

*Astride the Pyrenees*

THE ANCESTORS OF THE PEOPLE DEALT WITH IN THIS book were Pyreneans, Iberians, Celts, Greeks, Romans and Visigoths. They lived in the southern part of Gaul and northern part of the Iberian peninsula: that is, the large area between the Loire in the North, the Ebro in the South, the Alps in the East, and the Cantabric Sea in the West. Its geographical nucleus was the town of Narbonne, centre of the Roman administration for more than five centuries; in the extreme South was the town of Tarraco, the capital of the Roman province of Tarraconensis. Later, when the barbarians of the North invaded the decrepit Roman Empire, they made Toulouse—farther West—their capital.

As for the more remote ancestors of this people, we know that the races which migrated from Africa, Europe, or Asia always spread very evenly over the South of Gaul and the North of the Iberian peninsula. In fact there was no geographical obstacle to their great invasions; this calls for an explanation, since the reader may think of the Pyrenees as a barrier between the middle and the southern parts of the area with which we are concerned. The Pyrenees may be divided into three sections: the centre of the range which is very difficult of access, and the two sections at the ends with passes open even in the coldest winter. Towards the Mediterranean end of the mountains, there are four routes linking the plains on either side. Iberians, Greeks, Celts, Carthaginians, Romans and Goths—none of them were ever checked by the Mediterranean Section of the Pyrenees; rather is it probable that the passes lured them on to the plains

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beyond. But the middle and most of the western section are different: throughout history they have acted as a confining wall, partly because the passes through them are few and difficult, but principally because of the warlike nature of the Basques, who have lived there from prehistoric times. The Basques, with the mountains to aid them, stopped the Romans with that same spirit with which, many centuries later, they fought Charlemagne's army—a struggle which inspired the *Chanson de Roland* and other poems. It would not be an exaggeration to say that the unique topography of the Central Pyrenees has preserved to our own day one of the few prehistoric human stocks in Europe; and it is to the mountains that the Basques are indebted for the preservation of many of their ancient characteristics, physical, mental, and moral. The existence of the Basques all along the high ranges of the Central-Western Pyrenees is mainly responsible for the clear-cut difference between Frenchmen and Spaniards of today; as time passed the Basques of the plains have been strongly influenced by both, but most of the mountaineers have remained purely Basque. This varying accessibility of the mountains has conditioned the history of the Iberian peninsula and has made its inhabitants what they are today. The simple view—which, like every simple impression, tends to stick in our minds—that the areas represented by modern France and Spain are well defined by nature, is incorrect if applied to the inhabitants. And it is equally misleading if applied to the climate and other factors of their environment; in fact, climate and natural surroundings are very similar throughout both areas north and south of the Pyrenees. Thus, it is only natural that the older inhabitants of the zone between the rivers Ebro and Loire and the Alps and the Cantabric Sea had very similar characteristics. If anything, in ancient times the Ebro was considered a better boundary than the Pyrenees;

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it was the frontier between the Carthaginians and the Romans, and later between Christians and Mohammedans. In later days, the southern limit of the zone occupied by this people was displaced to the south of the Moorish kingdoms of Valencia and Denia.

Much study has been devoted to the question of Greek influence in the Western Mediterranean after the foundation of the Phocæan colonies of Massalia—Marseille (seventh century B.C.), Rhoda—Roses, Emporion—Empuries, and Hemeroskopeion—Denia: Greek influence on the later characteristics of the people was important even if it cannot be compared to that of the Romans. The term “influence” means not only the grafting of ideas and habits; it is used here rather in a biological sense. The Greeks and particularly the Romans moulded the people of this zone and imparted to them their own characteristics to such an extent that the latter called a very large part of that area 'Provincia', as it were *par excellence*.<sup>1</sup> Later it was named Septimania because the Seventh Legion was stationed at Béziers, another of the great towns of Roman Gaul.

During the fifth century A.D. these lands were occupied by the Visigoths, after being ravaged by the Vandals, Cimbris, Teutons, and Ambrones. Of all the barbarian tribes the Goths—Visigoths and Ostrogoths—were the most highly civilized, and the only ones to be Christianized at that early date (though they adhered to the Arian heresy), and to possess an alphabet adapted to their own language.<sup>2</sup> They were easily absorbed by the more highly developed indigenous civilization, and after a relatively short time, in spite of being the ruling aristocracy, they mixed with the native population; the southern part of the country then changed its name to 'Gothia', or land of the Goths. The Roman traditions, laws and administration were so deeply rooted that for a time two parallel ways of living developed side by side;

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on the one hand we find the newly-imported aristocratic manners of the leading families holding a personal power purely Teutonic in nature; on the other, a persistency of the old Roman Communes with their civilian intercourse. But both the new and the old social systems were rapidly changing with the changing times.

At the beginning of the eighth century, the stabilization of this society was interrupted by the sudden arrival of more barbarians, this time from North Africa. At the first blow they defeated the Christian army in the south of the Peninsula, and the Saracens spread, in the course of a year or two, almost to the northern confines of the Peninsula without meeting any serious opposition except for the courageous resistance of the people of Mérida. The feature common to all the previous invasions was then repeated, but this time there was something more, which had a telling effect on the making of modern Spain. The population of the Peninsula behaved in the following ways.

I. The Mediterranean people of the Tarraconensis emigrated *en masse* to the north of Septimania as far as the region of central France called Limousin. The easy crossing of the mountains now became a source of deep terror. After the Mohammedans had swamped without a fight almost the whole of the Iberian peninsula, the old imperial town of Tarraco, proud of her ancient prestige, tried to resist the invaders. After a bloody struggle it was taken, levelled to the ground, and its inhabitants massacred. The same fate befell Manresa, Casserres, Cardona, Ausona and probably the Greek Empuries further north. This seems to have been more than the rest of that part of the Peninsula could stand. Barcelona and Girona were occupied without a blow, and the towns and villages were abandoned by a great proportion of the Christian population, who fled to Gaul.<sup>5</sup> Only a few people, probably almost all of them Jews, remained in

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Barcelona; they were the population which the Christians found when they recovered the city ninety years later. We have some knowledge of what these people felt when their city was reconquered by the Christians: it seems they received the newcomers as enemies rather than as brothers, which suggest that very few if any Christians were among them.<sup>4</sup>

2. The Basque people behaved as they had always done: they retired to their closed valleys in the mountains and continued the fight, supported from behind the protecting barrier by the Basques living on the northern slopes of the Pyrenees. They were never conquered, and thus they viewed the Moors from a distance, but with the same vigilance with which, in centuries gone by, they had viewed the Celts and the Romans.

3. Near the Cantabrian coast there runs a long range of high mountains which orographically are a continuation of the Pyrenees; and there, people from the south and centre of Spain, especially aristocratic families, found refuge from the Moors. With their backs to the sea—an impassable barrier to a people who were not sailors—they continued the struggle in the mountains, and at length they began to recover their lost lands in a slow, southward movement known in Spanish history as the 'Reconquista'. This was completed almost eight centuries later, when the Moorish kingdom of Granada fell in 1492.

4. The people of the Atlantic coast, it seems, either stayed where they were or retreated to the north-west corner of the Peninsula. They were mostly of Celtic origin and at the time of the Teutonic invasions of the Peninsula they had been conquered by the Sueve tribes. This region was called Galicia, and from its people on their southward march there arose, well within the twelfth century, the Portuguese nation. Even nowadays, Galicians and Portuguese speak two derivative forms of

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the old *Gallego* language. The affinity of the Portuguese and the Spaniards has been recognized from early<sup>5</sup> times. The diverse behaviour of these Peninsular peoples at the time of the Moorish invasion lies at the root of their ensuing diversity, which has persisted almost unchanged throughout the vicissitudes of history. The people sheltering in the Cantabric mountains—Castilians or Spaniards—and those compressed by the Saracens into the north-west corner of the Peninsula—Galicians and Portuguese—moved in two parallel lines until they reached the southern limits of the Peninsula. Thus the central and western parts were recovered by their original populations or at least by people of the same stock as the pre-Mohammedan inhabitants. The central people spoke the rapidly evolving variety of Romance now known as Castilian or Spanish; the people of the Atlantic lands spoke their Galico-Portuguese language, as they do now. The Basques descended to the plains where they had previously lived since prehistoric times, and stayed there. They had recovered the country where their ancestors lay buried, and there they have remained, in almost exactly the same places, to the present day.

The reconquest of the lands deserted by the Christians of the Mediterranean coast was undertaken by the people of Southern Gaul. Once across the Pyrenees, the Moors had continued northwards and taken Narbonne; their advance was at last arrested when the Frankish Charles Martel, duke of Austrasia, defeated them. The decisive battle was fought between Poitiers and Tours in 732. From that day two simultaneous successions of attacks compelled the Saracens to go back whence they came. One of these was a movement of the Peninsular peoples only (Portuguese and Castilian); the other had a Continental origin: Gallic, Frankish, Gascon (*see map on p. 7*). This movement liberated Narbonne in 759, and then, under the supreme command of Louis 'le Debonnaire',



King of Aquitaine, and with soldiers from Aquitaine, Gascony, Septimania, Burgundy and Provence,<sup>6</sup> the Christian army crossed the Pyrenees, and liberated Girona in 785—or shortly before—and Barcelona in 801. Louis 'le Debonnaire' brought with him to the newly liberated regions soldiers of the same origin and language, customs and feelings, being united by a common purpose of a religious and—if this may be said referring to people of the eighth century—a patriotic nature. The newly-recovered parts were placed under a common administration, and lands were given to the soldiers, at first in a fief for life—*benefici*, and later in perpetuity—*aprisió*.



Families from the northern side of the Pyrenees settled on the southern slopes and in the valleys, and with them they brought the ties which connected these lands more than ever before, this linking again the populations from Nice and Limoges to Barcelona. The newly-regained country was more than an expansion of Southern Gaul; it was the melting-pot in which the regional differences between the peoples of Southern Gaul were fused into a national type. The language they spoke was closely akin to the various dialects of Southern Gaul—all of them of a common origin, and known as Languedoc, Provençal, or Limousin (*see map above*); it had the advantage of preserving the most vivid expressions from the various dialectal forms.<sup>7</sup>

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The people of Southern Gaul had, under the Romans and probably also under the Goths, succeeded in preserving self-government, their own laws and their own magistrature; Northern Gaul—the parts later to be occupied by the Franks—did not obtain these rights before the twelfth century.<sup>8</sup> In the eleventh century the citizens of the towns in which Langue d'Oc was spoken—in the area commonly called Provence, although it is very much larger than the Provence of today—constituted a separate social class distinct from the nobility, from the clergy, and from the serfs. They were called *bourgeois*, a term which occurs in the Catalan law *Usatges* in 1060, in Carcassonne in 1107, in Montpellier in 1113, and in Béziers in 1121; the towns nominated *consuls* for their own government.<sup>9</sup> Soon the *bourgeois* of the villages formed militias to assist the armies of the nobility in their wars; this institution, although modified by centuries, still exists in Catalonia under the name of *sometent*. Narbonne was made the religious centre, and Barcelona became the political pole around which the national consciousness was forming. Aix-en-Provence, Montpellier and Toulouse were the complementary focus from which light was shed over science, art, and politics. Thus it may be said without exaggeration that by the twelfth century a new civilization had emerged in Europe, for the first time after the collapse of Roman society. It had taken more than six hundred years, but this laborious process of gestation was now completed, and humanity began to move upwards again. All conditions for a prosperous life were at hand: among them a fertile land favoured by one of the mildest and most equable climates in Europe; a geographical situation which made the country between the Ebro and the Loire the link joining the North with the South and the Mediterranean with the Atlantic; numerous wealthy cities, in which society increasingly resembled the ancient Roman pattern; good communications;

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Mohammedan civilization developing in the neighbouring Spanish State;<sup>10</sup> a refined aristocracy which protected the Arts, and a rich and energetic middle class composed of merchants and sailors, which provided the sources of the nation's wealth. Commemorating the Gothic domination on both sides of the Pyrenees, a large part of that region in which the Langue d'Oc was later spoken was called *Gothia* or land of the Goths, and according to some authorities it was from this that the word *Gothalaunia* originated. An alternative view is that it was derived from a settlement of people from the Gallic Champs Cathalaunis. As early as the beginning of the twelfth century, the name was used in its modern form, Catalonia, though then applied almost exclusively to the southern side of the Pyrenees. Thus Catalonia may be said to be the region where all the various characteristics of the Provençals became concentrated and, in many spheres, intensified.<sup>11</sup>

Unfortunately, the seeds of disintegration were also to be found in this early Provençal society. Among them was corruption in the monastic orders and religious hierarchies, which many were allowed to join not for their conduct, piety or wisdom, but merely as followers of a profession in which the poor could find subsistence and the rich a source of power. Another danger for this young society was the fact that many of the aristocrats soon neglected the arts of war, preferring patronage of poets and singers to the exercise of their military prowess against the Mohammedans. This criticism however does not apply to the people who were more directly under the rule of the counts of Barcelona—the Catalans; they had to fight continually in order to drive back the Saracens from the lands they had conquered at the beginning of the eighth century. The preponderance of Troubadour poetry in the northern part of the country over its southern part, that is, of Provence over

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Catalonia, is probably due to the fighting kept up by the Catalans. From the time of the reoccupation by the Christians of the country from Narbonne to Barcelona, the feudal authority was held by the kings of the Carolingian dynasty. But in the course of time their authority dwindled to hardly more than a nominal fief, from which the earls of Barcelona were freed at the end of the ninth century, 'from Narbonne to Spain', as the *Gesta Comitum* put it. Some stigmata of the former dependency still remained in the names of the coins and the dates of the official documents, which were inscribed and dated

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according to the reign of the kings of France. In 1112, the Count of Barcelona became Duke of Provence by his marriage with Dolça the heiress of that dukedom. This new authority of the House of Barcelona, extending from Nice almost to the Ebro, marked a further step in the growth of national consciousness among the people of the Langue d'Oc (*see map on p. 11*). In books by Provençal writers on this period, we find definite expressions of gratitude to the House of Barcelona for the high development of Provence under its rule.<sup>12</sup>

The authority of the House of Barcelona over Southern Gaul took a more definite shape when, in 1137, the Catalan counts became kings of Aragon by the marriage of Count Ramon Berenguer IV with Petronella, heiress to the throne of Aragon.<sup>13</sup> From that time onwards, Provençal was a language not only suited for poetry but generally spoken at a king's court as well. Toulouse, the great city of the river Garonne and the only centre resisting the hegemony of Barcelona, more and more came under its influence; at the beginning of the thirteenth century its dependency was complete, when the country was ruthlessly attacked by the Northern Frenchmen, the descendants of the Franks who had conquered Northern Gaul in the sixth century.<sup>14</sup> The terrible struggle between the people of Northern and of Southern Gaul marked the end of Provençal nationality and cut asunder for ever the destiny of a people hitherto joined as one unit: from that time on, the Pyrenees have remained a frontier.

The superiority in wealth, culture and refinement of the people of Southern Gaul roused the envy of the warlike and primitive French of that time;<sup>15</sup> but this alone would hardly have sufficed to disrupt so large a country, without the causes of disintegration already mentioned. I have stressed that the most powerful of all was the state of the Church; but the type of remedy the people tried to apply to it was even worse. Among an intelligent and

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hard-working people of deep religious feeling, the spectacle of degenerate priests who practised simony and other irregularities produced a demand for reformation of these abuses. Rome was unable or unwilling to meet this claim, with the result that heresy sprang from the criticism and depreciation of the monks and priests, and also from the economic development of the communities.<sup>16</sup> It was a merchant from Lyons named Valdo who principally carried the propagation of the heretical doctrine. His preaching was not in many points in conflict with the Catholic dogma; but among other striking doctrines he preached that poverty was essential in order to carry the Christian Apostolate in accordance with the will of our Saviour; he and his followers also spread the belief that taking an oath was forbidden by God and that, in consequence, no man was entitled to swear an oath to another man. It will easily be realized that the acceptance of this doctrine would have brought about a collapse of feudal society, which was founded on the fief of obligation; and that it would probably have caused very real harm to a society not as yet sufficiently developed to be supported by the communities only. The Roman Church fought the heresy with all her might, and Valdo and his followers were excommunicated. One of the excommunicated Valdenses called Duran—H. C. Lea, an authority on that period, calls him the Catalan Duran of Huesca<sup>17</sup>—having repented of his heresy and returned to the fold of the Roman Church, asked Pope Innocent III for authorization to organize a new monastic order whose exemplary poverty, morality, and piety would serve as a model of Catholic life. Duran's idea was not brought to a practical realization when, in 1207 he first approached the Roman authorities, but it was accepted and fully developed some years later when the Order of St. Francis was founded. It was probably considered out of place at a moment when religious war was ravaging the lands of

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Southern Gaul; the reformation of monastic abuses may have been considered more proper when complete victory had been won by the army of the French Crusaders. In fact the Crusade was preached against another heresy known by the name of an Occitan town, Albi, where the new sect had made many proselytes, and from which the terms of Albigensian and Albigenses were derived and applied to the new heresy and heretics. This heresy was not very different from that of the Valdenses, but it seems to have been more popular in character, deriving some influence from ancient Oriental Manicheism. Unfortunately, most of the contemporary documents have been lost, and very little reliable information has been transmitted to modern times, among it the *Cansó de Crozada* of Guillem de Tudela.<sup>18</sup> However, we know that the common people of Provence called the priests of the new religion the 'poor brethren' and the 'bons homens' —an evidence of the exemplary role claimed by the heretics.

One of the first steps taken against the ensuing religious anarchy, which threatened the collapse of Catholic authority, was the Council of Lombers in 1165, where the nature of the heresy and the dangers of its propagation were defined.<sup>19</sup> The followers of the new religion seem to have been, in general, illiterate persons who had no established system of faith; the word Albigenses was applied to them for the first time during the crusade in 1208; a contemporary description,<sup>20</sup> says that 'the false prophets claim to follow the life of the Apostles, praying without end, walking barefoot, and praying on their knees seven times, night and day; they do not allow the use of money and do not eat meat or drink wine and are satisfied with simple food; they say that alms have no moral value because nobody should be allowed to possess material wealth; they refuse the practice of Holy Communion saying that Mass is useless, and they declare

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that they are ready to die and to suffer the most severe punishment for their beliefs. They claim that they can perform miracles. There are twelve principals among them under the direction of one whose name is Pons.' Only when the admonitions of Rome were neglected, the great Pope and able politician, Innocent III—Lothario Conti, a native of Rome—decided to intervene in a more vigorous way by changing the highly placed hierarchies of the Provençal Catholic Church, as they were suspected of weakness towards their heretical fellow-countrymen. The Troubadour from Marseilles, Folquet—the son of a Genoese family and great friend of St. Dominic and of King Alfonso VIII of Castille—was made archbishop of Toulouse, and most of the other Church posts were given to clergy from France. The bishops of Narbonne (Berenguer) and of Béziers were dismissed and their successors were 'newly-imported' men.<sup>21</sup> St. Dominic then played the decisive part. He was a Castilian by birth, born in the village of Calaroga in 1170, near the town of Palencia. His name was Domingo de Guzmán, and he belonged to a noble family. In 1203, when accompanying the bishop of Osma, Diego, to France he became convinced that an urgent remedy had to be applied to the heresy of Southern Gaul; he went to Rome and was delegated by Pope Innocent III to preach against the heretics in Provence, where he remained from 1205 to 1215. This preaching is considered to have been the mission of Dominic's life; he did his best to restrain the heretics from their errors, but believing he had failed he suggested to the Pope that, where preaching had been inefficient, repression and blows might be more effective. The following words are taken from his last sermon in Provence: 'For many years have I exhorted you in vain with gentleness, preaching, praying and weeping. But according to a proverb of my country, "where blessing can accomplish nothing, blows may avail". We shall

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rouse against you princes and prelates, who, alas, will arm nations and kingdoms against this land . . . and blows will avail where blessing and gentleness have failed.' St. Dominic's prediction was to be fulfilled, to the misfortune of the Provençal people.<sup>22</sup> From that time the Order of Dominicans grew out of the little band of volunteers who had joined Dominic of Guzmán. In 1214 the nucleus of this institution was formed around Dominic and was known as the 'Holy Preaching'. In 1215 the archbishop of Toulouse, Folquet, established Dominic and his followers in a house and church in Toulouse. Innocent III made the first arrangements for the foundation of the 'Order of Preachers', but it was not before Honorius III had succeeded him that the new Order had full Papal recognition, in 1218. By 1222, the year after Dominic's death, there were more than five hundred friars and sixty friaries, divided into eight provinces spread all over Europe. One peculiarity of the Dominican provinces was that they followed the old geographic and administrative divisions of the Roman Empire: that is, Italy, Hispania, Gaul, etc. Lyons, Limoges, Reims, Metz, Poitiers, Orléans in France; Bologna, Milan, Florence, Verona, Piacenza and Venice in Italy; Madrid, Palencia, Seville and Barcelona in the Spanish peninsula; Oxford in England; Friesach and Prague in the Holy Roman Empire, and Cracow in Poland had Dominican friaries which as early as 1217 had sprung from the forty friars of Rome and the thirty of Paris. The original idea of St. Dominic of combining blessings with blows qualified his order in Spain in later days for the administration of the Inquisition.<sup>23</sup> But side by side with these intolerant Dominicans, some of the most illuminating minds of the Middle Ages emerged from this order, among them St. Thomas Aquinas and Albertus Magnus.

From the national point of view of the Provençal people, the intervention of St. Dominic and his Order was

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decisive; he gave to Rome, Paris and Toledo, the centres of the Italian, French and Spanish States (Madrid has now taken the place of her neighbour, Toledo), the means of coercion against the intermediate Catalano-Provençal nation. Three centuries later, St. Dominic's foresight was to be proved again when the complete extirpation was attempted of the free remains of the Langue d'Oc people, that is, of the Catalans.

Both the Soldiers of the Cross—the men of France—and the priests appointed by the Pope or by the Pope's legates, acted with rude expedition, not only against the heretics but indiscriminately against all nationals of the civilized Provence, irrespective of age, sex, or religion. The city of Béziers was defended by its inhabitants; after being taken by the Crusaders, it was completely demolished and the whole population, heretic and Catholic alike, was massacred. Carcassonne, too, suffered terribly, and after it had fallen into the hands of the French, the Catalan King Pere II decided to intervene in order to stop the progress of the French across his country. Pere II had shortly before helped to defeat the terrible Almohades from Africa, who were a serious threat to the Christian Kingdoms of Spain after the Moorish defeat of the Castilian army of Alfonso VIII at Alarcos, in 1195. At the battle of 'las Navas de Tolosa' in 1212, the combined armies of the Basques under the command of their king, Sancho the Strong, the Castilians under Alfonso VIII, and the Catalans and Aragonese under Pere II, completely annihilated the large Moorish army; this victory marked the beginning of the Mohammedans decline, from which they never recovered.

King Pere, knowing that the invasion of his country bore only a remote relation to the extirpation of an heresy but a very close connexion with the imperialistic ambitions of the French, summoned a large army and went to the help of Toulouse. In Muret, a few miles from Toulouse,

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King Pere's army was completely defeated by the small army of the Crusaders under the command of Simon de Montfort (1213), and in the middle of the fighting the King was killed. The disaster of Muret marked the beginning of the partition of the Occitan lands into two parts under two separate powers, French and Catalan for some centuries and French and Spanish later. The Catalan hegemony in Southern Gaul began to decline until, less than fifty years later, the son of Pere II, King James I, signed the renunciation of his rights to the lands of Southern Gaul, in favour of the House of France. The treaty of Corbeil, signed in 1258, gave France the shape it has preserved through history. It also made Catalonia what it is. From those days, the common interests of the now divided people have many times been opposed by the conflicting ambitions of Catalonia and France; the Provençals, as rivals of the Catalans, were encouraged by France to inhibit Catalan expansion. But then, as now, Provençals and Catalans had a similar outlook derived from their common origin and similar environment. King Jaume I—called 'the Conqueror' because of his military successes—was more than any of his predecessors a pure type of the Provençal race. Son of the Catalan Pere II—known as the Catholic, in spite of his support of the heretics—and of Maria, Countess of Montpellier, King Jaume was born in his mother's city. For that reason Montpellier was the only city which remained in Catalan hands up to the middle of the next century. This also explains why Montpellier was the university town of the Catalans and why its incorporation into France in 1349 marked the end of the great period of that model of a medieval university. The superiority of Paris reduced Montpellier, in less than fifty years, to the provincial condition in which it has since remained.