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I: BURGUNDIAN SPECTACLES

1. The Feast of the Pheasant at Lille, 17 February, 1454

Introduction

Describing the spectacular extravagance on display at the Feast of the Pheasant, held by Duke Philip the Good at Lille, prompted Huizinga to ask the question: 'Are we to take all this seriously?' The answer, he implies, is 'no'. The vows that Duke Philip made more than 100 courtiers made at the sumptuous banquet – to go on crusade and rescue Constantinople which had fallen to the Turks eight months previously – were empty of sincerity, a decadent playing out of chivalric fantasy. Modern historians, however, answer Huizinga’s question with an affirmative. The long-standing interest of Philip the Good in the crusading ideal and the practical steps he took before and after the Feast more than suggest a seriousness of purpose (even if a crusading expedition, and a desultory one at that, was not undertaken until 1464). The vows, moreover, were intended to bind; many more were required of nobles in Burgundian lands after the Feast. But the motives behind the event, and meanings to be extracted from the symbolic allusions made during the spectacle, remain the subject of debate.

The Feast itself was an exceptional event in the life of the Burgundian court. Olivier de la Marche’s account is first-hand, since he was one of the ‘committee’ who organised the event and took part as Holy Church (making his dramatic entrance perched on an elephant). The Feast was the culmination of other events and jousts that had taken place over the previous eighteen days. Much of the symbolism of the jousts and entremets can be interpreted as referring to crusading and to the threat of the Turks – notably the figure of Jason whose chivalric quest to recover the Golden Fleece in Colchis could be symbolically linked to the recovery of Christian lands in the Eastern Mediterranean. De la Marche certainly emphasises the seriousness of crusading intent (taking some trouble to explain the meaning of his elephant). But his conceit of pondering over the extravagance on display suggests that there was room even for contemporaries to doubt the piety of intention.

Modern historians are inclined – perhaps over-inclined – to emphasise the secularity of the event and to detect political motives behind pious vows. The crusading postures struck by Philip the Good served other purposes. Immediately after the Feast, Philip set out for Regensburg where he might appear before the Emperor as leader of Christendom against the Turks, and secure formal recognition of his recent acquisitions within imperial territory. His vow of dutiful subservience to the king of France in the matter of crusading might be read as a submissive appeal to the French crusading tradition or as an anxiety to occupy the armies of le roi très victorieux, then on the point of driving the English out from all France save Calais. Perhaps more important to Philip was the opportunity such a feast might afford in asserting his control over the nobility of his disparate territories. The jousts put on by two major nobles prior to the feast were conceived as subservient to the main event.

1 Huizinga, Autumn of the Middle Ages, pp. 101–3.
2 On Burgundian crusades generally (and on Anthony of Burgundy’s crusade in 1464, which reached no further than Marseilles), see J. Paviot, Les ducs de Bourgogne, la croisade et l’orient (fin XVIe–XVe siècle) (Paris, 2009).
3 For the 290 vows collected (107 vows collected at the Feast itself, the rest at Arras, Bruges and Mons shortly after) and their relative practicality of purpose, see M.-T. Caron, Les voeux du faisan, nobleza en fête, esprit de croisade (Le manuscrit français 11594 de la Bibliothèque Nationale de France (Turnhout, 2003). For the canonical validity of the vows see G. Orgelinger, ‘The vows of the pheasant and late chivalric ritual’, in Chickering and Seiler (eds), The study of chivalry, pp. 215–92. For earlier traditions of vows over birds, on secular occasions, in the courts of the Low Countries, see Vla, Prinsely court, pp. 208–20.
4 Although Olivier did not compose his Memoirs until the 1480s, he probably inserted into them an account which he had composed at the time. For the other contemporary account, which differs slightly from de la Marche’s, see Mathieu d’Escouchy, Chronique, ed. G. du Fresne de Beaucourt (Paris, 1868), ii, pp. 116–23, who may well have borrowed from an ‘official’ account for which Olivier de la Marche claims to have had courtly approval. See C. Emerson, Who witnessed and narrated the Banquet of the Pheasant (1454)? A codicological examination of the account’s five versions", Fifteenth-century studies 26 (2008), pp. 184–207.
5 An entertainment originally presented between (entremê) dishes (mets) in a banquet, but more generally as an accompaniment to the festivities.
7 For criticism of crusading within the ducal court, see Caron, Les vouex du faiason, pp. 29–50, 189, 190. And for the need for crusading propaganda at the ducal court, see A.G. Heron, “Il faut faire guerre pour paix avoir” crusading propaganda at the court of Duke Philippe le Bon of Burgundy (1419–1467)” (PhD Thesis, University of Cambridge, 1992).
8 For the connection between the Feast and acquisition of Luxembourg acquired during 1441–43 (and for the Feast as a riposte to the jousts organised at Nancy in 1445 by King René of Anjou with Charles VII, who were hostile to Burgundian ambitions in the region), see C. de Méridol, ‘Le banquet du faisan. Jerusalem et l’esprit de croisade hors de la Bourgogne à la veille de la prise de Constantinople’, in Caron and Clauzel (eds), Banquet du faisan, pp. 71–83.
9 Duke Philip also refused to allow members of his household to attend an event held by the count of St Pol, Louis of Luxembourg, at Cambrai on 10 March, after the Feast of the Pheasant (which might have trumped his own): M.-T. Caron, ’17 février 1454: le banquet du vœux du faisan, fête de cour et stratégies de pouvoir’, RN 78 (1996), pp. 269–88.
entremets of the Feast made repeated allusion to symbols and figures associated with ducal authority - St Andrew (one of the duke's patron saints and of the Order of the Golden Fleece), Hercules and Jason. Vows made during and after the Feast expressed submission to the will of the duke. Great care was taken to extract vows from nobles with lands under Burgundian rule (although fewer were acquired from Holland). The crusading symbolism of the Feast drew on the traditions embedded in many of the duke's northern territories, and thus served to create a community of interest among the nobility. The spectacle ultimately affirmed (or hoped to affirm) the existence of a unified Burgundian state.\footnote{10}

The Feast was an exclusive event - perhaps the most exclusive of all the major Burgundian spectacles. It took place in the enclosed space of the palais de la Salle (the former castle of the counts of Flanders in Liége). Attendance was confined to the great families of ducal lands, arranged at tables in accordance with strict hierarchy. The organising committee was restricted to household personnel close to the person of the duke (unlike the groups who organised Entry ceremonies into towns). But a wider audience for the Feast was clearly intended. D'Escoucy refers to viewing galleries for other spectators in the main banqueting hall;\footnote{11} official accounts were produced, letters and descriptions of the event were widely disseminated. Shortly after the Feast, the ducal secretary, Jean de Molesmes, wrote a letter to the mayor and échevins of the town of Dijon to the effect that a ceremony had just taken place to which no other previous event was comparable.\footnote{12} General processions were ordered in towns to announce the crusading intentions of the duke.\footnote{13} The urban world was to be kept informed of high ducal ambition.

But for the rebellion of one town, de la Marche claims, the crusading ambitions of duke Philip would have been realised much earlier. The Ghent uprising from 1447 was finally defeated on 2 July 1453. In some ways, the Feast of the Pheasant, in which Philip surrounded himself with nobles who had fought on the campaign, can be interpreted as ducal celebration of a crushing victory over townsman.\footnote{14} In de la Marche's account there is little left of the urban landscape that provided the setting for the event. Nevertheless, even the exclusive Feast of the Pheasant required more of townsman than de la Marche chose to present. The jousters certainly needed the wider spaces of market places; the entremets demanded the skills of painters and artisans from Liége and many surrounding towns.\footnote{15} Perhaps the entremets incorporated cultural references of the Feast made repeated allusion to symbols and figures associated with ducal authority - St Andrew (one of the duke's patron saints and of the Order of the Golden Fleece), Hercules and Jason. Vows made during and after the Feast expressed submission to the will of the duke. Great care was taken to extract vows from nobles with lands under Burgundian rule (although fewer were acquired from Holland). The crusading symbolism of the Feast drew on the traditions embedded in many of the duke's northern territories, and thus served to create a community of interest among the nobility. The spectacle ultimately affirmed (or hoped to affirm) the existence of a unified Burgundian state.\footnote{10}

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which extended well beyond an aristocratic elite.\footnote{16} The organising of the Feast may not have included townsman, but the wider dissemination of its message arguably required the active participation of urban festive groups or chambers of rhetoric.\footnote{17} In the end, as de la Marche states, the event involved 'all ducal subjects', and if ducal crusades were ever to be launched, they required adroit approaches to estates and towns for financial support\footnote{18} – more adroit than Philip's demand for a regular salt tax which had precipitated rebellion in Ghent in 1447.

Olivier de la Marche, Mémoires, i, pp. 487–504

Chapter 28

[De la Marche begins by describing how the Pope had sent a knight to Duke Philip to report on the sack of Constantinople in May 1453: how the church of Hagia Sophia was pillaged and how relics and the Eucharist were flung into the streets among the filth, the dung and the swine. The pope's knight asks Duke Philip to prove his willingness to serve the Church. Meanwhile the Emperor has also sent for all the princes of Germany to come to Regensburg, and pointedly reminds Duke Philip of his previously expressed intention of going as far as Asia to serve the Church and the Faith. Duke Philip prepares himself.]

And to stir up the lords and noblemen of his lands and his subjects to serve God in this matter, and to embark on the holy journey out of their willingness and devotion, without constraint, he took advice to publish his enterprise through a great assembly. And because the banquets and festivities followed on from one another, each one grander than the last, and to make sure the conclusion of the banquet was reached under the control of the good duke who would close the Feast, he had preparations made for entremets and food. My lord Jehan de Lannoy, a knight of the Order of the Fleece,\footnote{19} a wise and inventive man, and a squire called

ambitions and ceremony like the Feast of the Pheasant was costly to urban independence, see D. Clauzel, 'Lille, 1354', in Caron and Clauzel (eds), Banquet du faiisain, pp. 41–52.

For the inclusion of popular Flemish images and proverbs in the entremets (such as the shooting at the 'pig' as symbolising common enterprise), see Lafontaine-Martel, Fête noble en Bourgogne, pp. 142–3.

M. de Grève, 'Le voeu du faiisain et les écrivains, problèmes de réception', in Caron and Clauzel (eds), Banquet du faiisain, pp. 137–44.

See Lecuppre-Desjardins, Ville des cérémonies, p. 219 n. 94.

Jean de Lannoy (1404–58), son of Jean de Lannoy killed at Agincourt 1415, and of Jeanne de Croÿ, received membership of the Order of the Golden Fleece at Mons in 1451. From 1448 to 1462 he was governor of Holland, Zeeland and Frisia. On him and for most of the following biographical details of those mentioned in La Marche's account, see Caron, Les voeux du faiisain, passim.
Jehan Boudault, a very honourable and discreet man, arranged this Feast. And the good duke did me so much honour by wanting me to be called; and on this matter several councils met, to which the chancellor and first chamberlain were called, now that they had returned from the war the duke had conducted in Luxembourg ... The greatest and the most privileged were also called to the council; and after deliberations on opinions, conclusions were reached as to what the ceremonies and plays should be. And the duke wanted me to play the character of Holy Church, whom he wanted to help at this assembly; and it was a solemn thing, worth reviewing, and it is relevant to our purposes here. So I have recorded this banquet, as fully as I could, so that it will be remembered.

Chapter 29

[The Feast is held at Lille on 17 February, but the build-up began eighteen days previously, with an announcement made at a banquet given in the town by Adolf of Cleves. The Feast was to begin with a joust on the same day, in which the ‘Knight of the Swan’ was to take on all comers. The announcement was made during an entrements. This took the form of a ship, in which stood an armed knight displaying the arms of Cleves; the ship moved along a river as though pulled by a silver swan. Legend had it that a swan had once miraculously led a knight from Cleves along the Rhine. This knight had married a princess, and from him the present Cleves were descended. After the entrements, a chaplet of flowers was presented to the count of Étampes who held another banquet ten days later. At this banquet, the chaplet was then handed to the duke by a young girl, dressed in a robe written on with Greek letters, led by Robert de Miraumont and the lord of Dreuil. The duke then decided to hold his own banquet and began preparations ...]

So on the day of this banquet, very early after dinner, my lord Adolf (who had announced the Knight of the Swan), accompanied at the place where he was being armed by my lord the duke, by the count of

20 Jean Boudault, served the household of Jean de Bourgogne, count of Étampes, before entering the service of Duke Philip, becoming bailli of Château-Chinon.
21 Adolf of Cleves (d. 1492), nephew of Duke of Cleves, servant of Philip the Good and his successors, made a knight of the Golden Fleece in 1459.
22 Jean de Bourgogne (1415–91), count of Étampes and later Nevers, fought in the Ghent war, made knight of the Golden Fleece in 1466.
23 Robert de Miraumont (d.1486), in the service of the count of Étampes and later the duke, and fought in the Ghent war.
24 Gauvain Quiéret, lord of Dreuil (c.1405–62), of the nobility of Artois, militarily active in the service of the count of Étampes and the duke, including in the Ghent war.

BURGUNDIAN SPECTACLES

Charolais, and by the Bastard of Burgundy, all dressed in robes of black velvet; and each of them had a golden collar, greatly enriched with precious stones, such as diamonds, rubies and pearls. My lord wore on his hat a coronet so rich with precious stones that I do not know how to describe it, except as the garment befitting a powerful prince. My lord Adolf, accompanied (as already said) by my lord, the count of Charolais and my lord the Bastard, and also by the lord of Étampes, left his household with a great company of people who went before him dressed in his robes; after them came drummers; and after them a pursuivant of arms dressed in a coat of arms full of swans; and after him came a large swan, marvellously and skilfully made, with a crown of gold around its neck, from which hung a shield of the full arms of Cleves; and from this crown hung a golden chain on which, from one end, there hung the shield of the knight; and this swan was flanked by two very well made centaurs who had bows and arrows in their hands, and made as though to shoot at anyone who tried to approach the swan.

Holding the golden chain, and armed most richly in all kinds of arms, the knight followed the swan. His horse was covered in a cloth of white damask, bordered with golden fringes, and with a shield decorated in the same way; and to the left, to the right, and behind, were three young page children, dressed in white in the manner of angels, mounted on beautiful couriers, decked out in well-cut white cloth; and after them came a groom, dressed in white, on a little horse, who led by hand a charger covered in white cloth, embroidered with large golden letters with the knight’s device; afterward came the duke of Cleves, brother of the said knight, and my lord John of Coimbra, son of the king of Portugal, with a great number of knights and noblemen, all dressed in white, in the same way as the knight, and carrying lances in fine array.

In such a way and in such company, the knight was led before the ladies; and he was presented by Golden Fleece, king of arms of the very excellent, very high, very powerful princess the Duchess of Burgundy, and to other princesses, ladies, and young ladies; and then he was led to the lists, with the centaurs, and was placed on a platform which had been prepared for him ...

25 Charles the Bold (1433–77), son of Duke Philip the Good.
26 Anthony, Grand Bastard of Burgundy (1491–1504), son of Duke Philip the Good, made knight during the Ghent war, and member of the Order of the Golden Fleece in 1465.
27 (c. 1435–57), son of Peter duke of Coimbra, grandson of King John I of Portugal, living at the court of his sister Beatrice, wife of Adolf of Cleves from 1450, and then at the ducal court. Participated in the Ghent war, made knight of the Golden Fleece in 1456. Poisoned at Nicosia after marrying the daughter of the king of Cyprus.
28 Isabella of Portugal (1387–1471), married Duke Philip in 1430.
Then, at a suitable hour, they found themselves in a room in which my lord had prepared a very rich banquet; and my lord arrived accompanied by knights, ladies and young ladies; and finding the banquet ready to be served, he bade them look at the entremets which were prepared there. The room in which the banquet was held was a large one, and finely hung with a tapestry in which the life of Hercules was depicted. To enter this room there were five doors guarded by archers dressed in grey and black cloth, and in the hall were several knights and esquires conducting the banquet, dressed respectively in damask cloth and grey and black satin. In this room there were three covered tables, one of an average size, one large, the other small; and on the middle-sized table there was a cruciform church with glass windows, made in a fine way; in it there was a chiming bell and four singers. There was another entremets of a little child completely naked on a rock, who pissed rose water continuously. There was another entremets of an anchored carrack laden with all sorts of merchandise and with figures of sailors: it seemed to me that not even the largest carrack in the world had more apparatus than this one, or more ropes and sails. Another entremets was of a very beautiful fountain, part of which was made of glass and part of lead, with the most original of workmanship; for there were little glass bushes, with leaves and flowers, made with such novelty as to be a marvel; and the space of this artifice was thus like a little meadow, enclosed with rocks of sapphires and other strange stones, and in the middle of this was a little upright figure of St Andrew, with his cross before him, and from one of the ends of the cross, the fountain sprang out, to a great height, and fell down into the meadow in such a subtle manner, that no one could tell what became of the water.

The second and longest table had a pastry first of all, which contained twenty-eight live people, playing diverse instruments each in turn. The second entremets of this table was a castle made in the manner of Lusignan, and on this castle, at the highest point of the principal tower, was Melusine in the form of a serpent, and from two of the smaller towers orange water issued forth when required, which fell into ditches. The third was a windmill, high up on a hill, and on its highest sail was a pole, on the end of which was a magpie; and around it were men of all estates with bows and crossbows, shooting at the magpie, to show that all men shooting at the magpie are bound in common in the same task. The fourth was a barrel placed in a vineyard, where there were two types of beverage, of which one was good and sweet, the other bitter and bad. On the barrel was a figure of a richly dressed man who held a letter in his hand in which it was written: 'He who wishes it, may take it.' The fifth was a desert, an uninhabited land, on which there was a marvellously lifelike figure of a tiger which fought with a large serpent. The sixth was a wild man mounted on a camel, who pretended to travel from country to country. The seventh was a figure of a man who beat a bush full of small birds with a pole; and near them were a knight and lady seated at a table, who were eating the birds which the other was beating from the bush; and the lady indicated with her finger that he worked in vain, foolishly wasting his time. The eighth was a fool mounted on a bear, between several strange mountains and diverse rocks which were laden with frost and icicles hanging in a fine way. The ninth was a lake surrounded by several towns and castles, on which was a small ship with its sails up, sailing by itself on the water of the lake; and the ship was finely fashioned, and well furnished with things necessary for sailing.

The third table (the smallest) had a marvellous forest on it, as though this was a forest of the Indies; within there were several strange-looking beasts, who moved on their own accord as though they were alive. The second entremets of this table was a moving lion, attached to a tree in the middle of a courtyard; and there was a figure beating a dog in front of

92 Girard de Roussillon or de Rochebarron, cup-bearer at the ducal court, squire panther to Charles, count of Charolais.
93 Louis de Luxembourg, count of Saint-Pol (1418–75), with lands in Hainaut and Artois, militarily active, fighting in the Ghent war, later mistrusted by both Charles the Bold and King Louis XI of France, executed for lèse-majesté in 1475.
94 Jean de Montfoort, lord of Hazerswoude (Holland), castellan of Montfoort, in the service of the count of Charolais from 1458.
95 Louis of Bruges (1427–92), lord of Gruthuse, Earl of Winchester, served in the Ghent war, made knight of the Golden Fleece in 1461; lieutenant in Holland, Zeeland and Frisia.
96 Chrétien de Digoine, lord of Thianges, made a knight during the Ghent war, counsellor and chamberlain of the duke from 1455.
97 Erart de Digoine, younger brother of Chrétien, lord of Saint-Sornay, counsellor and chamberlain of the duke from 1458.
98 Philippe de Lalaing (c.1450–60), made a knight during the Ghent war; organiser of the pas of the péron fït at Bruges in 1465, killed at the battle of Montlhéry in 1465.
99 The figure of Melusine, half-woman, half-serpent, was a widely known legend associated with the house of Lusignan, to which several late medieval dynasties claimed connections. The Lusignans were famed for their crusading efforts.
the lion. The third and last was a merchant passing by a village, carrying around his neck a basket full with all manner of haberdashery.

Now, to describe the manner of service and the dishes would be a marvellous thing to recount; and also I had so many things to do that I cannot truly recount them all; but I do remember, each course was furnished with forty-eight types of food, and the dishes bearing the roasted food were like chariots decorated with gold and azure. In this room, nearest the table, was a tall sideboard laden with gold and silver dishes, and with bowls of crystal, decorated with gold and precious stones; and except for those who served the wine, no one approached this buffet beyond the wooden protection which was placed there.

And so it was that in the middle of the room, lengthways, fairly near the wall, opposite the long table, was a tall pillar, on which there was an image of a naked woman, whose hair was so long that it fell to the small of her back, and on her head was a very rich hat, and she was enveloped in a veil inscribed in several places in Greek lettering, to cover up her modesty; and as long as the banquet lasted, hippocræs flowed from the right breast of this statue. Near her was another wide-based pillar in the manner of a platform on which a live lion was attached by an iron chain, as though guarding and defending the image; and on a shield against this pillar, written in golden letters, were the words ‘Do not touch my lady’.

My lord, the duchess, and all their noble company, set about visiting these entremets for quite some time. The whole room was full of noble people, and there were few other sorts of people. There were also five well appointed platforms, for those who did not want to sit at table, which soon were filled with men and women, most of whom were in disguise, and as far as is known, there were knights and ladies from great families, who had come from afar, some by sea, others by land, to see the Feast which was greatly renowned. To be brief, everyone had looked at the entremets, the chief stewards, who were taking care of proceedings, came to make the seating arrangements.

The duke was seated in the centre of the middle-sized table, and on his right my lady, daughter of the duke of Bourbon, was seated; after her, my lord of Cleves, my lady of Ravestein, niece of the duchess and wife of my lord Adolf. The duchess was seated to the left of the duke, with my

59 Mary of Burgundy (d.1475), bastard daughter of Philip the Good, wife of Pierre de Bauffremont, lord of Charny.
60 Isabelle d’Étampes (b.1438/9), daughter of the count of Étampes, married to the duke of Cleves in 1455.
61 Jeanne or Marie de La Vefville, lady of Beveren, wife of Anthony, Grand Bastard of Burgundy since 1446, lady of honour to the duchess in 1447.
62 Jacques lord of Pons (in Poitou) (c.1442–1479/3) had fought the English on the side of Charles VII of France in the 1440s, but had been banished from the kingdom, declared guilty of rése-majesté in 1449.
63 Guigonne de Salins, third wife of the chancellor Nicolas Rolin.
64 Thibaut of Luxembourg, lord of Fiennes (1440–1475/7), brother of Louis of Luxembourg, active in the Ghent war, but withdrew from the world as a Cistercian monk in 1456, and later became bishop of Le Mans.
65 Jacques, first count of Hornes (d.1488).
man, standing upside down, who held himself up by his hands on the
shoulders of the monster; and the monster was mounted on a wild boar
covered in costly green silk, and when he had made his tour of the room,
he returned whence he had come. When the goblin had left, the people
in the church sang out and a flute and another instrument were played
from the pastry; and soon after four clarions rang out loudly, and made
a joyful fanfare. These clarions were behind a green curtain, hung on a
big platform made at the end of the room.

When their fanfare was over, the curtain was suddenly pulled back, and
there, on the platform, could be seen the figure of Jason, armed to the
teeth, walking about, looking all around him, as if he had arrived in a
strange land ...

[Jason proceeds to read a letter that Medea had given him. He then does battle
with some enormous oxen with flames coming out of their nostrils. He subdues
them with the aid of a phial of liquid which had been given to him by Medea. At
this point, the curtain was drawn and the play ended for a while ...]

After the play, the organs in the church played out for the time it took to
play a motet; and then a song called 'Saviour of my life' was sung from
the pastry by three sweet voices.

Then the door through which the other entremets had come in, after
those of the church and pastry had played four times, a marvellously
large and beautiful stag entered the room, all white with large golden
antlers, and covered in a rich covering of green and vermilion silk, as
far as I could tell. A young boy twelve years old was mounted on the
stag, dressed in a short robe of crimson velvet, wearing a little black
slashed hat on his head, and shod in fine shoes. This child held on to the
antlers of the stag with both hands. As he entered the room, he began
on a song in a very high and clear voice, and the stag seemed to sing the
tenor part, without there appearing to be any other person about save
the child and artifice of the stag, and the song they sang was called 'Je ne voy
ontes la pareille etc.' [I have never seen her like]. While singing
in the way I have told, they passed in front of the tables, and then left;
and this entremets seemed to me to be well and agreeably received. After
this fine entremets of the white stag and child, the singers from within
the church sang a motet, and a lute was plucked from within the pastry
accompanied with two good voices; and so in this way, the church and
pastry performed something between the entremets.

After this, when the players in the pie had done their work, a fanfare
rang out, on the stage where the story of Jason was being played out,
from the four clarions which had played before. Once their fanfare was
over, the same curtain was drawn back ...

[This time a terrible serpent sprang out, spewing poison and flames from its
jaws. Jason begins to fight the serpent 'so realistically, that it did not resemble
a play but all too bitter and mortal battle'. The serpent is defeated with the help
of a ring that had been given to Jason by Medea. The serpent's head is cut off
and its teeth extracted. Then the curtain was closed, the organs in the church
played and four minstrels from the pie played on flutes ...]

Then from one end of the room, high up, a dragon breathing fire set off;
flying almost the length of the room, and disappeared – no one knew
how. The people in the church sang out, and the blind men in the pie
played the hurdy-gurdy. Then from high up at one end of the room a
heron took flight, to the cry of several voices in the manner of falconers;
and soon, from another end of the room a falcon took to the air and
circled about and got its bearings; from another end a second falcon took
flight and flew with such speed and struck the heron so violently, that it
killed the heron in the middle of the room. And when the clamour was
over, the heron was presented to my lord the duke; the singers from the
church sang once more and the drummers in the pie struck up...

[The curtains are drawn back once more to reveal Jason ploughing the land.
He then sows the land with the serpent teeth, from which armed men spring
up ready to do battle. Jason kills them all; and the curtains are drawn together
again ...]

Now that the play had finished, the organs in the church were played,
and from the pie issued hunting cries, so that it seemed that there were
little yapping dogs, and poachers shouting, and sounds of trumpets, as
though they were in a forest. The hunt marked the end of the entremets.
Such were the worldly entremets of this Feast, and I will speak of them
no further, and recount a piteous spectacle which seems to me more
special than the others.

Through the door where all the other entremets had entered and left,
came the largest real giant I had ever seen, with a long stride, dressed
in a long robe of green silk, striped in several places; on his head was a
headdress like a Saracen's from Granada; in his left hand he held a large,
thin double-edged axe of an old-fashioned kind, and in his right he held
an elephant covered in silk, on which there was a castle containing a
lady dressed in a robe of white satin like a nun, and over the robe was
a mantle of black cloth; her head was covered up in a white head-cloth
like a beguine or a recluse. As soon as she had entered the room and had
surveyed the noble company there, as though caught by necessity, she said to the giant who led her:

Giant, I wish to halt here
for I see a noble company
unto whom I must speak,
to tell them their will and to teach
them things which should be truly heard.

When the giant heard the lady speak, he looked at her in great fear, but he did not stop until he reached the duke’s table. There several people gathered round wondering who this lady could be. As soon as the elephant had halted, the lady began her lament.

[She explains that she is Holy Church, ruined and in bitter pain; she has implored help from the Emperor, the Christian and most victorious king of France, other Kings, lords and all good Christians. She is now joyful that she can bring her lament before the duke of Burgundy, and asks all to reflect on the shame that has befallen her, appealing in particular to the knights of the Golden Fleece and other gentlemen for help...]

When the laments of our Mother Church were over, a great number of heralds entered the room, the last being Golden Fleece, the king of arms. In his hands he carried a live pheasant, adorned with a costly collar of gold, very richly decorated with precious stones and pearls. Behind Golden Fleece came two young ladies, Yolande the bastard daughter of my lord the duke,46 and Isabelle of Neufchâtel, daughter of my lord of Montagu,47 flanked by two knights of the Golden Fleece, the lord of Créquy48 and Simon de Lalaing.49 In this order, the heralds and Golden Fleece came up to the pheasant on the table of the duke to whom they bowed in reverence. Golden Fleece then said: Most high and powerful prince, my renowned lord: here are the ladies who present themselves to you very humbly. And because it is the custom, and has been since ancient times, that at great feasts and noble assemblies, the peacock or some other noble bird is presented to princes, lords, and other noble

46 Yolande, Bastard of Burgundy, married Jean d’Ailly, lord of Harres, viscount of Amiens, in 1456.
47 Isabelle de Neufchâtel, daughter of Jean lord of Montagu, lady of honour to the duchess, married Louis de Vienne, lord of Ruffey in 1457.
48 Jean V de Créquy (Artois) (1400–74), one of the founding members of the Order of the Golden Fleece in 1430, militarily active in the 1440s, fought in the Ghent war, went on pilgrimage to the Holy Land in 1448.
49 Simon de Lalaing (c.1405–76), fought against the Mamelukes at Cyprus in 1426, and the English in the 1430s, and against the Ghenters 1449–53; knight of the Golden Fleece since 1437; one of the most active in preparing an expedition against the Turks after 1453, taking part in Anthony of Burgundy’s expedition in 1463.

men, on which to make useful and valid vows, they have sent me with these two damsels, to present this noble pheasant to you, praying that you will keep them in memory. Once these words had been said, my lord the duke (who knew to what end he had held the banquet) looked at the Church, and as if giving pity on her, pulled from a breast pocket a letter spelling out that he had vowed to come to the aid of Christianity (as it will be seen later). At this Mother Church made a gesture of joy, and seeing that my lord had handed his vow to Golden Fleece who was now reading it, she cried out aloud... [She praises God that she will now be served so well by the ‘foremost of the peers of France.’]

At these words, the giant took hold of his elephant once more, and led it in front of the tables, the way he had come. When I had seen this entremets (in other words, the Church) and a castle on such an unusual animal, I wondered to myself what it all could mean. And I could interpret it in no other way than to see the beast she led (a strange and unusual one to us in these parts) as a sign that she worked and laboured under great and diverse trials, on behalf of Constantinople (whose adversities we were aware of); and the castle she was in signified Faith. Moreover, I understood this lady’s being conducted and led by this large and armed giant as showing her fear of the arms of the Turks who had driven her out and sought her destruction.

When she had left, all the noblemen, out of pity and compassion, began to make vows, following the lead of my lord the duke, each one in his own fashion, and committed their vows to writing, as it will soon appear. But because so many vows were being made, or seemed about to be made, that it threatened to be too protracted, my lord had Golden Fleece call out that things should stop directly, and all those who wanted to make a vow should hand in their vows to Golden Fleece on the following day, and he would consider them as valid as if they had been made in his presence.

To be brief, as soon as Golden Fleece had made his announcement, the banquet was over; the table-cloths were taken away, and everyone walked about the room. As for me, it seemed that it had all been a dream, for of all the entremets and tables, there remained only the fountain of glass. When I saw nothing new to occupy my attention, my thoughts turned to several aspects of this affair. First, I thought of the outrageous excess and vast expense laid out for this banquet which had lasted only a short time; this manner of passing round the chaplets, in which each had tried to outdo the other in receiving the company more nobly, had taken a lot of time; and most of all, my lord had put on such pomp, cost and
company, that I called it all an outrageous and unreasonable expense, without finding any virtue in it, save in the *entremets* of the Church, and the vows that followed. And again it seemed to me to have been an enterprise begun too precipitously.

I remained a long time with these thoughts and ruminations, until by chance I found myself next to a lord counsellor and chamberlain who was very intimate with the duke, and with whom I was quite familiar. So I decided to speak with him, and told him of my fanciful thoughts. When I had told him everything, he replied: 'My friend, you should know (and I affirm this on my oath as a knight) that these chaplets, banquet and festivities were arranged and undertaken for a long time past, only under the firm direction and secret will of the duke to accomplish his banquet in the way you have seen, desiring greatly and with all his heart to bring to fruition an old and holy resolution which he had undertaken to serve God our Creator. This resolution is and can be made known through the vow that he has now made public, namely, for the good of Christianity; and to resist the machinations of the enemies of our faith, a desire he has annually demonstrated for a long time now, by hiring and sending ships and troops for the purpose.' Indeed, three or so years ago, my lord held a Feast of the Order of the Golden Fleece at Mons in Hainaut, to which a great many lords of the Order were gathered. And at morning mass, the bishop of Chalon, the duke's chancellor, described, in a general sermon, the great desolation and ruin in which the Church Militant lay, and urged the knights of the Order and others to succour our unhappy Mother Church. The knights were seized with noble intentions to increase the service of God and to maintain the faith; and my lord was the principal mover in all this, and the first to offer body and goods. Since then, as it is well known, the rebellion of Ghent overtook him, on which he spent time and money to subdue, and, by the grace of God, as everyone knows, he achieved this well and with honour. Now it was during this time that the Turks made great assaults upon Christianity, gaining Constantinople (no villainy has been greater), killing the Emperor and destroying the Empire. Such things have constantly enflamed the heart and desire of my lord to serve Our Lord Jesus Christ, for it is a duty to serve the needy. So, to conclude, you should be aware that for a long time he himself has followed through and striven toward this need to have the time to be able to make the vow and to demonstrate the noble will and desire he has for the common good and general profit of Christianity.'

While the knight and I talked and deliberated over the cause and primary intention for which, in his understanding, this Feast and great assembly had been made, there entered, by the main door, a great multitude of torches, and then several players of diverse musical instruments such as drums, lutes and harps. After them came a lady dressed in a robe of white satin, very simply made, in the manner of a nun, and wrapped around her was a large cloak of white damask, and her head was attired very simply with a white head-cloth, all as though she were someone saintly and devout ...

[The lady is called 'Grace Dieu'. She is followed by twelve soldiers, each leading a lady by the hand. When Grace finds herself in front of the duke, she speaks, handing him a letter that promises renown in this world and in paradise for the vow that the duke has made. Further letters are given by the twelve other ladies and read out by Grace-Dieu: these tell of the virtues represented by the twelve ladies: Faith, Charity, Justice, Reason, Prudence, Temperance, Magnanimity, Truth, Largesse, Diligence, Hope and Valour. All these virtues are necessary for the duke's enterprise ...]

After these words, Grace-Dieu left the room, leaving behind her the ladies she had brought in. To complete their act, the letters they carried were taken from their shoulders, and they began to dance like mummers, to make good cheer and to invest the Feast with more joy. They were followed in this dance by knights and ladies; first the lords by name, my lord of Charolais, my lord of Cleves, my lord of Étampes, my lord Adolf of Cleves, my lord John of Coimbra, my lord the Bastard of Burgundy, my lord of Bouchain, my lord Anthony bastard of Brabant, my lord Philippe bastard of Brabant, my lord Philippe Pot, my lord Philippe de Lalaing, and my lord Chrétien de Digoine; and as for the ladies,  

50 The chapter was held at Mons in 1451 (see chapter 3 [187]). For the crusading fervour expressed at the meeting (and concern to interest the king of France), see J. Pavot, "Les circonstances historiques du voeu du faisant", in Caron and Clauzel (eds), *Banquet du faisant*, pp. 66-8. The bishop of Chalon-sur-Saône, Jean Germain, who delivered the sermon, had long sought to encourage crusading as well as the unity of the Church, East and West.

51 Wolfert van Borsselen (c.1430-1486), son of Henry van Borsselen, one of the wealthiest families in Zeeland, made a knight during the Ghent war, carried the title of marshal of France after 1464, and was made a knight of the Golden Fleece in 1478.

52 Antoine, bastard of Brabant (d.1498), bastard son of Philip the Good, pantler in the ducal household from 1451, chamberlain in 1453.

53 Philippe, bastard of Brabant, bastard son of Duke Philip the Good, ducal chamberlain from 1453.

54 Philippe Pot (1428–94), lord de La Roche-Nolay and Châteauneuf, Grand Seneschal of Burgundy, governor of Lille, Douai and Orchies, godson of the duke and later his chamberlain, took part in the Ghent war, made a crusading vow in 1454, and became a knight of the Golden Fleece in 1461.

55 The text used by M.-T. Caron has Philippe de Lannoy (son of Guillebert lord of Willerval) instead of Philippe de Lalaing (*Caron, Les voeux du faisant*, p. 131).
my lady of Bourbon, my lady of Étampes, my lady of Ravestein, my lady of Arcis, my lady of Commines, my lady of Santeri, my lady of Obeaux, my lady of Chasteler, Marguerite, bastard of Burgundy, Antoinette, wife of Jehan Boudaut, and Ysabeau Coudain. While they danced in this way, the kings of arms and heralds, with the noble men assigned to the task, went about the ladies and maidens, to find out the name of the person to whom the prize for the best jouster and breaker of lances that day should be given and presented. It was found that the lord of Charolais had won and deserved it.

The officers of arms took two young princesses (the lady of Bourbon and the lady of Étampes) to present the prize and they handed it to my lord of Charolais who kissed them as he was accustomed to do and as was the custom; and a loud cry 'Montjoie!' was let out. Soon after the wine and spices were carried out in seven comfit-dishes, most of which were made of precious stones. And then jousts were announced for the following day by the lord of Charolais, accompanied by the lord Bastard Benetru de Chassa. Three companions in arms, wearing shields of violet and black, were named in the announcement. My lord Adolf won the challenger's prize and my lord of Charolais won the home prize. That day my lord the duke threw a banquet for all the ladies in his household.

Two or three hours after midnight, my lord and his company left the banqueting place and retired severally. Now, because I am fully aware that several people have written about the Feast, and that no-one can have known everything, and because it could be said that I have spoken about it in great detail, so that the manner and record of my account may be true, I have had it inspected by the lord of Lannoy and by Jean

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56 Isabella de Souza, married to Jean de Poitiers, lord of Arcis-sur-Aube, from 1431.
57 Jeanne d'Estoutville, lady of honour to the duchess, married the lord of Commines in 1444.
58 Probably Madame de Sambre, wife of Claude de Rochebaron.
59 Antoinette d'Inchy (d.1478), lady of Canteles, wife of Walran lord of Aubeaux (near Lille).
60 Wife of Simon lord of Chasteler (chamberlain of the duke who fought in the Ghent war).
61 Margaret, bastard daughter of Philip the Good, serving in the duchess's household.
62 Antoinette de Morale, lady of honour in the duchess's household from 1450.
63 Isabeau, lady of Macheoing, married to Jean Coudain in 1449 (see below, chapter 2), later to Jean de Montferrand, and finally de la Marche.
64 Jean de Chassa dit Benetru, counsellor and chamberlain to the duke, took part in the Ghent war (and in the wedding jousts at Bruges in 1468); accused by Charles the Bold in 1470, along with Baudouin, bastard of Burgundy, of an attempt on the duke's life; thereafter passed into the service of Louis XI.

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Boudaut, principal organisers of the events recounted above; and after their inspection had been made and approved of by the lord of Lannoy, I have dared to make public. I beg very humbly of my most redoubtable and sovereign lord the duke, and of all those who read or hear of these things, that they pardon my ignorance and lend their ears to listen to some of the vows which were made at this banquet.

Chapter 30

There follows some of the vows which the very noble and well-renowned prince Philip, by the grace of God, duke of Burgundy, Brabant, etc., and of several other great lords, knights and gentlemen, made in the year 1453. And first of all, the duke's vow:

'I swear first of all to God my Creator and to the glorious Virgin Mary His mother, and then to all the ladies and to the pheasant, that if it is the pleasure of the most Christian and most victorious prince, the king of France to take the cross and to endanger his body in defence of the Christian faith, and to resist the damnable enterprise of the Grand Turk and the infidels; and if then I have no legitimate impediment of body, I will serve him personally and with my power in the holy journey, in the best way that God may give me grace to do. And if the affairs of the king prevent him from going personally, and he wants to commit a prince of the blood or some other lord and leader of his army to the task, I will obey and serve at his command on the holy journey to the best of my ability, as if the king himself were there in person. And if, because of his important affairs, he is unable to go or send someone else in his place, and other Christian princes of sufficient power undertake the holy journey, I will accompany them on it, and exert myself with them in the most strenuous way I can for the defence of the Christian faith, provided that this is at the pleasure and permission of my lord the king, and that the lords that God has committed me to govern be peaceful and safe. To this end I will work and set about the task in such a way that God and the world will know that nothing will have held or hold me back. And if during the holy journey I may find out or discover, by whatever means or manner, that the Grand Turk is willing to fight me in single combat, I will, for the Christian faith, fight him with the help of God almighty and of his mother the most sweet Virgin Mary, whom I always invoke to my aid. Made at Lille, 17 February, in the year of the birth of Our Lord 1454, signed by my hand. PHILIPPE.'

[De La Marche then records twenty further vows in his account.]

65 For records of the 107 vows known to have been made at the Feast, see Caron, Les vœux du faisant, passim.