French King nor the English King, much less the Kings of Aragon and Navarre, his next neighbours, were as great as he, or as brave, or as courteous, or as rich, or as learned. His Court was one of the most splendid in Europe—and Froissart had, of course, seen many—his Castle of Orthéz the chronicler pronounced one of the finest royal residences in Christendom. In the vault of one of its towers was kept a treasure-chest containing "one hundred thousand florins thirty times over "-the word "million" had not been invented in those days-a store of ready coin no other ruler of Western Europe could match.1 Gaston's hunting establishment surpassed in size and quality all others; his horses, of which he had six hundred in his train on the famous occasion of his meeting at Tarbes the Black Prince and his Princess, were among the finest in the world, the beaux palefrois mounted by his "plated" knights, the elégantes haquenées for the fair ladies. His greyhounds were the lightest of foot, his hounds for the stag, buck, for the great bears of the Pyrenees (to the chase of which, one hot August day in 1391, he himself succumbed) were the swiftest, surest, and most valiant of any in royal kennels, and they numbered, as we are told, sixteen hundred hounds. Ever keen to improve the breeds of hounds and horses, choice specimens were sent him from all parts of the world, Froissart himself bringing him from this country the four oftquoted levriers called Tristan, Hector, Brun, and Rolland. His devotion to art, letters, and hunting made his Court a famous rendezvous for bards, artists, and men of science, and the hospitality proffered by this great feudal lord was world-famous and made his Court the refuge of dethroned princes and fugitive nobles. When the ambassadors of France, England, Aragon, and Castile met for the conclusion of a treaty of peace, they selected Orthéz as the most suitable place of meeting.

Of almost unrivalled splendour must have been the festivities held on such occasions in the famous castle, particularly when royalty favoured it with its presence. Thus when the Duke of Berry, the French King's uncle, laid siege to the "pearl of Orthéz," Jeanne of Boulogne, Gaston's rich young cousin and ward, the entertainments at Orthéz and in Auvergne were marked by truly regal prodigality. Equally so were the festivities at the betrothal of Gaston's only son and heir to Beatrice the Gay, the beautiful daughter of Count Jean of Armagnac, in 1379. By this union it was hoped would be ended the interminable wars between the lords of Foix and of Armagnac, the two leading dynasties of the Langue d'Oc, but the youthful swain's tragic death a year or so later frustrated this.

But it is time we cast a glance at our author's earlier history, for it gives us a key to the character of this remarkable man.

Gaston's fiery temper showed itself from his early youth. In his "Prayers," which he sent to his favourite friend the Duke of Burgundy, to which he also dedicated his hunting-book, Gaston says of his own youth: "I was wayward and frivolous so that I shamed my parents, and all the world said: this one can never be worth anything; unhappy country of which he will be the ruler." His father, Gaston II., and particularly his mother, Eleanor de Comminge, who had the reputation of being one of the wisest and most perfect women of the fourteenth century, succeeded in curbing, for the time, the violence of his character. They gave him as governor the good and loyal knight Corbeyran de Rabat, who kept from him all adulation and surrounded him with carefully selected youths of gentle birth. The striking personal beauty of young Gaston, and the abundance of golden hair, acquired for him the name "Phoebus." He wore it always loose and his head was ever uncovered. Some authors have asserted that it was owing to his taking the sun as his emblem that he was called Phoebus, others, again, say that he was so called on account of

the success with which he cultivated the muses, for he deserved to be cited "as a remarkable writer even in a century in which lived Petrarch, Dante, Chaucer, Boccaccio and Froissart." He was barely twelve when war cut short the career of his father, who with his brother and King Philip of Navarre had joined Alphonso the Avenger's crusade, from which so many failed to return. The widow was left guardian of young Gaston, and is said to have devoted her life to the task and to the good government of his heritage. With war he made his first acquaintance at the age of fourteen, when he helped to defend Guienne against the Earl of Derby's invasion. When he was seventeen he was made King's General in the Langue d'Oc, the beginning of his administration being marked by the fearful ravages of the most unsparing pestilence of which there is record, which, it is said, left alive after eight months' duration but a sixth of the population of Provence and Langue d'Oc. In 1349, at the age of eighteen, he married Agnes, daughter of Philip the Noble, King of Navarre and Jane of France, the marriage being celebrated in Paris, the King giving him his dispensation by which, in spite of his youth, he was enabled to assume the reins of government in Foix, which Comté he held as a fief from the French Crown, while Béarn was his own principality. Instead of this union, which united him with two powerful dynasties, being a source of good, it proved to be the cause of endless wars and unhappiness. His wife's brother was Charles the Bad, King of Navarre, the instigator of one of the most dastardly plots known in history, who, by a train of Machiavellian intrigues, managed to sow discord between husband and wife and father and son, as well as between Gaston and his over-lord King John. As a result Gaston fell into disgrace with the latter, and lay for some time as prisoner in the Châtelet, his person being secured while he was on French territory. His confinement, notwithstanding that Charles of Navarre had in the meanwhile joined England in the fighting in Normandy, did not last long, for one of the most disastrous defeats of French arms, no less than the efforts of his powerful friends, soon combined to release him from his prison.

Among those that came to his assistance was his cousin Captal de Buch, Viconte de Benanges and Castillon, another very remarkable mediæval personality. Notwithstanding his French nationality he occupied such a high place in Edward III.'s regard, that we find John de Grailly,1 or Captal de Buch, as he was usually called, as one of the first twenty-six original founders of the most noble Order of the Garter, his name occupying the fifth place in the list at the first "Feast of the Order" held on April 23, 1344 (Beltz: "Memorials of the Order of the Garter," p. cxl.). The Captals de Buch were lords of lands, which do not appear to have been very extensive, near Bordeaux (they are now known as "La Tête de Buch"), and the family had from an early period of England's dominion in France espoused the English cause. Froissart mentions the name as among the commanders of Edward's army at Bordeaux, and at the battle of Poitiers (September 19, 1356), Captal distinguished himself not a little, making an immensely rich haul by capturing James de Bourbon, for whom the ransom was fixed at the then vast sum of 25,000 florins. It was this great defeat of his over-lord's armies that opened the doors of the Châtelet to the imprisoned Gaston. About his next movement we only know that he returned home, while his cousin Captal² embarked with the victorious Black Prince for England in April 1357, and participated at the triumphal entry into London with the French King and the flower of French chivalry as prisoners. Captal could not have remained there long, however, for we know that in the early part of the summer he had joined Gaston de Foix, and, accompanied by a retinue of only

¹ M. Raymond, in his Rôles de l'Armée de Gaston Phoebus, states that the intrinsic value of a florin of Gaston's day was equal to 13 frcs. 75 c., so that, computing the respective purchasing values as only ten times as great, this Orthéz treasure was equal to something over 400 million francs, or over 16 million sterling of our modern money.

² Gaston's grandmother, Jeanne of Artois, wife of Gaston I., left a reputation strangely in contrast to that of his mother, "Eleanor the Wise," for so notorious was her conduct that her son, Gaston II., had to lock her up in 133I. In 1344, after his death, Philip of Valois claimed her and undertook to keep her in prison "tant que vie aurait." (Arch de Paris, JJ. lxviii).

¹ There exists some confusion concerning the Christian name of this Captal de Buch. In the records of the foundation of the Order of the Garter "John" is given as the name, but on the plate bearing the arms and name of each knight on the stalls at Windsor, it appears, according to the above cited authority (who was Lancaster of each knight on the stalls at Windsor, it appears, according to the above cited authority (who was Lancaster of each knight on the stalls at Windsor, it appears, according to the above cited authority (who was Lancaster of each knight on the stalls at Windsor, it appears, according to the above cited authority (who was Lancaster of each knight on the stalls at Windsor, it appears, according to the above cited authority (who was Lancaster of each knight on the stalls at Windsor, it appears of Bordeaux was John's maternal uncle, from whom he inherited his estates; and as neither he nor any other member of the de Grailly family became a Knight of the inherited his estates; and as neither he nor any other member of the de Grailly family became a Knight of the inherited his estates; and as neither he nor any other member of the de Grailly family became a Knight of the inherited his estates; and as neither he nor any other member of the de Grailly family became a Knight of the inherited his estates; and as neither he nor any other member of the de Grailly family became a Knight of the inherited his estates; and as neither he nor any other member of the de Grailly family became a Knight of the inherited his estates; and as neither he nor any other member of the de Grailly family became a Knight of the inherited his estates; and as neither he nor any other member of the de Grailly family became a Knight of the inherited his estates; and as neither he nor any other member of the de Grailly family became a Knight of the inherited his estates.

² Captal de Buch subsequently became the founder of the second line of the Foix dynasty, for he married Isabelle de Castelbon, the cousin-german and only surviving relation of Gaston de Foix.