

JOHN NIXON, JR.

Louis IX (1214–70)

Both king and saint, he handsomely excelled
 In politics, theology. However,
 When there was competition for his talents,
 He designated Blanche, his mother, regent
 While he marched forth, defender of the church
 Against its foe, the crescent militant.
 Indeed, he died near Tunis—though of plague,
 Not Arab scimitars.

Between crusades,
 For heresy on the domestic front,
 The royal remedy was: plunge your sword
 Into the non-believing belly, far
 As it will go. One gets the vivid picture—
 Triumphant picity, sheathing its blade;
 Unorthodoxy, writhing on the ground.
 With saints like that, was there demand for devils?