THE Frankish kingdom ruled by Charlemagne was a Germanic monarchy of the advanced type. The backbone of his army consisted of \textit{vassi dominici}, men who had been given land in return for military service and who had sworn a special oath of loyalty to the king. But the mass of his host was composed of the ordinary freemen of the realm. The king’s material resources came chiefly from the royal estates scattered through the country. The central administration consisted of a relatively small group of magnates both lay and ecclesiastical. These men were entrusted with special missions of all sorts and were sent out as \textit{missi dominici} to supervise the conduct of the realm. The king’s local agents were the counts. In the western part of the empire they actually ruled as the king’s representatives over districts that in general coincided with the former Roman \textit{civitates}. In the east they did little more than supervise the local popular courts. Although the great mass of law enforced in the state was ancient custom—Roman or Germanic according to the re-
region—the king could issue decrees that had the force of law. Charlemagne worked in close alliance with the church and relied heavily on its aid in keeping order, especially in such newly conquered regions as Saxony. As he appointed the bishops and abbots, the clergy was in many respects a branch of the royal administration. The Carolingian kingdom was far removed from the primitive Germanic monarchy of the Merovingians, yet, unfortunately, it had retained two of its chief characteristics. The succession to the crown was still in theory by election and it was considered proper to divide the realm among all a king’s sons.

The century and a half that followed Charlemagne’s death in 814 was a period of almost incredible confusion in the western part of his realm. The members of the Carolingian house quarreled fiercely over the crown, the royal estates, and the services of the *vassi dominici*. Wild Viking raiders plundered the coasts, sailed up the rivers, and ravaged the entire countryside. Moslems from Spain established themselves in the delta of the Rhône and plundered the region. The various parts of the state could defend themselves only through the development of a feudal hierarchy. The *vassi dominici* and ordinary landholders who had depended directly on the king became the vassals of the counts. Weak counts became the vassals of stronger ones. At the same time the offices of the counts and the fiefs of the *vassi dominici* became hereditary. The great ecclesiastical estates on which the Carolingian dynasty
depended heavily for support were also seriously weakened. Great lords like the counts of Toulouse, the dukes of Aquitaine, and the dukes of Normandy simply usurped the crown’s ancient rights over the church and appointed bishops and abbots themselves. Lesser lords forced the ecclesiastics to give them large parts of their lands as fiefs. Still others accepted the obligation of protecting a bishopric or abbey in return for control of its resources. The last kings of the Carolingian dynasty were almost helpless. The royal estates had been reduced to the town of Laon. The monarchs controlled only a few sadly depleted episcopal sees and abbeys. The great feudal lords acknowledged that the king was their suzerain, but he was completely unable to enforce the rights that went with that position. And although he could and did issue decrees, no one paid any attention to them.

_Hugh Capet_

The weakness of the Carolingian kings made it almost inevitable that some of the great lords of France should be tempted to try to gain the throne. As the monarchy was elective in theory, they were inclined to make it so in practice. In 888 a group of magnates, moved chiefly by the fact that all the available Carolingians were minors and that the defense of the realm against the Vikings required an able soldier, elected as king Odo, count of Paris, who ruled for ten years. In 922 Odo’s brother, Robert, was elected king and
ruled for a year. Then the magnates chose Ralph, duke of Burgundy, who was king for thirteen years. Thus between Charlemagne's death in 814 and 987 three men who were not members of the Carolingian house were elected king of the West Franks. In 987 the same process was repeated—the great lords chose Hugh Capet, grandson of Robert and grandnephew of Odo. It seems clear that as far as the great lords were concerned the monarchy had become fully elective. When a king died, they would meet to choose his successor. Under these conditions there was little fear that the king would be more than the head of the feudal hierarchy.

Fortunately for the future of the French monarchy, Hugh Capet was determined to make the royal office hereditary in his own family. Shortly after his coronation he announced that the task of governing and defending the realm was too great for one man and demanded that the magnates elect his son Robert as his associate on the throne. This device effectively assured Robert of being his father's successor. The practice of having the king's eldest son elected and crowned during his lifetime became a custom of the Capetian house and was only abandoned when the monarchy became strong enough to render it no longer necessary. But this method of negating the elective principal could only be effective as long as the reigning house could supply a male heir. The descendants of Hugh Capet have been astoundingly successful in this respect. One
of Hugh’s titles before he became king, that of count of Paris, is today borne by his direct descendant in the male line—the current pretender to the throne of France.

The Royal Demesne

As we have seen, the great vassals of the crown had deprived the Carolingian kings of all sources of power. In 987 six feudal potentates held all France except the tiny royal demesne around Laon: the count of Flanders, the duke of Normandy, the duke of France, the duke of Burgundy, the duke of Aquitaine, and the count of Toulouse. Hugh Capet’s father had been duke of France and of Burgundy. Hugh had felt obliged to give Burgundy to his younger brother, but he had retained control of its bishoprics and great abbeys. Hugh himself, before he ascended the throne, was duke of France. This duchy included all the land between Flanders and Normandy on the north and Burgundy and Aquitaine on the south—a wide strip of territory running from the tip of the peninsula of Brittany to the frontier of Lorraine. Unfortunately over most of this territory Hugh’s power was simply that of a feudal overlord. In Brittany the local counts were practically independent and had obtained control of the episcopal sees and abbeys. In Anjou the viscounts who had ruled as the representatives of the Capetian counts had usurped the title of count and were rapidly securing complete control of the region.
The same situation existed in the counties of Tours, Blois, Chartres, Meaux, Provins, and several others. The only counties directly under the control of Hugh Capet were Paris, Orleans, and Dreux. There lay the royal manors that supported Hugh and his court and from there he drew his army. Hugh did, however, succeed in keeping control of the bishopric and abbeys outside of Brittany and their resources were perhaps the chief basis of his power.

During the years 987–1108 Hugh Capet, his son, his grandson, and his great-grandson lost ground steadily before the rising power of their vassals both great and small. William, duke of Normandy, not only increased his power enormously by conquering England but he also took away from his Capetian suzerain the overlordship of Brittany. Two groups of counties in the duchy of France, Chartres and Blois to the west of Paris and Meaux and Provins to the east, came into the hands of a single family that also held the county of Troyes from the duke of Burgundy. By forcing the archbishop of Rheims and several other prelates to grant them a large part of their lands as fiefs and obliging weak vassals of the crown to become their vassals the counts of Chartres and Troyes built up a great feudal state that is usually known as the county of Champagne. In so doing they deprived the Capetian kings of a large part of their duchy of France and caught the royal counties of Paris and Orleans in a vise between the eastern and western parts of their lands.
The descendants of Hugh Capet found it impossible to control even the minor lords of their counties of Paris and Orleans. Local barons built strong castles in the country around Paris and openly defied the royal power. More than once the king of France met defeat in pitched battle against the barons of the Île de France. One suffered the deep humiliation of being captured by one of his vassals and being freed by the militia of Paris.

One may well ask how under these circumstances the Capetian monarchy was able to survive. Perhaps the chief reason was that no one had any great interest in overthrowing it. The feudal pyramid needed a head, and the great lords preferred that the holder of the theoretical suzerainty should not be powerful enough to trouble them. Certainly the great vassals of the crown were far too jealous of each other's power to allow one of their number to seize the throne. Then throughout this difficult period the church of France consistently supported the Capetian dynasty. The church was anxious to decrease even if it could not hope to eliminate the almost continual feudal warfare that wasted the realm, and the chief hope of doing this seemed to lie in the development of the royal authority. Thus, although several of the Capetian kings quarreled bitterly with the church and even suffered excommunication, they could rely on the support of the ecclesiastical lords against their lay vassals. Moreover, the church preached the sanctity of the royal office
and the king's person. Feudal theory itself gave a certain sanctity to the person and family of the suzerain. In short, the Capetians were not powerful enough to give their vassals much trouble and their demesnes were not great enough to arouse much greed. It was not worth while to attempt to crush the anointed sovereign and feudal suzerain for the slight benefits that might be gained from such an act.

The Increase of Royal Power

In the year 1108 Louis VI succeeded his father Philip I, the great-grandson of Hugh Capet, on the French throne. With his accession began a period of two hundred years in which the royal power steadily increased. This development was made possible by many diverse circumstances. Of the seven kings who reigned during this period four were men of high competence and only one was definitely ineffective. Thus in general the Capetian monarchs had the ability required to make the most of favorable conditions. Sometimes the circumstances that aided the monarchy were purely fortuitous—the weakness of character of a great vassal or the death of one without a male heir. But far more important than the capacity to make the most of sudden strokes of good fortune was the continuing ability of the French kings to use for their benefit fundamental changes in the civilization of western Europe. Hence, before examining in detail the process by which the monarchy increased in
power, it seems well to glance at these fundamental changes as they effected political institutions.

Certain vital changes in the economic structure of western Europe that took place in the eleventh, twelfth, and thirteenth centuries have been discussed in an earlier volume in this series. Here we are interested in them only as they affected the political balance of power. The great reclamation movement that put into cultivation vast areas of wasteland, marsh, and forest benefited the entire feudal hierarchy. Every lord who founded new villages increased his resources in produce and labor. But in general the great lords profited far more than their vassals because the extensive forests and vast tracts of waste and marsh were usually in their demesnes. Thus the large-scale clearings in the forest of Rennes benefited the duke of Brittany and his chief vassal, the lord of Vitré, the latter having a share only because he was the duke's brother-in-law. The forest of Rennes had been ducal demesne. The Capetian kings as dukes of France made full use of this movement. On the route between Paris and Orleans and in its immediate vicinity nine new royal settlements appeared during the twelfth century. The great forests that surrounded Paris were reduced to isolated fragments little larger than they are today.

Of far greater significance than the bringing of new land into cultivation were the development of commerce, the growth of towns, and the reappearance of a money economy. Once more all the members of
the feudal hierarchy profited to some extent, but the advantages of the higher lords over the lower ones became greater. The simple knight or petty baron might collect tolls in money from merchants traveling through his lands, might sponsor and reap the profits from a small local fair, and might have a small town in his possession. But the management of great fairs such as those of Champagne and the possession of important centers of commerce fell to the great lords like the counts of Flanders and Champagne and the dukes of Normandy. Here again the Capetian kings as dukes of France took full advantage of their opportunities. They scattered chartered towns over their demesnes and ringed Paris with prosperous fairs.

Money Revenues

The possession of revenues in money very greatly strengthened the position of a feudal prince. He could hire soldiers to fight for him and was no longer entirely dependent on the military service of his vassals. These soldiers would fight, as long as they were paid, against any enemy of their employer. No longer could a contumacious vassal escape punishment simply because his fellow vassals were unwilling to aid the lord against him. No longer could a rebellious baron shut himself up in his castle with the assurance that he was safe because the reduction of his fortress would require more than the forty days that the feudal levy would serve. Obviously this change in the position of the feudal princes was very gradual as was the develop-
ment of their sources of money revenues. By the late twelfth century the duke of Normandy, the duke of France, or the count of Flanders could reduce the castle of a rebellious vassal with hired troops, but it was very expensive and took a large part of his available resources. He did this only when the need was very great. A century later a feat of this sort was by no means such a serious matter.

The feudal prince could not only hire soldiers—he could also hire officials. His agents need no longer be his vassals whose primary interests were like those of their fellow vassals. He could employ officers who would make the development of his power their chief concern. These officers did not have to be knights who were steeped in feudal ideas. The rising merchant class provided men with a different point of view and little interest in the privileges and power of the feudal class.

It is important to remember that these economic changes benefited all the great lords. The duke of Normandy and the counts of Flanders and Champagne profited from them fully as much as did the Capetian king as duke of France. These general conditions enabled the king to build up his power in his own demesne, but as we shall see it was largely a marvelous combination of skill and good luck that enabled him to increase that demesne at the expense of his great vassals.

*The Reformed and Revived Papacy*

During the eleventh and twelfth centuries one important new element that was not economic in origin
was introduced into the politics of western Europe—the reformed and revived papacy. As we have seen, the royal power in the ninth, tenth, and early eleventh centuries had leaned heavily on a close alliance with the church. The king was both a secular and ecclesiastical dignitary. He controlled the personnel and the resources of the church within his realm. But the reinvigorated papacy was anxious to develop its own control over the church as a whole. It was unwilling to have kings appoint prelates as they saw fit. The popes even claimed that they could depose kings who violated the laws of the church. They denied that the kings were priestly in character—that the kingship was a sacred office. To popes like Gregory VII a king was a sort of police captain dependent on the papal power. Now this new view was not universally accepted by the churchmen of Europe. In fact there was a strong tendency for the ecclesiastics of each realm to support their monarch as they had in the past. But the papacy did vastly increase its power and become a vital factor in the secular politics of western Europe. And it was strongly inclined to use its power to weaken the great monarchies.

This new papal policy was one of the chief causes of the destruction of the German monarchy and at times hampered severely the development of the royal power in England, but the Capetians were far more fortunate than their rivals. During the first great struggle between the pope and the kings—the investiture
controversy—the attention of the papacy was centered on Germany. The French kings had a few skirmishes with the papacy, but they were of minor importance. Later when the popes sought to gain their ends by active participation in secular politics, the Capetians succeeded in being their allies at all the crucial moments. When at last, in the late thirteenth century, the papacy turned its face from the prostrate German monarchy to throw its full power against the Capetians, the latter were powerful enough to win the struggle.

The Pacification of the Demesne

Louis VI was extremely vigorous both mentally and physically. Although as he advanced in years his enormous size made it very difficult to find a horse that could carry him, he continued to lead his troops about his realm. He came to the throne determined to crush the turbulent petty lords of the duchy of France and to do what he could to strengthen his authority outside his demesne. In both these enterprises he had an invaluable ally—Suger, abbot of St. Denis. St. Denis was one of the greatest of French monasteries. The king himself was its advocate and its vassal for the region called the Vexin that lay on the frontier between the duchy of France and Normandy. The traditional banner of the French kings, the oriflamme, was the standard of St. Denis, borne by them as its advocates. Louis had studied in the monastic school at St. Denis and
there had met Suger. The royal influence rapidly raised Suger to the abbacy. He was the ideal prime minister for a mediaeval monarch. On the one hand, he was completely devoted to the development of the royal power and was ready to support the king against all rivals whether secular or ecclesiastical. At the same time his private life and his administration of his abbey earned him the respect of the most rigid prelates. Even his bitter political foe, the great St. Bernard of Clairvaux, admired the sanctity of his life and character.

Backed by both the spiritual and temporal support of the bishops and abbots of his demesne, Louis waged ceaseless war against the barons of his duchy. His usual practice was to summon a baron to appear before his feudal court to answer the charges of the people he had plundered, imprisoned, and maimed. When the baron failed to appear, he was declared contumacious. Before marching against the rebel, Louis would further strengthen his hand by having his foe solemnly excommunicated. The reduction of a powerful baron was not easy. For seven years the king waged war against Hugh de Puisset. Time after time he razed Hugh’s chief castle, but each time the baron managed to rebuild it. Finally Hugh was crushed and deprived of his fief. The resistance of Thomas de Marly was even more stubborn. This fierce lord, who was the terror of the countryside and a lecherous, sadistic enemy of all mankind, maintained his position for sixteen years
France

against all the power Louis could muster. But one by one the barons of the Ile de France were reduced to obedience. When Louis died, the king of France was the effective master of his duchy. The descendants of the lords he had curbed were to be his successors’ most loyal servants and allies in their struggles against the great vassals of the crown.

In addition to waging war on the barons of the duchy of France, Louis was frequently forced to defend his lands from the attacks of two of his great vassals—Henry I, duke of Normandy and king of England, and his nephew, Theobald, count of Blois and Champagne. With Normandy bordering the duchy of France on the northwest, Blois on the west, and Champagne on the east, Louis was in an extremely precarious position. Fortunately he could usually rely on the support of the count of Anjou, who was in a position to attack both his foes. Moreover, Henry I was always faced with a determined opposition in Normandy led by his brother Robert and the latter’s son William. Thus by stirring up and encouraging the count of Anjou and Robert’s party in Normandy Louis could divert the attention of his two powerful enemies.

Despite his almost continuous campaigns within and on the frontiers of his duchy of France, Louis lost few opportunities to exploit his position as king of France. In 1109 the uncle of the infant lord of Bourbon usurped his nephew’s fief. Louis gathered a band
of troops and forced the usurper to withdraw. In 1122 the bishop of Clermont was driven from his lands and even his episcopal city by the count of Auvergne. Although no king of France for many years had attempted to exercise his authority so far from Paris, Louis marched into Auvergne and restored the bishop. Five years later the count of Flanders was murdered by a band of assassins. Louis entered Flanders, punished the criminals, and installed as count his friend and ally William, son of Robert of Normandy. As William was quickly driven out by the rightful heir to the county, Louis’ intervention cannot be called a complete success, but he had shown his determination to exercise his rights as feudal suzerain. This energetic policy made a great impression on the feudal princes of France. When William X, duke of Aquitaine, lord of the most extensive fief in southern France, felt himself near death, he sent a message to Louis begging the king to care for his only child, his daughter Eleanor, and suggested that she be married to the king’s eldest son, Louis.

Eleanor of Aquitaine

Louis VI and Duke William of Aquitaine died within a few months of each other in 1137, and the new king, Louis VII, married Eleanor and became duke of Aquitaine. If one glances at a map, this will seem to mark an enormous increase in the royal power, but actually the possession of Aquitaine was of little
value to Louis VII. The dukes of Aquitaine had been the overlords of a vast territory stretching from the Pyrenees almost to the river Loire and at its widest point reaching close to the bank of the Rhône. But most of this area was in the hands of powerful lords whom the duke was completely unable to control. His real power lay in a few small districts lying around his chief seats—Bayonne, Bordeaux, and Poitiers. Even an energetic and warlike duke who resided in the duchy could exercise only limited authority. Louis VII was a gentle, kindly, pious man whose residence was far away. The ducal demesnes around Bayonne, Bordeaux, and Poitiers were too far away to add much strength to the royal power, and the great lords of Aquitaine ignored their new duke as cheerfully as they had his predecessors and would his successors. A wife that brought him a barony with a few castles somewhere near Paris would have been far more valuable to Louis than was Eleanor.

Although Louis VII was a far feeble figure than his father, the general policy of the Capetian house remained unchanged. Until his death Suger served the son as he had the father. The bitter war with the house of Blois continued. Louis, like his father, wasted few opportunities to exercise the royal authority. Once more the bishop of Clermont was supported against the count of Auvergne. The plundering lord of Polignac was suppressed. When the count of Nevers aided the people of Vezelay against their lord the abbot,
the crown intervened to settle the dispute. More and more the idea grew that the king was the natural keeper of the peace and protector of the weak—especially of the church. Where bishops or abbots suffered from the depredations of secular lords, they complained to the king's court.

The House of Anjou

During the early years of the reign of Louis VII the foundations were laid for a feudal state that was to threaten the very existence of the Capetian monarchy. In the vain hope of breaking the alliance between Louis VI and Geoffrey, count of Anjou, King Henry I of England had given the count his daughter Matilda in marriage. When Henry died, his nephew Stephen of Blois, younger brother of Count Theobald of Blois and Champagne, seized the English throne. Matilda crossed to England to wage a long civil war against Stephen while her husband Geoffrey attacked Normandy. To have their bitter foes, the house of Blois, hold Normandy would have been a major disaster for the Capetian kings. Hence Louis VII favored the efforts of Count Geoffrey who gradually conquered the duchy in the name of his young son Henry. As soon as Henry was old enough, he himself took over the government of Normandy. In 1151 Geoffrey died and Henry became master of Normandy and Anjou. As the dukes of Normandy were suzerains of Brittany, this gave Henry control of western France.
from the mouth of the Somme to that of the Loire.

The marriage of Louis VII with Eleanor of Aquitaine had never been happy. Eleanor was the granddaughter of William IX of Aquitaine, one of the first troubadors. She was deeply imbued with the spirit of the troubadours and their gay science of love. If one third the contemporary stories about her are true, she was far from prudish in her personal conduct. Louis was solemn, pious, and inclined toward asceticism. But the most serious difficulty was that Eleanor failed to produce a male heir and so threatened the future of the Capetian dynasty. In 1152 a group of French prelates declared the marriage annulled on the customary grounds of consanguinity and before the year was over Eleanor had married young Henry of Normandy and Anjou. Although Henry was never able to control the barons of Aquitaine, his possession of three great fiefs made him an immensely powerful feudal prince. Then in 1153 Henry came to an agreement with King Stephen by which he would succeed to the throne on the latter’s death, and in 1154 he became king of England. Thus the most powerful and most dangerous vassal of the French crown had behind him the resources of the English realm.

Louis VII combated this new menace to the French royal power as well as his limited capacities would permit. He waged war against Henry II, but he was no match for his rival as a soldier. Louis was more successful in intrigue. He succeeded in persuading Henry’s
eldest son to rebel against his father. As young Prince Henry was supported by a large number of Anglo-Norman barons who chafed under the king's heavy-handed rule, this revolt was a serious threat to Henry II. If Louis had supported his allies with energy, Henry might have been crushed. But the French king did little more than raid the Norman frontier and Henry was able to suppress the revolt. King Louis fell back on a new series of alliances—he came to terms with the house of Blois. His eldest daughter Marie married Henry, count of Champagne, her younger sister Alice became the wife of Henry's brother, Theobald, count of Blois, while Louis himself married the counts' sister Adèle. During the last years of his reign Louis was completely dominated by his strong-minded brothers-in-law, Henry, count of Champagne, Theobald, count of Blois, and their brother William, archbishop of Rheims.

**Philip Augustus**

Adèle of Blois bore Louis the much-desired male heir—Philip, known to history as Philip Augustus. Philip bore little resemblance to his father. Although he was never particularly effective as a soldier, he had all the other qualities needed by a successful monarch—sagacity, unscrupulousness, and invincible determination to increase the royal authority. When he reached the age of fifteen, he found the sight of his doddering old father in the tutelage of the house of
Blois completely unbearable. Philip gathered support by marrying the niece of the count of Flanders and forming an alliance with Henry II. By this means he was enabled to drive his uncles from power, and he was the effective master of the realm some months before his father died.

Although he had used an alliance with Henry II to enable him to escape from the dominance of the house of Blois, Philip fully realized that the Angevin kings of England were the chief threat to the Capetian monarchy, and he devoted the major part of his life to breaking their power. He started by following his father’s policy of stirring up Henry’s sons against him. When Henry died at Chinon in 1189, his two surviving legitimate sons, Richard and John, were in rebellion against him in alliance with Philip. But the French king gained little by this maneuver. Richard was an abler soldier than his father and equally determined to defend his seigneuries from King Philip. In 1190 Richard and Philip left together on a crusade. But while they were waging war in Palestine, Philip learned of the death of the count of Flanders and hastened home to make good his young son’s rights to his mother’s share of the inheritance. The new count of Flanders was forced to surrender the rich county of Artois to Philip to hold as guardian for his son Louis. Then Philip proceeded to see what he could do about seizing Richard’s lands while he was still in Palestine. His first step was to confer with the seneschal of Nor-
mandy, who ruled the duchy in Richard’s absence, and show him a treaty supposed to have been agreed to by Richard that gave the French king a fair part of the duchy. As the seneschal felt certain that Richard would not have made such an agreement, he refused to honor it. Philip’s answer was to summon his host for the invasion of Normandy. But an attack on the lands of a crusader was a serious offense involving immediate excommunication, and Philip’s vassals refused to follow him. The king then tried another device—intriguing with Richard’s younger brother John. Soon he had a close alliance with that fickle prince. News of all this reached Richard in Palestine and he hurried home. On the way he had the misfortune to be captured by a German lord, who turned him over to his enemy, the Emperor Henry VI. Philip promptly offered the emperor a large sum of money to keep Richard in prison. Unfortunately for Philip’s plans, the princes of Germany forced the emperor to accept the ransom offered by the English government. After he was freed, Richard waged bitter war with Philip for the rest of his life.

King John

Richard was killed while besieging the castle of one of his Poitevin vassals in 1199 and was succeeded by his brother John. The new king was not so able a warrior as his brother. Moreover, he made two serious mistakes. The feudal power of the county of
Poitou was divided between two great houses—the Lusignans who held the county of La Marche and the counts of Angoulême. The count of Angoulême had affianced his daughter and heiress to the count of La Marche. This alarmed John. He marched into Poitou and persuaded the count of Angoulême to let him marry the girl. To steal the fiancée of one’s vassal was a serious violation of feudal custom. The whole Lusignan family rose in revolt and appealed to John’s overlord, Philip, for justice. When John refused to appear before Philip’s court to answer for his offense, he was solemnly declared contumacious and deprived of all the fiefs he held of the French crown. But this declaration was of little practical value—John had to be driven out. His next mistake helped Philip to do that. John had been the fourth son of Henry II. His elder brother Geoffrey, who had been married to the heiress of Brittany, had died leaving a son named Arthur. At the time Richard died, Arthur was a young boy who had spent much of his youth in King Philip’s court. Hence the Anglo-Norman barons had preferred to have John as their king, and Arthur became count of Anjou and duke of Brittany as a vassal of John. When Philip’s court declared John’s fiefs forfeited, the French king gave Arthur some troops and sent him into Anjou to wage war against his uncle. In the summer of 1203 he was captured by John and imprisoned in the castle of Falaise. He was never seen alive again, and there is strong
reason for believing that John had him murdered. The disappearance of their young lord enraged the barons of Anjou and Brittany and they immediately went over to King Philip. The barons of England had no great interest in the defense of Normandy and very little confidence in John. By a discreet mixture of force and well-placed bribes Philip quickly conquered the duchy. Normandy and Anjou were added to the Capetian demesne. Arthur’s young half sister was married to a cousin of King Philip, Peter of Dreux, and Brittany placed in apparently reliable hands.

The Battle of Bouvines

John had no intention of giving up Normandy and Anjou without making an effort to recover them. He promptly set about raising a war chest in England through heavy taxation. He also built up a system of alliances on the continent. The German emperor, Otto of Brunswick, was John’s nephew. Large sums of money went from England to buy the support of the German princes. Then John succeeded in forming an alliance with two of Philip’s vassals, the counts of Flanders and Boulogne. The English king had an excellent plan. Otto, the counts of Flanders and Boulogne, and the German princes were to march against Paris from the north. He himself would land in Poitou with an army and attack from the south. The French king would be caught in a vise and completely crushed.
This was the great crisis of Philip’s reign. Fortunately for him John moved too slowly and was still on the borders of Anjou when Otto moved against Paris. Philip met Otto and completely defeated him in the great battle of Bouvines, and John was forced to make a truce and retire to England. Philip had won the contest against the house of Anjou. John’s successors were to make many attempts to reconquer all or part of their ancient fiefs in France, yet not until the middle of the fourteenth century were these efforts to be seriously dangerous to the French crown. The English kings remained in possession of Bordeaux and Bayonne, but Normandy, Anjou, and a large part of Aquitaine came into the hands of the Capetians.

Although Artois, Normandy, and Anjou were the chief additions made to the royal demesne by Philip Augustus, the foundation for another accretion was laid during his reign. The great county of Toulouse in southern France had become one of the chief centers of the Albigensian heresy. The count of Toulouse and his barons were not heretics, but they sympathized with them and made no effort to support the church’s attempts to suppress them. The strained relations between the count and the church reached the breaking point when a papal legate was slain by one of the count’s retainers. Pope Innocent III preached a crusade against the count and the heretics of his lands and called on King Philip to lead it. The king had no desire to place himself in the peculiar position of at-
tacking a vassal under these circumstances. The great lords of northern France were equally disinclined to be involved in the affair. But Simon de Montfort, whose ancestral lands lay on the borders between France and Normandy and who had lost most of them by being squeezed between John and Philip, undertook the adventure. Supported by knights who sought salvation and profit, Simon conquered Toulouse and was installed as count by the pope. His son Amaury found himself unable to maintain his position and surrendered the great fief to the French crown.

When Philip died in 1223, the French crown was triumphant over its great vassals. Artois, Normandy, and Anjou were part of the royal demesne. The count of Flanders, captured at Bouvines, lay in a royal prison. The effective authority of the English kings in their duchy of Aquitaine was reduced to the environs of Bordeaux and Bayonne. The count of Toulouse was a baron from the Île de France who depended entirely on troops and money from northern France. Of the six great secular vassals of the French crown only the duke of Burgundy and the count of Champagne still maintained their position. Philip had at least tripled the size and resources of the royal demesne and had broken the power of the feudal princes.

The Royal Administration

The demesne of Philip Augustus required far more administrative machinery than had the small duchy of
France. The government of the early Capetian kings had been extremely simple. The officers of the king's household had also managed the affairs of state. The seneschal who had the responsibility for feeding and clothing the court had general supervision over the demesne that supplied the necessary resources. The constable and the marshal cared for the king's horses and commanded his troops in battle. When the king needed advice, these household officers and such vassals as happened to be on hand supplied it. When a case was brought before the king's court, a similar group heard and decided it. The king's interests in the various royal estates were looked after by hereditary officials called provosts, who paid the crown a fixed sum every year and kept whatever else they could collect. As a rule these payments were probably in kind. The king and his court moved about the demesne eating the produce of his estates.

The expansion of the business of the royal court in the reigns of Louis VI and Louis VII brought a new element into the administration, composed usually of clerks in minor orders who had been trained in the law. They sat with the officers of the household and the vassals of the duchy of France in hearing cases of importance, and many lesser cases were probably handled by the clerks alone. These new men were of middle-class origin, and their chief interest was to serve their master the king.

When he increased the extent of his demesne, Philip
Augustus had no desire to appoint additional hereditary provosts. Instead he divided the new territory into districts and placed middle-class administrators called *baillis* in charge of them. These *baillis* were removable at the king’s will, and he changed their districts frequently to prevent them from becoming settled in power. They were expected to pay over everything they collected and in turn received a salary. In certain districts these bourgeois officials could not be used successfully. The soldiers of the day being generally disinclined to obey anyone who was not a knight, it was necessary for the king to have noble agents in regions that required strong garrison forces. Hence the country bordering the duchy of Aquitaine was ruled by seneschals of knightly rank. Both the *baillis* and the seneschals had subordinate officials who aided them in administering their charges. In this way the French crown developed a hierarchy of paid civil servants who were devoted to the interests of the king.

Philip Augustus left the Capetian monarchy firmly established. The next four generations of French kings simply built a rather more imposing structure on the foundations he had laid. It would not be practical to follow their careers in detail, but it is necessary to examine certain important aspects of the history of France during the century following Philip’s death.
Royal Appanages

Philip's son and successor Louis VIII made one important innovation—he started the so-called appanage system to care for his younger sons. This problem of how to support the king's younger sons had troubled the early Capetians very little. Robert, the second Capetian king, had given the duchy of Burgundy to his second son. His successor, Henry I, had married his second son to a rich heiress. Louis VI had used the same device to care for his sons Robert and Peter. No one of these had received any material part of the royal demesne. But Louis VIII had a number of sons to care for and he assigned them important parts of his demesne. One was given Artois, another Anjou, and a third Poitou. This policy has been severely criticized by historians. The royal demesne that had been built up with so much labor was parcelled out once more. A king might be able to rely on his brothers, but could his son trust his cousins or his grandson his second cousins? Actually it seems likely that Louis was merely being realistic. No thirteenth-century government could rule effectively too extended a territory. If they were to be loyal and reasonably honest, the baillis and seneschals needed continual supervision. A count of the royal house actually resident in the district was the best way of supplying this supervision.

Nor did the practice of giving appanages permanently diminish the royal demesne. The county of
Toulouse came into the hands of the crown under the successors of Philip Augustus; and somewhat later Champagne suffered the same fate. The grandson of Louis VIII married the heiress of Champagne and so brought that great fief into the royal demesne. By the end of the thirteenth century all that remained of the six great fiefs once held directly of the crown were the county of Flanders, the duchy of Burgundy, and the remnants of the duchy of Aquitaine. In their place were a number of smaller fiefs held by the cadet branches of the Capetian house—the counties of Artois, Anjou, and Valois and the lordship of Bourbon. The crown steadily encroached on the independence of all the great lords. Feudal custom had always provided that when a lord refused to hear a vassal’s case in his court, the latter could appeal to the overlord. Philip’s grandson, Louis IX, commonly called St. Louis, maintained that the vassal could appeal if he considered the decision unjust. This opened all the great fiefs to the king’s judges and officials. The kings also denied their vassals the right to participate in the election of bishops. Only one fief escaped from this tightening royal control. The Capetian dukes of Brittany, descended from Peter of Dreux, had built up the ducal power and developed an effective feudal state. They were strong enough to defy the kings. No case could be appealed from the duke’s court to the king’s, no royal official could enter Brittany without the duke’s leave, and the duke controlled his ecclesias-
tical benefices as the king did his. In short, Brittany became practically an independent state bound to France only by its duke's homage to the king.

The Royal Administration of Justice

St. Louis and his successors devoted much of their attention to checking the chief curse of most feudal states—private warfare among the nobles. St. Louis hedged private war about with complicated rules that took most of the fun out of it. Before attacking your neighbor you had to give him notice, and you had to ask his relatives whether or not they wanted to be included in the war. If your enemy asked for a truce, you had to grant it. You could not slaughter your foe's peasants or burn their crops. Royal officials stood ready to enforce these rules. Louis' grandson, Philip IV, went even farther. He forbade private war and made it illegal for the nobles to ride about armed. But this was too serious an attack on the privileges of the feudal class and his sons were obliged to abandon this legislation.

During the century following the death of Philip Augustus the French royal administration developed steadily. The little band of professional jurists that had served King Philip grew into the Parlement of Paris, the supreme court of the realm. Most routine cases were handled by these professional judges. Only when noblemen of importance were involved were vassals of the crown called upon to reinforce the court. The
royal administration also developed a financial branch, the *chambre des comptes*. This body received the money due to the king from *baillis* and provosts and kept account of its expenditure. The money revenues of the crown had grown enormously. Philip Augustus had supported his government from feudal obligations, such as reliefs, and from the revenues of his demesne. St. Louis collected regular taxes. They were for the most part income and property taxes levied on the realm as a whole. Usually the king admitted that he could not collect these taxes in the lands of the great lords without their consent. A common device was to offer to split the proceeds between king and lord. In short, by the end of the thirteenth century the Capetian monarchy had a comparatively well-developed central administration supported by taxation as well as the traditional revenues.

*The Church and the State*

The relations between crown and church provide a particularly interesting feature of this period. One issue was the ancient question of episcopal elections. According to the compromise reached in the twelfth century, the cathedral chapters elected the bishop in the presence of the king or his agent. Obviously, unless the king's candidate was outrageously unsuitable, he was elected without any dispute. Then in the thirteenth century the popes began to claim that unless the election by the chapter was unanimous, they had
the final decision. To all intents and purposes this ended the elective power of the chapters and bishops were appointed by the pope. Usually he appointed the royal nominee, but he could always use his power for political bargaining. Another issue was the king's right to tax the clergy and the estates of the church. The kings maintained that the clergy should bear their share of the cost of defending the realm, but the papacy insisted that churchmen could not be taxed without its consent. Here too the matter was usually compromised—the pope gave his consent in return for a *quid pro quo*, often a share of the proceeds.

Shortly after the middle of the thirteenth century the papacy had broken the last fragments of the power of the German emperors in Italy—in fact, with the assistance of other circumstances, it had destroyed the German monarchy. It was almost inevitable that sooner or later a conflict would break out between the triumphant papacy and the dominant power of western Europe, the great Capetian monarchy. In 1294 the cardinals elected to the papal throne an arrogant, ambitious, and determined prelate who took the name of Boniface VIII. The crown of France was worn by Philip IV, who was just as arrogant, just as determined, and far more unscrupulous. Soon king and pope were at bitter feud. The quarrel started with Philip's efforts to remove a bishop. But soon the pope struck at a vital point—the royal power to tax the church. In the bull *Clericiis laicos* he absolutely for-
bade any secular power to tax the clergy without papal consent. Philip replied by stopping all the papal revenues from France. The quarrel was patched up only to break out again in a still more virulent form. An agent of King Philip allied with Roman enemies of Boniface and actually kidnaped the pope. Although he was soon rescued, he died shortly after. Then Philip centered all his power and influence on gaining control of the papacy. In 1305 his partisans elected as pope the archbishop of Bordeaux. The new pope, Clement V, moved the papal court to Avignon, appointed enough French cardinals to give Philip control of the college, and in general obeyed the mandates of the man to whom he owed the papal throne.

The Estates General

The struggle with the papacy led to the creation of a new French political institution—the Estates General. Philip felt the need of showing the pope and the world in general that he had the firm support of his people. Hence, in 1302 he summoned a meeting of representatives of the estates of his realm—nobles, clergy, and townsmen. They gave full support to the king's policy toward the papacy. Philip then decided that this body could be useful for other purposes as well. As will become even more clearly apparent in the case of the English monarchy, the theory of feudal monarchy did not permit a king to levy general taxes without securing the approval of his people in
some form. Philip’s predecessors had used different devices—meetings of representatives of nobles and clergy, bargains with towns, and gatherings of local or provincial estates. The Estates General gave the crown the machinery necessary to do this on a national basis. Thus the Estates General was invented by the king for his own convenience and to strengthen his power. It seems obvious to us that such an institution might become a means of controlling the king, but it is unlikely that such a possibility occurred to Philip. Getting a tax levy always involved a good deal of argument and negotiation with nobles, clergy, and townspeople; through the Estates General it could all be done at once.

The reign of Philip IV saw the French feudal monarchy at its apex. With the exception of the duke of Brittany and the duke of Gascony the great vassals of the crown were definitely under the royal authority. Cases from their courts were appealed to the Parlement at Paris and royal officers freely entered their lands. The lesser nobility had lost their right to private war and were limited in their right to bear arms. The monarchy had developed a complex bureaucracy. Professional financial officers in the chambre des comptes saw to the king’s finances and professional jurists manned his courts. His baillis and their deputies were scattered over the realm. When the king needed an official expression of his people’s support either for his policy or for a tax levy, he could summon an Estates
General. Philip was far from an absolute monarch—no king could be absolute whose right to rule was largely based on his position as feudal suzerain and hence was bound by feudal custom. But some of Philip's servants who had studied Roman law thought of the royal power as similar to that of the Roman emperor and did their best to make that conception a reality. The seeds of the later French monarchy existed in Philip's reign.