from Roman and Dark Age times. Practically all the increase was in northwest Europe. There the future lay.

In 1250, when our narrative takes place, Louis IX, St.-Louis, was king of the broad and disparate realm of France. The royal domain, where the king made laws and collected taxes, comprised about a quarter of the whole country; the remainder was parceled out among a score of princes and prelates and hundreds of minor lords and barons, whose relationships with each other were hopelessly intricate. Scientific-minded Frederick II, "the Wonder of the World," was in the last year of his reign as Holy Roman emperor and king of Sicily. Henry III occupied the throne of England, enjoying an uneventful reign, though the loss of the old Plantagenet lands in France had left him less wealthy and powerful than his predecessors. Innocent IV wore the papal tiara in a Rome which had recovered a little of the prestige of its pagan days. In Spain the Moors were hard-pressed by the Christian kingdoms, while on the opposite side of Europe the Mongols, having lately taken over Russia, were raiding Hungary and Bohemia.

For much of Europe 1250 was a relatively peaceful time. As such, it may not have suited the fierce barons of the countryside, but it was congenial to the city burghers whose lives and activities constituted the real history of the period.

from Josephand Frances Gies
Life in a Medieval City
(Harper 1969)

I.

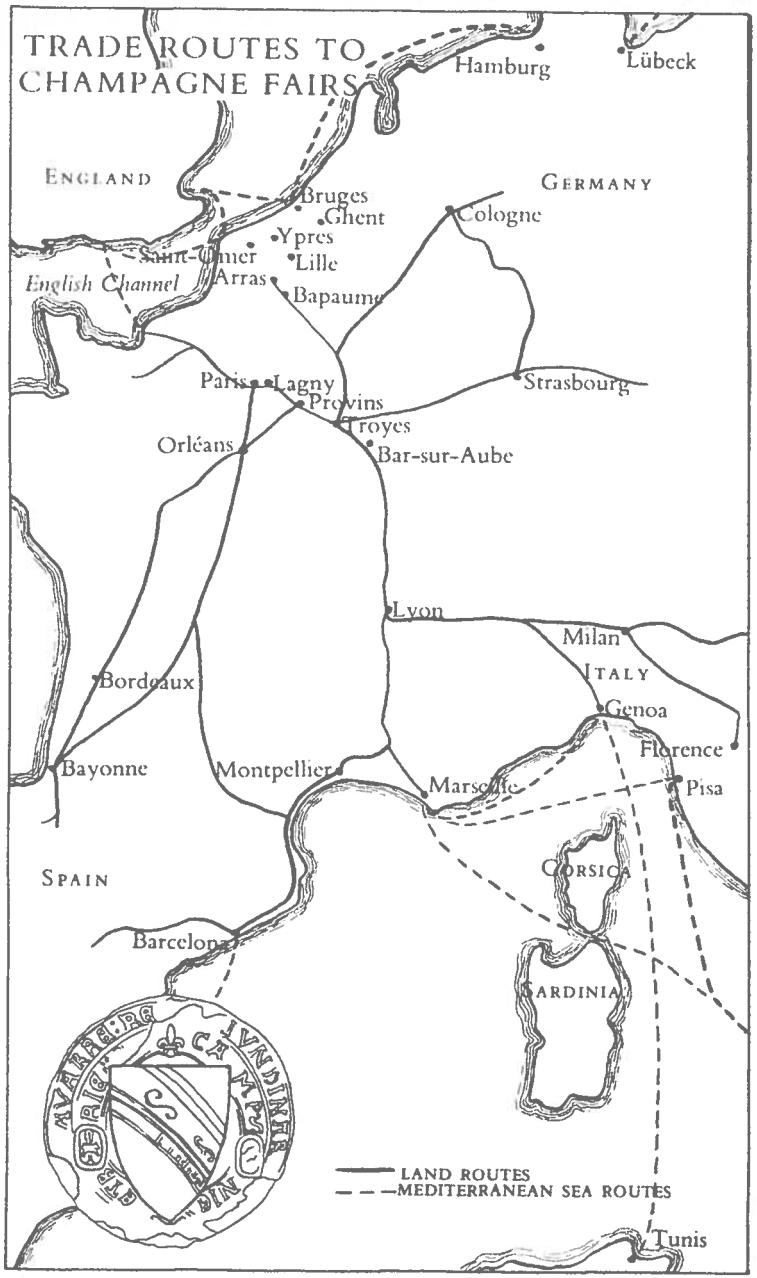
Troyes: 1250

A Bar, à Provins, ou à Troies
Ne peut estre, riches ne soies.
[At Bar, at Provins or at Troyes
You can't help getting rich.]

—CHRÉTIEN DE TROYES (*Guillaume d'Angleterre*)

In the first week of July, dust clouds rise along the roads that crisscross the broad plain of Champagne. From every direction—Paris and the west, Châlons and the north, Verdun and the northeast, Dijon and the southeast, Auxerre and Sens, and the south—long trains of pack animals plod to their common destination—the Hot Fair of Troyes.

Some have already covered hundreds of miles by the time they reach the borders of Champagne. The cloth caravans from Flanders move south along the old Roman road from Bapaume. Merchants of the German Hanse follow the Seine in their oceangoing boats as far as Rouen, where they transship to shallow-draft vessels or hire animals. Italians sail from Pisa or Genoa to Marseille, or take the "Strada Francesca" from Florence to Milan. If they go by the latter route, they climb the Little St.-Bernard Pass in the Savoy Alps, led along precipices, through drifts, and around crevasses by guides in woolen caps, mittens, and spiked



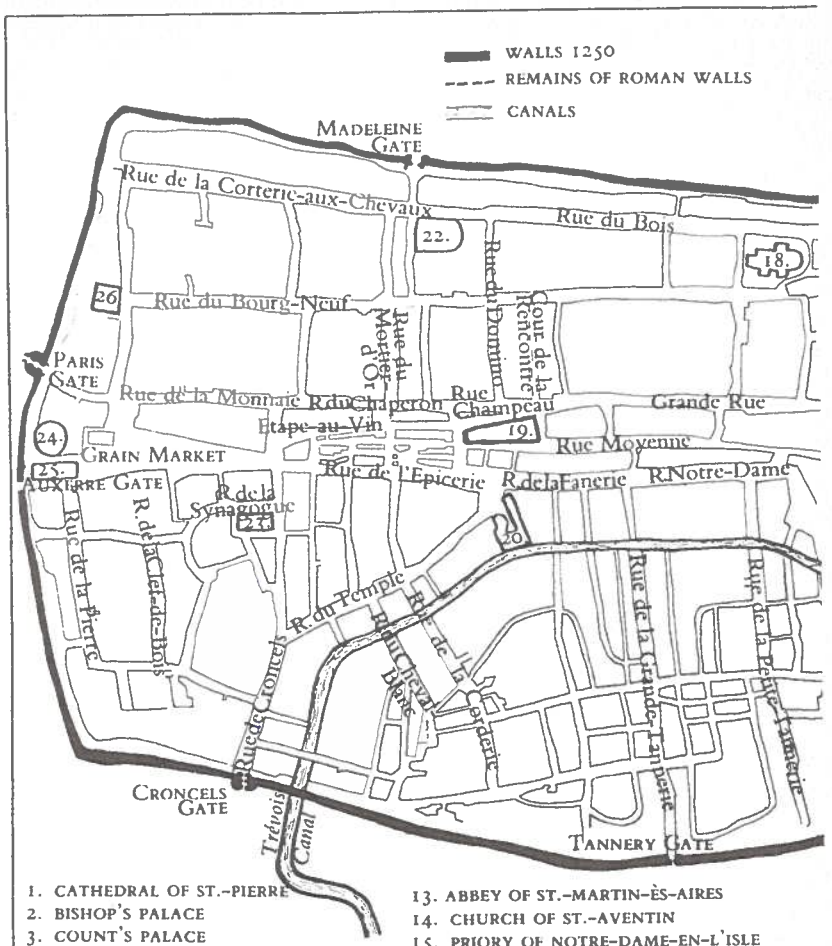
boots. Descending the western slopes, they follow the valley of the Isère to Vienne and Lyon. Here they are joined by merchants from Spain and Languedoc for the last leg of their trip, following the Saône valley north, or cutting northwest by way of Autun, or hiring boats and ascending the Saône.

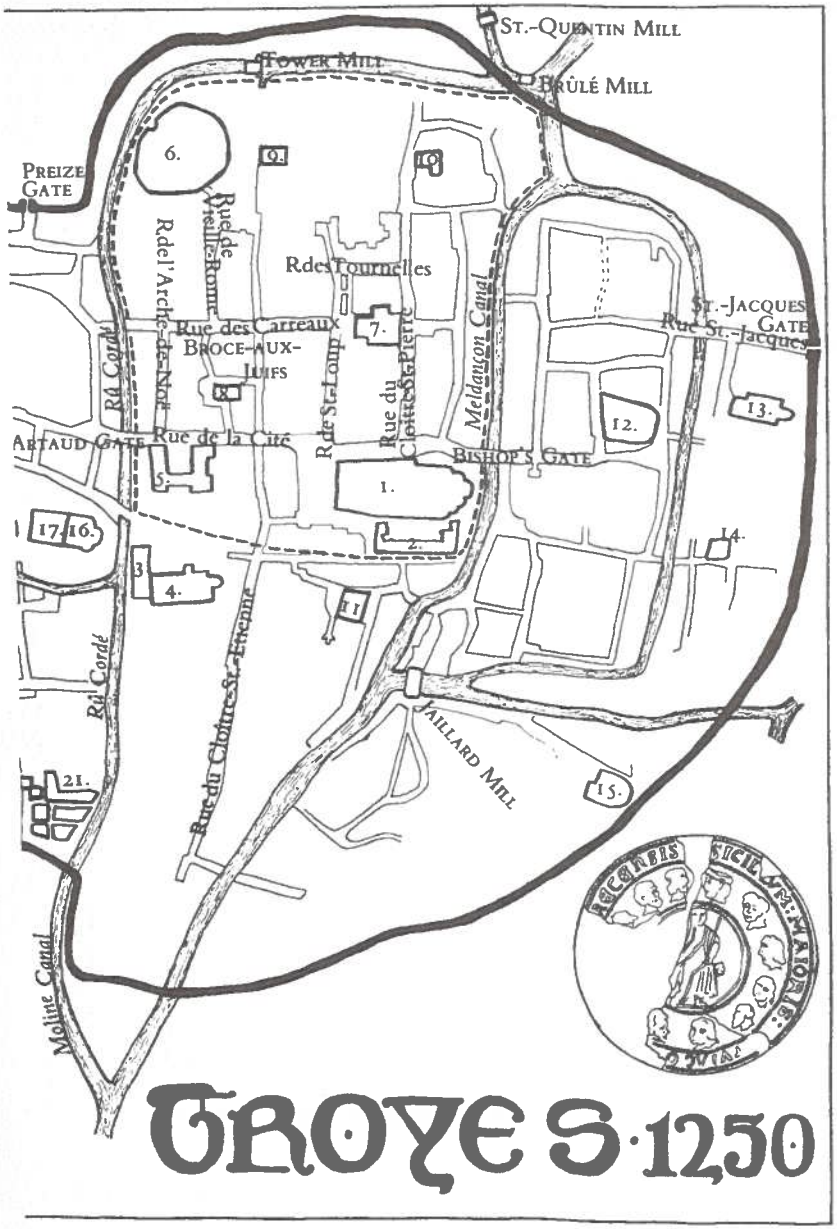
In level country pack animals can make fifteen to twenty-five miles a day, carrying three to four hundred pounds. Couriers travel faster; the Flemish cloth merchants operate a service between the Champagne Fairs and Ghent which covers two hundred miles in four days. But it takes a company of merchants traveling from Florence to Champagne three weeks, even barring accidents. Because carts mire down in rainy weather, pack animals—horses, asses, and mules—make up the merchant trains.

Among the worst nuisances to merchants are the tolls. River crossings that range from the magnificent Pont d'Avignon to bad ferries and worse fords all charge tolls. So do many roads, even though built by the Romans.

Most of the fair traffic journeys in convoy, sometimes preceded by a standard-bearer, and with crossbowmen and pikemen guarding the flanks—a martial display which serves to advertise the value of the goods. Roads are actually safe enough, at least in the daytime. Besides, merchants en route to the fair enjoy extraordinary guarantees as the result of the treaties made by the counts of Champagne with neighboring princes. This very year, 1250, a merchant was robbed of a stock of cloth and squirrel skins while passing through the territory of the duke of Lorraine. Honoring his treaty obligation, the duke indemnified the merchant.

The countryside through which the merchants approach Troyes is heavily wooded, but the past two centuries have witnessed considerable clearing and cultivating. Castles,


WALLS 1250
REMAINS OF ROMAN WALLS
CANALS
MADELEINE GATE
Rue de la Corterie-aux-Chevaux
Rue du Bois
Rue du Bourg-Neuf
Rue du Dominic
Cour de la Rencontre
Rue du Mortier d'Or
PARIS GATE
Rue de la Monnaie
Rue du Chaperon
Rue Champeau
Grande Rue
Etape-au-Vin
Rue Moyenne
GRAIN MARKET
AUXERRE GATE
Rue de l'Epicerie
R. de la Fanerie
R. Notre-Dame
R. de la Synagogue
Rue de la Pierre
R. de la Clef-de-Bois
R. du Temple
Rue Cheval Blanc
Rue de la Grande-Tannerie
Rue de la Petite-Tannerie
Rue des Comtes
CRONCELS GATE
Trévois Canal
TANNERY GATE
1. CATHEDRAL OF ST.-PIERRE
2. BISHOP'S PALACE
3. COUNT'S PALACE
4. COLLEGIATE CHURCH OF ST.-ETIENNE
5. HÔTEL-DIEU-LE-COMTE
6. CASTLE OF THE COUNTS OF CHAMPAGNE
7. ABBEY OF ST.-LOUP
8. ST.-FROBERT (FORMER SYNAGOGUE)
9. PRIORY OF ST.-JEAN-EN-CHÂTEL (ST.-BLAISE)
10. PRIORY OF ST.-QUENTIN
11. CHURCH OF ST.-DENIS
12. CHURCH OF ST.-NIZIER
13. ABBEY OF ST.-MARTIN-ÈS-AIRES
14. CHURCH OF ST.-AVENTIN
15. PRIORY OF NOTRE-DAME-EN-L'ISLE
16. ABBEY OF NOTRE-DAME-AUX-NONNAINS
17. CHURCH OF ST.-JACQUES-AUX-NONNAINS
18. CHURCH OF ST.-RÉMI
19. CHURCH OF ST.-JEAN-AU-MARCHÉ
20. TEMPLAR COMMANDERY
21. DOMINICAN FRIARY
22. CHURCH OF STE.-MADELEINE
23. ST.-PANTALÉON (FORMER SYNAGOGUE)
24. VISCOUNT'S TOWER
25. CHURCH OF ST.-NICOLAS
26. HÔTEL-DIEU-ST.-ABRAHAM

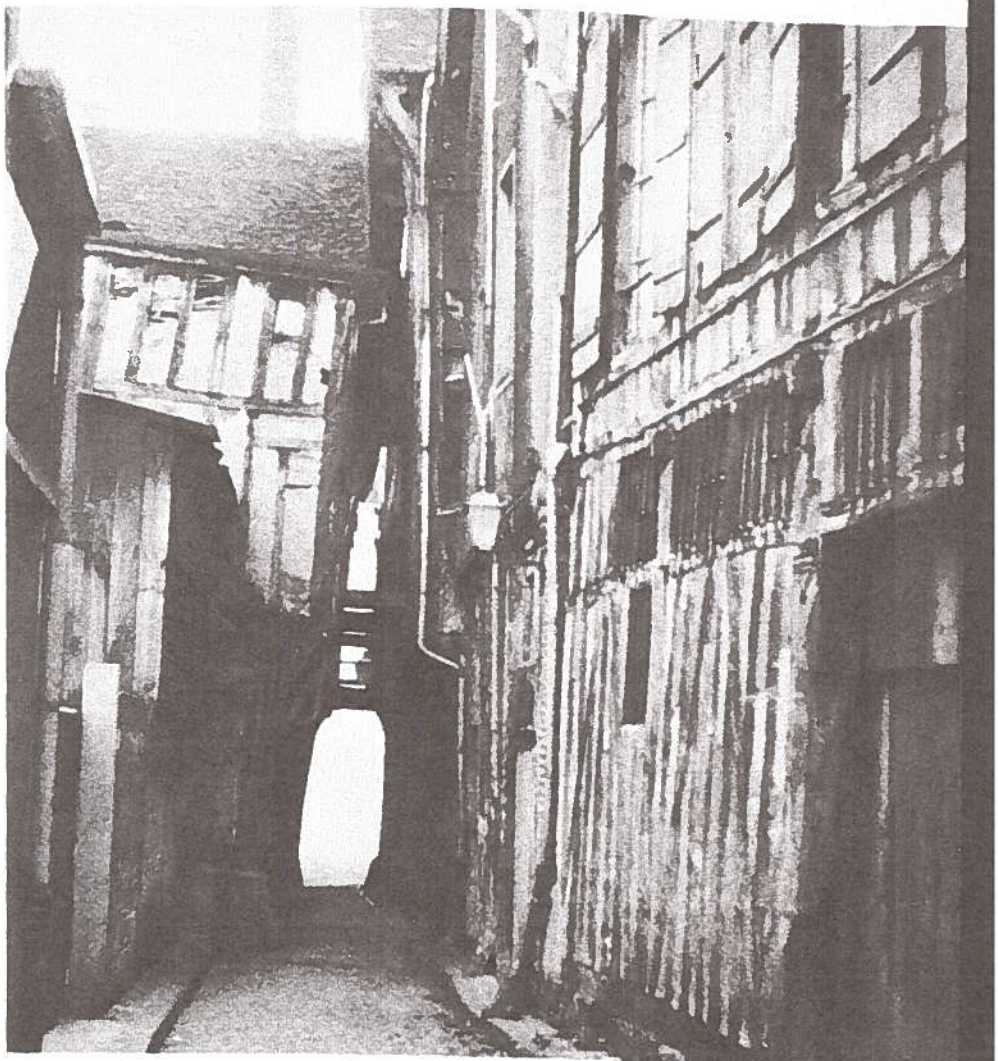

ST.-QUENTIN MILL
TOWER MILL
BRÛLÉ MILL
PREIZE GATE
Rue de la Vieille-Ronde
Rue de l'Arche-de-Noé
Rue des Tournelles
Rue des Carreaux
BROCE-AUX-JUIFS
Rue du Cloître-St.-Pierre
Meldançon Canal
ST.-JACQUES GATE
Rue St.-Jacques
ARTAUD GATE
Rue de la Cité
Rue de St.-Loup
BISHOP'S GATE
Rue du Cloître-St.-Etienne
JAILLARD MILL
Molinc Canal
GROYE S·1250

villages, and monasteries have multiplied, surrounded by tilled fields and pastures where sheep and cattle graze. Immediately outside the city walls lie fields and gardens belonging to the inhabitants of Troyes itself.

An incoming visitor to the fair enters the city by one of the gates of the commercial quarter—from the west, the Porte de Paris or the Porte d'Auxerre; from the north, the Porte de la Madeleine or the Porte de Preize; from the south, the Porte de Cronciaus. The sand-colored city wall[1] is twenty feet high and eight feet thick, faced with rough-cut limestone blocks of varying sizes, around a core of rock rubble. Above it rise the roofs, chimneys, and church spires of the city. One crosses the dry moat by a drawbridge, passing through a double-leaf iron door flanked by a pair of watchtowers, powerful little forts connected by three passageways, one under the road, one directly above it and one on the level of the wall. Spiraling flights of stone steps lead from the towers to the vaulted interiors.

A party entering the Porte de Paris finds itself in the newest part of the city, the business quarter west of the Rû Cordé, a canal created by a diversion of the Seine. A hundred yards to the right rises the Viscount's Tower,[2] originally the stronghold of the count's chief deputy. The Viscount's post has gradually evolved into a hereditary sinecure, at present shared by three families. The tower is a mere anachronism. Nearby, in a triangular open space, is the grain market, with a hospital named after St.-Bernard on its northern side.

Two main thoroughfares run east and west in the commercial section—the Rue de l'Epicerie, which changes its name several times before it reaches the canal, and to the north the Grande Rue, leading from the Porte de Paris to the bridge that crosses into the old city. It is thirty feet wide and paved with stone.[3] The Grande Rue is appreciably



Cats' Alley (Ruelle des Chats), Troyes' most picturesque street, looks today much as it did in the thirteenth century, barely seven feet wide, with housetops leaning against each other.

broader and straighter than the side streets, where riders and even pedestrians sometimes must squeeze past each other. The Ruelle des Chats—"Cats' Alley"—is seven feet wide. Even on the Grande Rue one has a sense of buildings crowding in, the three- and four-story frame houses and shops shouldering into the street, their corbelled upper stories looming irregularly above. Façades are painted red and blue, or faced with tile, often ornamented with paneling, moldings, and sawtooth. Colorful signboards hang over the doors of taverns, and tradesmen's symbols identify the shops. The shops open to the street, the lowered fronts of their stalls serving as display counters for merchandise—boots, belts, purses, knives, spoons, pots and pans, paternosters (rosaries). Inside, shopkeepers and apprentices are visible at work.

Most traffic is on foot—artisans in bright-colored tunics and hose, housewives in gowns and mantles, their hair covered by white wimples, merchants in fur-trimmed coats, here and there the black or brown habit of a priest or monk. Honking geese flutter from under the hooves of horses. Dogs and cats lurk in the doorways or forage for food with the pigeons.

The streets have been freshly cleaned for the fair, but the smells of the city are still present. Odors of animal dung and garbage mingle with pleasanter aromas from cookshops and houses. The most pungent districts are those of the fish merchants, the linen makers, the butchers and, worst of all, the tanners. In the previous century the expanding business of the tanners and butchers resulted in a typical urban problem. The bed of the Vienne became choked with refuse. Count Henry the Generous had a canal dug from the upper Seine, increasing the flow into the Vienne and flushing out the pollution. But the butchers' and tanners' district

remains the most undesirable neighborhood in town. Cities such as Troyes legislate to make householders and shopkeepers clean the streets in front of their houses, and to forbid emptying waste water into the streets. But such ordinances are only half effective. Rain compounds the problem by turning the unpaved streets to mud.

The heart of the fair district surrounds the church of St.-Jean-au-Marché, a warren of little streets where the money-changers have their headquarters, and where the public scales and the guards' quarters are located. This area, half asleep all spring, is now humming. Horses clomp, hammers bang, and bales thud. Commands and curses resound in several languages, as sacks and bales from the ends of the earth are unloaded—savory spices, shimmering silks, pearls from the bottom of the sea, and wagonload after wagonload of rich wool cloth.

Fair merchants can lodge where they wish, but fellow-countrymen tend to flock together—businessmen from Montpellier on the Rue de Montpellier, near the Porte de Paris; those from Valencia, Barcelona, and Larida in the Rue Clef-du-Bois; Venetians in the Rue du Petit Credo, where the count's provost has his lodge; Lombards in the Rue de la Trinité.

Tents and stalls are used only for the sale of secondary merchandise. The main transactions, in wool, cloth and spices, take place in large permanent halls scattered throughout the fair quarter, whose limits are carefully marked to insure collection of tolls from merchants. Several of the great cloth manufacturing cities have their halls in the Rue de l'Epicerie—Arras, Lucca, Ypres, Douai, Montauban. The hall of Rouen is in the Rue du Chaperon, that of Provins between the Rue de la Tannerie and the Commandery of the Knights Templar.

Near the canal, the Rue de l'Epicerie passes the ancient and powerful convent of Notre-Dame-aux-Nonnains and becomes the Rue Notre-Dame. Here, in stalls maintained by the convent, the Great Fire of 1188 began. To the south is the twenty-year-old Dominican friary (the Franciscans are outside the town, near the Porte de Preize). A little to the north, at the end of the Grand Rue, the Pont des Bains crosses the canal into the ancient Gallo-Roman citadel. On the right bank, above the bridge, are the public baths, where the traveler can scrub off the dust of the roads.

Across the canal lies the old city, still enclosed within its dilapidated Roman walls. Wealthy families live there, along with numerous clergy, officials serving the count, Jews in the old ghetto, some of the working class, and the poor. In the southwest corner of the square enclosure, its back to the canal, stands a large stone building, the count's palace. The great hall rises over an undercroft, with the living quarters in the rear. In front of the palace stands the pillory, a wooden structure resembling a short ladder, which often pinions a petty thief or crooked tradesman. The count's own church of St.-Etienne forms an "L" with the palace, so that he can hear masses from a platform at the end of his hall. Immediately to the north is the hospital founded by Count Henry the Generous, and at the northwest extremity of the old city rises the castle, a grim rectangular tower surrounded by a courtyard with a forbidding wall. The ancient donjon of the counts, the tower is today used as a ceremonial hall for knightings, feasts, and tourneys.

Near the center of the old city is the Augustinian abbey of St.-Loup, named after the bishop who parleyed with Attila. Originally it lay outside the walls, but following the Viking attack in 891, Abbot Adelerin moved the establishment into the city, St.-Loup's remains included. The Rue de

la Cité, principal street of the old town, separates the abbey from the cathedral, which is at the southeast corner of the enclosure. Workmen are busy on the scaffolding that sheathes the mass of masonry. A huge crane, standing inside the masonry shell, drops its line over the wall. Masons' lodges and workshops crowd the space between the cathedral and the bishop's palace.

Near the old donjon is the ghetto. Well-to-do Jewish families live in the Rue de Vieille Rome, just south of the castle wall; farther south, others inhabit the Broce-aux-Juifs, an area enclosed by lanes on four sides.

This is Troyes, an old town but a new city, a feudal and ecclesiastical capital, and major center of the Commercial Revolution of the Middle Ages.