

**PHILIP  
AUGUSTUS**

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Philip Augustus by William Holden Hutton

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**WILLIAM HOLDEN HUTTON**

**PHILIP  
AUGUSTUS**



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# PHILIP AUGUSTUS

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## CHAPTER I

### THE FRANKISH MONARCHY IN THE TWELFTH CENTURY

FRANCE at the beginning of the twelfth century was one of the smallest and least important of the European states. The duchy of France—a title borne for three centuries by the house of Robert the Strong—was no domain exactly bounded and compact. Its lands were situated not only in the country between the Seine and the Loire, but lay in small and scattered fragments farther south, in Poitou, and in the north. Peculiar rights belonged to the king in distant towns and churches. He was lord in Orleans. He was abbat of S. Martin's at Tours and senior canon of the church of S. Quentin. And step by step within the lands of the great lords of the north, of the great dukes and the great ecclesiastics, he acquired new rights, by intervening to check some injustice or win some privilege on behalf of a lesser lord.

The royal domain was the strength of the early Capets. As rich lords they could stand against the barons who hedged them in, and appear, unlike the Karlings, at least the equals of their great vassals. But the territory which they possessed was small,

and their material resources, in comparison with those of other European states, were contemptible. Entering rarely into foreign politics, and then with a conspicuous absence of dignity or success, the royal house of France saw its kingdom surrounded by foes or lukewarm friends, nearly every one of whom was superior to itself in strength. To the north and east the Empire and Lorraine, the great dynasties of Flanders and Burgundy, were each more than an equal combatant for the Frankish king. Southwards the kingdom of Arles, sometimes close linked to the Empire, sometimes enjoying a precarious independence, stood aloof, with many marches and counties, from the influence of the central realm. The great dukes of Aquitaine and the proud house that ruled in Toulouse scarce in their most friendly moments professed any allegiance to the Capets. And the demon race, sprung, said legends, from the union of an Angevin count with an unearthly bride, which ruled on the banks of the lower Loire and the Maine, the borderland between France, Aquitaine, and Brittany, was gathering its powers in grim concentration of purpose for a wider sweep, which should endanger the throne of the Frankish king. The circle was completed by the great duchy of Normandy, to which was annexed the county of Maine.

But small as was its territory and slight its power, the house which ruled from Paris claimed all the prerogatives and dignity of the imperial line which it had dispossessed. It clung with sagacious tenacity to the assertion that it was the successor of the line of Charles the Great. Hugh Capet had been elected in 987 by the influence of the Church at a moment when the Karling race had dwindled into impotent decadence. He had him-

self been a great feudal lord, the greatest and strongest of his peers. He had large possessions, his brother Henry held Burgundy for him, the dukes of Normandy and Aquitaine were his brothers-in-law, the count of Vermandois was of his kin. In the twelfth century his descendants had lost the strength of his position. The great duchies around them were in alien and often hostile hands. But the grandeur of their theoretical claim was not abandoned. They were still far above the feudal hierarchy, as the heirs of the Cæsars, sovereigns by divine right, the lawful kings of the West Franks.

The monarchy of the twelfth century was absolute in principle. It claimed to be the source of all power and authority, to hold in its own hand the control of all local and central government. More than this, it was founded on an alliance with the Church, which, in spite of their persistent moral lapses, the kings had shown the keenest anxiety to keep intact. It had seemed at one time as if the irresistible movement of the feudal theory, which had transmuted all offices into fiefs, and swept all ancient survivals into the net of its universal encroachment, would overwhelm the monarchy as it had transformed the nobility and invaded the Church. And indeed in his relations with those who held land directly under him the Capetian king had fallen under the domination of the feudal claim. He was a lord like other lords, with vassals whose dues were limited and whose rights were secured. But he never ceased to be sovereign as well as suzerain, and the persistence of his assertion of the old monarchical theory, even in the period of his greatest weakness, preserved the idea and prepared the way of the absolute monarchy