

THIRTEENTH CENTURY ENGLAND  
VII

PROCEEDINGS OF  
THE DURHAM CONFERENCE  
1997

Edited by  
Michael Prestwich, Richard Britnell and Robin Frame

THE BOYDELL PRESS



## Henry III's Plans for a German Marriage (1225) and their Context

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Getting Henry III married seems to have been a difficult task. We know of several planned unions: one with a daughter of the duke of Austria in 1225, another with a Bohemian princess a few years later, a third with a sister of the king of Scotland, yet another with a daughter of the count of Ponthieu, until, in 1236, Henry – eventually – managed to marry Eleanor of Provence. It has been noted that the king's choice of prospective spouses, as well as his failure to lead most of them into matrimony, is best understood if approached from a political perspective. Henry's marriage to a Scottish princess, for instance, was opposed by members of the English aristocracy, because her elder sister had already married Hubert de Burgh.<sup>1</sup> It is also a generally accepted hypothesis that dynastic marriages were political unions, arranged to settle conflicts, symbolize, cement or strengthen alliances, secure or make territorial gains. In this paper I would like to investigate how these and other factors influenced the two major marriage projects pursued by Henry III in 1225: the king himself was to marry a daughter of the duke of Austria, and his sister Isabella the son and heir of Emperor Frederick II,<sup>2</sup> Henry (VII).<sup>3</sup> My emphasis will be on the wider international context of the proposed union.<sup>4</sup> Ideally, this will contribute to a better understanding of general political and diplomatic structures, relevant not only for the early years of Henry III's reign, but also for the history of contacts between England and Europe during most of the later Middle Ages.

<sup>1</sup> Nicholas Vincent, *Peter des Roches: An Alien in English Politics, 1205–1238* (Cambridge, 1996), 276–9. I would like to thank Haki Antonsson, Rob Bartlett and Julie Kerr for commenting on earlier drafts of this paper. Furthermore, I would like to acknowledge the financial help received from the Royal Historical Society, the Carnegie Trust, and the Russell Trust towards the research of which this paper forms part.

<sup>2</sup> *CPR 1216–1225*, 558, and *Royal Letters*, I, no. 213.

<sup>3</sup> Henry, deposed in 1235, is usually referred to as Henry (VII) to differentiate him from the early fourteenth-century emperor Henry VII of the house of Luxemburg.

<sup>4</sup> The course of events has been described admirably by Erich Zöllner, 'Das Projekt einer babenbergischen Heirat König Heinrichs III. von England', *Archiv für Österreichische Geschichte* cxxv (1966), 54–75.

## I

On 3 January 1225, letters were sent to the duke of Austria and the archbishop of Cologne, announcing that Walter Mauclerk, bishop of Carlisle, Master Henry de Cornhill, chancellor of the church of London, Nicholas de Molis, and the masters of the Hospitallers and Templars in England were to be sent to Germany.<sup>5</sup> Most of these men had considerable diplomatic experience. Whereas Walter Mauclerk had been King John's agent in Rome in 1215,<sup>6</sup> both Alan Martel, the Master of the Templars in England, and Henry de Cornhill, the chancellor of London, had previously been involved in negotiations with France.<sup>7</sup> Nicholas de Molis, a rising star at the English court, was later to become seneschal of Gascony. Their first stop was Cologne, where they were to consult with archbishop Engelbert. As head of the regency council for Henry (VII) he was at that time the most influential figure in the government of Germany.<sup>8</sup> This puts the project into a long tradition of Anglo-Imperial contacts, as the archbishops had always played an important role in relations between the Empire and the English court. They had been involved when Henry II's son-in-law, Henry the Lion, prepared to return from his forced exile to England in 1184,<sup>9</sup> and they had arranged most of the contacts between Emperor Otto IV and the court of King John.<sup>10</sup> It seems that the German partners had been the driving force behind the proposed union. In the letter of accreditation for Walter and his companions, reference is made to earlier missives written by both the duke and the archbishop on the same matter,<sup>11</sup> and envoys from Cologne are known to have been in England the previous year.<sup>12</sup>

Much of what we know about this embassy is based on a letter by Walter to Henry III, dated 10 February 1225.<sup>13</sup> Having arrived in Cologne, Walter met one of his clerks, who had apparently been dispatched as an advance party, and Henry de Zudendorp, a Cologne merchant who had frequently been employed in diplomatic missions between England and Germany.<sup>14</sup> By early February a first meeting took place between the two prelates. Asked for his advice concerning the proposed

<sup>5</sup> *CPR 1216–1225*, 558.

<sup>6</sup> *DD*, no. 19.

<sup>7</sup> *CPR 1216–1225*, 484. In 1220 Henry had also been a member of an embassy to Rome (*CPR 1216–25*, 319–20).

<sup>8</sup> When Frederick II was to be crowned emperor in 1220, Pope Honorius III had insisted on formally separating the imperial lands of northern Italy from the Staufens domains of Sicily. The compromise eventually agreed upon was that Frederick would be emperor and king of Sicily, while the actual governance of the empire would be left with Henry (VII). Wolfgang Stürner, *Friedrich II, Teil 1: Die Königsherrschaft in Sizilien und Deutschland 1194–1220* (Darmstadt, 1992), 245–54.

<sup>9</sup> Karl Jordan, *Heinrich der Löwe* (Munich, 1980; 2nd rev. edn), 216.

<sup>10</sup> Hugo Stehkämper, 'England und die Stadt Köln als Wahlmacher Ottos IV. (1198)', *Mitteilungen aus dem Stadtarchiv Köln* 1x (1971), 213–44; Karl Wand, 'Die Englandpolitik der Stadt Köln und ihrer Erzbischöfe im 12. und 13. Jahrhundert', in *Aus Mittelalter und Neuzeit: Festschrift Gerhard Kallen* ed. Josef Engel and Hans Martin Klinkenberg (Bonn, 1957), 77–95; and, for a summary of German research, Joseph P. Huffman, 'Comparative History and the Anglo-German Connection: Cologne and Anglo-German Relations during the Central Middle Ages (1066–1307)' (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, UCLA, 1991).

<sup>11</sup> *CPR 1216–1225*, 558.

<sup>12</sup> *RLC*, I, 610.

<sup>13</sup> *Royal Letters*, I, no. 213.

<sup>14</sup> On the Zudendorps and their connections with both the English court and the archbishops, Joseph. P.

marriage, Engelbert pointed out that the English king was not the only one who wanted to have Henry (VII) as an in-law: the duke of Bavaria had recently offered 15,000 marks for a marriage between a daughter of the king of Bohemia and Henry (VII), in addition to the 30,000 marks already offered by her father. Fortunately enough, the young king himself had refused to consider the proposal. Soon after, the king of Hungary, too, began to inquire about the young Staufer. Furthermore, Conrad of Urach, the papal legate in France, had been eager to arrange a marriage alliance with the Capetians.<sup>15</sup> Therefore, the archbishop recommended that Henry III should offer a dowry so impressive and generous that the emperor would be unable to resist. In general, Engelbert was optimistic about the impending negotiations. He told Walter that he had already dispatched an envoy, Bernard of Horstmar, to the Imperial court.<sup>16</sup> The message this conveyed to the English court was that its affairs were in safe hands: Bernard<sup>17</sup> had been prominent in Emperor Otto IV's court,<sup>18</sup> and was his agent in the negotiations with King John in 1208.<sup>19</sup> One of the leading officers in Engelbert's household, Bernard was sufficiently familiar with both English and Imperial affairs to pursue Henry III's case successfully.

Soon after this meeting, Nicholas de Molis and the chancellor of London set out for Austria. In March 1225 first news arrived from the Imperial court. Bernard of Horstmar wrote that he had met the emperor, but that Frederick had yet not made a decision and wanted to wait for the outcome of a private meeting with the pope.<sup>20</sup> It seems that Henry III's regents had also been in contact with the papal court: in a letter to the bishop of Carlisle in March, Henry III referred to Walter's clerk John and outlined how his reports from the *curia* should be dealt with.<sup>21</sup> More evidence survives for the business conducted in Austria. In February or March the duke acknowledged the arrival of English envoys, declared that it would be a great honour for him to have Henry III as his son-in-law, but requested that the archbishop of Cologne would be accepted as his proctor in future.<sup>22</sup> At around the same time, Henry de Cornhill wrote to the bishops of Bath, Chichester and Salisbury, concerning his mission. The tenor of his letter was pessimistic: without Henry de Zuden-dorp as a companion, he would not have reached Austria alive. In fact, he would rather be sent to Acre, than have to spend any a more time with the Austrians, a furious people, lacking both in modesty and reason. As far as his dealings with the duke were concerned, he wrote only that his offer had been received coldly.<sup>23</sup>

It has been suggested that the duke's request that Engelbert of Cologne should act as his proctor was an acknowledgement of the important role the archbishop played

Huffman, 'Prosopography and the Anglo-Imperial Connection: A Cologne Ministerialis Family and its English Relations', *Medieval Prosopography* xi (1990), 53-134.

<sup>15</sup> *DD*, no. 153. Also, for the context, Falko Neining, *Konrad von Urach: Zähringer, Zisterzienser, Kardinallegat* (Paderborn, 1994), 203-72.

<sup>16</sup> This must have been just before the arrival of Walter, as Bernard witnessed a grant by Henry (VII) on 20 January. *RI*, no. 3960.

<sup>17</sup> Julius Ficker, 'Herr Bernhard von Horstmar', *Zeitschrift für vaterländische Geschichte und Alterthumskunde* iv (1853), 291-306, as the most recent biography of Bernard.

<sup>18</sup> *RI*, no. 510.

<sup>19</sup> *RLP*, I, 87.

<sup>20</sup> *Royal Letters*, I, no. 216.

<sup>21</sup> *RLC*, II, p. 71.

<sup>22</sup> *DD*, no. 164.

<sup>23</sup> *DD*, no. 163.

in Anglo-German relations.<sup>24</sup> However, it could just as well be a sign of the double-dealing that was going on in Austria at the time. Here, the *Chronica Reinhardsbrunnensis*, although a much later source, provides useful background information. According to the chronicler, Henry (VII) was supposed to marry a daughter of the king of Bohemia. As the couple were too closely related, it was decided that the duke of Austria should take care of the Bohemian princess, while a papal dispensation was secured. However, the duke secretly sent his own messengers, and asked for papal dispensation on behalf of *his* daughter, and married her to the young king instead. These envoys are said to have been dispatched by early March.<sup>25</sup> The chronicler's statement concerning the planned marriage of Henry (VII) to a Bohemian princess seems doubtful: during his meeting with Walter Mauclerk in February, the archbishop had declared that this particular project had found little favour with Henry (VII) himself. However, its statement regarding duke Leopold's mission to the emperor seems plausible. Leopold is known to have been at the Imperial court, and Bernard of Horstmar later referred to the duke's decisive role in the negotiations for the planned marriage. It is possible that the duke was already planning to arrange a match between his own daughter and Henry (VII). Under these circumstances, the presence of English envoys may have been viewed as a cumbersome hindrance, and would explain both the coldness with which the chancellor of London found himself received, and the duke's request to leave matters with Engelbert of Cologne.

Not much happened over the following months. One German chronicler mentions a diet at Frankfurt, at which English envoys had requested the hand of Henry (VII). As the German princes did not accept their proposal, the English delegation left again.<sup>26</sup> No documentary evidence survives for this diet and its dating is generally disputed.<sup>27</sup> In April 1225 Walter Mauclerk wrote to Hubert de Burgh.<sup>28</sup> He had little to report: after Nicholas de Molis' return, he once again met the archbishop. Engelbert had received letters from the emperor, Bernard of Horstmar and the Master of the Teutonic Knights. The thrust of their correspondence was that there was no reason for concern, and that the emperor would give the marriage proposals his full attention, once he had concluded some important business with the pope. From then on, the surviving evidence becomes teasingly vague and riddled with allusions. In May or June, Walter requested that he may be allowed to leave Germany. He also refers to orders he had received from the abbot of Beaulieu, who had recently joined the mission,<sup>29</sup> and which he was willing to execute, even if this meant endangering his body and soul.<sup>30</sup> At around the same time, Henry de Zudendorp and the archbishop addressed letters to the English court. Engelbert wrote that he had received missives from the emperor, and that he had passed on transcripts to the bishop of

<sup>24</sup> Huffman, *Comparative History*, 273–4.

<sup>25</sup> *Chronica Reinhardsbrunnensis*, MGH SS xxx, 607.

<sup>26</sup> *Annales Colonienses Maximi*, MGH SS xvii, 838.

<sup>27</sup> However, the *Reineri Annales* refer to a territorial squabble between the bishop of Liège and the duke of Brabant which was arbitrated by the archbishop of Cologne at a diet in Frankfurt (MGH SS xvi, 679). The meeting has variously been dated to March/April 1225 (*RI*, no. 3966a) and August to October (Walter Kienast, *Die deutschen Fürsten im Dienste der Westmächte*, 2 vols (Utrecht, 1924–31), II, 29 n. 3).

<sup>28</sup> *Royal Letters*, I, no. 217.

<sup>29</sup> *RLC*, II, 42.

<sup>30</sup> *DD*, no. 172.

Carlisle. He implored Henry III to make Walter stay, at least until Bernard of Horstmar would have returned from Italy.<sup>31</sup> Henry de Zudendorp, too, was optimistic. The bishop of Carlisle had worked diligently to further the king's affairs. Henry himself believed that the said business had been postponed at the instigation of the duke of Austria, following whose advice the emperor wanted to conclude the affair. Therefore, the English king should not cease in his efforts, as he would otherwise confuse his friends, while delighting his enemies.<sup>32</sup> To what extent this implies that the archbishop and his proctors had been aware of the game played by the duke of Austria remains uncertain. The earliest evidence for Leopold's presence in Italy dates from July 1225, when both the duke and Bernard of Horstmar appeared as witnesses to grants by Frederick II.<sup>33</sup> Walter's hopes of an early return to England were thus dashed. He was still in Cologne in July,<sup>34</sup> and it was not until August that he was allowed to set out for England.<sup>35</sup> Still, his departure depended on whether he received permission to leave from Engelbert, and even then he was not supposed to return until 16 October. This practically put an end to the planned marriage. On 7 November 1225, archbishop Engelbert was murdered<sup>36</sup> and on 18 November Henry (VII) married Margaret, daughter of the duke of Austria.<sup>37</sup>

## II

It is appropriate to begin an analysis of the political background of this episode by considering the ambitions and aims of Henry III. However, these cannot be understood, without considering the state of English relations with France. The loss of Normandy still rankled with many members of the English court, who had never really abandoned hopes for its recovery as well as of the other lands lost by King John. This occasionally led to rather bizarre actions: after the death of Philip Augustus in 1223, for instance, the archbishop of Canterbury was sent to France to demand the return of Normandy,<sup>38</sup> while Henry requested support from Honorius.<sup>39</sup> Furthermore, Pandulf, the former legate, even demanded that Louis VIII should not be crowned until he returned the lands seized from Henry III's father.<sup>40</sup> In 1224, it became clear that far from willing to abandon his father's gains, Louis VIII aimed at adding to the recent string of conquests. A truce between England and France, originally agreed in 1220,<sup>41</sup> was to expire that year. In the spring of 1224, an English

<sup>31</sup> *DD*, no. 188.

<sup>32</sup> *DD*, no. 189.

<sup>33</sup> Theodor Joseph Lacomblet (ed.), *Urkundenbuch für die Geschichte des Niederrheins*, 4 vols (Düsseldorf, 1846; repr. Aalen, 1966), II, no. 122; *RI*, no. 1571.

<sup>34</sup> *RI*, no. 10949.

<sup>35</sup> The letter has been dated 17 August in *Foedera*, I, 190, and 27 August by J.F.A. Huillard-Brehouilles (ed.), *Historia diplomatia Friderici Secundi*, 6 vols (Paris, 1852-61), II, 851.

<sup>36</sup> *Annales Elwangenses*, *MGH SS* x, 20.

<sup>37</sup> *Continuatio Cuonradi Praepositi Urspergensis*, *MGH SS* xxiii, 381; *Annales Schefilarienses*, *MGH SS* xvii, 338.

<sup>38</sup> *Chronica Johannis de Oxenedes*, ed. Henry Ellis, *RS* (London, 1859), 148.

<sup>39</sup> *DD*, no. 154.

<sup>40</sup> Powicke, *Henry III*, 170.

<sup>41</sup> *DD*, no. 67.

embassy was sent to Paris, to negotiate an extension of the agreement for another four years.<sup>42</sup> However, Henry had failed to take Louis VIII into account.<sup>43</sup> In June, Louis gathered troops at Tours and began his attack on Poitou. La Rochelle, the key fortress in the county, had surrendered to Louis by early August, and within a couple of weeks he had won control over most of Poitou. Even Gascony, the sole remaining territory on French soil under Plantagenet control, was in danger.

In England, the loss of Poitou triggered hectic diplomatic activity. Papal support was enlisted and a search for potential allies began. In August 1224, Honorius III wrote to Louis VIII, reprimanding him for his actions against the English king, and demanding an immediate truce.<sup>44</sup> Similar exhortations were issued in February and during the summer of 1225.<sup>45</sup> In February 1225, Frederick II asked the pope to ensure that Louis would make peace with Henry III.<sup>46</sup> However, the king of France refused to comply, and insisted that he was merely executing a judgement already passed by the peers of France against King John, but never fully carried out.<sup>47</sup> By December 1224 it became clear that Louis would not voluntarily surrender his newly made gains. According to the Dunstable annalist, Louis VIII's representatives at the papal *curia* declared that their lord would not only hold on the lands he had already seized, but would also conquer England. In fact, Louis was the rightful king of England, whereas Henry was but an impecunious minor. The annalist states that the English court took this threat so seriously that sea-towns were fortified and hostages demanded from the Cinque Ports.<sup>48</sup> A similar picture is presented in other sources. In late December 1224, English proctors at the *curia* sent a report, detailing how French envoys had declared King Louis VIII would instantly cross over to England, should the pope decide against him. They also brought other, worrying news: the papal legate in France was planning to arrange a marriage between a Capetian princess and the emperor's son, and Louis VIII had already sent envoys about this to Frederick II.<sup>49</sup> This news must have reached England in early January 1225, at about the time when Walter Mauclerk's mission was announced to the archbishop of Cologne and the duke of Austria.

Following this, Henry III's court took measures to prepare for military action. Efforts were made to build up a coalition of all those who had been wronged by the Capetians. Thus, in August 1225, Henry III wrote to count Raymond of Toulouse: as the ancestors of both men had been persecuted, cheated and robbed by the French crown, the count and Henry should work together and stand firm against the Capetian threat.<sup>50</sup> The moment was well chosen, as Raymond had just begun to recover ground lost during the Albigensian crusade,<sup>51</sup> while Louis VIII was exerting all his

<sup>42</sup> *CPR 1216–1225*, 484.

<sup>43</sup> David Carpenter, *The Minority of Henry III* (London, 1990), 370–5 for the following.

<sup>44</sup> *Royal Letters*, I, Appendix V, n. 18.

<sup>45</sup> P. Pressutti, *Regesta Honorii Papae III*, 2 vols (Rome, 1888–95), I, no. 5575; *MGH Epistolae*, I, no. 267.

<sup>46</sup> *DD*, no. 162.

<sup>47</sup> Leopold Delisle (ed.), *Recueil des Historiens des Gaules et de la France*, xix (Paris, 1880), 760.

<sup>48</sup> *Annals of Dunstable*, *Ann. Mon.* 11, 92–3.

<sup>49</sup> *DD*, no. 153.

<sup>50</sup> *Foedera*, I, 179.

<sup>51</sup> Jonathan Sumption, *The Albigensian Crusade* (London, 1978), 214–16.

influence to receive papal permission for yet another crusade against him.<sup>52</sup> Strict precautions were taken to keep the pact secret: two copies of their treaty were to be kept at a monastery, and only to be produced if necessary. Henry had good reason to be cautious: Raymond of Toulouse was still struggling to make his peace with the papacy and was to be publicly excommunicated the following year. Moreover, Henry III was threatened with a similar punishment, if he continued to negotiate with enemies of the Church.<sup>53</sup>

Occasionally, it seems, desperation guided the English court in its quest for allies. This is illustrated by Henry's letter to the count of Flanders from April 1225. As they had both been deprived of their inheritance by the king of France, Henry suggested that he would help the count in recovering his lands, if the count was willing to assist him in fighting Louis.<sup>54</sup> This letter is curious, as in 1225 the count of Flanders, Ferrand of Portugal, was still in French captivity, where he had been since the battle of Bouvines in 1214. He thus seems unlikely to have been able to offer much help. However, also in 1225, a 'false Baldwin' appeared in Flanders, and quickly won support amongst the towns, thus posing a serious threat to the regime of countess Joan.<sup>55</sup> His supporters maintained that he was count Baldwin, the first Latin emperor of Constantinople, who had been missing since 1205, and was generally believed to have died in Bulgarian captivity. They claimed that he had escaped from prison and lived a pious and humble life in his former domains, until increasing French control and his daughter's repressive regime forced him to come into the open. If this 'false' Baldwin really was the addressee of Henry III's letter – its wording and time of composition could justify this assumption<sup>56</sup> – this would throw new light on Walter Mauclerk's mission. The archbishop of Cologne played an important, though murky, role in the affairs of the pretender. Parts of the county of Flanders, notably Hainault, were held in fief from the bishops of Liège, who in turn were suffragans of the archdiocese of Cologne. Therefore, when Baldwin began to look for allies, one of those whom he approached was Engelbert of Cologne. Albert of Stade, who began writing his chronicle at some point before 1240,<sup>57</sup> reports that Baldwin met Engelbert, who in turn forced the bishop of Liège to investigate the pretender's claims. The bishop was eventually unable to withhold his acceptance any longer, and Engelbert then promised Baldwin his support in winning recognition from the pope.<sup>58</sup> However, it should be noted that according to another chronicler Baldwin's request for an audience was refused.<sup>59</sup> Nevertheless, it is interesting that English envoys were present at the archbishop's court, when Baldwin was trying to contact Engelbert. Whether Walter and his companions were in any way involved in this affair is unclear: there is no evidence directly linking them with Baldwin.

<sup>52</sup> Joseph R. Strayer, *The Albigensian Crusades, with a new Epilogue by Carol Lansing* (Ann Arbor, 1992), 123–6.

<sup>53</sup> *Royal Letters*, I, Appendix V, no. 22.

<sup>54</sup> *Foedera*, I, 177.

<sup>55</sup> Robert Lee Wolff, 'Baldwin of Flanders and Hainault, First Latin Emperor of Constantinople: His Life, Death and Resurrection, 1172–1225', *Speculum* xxvii (1952), 281–322, at 294–9 for the following.

<sup>56</sup> Wolff, 'Baldwin of Flanders', 296, simply states that he was the addressee of Henry III's letter, without elaborating on the matter.

<sup>57</sup> Franz-Josef Schmale, *Deutschlands Geschichtsquellen im Mittelalter: Vom Tode Kaiser Heinrichs V. bis zum Ende des Interregnum. Erster Band* (Darmstadt, 1976), 423–6.

<sup>58</sup> *Alberti Stadensis Chronica*, MGH SS xvi, 358.

<sup>59</sup> *Chronica Regia Coloniensis, Continuatio IV*, MGH SS xvi, 225.

However, the tenor of several English letters to the bishop of Carlisle is sufficiently vague to allow room for speculation. The orders which Walter received from London in summer 1225, for instance, and which he perceived as endangering both his physical and spiritual welfare, may well have referred to the affairs of Flanders. Be this as it may, the episode as a whole is not only illustrative of the desperate means to which the English court often resorted, but reveals the extent to which the bishop of Carlisle's mission was concerned with matters other than matrimonial.

That Walter's negotiations in Germany dealt as much with the loss of Poitou as with the king's marriage had never been a secret. When the bishop of Carlisle first met Engelbert in February 1225, he opened their conversation with a request to prevent a Franco-Imperial alliance, and ended his account of the meeting by reporting that the archbishop had been optimistic regarding Henry's chances of recovering his lost inheritance – a reference to Normandy, Anjou and Poitou.<sup>60</sup> A marriage between Isabella Plantagenet and Frederick II's only son would have strengthened Henry III's position against Louis VIII. If war broke out, the French king would have been forced to divide his troops between two enemies. In itself, this was a rather conservative choice of strategy. Something similar had been attempted by King John in the aftermath of the loss of Normandy, when he allied himself with Emperor Otto IV against Philip Augustus.<sup>61</sup> The successful conclusion of Walter's mission would have eased the way for the recovery of Normandy, Anjou and Poitou. Even if Henry III abstained from military action against France, the political advantages to be gained from such a union would have put him in a strong bargaining position against Louis VIII.

It is, therefore, not surprising that the king of France did his best to counter these moves, and attempted to draw Germany and the emperor on to his side. Rumours about Louis VIII's plans to marry Henry (VII) to a Capetian princess have already been mentioned,<sup>62</sup> but this was only one of many ways in which Louis VIII tried to form closer relations with the Empire. In November 1223, Louis and Frederick II had concluded the Treaty of Catania. The main clause of the document stipulated that neither Louis nor Frederick would assist rebels or those who waged war against the other party. It also referred specifically to Henry III and stated that neither the emperor nor anyone under his control was to enter into an alliance with the king of England or his heirs.<sup>63</sup> This, in turn, posed a serious threat to English interests. However, when Walter was sent to Cologne, all was not yet lost. As the ruler of Germany, at least in theory, Henry (VII) was also to approve the agreement. It was probably the imminent ratification of the Treaty of Catania which the bishop of Carlisle referred to, when he asked Engelbert to prevent a Franco-Imperial alliance. The archbishop had already proved himself to be a reliable ally. For November 1224, a meeting had been arranged between Henry (VII) and Louis VIII at Vaucouleurs, to endorse the treaty, and – possibly – to deal with the proposed Franco-German marriage. However, Engelbert did his best to obstruct negotiations, and the two kings

<sup>60</sup> *Royal Letters*, I, no. 213.

<sup>61</sup> Theo Holzapfel, *Papst Innoenz III., Philipp II. August, König von Frankreich und die englisch-welfische Verbindung 1198–1216* (Frankfurt/Main, 1991), *passim*, for the wider context.

<sup>62</sup> *DD*, no. 153.

<sup>63</sup> *MGH Constitutiones*, no. 99.

never met.<sup>64</sup> Of course, Louis VIII did not give up, and both he and the papal legate wrote to Frederick II, insisting that he overrule the actions of the archbishop. Nevertheless, Engelbert seems to have been successful in withstanding the emperor's will, as Henry (VII) did not confirm the treaty until after the archbishop had died.<sup>65</sup> In this respect at least, Walter's mission had achieved a success, albeit a temporary one. Therefore, plans for Henry III's German marriage, and a match between his sister and Henry (VII) must be viewed within the context of English efforts to revert the recent string of conquests made by the Capetians. These marriages were not only to forge closer dynastic links with Germany, but moreover to prevent the formation of an even closer relationship between France and the Empire. If the Staufens could not be won as allies against France, they were at least to be prevented from allying themselves with the Capetians.

What, then, about the other parties who had been involved in the negotiations? What did the archbishop of Cologne and the duke of Austria expect to gain from closer relations with England? Engelbert's championing of English interests in 1225 has traditionally been viewed as an indication of the increasing hostility between Germany and France. The see of Cologne certainly had territorial interests which were threatened by the Capetians. The French crown had expanded not only westwards, against the Plantagenets, but had also moved eastwards, into Imperial Burgundy and the Maas region, the latter an area where the archbishops had long-standing claims.<sup>66</sup> A marriage between Henry (VII) and a Plantagenet princess could have been perceived as a ploy to counter French influence. Engelbert's murky role in the affairs of the 'false' Baldwin seems to justify this interpretation, for he was perceived as a potential ally by those who opposed the Capetians and their supporters. However, other motivations must be considered as well: Cologne's traditionally strong trading links with England had come under increasing pressure from other German towns, and closer political ties with England arranged via Cologne might have been seen as a way to counter increasing competition from places like Lübeck, Hamburg and Bremen, or the domains of the duke of Brabant.<sup>67</sup> Furthermore, Engelbert's championing of an Anglo-German alliance could be viewed as an attempt by the regency council to escape the increasing domination of its affairs by the emperor. In theory Frederick had handed over the affairs of Germany to his son, but in practice he continued to dictate the young king's actions.<sup>68</sup> When Henry (VII) came of age, this led to renewed conflicts between father and son. However, even Engelbert's regency had not been without tensions. For instance, the capture of the king of Denmark in 1223 had provided an opportunity to recover lands in the north which had been occupied by Waldemar of Denmark. Engelbert's approach was

<sup>64</sup> Walther Kienast, *Deutschland und Frankreich in der Kaiserzeit (900–1270): Weltkaiser und Einzelkönige*, 3 vols (Stuttgart, 1975), III, 587–9, for a detailed account of what happened at Vaucouleurs.

<sup>65</sup> *MGH Constitutiones*, no. 290 (11.6.1226).

<sup>66</sup> Wolfgang Stürner, 'Der Staufer Heinrich (VII): Lebensstationen eines gescheiterten Königs', *Zeitschrift für Württembergische Landesgeschichte* liii (1993), 13–33, at 21 for the increasing hostility; Hugo Stehkämper, 'Der Bischof und Territorialfürst (12. und 13. Jahrhundert)', in *Der Bischof in seiner Zeit: Bischofstypus und Bischofsideal im Spiegel der Kölner Kirche. Festschrift Joseph Kardinal Höffner*, ed. Peter Berglar and Odilo Engels (Cologne, 1986), 95–184, at 133–8 for Cologne's territorial interests.

<sup>67</sup> Natalie Fryde, 'Deutsche Englandkaufleute in frühhansischer Zeit', *Hansische Geschichtsblätter* xcvi (1979), 1–14, at 6.

<sup>68</sup> Werner Goetz, 'Friedrich II. und Deutschland', in *Politik, Wirtschaft und Kunst des staufischen Lübeck*, ed. Klaus Friedland, Werner Goetz and Wolfgang J. Müller (Lübeck, 1976), 5–38, at 20–6.

much harsher than that of Herman of Salza, Frederick's emissary, who was willing to release Waldemar in return for rather limited concessions.<sup>69</sup> Therefore, Engelbert's insistence on pursuing the project of an Anglo-German marriage, and his efforts to block attempts to force Henry (VII) into Frederick's system of pro-French treaties, may have been an attempt to assert the independence of the regency council against the emperor.

As far as the duke of Austria was concerned, the planned marriage was both the continuation of an earlier project, and part of a policy which aimed at raising the prestige of the duke's family, and strengthening his position within Germany. Unlike the archbishops of Cologne, the dukes of Austria were not known to be champions of English causes. Richard the Lionheart's imprisonment by the duke's father still rankled with some English chroniclers. However, after Richard's release a marriage had been arranged between Eleanor of Brittany and a son of the duke. However, this failed to materialize.<sup>70</sup> It has been suggested that Henry III's marriage was a continuation of earlier plans, possibly in response to an Austrian embassy from 1221.<sup>71</sup> At the time, the English court seems to have played for time – Henry III wrote that, although he had received the duke's envoy, various details needed clarification.<sup>72</sup> The loss of Poitou and the ensuing quest for allies may have prompted attempts to resurrect the old project. In the wider context of English diplomacy in 1225, a union with the duke of Austria was a prize well worth aiming for. Leopold was an eminent figure at Frederick II's court who acted not only as one of the emperor's most trusted advisors in Germany, but also as one of his confidantes in dealings with the pope. When the duke went to Italy in 1225, his main task was not to arrange various marriages, but to participate in negotiations with Honorius III, concerning Frederick II's planned crusade. The duke would also have profited from a marriage between his daughter and Henry III. Leopold had been busy forming alliances with some of the most important houses in the Empire and eastern Europe. He himself was married to a granddaughter of Emperor Isaac Angelos II of Byzantium, and in 1222 had married one daughter to the duke of Saxony, and another to landgrave Henry Raspe of Thuringia, later to be king of the Romans. Moreover, in 1226 his second son was to marry a daughter of Theodore Laskaris, emperor of Nicaea.<sup>73</sup> These unions were certainly intended to further the duke's political ambitions, but they also brought his house into close contact with some of the most ancient and prestigious families in medieval Europe. A marriage linking the Babenberger dukes of Austria to the Plantagenet kings of England probably had less political significance in 1225 than during the days of Otto IV, but it still carried immense prestige. It is likely that the prospect of a politically more advantageous and more prestigious union caused Leopold to abandon the project of an English marriage, and settle for Frederick II's eldest son instead.<sup>74</sup>

<sup>69</sup> Stürner, 'Der Staufer Heinrich (VII).', 21.

<sup>70</sup> Zöllner, 'Das Projekt', 55–7.

<sup>71</sup> Huffman, *Comparative History*, 285.

<sup>72</sup> *Foedera*, I, 166.

<sup>73</sup> Karl Lechner, *Die Babenberger: Markgrafen und Herzöge von Österreich 976–1246* (Cologne/Vienna/Graz, 1973), 213–15.

<sup>74</sup> It also has to be remembered that four years had elapsed between the first offer and a favourable English response. It is plausible that, in the meantime, the duke's objectives might have changed, which in turn would help to explain the coldness with which English envoys found themselves received at the ducal court.

Therefore, the planned double-marriage was the result of several overlapping strategies. In the case of the English court it was an attempt to reverse, or at least to halt, French expansion into Plantagenet territory by finding powerful allies on the continent, and to counter Louis VIII's efforts to create closer ties with Germany. While the duke of Austria aimed to raise the prestige and influence of his house, the archbishop of Cologne endeavoured to assert his own prominence and that of his see in diplomatic and economic dealings with England, and probably also to uphold the independence of the German regency council from the overpowering influence of Frederick II.

### III

So far, Frederick II has made only a passing appearance. It seems that the English court failed to contact him. Although we know that one of Walter of Carlisle's clerks was present at the papal *curia*, there is no evidence that English envoys were dispatched directly to Frederick. Any communication with the emperor was indirect, via Engelbert of Cologne. It is worth noting that the first party to abandon its support for Henry III's plans, the duke of Austria, was also the one closest to the emperor. It thus seems that the analysis of Frederick's role in the project may hold the key to understanding the failure of Henry III's planned marriage.

At best, the sources give a patchy account regarding his involvement. The letters sent from Cologne to England usually mention that the emperor had not yet made a decision, and would have to deal with Honorius III first. Only one later chronicle comments on his role in Henry (VII)'s marriage, and describes the union with Margaret of Austria as having been arranged by Frederick.<sup>75</sup> However, it would be a mistake to deduce from this that the emperor had been hostile to the project. Rather, it seems that he adopted a wavering attitude and simply played for time. The emperor's refusal to engage in closer links with England against France has traditionally been interpreted as an indication of his lack of interest in German affairs, and of his predilection for everything Italian.<sup>76</sup> However, a closer investigation of the political problems in 1225 shows that Frederick had little option other than to prevaricate.

Bernard of Horstmar and Engelbert of Cologne did not exaggerate when they claimed that Frederick's difficult negotiations with the pope prevented him from dealing with the proposed marriage. During the summer of 1225, relations between the emperor and Honorius III had reached a low. The immediate reason was Frederick's planned crusade to the Holy Land, originally declared in 1216.<sup>77</sup> By 1223, when the Fifth Crusade had come to a halt at Damietta, Honorius III attributed the fiasco to the emperor's inactivity, and his own inability to make Frederick fulfil his vow. In the end, it was agreed that Frederick would marry the heiress of Jerusalem

<sup>75</sup> *Continuatio Cuonradi Praepositi Urspergensis*, MGH SS xxiii, 381.

<sup>76</sup> That viewpoint has been summarised best by Walther Kienast, *Deutschland und Frankreich*, 585; it is interesting that this judgement has been followed by most anglophone historians, David Abulafia, *Frederick II: A Medieval Emperor* (Harmondsworth, 1988), 227-9; Huffman, *Comparative History*, 293-4.

<sup>77</sup> Rudolf Hiestand, 'Friedrich II. und der Kreuzzug', in *Friedrich II. Tagung des Deutschen Historischen Instituts in Rom im Gedenkjahr 1994*, ed. Arnulf Esch and Norbert Kamp (Tübingen, 1996), 128-49, for the most recent and detailed coverage. Also Abulafia, *Frederick II*, 132-64.

and that he would set sail by the feast of St John in 1225.<sup>78</sup> However, as the date of departure approached, it became obvious that there was little likelihood that the emperor would be able to keep his promise.<sup>79</sup> This was partly due to the difficulties he still faced in establishing his authority in Italy, and partly to a general reluctance amongst European nobles to attend yet another crusade.<sup>80</sup> In May/June 1225, Frederick opened negotiations with pope Honorius III, to postpone his expedition by two more years. A final agreement was not reached until August, and it contained some of the most severe clauses of any crusading contract.<sup>81</sup> Should Frederick not set sail for the Holy Land by August 1227, he would be excommunicated.<sup>82</sup> To add a further incentive, he at last married Isabella, the heiress of the kingdom of Jerusalem.<sup>83</sup> Thus, Frederick would have risked not only the opprobrium normally associated with a crusader who failed to fulfil his vow, but even worse, that of a king who failed to defend his kingdom. Moreover, the emperor faced a pope who was increasingly unwilling to accept his excuses for not going on crusade, while Frederick utilized his status as a crusader to fight his enemies.<sup>84</sup> Thus, there were a number of reasons for Frederick to concentrate on his planned crusade. First, it seemed unlikely that Honorius III would grant him yet another postponement. Secondly, if he was to establish efficient lordship in Palestine, he had to attend to the kingdom's affairs in person. That Frederick was reluctant to be involved in projects which would tie up resources better used in the Holy Land is therefore hardly surprising, and not at all unusual. The affairs of Palestine began to be even more important than Frederick's control over Northern Italy. For instance when Frederick made peace with the Lombard cities in January 1227, he was content with their promise to support his campaign to Palestine with a contingent of 400 knights.<sup>85</sup> Even before 1225, there seems to have been a willingness on the emperor's part to abandon claims and opportunities if this furthered his affairs in Outremer. After all, in 1224 Waldemar of Denmark was released on rather generous terms, on the understanding that he would join Frederick's crusade.<sup>86</sup>

Similar considerations had guided the emperor's involvement in Anglo-French relations. In March 1224, Frederick complained to the pope that none of the great men of England or France were willing to go the Holy Land, unless peace was first arranged between the two realms. He therefore requested that papal legates be sent to Louis VIII and Henry III to propagate a truce or settlement.<sup>87</sup> In this, he could count on the full co-operation of Honorius III who viewed the pacification of Latin Christendom as essential to the success of the crusade.<sup>88</sup> In April 1223, for example,

<sup>78</sup> *MGH Epistolae*, I, no. 225.

<sup>79</sup> Hiestand, 'Friedrich II.', 135.

<sup>80</sup> *MGH Epistolae*, I, no. 230, for Frederick offering the duke of Austria copious amounts of money if only he would go on crusade in 1227 again.

<sup>81</sup> *Ryccardi de San Germano Cronica*, *MGH SS* xix, 344–5.

<sup>82</sup> *MGH Constitutiones 1198–1272*, nos 102–3.

<sup>83</sup> Most elaborate account: *Chronicon St Martini Turonensis*, *MGH SS* xxvi, 471–2.

<sup>84</sup> *MGH Constitutiones*, no. 100.

<sup>85</sup> *MGH Constitutiones*, no. 111.

<sup>86</sup> *MGH Constitutiones*, no. 101. This happened in July 1224, but no guarantees were demanded that Waldemar would keep his promises.

<sup>87</sup> Eduard Winkelmann (ed.), *Acta Imperii Inedita Saeculi xii ad xiiii*, 2 vols (Innsbruck, 1880–5), I, no. 261.

<sup>88</sup> For a general study of the Fifth Crusade and papal crusading policy during the 1220s, James Powell, *Anatomy of a Crusade, 1213–1221* (Philadelphia, 1986), 196ff.

Honorius III had written to Philip Augustus, to inform him that Frederick had promised to set sail for Palestine by 1225. He declared it the duty of any Christian king to defend the Faith against its enemies, but explained if the campaign was to be successful, peace would have to be arranged amongst the Christian princes. Therefore, he urged Philip Augustus to make peace with Henry III.<sup>89</sup> In 1224, the pope wrote a similar letter to Louis VIII and advised him to prolong his truce with the king of England, if not out of reverence for Honorius, than out of respect for the planned campaign to North Africa.<sup>90</sup> This request was repeated in February 1225,<sup>91</sup> and was taken up by Frederick II in an attempt to arrange peace between England and France the same year.<sup>92</sup> A peaceful settlement of English and French claims thus featured highly amongst the concerns of both papal and imperial diplomacy.

This helps explain Frederick's reluctance to deal with the marriage proposals put forth by Walter Mauclerk and Engelbert of Cologne. By accepting either Louis' overtures or Henry's, he risked being seen as a supporter of one versus the other. This would not only have jeopardized the planning of Frederick's crusade – he already had difficulties recruiting sufficient numbers of fighting men – but also his authority in Germany and the Empire, apart from incurring the wrath of an increasingly disillusioned pope. Moreover, taking sides posed the danger of a repeat of the events of 1198, when Philip Augustus and King John had tried to utilize the German Double Election for their own purposes by supporting rival candidates. Neither Otto IV nor Frederick would have stood much of a chance (at least initially), had they not received backing from their supporters in England or France. Furthermore, Frederick would have gained very little, had he alienated Louis VIII. Not that the emperor had been overly infatuated with Louis – his relations with the new king were far less cordial than with Philip Augustus. For instance, Frederick viewed Louis' Albigensian crusade with unease, and tried to ensure in advance that it would not be taken as a pretext to seize lands nominally under the jurisdiction of the Empire.<sup>93</sup> However, Henry III, 'an impecunious minor', as Louis' envoys allegedly had put it, had very little to offer in exchange, as he had not even been able to defend his own domains. Under these circumstances an Austrian marriage for Henry (VII) presented an opportunity to side-step the pitfalls of accepting either a Plantagenet or a Capetian princess.

This overall political situation also explains the reluctance with which Honorius had responded to English petitions that he take a more aggressive stance against Louis VIII. He was willing to send Pandulf, the former legate, to France to arrange a truce,<sup>94</sup> but he was not prepared to endanger the far more important project of a crusade to the Holy Land. Honorius behaved with great leniency towards Louis VIII, even allowing him to lead yet another crusade to Languedoc in 1226, instead of joining Frederick's campaign in Palestine.<sup>95</sup> The English court must have become aware of Honorius' reluctance to become actively involved in the conflict between

<sup>89</sup> *MGH Epistolae*, I, no. 220.

<sup>90</sup> *Royal Letters*, I, Appendix V, no. 18.

<sup>91</sup> *MGH Epistolae*, I, no. 267.

<sup>92</sup> *DD*, no. 162.

<sup>93</sup> A. Teulet, H.-F. Delaborde and E. Berger (ed.), *Layettes du Trésor des Chartes*, 5 vols (Paris, 1863–1909), II, no. 1716.

<sup>94</sup> *MGH Epistolae*, I, no. 220.

<sup>95</sup> *Reineri Annales*, *MGH SS* xvi, 680.

Henry III and Louis. Although English efforts to find allies against France, and to undermine the expansion of French influence on the continent continued, in May and June 1225 arrangements were made for a continuation of the truce of 1220.<sup>96</sup> This may explain why English efforts to pursue the project of a German marriage seem to fizzle out from about June/July onwards. Jean de Brienne, titular king of Jerusalem and Frederick II's father-in-law, was in England at around that time, and would have brought news of recent developments concerning Palestine, and of the state of Frederick's negotiations with the pope.<sup>97</sup> Although Walter Mauclerk had been ordered to hold out until October, the chancellor of London was already back at court by late August.<sup>98</sup> It seems from about mid-June onwards that Walter had been left more or less on his own.<sup>99</sup> The English court may still have hoped to benefit from the continuing support of the archbishop. However, they must have realized the difficulty in winning either papal or Imperial support for a project which was so openly hostile to the interests of the French crown.

As far as England was concerned, the planned marriages came back to haunt those who had led the king's government in 1225.<sup>100</sup> When Henry III moved against Hubert de Burgh in 1232, he accused him of secretly writing to the duke of Austria to undermine the marriage project.<sup>101</sup> Some of the allegations made against Henry's one-time tutor could at least be interpreted as allusions to political blunders committed by the regency government.<sup>102</sup> However, in the case of the marriage negotiations of 1225 it would be difficult to uphold this interpretation. The envoys sent to Germany were experienced diplomats, and unlike many other campaigns undertaken in the aftermath of the loss of Poitou, the mission to Cologne was well prepared and financed. When Walter arrived in Cologne, he already found one of his clerks waiting for him, as well as Henry de Zudendorp. This indicates a period of extensive negotiations in advance of the despatch of an actual embassy. Both Walter and his companions frequently complained about their lack of funds – Henry de Cornhill compared himself to an apostle, as he had been sent to Austria without any possessions. However, funds were forthcoming on a regular basis: 140 marks were paid out to the English embassy in Germany in February,<sup>103</sup> another 120 marks in May,<sup>104</sup> in June a German merchant was reimbursed for 160 marks spent by Walter and his companions;<sup>105</sup> in July, whilst the bishop of Carlisle received 60 marks for his expenses, Nicholas de Molis was awarded 30 marks for his.<sup>106</sup> In all, over 500 marks had been spent, which was more than the average baronial income of about 300 marks a year. Furthermore, it seems that the entire court gave their full support to the project. In July 1224, the abbot of Stratford received 20 marks for going on business

<sup>96</sup> *CPR 1216–1225*, 579–80.

<sup>97</sup> *CPR 1216–1225*, 527.

<sup>98</sup> *CPR 1216–1225*, 547.

<sup>99</sup> *RLC*, II, pp. 70–1.

<sup>100</sup> I would like to thank David Carpenter for discussing this point.

<sup>101</sup> Paris, *CM*, III, 221–2, following the account given by Roger of Wendover.

<sup>102</sup> For the affair as a whole, David Carpenter, 'The Fall of Hubert de Burgh', in his *The Reign of Henry III* (London, 1996), 45–60. Originally published in *Journal of British Studies* xix (1980), 1–17.

<sup>103</sup> *RLC*, II, 20–1.

<sup>104</sup> *RLC*, II, 42.

<sup>105</sup> *RLC*, II, 46.

<sup>106</sup> *Foedera*, I, 280.

to Germany.<sup>107</sup> The writ, attested by Peter des Roches, has been interpreted as the first step towards Walter's mission.<sup>108</sup> After Peter's fall in the same year, the project was continued by his arch-rival, Hubert de Burgh, and also the bishops of Bath, Salisbury and Chichester, who were the nominees of the archbishop of Canterbury on the regency council.<sup>109</sup> As such, the negotiations conducted by Walter Mauclerk stand out from many other initiatives at the time. They were well-organized, well-planned and well-funded.

The timing of English overtures was also significant. Monarchs and rulers planning crusades took great care to ensure the continuation of their dynastic line.<sup>110</sup> In 1186, before setting out on the Third Crusade, Frederick Barbarossa ensured that his son Henry would be crowned co-emperor. Henry's subsequent Sicilian marriage should also be viewed in this context.<sup>111</sup> Before Henry VI himself left for Palestine, in 1196, he insisted that his son Frederick be elected king of the Romans.<sup>112</sup> In 1220, one of Frederick's reasons for crowning his son king of the Romans was to ensure the safety of Henry (VII)'s inheritance before the emperor went to the Holy Land.<sup>113</sup> Similarly, while Henry III was still without an heir, he was reluctant that his brother Richard should leave England, as he was second in line to the throne and still without an heir himself. This was one of the reasons why Henry had refused to let him participate in Frederick II's planned conference with Louis IX at Vaucouleurs in 1236.<sup>114</sup> A marriage, which would ensure the physical continuation of Frederick's line, would have been the next logical step. This would also explain why Henry (VII) became a much sought-after commodity on the European marriage market in 1224/5. After all, English, French, Bohemian and Hungarian princesses had been offered for marriage at a time when Frederick's departure was imminent, and only a few years before Henry (VII) was to come of age in 1227.

The contradictory aims pursued by the court of Henry III and by Frederick II were the most important amongst the many reasons which contributed to the failure of Walter's mission. Whereas Henry's regents had aimed at widening the circle of supporters against Louis VIII, the emperor and the pope were unwilling to alienate a monarch essential to their wider political programme. All the influence which Henry III's most powerful ally, the archbishop of Cologne, could muster was not enough to overcome these difficulties. In many ways, this constellation became a recurrent feature in European politics over the following two hundred years. The English king's reliance on the support of the archbishops of Cologne continued to be a familiar element of Anglo-Imperial relations. Although Lübeck and the Hanse began to play a more important role, Cologne remained the primary addressee of English diplomatic overtures and always overshadowed other prominent partners like the dukes of Brabant. Rulers of Germany found themselves repeatedly courted as potential allies against France. The court of Henry III himself seems to have entertained hopes in that direction, when Frederick II married Isabella Plantagenet

<sup>107</sup> *RLC*, I, 465.

<sup>108</sup> Huffman, *Comparative History*, 285–6.

<sup>109</sup> Carpenter, *Minority of Henry III*, 343–9.

<sup>110</sup> Many thanks to Simon Lloyd who made me aware of this connection.

<sup>111</sup> Peter Csendes, *Heinrich VI*. (Darmstadt, 1993), 58–73.

<sup>112</sup> Csendes, *Heinrich VI.*, 171–8.

<sup>113</sup> Stürner, *Friedrich II.*, 233–6.

<sup>114</sup> *Royal Letters*, II, no. 419.

in 1235.<sup>115</sup> In the fourteenth century, English attempts to lure emperors into an anti-French alliance became a recurrent feature of the Hundred Years War and continued to do so well into the fifteenth century – Henry V's courting of Emperor Sigismund may be cited as an example.<sup>116</sup> On an equally recurrent basis, the rulers of Germany rejected these offers. In 1235, Frederick II took great pains to assure Louis IX that his marriage would not endanger his relations with France.<sup>117</sup> Many of the alliances of the fourteenth century were short-lived and an imminent crusade or a difficult relationship with the papacy were not always to blame. As Richard of Cornwall was to realize, it became impossible to establish a firm grip on Germany, or to become emperor while relations with France were strained. The high politics of medieval Europe formed a complicated web of overlapping strategies, alliances and ambitions, and cannot be understood unless this wider background is taken into account. It has been the aim of this paper to illustrate this within the context of one specific episode in the reign of Henry III.

<sup>115</sup> Paris, *CM*, III, 340.

<sup>116</sup> *Gesta Henrici Quinti*, ed. and trans. F. Taylor and J. Roskell (Oxford, 1975), 129, 131.

<sup>117</sup> *RI*, no. 2087.