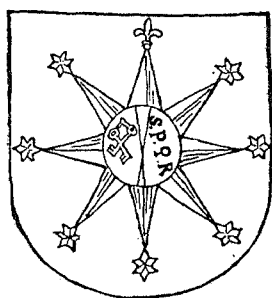


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A KING OF FRANCE UNNAMED IN HISTORY

BY
CHARLES EDWARD CHENEY



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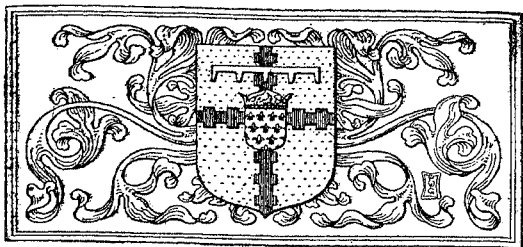
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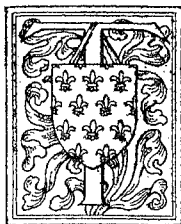
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The following pages are the result of researches outside of the beaten paths of mediæval history. The mysterious career of Giannino of Siena, who claimed to be John I. of France, has stimulated the curiosity of European scholars, and elicited several monographs in both French and Italian. If, however, it has hitherto been narrated in English, the fact has escaped the investigations of the present writer. His grateful acknowledgments are due to friends in Rome and Paris for valuable assistance, to the Rev. William Fairley, D.D., Ph.D., for translations from mediæval Latin, and especially to Mr. Frederick W. Gookin, secretary of the Chicago Literary Club, for helpful suggestions and unwearying care in passing the work through the press.

C. E. C.



A KING OF FRANCE UNNAMED IN HISTORY



THE glory of the old Tuscan city of Siena is the campanile which bears the name of the Mangia. Towering skyward with needle-like slenderness, it seems as it nears its full height to expand as the tulip blossoms on its graceful stem, and bears aloft, like the stamen of the flower, the sacred bell of the republic. For more than five hundred years has that brazen voice pealed on the ears of the Siennese. In mediæval times its sonorous notes were associated with every phase and mood of the turbulent town. It was the great bell which summoned the citizens to war, rang out their joy in victory, and tolled forth their mourning in disaster.

But when at high noon on the eighteenth day of October, in the year of grace 1359, the echoes of Siena were awakened by twelve strokes of the bell of the Mangia, there was none so ignorant as to mistake the meaning of the summons. It was the signal that the Seignory,* the supreme legislature of the republic, was about to meet in solemn session. The legal title of the body bespoke what place the great bell, at the call of which it assembled, held in the hearts of the people—for this Siennese Senate was known as "The Council of the Bell." †

That assembly was the resultant product of innumerable revolutions—the final governmental structure in which the Siennese had taken refuge when the storms of their own fury had swept away its many predecessors. For singularly capricious and fickle as was the populace of all the Italian cities of the Middle Ages, no other of them had known such changes and inconsistencies as marked the story of Siena. ‡ It is difficult to draw one thread of definite historic truth out of the confused tangle of dissension and bloodshed, when in less than half a year five revolutions convulsed the city. We only know that when the Coun-

* *Chroniques Sienneses*: Introduction par le Duc de Dino, p. 9.

† See Appendix V.

‡ Siena, art. *Encyc. Brit.*, Cesare Paoli.

cil of the Bell assembled on that October day, it was equally independent of the nobility and of the common people.* In the mysterious crucible of political evolution there had been produced a supreme governing body to which no noble could belong, yet which the people did not choose. Composed exclusively of the class engaged in trade, its members were vested with the choice of their successors, and the body was thus self-perpetuating. We are not dependent wholly upon that seductive artist, the imagination, for a picture which shall set before our mental vision the appearance of the rulers of Siena. So many and so striking are the paintings of mediæval times, transmitting to modern days the portraiture of similar assemblies, that it becomes easy to reconstruct the scene when the all-powerful Twelve responded with their presence to the summons of the great bell.

Commerce was the secret of the greatness of Siena;† and the wealth which had made her craftsmen and merchants famous through southern Europe appeared in the dress and decoration of these lords in the realm of trade. Velvet robes were bordered with costly fur, delicate laces half covered the hands, massive gold chains encircled

* *Chroniques Siennes*: Introduction par le Duc de Dino, pp. 9, 23.

† *Ibid.*, p. 24.

the neck, and jeweled buckles held to the broad hat the shadowing plumes which made darker still the swarthy Tuscan faces. The place of meeting was fitting such an assembly. The vast Palazzo Pubblico was not then the time-worn relic of an age long past. Just half a century before, in the year 1309, all Siena had gone wild with enthusiasm over the completion of the noble pile which still attests the genius of its architect. While as yet it had not lost the freshness of youth, it had already acquired some of the artistic treasures that have made the municipal palace the pride of the Siennese. As the Twelve gathered for deliberation in the Hall of the Grand Council, the same frescoes by Simone Martini * looked down on them as upon the modern visitor.

A letter of the poet Petrarch has been preserved, which records the circumstance that in that very October of 1359,† the winter came early to the plains of Lombardy, and drove the luxurious singer from his country home to the shelter of the city of Milan. We need not doubt, however, that mild autumn winds stirred the yet unfallen leaves of the chestnut woods which then covered the now naked hills about

* Guide to Siena and San Gimignano, London, 1885, p. 23.

† Mémoires de François Petrarque, Amsterdam, 1767, Vol. III., p. 522.

Siena, and that the warm Tuscan sun, making its way through the pointed windows of the Hall of the Grand Council, took something from the chilly vastness of that great apartment.

It was grave business which the rulers of Siena had met to transact. Two months was their brief term of office,* and now they were to choose the twelve burghers who, in succession to themselves, should hold sovereign power for November and December. Human nature was, then as now, tenacious of power once grasped, and the modern reader familiar with the municipal politics of our American cities can hardly stifle the suspicion that the Council of the Bell may each alternate month have re-elected itself. Yet the quaint language of the archives of Siena seems to hint that this election was by lot. Thus runs the ancient chronicle:

There were drawn out of the chest and the box existing in the chest, in which are described those who ought in the time to come to hold the office of the twelve lords administrators and governors of the commonwealth and people of the State of Siena, for the said office of the twelve lords, and for the two months, namely, for November and December, next approaching, a ball of wax, on which was folded a small sheet of parchment; and on

* *Chroniques Siennaises*, p. 140, makes the term but fifteen days.

this were found written, as I the Notary of the Reformation subscribed, read, twelve names.*

The list which follows bears striking witness to the complete exclusion of the ancient nobility from the government of Siena. Among the twelve one is specified as a shopkeeper, another as a dealer in linen, a third as a silk merchant, a fourth as a baker. The title to power in the Sienese republic lay, not in gentle blood or soldierly achievement, but in *bourgeois* lineage and success in the fields of commerce. Even the list proposed on that October afternoon was not to be accepted without challenge. For the notary adds that when he reached in his reading the name of "Janninus, or Gianni Guccio, the wool merchant of the section of Camollia," grave protest sprang to the lips of more than one member of the Seignory: not because of moral delinquency, intellectual incapacity or political turpitude, but because it had been clearly shown that Guccio was not a burgher born, but of blood royal, and heir apparent to the throne of France.† Upon that entry in the ancient minutes of the Council of the Bell hangs a tale that ranks among the strangest to be found in the annals of mediæval Europe. Our story carries us nearly half a century backward

* See Appendix V.

† Ibid.

in point of time, and changes the scene from Central Italy to the capital of France. It is the 15th of November, 1316. Paris is tumultuous with joy. Crowds throng the narrow streets. Houses are illuminated. *Te Deum* is sung at Notre Dame. History does not record it, but we may hazard the guess that at the solemn services in which the church gave expression to the universal gladness of the people, the archbishop may have preached in the great cathedral from the text, "For unto us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulders."

Five months earlier, on the 5th of June,* Louis X., surnamed *Le Hutin*, or the Quarreler, had reached the end of his brief and stormy reign. His accession to the throne had brought the elder line of descent from Hugh Capet to its last generation, and his death threatened France with the horrors of civil war. While Louis was yet a boy, his crafty father, Philip the Fair, to cement his own power, had negotiated the marriage of the young prince with the heiress of the ducal house of Burgundy. Similar splendid alliances had been made by Philip for his two younger sons. It casts a lurid light upon the morals of the great in that period of history, that each of the three princesses thus introduced into

* *Mémoires relatifs à l'Histoire de France*. Paris, 1825.

the royal family of France was accused—whether justly or unjustly, who can tell?—of unfaithfulness to her marriage vows, and condemned to a fearful doom.* The American tourist whose wanderings in France have led him to Les Andelys, on the right bank of the Seine, will long remember the imposing ruins of the Chateau Gaillard, built by Richard Cœur de Lion in the twelfth century. In one of the horrible dungeons still to be explored in the remnant of the old Norman fortress, Margaret of Burgundy was strangled by order of her husband.

The ill-fated young queen left a daughter who bore the name of Jeanne, and who was destined at a later period to act a conspicuous part in the tragedy of French and Burgundian history.

Some of the chroniclers do not hesitate to assert that Louis' mad passion for Clemence, or Clementine, the sister of the King of Hungary, was the real source from which sprang the indictment of Queen Margaret, and her cruel execution.† Certain it is that crowding close upon Margaret's death came the marriage of her husband to the Hungarian princess.

In the case of Louis le Hutin "the mills

* Milman's *Latin Christianity*, Vol. VI., p. 533. Dareste's *Histoire de France*, Vol. II., p. 378.

† Martin, *Histoire de France*, Vol. IV., p. 523. Sismondi, *Histoire des Français*, Vol. XI., p. 309.

of the gods" did not "grind slow." Less than a year from his second marriage,* and only eighteen months from the unhappy day on which he became King of France, he sickened and died. So insignificant was the personality of the man, and so inglorious the career of the monarch, that even the more elaborate histories of France dismiss the reign of Louis X. with little more than the mention of his name.

Not infrequently the actual experience of disaster is more easily endured than the suspense which precedes it. The French people groped like a ship in a fog, through the awful uncertainty which followed the death of Louis X. For once the populace of Paris could not shout, "The King is dead. Long live the King!" For Louis had no successor. From the days of Hugh Capet, through more than three hundred years, each monarch at his death had handed down the scepter to his son.†

But when the bells of Notre Dame announced the death of Louis the Quarreler, there was none to claim parentage from him—save the little girl Jeanne—pitiful offspring of a father utterly contemptible, and a mother whose savage murder had not obliterated the stains upon her memory. The child was not without a champion of her claims to be Queen of France. The

* Duruy, *Histoire de France*, Vol. I., p. 411.

† Daresté, *Hist. de France*, Vol. II., p. 387.

potent Duke of Burgundy,* her mother's brother, demanded that there should be no departure from the immemorial precedent by which the crown descended from the parent to the child.

But closer to the seat of power was Philip, Count of Poitou, brother of the dead king. As the nearest male relative of Louis, this prince had been immediately proclaimed regent of the realm till the question of succession should be settled. But his vaulting ambition was not satisfied with any temporary possession of sovereignty. Out from the musty archives of Carolingian tradition the cunning plotter dragged an almost forgotten statute that certain territories known as "Salic" lands could not be inherited by a woman.† With the convincing logic which has rarely failed to make the despot irresistible in argument, Philip insisted upon the application of this ancient custom to the title to the throne of France. With the ruthless exclusion of the young Jeanne began the so-called "Salic Law," which bound France to a line of male rulers—however hateful—so long as the nation was ruled by monarchical authority.‡

But for Philip, shrewd schemer though he was, the voyage to the royal "haven

* Monmerqué, p. 13; Dareste, Vol. II., p. 388.

† Dareste, Vol. II., p. 388.

‡ Sismondi, *Histoire des Français*, Vol. IX., p. 352.

where he would be" was not yet "plain sailing." There was another and more perplexing contingency to be reckoned with. The widowed Queen Clemence was expecting the birth of a posthumous child and heir of Louis X. All authorities concur in ascribing to the noblesse at this critical juncture an intense suspicion of Philip, and perhaps still more of Mathilde, Countess of Artois,* whose daughter was the regent's wife. This haughty woman had not scrupled to express in the most public way her chagrin that her son-in-law had not been seated on the throne when the death of his brother made it vacant. The great hereditary lords saw with keen apprehension that the selfish ambition of Philip was tempted by an opportunity which placed the prize of regal power just within his grasp. Himself already king except in name, and with his unscrupulous mother-in-law in constant attendance upon Queen Clemence, nothing was easier than to compass the early death of the child with whose fate the future of France was bound up. Against so perilous a contingency the great barons of France proceeded to make provision. The exact date and the precise place of the meeting vary slightly in the different chronicles, but certain it is that while the posthumous child of Louis le Hutin was yet unborn, an

* Gigli, *Diario Sanese*, quoted by Monmerqué, *Dissertation Historique*, p. 73.

assembly of the princes and highest nobility was held, at which an agreement was reached, to which Philip himself, however reluctantly, assented. The Duke of Burgundy withdrew the claim of his little niece Jeanne, to whom was flung the sop of a possible inheritance of the kingdom of Navarre.*

Relieved of this peril to his claim, Philip entered into a solemn covenant with the barons and lords of France, that should the child of Louis and Clemence prove to be a son, he should be proclaimed king immediately on his birth, but Philip should be guardian of the baby-monarch and regent of the realm until the young prince should attain the age of eighteen years.† But if the child had the misfortune to be a girl, Philip should become king not only in fact, but by public acknowledgment and consecration. Hated and feared as Philip was, little wonder that the thoughts and prayers of France, from the peasant to the peer, were centered on that chamber in the fortress of the Louvre, where from the time of Philip Augustus the heirs to the crown of France had first seen the light of day. Little wonder that when, on the 15th of November, 1316,‡ the gorgeously arrayed

* *Chronique de St. Victor*. See foot-note in *Monmerqué*, pp. 10, 11.

† *Sismondi*, Vol. IX., p. 338. Others say twenty-four years. *Monmerqué*, *Dissert. Histor.*, p. 8.

‡ *Sismondi*, Vol. IX., p. 344.

heralds proclaimed that a young prince had that day been born to the late King Louis of blessed memory and to the gracious Queen Clemence, the bells rang till the steeples rocked, joyous crowds thronged the streets, and bonfires blazed in every public place. When, a little later, in accord with a vow which the queen had made to St. John the Baptist,* the young prince was christened John, the people hailed as an omen of good the relinquishment of the names Philip and Louis which their monarchs had borne through so many generations, and to this day the hapless babe is counted in the history of France as "John I." †

Short-lived was the popular jubilation. The chroniclers of that period relate that when but eight days old the royal infant, inheriting feebleness of constitution from both its parents, suddenly died, and all France was plunged in mourning. The brief sunshine which had broken through the clouds of misrule shadowing the nation, was turned to midnight when John I. was laid at the feet of his father in the tombs of his ancestors at St. Denis, ‡ and Philip, fifth of the name, was proclaimed King of France and Navarre.

* Gigli's *Diario Sanese*, quoted by Monmerqué, p. 73.

† Sismondi, *Histoire des Français*, Vol. IX., p. 344.

‡ Martin, *Hist. de France*, Vol. IV., p. 533.

Thus far we have traveled a road known to scholars. Every student of French history may verify the pathetic tale of the little king whose birth was welcomed as the advent of a deliverer, and whose life and reign were bounded by the horizon of a single week. But he whose curiosity prompts him to search amidst the dust of mediæval archives for truth stranger than fiction will find an account of the only son of Louis X. of France widely variant from the narratives of Sismondi, or Guizot, or Martin. While there is no lack of corroborative testimony in other documents, the principal source of information is contained in an unpublished manuscript in the Chigi Library in Rome. The work of a Dominican monk, Sigismund Titius (or Tiziano),* it is the fullest and most elaborate history of the republic of Siena which has been preserved to modern times. The remainder of this paper will follow closely the record of this mediæval chronicle.

The suspicion and fear with which Philip of Poitou and his ally, the Countess of Artois, had inspired the great lords at the court of France, had taken form in an unusual precaution. Some weeks before the birth of the royal child, two barons of ancient lineage and distinguished services to France were appointed, together with their wives, to be a personal guard to

* Article Siena, *Encyclop. Brit.*, Vol. XXII., p. 43.

Queen Clemence.* Knowing that Philip's succession to his dead brother's throne hung upon the question whether the queen should give birth to a son or a daughter, these guardians were solemnly sworn to forestall any injury to the mother or the infant, and to detect and prevent any fraudulent attempt to misrepresent the sex of the child. Their watchful anxiety was not allayed when, after the birth of the young prince, the Countess of Artois demanded the privilege of holding him in her arms on the occasion of his public presentation to the people of Paris.† The barons were well aware that this unscrupulous woman and her crafty son-in-law, maddened with the disappointment of their hope, and reckless as to the means to be used to gain their end, might seize the opportunity to compass the death of the new-born king when he should be shown to a loyal populace. Suspicion of their purpose grew as it was discovered that the Countess of Artois had set afloat through Paris the rumor ‡ that the babe was a feeble and puny infant, and was liable to die at any moment. With a spirit characteristic of the Middle Ages, the protectors of the royal child re-

* Rienzi's Charte, Monmerqué, Dissertation Historique, p. 41. Vide Appendix IV.

† Chifflet, Lumina Salica, Antwerp, 1660, Vol. I., p. 278. Rienzi's Charte, Appendix IV.

‡ Chifflet, quoted by Monmarqué, Dissert. Hist., p. 57.

solved to "fight fire with fire." They, too, could resort to stratagem, and if Philip and his fellow-plotter were mining in the dark, their opponents with equal secrecy could countermine.

Our story leads us from the abode of royalty to the seat of a power which in mediæval times rivaled and often eclipsed that of kings. In one of the numerous nunneries in the outskirts of Paris a young mother, over whom scarcely fifteen summers had passed, was half the guest and half the prisoner of her relative, the Lady Abbess. Born of the noble stock of the *Sieur de Picard*,* a household famous in the region about Crécy, where a generation later Edward the Black Prince crushed the power of the House of Valois, the girl, left fatherless in her infancy, had been reared by her widowed mother and two elder brothers. Into the neighborhood of Crécy, some time in 1315, a young Tuscan merchant had found his way. The great patrician family of the Tolomei, the most aristocratic in Siena,† did not feel itself degraded in adding to its vast wealth by traffic in the woolen fabrics which to this day constitute the principal factor in Sienese commerce. Guccio di Mino di Gieri Baglioni was a nephew of Spinello di Tolomei, and became the representative of

* Papencordt's *Rienzi*, p. 320.

† Siena, Cesare Paoli, p. 42.

the great nobleman's extended trade with France.

How a youth engaged in commercial pursuits—even though connected with a noble house—should have overcome the prejudice with which the warlike French noblesse looked down upon the Italian tendency to traffic, it would be difficult to explain. Certain it is, however, that Pierre and Jean de Picard welcomed Guccio to their hunting and fowling excursions, and made him a frequent guest at their ancestral château.

Quick and terrible was their revulsion of feeling when one day the discovery was made that the handsome young Tuscan had not only won the affection of their little sister Marie, but had betrayed their hospitality by a secret marriage. The furious brothers drove Guccio out of France, and warned him that if he ever again crossed the Italian border, his life would pay the forfeit.* In vain the poor Marie pleaded, and showed her wedding-ring. They would acknowledge no marriage which should commingle the blood of the Picards with that of a base Italian trader. They tried to hide their disgraced sister by placing her in the care of her aunt, the Abbess of the Convent of the Filles Dieu at Paris, where her child was born a fortnight earlier than the baby king.

* Chifflet, quoted by Monmerqué, p. 56.

But the story spread, and reaching the ears of the barons appointed to watch over the queen and the heir apparent, they summoned Marie de Picard to be the royal infant's nurse.

One chronicler asserts that the barons assured the young mother that no harm to her babe could follow her permission to have him dressed in robes spangled with *fleurs de lis*, and to allow his exhibition to the populace as the new-born king. They urged that in some vague and unexplained way she would thus show her patriotism and her loyalty to the infant sovereign.* Nor is it unreasonable to suppose that in such an age of history the pride of her mother-heart was flattered with the thought of her son appearing, even for a brief moment, in the guise of a monarch.

The day arrived on which the people of Paris were to see the child whose advent had filled all France with joy. At one of the great windows of the palace appeared Mathilde, Countess of Artois. In her arms she bore a babe, whose tiny figure seemed strangely disproportioned to the jeweled robes of ermine-fringed velvet which proclaimed his rank, and on whose drooping head was fastened a crown flashing with diamonds.† Unconscious that, despite her shrewdness, a clever trick had been played

* Gigli, quoted by Monmerqué, p. 76.

† Rienzi's Charte. See Appendix IV.

upon her, Mathilde, when the eager crowd had satisfied their enthusiastic loyalty, withdrew from the balcony, but not till she had wrought the evil deed to accomplish which she had asked the honor of displaying the young king to his future subjects. Authorities differ as to the mode in which the murder was committed. Some assert that poison concealed in a finger-ring was injected through the child's tender skin. Others relate that in a more brutal way the Countess crushed the infant in her strong grasp till some internal injury assured its death. Still others hint that a slender needle was used to pierce the skull and reach the brain.* However the deed may have been done, we know that on the ensuing day a black cloud lowered over France, and a mourning people were told that their young king was dead. Only to two or three great lords and ladies, and to a broken-hearted young mother who went back to her convent-cell carrying a babe not her own, was it known that the murdered child was that of a Tuscan trader, and that the survivor of the tragedy was the son of Louis X., and heir to the throne of France. The chroniclers tell us that when the barons announced to the young woman they had so cruelly deceived that her child was dead, they were terrified by her piteous wailing. But while they tried to quiet her

* Gigli, quoted by Monmerqué, p. 76.

cries of grief by pointing out the peril betrayal of their common secret would bring to her as to them, they also pictured to her imagination the rank and wealth which would be her reward when her foster-child should attain his rightful crown.* Through the Louvre they caused the report to run that the nurse of the dead prince showed the loyalty and affectionateness of her nature by a sorrow as bitter as if the royal infant had been her own offspring.

That the secret would be guarded well may be easily believed. For Philip of Poitou became by the supposed death of his nephew unquestioned king of France. Had Marie de Picard revealed the royal lineage of the babe which she had adopted as her own, or had the lords of the court told how they had contrived and executed the exchange of the children, it would have had no result but to bring down on their own heads the certain and terrible vengeance of the king.

So passed nearly ten years. The young foster-mother of an unknown prince was once more reconciled to her family, and restored to the ancestral castle at Crécy. Meantime her husband ventured again into France, and from Paris wrote pleading letters to the wife from whom he had so long been parted, entreating her that he might be permitted to see his son. It is

* Rienzi's Charte. See Appendix IV.

easy to understand that the bereaved mother should have shrunk from weaving further the tangled web of deception, and that she hesitated long before granting a request which involved the false hypothesis that the boy was the child of Guccio. At last, however, the appeal became too urgent to be longer resisted, and the young Jean, or Gianni, was sent to Paris to meet his supposed father. But the wily Tuscan never sent back the borrowed boy. Taking him to Siena, Guccio educated the child in the schools where the young Siennese burghers were fitted for trade. At the proper age he was launched on the tide of business as a member of the wool-weavers' corporation,* and when, in 1340, the elder Guccio died, his supposed son had become a conspicuous figure in Siena. A prosperous merchant, repeatedly holding the highest municipal offices, and finally intrusted with the great responsibilities of administrator of the hospital of Santa Maria della Misericordia, Gianni di Guccio lived an unambitious life, contented with his lot, and enjoying the boundless confidence of his fellow-burghers of Siena.

Once more the scene shifts to France. It is the month of June, 1345.† To the castle of the Picards at Crécy, a Spanish monk of the neighboring Augustinian con-

* *Chroniques Sienneses*, p. 24.

† Papencordt's *Rienzi*, p. 322.

vent, has been summoned in hot haste. Marie de Picard, conscious that her end is near, has sent for the holy father to hear her last confession. On the ear of the astonished priest falls a story which fear had locked in this woman's breast for nearly thirty years. She tells him that the true King of France is in a foreign country, living a tradesman's life, not only unknown to his subjects, but himself unconscious of the high dignity of his birth. Nor does the dying woman allow her confessor to leave her, till, under every solemn sanction of his religion, he has sworn that he will seek the son of Louis X., and lay before him the proofs of his royalty, and urge him to claim his own.

It was a critical hour in the history of France. Philip the Long had died after a brief reign. Charles IV. had speedily followed his brothers, and now, so far as France knew, no male heir in the elder line from Hugh Capet existed to claim the crown. Philip of Valois, representing the younger branch of the Capetian dynasty, had been for seventeen years upon the throne. Meantime Edward III. of England had pressed his title to the sovereignty of France by crushing victories over the house of Valois. The French people were rent by intestine dissensions. Earthquakes had desolated the land. Fearful pestilences had sent mourning into palaces and

hovels.* To Father Jordan, the Augustinian confessor of Marie Picard, the secret significance of these scourges of God was revealed as by a light from heaven. They could only mean that Divine judgment would not be withdrawn from unhappy France until the true king, hidden alike from his people and himself, was brought back to his just inheritance. But while the monk's conscience led him to resolve to spend his days in seeking out the lost prince, he could not conquer his fear of Philip of Valois.† Nine years appear to have passed without action. But in 1354, Jordan confided the last testament of Marie Picard to a French Augustinian monk, Father Antoine, whose repeated visits to Italy had fitted him for his delicate responsibility. Landing near Genoa, Antoine was stricken with sudden and severe illness.‡ He had heard, before leaving France, the romantic history of Cola di Rienzi, with which all Europe was ringing, and knew that for a second time, and with the full approval of the Pope, the once banished Tribune was reigning in supreme and splendid power in Rome. In Rienzi, Antoine recognized a God-elected man, whose mission on earth was to right every wrong. To him, there-

* Rienzi's Charte, Appendix IV.

† Letter of Antoine, Appendix I. Also Rienzi's Charte, Appendix IV.

‡ Ibid.

fore, the monk sent not only the full account of the concealed King of France, but the documents and other evidences which Marie de Picard had intrusted to the monk Jordan.

It should be said that this letter of Antoine to Rienzi is differentiated from all the other versions of the story of Giannino by a marked variation in one particular.* It does not mention the Countess of Artois, nor even hint at the terrible iniquity with which she is charged by the other writers. On the contrary, the monk makes the barons who sought a nurse for the new-born prince to have intrusted the royal babe to the Lady Marie de Picard, while that youthful mother was still an inmate of the monastery. Her own child was cared for by a nurse, and the two women with the infants occupied the same apartment. At dead of night they discovered that the child of Guccio and Marie was lying lifeless beside the woman charged with its care. For some reason which Antoine does not explain, the Lady Marie is represented as taking the dead Giannino and placing him beside herself, consigning the living son of King Louis to the serving-woman, and thus deceiving the attendants whom her cries attracted to the chamber. Antoine therefore lays the responsibility of the exchange of the royal child for another

* See the full text of Antoine's letter in Appendix I.

to the Lady Marie herself, instead of the barons who watched over the safety of the young prince. What renders this discrepant narrative the more perplexing is the fact that the "Charte," or elaborate statement made by Rienzi to attest the claims of Giannino, although evoked by the letter of Antoine, repeats the story as related by the other writers. In that remarkable document, written but a few days before the death of the Tribune, he distinctly records that the lords of the court planned and executed the scheme by which the prince was saved from the murderess who plotted his destruction. Rienzi unhesitatingly attributes the death of the child of the Lady Marie to Mathilde of Artois. With this statement agree no less than four independent contemporary documents.

It is well to remember, however, that this discrepancy affects only the method, not the fact, of the exchange of the child of Guccio for the son of Louis X. of France. It is a principle of all sound historic criticism that when the chroniclers differ in subordinate particulars, but agree in the main incident which they relate, it invests that incident with the stronger probability. It should not be forgotten that the monk Antoine was a subject of the King of France.* The journey into Italy was undertaken for a definite purpose, having ac-

* Rienzi's Charte, Appendix IV.

complished which, he expected to return again to his native land. Compelled by his serious illness to substitute a written for an oral communication of his story to Rienzi, whom he knew only by reputation, Antoine might well hesitate to prefer a written indictment of an attempt at regicide against so powerful and so revengeful a woman as the Countess of Artois. Nor would it be inconsistent with the ecclesiastical conscience of that age so to suppress or alter a mere detail of the revelation he unfolded as to avoid making an humble monk the accuser of one so closely allied to royalty.

Startling as a lightning-flash out of the cloudless heaven it must have been when, one September day in 1354,* a messenger, booted and spurred, rode his jaded horse into the courtyard of Gianni Guccio's house at Siena, and announced himself as an envoy of Rienzi. Wasting no words, and giving no explanation of his master's purpose, he simply conveyed the oral mandate of the great ruler of Rome, that Guccio should present himself at the capitol without delay. It would be interesting if we knew what conjectures may have filled the mind of the Siennese wool-merchant as to the possible reason that one who then was counted among the very greatest and most powerful of mankind should desire a con-

* Papencordt's *Rienzi*, p. 323.

ference with an humble burgher of Tuscany. Most probable it is that his commercial instincts and training led Guccio to dream of profits to be made in some rich contract for supplies to Rienzi's armies, then warring against the revolting barons of Rome. Certain it is that farthest from the dreams of his fancy was the thought that the invitation had a political significance. The proverbial caution of the man of affairs was exhibited in Guccio's refusal to take the journey to Rome until he should receive a written summons in Rienzi's own hand, and sealed with his own signet. It speaks volumes for Rienzi's profound conviction that in Guccio he had found the true heir to the French crown, that in compliance with the wool-trader's stipulation a second messenger was dispatched to Siena, bearing an autograph letter of the Dictator of Rome—a letter which has been preserved to the present day.*

On the second day of October, 1354, a dusty cavalcade entered Rome by the gate now known as the Porta del Popolo, and drew up before a little hostelry which then fronted on the Campo di Fiore. Leaving his servants at the inn, and without more delay than was demanded by the arranging of his dress, disordered by his long ride, Guccio hastened to the capitol. Admitted without delay to the presence of Rienzi,

* See Appendix II.

and welcomed with that singular charm of manner which drew all men to the ill-fated Tribune, Guccio was ushered by his host into a private cabinet, where they could be alone.* Closing the door, Rienzi flung himself upon his knees, and saluted the wool-merchant of Siena as the rightful King of France. Bewildered by this amazing reception, and perhaps with the thought that Rienzi's intellect had given way under the strain of his cares and responsibilities, Guccio refused to let the great ruler of Rome humble himself to kiss the hand of a simple burgher of Siena. But before his eyes were spread the documents which had been transmitted by Marie de Picard as she lay upon her death-bed. The sworn statement of Father Jordan, and the marvelous circumstantial proofs which had been placed in Rienzi's hands, became irresistible. Reluctantly, and doubtless with many a yearning for the happy days of honorable and honored *bourgeois* life which he must leave behind him, Guccio accepted his high destiny as heir of an historic crown, and God-appointed deliverer of unhappy France.

Six days after Guccio had learned the secret of his royal lineage, the mob of Rome tore Rienzi to pieces at the gate of the capitol.† Guccio went back to Siena with a prisoner locked in his breast who was

* Papencordt's Rienzi, p. 323.

† Ibid., p. 325.

perpetually knocking for release. True, he once more took up his old life. Business thrived. His family was growing up about him. But Gianni Guccio could never again be to himself just what he had been before the fateful hour in which he met Cola di Rienzi. As was natural to mediæval piety, the burden on his mind was lifted at the confessional. Father Bartolomeo Mino, whose name would suggest his being a relative of Guccio, was a priest who bore a deserved reputation for piety and sound judgment. When the astonishing revelation was poured into his ear, the confessor counseled that it should remain a secret till God in his own good time should send such a conjunction of events as should make it clear that the hour for speech and action had arrived. Two years later, on the 9th of October, 1356,* God's bell seemed to sound its warning on the ears of Guccio and Fra Bartolomeo. On that day the tidings reached Siena that the vast armies of France had been crushed at Poitiers, that the great lords and princes of the realm had been slain or made prisoners, and that King John of the House of Valois had been carried captive into England. So deeply did the miseries of France touch the people of Siena, that for the moment the traditional feud of the aristoc-

* Gigli, quoted in Dissert. Hist., p. 81. Also Papencordt, p. 326.

racy and the *bourgeois* was forgotten, and all classes met in a great assembly to express their commiseration.* Suddenly the Fra Bartolomeo rose. He declared that the hour had struck for the only legitimate King of France to claim his own. That king had long dwelt among his fellow-citizens at Siena unrecognized and unhonored. Before the astonished multitude the eloquent priest set forth the salient points of Guccio's birth and early life, and finally produced the last will and testament of Marie de Picard, with its solemn declaration that her babe had been substituted for the royal child, and that thus the heir apparent had escaped the murderous hands of the Countess of Artois. A wild enthusiasm seized upon Siena. Municipal pride was stimulated by the knowledge that within the walls of the ancient town a king of France had been reared from his childhood. The story of Guccio spread like fire in the dry grass of autumn. All Tuscany was aroused. Fuel was added to the flame when the two monks, Jordan and Antoine, who were on a pilgrimage to the Holy Sepulchre, wrote letters from Palermo to the Grand Council and to the bishop of Siena, confirming all that Fra Bartolomeo had already revealed.† Guccio's friends were organized into a propaganda to push

* Papencordt's *Rienzi*, p. 326.

† *Ibid.*, p. 327.

his interests in every European court. Fra Bartolomeo was sent on an embassy to Rome, and swayed the senators and council of the Eternal City with so profound a conviction that they in their turn sent out their envoys to the other states of Italy, pleading for recognition and support of Guccio.

Louis, King of Hungary, nephew to Queen Clemence, eagerly embraced the cause of his royal cousin, and addressed a letter to all the princes, prelates, and governments of Europe, declaring his full belief in the validity of Guccio's title.*

Louis also asserted that he had personally set on foot thorough historical investigations, which had confirmed, in the minutest particulars, the narrative which Marie de Picard had related to her confessor.

The kingdom of Navarre, at this time governed by a regent, entered into open alliance with Guccio. City after city in his native France proclaimed him king. Some of the great French nobility offered him allegiance. In the papal court at Avignon he gained the adhesion of cardinals and prelates nearest to the Pope. Nor was Guccio lacking the most essential element of success. Enormously wealthy through prosperous trade, his exchequer was swollen by fifty thousand gold florins contributed by the persecuted Jews of Hun-

* Papencordt's Rienzi, p. 329.

gary, Carinthia, and Austria, who promised even greater gifts in response to his pledge that when King of France he would protect them from their enemies.* Furnished with an amount of ready money such as few monarchs of that day could boast, Guccio had already entered upon negotiations with one of those bands of mercenaries who constituted the main reliance in the military operations of the Middle Ages. Suddenly a combination of adverse events fell like a blighting frost upon the springing growths of his ambition. At Avignon the Pope was the creature of the King of France. At first not ill disposed to listen to those who told Guccio's romantic story, the pontiff suddenly awoke to the peril which the new movement had created. For one of Guccio's lieutenants with an armed force had seized on the fortress of Codolet, only a few miles from Pope Innocent's gorgeous palace at Avignon. The letter in which His Holiness relates this incident to Louis, King of Sicily, is still extant.† The enormous power of the church was interposed to block the plans of Guccio. The French monarch, who had but lately been released from captivity in England,‡ set a price upon the head of his rival. Conscious that

* Papencordt's *Rienzi*, p. 329.

† See *Dissert. Historique*, p. 25. Full text of letter.

‡ Martin, *Hist. de France*, Vol. V., p. 229.

their trade with France would be injured by their active participation in Guccio's schemes, his fellow-tradesmen of Siena grew indifferent and finally hostile. But strong conviction of his royal origin spurred Guccio on to restless wandering over Europe. He pleads his cause again with his kinsman, the King of Hungary. He appears at the Court of Austria. Then we find him at Milan. At the head of a band of mercenaries, he crosses the borders of France and gains success, which strikes terror to the luxurious sycophants of the papal court at Avignon. In a luckless hour, when perhaps unattended by his followers, Guccio was seized, on the 7th of January, 1361, and imprisoned in the fortress of St. Etienne, near Nice, by Matteo di Gesualdo, Seneschal of Provence.

Chifflet's narrative, hereafter to be referred to, supplies an otherwise missing link in the chain of events.* From St. Etienne Guccio was transferred to Marseilles, where his wealth enabled him to bribe his guards, and to make his way to the Mediterranean. But the ship-captains turned a deaf ear to the fugitive's appeals. Then, desperate as a hunted deer, he sought sanctuary in the churches. But from their altars he was sternly driven. Had not Pope Innocent denounced him? Betrayed for the second time into the hands of Gesualdo, the Sene-

* Monmerqué, *Dissert. Historique*, pp. 62, 63.

schal resolved to place his prisoner where escape would be impossible. Over Provence, that land of poetry, romance, and chivalry, Louis of Tarento, King of Naples, held the scepter of suzerainty. Bound by every tie of politics and consanguinity to the House of Valois, Louis would find in the possession of this captive an opportunity to prove his loyalty to his ally at Paris. To Naples, therefore, Gesualdo brought his captive, and over the picturesque career of Guccio falls the impenetrable shadow of the Castel del Ovo,* an island fortress in the Bay of Naples.

Few are the phenomena of nature which possess more attractiveness, or more completely absorb the interest of the beholder, than the unreal creations of a mirage. But even when they most nearly approach reality, the mind is always conscious that they are after all the effects of a mere optical illusion. Has the strange story of this mediæval claimant of a throne no better basis than a fairy tale? Shall we remand it to the same category with the legends of King Arthur, or the earlier tradition of the Seven Sleepers of Ephesus, because most of the great historians of France, if they knew of the tale, only treated it with silent contempt?

One modern French writer, profoundly

* Gigli, quoted by Monmerqué, p. 85.

interested in the discovery of the documentary proofs on which the story of Guccio rests, refuses to accept the evidence he had laboriously gathered, because, as he frankly says, such acceptance would invalidate the royal title of the long dynasties of the Valois and the Bourbons from 1328 to 1789.* His statement suggests that it is at least possible that a like motive may account for the unbroken silence regarding this episode of the Middle Ages, which broods over all the voluminous histories of France—written as most of them were when princes of the Bourbon race sat upon the throne. Few are the attested facts of mediæval chronicles which are based on firmer foundations than the existence of Gianni Guccio, the fact that he claimed heirship to Louis X. of France, and that thousands of his contemporaries held his title to be valid.

The minutes of the Council of the Bell,† with the declaration that this member of the Siennese legislature was ineligible to re-election because of his royal blood, are to be found in the archives of Siena. That record embraces a full transcript of the letter which King Louis of Hungary addressed to all the sovereignties of Europe asking the recognition of Guccio as the lawful King of France. This letter con-

* Monmerqué, p. 33.

† Appendix V.

tains the account, as already given in this paper, of the exchange by which another child became the vicarious sacrifice for the infant prince.

To precisely the same effect is the account given in the manuscript history of Sigismund Tiziano.* That chronicle is a quarry which has furnished modern writers with material for their histories, much as the Coliseum and the Forum supplied the builders of Roman palaces in the Middle Ages. Tiziano asserts that all through the stormy period when France was the prey of internal disorder and foreign invasion, the belief was never wholly extinguished that the son of Louis le Hutin still lived. He tells us that Rienzi declared that he had found the story floating in the ecclesiastical atmosphere of the papal court at Avignon. The letter just referred to, written by Pope Innocent, is of unquestioned authenticity and genuineness.

Matteo Villani, the Florentine historian, who was a contemporary of Guccio, while blundering with regard to many minor details, records the invasion of southern France by the armed forces under Guccio's command.

Jean Jacques Chifflet, a French physician and antiquarian, published in 1660 a voluminous work called "*Lumina Salica*,"

* Encyc. Brit., art. Siena.

which contains an elaborate history of Guccio,* varying in no essential particular from that which this paper has outlined. He declares that his narrative is an accurate reproduction of an autobiography of Guccio, partly written during his imprisonment in Naples, and continued after his death by Solomon Piccolomini and Thomas Agazzano, who was a relative of Guccio by marriage. Chifflet relates that at the period when he wrote there were at least two copies of this biography in Italy, and that the one to which he had access was in the Barberini Library.

In 1723 Girolamo Gigli, one of the most erudite historical scholars of Italy, published his "Diario Sanese," or Sienese Journal. It is a work of marvelous learning and accuracy of information. His account of the birth of Guccio, his having been exchanged for another child, and his subsequent career is almost identical with that of Chifflet, but is drawn from different sources. While the French historian had unearthed the romantic story as told in the autobiography contained in the Barberini Library at Rome, Gigli had discovered the same facts related in Tiziano's History of Siena in the Chigi Library. But his principal authority was the entirely independent testimony of the municipal archives of

* Monmerqué, p. 29.

Siena, to which during his long residence in that city Gigli had free access.*

In 1843 there was discovered in the vast antiquarian collection in Paris, known as the Cabinet des Chartes, three most valuable documents. These consisted of the letter in which the monk Antoine revealed to Rienzi the secret of Guccio's birth,† the invitation sent by Rienzi urgently summoning the Siennese burgher to come secretly to Rome,‡ and lastly, one which the Tribune wrote to Guccio, pathetic in its historic interest, as bearing date the 7th of October, 1354, the day preceding that which saw Rienzi perish at the hands of the Roman rabble.§

In 1844 M. Monmerqué, a counselor of the court royal of Paris, and member of the Royal Academy of Inscriptions and Belles Lettres, published in Paris a most valuable work, entitled "Dissertation Historique Sur Jean Ier, Roi de France et de Navarre." ||

In this volume, which is now rare, M. Monmerqué has embodied such portions of Chifflet's "Lumina Salica" as relate the career of Giannino, and also that part of the "Diario Sanese" of Girolamo Gigli, containing the results of his researches in

* Dissertation Historique, p. 30.

† Appendix I.

‡ Appendix II.

§ Appendix III.

|| Paris, Chez Tabary, Bouquiniste Editeur, 1844.

the archives of Siena. The present essay owes whatever it has taken upon the testimony of these two authors to the laborious investigations of M. Monmerqué, whose "Historic Dissertation" cannot be charged with any bias in favor of Guccio's claim to royalty, since the author carefully points out whatever discrepancies can be discovered in the various chronicles relating the romantic story. In the "Dissertation Historique" will also be found the full text of the three letters to which reference has just been made. Most remarkable of all is the preservation of the famous "Charte," or parchment of Rienzi.* Written in the Gothic Italian chirography of the fourteenth century, but couched in mediæval Latin, this document, which originally formed part of the archives of Siena, was rediscovered about 1843, in a collection of ancient manuscripts gathered by a distinguished French antiquarian, M. Lamberty of Aix.† In a dignified statement Rienzi tells with minute detail the strange story which this essay has related, declares that he has examined the documents which were submitted to him by the monk Antoine, and that he is firmly convinced that Guccio's title is irrefragable. He closes with the prophetic suggestion that death may

* See Appendix IV.

† Monmerqué, *Dissertation Historique*, p. 32, foot-note.

speedily overtake himself, and that therefore he has sealed this document with his official signet, and placed it in the hands of Guccio.

Singular documentary confirmation was supplied quite recently by Professor Carlo Mazzi, a distinguished archæologist of Rome.* He relates that he found in the Barberini Library a manuscript "having the form of an autobiography" of Guccio. Thus a scholar of our own period corroborates the statement of Jean Jacques Chifflet, made more than two hundred years ago, that this account of Guccio was based upon an autobiography contained in the Barberini Library.

In the course of this research Professor Mazzi unearthed a curious document, entitled "The Treasure of a King."† It is prefaced with this explanatory title: "*An accurate inventory of the money and articles which Gianni lost in Vignone, which were in the custody of a certain Daniel, and which Matteo of Gesualdo appropriated to himself in January, 1360.*" The list is bewildering in its crowns of gold, embroidered robes, splendid gonfalons, rich armor, costly jewels, and chests of golden ducats. The aggregate of wealth represented staggers the imagination. The

* Nozze Gorrini-Cazzola, Curzio Mazzi, Rome, 1892.

† Il Tesoro di un Re.

annotations of Professor Mazzi indicate that before the final collapse of Guccio's plans, he had accumulated these enormous treasures and trappings of royalty, and intrusted them to one Daniel, a member of that Jewish race to whom the would-be monarch had pledged immunity from persecution. But before Guccio himself had been arrested, his wealth had been seized by the rapacious Seneschal of Provence, and the faithful Daniel had preceded his master to a prison.

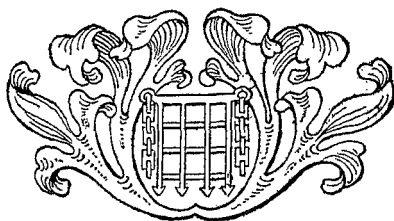
Loyal to the memory of the prince who had honored Siena by a lifelong sojourn, the people of that city for two hundred years, till the last scion of the line died in 1530,* bestowed upon the descendants of Guccio the distinguishing title "The children of King Gianni." While they lived they bore the three lilies of France in the midst of the arms of the Baglioni family, and in death Siena gave them the high honor of burial in the Church of San Domenico.†

Thus did Gianni Guccio vanish into the darkness of his Neapolitan dungeon. As the iron door closed behind him, and the jailor's key grated in the rusty lock, they

* Papencordt's *Rienzi*, p. 331. Monmerqué, p. 35.

† Chifflet, *Opera*, Vol. I., p. 278-282, quoted in foot-note by Monmerqué, p. 64. Also Papencordt's *Rienzi*, p. 331.

wrote "Finis" to this strange, pitiful story. Was Guccio the descendant of Hugh Capet, and of right the King of France? That will be known in the dazzling light of the day when all secrets shall be revealed.



THIS MONOGRAPH WAS WRITTEN FOR THE CHICAGO LITERARY CLUB, AND WAS READ BEFORE THE CLUB ON THE EVENING OF MONDAY, MARCH THE THIRD, NINETEEN HUNDRED AND TWO. THIS EDITION CONSISTS OF SEVEN HUNDRED AND FIVE COPIES, PRIVATELY PRINTED FOR MEMBERS OF THE CLUB, IN THE MONTH OF JUNE, NINETEEN HUNDRED AND TWO

