THE FEUDAL MONARCHY IN FRANCE AND ENGLAND

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PREFACE

INSTITUTIONS AND INDIVIDUALS

HERE is a book which, among other merits, has that of showing quite clearly how the work of scholarship can finally lead to a good historical synthesis and even to a truly scientific synthesis.

Charles Petit-Dutaillis has collected here the results of scholastic work on the period from the tenth to the thirteenth centuries, a work to which he has himself made important contributions, to which, on certain points, he makes contributions even here. He does not attempt to hide the gaps in our knowledge of facts and he points out those which are particularly serious and urgently need to be made good. Already, however, sufficient has been prepared and it is sufficiently familiar to him for its presentation in a synthesis which is new.

It appears to him that France and England, during the period he has been studying, were in such close communication through the coming and going not only of individuals but of certain elements in the population that the language, in some measure, that the bond of vassalage, the unfixed character of territorial boundaries at a time when the idea of State and national frontiers was just developing (p. 12), that the mutual borrowings, the repercussions of all sorts, and even the conflicts, bound their history so closely together that we are justified or rather forced to attempt a new historical construction and to arrive at a combined history of England and France. He traces the life of two countries which, at this period, lived in such close association, according to a cleverly articulated plan, which while consistently

1 Étude sur la vie et le règne de Louis VIII ; La Deshérélement de Jean sans Terre ; Querimoniae Normannorum ; Studies and Notes supplementary to Stubbs' "Constitutional History", 3 vols.
2 For example: On the frontiers of the kingdom of France, the preparation of the Norman Conquest, on the origin of the institution of the bailiffs, on the peers of France in the thirteenth century; on the process which ended, in France, in the royal ordinance applicable to the whole kingdom.
3 On the gaps in scholarship see, for instance, pp. 157, 308; on the task of scholarship, pp. 241, 242.
4 pp. 154 (The history of England at this period should not be separated by scholars from the history of the Angevin Empire), 372.
PREFACE

bringing them into relationship gives every opportunity to appreciate the differences in their evolution.

There can be no question of summarizing here a volume which the author himself has condensed to the essential minimum in the pages of sober clarity which form his conclusion; a volume full of knowledge in which, however, from beginning to end, the presentation of facts, particulars and hypotheses has been reduced to the minimum essential to appreciating the development of the institutions. We can undoubtedly see here a France and an England built up; we take part in the difficult advance of French unity beginning from the tiny geographical region, France (p. 10), in the formation of an English nation which survived the collapse of the cosmopolitan Anglo-French empire (pp. 108, 112, 178); we realise the full importance of the date 27th July, 1214, Bouvines. But Ch. Petit-Dutaillis is here less anxious to recount than to explain. If "history is more complex and contains more things than it is possible for one historian to know and tell" (p. 85) it is fortunately not necessary for the historian to know everything or, still less, to tell everything in order to produce some valuable generalizations. If we were seeking to astonish our collaborator himself, we would say that he had conceived and produced a volume of sociology—not, of course, a theoretical and abstract but a historical sociology. For what it is, this book falls excellently into its place. Our tasks here, therefore, will be to mark its precise place in the Evolution of Humanity and to show how it conforms to the main purpose of the latter—which is its explanation.

From the beginnings of humanity we have seen a tendency towards unification demonstrated in social forms and political organizations. The most striking examples of this have been the Empires. In the course of centuries we have met the Empires of the East, the Macedonian Empire, and the Roman. The idea and form of Empire was not destroyed in the eclipse of the power of Rome. It continued to appeal to some minds, particularly the minds of the ambitious. For we have similarly seen how the ambitions of individuals fitted in—in a more or less self-centred, more or less noble fashion—with this tendency towards unity which the human masses have displayed, a

1 See, for example, p. 207.
tendency which is itself in part a social instinct, in part due
to the need to "live and grow"1 which frequently reflects both.
When an Empire falls into disintegration—whatever the
cause—when the State is losing its authority in general, when,
over large areas, anarchy is supreme, a social arrangement
tends to establish itself on the basis of the need for protection,
"recommendation"; it is the feudal system, the vassal's
devotion, the suzerain's patronage—which is sporadic order,
a tempered anarchy. Elsewhere, we have studied this regime
of order in disorder; here, we are concerned with the
origins of the order which was imposed on disorder; we have
to follow the progress of a unifying authority. It is a curious
picture provided by this monarchy which established itself
actually within feudalism which, moreover, remained essentially
feudal—as Ch. Petit-Dutaillis has clearly shown—and which
in the natural process of developing its principles went to
the extent of reviving or rediscovering the idea of Empire.
Henry II has been accused of aspiring to universal dominion.
This old dream of the Romans appealed to many men of the
Middle Ages. "The positive and practical spirit of Philip
Augustus was not immune to chimerical dreams of universal
empire." A contemporary says of him that he thought "that
one man was sufficient to govern the world".2 More interesting,
however, than the excesses of these avowed pretensions was
the gradual consolidation of monarchical institutions and the
development of its organs. Our collaborator has made a pene-
trating study of the renaissance of the State which succeeds
in revealing its causes in all their complexity. While he
weaves the institutional into the texture of events—and even
all the better because of this method—he allows the reader to
understand the evolution; that, as we have already said, is
his merit and his art.

We know that the grouping of men into societies involves
certain essential institutions; and that, in some measure,
institutions are regulated by the structure of those societies,
i.e. by their volume and density. From this, results social
laws or what are, in effect at least, social laws.

1 See p. 179.
These essentials are, themselves, born of a fundamental need, of an internal logic which operates amid many contingencies—some favourable, others the contrary—but which also translates and realizes itself in clear ideas. In the process which is to end in the organization of the State, Ch. Petit-Dutaillis distinguishes what he calls "reasons of fact" and the "reasons of a spiritual character"—in other words the material contingencies and the reflected logic.¹

The role of contingency—which, from its character, is necessarily ambiguous—appears here to be very considerable. There is the admission of collective groups—with their ethnic character²: that of individuals—with their abilities or defects, their apathy or their ambition—from which, in such impulsive periods, arises intrigues, manœuvres, traffickings, corruption, treasons, and recantations.³ There is the game of marriages and divorces, of accession to the throne by association or heredity.⁴ There are the general circumstances of politics and religion, the atmosphere common to France and England: Feudalism, Church, and Papacy: circumstances peculiar to France: greater importance of the towns and the bourgeoisie.⁵ There are events which had very distant repercussions; the revolution of 1066, one of the most fundamental changes that has ever transformed a country (p. 374) and, after the conquest of England and the outburst of imperialist megalomania, the defeat of Bouvines.

At the beginning of the period which this book covers we find lordships but no State. The idea of the subject was lost (pp. 12, 302, 310). The king was nothing but a "higher suzerain" at the peak of the "feudal pyramid" (p. 2). Kingship represented a title rather than a power. It did not imply a kingdom; the

¹ p. 64. Opposition of the "needs" and "tendencies" which lead society to "theoretical views"; pp. 368–9. A profound movement which led to the English revolution.
² See, in particular, pp. 53–5, 374 (Normans), 348, 376 (English).
³ See pp. 22, 34, 96, 214 (Philip Augustus' neurosis), 215–16 (cyclothymia of John Lackland), 375 (the misfortune of incompetent and disreputable kings); p. 377 (the luck of having good kings for almost a century); pp. 106, 208, 214, 227, 327 (ambition).
⁴ See pp. 100, 305 (the chance of profitable marriages, profitable unions), 210 (the "Roman events" which interfered in the policy); 373 (the chance of the queen's fertility; the uncertain expedient of association in the throne).
⁵ By a few sober but full pages on Paris, Ch. Petit-Dutaillis makes its history from the twelfth century part of the general history. See pp. 197 ff., 234.
king's personal demesne, in the beginning was "broken up and scattered." The kingdom and the unity of France were built up once more only gradually, particularly by the victories over the English and the Albigensians. The degree of "Civilization", therefore, had no relation to the progress of the monarchy which, for a long time, played no part of moral or intellectual importance (pp. 96, 376).

It remains, however, a fundamental truth that the attributes of this higher suzerain became more and more clearly defined and applied (p. 200) at the same time as the sacred character of the monarchy grew stronger. On the whole, in spite of conflicts, Feudalism and the Church served the cause of the king.

This is particularly true of the Church and in various ways. It was the natural enemy of war, brigandage, and unbridled passions. By tradition and interests, it upheld the authority on which its own position was based.¹ "It believed in the king's mission and propagated on its behalf." (pp. 8, 19). In this way the King of France found a peculiar growth of his prestige which distinguished him "from other mortals", even from the barons themselves.² This "mystery of royalty" linked up with the Carolingian legend and the remembrance of unity in the minds of people and poets.³ In England the Church played the part of a supporter less consistently for "it occasionally figured among the opposition" (p. 72).

But it was not only through an "alliance"⁴ either continuous or intermittent that the Church served the State; it was also, in France and England alike, by the example and influence of its own organization. "It was within the Church that political understanding and the spirit of juridical and administrative organization grew up." "It had everything which the world of laymen lacked as the basis for a political society; . . . it had established methods for the election of delegates, for the conduct of meetings, for preserving written records of the discussion, for the formulation of decisions." It was the "tutor" (pp. 72, 113).

More and more ideas interfere to reinforce circumstances to establish, in its feudal setting, this medieval monarchy with all the essential characteristics which distinguish it from the monarchy of to-day (p. 234). In addition the Normans had

¹ See pp. 23, 120 ff.
² pp. 22, 23, 34, 125.
³ pp. 10, 25, 84.
⁴ See pp. 195, 258. Even in France it had suffered setbacks. pp. 86, 89.
contributed "a certain sense of government"; they had a "legal outlook" (p. 55). The logic (p. 2) which demanded that the feudal pyramid should culminate in "the sovereign" and that anarchy should be remedied by his power finished by becoming conscious in a growing number of brains. "The Capetians of the eleventh and twelfth centuries or those who thought and acted in their name never forgot that the king is the head of the feudal hierarchy even when they were not in a position to gain from their feudal superiority the advantages which potentially it offered" (p. 810–11). The idea that the inhabitants of the kingdom were subjects "slowly re-emerged". Saint Louis even considered that "the king had the right to impose his will on everybody because it was obviously in accordance with the general interest" (p. 308)  

The victory over disorder, selfishness, feuds, and private wars and over the excessive independence of the urban communities—which had been promoted in the first place—had been all but completed by the end of Saint Louis' reign as much by legal and administrative means as by force. The feudal edifice was sapped by the work of ants.  

There can be no question of summarizing here that slow and complex evolution: it is necessary, however, to insist on the parallels and differences which it presented in France and England.

"A prince cannot govern without the assent of his loyal followers."  

The Curia, the Court, an indeterminate institution which, in principle, was the same in both countries is the beginning. It is a Council sometimes restricted, sometimes expanded, which advanced centralization and the division of functions at the same time. All the great organs of the State—administration, justice, finance—are to be found there in embryo (p. 244).  

In the development of an officialdom, the sheriff in England and the Bailiff or seneschal in France, agents of the king and delegates of the Curia, played a part of primary importance and comprised the real basis of government.

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1 On the latent conflict between the dual principles of monarchy and feudalism, see pp. 325–6.
2 See pp. 290–1, 293, 302, 318.
5 On the sheriff, see pp. 129–8; on the bailiff, pp. 184–6, 247–8; on the officials in general, pp. 241, 332, 377, 379.
The "political society" which foreshadowed the State appeared quickly in England, earlier than in France. Ch. Petit-Dutaillis has shown this and explained it clearly. The Norman Conquest found "strong local institutions" which could provide an able prince with the means of action. By a fusion of Anglo-Saxon and Norman elements William and his successors established "the strongest and most experienced government" existing in Europe at the time. "It revived Carolingian practices and, at the same time, by the accuracy of its machinery the roughness of its manners and its appearance inevitably calls to mind the Roman State, or, if you prefer it, the State of to-day." But the Church and Nobility of England took advantage of favourable circumstances to subject the monarchy to a "tragic" crisis. Throughout, however, the latter remained powerful and we are mistaken in believing that the rule of parliament dates from that period. In a convincing interpretation of the revolutions of the thirteenth century both here and elsewhere, Ch. Petit-Dutaillis has proved that the Great Charter was "essentially a victory of the feudal reaction over the progress of an advancing royal administration and an arbitrary system of finance". By the same stroke the middle class achieved a political advance but neither a declaration of rights nor the establishment of a constitutional regime. "The Great Charter has retained a sentimental force which even to-day is not yet extinct... But no permanent system had been created to control the monarchy and prevent abuses" (pp. 370–1).

The French monarchy grew strong more slowly but without the same vital crises; under Louis IX it had achieved an authority and a prestige which was dependent on the king's personality—with his position came the definitive creation of the "religion of the monarchy".

At this point we must insist, with the support of our colleague, on the part played by individuals. He has written somewhere in relation to the constitutional history of England in the Middle Ages: "A false estimation of this history will be made by anyone who neglects the psychological data.

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1 See pp. 36, 39, 45, 46, 47, 51.
2 See pp. 374, 375.
3 Article cited p. 10. Cf. in this volume, pp. 36, 339, 341, 343–4, 347, 372, on the character and results of the successive crises of the thirteenth century which are vigorously summarized here.
There is no reason, because we are dealing with the history of institutions, to fail to depict the men. If we do not succeed in creating a life-like model of the past, the dangers of empty hypothesis multiply indefinitely. ¹ To create a life-like model of the past, to recreate the moral atmosphere (p. 378), to represent adequately mental states (p. 355) has been the task—or the natural tendency—of our colleague. In this book, of which we have emphasized the sociological importance, appear in the light of reality the actions of those individuals who have stimulated or, for the moment, hindered the development of institutions and administrative, financial, and judicial progress (p. 377) who, in a word, have made history.

A work has recently appeared in Germany under the striking title of "Menschen die Geschichte machten" ² which poses, without, however, giving it adequate treatment, one of the most important problems of historical synthesis. In what does the "collective consciousness" of which our sociologists talk consist? It undoubtedly shows itself in the "crowd psychology". ⁴ That is, however, a rare condition—arising particularly from a certain degree of social organization—and, even when it is produced, not all the individuals appear to be conscious of those needs to the same degree or equally affected by those sentiments which are agitating the group. In this book, we can see at work, with varying effectiveness, personalities of widely varying status and nature. There are the great ministers, clerical and lay, ⁵ whose ability and devotion contributed very largely to the advance of the monarchy: there are equally the humbler collaborators.

¹ Pamphlet quoted p. 5.
² Viertausend Jahre Weltgeschichte in Zeit- und Lebensbildern, a collective work published by P. R. Rohden, 2nd ed., two vols. 8vo, Vienna, Seidel and Sons. In spite of several pages of introduction by Fr. Meinecke—on the relations of individuality to the historical medium—this gallery of "famous" men with widely varying claims to fame, of all ages and all countries, pass in rapid, almost cinematographic review, and if it is not lacking in interest it is lacking in any explanatory value. Philippe Augustus, Saint-Louis are treated by W. Kienast (Berlin), vol. i, pp. 451–8; Charles of Anjou by E. Stahmer (Berlin), pp. 494–7; William the Conqueror by M. Weinbaum (Berlin), pp. 395–9; Henry II by A. Cartellieri (Jena), pp. 429–435.
⁴ On "crowd psychology" (état de foule), see Synthèse en histoire, pp. 104–7. Cf. in the same publication "The Crowd" (La Foule) (appearing shortly).
⁵ "Ecclesiastical dignities offered to the villein’s son the opportunity of exercising an influence of primary importance in politics. In the Middle Ages it was the means by which mental ability took its due," p. 78, cf. p. 119.
in the work of economic and political organization, all the new class of officials, lawyers, financiers, bailiffs, holders of various offices, all the "royal agents," but, well to the fore also, there are individual kings and their personal genius. If the early Capetians—with "their changing passions, their infantile fickleness, their boorish ruses, and their inability to follow a consistent line of conduct"—were unable consciously to pursue any end, in that more happy series—Philip Augustus, Louis VIII, Blanche of Castile, and Louis IX—the monarchy was represented for almost a century "by kings and a queen regent who were of very different temperaments but all equally endowed and able who had all consecrated their lives to the realization of their dreams of glory or active holiness." We shall find striking portraits within these pages in great numbers. Frequently a few words, two or three epithets are sufficient to bring the person again to life mentally and even in the flesh. "Men change" and it frequently happens that the development of character is noted; "At this point," says Ch. Petit-Dutaillis about Philip Augustus, "we cannot draw a portrait of this great king which would be valid for his whole reign." (p. 180). Philip in fact changed a great deal during the forty-three years of a troubled reign. In adolescence, "this ill-kempt youth nervous, emotional, subject to sickly fears and hallucinations, nevertheless loved action and hunting and gave little care to his studies... His mother Adelaide of Champagne had given him her intelligence and her love of glory and power." Action, the Crusade, and his journeyings matured him quickly. He returned from Syria "physically worn out, bald, lame, and neurotic," but his "moral strength" gave no signs of breaking (p. 181). Once he was cured "of the neurasthenia he had contracted in the East" he achieved the height of his activity. Then "his energy, stubborn in the accomplishment of his plans, was moderated only by his supple mind and a political wisdom which rarely made a mistake. The springs of his will were bent to an immense ambition" (p. 214): he was obsessed by the

1 pp. 294, 301, 310, 379.  
3 p. 225; cf. p. 84.  
5 William the Bastard at 38 years of age. "This big, bald man with an athlete's arm and a harsh face, whose cold anger roused fear, loved nothing but politics, war, and the chase. He was austere and chaste, and his character, taciturn, deliberate, and obstinate" (p. 50).
dream of uniting the crowns of France and England—who was the obstacle to this? A “maniac”, a “half madman”. John Lackland presented all the symptoms of a disease well known to-day, the periodic psychosis or cyclothymia.¹ What a striking contrast to the portrait of Philip Augustus is provided by this prince burdened with serious hereditary disabilities, unstable and irresponsible, incapable of finishing what he had started!

How many other people will similarly achieve the proportions of life for the readers of this masterly book?² Above all, surely, Saint Louis the “good king” who tried “to establish order and justice on earth and to lead his subjects to the heavens” (p. 426), the great king who, in spite of his “pitying heart” and his exalted devotion, had been brought up in a school of action and had a “firm will” and knew how to “speak very sharply even to bishops”.³ The figure of the man who made the monarchy loved among the French and France honoured throughout the world appears here delicately shaded.⁴ Thorough knowledge blossoms into very sound psychology.

As we have said elsewhere, art is neither essential to history nor useless. It should not be sought after but achieved. It is displayed here equally in the magnificent clarity of explanations and in the penetrating incision of the analyses of character.

HENRI BERR.

¹ In relation to John Lackland and other men of the period, Ch. Petit-Dutaillis in the pamphlet we have quoted, makes this remark: “We must examine, in the uncertain light that is provided for us, what was the temperament and even the physical condition of these men. I believe that in doing this we shall make some startling discoveries” (p. 6). On John Lackland, see pp. 215, 217, 327, below. At the recent Congress of Historical Sciences at Warsaw, Dr. Laignel Lavastine communicated a paper on the cyclothymia of Danton—on these questions see Aug. Bruchet, La Pathologie mentale des rois de France; A. Luchaire, “La Pathologie des Capétiens” in the Journal des Savants, January, 1904; Dr. Cabanes, L’Histoire claireée par la clinique (full bibliography).

² pp. 24, Robert the Pious; 76, Philip I; 77, Louis the Fat; 106, 180, Louis VII and Eleanor of Aquitaine (the “tireless”, 213, the “energetic” 221, the “imperious” Eleanor 260); 269 Alphonse de Poitiers; 270–1, 311 Charles of Anjou. 106, Geoffrey Plantagenet; 106–110, 137, Henry II, the “lawyer King”; 163 and Richard Cœur de Lion; 85, Gregory VII; 208–9 Innocent III; 207 the Emperor Henry VI; 78, Suger; 94, Etienne de Garlande; 119–120 John of Salisbury; 146 Thomas Beckett; 343, 363, 367–8, Simon de Montfort; 364 Stephen Langton.

³ pp. 209, 261–2. On the admirable energy with which Louis IX was concerned with business until his last moments, see in the Mélanges Jorga, pp. 139, 146, L. Bréhier, “Une ambassade byzantine au camp de Saint Louis devant Tunis.”

THE FEUDAL MONARCHY IN FRANCE AND ENGLAND FROM THE TENTH TO THE THIRTEENTH CENTURY

INTRODUCTION

The object of this book is to show how the monarchy was preserved and developed, in France and England, in a period when the reorganization of political society into seignorial and feudal forms seemed to be condemning it to destruction. We have not sought to trace once more all the political history of France and England from the tenth to the thirteenth century; in an epoch when the annals of the royal house, at least in France, are often more scanty and less interesting than those of some Duchy or County, we have, nevertheless, devoted our attention to them alone. The causes, material and moral, for its weakness in the time of an Edward the Confessor or a Hugh Capet, the conditions which have enabled it to persist and expand, the machinery it has established, profiting by the very principles of Feudalism itself, the failure of the attempts made in England to impose upon it an aristocratic control, these are the problems we have tried to explain.

Feudalism in the West was born spontaneously under a diversity of forms.\(^1\) It appeared, above all, in those areas where anarchy had produced the system of lordship. The springs of the new social order grew swollen in the disorder and misery of the tenth century and burst forth with an irresistible force offering to men some means of continued existence. But Feudalism was not a temporary expedient: it had had a long life. During the centuries that we are studying, above all during the twelfth and thirteenth, its sentimental inspiration was extremely powerful. Personal devotion, loyalty, the vassals’ spirit of sacrifice, the suzerain’s patronage, were the deep and lasting foundations of this organization.

\(^1\) Remember that the establishment of a truly feudal regime was only slowly achieved during the course of the period we are here studying. See further, pp. 13 and 82 below.
which was replacing the state in decline. Seignorial exploitation of the land, municipal liberties won by a mercantile class which, in some cases, made a “collective lord” of the greater men of the town assured this new society of an adequate and rapidly advancing economic life. Finally the jurists found means to co-ordinate and systematize the practices of the administration. At the end of the period we are reviewing, Beaumanoir’s *Coutumes de Beauvaisis*, to speak of France alone, express a doctrine making the maintenance of civilization dependent on a respect for the mutual obligations which bind lord and vassal, the observance of the traditional customs of old and the new laws made in the feudal court. To read them it might be supposed that the idea of the State was obscured in men’s minds for long years to come. And yet, Saint Louis could command obedience even to the extent of forbidding the wearing of arms and, according to Beaumanoir himself, could issue general ordinances. In England, for a century already, the monarchy had been provided with all the instruments of government and the barons had been unsuccessful in their attempts to prevent its progress. This simultaneous growth of two political systems, one of which was beginning to strangle the other, was due to such matters of fact as the conquest of England by the Normans, the victories of Philip Augustus, and the genius of individual statesmen; but at the same time reasons of a spiritual character also played their part. In the first place, in proportion as the feudal regime became systematized, logic demanded a recognition that the pyramid had a summit; the hierarchy ends in the monarch whom Beaumanoir calls sovereign over all: the kings will turn to the development of this principle and sooner or later will reap all its consequences. The Feudal System includes a king.

On the other hand the Church, that is to say the thinkers and writers, the preachers and teachers, who made up a large part of the personnel of the royal administration and councils—the Church preserved and developed the political doctrines of classical authors, the fathers and the theoreticians of the Carolingian age. It was essential for it to have a public authority which could help it in its work of salvation. Monarchy would not be necessary if man were virtuous; but to help the priest to destroy the tyranny of sin there
must be kings. The experience of past centuries had gone to prove this fact. Custom and the mutual obligations of lord and man could not replace the state. This inability to guarantee an assured and permanent society had been clearly shown. From the feudal regime emerged war, brigandage, the brutal satisfaction of passions, and the ruin of souls. As a result, the Church believed in the divine mission of kings and taught its belief.

The attention it had devoted to inventing consecration, the consecration oath, the royal healing powers, and in helping to build administrative institutions was repaid, at the end of the period we are going to study, by the appearance of St. Louis. In the thirteenth century the monarchy in France and England was a powerful force in a feudal order which it began, more or less consciously, to destroy. It was equipped with officials, an army, finances, a system of justice and of police. It was popular: the mystery of kingship had been created. We shall examine under what conditions and by what men.
BOOK ONE
THE MONARCHY IN FRANCE AND ENGLAND
FROM THE END OF THE TENTH CENTURY TO
THE CREATION OF THE ANGEVIN EMPIRE