

The Great Dukes of Burgundy

A War Meant to Last

The Valois and the 100 Years War

In 1328, after the Capetian dynasty came to an end, Philippe VI ascended the throne. This prince, from a younger branch of the royal family, was the first King of France from the Valois family line. His ascent was the beginning of a French-English conflict that broke out in 1337 and lasted more than a century. Through this conflict known as “The Hundred Years War,” the King of England contested Phillip of Valois’ claim to the French crown because of his own family lineage with the Capetians.

The war began badly for the French, defeated at Ecluse in 1340, then at Crécy in 1346.

Following the death of Philippe VI in 1350, his son John II the Good came to the throne. During his reign, the kingdom experienced a period of great difficulties. King John the Good reactivated the war, was defeated and captured by the English at Poitiers on September 19, 1356.

During his captivity, an unprecedented political, financial, and social crisis shook the country. In 1360, the royal government was forced to sign the Treaty of Brétigny with the King of England, giving him a third of the kingdom, and to pay a ransom of three million ecus to free King John the Good. At the same time, bands of unemployed warriors known as the Great Countries pillaged the countryside and extorted sums of money from the towns.

Once liberated, King John the Good took action to reestablish his authority by assigning his power to princes who had been granted large principalities, or feudal estates. Among these princes was his youngest son, Phillip the Bold.

Philippe the Bold – 1363-1404

A Royal Gift and a Good Marriage

The Beginning of Burgundy Power

In November 1361, Philip of Rouvres, last Duke of Burgundy from a younger branch of the Capetians, and victim of the plague, died without leaving any direct descendants.

King John the Good, who did not want the Duchy of Burgundy to become a pawn in the quarrels of succession, proclaimed that his next closest blood relative would inherit the Duchy from the deceased duke. Returning the Duchy to the domain of the crown, the King made his Grand Entrance in Dijon,

distributed gifts and privileges before conferring the ducal government to a governor.

From the start, this situation held little satisfaction for the Burgundy nobility and would not last. In September 1363, King John the Good conceded the dukedom of Burgundy to his youngest son, Philip and gave him the last name “Bold” that recalled his courage at the battle at Poitiers. Royal documents made Philip the new Duke of Burgundy and gave to him seniority over his French peers.

With the death of King John the Good (1364), his oldest son and successor, Charles V (1364-1380) confirmed the gift of the Duchy of Burgundy to his young brother Philip by solemn oath on June 2, 1364. Five years later, Charles V reinforced both Philip’s political position and his power by negotiating a favorable marriage for him.

Louis of Male, Count of Flanders, was head of a rich principality that was part of France but tied rightly to England through economic interests. He was in negotiations with King Edward III to marry his only child and next in line of succession, Margaret of Male, to an English prince. To prevent a union that would swing Flanders to the enemy camp, King Charles V made an offer to Count Louis for the marriage of Margaret to the Duke of Burgundy, Philip the Bold.

The Country of Imperial Highness the Duke

The Territorial Expansion under Philip the Bold

The concession of the Burgundy Duchy by King John the Good to his son Philip the Bold in 1363 offered the prince a solid, territorial seat; his marriage to Margaret of Male in 1369 opened opportunities of expansion to him.

But it was only in 1384, with the death of his father-in-law, Louis of Male, that the Duke of Burgundy was able to take possession, in the name of his wife, of an abundant inheritance, comprising the earldoms of Burgundy (Franche-Comté), Nevers, Rethel, Artois, and of Flandry, made up of Gallic Flanders (the castle lands of Lille, Douai, and Orchies).

From this time, then, the Burgundy territory was made up of two groups of nobility: to the south were the two Burgundys (Dukedom and Earldom), and the Earldom of Nevers, to which was added the Earldom of Charolais, bought in 1390, and to the north, the Earldoms of Artois and Flanders.

The “Saint Denis” of Ducal Descendants

The Chartreuse of Champmol, Place of Worship and Burial

In 1386, with agreement from Pope Clement VII, Duke Philip the Bold founded Champmol, a Carthusian convent built near Dijon. The following year, he declared in his will that Champmol was to be his place of burial.

From this time forward, the dynastic vocation of Champmol was affirmed: in 1391, the Duke and Duchess buried a son, Charles, who died in early infancy. In 1404, when Philip the Bold died in Hal, south of Brussels, his body was transferred to Champmol for burial. The body of his son, Fearless John, assassinated at Montereau in September 1419, was transported in June 1420 for burial there. Four years later, when Margaret of Bavaria, wife of Fearless John died, she was buried at her husband’s side. Philip the Good, who died in Bruges in June 1467, was temporarily buried at the school Saint-Donatien until 1474, when Charles the Rash brought his father’s body from Bruges to Champmol; the body of his mother, Isabelle of Portugal, who died in 1471 and had been buried in the convent of Gosnay, was transferred at the same time.

Home to the Dukes’ family burial vaults, the convent of Champmol was also a place of cultural and artistic radiance. During his sovereignty, Philip the Bold spent considerable sums -- some 160,000 gold francs, to decorate his convent and church with remarkable works of art. He brought sculptors Jean of Marville, Claus Sluter and Claus of Verve, and the painters Jean de Beaufort, Jean Malouel, Melcoir Broderlarm to work at this stone yard.

The Burgundy Court – Political Instrument

Luxury and Showiness

The Burgundy Court was made up of many concentric circles that revolved around the Duke.

Nearest to him were his relatives, his wife and children, including his illegitimate children, the young princes of the family, his cousins and nephews. The next circle comprised representatives of the high court nobility, connected to the prince through multiple ties.

There also existed an institution called “hotel,” or mansion, created to enhance, at any cost, the daily life of the prince and members of his family. Initially, the mansion featured six offices of specialized personnel: a bread-pantry keeper, cupbearer, cook, orchard keeper, stableman and blacksmith. To this was added a hunt and falcon staff. From there, other groups of servants appeared:

chamberlains, butlers, footmen, carvers, doormen, sergeants of arms, bowmen, trumpeters, fiddlers and court jesters. At the time of Philip the Good, this entourage represented 700 to 800 people.

The court and the mansion played an essential role in the political prestige of the Dukes of Burgundy: the luxurious clothes, the animals for riding, the arms, the interior furnishings of the residences, the abundance of food and drink, the opulence and great expense of the parties and ceremonies, in effect, demonstrated a power meant to reassure the princes' supporters and intimidate his enemies.

The King is Mad!

The Madness of Charles VI and the Princes' Rivalries

At the end of 1380, when his nephew Charles VI came to power, Philip the Bold played a major role at the center of government, not hesitating to use royal resources for his own political gain. But in 1388, when the King reached the age of 20, he broke away from the guardianship of his uncle from Burgundy and began to govern on his own.

However, four years later, in 1392, Charles VI fell victim to a crisis of dementia that bode ill for the future. The reoccurrence of such episodes created an absence of power at the head of the state, allowing Duke Philip the Bold, aided by his brother John, Duke of Berry, to restore his political influence and seize control of the government.

Almost immediately, his power caused division. At the end of 1400-1401, he faced opposition from his nephew and rival, Louis, Duke of Orleans, younger brother of the King. Louis, in effect, preached a politic whose main message --- reinforcing the royal state, enlarging fiscal powers, reactivating the war with England, and supporting the Pope of Avignon, Benoit XIII, was diametrically opposed by defenders of the Duke of Burgundy.

John the Fearless – 1404-1419

Born in Dijon on May 28, 1371, John was the oldest son of Philip the Bold and Margaret of Male.

In 1384, as prince in line of succession, he was given the title of Count of Nevers that he held until 1404. In April 1385, he married Margaret of Bavaria, daughter of Albrecht of Bavaria, Count of Hainaut (Belgium), Holland and Zeeland. Their marriage produced eight children.

From the time of his marriage, John the Fearless was given the role of managing partner alongside his father: he was invested as assistant commander in the absence of the Duke and was also involved in negotiations

with the states of Burgundy and the Four Members of Flanders (the deputies of Gand, Bruges, Ypres and the French of Bruges) to raise taxes.

In 1396, he became head of a contingency group of French crusaders that Philip the Bold had overseen and was sent to help Sigismond of Luxembourg, King of Hungary, menaced by the advance of the Ottoman Turks in the Danube Valley.

Captured in the terrible defeat of Nicopolis (September 25, 1396), John the Fearless was liberated for a ransom of 200,000 ducats in 1398. Upon his return to France, he was treated like a hero and basked in the glow that radiated from the Crusades.

From 1398 until his father died in 1404, he faithfully conducted his political affairs and enjoyed a high public regard. Christine of Pizan wrote to him that he was “a just prince, charitable and sweet.”

The Prince and the Artists

The Patronages from the Dukes of Burgundy

At the time of Philip the Bold, intense artistic activity at the convent of Champmol and at the princely residences was sustained by work orders from the dukes.

Sculptors and painters worked diligently from their workshops at the ducal stone yards, and certain artists were engaged and retained for their services by the prince.

Among the sculptors, the best known were Claus Sluter, Claus de Verve, Jean de la Huerta and Antoine le Moiturier, who worked, for the most part, on creating the tombs of the two first Dukes of Burgundy-Valois.

As for the painters, craftsman Melchoir Broederlam and Jean Malouel worked in the convent yards under Philip the Bold and John the Fearless. Jean Van Eyck, in the service of John of Bavaria, uncle of Philip the Good, became future butler and painter to John the Fearless and received commissions from important court nobles such as Chancellor Nicolas Rolin. The native-born Tournai artist Rogier Van der Weyden, painter living in Brussels, worked also for the Duke of Burgundy and for members of his court, such as Chancellor Rolin, bishop of Tournai Jean Chevot, ducal Board President, or Pierre Bladelin, man of finances and ducal counselor.

The dukes also commissioned painters like Simon Marmion, Guillaume Vrelant and Loyset Liédet.

A Wolf at the Door

Death Blow Against the Orleans Faction

Soon after his ascension, John the Fearless ran into conflict with his cousin Louis, Duke of Orleans, who profited from the death of Philip the Bold (1404) by reinforcing his control on the government and on the treasury.

Practically excluded from power, the Duke of Burgundy decided to settle the matter using violence. On November 23, 1407, armed men under his orders assassinated Louis, his rival, in broad daylight in Paris. In early 1408, John the Fearless returned to Paris in full force, intent on justifying his act, defined as “tyranny” by Doctor of Theology Jean Petit, a university staff in the hire of the Duke of Orleans.

After this political triumph, he earned another on the battlefield by wiping out Lieges forces at Othée (September 23, 1408), an expedition organized to help his brother-in-law, John of Bavaria, “Elect of Liège.” This victory further strengthened his position.

Back in France, and appearing to have reconciled with the Duke of Orleans’ heirs through the Peace Treaty of Chartres (March 1409), John the Fearless once again took his power to Paris. But his actions instigated opposition from other French princes who, at the initiative of Jean, Duke of Berry, organized the League of Ghent (1410).

Civil war between the Burgundians and Armagnacs began soon thereafter: it escalated to military action, interrupting a peace solemnly proclaimed but never respected (Bicêtre, in 1410, Auxerre in 1412, Pontoise in 1413, Arras in 1414).

A Time of Disasters

From the Battle of Agincourt to the Murder at Montereau

The effects of civil war, launched in 1410, were rapidly aggravated by the English war. The Armagnacs and Burgundians called the English to their aide, round after round, since they themselves witnessed the weakening of royal French power, prompting them to restart the war. King Henry V of Lancaster (1414-1422) took the offensive in reclaiming the crown of France.

Crushing the French at Agincourt on October 25, 1415, King Henry V then began his conquest of the Normandy Duchy. In 1418-1419, he was threatening Paris, where the Duke of Burgundy John the Fearless had just regained power after having driven out his Armagnac enemies.

In July 1419, fearing impending danger from the English, the Dauphin Charles (future King Charles VII), head of the opposition party, approached the Duke and offered reconciliation. But, despite a peace treaty, supporters of the Dauphin, desiring vengeance for the murder of the Duke of Orleans, lured John the Fearless into an ambush and assassinated him on the Montereau bridge (September 10, 1419).

Philip the Good – 1404-1467

Between Lilies and Lions

The Early Years of Duke Philip the Good

Philip the Good, son of John the Fearless and Margaret of Bavaria, inherited the property and political ambitions of his father after Fearless John's murder at Montereau.

Faced with political reality and the desire to avenge his father's death, Philip the Good chose to ally himself with the English against the Dauphin Charles and the Armagnacs. To that end, he was one of the authors of the Treaty of Troyes in May 1420, having been disinherited by the Dauphin and warning that Henry V and his descendants would succeed Charles VI on the throne of France.

For fifteen years, Philip the Good was faithful to the English alliance, even marrying, in 1423, his sister Anne of Burgundy to John, Duke of Bedford, Regent of France for King Henry VI, son and successor of Henry V.

A Great Reconciliation

The Treaty of Arras of 1435

From the beginning of the 1430s, the English alliance that had allowed Burgundy to recover from the dramatic situation caused by John the Fearless' assassination now became a heavy weight.

The turning point was marked, certainly, by the episode of Joan of Arc (1429-1430). The English, until then victorious on the battlefields, began to experience a turning tide. Philip the Good, himself in difficulty, decided to strike a separate peace with French King Charles VII.

Such was the intent of the sealed treaty at Arras in September 1435, authorizing the political, military and diplomatic autonomy of the Duke of Burgundy. However, it kept his principalities situated in the Kingdom of France under the sovereignty of the king, even though Philip the Good was exempted from paying homage to Charles VII.

In addition, the treaty took into consideration all the anticipated spiritual, material, and financial repairs due the House of Burgundy resulting from the murder at Montereau, even as the King agreed to important territorial surrender that would benefit Philip the Good: the Mâcons, the Auxerres, the Boulons, Ponthieu, Péronne, Amontdidier, and the cities of the Somme: Amiens, Corbie, Doullens.

The Golden Fleece

An Order of Burgundy Knighthood

In January 1430, on the occasion of his marriage to Isabelle of Portugal, Duke Philip the Good founded an order of chivalry whose members were originally chosen from the inner folds of Burgundy Court nobility. They wore an ornate necklace with a pendant representing the fleece of a golden ram, alluding to Jason and his Argonauts.

In the early days, the order was purely a knighthood of Burgundy: the top 24 knights were all counselors of the Duke, and were tied to him through personal, brotherly and political means; the obligation of belonging served to reinforce ties of loyalty and submission that already united them to their prince.

However, the Dukes of Burgundy soon thereafter wanted to use the order of knighthood as a diplomatic instrument, offering the Golden Fleece necklace to nobles and foreign princes with whom they were seeking an alliance. And so, in 1440, Philip the Good brought into the order the Dukes of Orleans, Brittany, Alençon, and the Count of Commynes; in 1445, he presented the necklace to Alphonse V of Aragon. In 1468, his son, Charles the Rash, married Margaret of York, sister of Edward IV, King of England, who asked to be admitted to the Golden Fleece Order of Knighthood, in exchange for Charles becoming a Knight of the Garter, the English Order.

Writers, Poets and Historians

Literature at the Dukes' Courts

The Burgundy Court provided a wide expanse for literary creation. The Dukes were not only readers, but they also commissioned and dedicated various works of literature. In their libraries that contained many hundreds of manuscripts were represented all categories of medieval culture: religious treatises, didactics, moral tales, ancient works or those inspired by antiquity, novels, and tales of travel.

From the time of Philip the Bold, certain celebrated authors, like Philippe of Mezières and Christine of Pizan, first woman writer to live by the pen, composed works specifically for the Duke. Soon, the princes hired writers and poets for their services, like Picardy native John Wauguelin, translator, compiler, and author of novels who worked for Philip the Good, and the Portuguese Vasque de Lucène, one of the disseminators of humanist culture, who served at the court of Charles the Rash.

The Dukes also encouraged the writing of history beyond the editing or translation of regional chronicles (Flanders Chronicle, Brabant Chronicle, Hainaut Chronicle). They commissioned the writing of an official history from 1455 by the Flemish chronicler Georges Chastellain, who was succeeded by his disciple Jean Molinet from Boulogne in 1475. Moreover, some of the dukes' servants, the Golden Fleece King of Arms Jean Lefèvre de Saint Rémy, or the

steward and counselor Olivier de La Marche, wrote up their own histories to glorify their masters.

The Land of Promise

Territorial Expansion and Prosperity of Burgundy

Philip the Good was a great amasser of land. Beginning in 1421, he bought Namur County. In 1430, he inherited the Duchies of Brabant and Limbourg from his cousin Philip of Saint Paul. In 1433, through the Treaty of Delft, he was acknowledged as Count of Hainaut, Holland, and Zeeland. In 1435, thanks to the Treaty of Arras, he acquired all of Picardy. In 1443, he inherited the Luxembourg Duchy from his aunt Elizabeth of Görlitz.

At the end of his sovereignty, the Duke of Burgundy controlled the total territory of the great secular principalities of the Netherlands. The clerical principalities, comprising the great and powerful Episcopal principality of Liège, were also placed under his sphere of influence since the Burgundians had retaken them by force many times over the years.

The “Netherlands Burgundy,” where Philip the Good’s authority extended, contributed to an important part of his wealth. Because of its great economic impact on the Duke, the land was called “the Promised Land” by economic advisor Philippe of Comynes.

There, large prosperous cities, notably Bruges and Anvers, served as crossroads of international commerce. The counties of Flanders, Brabant, Holland, with their production of textiles, were in direct contact with England, Scotland, the Baltic countries, Italy and the Iberian Peninsula. Important metallurgic activity was also well developed in these regions.

The large cities, moreover, were where court or nobility resided, ducal officers and a cliental of wealthy citizens gathered, and craftsmen of luxury goods, jewelry, gold, and tapestries prospered.

Fighting the Grand Turks

The Dukes of Burgundy and the Conceit of a Crusade

Towards the end of the 14th century, the Burgundy Court was one of the main centers involved with promoting a Crusade to the Holy Land.

John, Count of Nevers, future Duke John the Fearless, was the unfortunate hero of the expedition launched in 1436 against the Ottoman Turks that ended with the bloody defeat of Nicopolis. In spite of this disaster, the prince of the House of Burgundy continued to set his sights on a Crusade.

Philip the Good, in particular, was fixated on the Holy Land and went to great lengths to obtain information about these distant lands: he dispatched scouts and spies like Ghillebert de Lannoy and Bertrandon de la Broquière who brought him detailed reports of their missions. Between 1425 and 1445, he sent expedition armies to the eastern Mediterranean and the Black Sea.

From the end of the 1440s, calls to join the Crusade, launched by the Pope, began to reverberate at Burgundy Court, but it was only after the fall of Constantinople to the Turks in July 1453 that Duke Philip the Good vowed to join the Crusade. On February 17, 1454, he organized the celebrated “Pheasant Banquet,” a spectacular party of luxury and exuberance that produced the greatest response stemming from the Duke’s decision.

However, this initiative had no immediate result; it was only in 1464 that a Burgundy flotilla was sent to the Mediterranean to take part in Pope Pie II’s Crusade, whose death then aborted the mission.

Charles the Rash – 1467-1477

A New Duke

The Early Years of Charles the Rash

Born in Dijon November 11, 1433, Charles the Rash was the son of Philip the Good and his third wife, Isabelle of Portugal.

As prince in line of succession, he held the title Count Charolais. Having received a well-tailored education, he took on his first political responsibilities as lieutenant general in 1454-1455, governing Burgundy County in his father’s absence while he attended the Empire Diet in Ratisbonne. But two years later, Charles conflicted with the Duke, who he felt was too submissive to Croy family influences. The hostility between the Duke and his son lasted many years.

But finally, a reckoning took place and from 1465, Philip the Good delegated general powers to Count Charolais. It was then that he joined the League of Public Good, formed by French princes against Louis XI. In the war that followed, he commanded the Burgundy army and fought the King of France until the indecisive battle at Montlhéry (July 1465). In 1466 and 1467, he intervened militarily to maintain under Burgundy influence the turbulent principality of Liège. After having destroyed the city of Dinant, he set up a Burgundy protectorate over Liège.

The Lion and the Fox

The Contest Against Louis XI

Becoming Duke after the death of his father (June 1467), Charles the Rash entered into political hostilities with the King of France. He reinforced, first of

all, his ties with the King of England, Edward IV of York, who had married his sister, Margaret, in 1468. He profited from the favorable circumstances by sequestering Louis XI at Péronne, forcing him to sign a humiliating treaty and to help repress a new revolt by Liège forces (October 1468).

Then, between 1470 and 1475, Charles the Rash led a series of military actions, interrupted by truces and diplomatic maneuvers destined to assure control of Picardy and to protect the borders of his lands against French raids. This period of hostility ended with the Truce of Soleuvre (November 1475) that certified Burgundy as an independent state.

A New Alexander?

Territorial Expansion and Imperial Ambitions

At the time of Charles the Rash, at least half of the ducal principalities were in imperial instability: the duchies of Brabant, Limbourg, and Luxembourg, the counties of Holland, Zealand, and Namur, as well as the Burgundy County (Franche-Comté).

Since the beginning of his reign, the Duke had wanted to not only extend his influence as far as the Holy Empire, but to also obtain from Emperor Frederick III a royal title and a direct alliance with the House of Hapsburg.

He involved himself also in controlling strategic points in the Rhine Valley. In 1469, he purchased the High Alsace and the Black Forest from Sigismund of Hapsburg, Count of Tyrol.

In 1473, he conquered the Duchy of Gueldre and added it to his principality. The same year, he again met Frederick III at Trèves, hoping to receive a royal title, and showing his sincerity by offering, to this King of the Holy Empire, the marriage of his only daughter, Mary of Burgundy, to Maximilian of Hapsburg, only son of the Emperor.

Despite the pomp deployed by the Duke of Burgundy and the seductive possibilities of a Burgundy-Hapsburg alliance, the meeting at Trèves was a failure.

A State is Born

New Institutions from the State of Burgundy

Beginning in 1470, Charles the Rash took on the great challenge of institutional reform.

Between 1471 and 1473, he created a permanent army on the model of regulated French companies. He tried, at the same time, to impose on his

subjects the concept of permanent funding, but it was met with strong resistance. In 1473, he reinforced administrative and judicial centralization of his countries through creation of a Chamber of Audits (Accounting Office) and a Parliament, suitable for the uniformity of Netherlands-Burgundy that he established at Malines.

The creation of a Parliament was, in particular, an act of top political significance, inseparable from his ambitions as builder of a Royal State with the Kingdom of France, and from his plan to integrate with the Holy Empire.

A German Quarrel – A Quarrel Among Germans

Burgundy Wars

After the failure of the marriage proposal at Trèves in 1473, Charles the Rash imposed himself by force upon the Holy Empire, launching a ruptured military intervention in 1474-1475 in the bishopric of Cologne (siege of Neuss), and instigating a powerful coalition against him, which united the Rhineland cities, the Count of Tyrol, the Duke of Lorraine, the Swiss Confederates, and their allies.

In 1475, to put down this coalition, he launched a series of wars with disastrous consequences. After conquering Lorraine, he attacked the Swiss, but they were a military power the Duke of Burgundy had greatly underestimated.

To help his ally, the Duchess of Savoy, Charles the Rash invaded the County of Walden (Vaud), where the Swiss Confederates attacked his troops. The Rash suffered a crushing defeat before the town of Grandson on March 2, 1476. In the overthrow, he lost his camp and all supplies, leaving fabulous spoils to the enemy. Reorganizing his army near Lausanne, he attacked once again and was newly defeated outside the city walls of Morat on June 22, 1476.

The Great Scare of Burgundy

The Death of Charles the Rash

His defeats at Grandson and Morat surprised all of Europe

The Duke of Burgundy's allies, like the Duchess of Savoy and the Duke of Milan, abandoned him with such force that King Louis XI could now take advantage of his enemy's weakness.

At the same time, the Duchy of Lorraine, conquered by Charles the Rash in 1475, revolted against Burgundy domination. He decided to retake control as soon as possible so roads that united his northern counties with the two Burgundy counties could remain open. He began his campaign in the autumn of 1476 and by the start of the winter, was striking the walls of Nancy. Duke

René II of Lorraine, who the Rash had chased from his lands, returned there with an army reinforced by soldiers recruited in Switzerland.

On January 4, 1477, Duke René attacked the Burgundy forces that had been reduced over the months by famine, cold and desertion. The battle was brief but very violent: the Duke of Burgundy's troops were overthrown, the Duke himself captured and killed. His body, unclothed and mutilated, was found on a battlefield two days later.

A Fox in the Henhouse

Louis XI and the Succession of Dukes

At the announcement of the death of Charles the Rash, King Louis XI took immediate military measures. Without considering the rights of Mary of Burgundy, only daughter and heir of the Duke of Burgundy, he seized the Duchy of Burgundy with the help of his troops. Declaring royal privilege that did not permit succession of power through female lines, he declared the Duchy once again part of the French crown. The king also occupied Franche-Comté, a measure undertaken to safeguard his territory.

To the north, his armies seized the counties of Boulogne and Artois, launching invasions even in the county of Hainaut; they were able, almost immediately, to seize the remaining Burgundy holdings.

All is Settled by a Marriage and a Burial

Mary of Burgundy and Maximilian of Hapsburg

At the death of her father, Mary of Burgundy found herself in a dangerous situation: not only did the King of France attempt to wrest, one by one, her territorial possessions, but even her Netherlands-Burgundy subjects revolted against her authority, forcing her to agree to the Great License (February 1477) that canceled the centralized reforms undertaken by Charles the Rash, and reestablished the rights, abolished earlier by the Duke, of the urban communities.

In double peril, Duchess Mary accepted the advice of her mother-in-law Margaret of York, third wife and widow of Rash, and the proposal of marriage that her father had instigated with Maximilian I of Hapsburg, Archduke of Austria, son of Emperor Frederick III.

The celebration of this marriage, uniting the House of Burgundy with the House of Hapsburg, was one of the major diplomatic checks against Louis XI.

The birth in June 1478 of Philip of Hapsburg, oldest son of Maximilian and Mary (the future Philip the Handsome, Archduke of Austria and King of Castile), assured continuation of the dynasty.

This prince, both Austrian and Burgundian by birth, married the Infanta Jeanne in 1496, heir of the kingdoms of Castile and Aragon. From their union was born Charles the Fifth.

The question of rightful ownership of Burgundy was decided by the treaties of Arras (1482) and Senlis (1493), which left only the Duchies of Burgundy and Picardy in the hands of the King of France. Franche-Comté, Artois, Flanders, Hainaut, Brabant, Luxembourg, Holland and Zeeland remained with the House of Hapsburg-Burgundy.

Translation by Peggy Linrud
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