THE CAPETIAN KINGS
OF FRANCE

THE CAPETIAN KINGS OF FRANCE

Monarchy & Nation

(987-1328)

BY

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FOREWORD

TO THE ENGLISH TRANSLATION

THE preface to the original French edition has been here included, as it explains the circumstances in which the book was composed. It has been thought best that the text should stand as first published, and very few additions and corrections have been made. But it may be pointed out that very little historical work on the period has been published since *Les Capétiens et la France* first appeared, and certainly none which has rendered its general conclusions invalid.

I express my warmest thanks to my translators, Professor Lionel Butler and Mr. R. J. Adam, both of the University of St. Andrews. Their great merit appears to me to be the success with which they have avoided a purely literal translation. I venture to believe that their version of my text presents it to the English-speaking reader in the form best adapted to his own language.

ROBERT FAWTIER

PARIS

June 1958

PREFACE

THIS work has grown out of several years spent in studying the reign of Philip the Fair. The better to understand the events of the period and the documents through which they are known, I found myself compelled to turn back to the origins of the royal house of Capet and to assess the whole significance of its history. But the book itself would probably never have been written had not the Second World War broken out. For I was then required to replace at short notice a colleague called to the colours, and naturally enough I chose as the subject of my lectures the period best known to me.

I originally planned to give a course extending over two sessions. When the events of June 1940 overtook my country, I came to the conclusion that I should still complete this programme. I have always enjoyed the discipline of clarifying and setting forth my thoughts on history; and I was encouraged by the evident interest of some of those to whom I lectured. But there were also newer and stranger reasons behind my decision. In a time of national tragedy I found a source of strength, for myself and my audience, in the study of the beginnings of the French nation and of the actions of its first leaders. Such a study was, I found, not merely an escape from the horrors of contemporary reality. Like those monuments of antiquity which have provided the foundations for a whole series of later edifices, the original structure of France appeared to me so strongly built that it could not be completely destroyed. I hoped that something of this conviction might communicate itself to my readers, when my publisher was courageous enough to undertake publication. And even if his courage were to be ill rewarded, the book itself would always keep for me the character it acquired during the two years in which it was my companion in adversity, the good Samaritan giving me succour in a parched land.

The Capetian Kings of France is not a history of France from

987 to 1328, still less a history of Europe. It is intended only to be a study of the part played by the kings of the first Capetian dynasty in the creation of the French nation. Although my feelings have been deeply involved in its composition, two facts encourage me to believe that I have not distorted my themes: firstly, that I have had no need to deal with foreign affairs, so that questions of patriotism do not arise, and, secondly, that the remoteness in time of the entire subject has saved me from the unconscious prejudices which can influence the treatment of events closer to our own times.

I am very conscious of my debt to those historians, some of them my own teachers and friends, who have so skilfully and patiently reconstructed the history of Capetian France — all too often without general recognition of the importance of their work. This book is hardly more than a gathering together of their labours; such value as it has derives from them.

Notes and references have been kept to the minimum, for I have not tried to compose a treatise for specialists. My hope is that even those who know nothing of the subject will be able to read the book without too much difficulty. Nevertheless, I have been careful to justify any opinions which I have expressed by reference to the relevant sources. The first chapter contains, in addition, some basic bibliographical information, and those who wish to examine my views more closely will find the necessary material there.

I am well aware that a work of this kind cannot hope to be definitive. It can, at best, be only a general survey, based on the work of others as well as my own researches; and, like all surveys, it must be unequal in depth, precisely because previous work has not been equally distributed over the whole subject. But I hope that some younger historians may, as a result of reading this book, be inspired to take a closer interest in a period which still demands a great deal of study. And if my work induces the ordinary reader to ponder on the foundations of our native land, then my reward will be great indeed.

ROBERT FAWTIER

PARIS
July 1941

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ABBREVIATIONS

THE following abbreviations have been used in the footnotes:

B.E.H.E. *Bibliothèque de l'École des Hautes-Études, Sciences Historiques et Philologiques.*

Lavis E. Lavis (ed.), *Histoire de France*, 9 vols. in 18 parts (Paris, 1900-11).

L.T.C. *Layettes du Trésor des Chartes*, 5 vols. (Paris, 1863-1909).

R.H.F. *Recueil des historiens des Gaules et de la France*, 24 vols. (Paris, 1737-1904).