

Chivalry in action: Thomas Montagu and the war in France, 1417-1428.

Orléans, late October 1428: with the siege of the town in its second week the commander of the English army, Thomas Montagu, Earl of Salisbury, gathered his general staff in the tower of the Tourelles. From this vantage point he could look into the town below to assess the surest and most effective means of continuing the siege. According to the 'Mistère du siège d'Orléans' (a late fifteenth century play which the townspeople would subsequently enact each year to celebrate their deliverance from the English), the view of the medieval town stretching so temptingly before him moved Salisbury to enthuse upon the beauty of the scene which he surveyed.¹ But the Earl was a proud and hard-hearted man. Realizing that the town would never willingly surrender, thereby deserting King Charles VII of France, Earl Thomas sighed and announced his intention to put to the sword and to hang the entire population as a just punishment for its disobedience. It was at this point (a later tradition has it that it was during the lunch hour, and that the fateful shot was fired, David-like, by an apprentice cannoneer) that the distant crack of a cannon's fire was heard from the town below. Salisbury and his men had time to withdraw to the back of the room; but with terrific force the stone projectile ripped into the tower, sending an iron bar from the window hurtling into the side of the Earl's face, cleaving away his cheek and smashing an eye socket. A week later, 3 November, the Earl died of his wounds. As we shall see, it was perhaps fitting that one who had himself lived amidst the cannon's roar should die explosively.

This view to a death (as one might put it) would have far reaching and serious consequences for the fortunes of the English in France. Earl Thomas's death at Orléans effectively marked the end of a period of English expansion which had begun with Henry V's invasion of Normandy in 1417. Following the failure to take Orléans, the momentum of conquest would be lost forever. Writing with the benefit of hindsight, Edward Hall could later pen the following obituary to the Earl:

What detriment, what damage and what losse succeeded to the English publike wealth, by the sodeine death of this valiant capteyne, not long after his departure manifestly appered: For the high prosperite, and great glorie of the English nacion in the partes beyond the sea began shortly to fall, and little and little to vanish away: whiche thing, although the English people like a valiant and strong bodie at the first tyme did not perceyve, yet shortly after, they felt it growe like a pestilent hunger, which successively a little and little corrupteth all the members and destroyeth the bodie. For after the death of this noble man, fortune of warre beganne to change, and triumphant victorie beganne to be darkened. Although the dethe of the Erle was dolorous to all Englishmen, yet surely it was most dolorous to the Duke of Bedford,

¹ 'Le mistere du siège d'Orléans', *Collection de documents inédits sur l'histoire de France* (Paris, 1867).

Regent of France, as he which had lost his right hande, or lacked his weapon, when he should fight with his enemy.²

By his own admission, Bedford did indeed regret the passing of his most successful and talented general. In a memoir delivered to the English privy council in 1433, the Regent recalled how the period 1423-8 had been comprised of 'faire days and victorious' during which time the war had prospered for the English, and the territory subject to their rule had expanded in Brie, Champagne, the Auxerrois, Nivernais, Anjou and Maine. In the subjugation of each of these regions, the principal agent had been the Earl of Salisbury. As Bedford continued, everything turned sour at Orléans:

At the whiche tyme, after the aventure fallyn to the persone of my cosin of Salesbury, whom God assoile, there fell by the hand of God, as it semeth, a great stroke upon your people that was assembled there in greete nombre, as I trow of lak of sad beleve...³

The death of Salisbury, followed by the relief of Orléans by Joan of Arc, ushered in a series of reverses for the English which culminated in the coronation of Charles VII in the cathedral of Reims in July 1429. To contemporaries, their political outlook so highly coloured by a personal and individualistic interpretation of the great events of the time, the demise of Salisbury was the first link in this particular chain of upsets for the English. The purpose of this article, therefore, is to analyse more closely the importance of the military career of Thomas Montagu, Earl of Salisbury, the premature truncation of which was regarded at the time as such an important turning point in the Hundred Years' War. The considerable bulk of source material for the military history of the 1420s permits not just a simple narrative of Thomas's life and times, but also a more detailed appreciation of his approach to warfare. Why, for example, did Thomas fight in the war? What did he get out of it? Did he have a particular style of war? Furthermore, by beginning with an individual, very soon we will find that we have created a type.

Despite his later prominence as the leading English general in France, little is known about Thomas's early life. We know that he was born in 1388 at Shenley, Hertfordshire, where he was baptised in the parish church of St Botolph in March of the same year. He was named after Thomas of Woodstock who was one of his godfathers at the ceremony.⁴ Thomas's father, John Montagu, Earl of Salisbury, was one of the lords closest to Richard II during the period 1397-99. Following the usurpation he was lynched by a mob at

² *Hall's Chronicle*, ed. H. Ellis (London, 1809), 145-6.

³ *Proceedings and Ordinances of the Privy Council of England, 1386-1542*, ed. N. H. Nicolas (1834-7), iii, 223.

⁴ Public Record Office, C137/75 (under the return for Hertfordshire).

Cirencester whilst attempting to raise a rebellion against Henry IV. Since an act of attainder was immediately passed, confiscating all lands which Earl John had held in fee simple on the day of his death,' Thomas's early years were stigmatized by poverty and a probable sense of dishonour. In 1405, for example, both he and his wife, Eleanor Holand, were granted £100 'in consideration of the poverty of their estate'.⁵ In the following year the sentence of treason passed against his father was confirmed in Parliament, and the forfeiture was extended to include all lands entailed to Earl John's use at his death.⁶ On attaining his majority in 1409 Thomas took possession of a somewhat diminished comital inheritance, restricted to estates which had been held in tail male by his father, and was summoned to Parliament as Earl of Salisbury.⁷ Estimated at £750 p.a. his Earldom was one of the poorest in England.⁸ Many years later at Paris in 1425, a rumour circulated in the English camp that Duke Philip of Burgundy was planning to massacre them. Wishing to avoid this potential coup, Earl Thomas sent all his goods to England whilst he himself remained in Paris. This somewhat contradictory behaviour prompted the Earl of Suffolk's jibe that Thomas had 'plus grant paour de son avoir que de son corps'.¹⁰ Whilst suggesting Thomas's physical bravery, the anecdote nonetheless underlines the instinct for gain which characterized him; he rarely missed an opportunity for profit and was noted for a meticulous concern for his property and rights. This materialism was directly linked to the difficulties which he had experienced as a young, hard-up and out of favour nobleman.

Otherwise the details of Thomas's early life are frustratingly obscure. We know that at some point he went on pilgrimage to Jerusalem, possibly as an atonement for his father's sins, and that he visited the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.¹¹ He fell ill on this voyage but recovered. Nothing is known about his military activities at this point. The occasional dribbles of land or cash which came his way, such as an annuity of £100 in 1401¹², are a sure sign that he was doing something to earn his keep. But it is not until 1412 that we first have a reference to Thomas, in a campaigning sense, participating on this occasion in the Duke

5 *Rotuli Parliamentorum*, ed. J. Strachey and others (6 vols., 1767-77), iii, 459.

6 *Calendar of Patent Rolls, 1405-8*, 96.

7 *Complete Peerage*, comp. G.E. Cokayne and others (13 vols., 1910-59), ix, 215.

8 PRO C.13775.

9 For this estimate, I have relied on the calculations of M.A. Hicks in 'The Neville Earldom of Salisbury, 1429-71', *Wiltshire Archaeological Magazine*, 72/73 (1980), 141-9.

10 A. Desplanque, 'Projet d'assassinat de Philippe le Bon par les Anglais, 1424-5', *Mémoires courtoises et mémoires des savants étrangers, publiés par l'Académie Royale des sciences, des lettres et des beaux-arts de Belgique*, 33 (1865-7), 72.

11 *Calendar of Papal Registers: Letters, 1417-31*, 439-40.

12 *Proceedings of the Privy Council*, i, 127.

of Clarence's *chevauchée* in support of the Orleanist faction in the French civil war.¹³ In 1415 he took part in both the siege of Harfleur and battle of Agincourt.¹⁴ In the following year he fought in the naval battle at the mouth of the Seine, during the course of which he captured a Genoese sailor.¹⁵

With the onset of Henry V's conquest of Normandy in 1417, it is possible to trace the Earl's emergence as the leading field commander of his day in fuller detail. In August he was first commissioned to capture the fortress of Auvilliers; once this had been achieved, he was granted the lordship of the same.¹⁶ In the spring of 1418 he was despatched, with the Duke of Clarence, to mop up resistance in Lower Normandy;¹⁷ later, at the siege of Rouen, he would be responsible for subjugating a detached outpost in the fortified abbey of St Catherine. After the fall of Rouen in 1419, Thomas went on to capture the towns of Fécamp, Gournay, Eu and Honfleur. No doubt as a reward for these services, Henry V granted him the county of Perche¹⁸; a lordship which would be later valued, in time of peace, at 800 marks p.a.¹⁹ Thus in a little under two years service in Normandy Thomas had succeeded in more than doubling the value of the meagre inheritance of the Earldom of Salisbury. In the same year, he was also appointed lieutenant general of Normandy during the king's absence.²¹ This is a sure sign that Henry V considered him to be the best captain at his disposal. Further appointments on the Norman border confirm this impression. On 25 December the Earl was granted the governorship of the duchy of Alençon, together with the captaincies of a string of garrisons in the same area.²² Thomas's greatest service to Henry V would take place in this important zone. Following the disaster at Baugé (22 March 1421), it was Earl Thomas who managed to lead the remnant of the army, by a perilous route, back to the safety of their garrisons. Had he failed to escape the Franco-Scottish army snapping at his heels, the defences of Normandy would have been denuded and Henry V's conquest would have been largely reversed. But Earl Thomas held the line, thus justifying the trust which had been

13 J. H. Wylie, *A History of England under Henry IV* (4 vols., 1884-98), iv, 73.

14 *Foedera*, ix, 222, 227-9.

15 *Ibid.*, 356, 467.

16 *Ibid.*, 480.

17 *Gesta Henrici Quinti*, ed. F. Taylor & J. S. Roskell (Oxford, 1975), 119.

18 *The First English Life of King Henry the Fifth*, ed. C.L. Kingsford (Oxford, 1909), 124.

19 *Foedera*, ix, 739.

20 K.B. McFarlane, *The Nobility of Later Medieval England* (Oxford, 1973), 35.

21 *Foedera*, x, 29.

22 British Library, Additional Charter 111.

placed in him. Henry V never forgot Salisbury's heroics in the aftermath of Bauge. In May the English Parliament annulled the attainder which had been passed on his father, Earl John, in 1400;²³ by this act Thomas received not only a substantial portion of the lands which had been confiscated, but he was also restored to the same precedence as that formerly enjoyed by the Montagu Earls of Salisbury as though his father's forfeiture had never taken place - an important point for a medieval noble. In calculating the costs and profits of the Hundred Years' War, therefore, we would be well advised to take into account such 'hidden' factors. Under Henry V service in France was the only sure means by which an aspiring lord could hope to secure profitable grants of land and monies on which he and his followers depended. Quite logically, the lands which Thomas received in France, such as the county of Perche, were also a powerful incentive to continue fighting both to maintain and to add to these lordships; after the death of Henry V Salisbury remained just as committed to the war in France as before because he had acquired so many financial interests there. For Thomas, like many others, fighting in the war was thus a practical solution to the economic problems which confronted him.

There is also another facet to Thomas's success. The heraldic expert, Nicholas Upton, noted that heroic deeds in war could ennoble the men who perpetrated them; and by a logical extension of this train of thought, those already noble could add to their status by their actions during the course of pitched battles and sieges.²⁴ On account of his outstanding career Thomas's reputation had become considerable by the time of his death in 1428. His supplementary *état* (a customary payment made to field commanders) illustrates the extent to which Thomas's military abilities were rated in comparison to those of the other generals of his day.²⁵ The Earl of Suffolk, for example, received an *état* of 333 *l.t.* per month for the expedition to Montargis in 1427; the Earl of Warwick was deemed to merit 500 *l.t.* In 1428, for the Orléans campaign, Salisbury received an *état* of 750 *l.t.* per month. The next best, following these figures, appears to have been the Burgundian commander, John of Luxembourg, who received 600 *l.t.* The poor disinherited orphan of 1400, whose father's severed head had been contemptuously tossed at Henry IV's feet 'like fish in a basket' had risen, by dint of natural talent and hard work, to become a lord of international repute. During the course of a legal dispute tried before the Parlement of Paris in 1426, Thomas could style himself and his family as the

23 *R.P.*, iv, 141-2.

24 M. Keen, *Chivalry* (London/New Haven 1982), 170-1.

25 For the figures which follow, see A. Villaret, *Les campagnes des anglais dans l'Orléanais, la Beauce chartraine, et le Gâtinais (1421-8)*, (Orléans, 1893), 27.

descendants of kings of England." The war had made Thomas great.

It is perhaps difficult for the modern student, dependent as he is upon the administrative evidence (such as the receivers' accounts and wage receipts) which make up the greater part of the archival material for the military history of the fifteenth century, to comprehend fully the very human nature of the warfare of the time, and also to appreciate the emotions which might be engendered amongst the 'ha! ha!' of the trumpets, the thunder of the captains and the shouting.' For an experienced soldier like Jean de Bueil, the war was not so much a bureaucratic step in the development of the nation state as an essentially human and collective masculine experience: there remained always an element of 'felas let's go'" about the whole thing :

What a gratifying thing war is, for many are the splendid things heard and seen in the course of it, and many are the lessons to be learnt from it ... When one feels that one's cause is just, and one's blood is ready for the fight, tears come to the eye. A warm feeling of loyalty and pity comes into the heart on seeing one's friend expose his body with such courage to carry out and to accomplish the will of our Creator; and one makes up one's mind to go and die or live with him, and, out of love, not to abandon him. No man who has not experienced it knows how to speak of the satisfaction that comes from this sort of action.²⁵

Similar sentiments of unity and comradeship are evoked in Thomas's oft-quoted letter of June 1421 which recounted the news of his recent counter-attack following the disastrous battle of Baugé : a document which K.B. McFarlane considered *the* most revealing of the spirit in which the war was fought. In the face of adversity, Thomas and his men stuck together and fought their way out of an unpromising situation:

And liketh your Hinesse to wite that, the Saturday afore the Date of this, I, your humble liege man, com hom from a Journe, woch I hadde mad into Aungow and Mayne, where as I hadd Assemblid with me gret Part of the Capteines of your Lond; And Blessed bee God we spedde right well; for your Peple is gretly Refreshed with this Rood; For as they seien in commune, they woueir nevre more in no such Roode. And we broughten Hom the fareste and gretteste Prey of Bestes, as alle tho seiden that saw hem, that euer they saw; and also, thanked be God, we misse no men of thrift ner other to accompte at the said Roode.²⁶

26 *English suits before the Parlement of Paris, 1420-36*, ed. C.T. Allmand & C.A.J. Armstrong, (Camden 4th series 26. Royal Historical Society, 1982), 149. The Earl's paternal grandmother was Margaret Monthermer, a granddaughter of Edward I.

27 Reportedly shouted by the English captains at Agincourt (Allmand, *Henry V*, 91 n.17).

28 Quoted by G.W. Coopland in 'Le Jouvencel (revisited)', *Symposium*, v (1951), 137-86.

29 *Foedera*, x, 131; McFarlane, *The Nobility*, 33.

The outcome of Thomas's campaigns would depend to a large extent on his success in unifying and concentrating the forces at his disposal. His leadership of the Anglo-Burgundian army for the Cravant campaign of 1423 may serve as an example of the importance which he placed upon the good relationship between the soldiers in his command. The chronicler Jean de Wavrin, who himself took part in this campaign, recounted at length how the leaders of the two armies met and held counsel in the Cathedral of Auxerre, the English and Burgundians making great displays of reverence towards one another.³⁰ Following the rather exceptional appointment of two marshals for the duration of the expedition, one for the English and one for the Burgundians, ordinances were proclaimed to the effect 'that the English and Burgundians were to be good friends together in true love and unity, without stirring strife or tumult one against the other'. In the same spirit it was also ordained at Auxerre that both English and Burgundians should form a single army with a reconnaissance force of 60 men from both sides riding in advance. These *éclaireurs* were of paramount importance in the warfare of the period, functioning as the antennae of the command whose decisions would depend almost entirely on their reports. It was therefore essential to make sure that the Burgundians were included in the party. The next day, 31 July, 'after they had each heard mass, and each receiving the sacrament had drunk a cup, they set out through the fields very fraternally'. The eventual success of this campaign in raising the siege placed before the town of Cravant resulted from the way in which Thomas was able to orchestrate his forces into a concentrated attack upon the French army. The Earl himself led the charge on the French, crossing the narrow river Yonne to the west of the town, whilst the English archers, who had remained behind the main assault force, supported the operation with their covering fire.³¹ These daring tactics paid off. As the Anglo-Burgundians gained the upper hand, the defenders of Cravant poured out of the town to deliver a fitting *coup de grâce* to the Dauphinist force from the rear. Thomas's verve and aggression in synchronising so perfectly the attacking elements at his disposition — the archers, the main assault force and the town — appear particularly impressive.

The battle of Verneuil, a year later (17 August 1424), was a less elegant affair. This engagement was the most ferocious and bloody battle of the Hundred Years' War. As the best commander, Thomas was entrusted with the most difficult position to hold, that facing a Scottish army under the Earl of Douglas. This battle, 'very terrible and sanguinary', was also extremely double edged, and the final outcome remained in doubt for most of the duration of the fighting. Wavrin, who once again was present on the field of combat, recalled how Thomas's personal bravery and leadership would decisively influence the course of events :

30 J. de Wavrin, *Recueil des croniques et anciennes istories de la Grant Bretagne a present nommée Engleterre. 1399-1422. 1422-1431.* ed. W. & E.L.C.P. Hardy (Rolls Series. 1864-91), v, 41-4.

31 *Ibid.*, 45-7.

the Earl of Salisbury sustained the greatest brunt, notwithstanding that he wavered greatly and had very much to do to maintain his position, and certainly if it had not been for the skill and valour and conduct of his single person in the midst of the valiant men who fought under his banner after his example very vigorously, there is no doubt that the matter, which was in great uncertainty, would have gone very badly for the English, for never in all this war did the French fight more valiantly.³²

The collective element of fifteenth century warfare could be practical on another level: the successful coordination of profit. Both McFarlane and Keen pointed out the importance of contracts of brotherhood of arms during this period, drawing on the particular agreement struck between John Winter and Nicholas Molyneux in 1421 by which both esquires pledged mutually to pool their winnings from the war in France, and to remit them home to England for investment in property.³³ We may see the same value of such notions of fellowship in Thomas's 1425 ordinances for his campaign in Maine: here it is clearly stipulated that the army should be divided into 'feliships' of five to seven men, and that during raids on enemy towns the majority of these bands would be free to amass booty, whilst two or three men (depending on the size of the original group), would be assigned to guard the proceeds of such assaults under their captain's standard 'upon payne to lose all the wynynge that may be wonne by him as that day, or by the feliship of him'.³⁴ Thus it was laid down that every captain in the army should give the names of the men under him, stating clearly those 'that shall abide with the standerdes, and which shall doe ther avantage'. In decreeing such measures, Thomas hoped that the effectiveness of the army would not be disrupted by squabbles arising from conflicting rights in the goods captured during his sieges.

It is against this same background of fraternity and collectivity that we should consider Thomas's grants of arms to soldiers serving under him during the 1420s. By rewarding a soldier who had fought bravely with a coat of arms, thus ennobling him, he hoped that this would be good for morale in general and that others would be encouraged to follow his example. Furthermore, the details of the grants themselves reveal an unexpected sense of humour. In his heraldic treatise, *De Studio Militari*, Nicholas Upton (who served in the Earl's campaigns during the 1420s) described how Thomas had granted the arms of three black bulls' heads on a silver field (*tria capita bovina nigra in campo argento*) to a deserving soldier who had been wounded in the genitals at the battle of

³² *Ibid.*, 76.

³³ K. B. McFarlane, 'A Business Partnership in War and Administration, 1421-45', *Eng. Hist. Rev.* 78 (1963), 316-48; M. H. Keen, 'Brotherhood in arms', *History*, 47 (1962), 1-17.

³⁴ Thomas's ordinances of war for the 1425 campaign were printed by N. H. Nicolas in *A History of the Battle of Agincourt* (1832), 41-4. I am grateful to Maurice Keen for pointing out the importance of this text to me.

Verneuil.³⁵ Thomas's selection of this device appears to have been particularly appropriate since, according to classical precedent, the presence of bulls or bulls' heads in an armorial signified sterility. In another grant, Thomas chose a coat of arms containing three partridges for a soldier (whose name Upton tactfully declined to give) because the partridge was reputed to be a bird of sodomitic tendencies. The impression gained from these grants is not only one of a military expert casually playing with the language of his *métier*, but as the arms themselves were designed to be conspicuous there is also a sense that Thomas was deliberately drawing upon individual cases, in an amusing fashion, to foster a sense of unity within his army as a whole. Thomas realized that successful warfare depended on good team work.

It is sometimes debated whether war is a science or an art. But it is difficult to imagine a branch of either in which rivals are permitted to throw stones at each other, or to attempt to steal their tools, to destroy their materials whilst working on their statue, picture or experiment. Few indeed of the masterpieces of art or great scientific discoveries would have been produced in such similar circumstances. As Lord Wavell emphasized, the civil comparison to war must be that of a game – 'a very rough and dirty game'.³⁶ This description is particularly apt for the warfare of the fifteenth century. Thomas's retreat of the English archers in March 1421 may serve as an example of this particular theme. As we have seen, the English cause had just received a shattering blow with the defeat of the Duke of Clarence's division of the army at Baugé. It was left to the Earl of Salisbury to try and salvage something from an unpromising situation. He fulfilled this task in a manner reminiscent of a kind of deadly boy scouts' initiative exercise.³⁷ Avoiding the most obvious route back to Normandy, he instead led the remnants of the army through the thickly wooded countryside which surrounded the battle-site in the hope of shaking off the vastly superior Franco-Scottish army tracking him. En route, Thomas gave the order to collect all the doors from every village which the army passed through, and by laying this material over carts he was thus able to improvise a bridge to cross the river Loir at an unexpected point. Next, by despatching an advance guard disguised as French soldiers, the Earl managed to dupe the town of Le Mans into opening its gates to him. The rest was easy. Crossing the Sarthe Salisbury and his men regained Normandy and safety.

Examples of cunning tricks, like Thomas's ruse of adopting the enemy's guise, abound for this phase of the Hundred Years' War. At the siege of Rouen, for instance, the English besieging force tried to encourage the defenders to hazard a *sortie* from the town

35 Keen, *Chivalry*, 130-1.

36 Major-General A. P. Wavell, 'The Higher Commander', *Journal of the Royal United Service Institution*, 81 (1936), 17 (a reference I owe to Professor R.B. McDowell).

37 For Thomas's retreat I have relied upon A.H. Burne's *The Agincourt War* (1956), chapter 9.

by playing on their hope of assistance from the Duke of Burgundy. To this end, a mock combat was enacted before the town between the besiegers and a party of soldiers disguised in Burgundian livery.³⁸ But the prudent Rouennais did not rise to the bait, preferring instead to rest within the security of their ramparts. As with many sports and games, quickness of mind and body was of vital importance. During the Orléans campaign, Thomas was able to take the town of Jenville by surprise; as Wavrin records, the Earl had earlier tried to negotiate the town's surrender, but on the breakdown of these talks his soldiers, taking advantage of the defenders' lapse of concentration, began an assault of their own accord in much the same way as a well-drilled rugby or football team might instinctively decide to take a quick free kick to catch their opponents unaware.³⁹ Such tactics were in no way contrary to the rules, but rather to be admired as proof of audacity and ingenuity; Thomas himself would later describe the taking of Jenville as 'the most notable assault that evre we sawe'.⁴⁰

In his highly influential work of military reference, *De re militari*, Vegetius emphasized as early as the fourth century that the combattant should not only be a fighter, but also a thinker endowed with foresight.⁴¹ In the warfare of the fifteenth century this sense of foresight would be equated with resourcefulness, cunning and prudence. The Duke of Clarence, for example, at the siege of Caen in 1417, is depicted as sleeping in full armour, his head resting on a rock.⁴² His alertness is rewarded by the seizure of two strategic points in the town's suburbs. The ability to take full and speedy advantage of a particular opportunity or weakness of an opponent was an essential attribute for any aspiring commander. During his counter attack of June 1421, for example, Thomas tried to take the town of Château-Gontier by surprise since his spies had earlier succeeded in making contact with two of the townsfolk who were willing to open the gates to him. But on his arrival, under cover of darkness, the men on watch spotted his forces and rang the alarm.⁴³ Towns had to be especially watchful during this period. The town of Pontoise would be twice sanctioned for its inattentiveness, in 1419 and 1437. On the first of these occasions, an English besieging force managed to coordinate its escalade at the precise

38 *The Brut or the Chronicles of England*, ed. F. W. D. Brie, II (Early English Text Society, London, 1908), 390-1.

39 Wavrin, v, 155-6.

40 A detail from Thomas's 1428 letter to the mayor and aldermen of the city of London (re-produced in *Collection générale des documents français qui se trouvent en Angleterre*, ed. J. Delput (Paris, 1847), 236-7).

41 On this point, see particularly the observations of C. T. Allmand in *The Hundred Years' War: England and France at War c.1300-c.1450* (Cambridge, 1988), 157-8.

42 Allmand, *Henry V* (1992), 117.

43 A. Joubert, 'Une tentative des Anglais contre Château-Gontier en 1421, d'après des manuscrits inédits', *Revue historique et archéologique du Maine*, 2 (1888).

moment between the change of the day and night watches.⁴⁴ On the second, a more complicated tactic, once more highlighting the *jeux sans frontières* character of the warfare of the times was employed; on this occasion the cunning Talbot despatched a detachment of troops disguised as peasants seeking the warmth and comfort of the town due to the harsh wintry conditions of that year. Once they had been admitted by the gullible townfolk, the main assault force advanced across the frozen waters of the river Oise under the cover of white sheets and blankets for camouflage in the snowy conditions. At daybreak Talbot's men within the town opened the gates and the surprise was such that all resistance was overcome within the hour.⁴⁵

Rather than lightheaded chivalric folly, the warfare of this period was above all characterized by caution and an attention to the smallest detail. It became standard practice during the fifteenth century for towns to send spies into the enemy camp in order to perform what would be described as the 'ecoutes', thus hoping to learn something of the intentions of the besiegers.⁴⁶ To combat this practice, Thomas stressed in his ordinances of 1425 the importance of not talking to any individual originating from the town during the course of a siege, and laid down heavy penalties for those found to be in breach of this.⁴⁷ At the same time a field commander might try to introduce his own agents into a town, well before the actual siege of the place, in the hope that they would be able to open the gates on the army's arrival. To prevent such schemes, the municipal authorities would oblige the landlords of the town's taverns and hostels to declare their guests to the appropriate body so that suspicious strangers might be surveyed.⁴⁸ It was therefore of vital importance to anticipate enemy action, and in such a climate of subterfuge, ruse and counter-ruse, it is not surprising that foresight should have been considered as such an essential military prerequisite. The fault of negligence was considered unbecoming in a general, and it is interesting to note that Charles the Bold was severely criticised in this respect for his lack of preparation for the siege of Beauvais in 1472; his attempt to capture the town met with ignominious failure because his army was not equipped with sufficiently long scaling ladders; neither did it have enough cannon stones for an effective bombardment of the town.⁴⁹ We should not, therefore, draw too many conclusions, from

44 Allmand, *Henry V*, 133.

45 A.J. Pollard, *John Talbot and the War in France, 1427-1453* (1983), 48.

46 At Rouen in 1437 the English employed 4 of their men every night to perform 'les escoutes'. *Letters and papers illustrative of the Wars of the English in France*, ed. J. Stevenson. (Rolls Series 1864) II, 286.

47 Nicolas, *Agincourt*, 42.

48 In 1486 at Rennes, the town council stipulated that 'n'entrera homme qui porte espee harnoy, ne baston deussus, se ne sont ceulx de la ville et de reconnaissance, en ce qu'est cest article les hosteliers seront mandez demain au matin pour leur estre declarez' (Archives Municipales de Rennes, Liasse 15).

49 Allmand, *The Hundred Years' War*, 158.

an individualistic or stylistic point of view, of Thomas's obvious intelligence as a commander: resourcefulness and attentiveness were essential rules of the game which he was playing.

So far we have been concerned with the very intimate and human nature of warfare during this period. Nonetheless we should not lose sight of the fact that during the fifteenth century warfare became increasingly mechanized. The military activity of the fourteenth century had been above-all characterized by long-distance mounted raids known as *chevauchées*; these were essentially tactical operations where the emphasis was upon rapidity and flexibility of movement; in general an attacking army would avoid important strategic points such as towns, concentrating instead upon the destruction of the enemy's economic base. In contrast, the fifteenth century was above all an epoch of siege warfare, whereby invading armies would attempt to make continuous use of the opponent's resources by occupying them. The war which the English would fight in France from 1417, for example, was essentially one of conquest involving the reduction of towns and garrisons with the aim of exercising greater political control. This new style of warfare required new tools and techniques. It is therefore by an analysis of Thomas's conduct of the numerous siege operations which dominated his career that we may obtain a better view of this changing nature of warfare.

Following the success at Verneuil, the Earl was commissioned to lead an English army south for the conquest of Maine. On 20 July 1425 he arrived before the walls of Le Mans; the principal strategic objective of his campaign of that year. His letter, dating from the beginning of the siege, addressed to the 'bons gens d'eglise, nobles, burgors et habitans de la ville et cité du Mans' furnishes a good example of his standard mode of procedure in the prosecution of siege warfare.⁵⁰ Announcing his intention to return the inhabitants and town, with the aid of God, to their rightful obedience (that is to the lordship of King Henry and the Duke of Bedford as Count of Maine), he nonetheless insisted upon his desire to avoid the effusion of human blood and to fulfil the terms of his commission 'par toutes voies douces, amables et gracieusez. saunz quelque rudesse ou rigeur'. Should Le Mans willingly return to the fold its inhabitants could expect to be treated with 'courtesie' and enjoy the benefits of just government in accordance with its ancient liberties and customs. Delay, however, would result in disaster for the town. Salisbury reminded Le Mans that the kingdom of France could furnish many cautionary examples of towns whose disobedience had resulted in their total destruction. Le Mans could expect similar treatment should it persist in its false allegiance to Charles VII; in this contingency

50 B.L. Lansdowne 285 fos. 152v-153r. I owe this reference to my former supervisor, David Morgan. The summons to a town to surrender was standard procedure at the beginning of a siege. At Caen in 1417, for instance, Henry V 'sent his herradez unto the capteyn, and charygd hym to delyver the toun and his castel, or ellis he wolde hit gete with streynth of hond (*The Brut*, ii. 383)'.

Salisbury vowed to proceed with the execution of his charge 'tellement que la punicion que sera, par le bon aide de notre sauveour, Jeshu Crist, sur vous redondera en exemple et memoir perpetuell a toute autre que en ourront parler'. Such threats were not empty. Wavrin, for example, recorded the alarming fate of Sézanne, 'a fine little town' in Champagne, in June 1424. As the town had been captured by the Earl by outright assault, the garrison and its inhabitants no longer had any rights under the laws of war because they had failed to reach an agreement with the English to preserve either their goods or their lives; thus in the sack of the town which followed, the majority of the inhabitants were massacred, the garrison hanged, goods pillaged, women raped, and, when all this was done, the town's ramparts were razed to the ground.⁵¹

In the event, such drastic measures proved unnecessary at Le Mans. Considering discretion the better part of valour, the garrison, municipal council and bishop of the town unanimously decided to negotiate a treaty of surrender with the Earl of Salisbury, thus ensuring both the safety of their physical persons and their goods, whereby it was agreed that the town would surrender if not relieved by Charles VII within 8 days.⁵² Given the internal problems of the kingdom of Bourges such relief was highly unlikely and the town duly delivered itself to Salisbury, according to the terms of their agreement, at mid-day on 10 August. To have captured a town of the importance of Le Mans in little over two-and-a-half weeks was indeed a significant feat and ample testimony to Thomas's military ability. Admittedly there was very little real opposition at this time; Charles VII's constable, Richemont, was more preoccupied with using his army to purge the court of Bourges rather than do battle with the English; but the numerous chronicle sources for the siege lay particular emphasis on the rôle played by the English artillery in subduing the town's resistance.⁵³ In short, Le Mans was a victim of Thomas's heavy siege guns or 'grosses bombardes' as the chronicles would call them. Drawing up his cannons at the Place des Jacobins (situated just outside the town walls), Thomas concentrated his fire on the ramparts adjacent to the episcopal palace until a breach appeared. Faced with the horrific prospect of an assault, the garrison and town authorities preferred to negotiate a surrender, as we have seen, which preserved and confirmed their rights in the town, but by which they recognized Henry VI as their rightful king; they also agreed to pay the Earl 1,500 gold *écus* for his personal costs during the siege.⁵⁴ Administrative evidence supports the testimony of the chronicles for the importance of artillery during the siege. In May

51 Wavrin, v. 65-6.

52 The treaty of delivery was printed by R. Planchenault in 'La conquête du Maine par les anglais. La campagne de 1424-5', *Rev. hist. et arch. du Maine*, 2ème série (1925), pièce justificative 3.

53 The best chronicle accounts of the siege are in *Chronique de la Pucelle, ou chronique de Cousinot*, éd. V. de Virville (Paris, 1859), 226-7; *Chronique de Charles VII, roi de France, par Jean Chartier*, éd. V. de Virville, ii (1858), 46-7.

54 Planchenault, 'La conquête', pièce justificative 3.

1425 Thomas had already commissioned William Herling to purchase 80 oxen for the transport of the 'grosses bombardes' and other siege equipment to Le Mans.⁵⁵ Similarly, the marshal of Salisbury's host, Sir Lancelot de Lisle, certified the receipt from the Regent's master of ordnance, John Harbotel, of 3,000 lbs. of gunpowder and 800 cannon stones ('grosses dondaines') for the siege of Le Mans. For this siege alone, Harbotel received 2,042 *l.t.* for the delivery of the ordnance and also for the wages of the craftsmen involved in its manufacture and carriage.⁵⁶

Despite an abundance of material concerning the organization and deployment of siege guns during the period 1417-28,⁵⁷ recent research has tended to support Sir Charles Oman's assertion that 'the triumph of artillery' can only be dated from the middle of the fifteenth century. In particular, M.G.A. Vale has drawn attention to the rôle played by French artillery during the latter stages of the Hundred Years' War.⁵⁸ Although Vale's essay is mainly concerned with the impact of technological change on the chivalric ethos of the period, he has nonetheless chosen to concentrate upon the French use of siege guns and the French successes of the 1440s and 1450s, claiming that the swift expulsion of the English from France was to a large extent due to the development of heavy artillery: 'In English Gascony, the leisurely pace of siege warfare was quickened, as it was in Normandy, by Charles VII's artillery under the Bureau Brothers'. For Vale, the advances in medieval firepower are perhaps most vividly symbolized by the annihilation of the Earl of Shrewsbury's army by the French guns at Castillon – in effect the final battle of the war.

These arguments have received support, of a more technical and statistical nature from Professor Contamine, who has similarly chosen to focus on the second half of the fifteenth century as the point at which artillery 'came of age'.⁵⁹ Citing figures concerning the ratio of the constituent elements of gunpowder (namely saltpetre, sulphur and charcoal) Contamine has proved that the ideal mixture was only achieved *circa* 1490; furthermore, he has also produced evidence to demonstrate a considerable drop in the price of gunpowder over the period 1450-1500, indicating the more widespread use and availability of firearms during the period.

55 Bibliothèque Nationale, ms. fr. 26048, no. 433.

56 B.L. Additional Charter, 17629 (printed by Planchenault in 'La conquête', pièce justificative 4).

57 For a survey, see C. T. Allmand, 'L'artillerie de l'armée anglaise et son organisation à l'époque de Jeanne d'Arc', *Jeanne d'Arc: une époque, une rayonnement* (C.N.R.S., Paris, 1979), 73-83.

58 M.G.A. Vale, 'New techniques and Old Ideals: the Impact of Artillery on War and Chivalry at the end of the Hundred Years' War', in *War, Literature and Politics in the Later Middle Ages*, ed. Allmand (Liverpool, 1976), 65. See also the same author's *War and Chivalry: Warfare and Aristocratic Culture in England, France & Burgundy at the end of the Middle Ages* (1981), 129-46.

59 P. Contamine, *La guerre au moyen âge* (Paris, 1980), 258-75.

It is of course difficult to contest the fact that the technology involved in the manufacture of artillery improved greatly during the course of the fifteenth century; Charles VII's *maitres d'artillerie*, the Bureau brothers, contributed to make the carriage of these early guns much more manoeuvrable, allowing them to be displaced with greater speed and surprise; the cannons themselves became more powerful and rapid-firing; stone cannon balls were replaced by metal projectiles; the gunpowder, as we have seen, became more stable in composition. By the end of the fifteenth century the balance of power lay with the besiegers to such an overwhelming extent that there were few towns capable of putting up a resistance longer than two weeks.

But the use of artillery, both for siege and field purposes, was certainly not a development peculiar to the fifteenth century. Edward III, for example, used cannons during the siege of Berwick in 1333.⁶⁰ In 1337, William Montagu, Earl of Salisbury (Thomas's great-grandfather) attempted to take Dunbar with a number of 'craiks of werre'; the lack of efficacy of these primitive cannons is suggested by the actions of the castle's defender, Black Agnes, who, after each shot, mounted the battlements to brush away the dust caused by the impact with her handkerchief.⁶¹ T.F. Tout was able to reveal an unbroken tradition of the manufacture and use of firearms by the English during the fourteenth century due to his familiarity with the accounts of the king's privy wardrobe, a department of the royal household which functioned as a depository for munitions and artillery.⁶² These accounts allowed Tout to gauge not just the amount of ordnance in store at the Tower of London, but also purchases to and from the great wardrobe to which the privy wardrobe accounted. His most important finds covered the period 1382-8, during Randolph Hatton's tenure of the keepership of the privy wardrobe, a period which he qualified as 'the high-water mark of gunnery during the fourteenth century'.

Progress continued in the fifteenth century. The war which the young Henry V (as Prince of Wales) waged against Owain Glyndwr, could only have impressed upon him the importance of artillery for siege purposes. Due to the absence of direct engagement, the conflict necessarily centered upon the reconquest and maintenance of certain keypoints within the principality. Evidence for the importance of artillery in Wales is both detailed and abundant. At the siege of Aberystwyth, for example, heavy siege guns called 'Kyngesdoughtir', 'Joesne Neelpot' and 'Messagere' were deployed.⁶³ Artillery was also used in Scotland, at the siege of Berwick in 1405; the following year the Duke of Bedford

60 Allmand, *The Hundred Years' War*, 79.

61 *The Orygynale Chronykil of Scotland* by Andrew of Wynton, ed. D. Laing (Edinburgh, 1872), ii, 431-6.

62 T.F. Tout, 'Firearms in England in the Fourteenth Century', *Eng. Hist. Rev.* 26 (1911), 666-702.

63 PRO E364/49, mm.3-4.

(in his capacity as warden of the east march), could complain that the town's fortifications were now in a pitiful state, and that this was due to 'la debrusme des canons'.⁶⁴

Given such evidence, there seems little reason to doubt that the English were already making good use of artillery before the conquest of Normandy. Lydgate's poem on the siege of Harfleur (in 1415) certainly reveals the extent to which cannons had already impressed themselves upon the popular imagination :

"My brother Clarence", our Kyng gan say
 "The tother syde shall ye kepe
 With my doughtir and hire maydyns gay
 To wake the Frenshmen of there slepe.

"London" he seyde shall with here mete
 My gonnys shall lyn upon this grene
 For they shall play with Harflete
 A game of tenys as I wene.

"Go we to game be Gody's grace
 Myne children ben redy everych'on"
 Every grete gonne that there was
 In his mouthe he had a ston.

"Fyftene before" seyde 'London' tho
 His ball wol faire he gan it throwe
 That the stepyll of Harflete and bellys also
 With his brethe he did down blow.

"Thirty is myne" seyde 'Messagere'
 And smartly went his way
 The wallys that were mad right sure
 He brast them down, the sothe to say.

The Kynges doughtir seyde "there thei play
 Herkeneth my maydenys in thys tyde
 Five and forty that is no nay"
 The wallys went down on every side."

64 S.B. Chrimes, 'Some letters of John of Lancaster as Warden of the East Marches towards Scotland', *Speculum*, 14 (1939), 3-27.

65 *Proceedings of the Privy Council*, ii, 59-60.

In a strict strategical sense the introduction of cannons contributed little to the conduct of siege warfare. The besieger still had two courses of action: to attempt a blockade and to starve the town's inhabitants into surrender; or to reduce the defensive capacities of the ramparts, thus facilitating an eventual assault. For an aggressive commander like the Earl of Salisbury the development of powerful siege guns greatly increased the prospect of capturing towns by outright assault. The siege of Le Mans has already been mentioned in this context, despite the fact that the town took the understandable decision to negotiate a surrender. Although this town had been the principal objective of Thomas's 1425 campaign, it was only the first in a series of successful siege operations. Moving on from Le Mans in August, Thomas invested the town of Ste Suzanne (one of the strongest places in the county of Maine). Here an eye-witness account recorded that he first tried to take the town by escalade: 'And so the trumpets blew to the assault and scaling ladders were reysed to the walles and the Englishmen with great noyse began to climb and ascend'.⁶⁶ Meeting with stiff resistance from the courageous defenders, Thomas was forced to review his tactics :

When the erle perceyved that by this light assault and sleight skirmishe he lost somewhat and gayned nothing he made a wall and cast a trenche about the towne and caused his great ordonaunce to be shot at that part of the wall which was most feeble and slender, and so daily and nightly he never ceased to beate and breake down the walls and toures: and so that within two dayes the most part of the wall was persed and cast down to the ground.⁶⁷

The technique of constructing fortified boulevards or artillery parks close to a town's fortifications, thus aiming to concentrate the firepower available to its maximum potential, was beginning to enjoy considerable success during the 1420s. The Burgundian commander, John of Luxembourg, attacked towns in the same manner during his campaigns in the north of France: at Guise in 1424, for example, Wavrin informs us how the defenders had tried to take precautions against his siege guns by destroying the town's suburbs; nonetheless by establishing a fortified artillery park close to the ramparts he was able to concentrate his fire on the weakest part of the defences.⁶⁸ Thomas's way of besieging towns, therefore, was not an original idea, but rather a technique which he had learned. We see the Earl once again using the same procedure, this time during his final siege at Orléans in 1428, constructing 'bulwarkes round about the citie, casting trenches betwene the one

66 *Hall's Chronicle*, 126 Hall borrowed his account of these years from a contemporary eye-witness chronicle: B. J. H. Rowe, 'A Contemporary Account of the Hundred Years' War from 1415-29', *Eng. Hist. Rev.*, 41 (1926), 504-13.

67 *Hall's Chronicle*, 126-7.

68 Wavrin, v, 64-5. At Wiege in the same year, John of Luxembourg similarly caused the place 'to be battered and broken down for three successive weeks with his engines' before the garrison decided to surrender (Wavrin, v, 62-3).

and the other, layeng ordnance in every part, where he saw that any battery might be devised'.⁶⁹

With the development of artillery, the pace of warfare quickened considerably. Thomas's 1428 campaign was conducted with lightning speed; in August – after only a month of activity – he could proudly inform the mayor and aldermen of the city of London of the 'vare and spede seth our last comyng into this land' and that 40 places had been captured 'some wonne be assault, and some other wyse'.⁷⁰ The account of John Parker, the Earl's master of ordnance for the campaign, provides invaluable details for the artillery used to make this rapid progress towards Orléans.⁷¹ Parker's account shows us that some 48 fowlers were purchased for the campaign; these were relatively small guns capable of firing stones weighing only 2lbs. Salisbury was therefore already supporting the heavier, slower firing bombardars with lighter, quicker firing artillery during the 1420s; this practice then was not new when John de Bueil dictated the following advice in the 1460s:

When your bombardars have begun to fire, make sure that the veuglaires (fowlers) and light artillery fire as much as possible after each bombard shot, so that those within have no chance to make boulevards nor to repair the damage which the bombardars will have done to them.⁷²

In addition to these small cannons, some 16 handguns were supplied, together with 1,200 lead pellets for their ammunition. Like revolvers at a later age, these guns would have been reserved for the army's captains and were presumably used during the escalades which Thomas so frequently commanded.

The most important details in Parker's account concern the heavier cannons which were founded specially for the campaign. Three large iron cannons were purchased from John Matthews, a London smith, with an average weight of 5,166 lbs. per gun; one of these was more powerful than the others, since it was capable of projecting stones to the height of 18 poles; the other two could only manage 16 poles. Taking a pole as 16½ feet, the figures suggest that these cannons could shoot to a height of 297 and 264 feet respectively. Thomas would have therefore been looking to park his 'grosses bombardes' at about 550-600 feet from a town's walls, although obviously the closer he got, the greater the damage which he could inflict. Four other large cannons were supplied, weighing from 4,700 to 5,350 lbs. In addition to this artillery, twenty eight scaling ladders were also

69 *Hall's Chronicle*, 145.

70 *Collection générale des documents français qui se trouvent en Angleterre*, 236-7.

71 PRO E101. 51/27. For a file of receipts duplicating Parker's account, see E101. 51/30.

72 Quoted by Vale in 'New Techniques and Old Ideals', 69.

supplied by William Boys 'laddurmaker'. Thomas's indenture for this same campaign also bears ample witness to his aggressive intentions since it specified that four master artillery men and ten miners were to be included in his army.⁷³

Thomas's careful preparations for his sieges can likewise be deduced from the ordinances which he drew up for the 1425 Maine campaign.⁷⁴ Thus we see that the Earl commanded every soldier under his command 'to make him a good substanciall fagott of xiiij foote of length without leues', and that the captains of the army should, at the beginning of each siege, 'ley his fagottes aparte to that entent that it may be sene he have his nomber after the companye the whiche he ledeth'. These bundles of sticks served two particular purposes: the first to bolster the bulwarks protecting his artillery, such as we have seen at Ste Suzanne and Orléans; and secondly to be thrown into the ditches which often surrounded medieval towns, thus facilitating the passage of troops during storming operations. In the same vein, the Earl also laid down that one of every seven gentlemen in the army should be in charge of a scaling ladder of fifteen rungs: escalades were therefore carried out in small teams comprised of the army's social élite. At the same time, these scaling parties were to be covered by the archers as every other yeoman in the army was ordered to be furnished with a large wooden shield known as a 'pavey'; whilst the archer fired his longbow, the other yeoman would cover him from enemy fire. Thomas was thus no aristocratic numskull, amateurishly muddling along with tools a hundred years out of date; he was in fact a thoroughly modern and professional commander who kept abreast with technological change. In addition to this, he planned and conducted his sieges with mechanical efficiency.

Thomas's success in capturing towns so quickly shows us that the introduction of artillery had noticeably tilted the balance of power in favour of the besiegers as early as the 1420s. Nevertheless, the towns of this period retained some defensive chances. In this respect, it was essential for a municipality to try and prevent an attacking army from camping too close to its walls. In keeping the besiegers at arms length, the rôle of the heavy siege guns would be thus diminished. Before the siege of Rouen in 1418, for example, the bourgeois of the town took the decision to 'cast adoun al her subbarbes about the cite'.⁷⁵ In so doing, the Rouennais hoped to stop the English from approaching too close to their ramparts by depriving them of adequate cover; in addition to this, the municipality's own artillery, composed of lighter, more accurate and quicker firing guns, could be used to their maximum effect. At Rouen, these tactics paid some dividends; Henry V's army was unable to secure a position sufficiently close to the town for an effective bombardment, and

73 For the account of Thomas's expenses and also his indenture for the campaign, see *Letters and Papers illustrative of the Wars of the English in France*, ii, 403-21.

74 Nicolas, *Agin-court*, 41-4.

75 *The Brut*, ii, 387, 395. I owe this reference to Professor Allmand.

after an unsuccessful attempt to mine the city's walls, the king settled down to a protracted blockade which would last 6 months. The town of Orléans would follow this example in 1428, since Wavrin informs us how the municipal council gave the command to demolish the suburbs of the town 'in such a manner that all around the place was so well cleared for the distance of a cannon shot that there was no longer any impediment'.⁷⁶ That the municipal artillery furnished defensive possibilities is suggested by the activities of the gunners of the town of Louviers who, during the siege of the town by the English in 1418, managed to score a direct hit on the royal tent whilst the king was in discussion with the Earl of Salisbury. Henry was outraged by this incident: on the eventual surrender of the town he insisted that the gunners of Louviers should be delivered to him personally. He would subsequently hang eight of the nine gunners on the spot: the ninth was only spared on the intercession of Cardinal Orsini who happened to be in the vicinity. Henry graciously commuted the sentence to one of life imprisonment.⁷⁷ As we have seen, Thomas would eventually meet his grisly end at Orléans from a cannon fired from the town. The marshal of his army, Sir Lancelot de Lisle, would come to grief in a similar fashion: in January 1429 he attempted to negotiate a cease fire with the town's defenders; but on the conclusion of the talks and expiry of the safe-conducts, as both sides returned to their respective camps 'ceulx d'Orléans gecterent ung canon qui frappa messire Lancelot, tellement qui luy enleva la teste'.⁷⁸ It was therefore hardly surprising that it should become increasingly common to insist in the eventual accords of surrender between towns and their besiegers that the gunners should be delivered to the victorious commander to dispose of them as he saw fit.⁷⁹ This is a sure sign that the defensive rôle played by the municipal artillery was not insignificant.

The development of artillery therefore profoundly modernized the nature and scale of siege warfare. The attackers, as we have seen, would attempt to approach the ramparts of the towns by the construction of bulwarks to cover their offensive artillery. The towns themselves would try to prevent this strategy by establishing defensive positions of their own outside their walls. At Orléans, for example, much bitter fighting centered upon the

⁷⁶ Wavrin, v. 156-7. Archives Municipales d'Orléans, AA 2 gives details of payments relating to the destruction of the suburbs in 1428.

⁷⁷ 'Chronicle of John Strecche for the Reign of Henry V (1414-22)', ed. F. Taylor, *Bulletin of the John Ryland's Library*, 16 (1932), 162.

⁷⁸ 'Journal du siège d'Orléans' in *Procès de condamnation et de réhabilitation de Jeanne d'Arc dite la Pucelle*, ed. J. Quicherat (5 vols., Paris, 1841-9), iv, 124.

⁷⁹ At Le Mans in 1425, for instance, it was stipulated 'that al the gonners being in the seid towne and cite, the which han made shot of gonnes duryng this present sege shul be taken and delyvered into the handes and power of my Lord th'Erle to dispose of hem his free will' (Planchenault 'La conquête de Maine' pièce justificative 3).

bulwark of the Tourelles which the defenders of the town had linked to the main body of the town's ramparts by a network of trenches.⁸⁰ Sieges became bigger and more complicated since an attacker now had to reduce a number of defensive strongholds before he could think about tackling the town itself. To conclude, the basic strategic outlines of the artillery duel between besiegers and besieged, which would characterize siege warfare for the remainder of the fifteenth century until modern times, were thus clearly established by the 1420s: the 'leisurely pace of siege warfare' had thus undoubtedly quickened well before the French successes of the 1440s.

It is often claimed that the greater use and efficacy of artillery during the fifteenth century ruined warfare as a knightly finishing school, and that this new and destructive technology was incompatible with the chivalric ethos of the period. However, there is no evidence to support this view. Instead, the aristocratic combattants of the age readily adapted themselves to the changing nature of warfare, throwing themselves wholeheartedly into the development of this dangerous technology.⁸¹ Although Thomas used artillery to such great effect during his sieges, the chivalric cognoscenti of his day were unanimous in decreeing that he was nonetheless a thoroughly chivalric commander. The chronicler Wavrin (who served under Thomas) considered that the Earl was not just the most successful and talented commander of the last two hundred years:

besides this there were in him all the virtues belonging to a good knight: he was mild, humble and courteous, a great almsgiver and liberal with what belonged to him; he was pitiful and merciful to the humble, but fierce as a lion or a tiger to the proud; he loved men well who were valiant and of good courage, nor did he ever keep back the services of others, but gave to each his due according to what he was worth.⁸²

Nicholas Upton described how many quarrelsome gentlemen came before the Earl to ask him to act as an independent arbiter in their duels of honour; and that as befitted a just and chivalric lord, he let the two parties fight bravely for a while before intervening to impose an honourable and peaceful settlement, 'retornynge eche of them home ageyne rewardedy bowntiously with larege gyftes to ther gret worchyp and renowne'.⁸³ The 'Bourgeois' of Paris similarly specified in his journal that Thomas was not just a 'bon hommes d'armes'; he was also 'moult chevallereux'.⁸⁴ Because Thomas was a practical military commander, it did not automatically follow that he was not a chivalric

80 'Journal du siège', 96-8.

81 See the discussion in Keen, *Chivalry*, 241-2.

82 Wavrin, v, 158.

83 *The Essential Portions of Nicholas Upton's De studio militari*, ed. F.P. Barnard (1931), 13.

84 *Journal d'un Bourgeois de Paris, 1405-1449*, ed. A. Tuetey (Paris, 1881), 212.

commander. Conversely, being chivalric did not mean that he was any the less practical since the two qualities were not mutually exclusive.

Despite the ruthless efficiency which characterized all his military operations, Thomas still found time for the chivalric niceties of warfare. During the Cravant campaign of 1423, for instance, he knighted some 80 men, both English and Burgundians, of his army;⁸⁵ similarly, deep down in a mine shaft during the siege of Sézanne, with supreme coolness, he knighted the Burgundian lord Guillaume de Châteauvillain.⁸⁶ But these were no mere empty chivalric gestures, devoid of any real practicality. As we have seen, it was important that Thomas should try to weld together the two components of his army, the Burgundians and English, to coordinate the force under his command. We should perhaps also bear in mind that the Anglo-Burgundian alliance was never a natural political alliance, since its origins stemmed rather from the common detestation which both parties felt towards Charles VII in the context of 1420, and more than once during the period 1423-9 it seemed that Duke Philip the Good of Burgundy was on the point of negotiating peace with the French. In making great show of honour towards the Burgundians who fought under him, during the period 1423-4, Thomas was also making an important political statement regarding his attachment to the alliance agreed upon at Troyes.

The ideas of pilgrimage and crusade also occupied a very important place in the mental world of the christian knight, and Thomas's pious interest in Jerusalem should obviously be seen in this wider European chivalric context.⁸⁷ As we have already seen, he first went on pilgrimage to Jerusalem at sometime in the first decade of the fifteenth century, and vowed to return there during an illness.⁸⁸ During the course of the particularly gruelling battle of Verneuil, Thomas similarly vowed to return there should he succeed in getting out of the combat alive. In June 1426, Thomas went so far as to resign his command as lieutenant general in Normandy 'desirant faire ou accomplir certain veu ou pèlerinage au saint sepulchre de notre seigneur en Jerusalem'.⁸⁹ These plans were never realized. After almost two years spent in England, Thomas once more departed for France to lead the Orléans campaign of 1428.

Thomas's vow to go on pilgrimage in 1426 appears to have been also inspired by political motives because he thereby furnished himself with a good excuse for resigning his command in France at a time when he was perhaps at odds with the Duke of Bedford and

85 Wavrin, v. 43, 47.

86 Ibid. 65-6.

87 For this context, see Keen, *Chivalry*, 44-63.

88 See above, note 11.

89 B.L. Additional Charter 7943.

his policy towards Philip of Burgundy. From October 1424, both Salisbury and Burgundy were on particularly bad terms on account of the latter's attempts to seduce the Countess of Salisbury at an Anglo-Burgundian ball held at Melun.⁹⁰ Thomas's animosity towards Burgundy, however, was not simply inspired by irrational and emotional personal motives. Like many English lords, he was especially annoyed by the Duke of Burgundy's attempts to negotiate a separate peace with Charles VII; it was rumoured that Thomas's decision to go on pilgrimage was in fact a subtle political trick designed to lull Burgundy into a false sense of security.⁹¹ He hoped that the news of his imminent departure for the Holy Land would entice Philip the Good to reveal his true intentions *vis à vis* the French and the English. Once the Duke had made peace with Charles VII, Thomas would have postponed his pilgrimage in order to deal first with the traitorous Burgundy. Indeed, following his resignation he returned to England to help the Duke of Gloucester prepare an expedition to fight Philip of Burgundy in Holland.⁹² Nonetheless, it would be unwise to question the Earl's religious sincerity, and there is little doubt that he would have wished to return to the Holy Land once a more suitable moment presented itself. We know that in 1426, for example, he commissioned John Lydgate to translate Guillaume de Deguileville's religious allegory, the *Pèlerinage de la vie humaine*; the translator's prologue of this particular work reminds how 'Worldly folk should learn that this life is fleeting and only a pilgrimage to Jerusalem and Babylon'.⁹³ Thomas himself would express comparable sentiments in his elaborately stylized will drawn up just before the Orléans campaign.⁹⁴ The Earl's vow to return to Jerusalem thus presents a curious case where his life appears to merge completely with the politics, religion, art and chivalry of the period.

But the best evidence that Thomas was a chivalric soldier comes, unsurprisingly, from the actual details of his military career. Vegetius, in his enormously important work of knightly reference, *De re militari*, laid emphasis upon the importance of the fighting man to uphold the common good, and the idea that the christian knight should protect the weak and the needy formed an essential part of the chivalric ethos.⁹⁵ For Thomas, operating in the France of the 1420s it was therefore important that he should defend those already in the English obedience, and also assure that the army under his command did not disrupt too severely the economic life of the population that he was meant to serve.

90 P. de Fenin, *Mémoires*, ed. Mlle Dupont (Paris, 1837), 225.

91 Desplanque, *Projet*, 61.

92 Fenin, *Mémoires*, 226.

93 *Pilgrimage of the Life of Man*, ed. F.J. Furnivall (Roxburghe Club, 1905). I am grateful to Nigel Ramsay for this reference.

94 For Thomas's will, see *The Register of Henry Chichele, Archbishop of Canterbury 1414-1433*, ed. E.F. Jacob (Canterbury and York Society, 1955), ii.390-400.

95 Allmand, *The Hundred Years' War*, 157.

Salisbury's military ordinances of 1425 laid down harsh punishments for those who not only pillaged the belongings and produce of subjects within the Anglo-Burgundian territories, but also those who were found to be in receipt of such stolen goods.⁹⁶ The survival of numerous documents regarding his relationship, as Governor of Champagne, with the towns in this area shows the extent to which Thomas was keen to defend those territories subject to the Anglo-Burgundian alliance. In a letter of June 1423, addressed to the town council of Chalons-sur-Marne he announced his intention to use the forces at his disposal 'telement que Dieu, vous, et le peuple seront content'.⁹⁷ Since the county of Champagne was infested by freebooter garrisons loyal to Charles VII, Thomas's mission, as he put it himself, was to 'eslargir vos biens' by bringing a swift remedy to these problems.⁹⁸ The relief of the poverty of the realm, which features so strongly in Burgundian political manifestoes addressed to the 'bonnes villes' of the period, was conceived by the Earl in terms of the defeat of their common enemy, namely Charles VII.

In a second letter, Thomas once again stressed his desire to employ his men to eliminate the threat posed by the men-at-arms in the area.⁹⁹ To help him fulfil this task the towns themselves elected delegates to meet and discuss the military operations in their area, and also to vote considerable sums of money to pay for this objective. In 1423, the town of Troyes, for example, granted the Earl 3,434 *l.t.* to go towards the costs of the siege of Pont-sur-Seine and other places.¹⁰⁰ Similarly, the municipal council of Reims agreed not only to an aide in 1426 for the siege of Moynier: the town accounts for that year also reveal numerous payments to craftsmen and manual workers for mining works occasioned during the same siege.¹⁰¹ In return, the Champenois towns got good value for the monies and men supplied since their regional assemblies gave them some say in the military decisions taken by the English command. They also got Thomas, who, with his customary energy, busied himself in the mopping up of these strongholds which had so marred the economic life of the towns within the territory he controlled; the siege of Montaguillon undertaken in 1423 provides a good illustration of this. This siege presented numerous difficulties for Thomas since Montaguillon was not a town but rather a fortress perched on a rock. He was unable, therefore, to use his artillery to maximum effect, and was obliged to undertake a protracted

⁹⁶ Nicolas, *Agincourt*, 41-44.

⁹⁷ Archives Départementales de la Marne, E supplément, 4813 (BB37).

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁰ T. Boutot, *Histoire de Troyes*, II (Troyes, 1880), 458-60.

¹⁰¹ Archives Municipales de Reims, 30 (Conclusions du conseil), fos. 14v, 16r.

blockade of the place punctuated by numerous aggressive actions. Wavrin described at length how

the besieged were often assailed by various kinds of instruments, which was not, however, without great trouble and labour of the besiegers: and you may consider that the besieged suffered no less by it, who by day had to defend themselves and by night to guard against attack and to repair what had been torn down by day, for they were so much oppressed by continual assaults, that there was not one of them who would not have wished to be, if he honourably could, in some other place...¹⁰²

Such was the withering effect of Thomas's 'continual assaults' upon this fortified outpost that the six score strong garrison was soon reduced to a mere thirty men. At this point, the captain of Montaguillon decided to surrender to Salisbury on the agreement to pay him 22,000 gold écus so that he and his men might leave the place with all their belongings. However, whilst this considerable sum was being raised, the miners in Thomas's army succeeded in sapping the foundations of the castle's principal tower, thus causing it to collapse. Faced by the eventuality of yet another assault the besieged decided to surrender immediately and unconditionally. Thus the remnants of the garrison of Montaguillon were obliged to leave the place without their possessions, including their weapons, armour and horses (which they had already eaten), dressed only in their doublets, their heads bare as a sign of humility, and a white staff in hand as a symbol of their total submission.¹⁰³

In eliminating this stronghold, Thomas had therefore rendered an important service to the inhabitants of Champagne since the soldiers of Montaguillon had pillaged the countryside and preyed on the commerce of the region for a number of years. However, he also served himself since both he and his men were paid by the towns which they were protecting; they also got to partake in the spoil which had been amassed by the men at arms of Montaguillon. Once again, Thomas had demonstrated that chivalry could be practical.

The armies which Thomas commanded in France were small, close-knit, professional forces, normally operating with a fixed short-term strategical objective. In contrast, Charles VII's forces, until the military reforms of the 1440s, were often isolated mercenary bands with a reputation for indiscipline.¹⁰⁴ For the towns of Northern France

102 Wavrin, v, 22.

103 Ibid, 22-23.

104 Jean Juvénal des Ursins would later write, in 1440, that Charles VII's troops were lacking in the 'discipline de chevalerie' (cited by P. Contamine in 'Charles VII, les Français et la Paix', *Comptes rendus de l'Académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres* (1993), 19.

during this dangerous age, the Anglo-Burgundian alliance presented itself as the party of law and order. Paris, for example, had been traumatized by the period of Armagnac occupation of 1415-18. Throughout the 1420s the Regent Bedford was keen to eliminate the Dauphinist garrisons around the capital, often acting on the advice of the *prévôt des marchands* and burgesses of Paris.¹⁰⁵ In 1423 we see both Bedford and Salisbury cleverly playing upon the Parisian's fear and dislike of bandit strongholds. Thomas was despatched to take the garrison of Orsay, which, according to Wavrin, 'daily made incursions in the neighbourhood of Paris, and did all the mischief and damage which they could contrive to do'.¹⁰⁶ Following the delivery of this place Thomas led some of the members of the garrison back to Paris, bareheaded and dressed only in their doublets, halters around their necks, each holding the point of a naked sword to their breasts. In this sorry state Thomas led his prisoners before the Regent in the Hôtel des Tournelles. The Regent adjudged that they should die for their crimes. But his wife, Anne of Burgundy, interceded (as Philippa of Hainaut had done for the Bourgeois of Calais) to spare their lives.¹⁰⁷ This whole scene was doubt organized to impress the Parisians with the military effectiveness of English rule and to improve their popularity rating within the capital. His relations with the municipalities of this period show us that Thomas was no 'tough and greedy prizefighter with a thick skull', but rather a soldier-politician of considerable intelligence and tact who was capable of using relatively sophisticated political propaganda to justify the English presence in France to the indigenous community. The 'Bourgeois' of Paris described him as a man 'subtil en tous ses faiz'.¹⁰⁸

K.B. McFarlane once pointed out that although the Anglo-French wars of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries were still occasionally used to instill schoolboy patriotism, serious and 'adult' historians were nonetheless unanimous in condemning them as costly and unnecessary excesses. " In the 'general writing-down' of this age of 'pseudo-chivalry', Henry V's military and diplomatic 'victories' have not escaped criticism. For Edouard Perroy, Henry's union of the French and English crowns was doomed to failure: his brother, the Regent Bedford, would be consequently saddled with a 'vain and hopeless task' which left England on the verge of bankruptcy. More recently, Professor

105 C.A.J. Armstrong, 'Sir John Fastolf and the Law of Arms', *War, Literature and Politics*, ed. Allmand (Reprinted in the same author's *England, France and Burgundy in the Fifteenth Century* (1983) 123-33, from which I have taken the reference at 124)

106 Wavrin, v, 23.

107 *Ibid.*, 23-4.

108 *Journal d'un Bourgeois*, 212.

109 McFarlane, *Nobility*, 19.

110 E. Perroy, *The Hundred Years War* (English trans. 1951), 258.

Christopher Allmand has written of 'an error of judgement' with regards to the king's decision to sign the treaty of Troyes: a decision which would bequeath to his successor a 'damnosa haereditas'.¹¹¹

But the career of Thomas Montagu does not conveniently fit into such a scenario of inevitable (if protracted) defeat. For even after Henry V's death in 1422 he was able to demonstrate that the Dual Monarchy was capable of making considerable territorial and political gains during the period 1423-8. In 1423, as we have seen, Thomas and his Burgundian allies would triumph at the battle of Cravant. In 1424, a Franco-Scottish army was defeated at Verneuil. From 1424-6, Thomas would supervise a mopping-up operation of French garrisons in Champagne: at the same time, 1425-6, the conquest and occupation of the county of Maine was successfully undertaken. According to the contemporary chronicler, Wavrin, Thomas would have taken the town of Orléans within the space of three months had he lived to continue the siege.¹¹² There was therefore nothing inevitable about the sudden English collapse in the years 1449-53.

The second myth which Thomas's career explodes is that of the exclusively national character of the war from 1420 onwards. In this respect, Professor Allmand has warned that England lacked the manpower and finances necessary to conquer France, and that Henry V failed to take into account 'a rapidly growing sense of national spirit and awareness amongst the French'.¹¹³ In similar fashion, Professor Contamine has concluded that the war remained essentially an Anglo-French conflict 'et non point franco-français, comme l'aurait voulu la logique du traité de Troyes'.¹¹⁴ His compatriot, Bertrand Schnerb, has opined at greater length:

(The English) ... sont en effet considérés comme des étrangers, sauf peut-être dans certaines régions comme le Bordelais où la présence anglaise date de plusieurs siècles. Leur langue, leurs habitudes alimentaires, leur origine insulaire les distinguent de la population française, mais ce n'est là qu'un aspect secondaire. Ce qui est déterminant, c'est que près de cent ans de guerre ont fini par faire de l'Anglais un ennemi héréditaire: ce que, dans les textes du début du XV^e siècle, on exprime en le désignant comme 'l'ancien ennemi d'Angleterre'.¹¹⁵

111 Allmand, *Henry V*, 441-2.

112 Wavrin, v, 161.

113 Allmand, *Henry V*, 441-2.

114 *Histoire Militaire de la France. I. Des origines à 1715*, sous la direction de P. Contamine (Paris, 1992), 198.

115 B. Schnerb, *Les Armagnacs et les Bourguignons: la Maudite Guerre* (Paris, 1988), 221.

The historical reality was really quite different. Cravant, as we have seen, was essentially a Anglo-Burgundian victory. In Champagne, Thomas would receive quite considerable grants of money as well as actual physical assistance from the towns of this area in order to subdue the dauphinist garrisons in their vicinity. As Schnerb has admitted, English rule was accepted in Gascony. It was also largely accepted in Normandy where the estates of the duchy were prepared to vote taxation to the English.¹¹⁶ It was also largely accepted in the French capital, Paris, where in December 1431 Henry VI would be crowned king of France in the cathedral of Nôtre-Dame without the slightest incidence of French nationalist outrage. The Dukes of Brittany and Burgundy, two leading French nobles, were also prepared to recognize Henry V and Henry VI's right to the crown of France. As the war progressed and prospered for the English during the 1420s, so the Lancastrian monarchy came to be accepted by ever increasing numbers of French themselves. The war was no longer, therefore, exclusively dependent on English resources of money and manpower.

The more recent past has demonstrated that a different hereditary enemy, with equally peculiar alimentary habits, might ally itself with important sections of the French political community to exercise effective political and economic control over France through the traditional (if slightly modified) channels. Over five centuries ago, the English cause had an added advantage in the stronger French provincial sentiments which the period so clearly manifests. In addition to this, in Thomas Montagu the English possessed a commander of genius who, in attempting to capture a bridgehead on the Loire at Orléans, posed a very serious threat to Charles VII's kingdom of Bourges. Had he lived the Hundred Years' War might well have followed a completely different course.

L'Immaculée, St Nazaire

M. WARNER

¹¹⁶ B. J. H. Rowe, 'The Estates of Normandy, under the Duke of Bedford 1422-1435, *Eng. Hist. Rev.* 46 (1931), 556-9.

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