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DUKE OF NORMANDY**

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CHARLES WENDELL DAVID

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ROBERTUS DUX NORMANNORUM PARTUM PROSTERNIT

Robert Curthose in the act of unhorsing a pagan warrior, the oldest graphic representation of the duke now extant. From an eighteenth century engraving of a medallion in a stained-glass window at Saint-Denis, which was executed at the order of Abbot Suger. The church was dedicated 11 June 1144, and the window must date from about that period.

ROBERT CURTHOSE

DUKE OF NORMANDY

BY

CHARLES WENDELL DAVID

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF EUROPEAN HISTORY
IN BRYN MAWR COLLEGE



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PREFACE

ROBERT CURTHOSE, eldest son of William the Conqueror, had been dead but a few years when Abbot Suger set about rebuilding the great abbey church of Saint-Denis, which was dedicated with such pomp and ceremony in 1144. Among the scenes from the First Crusade which filled one of its famous stained-glass windows, there was one which portrayed Robert, mounted upon his charger, in the act of overthrowing a pagan warrior—"Robertus dux Normannorum Partum prosternit," ran the inscription beneath it.¹ It was thus, as a hero of the Crusade, that the great Abbot Suger chose to recall him, and it was as such that his fame survived in after times. Robert was not a masterful character, and it cannot be said that as a ruler he made a deep impression upon his generation. Overshadowed by his great father, cheated of a kingdom by his more aggressive brothers, and finally defeated in battle, deprived of his duchy, and condemned to perpetual imprisonment, his misdirected life offers a melancholy contrast to the more brilliant careers of the abler members of his family. Yet, if he was himself lacking in greatness, he was closely associated with great names and great events; and his unmeasured generosity and irrepressible bonhomie gained him many friends in his lifetime, and made him a personality which is not without its attractions to the modern. It is hoped that a study of his career which attempts to set him in his true relation to the history of Normandy and England and of the Crusade may be of interest not only to the specialist but to the general reader.

It is now more than a generation since Gaston Le Hardy published *Le dernier des ducs normands: étude de critique historique sur Robert Courte-Heuse* (1882), the only monograph upon Robert which has hitherto appeared. In spite of its age, if this were the critical study which its title implies, the present essay need hardly

¹ See Frontispiece and Appendix G.

have been undertaken. But it makes no use of documentary materials, and is unfortunately a work of violent *parti pris*, quite lacking in criticism according to modern standards. "J' ai entrepris," says the author in his preface, "à l'aide de quelques autres chroniqueurs, une lutte contre notre vieil Orderic Vital, essayant de lui arracher par lambeaux la vérité vraie sur un personnage dont il ne nous a donné que la caricature." It may be granted that Ordericus Vitalis was a hostile critic, who sometimes did Robert scanty justice; but assuredly there is no occasion for polemics or for an *apologia* such as Le Hardy has given us, and I have no intention of following in his footsteps. My purpose is a more modest one, namely to set forth a full and true account of the life and character of Robert Curthose upon the basis of an independent and critical examination of all the sources. To any one acquainted with the state of the materials on which the investigator must perforce depend for any study of the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries, it will not be surprising that there are many gaps in our information concerning Robert's life and many problems which must remain unsolved. I have tried at all times to make my own researches and to draw my own conclusions directly from the sources when the evidence permitted, and to refrain from drawing conclusions when it seemed inadequate. But my indebtedness to the secondary writers who have preceded me in the field is abundantly apparent in the index and in the footnotes, where full acknowledgments are made. The works of E. A. Freeman upon the Norman Conquest and upon the reign of William Rufus have proved especially helpful for Robert's life as a whole, as have also various more recent monographs which bear upon his career at certain points. Among these are the works of Louis Halphen upon the county of Anjou, of Robert Latouche upon Maine, and of Augustin Fliche upon the reign of Philip I of France. For the chapter on the Crusade much use has been made of the detailed chronology of Heinrich Hagenmeyer and of the exhaustive notes in his well known editions of the sources for the First Crusade, as well as of the admirable monograph by Ferdinand Chalandon upon the reign of the Emperor Alexius I. The appendix *De Iniusta Vexatione Willelmi Episcopi Primi* has

already been published in the *English Historical Review*, and is here reproduced by the kind permission of the editor.

It is more than a pleasure to acknowledge my obligations to those whose counsel and assistance have been constantly at my disposal in the preparation of this volume. By the librarians and their staffs in the libraries of Harvard University, the University of California, the University of Pennsylvania, and Bryn Mawr College I have been treated with a courtesy and helpfulness which are beyond praise. Mr. George W. Robinson, Secretary of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences of Harvard University, has given me much valuable assistance in preparing the manuscript for the press and in the correction of the proof. Finally, I have to acknowledge a debt of gratitude which is deeper than can well be expressed in writing, that which I owe to my teachers. It was Professor Dana C. Munro, now of Princeton University, who first taught me to care greatly for the Middle Ages and awakened my interest in the Crusades. He has followed this volume with kindly interest while it has been in the making, and has given me much helpful criticism upon that part which relates to the First Crusade. But above all I am indebted to Professor Charles H. Haskins of Harvard University, at whose suggestion this work was first undertaken and without whose help and counsel it could hardly have been brought to completion. While the author must accept full responsibility for the statements and conclusions herein contained, it is proper to say that the documentary materials which Professor Haskins had collected, as well as the results of his own researches, were placed at my disposal in manuscript before their publication in his recent volume entitled *Norman Institutions*, that separate chapters as they have been prepared have passed through his hands for detailed criticism, and that his unflinching patience has extended even to the reading of the proof sheets.

CHARLES WENDELL DAVID.

BRYN MAWR, PENNSYLVANIA,
September, 1919.