

Chapter 15

THE WAR WITH FRANCE, 1294-8

The outbreak of war with France in 1294 must have been a bitter blow for Edward I. In personal terms, it dashed his hopes of a second marriage, but far more seriously, it meant that there was now no longer a realistic possibility that he might mount a crusading expedition. The conflict with Philip IV of France gave hope to the Scots, and in 1296 Edward found himself at the head of an invasion of Scotland. The wars meant that burdens of a new order of magnitude were placed on the English people, with demands for money, men and food supplies. Edward found himself faced by political opposition at home of a kind he had not had to deal with since his accession. Many of the achievements of the first half of the reign were seriously threatened.

The central problem in Anglo-French relations was the fact that, by reason of the Treaty of Paris of 1259, the king of England now held Gascony as a vassal of the king of France. The French considered that they were now entitled to hear, in the *parlement* of Paris, appeals against Edward's jurisdiction in Gascony, and even claimed the right to military service. From the point of view of the French rulers, Gascony was a great fief, in just the same way as was Flanders. There was a clear royal policy, especially under Philip IV, of asserting sovereignty over such fiefs beyond any possible doubt, and of making that sovereignty effective. Yet in the first half of Edward's reign, relations between England and France had not approached a point of crisis. Several difficulties were resolved, and none apparently created, when Edward performed homage to Philip IV in 1286.¹

The immediate issue which led to the breakdown of relations between Edward I and Philip IV in the early 1290s was unexpected. For reasons which are unclear, rivalries between the sailors of England and Gascony, and those of other nations, reached new heights. Initially, in 1292, the problem was one of hostility directed against the Flemings by the men of the Cinque Ports in south-eastern England and Bayonne. Agreement was reached with Count Guy of Flanders, however, without much difficulty. In the next year there were problems over

¹ Above, 323.