

TO KNOW THE TRUTH

A SIXTEENTH-CENTURY DOCUMENT WITH EXCURSUS BY DOROTHY CRISPINO

Some time after 1525, a notice concerning the history of Our Lady of Lirey was posted near the entrance of that little church. The notice was entitled "St. Suaire" and began: "Pour scavoir la voirs...", To know the truth.... Four copies are preserved in the Bibliotheque Nationale, Paris, where Father Edward Wuenschel studied them, labeling the texts A,B,C,D. A photocopy of Document B is in the Wuenschel Collection of the Holy Shroud Guild, along with Fr. Wuenschel's transcription, on which his marginalia indicate where the other copies omit or add or use a different word or phrase. The variations are infrequent and insignificant.

The title of foundation of the small wood church that Geoffroy de Charny built is dated 24 June 1353. In 1508, the dean initiated a reconstruction in stone; Bishop Guillaume Parvy consecrated the new church on 27 March 1526. The notice can most likely be dated from about this time. Around 1820, the stone edifice was demolished. The building which stands today was built in 1897 on the site of the ancient collegiate church.

Some time in the XVIIIth century, the château-fort of Lirey, with its drawbridge, was totally razed and the moat filled in.

"To know the truth" is a curious document. There is scarcely a word of truth in it. Geoffroy de Charny was never a count; no Burgundian dukes figured in his ancestry, nor was he baron of Joinville. The "eagle of French knighthood" was treated honorably by Edward III and released on ransom. The foundation of the Lirey church was anterior to Geoffroy's capture at Calais; the relics honored in the Lirey church — with the exception of the Shroud and the silver tower — are not the same as those itemized in the 1418 agreement drawn up between the canons and Marguerite de Charny and her husband. Many of the affirmations so confidently exposed have been corrected by later research; the attentive reader will recognize the errors.

But the authors of the Lirey manifesto cannot be accused of deliberately lying for the sake of bolstering their cause or bewailing their injury. With no intent to deceive, they composed the notice on letters and documents "still in this present church" and on a few local reminiscences enhanced or enfeebled by two centuries. It is understandable that the text is overcast with bitterness: the same chagrin was voiced at Chambéry after 1578. The canons — like the Charnys, like the Savoys, like the hundreds of thousands of pilgrims, eloquent or mute, scholarly, saintly, royalty, peasantry or bourgeoisie, religious fanatics, atheists or those with simple faith, ordinary people of every nation — on seeing the Shroud, like St. John and St. Peter, they believed. For all of them, for all of us, this visible, tangible record of Christ's passage on earth is indeed the most precious and priceless object that exists.

To know the truth about the ancient foundation of this present church Our Lady of Lirey, as it is found and appears in the ancient chronicles of France as well as by the titles and other information about this church; and also by what notable persons it was originally founded, endowed and built; it is to be noted that in the year of Our Lord 1348, the deceased messire Geoffroy de Charny of blessed memory, knight, count of said Charny and lord of this present place of Lirey, descendant of the ancient dukes of Burgundy and the seneschals of Champagne, baron of Joinville, governor and lieutenant general for the king of France Philip, called of Valois, in his lands of Picardy, was sent by this King Philip of Valois, accompanied by the lord of Montmorency with fifteen hundred lances, to the said frontiers of Picardy to regain the town of Calais, that King Edward of England had only recently taken by assault from the said Philip of Valois, king of France, which the count of Charny accomplished so well that in a very short time he laid siege to the said* town of Calais in every part; and he had set about, by some secret means, to take the castle of Calais by assault, where the king of England and his son the prince of Wales were with a great number of men of war to defend the castle against the strength of this count of Charny; but since the enterprise was discovered by a Genoese, the king of England, Edward, precisely for this reason had amassed such a huge number of men of war at the castle that they were twelve against one, who leaped upon the count of Charny and his knights, who fought valiantly on one side and the other in such a way that several French were slain and killed, and among others the lord of Montmorency was killed and several others were taken prisoner. And in particular the count of Charny was taken prisoner in the town of Calais and put in a great tower where he was inhumanly treated by King Edward of England for nine whole months; and thereby he had a huge advantage because the count of Charny and lord of this place of Lirey, by his prowess and great feats of arms, had snatched Philip of Valois, king of France, out of the hands of the English in the battle of Crecy near Abbeville, when there was great danger to his life; which was in the year one thousand three hundred forty six.

Now several times, Philip of Valois, king of France, had sent ambassadors to King Edward, king of England, to release the count of Charny from captivity, and to offer a ransom that was more than sufficient; nevertheless Edward would never take a ransom for the count of Charny. In fact, he had decided to let him die in this captivity, saying that if the count of Charny were out of his hands, that one day he would be the cause of the loss not only of his town of Calais, but of even bigger things, and that since he was detained as

* From here onwards, we will drop the *said*s. The other locutions and the punctuation will be followed as literally as understanding will permit.

prisoner, he did not fear the strength of the king of France, who was Philip of Valois, because he held prisoner the eagle of the knighthood of France, who was this count of Charny.

When the count of Charny, who was detained prisoner in such terrible misery, was informed that King Edward had decided not to take a ransom for him, but to let him die in that captivity; having perfect confidence in God and turning all his hopes his Creator and to the Mother of grace and mercy, the glorious Virgin Mary, for whom he had a special devotion; having thus called to mind the deep and great mystery of the Incarnation of the Son of God for the redemption of mankind in all the catholic church, solemnly celebrated annually on the day of the Annunciation to the glorious Virgin Mary; on this day he prostrated himself on both his knees as humbly and devoutly as he could in his prison, and made petition and prayer that by her worthy merits and intercession she would have pity and compassion on him and would release him out of captivity and the hands of the king of England, Edward; and that in her honor and acclaim — especially in regard to the Annunciation that the Angel Gabriel had announced to her when she conceived the Son of God — he would build and erect a church to her, which he would endow sufficiently that God and the glorious Virgin Mary should be served daily. And the count of Charny had not yet finished his prayer when an angel came to him, as it is believed, in the form of a young man, claiming to be the servant of the concierge and lord posted as guard of the tower where he was held, saying to him that the king of England had decided to let him die in that misery and calamity, but if he would believe his advice and would fulfill the promises that he had made, a short time ago, to God and the Virgin Mary to build her a church in her honor, he would soon deliver him from captivity. The count of Charny was extremely astonished as to who had revealed his prayer and promise; to which the young man replied that it was the Virgin Mary who had sent him to him to tell what he had just now said, that with his help he would deliver him that night from this captivity.

Now the young man did not fail in this enterprise, because, when night had come, he came to the tower where the count was and rushed him out of the tower, closing the doors and gates behind him, and reminding him to always keep good confidence, without any fear, and with the aid of God and the glorious Virgin Mary, he would be in safety before daybreak. He told him that this night the English would assemble in the Grande Place of the town of Calais to go skirmish the French, who were in garrison in a small town about one little league distant from Calais, and that it was to his advantage to go out with them. To do this better, he would give him weapons and clothes of English style so that he would not be recognized, which the count of Charny agreed to do. And after he was armed and dressed in English style, the young man led him to the Place where the English were assembled, and he was armed

and dressed so well in their style that he was not recognized. The young man took leave of him and told him that when the English went out, that he should not delay going out with them, and that he should always have good confidence in the Virgin Mary and that he should fulfill the promises that he had made to her in the shortest possible time. This was what the count did, because, when the English went forth out of the town, the count of Charny mingled with them, and the English thought that he was English like them. And thus they marched quite near the little town where the French were garrisoned, whom they thought to find sleeping; but the French, who had been warned of their enterprise, met them and repulsed them valiantly, in such a way that the English were so vanquished that they were all slain and taken prisoners, among whom was the count of Charny taken prisoner as an Englishman, by messire Eustache Richemont, the French captain, who recognized him immediately to be the count of Charny, which was soon divulged to all the French army, who broke into great reveling and lighted great bonfires.

King Philip of Valois, who at that time was in his town of Amiens, informed that the count of Charny had got out of prison, desiring to know exactly by what means, sent for him, to know more amply the manner of his deliverance. At that summons, the count of Charny went immediately to the town of Amiens, where he was honorably received, and by command of the king bonfires were made, and the king Philip of Valois heard, from the count of Charny, the means of his escape, for which he was very happy and amazed. And praising him very much and approving his deep devotion and good will, and so that the church of Lirey would be more revered and honored, he gave him the holy shroud of Our Lord, Savior and Redeemer Jesus Christ, with a large piece of the true cross and several other relics and holy things to be put and collocated in the church that he hoped and proposed to build, erect and endow in honor of the glorious Virgin Mary. And so that he might be a participant in the prayers and oraisons of the church, he gave him leave and permission to give the church, for an endowment, up to the sum of two hundred sixty *livres tournois*; and afterwards the king John, son of Philip of Valois, also gave the count of Charny power and permission to give and increase the foundation of the church, up to the sum of a hundred *livres tournois* besides the gift of his father; all in amortized rent without paying any tax, from which he released him by a special grace on account of the great and agreeable services that the count of Charny had done for them.

After he had taken leave of the king of France Philip of Valois, he departed to his domains in Champagne, the same as this present place of Lirey, where, to fulfill the promises he had made to the Virgin Mary, he erected here in this present place of Lirey a small church or chapel of wood; only that much because of the evil times that reigned then in this country, which all the same quite amply

provided great rents and good revenues; but because of the wars and mortalities which in those times devastated the land, and that reigned for such a long time afterwards that the country remained almost uninhabited, it happened that these rents and revenues dwindled and were almost completely lost and wiped out.

And the count of Charny gave to this church the holy shroud (*la sainte suaire*), the true cross with numerous other relics which he had very richly adorned, and even a beautiful tower all of silver, in likeness and resemblance to the one where he had been held prisoner in Calais, in which there were several holy relics. These holy things, reliquaries and relics, are still at present in this present church, except the holy shroud, which maliciously and furtively was transported to the land of Savoy and there kept by force, although some of the dukes of the land of Savoy had, at other times, promised to return it, and in the meantime to pay a huge fine to this church for the loss and for the interest on it, which letters and informations are in this church; it appears that they have done nothing about it. And besides, the big strong armoires where the holy shroud was housed and carefully guarded are still here.

Also the count of Charny gave this church numerous other rich adornments serving for the divine service, such as chalices, books and vestments and other things for the decoration of this church. And he also obtained several pardons and indulgences for the benefactors, with privileges, graces and prerogatives, and exemptions for the church.

And the count of Charny founded in this church six canonries or chaplaincies by his plenary advowson and that of his successors, seigneurs of Lirey; one [of the canons] should be dean, elected by the other canons of this church, who would receive a double distribution and who would be charged with administering the sacraments of holy church, except baptism, to the seigneur, his wife, children* and domestic servants, as well as the canons themselves and other servers of this church and their successors. It also provided that two acolytes and an administrator be [appointed] in accordance to the wishes and discretion of the dean and canons; all of whom were charged by the founder to say, chant and celebrate, every day, all the canonical hours and high masses according to the customs and ceremonies of the church of Troyes; and several other ordinances in honor of God are included in this foundation.

And he intended to do many other great benefits if he had not been prevented by death in the battle that took place near Poitiers between King John, son of Philip of Valois, and the prince of Wales, son of Edward, king of England; in which battle King John was taken prisoner; and the count of Charny, founder of this present church and seigneur of this place of Lirey, who carried the ensign of King John, and who had the keeping of the oriflamme, was

* Texts C and D omit "children".

killed and slain, which was only about seven years after having started to build this church, which, as one has seen, was erected of wood, so very small and unsubstantial, awaiting more fortunate times, and not so big as it is at present because the present church as you now see it was constructed and erected from the year one thousand five hundred and eight until the year one thousand five hundred twenty five, by the grace of God and the glorious Virgin Mary, the aid and alms of good people, with the solicitude of messire John Huart senior, canon of Troyes and dean of this church, and what he was able to contribute out of his own substance. Pray God for the departed and the benefactors of this church. *Pater Noster, Ave Maria.*

EXCURSUS

To know the truth.... Many futile paths would fall into disuse, could we but see that scene of the transfer of the Holy Shroud of Our Lord Jesus Christ into the hands of Geoffroy de Charny, lord of Lirey. Then the screens that hide the When and Where — even perhaps the Who and Why — could be withdrawn and there would be light enough to trace the background and to project upon what truly happened in the centuries that followed.

Early reconstructions of the event — presaging Emily Dickinson —, were often based on one bee and revery. Despite its hollowness, the Besançon theory still resonates today, presumably on the proposition that repetition confers validity. In its most popular version, the Besançon theory has Philip VI giving the Shroud to "Count" de Charny.¹

The Smyrna Connection remains a riddle. Did Geoffroy's participation in Humbert the Second's chimera terminate on some unscheduled shore? The Dauphin's armies sailed from Marseille the end of August, 1345. It took them eight months to reach Negrepoint. A sort of battle took place, at Smyrna, at the end of June, 1346. But five weeks after the battle, precisely on the second day of August, 1346, Geoffroy gives a receipt for his and his soldiers' pay, at Port-Sainte-Marie, close by Aiguillon in southwest France.

Savoy has its myths and that is strange for if anybody knew the truth about the provenance of the Shroud, Louis I, duke of Savoy, and his consort, Anne of Lusignan, princess of Cyprus and Jerusalem, had every right to that information.

But did Marguerite de Charny know the full story of how the Shroud came into her grandfather's hands? The deposition she made at the court of Dole on 8 May 1443, states that the Shroud was acquired by the late messire Geoffroy de Charny: *conquis par feu messire Geoffroy de Charny....* The fragment *conquis par feu* has often been wrenched from context and totally misinterpreted to read "conquered by fire", ergo in battle. *...par feu messire* not only means "by the late sire" but *conquis*, in medieval parlance, had not the

value of "conquered" but signified merely "acquired" or "gained". Besides the fact that firearms were not yet in use....

Did Marguerite's father, Geoffroy II, have all the facts? In his letter to Geoffroy II, dated 28 July 1389, Clement VII ratifies the concession granted by Cardinal Pierre de Thury, papal legate, to return the Shroud to the Lirey church and resume its display.² Reference to possession of the Relic is casual: the pope repeats de Thury's explanation:

...Petro...pro parte tua exposito, quod olim genitor tuus zelo devotionis accensus, quandam figuram sive representationem Sudarii Domini nostri Jhesu Christi liberaliter sibi oblatam, in Ecclesia Beate Marie de Lireyo...venerabiliter collocari fecerat;...

That is, that this figure or representation of the Lord's *sudarium* had been "graciously given" to Geoffroy II's father, who had placed it respectfully in the church.

Enter the bishop of Troyes, Pierre d'Arcis, with his accusations of fraud. He inveighed against the canons who, he said, "their malice discovered", had the Shroud "preserved privately or kept hidden for about 34 years...because of wars and other reasons...." Clement VII, in his Bull of January, 1390, states that because of the wars and the plague "and certain other reasons," the Shroud had been removed to a safe and decent place to be kept in venerable custody. His phrase, "and certain other reasons", could be an ordinary legal expression, or it could be a discreet acknowledgment of the existence of unnamed reasons for the removal. For Clement was a first cousin to Aimon de Genève, lord of Anthon, Cruseilles, Rumilly and Mornex, in what is now the Haute-Savoie. Can we assume that when Jeanne de Vergy married Aimon de Geneve, probably in 1357,³ she left Lirey to reside with her second husband in his mountainous domains? Can we assume that she took with her not only her little son, Geoffroy II, but also the Shroud, "privately preserving it in a safe and decent place"? Aimon died in 1369 but there is reason to suppose that Jeanne did not resume permanent residence in Lirey before 1388.

No documents have been found to suggest that Geoffroy de Charny "gave" the Shroud to St. Mary of Lirey, any more than Louis of Savoy "gave" the Shroud to the Chambéry chapel. Generations of Charnys and Savoys considered the Relic as private property, carrying it with them in all their travels. Paramount in the behavior of all the Charnys — as we see from Marguerite's fierce protection of the Relic and echoed by the canons' defiance of the French king's order for confiscation in August, 1389 — was veneration for an object so holy as to brook no careless word or irreverent touch. But in an age when history was not yet a critical science, they could not have foreseen a generation, several centuries down the road, which could assign only sinister motives to their silence.

On a totally different route, Ian Wilson introduced the Templars, speculating that their "idol", alias the Edessa Image, was really the Shroud. Hinting that a compelling motive in Philip's persecution of the Templars was to gain possession of their "idol", Wilson focuses on the surprise attack, on Friday Thirteenth of October, 1307, upon the Paris Temple. Fierce resistance:

"...only afterwards were [Philip's men] able to begin searching, in vain, for the Templars 'idol'. In England, where Philip later encouraged similar action against the Templars, orders were given for a meticulous inventory to be made of all Templar goods seized. Again nothing was found." (*The Shroud of Turin*, p. 163-4)

This despite the fact that the penurious grandchild of King St. Louis was never renowned for piety. Indeed, squashing the Order was but another cruel step in his determination to subjugate the papacy.

The farther one pursues the documented history of the Templar Order, the farther recedes the premise that the Shroud could ever have been in Templar custody. But that the preceptor of Normandy,⁵ Geoffroy de Charnay, ever had the Shroud or ever could have sneaked it away to bestow upon a diapered namesake in Burgundy quite overreaches the bounds of reality. In their desire to get this problem settled and behind us, some authors still are satisfied that a family relationship can be safely established upon a homonym and that this adequately explains why such an unlikely scenario can be accepted.

But in the Mont-Saint-Jean/Charny line, there was never a Geoffroy, while in the Joinville genealogy, i.e., on Geoffroy's mother's side, outstanding knights and great nobles bore the name in every generation from 1090 to Marguerite de Joinville's brother. Little wonder that her second son, who was to inherit her fief of Lirey, should also inherit that name.

Add to that the fact that Geoffroy's mother died before 1310 (Wuenschel gives 1306). Geoffroy therefore was a very small child when Philip moved against the Knights in 1307. Some indication of Geoffroy's birth date can be gained from the information that his older brother, Dreux, died between 1323 and 1325, "a young man". There was a sister, Isabelle, but whether she was older or younger than Geoffroy there is no way of knowing.

But what about the XVIth century document we have just read? If one were to believe "To know the truth", the Shroud was given to Geoffroy by the king of France, Philip VI of Valois. The circumstances this account describes hardly merited such a priceless gift. A more dramatic version records that Philip VI rewarded Geoffroy for saving his life at the Battle of Crecy on 26 August 1346. Barbara Tuchman, in *A Distant Mirror* (p. 211) credits Jacques de Bourbon with saving the king's life at Crecy. Unfortunately, she does not give her source. But on page 91 she writes: "...King Philip, wounded, was led away by [William] the Count of Hainault...."

Froissart, instead, reports that it was Jean de Hainault, William's younger brother and King Philip's bodyguard, who respectfully but firmly led his heartbroken sovereign from the field.

In July, when Philip summoned his nobles to rally at Paris against Edward's coastal invasion, Geoffroy de Charny was fighting the English at the side of the Duke of Normandy (the future John II) at Aiguillon. Normandy and his armies left Aiguillon on August 20. By the time they joined Philip, there was nothing left to do but weep.

Twenty knights and squires were rewarded by the king for valor in combat: Viard gives their names. Geoffroy is not listed. He had missed that fray.

Geoffroy de Charny first enters the annals of history in 1337; the year the "Hundred Years War" began. His granddaughter, — childless, widowed and aging — delivered the Shroud into the safekeeping of Savoy in 1453; the year the "Hundred Years War" ended. The French Interlude of Shroud history tucks neatly into another remarkable period; the advent and extinction of the First House of Valois. Were these Capetian-Valois kings ever directly or indirectly involved in Shroud affairs? If one of them had ever heard or even dreamed that the Burial Cloth of Our Lord had once been in the hands of a forebear, he could readily have claimed and confiscated it. Instead, the acts of all seven betray an utter lack of curiosity in its regard.

Philip VI (reigned 1328-1350)

In 1328, Philip of Valois unexpectedly found himself King of France. Son of the renowned Charles of Valois and great-grandson of King Saint Louis, Philip scarcely knew his mother, Marguerite of Anjou, princess of Naples and Sicily, who died when he was six. He was mothered then by Catherine de Courtenay, granddaughter of Baudouin II, last emperor of the Latin Empire of the Orient and cousin of St. Louis. Catherine died in 1307. At her funeral, on October 6, one of the pall cords was held by her brother-in-law, the perfidious Philip IV; another by an unsuspecting Jacques de Molay, master of the Templars.

By 1340, Geoffroy de Charny had become an important personage in the realm, esteemed as one of France's most valorous knights. In 1349, Philip VI conveyed to him all the military powers and authority of the king himself in the campaigns on the frontiers of Flanders. Geoffroy's talents were not confined to military prowess. He became a trusted councillor to the king, and, in company with dukes and papal envoys, he was valued as a skillful diplomat. And Philip knew how to reward his "beloved and loyal" knight by gifts of lucrative property and increased income from the treasury.

By an act of June 1343, Philip granted tax-free revenues toward financing the church Geoffroy proposed to erect with funds inherited from his aunt. Philip confirmed his donation in January, 1349.

Royalty commonly made donations of this kind, therefore Philip's grant implies no special favor. Kings can give and kings can take away; in 1348, Philip VI confiscated a Parisian mansion from his notary and gave it to Geoffroy.⁶

Comparing the provisions of Geoffroy's 1349 testament with his later one, dated January 1354, one cannot but believe that he obtained the Shroud late in 1353. Philip VI had been dead for three years.

John II (r. 1350-1364)

When John II ascended the throne, Geoffroy was still in London, a prisoner of war. In September he was permitted on parole to attend King John's wedding in Paris, but returned to his captivity; and in December, Edward III gave safe-conduct to three of Geoffroy's servants to go to France on business about the ransom. His release was bought for the sum of 12,000 gold ecus. It was King John who paid this sum, ending a captivity made possible by a betrayal, at the castle of Calais, before the dawn of New Year's Day, 1350.

Returning to France in June 1351, Geoffroy, as the king's lieutenant in Picardy, now fired with a personal desire to avenge his honor after the humiliation he had suffered, intensified his attacks on the English. He continued as councillor to the king; he was a charter member of "Notre Dame de la Noble Maison", popularly called the Order of the Star; and in 1355 he was named bearer of the Oriflamme.

John increased the grants for the Lirey church in 1353 and again in 1356, the year he bestowed on Geoffroy a town house in Paris and a country estate.

While 1351 and 1352 might be considered as candidates for the time-frame in which the Shroud slipped so obscurely into European hands, the ceaseless skirmishes along the frontiers — hard days, soldiers' days and sleeping at night in steel armor, as Geoffroy feelingly describes in his book on chivalry — speak not of booty nor of gracious gifts, but only of mud and screaming horses and death.

And then it is recorded that by September of 1354, Geoffroy de Charny was no longer on the frontiers of Flanders and Picardy.

Charles V (r. 1364-1380)

Charles, the Dauphin, literally saved France by galloping away from Poitiers when the Oriflamme fell with Geoffroy de Charny, leaving the king his father and his three younger brothers to be captured into the power of the Black Prince.

The seventeen-year-old Dauphin had plenty of problems to face on his rocking throne, and a petition from Jeanne de Vergy, asking him to confirm his father's gift of two houses, could not have been

one of his most pressing decisions. After all, his father, although a prisoner, was still the king....

A more revealing gesture of the esteem in which Geoffroy de Charny had been held by Philip VI and John II is shown, in 1370, when King Charles V, with honor, gratitude, and affection for the "perfect knight", transferred his remains from a hasty burial in a Franciscan monastery near Poitiers to the recently-founded, richly-endowed Abbey of the Celestins in Paris, there to rest beside the heart of King John II.

In 1380, just three days before the anniversary of the Battle of Poitiers, France mourned the death of King Charles V of Valois. During those twenty-four years, the Shroud was being "privately preserved" while fate quietly fashioned other protagonists.

Charles VI (r. 1380-1422)

Charles VI had a perfect opportunity and excuse for appropriating the Shroud, had he wanted to do so. When the bishop of Troyes, Pierre d'Arcis, prohibited the exposition of the Shroud, Geoffroy II appealed to the king to defend his rights to display it; and the king granted his protection. The bishop, seeing that his own orders were being disregarded, complained to Parlement; and on 4 August 1389, a letter signed by Charles VI was sent to the bailiff of Troyes, instructing him to seize the relic: *ad manum nostram realiter et de facto ponatis*, stipulating that it should be honorably deposited in one of the churches of Troyes until a further decision could be made for its disposition.

Letter in hand, the bailiff, with other officials, on August 15, went to Lirey to requisition the Shroud;⁷ but the dean protested that he did not have the key to the treasury, where the Shroud was kept. Persuasions and protests went on until dinner time; then as now, the Frenchman lets nothing interfere with that. The bailiff sealed the doors of the treasury so that the object of contention could not be spirited away in his absence, and he departed. On the same day, he sent a report of the events to the king.

First, the king promises to protect Geoffroy's right to display the Shroud; then, very soon after, he sends his bailiff to confiscate it. This sudden about-face on the part of the king was not necessarily motivated by the same dilemma which caused Pope Clement VII to waver in the Lirey affair. It is curious, too, to learn that the king's letter was not sent directly to his bailiff, but was transmitted to the latter by the bishop of Troyes! And the order to confiscate the "cloth" was by request of the bishop!

On 5 September 1389, the king's First Sergeant reported to the bailiff of Troyes that he had gone to Lirey and confronted the dean and canons with the above-mentioned letters, and then informed them that the "cloth" was now "verbally put into the hands of our lord the king"; and furthermore, that he had instructed a squire of the Charny household to inform the "noble honne Monsieur

Geufroy de Charny", knight, of this decision. "Verbally" in the hands of the king, physically in the hands of Geoffroy II. Solomon could not have found a more conciliatory solution.

Charles VI must have been at least vaguely aware of the controversial "cloth", although his uncles Burgundy and Berry still controlled the affairs of state. Their decisions in matters of this kind were often written up by notaries and merely signed by the king. In any case, the king's confiscation order was never carried out. Someone, later, must have been instructed to remove the bailiff's seal from the treasury, for expositions were resumed.

From the Lirey imbroglio, it is refreshing to turn to the carefree personality of the king, before the terrifying tragedy at Le Mans. What were his personal relations with Geoffroy II?

The victory at Roosebeke (1382) was a great triumph for Charles VI. Of course, it was not the 14-year-old king who brought about the defeat of the Flemish, but his uncle of Burgundy. In Burgundy's army, one who earned high praise for valiant action in this encounter was Geoffroy II de Charny; a seasoned fighter, he had also served under Charles V and was to continue bearing arms in the wars of Charles VI.

If the king rejoiced in the accoutrements of war, he was no less fond of feasting, dancing, jousting, and traveling with all his friends and relatives to visit other relatives and friends; and 1389 was one continuous round of parties and grand celebrations. The Lirey dissension erupted just when important preparations were being made for the solemn entry of Isabelle of Bavaria into Paris, to be climaxed by her coronation. The revelry began on August 20 and lasted for five delirious days.

Geoffroy II was not only among the guests; he was also one of a very select company of dukes and counts and great lords calling themselves Knights of the Golden Sun; they staged a fabulous joust in which the king delighted to take part.

About Saint-Michael's (September 29), Charles VI left his bride in Paris and started out, accompanied by a host of nobles, all with endless retinues, for a little canter across the realm. At Dijon they were lavishly entertained for ten days by the Duke of Burgundy; then hosts and guests all departed for Avignon where, on October 30, with great pomp, they entered the papal palace. After eight days of festivities and serious conferences with Clement VII, Charles bade goodbye to his uncles — indeed, he was declaring his independence from them, then and there — and resumed his journey. The Duke of Burgundy returned to his own lands. We suppose that Geoffroy II, in Burgundy's entourage, returned to Lirey. It would have been about mid-November.

The next developments in the Lirey affair were not long in coming. Geoffroy II had communicated *something* to the Pope. A written document has not been found. It may be hazardous, but let us ask ourselves: During the eight days at Avignon, did Geoffroy find

occasion to speak personally to the Pope about the sacred Cloth bearing the figure of the Lord Jesus Christ, a Cloth that had been graciously given to his late father? After all, Clement was, by marriage, his second cousin....

Three documents are dated 6 January 1390: Clement VII's Bull supporting Geoffroy II; a letter of warning to Pierre d'Arcis; and a letter to three bishops, appointing them monitors to see that his new directives were observed. These acts were followed in June by another Bull, granting new indulgences to the faithful who visit St. Mary of Lirey and its relics.

If ever a Valois lay in wait for the right moment to recover "their" Holy Shroud, Charles the Well-Beloved let slip a perfect opportunity.

Charles VII (crowned 1429, died 1461)

By the time Charles VI died in 1422, the Shroud had been in the Franche-Comte for four years. In 1418, the canons of the Lirey church had entrusted it to Marguerite de Charny and her second husband, Humbert de Villersexel, Count of la Roche, to take to a safe place until the "tumults" in France should subside. Indeed, the realm was tottering, but worse was to come: in 1420, the Queen, Isabelle of Bavaria, disowning her son Charles, gave her daughter and the throne of France to Henry V of England.

Henry V had won a stunning victory — brilliant for the English, devastating for the French — at Azincourt; Marguerite de Charny's first husband was killed there. Henry advanced even to the walls of Paris, causing the Dauphin, precisely in 1418, to flee to the south of France, where he was squeezed between the Burgundians and the Armagnacs, intent upon their mutual massacre.

Both Charles VI and Hank Cinq — for aptly has he been yclept died in 1422; the nine-month-old Henry VI was acclaimed king. Every woe and terror that could befall a nation and its people raged with apocalyptic fury over a prostrate France. But the Shroud, by some stroke of destiny, was far off in the mountains of the Franche-Comte, the Free County, then under the protection of the Swiss Confederation.

Long after the stake consumed the Maid who had delivered the land and crowned the legitimate king, the canons of the Lirey church brought cause against Marguerite de Charny, countess of la Roche — widowed again in 1438 — for non-restitution of the Shroud to the church. The litigations were brought in the courts of Dole (1443) and Besançon (1447). Charles VII, the Victorious, was having problems with his eldest son.

Louis XI (r. 1461-1483)

Of all the Capetian-Valois kings, Louis XI would come to mind as the most likely to have been interested in the Shroud, and the only one for whom the confluence of time, place and persons

presented occasions for him to see it. So often did his path approach an opportunity, then veer aside, that we who watched in anxious expectation are left, at the end, in perplexity.

The fascinating character that was Louis of Valois began shaping the realm to his own designs while he was still the impatient Dauphin. In blatant defiance of his father, King Charles VII, Louis contracted to marry Charlotte, the eleven-year-old daughter of Duke Louis I of Savoy and Anne of Lusignan. The marriage contract was signed on St. Valentine's Day, 1451, at Geneva, in the Franciscan monastery where the duke was residing. On the same day, Louis commanded his officers to restore to their owners the castles and other possessions which he had seized, a few weeks earlier, from the duke's subjects in the Dauphine.

Louis and Charlotte were wed at Chambéry on March 9. Another marriage was celebrated in short order; Louis' sister, Yolande of France, was wed to Charlotte's brother, Amedeo of Savoy, later duke and later beatified. Yolande had been affianced to Amedeo in 1436 when she was two years old, and had been living at the Savoird court since then. The father of the bride was informed of the nuptial after it had taken place.

Still cherished in Piedmont is the memory of the pilgrimage Yolande and Amedeo made, on foot across the Alps, from Vercelli to Chambéry to venerate the Holy Shroud.

When, in 1473, the Lirey chapter, trying yet again for redress of their injury, sent a delegation to the Duchess Yolande, by now a widow, demanding eight years of non-payment or the return of the Holy Shroud, the same petition was made to Louis XI, who responded by sending letters to the bailiffs of Sens, Troyes and Chaumont. Then, in 1476, Charles III, duke of Burgundy, attacked Savoy, seized Yolande with one of her sons and all her retainers. The King of France liberated his sister and restored to her "all her properties and her jewels and everything that belonged to her".

Such indifference to the Shroud is hard to explain in a king whose religious fervor is legendary. He has been called the Pilgrim King, for he visited almost every shrine in his realm, and goodness knows in those days there was no dearth of them in France. Before and after every battle he would slip away to a nearby chapel to present himself humbly before some relic or venerated image. His devotion to the Blessed Virgin bordered on superstition; indeed, Sir Walter Scott, securely ensconced in his Protestant superiority, made merry with that fact to enliven scenes in *Quentin Durward*. But the bonny baronet exaggerated when he described Louis' old squashy hat as being studded with pilgrim badges. Historians for grown-up readers tell us that Louis had "a" leaden badge of the Virgin pinned on that extraordinary hat he always wore.*

* Now in the treasury of Chartres Cathedral, the badge represents the Virgin crowned by two angels.

Commynes relates that on a trip to Poitiers, Louis XI had the "shroud" of Cadouin brought to him that he might venerate it. Strange to say, some time earlier, in 1461 to be precise, he had been asked to arbitrate in a long and bitter quarrel over the ownership of this relic. During the wars in Guyenne, the cloth had been transferred from Cadouin to a safer place in Toulouse; Toulouse then refusing to give it up, it was recovered by trickery and hied back to Cadouin. But fearing another theft, the priests took the cloth to a Cistercian abbey near Limoges and again, when they asked to have it back, they met refusal. Louis XI decided in favor of the original owners and the relic was returned to Cadouin in 1463.

In his last illness, Louis XI's only comfort was in the relics which now surrounded his bed. He summoned St. Francis de Paule from his cave in Calabria; the Pope sent him St. Peter's communion cloth, a fragment from the Seamless Tunic, a piece of skin from the head of St. Anthony of Padua....

In her book, *Wise and Foolish Kings; the First House of Valois*, Anne Denieul-Cormier wrote of Louis XI: "Everything that heaven had left in the way of tangible signs of its passage on earth aroused his interest." The statement seems well substantiated; and that is why we are so puzzled. Louis XI knew about the Shroud, already the palladium of the House of Savoy. Even Marguerite de Charny was no stranger to him, for in 1454, while he was Dauphin, he seized her fief of Bouligneux⁸ in Bresse, then a part of the duchy of Savoy. Yet — so far as we have discovered — he showed no interest in the one tangible sign of heaven's passage on earth....

The French Interlude ends in 1473 with the last plaint from Lirey. There is no reason, therefore, at this time, to accompany Charles VIII, the last of the Capetian-Valois, on his gaudy progress into Italy in quest of the ancestral crown of Naples and Sicily; his, he claimed, by right of Angevin inheritance through the mother of Philip VI, the first Capetian-Valois to ascend the throne of France.

NOTES

1. PAUL DE GAIL, (*Histoire...de Jérusalem à Turin*, Chapt.V) names J.J. Chifflet as having planted the seed (in *De linteis sepulchralibus Christi Servatoris crisis historica*, 1624) which later historians force-fed into the thesis that the Besançon cloth and the Shroud were one and the same.

2. To place a relic in a church or to transfer it to another place, papal permission was required. Geoffroy II requests permission to "return" the Shroud to the Lirey church where his father had once "venerably placed" it.

Much has been made of the expression used by Bishop Henri de Poitiers, in his letter of 28 May 1356 to Geoffroy de Charny regarding the Lirey church: the bishop praises, ratifies and approves "all he [i.e., Geoffroy] has done" for the divine cult: "all he has done" has been taken to be a veiled allusion to the Shroud. However, the words the bishop uses are simply a stock phrase, like "ame et fear", "ad perpetuum", "notre cousin", etc. A case in point is a letter

from Philip VI, in 1343, to Jean II de Thil, constable of Burgundy, who had founded a collegiate church.¹The king congratulates him and "ratifies all that the founder has done". Another phrase commonly found in documents refers to "other services rendered", as in *multa laudabilia obsequia*.

3. On 5 June 1357, twelve bishops of the pontifical court of Avignon grant indulgences to all who visit St. Mary of Lirey and the relics therein: *...ac omnibus visitantibus dictam ecclesiam et reliquias ibi existentes...* The full text is given in FOSSATI: *Nuove Luce su Antichi Documenti*, 1961.

4. The search for "Templar treasure" still goes on in France. A local rumor names Anne de Beaujeu as the first to begin digging. It does not seem consistent with the character of that remarkable woman. Even her father, Louis XI, conceded that Anne was the smartest woman in the realm. The treasure is supposed to consist of a few objects from the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, most precious of these being the index finger of St. John the Baptist's right hand. The annals and ancient correspondence of the Templars was also a part of the "hidden treasure".

5. This heroic martyr was not a "master"; he was the head of a preceptory. He was one of 3000 preceptors in France and of 9000 in Europe.

6. I would like to take this opportunity to apologize for a typographical error on page 13 of *Spectrum* #24. In the second line of the paragraph beginning "On 17 January 1349...", we see "King Philip IV". As you know, this should have been "King Philip VI".

7. August 15, the Feast of the Assumption, was one of the days on which an exposition of the Shroud was permitted by the papal bull of 1349. Crowds of pilgrims would have been gathering for the Mass and exposition; the bailiff had timed his visit astutely. But perhaps he arrived too early; or perhaps the canons had been forewarned of his purpose. The doctrine of the Assumption of the Virgin was not defined until 1950: but the belief dates from before the Council of Chalcedon (451).

8. The cession of the Shroud to Duke Louis I of Savoy was not a single, isolated act, but a decision, on the part of Marguerite de Charny, in consequence of long litigations with François de la Palud, nephew and heir to Humbert de Villersexel, and her claims to some property in his possession: coinciding with Anne de Lusignan's rancor toward François de la Palud, as well as the fact that the duke had ill-advisedly incurred the anger of Charles VII. The bitter story is briefly but clearly exposed by André Perret in his much-cited article, "Essaie sur l'histoire du Saint Suaire du XIV^e au XVI^e siècle". An intensive study of documents bearing on these smovements was made by GIAN MARIA ZACCONE: "Le Investiture Feudali nei Domini del Duca di Savoia a favore di Marguerite de Charny, Contessa de la Roche", published in *Sindon* #34, pp. 21-41, December 1985.

A list of principal works consulted will be sent on request. Reference notes on specific passages can also be provided. In either case, please accompany your request by a stamped self-addressed envelope. Ed.