when their liberty, their honour and their lives would be preserved. The Flemish representatives then presented to the French delegates a treaty concluded among them at Lille, and on which the king had placed his seal. The councillors of King Philip remarked to the Flemish the Treaty of Athis also held the seal of Robert de Béthune, and therefore had to be honoured. The delegates of the towns did not cede in their demands. Nothing came of the discussions for the moment.

In Flanders, the *Klauwaerts* now reproached Count Robert de Béthune to serve the interests of France! John of Namur had married a cousin of King Philip in the meantime. His influence too went in favour of the *Leliaerts*. Flanders stood on the brink of a new revolt. The bailiffs of the count chased the people who had been signalled as rebels and enemies of the king. In the Land of Waas, they arrested twenty-five of the most notable inhabitants. Some were killed, executed, others sentenced to exile.

Willem van Saaftege, one of the heroes of the Battle of Kortrijk, killed the *Leliaert* abbot of the Abbey of Ter Doest in Bruges. He came under siege with some of his men in the tower of Lissewege. He should have died, had not Jan Breydel and Pieter de Koninck rescued him with a few men from the guilds of Bruges. At their return to Bruges, the city ran to arms! The guildsmen murdered Gilles Declerck, one of the counsellors of Count Robert de Béthune.

The count was rapidly losing the confidence of the people. He took with him the aldermen he could intimidate, or whose ambitions he could nurture, or the men he could flatter and cajole and who responded to the flatteries. With these, he rode to Paris to have the Treaty of Athis-

sur-Orge ratified by the Flemish towns. The ratification happened in February of 1309. The city of Bruges was the only one not present at the ratification.

Count Robert of Béthune did not leave Paris immediately. He sent his son, Robert of Cassel, more popular than he with the people, to announce to the towns the Treaty of Athis had been officially accepted and ratified. Everywhere, the wealthier *Leliaerts* agreed to uphold the treaty. The aldermen who leant towards the cause of Flanders kept their silence, and waited.

Robert of Cassel arrived in Bruges as the last city to bring over to his side. The aldermen of Bruges heard Robert of Cassel's plea in favour of the treaty. They met again on the 26<sup>th</sup> of March of 1309. The *Leliaerts* who had fled from Bruges during the war with France, supported Count Robert. The traders and the fishermen, who had suffered most from the war, as their ships had been attacked by the war fleets of France and England, finally also agreed. The other guilds heard what Jan Breydel and Pieter de Koninck had to say. These reminded everybody of the humiliations imposed by the Treaty of Athis. They pointed out the possible secret violent projects of the king, once all the fortifications of the Flemish towns had been dismantled. The guilds seemed to want to refuse the treaty. Mediators then sprang in at Bruges. They obtained a delay of decision. Eight men would be designated to travel to Paris, and ask the king to modify the Treaty of Athis.

King Philip IV took his time to think about the affair. On the 10<sup>th</sup> of May of 1309, he declared he had well received the proposal of the duke of Brabant to moderate the conditions of the Treaty of Athis-sur-Orge. He proposed the following changes.

1. He pardoned all the offenses committed against the king from before and after the Treaty of Athis-sur-Orge.
2. He permitted to buy off half of the yearly interest of twenty thousand pounds, and he delayed by two years the payment of the other half of the expiation money, to be taken on the county of Rethel.
3. The fortifications of the Flemish towns had not to be demolished.
4. The king abandoned all intentions for new taxes on Flanders.
5. The king abandoned his rights to occupy temporarily the castellanies of Kortrijk and Cassel.
6. He declared not wanting to demand more guarantees than those he had obtained already.

By the end of May of 1309, King Philip the Fair charged Guillaume de Plaisians with the mission to receive the oaths of the towns of Flanders. This happened during a ceremony in Bruges held on the 8<sup>th</sup> of July of 1309.

The special clause that allowed the king of France to lay and withdraw the excommunication on Flanders, remained in this Treaty of Paris, the first to alleviate some the Treaty of Athis-sur-Orge.

The clause was sent to the pope for his acceptance. Pope Clement V had fled from Poitiers to Avignon. On the 26<sup>th</sup> of August of 1309, he wrote to the king that if he had left this clause of excommunication in the bull directed against the Flemish, he had done this either by

negligence, or by precaution. He asked for the original of that bull, so that he could convert the meaning. He added that if one of the king's predecessors had already used the claim, he could consent to leave it in the treaty. The king then sent Guillaume de Nogaret to confirm to the pope the clause had already be used before, so Clement V confirmed it.

Nogaret rode to the pope with yet another mission. He demanded the trial against the evil memory of Pope Boniface VIII to be started. Guillaume Nogaret asked for the bones of Boniface, so that they could be burned. Clement V opposed the trial. He had to give in, however, on the subject of the suppression of the Order of the Templars.

On the 23rd of February of 1308, Louis d'Evreux, the brother of the king, arrived at Tournai, accompanied by the influential king's counsellor Enguerrand de Marigny. Marigny would henceforth serve as the king's confidant on the affairs of Flanders. They had come to Tournai to install Jean de Vierzon, who had married the lady of Mortagne, the heiress of the castellany of Tournai.

The renewed interest for Tournai of King Philip the Fair originated in Tournai standing at a strategic point between Flanders and Hainault. Tournai was a strongly fortified town. The truces between the count of Flanders and William d'Avesnes, count of Hainault, had been reconducted, but the peace was not very stable, conflicts never far away. In 1309, the two armies of Flanders and Hainault would stand in front of each other along the Scheldt, but a battle was avoided. Enguerrand de Marigny's mission was also to remind Count Robert of Béthune of his previous promises and oaths concerning Hainault. France wanted no new war between Flanders and Hainault.

In 1309, Count Robert de Béthune and his son, Louis de Nevers, rode to Tournai, for talks with Marigny. The count of Flanders argued that since Hainault depended feudally from the German Empire, the king of France could not intervene in disputes between Flanders and Hainault. The count reproached the French court for the alliance made by the king with Hainault against Flanders.

Enguerrand de Marigny reminded Count Robert a war had been going on between France and Flanders when this happened. Marigny added the count and his men could not blame the acts of the king in those times. Marigny explained how graceful the king had been in his attitude to the old count and to Robert of Béthune during the peace negotiations. Marigny and Louis de Nevers disputed about these arguments, but held the peace.

Louis de Nevers was an ambitious man, a man of violent eruptions, and a man of low morals. He held a grudge against King Philip the Fair, for the king had grabbed away from him all the income of the counties of Rethel and Nevers against the non-execution of the Peace Treaty of Athis-sur-Orge of 1305 and of the Peace Treaty of Paris in 1309. Marigny hinted several times at the imprisonment of Count Guy de Dampierre. Finally, Marigny proposed to let the thoughts sink, and mature. He proposed a new meeting on the 14<sup>th</sup> of October of 1309.

Count Robert of Béthune remarked the allusions to the imprisonment of his father might mean some dark intrigue of Marigny. The count also heard of the arrival at Tournai of Guillaume de Nogaret, who had been the executor of various secret projects of the king.

Robert of Béthune asked for a safe-conduit. He obtained the guarantee. Marigny sent him also two men-at-arms to escort him to Tournai.

The delegates of the king waited in October in vain, for four days, at Tournai.

Representatives of the towns of Flanders arrived, but not the count! Was a new conflict between count and king in the making?

## England

The rebellious Scottish nobleman John Comyn surrendered to the English army and did homage to King Edward I in February of 1304. Scottish nobles who had remained loyal to the king, captured William Wallace in August of 1305. Wallace was brought to London in chains. On the 23rd of August, he was executed in a gruesome way. His head was placed on a spike at London Bridge, and the rest of his body, cut to pieces, publicly displayed in a number of important Scottish towns.

The war in Scotland had drawn to it all attention and financial means of the kingdom. England, Ireland and also Gascony, though at peace, curbed under heavy taxes. Scotland had been devastated. King Edward needed time to rest, and so did the kingdom. He began to work on the trailbaston gangs. His court of justices nearly eliminated the bandit organisations all over the country. The king also set up a Council of three men to help him with the work in Scotland. It consisted of Robert Bruce, John Mowbray, and Bishop Robert Wishart of Glasgow, not necessarily men who agreed at all times with what the king wanted. These men installed a Scottish Parliament.

The relations between King Edward I and his frivolous son Edward of Caernarfon were not very good. Father and son disputed about the amounts of money the son spent, and about the men the son called to his own court. In particular, the king reproached his son for his intimate friendship with an English courtier called Piers Gaveston. King Edward I sent Gaveston into exile.

During a meeting of the English Parliament, Scottish delegates participated in the debates. They had to hear Scotland was no longer considered as a kingdom. It had been demoted to the status of a 'land'. It was to be governed by a lieutenant of the king of England. That role of governor would be held by a nephew of King Edward, by John of Brittany. The members of Parliament for the land, as well as the sheriffs, remained Scotsmen mostly. An agreement was also found for the compensation of the expenses incurred by the king for the campaigns in Scotland. The peace seemed to have been re-established in Scotland, at a very high price for the Scots.

King Edward wanted to eliminate his opposers in England. One of these men was Archbishop Robert Winchelsea of Canterbury. In October of 1305, Edward I sent an embassy to the new Pope Clement V, asking for Winchelsea's deposition. Clement V was a Gascon, so maybe a little more inclined to answer a plea of the king of England more favourably. On the 11<sup>th</sup> of February of 1306, a papal bull absolved the king from his oaths to the concessions Edward

had been compelled to grant to his opposers. Winchelsea was suspended from office by the pope.

Scotland then once more erupted in revolt! On the 10<sup>th</sup> of February of 1306, Robert Bruce killed his rival John Comyn, lord of Badenoch, in the Franciscan church of the town of Dumfries. It was discovered Robert Bruce had tried to incite the Scottish noblemen to a new revolt, and John Comyn had refused to participate. Bruce and his friends took control of a series of castles in south-west Scotland. The bishop of Glasgow, the ever perfidious Robert Wishart, absolved Robert Bruce of his crime of murder. Wishart also produced as by miracle some of the Scottish regalia, and Bruce was crowned king of Scotland as King Robert I.

King Edward I was old, sick and feeble. He passed command of an army to Aymer de Valence, to lead the counter-attack on Scotland. The English army departed for Scotland in April of 1306.

That same year, Edward I handed over Gascony to his son, Edward of Caernarfon. The king knighted his son, but the appointment might have seemed as an exile.

Nevertheless, Edward of Caernarfon swore not to sleep for two nights in the same place until the Scots were defeated.

Aymer de Valence advanced rapidly in Scotland. He captured the bishops of Saint Andrews and of Glasgow, making them his prisoner. He defeated an army led by Robert Bruce near Perth. Bruce himself could escape. In July of 1306, Bruce was once more defeated at Dalrigh, this time by an army of Scotsmen loyal to Edward I. Again, Bruce could escape. Also Edward of Caernarfon had by that time well advanced, and pacified south-western Scotland further.

In the second half of August, King Edward, though very ill, had travelled to Northumberland. He progressed slowly to Carlisle. Because of his illness, he had to stop at Lanercost Priory, where he set up his headquarters. The last fortresses of the Scottish rebels surrendered, but Robert Bruce had escaped to Ireland. The earl of Athol and Neil Bruce, Robert Bruce's brother, were caught and executed. The women of Bruce's family were also captured, and imprisoned in iron cages kept in the towers of Roxburgh and Berwick. The king executed a number of Scottish noblemen who had helped the rebels. He pardoned others, but his patience with the Scots had clearly run out.

At the same time, Robert Bruce had returned to Scotland. The English army was successful in defeating Bruce's troops. The English executed Bruce's two brothers Alexander and Thomas. From then on, Robert Bruce fared better. In three successes in battle he defeated limited English armies. Edward of Caernarfon had left Scotland for the south of England. Edward I commanded the army once more himself.

On the 7<sup>th</sup> of July of 1307, the heart of the old warrior-king broke. Edward I died at Burgh-on-Sands. On the 20<sup>th</sup> of July of 1307, Edward of Caernarfon was crowned king of England as King Edward II. He buried his father in October of 1307.

King Edward II travelled to Scotland to receive the homage as king from the loyalist Scots. He returned south shortly thereafter. He recalled Piers Gaveston, and appointed his friend to

earl of Cornwall. He also arranged a marriage for Gaveston with the wealthy Margaret de Clare.

In 1308, King Edward II married Isabella of France, a daughter of King Philip IV. He crossed the Channel to France in January of 1308, leaving Gaveston in charge of the kingdom. Edward did homage to King Philip the Fair for the duchy of Aquitaine. Isabella and Edward II married at Boulogne on the 25<sup>th</sup> of January of 1308. Isabella was only twelve years old at the wedding. Their first son was born in 1312, and equally received the ancient name of Edward.

In February of 1308, during a heated session of the English Parliament, many members of the English nobility reproached Edward II for the influence exerted on him by Piers Gaveston. The influence of one man on a king was always hated in England, now the more so because Gaveston acted haughtily and arrogantly with the other nobles of the court. During another session of Parliament in April, the nobles openly demanded Gaveston's exile. King Edward II was hard pressed, and had to accept to send Gaveston to Gascony. The archbishop of Canterbury threatened to excommunicate Gaveston, should he return.

Many voices in Parliament had called for a reform of the royal government. The discussions on this subject opened in yet another meeting of Parliament in August of 1308. At the same time, the king negotiated secretly with Pope Clement V and with King Philip IV of France to allow Gaveston to return to England. Edward II offered to suppress the Templar Order of knights in England. Further meetings with the clergy and with his earls followed. Parliament offered Edward II additional taxes if he agreed to a reform, but it continued to refuse to allow Gaveston to return. Finally, in the late spring of 1308, the pope annulled the threat to excommunicate by the archbishop of Canterbury, so that the most important difficulty for the return of Gaveston was removed. King Edward II then made a series of concessions to Parliament. He limited the power of the royal steward and of the marshal of the royal household. He regulated the royal power of purveyance. He abandoned a new legislation on customs. The English Parliament was pleased, and gave the king more taxes for a new war in Scotland. Parliament seemed for some time to tolerate Gaveston at the side of the king.

Edward's issues did not disappear. Gaveston's arrogance led to clashes with the most powerful earls of the kingdom, among whom the earls of Lancaster and of Warwick. Edward's financial problems augmented. He owed much money to the Italian bankers of the Frescobaldi.

Parliament met again in February of 1310. It demanded of the king to revoke Gaveston as his counsellor. The Parliament also adopted the proposal to ask the advice of twenty-one elected barons, to be called the Ordainers, to reform further the royal government and the royal household. Edward II had to agree. The Ordainers were elected, and began their debates. In the meantime, Edward and Gaveston had taken a small army of less than five thousand warriors to Scotland. Robert Bruce refused them a decisive battle. The king's money threatened to run out by early 1311, so he returned to England.

With these severe kinds of domestic issues at hand, with the war in Scotland not really evolving in his favour, in financial difficulty, the king of England could not possibly intervene in Flanders and risk a new war with France!

## Germany

In Germany, the attention of the emperor was drawn to Bohemia. King Wenceslas II of Bohemia, called Wenzel in German, had concluded a peace treaty with Emperor Albert of Austria. He ceded to the emperor the rights to the cities of Eger and Meissen. He would keep Bohemia and Poland, but abandoned his claims on Hungary.

Wenceslas II died in 1305. A war of succession started in Bohemia. The newly crowned King Wenceslas III had to wage a war against one of his barons, Ladislaus Loktiek. Wenceslas III was renowned for being a drunkard and a debaucher. Konrad von Poltenstein, a knight from Thüringen soon murdered King Wenceslas III!

The war of succession for Bohemia and Poland then entered a new stage, as Emperor Albert fought against Duke Heinrich von Kärnten for the crown. The war ended when the Bohemian noblemen arranged a wedding between the widow of Wenceslas III, the Polish Princess Elisabeth, and the son of Emperor Albert. The Bohemian nobles then recognised Albert's son, Rudolph, as king in 1306.

Emperor Albert had been elected emperor, but he owned little lands of his own. His eyes fell on Thüringen as a county he might conquer. He wanted to draw Thüringen into his own domains. He began a war against the county in 1307. One after the other, however, Albert lost his battles in Thüringen! The most famous battle he lost was the Battle of Lucka, a village in the Altenburg district of Thuringia. His armies were annihilated, ending the war in Thuringia, Albert's ambitions not realised.

King Rudolph III of Bohemia and Poland already died in 1308. The Bohemian noblemen then voted for Heinrich von Kärnten as their new king. Emperor Albert had one more war to wage! Luckily, his troops conquered Kärnten.

Albert had to face more and more opposition from barons in Germany. He had for instance withheld the son of his brother, Johann von Schwaben, to take up his inheritance. Johann organised a conspiracy with four other knights to murder the emperor. Also the archbishop of Mainz, Peter Aichspalter, was involved in this plot. The archbishop had an appropriate name of Aichspalter, 'he who splits oaks'.

They assassinated Emperor Albert of Austria on the 1<sup>st</sup> of May of 1308. German history was filled with violent horrors in those times! The conspirators killed Albert on the road near Bruck, close to the Habsburg Castle. Johann would henceforth be called 'the Parricide'. Albert's wife and queen, Queen Agnes of Hungary, took bloody revenge for the murder of her husband. She and her son, executed hundreds of people they suspected of being involved in the murder.

The lands of the former emperor were distributed over his five sons. The title of king of Germany, however, went to Count Henry of Luxemburg, born in 1262 at Valenciennes. He enjoyed the special support in the election to king from his brother, Archbishop Baldwin of Trier, and from his friend Archbishop Peter Aichspalter of Mainz, who had once been in his service. Henry of Luxemburg was crowned on the 6<sup>th</sup> of January of 1309.

At his first *Reichstag* meeting, in August of 1309, a pirate knight of Württemberg, Eberhard von Württemberg, the leader of the barons of Schwaben, left the ceremony in anger against the king. Henry of Luxemburg had made himself a powerful enemy.

King Philip IV of France had proposed his brother Charles de Valois at the election. This scheme fell through. Also Pope Clement V intervened, but not in favour of Charles de Valois. Clement wanted an emperor inclined to go on a crusade in the Holy Land. The pope and the electors also felt the choice of a French Valois king and emperor was more of a menace to their authorities than an asset.

On the 22<sup>nd</sup> of November of 1308, Count Henry of Luxemburg was chosen as King Heinrich VII at a meeting of the German *Reichstag* at Frankfurt. He would become Holy Roman Emperor in 1312.

Immediately, the new king had to wage several campaigns to assert his authority. In Hungary, the noblemen of the land recognised Charles Robert as their king. They thus placed a member of the French House of Anjou on the throne.

Count Robert de Béthune tried to negotiate an alliance with King Heinrich VII of Germany, directed against France. The king refused to move. Like the king of England, he had enough on his hands with his wars inside his kingdom! He did incite John de Namur to bring back the castellany of Cambrai, the Cambrésis, back into the empire. John refused in his turn to wage a war on France. He had formally reconciled with the king of France already in 1307, and did not want to risk Flanders for the Cambrésis.

In the meantime, King Heinrich VII had been seeking a solution for Bohemia. There, Duke Heinrich von Kärnten submitted the county to a very cruel rule.

On the 1<sup>st</sup> of September of 1310, King Heinrich VII engaged his son to the heiress of Bohemia. His son Johann was only fourteen years old. The heiress, Elisabeth, was nineteen. In a subsequent move, the king declared Duke Heinrich von Kärnten unworthy of the crown of Bohemia, handing it over to his son. A war ensued. The king, helped by powerful friends among the noblemen of Germany, and also by Peter Aichspalter, defeated the armies of both Heinrich von Kärnten and Eberhard von Württemberg. Heinrich von Kärnten fled to his castle in the duchy of the same name, from which he would never leave.

In the autumn, Heinrich VII then started a campaign in Italy. He took only two thousand warriors with him. He nevertheless advanced to Milan, then held by Guido della Torre. The king took Milan, and banned della Torre. On the 6<sup>th</sup> of January of 1311, Heinrich VII took on the iron crown of Milan.

Because of these developments in Germany, because of the ambitions of the king to win back lands that had drifted away from imperial power in Germany and in Italy, also King Heinrich VII of Germany did not intervene in Flanders.

### 3.3. The violent Ghent Settlement. 1308

It was well past midnight in Ghent. The city slept. All was quiet. The only people awake were a few shippers who entered as the very last the inner port of Tussen Bruggen. Two men only guarded over the city on the top floor of the high Belfort, walking to and fro, from window to window. Their task was mainly to watch out for flickers of light in the city. Light would mean people awake at strange hours, burglars, thieves, a revolt beginning. Light could also mean a fire. Most of the houses in Ghent had roofs of thatch. One roof on fire usually led to an entire street losing its roofs and worse. Most walls of the houses in Ghent were built of wattle and daub, the rods and twigs plastered with clay or mud. The twigs, the walls, would catch fire as quickly! Fire in a city like Ghent, meant a great disaster always. Tonight, all was quiet. No dogs even barked, no bird squealed.

Raes van Lake and his wife slept. Raes had three servants, two maids and a manservant. He had one maid to help his wife, a cook, and a manservant to help him in the stables. Often, during the day, more men worked for him, but these generally did not stay as long as his three house servants. The servants did not sleep in his house.

Raes slept well and deep. It did not often happen he slept lightly. He sank into a half daze when he was brooding over a business venture, calculating and playing in his mind the data and the figures, thinking about the chances of a ship laden with cloth wrecked in the sea, or arriving early. Then, unlike tonight, he would toss and turn in his bed and not find his best sleep. His wife, Zwane, slept well at all times. She was snoring lightly while Raes brooded.

The darkness was not black as peat tonight. Clouds hung in the sky, but the full moon pervaded the streets with a silvery haze. More than one town of Flanders had been surprised by this kind of light. When it reflected on a glass pane, it could alarm everybody out of sleep for a fire on a tower.

Raes and his wife slept upstairs, in a room under the roof. Raes liked it there. He even liked to hear the rain pelting down on his roof. It was a very large room he slept in, above his hall, and the ceiling was high. Raes had been thinking of building even higher, the next time he would have to change the thatch of his roof. He could use additional storage space.

Raes lay in his bed, arms tucked beneath his head. He was musing, half awake and half in a daze. Suddenly, he heard a noise downstairs, in the corridor next to his hall. He heard the scraping of metal on metal. He had hung a metal lock on his door, and a sturdy piece of wood placed horizontally blocked his door. Raes knew the piece of wood that held his door closed would hold even when his lock was picked. But the wood was old, worm-eaten. It would give way and break against greater pressure. He knew he should have replaced it with a metal bar long ago. He simply did not believe somebody would try to get inside his house in the middle of the night. What would burglars be able to steal from him? A few silver candelabras, some coins in a chest in his hall? Nothing else was worth great value, except for the furniture and the tapestries, which were much too heavy for one or two desperate men to wear about in the middle of the night!

Raes van Lake heard the noise again, and then the slow cracking of wood. Somebody was definitely trying to break into his house! This was not the noise of a mouse or of a rat, running through the fragrant herbs and the new straw spread on the floor.

Raes van Lake had weapons in his bedroom, a sword, an axe, a shield, a lance. His mail coat hung on a hook against the wall. He made as little noise as possible, so as not to wake Zwane. He put on his boots, a short tunic, but not his mail, and he took his lance. He did not need much light to find these. He cautiously opened the door of his bedroom. He did that very slowly, so that the hinges did not creak too much. He came to stand on the landing leading downstairs.

Raes then saw a light, not the broad light of a candle, but rather the minuscule light of a small oil lamp held at a thumb. He could very faintly smell burning oil. A shadow approached, ascended the stairs. Raes withdrew into the recess of his bedroom. Somebody was definitely climbing up the stairs. Why was the man not searching through the hall? Raes waited. He waited for the fourth plank of the stairs, counting from above, to shriek. He knew that plank always made a high sound. His heart thumped. The time seemed an infinity to Raes. He heard the plank move, squeak, crack. The man seemed to stop, surprised, probably looking down. This was Raes's moment!

Raes surged from hiding, in utter silence. He saw a dark shadow where he expected, and pushed his lance with great force straight through the man. He did not feel the resistance of a chain mail. The steel tip of the lance, sharp as a knife, penetrated deep in the flesh of the man, so deep a part of the wooden shaft also entered the soft chair with the sharp point. Raes heard a muffled sigh, a loud groan, and then the man toppled down the stairs.

The intruder must have fallen onto another man following. This man dropped his oil lamp. The lamp broke on the ground floor, and started a small fire there. The stairs remained in total darkness. The two men rolled down. Raes heard curses. Men growled.

Raes grabbed his sword, now, and went down the stairs. On the ground of the lower floor, he saw another man trying to get up. Raes pushed the point of his sword through the man's left shoulder, and winged him. He kicked the man also in the belly.

A third man stood still near the entry door, also holding a very small oil lamp. The man neared rapidly. Raes lunged at him, but the man stepped adroitly aside and swung a sword at Raes. Raes ducked. The sword whipped past and bit in the wooden beam of the wall, below the stairs. Raes had already brought his own sword upwards, to reach the belly of this third opposer. He first drew a bloody line, which made the man groan and ply double. Raes let his weapon fly on. He turned it, and the sword continued its course to the man's neck. The third man was too slow for Raes's sword-fighting! He had not seen the sword of Raes curbing on. Raes sliced deep in the man's neck, sawed and drew his sword towards him. Blood erupted out of the man's half cut-through throat. Blood sprouted out in Raes's corridor, in front of his door. Raes did not have to cut a second time. Raes knew the man would die in a few agonising heartbeats.

Raes van Lake remained standing on the stairs to where he had stepped back. He was panting from the energy spent in a few seconds. Two oil lamps had fallen to shreds, on the ground. The oil burned there, and fire began to spread in the straw on the floor. Raes stamped with his

boots on the flames, until the fire stopped to flicker its orange light in the corridor. It was again totally black, and totally silent in the house.

Raes stepped over the third man's body. He went to his hall, and lighted a candle, then two. He knew his house by the touch! He took up the silver candelabra he had lighted, added a candle, lighted it too, and went back to the corridor.

He looked at the three bodies in disgust. Then, he saw a figure dressed entirely in white, almost a phantom, come down the stairs. Zwane Bentijn had finally heard a noise. She was coming down the stairs. She saw the three men lying on the ground. She smelled death and sweet blood. Then, she noticed the blood all over her stairs, the blood on her walls, and her husband looking at her with wild eyes of fury. She screamed.

It took quite some time to calm down Zwane. Raes told her to go back to her bedroom until he would call for her. He assured her he was not wounded. The blood was not his! Zwane went up the stairs, shivering and weeping.

He fetched a second candelabra, and lighted more candles. He saw the second intruder still breathed. He went up to the man, a long dagger in his hand.

'Speak up, man, or I'll kill you very slowly,' Raes began. 'Who organised this? You are no ordinary burglar, I can tell. You're a hired murderer. You came to kill me, didn't you? Who hired you, who sent you? Speak up!'

Raes held his dagger to one of the man's eyes.

'De Grutere, Panneberch, van Lovendeghem hired us,' the man broke out. 'May you die in hell!'

'I'll meet you there, friend,' Raes replied. 'You must meet somewhere with the men who hired you, after having murdered me and my wife. Where?'

'We must report in a warehouse of de Grutere,' the man choked. 'The isolated standing warehouse along the *Ketelgracht* in the *Kouter*, near the Bridge of the *Fremineuren*. Damn you! They didn't tell us you could fight. They said it would be easy. An easy job, they told us. Now let me go. You promised.'

'I only promised you a swift death, friend, nothing more,' Raes whispered.

He plunged his dagger into the man's heart. He saw the man's eyes widen, then break.

Raes's first thought then went to what he should do with the bodies. He remained standing in the corridor. Finally, he took three linen bedcovers out of a cupboard in the corridor. He opened one cover on the tiles of the floor, and rolled the first man on it. He drew the linen over the ground to his stable. He heaved the body on a cart. He did the same with the two other bodies. By then he was soaked in blood. He pumped water in a large pail, took a piece of cloth and began to transfer the blood on the ground into the pail. He had to use five pails of water, saw them turn red. He poured the contents of the pails in a barrel. Most of the blood was gone. He wiped the blood from the stairs and from his walls, as well as he could, and then he washed his hands. He wiped off his boots. He went upstairs.

Zwane had dressed. She was weeping.

'Three burglars tried to break into our house,' Raes announced. 'I had to kill them!'

Zwane made very large eyes. She did not know this aspect of her husband.

'I washed away most of the blood. Everything is all right, now, but I must ask you to continue washing everything on the stairs and in the corridor better than I could. By morning,

everything must be clean, as if nothing happened. Can you do that? I have to hurry, to warn John Denout. His house may have been attacked to.'

Zwane nodded. Without a word, she left the room and went down the stairs. She managed a kiss on Raes's front, and Raes understood all was well in her head. She had absorbed the shock!

Raes washed himself in his bedroom. He threw his blood-soaked tunic in a corner. Zwane sat on her knees, scrubbing the stairs. Raes passed her in a hurry, threw a kiss, and left the house. He heard Zwane close the lock after him. He had not taken the time to cut a kneewall. He did not expect a second attack.

John Denout always slept lightly. He felt never really at ease, even not in his bedroom. He heard the stairs crack quite rapidly. He heard shuffling feet on his stairs. He rarely locked close his front door for the night. Who would steal anything from a poor fuller? The men John now knew to be advancing silently in his house must have thought John's bedroom was upstairs. It was not! John used the rooms upstairs only to store and dry cloths, and to hide the sacks with his most precious alums. He grabbed his *goedendag*, and slowly, slowly, opened his door. John Denout and his wife slept downstairs, near his hall.

John saw two men holding a small candle each, sneaking upstairs. One man stood halfway the stairs, the other one followed him. The men had their backs turned to him. John did not hesitate. He tripped the lowest man on the stairs with his *goedendag*. Then, he crushed the falling man's head with the weight of the iron ring on his weapon. That was how he had learned to fight at Kortrijk! The man groaned, then he didn't move anymore. A pool of blood began to form near his head.

The second man, the one who stood highest on the stairs, scrambled down in haste, swinging an axe. The axe was not a battle-axe, just an unwieldy, large axe. John Denout had learned also how to handle oncoming axes in the battles he had fought in. He flung the axe aside with his *goedendag*, so that the weapon buried itself in the planks of the stairs. In the same movement, he planted the *goedendag*'s long spike in the belly of his attacker. The man sighed, tried to tear his axe free, but John had already drawn his *goedendag* to him, and he pushed the spike out again, right into the man's heart. He had to push upwards, so that he almost crouched under the man, a dangerous position, but John's force was extraordinary. He also realised he was once more fighting for his life. The man sighed again. As John withdrew his *goedendag* a second time, the man slumped down. John Denout let him fall beside him.

John fell to his knees, spent by the effort. His wife, Selie Scivaels, entered the corridor, from behind him. She did not scream. She brought her hands to her face.

'What happened here?' she asked.

'Two burglars entered our house. I think I killed them both,' John replied, as matter-of-fact as Selie had addressed him.

'Oh, Sweet Jesus,' Selie exclaimed. 'You are a great warrior, indeed! The cursed thieves! They deserved death. Stealing from innocent people!'

Selie Scivaels did not cry. She did not weep. She immediately told John Denout what to do. He was to draw the bodies to behind the house, to where his fuller's tubs stood. He was to wash and put on a new tunic. John realised he stood almost naked in his corridor! He was

then to run to Raes van Lake, to ask for help with the bodies. Selie pushed John out of her way.

Then, they heard someone knocking on the door. John was terrified. Selie went to the door, leaned against it, and asked loudly, 'who is there?'

'Raes van Lake, Selie. Open up. Let me in!' Raes told. 'I have to talk to John. Open up!' Selie opened the door, and drew Raes in. Raes immediately slammed the door shut behind him. In the strange, scarce candlelight, he noticed immediately the bodies and the blood.

'Good God,' Raes stammered. 'I came to warn you. I am too late.'

'No, you're not too late,' Selie replied. 'My John can handle a couple of thugs! They're dead. Nothing to worry about.'

'Nothing to worry about? I was attacked too. It is a conspiracy!' Raes exclaimed. 'Three men attacked my house. Three men! I killed them too. Sweet Jesus! We killed them!'

'Yes,' Selie continued. 'We killed them too. What to do with the bodies? We have to get rid of them. John was on his way to ask your help.'

'Call the bailiff,' John dared.

'No, no, no, no bailiff,' Raes shouted. 'I know who sent them! They are no ordinary burglars we killed! They did not come to steal. They were sent by de Grutere, by the van Lovendeghems, the Panneberch and their kind. They were hired killers we eliminated. The instigators are waiting to hear from their hired assassins right now. I know where!'

'Who else would they attack?' Selie wondered. 'Juris Vresele, Arnout de Hert?'

'Probably Juris Vresele,' Raes speculated. 'Maybe Arnout. We have to go to the house of Juris Vresele first.'

Selie Scivaels nodded.

'John, you go with Raes,' Selie decided. 'I'll clean up here.'

Raes and John accepted Selie's command. They had better follow Selie's orders. Selie had taken matters in hand.

Raes van Lake and John Denout ran silently to the *Kalanderberg*, to Juris Vresele's house. They saw there was light in this house too. They knocked on the door. A voice asked who they were. They announced themselves, and the door opened. Juris stood in the door opening. He seemed relieved to see Raes and John.

'We have been attacked,' Raes whispered. 'We wondered how you were doing. It seems quiet, here. We came to warn you.'

'Come on in, be silent,' Juris said.

In the corridor that led to Juris's hall, and on the stairs to the bedrooms, Raes and John now saw the same spectacle as at their houses. Three men lay dead on the floor. Mergriet Mutaert was cleaning up the cloying blood. Juris's two sons, Gerolf and Gillis, stood there too, weapons in hand.

'We had to kill three men,' Juris explained.

He seemed still much in shock. He was glad to be able to talk.

'I heard burglars open the front door. Of course, I had forgotten to bar the door. They picked the lock. I heard an unusual noise. I took my sword. I fought three men with the sword, here in the corridor. I managed to kill two men. I managed to surprise the first one on the stairs. I'm good at sword fighting, now. I had not much trouble with him. I slammed my sword through the man. The second one was tougher. Much tougher! He must have been a

mercenary, good at sword fighting. We fought quite a while. Seconds probably, but they seemed an eternity to me. The third man at first did not intervene. Difficult to move in the narrow corridor! He had a lance, you know. My two sons slept downstairs. Young Gillis, here, barely fifteen, he stormed into the corridor, screaming like a berserker, a *goedendag* clutched in his hands. He surprised the third man, and put his spike in the man's belly. He pushed and pushed, until the man hit the wall. That made the second man hesitate, doubt, and I could run him through also. Gerolf arrived later. Gerolf is a monk already. He had a sword in his hands! He did not have to use it. He is horrified by what happened. Young Gillis continued to push his *goedendag* into the third man's body. I think he must have hit the man five or six times. The wretched burglar did not survive! It was Gillis's first killing! His mother is consoling the boy. His brother, Gerolf, is still in shock. I killed two men. In the end, the second man was terrified by what he saw young Gillis doing. Gillis turned on him too, you see. We attacked the man from both sides. How have you been doing? Why have you come here?'

Raes van Lake and John Denout explained what had happened at their houses. Juris took them to his hall, where Mergriet Mutaert sat with her two sons. Juris served them a beaker of strong wine. The friends sat.

'We must go to our friend, the shipper,' John Denout said after he had gulped down the wine. 'Just one moment,' Raes protested. 'My knees are buckling under me. What are we going to do?'

'Yes,' Juris whispered, so that Mergriet did not hear all the gruesome details. 'We have eight corpses on our hands, not to count those of the shipper. We can wash the blood and the signs of a battle from our houses by tomorrow morning. We have to get rid of the bodies. We must act as if nothing has happened in our houses.'

'We must call on the bailiff's men,' John Denout repeated.

'Never! Forget it,' Raes van Lake shouted. 'We are up against some of the wealthiest *Leliaerts* of Ghent. The aldermen and the bailiff may hear us out. They may even believe us. They will not judge against the de Grutere and the others! No, we must get rid of the bodies quickly, and pretend nothing happened. We must do as if our noses bleed. I know where the assassins are to meet after their supposed killings. I say we pay these men a visit.'

'I agree,' Juris Vresele nodded. 'Let's pay them a visit. That is the only solution. I'd like to smoke them out.'

'I too,' Raes van Lake agreed. 'They are waiting at this very moment, the fine gentlemen. They are waiting in a warehouse near the *Ketelgracht*. We may try to hurt them badly. So badly, they won't try their tricks again on us. We are six. Gerolf and Gillis can come with us. What about the shipper?'

'I say we first go to the *Ketelgracht* and surprise them,' Raes proposed.

'No,' John Denout refused. 'You two go to the warehouse and see what you can do. I'll run to Arnout's house. Arnout can defend himself, but the least we must do is to have a look at his house, and if needed, warn him.'

'Yes,' Raes van Lake agreed. 'We have to do that. We don't leave Arnout on his own. You go to Arnout, John. We'll snoop around at the Grutere warehouse. Come back as soon as you can, preferably with the shipper. Call also on Wouter de Smet if you can. Bring him here, too. Your shipper should get rid of the bodies for us. We could charge them in a boat of his at the

*Braembrug*, the Brabant Bridge, not far from the *Kalanderberg*, close to the *Brabantstraat* and the *Brabantdam*. He can bring them to far, on the Scheldt or on the Leie, and dump them somewhere in the water, far from Ghent!’

‘I’ll do that,’ John Denout accepted. ‘I’ll be back as soon as I can.’

John already left the house of Juris Vresele.

‘Will you be all right, wife?’ Juris Vresele asked to Mergriet.

‘I am. You go to do what you have to do. But I need Gerolf. Give him to me. We’ll wash the house and bring the bodies to under the *Braembrug*. Take Gillis, but return him to me safe and sound, you hear, Juris Vresele? I want him back alive and unhurt! Otherwise, I shall never speak another word to you for the rest of my life. I’d rather live in a beguinage than address you again. Hear my words! Bring back my Gillis to me!’

‘I promise, wife,’ Juris shuddered. ‘I’ll bring back your son.’

They did not linger, then. Raes van Lake, Juris Vresele and Gillis Vresele went out, into the night. John Denout had already run off. They took each a *goedendag*, a sword and a dagger. Juris had mail haubergeons for the three of them. They also took two crossbows with them. Juris wore an old crossbow, inherited from his father. Gillis had thrown a rather new bow over his shoulder. It was much lighter than the old crossbow, but it could shoot bolts with great power nevertheless. Gillis had been exercising with this new bow. Juris knew his son shot well.

The three men sneaked through the pitch-dark streets. Sometimes, the moon appeared through the clouds, to guide them. Raes brought them to the warehouse he knew as one of the de Grutere family. It stood near the waters of the canal that connected on the south of the centre of Ghent, on the south of the *Kuipe*, the Scheldt in the east and the Leie in the west. At first, they merely saw the great, sombre mass of the warehouse, a wooden building with a roof of slate. When they neared, following a small path of the *Kouter*, they noticed some subdued light at one of the windows. They looked out for guards around the building, but found none. The conspirators seemed to have gathered inside. Raes and Juris sneaked closer. They walked very cautiously, crouching, went to near one of the feebly lighted windows. Juris Vresele looked inside. He saw a table at a corner of the warehouse. At the table sat Juris’s erstwhile enemy and rival, Lievin de Grutere. With him sat Hugen van Lovendeghem, Jehan Panneberch, and Sanders de Mey. These were the four men Juris knew all too well. Another man stood, a man with a fiery face. He was probably a mercenary, maybe the leader of the hired killers. They were talking. Juris heard bribes of the conversation.

‘It will not be long, now,’ the mercenary was saying. ‘They will have killed the Vresele man and the van Lake man by now. The Denout guy may take a little longer. They will be on their way to the smith and the shipper. That will take more time. Those men live the farthest from here. I think our men will be back in an hour or so.’

‘What makes you so sure they have succeeded?’ de Grutere asked.

‘They cannot fail. They are warriors. They are skilled in killing at sight. They know how to handle a weapon, a sword, an axe, and daggers.’

Juris Vresele gave a sign to his friend to go on a little farther. Then, they gathered behind the bushes.

‘They are five,’ Juris explained. ‘The four we know, our rivals. The fifth is a mercenary.’

‘We could burn the warehouse down on them,’ Raes suggested. ‘There is quite some dry bush here. We can start a fire at the barn, near the place where they gather. We throw fire through the window, then wait for them at the gate. Have you seen where they can get out?’ ‘There is only one gate near, and in that gate a door, a small one,’ Juris agreed. ‘They will run through there, to get out as fast as possible.’

‘You and I prepare the fire, and throw some in through that window,’ Raes organised. ‘Your son waits with the two crossbows. When somebody gets through the door, he loosens two bolts. He cannot miss. We then run with our *goedendags* on to the others. Agreed?’

Juris thought for a few moments.

Then, he replied, ‘agreed. Fine!’

They sent young Gillis to behind a tree in front of the door. Raes and Juris waited for a few moments, until they thought Gillis must have reached that place to hide and cock the two crossbows. They sneaked again up to the warehouse. Close to the windows, they put fire to three bushels. One bushel they placed near a heap of wood, outside the warehouse. The fire would rise and consume the wall. They placed the fire, waited a little until they could be certain the flames had taken to the wood. Then, they put fire to two large bushels of little twigs. Juris went to the window. Before the men inside could have noticed a strange light outside, Raes van Lake threw a heavy stone inside. The glass, quite unusual for a warehouse in Ghent, shattered with a great noise. Juris immediately threw in the large bushel. He saw the sparkles fly inside the warehouse. The bushel broke out in more flames and smoke. Juris ran already to the other side, when Raes threw in a second bushel on flames through the window.

Juris Vresele stood at the side of the building, not far from the windows, waiting a few paces from the small gate. A first man emerged coughing. He came two steps forward. Juris noticed it was the mercenary leader. Juris wondered already what Gillis was waiting for. Suddenly, a crossbow bolt slammed hard, straight in the man’s chest. The mercenary wore a thick, leather jerkin. The bolt entered his lungs by a foot at least. The man grabbed at his chest. He was also thrown a good three feet back, and thumped into the mass following him, who was Sanders de Mey. Both fell to the ground, backwards, the mercenary on top of Sanders. A second bolt whipped through the air, and caught Jehan Panneberch in the breast, to the left side. Jehan looked down, and saw the bolt deep inside his heart. He fell sideways.

Juris van Lake and Raes van Lake ran to the gate, shrieking like an entire battalion of barbaric warriors. They fell upon Hugen van Lovendeghem, who was then the next man to run away from the fire inside. Juris Vresele rammed his *goedendag* in Hugen’s belly. He let the weapon stick in Hugen’s flesh. Hugen would die in a slow, very painful agony. Juris saw a sword come on to him, cleave the air and lung for his shoulder. He threw himself aside, fell, and sprawled on the grass.

He saw in horror Lievin de Grutere hold up his sword with both hands. When that sword would come down, Juris’s life would end. Juris saw at first the triumphant eyes of Lievin gleam, and then the entire face distorted to a rictus of hate and pain. A *goedendag*’s spike appeared in the middle of Lievin’s breast. The spike stuck out of the chest of de Grutere for about a third of a foot. Blood sprouted over Juris Vresele.

Lievin de Grutere seemed surprised. The spike moved, tore a greater hole, cut up and down, sideways, holding Lievin still on the *goedendag* that had entered his back. Juris Vresele saw the eyes of the man break. Blood erupted from his mouth. He gulped, and fell forward.

Behind him stood a grinning Raes van Lake.

‘That suited him fine,’ said the strong voice of Raes. ‘I would have liked to see his eyes.’

‘I did,’ Juris answered, wiping Lievin’s blood from his face.

Juris Vresele looked at the door. Nobody seemed to come out anymore.

‘No,’ we got them all,’ Raes van Lake said. ‘I only hope they have not sent other mercenaries against our shipper and against our blacksmith.’

At that moment, the first flames were drawn out of the windows of the building. The guards of Ghent would soon see the fire. Men would come, running on.

‘We have to go,’ Raes van Lake urged. ‘What do we do with Sanders de Mey?’

Juris went up to Sanders, who didn’t dare to stand up, for a wild-eyed youngster stood at three paces from him, a crossbow directed at his groin.

‘Sanders,’ Raes van Lake began, ‘you are a bag full of shit. You should have known better than to attack us. Now! We are going to let you live. But you have not been here. You know nothing of what has happened here. I don’t know why I am being so clement. Enough people have been killed this evening, a dozen in all. If you ever tell somebody even only half a word, even dumb drunk, of what happened this evening, all hell will come loose. The members of your family, however far related, shall be killed. Do you understand? We are numerous enough to take revenge on you. From now on, you will be nice towards the blacksmith Wouter de Smet. Very nice! You will not harass him any longer, you hear?’

Sanders de Mey, a thickset youth, nodded.

‘Don’t ask expiation money from any of us, don’t ever mention our names again, or you’ll be killed. Do you understand?’

De Mey nodded again. He was terrified to death.

‘Then stand up and run, and only stop when you reach your house. Tomorrow, I’ll want you out of Ghent. Ride to your property mansion near Dendermonde, and don’t come out of it for a month. Do not come near to Ghent. Come back earlier, talk about us, and you’ll feel a blade between your two shoulders at a moment you’ll be expecting something like this the least. Is that understood?’

De Mey nodded frenetically.

‘Run then, run,’ Raes van Lake cried.

Sanders de Mey fled into the darkness of the *Kouter*.

Gillis Vresele, the young boy, placed the crossbow to his eye, but Juris Vresele had his hand on the bow and shook his head to his son.

‘You two run home,’ Raes van Lake said softly. ‘See to it your dead bodies reach the *Braembrug*. I’ll stay here to wait for the others.’

Juris and Gillis Vresele looked at the flames that licked out of the windows and out of the door of the de Grutere warehouse. The building would be destroyed soon.

They ran over the *Kouter* to the *Brabantstraat* by the shortest way. Juris looked at his son.

The boy was merely fifteen years old, but he had killed three men today! Never had he given any sign of distress. The boy had remained calm and efficient.

‘To what kind of a formidable man have I given life?’ Juris Vresele wondered, as he tried to keep up with his son.

Raes van Lake stood with only his sword and dagger, not near, but also not far from the burning warehouse. Large flames now flew out of the roof. Slates had already heated and sprang high.

A little later, he saw Wouter de Smet and John Denout come running on to the *Kouter*. He waved at them. They came to stand near him. Raes had some explaining to do.

‘We killed them all,’ he said, ‘except for Sanders de Mey. Sanders will leave us alone. He will shit his breeches full every time he sees one of us. The assassins wanted to kill me, Juris and you, John, and then do their nasty business also to you, Wouter and Arnout. By the way, where is Arnout?’

‘Arnout is bringing a small, flat-bottomed boat to the *Braembrug*. He will take on the dead bodies. He agreed to sail them, or push them, on the Scheldt. He will throw the bodies over board far north of Ghent. The currents are very strong there, he said. The current will take the bodies much farther up, direction Antwerp. It will take a long time before the bodies will be found, and then, where they come up, nobody will know who they are.’

‘Good man, Arnout,’ Raes appreciated. ‘Let’s get out of here and see to that!’

The men ran to the house of Raes van Lake, then to John Denout’s. They picked up the five bodies and drove them in two handcarts to under the *Braembrug*. Their work was more dangerous than they had thought, for Ghent’s south quarter had been thrown into a frantic commotion by the news of the fire. The bells of several towers rang sombre tones. Many men ran in the direction of the glow of the fire.

Raes, John and Wouter drew their hoods over their faces while they pushed the handcarts. They had placed dirty sacks over the dead bodies. They brought their macabre load to under the *Braembrug*. They found the boat of Arnout de Hert. They threw the bodies in the boat, covered them with planks and the sacks. Arnout added more heavy cloths. The men remained silent while doing this. The dead of Juris Vresele had already been placed in the hulk of the boat.

Without a word, Arnout de Hert pushed his boat free, picked up the current of the Scheldt, and let his boat glide slowly to the middle of the stream. Later, just outside Ghent, he raised a small sail. The boat took on some velocity. It disappeared in the dark of the night.

Raes, Juris, John and Wouter returned home. Raes, Juris and John helped their wives clean the stairs and their corridor. In the morning, when Raes and Juris had to expect their servants, they hoped the women and men would notice nothing special, but for the new cleanliness of the entry.

Then, the waiting began. Would somebody yet accuse them of man-slaughter of some of the finest youth of the city? What mistake might they have left behind, where? Had somebody as yet recognised them in the *Kouter*?

### 3.4. Fulk's Chronicles. Flanders challenges the Treaty of Iniquity. 1311-1315

On the 27<sup>th</sup> of April of 1311, Pope Clement V issued the papal bull *Rex Gloriam*. In this letter, he annulled all the papal acts accusing King Philip the Fair of France. French diplomacy and pressure on the popes had gained the ultimate victory.

On the 15<sup>th</sup> of October of 1311, Enguerrand de Marigny, the king's envoy for Flanders, broke the diplomatic silence out of the royal city of Tournai, where he resided. He explained his negotiations with Count Robert of Béthune, insisting on the bad counsel the count's son Louis de Nevers had provided. Marigny argued the domestic disputes between father and son were but a ruse to excite the Flemish people against the king. He publicly read letters of King Philip the Fair, given on the 6<sup>th</sup> of October of 1311, summoning the count to justify himself at the Parliament of Paris. The count of Flanders would have to explain the grievances relative to the alliance of France with Hainault, contested by Flanders. Marigny sent copies of his letters to all the representatives of the towns of Flanders. The king wanted thus to throw discord between the towns of Flanders and the count, in a very perfidious way.

Marigny told the delegates of Flanders they should not forget the king was their sovereign lord. Whenever a common man appealed to the king about an injustice, the king could force the count to justice, if necessary with arms. The king was a man of good faith, as the towns acted in good faith. Only the count had not always loyally executed the agreements between him and the king.

Marigny also told how in France, the duke of Normandy and the count of Toulouse had regretted their uproar, for they had been punished with the forfeiture of their lands. The count of Flanders merited the same punishment. King Philip the Fair had been all too lenient with Count Robert! The inhabitants of Flanders would do better to support the king instead of the count and his knights. These lords merely sought to retain their lands, whereas the people lost their properties and their fortunes.

Enguerrand de Marigny was thus preaching insurrection, by offering the support of the king in any conflict of the Flemish towns against the authority of the count of Flanders.

Robert de Béthune, count of Flanders, did not come to the session of the Parliament of Paris on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of February of 1312. Why should he? Had not his father been imprisoned twice at such meetings? As the count of Flanders apparently refused to justify himself to the king, a new war between Flanders and France threatened! King Philip the Fair forbade all export of weapons from France.

In the meantime, Louis de Nevers ordered his knights to fetch his children in the county of Nevers. He felt they were not in safety in France. He pretexted to want them to learn the Flemish language. Once the children and their escort had passed the borders of the Nivernais, the envoys of King Philip the Fair arrested them.

Louis de Nevers had not much choice left. He travelled to Paris, to ask the king for the release of his children. The counsellors of the king invented a long list of accusations against Louis, going from *lèse-majesté* to the violation of oaths, over having broken the peace and invited the Flemish towns to insurrection. Louis de Nevers asked to confer with some of his

friends to answer the accusations, but the Parisian court refused to accept any delay. The royal court threatened with the king's wrath anybody who would have wanted to say a word in Louis's favour.

Louis de Nevers appeared at court the next day. He had been abandoned by all. He tried to defend himself. He called his accusers to a duel. Enguerrand de Marigny and Guillaume de Nogaret did not come forward. They did allow some more time to Louis to prepare his defence. The king granted the flamboyant Fleming until the beginning of October to prepare his case.

Louis de Nevers found himself until that time virtually imprisoned in France, officially invited to stay in the Gâtinois region. The royal court again refused a few Flemish knights to assist at Louis's defence. Louis de Nevers never reached the Castle of Moret, which was assigned to him as residence. He was thrown in a small cell of the formidable Castle of Montlhéry.

There, Louis de Nevers took a fright. This was a cell one didn't leave alive! He begged most humbly to the counsellors of the king for another residence. Louis de Nevers would have to wait, however.

Enguerrand de Marigny profited from the imprisonment of Louis de Nevers to force the old count of Flanders to submit to the French orders. Flemish and French delegates negotiated a new form of the treaty of Athis-sur-Orge at Pontoise, and signed it on the 11<sup>th</sup> of July of 1312.

In this new treaty, King Philip the Fair accepted the following clauses, pertaining to the sums Flanders would have to pay for the war effort of France.

1. The ten thousand pounds of interest could be bought for the one-time payment of six hundred thousand pounds Tournois.
2. For the payment of the other ten thousand pounds' interest annually, the king would accept the castellanies of Lille, Douai, Orchies and Béthune in perpetual ownership.
3. The count of Flanders could ask the towns of Flanders to pay for the interest of the ten thousand pounds, for which he abandoned the rights on the castellanies of Lille, Douai, Orchies and Béthune to France. The king considered this interest a gift from his part to the count of Flanders, for which the count should do him homage.
4. All so-called crimes against the king, committed by the count, were forgiven.
5. Commerce between Flanders and France was re-established.

Count Robert of Béthune signed this treaty, by which he also granted the king of France rights on his lands of Béthune, for an annual interest of ten thousand pounds – to be levied on his own subjects. Robert may have signed this scandalous treaty hoping to liberate his son, Louis of Nevers and Louis's children. The king did not liberate Louis, but the cunning Louis escaped on his own means from his prison of Moret.

Enguerrand de Marigny persuaded the count of Flanders the handing over of the three castellanies was merely a formality, demanded by honour. The king would immediately donate back the castellanies to the count to Flanders, as a gracious royal gift. Marigny promised the ratification of this Treaty of Pontoise would not be given unless royal letters had not put the count back in possession of his castellanies.

The chancellor of Flanders had serious suspicions about this scheme. He declared the count of Flanders could not renounce to his hereditary domains. He refused to place the seal of Flanders on the document. Once more, another courtier took up the seal and signed with it the Agreement of Pontoise for Flanders!

In another transaction, the king had to reconstitute to the city of Bruges the charters of the liberties of the city, confiscated in 1301. The charters were kept at the Abbey of Saint-Vaast in Arras. The king did not like re-instating the liberties of the charters! He ordered his Grand-Master of the Crossbowmen, Pierre de Galard, to take all the charters of Bruges. Pierre de Galard in his turn sent the royal governor of Douai, Baudouin de Longwez, to recuperate the charters at Arras.

Two delegates from Bruges, John Balkaert and James d'Aire got wind of the matter. They rode to Arras, arriving in the town at the same time as the envoys of Pierre de Galard. They pleaded their cause so well, the abbot of Saint-Vaast gave two chests with the charters to the two Flemish delegates. The Flemish representatives promised to bring the chests to the king. When the Flemish delegates arrived at the Parisian court, the king replied he would decide later on the matter, in a session of Parliament. In the meantime, he ordered the charters to be brought back to the abbey of Saint-Vaast!

The delegates had by then also understood the ruse by which the king had obtained the poorters of the towns of Flanders to pay for most of the ten thousand pounds per year with the enormous one-time lump sum of six hundred thousand pounds in actual value. The king had devalued the coins. In all, Flanders would actually have to pay eight hundred thousand pounds!

King Philip the Fair forced the count of Flanders to accept other terms.

1. The count would have to obey the king in holding the peace.
2. Without further delay, the fortresses of Flanders would have to be demolished.
3. The count had to make sure only aldermen, bailiffs and provosts would be chosen who were in favour of the peace. The count would have to take an oath from his counsellors to not propose any other men.
4. If one of the count's counsellors would speak out against the peace, the count had to send such men to exile out of Flanders.
5. The count would have to punish all the men who helped, excited or encouraged rebels and enemies of the king.
6. The count would have to punish everybody who tried to turn the people away from the peace, or who would speak out against the king and the royal counsellors.
7. The count would have all the receivers of taxes in Flanders swear an oath they would not give anybody the least pound until the sums due to the king were paid.
8. The count would immediately punish the rebels and enemies of the king, as well as all the men who violated the peace.

Afterwards, the king sent other delegates to the count of Flanders, to invite the count to do homage to the king, as demanded by this Treaty of Pontoise. King Philip the Fair also

recommended the count to send the militiamen of Flanders to fight against the Sarrasins instead of against France.

Louis de Nevers had been allowed to live in a Paris hotel. The hotel belonged to his father. Soon, Louis asked to gain his liberty. He complained about the severity of Guillaume de Nogaret. The king refused to liberate Louis de Nevers. Finally, Louis escaped from Paris on the 6<sup>th</sup> of January of 1313. He rode to Ghent, but stayed on the right side of the Scheldt, where the lands belonged not to France but to the German empire.

King Philip instantly ordered Louis de Nevers back to the court of Paris. Louis had to get back within six weeks. Otherwise, the court would accuse Louis of high treason. Louis de Nevers never travelled to Paris. The king then installed a committee of the Paris Parliament, constituted of Enguerrand de Marigny, Guillaume de Nogaret, Pierre d'Issy and other royal counsellors. This committee declared Louis de Nevers forfeited of his rights on the county of Nevers and on his heritage of Flanders.

Louis de Nevers replied to this sentence by a solemn appeal to the pope and to the emperor. On Easter Day of 1313, he had a letter read first in the Church of the *Fremineuren* of Ghent, in the presence of a large number of knights and *poorters* dedicated to his cause. Louis vehemently protested against the tyranny of the king of France. He had drawn up a list of everything the king had done to humiliate Flanders in the last decade.

He wrote of his opposition to the Treaty of Athis-sur Orge, the Treaty of Iniquity, on which he had not placed his seal. He complained about the attempts against his life and against his children. These misdeeds against his person seemed to indicate the king wanted to annihilate his race, the dynasty of the counts of Flanders. In doing so, the king would have it much easier to bring the county he coveted for its wealth into the royal domains.

Louis de Nevers furthermore analysed the accusations pronounced against him. The persons who had judged him, he called commoners, or nobles of obscure origins. These were not legally allowed to judge a pair of France, not by law, not by right, not by customs, not by rank, not by honour, not by reason and not by God, not by nature and not by good morals. Most of these men could hope on a part of his inheritance! Louis de Nevers wrote and told he should be judged by his pairs, not by people of the King's Council. He accused then also directly Enguerrand de Marigny and Guillaume de Nogaret in name, of ignominy, infamy and of criminal acts against this person. Louis also reminded of the attack of Guillaume de Nogaret against the life of Pope Boniface VIII. He accused the ancestors of Nogaret of heresy, for which they had been burned at the stake.

The pope never replied to the plea of Louis de Nevers. He sought to preserve the peace. He complained about the war-loving intentions of Louis de Nevers. Emperor Heinrich of Luxemburg also never answered. He died on the 24<sup>th</sup> of August, on return of his campaign in Italy.

We must remind here how the sons of Count Guy de Dampierre assisted the king of Germany on his campaign in Italy. Philip of Chieti had died in Naples. Guy de Namur died in an epidemic of sickness. Both fought in the king's army. Henri of Flanders also served the king. He received the county of Lodi in reward, and became the lord of Pisa. Many knights of

Flanders fought with these sons of Count Guy, with and for the king of Germany in Italy. They thought of presenting the candidacy of Louis de Nevers to become king of Germany. They were too weak a party in Germany, however, to put much weight behind their proposal.

In the meantime, Count Robert de Béthune had been invited to Paris for the Feast of Pentecost to assist at a solemn gathering of the French barons who would join the king on a crusade. The idea of a new crusade to the Holy Land was very dear to the pope. The French court insisted on the presence of the count of Flanders, so Robert rode to Arras to meet first with the legates of the pope. To these, he complained vividly about Enguerrand de Marigny. He accused Marigny of having lured him into allowing the castellanies of Lille, Douai and Béthune to be handed over to the king as guarantee for the payment of the sums determined in the Treaty of Athis-sur Orge. Count Robert complained clearly he would never see these territories back into Flanders.

King Philip the Fair summoned Robert de Béthune to continue his journey, to do homage to him at Paris. Count Robert replied by claiming the oath of loyalty had always been given for his entire county, also including Lille, Douai and Béthune. He could not give any other oath or homage. The king then also demanded for the destruction of the fortresses and for the five-hundred men-at-arms promised in the treaty. Robert de Béthune refused once more. He gave to Enguerrand de Marigny the king had been badly advised to demand such items of discord.

King Philip the Fair then prepared for a new war in Flanders. He levied new taxes, among which taxes imposed in the city of Paris. He taxed more the Flemish merchants established in the capital than the other inhabitants. The king also appealed to King Edward II of England for sanctions against the Flemish cities. On the demand of the king of France, on the 13<sup>th</sup> of July of 1313, King Edward II ordered to arrest all the Flemish merchants in the ports of England, except for the merchants of Ieper. King Philip the Fair thought the men of Ieper more inclined to his aims.

These acts against free trade caused great distress in Flanders. The wars had devastated large parts of the countryside, and the commerce with Picardy remained very difficult. Now, Philip the Fair attacked the Flemish weaving industry and the trade of Flanders with England. The representatives of the cities of Flanders discussed the demands of the court of Paris at a session of the Parliament of Flanders held at Kortrijk. The cities were inclined to give in to the French king's demands.

Count Robert of Béthune, still at Arras, signed a new treaty there with the king of France. He signed the final document in the presence of Cardinal Nicolas Caignet, the confessor of the king. The French pressing demands, as stated in this document, were essentially the same as those stipulated in the Treaty of Athis-sur Orge.

1. The fortifications of all the Flemish towns would be demolished, to begin with those of Bruges and Ghent.
2. The Castle of Kortrijk would have to be handed over to a French garrison as guarantee.
3. A large number of hostages were to be given to the king of France, among whom the count's son Robert of Cassel.

Robert of Cassel immediately gave himself up as prisoner of France. The French brought him to Pontoise, later to Verneuil.

This Peace of Arras lasted no longer than nine months!

In June of 1314, King Philip the Fair ordered his sergeants to Flanders, to arrest Louis de Nevers. The king feared more and more the influence of Louis de Nevers on the Flemish towns.

On the 26<sup>th</sup> of June of 1314, Louis de Nevers published a new protest against the persecutions of Flanders by King Philip IV. The towns of Flanders ran to arms. They chased the royal bailiff from the Castle of Kortrijk!

The French reaction came quickly! On the 1<sup>st</sup> of August of 1314, King Philip called the representatives of the towns of the kingdom to a large meeting at Paris. King Philip IV, with Enguerrand de Marigny at his side, explained why he had called them to Paris. He told how Count Robert of Béthune and the Flemish towns refused to preserve the peace with France. He asked for new subsidies to wage war in Flanders.

On the 11<sup>th</sup> of August of 1314, the king of France again summoned Count Robert de Béthune to justify himself at a session of Parliament. Robert had to arrive within thirty days. If not so, Flanders would be excommunicated. Any Flemish man who would fall in the hands of the king, could and would be executed without trial. The tension escalated.

Robert de Béthune sent his representatives to Paris, but he refused to come in person. He knew what to expect. The king refused to receive and hear the representatives of Flanders. Guillaume de Nogaret declared in the name of the king all the lands of the count of Flanders forfeited, and confiscated. Flanders would be united with the royal domains by arms. The archbishop of Rheims and the abbot of Saint-Denis pronounced the excommunication of Flanders at Tournai, on the *parvis* of the Church of Notre-Dame. Once more, the conflict with Flanders was led to its zenith!

The Flemish towns had already started the war with France! They had taken the Castle of Helchin, and laid a siege to Lille.

Four large royal armies were attacking the borders of Flanders. The army of the king of Navarra, the oldest son of the king, marched on and occupied Douai. The king's brother, the count of Evreux, marched to the relief of Lille. The count of Valois entered Tournai, which was less and less inclined to loyalty to the king. Finally, an army led by Philip of Poitiers, another son of the king, moved to Saint-Omer.

The militias of Flanders were ready and eager to give battle. They were very surprised when suddenly, Enguerrand de Marigny proposed a truce.

Negotiations took place, and an agreement was reached. On the 13<sup>th</sup> of September of 1314, at Orchies, the oldest son of the king of France, the king of Navarra, ratified the truce. The first condition of Flanders to sign the truce had been the release of Robert of Cassel and all the other hostages of Flanders. Later, the French noblemen felt scandalised about the clauses that were to the advantage of the Flemings. The French court accused Enguerrand de Marigny of

corruption by the gold of Flanders. What had really happened, was that King Philip IV had realised the war with Flanders was very expensive.

The armies of France left Flanders, and returned home. King Philip IV had to face the growing resistance of his noblemen against the many royal taxes. The nobles of Artois, of Champagne and of the Vermandois had estimated the taxes illegal. These men came to be called the '*alliés*', the allied nobles. The leader of the allied nobles for Artois was the lord of Fiennes. Jean de Fiennes, lord of Bourbourg, had married out of love a daughter of Count Guy of Dampierre, Isabelle of Flanders. The towns of Artois and of Flanders had formed a confederation, directed against the system of taxation of King Philip the Fair. The allies were the barons of Artois, as well as the burghers of the towns. They proposed their grievances to the king. They reproached the king for having broken his oath to govern loyally and according to what was right. Jean de Joinville, an old friend and biographer of King Louis IX, denounced the lack of loyalty of King Philip IV to his noblemen. Philip had to give in, and to suppress several taxes. King Philip was facing the protests of his noblemen, as had the kings Edward I and Edward II in England. The war with Flanders was temporarily suspended.

### The Templar Knights and the death of King Philip IV

One of the last acts of King Philip the Fair had been the trial and execution of the Grand-Master of the Temple, Jacques de Molay. De Molay had cursed the people who had condemned him to death.

Forty days later, Pope Clement V expired at Avignon. By the Day of All-Saints, the cardinal and confessor of the king, one of the main accusers at the trial, fell from his horse and died. Eight days later, King Philip the Fair was hunting on the borders of the River Oise. The king returned wounded to his castle. He may have hurt his leg while passing the Bridge of Saint-Maxence; he might have been thrown aside by a wild boar on the hunt. The wound festered. The king asked to be taken to Fontainebleau, where he had been born. He died on the 29<sup>th</sup> of November of 1314. These formed strange coincidences after the curse of de Molay! What was the trial of the Templar knights about?

The crusades to the Holy Land had brought several religious, military orders to be founded. The Temple, the Hospitallers of Saint-John, the Teutonic Order, the orders of Calatrava and of Alcantara were but a few of the names. The religious military orders helped to defend the religious interests of Christendom by the sword. One of the most powerful orders was of the Templar Knights.

The only superior of the Order of the Temple was the pope. The order had not to answer to the king. At the beginning of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, the orders had to a large part lost their reason of existence, as the Holy Land had been conquered by the Saracens. There had been some talk of merging all the orders into one single, large order. Each order had its hierarchy, however, its administration, its fortune and its leaders. These refused to be put together.

The Order of the Temple was rich. Money placed with the Temple was safe. Even much of the treasury of France had been placed in the Temple of Paris, to be guarded by the military monks of the Templars!

The Templar Order had known a long and fine existence. They had been accepted by the papal Council of Troyes as a regular order. The Templars were the soldiers of Christ. Kings and bishops, wealthy men and barons, had been generous to donate to the order. The Templars received many lands. They had used their large property of lands and the donated money to build fortresses, not only in the Holy land. As the order had substantial reserves of money, they could lend money. The Templars had become bankers, with a large network of *commanderies* and houses, all over Europe.

Gradually, the reputation of the Templars degraded. As the order only recognised the authority of the popes, the kings of the countries regarded them with growing suspicion, as states within the states. Moreover, the Templars had not been able to hold the Holy Land! Their last fortress in Palestine, the port of Acre, fell to the Muslims on the 28<sup>th</sup> May of 1291. The Templars fled to Cyprus, and to the rest of Europe. Their reason of existence had largely ceased.

Pope Clement V nurtured the ardent wish to call the knights of Europe to a new crusade to the Holy Land. He talked in the summer of 1306 with the Grand-Master of the Templar Order, with Jacques de Molay, and also with the Grand-Master of the Hospitallers of Saint-John, Guillaume de Villaret. Both these men rejected a fusion of their orders. They were also not very inclined to start a new crusade.

Many rumours fused about the orders, however, and especially about the Templars. The monk-knights were heretics, idolaters, renegades, and sodomites. King Philip the Fair had heard about the rumours. He informed Pope Clement V during the pope's stay at Poitiers in 1307. The pope did not believe the allegations, but in August of 1307 he asked for an official investigation. The Grand-Master got hold of the inquiry. He promised his full collaboration. The pope interrogated, and took his time. King Philip the Fair acted!

On the 14<sup>th</sup> of September of 1307, the king ordered all his bailiffs to arrest the members of the Templar Order in their district. Guillaume de Paris, the Inquisitor for France, sent out the same letters to the clergy. The king may have been moved by a genuine religious feeling. He may also have coveted the enormous treasuries of the order. Guillaume de Nogaret led the operation of the arrest of the Templars. On the 13<sup>th</sup> of October of 1307, the French sergeants arrested the Templar Knights and imprisoned them.

The royal commissars began to draw up the inventory of the possessions of the Templars. Everything was confiscated. The next day, the king published an act of accusation, written by Nogaret. On the 14<sup>th</sup> of October, Guillaume de Nogaret read the accusation in the Church of Notre-Dame of Paris. Other men explained the evil ways the Templars were accused of. The court also sent royal letters to the other countries of Europe.

Pope Clement V stayed at Loches, when he heard of the precipitous actions of King Philip the Fair. The king had faced the pope with an accomplished fact. The arrests had taken place, without the pope having been warned. Pope Clement V reproached the king for having acted so quickly. The pope sent two legates, the Cardinals Suissy and Frédol, to control what had happened. The act had nevertheless been done.

On the 22<sup>nd</sup> of November 1307, Pope Clement V equally ordered the arrest of all Templars in Christendom. The princes of Europe had to seize the properties of the Templars and guard

them to be used in the new crusade. Not only King Philip the Fair had financial reasons to suppress the Templars, also the pope!

By the end of the year 1307, Pope Clement V declared to his two legates he made over to them the guardianship of the Templars imprisoned in Paris. The arrest was not undone. The interrogations of the prisoners could begin. Torture was applied. Under torture, the Templar Knights confessed to whatever one wanted them to say. They had disavowed God, spit on the crucifix, practised the crime of sodomy, have celebrated heretic ceremonies of the orient, and so on. The confessions made public, became a great scandal in France. The crimes of being renegades, heretics, idolaters and sodomites were the most recurring crimes held against them.

After the decision of 1307 to hand over the Templars prisoners of France to the papal legates, Jacques de Molay had retracted on all his confessions. He asked his brothers in religion to do the same.

Pope Clement V took the affair in hand. He broke the powers of the local inquisitors, and ordered a new inquiry.

King Philip the Fair protested. He ordered his own investigation, to be executed by the University of Paris. The inquiry went on a list of seven points, among which the jurisdictional independence of the king versus the pope. The French legal experts did not dispute the pope for the right to judge the Templars. They affirmed the right of the king to judge without waiting for the judgement of the pope! The king of France had received the kingdom as part of the celestial Jerusalem. Nothing justified him having to wait for the end of the papal inquiry to proceed against the criminals.

On the 25<sup>th</sup> of March of 1308, the advice of the University of Paris was presented to the court. The king could arrest the heretics, but not judge them, the University had concluded. A lay judge could not decide someone had lost his religious quality! The theologians of Paris thus turned their arguments against the king! In the meantime, Philip IV could manage the confiscated goods for the best.

On the 25<sup>th</sup> of March of 1308 also, the king published more letters. Each town of France had to delegate two men of good faith to judge on the affair and to adhere to the royal decisions. The counsellors of the king started a propaganda campaign for the views of the king. King Philip the Fair did not drop the cause! A new conflict between the king and the pope seemed to be in the making. The legal counsellors of France sought to obtain from the delegates of the towns a right even the University of Paris had refused to the king!

One of the most zealous supporters of the king was one Pierre du Bois. Du Bois accused Pope Clement V of nepotism. The pope had given the archbishopric of Rouen and the bishopric of Toulouse to his nephews, to Bernard de Fargues and to Gaillard de Preyssac respectively. The revelations caused great indignation among the clergy of France.

King Philip the Fair continued handling the affair of the Templars as he wished. The large assembly proposed by the king opened at Tours on the 15<sup>th</sup> May of 1308. Pierre du Bois was one of the representatives of the towns. Guillaume de Nogaret and Guillaume de Plaisians, the main counsellors of the king for the affair, obtained what they had wanted from the

assembly. The assembly of Tours declared the Templars merited the death penalty for their crimes.

King Philip the Fair arrived at Poitiers on the 26<sup>th</sup> of May of 1308. Guillaume de Plaisians demanded the pope to condemn the order of the Templars, lest the pope would be considered the accomplice of the Templars. In other speeches, Guillaume de Plaisians put the pope under pressure.

Pope Clement V wanted to preserve the properties of the Templars. He demanded the possessions to be transferred to the Holy See, even before the decision would be made on the matter. If not, the pope confirmed the order of the Templars would continue to subsist. The pope would not abolish it. Pope Clement V was, of course, not convinced at all about the culpability of the Templars.

The pope and his cardinals heard the confessions of seventy-two Templar Knights. These confirmed the allegations of the king of France! On the 2<sup>nd</sup> of July of 1308, at Poitiers, these Templars confessed their crimes in public. They expressed their sorrow. The pope appointed four cardinals to arrange their reconciliation with the Church. The seventy-two Templars were saved from death, but the king of France had won his most important argument: the Templars were guilty. The local inquisitors regained their powers, so that they could intervene in the trials that were to come.

Trials were organised in the provinces of France. For Paris, the trials were to be controlled by the archbishop of Sens, as Paris belonged to the diocese of Sens.

King Philip the Fair saw to it the courts were placed to his hands. He obtained for instance that Philippe de Marigny, the brother of Enguerrand de Marigny, former bishop of Cambrai, was given the archbishopric of Sens!

The pope transferred the Templars and their properties to the king. The king had to administer them. After the trial, the properties would either have to be returned to the Templars, or to be affected to the financing of the crusade.

King Philip the Fair asked for a Council of the Church to be organised. The king and his counsellors sought the condemnation of the ideas of Pope Boniface VIII, as well as of the Templars. The Council would be held at Vienne, in France. Pope Clement V understood he would have to choose between a judgement of Pope Boniface at the Council of Vienne, and with it of much the Church stood for, or the condemnation and suppression of the Templar Order. He chose for the last.

The pope sent three cardinals, Frécol, Suissy and Brancacci to Chinon, to note the confessions of Jacques de Molay for the definite, last time. With them went Guillaume de Nogaret and Guillaume de Plaisians. Jacques de Molay confirmed his confession made under torture in Paris.

The papal investigation could begin. It proceeded very slowly. On the 26<sup>th</sup> of November of 1309, the papal delegates saw once more Jacques de Molay. They read to him the declarations he had made at Chinon. Jacques de Molay refuted them promptly! He declared he would defend the order. He claimed he had been tricked by the men who had come to see him at Chinon.

Jacques de Molay had confessed his errors a first time in October of 1307, refuted them in January of 1308. He confessed to them again in August of 1308, to refute them once more in November of 1309!

One could recognise here the weaknesses and the moments of renewed power of the Grand-Master. Where lay the truth? After his last confession, Jacques de Molay refused to talk again to the cardinals. He only wanted to talk and confess to the pope. But the pope had delegated the inquiry to his cardinals! He had no wish to involve himself further.

In February of 1310, the investigators of the pope heard no less than five hundred and forty-six Templar Knights from in and around Paris a last time. The Templars delegated two spokesmen, Renaud de Provins and Pierre de Boulogne. These argued the Templars were simple men, who did not well understand the procedure they were implicated in.

On the 7<sup>th</sup> of April, a delegation of nine Templar Knights proposed to defend the order. They asked for the safety of the witnesses and the secret of the depositions. Philippe de Marigny, the archbishop of Sens, tried to discourage these nine Templars. He attacked them personally. They had already accused the Temple, he argued, by their confessions. Now, they would defend the order to prove their innocence. That made them perjurers!

On the 11<sup>th</sup> of May of 1310, the Council of the Province of Sens, encompassing Paris, held its first session. The Council condemned the five hundred and forty Templars to death. All of the men had confessed, though they had later refuted their confessions. This had made perjurers of them. The perjury was condemned. The five hundred and forty knights were executed, burnt at the stake near the Gate of Saint-Antoine, outside Paris.

The Council of Vienne started in October of 1311. Pope Clement V wanted to end the affair. Much of what the order was accused of was true. It was a wealthy order, but unnecessary; it was undisciplined, for it had pursued its own views. The pope desired no new trial.

Negotiations took place between the papal delegates and the royal delegates in February of 1312. The delegates of the king were Louis d'Evreux, Guy de Saint-Pol, Guillaume de Nogaret and Enguerrand de Marigny. For the pope negotiated the French cardinals Bérenger Frédol and Nicolas de Fréauville. The pope accepted to abolish the Templar Order. The French wanted more, an outright condemnation of the order.

On the 3<sup>rd</sup> of April, the Council of Vienne met in plenary session with the pope and the king. The pope announced the Templar Order was abolished. He also announced a new crusade, and the king of France would take part in that crusade. A little later, the pope declared he passed the properties of the Templars to the Hospitaller Order of Saint-John. King Philip IV had never actually demanded the fortune and lands of the Templars for the crown.

Pope Clement V also declared he would judge the dignitaries of the order. On the 22<sup>nd</sup> of December of 1313, he charged three cardinals with this mission, Nicolas de Fréauville, Arnaud Nouvel and Arnaud d'Auch. Jacques de Molay had always said he wanted to be judged only by the pope. He had asked to speak to the pope. He refused to see the cardinals. The cardinals could do nothing more than speak out their judgement. They did this on the 19<sup>th</sup> of March of 1314, in a ceremony in front of the Church of Notre-Dame of Paris. They condemned Jacques de Molay to a life-time imprisonment. Jacques de Molay and the preceptor of Normandy, Geoffroy de Charnay, were the only ones to speak out. De Molay

shouted the order of the Templars was innocent. His only crime was of having betrayed the Temple to save his life. The prisoners were sent back to prison.

Guillaume de Nogaret counter-attacked instantly. The retractions of de Molay had been made in public. A new trial was not necessary. The Royal Council convened in haste the same afternoon, in the palace. It decided to have the two dignitaries executed. In haste, a stake was erected on an island at the extreme west corner of the Cité of Paris. The sun set. The same evening, Jacques de Molay and Geoffroy de Charnay were burnt at the stake. They cursed the men who were responsible for their death.

Pope Clement V died in Avignon on the 20th of April.

In May of 1314, an affair of adultery racked the city of Paris. It became known the three daughters-in-law of the king of France had committed adultery. The first daughter-in-law of the king was Marguerite de Bourgogne, married to Louis le Hutin, the future King Louis X. The second one was Blanche d'Artois, daughter of Otton IV duke of Burgundy. She was married to Charles de la Manche. The third was Jeanne d'Artois, sister of Blanche, married to Philip of Poitiers. The first two had been the lovers of a knight called Gauthier d'Aunay, a very handsome young man. King Philip the Fair was at Maubuisson when he heard about the matter. He had the three women imprisoned. Gauthier d'Aunay was very cruelly executed at Pontoise.

The court acquitted Jeanne d'Artois. She could not possibly have denounced her own sister! The count Philip of Poitiers accepted her back as his wife. She was not found guilty of adultery.

The court kept Marguerite of Burgundy in the prison of Château-Gaillard. She died of cold in the tower of the castle.

Also Blanche d'Artois remained in prison at Château-Gaillard. She became a nun, and died ten years later at Maubuisson.

The affair was an enormous scandal for the French royal court, an outrage done to King Philip and his sons. It was called the 'Case of the Tour de Nesle', after the defence tower of the walls of Paris where the lovers met.

King Philip IV the Fair died on the 29<sup>th</sup> of November of 1314.

### After King Philip the Fair

From the year 1314 originated important charters for the Flemish towns. Ghent received a privilege from Count Robert de Béthune, prohibiting the weaving of cloth outside five miles of its walls. This charter was to serve as example for other towns. In 1322, Bruges and Ieper would receive similar cloth-weaving monopolies in their regions.

The successor of King Philip the Fair was King Louis X, Louis le Hutin or the Quarreler. Louis X reconciled with the allied nobility of France in April of 1315. The terms of the agreement and reconciliation were as follows.

1. The king could not anymore act against the nobles by official inquiries.
2. The castles of the noblemen could only be seized when they were opposed to all the legal means.
3. The noblemen would hold toward their vassals the same rights as the king to his vassals.
4. The vassals of the king had to serve the king in the wars that were of interest to the entire nation.
5. The coinage had to be the same as the one issued during the reign of King Louis IX.
6. All the illegal subventions destined to support the war against Flanders were abolished.
7. The king would respect the ecclesiastical justice.
8. He would respect the jurisdiction allowing the noblemen only to be judged by their pairs.
9. The proper jurisdiction of the inhabitants of the towns and of the inhabitants of the castellanies would be respected.
10. The king would conserve his superior authority delegated to his bailiffs and to his provosts. If these men proved themselves guilty of abuses, they would be severely punished.
11. Commissars of the king would travel through the provinces, examine and survey the royal officers, and hear their complaints.

Enguerrand de Marigny was arrested, accused of having been a bad counsellor, and hung at Montfaucon.

Louis le Hutin accepted the rulings dictated by the allied noblemen. He nevertheless remained determined to win back as soon as possible the prerogatives of his father.

In May of 1315, Louis de Nevers rode to Paris. He was eager to recuperate his lands of Nevers and Rethel from the new king. He reconciled with Louis X. Afterwards, he remained at the court of Paris. He intrigued to have his own sons inherit the county of Flanders, in disregard for the rights of the oldest son of the count, Robert of Cassel.

At that moment, Count Robert of Béthune sent this son, Robert of Cassel, to do homage for Flanders to the new king. King Louis X demanded immediately that the count of Flanders would not do the homage also for the castellanies of Lille, Douai and Béthune. He considered these now parts of the royal domains. Robert of Cassel refused, and returned to Flanders. The king then demanded Count Robert de Béthune to come to Paris to do homage in person. A delegate of the count arrived in Paris, explaining Robert of Béthune was retained on his estates, because he was old and sick. King Louis X refused these excuses. It seemed King Louis X was the true son of his father.

A court of pairs of France came together in Paris on the 30<sup>th</sup> of June of 1315 to deliberate on the matter. The dukes of Burgundy and of Brittany did not attend, and the bishop of Châlons had been imprisoned. Of the twelve pairs of the kingdom, only one was present, the archbishop of Rouen, Gilles Ascelin. According to the Treaty of Athis-sur Orge, the king could replace absent pairs by men chosen by him. The court therefore assembled with men

such as Gaucher de Châtillon, Béraud de Mareuil and Miles de Noyers, all very dedicated to the king. The court declared Robert of Béthune guilty of rebellion, a cause for excommunication and for the forfeiture of his lands. A new conflict with Flanders was in the making.

On the 13<sup>th</sup> of July of 1315, King Louis X had the judgement of the court of pairs published. The announcement threatened with excommunication and with confiscation if the count of Flanders and the Flemish did not submit to the king by the Octaves of Saint-Mary-Magdalene. All the penal clauses stipulated in the Treaty of Athis-sur-Orge would be applied! The Flemings would be forbidden to travel in the kingdom. The Flemings who were arrested would be condemned to be serfs and slaves. The Flemings still found in France after the mentioned expiration date, would be put to death without judgement and trial. No French merchant could trade with Flanders. A French merchant had not to pay his due to a Flemish merchant. Whoever hid goods of Flemish merchants would be punished with death. Whoever denounced such hidings, could share the profits of the confiscations with the royal treasurer. The measures against the count of Flanders were total.

Three days later, Robert of Cassel sent to the king his homage for his fief of Broigny in Spain. He tried in a last letter to soften the decision of King Louis X. King Louis X did not relent! He did not fear anymore the allied noblemen of the kingdom. He took back from them everything he had granted.

On the 31<sup>st</sup> of July of 1315, the king of France left Paris to invade Flanders with an army. He gave the Oriflamme to Harpin d'Erqueries, a counsellor of the times of Enguerrand de Marigny and Guillaume de Nogaret.

The king also worked on his allies, on the duke of Brabant, on the count of Hainault and on the king of England. Brabant and Hainault promised not to assist Flanders. Flanders would be starved out. King Edward II of England gave the Flemish merchants forty days to leave his kingdom.

Guillaume d'Avesnes, the count of Hainault and Holland, promised King Louis X to attack Flanders with fifty thousand men for the sum of forty thousand pounds. He gathered his army rather quickly. The Flemish leaders feared an attack of Guillaume d'Avesnes from out of Zeeland. The count came on the River Scheldt, from the south, with a large fleet of several hundreds of boats. He would navigate to Antwerp. Everywhere he passed, he devastated the countryside of Flanders like a predator. He arrived this way to near Rupelmonde.

King Louis X entered Lille on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of September of 1315. His army assembled in full force north of Lille, at Bondues. From there, the troops advanced in the direction of Kortrijk. The French camp was set up between Lauwe and Belleghem. The king ordered a bridge to be built over the Leie, but the Flemish militias promptly destroyed it. And then, the rain pelted down for days on end. The French men-at-arms and knights on horseback could practically not advance anymore on the muddy, rain-soaked roads. Everywhere, the Flemish warriors attacked the provisioning troops of the French army. King Louis X held a council with his war leaders. They decided to renounce to the campaign this autumn and winter, and turned back to Tournai. When the French army retreated, it abandoned all chariots, tents, war engines and provisions. The Flemish relished with the treasure. Tournai once more closed its

gates to the army. The king of France could enter the town. He stayed there for four days. Then, he returned to Paris.

Count Guillaume d'Avesnes soon heard of the French débâcle. He was preparing to lay a siege to Rupelmonde. He now made his army march to Kallo, which he burned down and then broke the dykes to flood the environs. He returned to Holland with his boats.

Flanders continued a small part of its former intense commerce. A Flemish fleet, helped by ships from Bayonne, still navigated and brought grains and wine to Flanders. The towns of Brabant, despite the edicts of their duke, sent provisions to Flanders.

The militias of Flanders ran through the county of Artois without being resisted. A French cardinal arrived in Flanders. He negotiated to stop the pillage and the ravages in French-spoken territories. He succeeded in concluding a truce that was to last until the 22<sup>nd</sup> of July of 1316.

At the end of 1315, Count Robert of Béthune of Flanders drew up his testament in favour of his young grandson Louis de Nevers, son of his namesake. Robert de Béthune also left much land to Robert of Cassel, to ease the shame. The count mainly gave Robert the Lands of Aalst, of Waas and of Geeraardsbergen, with the Four Crafts mainly lands feudally owned by the count of Flanders to the king of Germany.

The count's son, the impetuous, treacherous, ambitious and always devious Louis de Nevers, revolted against his father. Allegedly, he even attempted to poison Count Robert de Béthune! Louis was in Brabant when this rumour spread in Flanders. The count ordered Louis de Nevers to be imprisoned. His war leaders moved Louis de Nevers from castle to castle, ultimately to Rupelmonde. Robert of Cassel ordered Louis to be decapitated, but nobody at Rupelmonde dared execute a son of the count. The main noblemen of Flanders also dared not to move against Louis de Nevers. They set him free, but nevertheless made him swear an oath to leave Flanders and not to return as long as his father lived.

Louis de Nevers rode to France. He felt bitter and in this mood arrived at the French court at Poissy, demanding the king to do justice and give him back his counties of Nevers and Rethel; Nevers and Rethel had been taken away from him. Louis could present these claims at the Parisian royal court, but nobody really listened to him. The court even ordered his imprisonment. Louis could escape. He fled to an abbey in Brabant, in the diocese of Cambrai. Robert de Béthune could capture his son, but he pardoned him.

Louis de Nevers died on the 22<sup>th</sup> of July of 1322 in Paris, shortly before the death of his father. The old count died on the 17<sup>th</sup> of September of 1322. The ambitious Louis de Nevers thus never succeeded on his father as count of Flanders. His son, equally named Louis de Nevers, would become the new count of Flanders.

King Louis X le Hutin died on the 4<sup>th</sup> of June of 1316 at Vincennes. He had no male successor. He had only one daughter by his first wife, Marguerite de Bourgogne. His queen, Clemence of Hungary, was pregnant. The French court appointed as regent the brother of Louis X, Philip of Poitiers, called the Tall. He received the help of Gaucher de Châtillon to this function.

Representatives of Flanders rode to France to negotiate a new peace with the regent. The discussions took place at Pontoise. The French delegates proposed the following clauses.

1. The commercial relations with Flanders would be re-established.
2. The count of Flanders should go on a crusade to the Holy Land.
3. Robert of Cassel was to go on pilgrimages to Our Lady of Vauvert, to Rocamadour, to Le Puy, to Saint-Gilles in the Provence, and to Saint James of Compostela.
4. The castles of Kortrijk and of Cassel were to be demolished.
5. The castellanies of Lille, Douai and Béthune could not anymore be claimed by the count of Flanders. They would be added to the royal domains.
6. The count of Flanders had to submit to the arbitrage of the count of Poitiers for his disputes with the count of Hainault.
7. The inheritance of Flanders would go to the oldest of the children of Louis de Nevers. This youth should marry the daughter of Count Louis d'Evreux, son of the regent Philip of Poitiers.

The delegates of Flanders received some time to confer. On the 10<sup>th</sup> of August, they signed at Paris an extension of the truce. Finally, on the 1<sup>st</sup> of September of 1316, the Flemish representatives accepted the French proposals for peace. They signed this second Peace Treaty of Paris.

New troubles in France delayed the execution of the Paris Treaty! After the death of Louis X, Robert of Artois had obtained the support of eight hundred knights to claim the domains of his ancestors. The towns of Amiens and Arras joined his movement. Robert of Artois promised to restore the old liberties and privileges of the towns of Artois. The regent, the count of Poitiers assembled an army to lead against Artois. But before the violent clash, he succeeded in convincing Robert of Artois to submit to a judgement by his pairs. In the meantime, Queen Clemence of Hungary gave birth to a son who survived only for a few days. The court proclaimed Philip of Poitiers legal heir to the throne of France, though many noblemen disagreed with the choice. The duke of Burgundy also, in the name of his fiancée, the oldest daughter of Louis X, claimed the crown of France. Flanders then entered the intrigues again, for Louis de Nevers fortified his castles of Rethel and Nevers, in support of the duke of Burgundy. He also sought allies in the barons of Champagne.

Pope John XXII, born Jacques d'Euse, was elected the successor of Pope Clement V after a difficult interregnum of two years, at a Council of cardinals at Lyon. Mainly Philip of Poitiers, son of King Philip the Fair, the future King Philip V, helped elect him. The new pope was of course a Frenchman, the son of a shoemaker, who taught civil law at Toulouse and Cahors. He was made bishop of Fréjus in 1300. In 1312, Pope Clement V had made him cardinal and bishop of Porto-Santo-Rufina. Pope John XXII was crowned at Avignon, where he stayed during most of his reign.

Pope John XXII proposed his mediation in the dispute of the succession of the throne of France. His legates could obtain from the duke of Burgundy to renounce to his marriage to the daughter of Louis X. He would marry the daughter of King Philip the Tall, equally heiress to the throne of France.

Philip of Poitiers succeeded in being accepted as king of France. He was crowned King Philip V the Tall on the 9<sup>th</sup> of January of 1317.

On the 13<sup>th</sup> of September of 1317, Louis de Nevers gave homage for his domains to the new king. Negotiations then started with Pope John XXII. The decision of the pope was published on the 8<sup>th</sup> of March of 1318. The pope wanted the king and the pairs of France to uphold the treaties. The count of Flanders would have to swear the same oath, as would the pairs of France, the counts of Valois, of Bourbon and of Saint-Pol. They would not be obliged to assist the king in every decision, however, especially not in the event the king acted against the peace treaties. If the Flemish broke the treaties, the French barons would not be held to their oaths.

The delegates of Flanders were very reluctant to accept these rulings. In a papal bull of March of 1318, the pope threatened to place the towns of Flanders under the interdict if they continued to stand in the way of the peace.

On the 9<sup>th</sup> of April of 1318, King Philip the Tall summoned once more Count Robert of Béthune to Paris. The count would have to take an oath on the agreement of the Peace Treaty of Paris. Preparations were made to throw the interdict over Flanders. The pope sent three clergymen, Etienne de Nérac, Willem van Gent and Pierre de la Palu to Flanders. The first two were Friar Minors, the third a Friar Preacher. They arrived on the 11<sup>th</sup> of May of 1318 at Bruges. Their arguments did not accomplish much in Flanders. The friars seem even to have displayed some sympathy for the Flemish cause.

King Philip the Tall, understandably, became very furious with all these delays. He ordered a meeting of the pairs of France at Arras, to be held in September of 1318.

In the meantime, Louis de Nevers had concluded an alliance with the bishop of Verdun and with the lord of Aspremont, directed against the count of Bar. The king had no patience anymore with Louis de Nevers. He sent an army led by Gaucher de Châtillon against Nevers and Rethel. At the end of June, Louis de Nevers had to flee to Flanders with his children, to flee from the wrath of the king of France. Philip the Tall also had asked for a new meeting of the representatives of Flanders at Compiègne. Louis de Nevers and the towns of Flanders refused to attend.

Once more, the pope intervened. His legates obtained the meeting at Compiègne would be held on the 7<sup>th</sup> of October of 1318. There, the bishop of Mende, one of the counsellors of the king, attacked the Flemish delegates with sound arguments. He cried the Flemings were guided by bad thoughts, and not by reason. The three representatives of the towns of Flanders remained of stone.

Pope John XXII did not give up mediating. He sent his nephew, Cardinal Gosselin on a new mission to Flanders to appease the parties. Once arrived in Paris, the cardinal ordered the bishop of Tournai to pronounce the interdict on Flanders and to ride to Count Robert of Béthune to signify this decision to him in person. The bishop of Tournai did not dare risking his life. He sent two clergymen with the message. Count Robert promptly sent them to prison.

All attempts at reconciliation failed, the king of France commanded a new French royal army to gather. Led by Gaucher de Châtillon, this army invaded Flanders. But Louis de Nevers had

brought the towns of Flanders to resist the bad government of Count Robert of Béthune. The urban militias therefore refused to follow the count against the invading army. The count could not force them to war against the royal army.

In the meantime, Louis de Nevers continued his intrigues at the court of France. He earned and obtained complete amnesty from the king of France from having allied with Gobert d'Aspremont. He also promised to execute the Treaty of Paris of 1316, and to bring his father to Paris. Moreover, the king confirmed choosing as his son-in-law the grandson of Count Robert of Béthune, the son of Louis de Nevers, to assure the succession of Count Robert de Béthune.

Cardinal Gosselin met the count of Flanders at Tournai. Count Robert told him he would agree to everything demanded of him by the treaties, but for the payment of the two hundred thousand pounds stipulated in the last Peace Treaty of Paris. He promised to ride to Paris. The cardinal immediately proclaimed the peace had been restored. On the 7<sup>th</sup> of January of 1320, at the Louvre, the king declared he would conform to the decision of the pope. He asked the pairs of France around him to guarantee the execution of the last Treaty of Paris. The pairs refused! They said they considered it dangerous to engage in affairs they had nothing to do with. They asked also the Flemings to first equally conform to the treaty. They thus placed new obstacles to the peace. Count Robert de Béthune used the occasion to not show up at the court of France.

The count of Flanders could nevertheless not hold back anymore the desire for peace of the towns of Flanders. The economy of Flanders was in a dire state, due to the incessant rains of the years 1315 to 1316, and to the halting of all commerce between Flanders and France. He finally agreed to accompany the delegates of the towns to France in the month of April of 1320.

King Philip the Tall was pleased. He rode to meet the count even before the delegation reached Paris. Louis de Nevers read to his father the homage he would have to pronounce to the king. The old devils sprang out of the box! Count Robert refused, as he had always done before, not to include Lille, Douai and Béthune in the homage.

This angered the king, who cursed audibly. He became even more angered, when he heard Count Robert had turned his horse homewards, to Flanders. Louis de Nevers rode after his father, and found him already at some distance from Paris. He pleaded with his father. He could persuade the count to return to Paris. There, Robert de Béthune understood his son was the head of a conspiracy directed against his person. Nevertheless, on the 5<sup>th</sup> of May of 1320, he ratified the last Peace Treaty of Paris. He declared he even renounced to the oaths to be taken by the pairs of France, his main safety against the actions of the king. He heard of the marriage agreement between his grandson and Marguerite of France. The old count protested again. He did not want his grandson to marry a granddaughter of Philip the Fair! Cardinal Gosselin hurried to appease the count.

In the month of July of 1320, the oldest son of the count of Nevers, the future count of Flanders, equally called Louis, married Marguerite of France. Marguerite was then only eight years old!

And the counts of Flanders had definitely abandoned their claims on Lille, Douai and Béthune! The Flemish men and women did not forget this ignominy against the county of Flanders, however. The dispute would surface later again and again.

## England

By October of 1311, the Ordainers had finished their work in England. The law was modified with as most important points the following.

1. Parliament was to meet yearly.
2. For the appointment of the higher functions in the kingdom, the agreement of the earls would henceforth be necessary.
3. The king could only go to war and declare war by agreement of Parliament.
4. The king would not be allowed to hand over royal possessions to other persons without the agreement of Parliament.
5. The king was to live off his own income, the income obtained from his domains owned personally.
6. The system or royal purveyance was largely abolished, as was the appeal to the Frescobaldi bankers.

With these Ordinances, Parliament obtained more control over the royal administration. The Ordainers and the Ordinances also sent Piers Gaveston back into exile. He was not allowed to live anywhere near the lands of the king, including Gascony and Ireland. Gaveston left England for northern France and Flanders.

King Edward II nevertheless called back Piers Gaveston a little later. He declared the sheriffs of the kingdom should protect Piers Gaveston against the earls.

The earls were furious. The earls of Lancaster, Leicester and of Derby, joined by the archbishop of Canterbury, then formed an army directed against the king. They appointed Thomas of Lancaster as their leader. The archbishop of Canterbury excommunicated Gaveston. The king and Gaveston fled to the north of England. The Lancaster army moved against them. The king rode away with his family, leaving Gaveston alone to confront the earls.

The Ordainers' army surrendered Gaveston's troops at Scarborough, and imprisoned him. Gaveston was found in the possession of a huge treasure of gold, silver and precious stones, probably a part of the royal treasury. A committee of four earls judged Gaveston, finding him guilty of treason, and condemned him to death. He was not executed immediately. He was brought back to the south of England, under guard by the earl of Pembroke. On the way back to England, the earl of Pembroke stopped in the Midlands to visit his wife. He left Gaveston under guard, but the earl of Warwick seized Gaveston and brought him to Warwick Castle. The earls gathered there once more, and declared Gaveston again guilty under the terms of the Ordinances. They executed Gaveston the next day on Blacklow Hill. His body was not buried until 1315. His funeral was then held in the Priory of King's Langley. The king was so furious, as to threaten his earls with a civil war.

The earl of Pembroke negotiated the reconciliation. The earls remained in open conflict with King Edward II. The reconciliation of Pembroke succeeded, and in October of 1313, King Edward proclaimed the general amnesty of the earls. The king pardoned the earls for the murder of Gaveston, in exchange for their support to a new campaign in Scotland. The war in Scotland had not ceased.

King Edward first travelled to France. In June of 1313, Edward II met Philip the Fair in Paris. Edward hoped to resolve his issues with France over Gascony, and to win the king of France's support in the conflict with his earls. During the stay, the kings promised to go on a crusade together.

On his return from France, further negotiations with the earls continued. The king and the earls finally reconciled. Parliament agreed to a new raise in taxes for the war in Scotland, and Edward also received a loan of twenty-five thousand pounds from the pope. He borrowed thirty-three thousand pounds from the king of France, and received additional loans from his new Italian banker, Antonio Pessagno. He had gathered sufficient funds to raise an army and attack Scotland.

By that year of 1314, Robert Bruce had recaptured most of the castles in Scotland formerly held by the English. He laid a siege to Stirling Castle. Stirling Castle was strategically important, as it commanded the route northward into the Scottish Highlands. The head of the English garrison already agreed to surrender the strategically important fortress by the 24<sup>th</sup> of June, unless the king arrived to relief.

King Edward II had mustered an army of more than fifteen thousand men, among which a cavalry of two thousand knights, to pursue his campaign in Scotland. Bruce had an army of about ten thousand men, predominantly pikemen, and no more than five hundred men on horseback. The Scottish army was led by Sir James Douglas the Black.

The two armies clashed at Bannockburn, on the 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> of June of 1314. In a battle of two days, the English army was defeated. King Edward continued to fight to the last, but the earl of Pembroke, realising all was lost, dragged the king away from the battlefield. The losses of the English army were huge.

King Edward retreated to Dunbar, travelling afterwards to Berwick and to York. Stirling Castle surrendered to Edward Bruce, Robert Bruce's brother. The English army tried to escape to the south, but the Scottish pursued them and continued to massacre them far from Bannockburn. Many English warriors were killed on the flight. The defeat opened the north of England to Scottish raids.

Torrential rains fell down from the sky in England as of 1314. Cold winters and vast inundations destroyed crops and livestock. Famine threatened in England. The famine made it extremely difficult to supply the English troops and garrisons with food.

In 1316, a Scottish expedition landed in Ireland. Edward Bruce, Robert Bruce's brother led it. Edward Bruce was defeated in 1318, his severed head sent to King Edward II.

The war in Scotland continued.

In the defeat of Bannockburn, also the duke of Gloucester had been killed. King Edward II had by then a new favourite, Hugh Despenser. He gave the lands of Gloucester to this

Despenser. King Edward thus continued favouring his best friends, despite the Ordinances. He made of Hugh Audley and Roger Dandy very wealthy men. A new civil war threatened because of these deeds. The Scots attacked northern England, and because of the king's defeats in war and because of his weaknesses of character, revolts also broke out in Wales. In 1315 and 1316, the English army set a siege to Berwick. When the earls present heard the intentions of King Edward II was to hand over the town to the king's favourite, Hugh Despenser, many earls left the army in protest. The civil war would finally break out completely in 1321.

## Germany

After King Heinrich VII had taken the town of Milan, he remained in the city until mid-April of 1311. He then marched on with his army, bringing it to Parma, Lodi and Cremona. The Germans attacked Cremona, took the town by storm and pillaged it for three days to set a gruesome example. The king destroyed the walls and imprisoned the most prominent persons of the town.

The king also strengthened his grip on Bohemia. Archbishop Peter Aichspalter crowned the king's son, Johann von Luxemburg, as king of Bohemia in February of 1311.

In the spring of 1311, Pope Clement V ratified the Treaty of Paris between France and Flanders. The pope threatened to refuse to crown Heinrich to emperor if the king of Germany did not also sign the agreement. Heinrich accepted the treaty.

From June to September of 1311, he laid a siege to Brescia. The town had to surrender. The king acted cruelly with Brescia, as he had done with Cremona. He appointed Werner von Hohenberg as his governor for Lombardy, and then marched south with his army, to Rome!

From October 1311 to February 1312, the king resided in the town of Genoa. He was well received in this city. He sailed from Genoa to Pisa, and prepared to march on Rome.

John of Achaïa, the brother of King Robert of Naples defended a large part of Rome. The battle for Rome was very bloody, and it continued for many weeks inside the city. Heinrich finally prevailed. King Heinrich entered Rome in May of 1312.

Pope Clement V crowned him to Holy Roman Emperor, and Heinrich took Pope Clement in protection against many enemies. King Heinrich VII of Luxemburg was crowned emperor on the 29<sup>th</sup> of June of 1312.

The emperor left Rome in the autumn of that same year, to attack Florence. The Florentines had assembled such a large army the emperor could not subdue the city. He returned to nearby Pisa, which had remained loyal to him.

Heinrich imagined a new objective in Pisa. He wanted to attack the kingdom of Naples! Pope Clement V intervened, and forbade the campaign. He threatened the emperor with excommunication.

On the 24<sup>th</sup> of August of the next year of 1313, the emperor died in his preparation for a new campaign in southern Italy. He died at Pisa, probably poisoned.

One should remind that during this Italian campaign, the sons of Count Guy of Dampierre fought in the royal army of Germany. Philip of Chieti died in Naples. Guy de Namur died in

the siege of Brescia. Henry of Flanders, the marshal of the Flemish army, fought well for the king of Germany. The king appointed him to count of Lodi and lord of Pisa!

After the death of the German emperor, Pope Clement appointed Robert of Naples as his vassal with imperial rights. He was called in German the '*Reichsverwehrer*', the protector of the empire. The pope grabbed all the imperial duties and rights to the papacy. He stated in a papal bull that as long as a new emperor had not been chosen and crowned, all imperial powers lay with the popes.

The war of succession for the supremacy in Germany raged from 1314 to 1315. The war was fought between the lords of Bavaria and Austria. Ludwig, or Lewis, of Bavaria fought Frederick of Austria for the throne of Germany. Pope Clement V might have acted as mediator, but he died on the 20<sup>th</sup> of April of 1314 at Avignon.

On the 11<sup>th</sup> of October of 1313, at Frankfurt, a number of electors chose a new king for Germany. They opted for Friedrich the Fair of Austria. Friedrich was the son of Emperor Albert I of Austria, a Habsburg. Other electors, however, chose for Ludwig of Bavaria in the same Frankfurt, meeting in another quarter. Germany was therefore thrown into a civil war that would last for more than three decades. Also the Swiss cantons, always hostile to the Habsburgs, chose for Ludwig of Bavaria as king. They began a war against their lord, Leopold of Habsburg, and defeated Leopold's army at Morgarten.

The Battle of Morgarten was of the same symbolic importance as the Battle of Kortrijk of 1302 for the Flemish, and as the Battle of Bannockburn for the Scots. The Swiss allied to Ludwig of Bavaria, who swore to uphold the liberties and privileges of the Swiss cantons.

The war in Italy continued between the army of the emperor and of the Italian cities allied with the pope. A large army from Pisa and the Imperial Vicar Ugucione della Faggiuola defeated a Guelph army of Tuscany. He had to retreat only a little later to nearby Verona. The strife between the emperor and the Italian city-states, as well as the pope, was far from over.

'You provided us with an account of over a quarter of a century of conflicts and wars,' Brother Bernardus remarked. 'Your description of how we lived is devastating. How did the people of Flanders survive despite the battles, ravages of armies, pillages and fires set to the villages and towns? An overview like this, the chronicles, show how terrible and how vast have been the depredations ordered by the kings of our countries. On is almost bound to conclude, may they burn in hell!'

'I am sure they will burn in hell,' I replied. 'Yet, they thought they did the right thing for what their vision was of the grandeur of their country. Were the counts of Flanders the exception? They seem so innocent! Were they the good guys, who fought against the bad? God will judge them. I cannot! I merely remark that Guy of Dampierre's sons used the militias of the towns also to their own aims. Why did our militias accept so eagerly to help them, and why have hundreds of inhabitants of the towns be killed in the process?'

'I remain astonished at how long the people tolerated the violence,' Brother Bernardus continued his musings.

‘The people were used to living in a system. They disliked change. They never put the system of feudal lords who governed them into question. Will the next generations see the people becoming aware of the horrors? And of the need to change the system to guarantee peace?’ ‘Will the current system ever be modified to a system of justice and peace?’ Brother Bernardus sighed.

‘I doubt it. Man’s nature is too prone to weaknesses of character. Something has awfully gone wrong in the divine creation. Will we ever know what, and how to remedy? How many years, thousands of years no doubt, will humanity need to reach God’s Paradise? When will lions eat with sheep in the same meadows?’

We both looked sombre in front of us.

‘If people survived,’ I said as last, ‘it was because they counted on and helped families and friends! That is what we have to continue doing, and grow peace out of that comfort!’

‘Amen!’ Bernardus whispered.

### 3.5. Epilogue

The deaths of Lievin de Grutere, Jehan Panneberch and Hugen van Lovendeghem, sons of families very well known in Ghent, caused a great commotion in the city. Their fathers cried out for revenge. A friend of the three, Sanders de Mey, apparently had disappeared. His parents told he had travelled on a pilgrimage. As deaths were involved, the bailiff, as the count's representative in the city, led the investigation into the murders.

The bailiff did not particularly like these kinds of enquiries. All persons who might have been involved were suddenly found to be tight-lipped. Nobody knew about anything. The killings seemed to have resulted from disputes among the *Leliaerts* and *Klauwaerts*, as happened regularly in those times. The bailiff had little hope of ever finding the culprits. He might also have been very embarrassed to accuse some of the most prominent *Klauwaerts* of Ghent! In such affairs, revolts were never far off and could break out any instance. He knew the count wanted no disturbances in his greatest city.

The bailiff heard about past altercations between the dead men and Raes van Lake, Juris Vresele, John Denout, Arnout de Hert and Wouter de Smet. He had no proof in hand of their involvement in the murders. Raes, John, Juris, Arnout and Wouter were respectable porters, *Klauwaerts* all, men who had fought for Flanders and for the count.

The bailiff did interrogate Raes, John, Juris, Arnout and Wouter. He did this at their own homes, very discreetly, in their halls. Yes, the five men told the bailiff, they had not liked the killed *Leliaerts*. They were loyal servants of the count, ready to give their lives for free Flanders. The issues they had with de Grutere, Panneberch and Lovendeghem, even with de Mey, were merely sentimental affairs, not worth mentioning. They had coveted the same women. Those affairs dated from old. Marriages had solved the matters. The merchant, weaver, fuller, shipper and blacksmith had heard nothing of the dead men since. The bailiff asked where they had been in the night of the murders. They had been sleeping in bed, they replied, as their wives could testify. They had not been out of their house that night. They had nothing to do with the deaths. The bailiff interrogated the neighbours of these men, but nobody had heard or seen anything.

The bailiff closed the inquiry quite rapidly, glad he had not to intervene and arrest people. Later, he heard of dead bodies discovered in the River Scheldt near Antwerp, but he had no reason to connect these bodies with the night of the murders of the *Leliaerts*. He concluded burglars, thieves, must have surprised the men in the warehouse, killed them and as they had found nothing of substance, they could have set fire to cover their murders.

From 1308 to 1314, a period of from five to six years, Juris Vresele and Raes van Lake traded intensively. John Denout fulfilled until he could not stay on his feet anymore, and also Wouter de Smet worked in his forge from morning to evening. They saw their dreams near. They lived very happily with their wives and children in Ghent. Then, suddenly, in the years of 1315 and 1316, matters changed dramatically for the very worse.

The years 1315 and 1316 were years of desolation. Rain showers fell incessantly, particularly in the months of sowing. It rained for days in a row. Springs and autumns were cold, and

rains also fell in summer. Large parts of Flanders and of the north of France got inundated by the water. The crops of grains failed in Flanders, and also in Picardy and in the Four Crafts. No food could be bought in England, in Brabant or in Hainault. These countries had barely enough to eat for themselves. Their crops also had largely failed.

Famine set in.

Cold and humidity set in.

Juris Vresele still had some peat to sell from his lands in the Four Crafts, but he found nobody who could pay him. He brought his peat in to distribute to his friends.

Juris Vresele and Raes van Lake put their funds together to bring grains and other food over from the south of France to Sluis. Then, France ordered all commerce with Flanders to be stopped. France declared all trade with Flanders illegal, and issued harsh measure to punish severely the Flemish merchants discovered in France. French and English pirates, commandeered by the governments of France and England, took or sunk the ships Juris and Raes had loaded. In one year, they lost all their reserves of money. When also the king of England closed all commerce with Flanders, Raes van Lake had no wool to weave. John Denout was out of work of fulling. He and his family ate his reserves of money. His dream of saving money for a fullers' mill vanished in less than one year. The same happened to Wouter de Smet. Arnout de Hert stayed for long weeks at quay with transport. His boats did not sail. He despaired. He too ate from his reserves.

The five men wondered how to live on. Where would they find the money to continue living with their family? If trade and business ameliorated with time, where would they get the free money to invest, to buy wool, to buy fullers' clay, to buy metals to forge, to repair the boats? Inexorably, they ran out of money altogether.

They watched in the streets with angry eyes for people who might show gloating at their misery, but nobody in Ghent walked on with the least smile on his or her face. The joyful noises, the laughter, the boisterous shouts and the wide gestures, the noise of the weaving looms and of the beats on metal in forges, had stopped. Ghent was a dead city. Everybody felt the issues with the provisioning of Ghent. When there was no bread, the wealthy might propose preposterous, high prices, no bread could be bought! The wealthy grew as thin in flesh as the poor. The women complained. Many rich poorters of Ghent left the city to go and live on their estates to the north of Ghent. They hoped always to find something, if little, in the countryside. They usually did, too, but barely enough to survive. Other men put all their possessions together on carts, and travelled far into Brabant, and on, into the German lands. Juris Vresele and Raes van Lake racked their brains for desperate initiatives to survive. They would have murdered again to bring food to their families.

The war with France continued indefinitely. The counts of Flanders seemed unable to reconcile with the kings of France. The sons of Count Guy of Dampierre had been brought up with the hatred and the suspicions for the kings of France in their blood. They were right too, for the kings continued the political views of their fathers. They wanted the Treaty of Iniquity and the subsequent treaties of Pontoise and Paris to be executed by Flanders to the letter! Flanders had to pay huge sums. But how could Flanders pay when the land lay starved and deprived of commerce with its neighbours?

The times were hard for England, France, Brabant and Hainault-Holland, for Limburg, Loon, Bar, Cleves, Jülich, Namur, for so very many other small counties all over the continent. Because of the war, and of the blocking of trade, the violence and the famine were felt as particularly tough in the county of Flanders. The count and his knights of course did not help the commoners.

How could the war with France end? How could Raes van Lake, Juris Vresele, John Denout, Wouter de Smet and Arnout de Hert emerge from out of their despair when the weather turned better and when the war resided? Until now, they had never lost hope. They prayed the Lord, but when no answers came and nothing changed, they despaired more and more.

## Author's Notes

'Golden Spurs' is the first novel of the five-volume series 'The City – Ghent in the fourteenth Century'. Part of these novels is historical fact, part fiction. Some novels are more fact than fiction, like this one. Other contain more fiction than fact. Facts take precedence when the events were sufficiently dramatic to form an interesting, compelling story on their own. I admit I had some scruples in tackling the subject of the Battle of Kortrijk. The battle is the central scene of Hendrik Conscience's historical novel 'The Lion of Flanders'. This romantic novel is considered a monument in Flanders about as large as Flanders's National Day, which is on the 11<sup>th</sup> of July, the day on which the famous battle took place. My version stays closer to the historical facts. It is also very difficult to add a romanced story to a tale as dramatic as the events of the Battle of Kortrijk, of the Sea-battle of Zierikzee and of the Battle of Mons-en-Pévèle. Some of the books in this series are denser in fiction. Other are denser in real history, like this one. The reader will find the same heroes of the five families of Ghent in the following novels. Ultimately, the heroes will realise their dreams, but maybe only their children will profit from the dreams!

I am quite aware I did not apply a consistent rule on the use of proper names. Sometimes I used Willem or William for Guillaume, Philip for Philippe, James for Jacques or Jacob, and sometimes not. O preferred Ieper for Ypres, but used Bruges for Brugge. I ask for forbearance from the readers. I claim no excuse. I did this when I esteemed it the more natural way to handle names in the story.

Because of the role Jacques de Châtillon played in Bruges when he was a governor of Flanders, he became one of the most controversial – some will say hated - figures of the history of Flanders.

The Châtillon family was large and famous, and more members of that large family proved rather less than sympathetic. Their name is associated with many other counties in France than their origins of Châtillon-sur-Marne in the Champagne Region.

Jacques de Châtillon was related to the Queen of France Jeanne de Navarre in the times of this novel. He had indeed been appointed governor of Flanders after Raoul II de Clermont-Nesle. He was lord of Leuze, of Condé, of Carency, of Huquoy and of Aubigny. As he was the son of the count of Saint-Pol, many historians hence call him Jacques of Saint-Pol. His family name was Châtillon.

The counts of Saint-Pol were Châtillons in the times of the novel (from 1205 to 1378), and Guy IV de Châtillon (r. 1292 – 1317) was a count of Saint-Pol. He was the brother of the Jacques de Châtillon mentioned in this novel, also called de Saint-Pol by certain historians. I avoided this to not cause more confusion.

His predecessor, Hugh VI de Châtillon was count of Saint-Pol only from 1289 to 1292, when he became count of Blois by marrying Marie d'Avesnes (yes, the same name as the rules of Hainault, as many of these ancient families were connected). Marie was the last countess of Blois in her dynasty.

Gaucher V de Châtillon was *connétable* of France under King Philip the Fair. It was he who Jacques de Châtillon called to help against Bruges. Gaucher V was lord of Châtillon and count of Porcien. He was the great-grandson of Gaucher III of Châtillon, count of Saint-Pol, who was the father of Hugh I count of Blois, father in his turn of Guy III of Châtillon, who

was the father of Jacques I of Châtillon. He was thus far family of the in Flanders ill-famed Jacques de Châtillon.

The count of Blois who fought the Montfort dukes of Brittany in the Wars of the Succession for Brittany (see one of the other volumes of 'The City', 'The Captain') was also a member of the Châtillon family.

In yet another of my historical novels, 'Star Seeker', in the second volume entitled 'Jerusalem', a novel playing in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, appears Renaud de Châtillon, the lord of Kerak, another member of the famed family. Renaud had a particularly adventurous life. He died in the Battle of Hattin in 1187, which ended the supremacy of the French in the Holy Land. Like Jacques de Châtillon he was cruel, arrogant, bold, malicious, cunning and yet impetuous. He proved to be the major thorn in the side of the Leper King Baldwin IV of Jerusalem. His deeds led to the loss of the Christian Kingdom of Jerusalem.

The duchy of Limburg in this novel is the historical, rather small Limburg region, lying between the River Maas and the town of Aachen. It had nothing in common with the province currently called Limburg in Belgium, which corresponds largely to the former county of Loon (Looz in French). Duke John I of Brabant conquered the medieval Limburg at the Battle of Worringen in 1288. It remained under Brabant control for centuries, a separate entity in the personal union with Brabant by the dukes of Brabant.

The current province of Limburg in Belgium should probably have better been called 'Loon'. Loon, which included the towns of Hasselt and Maastricht, had as its capital the town of Borgloon. Loon remained feudally a part of the bishopric of Liège for most of its history.

For the Battle of Mons-en-Pévèle, I found figures varying from twenty thousand men in both armies together to two hundred thousand! I followed the figures proposed by Gérard Hugot, which he deduced from most of the historians who have written on the battle.

The William van Artevelde of this novel is a historical figure. His connivance with Juris Vresele is of course entirely fictional.

In the fourteenth century, Flanders was a county, its titular head a count who owned feudal duties to the king of France. The county was organised into castellanies, called in Flemish or Dutch '*kasselrijen*'. The castellanies were subdivided in 'crafts', the literal translation for the Flemish and Dutch word of '*ambachten*', though 'crafts', or shires, existed that had no real castellany between them and the count. At the head of the castellanies and of the 'crafts' were noblemen, knights, who ruled over their domain in feudal duty to the count. Inside the 'crafts' existed manors and domains, called in Dutch '*Heerlijkheden*', usually consisting of a castle or manor with much land around it. These were the property of a Lord, a nobleman, a knight. Béthune, for instance, was such a domain.

The three main cities of Flanders controlled each a 'quarter'. Bruges controlled the *Brugse Vrije*, the Franc of Bruges, the largest territory, as well as three ambachten in the west, with from north to south respectively: the Veurne Ambacht, The Saint-Winoksbergen Ambacht (Bergues in French) and the Broekburg Ambacht. The quarter of Ieper consisted of three castellanies, respectively Ieper itself, Belle and Cassel. The quarter of Ghent was the largest, holding from north to south the following castellanies: the *Vier Ambachten* or Four Crafts, The Land van Waas, the Land of Dendermonde, Oudburg, The Land van Aalst, Oudenaarde,

Kortrijk. The quarter of Lille consisted of Lille as a castellany, and of the castellany of Douai. Tournai (Doornik in Dutch) formed a separate castellany and quarter.

For place names, I used in this novel as much as possible the names in the language of the region, with a few exceptions. So, I generally used Ieper instead of Ypres (the French name of the town used also in English) and the Leie instead of the Lys (French). I allowed for exceptions when the names were too well-known in English, such as Bruges (the French name for Brugge), Ghent (for Gent in Dutch) and the Scheldt (for the Dutch Schelde).

The year did not begin on the first of January in the Middle-Ages, but finding the consistent use of Easter or Lady's Day (27 March) as the start of a new year too cumbersome for the good understanding of the stories, I let the years mentioned in the novel start as of the first of January, as we are currently used to. One must take care with the older history books of the nineteenth century (Le Glay, Kervijn de Lettenhove), who still used the old dates, annotated as such or not.

Some confusion may happen in novels like this about the notions of left and right on a battlefield. I always use the following convention. Left and right are as observed for an army in its direction of movement. Therefore, the left wing of an army is at the right as seen by the enemy, as seen by the opposing army. Imagine a commander standing behind his troops, looking forward or towards the enemy. In a battle between a Flemish and a French army, when I write about the left wing of the Flemish, that wing stands opposite the right wing of the French.

Similarly, when talking about the left or right banks of streams or rivers, the left bank is the bank to the left when looking towards where the stream or river flows, in the direction of the flow.

One does not have to study hundreds of books for a story like this one, but one has to discover the right books. I am no historian, so I mostly used existing studies for the story line. I particularly appreciated and recommend the following books.

- ❖ Histoire de Belgique – Henri Pirenne – Maurice Lamertin – Brussels - 1929
- ❖ Histoire des Comtes de Flandres jusqu'à l'avènement de la Maison de Bourgogne. Tome 2. Edward Le Glay – Le Comptoir des Imprimeurs Unis – Paris – 1863.
- ❖ Histoire de Flandre – Constantin Bruno Kervijn de Lettenhove – Volume 1 and volume 2. – Bruges - Beyaert-Defoort – 1874.
- ❖ Notice sur la Bataille de Courtrai des Éperons d'Or – A. Voisin – Imprimerie A. Cauvin – Brussels – 1836.
- ❖ Istore et Croniques de Flandres. Baron Kervijn de Lettenhove – F. Hayez, Imprimeur – Brussels – 1879.
- ❖ Friedrich Christoph Schlossers Weltgeschichte. Bände 5, 6, 7 Mittelalter III, IV, V.' Notes by Prof. Dr. Oskar Jäger and Dr. Franz Wolff. (27. - Auflage, Verlag Neufeld und Henius – Berlin - 1905. Original edition: 1815-1848.
- ❖ Philippe le Bel – Jean Favier – Éditions Talladier – Paris – 2013.
- ❖ A great and terrible king: Edward I and the forging of Britain – Marc Morris – Hutchinson/Random House – London – 2008.
- ❖ The Battle of the Golden Spurs – J.F. Verbruggen – Boydell Press – Woodbridge, Suffolk -2002

- ❖ De Leeuw van Vlaanderen - Hendrik Conscience – Office de Publicité – Brussel.
  - ❖ La Bataille de Courtrai ou des Éperons d'Or – Goethals-Vercruyssen – Vanderhaegen Imprimeur de l'Université – Gent – 1834.
  - ❖ La Bataille de Mons-en-Pévèle 1304. La revanche de Philippe le Bel – Gérard Hugot – Éditions Historic One Philippe Gaillard – Plougastel-Daoulas – 2015.
  - ❖ Europe in the High Middle-Ages – William Chester Jordan – Penguin Books – London - 2002.
  - ❖ Medieval Europe – Judith M. Bennett and C. Warren Hollister – McGraw-Hill International Edition – New York – 2006
  - ❖ A History of Medieval Europe – R.H.C. Davies Pearson Education limited – Harlow, UK – 2006
  - ❖ The Time Traveller's Guide to Medieval England – Ian Mortimer – Vintage Books – London – 2009
  - ❖ The Metamorphosis of a Medieval City: Ghent in the Age of the Artevelde, 1302-1390. David Nicholas – University of Nebraska Press – Lincoln, London – 1987
  - ❖ The Van Artevelde of Ghent. The varieties of vendetta and the hero in history. David Nicholas – Cornell University Press – Ithaca, New York – 1988.
  - ❖ Medieval Flanders. David M. Nicholas – Routledge – Abingdon - 2013.
  - ❖ Jacques d'Artevelde. M. Kervijn de Lettenhove – Van Doosselaere – Gent - 1863.
  - ❖ James and Philip van Artevelde – William James Ashley – Macmillan & Co – London – 1883.
  - ❖ James and Philip van Artevelde – Patricia Carson – Story Scientia BVBA - Gent – 1980.
  - ❖ A distant Mirror – Barbara W. Tuchman – Ballantine Books – Random House Publishing Group – New York – 1978.
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