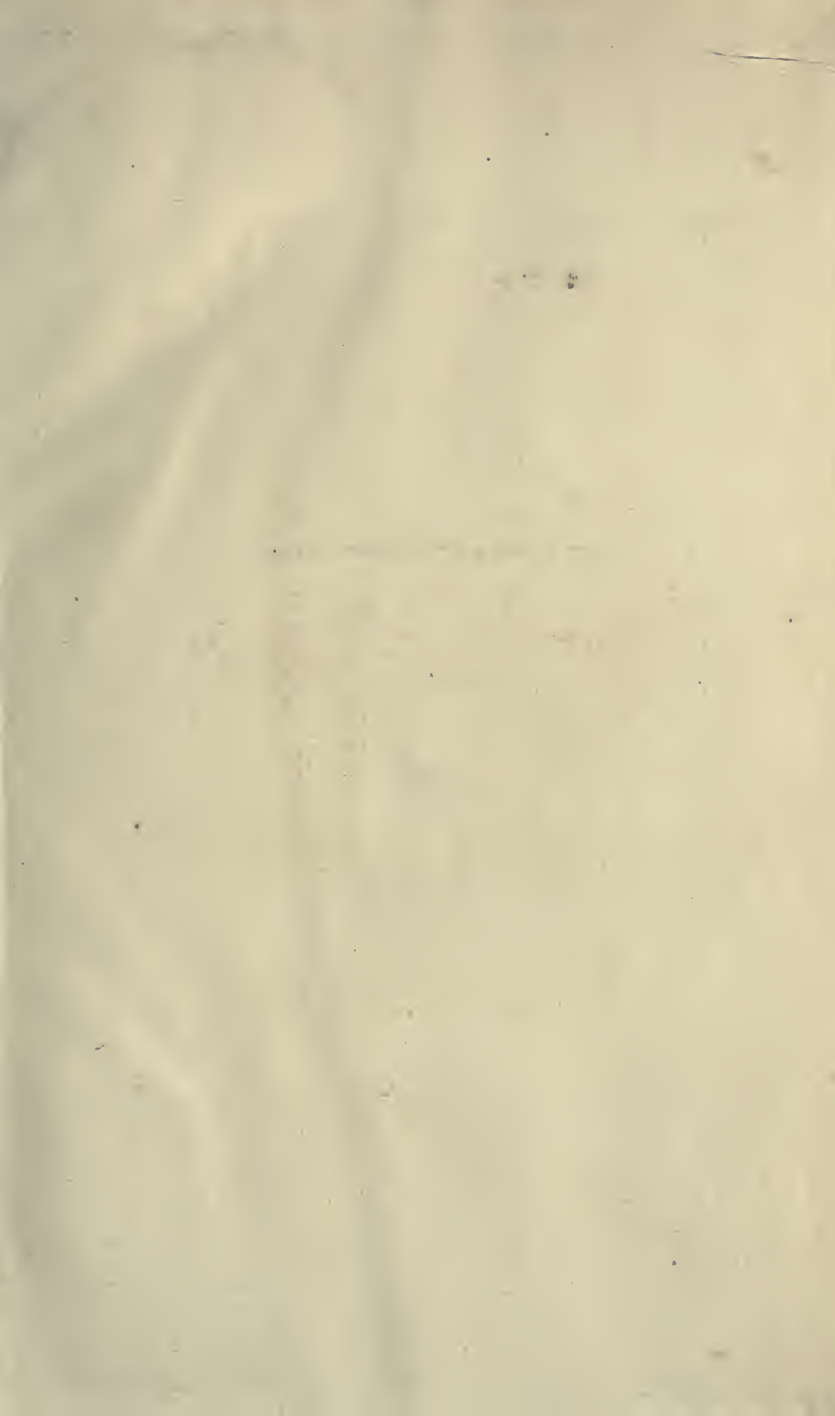


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# THE FAVOURITES OF HENRY OF NAVARRE

*blue*

BY  
LE PETIT HOMME ROUGE *pseud.*  
AUTHOR OF  
"THE COURT OF THE TUILERIES, 1852-1870"

*E. A. Vizetelly ✓*  
" "



WITH SIX PORTRAITS

LINE OF  
CALIFORNIA

LONDON  
CHATTO & WINDUS

1910

“ Lightly from fair to fair he flew,  
And loved to plead, lament, and sue ;  
Suit lightly won, and short-lived pain,—  
For monarchs seldom sigh in vain.”—*Marmion*.

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ANNEX 1111

THE FAVOURITES OF  
THE FRENCH COURT

THE FAVOURITES OF  
HENRY OF NAVARRE





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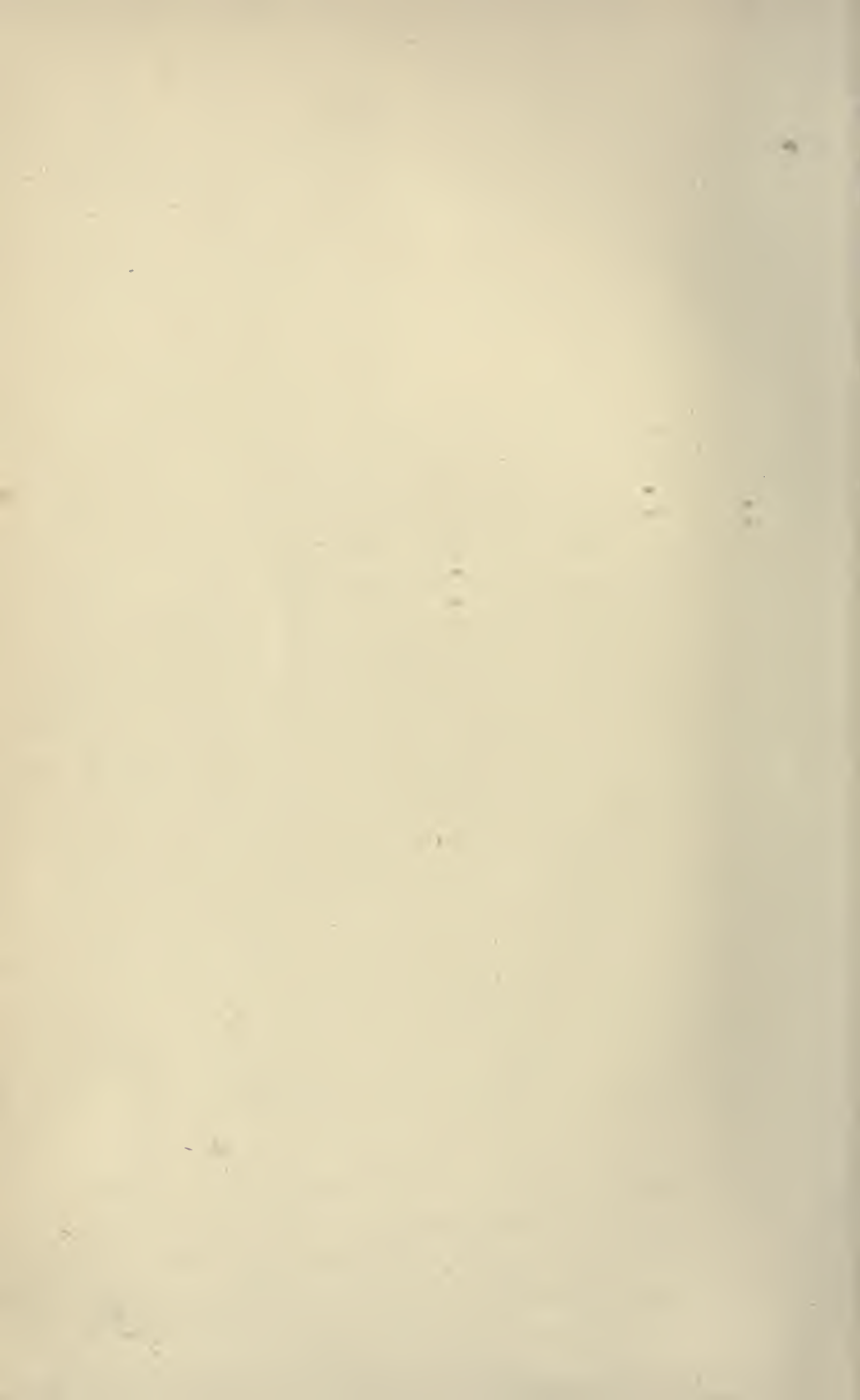


HENRY IV., KING OF FRANCE AND NAVARRE, IN 1595.

À  
LA DAME DE MES PENSÉES

“ L’amour est une passion à laquelle  
toutes les autres doivent obéissance.”

*Henri IV. à la Reine Élisabeth,  
le 26 Octobre, 1596.*



## PREFACE

THREE years ago the reviewers and the public gave a flattering reception to a book written by *Le Petit Homme Rouge* on the Court of the Tuileries in the days of the Second French Empire. He now offers a work in some respects similar to and in others different from his previous effort. For instance, this volume contains no elaborate descriptions of Court life and ceremonial, though these are incidentally dealt with; and while, on the other hand, monarchs, nobles, and statesmen again through *Le Petit Homme Rouge's* pages, they are men of long ago, offering frequently but little resemblance to those about whom the author wrote in his earlier work. This time, moreover, his theme is more particularly Woman in connection with History. He holds the view that, although women have been debarred by the Salic Law from reigning in France, they have really exercised more power and influence there than in any other country. It is, indeed, certain that the fair and frail creatures, with whom one or another Sovereign became infatuated in the days of the old monarchy, often proved, for good or for evil, important factors in the national life, and that due account of them and their influence should therefore be taken by every student who desires to arrive at a right understanding of French history. The present volume, then, treats of the Favourites of that famous monarch, Henri de Navarre; and although he was a ruler who never deliberately entrusted the authority vested in himself to either wife or mistress, the readers of this book will probably recognize that his personal career and the fortunes of his Kingdom were profoundly influenced by his numerous entanglements with women.

The author believes that he has gathered together in a volume of moderate length a large amount of information hitherto scattered here and there, and often not easily accessible, while at times it has only been conveyed in works overburdened with details that offer little if any interest to the British reader. At the same time, there have been hitherto very few books limited to the Favourites of Henri de Navarre, yet also professing to give fairly detailed accounts of all of them. An anonymous volume of the kind was issued at Amsterdam in 1743, and nearly fifty years ago M. de Lescure produced in Paris a more elaborate one, which is frequently quoted in this present work. It must be said, however, that latter-day research in many directions has demonstrated the inaccuracy of a good many of Lescure's facts and a good many of his conclusions. At the present time his book is somewhat similar to the curate's egg, that is, "excellent in parts" only; for, since it was written, public and private archives have disclosed many of their secrets, and documents have come to light invalidating much which was once regarded as being probable if not altogether beyond dispute.

In the following pages the author has availed himself of this great advance in our historical knowledge, and hopes to have attained to a higher degree of accuracy than was formerly possible; whilst, by carefully examining and sifting evidence, he thinks that he may have elucidated certain points which had hitherto remained more or less obscure.

He has not forgotten that his book is intended for the British public, and although he has much to say about women who were frail as well as fair, and claims the rights to which every conscientious historical writer is entitled—for historical writing is valueless unless it adequately sets forth the truth—he does not think that he has written a single word to which any reasonable exception can be taken. On the other hand, he has not indulged in moralizing, for he holds that the facts he recounts speak amply for themselves, and that his readers

will easily draw their own conclusions from them. The book makes no claim whatever to be a complete history of Henri de Navarre's career and rule; but, in order that the King's position at one and another period may be the better understood, there are not infrequent glances at political and military affairs. Moreover, the writer has had to refer incidentally to a very large number of characters, with a good many of whom the English reader is scarcely familiar. There are instances also when one or another personage, after figuring for a while under some particular title, suddenly becomes known by another; and, further, more or less important questions of relationship occasionally present themselves. The author has therefore been at some pains to supply, either in his text or in his footnotes, a variety of information respecting those subordinate characters, in order that no confusion may arise in the reader's mind.

That said, *Le Petit Homme Rouge* respectfully submits his work to the judgment of the critics and the public, in the hope that it may meet with some at least of the favour which was so generously extended to his previous volume.

PARIS,

*Easter, 1910.*





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# THE FAVOURITES OF HENRY OF NAVARRE

## I

### INTRODUCTION

The Popularity of Henri de Navarre—His amorous Nature—His Parentage and Ancestry—His Birth, Appearance, Habits and Early Years—His Marriage with Marguerite de Valois—Marguerite's striking Beauty—Marguerite and the Duke de Guise—Wedding of Henri and Marguerite—The Massacre of St. Bartholomew—Marguerite and the Massacre—Guise and Coligny—The suggested Annulment of Marguerite's Marriage—Predicament of Henri and Condé—Henri as "Prince Hal"—Henri and Alençon seek to Escape—They are foiled by Marguerite—A second Plot for Escape—La Mole and Coconas—Marguerite's alleged Love for La Mole—His Trial and Execution—The strange Legend of the Severed Heads—Henri and Alençon threatened—Marguerite helps her Husband—Another unsuccessful Scheme for Escape—Death of King Charles IX.

A GREAT King is not necessarily a popular one. For instance both Francis I and Louis XIV rank among the most remarkable men who ruled France in her monarchical days, yet neither acquired a shred of popularity among the millions under his sway. But the same cannot be said of the monarch whom the French call "Henri Quatre," but who is generally known to present-day Englishmen as "Henry of Navarre," an appellation which properly belongs only to the earlier part of his strenuous career. Macaulay helped to popularize it, however, and there is perhaps a particular reason why it should have prevailed among us. Broadly speaking, ours is a Protestant country, and "Henry of Navarre" was the champion of Protestantism; whereas "Henri Quatre" was a Catholic King.

Even in these republican days that sovereign's memory may well appeal to many Frenchmen. A forgotten eighteenth-century writer, Gudin de la Brenellerie, wrote of him that he was

“Le seul Roi dont le pauvre ait gardé la mémoire”—

a famous line, the authorship of which is little known and which is almost always misquoted, the practice being to substitute *peuple* for *pauvre*. But, as Gudin was wont to explain on occasions when that error was perpetrated in his presence, the *peuple* (which, in his time, meant the nation, not merely the inferior or working classes) had reason to remember other monarchs in a favourable sense, among them being Louis XII, on whom, as will be recollected, the appellation of “Père du Peuple,” was bestowed. When, however, Gudin penned the line which alone, of all his writings, has survived, he was thinking, he said, of Henri's desire to improve the lot of his lowlier subjects, and introduce plenty into their homes, a desire he expressed by the wish that the humblest peasant in France might have a fowl in his pot on Sundays.

But it is not merely on account of Henri's kindly thoughts for the poor that his memory has remained green in France. It is because he was the living synthesis of the French race in all that appeals to the imagination. He was a skilful, brave, victorious, tolerant and clement monarch, a good King and a great one, and also, pre-eminently a Man. His passions and failings contributed as much as his virtues to his popularity. A King who can be as intrepid, as hardy, as adventurous, as fond of women, as big a sportsman, drinker, gambler, jester, and railer as men who are not Kings, appeals to the primal instincts; and one can well understand the vogue enjoyed by the song—

“Vive Henri quatre !  
Vive ce roi vaillant,  
Ce diable-à-quatre,  
Qui eut le triple talent  
De boire, et de battre,  
Et d'être vert-galant !”

Henri's amorousness, his perpetual worship at the shrine of beauty, has helped, perhaps, more than anything else, to fix

his personality in the popular mind. What Lescure wrote many years ago is still true to-day. Ask an average Frenchman who Sully was, and the chances are that he will hesitate to answer. But ask him who was "la belle Gabrielle," and he will reply both immediately and accurately. The names of many of the greatest ministers of Kings are forgotten, but the names of those Kings' mistresses abide. In the case of Henri IV, it must be conceded that he did not surrender the reins of government to any woman, however great might be his attachment to her. He was neither a Louis XIV nor a Louis XV. He could refuse the requests of Gabrielle d'Estrées, and he placed Henriette d'Entragues under arrest.

One day Henri asked the ambassador of the Emperor Rodolph II, whether that monarch had any mistresses. "If he has," the envoy replied, "they are kept secret." "It is true," the King retorted, "that some men have not sufficient great qualities to cast over their failings." After he had selected Pierre Mathieu to write a history of himself for his son (the future Louis XIII), Mathieu read to him one day a passage respecting his partiality for women. "What is the use of revealing that weakness?" asked Henri. "It will be a lesson for your son," said Mathieu; whereupon the King after a pause replied, "Yes, yes, the whole truth must be told. If you were to remain silent about my failings, people would not believe you respecting the rest. Well, set them down, then, so that my son may know and avoid them."

Henri's love-affairs were probably more numerous than those of any other King of France, not even excepting Louis XV. The escapades of his early youth are not worthy of mention, but in the appendix to the present volume will be found a list of the many fair women who appear to have attracted his attention from the time of his marriage onward. In the body of the work chiefly those who really exercised an influence on his career will be spoken of, and they, as it happens, are numerous enough. It is not intended that this volume should be either a complete biography of the great soldier-king or a full study of his times, and in no sense will it be a panegyric; but by the light of what will be set forth—incidents neglected by grave historians as beneath their notice,

or so altered or disfigured by novelists, playwrights, and others, as to have little likeness to the truth—it may be easier, perhaps, to understand one of the most remarkable and interesting personalities the world has known, as well as some of the most momentous changes which marked his period.

Henri, Prince of Bearn, later King of Navarre, and ultimately King of France, was born at the château of Pau on December 12, 1553. His father, Antoine de Bourbon, was one of three brothers—first himself, secondly Charles, Cardinal de Bourbon, and thirdly Louis, Prince de Condé—who traced their line and kinship with the Royal House of France back to Robert de Clermont, youngest son of St. Louis, and husband of Beatrice of Burgundy, heiress, through her mother, of the old Lords of Bourbon, who on their side were descended from one of the captains of Pépin le Bref, Charlemagne's father. Robert de Clermont assumed the name of Bourbon on his marriage, and in 1327 the barony, for such it had hitherto been, was raised to the rank of a duchy. The Dukes de Bourbon played conspicuous parts in national affairs during the reigns of Charles V, Charles VI, and Charles VII, and at the time of Francis I the house rose to universal celebrity by reason of the chequered career of that great soldier, Duke Charles, best known as the Constable de Bourbon.

Antoine, the father of the Prince who became Henri IV of France, bore the title of Duke de Vendôme, when in October, 1548, he espoused Princess Jeanne d'Albret, daughter of Henri II, King of Navarre, by his marriage with Marguerite d'Angoulême, sister of Francis I, and author of *The Heptameron*. Eight years previously, Jeanne, then not yet in her teens, had been married, almost perforce, to William III, Duke of Cleves, with the object of cementing an alliance between that Prince and Francis I; but although the latter insisted that the Duke should be bedded with his child-bride in presence of the whole court, in order that the marriage might be reputed indissoluble, it was never consummated, but was obligingly annulled by Pope Paul III at the instigation of Francis himself, when in 1543 the Duke of Cleves deserted his cause for that of the Emperor Charles V. Jeanne's subsequent



marriage with Antoine de Bourbon did not prove a happy one, though at the time of the wedding her satisfaction appeared boundless. "I never saw so joyous a bride," her cousin, the Dauphin, afterwards Henri II of France, wrote to Constable de Montmorency, "she does naught but laugh."\*

Antoine, then thirty years of age, was a very good-natured man, easy in his ways, generous to a fault, possessed of great personal bravery, and not without claims to some little culture if he were indeed the author of the various songs and such like which have been ascribed to him. But at the same time he evinced no strength of character. Unstable in religion, irresolute in policy, fickle in his affections, he became, as he advanced in life, more and more inclined to dissolute courses, much to the chagrin of his consort. She, twenty years old at the time of this second marriage, was inclined to extravagance, but her intelligence was far higher than her husband's, and her character was all energy and resolution, which she largely transmitted to her son.

Henri, however, inherited his qualities and failings from many sources. Personal bravery had long been conspicuous among the Bourbons, and had also proved a distinguishing trait of the Prince's grandfather on the maternal side—Henri (II) d'Albret, King of Navarre. The literary faculty, tinged with poetry and romance, which asserted itself so often in his correspondence, was derived not only from his parents, but also, and more particularly perhaps, from his grandmother, the Marguerite of the *Heptameron*, *Le Myrouer de l'Ame pêcheresse*, *Les Marguerites de la Marguerite*, *La Coche*, and many fugitive pieces. Through her, too, Henri was a Valois, and therefore not deficient in a sort of diplomatic *rouerie*. However, Marguerite's brother, Francis I, had been the most chivalrous Prince, and likewise one of the most dissolute, of his times, and those traits displayed themselves in her grandson. But the amorous side of Henri's nature was not derived solely from Valois sources, for both his father, Antoine de Bourbon, and his grandfather, Henri II of Navarre, were men of strong carnal passions. Briefly, the houses of Valois, Bourbon, and

\* An amusing anecdote of their honeymoon tour figures in the *Heptameron* (Tale 66).

Albret, and also that of the superb, daring, and disputatious Gastons and Phœbuses of Foix,\* combined to produce the qualities and failings which distinguished the Prince to whom, as we have said, Jeanne d'Albret gave birth at Pau in the winter of 1553.†

She had repaired thither at her father's request. Some forty years previously Navarre proper had been conquered by Ferdinand the Catholic, and annexed to Spain, and although the Albrets still called themselves Kings of Navarre, they only governed the principality of Bearn, a part of Bigorre, and the county of Foix on the French side of the Pyrenees. Pau and Nérac were their usual residences, the château of the former locality having been considerably enlarged and embellished by Henri d'Albret and his consort Marguerite d'Angoulême. It is not quite certain in what room of this château Jeanne d'Albret gave birth to her son. Some authorities believe that the apartment was the old bed-chamber of the Kings of Navarre on the first floor, a room which, in Napoleonic times, became known as the "Chambre de l'Empereur"; but the most accredited opinion is that a second-floor room, called the "Chambre d'Henri IV," was the scene of the accouchement. The child's cradle, fashioned out of the carapace of a tortoise, is still preserved there.

Henri d'Albret, brave and hardy, whatever his faults may have been, expressed to his daughter a particular desire that she should not present him with any "glum and tearful grand-child," and in order that such might not prove the case, he promised, says Favyn's old narrative, to give her both a will he had made in her favour and a gold chain long enough to encircle her neck five-and-twenty times, provided she would

\* Catherine de Foix, the last heiress of that house, was by her marriage with Jean d'Albret the great grandmother of Henri IV.

† He was her second son. The first, third, and fourth, Henri Duke de Beaumont, Louis Charles Count de La Marche, and another Charles, all died in infancy, the two former from the effects of accidents. Besides those four sons, on February 7, 1558, Jeanne gave birth, in Paris, to a daughter, Catherine, who was reared in the Huguenot faith and, unlike her brother Henri, never departed from it. On January 30, 1599, she espoused Henri de Lorraine, Duke de Bar, and died at Nancy on February 13, 1604. She will be occasionally referred to in our narrative.

sing a Bearnese air when the decisive moment arrived. And Favyn assures us that the brave Princess Jeanne complied with that request, and gave birth to her child while chanting the local Canticle of Our Lady at the End of the Bridge,\* a canticle which began as follows:—

“Nouste Dame deü cap deü poun,  
 Adyudat me a d'aquest' hore!  
 Pregats aü Diu deü ceü,  
 Qu'em bouille bié delioura leü!  
 D'un maynat qu'am hassie lou doun;  
 Tout d'inqu'aü haüt dous mounts l'implore.  
 Nouste Dame deü cap deü poun,  
 Adyudat me a d'aquest' hore!” †

And as the child came into the world, says Favyn, “the good Henri, full of indescribable delight, placed the gold chain about the neck of the Princess, his daughter, and in her hand the box in which was his will, saying to her the while, ‘*These* are yours, my daughter; but *this* belongs to me.’ Whereupon, taking up the new-born babe in his long robes, he carried it to his own chamber, where he had it attended to. This little Prince came into the world without wailing or weeping, and the first sustenance he received ‘was from the hand of the King, his grandfather, who, taking a clove of garlic, rubbed it on his little lips, which sucked the juice of that theriac of Gascony; after which the King, taking his gold cup, poured a drop of wine into his mouth, and he swallowed it right well. Whereupon the good King, being full of delight, began to say, in presence of all the noblemen and ladies who were in his chamber, ‘Thou wilt be a real Bearnese!’”

Little Henri was reared in a simple and hardy manner, which laid the foundation of a vigorous constitution, though the latter was threatened early in his youth when his father took him to the Court of France, where Charles IX had recently succeeded his brother Francis II. The lad did not

\* So called from an oratory whither the women of Pau repaired to pray for a happy accouchement.

† “Our Lady at the end of the bridge, help me at this present hour! Pray to the God of Heaven, that He will be pleased to deliver me speedily! May He grant me the gift of a son; all, to the very mountain-tops, implore Him. Our Lady at the end of the bridge, help me at this present hour!”

grow up absolutely handsome, for he had the Valois nose—that of Francis I and Marguerite d'Angoulême, narrower, however, and also longer and more beaklike than theirs. But his lips were red and his cheeks glowed with the blood of health until campaigning bronzed them to such a degree that periods came when he was as dark as a mulatto. Beneath an abundant crop of black wavy hair, which was carelessly brushed backward and which whitened at an early age, the brow was both broad and lofty, the rest of the long face tapering to the well-formed chin. A somewhat derisive smile, which at times became quite sarcastic, played round the mouth, and the young fellow's nature looked out from his somewhat deep-set, but large, luminous, and liquid eyes—eyes as expressive as any man ever possessed, eyes which in turn sparkled with raillery, flashed with courage and ardour, or softened into tenderness and fascinated with an appeal which very few women could resist. It happened, however, that his eyesight began to fail him before he was fifty years old, and although we think, no spectacléd portrait of him exists, we know, by contemporary writers, that he was compelled to wear glasses.

Quick and vivacious in his movements, Henri loved every form of exercise, and scarcely knew fatigue; he paid little if any attention to the laws of health, was careless of his attire and even of personal cleanliness, and was very irregular in his meals, though at times he ate inordinately and was extremely fond of rich dishes, in such wise that before many years elapsed he was troubled by digestive complaints, which necessitated the habitual use of the waters of Pougues.

His grandfather died in 1555, whereupon Jeanne d'Albret became Queen, and Antoine de Bourbon, King of Navarre. A great religious conflict—the struggle between the Catholic and Huguenot elements in France—was impending. In 1558 Antoine went over to the Reformed Religion, which he subsequently abjured. Jeanne, on the other hand, remained—at all events, outwardly—a Catholic until her husband was mortally wounded at the siege of Rouen in 1562. After his death, assuming the entire government of her states, she, in her turn, espoused the Huguenot faith, closed the Catholic convents, forbade Catholic processions, and prescribed compulsory and gratuitous

elementary education wherever she held sway. A bitter contest ensued, the Catholic lords of Bigorre, Bearn, and Foix called in Catholic forces under Montluc and Terride; but Jeanne, helped by Elizabeth of England and her late husband's brother, the Prince de Condé, got an army together and placed it under the command of that same Gabriel de Lorges, Count de Montgomery, who had mortally wounded Henri II of France at a tournament. Montgomery drove the Catholics from Jeanne's possessions, and virtually all the lords who had risen against her were massacred at the Château of Pau.

She had previously recovered possession of her young son, Henri, who as already mentioned had been sent to the French court, and she reared him in the Reformed faith, selecting as his tutor one Florent Chrétien, a native of Orleans, who was both a zealous Huguenot and a poet, one whose chief gift was irony, which he employed skilfully enough in satirizing his contemporary Ronsard. Whatever may have been young Henri's natural predisposition to wit and raillery it is allowable to believe that it was fostered by Florent Chrétien. The Prince acquired a good knowledge of history and took considerable interest in literature. We know that he read *Amadis de Gaule* and became acquainted in later years with Honoré d'Urfé's *Astrée*. In Bearn he gleaned a knowledge of the Spanish language, and in Paris, among the entourage of Catherine de' Medici, he learnt to speak Italian.

He was carried by his mother to La Rochelle when that port became the headquarters and chief stronghold of the Huguenots. Louis de Condé, Admiral Coligny, and Count François III de la Rochefoucauld were there at the time, and the young Prince received his first lessons in the art of war. At last, however, by the crafty diplomacy of Catherine de' Medici, who so largely governed her son Charles IX, a pacification was arrived at, and many of the Huguenot leaders were attracted to Paris, among them being the young Prince of Bearn, to whom Charles, at his mother's instigation, proposed to give his sister, the Princess Marguerite de Valois, in marriage.

That was not easily accomplished for the Pope was at first strongly opposed to the union of a Catholic Princess with a

Huguenot. Jeanne d'Albret, who repaired to Paris to conduct in part the negotiations for the match, was not opposed to it, but she was anxious that, directly the ceremony was over, her son should flee in all haste from "that pestilential court" of the Louvre—"where," said she, "the women so shamelessly make advances to the men,"—and carry his young bride into the salutary atmosphere of Bearn. "She [Marguerite] is beautiful and very intelligent and passing graceful," Jeanne wrote to her son, "but she has been bred in the most accursed and corrupt company there ever was. . . . For nought in this world would I have you remain there. . . . That is why I desire you should marry, and that you and your wife should withdraw from that corruption, which I already believed to be great, and find to be greater still."

However, midst the negotiations and preparations for the wedding, Jeanne d'Albret died. She was only forty-four years old, and it was surmised that her death had been brought about by means of some poisoned gloves, which she had purchased of one of the Italian purveyors to the Court; but her early demise was really due to pneumonia and pleurisy. However, her death was regarded as an evil omen in respect to the wedding which was about to take place.

Both in Bearn and in Paris, the bridegroom, then only half-way through his twentieth year, had already given proof of a sensual nature, a predisposition to sexual passion which was to last all his life. His destined bride, born May 14, 1553, and thus his senior by some seven months, was ripe for marriage,\* tall, superbly built, and possessed of great powers of fascination, a grace which was half proud and half gentle. She had the black hair of her father, Henri II of France,† a most beautiful snowy brow, a dazzling complexion, tender languorous eyes, and a small inviting mouth, the nose, however, being somewhat large and fleshy. Withal, she was a beautiful woman, one of whom a young Prince, in all the ardour of youth, might well

\* An attempt, in which Sir Francis Walsingham was concerned, had previously been made to marry Marguerite to the ill-fated Dom Sebastian of Portugal.

† Fair hair becoming the fashion, she ended by wearing fair wigs, and kept several footmen whose long fair hair was cropped periodically to supply the material for the wigs in question.

have become enamoured. But it is asserted that she had no particular attraction for Henri, and on her side, though she had some friendly feeling for him, she had no love.

It is difficult to say what was the cause of Henri's alleged coldness, but it is virtually certain that Marguerite's dislike for the match was due to the circumstance that her heart was already given to Henri de Lorraine, at first Prince de Joinville and later Duke de Guise; in a word the famous "King of the Barricades" murdered at Blois in 1588, by the order of King Henri III. Numerous historians have written respecting that attachment, and the famous scandalous pamphlet, *Le Divorce Satyrique* asserts that, apart from Henri de Guise, Marguerite had other favoured lovers prior to her marriage: for instance, M. d'Entragues,\* M. de Charry of the King's bodyguard, and the Prince de Martigues. She, in her memoirs, seeks to convey the impression that her heart was never given to Guise; but, reared as she had been at a court where dissimulation was an habitual practice, being essential for the enjoyment of comparative freedom and often indeed for the preservation of one's life, she was one of those who, long before the days of Talleyrand, held speech to be a vehicle for disguising one's thoughts.

Guise, for his part, was certainly enamoured of her, and secretly aspired to her hand. Little more than one-and-twenty years of age at this time, but daring, energetic, unscrupulous, masterful, with handsome face, anxious brow, haughty glance, sardonic laugh, and imperious gestures, his hand ever ready to grasp the hilt of his sword, this ambitious scion of Lorraine lived at the Court of France encompassed by dislike and distrust. Catherine de' Medici, who foresaw his threatening aspirations to the royal crown, strove to thwart them; and on the day when Guise allowed it to be seen that he loved the Princess Marguerite and desired to wed her, he suddenly found himself in such danger that to save not only his liberty but perhaps his life as well, he had to renounce his pretensions and strive to conciliate his Sovereign and the Queen-mother by contracting another marriage, one with Catherine of Cleves,

\* Not François de Balzac d'Entragues who became father of Henriette d'Entragues, Henri IV's so-called "wicked mistress," but his younger brother Charles, called "le bel Entragues" and also "Entraguet."

widow of Antoine de Croy, Prince de Porcien, a bold, diplomatic, and amorous lady, who became one of the most fruitful of wives, bearing him, indeed, no fewer than fourteen children in the space of eighteen years.

That union which seemed destined to separate Guise from Marguerite, tended in reality to bring them more closely together, for as a married man he was allowed more opportunity of approaching the Princess than he had hitherto enjoyed. She was certainly no saint, though one may agree with one of her latest biographers, M. Merki, that her notorious reputation for unchastity, comparable only to that of Messalina, has been largely due to the effusions of her avowed enemies, pamphleteers and pasquinade-writers, some of them bigoted Huguenots—and the Huguenot was often a far greater bigot than the Catholic—while others were more particularly partisans of her husband, men whose zeal for him degenerated at times into unscrupulousness and mendacity. Nevertheless, Dupleix, the historian of Louis XIII, a writer who was attached to Marguerite's household for some seven years, speaks openly of her *liaison* with Guise even before her marriage.

According to her own account she offered virtually no resistance to her union with the young Prince of Bearn, who by his mother's death became King of Navarre.

When Catherine de' Medici first spoke to Marguerite about this match she answered that she could have no other will or choice than hers (Catherine's), but she begged her mother to remember that she was "extremely Catholic." Further, she told M. de Méru that it would greatly displease her to have to marry some one who was not of the same religion as herself. Apart, however, from expressing those conscientious scruples, she indicates in her memoirs that she soon resigned herself to the alliance, and expatiates with evident pleasure on the regal splendour of her attire at the wedding, and the extreme pomp which marked the whole ceremony.

There is, of course, a well-known story to the effect that in the church, Marguerite hesitated at the supreme moment of responding "yes" to the question whether she would take Henri to be her husband. She remained silent, unable to articulate, we are told, and Charles IX, roughly laying his hand



upon her head, absolutely compelled her to bow it in token of assent. That tale will be found in Davila's *Storia delle Guerre civili di Francia*, first published at Venice in 1630—that is, fifty-eight years after Marguerite's marriage. Davila, moreover, was born four years subsequently to that event, of which he only acquired hearsay knowledge when, in his early teens, he became a page of Catherine de' Medici, then near her death. In no contemporary French work of any standing is there mention of any such incident as Davila relates. To us it seems a very improbable one, for the Church had quieted the bride's religious scruples, and "la Reine Margot" was not one of those shrinking nervous women whom the thought of matrimony upsets.

It was on August 18, 1572, that those fatal nuptials were celebrated. In spite of numerous warnings the Huguenot lords had flocked to Paris for the occasion. Five days later came St. Bartholomew; and thus Péréfixe wrote that young King Henri was offered his mother's death as a marriage portion, and the general massacre of his friends as a wedding entertainment.

Henri escaped death, and so did his cousin, the Prince de Condé; \* but that was not the fault of the actual perpetrators of the massacre. Although Henri de Guise had been virtually constrained to take a wife two years previously, he had beheld with keen jealousy the marriage of the King of Navarre and Marguerite de Valois. Moreover, the death of Condé would have brought him nearer to the throne he coveted, leaving, apart from the reigning monarch, only the latter's surviving brothers Alençon and Anjou \* (from neither of whom even at that date was offspring anticipated) between him and the object of his ambition. But though Catherine de' Medici was willing to use Guise as an instrument she deeply distrusted him, and if Henri de Navarre and Condé were spared it was precisely because they were Guise's enemies and obstacles in his way, men who, in the fullness of time, might stand between him and the Crown of France.

It has been asserted that the young King of Navarre was

\* Henri I, son of Louis I.

† Afterwards Henri III. Respecting Alençon see *post*, footnote p. 19.

saved on this occasion by his wife. But that is quite untrue. Her mother and the King her brother had kept her entirely ignorant of what was impending, and on that terrible night when murder burst into the palace of the Louvre, she was virtually abandoned to her own resources. She had neither power nor influence, and could do nothing for the husband whom she had so recently wedded save wish him well. Besides, however great might be her natural courage, the circumstances were so dreadful that she became distracted and terrified, alarmed for her own safety by what she either witnessed or experienced. That is well shown by her own narrative :

“Nothing of all that was said to me,” she writes. “I saw everybody in commotion, the Huguenots in despair at the wounding of the Admiral [Coligny],\* and Messieurs de Guise whispering together in fear lest the others should wish to inflict justice on them for it. The Huguenots held me in suspicion because I was a Catholic, and the Catholics because I had espoused the King of Navarre who was a Huguenot. In such wise that nobody said anything to me until the evening, when, being present at the *coucher* of the Queen, my mother, and seated on a chest near my sister of Lorraine, who looked very sad, the Queen, my mother, perceived me, and bade me go to bed. As I was courtesying to her my sister took me by the arm and stopped me, bursting into tears and saying to me ; ‘*Mon Dieu, sister, do not go !*’

“That greatly frightened me. The Queen, my mother, perceived it, and called my sister to her, and became very angry with her, forbidding her to tell me anything. My sister replied to her that there was no reason to send me to sacrifice like that, and that doubtless if they [*i.e.* the Huguenots] discovered anything they would avenge themselves on me. The Queen, my mother, replied that if it so pleased God I should come to no harm ; but that whatever might happen, I must go, for fear lest they might suspect something, which would prevent it having effect.

“I saw that they were disputing, but did not understand

\* He had been severely wounded in the forearm by a shot from an arquebuse fired at him from a window as he left the Louvre by a partisan of the Guises, named Maurevers.

their words. The Queen again roughly bade me go away to bed. My sister, bursting into tears, said good-night to me without daring to say aught else, and I went away quite overcome, distracted, without being able to imagine what there might be for me to fear. Directly I was in my closet I began to pray God that it might please Him to take me under His protection, and that He would keep me, but without knowing from what or from whom. Thereupon the King, my husband, who had got into bed sent word for me to come to bed, which I did, and found his bed surrounded by thirty or forty Huguenots, whom I did not yet know, for it was only very few days that I had been married.

“Throughout the night they did but talk of the accident which had befallen Monsieur l’Amiral [Coligny], resolving that as soon as it should be daylight they would ask the King for justice against Monsieur de Guise and that if it were not done they would do it themselves. I, for my part, had always in my heart [the recollection of] my sister’s tears, and could not sleep by reason of the apprehension into which she had thrown me, though of what I knew not. The night went by in that fashion without my closing my eyes. At daybreak the King, my husband, said that he would go to play at tennis until King Charles should awaken, resolving that he would then immediately ask him for justice. He quitted the room and all his gentlemen likewise. I, seeing that it was daylight, and believing that the danger of which my sister had spoken was past, overcome, too, by sleepiness, told my nurse to fasten the door so that I might sleep at my ease.

“An hour later, while I was fast asleep, there comes a man kicking and battering the door and crying ‘Navarre! Navarre!’ My nurse, thinking that it was the King, my husband, ran quickly to the door, and opened it for him. It was a gentleman named Monsieur de Lezan, who had [received] a sword thrust in the elbow, and a cut with a halberd on the arm, and was even yet pursued by four archers, who all came into my room after him. He, wishing to protect himself, flung himself on my bed. Feeling myself held by this man, I threw myself into the *ruelle*,\* and he after me, still holding me round the body.

\* The space between the bed and the wall.

I did not know this man, and could not tell if he had come there to insult me, or whether the archers were after him or me. We both cried out, and were as much frightened the one as the other. At last it pleased God that Monsieur de Nançay, Captain of the Guards, should come; and he, finding me in that state, could not help laughing although he had some compassion; for becoming angry with the archers for their indiscretion he made them go out, and granted me the life of the poor man who was holding me, and whom I caused to be put to bed and nursed in my closet until he was quite healed. And when I had changed my chemise, because he had covered me all over with blood, Monsieur de Nançay told me what was happening, and assured me that the King, my husband, was in the King's [Charles's] chamber, and that he would have no hurt.

“A *manteau de nuit* being thrown over me, he then took me to the room of my sister, Madame de Lorraine, where I arrived more dead than alive, and where, on entering the ante-room, all the doors of which were open, a gentleman named Bourse, while fleeing from some archers who pursued him, was pierced by the point of a halberd three steps away from me. I fell on the other side, almost fainting in the arms of Monsieur de Nançay, and fancying that the thrust had pierced us both. Having recovered slightly, I entered the little room where my sister slept. While I was there Monsieur de Miossens, first gentleman to the King, my husband,\* and Armagnac, his first valet-de-chambre, came there, seeking me to beg me to save their lives. I went and fell on my knees before the King [Charles] and the Queen, my mother, to beg those lives of them, which at last they granted me.†”

From the foregoing it will be seen that Marguerite had no hand in saving her husband. Had she taken any part in doing so she would not have failed to chronicle it.

There is no occasion for us to review at length the causes and the horrors of the St. Bartholomew massacre. All massacres

\* Henri, Baron de Miossens, was a kinsman of Henri of Navarre, being the representative of a junior branch of the House of Albret.

† In the above translation some of Marguerite's phraseology has been slightly modernised, but the full sense of the original has been preserved.

are reprehensible under whatever circumstances they occur. In respect to that of the Huguenots, impartial historians have long since ceased to regard it as having been inspired solely by religious motives, for there were powerful political motives as well. There can be no doubt that the Huguenot party threatened the French monarchy as it was then constituted, and that Catherine de' Medici trembled for the safety of the Valois throne. Hence the terrible scheme to destroy the hydra of rebellion, and possible revolution, at one fell swoop. The cause of Holy Church would likewise be served by the extirpation of a detestable heresy, but, first and foremost, the Valois dynasty, the children whom she, Catherine, both ruled and loved, would be saved.

Let it not be forgotten that horrible deeds had already been perpetrated by both parties during the religious wars. Had not three hundred confiding Catholic noblemen been massacred at a banquet in the château of Pau by the orders of Montgomery, and with the connivance of his patroness, that heroine of Protestantism, Jeanne d'Albret, the mother of Henri de Navarre? The age was one of revenge, of implacable vendettas, and neither side recoiled from massacre and murder. Personal as well as religious and political motives were often at work. The murder of Admiral Coligny was essentially an act of personal vengeance. The Guises had never forgiven the death of their father, François le Balafré, assassinated in 1563 by the Huguenot Jean Poltrot de Méré, at the instigation, they held, of Coligny.\* It is impossible to decide whether they were right or wrong in their belief. Brantôme is no great authority in such a matter, but it may be pointed out that, according to him, the last words spoken by François de Guise, "And you who are the author of it, I forgive you," were addressed directly to Coligny. Certain it is that under the searchlight of modern investigation, the Admiral no longer appears the impeccable character portrayed by zealous Protestant writers, blind to the faults of all who fought on the Huguenot side.

If we could believe the statements of Marguerite de Valois with respect to the attitude of her brother Charles IX, he

\* See Edouard Fournier's *Variétés historiques*, vol. vii.: "Interrogatoire et déposition de Jean Poltrot."

wished Coligny to be spared, as well as La Rochefoucauld, La Noue, and Téligny. But that was not to be; for if the Guises became the chief instruments of the massacre in Paris (where, by the way, they received the greatest help from the municipality), it was precisely to have an opportunity of despatching the Admiral in a spirit of filial vengeance.

Henri de Navarre and the Prince de Condé were spared, as we have already said. Guise, who was particularly mortified at finding the former escape, thereupon sought another mode of revenge. He wished the recent marriage of Henri and Marguerite to be annulled, and so far prevailed with Catherine de' Medici that she spoke to her daughter on the subject, saying that she would have her "unmarried" if, as a woman, she were not satisfied with her husband. Marguerite, according to her memoirs, answered that she did not know what her mother meant. In any case, she adds, since she had been married to Henri she intended to remain with him, for she suspected that if the others wished to part her from him it was to do him an ill turn. Dupleix, whom we previously quoted, also asserts: "I often heard Queen Marguerite declare that after she had given her affection to the King of Navarre, the Queen-mother spoke to her of loving the Duke de Guise again, to which advice, however, she would not listen, saying frankly that her heart was not of wax."

By her adroitness and good sense, veiled with an affectation of *naïveté*, Marguerite saved the situation. The idea of annulling her marriage was abandoned. On the other hand, at the moment of the massacre Henri de Navarre and Condé had to face a grim alternative, that is, choose between death and the renunciation of the religion which they practised. Charles IX insultingly declared that he well knew what their choice would be. Condé responded by a timid, and Henri by a careless, abjuration. Life (like Paris in after years) was well worth a mass. Nevertheless, the young Princes found themselves in a most equivocal situation. The suspicious Charles kept them strictly watched, for, insincere as he ever was himself, he doubted their sincerity. They were suspected also by the Huguenots, the more austere of whom blamed them for recoiling from martyrdom, while the more impatient ones demanded the fulfilment of

a sworn promise to avenge Coligny, which they had signed after Maurevers' attempt on him.

Many men would have lost their heads amidst such a clash of duties, requirements and inclinations. But Henri de Navarre, who had Valois blood in his veins and thus some natural inclination to *rouerie*, had not lived at the Louvre in his boyhood, and again of recent times, without observing all the dissimulation which was practised at the Court. He attuned his nature to the prevailing custom, he took the course which many great men have taken when they have been suspected or misunderstood, and have been meditating some important design for which the time has not yet been ripe. And the attitude he adopted was the wisest one under the circumstances. He affected complete indifference in regard to all political affairs, and became a mere jovial, frivolous, jesting man of pleasure, a prince of *ribauds*, hunting, playing tennis, making love, frequenting shady nocturnal resorts, condescending to middle-class entertainments, falling foul of the watch, and playing practical jokes upon wayfarers. In a word, he became Falstaff's Prince Hal in his earliest stage.

He played his part so well—doubtless because it appealed to one side of his nature—that the Court folk soon began to think that little or no danger was to be apprehended from this prince who seemed quite destitute of ambition, and to prefer a bacchanalian frolic or the glance of a pair of soft eyes to the dangers of conspiring and the glory of winning liberty and independence. It was with contempt that the Catholic princes and lords treated this little captive Kinglet, at whom they were ever railing, saying, for instance, that his nose was bigger than his kingdom.

A time came, however, when François, Duke d'Alençon,\* the youngest brother of Charles IX, with whom he had fallen into disgrace and by whom he was detained (like Henri de Navarre) in semi-captivity, drew near to the young Bearnese, and even offered to espouse the Huguenot cause. They therefore

\* He was the fourth son of King Henri II. Born March 18, 1554, he bore the title of Duke d'Alençon till after the accession of his brother Henri III who created him Duke d'Anjou. He became one of the suitors of our Queen Elizabeth. However he never married.

agreed upon an attempt to make their escape from Paris. At that moment Charles IX had already contracted the illness which resulted in his death, and his brother the Duke d'Anjou (who succeeded him as Henri III) had left for Poland, the crown of that country having been offered him. Thus the moment seemed propitious for the designs of Henri de Navarre and Alençon. But it fell out that their secret was confided to the former's wife by M. de Miossens, whose life she had saved at the St. Bartholomew massacre, and who had since become a Catholic.

Now Marguerite, as was previously mentioned, was much attached to Charles IX ; she had also become reconciled to the Duke d'Anjou before his departure for Poland,\* and dreaded the possible results if her brother Alençon should plunge into the vortex of civil war. Alençon was probably the brother of whom she was most fond : such is, at all events, the impression conveyed by her memoirs ; and it must be mentioned that more than one writer has deliberately accused her of loving him otherwise than a sister should love a brother.† In any case she became greatly agitated when she heard of the designs of her husband and brother François. But *la raison de famille*, coupled with a sense of her personal obligations to King Charles, and a sudden desire to profit by this opportunity to play an important part, one that might lead to her employment in politics from which, to her chagrin (for she possessed a genuine instinct for government), she had hitherto been kept apart, ended by prevailing. She therefore confided everything to her mother and her brother Charles after obtaining from them a promise that Navarre and Alençon should not be prejudiced by her revelations. In the result their scheme was foiled, and their liberty became more restricted.

Early in the following year, 1574 (n.s.), there was, however, another plot for ensuring the escape of the Princes, and this time, as Marguerite was not in the secret, she could not interfere. This affair was the somewhat mysterious conspiracy in

\* She and her husband accompanied Anjou and the Queen-mother as far as Nancy.

† The same charge has been brought against her with respect to her brother Anjou, with whom, however, she had frequently been embroiled.



which two of François d'Alençon's retainers, La Mole and the Count de Coconas, were implicated. The Court was then staying at St. Germain, and it was planned that a party of Huguenot troops should descend on that locality and carry off both Alençon and Navarre. But the design was revealed to Catherine de' Medici (by La Mole himself, according to Marguerite), and the Court hurried away to Vincennes on the other side of Paris, King Charles, whose health was becoming worse and worse, being carried thither in a litter, while Henri de Navarre and Alençon were conveyed by Catherine de' Medici in her own *chariot*, which was strongly guarded.

Both princes were for a time kept under arrest at Vincennes, and the same punishment, says Marguerite, befell Marshal [Arthur] de Cossé [Brissac] and Marshal de Montmorency,\* who, it was alleged, had been privy to the plot for the escape.

La Mole and Coconas, for their part, perished on the scaffold; and in that connection we must refer to a romantic and somewhat gruesome story, according to which La Mole was one of Marguerite's innumerable lovers. He certainly appears to have been one of the lady-killers of the Louvre, one whose time was spent in hearing a succession of masses every morning, and in worshipping at the altar of beauty during the remainder of the day. On account of La Mole's success with certain ladies of the Court, Charles IX, according to the *anecdoteurs*, became inordinately jealous of him, and repeatedly threatened and, on one occasion actually attempted, to put him to death with the connivance of Henri de Guise. It is further alleged that the Duchess de Nevers,† who was the mistress of the Count de Coconas, and Marguerite's close friend, persuaded her to favour La Mole who was the boon companion of Coconas, and that it was on account of Marguerite's intrigue with La Mole that he was really executed. But apart from any complicity in the attempt to procure the escape of Henri de Navarre and Alençon, the great charge against La Mole and Coconas

\* We are uncertain whether this was François, created Marshal 1559, died 1579, or Henri I de Montmorency, who became a Marshal in 1566 and Constable of France in 1590.

† Not Marguerite de Bourbon, wife of Francis of Cleves, Duke de Nevers, for she was then over 58 years old; but her daughter Henriette, wife of Louis Gonzaga, who by marrying her became Duke de Nevers.

at their trial appears to have been that of attempting to bring about the death of the ailing Charles IX by means of that form of sorcery known as *envoûtement*. La Mole was found to be in possession of a wax image, alleged by his judges to represent the King, and he was charged with pricking it in the heart with pins, while repeating incantations, with the object of hastening the King's death. La Mole replied that the figure did not represent the King, but a lady whom he loved and wished to marry, and that it was the work of Cosmo Ruggieri, the Queen-mother's astrologer, and that Ruggieri himself had pricked it twice in the heart. The astrologer having confirmed those assertions, was sentenced to the galleys, but was speedily released by Catherine de' Medici, whereas the unfortunate La Mole and Coconas were decapitated and quartered on the Place de Grève \* on April 30, 1574. La Mole was the first to suffer, and according to L'Estoille, who is often but not always truthful, having his prejudices and being fond of effect and the *mot de la fin*, the last words spoken by the condemned man were these: "May God and the Blessed Virgin have mercy on my soul. Recommend me to the good graces of the Queen of Navarre and the ladies."

Now comes the strangest part of the story. It is asserted that "those charitable ladies (Marguerite and the Duchess de Nevers) did not long allow the sorry remains of their unfortunate lovers to be exposed to the view of the people; they themselves carried off their heads in their coach to the chapel of St. Martin below Montmartre, and, after bedewing them with their tears, interred them with their own hands." That is the account given in *Le Divorce Satyrique*; and Sauval adds that Marguerite long wept for the handsome La Mole on whom she bestowed the name of Hyacinthe. But there arose a tradition, fostered by some of Marguerite's libellers, and adopted by later-day novelists, to the effect that she did not inter her lover's head, but caused it to be embalmed and kept it with her in a padded velvet box, which she opened at times in order that she might gaze, through her tears, at the lineaments of the lover whom she had so fondly cherished!

Now, beyond chronicling in one brief line and without one

\* Now Place de l'Hôtel de Ville.

word of sympathy and regret, the fate of La Mole and Coconas, she makes no further allusion to either in her memoirs. Of course the story of the embalmed head (in spite of the case of Raleigh's) is historically ridiculous; but although Marguerite's dissimulation was great, and although one cannot expect from any woman a free acknowledgment of an *amour*, is it conceivable that if La Mole had been Marguerite's lover, one whom she regretted so deeply that she "had interred his head with her own hands," she would not have penned at least a word expressive of her pity for his untimely end? For our part, we hold that the legend of La Reine Margot and La Mole is purely and simply a fiction. At the same time it is possible that there was some mystery in the affair, and that La Mole and Coconas suffered for reasons different from those alleged at their condemnation.

It may be that their punishment, so far as the reputed sorcery was concerned, was inflicted to allay the apprehensions of an ailing, anxious and superstitious King; while with regard to the plot for the escape of Henri and Alençon, that punishment may have been intended as a lesson for the Princes themselves and all who might feel inclined to abet them. There was serious talk of bringing them to trial, and they were at least interrogated by Commissaries of the Parliament of Paris. It was at this juncture that Marguerite (who, if one adopted the views of the *anecdoteurs* would have been weeping for her dear La Mole and incapable of exertion) came to her husband's help by drawing up a firm and clever memoir on his behalf. That document shows that if she had not always been systematically banished from the sphere of politics she might have proved both a shrewd adviser and a skilful instrument.

But her help with the memoir was not everything. At this same moment of losing her reputed lover, La Mole, she was so far won over to the cause of her husband and her brother Alençon, that fearing the effects of the royal anger in regard to them, she became willing to assist them in making their escape, disguised as women. The scheme failed because it was dangerous for them to go out together, and they were unable to agree which should go out first. In the midst of this contestation, that is on Sunday, May 30, 1574, Charles IX, who

had not yet completed his twenty-fourth year, expired at the Château of Vincennes, carried off, as scientific writers upon the subject now recognize, by pulmonary tuberculosis. While his death was certainly in some degree a deliverance for France, it was a great loss for his sister Marguerite, for whatever might be her personal preference for her brother François d'Alençon, Charles had been her best protector and most disinterested friend. A more and more agitated life now lay before her. In the first place, she was to be deprived of whatever confidence had hitherto been placed in her by the husband to whom she was at least most friendly disposed, if not affectionately attached. That was largely the work of a woman, a creature of Catherine de' Medici's, a certain Madame de Sauves, of whom we must now speak.



MARGUERITE DE VALOIS, QUEEN OF NAVARRE.

*After a contemporary Painting.*



## II

### CHARLOTTE DE SAUVES

The beautiful Mme. de Sauves and her Husband—Her Mission to alienate Henri de Navarre from Marguerite and Alençon—Henri III and his Favourite Du Guast—Du Guast's Enmity towards Marguerite—Mme. de Sauves inspires Navarre and Alençon with Jealousy—Henri's Infatuation for her—Danger of a Duel between Henri and Alençon—Marguerite and Bussy d'Amboise—Du Guast denounces Bussy and seeks to assassinate him—Navarre and Alençon draw together again—Dismissal of Marguerite's *confidante*, Gillone de Goyon de Thorigny—Temporary Rupture between Marguerite and Henri—Reconciliation—Escape of Alençon from the Louvre—Henri again infatuated with Charlotte de Sauves—Exhorted by Aubigné, Henri resolves on Escape—Henri's Flight from Paris—Marguerite under Arrest—She is refused Permission to join Henri—Return of Alençon and Bussy d'Amboise to Court—The Assassinations of Du Guast and Bussy—Alençon and Mme. de Sauves—She again meets Henri de Navarre, marries the Marquis de Noirmoutier and becomes the last Mistress of the Duke de Guise—Her Advice to Henri de Navarre.

READERS of French history will readily remember the famous superintendent of finances Semblançay, whom Francis I sacrificed to the greed and vengeance of his mother Louise of Savoy. It was that unfortunate man's great granddaughter who became Henri de Navarre's first mistress after his marriage with Marguerite de Valois. Charlotte de Beaune, only child of Jacques de Beaune, Knight of the Holy Ghost, Baron de Semblançay, Viscount de Tours, and Lord of La Carte, by his marriage with Gabrielle de Sades, was born in 1550. At the age of seventeen she became the wife of a Languedocian "noble of the robe," Simon de Fizes, Baron de Sauves, who after acting as secretary to Bertrand, Keeper of the Seals, was appointed secretary to the King, later secretary to Catherine de' Medici, and, soon after his marriage in 1567, Secretary of State. Shrewd and supple, one of the few who prepared the St.

Bartholomew massacre, Sauves had a genius for intrigue, and was so wrapped up in politics that he did not condescend to allot any time to keeping a watch upon his wife.

She, young, beautiful, witty and skilful, was one of the most admired of that charming bevy of ladies of the robes and maids of honour whom Catherine de' Medici gathered around her and employed to further her designs. Mézeray tells us, however, that Mme. de Sauves made use of her charms as much for her own satisfaction as that of the Queen-mother, and exercised such an absolute sway over those who were dying for love of her that she never lost a single admirer, but was perpetually recruiting new ones. If her husband abstained from the folly of jealousy it may have been because he was aware that reasons of State lay behind most of her love affairs. Moreover there was consolation in the fact that he had control of her wealth, which was considerable, the confiscation of the Semblançay property having been revoked in favour of the famous financier's son, Mme. de Sauves' grandfather.

The mission which Catherine de' Medici entrusted to the lady with regard to Henri de Navarre, was to alienate him from his wife and his brother-in-law Alençon, as the trio were living on a footing of close intimacy which disquieted the Queen-mother. Mme. de Sauves acquitted herself wonderfully well of the duty assigned to her; but, after all, it was only necessary that she should make both Princes fall in love with her, and that was speedily achieved. She turned her soft and tantalising eyes upon them, and they became her slaves.

The Duke d'Anjou had no sooner ascended the throne as Henri III than he associated himself with this intrigue, which was directed against two men whom jealously he regarded as his enemies. In Marguerite's earlier years her predilection for her brother Henri had been most marked. But after the bloody victories of Jarnac and Moncontour, where Henri displayed such elegant courage and such cold ferocity, he surrendered himself to a follower who speedily became his *âme damnée*, the self-seeking Du Guast,\* who in order to retain his ascendancy

\* Louis Bérenger du Guast, born about 1545. His pride, ambition, and sarcastic bent made him generally odious. Brantôme was one of the few who admired him.



over his patron embroiled him with many of his friends and relatives. Thus, being particularly jealous of Marguerite's influence with her brother, Du Guast became her declared enemy, and he ended by inspiring the Duke d'Anjou with a jealousy and animosity equal to his own. In the intrigue of which Mme. de Sauves became the willing instrument, Du Guast stood behind his master—now Henri III—eager to second the perfidious scheme which had been designed for the purpose of embroiling husband and wife, between whom a kind of mutual tolerance had hitherto existed.

The royal court journeyed to Lyons to meet the new monarch on his return from Poland; and at Lyons Du Guast exerted himself to bring about Marguerite's disgrace by accusing her of improperly visiting a courtier who was confined to his bed by illness. Marguerite victoriously refuted the accusation, and deeply resented the affront. And realising that it was but a part of the scheme to stir up animosity between herself, her husband, and her brother Alençon, she insisted that the latter should swear to a compact of eternal friendship. At the same time, however, well knowing that they were both in love with Mme. de Sauves, she placed little reliance on that device, for, as she remarked, what compact, what oath could be of any avail in the presence of jealous love?

Baffled, and therefore more hostile than ever, Du Guast did not acknowledge himself beaten, but prevailed on Charlotte de Sauves, who, it has been said, was not indifferent to him, to do her utmost to repair the mistake caused by his own clumsy hastiness. She therefore brought all her powers of fascination to bear upon young Henri de Navarre and young François d'Alençon, fanning their passion to fever-heat in such wise, says Marguerite in her memoirs, that their minds were entirely absorbed by the thought of winning this woman. "And they came," she adds, "to such great and such vehement jealousy of each other, that although Monsieur de Guise, Monsieur de Souvray, Du Guast himself, and many others sought her and were preferred by her to them, they gave that no heed, but believed exclusively in each other's rivalry."

Before long the artful siren Charlotte persuaded Henri de

Navarre that his wife was of an extremely jealous nature, and that he ought to distrust her in all things. Henri had hitherto spoken freely and frankly with Marguerite, even acknowledging to her his not infrequent conjugal slips, at which, according to her own account, she did not take offence, "being in no wise jealous, and desiring his contentment only." But the young King now almost ceased to speak to her. He repaired each morning to the Queen-mother's levee, where he met his mistress, who attended the function by reason of her position as a lady of the robes, and he spent the rest of the day in her company, only returning to his wife very late at night.

Marguerite tried every device, every stratagem, for the purpose of freeing her husband and her brother from this entanglement, but they were under the spell and could not resist the fascinations of the sprightly Charlotte. A born coquette, ever with a crowd of adorers in her train, she skilfully played off one against the other. There were times when she irritated Henri's passion by feigning a preference for Alençon, and others when she treated the latter contemptuously in Henri's presence. And the tension between the two rivals became so great that it seemed at last as if their claims and aspirations could only be settled sword in hand. On one occasion that almost occurred, as is related by Mathieu :

"One evening when the Duke d'Alençon was with Madame de Sauves, the King of Navarre devised a trick worthy of a page, whereby the Duke, when he withdrew, received so severe a knock that one of his eyes was quite bruised. On the following morning, directly the King of Navarre perceived him, though he was still at some distance, he exclaimed : 'Why, *mon Dieu*, what is the matter with your eye? What an eye indeed! what an accident!' 'It is nothing, very little suffices to astonish you!' the Duke retorted brusquely. But the other continued pitying him, whereupon the Duke drew near, and pretending to laugh though he was really piqued, whispered in his ear : 'If anybody says that I got it where you think I did, I will make him deny it.' Thereupon Souvray and Du Guast had to intervene to prevent them from fighting." It is probable that had any such occasion arisen again pacification would have been impossible.

Whilst Henri was thus neglecting his wife, she began to lend ear to that daring wooer and splendid swordsman—the foremost of his age—Louis de Clermont d’Amboise, Lord of Bussy, commonly known as Bussy d’Amboise, or simply as the brave Bussy. That doughty knight, so valiant and generous in every war in which he found himself—it is thus that Brantôme speaks of him—had taken an active part in the St. Bartholomew massacre, and, after sojourning in Poland with the new King, had lately quitted his service and attached himself to the Duke d’Alençon, “by whom,” says Marguerite, “he was held in high esteem as his valour deserved.” They were every day together, and Bussy, it would seem, aware of the instructions which Alençon gave all his retainers “to honour and serve his sister Marguerite as much as they did himself,” profited by them to pay his attentions to her.

This came to the knowledge of Du Guast, who, still bent on doing Marguerite all the harm he could—we think it possible that she may have rejected his addresses at some earlier period, and that his enmity may have been partly due to that cause—sought out Henri de Navarre and told him that Bussy was his wife’s favoured lover. Navarre was either indifferent or incredulous, the point is not quite clear, but in either case he took no action, whereupon Du Guast addressed himself to his own master, Henri III. The latter was quite ready to listen to him, partly on account of the dislike for the Navarre *ménage* with which Du Guast had previously inspired him, and partly because he was extremely displeased with Bussy d’Amboise for quitting his service and entering that of his brother Alençon. Marguerite’s view of that matter and the sentiments with which she regarded Bussy are frankly disclosed in a passage of her memoirs, in which she says that the acquisition of M. de Bussy “increased my brother’s glory as much as it did the envy of our enemies, for in that century there was nobody of Bussy’s sex and rank at all comparable to him in valour, reputation, grace and wit.”

It follows, then, that Henri III tried to inflame Catherine de’ Medici against Marguerite in order that the latter might be again rebuked in much the same way as at Lyons. But Catherine had no desire to make a second mistake, and as,

to all outward semblance, the relations of Bussy and Marguerite were irreproachable, she refused to intervene.

The failure of this attempt fairly enraged Du Guast, and it was then that he laid that famous ambush for Bussy d'Amboise, which illustrates so vividly the wild, unscrupulous manners of the times. He, Du Guast, commanded the Sardinian regiment, and one night he assembled three hundred of his men, divided them into six detachments led by nine or ten courtiers, who for one or another reason were also desirous of punishing Bussy, and posted them here and there for the purpose of waylaying the great swordsman. In the narratives of Brantôme and Marguerite you read how, extinguishing torches and flambeaux, a troop of those spadassins charged down upon Bussy and his friends, he bravely facing and resisting them though his right arm was in a sling—a sling formed of a scarf of columbine hue, which served to identify him. One of his supporters, who had been wounded like himself in some encounter a few days previously, also carried his arm in a sling of similar colour, “though it was very different,” says Marguerite, “for it was not enriched [embroidered?] like his master’s.” Nevertheless the wearer was mistaken for Bussy himself, and promptly struck down and killed. However, one of the Duke d’Alençon’s Italian retainers, wounded at the outset of the fray, hastened to the Louvre, and, while the blood dripped from his injuries on to the palace steps, raised a loud cry of alarm. The slumbering palace suddenly awoke, all became bustle and confusion, and the Duke d’Alençon was eager to rush to his friend’s assistance. But Marguerite threw her arms about him, and a stern forbidding glance from Catherine de’ Medici arrested his steps. As it happened the help of Alençon was not needed. Bussy safely reached his residence, and at once sent word to reassure his friends. In fact, at daybreak, again defying his enemies, he boldly came to the Louvre, where he presented himself, looking as gay, as unconcerned, “as if that attempt on his life had been a mere pleasure joust.”

Once more foiled in his designs, Du Guast began to meditate other plans, and the situation becoming quite perilous, Alençon and Marguerite at last prevailed on Bussy to quit the court for a time. Further, the persecutions and dangers to which both

were exposed drew François d'Alençon and Henri de Navarre together once more, and Henri, having temporarily shaken off the spell cast over him by Mme. de Sauves, again lived on better terms with his wife who had lately shown great devotion to him. One night, it appears, he fainted away and remained unconscious for quite an hour. "I had never known him to be subject to this before," writes Marguerite, "but it was due, I think, to excesses . . ." Henri felt that he owed his life to the promptness and presence of mind with which his wife succoured him, and for a time he showed himself grateful.

But Du Guast was again at work. He had become anxious respecting his influence with Henri III, who had now (February 15, 1575) espoused Louise de Lorraine, daughter of Nicolas, Count de Vaudemont. She had a *confidante*, a Mlle. de Changy, with whom Du Guast failed to ingratiate himself. He therefore insinuated to the King that it was unfitting for Princesses to have female retainers with whom they became unduly familiar, hinted that Mlle. de Changy might lead Queen Louise astray, and Henri III accordingly ordered her dismissal and that of several serving maids. Further, at Du Guast's instigation, and, by way of purifying the household of the Queen of Navarre, a command went forth for the dismissal of her favourite female retainer—a certain Demoiselle Gillone de Goyon, daughter of Jacques de Goyon, Count de Matignon and Thorigny who, a few years later, became a Marshal of France. However, when Henri III sent for his brother-in-law of Navarre, and intimated his orders, the latter was loath to communicate them to his wife. But as the King of France insisted, his commands had to be obeyed. "I was so offended by this indignity cast upon me after so many others," says Marguerite, "and so unable to resist the just grief which I felt, and which banished all prudence from me, that I gave myself up to vexation, and could no longer constrain myself to seek the King my husband; in such wise that Guast and Mme. de Sauves, estranging him from me on the one hand, and I on the other drawing away from him, we no longer either slept or conversed together."

It happened, however, that this particular rupture was not of long duration. Both Henri de Navarre and Alençon realized,

more and more acutely, that they were very seriously threatened. Du Guast had become all powerful at court, and it was through him that they had to solicit the favours which were so often refused them. Moreover, nobody could attach himself to their service without incurring enmity and persecution. Thus the two Princes again drew together with the object of supporting each other, and regaining their freedom. There was, in fact, a general reconciliation. Alençon expressed to Marguerite his desire that she and her husband should again live on good terms, and asked her to forget every annoyance which had occurred; while Henri, on his side, expressed his deep regret if he had allowed himself to be drawn away from her. He was now, he said, resolved to love her and to please her better. "And he begged me," writes Marguerite, "to love him on my side, and to help him in his affairs in his absence."

Early on the evening of September 15, 1575, shortly before Henri III sat down to supper, Alençon, having put on a retainer's cloak and muffled himself up to the nose, quitted the Louvre with a single servant, and managed to reach the St. Honoré Gate of Paris without being recognised. Outside the gate he found Seymer (Seymour?) the master of his wardrobe, with a lady's coach which he had borrowed. In this coach the Duke travelled about a quarter of a league to a spot where he found some men and horses waiting. He then rode on to another meeting-place, where between two and three hundred devoted horsemen joined him, and thus escorted he arrived at Dreux, one of the towns of his appanage, at about ten o'clock in the morning. From Dreux he issued a manifesto justifying his conduct, and setting forth his pretensions.

Surprise, anger and alarm in turn took possession of Henri III when, at about nine o'clock on the evening of September 15, his brother's disappearance was at last discovered. He ordered officers to mount at once, he wished to secure Alençon dead or alive. Then, growing calmer, he took advice, and conflicting counsels led to much loss of time, in such wise that the royal officers only started in pursuit of Alençon on the following morning when the Duke was already in safety.

Marguerite succumbed to the emotions of that anxious

night. Fever seized hold of her and an attack of erysipelas supervened. Curiously enough her husband was not there to comfort her. Henri's thoughts were divided between his own contemplated escape and the mistress whom he had so recently promised to renounce. He hoped that he would not have to reside much longer at the Louvre, but whilst he remained there he was intent on devoting as much time as he could to the fair Charlotte de Sauves. On that occasion, then, he only returned to his wife at two o'clock in the morning, and she, in the grasp of fever in her own bed, did not hear him enter. Early the following morning, knowing nothing, apparently, of his wife's condition, and not deigning to inquire, he hurried off to the Queen-mother's levee, all eagerness to see the siren who had bewitched him once more! Sad, indeed, are Marguerite's comments on that incident; and although we shall have occasion hereafter to show Henri de Navarre under a far more favourable light, it must be confessed that he often cuts a sorry figure in his relations with his wife.

In some respects a great change in his conduct was now impending. The times were at hand when this careless Prince Hal was at last about to cast off his cloak of indifference and supineness, and live laborious days, without, however, entirely scorning delights. Here let us turn to the pages in which Agrippa d'Aubigné chronicles the circumstances which preceded Henri's adventurous flight from Paris. The Queen-mother now had a very strict watch set upon him. Her son, François, had escaped from his cage, but her son-in-law, Henri, must not be allowed to do likewise. Nevertheless she felt anxious about him, for she divined to some extent his vigour and dexterity both of mind and of body. He, on his side, was swayed alternately by his generous and ambitious instincts and his taste for pleasure. There were times when, by his courtesy and agreeable conversation he won over the least favourable of those who were appointed to watch him. One evening he would plan a bold bid for freedom, but on the morrow give himself to some amourette which the shrewd Catherine de' Medici had instigated, well knowing that his "tender spot" was his partiality for her sex. At last, however, a time came when Agrippa d'Aubigné, who was one of his gentlemen of the chamber, and

Armagnac, his first valet-de-chambre,\* both of whom were frank, outspoken men, heard him sighing in bed and repeating that verse of the 88th Psalm, which runs: "Thou hast put away mine acquaintance far from me; thou hast made me an abomination unto them; I am shut up, and I cannot come forth."

Thereupon Aubigné and Armagnac combine; they profit by the opportunity to speak out boldly, they even threaten to abandon their master if he persists any longer in self-surrender and inaction. "Is it true, then, sir," asks Aubigné, "that the Spirit of God still works and abides in you? You sigh to God on account of the absence of your friends and faithful servants, and at the same time they, all of them, are sighing on account of yours, and working for your freedom. But you have only tears in your eyes, and they have weapons in their hands. They are fighting your enemies, but you are serving them. They are filling them with real fears, but you are courting them with false hopes. They only fear God, but you fear a woman,† before whom you join your hands when your friends clench their fists. They are on horseback, you are on your knees. There, sir, is the chief one of those who guarded your cradle and who do not take much pleasure in serving under the auspices of one whose altars are the reverse of theirs. In what spirit of giddy thoughtlessness have you elected to be a varlet here instead of being the master yonder, the scorn of those who are scorned, where you should be the first of all those who are feared? Are you not weary of hiding behind yourself, if, indeed, hiding were allowable for a prince born as you were?"‡

According to Aubigné's own account Henri was spared no reproaches: neither in regard to his jesting with the ladies of the Court, or his deception respecting a delusive promise of the Lieutenancy of the Kingdom, a promise which had become a standing joke at the Louvre, or even the equivocal actions of his wife, Marguerite, whom Aubigné detested, and who, on her side, detested him in an equal degree. He portrayed her

\* See *ante*, p. 16.

† Catherine de' Medici.

‡ The speech is too rhetorical to be authentic, but we think it may well represent the sense of the reproaches and exhortations which Aubigné addressed to Henri.



preferring her brother to her husband, whom she betrayed for his benefit, inciting Henri III also against her husband, and even using Mme. de Sauves as her instrument—a delusion of Aubigné's, which we do not share.

In any case Henri, to use a colloquialism, was “thoroughly wound up” by the exhortations of his friends; and his longing to flee and free himself became more intense than it had ever been before. Two of the Court malcontents, Guillaume de Hautemer, Comte de Fervacques, and Jean de Beaumanoir, Marquis de Lavardin, offered him their services. To confer more freely the plotters drove about the streets of Paris in a coach “which was closed on both sides.” There was a meeting also at Fervacques' abode adjacent to the “Cousture Ste. Catherine,”\* where one and all who were in the secret swore that they would not retreat or fail whatever inducement might be held out to them, and would prove enemies to the death of whosoever might reveal the enterprise. That oath having been taken, Henri de Navarre kissed each of his companions on the cheek, and they in return kissed his right hand.

Two days before the date fixed for the young King's flight there was a rumour at Court that he had disappeared. It arose because he had not slept at the Louvre the previous night. On hearing of the report, however, he hastened to the Sainte Chapelle, where Henri III and his Queen were attending mass, and accosting them gaily, he exclaimed: “I have brought you back the one about whom you were feeling worried!” Then, on the day agreed upon with his friends, February 3, 1576—the occasion they had chosen being a projected stag hunt in the forest of Senlis—he repaired in the first instance with Henri de Guise to the famous fair of St. Germain, held on the site of the present Marché St. Germain in Paris, and the annual opening of which took place that morning. And he lavished all sorts of attentions and marks of friendship on the Duke, begging him to go hunting with him and even threatening to carry him off to Senlis by force. It was a skilful manœuvre, for the suspicious Guise absolutely refused to go. Thus Henri departed with a few of his friends and the two custodians who had been attached

\* That is cultivated land (*cultures*)—perhaps vegetable gardens—belonging to the church of St. Catherine.

to his person : M. de St. Martin and Lieutenant Spalungue of the royal guard.

The contemporary accounts of the escape are contradictory in regard to various details. It appears, however, that Henri, starting from Paris on February 3, spent most of the following day, Saturday, in stag-hunting in the forest of Senlis. Meantime, Aubigné, who had momentarily remained behind in Paris, surprised Fervacques, who had also lingered there, in consultation with Henri III. He immediately suspected treachery, and setting out with M. de Roquelaure hastened to join his master before Henri III was able to warn the Provost of Paris, send out estafettes, and close the city gates to all other persons. Aubigné and Roquelaure are said to have joined Henri de Navarre in the outskirts of Senlis, though the former in his narrative never mentions that locality, but says that the hunt took place in the direction of Livry, that is, the forest of Bondy, which is very much nearer to Paris than Senlis. In any case, however, the young King was still attended by St. Martin and Spalungue, whom his partisans desired to despatch ; but he more prudently decided to avail himself of them to delay any attempts at pursuit. Completely deceiving St. Martin, he sent him back to Paris with a letter addressed to Henri III, in which he offered to return and join him so as to confound his enemies. Then, still, it is said, in the outskirts of Senlis, he sought a lodging to take a rest, and feigned a desire to witness the performance of some strolling players who were in the neighbourhood. Somewhat later, he summoned Spalungue and succeeded in despatching him also to Henri III with deceptive assurances. St. Martin, for his part, reached the Louvre on the following morning\* and succeeded in quieting the King ; but Spalungue, after losing his way in the neighbourhood of St. Maur, only arrived in Paris in the afternoon. Catherine de' Medici was then already suspecting the truth, but when at sunset couriers and troopers were at last sent forth to bar and surround the roads, it was too late : Henri de Navarre was beyond their reach. He and his companions † made their way

\* This indicates that they were much farther away from Paris than is the village of Livry, mentioned by Aubigné.

† Among those who attended him were Aubigné, Roquelaure, Lavardin,

through the forests during the dark and bitterly cold night. At daybreak they crossed the Seine at Poissy, and after resting awhile in a village near Montfort-l'Amaury, pushed on to Châteauneuf, whence they proceeded to Alençon, L'Estoille's account asserting that they made a detour by way of Vendôme, and that the King of Navarre, on crossing the Loire, "heaved a great sigh," and broke the silence which he had preserved ever since quitting Senlis by saying: "Praised be God who has delivered me! My mother was brought to her death in Paris, Monsieur l'Amiral was killed there, and all our best servants also. They had no desire to treat me any better, but God preserved me. I will return there no more unless it be that I am dragged." Then, jesting in his usual fashion, he added: "I regret but two things which I left behind me in Paris, the mass and my wife. Nevertheless, as for the mass, I will strive to do without it; but as for my wife I cannot, and I will have her back."

That little speech is but a mild example of the improbabilities with which the *anecdoteurs* occasionally entertain us. Still Henri may well have thought of his wife, knowing how difficult her position would now become. She, indeed, was called to account for everything: for the conduct of her brother Alençon, to whom the Queen-mother was to be despatched entreatingly, so great had become the alarm of Henri III; for the conduct also of her husband, who had likewise escaped from the bonds which alone seemed to ensure any stability to the throne of France; and also for the behaviour of Fervacques, who had succeeded in fleeing before orders for his execution could be issued. Infuriated by those humiliating escapes, the last of the Valois monarchs might well have treated his sister with real cruelty, had not his mother, Catherine, restrained him. At last the King contented himself with setting guards over Marguerite in order to prevent her from following her husband or communicating with him. Several other retainers, however,

La Vallette, Frontenac, and Fervacques, the last of whom appears to have joined him because he feared he might be hanged by Henri III. The point is of no great importance, but some doubt attaches to the charge of treachery which Aubigné brings against Fervacques. In any case, the King of Navarre received the latter among his companions, and in later years made him a Marshal of France.

suffered severely ; and it seems that an outrageous attempt was made to seize, and possibly murder, her former *confidante*, Gillone de Goyon, who, after her dismissal from the Louvre, had found a home with a cousin of hers, a M. de Chastellas, residing in the environs of Paris. Guards were despatched there, the house was pillaged, and Gillone was on the point of being carried off, when two of the Duke d'Alençon's chamberlains, who were on the way to join him with a troop of two hundred horse, appeared upon the scene, having luckily been met by an escaping servant, who had informed them of what was happening. They immediately dispersed the kidnappers, freed Mlle. de Goyon, and conveyed her and her cousin, M. de Chastellas, to the Duke, their master, by whom the refugees were kindly received.

During Marguerite's captivity her husband reached his states, where several of his friends suggested to him that it was desirable for him to win her over to his cause, as she was undoubtedly a very skilful woman. According to Marguerite herself, Henri was the more easily persuaded to do so as he was now far from the snares of the siren-like Charlotte de Sauves. He ended by writing his wife "a very honest letter," in which he asked her to forget all differences which had ever arisen between them and to believe that he desired to love her and to prove it more than he had ever done before. He also desired her to keep him informed respecting affairs in Paris, her own position and Alençon's also. "I received that letter," says Marguerite, "while I was still a captive. It gave me much consolation and relief, and although the guards had orders not to allow me to write, I did not fail, being aided by necessity, which is the mother of invention, to forward him letters very often."

At the time when Marguerite was first placed in custody, she had been informed, both by her mother and by Henri III, that this was done precisely to prevent her from corresponding with her husband and Alençon. Her retort had been that there was no likelihood of any correspondence with her husband, as he had not spoken to her for a long time, had not even seen her during her illness, and had gone off without so much as bidding her farewell. Catherine de' Medici, however, like a woman well

acquainted with the weakness of the human heart, made answer: "Those, my daughter, are but little tiffs between husband and wife. One knows very well that with gentle letters he will regain your heart, and that if he requests you to go to him you will go—which is precisely what the King my son will not allow."

About this time the Queen-mother started off alone to try to negotiate an arrangement with her rebellious son Alençon, who gave her a very unfavourable reception, in such wise that she had to return to Paris for Marguerite, the latter being the only person able to mediate between the conflicting parties. In fact, Alençon insisted that she should be sent, and Henri III, much to his mortification, had to request her good offices. The proofs of disinterestedness and good will which she then gave him ought to have overcome his animosity for ever. But his narrow and resentful mind never knew an impulse of generosity. By Marguerite's intervention a pacification—favourable certainly to the Huguenots—was arrived at, and the only reward she asked was the permission to join her husband in Gascony, he having pressingly requested her to go to him. She was assured that leave to do so would be granted her provided the Duke d'Alençon returned to Court, as had been covenanted; but although that occurred, the requisite permission was constantly adjourned on one or another pretext, until at last Henri III, thinking that he had sufficiently won over his brother Alençon—whom he created Duke d'Anjou—began to revoke the concessions recently granted to the Huguenots, whereupon preparations for war began once more on both sides.

Henri de Navarre had despatched in turn both M. de Duras and M. de Génissac to Paris in order to hasten his wife's departure, but the first envoy was got rid of by means of fine promises, and the second one was curtly dismissed after an audience with Henri III, who told him roughly that Marguerite had been given in marriage to a Catholic and not to a Huguenot, and that if the King of Navarre desired to have his wife back he must conform to the Catholic religion. The Bearnese, however, would do no such thing. Paris might well be worth a mass, but certainly a wife was not. Nevertheless, Marguerite was now insisting, entreating, even threatening to rejoin

her husband at the peril of her life. Deaf both to prayers and menaces, Henri III and Catherine were not to be moved; but in order to rid themselves for a while of this troublesome woman, they agreed to let her leave the court and go with the Princess de la Roche-sur-Yon to Spa, to drink the waters for the benefit of her health. She there found herself in touch with her brother Alençon, who was now negotiating with the Flemings with a view to assisting them in throwing off the Spanish yoke.

Before that journey to Spa Marguerite had again met Bussy d'Amboise, who had returned to Paris with Alençon at the time of the recent pacification, and it is alleged that his presence greatly helped to console her for her husband's absence. In any case, her enemy, Du Guast, could no longer interfere with any amorous intrigue, for at ten o'clock, on the night of October 31, 1575, when ill in bed, he had been assassinated by a party of masked men, who further stabbed his valet and one of his lackeys to death. That crime, which remained unpunished, as did so many crimes in those days, was called by Marguerite "the judgment of God"; but several historians have contended that the judgment was her own. She, doubtless, had good cause to complain of Du Guast's persecutions, and may have availed herself of a favourable chance to put him out of the way for ever.\* She was, be it remembered, both a Valois and a Medici, and essentially a woman of her times. Briefly, it has been asserted, though never conclusively proved, that she instigated the murder of Du Guast, securing the co-operation of Guillaume du Prat, Baron de Witteaux, the leader of the masked assassins, by a means which need not be specified. Let us add here that however real may have been Marguerite's grievances against Du Guast, he must not be judged exclusively by her memoirs, for he had abilities as well as faults.

With regard to Marguerite's intrigue with Bussy d'Amboise, that seems to be better authenticated. There are many tales respecting them. It is said that Bussy sent her various men whose lives he spared after overcoming them in duels, it being

\* The murder occurred, be it noted, six weeks after Alençon's escape, and while Henri de Navarre was still in Paris. It rid Henri, as well as Marguerite, of a very watchful enemy.

sufficient on those occasions for the vanquished adversary to ask his life in the name of the woman whom he most loved. Brantôme assures us in his *Hommes illustres et grands Capitaines* that Bussy behaved in this fashion with a certain Captain Page, whom he was about to despatch when the other was inspired to recommend himself to the lady of his thoughts. Suddenly touched by the words he heard, Bussy answered him: "Go, then, and seek through the world the most beautiful Princess and lady of the universe, and cast yourself at her feet, and thank her; and tell her that Bussy granted you your life for love of her!" "And it was done," adds Brantôme.

However, Marguerite's intrigue with Bussy was of no great duration, for he left Paris for the provinces when his friend the Duke d'Alençon, having been granted the duchy of Anjou, appointed him Governor of Angers and the surrounding region. It was then that he became enamoured of the wife of Jean IV de Chambes, Lord of Montsoreau. The latter, on discovering what was going on, resolved to wreak vengeance on his wife's lover. He compelled the unhappy woman to give Bussy an assignation, not at the château of Montsoreau, as is so often said, but at the château of La Coutancière, near Brain-sur-Allonne, a few miles north of Saumur, for that castle also belonged to him. On August 19, 1579, Bussy repaired to the appointed spot, and was speedily attacked by the men whom the Lord of Montsoreau had gathered together. He defended himself with the most desperate courage, killing or wounding several of his assailants, even when only the broken remnants of a sword were left to him; and then employing tables and stools as his weapons, and by that means injuring another three or four men, until, at last overpowered by numbers, he sprang towards a window, when some nail or fastening catching in his doublet, he hung there and was despatched with repeated thrusts.

Meantime the Duke d'Alençon (now d'Anjou) had again sought out Mme. de Sauves, with whom he seems to have been on the best of terms, if we may judge by a passage of Marguerite's memoirs, in which she describes a curious scene between her brothers François and Henri, the latter of whom was ever apprehensive of plotting and rebellion on the other's

part. On this occasion he is found personally ransacking Alençon's boxes and inspecting his papers in the hope of discovering some proof of treason. "He also searched his brother's bed," writes Marguerite, "to see if he would find any papers there. My brother (Alençon) having received that evening a letter from Madame de Sauves, took it in his hand to prevent it from being read. But the King endeavoured to take it from him, and as he (Alençon) resisted and begged him with clasped hands not to read it, the King's desire to do so became all the greater, for he fancied that this paper might suffice to enable him to send my brother for trial. At last, when it had been opened in the presence of the Queen, my mother, they became as confused as was Cato in the Senate, when after compelling Cæsar to show a paper which had been brought to him—saying that it was something concerning the welfare of the Republic—it was found to be really a love-letter from that same Cato's sister, addressed to Cæsar."

After the scene recorded by Marguerite, which occurred in May, 1578, the Duke of Alençon and Anjou was again consigned to captivity, which his sister insisted on sharing with him. It was her great affection and extreme devotion to his interests which inspired the *anecdotiers* of the period with those scandalous charges of undue familiarity which have come down to us. They have never been proved, and one may well hesitate to believe them. It was by no means unnatural that Marguerite should attach herself almost despairingly to her brother François. Separated as she was from her husband, regarded with cold indifference by her mother, and with suspicion and dislike by her brother Henri III, François was the only friend remaining to this unfortunate woman. It is true that she writes of her feelings towards him in a somewhat fulsome strain, but that was in keeping with the manners of the time, and for our part we cannot admit that the charges of the *anecdotiers* are proved by a little exaggeration of language, inclusive of a somewhat indiscriminate profusion of adjectives.

The close captivity of the Duke d'Alençon was not of long duration, as his mother intervened in his favour. At this period of her career Catherine de' Medici strove to make herself indispensable by constantly embroiling and reconciling her two



surviving sons. Alençon, however, was profoundly hurt by the treatment he had received, and fully realised that he was at the mercy of any fresh Court intrigue. As long as he remained a mere prince of the blood he would not be safe from the jealous rancour of his brother Henri. To secure his head upon his shoulders, he must wear a crown, become a sovereign prince. It was with that object that he vainly endeavoured to win the hand of Elizabeth of England, and aspired to reign in Flanders, where there were so many people eager to overthrow the Spanish rule. Already in 1577 Marguerite, on going to Spa \* with the Princess de la Roche-sur-Yon, had helped him to prepare the ground among the Flemings, and he now resolved to carry matters further.

Although Alençon was no longer in absolutely close confinement he remained to all intents and purposes a prisoner, and in order to quiet the suspicions of Henri and Catherine, Marguerite was obliged to pledge her word that he would make no attempt at flight. Nevertheless she was his foremost assistant when on January 14, 1578, he for the second time effected his escape. As is well known, he and two of his friends, Simier and Cangé, lowered themselves into the moat of the Louvre by means of a rope held and slowly "paid out" by Marguerite in conjunction with three of her women and a devoted valet. The fugitives repaired to the Abbey of Ste. Geneviève, where Bussy (this occurred seven months before his death) was awaiting them, after effecting, in agreement with the Abbot, a breach in the walls, which enabled Alençon and his friends to pass out of Paris. How Alençon afterwards failed in his ambition to marry our Queen Elizabeth, how he afterwards prosecuted somewhat wildly his designs on Flanders, received first the title of "Protector of the Belgic Liberties," was afterwards crowned as sovereign Duke of Brabant at Antwerp, and later was recognized as Count of Flanders at Ghent and Bruges—those are matters beyond the scope of this work. We shall meet him again at Nérac in connection with the peace by which the so-called Lovers' War was concluded. In regard to his Flanders enterprise, suffice it to say here that the Flemings became distrustful of him, and being ultimately obliged to return to France,

\* She was suffering from erysipelas in one of her arms.

he passed away at Château Thierry in June, 1584, with none of his dreams fulfilled.

The year of Alençon's second escape from Paris proved a bitter one for Henri III. Apart from the flight of the brother of whom he was so jealous, he was dealt some severe blows by Guise and his partisans, who, two years previously (1576) had first founded that famous league, the apparent object of which was to defend the Catholic religion, though its secret aim was to place Guise on the throne. In the spring of 1578 three of Guise's partisans, Charles d'Entraques, Ribérac, and Schomberg, provoked three of the royal favourites or *mignons*, Quélus, Maugiron and Livarot, and at five o'clock on the morning of April 27 a desperate duel was fought between the two parties in the horse market on the site of the old Palais des Tournelles, later Place Royale. Only Livarot and Entraques survived the wounds they received at that encounter, which Brantôme compared to the classic combat of the Horatii and the Curiatii. Maugiron and Schomberg were killed on the spot, Ribérac died on the morrow, and at the end of a few weeks Quélus, who had received no fewer than nineteen wounds, expired in the arms of his despairing royal master. Nor was the King allowed much time to console himself with another of his *mignons*, St. Mégrin, for on July 21, as the latter was leaving the Louvre, he was assailed and assassinated at the instigation of Guise and the League.

And what of the fair Charlotte de Sauves, it may be asked? Well, we learn from Aubigné that she was one of the beautiful women whom Catherine de' Medici carried in her train, when she at last escorted Marguerite back to her husband. It may have been thought that the fascinating lady of Sauves would again ensnare Henri de Navarre. But on this occasion Catherine also had with her a younger and fresher beauty, the famous Dayelle, the Cyprian *charmeuse*, and it was to her that the fickle Henri tendered his adoration, as we shall presently relate. In later years, however, we twice hear of Charlotte de Sauves in connexion with the King of Navarre. The first occasion is in 1582, when Marguerite speaks of her in a letter, in which, in accordance with her husband's request, she sends him, she says, all sorts of tittle-tattle. Referring to two of

Catherine de' Medici's maids of honour, she remarks : " It is said that La Vernée and Setanaie have lost their lovers ; the former's lover no longer cares for anybody excepting his own wife, the latter's now belongs to Madame de Sauves. He came to see her at Chenonceaux,\* and was hidden there for two days, but it was done so cleverly that the Queen knew nothing of it, and she (Mme. de Sauves) wished to make one believe that he came in reality for our aunt. Nobody contradicted her. I leave you to imagine, however, to what a state one is reduced, to have to cover up such things as that. She moves me to pity, but, as for help, none but yourself must expect any of me. The day after he left,† his mistress pretended to be ill, and went to Paris. She has promised me her good offices on your behalf, and Setanaie likewise, as far as she is able."

The second occasion on which *la belle* Charlotte's name is found associated with that of Henri de Navarre was in 1587, when, shortly before Henri's famous victory at Coutras, Sully had an important conversation with her and Mme. d'Uzès. It is well known that women of a certain type often continue to take a friendly interest in their former lovers. Thus it was with Charlotte de Sauves, who frankly informed Sully that his master ought to place no reliance whatever on the promises of the Court, which was only trying to hoodwink him, and that there was only one course for the King of Navarre to follow—namely to fight and achieve victory.

With that advice the woman, who in obedience to the instructions of Catherine de' Medici, had first sown dissension between Henri and Marguerite passed out of their lives though not into retirement, for she now proceeded to compass the downfall of another man. To her indeed one might have applied the famous line :—

" C'est Vénus toute entière à sa proie attachée."

M. de Sauves died—in 1579, according to genealogical authorities—and on October 18, 1584, his widow married

\* At that time the property of Catherine de' Medici by whom the château was greatly embellished and enlarged.

† It is impossible to identify this mysterious lover, but it has been surmised that Marguerite may have referred to the Duke de Guise.

François de la Trémoille, first Marquis de Noirmoutier. Nevertheless she is still referred to by the name of Sauves in 1586, in which connexion a curious error occurs in the despatches from the ambassadors of Savoy which are quoted by Michelet in his work *La Ligue et Henri IV.* Under date February 20, 1586, one reads: "Guise still goes on foot amidst his gentlemen on horseback. M. de Sauves says that if Guise ventures to be familiar with his wife he will put him to death, without ceremony." Now, as M. de Sauves had then been seven years in the grave, the reference must be not to him but to the Marquis de Noirmoutier, the error arising, perhaps, from the circumstance that the lady was still so often referred to by her former name. Those same despatches show that Guise was in no wise intimidated by any threats regarding his intercourse with her. Under date September 11, 1586, it is said: "Guise is becoming reckless, and renewing his *amours* with Mme. de Sauves."

Those *amours* proved fatal to him. At a moment when in his great duel with Henri III it was more than ever necessary for him to retain full vigour of mind and body, he was caught in the enervating toils of an enchantress. As is well known, late in 1588, he repaired to Blois, whither Henri III had fled, and where the States General had been convoked. Mme. de Noirmoutier was there with him, and although events soon shaped themselves in such a way as to make it imprudent for him to linger there, he could not tear himself away from his mistress's embraces. As Michelet has written: "Every day Guise could see that he ought to go, and the sooner the better; but every night he repeated 'Not yet.' . . . He had received as many as five warnings, and others came even when he was in bed at his mistress's. 'One would never finish if one paid attention to all that,' he exclaimed. And he thrust the last billet under his pillow, and dismissed the bearer of the warning. 'Let us sleep, and you, go to bed.' He braved things in this wise in order to reassure his lady. . . . At supper he had been insolently audacious—as one is, at times, in the presence of women—flinging under the table one of the mysterious warning notes, across which he had written: 'They would not dare.'"

They did dare, however. Before eight o'clock on the following morning, Guise, quitting his mistress, repaired to the

château of Blois with his brother Cardinal Louis, Archbishop of Reims, for the purpose of taking part in a council. On being summoned to attend the King in his own chamber, he fearlessly climbed the stairs to the second floor where death awaited him, for the King had resolved on his assassination. Nine men of the royal guard, the famous Forty Five, had made their way to the spot by means of a secret staircase, which the tourist may still see hidden within one of the castle walls. Two monks, it has been asserted, were praying in the King's dressing-room for the success of the enterprise, and as Guise reached the door of the outer closet of the royal apartments, his murderers set upon him. It was, however, in the King's bed chamber that he was at last overpowered and killed. Henri III was awaiting the issue in his cabinet. When all was over he went down to his mother, whose rooms were on the first floor, and exclaimed exultingly; "Now, madam, I am once more King of France." But he soon discovered that the murder of the Duke, which was followed by that of the Cardinal his brother,\* had placed him and his throne in greater jeopardy than ever. Little more than seven months afterwards he himself was assassinated. *Lex talionis.*

Perhaps it was the fate of Henri le Balafré—which we have related at this early stage of our narrative in order to complete the account of that instrument of Medici craft and vengeance, Charlotte de Noirmoutier, sometime de Sauves—perhaps it was that fate which deterred her from taking any further lovers. As she was at this time thirty-eight years of age, it may be, however, that her charms were waning. In any case it is said that she now renounced a wanton life and became much attached to her husband, the Marquis de Noirmoutier. After all, even constancy may have its charms.

\* At first the Cardinal was merely arrested and consigned to a lower room in the Tour des Moulins (where may be seen the most remarkable *oubliettes* in France). However, before many hours had elapsed it was judged dangerous to let the Cardinal live. So he was also murdered, his remains, like those of his brother, being afterwards burnt to ashes.

### III

#### A QUARTETTE OF BEAUTIES : TIGNONVILLE, DAYELLE, REBOURS, AND FOSSEUX

Henri, Aubigné and Jeanne de Tignonville—Queen Marguerite proceeds to Bearn with Catherine de' Medici—Her splendid Litter—Dayelle, Catherine's Cyprian Maid—Henri III, Turenne and Marguerite—Marguerite and the Bearnese—Her Beauty and her Gorgeous Gowns—Dance and Song—Henri's Coarseness and Self-Neglect—Some of his alleged lowly Amours—Dayelle's Marriage—Catholicism and Puritan Pau—Henri has to choose between Wife and Secretary—Mlle. de Rebours and her Parentage—A Sonnet addressed to her—Henri forsakes her for Mlle. de Fosseux—Illness of the King—Marguerite's Devotion—Nérac and its Castle—Marguerite's Sketch of her Life there—Contagious Gallantry—Aubigné on the Court and the Lovers' War—Marguerite denies fomenting it—Historical Causes of that War—Nérac and its Neutrality—Marguerite under Fire—Alençon makes Peace and falls in Love with Fosseuse—Fosseuse becomes *enceinte* and falls out with Marguerite—Mlle. de Rebours again—Upshot of Henri de Navarre's Love Affair with Fosseuse.

WHEN Henri de Navarre, after escaping from Paris, had returned to his states, which he had not seen since he became King, he was struck by the beauty of one of the maids of honour of his sister Catherine, who had governed Bearn in his absence, and who, after a long and unhappy attachment to Jean de Bourbon, Count de Soissons, ended in 1599 by marrying Henri de Lorraine, Duke de Bar. The young person who attracted the King's notice was Jeanne du Montceau de Tignonville, daughter of Lancelot du Montceau, Lord of Tignonville, by his wife, Marguerite de Selves.\* Little is known of Mlle. Jeanne beyond what appears in the memoirs of Aubigné, who had reason to dislike her, as she became, involuntarily, it is true, the cause of his loss of favour. The fact is the young

\* She was governess of the Princess Catherine's household.

lady was, in the first instance, intent on matrimony, and turned a deaf ear to the compliments which King Henri lavished upon her. In the hope of prevailing on her to listen to him, he desired Aubigné to put in a word in his favour, but Aubigné, who, although he held the post of first gentleman of the chamber, was more fitted for campaigning than for court life, bluntly refused to do as the King desired. Requests proving of no avail, Henri threatened his retainer, withheld his salary, and played him several scurvy tricks, without, however, overcoming his virtuous resistance. Vainly, too, did the King sigh at the feet of the fair Tignonville, until at last, in 1581, she espoused François Léon Charles, Baron de Pardaillan and Count de Pangeas, who became a councillor of state, a royal chamberlain, a knight of the King's orders, a captain of fifty men-at-arms of the royal companies, commander of the regiment of Guienne, and Governor of Armagnac, for several of which posts he was indebted to his wife, for she, so inflexible as Mlle. de Tignonville, was far less so when she had become Countess de Pangeas. At all events that is indicated by what Sully says of her in his memoirs, from which we also gather that the lady's husband was so fat, ponderous and lubberly, that Catherine, King Henri's sister, nicknamed him the "big buffalo."

Before then, however, Queen Marguerite and others had appeared upon the scene; for in the summer of 1578, Henri III, in the midst of his struggle with the Guises, at last found it politic to allow Marguerite to rejoin her husband in the hope of thereby restraining the latter who was in arms against the Catholics. Thus, "on August 2," says L'Estoille in his Journal, "the Queen of Navarre set out from the château of Olinville\* to take the road to Gascony to meet the King her husband,† and with her went the Queen her mother, Cardinal de Bourbon, the Duke de Montpensier and Messire Gui du Faur, Sieur de Pybrac, and President of the Court."‡

\* Aulainville, between Ouzouer-le-marché and the forest of Marchénoir (Loir-et-Cher).

† In his MS., it appears, L'Estoille, after the word "husband" added: "to her great regret and reluctantly, according to common report," but he subsequently struck out that remark.

‡ That is, of the Parliament of Paris. He was also Chancellor to Queen

On parting with his sister, Henri III lavished compliments, good wishes and presents on her, so great was his desire to make her forget all his past ill-treatment, and induce her to serve his interests with her husband. He also wished to detach her completely from those of his brother Alençon; but he only elicited vague assurances of respect, friendship and fidelity from Marguerite, and was unable to prevent her from going to wish Alençon farewell. That done, she set out to join her husband, the royal party travelling by slow stages and in pompous fashion towards Guienne. Elegant in her tastes as well as beautiful in person and witty in her speech, Marguerite journeyed in her magnificent closed and glazed litter, whose corner pillars were covered with Spanish velvet of carnation hue while the lining was adorned with embroidery of gold and shaded silk, worked into devices, in such a way that there were fully forty devices either on the lining or the glass, devices in the Spanish and Italian languages, and all of them treating of the sun and its powers, as was indeed appropriate, for did not Marguerite at this moment of her life typify the Sun of Beauty in all its splendour? In taking the great orb of day as her emblem she anticipated Louis XIV. In her fondness for devices she followed the example of that other famous Marguerite de Navarre, her husband's grandmother, whose rare and cunning skill in composing those conceits, had been the admiration of the Court of her brother, the first Francis.

Henri de Navarre met the Queen his wife, and the Queen her mother at La Réole, south of Bordeaux. Catherine de' Medici tendered some amusing excuses on meeting her son-in-law. She had merely made the journey, she said, to chaperone her daughter and admire the scenery of the region. She lingered there, however, for eighteen months, during which her maids and ladies of honour were by no means idle.\* Among them,

Marguerite. The Cardinal de Bourbon referred to above was the uncle of Henri de Navarre, and the same whom the League subsequently proclaimed King as Charles X. The Duke de Montpensier, François de Bourbon, was another of the King of Navarre's kinsmen, but a very zealous Catholic.

\* It was for the sake of the bright eyes of one of these beauties, Anna d'Aquaviva, that old Ussac, one of Henri de Navarre's captains, subsequently surrendered La Réole to the Catholics, an act of treason which Henri avenged by taking the town of Fleurance one evening after diverting himself at a ball.



as we previously mentioned, was Mme. de Sauves,\* but the fickle Henri de Navarre paid far more attention to the Cyprian beauty known as Dayelle. She and her brother, it appears, were of Greek birth, and had escaped from Cyprus, when in 1570 that island was wrested by the Turks from the Venetians. Coming to France, the brother was patronized by the Duke d'Alençon, who made him a gentleman of his chamber, while the sister was added to that battalion of frail fair ones with whom Catherine de' Medici loved to surround herself. Henri de Navarre had already met Dayelle in Paris at the time of his infatuation for Mme. de Sauves, but he had then paid little heed to her; whereas now it was Mme. de Sauves whom he neglected, reserving all his glances for the languorous eastern beauty of the almond-eyed Cyprian.†

All was love and gaiety, everything went wonderfully well during the eighteen months that Catherine de' Medici tarried with the Navarrese *ménage*. Queen Marguerite, as Aubigné indicates, soon fetched the rust off men's wits, and cast it over their weapons. Whilst her husband was paying court to the fascinating Dayelle, she, in accordance with a covenant of mutual tolerance to which she and Henri are said to have agreed, was listening, it is asserted, either to an old suitor of her Louvre days, Du Luc, or else to one of her husband's bravest and for a long while most faithful adherents, Henri de La Tour, Viscount de Turenne, in later years Duke de Bouillon and Marshal of France. Turenne, as he was then called, had at first paid his addresses to one of Catherine de' Medici's maids, Mlle. de la Vergne,‡ but he afterwards transferred them to Queen Marguerite, and this coming to the knowledge of her brother Henri III, he wrote to her husband to denounce Turenne to him, hoping, no doubt, to sow seeds of discord in the Huguenot ranks and thereby derive profit for himself. But, outwardly at all events, Henri de Navarre paid no heed to the

\* See *ante*, p. 44.

† She must not be confounded with another of Catherine's maids, Vittoria d'Ayala, who was also sometimes called d'Ayelle, and who married Camillo di Feia of Mantua.

‡ Perhaps the same whom Marguerite, in one of her letters, calls La Vernée. See *ante*, p. 45.

accusation, as he divined, it is said, the designs lying behind it. At the same time others say that this affair caused the Lovers' War, to which we shall presently refer.

One need not attach much importance to anything contained in that famous pamphlet *Le Divorce Satyrique*, a scurrilous work produced in support and defence of Henri in connexion with his ultimate severance from Marguerite, but there is a sufficiency of other evidence to show that the King, intent on his own love affairs, evinced great indifference respecting his wife's conduct. Although those brief Decameron years of hers—to employ Lescure's expression—were not unclouded ones, they appear to have been the happiest of Marguerite's life. She had attained, according to all accounts, the zenith of her beauty, and her departure from the Court of her brother Henri III had been regarded there as an irreparable calamity. "The Court is shorn of its beauty, said some courtiers. The Court is dim, its sunlight has departed, said others; while yet others added, 'tis a nice business that Gascony should come and gasconade us and carry off our beauty intended for the embellishment of France and the Court and Hôtel of the Louvre, Fontainebleau, St Germain and the other fine places of our Kings, to lodge her at Pau or Nérac, residences which are so different from the others."\*

Marguerite, however, was willing to face the change, and the simple admiration with which she was regarded by the less bigoted Bearnese would have amply solaced her for any sacrifice she had made, had it not been for the jealous intriguing and rough intolerance of certain members of her husband's Huguenot Court. Crabbed, envious and peevish folk, ambitious and sanctimonious men, bald bony old captains withered by long years of civil war, gouty old dogmatising councillors, all, in fact, who had never known or were past the time of *la joie de vivre*, were against her. It must be acknowledged that the interests of Henri de Navarre and his subjects would have been better served had his consort resembled his mother, Jeanne d'Albret, that masculine, military, politic Queen, who had shown both skill in council and energy in war. In lieu thereof, although Marguerite, as we know, possessed a real governing

\* Brantôme.

instinct, she merely flashed on patriarchal Bearn like some magnificent idol, arrayed in the Italian fashions of Paris, that Babylon of the age. Therein lay a text for much deprecatory discourse, a motive for many stern sermons, innumerable pious ejaculations and heaven-directed glances.

Marguerite, however, paid little heed to the hostility of the Puritans. She contented herself with dazzling them with the spectacle of "her fine features, her well-planned lineaments, her limpid and faultless eyes, her beautiful head set upon a beautiful body, with the most superb figure that could be seen, attended by the port of a goddess, and a grave majesty." She gave balls and other entertainments, and at all events the peevish old captains brightened and smiled—recalling, perhaps, their own earlier days—when they beheld her gorgeous either in "white satin, trimmed with a little carnation-pink and an abundance of glittering orichalc," or else a robe of Spanish velvet of a deeper carnation hue and laden with sequin trimmings, while on her head was set "a cap of the same velvet, well dressed with plumes and gems." There were occasions, too, certain great functions, when she was even more magnificently arrayed, when she displayed herself in the most wonderful robe ever seen in France, a robe fashioned out of fifteen ells of material, all fine gold thread, the gift of the Great Turk. Diamonds and feathers then bedecked her hair, while from her neck fell a matchless rope of four hundred large pearls. On those occasions well might she have been considered a Queen of Fairyland.

But there were times when she condescended to show that she was a mere mortal, when she joined in the Spanish, Italian and French dances which were then in fashion, the slow and stately pavan, the slightly swifter passy-measure, the gliding Medici courant, the merry brawl and others.\* There were also occasions when, accompanying herself with her lute, she sang *romances* which she herself had composed in the high-flown language which was then known as the "phœbus style." With her beauty, grace and accomplishments she fascinated so many men that it really seemed as if she were the very goddess of

\* The Spanish *pavana*; the Italian *passamezzo* and *corrente*; and the French *branle*.

love.—"But," remarked Don John of Austria at the time when he met her in Flanders, "although her beauty was more divine than human, she was more fit to ruin and damn men than to save them."

Her husband Henri, since his flight from the Louvre, had relapsed into those simple, rough, coarse Bearnese ways which more than once gave Marguerite a shock. She, who the better to display the whiteness of her beauty reposed between sheets of black satin, found no congenial mate in a husband who, like many other men of that period, was so neglectful of personal cleanliness that, on one occasion, she felt it necessary to ask permission to wash his feet, a request which he resented as a great affront. But in those days the ablutions of men were of the most summary description; to bathe was regarded as a sign of effeminacy, fit only for the curled and perfumed *mignons* of the Louvre, who, it must be conceded, at least preserved the whiteness of their skins, however black may have been their souls.

Careless in regard to himself, Henri did not seek refinement in those on whom, *en passant*, he bestowed his wayward heart. The *anecdotiers* and popular tradition ascribe to him at this period of his life many *amourettes* in which the damsel of his choice was of lowly birth and habits. There were, *inter alia*, we are told, Arnaudine of Agen; Fleurette, the daughter of the palace gardener at Nérac; a certain Demoiselle Maroquin; Xaintes, his wife's *femme-de-chambre*; and Picotine Pancoussaire,\* otherwise the Boulangère de St. Jean: in addition to all the ladies of the Court whom he honoured with his glances. But, except in one or two instances, such as that of Xaintes, those early love affairs remain vague, shadowy, authenticated only by the few passing allusions of memoir-writers and *anecdotiers*, and—in regard to details—transmitted to us only by popular report in the form of stories, such as merry fellows have told at evening by the fireside in some snug inn or tavern, when a bleak wind from the Pyrenees has been sweeping across the valleys of Bearn. Handed down in this wise from father to son, embellished from time to time just like so many Church legends, those tales undoubtedly testify to the virile reputation

\* Pancoussaire is Bearnese for *boulangère* or bakeress.

which the most amorous of Kings left behind him, but it is difficult to say whether they are even in the smallest degree founded upon fact. As with Queen Marguerite, so has it been with Henri. If one were to believe some accounts, she became the mistress of every man with whom she ever had the slightest intercourse; and in like way one might believe that Henri became the favoured lover of every woman, were she *grande dame*, *bourgeoise*, servant girl, or country wench, at whom he ever glanced or smiled, with whom he ever jested, or whom, perchance, he chucked under the chin and gaily kissed as he rode through some village on his way to battle and victory.

In these pages we prefer to speak only of those love affairs of Henri's of which there is some evidence. Respecting his infatuation for Dayelle very few details have come down to us. We know, however, that he lost her when Catherine de' Medici, having established peace between him and her son Henri III, at last returned to Paris. For Dayelle went thither with the Queen-mother, and soon afterwards became the wife of a Norman noble, Jean d'Hémerits, Sieur de Villers. Henri and Marguerite accompanied Catherine and her train as far as Castelnaudary, whence they returned to Pau, a locality which Marguerite greatly disliked, infinitely preferring Nérac, where she was encompassed by far less bigotry. Pau was then a miniature Geneva, a centre of rigid Calvinism, amidst which the Queen experienced many vexations.

"There was no practice of the Catholic religion," she writes, "and I was only allowed to have Mass said in a little chapel three or four paces long, which, being so extremely small, was full whenever there were seven or eight of us inside." At the times when Mass was said, the drawbridge of the château was raised, for fear lest the Catholic inhabitants, who were debarred from practising their religion, might attempt to satisfy their desire to receive the Blessed Sacrament. One Whit Sunday that actually occurred, several Catholic inhabitants of Pau managing to slip into the château and enter the chapel. They were discovered, arrested, flogged—in Marguerite's presence—and afterwards imprisoned by order of one of Henri's most faithful servants, Jacques Lallier, Sieur du Pin, who was,

however, at the same time a most bigoted Huguenot, and therefore an uncompromising adversary of his master's Catholic consort. She, justly indignant at the affront offered to her, and at such a violation of the right of asylum which the unfortunate victims of Du Pin's violence claimed of her as well as of God, speedily complained to her husband, requesting that the imprisoned men might be immediately released. Thereupon Du Pin who, although he held the post of secretary to the King, was no courtier, presumed to rebuke her, and she retaliated by demanding his dismissal. Henri, not wishing to part with his secretary, who was a capable and useful man, endeavoured to temporize, but Marguerite insisted on her demand, declaring that her husband must choose between herself and Du Pin. The latter then had to go, for the times were not yet ripe for an absolute conjugal rupture, though Henri, by way of consoling himself for the departure of Dayelle, was already paying his addresses to another young person.

This was a certain Mlle. de Rebours, whose parentage is somewhat doubtful, some authorities saying that she was the daughter of one Montabert, Sieur de Rebours, a Huguenot nobleman of Dauphiné, killed at the St. Bartholomew massacre; while according to others her father was a judge, first at Calais, and later of the Parliament of Paris. L'Estoille chronicles a somewhat amusing *jeu de mots* respecting this personage, who was in the capital at the time Henri de Navarre besieged it. His troops having planted a couple of cannon on the height of Montmartre, were firing on the city when a ball from one of the guns broke one of M. de Rebours' legs. Thereupon, as he was suspected of secretly favouring the royal cause, the preachers of the League made a great joke of the affair, declaring from the pulpit that "the cannon shots of the Royalists went à rebours."

In addition to Henri, Mlle. de Rebours counted among her particular admirers two of his companions in arms—the Count de Frontenac and Charles de Montmorency, Duke de Damville. Frontenac's passion was celebrated by Guillaume du Sable in one of the sonnets of his *Muse chasseresse*. Nowadays this effusion—which may be quoted as a specimen of the amatory verse of the period—will doubtless appear ridiculous, but it

was then probably regarded as something quite tender and touching.

“REBOURS, n'éprouve tant de FRONTENAC la foi,  
 Que l'épreuve à la fin ne soit pour lui mortelle,  
 Je vois bien que son cœur te porte une amour telle  
 Qu'impossible est qu'il vive étant privé de toi.  
 J'ose bien t'assurer, si tu veux croire en moi,  
 Que jusques à la mort il te sera fidèle ;  
 Car l'Amour l'a lié si bien à ta cordelle  
 Qu'il faut qu'il obéisse aux édits de sa loi.  
 N'offense point ce Dieu ; il a la même flèche,  
 Qui, en son cœur, a fait luire pareille brèche,  
 Pérçant de part en part son loyal estomac.  
 Donc, si pour l'avenir tu veux être servie,  
 Non pas pour quelque temps, mais pour toute la vie,  
 Ne change, s'il te plaît, ton humble FRONTENAC.”

According to Marguerite, Mlle. de Rebours was a very malicious young person, who did not like her, but did her every possible ill turn. Slight and slender, however, she was also very delicate, and thus Henri's intrigue with her was of short duration. “Amidst these contrarieties,” writes Marguerite (referring to the dislike which the more zealous Huguenots evinced for her), “God, to whom I always had recourse, at last took pity on my tears, and permitted that we should depart from that little Geneva, Pau, where, by a piece of good fortune for me, Rebours remained lying ill, in such wise that the King, my husband, losing sight of her, also lost his affection for her, and began to engage with Fosseuse, who was much prettier, and at that time quite young and very good-natured.”

On the occasion of this departure from Pau it was the intention of the King and Queen of Navarre to visit Montauban, but on the evening when they reached the little, though in Roman days splendid, town of Eauze, which Henri some time previously had taken by surprise, almost losing his life in the exploit, he again found himself in danger there, for a violent fever seized hold of him and did not abate until after seventeen days of restless suffering. Marguerite, often so uncertain and variable, at once became all devotion, a ministering angel, such as was pictured by the poet of a later day. It was constantly necessary to move the pain-racked patient from one bed to another, and his wife assisted in doing so,

never leaving him but exhausting her strength to such a degree by watching and nursing that she at last fell ill herself. "I became so attentive in nursing him," she writes, "never quitting him, never undressing, that he began to take pleasure in my services and praise them to everybody, particularly to his cousin M. de Turenne, who, behaving to me like a good relation, set me on as good terms with him again as I had ever been: a happiness which lasted for the space of the four or five years that I remained with him in Gascony."

Thus, when Henri recovered and they at last repaired to Nérac, husband and wife were again the best of friends, disposed to treat each other with forgiveness and indulgence, an indulgence which was the more necessary as conjugal constancy was quite foreign to their natures. Nérac, nowadays renowned for its partridge pies and *terrines*, is a pleasant little town on the banks of the Bayse, with some interesting Gallo-Roman ruins, including remnants of some baths, of a palace, and of a temple, which last, it is said, was dedicated to the infernal gods. Few traces remain, however, of the castle which, in the fourteenth century, Amanieu d'Albret first raised on a hill overlooking the river, and which was gradually enlarged by his successors, Jeanne d'Albret ultimately completing it, for which purpose she made use of stones derived from some of the many Catholic churches and monasteries which she razed to the ground. This castle of Nérac was a large quadrilateral, communicating on the western side with the town, and on the east, by means of a bridge over the Bayse, with a park, which, as Queen Marguerite tells us, was laid out by her instructions. The castle remained intact until the Revolution of 1789, when it was gradually destroyed, the remnants of the particular building in which Henri and Marguerite had their apartments passing into the possession of a baker, who allowed them to go to ruin.

The most brilliant period of Nérac's history was undoubtedly the sixteenth century, when three famous queens in turn held their Court there. Under Marguerite d'Angoulême, the author of the *Heptameron*, who there received Clément Marot and many other writers, that Court was more particularly a literary one; under Jeanne d'Albret, who transformed Nérac into a



place of refuge for persecuted partisans of the Reformation, it became essentially puritanical; whereas, under our Marguerite and her husband it was alternately given over to diplomacy, gallantry, and war. It was at Nérac—and we ought to have mentioned this previously—that Catherine de' Medici, during her sojourn there in 1578, initiated the conferences which led to a brief peace between her son Henri III and her son-in-law of Navarre. That indeed had been her real object in escorting her daughter back to her husband. Never was the diplomatic craft of the astute Catherine better exemplified than at the time of those negotiations, when, by means of one and another weapon—a most amusing affectation of Puritanism on her own part, and a by no means edifying display of gallantry on the part of her maids of honour—she successfully jockeyed both the Huguenot military leaders and the ministers of that religion. Virtually, the only point which Henri de Navarre gained in the negotiations was one he raised respecting the governorship of Guienne, which, at his request, was taken away from the Marquis de Villars and given to Armand de Gontaut, Marshal de Biron, afterwards one of the King's most devoted captains, but unfortunately the father of another Biron whom treason brought to the scaffold.

Marguerite has left us a pleasant picture of the Court of Nérac after her husband had recovered from the illness we previously mentioned. "Our Court," says she, "was so fine and pleasant that we did not envy that of France; we had there the Princess of Navarre—the King's sister, who afterwards married Monsieur le Duc de Bar—my nephew, and myself, together with a good number of ladies and girls; and my husband was attended by a fine troop of lords and gentlemen, folk as seemly as the most gallant that I ever met at Court; and there was nothing to regret in them excepting that they were Huguenots. But of that diversity of religion one heard nobody speak; the King, my husband, and Madame la Princesse, his sister, going on one side to the preaching, and I and my retinue to mass in a chapel which is in the park; after which, when I came out, we all met to go and walk together either in a very fine garden with very long paths, edged with laurels and cypresses, or in the park which I had caused to be laid out, along paths stretching for

three thousand paces beside the river; and the rest of the day was spent in all sorts of seemly pleasures, the ball usually taking place in the afternoon (*après-dîner*) and in the evening."

After that pretty picture, can one wonder at gallantry becoming *de rigueur* at Nérac? It was contagious. Sully, although still young at the time, was already inclined to austerity, and yet even he is seen taking not only dancing lessons from Henri's sprightly sister the Princess Catherine, who wishes that he should figure in a ballet, but also—such is the force of example—a mistress, in accordance with the current fashion.

Aubigné has also left us a picture of the Court of Nérac, which should be set beside Marguerite's. "The Court of the King of Navarre," he writes, "flourished with brave noblemen and excellent ladies. . . . But ease brought vices there, like warmth brings serpents. . . . I should much have liked to conceal the filth of the house; but having taken an oath to tell the truth, I cannot omit things which are instructive, principally on a point which, ever since Philip de Commines, has been little known to writers, because they have not made their beds at the feet of kings, as he and I did; which point is that the greatest perturbations which arise in kingdoms, and the tempests which overthrow them, often surge first of all in the minds of base people of small account. We have alluded to the hatred of the Queen of Navarre for the King, her brother (Henri III). That was the cause why, in order to thrust war upon him again, whatever the cost might be, that artful woman made use of her husband's love for Foceuse, a girl of fourteen years, and of the name of Montmorency, to sow in the Prince's mind the resolutions she desired to see in it."

It is possible that "Foceuse," as Aubigné calls her, was slightly older than he states. Her father was Pierre de Montmorency, Marquis de Thury and Baron de Fosseux, who in January, 1553, married Jacqueline d'Avaugour. The union was a prolific one, resulting in the birth, according to some authorities, of eleven, and according to others, of nine children. It is agreed, however, that the so-called "Foceuse" or "Fosseuse" \* of Nérac—that is, to give her real name, Françoise

\* "Fosseuse" is, so to say, a feminine form of Fosseux.

de Montmorency—was the fifth daughter and the youngest child. We prefer to think, then, that she may have been sixteen or seventeen years old at the time when she attracted the attention of King Henri.

This affair of his seems to have lasted throughout the so-called Lovers' War of 1580, thus designated because those who took the leading parts in it were *inamorati*, and because it has been surmised that their designs and deeds were strongly influenced by their attachments. Briefly, it is alleged that this war originated in Henri III's denunciation of Marguerite's intercourse with M. de Turenne,\* those two fomenting it in a spirit of mingled resentment and anxiety, whilst the King of Navarre engaged in it in order to curry favour with the youthful Fosseuse.

Respecting the latter Marguerite writes as follows: "Depending in all things on me, she long conducted herself with so much honour and virtue, that if she had always continued in that fashion she would not have fallen into misfortune, of which she afterwards experienced a great deal, and I as well." On the other hand, Aubigné tells us that Fosseuse, after at first acting as Marguerite's docile instrument, rebelled against her directly obedience had ceased to correspond with her own ambition. At the outset, says Aubigné, Fosseuse, being very inexperienced, was assisted by Marguerite's maid Xaintes, who, "regardless of all discretion, repeated a great deal of news which the Queen of Navarre received from the [French] Court, or else invented, whether it were contemptuous words which her brother [Henri III] had let fall in his cabinet, or mocking laughter on the part of Monsieur [Alençon] or the Duke de Guise, at the King of Navarre's expense and in presence of the lady of Sauves. Moreover, the Queen seduced the mistresses of those who had credit [with the King]. She herself won over the Viscount de Turenne, and all their speeches were but expressive of their contempt for peace, and of their high hopes in war. Minds having been thus prepared, there arose a dilemma which had to be settled, and which was, ought the places of refuge [held by the Huguenots] to be surrendered [to the Catholics] in order to secure peace, or ought they to be defended by

\* See *ante*, p. 51.

war? . . . The King of Navarre only summoned the Viscount de Turenne, Favas, Constant Aubigné, and Marsellère, the secretary, to his secret council. He set out to them the dilemma we have stated, and did so in terms which, in keeping with his good custom, indicated the conclusion [he had arrived at]. All those whom he had summoned to give their opinion were in love, and therefore full of the instructions we have mentioned,\* so that none of them could plan or thirst for anything but war. . . . In this wise was war resolved upon, a war which, for the reasons herein stated, was called the Lovers' War."

That forms an attractively romantic story, but if we turn from Aubigné to Marguerite we find her affirming that the war was declared contrary to her advice and in spite of her efforts, and that she only decided to support her husband's party from duty and gratitude "for the honour which the King her husband did to love her." Moreover, quite apart from any resentment which Henri, Marguerite and Turenne may have felt with respect to the French King's denunciation of the alleged love affair between Henri's wife and his cousin, there were military and political grounds for putting an end to the peace, or rather truce, which Catherine de' Medici had negotiated during the previous year. For instance, Biron, who at Henri's request had been appointed Governor of Guienne, proved, at the outset, his determined adversary, carrying matters in an extremely high-handed fashion, notably in regard to the fortified places which the Huguenots, according to Catherine's treaty, were to surrender to the forces of the French King. That condition alone made many of the Huguenot leaders angry; they did not care for peace at such a price, but constantly urged the King of Navarre to resume hostilities. In that respect it was quite unnecessary for them to be influenced by their mistresses, as Aubigné, in his anxiety to traduce Marguerite, would have us to believe. Thus it at last came to pass that when Biron dismantled Langon, near Bordeaux, Henri de Navarre, who regarded that proceeding as most arbitrary, hesitated no longer, but resolved on the renewal of hostilities.

\* The meaning is that they all had mistresses, who in compliance with Marguerite's suggestions had influenced them in favour of war.

The so-called Lovers' War was marked by numerous dashing deeds interspersed with foul actions of cruelty. Many were the bold, almost reckless *coups de main* which Henri directed at the Catholic strongholds of Guienne and Armagnac; wonderful, often, was the good fortune and success which attended his enterprise. There was notably that bold assault of Cahors, where, as Marguerite says, her husband "showed his worth, not only as a prince of his rank, but as a captain who could be both prudent and venturesome."

Meantime, at Marguerite's personal request, the town and castle of Nérac had been declared neutral, the Catholic party consenting to that arrangement on the condition that her husband should not profit by such neutrality. Marguerite's comment on the arrangement is worthy of Machiavelli. "This condition," says she, "was observed by one and the other party with as much respect as I could have desired, but it did not prevent the King my husband from often coming to Nérac, where Madame his sister and myself were; it being his nature to feel pleased in the society of ladies, besides which he was then very much in love with Fosseuse, whose servant he had always been since he had quitted Rebour, and from whom I then received no ill-office; and thus it was that the King my husband did not cease to live with me in as much privacy and friendship as if I had been his sister, seeing, as he did, that I only desired to content him in all things."

It happened, however, one day, when Henri, anxious to see the bewitching Fosseuse, paid one of his periodical flying visits to Nérac, Biron pursued him thither, and threatened to subject the town to a siege on account of this breach of its neutrality in harbouring the King of Navarre. As it happened, Henri had to throw a party of troops into some of the neighbouring vineyards in order to keep Biron's men in check. Biron thereupon fired seven or eight cannon shots, one of which reached the castle, the projectile striking just below the ladies who, from the summit of the ramparts, were inquisitively watching the evolutions and cavalcading of the soldiery. None was wounded, but they all had a good fright, and Marguerite, it seems, could never forgive Biron for his military jest, to which, by the way, he put a finishing touch by sending a trumpeter

to tender sarcastic apologies to the frightened beauties of the Navarrese Court. Henri, however, for his part, regarded Biron's action as fair play; and put in a good humour by the alert, he remained three days at Nérac, unable, we learn, to tear himself away from such an agreeable spot and company.

In the following year, 1581, came another peace, this being negotiated, curiously enough, by Alençon, who, with the view of prosecuting his designs on Flanders, wished to secure the services of some of the French troops who were being employed in the war against the King of Navarre. He pretended, however, that his only motive in negotiating was his sincere desire to re-establish peace and concord. Thus, with Henri III's consent, and attended by Nicolas de Neufville (fourth of the name), Lord of Villeroy and Minister of State, and Nicolas Pomponne de Bellièvre, subsequently Chancellor of France, he set himself to the task of reconciling the two Kings. His endeavours were zealously seconded by Marguerite, who was always willing to co-operate in anything that might redound to her favourite brother's honour and credit, and before long peace was concluded.

It must be mentioned, however, that Alençon's sojourn with his sister and brother-in-law lasted seven months, which is sufficient proof that he found it agreeable. Marguerite admits that his pleasure in being with her considerably softened the bitterness he felt at having to provide for the relief of Cambray where one of his lieutenants, Balagny, was being besieged. Meantime, however, "as glory and honour are always pursued by envy," Henri III was feeling more vexed with Alençon for succeeding in his peace negotiations than he would have felt had he failed. Even as Aubigné was convinced that Marguerite had fomented the Lovers' War simply because her amorous intercourse with M. de Turenne had been interfered with, so Henri III was now persuaded that she had stirred up those hostilities for the express purpose of procuring for Alençon the honour of bringing them to an end. And thus the King's hatred of his brother and sister was once more in the ascendant. That may have been one of the reasons why Alençon prolonged his sojourn at Nérac, but there was also another motive: he had once again fallen in love.

It will be remembered that he had competed with his brother-in-law of Navarre for the smiles of the vivacious Mme. de Sauves. At present he could not behold the youthful Fosseuse without desiring to take Henri's place in her affections. It would really seem from this that in *affaires de femmes*, at any rate, Alençon and Navarre had very similar tastes. However, Marguerite, becoming seriously alarmed for her own interests, intervened in her husband's favour. "The great misfortune for me," she writes, "was that he [Alençon] fell in love with Fosseuse. This seemed likely to incite the King my husband to wish me harm, as he might imagine that I would use my good offices for my brother and against him; which, having realized, I entreated my brother so much, pointing out to him the pain he gave me by that suit, that he, being more desirous of pleasing me than himself, quelled his passion, and did not speak to her again."

Unfortunately another complication supervened. Mlle. de Fosseux became *enceinte*. This was, as Marguerite remarks, a great misfortune in several respects. The fact that the Queen of Navarre had borne her husband no children was one of the particular grievances of the Bearnese Huguenots against her. Now, however, her husband was expecting a child by a mistress whom he adored. There is no doubt that Marguerite was deeply moved by the situation, that she experienced feelings of mingled humiliation and resentment. Moreover, the behaviour of Fosseuse towards her now changed entirely, as did also that of the King of Navarre. "She, who had done me all the good offices she could with the King my husband, now began to hide from me, and do me as many ill offices as she had done good ones," says Marguerite. "She so possessed the King my husband that in a very short time I found him quite changed. He became estranged from me, hid himself, and no longer found my presence so agreeable as he had found it during the four or five happy years which I had spent with him in Gascony, and while Fosseuse conducted herself with honour."

Such was the state of affairs when, for one or another reason, Mlle. de Fosseux persuaded the King to take her to the waters of "Aigues-Caudes,\* which are in Bearn." Henri

\* Les Eaux Chaudes, a village in a wild Pyrenean gorge watered by the

wished Marguerite also to make the journey, but she stoutly refused to do so, and the King eventually had to go off with Fosseuse, two of her colleagues, Mles. de Rebours and Ville-savin, and the governess of the maids. "They left with him," Marguerite writes in her memoirs, "and for my part I waited at Banière." \*

It will have been observed that Henri's former mistress, Mlle. de Rebours, formed one of the party accompanying the King. She appears to have been a very jealous and intriguing creature, anxious if possible to regain Henri's affections, and therefore slandering her rival Mlle. de Fosseux and Marguerite alternately. The last named writes of her: "From Rebours, who was the one he [the King] had loved, and who was a corrupt and double-faced girl, who only desired to oust Fosseuse, hoping to take her place in the good graces of the King, I each day received advices that Fosseuse was doing me the worst turns in the world, usually slandering me, and persuading herself that if she should have a son and be able to get rid of me, she would marry the King my husband; with which intention she wished to compel me to go to Pau, and had made the King my husband resolve that on returning to Banière he would take me there, whether I would go or not. Those advices put me in great distress, as may be imagined." And Marguerite adds: "I shed as many tears as they drank drops of water where they were." †

After a stay of four or five weeks at Eaux-Chaudes Henri and his companions returned to Marguerite, but her fears

Gave d'Ossau. Henri's sister Catherine visited the baths there on one occasion. Sully's Memoirs contain some remarkable particulars respecting the size and strength of the bears which were then hunted in the region.

\* Probably Bagnères de Bigorre. Montaigne who visited and commends the baths there writes the name Banieres.

† To finish with Mlle. de Rebours we may quote the following passage from Brantôme: "Rebours, one of Queen Marguerite's maids, who died at Chenonceaux, had given her great offence, yet she treated her no worse; and the said Rebours falling extremely ill, she visited her, and when she was about to give up the ghost admonished her and then said: 'This poor girl suffers a great deal, but she has also done much that was wrong. May God forgive her as I forgive her.' That was all the revenge and harm the Queen did to her. Thereby you will see that this great Queen, with her generosity, was very slow in taking revenge, and altogether good of heart."



respecting an enforced stay at Pau, which she calls "the place of penitence," were not realized, for, to her great relief, the court proceeded to Nérac, her favourite spot. She remained very anxious, however, respecting her loss of influence with her husband, and after some meditation resolved, like the shrewd woman she was, to make an effort to regain it by rendering Henri a service such as very few wives would be willing to render. A rumour respecting the condition of Mlle. de Fosseux had arisen and spread throughout the region. On the one hand, its truth could not be acknowledged, on the other, it was a rumour difficult to dissipate. The course which Marguerite took in these circumstances may be judged diversely, but it tended to the suppression of what was fast becoming a public scandal. Briefly, she resolved to speak to her rival, Fosseuse, and offer her such assistance as she could tender in the expected emergency. She proposed to take that course for the sake of the girl herself and that of her family—the great house of Montmorency—as well as for the sake of the King her husband.

The pages of Marguerite's memoirs, in which she refers to her action in this respect, are among the most curiously effective of her writings, the whole story being narrated with a skill and for that period a delicacy which leave a deep impression. In substance the proposal which she made to Mlle. de Fosseux was this: There was an outbreak of plague in the vicinity of Nérac, which was an extremely suitable excuse for quitting that locality. A convenient place of refuge would be the Mas d'Agenais, a secluded royal estate, lying between Marmande and Tonneins, on the Garonne. Marguerite suggested, therefore, that while King Henri went off hunting in some other direction, she, with Mlle. de Fosseux, and such others only as the latter might be willing to take, should quietly repair to the Mas d'Agenais and remain there in seclusion until all was over, thereby putting an end to the rumours which were in circulation—rumours which affected her, the Queen, almost as much as they affected Fosseuse herself.

In this conjuncture there were two courses open to the unfortunate young woman. She might rebel against Marguerite's proposal, or she might fall on her knees and gratefully

accept it. She preferred the former course, which, as Lescure rightly says, shows that she was a true woman, and a not unworthy adversary of Marguerite. But the same author, whom we may here well follow, also asks whether Fosseuse was ashamed to confess, or whether she remembered that Marguerite was both a Valois and a Medici, and in that case whether she felt alarmed at the thought of placing herself in the power of one, who, whatever her protestations of solicitude might be, was none the less her rival. "Did Fosseuse," asks Lescure, "have some rapid vision of what might happen with impunity to a creature like herself, in a mysterious and solitary spot, and in the hands of a woman who had cause to feel offended both as a Queen and as a wife?" It is quite possible that some such apprehension may have crossed Mlle. de Fosseux' mind. But she gave no outward sign of it. The attitude which she assumed was one of pure *bravura* and defiance; and it was with bold effrontery that she answered that she would "make those who had spoken of her eat their words, and that she was well aware the Queen had ceased to like her for some time past, and was seeking a pretext to ruin her."

Such language, if Marguerite's account of it may be trusted, indicates that Mlle. de Fosseux was by no means such a child as Aubigné would have us to believe. She quitted the Queen in a fury, and went off to complain to the King, who took her part, and for some time put on a very angry countenance with his wife. That was all very well in its way, but a day arrived when the situation had to be faced. The unfortunate Fosseuse was obliged to send a warning message to Henri, who, Marguerite tells us, was for a moment sorely perplexed, first because he did not wish the affair to become public, and secondly because he feared that unless he took immediate steps, Fosseuse, "whom he loved extremely," might suffer from neglect. We learn from Marguerite's memoirs that she and Henri still occupied the same sleeping apartment, and that on the occasion we refer to he drew aside her bed-curtains, and taking, so to say, the bull by the horns, made a hasty confession of the truth, and begged her to help his mistress, assuring her of his gratitude if she would only do so.

That appeal succeeded, largely by virtue of its very audacity,

In exceptional circumstances exceptional courses become necessary. Marguerite, moreover, was an exceptional woman. She rose to that trying, that remarkable situation, and answered her husband that she honoured him too much to take any offence, and that she would act as though the girl were her own daughter. But, at the same time, she asked him to go off hunting, and take everybody with him, so that there might be no talk about the affair. That was done, and further complications were prevented by the fact that Mlle. de Fosseux' child, a girl, was stillborn.

The young woman seems to have recompensed the Queen's kindness with no little ingratitude; but that, of course, was merely in accordance with human nature. On the other hand, however, she lost the favour of the wayward King, on whom this adventure had cast many worries. He gradually neglected her, consoling himself with a variety of passing *amourettes*; and, at last, when, early in 1582, Marguerite repaired to Paris, she took the fallen queen of the left hand with her. Mlle. de Fosseux eventually married, but there are conflicting accounts of her husband. According to some authorities he was a certain St. Marc, Lord of Broc, or a certain De Broc, Lord of St. Marc; but in Castelnau's *Memoirs*, the *Histoire des Montmorency* and the *Confession de Sancy*, we are told that he was the Baron de *Cinq Mars*.\* There is, of course—phonetically at any rate—considerable similarity between that name and *St. Marc*, but we cannot say which of the two is correct. If, however, the husband of Fosseuse was a Baron de Cinq Mars, we do not think that he belonged to the same family as that which produced the Marquis of that name, who became the favourite of Louis XIII, and was put to death with his friend, Auguste de Thou, by the orders of Richelieu. For the family name of the Marquis was not Broc, but Coiffier, though his father, the Marshal d'Effiat, was nicknamed Ruzé, an appellation by which he is sometimes known.

For the rest, the whilom Fosseuse of Nérac passes out of history after her marriage. Nothing apparently is known about her subsequent life. That she retained to the last a vivid recollection of the days when King Henri was infatuated with

\* One account, too, gives the name as St. Mars.

her fresh young beauty, is probable ; for, as we know, in her first love, woman always loves her lover, though in all the rest all that she loves is love. But Henri, on his side, speedily forgot the fair and aspiring Fosseuse. He was now indeed on the eve of what may be regarded as the first serious attachment of his life, his love for the famous "Corisanda," Diane d'Andouins, Countess de Gramont. Before, however, we pass to those years when Corisanda's glance and smile urged him onward from victory to victory, we must yet say something more of his wife, Marguerite, of a certain love affair of hers, of the circumstances under which she quitted Nérac for Paris, and placed herself yet once more in the power of her brother, Henri III, then of her return to Bearn and the final separation which ensued.

## IV

### A ROYAL SEPARATION

Queen Marguerite's Return to Paris—Her Love Affair with Harlay de Champvallon—Their Correspondence—Marguerite's alleged Son—Her Sojourn in Paris—Her Quarrels with Henri III—She is accused of stealing royal Despatches—She is upbraided by Henri III for Immorality and banished from Court—Insulted in her Flight—Henri III's Correspondence with Henri de Navarre—Navarre demands Satisfaction and Separation—His Views on the Charges against Marguerite—Henri III withdraws his Accusations—Mutual Concessions—Navarre takes his Wife back—Domestic Unhappiness—Marguerite accused of attempting to Poison her Husband—Political Complications—War of the Three Henrys—Excommunication of Henri de Navarre—Marguerite leaves him and seeks Refuge at Agen—Definite Rupture.

It was early in 1582 when Queen Marguerite departed from Nérac, going to Paris, whither she had been urged to repair both by her mother, Catherine de' Medici, and by her brother, Henri III. She seems to have grown weary of the life she led with her wayward husband, to have desired a change, and to have wished also to acquaint herself with what was occurring in Paris, where the fight for supremacy between her brother the King and the ambitious Duke de Guise was gradually approaching a climax. Henri III, on his side, appears to have desired her presence at the Louvre precisely on account of the imbroglio in which the course of events was placing him. One of the necessities of his Kingship was to play off Navarre against Guise and Guise against Navarre, alternately. This invitation to his sister was backed by a gift of 15,000 crowns, and although she must have realized that he wished to place her more or less under his dependence again, she set out for Paris willingly enough. Her husband, on his side, was not to be lured thither, for he placed no reliance whatever in Henri III.

He offered, however, no opposition to Marguerite's departure. He probably felt that she might be useful to him in Paris by keeping him informed, as for a time she did, of the exact situation there; and it would further appear, from what Marguerite herself writes respecting this journey, that she and her husband had certain more or less private interests in the capital which required attention.

She wished, she says, to make a stay of just a few months at Court, in order to settle her own affairs and her husband's, and we know that shortly after her arrival in Paris she was selling certain house-property there, notably the Hôtel d'Anjou near the Louvre, which was sold, through her Chancellor, Pibrac, to the Duchess de Longueville and became the famous mansion of that name. On the other hand, Marguerite purchased for 28,000 crowns a house which belonged to Cardinal de Birague, Chancellor of France. But apart from monetary matters, her journey, according to her own account, had another motive, for, as previously mentioned, she took with her Mlle. de Fosseux, and she admits in her memoirs that she did so in the hope that her husband, no longer seeing that young person, would possibly fall in love with another, who would not prove so great an enemy to herself.

Finally, the *anecdoteurs* give yet another reason for the readiness with which Marguerite set out for Paris. Among the gentlemen who had come southward with Alençon, when he negotiated the peace which put an end to the Lovers' War, was a handsome young fellow called Jacques de Harlay, Lord of Champvallou, whose nobility, says Ghiselin de Busbecq, envoy of the Emperor Maximilian II in France, was doubtful, though he appears to have been a member of a junior branch of the family of the famous President Achille de Harlay, and was, we think, in later years, the progenitor of François de Harlay de Champvallou, who became Archbishop of Paris and took a leading part in the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes. In any case it is generally admitted that at the time when Jacques de Harlay met Queen Marguerite, he was "young and handsome, with agreeable manners." And we are assured that at the period of Alençon's negotiations to put an end to the Lovers' War, Aubigné surprised young M. de Champvallou

with Marguerite under circumstances which left him no doubt respecting their intimacy. Briefly, as Henri de Navarre devoted himself to Fosseuse, his wife consoled herself with another.

That there was an intrigue is certain, for a portion of the correspondence exchanged by Marguerite and Champvallon was discovered in our own times, and published by M. Guessard in his edition of the Queen's memoirs. Only two of these epistles were written by Champvallon, all the others, nineteen in number, being from Marguerite's pen. Sainte-Beuve's opinion of them may well be quoted: "Here," says he, "one no longer finds the agreeable, slightly ornate and naturally polished style of the Queen's memoirs, but high metaphysics and pure *phébus*, which is almost unintelligible and most ridiculous.\* 'Farewell, my beautiful sun! farewell, my beautiful angel! beautiful miracle of nature!'—such are the commonest and least lofty expressions; the rest rises and soars by degrees till it is lost in the uppermost altitude of the empyrean." Judging by the phraseology of the letters, Sainte-Beuve expresses the opinion that Marguerite's passion for Champvallon was far more artificial than sincere, far more imaginative than heart-felt. There are, however, passages which really seem to indicate the existence of a *grande passion*, such as sometimes sweeps a woman off her feet. "Triumph," she writes on one occasion, "triumph in your knowledge of my too sincere and too ardent love!" And one can picture her feeling almost distressed at the thought that she cannot master herself and renounce a man, who has won and retains her heart in spite of all deceptions on her part. For jealousy displays itself, and infidelity is often charged in this correspondence, in which, it would seem, Champvallon always remained on the defensive. And the language of the letters is by no means empty, ambiguous babble, though, as so often happens in a woman's correspondence, the most significant phrases occur in the postscripts: "I kiss you a million times on that loving and beautiful mouth."—"Farewell, my life, I kiss

\* With all respect for Sainte-Beuve it may be pointed out that there was nothing exceptional in Marguerite's use of the so-called "phœbus style." It was, indeed, the style of the period, and we shall presently show by quotations from Henri de Navarre's correspondence with Corisanda that he was fully as much addicted to it as was his wife.

those beautiful eyes and that beautiful hair, my dear, sweet bonds, a million times."

There can be no doubt, we think, that Marguerite loved Champvallou, but the alleged upshot of the intrigue is somewhat less certain. It will be remembered that she had no children by her husband. It is asserted, however, that she had a son by Champvallou, a son who was first brought up under the name of Louis de Vaux by a perfumer named de Vaux, living near the Madeleine in Paris. On attaining manhood this Louis de Vaux became a Capuchin, and was then known, according to Dupleix, as Père Ange, and, according to Bassompierre, as Père Archange. He led a life of constant intriguing, and having been appointed confessor and spiritual director to Henriette d'Entragues, Marchioness de Verneuil, the so-called Wicked Mistress of Henri de Navarre's later years, he served the revengeful and ambitious conspirators who aimed at placing the crown of France on the head of the King of Spain.

It was certainly alleged at the period, and at one moment, apparently, by no less a personage than Marguerite's brother, Henri III, that she had given birth to a child by Champvallou—which accusation was the first of a series of incidents leading up to another war between the Catholics and the Huguenots, the war known as that of the Three Henrys—Henri III of France, Henri de Guise, and Henri de Navarre. The Queen had reached Paris on March 8, 1582, and, in spite of the pressing character of the invitations addressed to her, had met with a somewhat cold reception there. Respecting her actions and opinions at this time, we no longer have her memoirs to guide us and assist us in checking the statements of her enemies; for they end with the termination of the happiest period of her life—those years spent near her husband in Gascony and Bearn, years not of unalloyed happiness, for, as we have shown, they were marked now and again by serious tribulations; yet, as everything is relative in this life, they must at any rate be accounted the least chequered, the least painful, of this remarkable woman's career. In default, however, of a continuation of her memoirs some of her later letters have come down to us, and thus, soon after her arrival in Paris, we find her sending Court news to her husband, telling him, for instance, that



Guise has become aged and very thin, whereas Guise's brother the Duke de Mayenne "has become so strangely corpulent that he looks quite deformed."

At the same time she finds her mother, Catherine, and her brother, Henri III, irritated with her, the truth being that in inviting her to Paris they had hoped to attract Henri de Navarre thither also. Hence their disappointment and vexation, which Marguerite strove to overcome by making every effort to induce her husband to join her in the capital. That, no doubt, is not altogether consistent with her alleged secret motive for making the journey herself, her supposed eagerness to meet the handsome young Champvallon again. However, no entreaty could lure Henri de Navarre back to that Court from which he had once had so much difficulty in escaping. He turned a deaf ear to all his wife's solicitations.

Thereupon, neglected at the Louvre, losing all influence with her mother and her brother Henri III, railed at, even, by him and his *mignons*, she took up position against them, meeting raillery with raillery, for, says Busbecq, she lacked neither will, nor malice, nor wit. Briefly, she seems to have sided with that section of the Court which jeered at the flagrant immorality of Henri III. Aubigné, however, not only accuses her of "libelling that Prince," but even of trying to persuade his consort, Queen Louise, to dissolute courses with the Duke d'Alençon, whereat, says he, "the King was very deeply provoked against her and his brother."

It must be remembered, however, that Aubigné's pen is now invariably steeped in gall when he refers to Marguerite. Not only does his hatred of her rob him of all self-restraint but it quite deprives him, however great his ability, of lucidity of judgment. He was not in Paris at the time of these alleged occurrences; he simply retails gossip from the most scandal-mongering of courts, never making the slightest attempt to check any assertions directed against Marguerite. Indeed everything of that kind which reaches his ears is accepted by him blindly, wilfully, with a fierce and violent delight. Such is the religious fanatic. Were it not for Marguerite's love-letters to Champvallon we should attach no credit at all to the

story that Aubigné positively detected their passion at Cadillac. And in any case we think that account to have been greatly exaggerated, Aubigné, like many others, becoming wise after the event; for if his discovery was such as is asserted, it was the bounden duty of one who depicts himself as the most godly and upright of men, to have insisted on the immediate punishment of the guilty pair at the hands of his King and master. While, then, we admit that there is evidence of Marguerite's affair with Champvallon, we hesitate to believe in its early and complete discovery by Aubigné.

It is, however, certain that there were several quarrels and altercations between Marguerite and Henri III during her stay in Paris, quarrels which may have been due in part to Marguerite's indiscreet tongue, and in part to intrigues which she fomented or assisted. At last came a grave incident for which, rightly or wrongly, Henri III held her to be responsible. He confided to a courier a long autograph letter addressed to his friend and whilom *mignon* François de Joyeuse, who, although only one and twenty years of age, had already been created Archbishop of Narbonne and appointed envoy to the Holy See with the title of Protector of French Affairs in Rome. Now the royal courier was attacked by four horsemen, who riddled him with steel and seized his despatches. Thereupon the King, ever suspicious of his sister, imputed the outrage to her, the more particularly as there was question of her in his letter to Joyeuse, and she undoubtedly had an interest in trying to discover the purport of his communications with Rome, such communications often dealing with the difficulties which arose with the Huguenots, of whom her husband was the acknowledged chief.

Whether Marguerite was in any way responsible or not for the attack on the courier, Henri III made up his mind to revenge it upon her. On August 7, 1583, there occurred a scandalous scene between the King and his sister, the whole current of whose life changed from that moment. According to Busbecq, Henri publicly charged her at Court with leading a shameful life, with repeated adultery, and with having an illegitimate son; and in doing so, says the German envoy, he entered into such particulars that it seemed as if he had

personally witnessed her transgressions. Finally, he ordered her to quit Paris and rid the Court of her pestilential presence immediately. This is perhaps the finest instance in all history of the pot calling the kettle black. Without doubt the whole carefully prepared scene—Henri III had histrionic gifts, and, with all his faults, was a most effective speaker, as several of his contemporaries testify\*—was the royal method of taking a signal revenge on Marguerite, not only for the attack on the courier despatched to M. de Joyeuse, but also for all the raillery against the monarch and his *mignons* in which Marguerite had participated.

On the following day, in great distress, she hastily quitted the capital with a very small retinue and equipage, repeating as she went, that “in all the world there were not two more unfortunate princesses than herself and the Queen of Scots.” But Henri III’s resentment was not yet satisfied. A captain of the royal guard followed the fugitive with sixty men, and stopped her and her party at the village of Palaiseau, southwest of Paris, where she proposed to sleep that night. Her litter was searched by the officer.† She was ordered to unmask, and the same injunction was given to the ladies of her retinue, whose ears the officer even boxed as they did not obey him with what he deemed to be sufficient alacrity. He next apprehended the two principal ladies, Mme. de Duras and Mlle. de Béthune (the latter a near relative of Sully’s), “on the charge of unchastity and criminal offences.” L’Estoille states that a certain M. de Lodon, a gentleman of the Queen’s Household, “her equerry, her secretary, her physician, and others, men and women to the number of ten, were likewise arrested, and carried to the Abbey of Ferrières near Montargis, where the King himself interrogated and examined them respecting the loose

\* Very few good sayings have come down to us, however, as having emanated from him; but Fournier in his *L’Esprit dans l’Histoire* opines that (as in an instance which he specifies) Henri’s sayings have mostly been ascribed to more popular monarchs.

† Another account says that the officer searched her bed in which she had already lain down to rest; but that does not tally with the story of the unmasking, for while she and her ladies would have worn their masks on the journey in accordance with the usage of the time, they would have removed them on retiring to bed.

life of the said Queen of Navarre, his sister, and even concerning the child she was rumoured to have had since coming to Court, by, so it was suspected, young Champvallon, who, as a matter of fact, had at this moment left and absented himself from the Court."

That is accurate. Champvallon fled to Germany, but before long returned to France and became grand master of the artillery to the League. We shall catch a glimpse of him again at a later period. Whatever may have been his relations with Marguerite, her husband does not seem to have had any rancour, for in 1602 he created him a Knight of the Holy Ghost.

"At last," to quote L'Estoille again, "the King [Henri III] having failed to ascertain anything from the said prisoners of both sexes, set them all at liberty and licensed the Queen of Navarre, his sister, to continue her journey towards Gascony, and did not omit to write with his own hand to the King of Navarre, his brother-in-law, to tell him how everything had occurred." That last statement requires qualification. In the first instance, Henri III, with that pusillanimity of his which always followed his sudden outbursts of passion, and in which no trace lingered of the gallant *bravura* of his youth, enervated as he had been by years of effeminacy and indulgence—Henri III, we say, did not at first write the whole truth to Henri de Navarre. The order of the Jesuits had been established half a century previously, and this King of France availed himself of the doctrines of Loyola. Says Philippe de Mornay, Seigneur du Plessis-Marly,\* in his memoirs: "While the King of Navarre was hunting at Sainte Foix,† he received, by a valet of the wardrobe, a letter from the King [of France], dated the 5th of August ‡ [1583], and written entirely by the King's own hand, by which letter, in short, he sent him word that having discovered the evil and scandalous life led by Madame de Duras and Mademoiselle de Béthune, he had resolved to drive them

\* He had originally been a gentleman of the chamber to the Duke d'Alençon, and followed him to Flanders for a time; but afterwards became one of the chief doctors as well as leaders of the Huguenot party.

† Probably Sainte Foy-la-Grande on the Dordogne.

‡ If Mornay gives the date correctly the letter was written three days before the outrage on Marguerite, which must therefore have been fully premeditated.

away from the presence of the Queen of Navarre, as being most pernicious vermin and not to be supported near a Princess of such position."

Nothing was said in this first letter of the affront offered to Marguerite herself; and Henri de Navarre, being acquainted with nothing beyond what Henri III then wrote to him, deemed it fit to write and thank his brother-in-law. But a little later, on returning to Nérac, he received positive intelligence of the manner in which his wife herself had been accused and treated. There was evidently a second letter from Henri III, one indicating, perhaps, that Marguerite had been guilty, if not of actual misconduct, at least of light behaviour; apart from which the scene chronicled by Busbecq as having occurred between Henri III and Marguerite, must have come to her husband's knowledge. His first impulse seems to have been to exact satisfaction for the insult, his second to demand a separation from an unworthy consort.

He himself was no saint. Ever amorous as he was, he could never have kept his marriage vows, no matter to what woman he might have been united. But in his estimation, no doubt, it was one thing for him to indulge in misconduct, and another for his wife to do so, particularly in such a manner as to bring about a public scandal. Whether he actually believed in the existence of the alleged child we cannot say. For our own part, while admitting, as previously mentioned, the intrigue with Champvallon, and the existence of a certain Louis de Vaux who became Father Angel or Archangel, we have very great doubts indeed whether the said Louis de Vaux was Marguerite's son. And we are quite as doubtful respecting the story of a second child, which she is alleged to have had subsequently by another lover, and which is said to have been born blind. In both instances the evidence is of the very flimsiest. At no period of French history was there more jealous hatred and more mendacity than at the period with which we are dealing, and it is often most difficult to distinguish the true from the false, so inextricably, in certain instances, have they been intermingled. In Marguerite's case, while recognizing that she had lovers, we are virtually convinced that she was not destined by nature to have children. Had it been otherwise she would have given, we

think, an heir to Henri de Navarre, who had many children both by his second wife and by his mistresses. But the Valois race was drawing to its close.

On the other hand, it should be remembered that among the counsellors surrounding Henri de Navarre there were many adversaries and enemies of Marguerite. Some detested her on account of her religious faith, some on account of her extravagance, fondness of display, frivolity and suspected looseness of morals, others again precisely because she had given the King no son to ensure the succession to the throne. For all who regarded her in one or another of those ways, and some looked upon her in all of them, she was an undesirable consort for their master, and it is easy to picture what influence must have been brought to bear on him now that an opportunity had arisen to get rid of the unpopular Queen for ever. There was, too, a particular private reason why Henri de Navarre should have listened to the suggestions made to him in that respect, for at this period, as we shall show in our next chapter, he had become greatly enamoured of "Corisanda," the widowed Countess de Gramont, to whom, it is said, he ended by giving a written promise of marriage.

Henri III, however, became alarmed by his brother-in-law's demands for satisfaction and separation, the more particularly when Navarre enforced the first demand by seizing, under a pretext that the last treaty of pacification had been infringed, the fortified town of Mont-de-Marsan. Thereupon the French monarch began to make attempts to undo the harm he had done by inflicting, in his jealous spite, a public disgrace upon his sister. The steps he now took are indicated by L'Estoille whose general moderation in dealing with the disputes between the two Princes entitle him to a hearing.

"The King of France," he writes in his journal, "having reflected on the consequences of such an affair, and on what the King of Navarre might thereupon resolve to do (as, indeed, happened); that is not to take his wife back—which would have been a scandal and scorn shameful for his [the King of France's] name and escutcheon—coupled with the circumstance that the reports of the affair had already spread even to foreign nations, he sent fresh letters and despatches to the King of

Navarre, whereby he requested him not to refrain from taking the Queen his sister back on account of what he had written to him, for he had since learnt that all he had been given to understand in that respect and had written to him, was false, and that, owing to false reports, one had innocently [*i.e.* without malice] impeached the honour of the Queen of Navarre, his sister.

“To which the King of Navarre made no other answer than this, that abiding by the first advices which the King [of France] had sent him, and which he certainly knew to contain the truth,\* he very courteously apologized to the King, but was resolved not to take her [his wife] back. Thereat the King of France being irritated, despatched to him M. de Bellièvre † with express commands and letters written and signed with his own hand, and in which, with tart and stinging words, he enjoined on him not to fail to put his will promptly into execution. Among the shafts which the King’s said letters contained this was one of them: ‘That he [the King of Navarre] knew that Kings were liable to be deceived by false reports, and that very often the most virtuous Princesses were not exempt from slander, and that, even in the case of the late Queen, his mother, ‡ he knew what had been said of her, and to what a degree ill of her had always been spoken.’

“Having seen those letters, the King of Navarre began to laugh, and in presence of all the nobility, he said aloud to M. de Bellièvre: ‘The King does me great honour in all these letters. In the first ones he calls me the husband, and in the last the son, of a worthless woman. I thank him.’” §

It would require more space than we can give to narrate in any detail the protracted and complicated negotiations which ensued between Navarre and France with respect to this matrimonial *impasse*. Several envoys were despatched to Henri III—Aubigné, Plessis-Mornay, Pibrac and Yolet—but he would not consent to any of Henri de Navarre’s requests for

\* There had probably been private reports from Huguenot agents in Paris.

† See *ante*, p. 64.

‡ Jeanne d’Albret.

§ We have here bowdlerized L’Estoille, for Henri’s actual words were much less refined.

a separation based on the charges which had been brought against Marguerite. On the contrary, he insisted that his brother-in-law should purely and simply take his wife back. Not unnaturally, given the conditions of the times, politics intruded into the affair. Realizing the advantages on his side, Henri de Navarre would only take his wife back on certain conditions, and Marguerite became, as it were, the shuttle-cock of her brother and her husband.

At last, however, by means of mutual concessions, which included notably the withdrawal of French garrisons lately thrown into towns near Henri de Navarre's possessions, the affair was temporarily settled, and in January, 1584, Henri repaired to Agen where Marguerite had in the meanwhile retired (that town forming part of her appanage), and took her to Nérac, where, according to the accounts of certain laudatory poets, accounts which must be taken with a very great deal of salt, she made quite a triumphal entry. The fact is, however, that the fracas of her expulsion from the French Court had greatly damaged her reputation on all sides. Although her husband took her back, he cannot have been unaware that there was at least some truth in the charges preferred against her, although they had been subsequently withdrawn. Her absence in Paris, moreover, had helped to undermine whatever affection and friendship Henri had previously felt for her. Besides, however little importance one may attach to the pamphlet *Le Divorce Satyrique*, there may well be some truth in the assertions it contains to the effect that the King also resented the repugnance which Marguerite had at times displayed for him, a repugnance arising from her fastidious refinement and his careless self-neglect. Further, the complaisance which she had evinced in regard to his own amours may well have contributed to his loss of respect for her. Men may avail themselves of such complaisance, but they despise the woman who tenders it. Finally, Henri now had another mistress, the Countess de Gramont to whom we previously referred, and was becoming more and more attached to her. And thus there are many possible reasons which would explain why harmony was never again restored between Henri and Marguerite.



Bickerings began, disputes arose, charges were bandied to and fro. Marguerite had been taken back, but to be a wife in name only. She often remained isolated at Nérac whilst her husband went here and there, now journeying to Sainte Foy in the Dordogne (for he was more or less nominally Governor of the French province of Guienne, though Marshal de Matignon was Henri III's commander there) or else staying with Montaigne and hunting in his forest, as the great essayist tells us in one of his letters. Again, at other times Henri repaired to Bearn in order to be near his new mistress; and Montaigne, whose shrewd good sense is well known, was particularly concerned with respect to the possible outcome of those frequent excursions.

Mayor of Bordeaux, contending with innumerable difficulties there, loyal to Henri III, who was his legitimate Prince, yet striving to keep the balance even between Catholic and Huguenot and desirous of a continuance of peace, Montaigne foresaw that the isolation in which Queen Marguerite was left at Nérac whilst her husband went off into Bearn attended by counsellors who were opposed to her, and seeking the society of an influential favourite, must end by proving fatal to the cause which he, Montaigne, had at heart. He did not judge Marguerite to be guiltless, but it was his wish to see her and her husband on sufficiently amicable terms together that she might at least be able to exercise some influence against those counsellors who from one or another motive might urge a renewal of war.

He had known Henri de Navarre's new mistress, the Countess de Gramont, for several years. At the time of the first issue of his Essays he had dedicated to her a particular chapter containing twenty-nine of La Boëtie's sonnets. He knew that she was capable not only of loving tenderly but also of displaying a strong mind, of exercising a decisive influence over a man who might come under her spell. Thus, as we learn from a letter which he addressed to Marshal de Matignon, he wrote to the Countess in a frank and open manner begging her to sacrifice all personal feelings for the sake of her royal lover's political interests. Those interests, however, were not, in Mme. de Gramont's opinion, the same as Montaigne judged them to

be. He was for peace and reliance on time, which brings about all things; whereas she favoured action, energy and daring, and, as we shall see, she at last made a real man of Henri de Navarre. Yet, it may well be said that if her views prevailed, those expressed by Montaigne, in his anxious solicitude, did him honour also.

Whatever might be Marguerite's isolation at Nérac, she did not remain inactive. Amid the competition of the different parties, with which she was well acquainted, she embarked in various intrigues with the object of improving her position in one or another way. She corresponded, if not with her treacherous brother Henri III, at least with her mother and with personages of the French Court. It is known that she bitterly denounced the fact that although the King her husband had taken her back he had denied her all conjugal rights. At last he, on suspecting or being warned that her correspondence with the French Court was not in his favour, suddenly caused one of her couriers, a secretary named Ferrand, to be arrested soon after he had started from Nérac for Paris.

Apropos of that affair Montaigne is found reporting, in a letter which he addressed to Marshal de Matignon, that "since Ferrand's misadventure, and on that account, Frontenac has been to Nérac, where the Queen of Navarre told him that if she had imagined the King her husband to be so inquisitive, she would have placed all her despatches in his hands, and that as for what appeared in the letter she wrote to the Queen her mother, speaking of returning to France, it was by way of deliberating and seeking advice, but not that she was resolved on it. . . . And Frontenac says that what the King of Navarre did in the matter was only on account of the suspicion imparted to him that Ferrand was the bearer of memoirs relating to his position and public affairs. The principal result is said to be that several letters from girls of that Court to their lovers in France—I mean the letters which were saved, for when Ferrand was taken he found the means to throw into a fire some papers which were consumed to ashes before they could be taken out—it is said that these remaining letters provoke much laughter."

From that account the affair would seem to have been of

little consequence, but both L'Estoille and Aubigné tell us that a much more serious issue was involved, for Ferrand when under arrest, had declared that Queen Marguerite had formed a design to poison her husband in order to punish him for the scorn and neglect with which he had treated her since her return to him. Even Henri lent himself, for a while at all events, to that charge against a woman who had twice nursed him with the utmost devotion when his life was imperilled. The Royal Council was summoned to discuss the case, but it was not carried further, because Aubigné, according to his own account, remonstrated against the proceedings, "for which his master thanked him." In that connection, let us say that although we are not without some liking for Aubigné in certain respects, we fear that he takes credit to himself for too many things.

But events of much greater importance to France than the domestic squabbles of Henri de Navarre and his consort had occurred or were impending at this period. The situation between Henri and the French Court had never been in any way satisfactory since his wife's expulsion from it; and though in that respect it might be exaggeration to say of Marguerite that like another Helen she fired another Troy, it is at least certain that her expulsion was the first of a series of occurrences that led up to the new war which in 1585 broke out between the Catholics and the Huguenots, and which, chronologically, was the eighth war of its kind.

Among many matters which helped to bring about the renewal of that bitter struggle were some of the conditions exacted by Henri de Navarre on taking his wife back, the right of holding certain important fortified places, the death of the Duke d'Alençon on June, 1584, which, as he left no issue and Henri III had none, made Henri de Navarre heir to the French throne; then the anger of the Catholics at the thought of a Huguenot Prince becoming King of France, their idea of conferring the regal dignity on his old uncle, the Cardinal de Bourbon, followed at last by their compact with Philip II of Spain, whom they chose as Protector of the League, and one of whose daughters was to have espoused a French Catholic Prince—a Guise being ultimately chosen—

thereby in a measure handing France over to Spain, and all this with the object of excluding the hated Henri de Navarre, the rightful heir, from the throne of his ancestor St. Louis. Thus, once again, there came war, the War of the Three Henrys, so called for reasons previously explained.

Meantime, the relations of the King of Navarre and his wife had become absolutely intolerable. Nérac, which she had once found a happy home, was now for her a purgatory, a "place of penitence" even as puritan Pau had been in the past. And thus, after Pope Sixtus V, incited by the French Catholic Leaguers and the Spanish monarch, had at last solemnly excommunicated the sovereign of Navarre, his wife, as a Catholic Princess, and one not without certain mystical and superstitious tendencies (so many *femmes galantes* are also or become *dévotés*) availed herself of that excommunication to leave him.

She did not attempt to do so openly. She knew that he might well have refused to let her go had he suspected her real intentions, for though he now cared nothing for her as a wife, she was a kind of hostage in his hands. So she sought a convenient pretext. It was the Lenten season, and she therefore expressed a desire to repair to Agen to hear a certain Jesuit father who was preaching at the cathedral there. The King did not oppose that desire, and so on the evening of March 19, 1585, the Agennais witnessed the arrival of their sovereign-lady escorted by merely a few attendants. But other folk soon followed her, and day by day the number of the Queen of Navarre's retinue and partisans increased. By the employment of a little Valois and Medici craft, Marguerite had succeeded in her object of once more installing herself in her dower town of Agen and there surrounding herself with reliable folk who would defend her against the husband by whom she had been scorned. Siding more or less sincerely with the League, she held Agen against all comers until her prodigal life there, and the exactions of her *confidante*, Mme. de Duras, who had again joined her and exercised a powerful influence over her, at last stirred the Agennais to revolt, in such wise that with the help of Marshal de Matignon—the father, by the way, of her whilom attendant, Gillone de

Goyon \*—she and her retinue were most unceremoniously bundled out of the town.

Of that incident and the strange fate which afterwards befell her for several years, we shall presently have occasion to speak. Suffice it to say here that from the day when Marguerite betook herself to Agen for the second time the rupture with her husband became complete, the long separation which ensued culminating at last in a divorce. Here, then, we will, for a while, take leave of this fascinating and insinuating woman who has intruded so frequently into our pages, though not without reason, for to understand Henri de Navarre aright a knowledge of his wife is also necessary. Let us now turn to him and his affairs and see how he found compensation for the loss of his consort in the affection of the devoted and disinterested Corisanda.

\* See *ante*, pp. 31, 38.

## V

### CORISANDA

The Gramont Family, its Origin and Rise to Influence—Antoine I and the Massacre of Hagetmau—Diane d'Andoins, Countess de Gramont, otherwise Corisanda—Her Husband Philibert de Gramont—The alleged Paternity of her son Antoine II—Henri de Navarre not his Father—Henri's *Liaison* with Corisanda—Aubigné's Spite against her—Her Devotion to Henri—Her Portrait at Versailles—Henri's Passion and its Lapses—He carries Matignon's Flags to Corisanda—He throws away the Results of Coutras to carry her Joyeuse's Standards—He gives her a Promise of Marriage and has a Son by her—Aubigné prevents Henri from making Corisanda his Wife—Correspondence of Henri and Corisanda—He sends her Presents—He describes Battles to her—His Narrative of Henri de Condé's Death—His Fears for Himself—Events of this Period—His Letter to Corisanda before the Battle of Arques—His delightful Description of Marans—Love Passages in his Letters—His Protestations of Faithfulness—His other alleged Love Affairs at the Time—Corisanda distrusts his Constancy—Henri's Allusions to Queen Marguerite—Marguerite's Flight from Agen and Strange Life in Auvergne—Corisanda and the Love Affair of Soissons and Catherine de Navarre—End of Corisanda's *Liaison* with Henri—Her later Years and Death.

At this period a family of Basque origin, destined to become famous, was gradually acquiring more and more prominence in France. Its name in the days of Basque independence had been Agaramuntek, which, as the suzerainty of France spread to the Pyrenees, became transformed first into Agramunt, then into Agramont and finally into Gramont.\* Bergon Loup d'Agramont, by his valour at the first Crusade, had been one of the first members of this family to achieve historical distinction. In the sixteenth century the Gramonts acquired considerable influence at the French Court, one of them,

\* The corrupt spelling Grammont was only used by certain members of the family itself in the latter part of the seventeenth and earlier part of the eighteenth centuries.



DIANE, COMTESSE DE GRAMONT, "LA BELLE CORISANDE."

*After the Portrait in the Versailles Museum.*





Gabriel de Gramont, Bishop of Tarbes, accompanying Marguerite d'Angoulême to Spain when she repaired thither to negotiate with the Emperor Charles V for the release of her brother, Francis I. Moreover, Francis despatched Gabriel de Gramont to England as his ambassador at the time when Henry VIII was thinking of marrying his daughter Mary to the French monarch, and when Francis, on his side, wished to arrange a marriage between his sister, the aforementioned Marguerite, and the English ruler. Neither of those schemes succeeded, however; for Francis espoused Charles V's sister, the widowed Queen Eleanor of Portugal, while Henry VIII preferred the beauty of Anne Boleyn to the diplomatic skill, the literary talent, and the discerning mind of the plain-featured writer of *The Heptameron*. What that work might have contained had Marguerite d'Angoulême become the wife of the English Bluebeard, supposing that he had spared her to write it, may be left to the imagination of our readers.

Gabriel de Gramont, being in orders, was unmarried, but the head of his family at that time, François, Lord of Gramont, had one child, a daughter named Claire or Clara. She, in 1525, espoused Menaud d'Aure, Viscount d'Aster or Asté, and from that union sprang the modern line of the Gramonts, Clara's son, Antoine, assuming his mother's surname in accordance, says M. Paulin Paris, with the stipulations of her marriage contract. Menaud d'Aure had consented to this arrangement although he himself claimed an illustrious lineage, tracing his descent back to one of the very earliest rulers of Navarre, Sancho the Cæsarian, who, according to the legends, was so called from having been cut alive out of his mother's womb when she was massacred by the Moors. Among Sancho's possessions was the valley of Aure, lying among the Pyrenees, south of Bagnères-de-Bigorre; and at the beginning of the sixteenth century, Menaud d'Aure was virtually ruler of that valley. Some remnants of his castle of Asté may still be found in the environs of Bagnères.

In 1549, Menaud's son, Antoine I de Gramont, espoused Hélène de Clermont, Lady of Toulangeon, by whom he had several children, the eldest one being named Philibert. Antoine I—so called because there were in after years several

Antoines in the family—took a prominent part in the religious wars of his period, being a commander on the Catholic side. In 1574, when, after the massacre of St. Bartholomew, Henri de Navarre, detained as a prisoner at the Louvre, was compelled to abjure the Huguenot faith, he was also constrained to send orders for the re-establishment of the Catholic religion in Bearn, of which province Antoine de Gramont was appointed governor-general. To carry out those instructions, Antoine repaired to his castle of Hagetmau, some fifteen miles from Mont-de-Marsan (Landes)\* and there assembled over two hundred and fifty noblemen to arrange with them on the steps which should be taken. Tidings of that conference came, however, to the ears of the fierce old Huguenot leader, Baron d'Arros, who had been Jeanne d'Albret's lieutenant-general in Bearn, and who, though now of little account himself, for he was an octogenarian and was blind, had a son on whom he believed he could rely. He sent for him—so Aubigné tells the story—and after handing him a naked sword spoke to him as follows :—

“ Who gave you life ? ”

“ After God it is to you that I owe it, father,” the young man answered.

“ Well, God now requires that life of you,” the old man exclaimed. “ Go, my son, and that you may accomplish the enterprise I now call on you to undertake, cast not your eyes on the number of those who will accompany you, but only on their virtues and their courage, and gaze not on your enemies to count them, but only to strike them with this sword of mine, which God will bless in your hand.”

The young man obeyed, and although he had only thirty-seven companions he attacked the two hundred and fifty noblemen assembled at the castle of Hagetmau, surprised them, and massacred all but a few who succeeded in taking flight. And it is said that he was already raising his sword to cut down Antoine de Gramont, when a beautiful young woman sprang forward and entreated him to spare his prisoner's life. D'Arros

\* The castle of Hagetmau was a very fine one. Henri de Navarre's grandfather Henri II died there. “ Mauvaise-hétraie ” would be the French equivalent for the Bearnese name of the place.

was too young to be insensible to her distress and her charms, he gave Gramont his life, put up his sword, and returned to his fierce old father, who upbraided him for having spared the raven who would one day pluck out his eyes.

The young woman whose intervention had saved Antoine de Gramont was the Corisanda of romance and history, who became the most devoted and most disinterested of the mistresses of Henri de Navarre. Her real Christian name was Diane, and she was the only child of Paul d'Andoins or Andouins, Viscount de Louvigny and Lord of Lescun, a brave gentleman who was killed (says Brantôme) beside François, Duke de Guise, father of Henri le Balafré, when the troops of Charles IX took Rouen from the Huguenots in 1562. All authorities give the date of Diane's birth as 1554, so she can only have been thirteen years of age, when, on August 7, 1567, she espoused the son of that Antoine I de Gramont whose life she afterwards saved at Hagetmau.\* Such an early marriage as hers was not unexampled in those days, but such unions were not consummated until a later date.

Diane's husband Philibert de Gramont and Toulangeon, Count de Gramont, Count de Guiche, and Viscount d'Aster, became mayor of Bordeaux, governor of Bayonne, and seneschal of Bearn. L'Estoille, though mentioning that he was one of the *mignons* of Henri III, also calls him a Gascon of great valour and promise. But he was quarrelsome as well as brave, and in 1578, on falling out with Bussy d'Amboise, it was proposed that they should fight together outside the Porte St. Antoine of Paris, each being supported by three hundred gentlemen, who were to join in the fray. But that murderous enterprise was happily frustrated. In the same year, however, Count Philibert quarrelled with a young member of the Chavigny family concerning a page's staff, and cut him down lifeless at the very doors of the church of St. Roch. His own violent career was cut short two years later, for at the siege of La Fère, early in August, 1580, one of his arms was carried

\* She would then have been twenty years old. Let us add here that many of the particulars we give respecting the earlier Gramonts have been taken by us from an essay on the family which we contributed in 1889 to an edition of Anthony Hamilton's famous *Mémoires du Comte de Gramont*.

away by a discharge of musketry, and he died from the effects of the wound. "It was said at Court," writes L'Estoille à propos of this event, "that La Fère was a very wicked beast to devour so many *mignons*." As that jest may not be readily understood by some of our readers it may be allowable for us to explain that in old French the word *fère*—used by Ronsard, among others—signified a wild animal.

Count Philibert, at the time of his death, was only twenty-eight years old, his wife being left a widow at the age of twenty-six, with a son who was then quite a little boy, but who became known as Antoine II, Count de Gramont, Guiche and Louvigny, Sovereign Prince of Bidache, and Viceroy of Navarre. In 1601 he married Louise, daughter of the first Marshal de Roquelaure, by whom he had two sons, Antoine III (Marshal) de Gramont and Roger, Count de Louvigny. Nine years, however, after contracting that union he made a painful discovery, and a tragical result ensued. "The Count," writes Malherbe, under date April 1, 1610, "surprised his wife with Narfizian, his equerry, whom he slew on the spot." Eight months later the Countess herself died, and L'Estoille chronicles a rumour that her husband had poisoned her. In the spring of 1618 he again took a wife, Claude de Montmorency, eldest daughter of Louis, Baron de Boutteville, by whom he had two sons and four daughters, the former being Henri, Count de Toulangeon, and Philibert, known successively as the Abbé, Chevalier, and Count de Gramont. This last was the hero of those lightly yet admirably written memoirs in which Anthony Hamilton bequeathed to the world such a vivid picture of the Court of our second Charles.

In the opening lines of the epistle of alternate verse and prose which is prefixed to those memoirs, Hamilton recalls the ancestry of his friend Gramont in grandiloquent fashion, exclaiming:

"O thou, the glory of the shore  
 Where CORISANDA saw the day,  
 The blessed abode of MENAUD D'AURE;  
 Thou whom the fates have doomed to stray  
 Far from that pleasant shore away——"

Subsequently, moreover, Hamilton suggests that the Gramonts

of his time were in reality descended from Henri de Navarre. For instance, in narrating a conversation between the Chevalier de Gramont and his friend Charles de Bourdeille, Count de Matta, he makes the former exclaim: "Ah, you sorry jester! So you fancy that all the world is as ignorant as yourself. You think, then, that I know nothing of the Menauds d'Aure and the Corisandas. I indeed! Perhaps I don't know that it only depended on my father for him to become the son of Henri IV. The King was most anxious to acknowledge him for his son, but the traitrous fellow would never consent to it. Just think what the Gramonts would be now, but for his fine whim. They would take precedence of the Césars de Vendôme.\* You may laugh as much as you like, it is gospel-truth."

Hamilton's Gramont having been the son of Antoine II, who was the son of Corisanda, it would follow from the above that Corisanda was the mistress of Henri de Navarre in her husband's lifetime. That view was long entertained by numerous writers. In *Les Amours du grand Alcandre*, the famous seventeenth-century romance recounting Henri's love affairs, and formerly but erroneously attributed to the Mlle. de Guise who became Princess de Conti, it is stated that Henri offered to acknowledge himself the father of Corisanda's † son, but that the son replied he preferred to be a gentleman rather than a King's bastard. A similar view with respect to the real paternity of Antoine II is expressed in the *Observations sur Alcandre et sa Clef* included in the 1720 edition of the *Journal de Henri III*; and Boiteau contended in his notes to the *Histoire amoureuse des Gaules* that if the Gramonts of the time of Louis XIV rose to such high favour with the King it was precisely on account of their left-handed descent from the monarch's grandfather, Henri de Navarre. Again, it is generally admitted that the latter King, after his escape from the French Court in 1576, paid a visit to Count Philibert de Gramont and the Countess Diane on arriving in Gascony; for which reason

\* César, Duke de Vendôme, was Henri de Navarre's eldest son by Gabrielle d'Estrées. We shall have occasion to speak of him hereafter.

† It may be mentioned that the name of Corisanda (Corisande) by which the Countess Diane de Gramont has long been so generally known, was first bestowed on her in that same romance to which we refer above.

his *liaison* with the Countess has been dated from that period. To certain letters of his addressed to her, such dates as 1570, 1573, and 1576 have been assigned, thus supporting the view that Corisanda was not only Henri's mistress, but also an unfaithful wife.

But whatever may have been the ideas of Anthony Hamilton and his Chevalier de Gramont—their sincerity is not in question—there is good reason to believe that Henri de Navarre's relations with Corisanda did not begin until she had become a widow, and that is after her son Antoine's birth. Prolonged constancy was not a feature of Henri de Navarre's love affairs, and if that in which he engaged with Corisanda began at the early date which has been suggested, it would follow (since we know when it ended) that it lasted for a score of years, whereas the very longest of Henri's other *amours* was of less than ten years' duration. Further, his minister Sully, who ought not to be mistaken, states in dealing with the year 1583, that the King of Navarre had then reached the apogee of his "passion for the Countess de Guiche (Corisanda), to see whom he made a journey to a spot which is named Agemau."\* Now, it is certain that if Corisanda had been Henri's mistress ever since 1576, his passion would not have been in its apogee in 1583. In all the love affairs that the world has ever known no passion has attained to its highest degree so late as seven years after its inception. Moreover, all Henri's absolutely authentic letters to the Countess belong to periods subsequent to the last date we have given, which, it will be observed, is posterior to Queen Marguerite's return to Paris, and the disappearance of the disappointed Fosseuse from the scene (February–March, 1582). Marguerite gone, Fosseuse packed off to be married, Henri embarks in a fresh *liaison*.

At first, perhaps, he engages in it merely *pour passer le temps*, but it becomes a very serious attachment, and whatever may be said against it from the standpoint of strict morality, it does the King a world of good. It raises him from vulgar amours, it inspires and inspirits him, incites him to deeds of valour and

\* The name is misprinted Ageman in some editions of Sully, but the reference is evidently to Hagetmau, the scene of the massacre which we mentioned on p. 90, *ante*.

the most persevering efforts. But for Corisanda, indeed, he might never have become King of France. She was, so to say, his Agnes Sorel.

Of course Corisanda had her enemies even as Queen Marguerite had hers; some of the Huguenot leaders being quite as much opposed to the mistress as they were to the wife. Among these one may name the austere Aubigné, who, being virtuous, could not brook the thought of anybody indulging in cakes and ale. Corisanda was at Mont-de-Marsan in 1584, when M. de Bellièvre repaired thither on behalf of Henri III to induce the King of Navarre to take back his wife; and Aubigné indicates his opinion of her in a way which is at once venomous and amusing: "Every morning," says he, "M. de Bellièvre, from the window of his lodging, saw the Countess de Guiche [Corisanda], then headquarters hussy, going to mass, accompanied by Esprit and the *petite* Lambert, and by a Moor, a Basque in a green gown, Bertrand the baboon, an English page, a spaniel, and a lackey. This Senator [Bellièvre] remonstrated with a Huguenot [Aubigné himself] respecting the defectiveness of all that, in the following terms: 'In my time I have often seen lady friends of our Kings, but the men highest in rank, even the Princes, were happy to watch for the time when they would leave their lodgings in order to pay them respect; but I see this woman, who is of good birth, and who turns and jogs this prince [Henri de Navarre] as she pleases, and, behold, she goes to mass, on a feastday, attended, when all is said, merely by a monkey, a spaniel and a buffoon.'—'Monsieur,' the Huguenot [Aubigné] replied, 'that is because in all this Court there is neither monkey, nor spaniel, nor buffoon, excepting the ones you see.'"

However, when the War of the Three Henrys broke out, the Countess de Gramont and Guiche—or Corisanda as we prefer to call her in this narrative—showed that she could think of other things besides buffoons, spaniels and monkeys. Although she was a Catholic and her lover a Huguenot, one, too, solemnly excommunicated by Sixtus V with bell, book and candle, it was to him that she gave all her help, for him that she offered up all her prayers. She mortgaged her estates and pawned her jewels in order to reinforce his army with men and

horses, while he, on his side, as the war proceeded, gave her more than one memorable proof of his attachment. There were times, indeed, when he seemed to be making war not for his own cause, not for his own political advantage, but merely to distinguish himself in the eyes of his mistress, seeking in her smile and her embrace the only reward he desired.

On some occasions he was carried away by his passion to such a point that his cause as a King suffered seriously. For that, however, Corisanda cannot have been intentionally responsible—on the whole her influence over Henri was, as we have said, healthful and inspiriting—but the love with which she had inspired him was such that there were times when he could not resist it, but flung aside important advantages gained in the field in order to hurry to his mistress and cast himself in her arms.

How far her reputation for beauty was justified it is difficult to say. In the galleries of Versailles will be found a small panel portrait of her, formerly in Colbert's collection, and certainly dating from Corisanda's period. But while it is of historical interest it has little value as a work of art. Like many sixteenth-century portraits, it shows the Countess with an abnormally high forehead and the most diminutive of chins, the general expression of the face being childish. It may well date from Corisanda's extreme youth, in connection with which it will be remembered that she was married when only thirteen years of age. But if this portrait has no other merit, it at least tells us something of Corisanda's general appearance. Her hair, raised very high above her brow, is fair, her eyes are blue or bluish-grey, her cheeks are rosy, plump, and round; and as we know that in her last years she became ruddy and very stout—such is too often the metamorphosis reserved for the female form divine—the picture would really appear to convey an idea of what she was like in girlhood. It is not a beautiful face, it has none of the distinction and refinement which one observes in the portraits of Gabrielle d'Estrées, who succeeded Corisanda in the affections of Henri de Navarre, and who, by the way, also had fair hair, blue eyes, and pink cheeks, nor is it (perhaps on account of its youthfulness) a strong face, but it is a right pleasant and good-natured one.



That Corisanda became in early womanhood more charming than this portrait indicates, seems evident from all that we know of her *liaison* with Henri. We have said that on certain occasions his passion so overcame him as to cause him to neglect his interests in the great struggle for the crown of France. A first example of the kind was supplied in March, 1586, when, after compelling Marshal de Matignon to raise the siege of Castelsarrasin, and taking several of his standards in the engagement which was fought, he did not follow up the retreating forces of Henri III's lieutenant, but hurried away to the castle of Guiche—on the Bidouze between Bayonne and Pau—in order to spread his mistress's couch with the captured banners. On that occasion no great harm was done, perhaps, by Henri's remissness in regard to Matignon. But in the following year the consequences of a similar *fugue* were serious.

On October 20, 1587, Henri's army encountered the Catholic forces under Anne, Duke de Joyeuse, Grand Admiral of France, at Coutras, north-east of Libourne, and inflicted on them a severe defeat. Joyeuse, who, on seeing Henri's soldiers kneeling in prayer before the engagement, is said to have exclaimed, "Those men tremble, they are ours!"\* was among the slain; and Henri de Navarre, who conducted himself with great gallantry on this occasion,† might have reaped important advantages from the victory. Indeed, the whole course of the war of the Three Henrys might have been changed. But the fever of love had again come upon the amorous young monarch, and without heeding the murmurs of his troops or the reproaches and solicitations of that able commander, his cousin, the Prince de Condé, who asked for only a few days to reach Saumur so as to ensure the army a means of crossing the Loire, he threw away all that had been gained at the price of no little bloodshed, and rendered the whole campaign futile, by starting yet once more

\* It has been pointed out by Edouard Fournier that the saying attributed to Joyeuse is probably apocryphal, a similar one having been previously ascribed to Charles the Bold at Granson, and to an Austrian commander on another occasion.

† Says Brantôme *à propos* of this battle: "Our great and brave King Henri, who had large long plumes hanging from his helm, said to his men: 'Get ye from in front of me, obscure me not, for I wish to show myself.'"

with the standards taken from the enemy, in order to join his mistress. We see him going southward, staying four days after the battle with Montaigne, dining with that right good man and staid philosopher; then taking to boot and saddle once more until at last the standards he bears lie at Corisanda's feet, and he is kissing her "a million times."

Our readers will perhaps allow us to add, platitude though it be: Thus does love of woman change the course of history.

Sully, by way of excusing his master on this occasion—we are with him in that respect: it is fitting that a good servant should try to extenuate the lapses of a good master—Sully asserts that Henri yielded to the solicitations of his cousin, Charles de Bourbon, Count de Soissons, who was enamoured of Henri's sister, Catherine de Navarre, and anxious to see her again. But Sully cannot deny that the King was easily persuaded. Soissons, says he, was aided by "the complicity which he found in the King's mind, the love he bore the Countess de Guiche, and the vanity of presenting to that lady the ensigns, pendants, and other spoil of the enemy which he had caused to be set aside to be sent to her." And in adding that Henri assigned as his "pretext" for the journey "the affection he bore to his sister and the Count de Soissons," Sully virtually gives the case away.

It was about this time, in 1587 or 1588, that Henri de Navarre, now for a year or two quite separated from Queen Marguerite, whom he no longer regarded as his wife and was ready to repudiate in defiance of Rome and all her thunders, was so far influenced by his love for Corisanda as to desire to marry her. In a famous romance to which we have already referred, *Les Amours du grand Alcandre*,\* it is asserted that the King gave Corisanda a promise of marriage written and signed with his blood. That is not at all unlikely. It is known that Henri repeatedly gave written promises of marriage to women whom he loved, and we shall print one of them *in extenso* in a subsequent chapter. But men being deceivers ever—for the prophecy that they "shall be true and women shall believe" is still as far from fulfilment as it was in the days of Henri de Navarre's younger contemporaries, Beaumont and Fletcher—it

\* See *ante*, p. 93.

so happened that none of the aforesaid royal promises was ever redeemed.

In the case of Corisanda it seems probable that she was *enceinte* at the time when Henri's promise was given her, for it is known that she gave birth to a son, who died in 1590, as is indicated by one of Henri's own letters, in which he says, "I am greatly distressed by the death of my little one (*petiot*) who died yesterday. He was beginning to talk." It was, we think, the circumstance of Corisanda having this son by her royal lover that afterwards gave rise to the supposition that the Gramonts of a later date were descended from him. But the above will have shown that the child in question was born during the Countess's widowhood, and died when emerging from infancy. Thus the Gramonts of to-day may well be entitled to repudiate any alleged left-handed descent.

It is not at all surprising to find that the virtuous Aubigné claims the honour of having prevented his royal master from espousing Corisanda. He gives us to understand that the King's intentions were communicated to him and to the Viscount de Turenne \* when they were together at Marans.† Turenne, we are told, was tacitly opposed to the match; but, as remonstrance might prove dangerous, he invented an excuse to quit the King for a short time, leaving Aubigné to dissuade him from his matrimonial projects. Aubigné favours us with a long, sententious, rhetorical discourse, which, according to his own account, he thereupon addressed to his royal master, though we greatly doubt whether Henri de Navarre was at all the man to listen to the interminable speeches which Aubigné asserts he delivered at one or another more or less critical time. It is quite possible that those speeches, as printed in his History, convey the sense of his actual utterances; but they are, as it were, those utterances "revised, corrected, and considerably extended."‡ On the occasion with which we are dealing,

\* See *ante*, p. 51.

† This town, which is in Saintonge, was besieged and taken by the Huguenots in 1588, and it seems probable that Henri's project of marrying Corisanda was formed about that time. The date would fit in with that of the death of the child who was beginning to talk (1590).

‡ Malherbe judged Aubigné's History very severely. Writing to a cousin under date February 14, 1620, he says: "As for what you tell me at the end

Aubigné claims to have harangued the King in the first place on his duty as (1) Henri de Bourbon, (2) as King of Navarre, (3) as heir to the crown of France, and (4) as protector of the Churches. Finally, however, and probably because he observed that the monarch did not appreciate that pulpit mode of address, he advised him, skilfully enough, to postpone his intentions until he had overcome all the difficulties by which he was beset, and found himself firmly seated on the throne of France. Henri felt the force of Aubigné's reasoning on this point, and finally agreed to postpone his plans in regard to Corisanda for a term of two years. We are also asked to believe that on M. de Turenne returning to the King, the latter made him a speech, which was word for word the speech which Aubigné had previously delivered, and that on ending it he repeated his decision to adjourn the whole matter for the period we have mentioned. When that period expired, however, Henri's passion for Corisanda was expiring also.

Thirty-seven of the letters he addressed to her during their *liaison* were collected and preserved by Count d'Argenson, and afterwards became the property of President Hénault, and were communicated by him to La Place, by whom they were published in the *Mercure* in 1765-1766. In our own times the originals were placed in the Arsenal Library in Paris. Other letters belonging to this same correspondence, came to light at various periods, and the whole collection, so far as it goes, will be found in Berger de Xivrey's *Recueil des Lettres missives de Henri IV.* They are often very delightful and vivacious epistles. During most of the time the King has full confidence in his mistress. He informs her of the position of his affairs, confides to her his impressions of men and things, describes battlefields and other scenery to her, or advises her of the despatch of a present.

“I am on the point of acquiring for you a horse which goes of your letter respecting Aubigné's History, you have in the volume which I sent you, all that he has yet had printed. I certainly think that it will be followed by a third one, but he has hit it off so badly in the beginning that I fancy he will think it out more closely in the future. You may judge how truly he may speak of the affairs of the Levant and the South since he has done so badly with what occurred so near him, or as one might say, at his very door.” *Œuvres de Messire François de Malherbe*, 1634, p. 464.

the ambling pace, the handsomest and best you ever saw, with large aigrette plumes," he writes on May 25, 1586, "Bonnières has gone to Poitiers to bring you some lute strings." A month later, after noticing among his own coach-horses one similar to Mme. de Gramont's, he offers her that one also; and in the following year he sends her "for her menagerie" two young tame boars and two fawns which, says he, have followed him about everywhere, even to church.

On military matters we find him writing among other things: "The enemy took the island of Marans before my arrival, so that I could not relieve the castle. . . . You will soon hear that I have taken it again, please God." (March 12, 1587.) Again: "Yesterday the Marshal [Matignon] and the Grand Prior came and offered us battle, knowing very well that I had sent my troops back. It occurred on the summit of the vineyards near Agen. They were five hundred horse and nearly three thousand foot. After spending five hours to form their order of battle, which was rather confused, they started off resolved to throw us into the moats of the town, as they really ought to have done, for all their infantry joined in the combat. We received them at the wall of my vineyard, which was the farthest, and retreated at a walk, always skirmishing, until we were only five hundred paces from the town where was our main force, which may have numbered three hundred arquebusiers. Thence we drove them back to the point whence they had assailed us. It was the hottest skirmish I have seen." (March 1, 1588.)

At another time *à propos* of military matters Henri addresses Corisanda in the style of a knight of some romance of chivalry: "Prepare yourself, my beautiful mistress, to have a favour made for me; for I will wear none save your favours in this war. I have only two hundred horse against three hundred, but I will see if the others will fight. If they do so I will fire a pistol shot for love of you."

When, subsequent to the battle of Coutras and the crushing defeat of the German auxiliaries on whose help the King largely relied, his cousin the Prince de Condé is suddenly struck down by poison, he tells Corisanda of the terrible trials which assail him. "I cannot fail to become either mad or a

very skilful man before long!" he exclaims in a letter (March 10, 1588) in which he also graphically narrates the circumstances of Condé's death. "On Thursday," he writes, "this poor Prince, after tilting at the ring, supped, and was in good health. At midnight violent vomiting came upon him, and lasted until the morning. All Friday he remained in bed. In the evening he supped, and, after sleeping well, rose on Saturday morning, dined, and played at chess. Getting up from his chair, he walked about his room, chatting with one and another. But all at once he said: 'Give me my chair, I feel very weak;' and he had no sooner sat down than he lost the power of speech, and suddenly, still seated, gave up the ghost. The signs of poison suddenly appeared."\* Condé's death was a great blow to Henri's cause, for the Prince was not only a man of integrity but also a most able commander.

The King had a suspicion, natural enough in those days, that attempts might be made on his own life, and tells Corisanda of it on several occasions. But, says he, his "chief reliance is in God who by His grace will keep him." There are numerous references to the Deity in his letters: "All is in the hand of God, who has repeatedly blessed my labour," he writes on one occasion; and on another: "Certainly I advance a good deal, going as God leads me, for I never know what I shall have to do at the finish." Again, *à propos* of Condé's death, and the possibility of an attempt on himself, the King remarks: "I am now the only target of the perfidy of the mass [worshippers]. They poisoned him, the traitors! But may God remain the master, and I, by His grace, the executor of His will. . . . I foresee that great trouble is coming upon me. Pray stoutly to God for me. Should I escape it will be that He will have preserved me. Until the grave, to which I am perhaps nearer than I imagine, I shall remain your faithful slave." He also says: "My soul, I am well enough in body but sorely afflicted in mind. Love me, and show me that you do so: it will be a great consolation for me." A similar note is sounded yet

\* It is said that the crime was committed by some of the Prince's servants, for religious motives. His wife, Charlotte de la Trémoille, was also so strongly suspected of having instigated it that she was kept in captivity for many years.

more forcibly about the same time: "The devil is let loose, I am to be pitied, and it is a marvel that I do not succumb under the burden. If I were not a Huguenot I would become a Turk. . . . Every Gehenna that can receive a soul assails mine incessantly. . . . Pity me, my soul. . . . Love me, my all. Your good grace is my mind's stay under the shock of affliction. Refuse me not that support." (March, 1588.)

When the King is prostrated by bodily illness he is found writing: "Yerre could not be sent off on account of my illness, from which, thank God, I now see myself emerging. Assuredly, my heart, I saw the heavens open, but I was not deemed good enough to enter them. God still wishes to make use of me. Twice in twenty-four hours I was so reduced as to be fit to be wrapped in shrouds. You would have pitied me. If the crisis [of my illness] had been delayed two hours the worms would have made a great feast of me. . . . I finish because I feel faint. Good morrow, my soul." (January, 1589.)

All sorts of important events are occurring in France during the years of Henri's correspondence with Corisanda. There is the great rising of the Barricades in Paris, the flight of Henri III into the Orléanais, the assassination of the Duke de Guise, the reconciliation of Henri III and the King of Navarre at Plessis-lès-Tours, their joint advance on Paris and their preparations to attack the city, amidst which, however, Henri III is assassinated at St. Cloud by the monk Jacques Clément. To several of those events there are allusions in the letters which Corisanda receives. When, after the assassination of Henri III, her royal lover becomes rightful King of France, and, withdrawing from before Paris, undertakes his memorable campaign in Normandy, we still find him acquainting her with his position and his intentions. As Yung remarks in his *Henri IV, écrivain*, just before the battle of Arques, when the Duke de Mayenne, now leader of the Catholic party, was giving out that Henri was seeking safety in the sea, when the Spanish ambassador was writing to Rome that he had been killed, when the Duchess de Montpensier, on the contrary, was spreading a rumour through Paris that he had been captured, and folk were hiring windows in the Faubourg St. Antoine to see him led in chains into the capital, he was really writing to Corisanda

in this quietly confident strain: "My health is good and my affairs are going well, compared with what many people thought. I have taken Eu. The enemy, who are now double my strength, thought that they would take *me*. After accomplishing my enterprise, I drew near to Dieppe, and am waiting for them in a camp which I am fortifying. It is to-morrow I shall see them, and I hope, with God's help, that if they attack me they will have an ill bargain of it."

Twelve days after that letter was written, that is on September 21, 1589, the Leaguers did attack him, opposing thirty thousand men to his seven thousand; but with the assistance of that doughty commander, old Marshal Biron, Henri defeated them, and to perpetuate the memory of his victory Arques took the name of Arques-la-Bataille.

But let us now give an extract from a very different kind of letter addressed by Henri de Navarre to Corisanda. "I arrived yesterday evening from Marans, whither I had gone to provide that it should be well guarded. Ah, how I wished that you had been there! It is the spot most in accordance with your fancy that I have ever seen. . . . It is an island, enclosed with bushy marshes, where at every hundred paces there are channels to enable one to go and gather wood, in boats. The water is clear, with but little current, the channels are of all widths, the boats of all sizes. Among those solitudes are a thousand gardens, whither one goes by boat. The island thus encompassed is two leagues round; a river flows at the foot of the castle, through the town, which has as much accommodation as Pau. Few are the houses from the doors of which one cannot enter one's little boat. This river spreads into two arms, which not only bear large boats, for ships of fifty tons come there. The distance from the sea is only two leagues. Assuredly it is a channel, not a river. Contrariwise the big boats go to Niort, which is twelve leagues away. There is an infinity of insular mills and farms, all sorts of birds that sing, all sorts of sea birds too. I send you some of their feathers. Of fish the quantity, the size and the price are wonderful; three *sols* [are paid] for a large carp, and five for a pike. It is a place of great traffic, and all by boat. The land is covered with corn, and very fine. One



can be there pleasantly in peace, and safely in war. One can rejoice there with the one that one loves, and lament an absence. Ah, how pleasant it is to sing there.”\*

The strain in which that charming epistle is written certainly suggests that Henri de Navarre possessed a poetical gift, and indeed Lescure regarded it as sufficient indication that the King was really the author of the songs *Charmante Gabrielle* and *Viens, Aurore*. Respecting those pieces, however, we shall have something to say in the appendix to this volume.

Let us now turn to some of the love passages in the King's correspondence with Corisanda. In the earlier years there is often a picturesque and—however much grammarians may object—charming mingling of such pronouns as “thou” “thee” and “you,” “thine” and “yours” in the same letters—occasionally even in the same sentences. For instance: “*Your* slave adores *you* to distraction. I kiss *thy* hands a million times, my heart.” Again: “I beg *thee* to think it right if I do not give *your* son the position which *you* ask for.” As a rule, however, the King confines himself to the second person plural even when he is protesting his love most ardently. Tender thoughts and passionate outbursts often occur. “I read your letter every evening; if I love it, how much must I love her from whom it comes?” “Love me more than yourself.” “I do not beg you to love me, that you have done already.” “I would rather die than fail in aught that I have promised you.”

As for the protestations of constancy—unfortunately we know what to think of them—they are innumerable. “Always remember Petiot (little one), my heart. Assuredly his fidelity is a miracle. He bids you a thousand times good day in those paths of Lyranuse.” †—“Believe that my fidelity is white and spotless, its like was never seen.”—“Live convinced of my fidelity, it grows firmer, if that be possible.”—“Be always sure of my fidelity, which will be inviolable.”—“I love none but you

\* The date of the above letter is somewhat uncertain, some authorities assigning it to 1586 and others to 1588, which last seems the more probable date, for the note which the letter sounds is precisely such as one might expect at a time when Henri was seriously thinking of making Corisanda his wife. See also footnote, p. 99, *ante*.

† Lyrnessus, perhaps. If so the allusion may be to Briseis and her constancy to Achilles.

and in that resolution I shall die.”—“Never entertain a doubt of my fidelity.”—“Be convinced of your slave’s fidelity. He will never fail you.”—“Believe that nothing save a departure from friendship [on your part] will ever make me alter my resolution to be yours eternally.”

Only a few years after Henri penned those protestations, Shakespeare, translating Tibullus, wrote in *Romeo and Juliet*: “At lover’s perjuries, they say, Jove laughs.” If that were true then Henri de Navarre must have kept the master-deity in constant merriment. His fidelity to Corisanda was not so “white and spotless” as he asserted. During the years of their *liaison*, the names of various women are associated with his own—those of a certain Dame Martine and a certain Esther Imbert in 1587, then that of Antoinette de Pons, Marchioness de Guercheville, in 1589 and 1590. That lady, it is true, sent him about his business, much to his surprise. But, on the other hand, about the time when his attachment for Corisanda was expiring, 1590, the *anecdotiers* name two nuns in connection with him: Catherine de Verdun, then of the nunnery of Longchamp in the Bois de Boulogne, and later Abbess of Vernon, and Marie de Beauvilliers, Abbess of Montmartre. The erudite Paulin Paris contended that the story of Henri’s *liaison* with the last named could not be true, as she only became Abbess of Montmartre in 1598, and that at the time when there was question of besieging Paris, and Henri was therefore near that city, the abbatial dignity belonged in turn to Catherine de Havard and Mme. de Senantes. Sauval, however, who personally knew Marie de Beauvilliers, gives us to understand that she was only a nun when Henri fell in love with her, and was subsequently made by him an abbess.\*

Some of those tales may be true and some may be false, but it is certain that Corisanda considered that her royal lover protested his fidelity too much, and ended by quite disbelieving in it. As always happens, in the love affairs of royalty as well

\* She was a daughter of Claude de Beauvilliers, Count de Saint Aignan, by Marie Babou de la Bourdaisière, through whom she was first cousin to Gabrielle d’Estrées. Her sister Claude became Abbess of Pont-aux-Dames near Meaux, and her sister Françoise of Avenay in Champagne.

as in those of students and *grisettes*, there came at times some little tiff between the pair, some fit of sulks or jealousy on one or the other side. That Henri was quite piqued on certain occasions is shown by various passages in his letters.

“The more I go forward the more it seems that you try to make it appear how small a position I occupy, not only in your good graces, but also in your memory. By that lackey you sent a letter to your son [Antoine II de Gramont] but none to me. If I did not render myself worthy of one, I did at least all I could. You do not find the roads dangerous when you wish to give pleasure to the least of your friends. But if it be a question of writing to me to give me some contentment then the roads are dangerous. That is proof of the share which I have in your good graces. . . . I finish, certainly believing that you do not love me.” On another occasion he remarks: “I have received your letter, it required very little time to read it. You did not deign to send me a letter by Vicose. Do you think it right to behave so coldly? I leave that for you to judge.” Yet again he says: “I have received a letter from you, my mistress, by which you acquaint me that you do not wish me ill, but that you cannot place reliance in one so variable as me. It was extremely displeasing to me to learn the first, [*i.e.* that she did not place reliance in him], and it is quite wrong of you to remain doubting as you do. In what actions of mine have you known me to be variable? I say in regard to yourself . . . I have always remained fixed in the love and service I vowed to you: God is my witness of it.”

Well may Corisanda have shaken her head when she read those assurances. There exists a letter of Henri's, dated May 18, 1589, on which she indicates in her own handwriting what her real opinion of the matter is. “Truly swearing to you,” writes the King, “that I love and honour none in the world as I do you, and that I will keep faithful [garderoi fidelité] to you even to the grave”; whereupon Corisanda writes: “There is no appearance of it;” and after changing “faithfulness” into “unfaithfulness” [*garderoi infidelité*] she adds sarcastically: “I believe it!”

In the course of Henri's letters there are sundry allusions to his wife, Queen Marguerite, his indifference towards whom

gradually changes to real bitterness. In an early note to Corisanda, he says: "A man came on behalf of the lady with the camels to ask me for a passport to pass five hundred tuns of wine for her consumption [*bouche*] without paying the tax; and it is thus written in a patent. It is as if she declared herself on parchment to be a drunkard [*ivrognesse*]. For fear lest she might fall from such a height as the back of her animals, I refused the man the passport. This is guzzling beyond all measure, never did the Queen of Tarvasset\* do as much." Henri's raillery on this occasion must not be taken too seriously. He well knew that his wife did not require such a quantity of wine for her personal consumption, but for the force which she had gathered together at Agen, and it was for that very reason that he refused to let her have it.

Three years later, 1588, he is found writing: "Domestic misfortune is a very great one"; and again: "a bad woman is a dangerous beast," both of those remarks having reference to his wife. In January 1589 he expresses to Corisanda his great wish to be rid of Marguerite for good: "The only happiness I now await is that of hearing that the late Queen of Navarre has been strangled; that, and the death of her mother [Catherine de' Medici] would certainly make me sing the song of Simeon." Four months later, that is after his reconciliation with Henri III, he writes: "The King has spoken to me about the lady of Auvergne, I think I shall make her take a nasty jump."

The unfortunate Reine Margot, it may be here explained, had been leading a very strange life ever since her expulsion from Agen. † If one could believe *Le Divorce Satyrique*, her flight from that town was most precipitate and unseemly. One of her officers, a certain Sieur de Lignerac, who is said to have become her lover, took her up behind him on his horse, her girls followed her as best they could, with a few other officers, some on horseback and some on foot, the party resembling a pack of gipsies. Covering a distance of twenty-four leagues in two days, Lignerac carried the Queen to a castle called Carlat in the mountains of Auvergne, of which his brother

\* In Rabelais.

† See p. 86, *ante*.

Mercé was governor,\* and where she remained for a considerable period, virtually as a prisoner of the Ligneracs. She had previously sent her whilom chamberlain, M. de Duras, to Spain, to procure some money for her, but he failed to obtain it, and was thereupon dismissed. The *romanciers* and *anecdottiers* attribute to Marguerite a variety of love affairs at this period, and it certainly appears that she became the mistress of a certain Sieur d'Aubiach, one of her retainers. Between them they at last devised a plan to reduce the Ligneracs, secure possession of the castle, and hold it against all comers. With that object, Aubiac despatched a cousin of his, named Roras, to raise men in Gascony; but according to a manuscript in the Bibliothèque Nationale, at Paris, the plot was discovered, and Lignerac, after seizing some of the Queen's rings, in part payment, he declared, of ten thousand *livres* which he had expended on her, summarily expelled Marguerite, together with Aubiac and one of her tirewomen.

"After much debate in her mind, she resolved to repair to Millefleur,† and started off on foot with Aubiac and a woman servant; then, on the way, she was set on a pack-horse, and afterwards in a bullock-cart; and while she was in a village called Colombe, a nobleman named Langlas, who was lieutenant at Usson, offered her that castle ‡ and conducted her to it. But immediately after she had arrived there he went in search of the Marquis de [Montboissier] Canillac at Saint Hicques, who, mounted on horseback, and having caused the gates to be opened, demanded the said Aubiac, who was hidden between the walls. He took him and handed him over to a provost, and immediately afterwards the said Marquis despatched young

\* The shapeless ruins which still exist indicate that Carlat must have been a huge and formidable fortress.

† Mirefleurs, a small and ancient fortified town in the department of the Puy-de-Dôme.

‡ According to other accounts Usson really belonged to Marguerite, having been included in the dowry granted her by Charles IX at the time of her marriage to Henri de Navarre. The castle (afterwards demolished by Richelieu) stood on the very site of a volcanic crater on the road from Issoire to La Chaise Dieu and was long regarded "as one of the strongest and most lordly fortresses" in France. It was held by the English in the fourteenth century, but surrendered to Du Guesclin.

Montmaurin with the news to the King [Henri III] and the Queen-mother." Aubiac was afterwards hanged at Aigueperse, where, according to *Le Divorce Satyrique*, "he displayed to the end so much constancy for his faithless mistress that instead of thinking of his salvation he continued kissing, until the last moment, a blue muff which was the only thing then left to him of the favours of that shameless creature."

The Marquis de Canillac seems, in his turn, to have become enamoured of Marguerite, and if so this circumstance may perhaps have helped her to secure possession of the castle of Usson. There is a legend of how she made a fool of the Marquis, how she bribed his wife, entered into communication with the League, turned Usson from a prison into an "ark of safety," and, once her purpose gained, deprived the Marquise of the jewels which she had given her as a bribe, and summarily dismissed her. But the whole of the highly entertaining story is mere romance. M. Merki, one of the Queen's latest and most authoritative biographers, shows that if Usson became a stronghold of the League, with Marguerite in more or less nominal possession of it, this was owing to the faithlessness of Canillac to his King and master, Henri III, and his connivance with the Duke de Guise, one of whose letters to the Marquis is printed in M. Merki's work. The upshot was that, while Canillac departed to join the League, his wife remained at Usson as Marguerite's first lady-in-waiting.

Again, the *romanciers* and *anecdotiers* tell very remarkable stories of the life which the Reine Margot led at Usson during her long residence there. Hilarion de Coste, the Queen's panegyrist—eponiums have been pronounced on even the worst of Queens—likens that castle to a temple, a saintly hermitage, and a pious monastery; but *Le Divorce Satyrique* claims that it had more resemblance to a den of thieves than to the residence of a Princess who was at once the daughter, sister, and wife of Kings. According to the same libel, Marguerite, whilst at Usson, took as her lover a certain Pominy, who was the son of an Auvergnat tinker; and it certainly seems that her brother, Henri III, remarked one day in open Court that the Queen of Navarre, not content with the young sprigs of Gascony, had now thrown her cap at the mule-drivers and tinkers of Auvergne.

Pominy, it appears, had been a choir boy, and his fine voice attracting the Queen's attention, she appointed him to her "chapel," and afterwards made him her secretary. All the rest, however, is mere legend—a succession of that kind of story, which, as Paulin Paris once wittily remarked, "everybody repeats and nobody believes." And now let us once more say *au revoir* to Queen Marguerite, leaving her for a while to her semi-captivity at Usson, and her endless devices to raise money, now by sending her jewels to Venice to be pawned there, and now by appealing in turn to her mother, her sister-in-law, Elizabeth of Austria, and even her husband, Henri de Navarre. We shall meet her again when the latter negotiates with her for the purpose of procuring her consent to a divorce.

The last stage of Henri's love affair with Corisanda was reached in 1590, when their young child died. Nevertheless he continued writing to the Countess down to the close of that year, acquainting her with all the episodes of his fruitless campaign, that victorious march on Paris, which the sudden assassination of Henri III at St. Cloud rendered of no avail. We have seen, too, that Henri still corresponded with Corisanda while he was contending with Mayenne in Normandy. However, his passion was now fast waning, and before long the star of "la belle Gabrielle" began to rise. It is possible that Corisanda might still have exercised influence with her royal lover had she been willing to second some of his designs. But, in some matters at all events, she was not of a pliable nature.

Let us take a case in point. We mentioned previously that Henri's sister Catherine was long attached to her cousin Charles de Bourbon, Count de Soissons, who for some years held at the Louvre the high court office of "Grand Master of the Palace," or, as was corruptly said, "of France." Henri had at one time favoured the match between Catherine and Soissons, as we indicated when writing of the battle of Coutras. That occurred in 1587, the year in which Mary, Queen of Scots, was beheaded. Some time afterwards Henri, wishing to secure the help of the King of Scots, subsequently our James I, conceived the idea of offering him his sister Catherine in marriage. She was about eight years older than James; but in one respect the match would have been suitable, for the Princess was a staunch

Protestant. Her attachment, however, to the Count de Soissons thwarted the fulfilment of Henri's plans.

In this connexion we find him writing to Corisanda, urging her to use all her influence with his sister (they had known one another ever since their childhood) to induce her to dismiss Soissons, and incline her to the idea of espousing the King of Scots. The latter, says Henri, offers to come and help him with 6000 men at his own expense, and even to give his own services. And, Henri confidently predicts, this King of Scots "will infallibly become King of England." He is, therefore, all the more anxious for the match between James and Catherine. "Prepare my sister to wish him well," he writes to Corisanda; "point out to her the position in which we are, and the greatness of that Prince, together with his virtue. I am not writing to her about it myself. Do but speak of it to her by way of discoursing that it is time for her to marry, and that there is no hope of any other match for her than this one."

But Corisanda turns an unwilling ear to the suggestion. She inclines to constancy in love, she admires the mutual fidelity of Catherine and Soissons, she does not wish to see their affections blighted by one of those "reasons of State" which, ever since States were founded, have been responsible for so much human misery. She herself, although well aware of the waywardness of Henri de Navarre, clings to her love for him patiently enough until at last the triumph of Gabrielle d'Estrées inspires her with a very womanly idea of revenge.

There was then no longer any question of a union between Princess Catherine and the King of Scots. He had espoused Anne of Denmark (1589), and Catherine still remained faithful to Soissons. Under these circumstances Corisanda urged her to marry her lover, regardless of her royal brother's wishes. It seemed possible that the plot might succeed. Soissons furiously quitted Henri's army and repaired to Bearn, where, at Corisanda's instigation, he and Catherine signed a promise of marriage which would have been put into effect but for the sturdy opposition of one of the Bearnese ministers, Palma Cayet the historian. In vain did Soissons argue and storm, even threatening that he would kill the minister if he persisted in his endeavours to thwart him. Cayet replied that he would



prefer to die by the hand of a Prince while doing his duty, than by that of the executioner for betraying his master, King Henri; and, undaunted by Soissons' menaces, he laid all the facts before the President of the Sovereign Council of Bearn, M. de Pangeas, the "big buffalo" who had married King Henri's whilom mistress, Mlle. de Tignonville. Pangeas thereupon seized the château of Pau, set guards round the Princess Catherine, and compelled Soissons to leave the region. The only revenge the Count was ever able to take on Pangeas, says Sully, was to make him fall downstairs one day when he subsequently met him at the King's quarters at Pontoise.

However, the mutual promise of marriage signed by Soissons and Catherine was still in existence, and Sully received orders to obtain possession of it. This was the first commission of the kind given to him, but in later years he had to deal with a similar promise which the King himself handed to the father of Henriette d'Entragues. "I shivered," says Sully, "when the King gave me such an order." Nevertheless he acted on it, and achieved success by dint of masterly duplicity. He deceived everybody in turn by giving out that the King would consent to the union of the lovers—which, said he, was indeed inevitable—when the royal authority had triumphed over so many rebellions, and that his Majesty would certainly be touched by the sacrifice and trustful homage of that promise of marriage, which was an insult to him as a monarch and as head of his house. Briefly, the crafty minister secured that document, and at the same time another one, that is a declaration by which the two unfortunate, trusting lovers entered into an engagement that they would not marry one another without his consent. While Sully duly conveyed the promise of marriage to Henri, he kept the other paper in his own possession, never even mentioning it to the King, but afterwards utilizing it to frustrate all further attempts at union on the part of Catherine and Soissons.

Nevertheless, there was long unrest and dissension in the royal house owing to this affair; and it is the principal subject of one of the King's last letters to Corisanda. "Madame," he writes in March, 1591, "I commissioned . . . to speak to you concerning what, to my great regret, has occurred between my

sister and myself. Far from finding you capable of believing me [he found that] all your speeches only tended to blame me and foment my sister to do what she ought not to do. I did not expect that of you, to whom I will only say these words: that all persons who seek to set my sister at variance with me, will never have my forgiveness." Later, on September 13, 1595, the King writes to Monsieur (afterwards the Duke) de la Force: "I must tell you that I received during the last few days a letter from my sister, which greatly vexes me and in which she reveals her bad disposition [*mauvais naturel*], for she complains of me in the most cruel manner possible, with what in appearance are soft words, but in reality quite different ones, as I will let you see by her letter, which I will show you. Although many vexations now trouble me I have felt none so much as this, that while I desire her welfare she shows me so little gratitude. Ingratitude will be punished by heaven, and to that I adjourn her. Whatever she may say and do I will not cease to be her father, brother and King, and to do my duty even though she does not do hers, which is a thing everybody does not do nowadays, though with God's help I will do mine."

It is possible that the letter from Catherine which Henri mentions to La Force was the touching epistle, quoted by Yung in his *Henri IV, écrivain*, in which the Princess protests against the martyrdom to which she is subjected, and begs (although still a Protestant) to be allowed to retire to a convent and there end the painful widowhood of her affections, rather than to be obliged to take a husband against her will. That entreaty was vain. Catherine prolonged her resistance until the latter part of 1598, but on the 30th of January in the following year she was constrained to marry Henri de Lorraine, Duke de Bar. She was then in her forty-first year. Ever since the age of sixteen she had been in love with the Count de Soissons. Her wedded life was brief; for she died at Nancy in February, 1604, from an internal inflammation which had been mistaken for pregnancy. It will probably be felt that although in earlier years Henri de Navarre professed much attachment for his sister, he shines no more in relation to her than he does in relation to his wife Queen Marguerite.

And what of Corisanda, it may be asked? She could not be forced to take a husband when the fickle Henri transferred his affections to Gabrielle d'Estrées, and, moreover, she was not inclined to love again. The King, owing perhaps to the quarrel respecting his sister, seems to have made no attempt to soften the blow which his desertion inflicted on Mme. de Gramont; for, a long time afterwards, in 1597, the Marquis de Parabère, one of the Countess's relations, and her first *confidant* respecting her *amours* with Henri, was bold enough to reproach him for the sudden and humiliating manner in which he had forsaken her; whereupon the King, stung by that well-deserved rebuke, and his heart touched, perhaps, by the memory of the days when he had laid his first spoils of war at Corisanda's feet, replied (September 21, 1597) expressing the most flattering deference, gratitude and friendship for the woman to whom in other days he had written with the fervour of passion: "Farewell, my heart, I kiss thee a hundred million times!"

He greatly favoured her son, Antoine II de Gramont,\* attached him to his person, and ultimately created him Viceroy of Navarre. M. de Gramont was one of those who, in the King's last years, after his Majesty had retired to bed, read to him one or another of the new romances of the time, such as D'Urfé's *Astrée*, to enable him to get to sleep! Thus were the soporific effects of a certain pastoral literature exemplified in the case of Henri de Navarre. One can understand, however, that so mutable and enterprising a wooer may well have felt bored by the unfailing timidity and constancy of D'Urfé's hero, the love-sick Celadon.

Meantime the horrid fate reserved for many an *ex-belle femme* fell upon Corisanda. She grew "very fat, corpulent and red in the face," says L'Estoille—an assertion which is corroborated by Sully, who states that, changed as she was, she felt ashamed that folk should say the King had once loved her so much. According to most authorities she passed away in 1620, but some opine that she survived until 1624, in which case she may well have seen her grandson, the Philibert de Gramont whom Anthony Hamilton immortalized.

\* See p. 92, *ante*.

## VI

### LA BELLE GABRIELLE

#### I. WOED AND WON

The Babou de la Bourdaisière Family—Marriage of Antoine d'Estrées—His Wife and her Sisters—"The Seven Deadly Sins"—Birth and Early Years of Gabrielle d'Estrées—Her First Love Affairs—The Duke de Longueville and the Duke de Bellegarde—Gabrielle's Inclination for Bellegarde—Henri in Love with Gabrielle—He orders Longueville and Bellegarde to retire—Gabrielle flies from Henri—His Romantic Journey to pacify her—He orders the Estrées Family to join him at Mantes—Renewed Pretensions of Bellegarde and Longueville—The Latter's Death—Gabrielle's Beauty—Portraits and Descriptions of Her—Henri de Navarre's Appearance—Marriage of Gabrielle and Nicolas de Liancourt—Dismissal of Liancourt and Annulment of the Marriage—Gabrielle accompanies Henri on his Campaigns—Military and Political Events—Siege of Paris—Henri in Champagne—The Fair Anne du Puy—Death of Marshal Biron before Epernay—The League and its States-general—Henri's Religious Views and Abjuration—"Paris is well worth a Mass"—Henri's Jealousy of Bellegarde—A Letter of Reproaches to Gabrielle—Bellegarde marries Anne de Bueil—Henri enters Paris—Attempts on his Life—Gabrielle's son, César de Vendôme—She is accused of Poisoning the King's Physician—She is vindicated by Henri—She makes a Triumphant Entry into Paris—Legitimation of her son César.

AMONG the most notorious French families of the period of the Renaissance was one known by the name of Babou de la Bourdaisière, the latter part of that appellation being derived from the castle of La Bourdaisière which reared its towers beside the Loire, near Vouvray, and still existed in the eighteenth century, when, however, it passed into the possession of Louis XV's minister, the famous Duke de Choiseul, who caused it to be demolished. The men of the Bourdaisière race were not particularly remarkable, but the women were undoubtedly;

being usually beautiful and all but invariably most amorous. For a hundred years they figured continuously in the *chronique scandaleuse* of France. They began to be particularly prominent in the reign of Francis I, when there was one who boasted that she had been not only the mistress of that King but also of the Emperor Charles V and of Pope Clement VII. One can count, however, well-nigh thirty women of this family whose love affairs became notorious.

On February 14, 1559, one of them, a certain Françoise Babou de la Bourdaisière was taken to wife by Messire Antoine d'Estrées, of a noble house of Picardy, and who was or became Governor, Seneschal and first Baron of the Boulonnais, Viscount de Soissons and Bercy, Marquis de Cœuvres, Governor of La Fère, Paris and the Isle of France, and Grand Master of the Artillery, which last office had formerly been held by his father Jean d'Estrées, and also by the father of his wife. The latter had two sisters, one of whom married M. de Beauvilliers, and became the mother of the Marie de Beauvilliers, Abbess of Montmartre, whose name, as we previously mentioned,\* has been associated with that of Henri de Navarre, while the second espoused the Marquis de Sourdis, and took as her lover Philippe Hurault, Count de Cheverny,† sometime Chancellor of France. Françoise de la Bourdaisière followed that example after her marriage with Antoine d'Estrées, but not being able to secure a Chancellor she contented herself with a future Chancellor's father, that is the first Étienne d'Aligre, Marquis de Tourzel. Unfortunately for her, however, she followed him to Issoire where he was governor, and was killed at the time of a popular rising there.

Before that happened she had presented her husband with eight children, two of them being boys. The elder of these was killed at the siege of Laon, whereupon the younger one, François Annibal, first a churchman and raised to a bishopric, abandoned the crozier for the sword, and ultimately became the first Marshal d'Estrées (1626-1670). One of the six girls, Angélique, as she was called, took to conventual life and became Abbess of Maubuisson, near Pontoise, in which position

\* See p. 106, *ante*.

† Sometimes spelt Chiverny.

her conduct proved so scandalous that she was ultimately consigned to the Couvent des Filles Repenties. All her sisters married, becoming Mesdames de Villars, de Nau, de Sanzay, de Balagny, and de Beaufort. According to Tallemant des Réaux, the six girls and their surviving brother were known in Paris as the Seven Deadly Sins.

The Mme. de Balagny included in the above list bore the Christian name of Diane, and is said to have been slightly deformed. Be that true or not, she secured as her husband a Marshal of France, Alexandre Jean de Montluc de Balagny, a son of the Montluc who massacred so many Huguenots, and as her lover an equally important personage, Jean de la Valette, Duke d'Épernon, sometime Grand Admiral of France and Colonel-General of the Infantry of the Kingdom. We mention her again, however, more particularly because she suggested to D'Urfé the character of Délie—or, as we should say, Delia—in his *Astrée*, and is also alleged to have been, for a brief period, a mistress of Henri de Navarre before he definitely fixed his affections on her younger sister, who is designated in our list under the name of Beaufort. She acquired, indeed, the title of Duchess de Beaufort as well as those of Lady of Liancourt and Marchioness de Montceaux, but it is as La Belle Gabrielle that she has remained famous in song, romance and history.\*

She was by order of birth the fifth child and the fourth of the six daughters presented to Antoine d'Estrées by his wife Françoise. She came into the world at La Bourdaisière, but the date of that occurrence is somewhat uncertain. It was formerly held that she was born in 1565, which would be six years after the marriage of her parents, but that, although possible, seems unlikely; while the date of 1573 assigned by recent writers appears even more improbable, as Gabrielle's brother, François Annibal, was born in that year, and her connection with Henri de Navarre began in 1590-1591, when, if 1573 were the correct date of her birth she would have been

\* The best romance in which she figures is probably *La Belle Gabrielle* by Auguste Maquet, the *collaborateur* of the elder Dumas. With respect to the song "Charmante Gabrielle" attributed to Henri de Navarre, see *post*, Appendix G.

barely eighteen years of age.\* It is true that Voltaire writes of Gabrielle in *La Henriade* :

“Elle entrait dans cet âge, hélas trop redoutable,  
 Qui rend des passions le joug inévitable.  
 Son cœur, né pour aimer, mais fier et généreux,  
 D'aucun amant encor n'avait reçu les vœux.”

But Voltaire appears to have been mistaken. There are grounds for thinking that Henri de Navarre was not Gabrielle's first favoured lover, and it therefore seems unreasonable to suppose that she was only eighteen when he met her. The truth would appear to be that she was then about twenty, which would give 1571 as the probable date of her birth. Although she was born at La Bourdaisière, she was chiefly reared at her father's château of Cœuvres in Picardy—about eight miles north-east of Villers-Cotterets and ten miles south-west of Soissons. Antoine d'Estrées himself designated that château by a very disreputable nickname which we need not repeat, but which signified that Cœuvres was given up to licentiousness. Under the sway of Françoise Babou de la Bourdaisière matters could hardly have been otherwise. She took “the wrong turning” herself, and allowed—some have even said encouraged—her daughters to do likewise.

Both historians and *anecdotiers* agree with respect to the main facts of Henri de Navarre's first meeting with Gabrielle d'Estrées. The most detailed account of her earlier love affairs is given in the *Nouveaux Mémoires* ascribed to the brilliant, witty, cynical and vainglorious Bassompierre, whom Richelieu cast into the Bastille. Those *Nouveaux Mémoires*, a manuscript of which was found in President Hénault's collection, were not published until 1802, and while some critics have regarded them as authentic, others have pronounced them to be apocryphal. In numerous respects, however, statements which are found in them, agree with those made in works of recognized authority. We will therefore venture to transcribe some of the particulars they contain respecting the early life

\* In a declaration made by her during the proceedings for the annulment of her marriage with M. de Liancourt she says that she became his wife (June, 1592) when eighteen years of age, but that declaration contains several loose and contradictory statements and must not be implicitly relied upon.

of La Belle Gabrielle without, however, guaranteeing their authenticity. It is said, then, that when Gabrielle was sixteen years old, very pretty and already possessed of a good figure, she was, at her mother's instigation, brought to the notice of Henri III by the Duke d'Épernon, then already the lover of her elder sister Diane. She took the fancy of the King, who handed to one of his *confidants*, a certain M. de Montigny, a sum of six thousand crowns which was to be given to Mme. d'Estrées. Montigny, however, only remitted her two-thirds of that amount, retaining the balance for himself, on which circumstance coming to the King's knowledge, Montigny lost all favour until the Duke de Joyeuse reconciled him with his sovereign. Henri III's *liaison* with his young favourite is said to have been of brief duration—he had other notorious vices—but she attracted the notice of the Cardinal de Guise,\* who remained her lover for more than a year, quitting her shortly before the affair of the Barricades in Paris (May, 1588) as he had become jealous of the young Duke de Longueville,† of whom we shall speak again. However, Roger de Saint-Lary, Duke de Bellegarde,‡ who was Grand Equerry of France, Master of the King's Wardrobe and First Gentleman of his Chamber, suddenly entered the lists, and Henri III, with whom he was in high favour, is said to have supported his suit. But about this time Mme. d'Estrées took Gabrielle and her sisters, Denan (*sic*) and Diane, back to Cœuvres, in consequence perhaps of the disturbances in Paris and the flight of the Court. Then, a little later, she forsook her husband and, accompanied only by her youngest daughter Juliette (or Julienne) Hippolyte, afterwards Marchioness and Duchess de Villars, set out to join her lover M. d'Aligre, at Issoire, where, as we previously mentioned, she met her death under very tragic circumstances. Indeed she and Aligre were surprised in their bedroom and promptly cut down by the malcontent burghers, Mme. d'Estrées' naked

\* Put to death at Blois after the assassination of his brother Henri le Balaféré. See p. 47, *ante*.

† He was the son of Léonor d'Orléans, Duke de Longueville. The family was descended from the famous Dunois, Bastard of Orleans, so called because he was the natural son of Louis, Duke of Orleans, brother of Charles VI.

‡ Son of Roger, Marshal de Bellegarde. He was born on January 10, 1563, and was, therefore, about eight years older than Gabrielle.



corpse being afterwards thrown out of the window like that of Jezebel.

Meantime, her elder daughters had remained at Cœuvres, where several young sprigs of nobility paid their court, and where the Duke de Longueville was an occasional visitor. In time Gabrielle became a perfect beauty, and one of her admirers at Cœuvres, a certain M. de Stanay (or perhaps Stenay), to whom she confided the fact that M. de Bellegarde had made love to her in Paris, is said to have sung her praises to the Grand Equerry with so much fervour, at the same time mentioning how favourable was her recollection of him, that he, Bellegarde, wrote to her—confiding his letter to Stanay who had offered to serve him. It also seems that Bellegarde afterwards repaired secretly to Cœuvres in order to see Gabrielle. In a boastful spirit he subsequently informed Henri de Navarre of his adventure, and indulged in such extreme praise of his mistress's beauty that he fired the King's curiosity.

So far we have followed the statements in the *Nouveaux Mémoires* attributed to Bassompierre. We think them incorrect in regard to Gabrielle's alleged love affairs with Henri III and Cardinal de Guise, but they certainly seem to be accurate with respect to Longueville and Bellegarde, for virtually every authority mentions those two nobles among Gabrielle's earliest lovers, and states that Henri de Navarre's curiosity was awakened by Bellegarde's indiscreet praise of her beauty. The account of the affair given in *Les Amours du grand Alcandre*, that romance in which fact is so often interwoven with fiction, agrees with that attributed to Bassompierre in all respects but one—that is the name of the locality where Bellegarde told Henri of his intrigue with Gabrielle. In the *Alcandre* that locality is Compiègne, whereas in the *Nouveaux Mémoires* as well as in various other works it is Mantes,\* in which town Gabrielle is said to have resided at a house which is still shown to the tourist. By reason, however, of the situation of Cœuvres, we incline strongly to the view that Henri was at Compiègne and not at Mantes when he first heard of Gabrielle.

In any case he insisted on seeing the fascinating young

\* Henri took Mantes from the League by a surprise, and entered it in triumph in 1590.

creature with whom Bellegarde was infatuated, and the impression she produced on him at that first meeting (which, it is believed, took place in November, 1590) was a deep one. For the moment, however, matters went no further. Henri still had to overcome the forces of the League scattered through North Western France, and his military duties did not immediately allow him to give rein to his rising passion for Gabrielle d'Estrées. Thus, for a little while longer, Bellegarde and Longueville, it seems, continued to dispute her favours, she apparently inclining now towards one and now towards the other, though on the whole her preference would seem to have been for the young Grand Equerry of France.

When, however, Henri, while resting after one of his expeditions against the Leaguers, again found himself in presence of Gabrielle his passion asserted itself, and he is said to have signified to Bellegarde and Longueville that they must retire from the field. Both of them were mortified by that ultimatum; Bellegarde, indeed, was quite afflicted by it, as was the more natural, if it be true, as is asserted, that he had been for some time past Gabrielle's favoured lover. However, open resistance to the royal command was impossible, and so the Grand Equerry made every promise which the King desired of him. At the same time, however, he bitterly complained to Gabrielle, who is said to have been greatly upset by what he told her. Having no high position at stake, as her lover had, there was on her part less reason for self-restraint, and so, speaking with great warmth (it is asserted), she told the King that she did not wish to be disturbed in her inclinations, and that any violence on his part or attempt to prevent her from marrying a man whose suit was approved by her father, would only inspire her with feelings of contempt and hatred. And it is further alleged that she was so far carried away by grief and resentment at having to dismiss her lover Bellegarde, that she precipitately returned home, in spite of all the danger of the roads, anxious as she was to avoid meeting the King again.

Now comes an episode which is certainly in accordance with the adventurous and amorous character of Henri de Navarre. But it is one for which we merely have the testimony of the *anecdotiers* and *romanciers*, on whom, indeed, we chiefly have to

depend with respect to this part of our narrative. Let us still follow them, however, because if what they relate be not strictly accurate, it is at least *ben trovato*. Gabrielle's sudden departure fell, then, on Henri like a thunderbolt. He was a man whom resistance, whether in war or in love, incited to every effort. Directly an obstacle arose it became his desire to overcome it. He resolved, therefore, to hurry after the beautiful fugitive and endeavour to appease her. He imagined that his eager alacrity in doing so would touch her heart. It is said that a distance of seven leagues lay between him and Cœuvres,\* whither Gabrielle had repaired. A considerable tract of forest land had to be crossed on the journey, and it was known that bands of Leaguers still lurked there. Nevertheless, Henri set out accompanied by only five of his familiars. The forests were traversed safely, but at some distance from Cœuvres the King decided to disguise himself. Dismounting from his horse he assumed a peasant's garments, and made his way on foot to the castle of Cœuvres with "a sack of straw on his head." Thus, after risking his liberty, Henri also compromised his dignity, in the hope, no doubt, that the lady of his thoughts would reward him for his courage and his craft.

But he was grievously mistaken. When he appeared in his ridiculous disguise before Gabrielle d'Estrées, beside whom stood her young sister, Juliette Hippolyte, she received him, it is said, with the utmost coldness, even declaring that "he appeared so ugly she could not even look at him." And in spite of his entreaties she speedily withdrew, leaving him alone with her sister. The future Duchess de Villars was, however, a very clever and precocious girl. On this occasion she may have been prompted by Gabrielle, but she had been for some time her dissolute mother's chosen companion, and knew all about such everyday matters as *peines de cœur* and *soupirs d'amour*. And whether she repeated a lesson or acted as her own ready and resourceful mind suggested, she at least contrived to get rid of the already discomfited Henri de Navarre. She apologized for the incivility of the reception accorded to him, declaring that her sister had been carried away by amazement

\* This points to his being then at Compiègne and not at Mantes, which is very much farther away.

at seeing him appear in such a disguise, and by fear, moreover, lest their father, who was in the vicinity, should suddenly appear upon the scene. So, after risking his life among the bandit Leaguers of the forests, and condescending to masquerade as one of the lowest of his subjects, all for the sake of furthering his interests with his lady-love, Henri had to depart in sore disappointment. The affair reminds one of some of the sayings which emanated from the great fabulist of his grandson's reign. It was perhaps a case, not only of *Jean s'en alla comme il était venu*—that amplification of the popular expression: *Gros Jean comme devant*—but of actually feeling *honteux comme un renard qu'une poule aurait pris*.

Accepting and striving to place ourselves in communion with the manners and morals of the close of the sixteenth century, we are by no means hostile to Gabrielle d'Estrées. We have not the slightest desire to prejudice the reader against her, for, all considered, her influence on Henri de Navarre was, like that of Corisanda, more beneficial than hurtful. If, then, we have refused to accept the view that she was an absolutely pure and artless young maiden at the time of her first meeting with Henri IV, if we have inclined more to the views of the memoir writers and the *anecdotiers* than to those of more or less official historians with respect to her antecedents, it is because we feel there are grounds for doing so. At the same time, given Gabrielle's life and environment in childhood and youth, it must be admitted that if she were guilty of the early lapses ascribed to her, this was more her misfortune than her fault. We believe in her early attachment for Bellegarde, who was a much younger man than Henri de Navarre, one too possessed of those courtly accomplishments and graces which, in the last days of the Valois monarchy, appealed to many a fair damsel and dame. Further, he held high rank, was a bachelor, and therefore in a position to offer marriage. And as Gabrielle had fixed her affections on this dashing and, let us add, brave nobleman—for, although Henri de Navarre once jealously derided his courage, Bellegarde fought gallantly at Arques and Dreux—we admire her for the resistance she offered to her virtually all-powerful royal suitor.

On rejoining his counsellors and captains after his fruitless

escapade, Henri had to listen patiently, and perhaps with some humiliation, to the remonstrances of Sully and Du Plessis-Mornay. That censure was not without some effect, for the King at first endeavoured to forget Gabrielle. But the thought of her persistently pursued him, and at last, being thwarted as a man, he resolved to make use of his authority as a monarch. Having established his head-quarters at Mantes, he sent a command to the Marquis d'Estrées to join him there with all his family, and in order to keep the Marquis beside him he appointed him a member of the Royal Council, an honour which was not so excessive as to excite remark, for Estrées was already Governor of the so-called Isle of France.

But although Henri by this means again brought Gabrielle near him, the requirements of the war in which he was engaged repeatedly carried him away from her; and again did Bellegarde and Longueville, on being freed from the royal presence, contend in amorous rivalry. Again, however, did Henri, as soon as he could draw breath, make use of his royal prerogative. The wary Bellegarde—a whilom favourite of Henri III's, and therefore well versed in the craft and *rouerie* which court life required—thereupon resorted to dissimulation and drew aside; whilst Longueville, who, says Lescure, was in reality more ambitious than amorous, endeavoured to come to some arrangement with Gabrielle d'Estrées. He foresaw her rise to influence, perhaps to power; and it was possibly that idea which inspired him with the thought of retaining in his possession certain weapons which might thereafter compel her to serve his interests. Now, it had been arranged that Gabrielle should return him the love-letters he had addressed to her and that he should return her those he had received. But while she trustfully carried out her part of the arrangement, Longueville, it is asserted, craftily contrived to keep back the most expressive of the *billets* which she had written him.

It is said that she never forgave him that act of treachery, but treated him thereafter with scorn and repugnance. And it was on account of the dislike for him which she no longer concealed that when the Duke, on making his entry into Dourlens in 1595, was mortally wounded by a musket shot—a salvo of musketry being fired in his honour—his premature death was

not regarded as accidental but as a deliberate act of revenge on Gabrielle's part. It is certainly true that love and vengeance still went together in those days, that Cupid still carried the stiletto and the poison which the Renaissance had placed in his hands, and which he was afterwards to exchange for the wand and the programme of a master of the ceremonies; nevertheless, whatever may have been the transgressions and faults of Gabrielle d'Estrées, we are convinced, like many other writers, that she was not the woman to instigate or commit a deliberate crime.

Women of her type seldom, if ever, commit capital crimes. A search through all the "Newgate Calendars" of the world would lead, we think, to the discovery of very few *blonde* murderesses except among the "tawny" variety of women, as exemplified by the auburn Veneziana. But if much may be hoped, much may also be feared from the dark-haired woman, she who exacts, whereas the other only solicits, man's admiration, and whose more ardent nature inclines her, should her path be crossed, should her hopes and expectations be baffled or unfulfilled, to the most extreme courses. There have certainly been revengeful women of the north, as witness Christina of Sweden, who was, however, of the intermediate type, neither *blonde* nor *brunette*, and whose mind was inclined to insanity. At the same time we by no means seek to condemn all women of the darker type. Far from it. We admit that the demand they make on man's admiration is most often justified, but, at the same time, if they have cause for offence they are far more to be feared than their fairer sisters.

Gabrielle d'Estrées, as we previously said, was fair. The reign of fair women at the Court of France had begun in the days of Francis I, for all the last Valois Princes were naturally dark. Henri de Navarre's wife, Queen Marguerite, was also one of the dark type, but in order to comply with the fashion of the times she wore fair wigs, after exhibiting her own dark locks to the Court for just a few years.

With respect to Gabrielle, she had no occasion either to dye her tresses or to borrow false ones. Every contemporary account and portrait of her shows that she was a natural *blonde*; and as passion if not actual love so often seeks something which

contrasts with oneself, it is not surprising that this fair young creature should have been sought by the dark-haired Henri, now swarthy from long campaigning. There are various contemporary portraits of Gabrielle. A small panel painting at Versailles shows her at the age of eleven years, while one of the crayon drawings at the Louvre depicts her as she was in her youth, about the time, no doubt, when Bellegarde and Henri fell in love with her. Moreover, there are several eighteenth-century copies or variations of a now lost picture, which was probably painted in her lifetime, and in which she was depicted seated in a bath, and holding a pansy. She is thus shown in the Versailles copy of the picture in question, and beside the bath there stands a child—probably her son, César de Vendôme—who is taking some fruit from an epergne, while farther away sits a nurse giving the breast to an infant—perhaps Gabrielle's second son, Alexandre, the so-called Chevalier de Vendôme. In the background one sees yet another woman, standing before a richly carved chimney-piece.

There are also some contemporary versified descriptions of Gabrielle's beauty. Guillaume du Sable, "gentleman-in-ordinary of the Royal Hunt," who spent his youth at the Court of Francis I and died in the days of Louis XIII—thus living under seven Kings of France—sang Gabrielle's praises in that *Muse Chasseresse* from which we previously quoted a sonnet addressed by him to Henri de Navarre's early mistress, Mlle. de Rebours.\* This is the high-flown Renaissance style in which Du Sable extols Gabrielle's beauty :

" Mon ceil est tout ravi quand il voit et contemple  
 Les beaux cheveux orins qui ornent chaque temple,  
 Son beau et large front et sourcils ébénins,  
 Son beau nez décorant et l'une et l'autre joue,  
 Sur lesquelles Amour à toute heure se joue,  
 Et ses deux brillants yeux, deux beaux astres bénins.  
 Heureux qui peut baiser sa bouche cinabrine,  
 Ses lèvres de corail, sa denture yvoirine,  
 Son beau double menton, l'une des sept beautés,  
 Le tout accompagné d'un petit ris folâtre,  
 Une gorge de lys sur un beau sein d'albâtre,  
 Où deux fermes tétins sont assis et plantés."

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\* See p. 57, ante.

Another versifier of the time, Porchères, also celebrated Gabrielle's charms in sonnets. One of them, addressed exclusively to her hair, contains these lines :

“ Doux chainons de mon Prince, agréables supplices,  
Blonds cheveux, si je loue ici votre beauté,  
On jugera mes vers pour être vos complices,  
Criminels, comme vous, de lèse-majesté.”

Not content with that amusing effort, the poet next tried his skill at a sonnet in praise of Gabrielle's eyes, respecting which he remarked :

“ Ce ne sont pas des yeux, ce sont plutôt des dieux,  
Ils ont dessus les rois la puissance absolue,  
Dieux? Non, ce sont des cieux, ils ont la couleur bleue  
Et le mouvement prompt comme celui des cieux.”

That achievement, at which one may now well laugh, must have been regarded as a *chef d'œuvre* at the time of its composition, for it procured the fortunate poet, says Lescure, a royal pension of 1400 *livres*—that is, taking into account the relative value of money in those days and in these, considerably more than is paid even to our Poet Laureate !

Dreux du Radier was not a contemporary of Gabrielle's, but he collected a variety of traditional information respecting her, and this is the enthusiastic way in which he extols her person ; “ She had the most beautiful head in the world ; fair and plenteous hair ; blue eyes so brilliant as to dazzle one ; a complexion of the composition of the Graces, but in which the lilies surpassed the roses unless it were animated by some deep feeling ; a well-shaped nose ; a mouth on which gaiety and love reposed, and which was perfectly furnished.\* The contour of her face was such as painters take as a model ; her ears were small, acute and well bordered ; her bosom was of a beauty to make one forget all others ; her figure, arms, hands and feet, all corresponded with her head, and formed a perfect whole, which none could admire with impunity.”

Let us now turn to what Sainte-Beuve writes on the subject, basing his description of Gabrielle largely on a tinted crayon portrait at the Louvre. “ She was white and fair,” he says ;

\* That is with well-formed teeth.





GABRIELLE D'ESTRÉES, "LA BELLE GABRIELLE."

*After a contemporary Drawing in the Louvre Museum.*



“she had fair hair like fine gold, caught up in a mass, or slightly crisped above the forehead; the brow was beautiful; the *entr’œil*, as one then said, was broad and noble, the nose straight and regular, the mouth small, smiling and purplish, the cast of physiognomy engaging and tender. A charm was spread over every outline. Her eyes were blue, quick, soft and clear. She was wholly feminine in her tastes, her ambitions, and even her defects.” To that let us add just one line from the austere Aubigné: “There was nothing lascivious in her extreme beauty.”

At that same period—that is, the outset of Henri’s *liaison* with Gabrielle—he was thirty-eight years of age, and he is pictured by Dreux du Radier as fairly tall, well built, with bright eyes, a large forehead, a martial air, and a long beard “which had already become grey.” In despite of that sign of age, however, and all that he yet had to accomplish to make the kingdom of France his own “by right of conquest as by right of birth,”\* we know that Henri was entering upon a period when martial ardour was attended by no little happiness, springing from the contentment of his passion for Gabrielle.

We left him at Mantes, whither he had summoned M. d’Estrées and his family. The Marquis soon detected the motives of the favour which was shown him by the King, and felt himself placed in a somewhat difficult position. On one side there was his personal interest, and on the other his duty to his daughter. He must either fail as a courtier or play the part of a compliant father. In these circumstances, M. d’Estrées resolved to divest himself of the care of watching over Gabrielle by providing her with a husband, and the choice he made on this occasion certainly suggests that his personal interests were dearer to him than his daughter’s happiness. He would not

\* In Abbé Cassagne’s poem, *Henry le grand roy* (1662), the following passage occurs:

“Lorsqu’ après cents combats, je possédai la France,  
Et par droit de conquête et par droit de naissance,  
Le monde vit briller dans mes illustres faits  
La valeur, la bonté, la victoire, la paix.”

Voltaire coolly appropriated the second of the above lines, and inserted it at the very commencement of his *Henriade* (Fournier’s *L’Esprit des Autres*).

hear of Bellegarde, whom Gabrielle, we think, would have willingly married, but decided to wed her to a Picard like himself, a certain Messire Nicolas d'Amerval, Lord of Liancourt,\* who was of good birth and wealthy, but was also an elderly widower—his deceased wife had presented him with four † children—besides which he is said to have been somewhat deformed.

When the matter was laid before the King he willingly assented to a match which seemed likely to favour his own interests. Gabrielle, however, wept and protested, whereupon the King, it is asserted, assured her by way of consolation that Liancourt should be her husband in name only. Henri was now again pressing his own suit, and Gabrielle, realizing, perhaps, that it was hopeless for her to think of marrying Bellegarde, appears to have been far more favourably inclined towards her royal lover than she had been previously. Lescure mentions that the news of her espousals with so unsuitable a consort as M. de Liancourt quite depressed the Court poets, who attuned their lyres to strains of melancholy. Abbé, afterwards Cardinal, du Perron, who made his way in the Church as well as at Court by his attentions to women, composed on this occasion a mournful and yet amusing epithalamium, in which Liancourt was called a "smoky volcano," and Henri Gabrielle's "well-beloved Mars," whilst she was represented as reproaching the King for handing her over to such an odious husband when he loved her himself and was loved by her in return.

Nevertheless the marriage took place at Noyon, in 1592, some documents saying in June and others in August; and by way of wedding gift the King presented the bride with the lordships of Assy and St. Lambert, and the county of Marle, in Picardy, to be held by her for life (Deeds dated June 10). It is probable that M. de Liancourt would have become a husband in more than in name if it had not been for the prompt intervention of Henri, whom Gabrielle, it is asserted, reminded of his earlier promise. In any case, the King summoned Liancourt to attend him with his wife, and after an interview

\* Spelt Liencourt in some old documents. He was also Baron de Benais, Lord of Sérifontaine and governor of Chauny.

† In some works the number is given as fourteen, but that is incorrect.

at which he signified his royal pleasure to the Picard nobleman, he dismissed him but retained the new Lady of Liancourt with her sister Juliette, and her cousin Marie de la Bourdaisière,\* and her aunt the Marchioness de Sourdis, who acted as her chaperon.

Already in the previous year, on proceeding to the siege of Chartres, Henri had taken the Estrées family, including Gabrielle, in his train, perhaps because he feared that she might escape him if he left her behind. One of the best *gasconnades* attributed to the King is connected with the siege of Chartres. When the town surrendered it is said that a deputation came to the Porte St. Michel to present the keys to the victorious monarch, whereupon the chief *échevin* began to deliver an elaborate harangue, in which he proposed to prove that Chartres really belonged to his Majesty both by divine and by civil law. "By *canon* law also," the King abruptly retorted, setting spurs to his horse. "Come, let us pass!" And forthwith he rode into Chartres. It was then, by way of rewarding Mme. de Sourdis, who had displayed much complaisance in regard to Gabrielle, that Henri appointed her husband Governor of Chartres, whither, by the way, he returned two years afterwards to be crowned King of France, the real coronation city, Reims, then still being held by partisans of the League.

On the dismissal of her husband, Gabrielle for some time followed her lover and his army, and it was certainly advisable for her to do so, as Henri was by nature the most inconstant of men, one whose vows of "eternal love" were perpetually being broken.

Although it is not the purpose of this work to relate the history of France under Henri de Navarre, it may be as well to glance at some of the chief events which had occurred since the assassination of the last Valois king at St. Cloud, in order that the reader may the better understand the position in which Navarre found himself towards the close of his *liaison* with Corisanda, and the beginning of his relations with Gabrielle d'Estrées.

The battle of Arques, to which we previously referred, † was

\* Afterwards Viscountess d'Estauges.

† See pp. 103, 104, *ante*.

fought in September, 1589. Henri, profiting by the advantage he then gained, soon advanced on Paris, and on November 1 of that year, by means of a surprise, he actually penetrated into the city by the Porte de Nesle, but was afterwards repulsed, and again had to retire into Normandy, where on May 14 in the following year (1590) he once more defeated the Duke de Mayenne near the stronghold of Ivry. It was on that occasion that he addressed to his soldiers the stirring harangue in which he said: "If you lose your ensigns, rally round my white plume, you will always find it in the path of honour and victory!"—famous words, which inspired Macaulay with the idea of writing his well-known ballad. After the victory of Ivry and the capture of Melun, Henri once more advanced on Paris and laid siege to that city, which, in M. de Mayenne's absence, was governed nominally by the young and little-experienced Charles Emmanuel of Savoy, Duke de Nemours, and in reality by the League's famous Council of the Sixteen. Although the supply of food was scanty, and the distress great, the citizens offered a most stubborn resistance to Henri's forces. Paris remained staunchly Catholic, and would not accept the Huguenot monarch as its King, although the one of its choice, Henri's old uncle, the Cardinal de Bourbon-Vendôme, proclaimed as Charles X by an edict of the Paris Parliament on March 5 of that same year, had passed away in retirement at Fontenay-le-Comte in Poitou, five days before the battle of Ivry was fought.

The Parisians were encouraged in their resistance first by that masculine-minded lady the Duchess de Montpensier, who was a determined adversary of Henri de Navarre, secondly by the Spanish ambassador, who strove to provide for the wants of the most necessitous, and predicted speedy relief at the hands of the Duke of Parma, who was advancing with an army of succour, and, thirdly, by the Papal Legate Cajetano, who promised absolution for all sins, and the crown of martyrdom for everybody who might die in defence of the true faith. Thus, neither incessant attacks, nor terrible conflagrations, nor the cruel pangs of hunger could induce Paris to cease her resistance. On the other hand, it has been said that the King might have taken the city by assault, had he been willing to

adopt that course. But he shrank from endeavouring to gain possession of the capital of his kingdom by slaughtering and ruining its citizens. There are also familiar stories of how, from time to time, he allowed provisions to be taken into the starving city. At last, however, the near approach of the Duke of Parma's forces compelled him (August 30, 1590) to raise the siege, and retire into the provinces.

It was during the ensuing months, then, that he first met Gabrielle d'Estrées, and began to lay siege to her heart, whilst also besieging Chartres, as we have related, and subsequently Rouen, which city, however, was relieved, like Paris, by Parma. But at a later stage the united forces of Parma and the League were hemmed in by the royal army near Caudebec, and only escaped destruction by crossing the Seine at dead of night. After Gabrielle d'Estrées had been carried off from her nominal husband, the Sieur de Liancourt, she continued travelling in her lover's train, accompanying him on his march to Champagne, where she may well have had some cause for jealousy, for the historical chroniclers of the province assert that while the King had his headquarters at Damery—during the siege of Épernay (1592)—he was fascinated by the charms of his *belle hôtesse*, the Présidente Anne du Puy,\* who was also a blonde beauty of much the same type as Corisanda and Gabrielle. And it is even claimed that it was in the fair Anne's honour and not in Gabrielle's, that Henri composed the song beginning :

“ Viens, Aurore,  
Je t'implore,  
Je suis gai quand je te voi ;  
La bergère,  
Qui m'est chère,  
Est vermeille comme toi.”

However that may be—we shall refer to the matter again—the siege of Épernay was not all love-making and song-writing—but a very serious and difficult business, one, too, in which Henri's able lieutenant, old Marshal Biron, lost his life through being mistaken, it is asserted, for the King. On July 9 Henri and Biron were riding after supper from Damery to reconnoitre

\* *Née* Dudey, and wife of a certain Oudart du Puy, who was President of the Élection d'Épernay.

Épernay, and making their way along a road leading from Mardeuil to the faubourg of Igny, when a sudden gust of wind blew off Henri's hat, in which, as usual, he wore a large white plume. Both he and Biron, it is alleged, dismounted, and the latter picking up the hat, jestingly set it on his own head. The approach of the royal party had already been discerned by Petit, the master gunner of Épernay, who, on catching sight of the white plume, cried, "For the Béarnais!" and at once fired at the well-known headgear. At that moment the King was resting his right hand on the shoulder of the Marshal, whose head was struck by the cannon-ball. "*Mordieu!*" shouted Petit in exultation, "the dog has bitten the Béarnais!" for he really believed that it was the King who had fallen. If he called his cannon a dog, it was because that ancient piece of ordnance was known as the Dog of Orleans, owing to the circumstance that it bore a dog's figure on its breech, and had been captured from the English at Orleans, when Joan of Arc had relieved that city a hundred and sixty-three years previously. Thus say the local chroniclers; but the King, in writing on the subject, makes no mention of his hat or of his hand resting on Marshal Biron's shoulder.

In spite of Biron's death, Henri made himself master of Épernay. Paris, however, still held out. In 1593 the leading men of the League convoked the States-general there, and this assembly, which was by no means representative of France, took upon itself to decide who should now wear the crown of St. Louis. Although some zealous men, Pithou, Rapin, Passerat, Leroy, and others, were at work preparing that famous pamphlet *La Satire Ménipée*, which bravely flagellated the League and its mock "States," the King at first had no declared partisans in the assembly which claimed the right to dispose of his kingdom. The parties in presence favoured either the Infanta Isabella Clara Eugenia, daughter of Philip II of Spain, or the young Duke de Guise as representative of the House of Lorraine; and in order to reconcile the rival claims it was proposed that the Duke and the Infanta should marry.

But a great change was impending in the position of affairs. Henri had come to the conclusion that in order to thwart Spain and Lorraine, secure the nation's general acceptance of



him as its ruler, win Paris, pacify the country, reign over it and restore its fortunes, sadly shaken if not shattered by so many years of bitter civil war, it was necessary that he should renounce the Huguenot faith and reconcile himself with the Catholic Church. Crillon, his brave lieutenant, Gabrielle, his adored mistress, and others helped to incline him to that course. It was, however, a serious, even a venturesome step to take, for it could not fail to produce a painful impression on many hitherto devoted Huguenot followers; and Henri himself, when writing to Gabrielle to tell her that he had decided upon it, called it a *saut périlleux*.

In the result, however, it proved to be a wise act; and so far as Henri was personally concerned the change was perhaps not so great as some might think it. It is certain that he had never attached a high importance to any mere matters of ritual. So far back as 1577 he had written to M. de Batz: "Those who straightly follow their consciences belong to my religion, and I belong to that of all who are good and brave." He had also once remarked to Du Plessis-Mornay: "Perhaps the difference between the two religions [Catholic and Protestant] only appears to be so great by reason of the animosity of those that preach them. By exercising my authority I shall some day try to arrange everything."

Henri's religious views may perhaps be likened to those expressed by Montaigne in a passage where he says: "Of all human and ancient opinions concerning religion, that one seems to me to be the most plausible and excusable, which recognized God as an incomprehensible power, the origin and preserver of all things, all goodness, all perfection, receiving and accepting in good will the honour and reverence which human beings rendered to Him, under whatever aspect, under whatever name, and in whatever manner that might be."

Further, one finds in the memoirs of Montaigne's friend, Jacques Auguste de Thou, the historian, an account of some interesting statements which Montaigne made to him respecting the rivalry of Henri de Navarre and Henri le Balafre of Guise, and the sincerity of their respective religious views. This conversation appears to have taken place shortly before the assassination of Henri le Balafre at Blois (1588) and may

well be quoted here. "Montaigne told me," says De Thou, "that he had previously served as a mediator between the King of Navarre and the Duke de Guise, and that the latter had made every possible advance in the way of services and assiduity in order to gain the King of Navarre's friendship; but having realized that the latter was trifling with him, and that, after all the steps which he had taken, he was faced by implacable animosity instead of by friendship, he had had recourse to war, as to a last resource to defend the honour of his house against an enemy whom he had failed to win over. And Montaigne also said that the bitterness of those two minds was the cause of the war which one now saw raging, and which only the death of one or the other could bring to an end; for neither the Duke nor any of his house would believe themselves to be in safety so long as the King of Navarre might live, whilst he, on his side, was convinced that he would never be able to assert his rights to the succession of the throne during the Duke's life. As for religion, added Montaigne, of which both made great parade, that is only a fine pretext to induce the members of their respective parties to follow them, but the interests of religion touch neither. It is only the fear of being abandoned by the Protestants that prevents the King of Navarre from returning to the religion of his fathers; and the Duke would not hold off from the Augsburg Confession of Faith, which his uncle, Charles, Cardinal of Lorraine, made him appreciate, if he could follow it without prejudice to his interests. And those, said Montaigne, were the sentiments which he had found in the two Princes at the time when he concerned himself with their affairs."

In connexion with that extract from De Thou's memoirs, it is a somewhat curious circumstance that the residence of one of the historian's relatives, Emeric de Thou—a house at La Villette, then a suburb but now part of Paris—became the scene of the conferences which preceded King Henri's return to the Catholic religion. It was on July 25, 1593, that he at last solemnly abjured the Huguenot "heresy" at that famous Church of St. Denis, where so many Kings of France from the days of Childeric and Dagobert had been buried. It was the

Archbishop of Bourges who officiated and received the penitent monarch back into the fold of Holy Church, subject, however, to the sovereign decision of Pope Clement VIII, by whose predecessor, Sixtus V, Henri had been excommunicated. The King had already sent envoys to Rome to treat for the Papal absolution, but it was deferred until 1595, and as Paris, before which the royal forces were again assembled, still refused to admit the King, his abjuration did not immediately have any decisive consequences.

The notorious saying, so often attributed to him, "Paris is well worth a mass," is, of course, apocryphal so far as he is concerned. Whatever may have been his inclination for "gasconnading" he was too skilful and shrewd a man to make a remark which would have cast doubt on the sincerity of his conversion, and have allowed people to think that his chief, if not sole, motive in changing his religion was the desire to secure possession of his capital. The saying may, perhaps, have originated with Sully, not, however, at the time of the King's abjuration, but subsequently, when Henri, having become a Catholic, thought that his Huguenot minister ought to act likewise, and asked him why it was that he did not accompany him to mass, whereupon Sully is said to have retorted :

"Sire, sire, the crown is well worth a mass." \*

During the last operations before Paris, Gabrielle d'Estrées was constantly near her royal lover, residing, it is said, sometimes at a pavilion on the summit of Montmartre and sometimes at another at Clignancourt, the last one being the pile which was known in our own time as the Château Rouge, and became notorious for its public balls. But although the Château Rouge, which we can well remember, certainly dated from Henri's reign, there has never been any positive proof that it was Gabrielle's residence.

At this period complete harmony appears to have existed between the favourite and the King, but the latter had previously been extremely jealous of his Grand Equerry, Bellegarde. The *anecdottiers* relate with numerous variations how upon one occasion when Gabrielle and Bellegarde were together, the King arrived on the scene so suddenly that the Duke barely

\* E. Fournier's *L'Esprit dans l'Histoire*.

had time to seek refuge in a cupboard, in which some preserves were kept; whereupon Henri, suspecting that his rival was lurking there, expressed a keen desire to partake of the said preserves, and demanded the cupboard key. As it was not forthcoming he threatened to burst the door open, at which Bellegarde, in his alarm, jumped out of the cupboard window, fortunately without injuring himself, and fled for his life. That story appears to be founded, however, on an anecdote which Tallemant des Réaux relates of Francis I, the Duchess d'Étampes and Jean de Cossé-Brissac. As for a story to the effect that Beringhem, Henri's first valet-de-chambre, secured a letter addressed by Bellegarde to Gabrielle and carried it to the King, who at once sent orders to M. de Praslin, the Captain of his Guards, to seize Bellegarde and despatch him on the spot, that also seems to lack authenticity, though some indication of such an affair will be found in the Memoirs of Pontis.

At the same time, the belief that the King did on some occasion surprise Bellegarde with his mistress became so general that in the reign of his grandson Louis XIV, when the Gobelins executed a series of tapestries purporting to depict various episodes in Henri's life, the subject chosen for one of the panels was the very incident to which we have referred. Some years ago this tapestry was to be seen with the others at the château of Pau, where, perhaps, it is still to-day.

On the other hand, Sully, who was notoriously opposed to Gabrielle, does not question her constancy to Henri from the time when she became his mistress, and indeed the minister gives us to understand that many of the allegations made against her emanated from two of her attendants, a woman whom he calls "La Rousse" and her husband, both of whom were consigned to the Bastille for six years for having circulated injurious rumours respecting their mistress's life and actions.\* Dreux du Radier opines that the story of the cupboard and the preserves may well have emanated from the aforesaid La Rousse.

While one may incline to Sully's belief in Gabrielle's

\* La Rousse's real name was Marie Hermant and she was the wife of the Sieur de Mayneville, a captain of the King's guard.

constancy, it remains certain that Henri was for a time extremely jealous of Bellegarde, and that the latter found opportunity to visit the favourite in her royal lover's absence. For proof of this we have only to turn to the King's correspondence in which he is found writing to Gabrielle: "There is nothing to prolong or increase my suspicions save the manner in which you act towards me. Since it pleases you to order me to banish them, I am willing to do so; but you must not take it amiss if I open my heart to tell you by what means that may be attained, as however openly I have [previously] done so, you have pretended not to hear me. To begin, I protest to you, my dear mistress, that whatever I may assert respecting the offences I have received, is not intended to stir up any remnants of bitterness, for I am satisfied with the trouble you have taken to content me; but only to show you that my cause for suspicion was just. You know how offended I was on arriving in your presence, on account of my competitor's [Bellegrade's] journey. The power which your eyes had over me saved you from half of my complaints. You satisfied me in regard to speech, though not in heart; but if I had known what I have learnt about the said journey since I have been here at Saint Denis, I would not have gone to see you, but would have broken off everything at once." Then launching out into reproaches which he can no longer restrain, Henri adds: "What can you promise me save what you have already done? What faith can you pledge me save that which you have twice failed to keep? You must give effect to your promises, you must no longer say *I will do*, you must say *I do*. Make up your mind then, my mistress, to have but one *serviteur*." Next, by way of revenging himself on his rival, the King sneers at him and charges him—wrongfully—with cowardice. "Dead Leaf,"\* he writes, "has made it quite evident by his fear of the Leaguers that he is neither a lover nor a man of mine." However, the letter ends with glowing protests of love and a tender reproach inspired by some still lingering jealousy.

According to the *anecdotiers*, as Bellegarde still persisted in making love to Gabrielle, the King dismissed him from

\* Dead leaf (*Feuille-Morte*) was a nickname given by Henri to Bellegarde on account of the latter's complexion, which was inclined to be sallow.

attendance at Court, forbidding him to return unless he married and brought his wife with him. Whether that be true or not, it is certain that Bellegarde did quit Henri for a time, and that when he returned he was accompanied by a lady whom he had recently taken to wife—Anne, daughter of Honoré de Bueil, Lord of Fontaines and Governor of St. Malo. Thereafter, we hear no more of the royal jealousy, which may have been inspired simply by the circumstance that Bellegarde, presuming on his earlier relations with Gabrielle, had comported himself in too familiar a manner. Henri evidently desired that she should not receive his rival at all, and judging by the letter which we have quoted, she had promised not to do so, yet had twice failed to keep that promise. The King's jealous anger was the greater as the Duke and Gabrielle had met when he himself was not at hand. It is, of course, possible that Bellegarde's intentions were not honourable, but there is no proof that Gabrielle failed in fidelity to her royal lover.

In the autumn of 1593 she became *enceinte*. In February the following year the King repaired to Chartres to be crowned. At seven o'clock on the morning of March 22, thanks to some defection among the defenders of Paris, he at last succeeded—partly by stratagem and partly by bribing M. de Brissac, who had become governor of the city\*—in effecting his entry into that capital which had so long defied him. He still retained many enemies there, and before the year expired his life was attempted by Jean Châtel, a student, at the instigation, it was alleged, of the Jesuits, one of whom was executed as Châtel's accomplice, and who were consequently banished from France for several years. However, the execution of Châtel and the Jesuit had no deterrent effect upon those who, chiefly on religious but sometimes on political grounds, detested the ex-Huguenot monarch. Between 1594 and 1610 the King's life was attempted no fewer than sixteen times.

In June, 1594, Gabrielle, while at the château of Coucy, near Laon, gave birth to a son who received the Christian name of César. The King's pleasure at the birth of this child seems to have been slightly embittered by some odious tittle-tattle. According to a story which Sully records in his *Économies*

\* Brissac is said to have received over one million and a half of livres.

*royales*, but which he declares he does not believe, Henri was not the father of Gabrielle's son, and in fact became very indignant on hearing of his mistress's accouchement. This report originated, it seems, with Harlay de Sancy, who was then Superintendent of Finances,\* and who repeated it to Sully; but Sancy was a declared enemy of Gabrielle's, and his slanders eventually led to his removal from his post. It so happened, however, that shortly after the birth of Gabrielle's child the doctor who had attended her, M. Ailleboust, first physician to the King, died very suddenly, whereupon a suspicion of foul play immediately arose.

Writing under date July 24, 1594, L'Estoille says in his journal: "This same day one received news in Paris of the death of M. d'Aliboust (*sic*) . . . respecting whom it was said that some light remark he had made to the King respecting his [the King's] little César, had cost him his life, not by any action of the King, who knows nothing of those beastly and monstrous poisons, but of her, so everybody said, who was interested in the matter, and to whom the King, contrary to promise, had repeated what M. d'Aliboust had said, never imagining that this would cost that good man of a doctor . . . his life."

Thus Gabrielle was charged with poisoning the royal physician, and, if one were to believe the *anecdotiers*, her motive for doing so was that Ailleboust knew that her recently-born child was not King Henri's son. However, the whole story is nonsensical, and simply supplies evidence of the alacrity with which the multitude always imputes crimes to royal favourites, whatever their real character may be.

Henri heard something of the current rumours, and answered them in a remarkable manner. As soon as his mistress could conveniently travel, he made a triumphal entry into Paris with her; and this was followed, first by the grant of letters patent legitimating her son, and secondly by that of the title of Marchioness of Montceaux for herself.† In fact, the King went further. As we shall presently relate, certain negotiations had

\* The Sancy diamond was called after him.

† In certain deeds now in the Estrées archives she had previously styled herself "Lady of Coucy."

previously been started to enable him to obtain a divorce from Queen Marguerite, who was still at Usson, in Auvergne, and Henri now became more and more desirous of securing that divorce, for he had formed the bold design of marrying his mistress Gabrielle and raising her to the throne of France.

With regard to her own matrimonial position, proceedings had previously been started to obtain the annulment of her marriage with M. de Liancourt. The *anecdotiers* and several of the historians are altogether wrong in their statements respecting the grounds on which the dissolution was solicited. The documents in the case still exist in the Estrées archives and the National Archives of France, and some of them have been printed by M. Desclozeaux. The suit was instituted on the grounds that Liancourt's first wife and Gabrielle were *cousines issues de germain*, that no dispensation had been obtained for the marriage, which came within the prohibited degrees of affinity, and that it was therefore null and void in canon law. M. de Liancourt, who had been robbed of a beautiful bride, at first offered considerable opposition to the suit; and when he at last acceded to it, he protested in writing that he only did so "out of obedience to the King, and because he went in fear of his life."

"On Thursday, September 15, 1594," writes L'Estoille, "the King made his entry into Paris by torchlight, between seven and eight o'clock in the evening. He was mounted on a dapple grey horse, and was dressed in grey velvet, all covered with gold, with the grey hat and the white plumes. The garrisons of Mantes and St. Denis went first, with the Corporation of the City and the *échevins*. Messieurs de la Cour [the Presidents and Councillors of the Paris Parliament] went in their red robes to meet him at Notre Dame, where the *Te Deum* was sung. It was eight o'clock when his Majesty crossed over the Pont Notre Dame, accompanied by a large body of cavalry and surrounded by a magnificent *noblesse*. He, with a laughing face, well pleased at seeing all the people crying *Vive le Roy!* so gaily, kept his hat constantly in his hand, principally in order to salute the dames and damsels who were at the windows, among whom he saluted three very comely ones (who were in mourning, and stood at some high windows in front of St. Denis



de la Chartre), as he also did La Raverie,\* who was at Bocquet's in the Rue St. Jacques. The Lady of Liancourt went a little before the King, in a magnificent litter, which was quite open, and she was covered with so many pearls and such brilliant gems that they outvied the torchlight; and her gown was of black satin, tufted all over with white."

That triumphal entry was, so to say, a formal recognition of the position which Gabrielle now occupied beside the throne, a mark, such as all might witness, of the confidence which Henri placed in her. On January 7, 1595, her marriage with Liancourt was formally annulled as being contrary to the statutes of the Church; and those folk who still foolishly asserted that the King well knew that he was not the father of her son César must have been silenced on the ensuing 3rd of February, when the Parliament of Paris was called upon to register the letters patent, by which Henri acknowledged the paternity of the child and legitimated him. The more curious and interesting part of that document may well be quoted:

"HENRY, BY THE GRACE OF GOD, KING OF FRANCE AND NAVARRE, etc. . . . Whereas We have desired to have issue and to leave it, after Us, to this Kingdom, and whereas God has not yet allowed Us to have any in lawful wedlock, since the Queen, Our spouse, has been for ten years separated from Us, it has been Our desire, pending the time when HE may graciously give Us heirs, who may legitimately succeed to this crown, to endeavour to have children elsewhere . . . who will be obliged to serve this State, as has happened in the past, with others of the same quality, who deserved well of the State, and rendered great and notable services; on this account, then, having recognized the many great graces and perfections, as much of mind as of body, that abide in the person of Our very dear and well-beloved

\* Respecting La Raverie who appears to have visited the royal camp before Paris in 1592, Lescure quotes a letter written by the King in which he says: "Monsieur de Marivaux, I have granted the Demoiselle de la Raverie a passport to enable her to take some wheat, wine, and wood into Paris for her consumption. I beg you to make no difficulty in letting her pass. You are, of your own accord, courteous enough to beautiful women such as she is, so I do not press you more on the subject (Oct. 17, 1592)." Judging by this letter, one ought perhaps to include Mlle. de la Raverie among the Vert Galant's conquests.

GABRIELLE D'ESTRÉES, We, for some few years past, have sought her to that effect, as being the subject whom We judged to be the most worthy of Our friendship; which We held We might do with all the less scruple and burdening of conscience, as We know that the marriage which she had previously contracted with the Sieur de Liancourt was null, and had never had effect, as is testified by the judgment of separation and annulment of the said marriage, which has since ensued. And whereas the said Lady, after Our long suit and by the exercise of such authority as We brought to bear, did condescend to obey Us and do Our pleasure, and whereas it has pleased God that she should not long since give Us a son, who has hitherto borne the name of CÉSAR MONSIEUR, now, in addition to the natural charity and paternal affection in which We hold him, both because he is Our issue and by reason of the particular graces which God and nature have bestowed upon him in his early infancy, and which induce Us to hope that they will increase with his years, so that he, coming from such a stock, may some day yield much good fruit to this State, WE HAVE RESOLVED, etc., etc."

The usual formula of legitimation then follows, the name of Vendôme being bestowed on the infant César—in which connexion it will be remembered that Henri's father, Antoine de Bourbon, bore the title of Duke de Vendôme, before his marriage with Jeanne d'Albret made him King of Navarre.

## VII

### LA BELLE GABRIELLE

#### II. PALMY DAYS

First Negotiations for the Divorce of Henri and Marguerite—Gabrielle's rôle at Court—Her Friends and Partisans—She protects the Huguenots—Aubigné and Gabrielle—Châtel's Attempt on the King—Gabrielle's good Sense in Politics—Her Correspondence—Honours paid to her—Henri's Speech at Rouen and Gabrielle's Criticism—The King's early Penury—His alleged Miserliness—The Indebtedness of the French Crown—Extravagant Queens—Henri's Gifts to Gabrielle—Her Estates—Birth of her Daughter—She is created Duchess de Beaufort and acquires further Property—Unpopular with Parisian Malcontents—L'Estoille on Gabrielle and Henri—Her hunting Costume—Henri laughs at Prophecies—His Amusements—Gabrielle said to have Debased him—The Spaniards in Northern France—Henri and the Surprise of Amiens—Bad Tidings all round—The King's Composure and Gallantry—Gabrielle's Nervousness—The Story of the Ferryman—The Siege of Amiens—Henri's Letter to Crillon—Gabrielle's Fortune—Her Inventory—The King's Constancy to her—Love Passages from his Letters.

It was in 1593 that the King made the first attempt to obtain a divorce from his wife, Queen Marguerite. The idea sprang in part from some remarks made to him by his counsellor and friend Du Plessis-Mornay, who pointed out one day that his innumerable love affairs, besides imperilling his soul, were prejudicial to his health and reputation. "Why don't my friends think of marrying me?" Henri retorted, without taking the matter quite seriously perhaps. That question, however, enabled Du Plessis-Mornay to press his point, and he seems to have really imagined that matrimony might ensure the King's salvation. It was thought at first that Henri might secure a divorce from Queen Marguerite without referring the affair to the Pope, it being proposed that Marguerite should sign full powers of attorney, and make a declaration before an

ecclesiastical judge, setting forth her desire for the dissolution of her marriage, on the ground that it had been contracted contrary to her wishes, and without a dispensation, although she and her husband came within a degree of affinity in which marriage was prohibited by the Church. A certain Erard, who was one of her *maîtres de requêtes*, was accordingly despatched to Usson in order to obtain the necessary documents from her; and in April, 1593, he returned to Paris with them, as appears from a letter written by the Queen herself.

That satisfactory beginning was followed, however, by numerous incidents, and the interposition of one and another obstacle, which deferred the actual divorce for several years. M. de Lescure holds, moreover, that many of the delays were due to the interested parties themselves. On the one hand, either some very belated jealousy arose in Marguerite's mind, or in her reduced circumstances she was inclined to demand too high a price for her compliance with the King's desires; while, on the other, Henri may have intentionally refrained from expediting matters from a fear lest, directly he recovered his freedom, his counsellors should insist on providing him with a wife more of their choice than his own. That last view is not endorsed by historians, but it was held by some of the contemporary *romanciers* and *anecdotiers*, who did not always invent what they wrote, and it is certainly a somewhat plausible one, for we know that while the King himself wished to marry Gabrielle d'Estrées, his most influential advisers were opposed to that match, and he may, therefore, have deemed it best to adjourn matters altogether. Moreover, when the question of applying to the Pope arose it had to be remembered that the affair of the Papal absolution, which Henri had been obliged to solicit, was still in abeyance, and until that might be settled it seemed unadvisable to request any further favours of the Holy See.

Meantime, Gabrielle was not merely the King's favourite, for her position became that of a kind of deputy Queen of France. The King defined her status, in regard to himself personally, as that of "a person in whom he could have confidence, to whom he might confide his secrets and worries, receiving from her in all such matters familiar and sweet consolation." Historians

generally agree that Gabrielle played a consoling and pacifying rôle, at least in the earlier years of the *liaison*, in such wise that even those who were not inclined to like her found that they could not hate her. Aubigné admits the outward modesty and decency of her behaviour; while Mathieu, Henri's official historian, writes: "Pleasure was not the principal object of her affections; she rendered the King service by putting an end to several quarrels in which Court life is only too prolific. He confided to her the opinions and reports he received concerning his servants, and whenever he revealed to her his mental wounds, she at once applied herself to quieting their pain, never ceasing until the cause was removed, the offence softened, and the offended one pacified; in such wise that the Court confessed that the great favour she enjoyed, often dangerous in an imperious sex, sustained all and oppressed none; and there were several who rejoiced at the greatness of her fortune." In much the same strain, Sainte-Beuve writes: "Gabrielle was one of those women who, far from fomenting quarrels, prove restful and recreative to their lovers. . . . It was Gabrielle's art and charm that she knew how to invest a more than equivocal mode of life with a kind of dignity and even some air of decency."

Apart from the early affair of Bellegarde, Gabrielle's devotion to her royal lover has never been called in question by historians. Even when Henri had secured possession of Paris, he was not yet entirely King of France. He still had to conquer Brittany, Picardy and Lorraine, and again and again mediate between Catholics and Huguenots. His sway did not become definite until 1600; it was only then that, to use his own expression, he "mounted into his triumphal car." And, as Lescure says, Gabrielle was then dead, and with her had gone the happiness of continual striving, the illusions of youth, the very joy of that comparative poverty, too, which was the cause of the King's Court being composed solely of men really attached to him, men inspired by feelings of friendship and affection, and not by greedy desires.

As we shall see, Gabrielle received numerous very important gifts from Henri in the course of their long *liaison*, but we hardly think that she was a rapacious woman. She was held

in friendship by two persons of her sex who were among the most respectable and respected of their time, first the King's sister, the Princess Catherine of Navarre, and secondly Coligny's daughter, the Princess of Orange, widow of William the Silent. "The friendship of that lady, who was loved and honoured by all, even by the Catholics," says Michelet, "was a great moral support for Gabrielle. She was evidently of opinion that such a long and faithful attachment became purified by its duration, and that Gabrielle was no more bound to her nominal husband, whom, perhaps, she never saw again, than the King was bound to the slandered Marguerite, whom he had not seen for so many years."

The Huguenot party greatly preferred Gabrielle to any Queen of Spanish or Italian origin. Aubigné even asserts that she was secretly inclined to the Protestant faith. In any case, she certainly did much to protect the Huguenots and ensure them the free exercise of their rights. She was the better able to do this without incurring obloquy among the Catholics, as she had brought no little influence to bear on the King in favour of his abjuration. L'Estoille shows her interceding very energetically and sensibly on behalf of the Huguenots at the time of the Edict of Nantes, when there was a desire to disqualify them in respect to the holding of public offices and admission to the States-general.

Aubigné, as we have said, was not unfavourable to Gabrielle, and, in that connexion, here is a curious passage from his writings. "He [Aubigné] arrived at Chauny for the siege of La Fère, wearing mourning for his wife, who had died a few months previously and for whom he wept almost every night during three years. . . . His friends declared that he despaired of ever regaining the King's good graces,\* and dared not appear before him, as the King had openly sworn at table that he would have him put to death. But to show that this opinion was wrong, Aubigné made six journeys, one of which was this particular one. Having come, then, to the lodgings of the Duchess de Beaufort [Gabrielle] † where the King was expected,

\* They had fallen out over Henri's abjuration and similar matters, Aubigné's outspokenness not being to the King's taste.

† At the time of the occurrence in question Gabrielle was not yet Duchess

two noblemen of mark affectionately begged him to mount horse again on account of the King's fury against him. Indeed, he heard some gentlemen disputing whether he should be committed to the custody of the Captain of the Guard or the Provost of the Household. In the evening, however, he set himself between the torch bearers who were awaiting the King, and as the coach went by towards the steps of the house, he heard the King exclaiming: 'There is Monsieur, my Lord d'Aubigné!'

"That 'my Lording,' was very little to Aubigné's taste. However, he went forward as the King alighted. The King set his cheek against Aubigné's, ordered him to assist his mistress to alight, and made her unmask to salute him; while the companions were heard repeating, 'Is that placing him in charge of the Provost of the Household?'

"The King, however, forbidding any others to follow him, made Aubigné alone go in with him, his mistress, and her sister Juliette. For more than two hours he made him walk up and down between the Duchess [Gabrielle] and himself, and it was then that a remark was made which afterwards circulated so much; for while, by the light of a flambeau, the King was showing his pierced lips, he allowed Aubigné to say, without resenting it:

"'Sire, so far you have only renounced God with your lips, and it has satisfied Him to pierce them; but when you renounce Him with your heart, it is your heart that He will pierce.'

"'Oh, the fine words!' the Duchess exclaimed, 'but you employ them badly.'

"'Ay, madam,' said the other, 'because they will be of no avail.'

"The lady being pleased with such boldness, and desiring the author's friendship, the King formed the great design of committing to him the rearing and keeping of the little César, now Duke de Vendôme, whom one day he placed naked in Aubigné's arms. Three years later, Aubigné was to have taken him into Saintonge to rear and provide for him among the

de Beaufort, but Aubigné designates her by that title, as his narrative was drawn up at a much later date. As the reader will perceive, it is written in the third person.

Huguenots, but as that design was cast to the winds, we will also consign to them the account of it."

The piercing of the King's lip, referred to in the above passage, was the work of that young student, Jean Châtel, to whose crime we previously referred. Like some of the other attempts on the King's life, it was perpetrated in the presence of Gabrielle; in fact, it actually occurred in her own house in Paris.\* The King had just returned from a journey into Picardy (December, 1594), and two noblemen, MM. de Ragny and de Montigny, had arrived to offer him their submission. He was leaning towards them to assist them to rise and to give them the accolade, when Châtel dealt him a thrust with a knife, thereby hoping to pierce his throat. The assassin's aim was bad, however, and he pierced the lip instead. Gabrielle and her sister, Mme. de Balagny, nursed the wounded monarch, and endeavoured to console him, but he could not refrain from making some very bitter complaints. L'Estoille pictures him exclaiming:

"*Ventre saint-gris!* how can I feel happy when I see a people so ungrateful as to plan fresh attempts on me every day, although I have done and still do all that I can for them, and would willingly sacrifice a thousand lives for their welfare, had God given me so many!"

Châtel's crime was followed, as we previously mentioned, by the expulsion of the Jesuits from France; and the fact that so many of the attempts on Henri's life were inspired by religious fanaticism, prompted Gabrielle d'Estrées to advise great caution on her royal lover's part. She did not wish to see injustice done to his former co-religionaries, but at the same time she did not wish him to give the Catholics cause for offence. On that point Sainte-Beuve tells the following interesting anecdote. "One day in March, 1597, the King went after dinner to see his sister Madame Catherine, who was indisposed. She had remained a Protestant. By way of diverting her they began to play a lute and sing a psalm, according to the fashion of the Calvinists. The King thoughtlessly began to take part in the concert and sing the psalm with the others; but Gabrielle, who was near him and reflected

\* See p. 207, *post*.



on the possible consequences of such an imprudent action, when distorted by malicious folk, placed her hand over his mouth, begging him to desist from singing, with which request he complied."

The royal favourite's behaviour on that occasion was at least full of good sense. Nevertheless some writers have held that Gabrielle d'Estrées possessed no political shrewdness, no spirit of initiative, no powers of suggestion and advice. Others, going even further, have declared her quite destitute of wit, unable even to speak and write with a little feminine *esprit*. There is, however, scarcely anything more than negative evidence in support of that view which, as Lescure remarked, is such as plain women favour, for they generally hold that wit and talent never go hand in hand with beauty. We often observe the contrary, however, in our own daily lives, while, historically, to mention but two women, more or less of the class to which Gabrielle belonged, it may be pointed out that Ninon de l'Enclos was a woman of great wit as well as of great and lasting beauty, while the talents of the beautiful Marchioness de Pompadour would almost justify one in calling her a woman of genius. Doubtless, however, the ugly women will still and ever contend that their more favoured sisters must be stupid.

So very few examples of Gabrielle d'Estrées' letters have come down to us that she cannot be fairly judged by them. One is addressed to Henri I, Duke and Constable de Montmorency, on the occasion of the death of his young wife, Louise de Budos, an extremely beautiful woman, first married to Jacques de Gramont, Lord of Vachères, and secondly, in 1595, to Montmorency, from whom she was suddenly snatched by death in 1598, when she was only twenty-three years old, her sudden and mysterious demise at Chantilly, then the property of the Montmorencys, being attributed to poison. The letter written by Gabrielle on this occasion \* is a mere letter of condolence couched in the exaggerated style then commonly found in such epistles. Two other notes of hers—addressed to the Duchess de Nevers †—are somewhat insignificant; a fourth

\* Yung's *Henri IV, écrivain*.

† Delort's *Voyages aux Environs de Paris*, vol. ii.

one, published by Musset-Pathay, displays more liveliness and freedom of style. Gabrielle certainly affected no pretensions to scholarship, but in the three last missives which we have mentioned, one can detect indications of a graceful, pleasing, and perfectly unaffected nature. There is no trace of the wit and literary talent of Queen Marguerite; but to assert, as some have done, that Gabrielle was altogether without intellectual gifts is contrary to everything we know of her career.

One cannot deny the possession of political shrewdness to one who favoured her royal lover's abjuration in order to win for him the allegiance of the great majority of Frenchmen, and who did so much to bring about the submission of the Dukes de Mayenne and de Mercœur, thereby dealing the League a blow from which it never recovered. While at the outset it was undoubtedly her beauty which attracted Henri de Navarre, he was, as Lescure says, too witty, too intellectually gifted to have desired to marry her and make her Queen of France—as he, at one moment, undoubtedly did desire—had she been merely a *jolie sottie*. Moreover, with his well-known fickleness in love, he would not have remained bound to her as he did for so many years had her beauty been her only charm.

Sully was opposed to Gabrielle, though he was indebted to her for his position as financial minister, in which respect again she showed political sagacity, as disinterested as it ultimately proved advantageous for France. The course of events, and notably the King's idea of marrying his favourite, brought her and Sully into antagonism. From the moral point of view such a marriage would have been a right one, and would have conduced far more to the King's domestic happiness than did his subsequent union with Marie de' Medici. But for political reasons the marriage was distinctly unadvisable; and thus, when Gabrielle died, Sully openly rejoiced—effusively embracing his wife at the thought that she would not be obliged to attend the *levées* of the whilom favourite transformed into a Queen of France.

The Memoirs of Claude Groulart, President of the Parliament of Normandy, indicate what a high position Gabrielle held beside the King, and how he required even the chief magistrates of the Kingdom to treat her with as much deference

as if she had been actually a Princess; "On Thursday, October 10, 1596," writes Groulard, "Madame la Marquise de Montceaux [Gabrielle] arrived at Rouen and lodged at [the abbey of] St. Ouen, in the room over the King's. On Friday, the 11th, I went to pay her my respects, and again on the following Sunday, having received the King's command to that effect by the Sieurs de Ste. Marie du Mont and Fouquerolles."

This was the occasion on which Henri made a state entry into Rouen before attending the Assembly of Notables, to whom he delivered a very striking speech which partially failed in its object, however, as the King's sincerity was doubted by many people. He often spoke too freely and promised too much, like the Gascon he was, and if we may believe certain anecdotes, Gabrielle appears to have noticed that defect and have cautioned him against it. In the speech he made to the Notables at the abbey of St. Ouen there occurred the famous passage: "I have not summoned you as my predecessors did to make you approve what they had resolved upon. I have assembled you to receive your advice, to trust in it and follow it, briefly to place myself in tutelage in your hands, a desire which seldom comes to Kings, grey-beards, and victorious men. But the violence of the love which I bear to my subjects, etc., etc."

Now, as Henri wished to ascertain Gabrielle's opinion of that harangue and the effect it might produce, he requested her to station herself behind some tapestry which shut off a part of the hall, in order that she might hear everything that was said. And as soon as the ceremony was over, the King asked her what she thought of his speech, whereupon, we are told, she answered that she had never heard a better one, but had nevertheless felt astonished on hearing him speak of placing himself in tutelage.

"*Ventre saint-gris!*" Henri retorted, "that's true, but I mean it with my sword at my side!"

That admission of the King's shows that Gabrielle's criticism was well founded, and that she was really possessed of sound political sense.\*

\* M. Yung's work *Henri IV, écrivain* contains some interesting remarks concerning the King's speech at Rouen, the original draft of which, corrected by Henri himself, is now in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris.

Like most if not all royal favourites, Gabrielle d'Estrées was accused in her lifetime of impoverishing the Kingdom by her extravagance, and some latter-day historians have pictured her as an unscrupulous creature carried away by boundless greed. It is certain that Henri was put to sore shifts for money at the period when his *liaison* with Gabrielle began. For instance, here is an amusing passage from L'Estoille's Journal :

“ At this time (1594) the King's coach horses were brought back to him because there was no food for them. Addressing himself to Monsieur d'O,\* he asked him how that happened.

“ ‘Sire,’ said he, ‘there is no money.’

“ ‘I am in a very wretched state,’ the King retorted. ‘I shall have to go about naked and on foot before long.’ And turning to one of his *valets-de-chambre*, he asked him how many shirts he had.

“ ‘A dozen, Sire,’ said the valet, ‘but some of them are torn.’

“ ‘And handkerchiefs,’ said the King, ‘have I not eight?’

“ ‘At present there are only five,’ the valet answered.

“ Thereupon Monsieur d'O told the King that he had ordered six thousand crowns' worth of linen in Flanders to make him some shirts and handkerchiefs.

“ ‘That's the way,’ said the King, ‘they want to make me resemble those students who are said to wear furred gowns at home, but who none the less die of cold.’ ”

Two years later he is found writing this letter to Sully : “ It is now for you to make up your mind to follow my instructions and speak to me freely, and in order that you may do so, I will tell you to what a state I am reduced, which is that I am very near to the enemy, and yet I hardly have a horse on which I can fight, or a complete set of armour (*harnois*) for my shoulders. My shirts are all torn, my doublets are ragged at the elbows. My stewpot is often turned upside down as there is nothing to put in it, and for two days past

\* François, Marquis d'O, Master of the Wardrobe, Sancy's successor as Superintendent of Finances and some time Governor of Paris. He had served Henri III, but was confirmed in most of his posts by Henri de Navarre. M. d'O died in 1594, and later Sully became Superintendent of Finances.

I have been dining and supping with one and another, as my own purveyors declare that they can no longer supply anything for my own table, particularly as they have been paid no money for six months past. Well, judge if I deserve to be treated in that manner, if I am to suffer financiers and treasurers to let me die of starvation, whilst they keep well-served and dainty tables."

Sully, as we know, restored the finances of the kingdom, and enabled the King to support his crown and dignity in a proper fashion. In his later years Henri was repeatedly accused of meanness. "His greed is abominable," said the Florentine resident at the French Court. "He is an absolute miser," wrote Aubigné. "He can neither give nor receive like a King," was the verdict of Mme. de Simier. "He avoids gentlemen without fortune for fear lest they should pester him with requests," said Beauvais-Nangris, while Marie de' Medici, Henri's second consort, never ceased complaining of his niggardliness.\* But we do not believe in the charge that the King was naturally a miser. As he grew older, however, the thousand straits and shifts to which he was put taught him the value of money; and he ended by realizing how necessary it was that, after so many years of ruinous civil war, the treasury should be replenished if France were to be again made a strong and prosperous kingdom. He did not scatter State property broadcast among his adherents. Had the Huguenot cause prevailed he would never have distributed the spoils of the Catholic church among greedy nobles, as our Henry VIII did at the time of the dissolution of the monasteries. When Navarre heard that many of his courtiers called him a miser, he retorted:

"A miser? Why, I do three things which are far from being the acts of a miser: I make war, I make love, and I build."

Further, he ordered Sully to issue a statement of the Crown debts which had to be met, and which were gradually settled by annual payments. Exclusive of the cost of the treaties with the Leaguers (some thirty-two million livres) the total amounted

\* See Louis Batiffol's important and interesting volume *Marie de' Medici and the French Court*, London, Chatto and Windus, 1908.

to three hundred and seven millions,\* which, if we accept M. Louis Arnould's view that a livre at that period represented seven francs of present-day money, would mean an indebtedness of £50,000,000.

In such a position of affairs how could a King, desirous of acting rightly, be otherwise than cautious in money matters? At the time of his second marriage, Henri owed the Grand Duke of Tuscany alone, for repeated advances to himself and his predecessors, Charles IX and Henri III, a sum of over thirty millions sterling, and indeed it was that circumstance and the urgent need of further money that led to the King's marriage with Marie de' Medici. A large part of her nominal dowry never reached the King, being simply written off the royal account; and the amount she actually brought with her to France (some 350,000 crowns †) represented barely a tithe of what she afterwards cost the King and the French Treasury, for not only did she fall into the hands of designing favourites but she was carried away by an insensate passion for jewellery which she satisfied regardless of expense.

The sixteenth century was pre-eminently an age of extravagance in women. Spendthrift Queens, Princesses and *grandes dames* were then the rule, not the exception. Eleanor of Austria, the second consort of Francis I, left heavy debts behind her when at his death she quitted the country. That monarch's favourites were also grasping and prodigal. Catherine de' Medici, the consort of the next King, Henri II, was both the richest and the most extravagant Queen France ever had, one who died hugely in debt in spite of all her great personal wealth. Louise de Vaudemont, the Princess of the House of Lorraine, who espoused Henri III, was less wealthy but almost as prodigally inclined, particularly in household expenditure; while her husband squandered millions on his *mignons*. The extravagance of his sister, Marguerite—Henri de Navarre's first wife—is unquestionable, and she being followed by the lavish Marie de' Medici, the King (apart from the expense of his mistresses) was plagued throughout life by the many liabilities

\* The total revenue of France, so far as it reached the State exchequer, was then little more than twenty million livres per annum.

† A crown was worth three livres.

and pecuniary appeals of his successive consorts. He waxed mightily indignant one day when it came to his knowledge that in Marie de' Medici's opinion he had not done enough for her. "What!" said he to Sully. "Why, I have given my wife more, I have made her more presents, both to keep up the ordinary expenses of her household, and for supplementary expenses, than any other King of France ever granted to his wife!" On the other hand, it is undoubtedly true—as M. Batiffol, Marie de' Medici's latest apologist, points out—that previous Queens had lived less luxuriously and possessed large private means.

In his younger days Henri de Navarre does not appear to have been lavish with his mistresses; but at that period of his life he had little or nothing to give, and it was necessary to love him for his own sake. Moreover, the principal favourite of those earlier years, Corisanda, was undoubtedly a naturally disinterested woman. So long, too, as Henri was merely a kind of King-errant, there was no call on him to keep up any particular state or for his mistresses to do so either. But the position changed when he at last made himself master of Paris and was recognized as sovereign by the greater part of France.

It is then that, however difficult his circumstances might still be, we find him showering gifts as well as honours on Gabrielle d'Estrées. Of course, when a man loves a woman it is his duty to provide for her, and when she presents him with children he should do what he can for them also. In regard to Gabrielle, as in regard to many another royal favourite, the point simply is whether the King did too much for her, and whether she was such a greedy, grasping creature as some have pictured. There is no question that she gave Henri several years of happiness, and that he was the more delighted by the birth of their three strong and healthy children as he had no living offspring: his daughter by Fosseuse had been stillborn, it will be remembered, and his son by Corisanda had passed away in infancy.

In 1594, the year of the birth of César de Vendôme, we find that Gabrielle acquired, either by royal grant or by purchase with money received from the King, the lordship of Venteuil,

between La Ferté-sous-Jouarre and Coulommiers in Brie, as well as a handsome house in Paris. A little later she obtained the lordship of Crécy, a fortified town in Brie; while in March, 1595, after securing the domain of Jaignes, another Brie lordship, Henri bestowed on her the title of Marchioness de Montceaux and presented her with the estate and château of that name which also were in Brie, on the road from Paris to Châlons, near the Marne and about two leagues from Meaux. The château had been built by the Primaticcio for Catherine de' Medici in or about 1547; but that Queen's estate being distrained and offered for sale in consequence of the debts she left behind her, Henri acquired it for his mistress. Forty years ago one might still see some remains of the Montceaux property, a pavilion, a ruined colonnade, and a part of the grand staircase, decorated with the carved initials (as it was thought) of Henri de Navarre and Gabrielle. They were those, however, of Henri II and Catherine de' Medici, the C of the latter's Christian name having been mistaken for a G.\*

Montceaux was finely furnished by Gabrielle d'Estrées, as her inventory shows, but at her death Henri recovered possession of the property by placing a nominal amount to the credit of her—and his—young children, and then bestowed it on his second consort Marie de' Medici when she gave birth to the future Louis XIII. Montceaux attracted her by reason of the fact that the other Medici Queen, Catherine, had erected it, and she enlarged and embellished the property regardless of expense, adding a hundred and thirty acres to the park, building a new chapel, additional pavilions, spacious outbuildings and huge stables, besides laying out a tennis court and digging a moat, in one or another part of which work she employed such famous architects as Jacques and Baptiste Androuet du Cerceau and later Salomon de Brosse. Thus, in one way or another, Montceaux, of which there exists a fine view engraved by

\* In like manner the initials of Henri II and Catherine on various buildings in Paris and the provinces were, until recent times, often mistaken for those of himself and his mistress Diana of Poitiers, on account of the manner in which they were carved, the Queen's initial appearing on either side of the King's, and joining it in such wise that many supposed the two C's (the second of which was reversed) to be two D's. The question is well discussed in Fournier's *Énigmes des Rues de Paris*, 1860.



Chastillon, became a pattern of royal extravagance, which a later generation imputed to Gabrielle d'Estrées, instead of to those two pernicious Florentine Queens who in turn did so much harm to France.

It was while Gabrielle was staying at the Benedictine Abbey of St. Ouen at Rouen, in October, 1596, that is at the time of the royal oration of which we previously spoke, that she gave birth to a daughter, who received the Christian names of Catherine Henriette, the King's sister and the King himself acting respectively as godmother and godfather at the baptism, which was performed with all the state ceremonial customary at the christenings of Children (*i.e.* Princes or Princesses) of France. This daughter, legitimated by a royal edict in March the following year, became the wife of a member of the Guise family, Charles de Lorraine, Duke d'Elbeuf, in February, 1619, and died towards the end of June, 1633.

A few months after the legitimation of Catherine Henriette, that is in July, 1597, a further dignity was conferred on Gabrielle. "The King," writes L'Estoille "purchased the duchy of Beaufort for Madame la Marquise de Mousseaux (*sic* \*) his mistress, and from a Marchioness made her a Duchess, which happened on Thursday, the 10th of the month of July; since which day she has been called the Duchess de Beaufort, but others call her the *Duchesse d'Ordure*." The domains of Beaufort, it may be explained, were in the province of Cham-

\* The spelling "Mousseaux" frequently occurs in L'Estoille's Journal. It is possible that Montceaux was pronounced in that manner. Though the difference between the orthography and the pronunciation of French proper names was, perhaps, never so great as one sometimes observes in this country, it is certain that such a difference occasionally occurred. More than once the point has been raised whether the Valois line of Kings were not really called Valais by their contemporaries. If one might judge by the rhymed lampoons and pasquinades which appeared at the time of the last Princes of that house, such would seem to have been the case. One of the rhymes of the time of the League beginning:

" Henri de Valois (Valais ?)  
Qui a dévallé,"

may be mentioned as an example. It should also be remembered, however, that the word Français (French) was long written François. Nevertheless we hesitate to say whether the proper name François (Francis) was ever pronounced as Français.

pagne, and had previously ranked as a county, but the King, wishing to give his mistress as high a position as possible in the *noblesse*, issued letters patent raising the property to the status of a duchy. The sum paid for the purchase of the domain was 80,000 crowns.

About this time Gabrielle also acquired—by purchase from the Duchess de Guise—the lordships of Loiscourt and Jaucourt near Bar-sur-Aube; and we may add that not long before her death she increased her property in Brie by acquiring the domains of St. Jean-les-deux-Jumeaux and Montreton. Like Montceaux, however, most of the Brie property ultimately went to Marie de' Medici. Finally, Queen Marguerite, in the course of her interminable negotiations respecting both her pecuniary needs and the divorce her husband desired to obtain, made Gabrielle—in some degree perforce—a present of the Duchy of Étampes, which had formerly been held by Anne de Pisseleu and Diane de Poitiers, the mistresses of Francis I and Henri II. That gift, however, did not imply a great revenue, as it only carried with it the right to the payment of feudal and seigniorial dues, fees on the sale of lands, succession duties, fines of justice, escheats, and dues payable for appointments to offices and benefices. In that respect we know by the accounts of Marie de' Medici \* that the Duchy of the Bourbonnais only yielded 4300 livres, that of Auvergne 9280 livres, and the county of Nantes 3772 livres per annum.

Among the citizens of Paris at this time, particularly the Catholics and the Parliamentarians, there were a good many malcontents, as was only natural. They had been embittered by the preachings of the League, sorely tried by the civil war, the sieges of their city, the outbreaks of the plague and other misfortunes; and thus many of them regarded Gabrielle as a leach who was draining the last resources of the kingdom, a mere wanton who was filling the Court with parasites, insulting the poorly circumstanced wives of honest citizens by an impudent display of luxury, and deriding their—more or less—virtuous lives by the exhibition of her triumphant shamelessness. The many passages in which L'Estoille refers to the favourite's luxury, and charges her with greed, venality, ambition

\* See Batiffol, *l.c.*

and tyranny remind one of some passages that came from the pen of that typical English *bourgeois*, Mr. Pepys, who with the customary cant of his species was not above frolicking on the sly himself, but became quite scandalized by the goings on of My Lady Castlemaine, the Duchess of Portsmouth and Mistress Nell Gwynne. In mentioning those three fair and frail creatures let it not be supposed that we desire to liken Gabrielle d'Estrées to them, for we are convinced that she was a much better woman than any one of that trio. But Pierre Taisan de l'Estoille, *grand audiencier* of the Chancellery of Paris, was undoubtedly the French Pepys of his period.

“On Sunday, November 6, 1594,” he writes, “the son of Mme. de Sourdis [Gabrielle’s aunt \*] was baptised at ten o’clock in the evening at the Church of St. Germain l’Auxerrois, in Paris, when the King was the *compère* (godfather) with Mme. de Liancourt, who was clad that day in a gown of black satin, so laden with pearls and gems that she could not hold herself up; and it was said that Mmes. de Nemoux [Nemours] and Montpensier [both Princesses] had served as her tirewomen for this ceremony. M. de Montpensier carried the saltcellar, the Maréchale de La Chastre † carried the infant, which was baptised by its uncle the Bishop of Maillezais [Vendée]. From the moment when the King, who was dressed in grey, entered the church until he left it, he did not cease laughing with the Lady of Liancourt and caressing her, sometimes in one way sometimes in another.”

Six days later, Saturday, November 12, L’Estoille writes: “I have been shown a kerchief which a Paris embroiderer has just finished for the Lady of Liancourt; she is to wear it to-morrow at a ballet, and the price agreed upon with him is 1900 crowns, which she is to pay at once.”

“On Wednesday, November 16,” so L’Estoille subsequently states, “the King gave the Lady of Liancourt the office of M. de Brou, a member of the Grand Council, who died in Paris a few days previously, so as to enable her to make her journey

\* See p. 131, *ante*.

† Daughter of Guy de Chabot, Baron de Jarnac (who killed La Chataigneraye in the famous duel), and wife of Claude de la Châtre, Marshal of France, 1593-1614.

to Lyons." This means that Gabrielle became entitled to the dues which would be payable on the appointment of M. de Brou's successor.

In the following month L'Estoille relates an anecdote which recalls both one about Nell Gwynne and the Duchess of Portsmouth, as told by Pepys, and another about Mme. de Montespán as related by the Princess Palatine. "On Monday, the 9th," says he, "a printer named Chapus, who recently arrived in this city from Geneva, told me that, having gone to the Louvre on some serious business, he met at the door of the said Louvre Mme. de Liancourt, who was magnificently arrayed and accompanied; and knowing her not, but seeing that every one paid her honour, he stopped to ask who she might be, and was dumfounded when an archer of the Guard answered without lowering his voice: 'It is nothing of any account, my friend, it is only the King's——' Whereat the poor man remained quite astonished."

"On Friday, March 17, 1595," L'Estoille tells us, "there was great thunder in Paris, with lightning and tempest, while the King was hunting in the country round Paris with his Gabrielle, the newly-created Marchioness de Montceaux, she by the King's side and he holding her hand. She was on horseback, riding like a man,\* dressed entirely in green; and she returned with him to Paris in that attire."

Gabrielle, by the way, was as fond of green as Henri was of grey. The attire she wore on the occasion mentioned above was probably similar to a costume which is described in the inventory made of her wardrobe after her death: "A mantle and a *dévantière* [i.e. divided skirt] to be worn on horseback, of satin of *zizolin* colour, † with silver embroidery, the cuffs trimmed with silver, set in *bâtons rompus*, and purflings of green satin. The mantle lined with green figured satin, and on the facings buttonholes embroidered in silver. And the said *dévantière* lined with taffety of *zizolin* colour, with a hat of taffety, also

\* L'Estoille's remark seems to indicate that he thought it unusual for a woman to bestride a horse. Originally, however, it had been the common practice. There are early Spanish paintings of the Flight into Egypt in which the Virgin is shown bestriding the donkey which Joseph leads.

† Now *Zinzolin*, from the Italian *zuzzolino*, a reddish violet colour.

*zizolin* colour, and trimmed with silver. Estimated at two hundred crowns."\*

In November, 1596, shortly after the Assembly of the Notables at Rouen, L'Estoille wrote that people had repeated at Court "a prophecy made by a great magician of the Low Countries, which said that the King would be killed in his bed towards the end of this year by a conspiracy of the greatest men of his kingdom, to which was added a story, made up intentionally, about a great defeat of the Christians by the Turks; which victory was attributed to the justice which the Grand Seignior had inflicted on a hussy he kept, by killing her with his own hand in order to content his people and the folk of his Court, to whom she was very odious. And since then, so it was said, all happiness had attended him. Which story having come to the King's ears, he laughed at it derisively, as well as at the prophecy, saying that all that would not prevent him from kissing his mistress, as indeed he does before everybody, and she the same to him, even at the Council. And about that time, as she was brought to bed of a daughter at Rouen,† the King went every day to see her."

Early in 1597, while chronicling the baptism of the son of Constable Henri de Montmorency in the chapel of the asylum of the Enfants Rouges, ‡ L'Estoille, after mentioning that the King held the child over the font, adds: "Madame la Marquise [Gabrielle] was also there, magnificently arrayed, and dressed all in green, and the King amused himself in keeping her *coiffure* in order, and told her that she had not enough diamonds in her hair; for she only had twelve, and it was said that she ought to have had fifteen." A few days later our *chroniqueur* relates that the King had "sent for some of the principal men of his courts, and those whom he knew to be the most easy circumstanced of his city of Paris, and asked them for money in such a manner that they found themselves prevented from refusing him, although they were minded to do so. Nevertheless,

\* That is, taking Arnould's estimate, about £170 of our money.

† See *ante*, p. 159.

‡ Orphans from the Hôtel Dieu, called *enfants rouges* because they were dressed in red. The asylum was established by Marguerite of Angoulême, author of the *Heptameron*.

he spends all his time in playing at tennis, and is usually at the "Sphere" where Madame la Marquise and Mesdames de Sourdis and de Sagonne \* go every day to watch him play; and he borrows money [to pay for the play?] from Mme. de Mousseaux, and caresses her a great deal and kisses her before everybody."

It has been assumed that Gabrielle's influence over Henri was pernicious, that her allurements deprived him of all vigour and energy, reduced him to much the same supineness as that which overcame Rinaldo when he was caught in Armida's toils. Michelet took that view, and one might adopt it if L'Estoille's Journal stopped at a certain point. But this pepysian diarist was not a violent partisan, and every now and again some statements which he makes are refuted by later ones. It is, of course, quite true that at the period we have now reached, 1596-1597, a good deal still remained to be done in order to ensure to Henri the full and peaceful possession of his kingdom. For instance, although the Duke de Mayenne had submitted to the royal authority, his relative, Philippe Emmanuel of Lorraine, Duke de Mercœur, still held a great part of Brittany in the name of the League. So far, moreover, no peace had been arrived at with the Spaniards, whose forces, commanded by Archduke Albert of Austria, Governor of the Low Countries, as well as Cardinal Archbishop of Toledo, continually threatened northern France. It was with their help that Calais was seized in 1595 and held for the League, while in the following year the little fortified town of Ardres surrendered to the Archduke Albert's forces. To contend with that state of affairs Henri, slightly tired perhaps of long campaigning, relied for a while on his lieutenants, and thus the Parisians began to murmur.

L'Estoille, who does not hesitate to call the commonalty a "headstrong, inconstant, and feeble animal," now shows us Paris "saying as much ill of the King as it had formerly said good of him," and taking as its excuse for this the circumstance that "he amused himself rather too much with Madame la Marquise." Under date Sunday, March 23, 1597, when Lent began, L'Estoille pictures the King still amusing himself. "He made up a masquerade of sorcerers and went to see all the company of

\* Mme. de Sagonne was the widow of one of Gabrielle's uncles.

Paris. He went to the Présidente Saint-André's, to Zamet's,\* and all sorts of other places, always having at his side the Marchioness, who unmasked him and kissed him wherever he entered." In that wise, indeed, Henri prolonged his escapade through the night, only returning to the Louvre at eight o'clock in the morning.

But twenty days later, Wednesday, April 12, the eve of Mid Lent, L'Estoille has a very different tale to tell: "While one was amusing oneself," says he, "with laughing and dancing, there came the sore tidings of the surprise of the town of Amiens by the Spaniard, who had turned our ballets into rods with which to whip us. At which news Paris, the Court, the dancing, and all the festivities were greatly disturbed. And even the King, whose composure and magnanimity are not easily shaken, was astonished as it were by this blow. Nevertheless, looking up to God, as he usually does more in adversity than in prosperity, he said aloud:

"'This blow has come from Heaven! Those poor folk [the inhabitants of Amiens] have undone themselves through refusing the little garrison which I wished to send them.'

"Then, after some brief reflection, he added: 'I have acted the King of France enough, now I must act the King of Navarre!' And turning to the Marchioness, who was weeping, he said to her, 'We must set the contests of love aside, my mistress, and mount on horse, to wage another kind of war.'

"As he, indeed, did that very same day, going first at the head of his company, in order that people might see that fear had no place in his soul, and could not gain admittance into his heart, which he showed to be very resolute in this adversity."

The citizens of Paris, reassured by the King's gallant demeanour, acclaimed him on his departure, thereby inciting "all his nobility," says L'Estoille, "to fight well and remain firm under the leadership of so brave and generous a King." His composure never left him, writes Lescure. Bad news came from all directions. The remnants of the League were again active. Poitiers was said to have been taken by surprise. The rebellious Lorrainers were regaining courage. The Parliament

\* Sébastien Zamet, a very wealthy banker of Italian origin, and of whom Henri often borrowed money. We shall speak of Zamet again.

was refusing to register edicts. The Count d'Auvergne,\* otherwise the "Prodigal Son," fled from Court. But nothing seemed to alarm the King. He lectured the recalcitrant Parliament, pardoned the malcontents who took to seditious courses, laughed at things which might have filled another with distress; and, returning to Paris for a while after the adoption of certain measures, again took to playing tennis at the "Sphere." "But that," says L'Estoille, "did not prevent his Majesty from watching over and giving orders about all that was necessary for undertaking the siege of Amiens during the following month, and when that was come he again dismissed play and love, and set out in person, acting as King, captain and soldier at one and the same time."

That is certainly not the picture of a Prince emasculated by dalliance, neglecting his duties and his interests under what Michelet styled the enervating tyranny of Gabrielle d'Estrées. We find that she gave all her ready money and pledged all her jewellery for the purposes of the Amiens expedition. At the same time she did not possess as much strength of mind as her royal lover; she lacked the courage to face the enmity of the multitude. Referring to that eve of Mid Lent when the news of the surprise of Amiens first reached Paris, L'Estoille declares: "Madame la Marquise, who was very much frightened, more by her conscience than by anything else, was ready before the King was, and departed an hour before he did, in her litter, not feeling safe in Paris, so she said, as the King was leaving it."

Even if we admit that account to be correct, which is not certain, for Gabrielle's departure may have been advised by Henri himself, a lack of courage in such circumstances, on the part of a woman occupying so invidious a position as she did, is hardly a matter for grave censure. If Henri had failed in his endeavours to prevent the Spaniards from overrunning northern France, the populace of Paris might well have sought a victim. Moreover, Gabrielle dreaded slander and could not laugh at it as the King so often did. There is the well-known story of the ferryman who, not recognizing either her or Henri, boldly expressed his opinion of them while he was ferrying

\* Charles, son of Charles IX by his mistress Marie Touchet.



them across the river. The man having complained of the taxes, Henri said to him—

“But does not the King intend to amend all those taxes?”

“Oh, the King is a fairly good fellow,” replied the ferryman, “but he has a mistress who requires so many fine gowns and so many gewgaws that there is no end to it all, and we have to pay for it. It might be allowable if she belonged only to him, but it’s said that she lets many another caress her.”

Thereupon, according to the story, Gabrielle indignantly talked of having the man hanged.

“You are foolish,” Henri said to her; “this is only a poor devil soured by poverty. I have made up my mind that he shall pay no more dues for his ferryboat, and I am certain that he will sing every night: ‘Vive Henri and Vive Gabrielle!’”\*

The siege of Amiens lasted six months, for the Spaniards made a very stout resistance. Henri more than once desired to meet the Archduke Albert’s forces in a pitched battle, but Mayenne, who was with him and behaved right loyally, would not allow him to incur such a risk, feeling, perhaps, that in an engagement in the open country the royal army might not prevail over the Spanish infantry which was then reputed to be the finest in the world. Thus the whilom chief of the League did not cease repeating to the King: “No, Sire, you have come here to take Amiens, and not to fight a battle.”

On the other hand, there were some occasional sharp encounters, and Henri had full confidence in his army, as is shown by his famous letter to his able lieutenant, Louis de Balbis-Bertons, Lord of Crillon, which is so often misquoted on the authority of that inveterate and often intentional misquoter, Voltaire. According to him Henri wrote to Crillon: “Hang thyself, brave Crillon, we have fought at Arques and thou wast not there. . . . Farewell, brave Crillon, I love you *à tort et à travers*.” That version was the more inexcusable as the actual text of the letter had been published long before Voltaire

\* We have given the story in the same form as Lescure quotes it from Sauval. There are several versions of it. L’Estoille gives a very detailed one in that part of his narrative which was discovered and first printed by Halphen. The date assigned to the incident by L’Estoille is 1593.

composed his *Henriade*.\* Here is what Henri actually wrote according to the text given by Berger de Xivrey in the *Recueil des lettres-missives de Henri IV*. The original was, in our time, still preserved in the Crillon archives :

“ Brave Grillon (*sic*), hang yourself for not having been here near me last Monday, on the finest occasion that has ever been seen, and which, perhaps, will never be seen again. Believe that I greatly desired you at it. The Cardinal † came to see us in great fury but has gone off in great shame. I hope to be next Thursday in Amiens, where I shall make but little stay, as I mean to undertake something, for I now have one of the finest armies that one can imagine. It lacks nothing but the brave Grillon, who will always be welcomed and well regarded by me. *A Dieu*. This XX September, at the camp before Amiens.—HENRY.” ‡

But let us return to Gabrielle d'Estrées. The story of the ferryman supplies at least some indication of the manner in which she was regarded by the commonalty. With respect to her alleged unfaithfulness there is, as we previously said, no proof whatever. With regard to her greed we have already spoken of the principal domains comprised in her landed property. Let us now say something about the various other gifts which she received from the King. She certainly does not appear to have been a woman of the same nature as Henri's next mistress, Henriette d'Entragues, who set a price on every kiss she gave, and who, as a mere preliminary, cost the King a hundred thousand crowns. During her *liaison* of about nine years' duration, however, Gabrielle undoubtedly received many gifts, several of which passed to her numerous and unscrupulous relations, who constantly speculated upon her position. Such

\* That is, says Fournier, in *Le Bouquier d'Honneur*, by P. Bening, Avignon, 1616, 8vo.

† That is the Cardinal Archduke Albert.

‡ In these days when French historical writers make such strenuous efforts to arrive at accuracy it is pitiful to find Voltaire's erroneous version of the above letter perpetuated by such a publication as *Larousse's Encyclopædia*—both the *Nouveau Larousse* and the *Petit Larousse* also. It will be observed that Henri does not “ thee-and-thou ” Crillon, or write to him about the battle of Arques. The expression “ hang yourself, etc.,” was, says Fournier, a customary one with the King. It occurs in letters of his to two of his captains, Fervacques and Harambure.

was notably the case with her aunt and so-called chaperon, the Marchioness de Sourdis, who by this means and with the help of her lover Cheverny, Chancellor of France, acquired a very large fortune.

It does not appear, however, that Gabrielle was particularly eager in soliciting gifts of her royal lover. She was generally content to accept what he offered. At the outset of the *liaison* an allowance of four hundred crowns a month was made to her from the privy purse. This was raised to five hundred, and eventually, after the King had decided to marry her, to a thousand crowns. At the same time there were many handsome gifts. For instance, in 1593, the King allotted to her 20,000 crowns to be levied on the dues payable for the transfer of judicial offices and for the guardianship of nobles under age, in the Duchy of Normandy. That does not imply, however, that the whole amount was levied in one year. In 1594 there was a gift of 33,000 crowns for the purchase of property, and in other years we find Henri assigning to his favourite some of the fees payable as seneschal's dues in Poitou, Angoumois, Saintonge Aunis, La Rochelle, the duchy of Alençon, etc. All the known letters-patent on those matters are quoted by M. Desclozeaux in his work on La Belle Gabrielle. In the aggregate they certainly represent a large amount of money, but it must be pointed out that for several years Gabrielle distinctly held the position of Vice-reine, which entailed no little expenditure, and also had to constitute appanages for her children.

So far as Henri's correspondence with her has come down to us, presents are not often mentioned in it. When they are it is a question of some lover's gift or a mere attention. "I am sending you a bouquet of orange flowers, which has just been sent to me," he writes on June 16, 1593. "I found only an hour ago a means of completing your set of plate: you see how I take care of you," he remarks a week afterwards. "I am sending you a company of fairly good violin-players, to divert both yourself and your subject, who will cherish you extremely," he says in December, 1594. Three years later, L'Estoille pictures him dining with Gabrielle at the house of one of the Gondis—who so often negotiated the loans he contracted with Francesco and Ferdinando de' Medici, Grand Dukes of Tuscany

—on which occasion he bargained for a ring, priced at eight hundred crowns, which he wished to give his mistress. As the vendor, however, would not reduce that price to his satisfaction, the King did not buy it, “but contented himself with giving little César a silver ‘mathematical’ comfit box, on which the twelve signs of the heavens were engraved, and which was sold him by a merchant jeweller named Du Carnoi. He bargained for many other things at the fair [of St. Germain]. But for things which were priced to him at twenty crowns, he only offered six, and thus they made very little by seeing him.”

It was that kind of haggling, no doubt, which led to Henri’s reputation for miserliness; but we rather admire him for refusing to allow himself to be cheated by Italian jewellers and others, who either on the plea that Kings were rare or because they knew that he would endeavour to beat them down, raised their prices immediately they saw him.

The inventory of Gabrielle’s portable property, jewellery, wardrobe, works of art and furnishings, sets out a total estimate of 156,322 crowns, which, taking the crown (three livres) as being worth say twenty francs of the present French currency, would be equivalent to about £125,000. Does that seem a very extraordinary fortune for the favourite of a King of France, who had no wife to provide for—in her time, at all events—as the unfortunate Marguerite was still languishing in Auvergne? Is it an amount which would particularly appeal to the daughter of some millionaire beef-canner of the United States? There was, of course, also the landed property which Gabrielle had either received as gifts or else had purchased, but any crown estates were assigned to her merely for life and reverted to the King at her death, while the purchased estates were intended to form appanages for her three children, though in the sequel several of them passed to Marie de’ Medici. On the whole, considering the duration of the *liaison* and the exalted position which, by the King’s own desire, Gabrielle d’Estrées had to fill, and in regard to which we have the testimony of more than one foreign ambassador, we are inclined to think that she was a less expensive royal favourite than many who figured at the Court of the old French monarchy.

Michelet, who was very much prejudiced against Gabrielle,

represented her as an extremely prosaic, commonplace creature, who after some years of delicate beauty became stout and massive, kept an eye on the main chance, turned the wittiest of Kings into a mere *bourgeois* and a credulous and doting father. There is just a little truth and much exaggeration in that portrait. Gabrielle certainly grew stout—a now much advertised cure for adiposity did not exist at that period, and with increasing years far too many Queens, Princesses, and *grandes dames* became afflicted with an outrageous *embonpoint*. Nevertheless, Henri's love letters to Gabrielle show that she always retained a charm which bound him to her admiringly. Michelet declares that she materialized and debased him. To that assertion the following extracts from the King's letters supply the best of answers.

“I write to you, *mes chères amours*, from the feet of your portrait, which I worship only because it was done for you, not that it resembles you. I can be no competent judge of it, for I have painted you all perfection to my soul, my heart, and my eyes.”

“My beautiful angel, if it were allowable for me to importune you at every moment with the remembrance of your subject, I believe that the end of each of my letters would be the beginning of a new one. . . . I wear only black, and, indeed, I am a widower of all that can give me any joy and contentment.”

“I do not know what charm you have used, but I did not bear previous absences so impatiently as I do this one. It seems to me that a century has already elapsed since I departed from you. There is no need for you to solicit my love. I have neither artery nor muscle that does not at every moment bring the thought of seeing you before me, and make me feel distressed at your absence. Believe me, my dear sovereign, never did love do me such violence as it does now. I own that I have every reason to let it lead me. And so I do so with a *naïveté* that bears witness to the reality of my affection which I am sure you do not doubt.”

“Not on a single day have I failed to send you a messenger (*laquais*). My love renders me as exacting respecting my duty as respecting your good grace, which is my only treasure. Believe,

my beautiful angel, that I esteem the possession of it as highly as the honour of gaining ten battles. Be glorious in the fact that you have vanquished me, who was never entirely vanquished save by you."

"For one day I waited patiently at having no news of you; for on calculating the time [I found] it was bound to be so. But on the second day I see no reason for it, except that your servants are lazy or have been captured by the enemy, for to attribute the fault to yourself has never yet occurred to me; for, my beautiful angel, I am too sure of your affection, which is certainly well due to me, for never was my love greater, or my passion more violent."

"Come, come, *mes chères amours*, and honour with your presence one who, were he free, would travel a thousand leagues to cast himself at your feet, never again to stir from them."

"*Mes chères amours*, the truth must be said, we love each other well; certainly, for a woman, none is like you; and for a man, none equals me in knowing how to love. My passion remains the same as when I first began to love you, my desire to see you again is more violent than it was then: briefly I cherish, adore, and honour you marvellously well."

"You will see a horseman who loves you dearly, who is called King of France and Navarre, a title which is assuredly very honourable, but very burdensome; that of your subject is a far more delightful one. All three together are good, at whatsoever sauce they may be served, and for my part I am resolved to surrender them to none."

Seven months before Gabrielle's death Henri writes to her: "I cherish your good grace more than I do my life, and yet I am fond of myself." The following expresses a pretty thought: "I make this letter very short so that you may get to sleep again directly you have read it." And there is also this: "To spend the month of April apart from one's mistress is not to live"—words which bring to mind Tennyson's line about a young man's fancy turning to thoughts of love at spring time. Henri, however, penned the phrase when he was forty-five years old, and Gabrielle twenty-seven.

## VIII

### LA BELLE GABRIELLE

#### III. DISAPPOINTMENT AND DEATH

Sully and the Favourite—Henri in Brittany—His Divorce and Matrimonial Plans—Sully opposes his Marriage with Gabrielle—The Edict of Nantes—Birth of Gabrielle's son Alexandre—Baptism of that child—Quarrel between Gabrielle and Sully—Henri supports his Minister—Gabrielle's Alarm—Priests preach against her—Queen Marguerite and Gabrielle—The Divorce Negotiations—Henri's Constancy to Gabrielle—His Last Letter to her—Rumours of her Elevation to the Throne—The Negotiations at Rome—Gabrielle comes to Paris for Easter—Her Farewell to Henri—Her Presentiment of Death—Zamet the Banker and his House—Gabrielle's Pregnancy—Her sudden Illness—She sends for the King—A proposed Marriage *in extremis*—The King's vain Haste—He learns that Gabrielle is Dead—Circumstances of her Death—Was she Poisoned?—Improbability of that Charge.

THE character of Henri's famous minister Maximilien de Béthune, Baron de Rosny and Duke de Sully, has been diversely estimated. It goes without saying that he was an extremely able man, and a strong one, but his moral worth, once so highly extolled by zealous Protestant writers, was by no means so great as they wished us to imagine. No little hypocrisy and cunning lurked beneath his rugged exterior, his brutal roughness, his spartan austerity. Yet according to his lights, he was the best minister and, perhaps, the best friend that Henri de Navarre ever had. He lent himself to several unclean transactions for the sake of his sovereign and master, such, for instance, as the promise of marriage affair between Catherine de Navarre and the Count de Soissons, and the last great passion of the King's life—his love for the Princess de Condé, of which we shall speak hereafter. Further, by reason perhaps of his very nature, egotistical, avaricious, proud, vain

and vindictive as he was, Sully achieved very little success in diplomacy, and inspired feelings of sympathy in but few of his contemporaries. At the same time, as financial dictator of France, to use Michelet's expression, he rendered his sovereign and his country incalculable services. And, again, he acted rightly and did good service to the State when, as sedition was always following sedition, he insisted on the decapitation of the rebellious Marshal Biron, the son of the King's old friend, killed, as we related, at Epernay. Henri would have pardoned the offender if only for his father's sake, but Sully insisted on a punishment which, as repeated acts of clemency had failed, seemed the only course likely to prevent future factious attempts.

With respect to Gabrielle d'Estrées, to whom Sully owed his elevation, apart from certain private grievances to which we shall presently refer, he became opposed to her chiefly because the King desired to marry her and make her Queen of France. He and other politicians trembled at the thought of all that this might imply in the future. Doubtless, in the King's lifetime, Gabrielle would be generally recognized as his consort, but what would happen at his death? On marrying Gabrielle, Henri would have to make their son, César, born out of wedlock, heir apparent to the throne. He could not well act otherwise. He could not, in fairness to that son, devise the crown to some younger one that might be born, perhaps, subsequent to his marriage with Gabrielle. Any such course would provoke furious dissension in the royal house. And, besides, would other Princes of France, having claims of various degree to the succession to the throne, be ready at some future date to accept the bastard César as their rightful King? Would not sedition spring up on all sides as soon as César might assert his claims? Would not civil war break out, and once more rend the kingdom asunder? The thought of all those perils arose in the minds of Sully and other statesmen, and it must be admitted that their estimate of the possibilities was not exaggerated. But, as Michelet remarks, after foreseeing the future perils, they plunged, a little later, into an immediate one, by counselling Henri's marriage with Marie de' Medici, thus once again admitting the foreign enemy to the



Court of France, with its train of adventurers and adventuresses, robbers and traitors. We shall have to speak of that marriage presently, but it is certainly remarkable that Henri de Navarre, however pressed for money he might be, should have assented to it, he, who so well knew the Medici character, who had seen Catherine at work, who had found himself in her power, who had devoted her to the infernal gods and rejoiced at the news of her death.

As long as Gabrielle lived we believe that Henri really had no thought of marrying any other woman, and that Michelet is right when he expresses the view that she would have won the day by the force of affection and habit. She would have done so, we feel, even in spite of the opposition of Sully, whom she had somewhat clumsily displeased.

This was in connection with the grand mastership of the artillery, an important post, though not as yet one of the high Offices of State. It was bestowed in 1596 on François d'Espinay-Saint-Luc, who was killed, however, at the siege of Amiens in the autumn of the following year. Sully was then very desirous of obtaining the post, but a second competitor appeared in the field, none other indeed than Gabrielle's father, Antoine d'Estrées, who urged her to solicit it of the King, on his behalf. She did so, and her request was granted. The military services of Antoine d'Estrées scarcely justified the appointment; still he was, in that respect, a more capable man than Sully; the latter, however, was grievously offended on finding a post which he himself coveted conferred on the father of the King's favourite. In gratitude perhaps for his own advancement he had previously rendered services to the Estrées family, notably in respect to the growing influence of the Italian financial *coterie* at the Court, an influence due to Henri's need of money and which the Estrées regarded as opposed to their own. Disappointed, then, in his desire to gain the grand mastership of the artillery,\* Sully now also became an opponent of the Estrées. At the Council he had often previously sided with Chancellor Cheverny and Councillor

\* Subsequently to Gabrielle's death in 1599, Sully purchased it from Antoine d'Estrées, with the assent of the King, who in 1601 raised the post to the rank of a great office of state.

de Fresne,\* who, largely for private reasons, hoped to see Henri marry Gabrielle; but he now went over altogether to the side of La Varenne, comptroller general of posts, and Zamet the financier, both of whom, it has been asserted, were opposed to the idea of a marriage between the King and his favourite. That is by no means certain, however, and in any case they were not men to oppose anything on the ground of principle, for self-interest and advancement were the chief thoughts of their lives.

Guillaume Fouquet, Marquis de La Varenne † and Baron de Sainte-Suzanne, is said by Aubigné to have begun life as an assistant in the kitchens of Catherine de Navarre, Henri's sister, but according to Palma Cayet his family had long been honourably known in the service of the Navarrese sovereigns. He figures in documents of the *Chambre des Comptes* of Navarre (1585) as Guillaume Fouquet de Lavarande, "train-bearer" to King Henri at a salary of forty crowns a year. By dint of suppleness, wit, and services, sometimes very equivocal and sometimes very important ones, he soon made his way from the royal anterooms to the King's cabinet. While at one moment one finds him occupying in regard to Henri a position akin to that of Chiffinch in regard to our second Charles, at others he is sent on very serious missions, such for instance as to solicit military help from Queen Elizabeth, or to summon Aumont and Longueville to the King's support at the time of the campaign against Mayenne in Normandy. On one occasion, it has been said, La Varenne performed an extraordinary feat, passing himself off as a representative of the League, journeying to Spain as such, securing an audience of Philip II, obtaining from that monarch confidential particulars concerning his designs in regard to France, and contriving to make good his escape before his trickery was discovered. If that story be true (we have some doubts about it) so ingenious and useful a man could not be left unrewarded. At all events, for one service or another La Varenne secured in turn a barony, a marquisate, the collar of the order of St. Michael, and the offices of comptroller

\* A connection of the Beauvilliers family. See p. 106, *ante*.

† He wrote his name La Varane and King Henri also spells it that way in his correspondence. La Varenne is a more modern form.

of the postal services and lieutenant-governor of Anjou. In 1603, when the Jesuits were again allowed to exercise their ministry freely throughout the whole of France—they had been allowed to return thither before the death of Gabrielle d'Estrées\*—La Varenne, whom they were said to have protected for some years, largely assisted them to obtain that permission.

If we have sketched La Varenne's character and career at some little length it is because he was long supposed to have played a leading *rôle* in Gabrielle's last days. In fact, until a certain discovery was made in our own times, a letter attributed to him was generally accepted as containing the one authentic account of her death. That is a point, however, which may be discussed presently. Let us now say something of a man who certainly figured somewhat prominently in Gabrielle's life, and who, according to the traditional accounts, was also connected with her death. This was Sebastiano Zamet, a remarkably shrewd and dexterous Italian of lowly birth, who rose to a position of great importance in France. He was born in or about 1549 at Lucca, where, it is asserted, his father carried on the calling of a shoemaker. Attracted to France, like so many of his compatriots, at the time when, under Catherine de' Medici, Italian influence was so great at the Court of the Louvre, Zamet entered that Queen's service, becoming, it is asserted, shoemaker to her majesty and the ladies of her retinue. He soon made his way, thanks to his marked talent for intrigue, and on being appointed valet of the wardrobe to Henri III, ingratiated himself with the latter's *mignons*, lent them money at high interest, and steadily increased his gains, in such wise that already in 1585 he had 70,000 crowns invested in the State Salt Farm or Monopoly. Siding at last with the League, Zamet won the confidence of the Duke de Mayenne, who made him his treasurer, and in whose eventual submission to Henri de Navarre he played, in conjunction with Gabrielle d'Estrées, an important part.

\* That is a rather important point, as some writers have accused them of having brought about her death as a revenge for their expulsion. As a matter of fact, nearly all that they asked of the French Crown had been granted them in her lifetime; but it is true that Henri, who had not forgotten Jean Châtel's attempt on his life, was, until 1603, unwilling to allow them in the diocese of Paris.

If Zamet was really hostile to the royal favourite he certainly did not show it. He was repeatedly mixed up in her affairs, notably in regard to property which she acquired; and she, on her side, rendered this fortunate *partisan*—as capitalists were then denominated—some valuable services. Henri de Navarre's pecuniary necessities inclined him to be friendly with such a wealthy and resourceful man as Zamet, and Gabrielle certainly countenanced the favour which he acquired and ever afterwards retained with the King. Zamet had been naturalized a Frenchman in 1581, at the same time as two brothers who had followed him to France, and for some years he lived with a mistress, a young woman of good birth, known as Madeleine Le Clerc, Demoiselle du Tremblay, by whom he had several children. To show how intimate Gabrielle d'Estrées became with the financier it may be mentioned that she assisted him not only to marry his mistress, but also to obtain the full legitimation of their progeny born out of wedlock, a matter of considerable difficulty in those days among people of Zamet's position, whatever in that respect might be the peculiar privileges of kings.

It has been surmised, and it is possible, that in assisting Zamet with respect to his children Gabrielle sought to prepare the way for the legitimation of her own offspring by the King. But in any case the service rendered to the financier was an important one; and although Zamet was, as we have said, a man who chiefly sought money and self-advancement, employing all sorts of means to secure them,\* his position while

\* After the marriage of King Henri with Marie de' Medici, Zamet ingratiated himself with the new Queen-consort to whom, indeed, by reason of her extravagance, he soon became well-nigh indispensable. While he neglected no opportunity of amassing money his loyalty to Henri seems certain, for on one occasion he warned the King of an Italian conspiracy in which Concini was concerned. After Henri's assassination, however, Zamet, like the genuine courtier he was, went over to the Concini party. He died in 1614, leaving two sons, respecting the elder of whom, Jean, a distinguished general-officer, it is related that on seeing his troops retreating at some engagement, he inquired the reason, and on hearing that they had neither powder nor shot left them, retorted: "Forward! you at least have your swords and your finger-nails!" This Jean Zamet married during his father's lifetime, and there is a story to the effect that the notary appointed to draw up the marriage contract inquired of the father by what lordships he should describe him: "Write lord of 1,700,000 crowns!" replied the old millionaire financier with a laugh. In

Gabrielle remained favourite became so high, and she was in one or another way so constant a customer of his, that he can have had no reason for plotting against her.

The particulars we have given respecting La Varenne and Zamet render it doubtful whether Sully, however hostile he may have become to Gabrielle, found any great support in those two councillors. One turns from that account of the great financial minister's work, *Les Économies royales*, with the impression that he was at heart a vain, jealous, and envious man, one who set his ambition on becoming the King's sole *confidant* and mentor. It must be noted that *Les Économies royales* was not issued until 1638, that is but three years before Sully's death, and subsequent to the publication of many volumes dealing wholly or in part with the life and reign of Henri de Navarre,\* some of which works slighted the minister altogether, while others, in recording the events of the period, by no means assigned to him that unfailing sagacity and preponderant influence, which he, in his own work, afterwards claimed to have possessed and exercised. Sully had one defect in common with Aubigné; he was too much inclined to take credit to himself for everything, he wished posterity to believe that his had been the one sole master mind of his epoch. Perhaps he imagined that national and private archives would never yield up their secrets, that generation after generation would always accept without challenge or demur the statements which he himself dictated. For some two centuries after his death such was certainly the case, but a school of zealous historical inquiry arose, and, little by little, the impeccable Sully was found making "mistakes," and telling fibs, which, perhaps, he imagined would never be detected.

M. Adrien Desclozeaux in his valuable work on Gabrielle d'Estrées exposes several of the afore-mentioned fibs which are distinctly damaging to Sully's reputation. What is to be

point of fact, however, he was officially described as Lord of Beauvoir and Cazabelle, Councillor to the King, and Superintendent of the buildings of Fontainebleau. His second son, Sébastien, became Bishop of Langres and almoner to Marie de' Medici, and was mixed up in some of the earlier Port Royal disputes.

\* Such as those of Palma Cayet, 1605; Legrain, 1614; Aubigné, 1616; Dupleix, 1621; L'Estoille, 1621; P. Mathieu, 1631, etc.

thought of a statesman who, in order to persuade his contemporaries and posterity of his exceeding intimacy with the King, falsified the letters he received from him? Sully must have had those letters before him whilst he was preparing *Les Économies royales*. Why, then, should they begin in his versions with the familiar expression "*Mon ami*—my friend," when they really begin "*Monsieur de Rosny*," and end with the condescending commonplace, "*Your cousin, Henry*"? Perhaps Sully imagined that the original letters would never be found, and printed in any other work save his own. It is true, of course, that all of them have not been recovered, and it is possible that Henri may have addressed his minister on one or two occasions in the fashion that minister asserts. But, according to M. Desclozeaux, in none of the letters which have survived does that occur.

Again, there are Sully's claims in respect to the negotiations for the divorce of Henri and Marguerite; though whatever he may assert on that head it is certain that he had little if anything to do with the matter for several years. Marguerite's *confidant* in that business was another of her husband's Huguenot adherents, Du Plessis-Mornay, with whom she carried on a correspondence, most of which is extant; and on one occasion, when Sully wrote to her, anxious as he was to play a rôle in the affair, she left his letter unanswered for many months.

But there is something even more curious. Sully is found setting up a claim that he made journeys to England on two occasions, that is in 1601 and 1603. The latter embassy is of course well known, but as regards the former mission, a secret one, connected with a proposal for joint action on the part of England and France in regard to Ostend, modern research\* seems to have proved that although the minister proceeded as far as Calais and interviewed an English envoy there, he never actually crossed the straits, so that his account of his experiences in our country would simply be an impudent concoction. Desclozeaux goes so far as to declare that Sully—a Picard be it noted, and in old France the Picards had a

\* *Mission de Jean de Thumery, Sieur de Boissise*, by M. Laffleur de Kermaingant, Paris, Didot, 1886; and Desclozeaux, *l.c.*

dreadful reputation for untruthfulness—was simply an inveterate liar. However that may be, he was nearly eighty years of age when *Les Économies royales* appeared, and there are various proofs that his memory had then become defective. At the same time it seems certain that on looking backward over a long and busy life, he was inclined, like a good many other old men, to exaggerate his own achievements, and to tell fibs in a spirit of senile vanity. The worst is that when once you begin to doubt a man who is narrating his own career you doubt him always. At every page you turn, you ask yourself: How much truth is there in this? Is it strictly accurate? Is it exaggerated? Is it entirely false? Thus it is with Sully, who can never more be accepted as an unimpeachable authority, particularly in those instances when he is recounting events in which he claims to have played a conspicuous part.

The reader may remember that in the famous letter which King Henri addressed to M. de Crillon during the siege of Amiens \* he spoke of the fine army he had got together and of his intention of undertaking some enterprise. He must have referred, we think, to the reconquest of Brittany, the greater part of which province was still held by the Duke de Mercœur † ostensibly on behalf of the now almost defunct League, though more than once this Prince of the House of Lorraine had laid claim to the rank of Duke of Brittany by reason of his wife's descent from the old line of the Penthièvres, who, after a struggle of over a hundred years' duration (1312–1422), had been finally vanquished by the House of Montfort in their efforts to secure possession of the duchy. Mercœur himself was the eldest son of Nicolas de Lorraine, Count de Vaudemont, and the step-brother of Queen Louise, consort of Henri III; whilst his wife, known as Mlle. de Martigues prior to her marriage, was the only child of Sébastien de Luxembourg, Duke de Penthièvre. At one moment Mercœur had even seized Rennes by virtue of his pretensions, but had been driven out of the city as a rebel, as the Parliament and the citizens decided to recognize the authority of Henri de Navarre directly they received the assurance that he would maintain the Catholic faith. In other parts of the Duchy, however, and notably in those regions

\* See p. 168, *ante*.

† See p. 164, *ante*.

now known as the departments of Finistère, Morbihan and Loire Inférieure, Mercœur remained supreme, having his headquarters in the city of Nantes.

To reduce that great rebel, almost the only one of any note remaining in France, became Henri de Navarre's chief concern after the victorious siege of Amiens. There was, we think, no actual fighting, or if so it was relatively unimportant. The States of Brittany, assembled at Rennes, invited the King to take possession of his own, and Mercœur deemed it best to negotiate. Henri advanced on Brittany by way of Angers and was accompanied by Gabrielle, although at this time (early in 1598) she was again expecting to become a mother. They stayed together at the famous castle identified with our Angevin kings, but it was during some absence of Henri's that Mercœur sent his wife thither to treat for terms. Thereupon Gabrielle, acting either on her own initiative or by the advice of those who were with her, issued orders that the Duchess was to be refused admittance to the city, it being realized that this move on Mercœur's part was prompted by a desire to prolong negotiations. The attitude assumed by the royal favourite did much to shorten them. Mercœur realized that the royal party was in earnest, and agreed to surrender. On March 20, 1598, the King issued a proclamation announcing his reconciliation with the rebellious noble, and a solemn thanksgiving procession was held at Angers.

Gabrielle had played an important part in the negotiations, and one clause in the agreement which was arrived at affected her particularly, and shows how mistaken were those of her contemporaries who imagined her to be a woman possessed of little understanding and shrewdness. The Duke de Mercœur, by virtue of his territorial possessions, which were confirmed to him, was probably at that time the wealthiest noble in France. He had a daughter, Françoise de Lorraine, who would be, and indeed became, the greatest heiress of the age. This girl was then four years and a few months old. Gabrielle, on the other hand, had her son César, whom the King proposed to create Duke de Vendôme and who was nearly four years old. Why should not those children become husband and wife? The original idea seems to have been entirely that of Gabrielle, the



woman who is said to have been "simple," destitute of initiative and politic sense. It was adopted by the King, and on April 5, sixteen days after the formal reconciliation between Henri and Mercœur,\* the little César and the little Françoise were solemnly affianced at Angers by Cardinal de Joyeuse, and their marriage contract was signed. On that occasion, be it noted, all the ceremonial customary at the betrothals of Children of France was observed. And Sully was present.†

From Angers Henri and Gabrielle repaired to Nantes, and there little César was appointed successively captain of the city and governor of Brittany, doubtless to the amusement of many of the good Bretons. At Nantes, moreover, Gabrielle was delivered of her expected child, which proved to be a boy. As the happy and ever-victorious father had bestowed the name of César on the first son with whom his mistress had presented him, he doubtless thought that there could be no more appropriate appellation for the new arrival than that of Alexandre. If we may be allowed to use a colloquialism it was, perhaps, a case of going "one better"; though we will not undertake to decide whether the Macedonian or the Roman conqueror was the greater man. Gabrielle's condition of health constrained her to remain at Nantes for some time after her accouchement, and meanwhile Henri proceeded to Rennes, making a state entry into that city on May 9 (1598), when the *présidial* court and the seneschal met him at All Saints Gate, and presented him with some new city keys of silver gilt, made expressly for the occasion. "They are beautiful keys indeed," the King is said to have remarked, "but I prefer the keys to the hearts of the inhabitants."

Now, according to Sully, one day during that stay at Rennes, the King, after dining with the Procuror‡ of the city, went upstairs to see M. de Bouillon§ who was staying in

\* The King facetiously called him "Duke of Mercury."

† There is a strange error in M. Batiffol's erudite work on Marie de' Medici. He says that in 1609 that Queen was obliged to assent to César's marriage with Françoise, "arranged *two* years previously by Henri IV" [Batiffol, English edition, p. 153]. But they were affianced in 1598.

‡ Otherwise the *Alloué* or *Aloé*. *Allocatus* in Ducange.

§ Henri de La Tour d'Auvergne, Viscount de Turenne, married in 1591 to Charlotte de La Marck, who as heiress brought him the Duchy of Bouillon and Principality of Sedan.

the house and ill with gout. On coming down again Henri met Sully in the courtyard, and taking him by the hand led him into the garden where, while walking up and down the paths, they engaged in a long discussion which the King initiated, and which embraced such questions as his divorce, his re-marriage, and the succession to the throne.\* After referring to certain "beautiful and magnificent designs" which we need not recapitulate, the King said to Sully: "There is only one defect and one thing lacking in them, but that does not cease worrying me, in suchwise that it almost robs me of my courage, and I have no other design save to live on from day to day, as people say." And by way of specifying the matter which worried him, the King added; "It is to know who will profit by all my work when I am gone, whether my labour will have a just reward, such as I hold to consist in good fame throughout the world, in the praise which will be bestowed on me, the gratitude which will be granted and the affection which will be manifested to my person and memory by those who will succeed me."

The King thus broached the question of the succession to the throne, which was complicated by that of his marriage—the stumbling-block which he was always encountering, the obstacle which might well prevent him from founding a dynasty—"that is," said he, "if I do not dispose myself to give France children of my own, which is a thing I have always and infinitely desired, and of which I have had good hope since the Archbishop of Urbino, the Sieurs du Perron, d'Ossat, de Marquemont, † and other ecclesiastics at Rome, have sent me

\* According to Sully also, there had been a conversation between them on this same subject two years previously (1596) while they were together in the high terraced gardens of the beautiful château of Gaillon. On that occasion, the King, after setting forth his ideals of happiness and glory, had begged his minister "to deliver him from his wife [Queen Marguerite] and enable him to find another of a condition suited to his birth, one of gentle and *complaisante* humour, who would love him, and whom he would be able to love, and who would further give him children soon enough so that he might have sufficient years at his disposal to bring them up in his own style, and make brave, gallant and skilful Princes of them."

† Jacques Davy du Perron has been previously referred to (p. 130, *ante*). He was a native of Bearn, acted as reader to Henri III, then took orders and delivered a striking panegyric on Mary Queen of Scots after her execution. Elevated to the Bishopric of Evreux in 1595, he was sent to Rome to negotiate

advice that the Pope will in every way facilitate my divorce (*desmariage*), so much does he desire and wish that I may leave the succession to the Kingdom of France free and indisputable."

So a divorce from Marguerite was to be granted, and that matter settled, the King would require another wife. It was in these words—still according to Sully—that he portrayed his ideal: "A woman so well 'conditioned' that I may not cast myself into this life's greatest misfortune, which, in my opinion, is to have an ugly, ill-tempered, and despotic wife, instead of the ease and contentment which I should desire to find in that state of life. If one could obtain wives according to one's wish, in order that I might not repent me of so hazardous an undertaking I would choose one who, among other good points, would comply with several principal conditions, that is to say, beauty of person, modesty (*pulicité*) of life, complaisance of humour, shrewdness of mind, fruitfulness of body, eminence of extraction, and greatness of estate. . . . But," added the King, quickly, "I think, my friend [*sic* in Sully], that this woman is dead, or perhaps not yet born or near being born."

Nevertheless, Henri and his minister (still according to the latter) passed all the eligible Princesses of Europe in review, successively examining their claims and rejecting one after the other, for there seemed to be neither royal maiden nor widow, whether abroad or in France, to whom some valid objection could not be taken. By this time Sully realized what his master was driving at, and strove to conceal his apprehensions beneath an assumption of jocularly. Being so good a man, he may not have read Rabelais, so it is probable that he derived from Holy Writ, and not from Pantagruel, the scheme which he proposed to the King—which was, that all the maids of France should be assembled and examined in the hope there might be found among them one who (like Esther) would obtain grace and favour in the monarch's sight. Henri took

the absolution and divorce of Henri de Navarre. With him went Arnaud d'Ossat, a brilliant pupil of Ramus and Cujas, who had acted as secretary to Cardinals Hippolyte d'Este and Joyeuse when they were French ambassadors at Rome.

Arnaud d'Ossat became a Cardinal in 1599, and du Perron (who was also appointed grand almoner of France) was made one in 1604. Marquemont was a less important ecclesiastical luminary.

the jest in good part, but he at last became somewhat impatient at Sully's persistence in playing the stupid.

"Oh the cunning animal you are!" said he, "you could choose one very well if it pleased you, even the one I think, for there is none that has not heard some rumour of it. But I see very well what you are aiming at, in playing the stupid and the ignoramus. It is to make me name her, and I will do so, for you will admit to me that all those points may be found in my mistress, not that I mean to say that I have thought of marrying her, but I would like to know what you would say of it if, for lack of another, that fancy should some day take me."

This was a direct thrust, but Sully met it in an evasive way, for he desired, he says, to avoid a conflict. The King, however, requested him to examine the matter as a mere hypothesis and give his opinion on it, saying that he might speak out freely as they were together, in private, so that he (Sully) had no reason to fear the displeasure which might result from an adverse opinion publicly expressed.

The minister declares that he thereupon explained his views with all frankness. "I will tell you, Sire," he answered, "that apart from the general blame that you might incur, and the shame which repentance would bring when the transports (*bouillons*) of love were cooled, that I can think of no expedients suitable to contend with the intrigues and embarrassments and to reconcile the various pretensions which would arise with respect to your children, born in such diverse and irregular circumstances. The more so as, apart from the good stories that have been told me (which were least known to yourself, and yet you were not entirely ignorant of them, particularly of that of Messire Alibour\* which was spread about so much, for I know that Regnardière one day told you something about it, in ambiguous words which you nevertheless well understood, though, not wishing it to appear so, you availed

\* See p. 141, *ante*. Judging by the rolls of the King's medical household, the correct orthography of this doctor's name appears to have been Ailleboust. He became first surgeon to King Henri, at a salary of 400 crowns per annum, in 1593, when he succeeded Marc Miron. Henri's medical household was the largest ever formed by any King of France, being composed of sixty-five persons, physicians, surgeons, barber-surgeons and their assistants.

yourself of the displeasure of Monsieur l'Amiral \* to have him [Regnardière] beaten, so that he might be forced to withdraw from court) apart from those stories, I say, the first of your children, since such you call them, cannot deny that he was born in double adultery; † the second that you will now have, will think himself more favoured, as it will only be in simple adultery; ‡ while those who will come afterwards, when you are married, will not fail to assert that they alone ought to be held legitimate—of all which difficulties I will leave you to think at your leisure, before saying more of the matter to you.”

“That will not be unfitting,” the King rejoined, “for you have said enough for the first time, of which I promise you I will never tell my mistress anything, for fear lest it should put you on bad terms with her. For it is true that she likes you, and even more, esteems you, though there is always some doubt in her mind that you will not be very favourable to the advantages I should like to confer on her and her children, for she says that you always place the State and my glory so much to the fore, that it seems as if you have more regard for them than for my contentment and my person.”

Sully's account of this interview cannot be accepted without a few grains of salt. We doubt whether he was so venturesome as to allude to the Ailleboust affair, and we doubt some of the

\* The Grand Admiral of France referred to above was either the second Marshal Biron, who resigned the post of admiral in the year of the Ailleboust affair and César de Vendôme's birth; or else Biron's successor, André de Brancas de Villars, husband of Gabrielle d'Estrées' sister Juliette Hippolyte. Villars is more likely to have quarrelled with the person called Regnardière over any tittle-tattle reflecting on the royal favourite.

† At the time of the birth of César de Vendôme (June, 1594) Henri of course was married to Marguerite de Valois, while Gabrielle's marriage to M. de Liancourt still held good, not having been annulled until the following January.

‡ The above phrase is somewhat ambiguous. Sully does not really refer to the second *child*, who was a girl, and as such could have no claim to the succession to the throne (Salic law). He alludes to the second *son*, Alexandre, Chevalier de Vendôme and ultimately Grand Prior of France (St. John of Jerusalem). But he writes in the future tense, saying *le second que vous aurez à présent*. *Aurez* is probably a mistake for *avez*, for if Sully's alleged conversation with the King took place at Rennes this must have been some time in May, and Alexandre de Vendôme was born in April.

grandiloquent language, particularly the concluding words respecting himself, which he ascribes to the King, but it is interesting to find him admitting that Henri held Gabrielle to be the one woman who possessed the qualities which he desired to find in a wife : beauty of person, modesty of life, complaisance of humour, shrewdness of mind, and so forth. Sully's objections to the match are in accordance with opinions expressed by other prominent men of the time ; and with regard to rival claims on the part of Henri's children they were well justified, for it so happened that in later years these children went to law on the subject of family property, their dispute entirely turning on the question as to which of them was the most legitimate. Had one of them then been King of France no mere lawsuit would have settled their differences, and thus one can well understand with what apprehension the marriage of Henri and his favourite was regarded by far-seeing men.

On the other hand, it is certain that the King was deeply attached to Gabrielle, and we feel that she would have proved a wife after his own heart. There is something ludicrous in Sully's words about the transports of love, or, to translate him literally, its "boiling bubbles," cooling down, for at the date of his conversation with his master, May, 1598, there had been plenty of time for that to happen, the *liaison* having lasted for several years. It was, assuredly, less a violent passion than a sincere attachment, based on similar tastes, ideas, humour, and mutual esteem, which now bound Henri to Gabrielle. She was no longer the fresh young beauty of the days of Compiègne, Mantes and Chartres, although she was still only some seven-and-twenty years of age. Her last portraits show that while her face had become full, perhaps slightly flabby, some of the features were marked as if by care or suffering. Her health must have been indifferent if the statements made respecting the post-mortem examination of her remains can be relied upon, for they assert that both the lungs and the liver were found to be in an unhealthy state and that renal calculus was developed to a degree surprising in one so young.\*

She had also become stout, to what extent one cannot well

\* Letter from President de Vernhyes of the Cour des Aides of Auvergne to the Duke de Ventadour. We shall refer again to that important document.

say, the reliable portraits of her—crayon drawings at the Louvre and elsewhere—showing only her head or at the utmost her head and shoulders. But in any case twenty-seven is an early age for a woman to put on flesh to such a degree that her contemporaries should describe her as stout. This may have been due to some natural predisposition, but we strongly suspect that la Belle Gabrielle was somewhat unduly fond of the pleasures of the table.

Reference is made to her personal appearance in two English documents to which we have not yet alluded. They are official letters from our envoys in France. The first one, dated February 3, 1596, O.S., is addressed to Queen Elizabeth in person by Sir Henry Unton,\* who had for a time commanded a small body of English soldiers in that part of Brittany which did not accept the Duke de Mercœur's rule. Unton's account of his presentation to King Henri's mistress is most unfavourable to her. He regarded her as a person of no consequence, one of very simple mind and incapable of dealing with State affairs. She wore a gown of satin without any ornaments, he says, with a velvet cap on her head, all which fitted her very badly, and her face was grossly painted. It happens, however, that Unton's account of Gabrielle cannot well be accepted. A born courtier, as well as a fairly good soldier, he wished to make his way in the world, and in that respect he could assuredly take no better course than that of singing the praises of the Virgin Queen and disparaging the French favourite. An intensely loyal admirer of his sovereign, he had one day challenged and fought the young Duke de Guise, son of Henri le Balafre, for daring to speak impudently, lightly and over boldly of the bright Occidental Star; and the letter which he writes her *à propos* of Gabrielle breathes the same spirit of admiring fervour. Henri took him aside, it appears, and asked him what he thought of his mistress; whereupon the ready-witted and ingenious Unton replied that he knew a better, and in proof thereof he produced a portrait of Elizabeth, at which the King of France gazed, he says, "with passion and admiration." It would be pleasant to know if that portrait in any degree resembled the "great Eliza," who was then over sixty

\* Sometimes spelt Umpton.

years of age and a bag of bones. Would Henri de Navarre have fallen in love with her had he seen her in the flesh? We cannot say. In respect to love he certainly did some very extraordinary things, and, after all, *tous les goûts sont dans la nature*. Poor Unton did not live long enough to reap any reward for his outrageous flattery of his vain old mistress, for, accompanying Henri to the siege of La Fère, he died there of a "purple fever" less than six weeks after writing the letter to which we have referred.\*

Sir Robert Cecil, later Lord Salisbury, is the other Englishman giving some account of Gabrielle. Writing an official letter from Paris, whither he had gone on some mission in March, 1598, he describes her as "stout but really pleasant and gracious. . . . I spoke with her for a moment," he adds; "she expressed herself well and courteously. . . . She spoke to me of the Queen [Elizabeth] with much respect, and expressed her desire to receive her commands."† That is brief, but probably nearer to the truth than Unton's disparaging epistle.

On one point both English writers confirm the French accounts that Gabrielle was present at state functions, such as the receptions of foreign envoys, and was regarded as the principal personage at Court after Henri himself. In the middle of 1598, when she and the King had returned to Paris after the pacification of Brittany, L'Estoille pictures them for us at the midsummer rejoicings at the Hôtel de Ville, which Henri, with the co-operation of François Miron, the famous Prévôt des Marchands, and Androuet du Cerceau, the great architect, was then endeavouring to complete. "The collation there was magnificent," writes L'Estoille. "Madame de Guise served the Duchess de Beaufort [Gabrielle], who was seated in a chair, and to whom with many curtseys (*révérences*) Madame de Guise presented the dishes. She, with one hand, took what she found most to her taste, while the other hand she gave the King to kiss, he being near her." No doubt the sight of the endearments in which his Majesty publicly indulged amused some of

\* It is in the Public Record Office. State Papers, France, 120.

† We translate the above from Desclozeaux, not having the English text before us. He makes the usual French mistake of calling both Unton and Cecil "lords."



the onlookers, but other Parisians may well have been more particularly struck by the obsequious manner in which no less a lady than the widow of Henri le Balafgré, sometime "King of the Barricades," and almost ruler of France, waited on the mistress whom their sovereign delighted to honour.

During the following month, President Claude Groulart of Rouen,\* who, by the way, often lent Henri money, in such wise that the royal indebtedness to him amounted at last to the huge sum of 500,000 crowns,† repaired by the King's desire to St. Germain-en-Laye to see him there, perhaps in relation to some further loan. From St. Germain, as Groulart relates in his memoirs, he accompanied Henri to Paris and afterwards to Montceaux, Gabrielle's favourite residence. And there, after supper, says the President, "the King made me take a couple of turns up and down the long alley, he holding Madame la Duchesse's hand on one side, and I being on the other." That same evening Henri spoke to the President on the subject which so constantly occupied his thoughts—the absolute determination at which he had arrived to secure a divorce from Queen Marguerite and "to contract another marriage immediately afterwards." To us the inference is obvious. In spite of the conversation with Sully at Rennes early that spring, the King firmly persisted in his design to make Gabrielle his wife.

Now, however, came an episode in which Sully again figured, and which, according to his account, turned entirely to Gabrielle's confusion. On December 13 that same year, her son Alexandre was baptized at St. Germain-en-Laye, the rite being performed with all the ceremonial usual at the baptism of Princes and Princesses of France. Pierre de Gondi, Cardinal de Retz and Archbishop of Paris,‡ officiated; the King acted as one of the godfathers, selecting as his *compère* his cousin, the Count de Soissons—the Princess Catherine's unfortunate lover—who was

\* See p. 152, *ante*.

† There are acknowledgments of the debt under the King's own hand.

‡ The Gondi family came to France with Catherine de' Medici and secured many high offices. One branch became hereditary introducers of ambassadors, another generals of the galleys; while others of the family obtained some of the highest preferments in the Church, three of them becoming Cardinals. The one mentioned above was born in 1532, became Archbishop of Paris in 1570, and secured the dignity of Cardinal in 1587.

now "Grand Master of France,"\* while the godmother was Diane, Duchess d'Angoulême, a natural daughter of Henri II.

According to Sully's own account, he was much upset by all the magnificence displayed on this occasion, and the King having admitted to him "that a great deal more had been done than he had commanded," the minister resolved upon decisive action against the royal favourite. Thus, when an order was issued on the treasury to pay "the heralds, trumpeters, and hautboys for their services at the baptism of Alexandre Monsieur, as Child of France," Sully refused to honour it, and issued another one for a reduced amount on the privy purse. Complaint was speedily made to him. "Monsieur," he was told, "the amounts payable at the baptisms of Children of France have long since been regulated." "What is that to me?" retorted the Superintendent of Finances, "Go, go; I shall do nothing. There are no Children of France!"

The officials went off to complain to Gabrielle; and Sully—so he says—being anxious to forestall the favourite's applications to the King, hurried to the latter in order to lay before him the scandalous and reckless claims which had been inspired by an impatient ambition in its anxiety to wring from the monarch compromising favours which might seem tantamount to promises! Thereupon Henri, still according to Sully, told him to go and see the Duchess de Beaufort and bring her to her senses. Sully repaired to the Cloître St. Germain—in reality the Deanery of St. Germain l'Auxerrois, the residence of Mme. de Sourdis, Gabrielle's aunt, with whom she was staying—and met with what he regarded as an impertinent as well as hostile reception. Forthwith he returned to the King, who, being put on his mettle, got into the minister's coach and drove to the

\* The office, which can be traced back to that of the *comes palatii* and the *magister officiorum* of ancient times, was really that of a chief major-domo. When the post of grand seneschal was abolished some of its attributions passed to the Constable of France and others to the Souverain Maître de l'Hôtel, who exercised authority over the whole royal household and its expenditure. On the appointment of Antoine de Croy in 1463 the title of the office was altered to the very inappropriate one of Grand Maître de France. The post took rank as the third of the great offices of state, being preceded by those of the Constable and the Chancellor of France. At the death and accession of each successive monarch it was the Grand Maître who announced those events in the well-known words: "The King is dead, long live the King!"

deanery. Finding the Duchess on the threshold, ready to do him the honours of the house, Henri took hold of her hand; but, says Sully triumphantly, "without either kissing or caressing it, or saying a single complimentary word as he usually did," and in that fashion he led her to her room, where, after closing the door and making sure that they were all three alone, he said to his mistress, while holding her hand in one of his, and Sully's in the other:

"Come, madam, *vrai Dieu*, what is all this? What! Are you purposely seeking to anger me and try my patience. Is that the fine advice you receive? Well, *par Dieu*, I swear to you that if you think of continuing in this fashion, you will find yourself very far from your hopes, for I will not lose the best and most loyal servant I ever had \* on account of any foolish fancies which are put in your head by I know whom. . . . And it is necessary you should understand that, having loved you principally because I found you gentle, gracious, and good humoured, and neither obstinate nor peevish, if you suddenly change, as you are doing, you will make me believe that all that was feigned by you, and that you will revert to the nature of other women as soon as I have raised you to the position you desire."

On hearing this speech, which was "that of a master and not of a lover," Gabrielle, according to Sully, could at first only weep and sob and kiss the King's hand, but at last, breaking out in spite of herself, she exclaimed, as she cast herself on the bed, "Oh God! I shall never be able to live after such a disgrace, to see you preferring a servant † of whom so many people complain to a mistress whom everybody praises!"

The King, affected by her despair, weakened for an instant, but recovering his energy he bade Gabrielle make peace with the minister whom she had offended, and advised her to practice patience and moderation in future, promising her that "if she would love him as usual and live with him and his good servants, with the same gentle disposition as in the past, he, on his side, would also love her as he ought."

\* It will be noted that it is Sully himself who ascribes these words to the King.

† She is said to have previously called Sully a valet.

But as Gabrielle still continued sobbing and complaining and again unluckily referred to the minister as a valet, Henri's patience became exhausted, and he told her (still according to Sully) "that if he were reduced to the necessity of choosing between them, he would be the better able to dispense with ten mistresses like herself than with one servant such as his minister." Thereupon Gabrielle realized, it is alleged, how great had been her blunder, and exerted herself to repair it, so that outwardly, at all events, a reconciliation was arrived at.

Now M. Desclozeaux, to whose exhaustive study of Gabrielle d'Estrées' career we have previously referred, holds very strongly that the aforesaid scene between the King, the favourite, and the minister never took place at all, and that Sully's narrative is entirely a concoction. We are not inclined to go as far as that, but we feel that Sully's account of the affair is at least greatly exaggerated. It contains some statements which seem very improbable. Sully was not yet the all-powerful personage he became. He talks of his own coach, and he had none at the date of the alleged incident. His rank did not entitle him to have a coach. He only acquired one after he became a great officer of State as Grand Master of the Artillery. Next he speaks of driving the King to Gabrielle's, when the Deanery of St. Germain, where she was installed, abutted on the Louvre, so that the King merely had to take a few steps in order to reach it. But the most important point of all is the alleged cause of the quarrel, the baptism of Alexandre de Vendôme as a Child of France.

Alexandre's elder brother César had come into the world in very troublous times, when Henri had barely made himself master of Paris, and the League still lorded it in various parts of France. Thus there was no particular fuss at César's baptism. But when the second child of the *liaison*, Catherine Henriette, was born at Rouen in 1596, circumstances had greatly changed. The King's position was more assured, Gabrielle's hold on his affections had become stronger and stronger, and he already contemplated making her his wife. Now, Catherine Henriette was baptized at Rouen with all solemnity and ceremonial as a Child of France. President Groulart, an unimpeachable authority on such a matter, gives a vivid account of the function in his

memoirs. Sully accompanied the royal party to Normandy at that time—it was then that, according to his own account, he had in the gardens of Gaillon a first conversation with the King on the subject of the royal divorce.\* Moreover, he actually attended the baptism of Catherine Henriette. Why, then, did he not protest against the illegality and cost of the ceremonial which was adopted? Why also did he not protest against the betrothal ceremony at Angers when César de Vendôme was affianced to Françoise de Mercœur? He was also present on that occasion. Why did he reserve all his thunders for the baptism of Alexandre, in whose case the Court simply followed the precedent established at that of Catherine Henriette? Sully talks of scandalous claims and compromising favours as if they were something quite novel and had not been already granted twice previously.

On that point, then, his account of the affair is open to grave suspicion. We are ready to believe that, as a careful Superintendent of Finances, he objected to a large outlay at the baptism of Gabrielle's son, for which reason, indeed, he may well have "cut down the bill" presented to him; but we doubt whether he ever raised the question of privilege in the manner he asserts he did, and we doubt yet more strongly his account of the scene between Henri and Gabrielle. According to his own showing it had a very tame conclusion, and it certainly led to nothing, Henri persisting in his intention to marry his mistress in spite of all advice to the contrary.

The idea of the match was certainly resented in several quarters, and from time to time very unfavourable rumours reached Gabrielle. Like many folk of those days she inclined to a belief in astrologers, crystal-gazers, palmists, and other necromancers, and consulted them respecting her future. At a comparatively early period, according to L'Estoille, one necromancer told her that she would come to the point of almost securing what she desired, but that a little child would prevent her from doing so, whereat she was distressed to the depths of her heart, for her one desire was at least to die Queen of France. "Some fortune-tellers informed her that she would only be married once," says Nicolas Pasquier, in one of his letters,

\* See footnote, p. 184, *ante*.

“others that she would die young; some that a child would destroy her hopes; some that a person in whom she placed all her confidence would play her an evil trick. Cœffier, a councillor of the *présidial* court of Moulins, who concerned himself with astrology and succeeded in it, predicting in turn the death of Henri, Duke de Guise, the fall of the League, the taking of Calais, the Savoy war, and the death of Henri IV, announced to her that she would never become Queen.”

In the autumn of that year, 1598, with which we are now dealing, the King, says L'Estoille, committed to prison a certain Le Thuillier, “because he had told the Duchess at Montceaux, in the King's presence, that there was danger lest the King should some day desert her, for which reason he offered her a philter, with which she was to rub her lips, and afterwards kiss the King in order to enchain him to her for ever.” That occurred in October; in the following December, exactly a fortnight after the baptism of Alexandre de Vendôme, Gabrielle was attacked from the pulpit by two Parisian ecclesiastics, one of them preaching at St. Leu *cum* St. Gilles (Rue St. Denis) and the other at St. Jean de Beauvais, adjoining the Collège de Dormans. A certain Chavagnac, who preached at the latter church, declared that “a lewd woman in the Court of a King was a dangerous monster, and caused much evil, particularly when she was encouraged to raise her head.” One can well understand that, amidst sinister warnings and ecclesiastical denunciations, Gabrielle became distressed, and sometimes wept at night, as her maid, Gratienne Mareil,\* subsequently affirmed.

Nevertheless, it seemed as if her desires would be fulfilled. She was on excellent terms with Queen Marguerite, who had recently (November 11, 1598) transferred to her the seignorial rights over the duchy of Étampes, and with whom on various occasions she had been in direct communication. Marguerite had written favourably about her as far back as 1595, and in February, 1597, she addressed her personally, designating her as her sister, asking for her friendship, begging that she would communicate her requests to the King through her own beautiful lips, which would lend them the authority that they

\* She entered the service of Marie de' Medici.

lacked. All the old stories that Marguerite was not willing to consent to a divorce at this stage seem to have been disproved by modern research. She desired it, as she herself said, for the sake of her own personal safety and freedom; but at the same time she laid down conditions, the pecuniary ones being a sum of 250,000 crowns to pay her debts, and a life pension of 50,000 crowns.

Henri, on his side, showed great activity. President Brulart de Sillery was despatched as special envoy to Rome, in order to expedite matters there, and writing to him in October, 1598, Henri appealed to his zeal, saying that now his kingdom was at peace, he also wished to have his own mind at rest, which could only be effected by a solution of his matrimonial difficulties. On January 20 in the following year, the King wrote to the Pope personally, begging his Holiness to grant the favour he solicited, for it was one that he would esteem as much as if the Pontiff were to grant him and his kingdom a new life. Yet Clement VIII still hesitated. He well knew that it was Henri's intention to marry Gabrielle, and acting, perhaps, under the influence of French or Italian personages opposed to the match, he perpetually deferred his decision. But at last President Sillery and Bishop d'Ossat ceased soliciting, and began to threaten. If the Pope would not annul the King's present marriage, the King would act regardless of the Pope, even as King Henry of England had done; and thus the threat of a fresh schism arose before the perplexed Pontiff.

Henri was thoroughly in earnest, and in perfect agreement with Gabrielle. Whenever they were momentarily separated he hastened to write to her, in fact, she received two letters from him the day before she died; but those final missives have been lost, like others, and the last letter from Henri to his mistress now extant is dated October 29, 1598. It breathes as much love as any of the earlier ones.

"I caught the stag in an hour with the greatest possible enjoyment, and I arrived here at four o'clock and alighted at my little lodging. . . . My children came to meet me there, or, to put it better, they were brought. My daughter is greatly improving and becoming a beauty, but my son [Alexandre] will

be handsomer than his elder brother. You entreat me, *mes chères amours*, to carry away with me as much love as I left with you. Ah! how that has pleased me, for I feel so much love that I thought I must have carried all away with me, and feared that none might have remained with you. I am now about to hold communion with Morpheus, but if he shows me any one save yourself in my dreams, I will for ever forsake his company. Good night to myself, good morrow to you, my dear mistress. I kiss your beautiful eyes a million times."

On February 3, 1599, Marguerite signed, at Usson, a fresh *procuracion* for the settlement of the divorce. It reached the Louvre on February 9, and was at once despatched to Rome. The Pope was now said to be favourably inclined, and the early annulment of the marriage was expected. On March 2, Shrove Tuesday, Henri gave Gabrielle his coronation ring, set with a large diamond *en table*, and estimated to be worth nine hundred crowns, as a betrothal ring, adding thereto some fine specimens of the goldsmith's art recently presented to him by various cities. And it was arranged that the marriage should take place on or about Quasimodo Sunday—the first after Easter.

Gabrielle, though again pregnant, busied herself with various preparations. She had a house of her own in Paris, one at the corner of the Rue Fromenteau, hard by the river gate of St. Nicolas, but she lived at the Louvre whenever the King was in the city, occupying the bedchamber of the Queens of France, and this she proposed to refurnish, for which purpose she bought a variety of articles, including a magnificent bed with hangings of velvet, all crimson and gold. And her bridal robe was also made, this likewise being of velvet, elaborately embroidered with gold on a foundation of carnation hue. It cost a thousand crowns. For her ears the King gave her two diamonds valued at thirteen hundred crowns apiece.

But such preparations did not suffice. It was necessary that the future Queen should be surrounded by warm partisans and defenders. The man on whom Henri largely, if not chiefly, relied in that respect, was one who afterwards became a traitor, the second Marshal Duke de Biron. It was arranged he should marry Gabrielle's sister Françoise d'Estrées, and he was promised the reversion of the post of Constable of France, on



Montmorency's death, as well as the counties of Périgord and Bigorre. Members or connections of the Estrées family governed all northern France. Brittany was held by devoted officers on behalf of the little César de Vendôme, who, directly after the marriage of his parents, would become Dauphin of France. His betrothal to the wealthy young Françoise de Mercœur was to be annulled, and he was to be betrothed to the daughter of the Duke of Savoy in return for that ruler's support. Françoise, on the other hand, was to find a new *fiancé* in the person of the boyish Prince de Condé. Mlle. de Guise was to espouse Gabrielle's brother Annibal. And there were other alliances, either arranged or projected, in order that the cause of Gabrielle as Queen-consort, and that of her son César, as Heir-apparent, might have powerful support. As M. Desclouzeaux remarks, after reviewing the plans, what a change they might have effected in the destinies of France! The Vendôme race would have become the royal house, there would have been no Marie de' Medici with her scandalous Italian favourites, no Louis XIII with his Richelieu to establish absolute power, no Louis XIV to exhaust the resources of the country, no Louis XV to complete its ruin, no fated Louis XVI, and, perhaps, no guillotine. On the other hand, it is impossible to surmise what might have happened had events taken the course which Henri and Gabrielle desired.

During Lent they repaired to Fontainebleau. Gabrielle, as we have said, was expecting another child, and her health was bad, as appears from the statements of L'Estoille, Sully, and others. Without entering into details, we may say that there are grounds for believing that she had never recovered properly from her previous accouchement, and to that cause we think may be ascribed all that was soon to happen. The first writers who related Gabrielle's death did not attribute it to any but natural causes. But after the publication of Sully's *Économies royales*, several historians adopted the view that she had been poisoned. This was largely on account of a letter inserted in Sully's work, and stated to have been written to him by Guillaume Fouquet de la Varenne.\* Either Sully quoted the letter from memory (thirty years after it was written) or he concocted it,

\* See pp. 176, 177, *ante*.

or La Varenne told a number of gross untruths. Desclozeaux believes that the missive was one of Sully's various fabrications (based, perhaps, on a vague recollection of some conversation between himself and La Varenne), and so did the erudite Jules Loiseleur, librarian of the city of Orleans, who in 1873 discovered an important document which entirely changed the aspect of the case and demolished several more or less fantastical theories, including the striking romance previously devised by Michelet on the basis of Sully's allegations.

This document was a long letter written partly in cypher, and containing, in addition to more or less general information of a political character, a circumstantial account of Gabrielle's last days and death. It was written by an important personage, who was in a good position to know all the facts, that is, M. de Vernhyes, Chief Judge of the Cour des Aides of Montferrand and a member of the Supreme Council of Navarre. Devoted to King Henri, M. de Vernhyes was the leader of the royal party in Auvergne, where in previous times he had done much to keep the League in check. He was in Paris at the time of Gabrielle's death, he saw her corpse, and sprinkled holy water upon it, and the letter in which he related everything was a confidential communication addressed by him to another important personage, the Duke de Ventadour, Lieutenant-Governor of Languedoc. From the political standpoint, Vernhyes regarded Gabrielle's death as fortunate, for he felt that her marriage with the King would have led to great trouble in France. But in respect to all the rest his narrative is a most sober and impartial one.

Let us now see, then, what actually happened, adding to Vernhyes' account a few particulars from other sources. Easter was drawing near, and at that solemn season of the year, when it is usual to confess and seek absolution for one's sins in order to partake of the Sacrament in a right spirit, it was deemed fitting that Henri and Gabrielle should momentarily separate. In fact, the King's confessor, René Benoît, is said to have insisted on it, and it was therefore arranged that Henri should remain during the holy days at Fontainebleau and that Gabrielle should repair to Paris. The King decided, however, to go with her a part of the way—indeed, he could hardly bring himself to

leave her—in such wise that they went on together, with their escort, from Fontainebleau to Melun, where they supped, and thence to Savigny, where they slept on the night of Monday, April 5.

All accounts agree that Gabrielle was in a very despondent mood, this being due probably to her state of health. L'Estoille, repeating the rumours of the time, says that both she and the King had recently dreamt that they would soon be separated for ever. Sully declares that when the King left her—some of his courtiers had to compel him to do so—she begged him to take care of her children and provide for the needs of her servants, as if she felt sure she would never see him again, whereat Henri was greatly affected. Vernhyes supplies some confirmation of that account; however, when Gabrielle took boat in order to proceed to Paris by way of the Seine, the King was persuaded to return to Fontainebleau.

With Gabrielle went several female servants and her midwife, Mme. Dupuy, while Montbazon and Bassompierre accompanied her by order of the King. She arrived in Paris at three o'clock the same day, Tuesday, April 6, and landed near the Arsenal. That was then the official residence of her father, who, it will be remembered, was Grand Master of the Artillery. Gabrielle was met by her sister Diane, Maréchale de Balagny, who also lived at the Arsenal, and her brother Annibal, Marquis de Cœuvres. With them were the Duchess and Mlle. de Guise, the Duchess de Retz and her children, the Duchess de Mercœur, and Mesdames de Martigues. Gabrielle went into the Arsenal with Mme. de Balagny, but they afterwards repaired to the neighbouring residence of Sébastien Zamet, the financier. This was a handsome pile of red brick and stone work, with large grounds adorned with fountains and stretching between the Rue de la Cérissaie and the Rue Beautreillis, the site having previously been occupied by the famous Hôtel St. Paul.

The place had a bad reputation. Zamet largely made his fortune by pandering to the gilded youth of his time, and even King Henri appears to have availed himself of the financier's residence for passing assignments. However, Zamet was a useful man, very friendly, too, with Gabrielle, as we previously said, and as he had heard of the favourite's arrival and prepared

a collation, Gabrielle paid him a visit. She then partook of something which disagreed with her, as many things might have done, given her condition. Some accounts say it was an orange, others a salad, but most agree in mentioning a lemon. That is likely enough, for even some present-day women have an abnormal fancy for acid fruits. In any case, Gabrielle was feeling indisposed when she took leave of Zamet, for, contrary to the statements of La Varenne's alleged letter to Sully, she did not sleep at the banker's house, but entered her litter and repaired to the residence of her aunt, Mme. de Sourdis, that is, the Deanery of St. Germain l'Auxerrois, adjacent to the Louvre. It is true that Mme. de Sourdis was not in Paris at that moment, but in going to the deanery Gabrielle followed the course she always took when the King was not in Paris and her own house was not ready to receive her.

The story in Sully that she slept that night at Zamet's house is scarcely worthy of examination. She had come to Paris for a special purpose, to perform an act of contrition, to confess, seek absolution, purify herself, as it were, before her projected nuptials. At heart, there is proof of it, she was in some degree a sceptic, but in her position it was absolutely necessary that she should comport herself as a good Catholic, and in particular be on her guard against scandal, such as would have arisen had she taken up her quarters at Zamet's ill-famed abode. We feel, therefore, that one may confidently believe President de Vernhyes when he tells us that directly after the collation Gabrielle repaired to the deanery.

That night, or on the following morning (Wednesday, April 7), still feeling unwell, she despatched a messenger to Mme. de Sourdis, who was at Chartres with her husband, he being governor there. Gabrielle wished Mme. de Sourdis to join her, as she feared that her indisposition might become more serious, and it was a natural course to take, for Mme. de Sourdis had long been her chaperon, and would appear to have possessed both brains and energy. As it happened, however, the lady was detained at Chartres by a riot due to her husband's violence in assaulting some tax collector of the municipality. At the Arsenal or at Zamet's, on the previous afternoon, Gabrielle had heard there was to be a musical service at

the celebration of *Tenebrae* at the chapel of St. Antoine belonging to the abbey of that name, and feeling better in the latter part of the day she decided to attend it. This was on Wednesday, not Thursday, as asserted in La Varenne's alleged letter. Gabrielle repaired to the Petit St. Antoine in her litter, and with her went the Princesses of Lorraine and several other ladies, in their coaches. In attendance on the favourite was M. de Montbazon, Captain of the Royal Guard, with several of his archers.

At the service, says *Les Amours du Grand Alcandre*, which is not all romance, for it confirms President de Vernhyes' confidential missive in several important respects,\* Gabrielle sat beside Mlle. de Guise (long the reputed author of that work), to whom she mentioned that she had that day received two letters from the King. The heat in the church was great, however, and Gabrielle felt so ill at ease that after the service she would not go to supper at Zamet's, as she was invited to do, but returned direct to the deanery, where she at once went to bed, complaining of a violent headache.

On the following morning (Thursday, April 8) she attended mass at the neighbouring church of St. Germain l'Auxerrois and partook of the Sacrament. About two o'clock in the afternoon she again felt unwell, complaining of extreme thirst. At four o'clock she went to bed again, and was seized with the pains of labour, followed by convulsions, which came on repeatedly during the next four hours. She was much worse on the following day—Good Friday, we presume. It was necessary that she should be delivered of her child, but she was in so exhausted a state that nature refused assistance. We ask the sensitive reader's forgiveness for entering into a few details, but it is necessary to do so in helping to refute one of the great "poisoning" romances of history. At last, then, about two o'clock, after there had been a great deal of hemorrhage, the medical men who had been summoned to attend Gabrielle resorted to embryotomy, and the infant was removed in pieces. In the course of the treatment, Vernhyes tells us, she was cupped three times, and three clisters and four

\* Further confirmation is supplied by the despatches of Francesco Contarini, the Venetian envoy in France.

suppositories were administered to her, though they all failed to have the effect which the doctors desired to produce. Until six o'clock Gabrielle remained in a convulsive condition, with such distortions of the face and other parts of the body "that the doctors told me," said Vernhyes, "they had never seen the like before." "At the said hour of six o'clock," he adds, "she lost the powers of speech, hearing, sight and motion, and remained in that state until five o'clock on the morning of Saturday [April 10], when she gave up the ghost after a most frightful agony."

The cause assigned for her death after the post-mortem examination was congestion of the brain, and that organ was certainly affected, as were the lungs, the liver, and the kidneys, in which last was found a large pointed calculus. We strongly doubt, however, whether modern science would have subjected Gabrielle to anything like the treatment which her doctors adopted. We do not know at what precise moment their services were requisitioned, but a year or two later, when Henri had married Marie de' Medici and wished to appoint Mme. Dupuy, Gabrielle's midwife, in the same capacity to the new Queen, a certain Mme. Louise Bourgeois, *alias* Boursier, who was supported by Leonora Galigai, competed for the post, and a great dispute arose, in the course of which Gabrielle's former maid, Gratiennne Mareil, who had entered the new Queen's service, preferred charges of neglect against Mme. Dupuy in relation to the accouchement which had resulted in Gabrielle's death. In the result the King ceased supporting Mme. Dupuy's claim, and gave the office to Mme. Boursier. Desclozeaux mentions a pamphlet which was issued by the latter on this subject.

Judging by the available evidence, we are strongly of opinion, and every medical friend whom we have consulted agrees with us, that the circumstances of Gabrielle's accouchement fully account for her death. It is certain, too, that she had been in a bad state of health ever since becoming *enceinte*. She had known no such trouble at previous times, but, bearing in mind the charges of negligence preferred against Mme. Dupuy, we believe, as we said before, that she had never properly recovered after the birth of her son Alexandre.

In the alleged La Varenne letter, Gabrielle is spoken of as

being almost deserted in her last hours. La Varenne is even made to speak of having this dying woman in his arms. All that, however, is sheer nonsense. With or near Gabrielle at the time were her sister, Mme. de Balagny, the Duchess and Mlle. de Guise, Mesdames de Retz, de Martigues and de Mercœur, in addition to doctors, servants and sisters of charity, so that with regard to attendance nothing at all was lacking. Gabrielle, however, had a presentiment that she would not recover, and thinking less of herself than of her children's interests, she fixed her last hopes on a marriage *in extremis*; with which object she despatched to the King one of the gentlemen of his bed-chamber, Bernard de Peichpeyroux,\* Baron de Beaurain, who was to summon Henri to her side.

La Varenne, who was certainly on the spot, then intervened. Influenced by some of the high personages whose wish it was to prevent a marriage, he set out in hot haste and made his way to Fontainebleau, for the purpose of dissuading the King from the journey. His departure took place, apparently, at about four o'clock on the afternoon of Thursday, April 8. But whatever he may have said to the King, he did not prevent the latter from deciding to return to Paris and from despatching his valet Beringhem to announce his coming. So far, then, La Varenne had failed in his purpose, but he was not yet beaten. He hastened back towards the capital, travelling more swiftly than Beringhem, and on meeting Marshal d'Ornano and Bassompierre (with whom there is reason to believe he had conferred before undertaking his journey) he informed them that he had been unable to restrain the King, and suggested that they should do so. Ornano immediately started with that object, and on reaching Villeneuve-St. Georges met or called on President Pomponne de Bellièvre, with whom he had a conference. He further stopped the King's messenger, Beringhem, and proceeded with Bellièvre to Juvisy, where they met the King himself, who was travelling in all haste towards the capital. On the Friday, then, at Juvisy, twenty hours before Gabrielle actually expired, Bellièvre informed Henri that she was at the very last extremity, that she could neither speak nor hear, and that it would serve no

\* Spelt Puypeyroux in most accounts.

earthly purpose for him to proceed to Paris. The grief-stricken monarch wished to do so, however, and both Ornano and Bellièvre had great difficulty in prevailing on him to go back. He is even said to have fainted (he had been subject to fainting fits in moments of strong emotion), but at last a coach was found, and in this, instead of on horseback, he returned to Fontainebleau in a state of great distress. His children by Gabrielle were there at the time, and the grief of little César on hearing of his mother's death was extreme. He was, perhaps, too young to realize that in losing her he had also lost the Crown of France.

We read also of Gabrielle's brother, the Marquis de Cœuvres, being prostrated with grief, and of consolation being offered to him by Brother Ange, Duke de Joyeuse, sometime Admiral and Marshal of France, who, for the second time in his career, had assumed the cowl of a Capuchin. Most of the womenfolk were also deeply distressed. When President de Vernhyes went to sprinkle holy water on the corpse, he found the Duchess de Guise shrieking and weeping. Her daughter also was in tears. But, according to L'Estoille, Mme. de Martigues, who, while Gabrielle was in her last agony, kept on advising her to seek the intercession of one or another saint, stealthily removed some valuable rings from the dying woman's fingers, and affixed them to her chaplet. Unfortunately for her, a nun who was present observed that dishonest action, and she was compelled to restore her purloinings. As for Gabrielle's father, all accounts agree that he evinced great callousness at his daughter's death, and simply endeavoured to remove from her house whatever furniture and valuables he could. Most of the deceased favourite's jewellery had remained with the King at Fontainebleau, and with regard to the rest M. de Bellièvre appeared upon the scene, and intervened with sufficient speed to recover the greater part of it. Further pillaging was stopped by the interposition of François Miron, the Prévôt des Marchands, to whom Henri sent an urgent letter on the subject.

All the funeral ceremonial was, by the King's express command, such as was observed at the death of a member of the House of France. One of the despatches of Francesco Contarini, the Venetian envoy, supplies some interesting particulars. In



accordance with the usage of the time a wax effigy of the deceased favourite was prepared and exhibited in solemn state.\* On its head was set a ducal coronet, the body was clad in gold-embroidered robes, perhaps indeed those which Gabrielle had prepared for her nuptials; and having been thus arrayed the effigy was placed in a sitting posture on a magnificent bed—the very one which the deceased had purchased for the Chamber of the Queens at the Louvre—while above this bed, which was set on a platform with three steps, there depended a baldachin of cloth of gold. The ceremony did not take place at the deanery where Gabrielle had actually died, but in the hall of her own house,† the *Maison des Trois Degrés*, as it was called, close to the *Porte St. Nicolas*. Two heralds, on whose black tabards appeared the golden lilies of France, stood at the foot of the bed, and offered holy water to the Princes and other high personages who presented themselves. The hall was draped with hangings from the Louvre. On each side of the bed was an altar, at which priests constantly officiated. Archers of the Royal Guard, gentlemen and *valets de chambre* of both the King's and Gabrielle's households were in attendance. Clad in deep mourning, her relatives received the visitors. At the usual meal-times dishes were tendered to the effigy, as if it were a living being, and Princesses assisted in that service. The number of people who presented themselves was large, and, according to L'Estoille, many of them appeared to be very well pleased that the King's favourite was dead.

After the effigy had been exhibited for four days in the manner we have mentioned, there came a solemn requiem mass at *St. Germain l'Auxerrois*, and then the funeral procession was formed; a great cavalcade of Princes and nobles, with Princesses and ladies of high estate in their coaches, all of them

\* Lescure imagines that the corpse was exhibited, but that was not the case. The practice of setting up wax effigies was very old. We are told that Jehan Perreal worked day and night beside the corpse of Louis XII preparing the effigy for that monarch's obsequies. Some of our readers may have seen the Westminster Abbey effigies.

† It was purchased in 1596 from M. de Schomberg. Previous to that date Gabrielle had owned the *Hôtel du Bouchage*, acquired for her by the King from Henri, Duke de Joyeuse, at a time when Count du Bouchage was his appellation. It was at that earlier residence of Gabrielle's that Châtel attempted to assassinate the King.

escorting the bier on which were placed two coffins, one containing the remains of Gabrielle, and the other those of the little child, who, the fortune-tellers had predicted, would prevent the realization of her supreme desire. Nevertheless, the honours, says the Venetian ambassador, were such as were rendered at the obsequies of a Queen of France. In stately fashion the cortège betook itself to the ancient fane of St. Denis, and there a second solemn requiem mass was celebrated amid all the tombs of Merovingian, Carlovingian and Capetian monarchs, their consorts and their sons: Dagobert and Clovis II, Pepin the Short and Bertha with the Big Foot, Charles the Bald and St. Louis, Charles the Victorious and Anne of Brittany, Francis I and Catherine de' Medici, and many more.\* But Gabrielle's remains were not destined to remain at St. Denis; they were presently conveyed, still with much pomp and ceremony, to the abbey of Notre Dame la Royale, otherwise Maubuisson, near Pontoise, of which her sister, Angélique d'Estrées, was abbess. There she lay side by side with many daughters of departed Kings, until the foolish iconoclasts of the Revolution shattered the tombs and defaced the sanctuary.†

The King went into mourning for the woman he had loved, wearing during the first week nothing but black, which was a noteworthy departure from the etiquette of the times, for Gabrielle was not of the blood royal. Afterwards, for a period of three months, Henri restricted himself to violet habiliments. The news of his mistress's death had been conveyed post-haste

\* At the time of the first Revolution St. Denis contained, of the Capetian line alone, the tombs of twenty-nine out of thirty-two Kings (from Hugues Capet to Louis XV inclusively) and of eighteen of their consorts. The ancient church of the Parisian Abbey of St. Germain des Prés was, however, the resting-place of many Merovingian sovereigns, including Childebert I and Ultragotha, Chilpéric and Frédégonde, Childéric II and Bachilde, etc.

† We previously mentioned (p. 118) that the D'Estrées sisters and their brother were called the seven deadly sins by the lampoonists of the time. In that connection Tallemant prints the following lines *à propos* of Gabrielle's funeral:

“ J'ai vu passer, par ma fenêtre,  
 Les six péchés mortels vivants,  
 Conduits par le bâtard d'un prêtre,  
 Qui, tous ensemble, allaient chantant  
 Un *requiescat in pace*,  
 Pour le septième trépassé.”

to his sister, Princess Catherine, now Duchess de Bar, and she immediately wrote him the following letter :

“MY DEAR KING,

“I know that words cannot afford a remedy to your extreme sorrow. That is why I will only employ them to assure you that I feel it as keenly myself, for both the extreme affection I bear you, and the loss I have suffered of so perfect a friend, compels me to do so. Believe, my dear King, that I will ever love and serve as mother to my nephews and niece ; and I very humbly beg you to remember that you promised me my niece.\* If it pleases you to give her me I will treat her with the same friendship and care as if she were my own daughter. Monsieur my husband expresses to you his regret by the messenger he is sending you. Would to God, my King, that I might alleviate your grief by sacrificing a few years of my own ; I wish by all my affection that I could do so, and with those true words I kiss you, my dear brave King, a thousand times.”

Henri answered that letter in these words :

“MY DEAR SISTER,

I received your visit † with much consolation, I have great need of it, for my affliction is as incomparable as was she to whom it is due ; regrets and lamentation will attend me to the grave. Nevertheless, as God brought me into the world for this Kingdom and not for myself, all my understanding and care will be devoted henceforth solely to its advancement and preservation. The root of my love is destroyed, it will not sprout again, but that of my friendship will remain ever green for you, my dear sister, whom I kiss a million times.

“This 15th April, 1599, at Fontainebleau.

“HENRY.” ‡

\* It will be remembered that the Princess Catherine was godmother to Gabrielle's daughter. The Princess herself had no children.

† This must be a slip we think, the word “letter” being intended.

‡ We have adhered to the usual French spelling, “Henri,” in this volume, except in our title and such quotations as the above letter ; but the King himself always wrote “Henry,” as was often done by Frenchmen at his period. It might, however, have seemed pedantry on our part had we departed from the spelling now universally adopted in France.

The Parliament of Paris and the foreign ambassadors tendered condolences to the bereaved monarch. One of the latter, however, Contarini the Venetian, lost no time in turning Gabrielle's death to account. There is a despatch of his dated April 10—and written, therefore, only a few hours after the favourite had expired—in which he mentions that he has advised Cardinal de Gondi's secretary of the event, with the view of negotiating a marriage between the King and the Grand Duke of Tuscany's niece—Marie de' Medici. That match had been first suggested by Gondi in 1592, and the subject had been revived in 1597, when the King's pecuniary position had become more difficult, both by reason of his indebtedness to the Grand Duke and others, and his need of ready money. There was a certain Florentine canon in Paris, one Francesco Bonciano, an agent of the Grand Duke,\* who keenly desired to bring about the match. Nevertheless, despite every effort to effect it, the King seems to have regarded the negotiations merely as a possible means of raising a fresh loan, without in any way binding himself to espouse the Princess Marie. Although he gave Gabrielle's predecessor, Corisanda, a promise of marriage, which he never kept, and although in like way he gave another to her successor, Henriette d'Entragues, and also dishonoured it, we feel, as we have previously said, that in the case of Gabrielle he was sincere and would have made her his wife had she lived a little longer.

It is mainly on account of the opposition offered to that marriage by important French personages of the time, and on account of the attempts to induce Henri to espouse Marie de' Medici, that some writers have inclined to the view that Gabrielle was actually poisoned. What, it might be said, could be more natural, under the circumstances of the case? Was not the very name of Medici synonymous with secret murder? Was there not a whole crew of Italians at hand: Zamet, the Gondis, Bonciano, men not likely to hesitate about removing an obstacle to plans which they favoured? We hold, however, that the Medici, like the Borgias, were far less black than some historians have painted them, while, as for Zamet and the

\* He resided with Cardinal de Gondi, and was, perhaps, the "secretary" to whom Contarini's despatch refers.

others, not a scrap of evidence has ever been produced in support of the theory of their guilt, save the story about the lemon which Gabrielle is said to have sucked at Zamet's house. That tale may well be true, and the lemon may well have caused indisposition. It was not necessary for it to contain poison to bring about that result. For the rest, we have President de Vernhyes' impartial narrative, and the statements of Contarini, which appear to be equally impartial; and the particulars they contain point to a perfectly natural death under very distressing conditions, with which, perhaps, even the medical and surgical science of to-day might have been unable to contend.

Undoubtedly Gabrielle's sudden death at a moment when she was so near to becoming Queen of France was calculated to inspire suspicion. Yet people did not suggest that she had been poisoned, they wrote and talked of "a stroke from Heaven," "a blow of Providence." Aubigné was the only author who, prior to Sully, expressed a belief in the alleged poisoning. Palma Cayet, Legrain, Dupleix, Mathieu, Cheverny, Bassompierre, de Thou, Groulart, Dreux du Radier, the author of *Les Amours du Grand Alcandre*, all regarded the death as due to natural causes. After Sully, however, came Tallemant des Réaux, Mézeray, Sismondi and Michelet, each enlarging more and more on the theory of poisoning. For our part we feel that they were wrong. It is our belief, too, that, although history teems with stories of poisoning, only a few of them are authentic, by far the greater number crumbling to pieces directly they are subjected to the test of critical examination.

## IX

### HENRIETTE D'ENTRAGUES

#### I. THE FELINE FAVOURITE

The King's next Amour—The Balzac d'Entragues Family—Marie Touchet—Black Pages in François d'Entragues' Early Life—Marie d'Entragues and Bassompierre—Henriette's Person and Disposition—First Meeting of Henri and Henriette—He follows her to Paris—Affray between Joinville and Bellegarde—Henri notices Mlle. de La Bourdaisière—Negotiations with Henriette d'Entragues and her Father—The Price of Shame—A Royal Promise of Marriage—Henriette is removed to Marcoussis—The King carries her off—She becomes Marchioness de Verneuil—The King's Marriage with Marie de' Medici arranged—The Duke of Savoy and his Intrigues—Biron the Malcontent—Henri demands the Restitution of his Marriage Promise—He starts for the Savoy War—Henriette's Stillborn Child—Her Sorrowful Letter to the King—Her Journey to join the King—The Duke of Savoy again intrigues with her—Father Hilaire—Marie de' Medici and Henri's Love-Letters—End of the Savoy War and Pardon of Biron—Henri finds his Wife at Lyons—Praises her, but eagerly joins Henriette—The Queen arrives in Paris—Presentation of Henriette to Marie de' Medici.

ON October 6, 1599,—that is, six months after the death of Gabrielle d'Estrées—Henri, whom “regret and lamentation were to have attended to the grave,” wrote his first love-letter, or, at all events, the first by order of date of those which have come down to us, to Henriette de Balzac d'Entragues. On November 10 his marriage with Marguerite de Valois was at last annulled, and on April 25 in the ensuing year the contract for his marriage with Marie de' Medici—finally decided on immediately after the dissolution of his union with Marguerite—was signed on his behalf at Florence.

It has been surmised by a few writers that the King's *liaison* with Henriette d'Entragues had been projected during the lifetime of Gabrielle. Count de La Bouillerie, for instance, quotes

a receipt given on July 11, 1598, by Fouquet de La Varenne for certain payments made to him for expenses he had incurred on various journeys on the King's service, among these being one to Marcoussis, a castle belonging to Henriette's father. But M. d'Entragues was a sufficiently important personage to have communication with the King quite apart from any question of his daughter, for ever since 1578 he had been lieutenant-general of the Orléanais and governor of the city of Orleans.

There were two Entragues at that period, both of them grandsons of Jean de Balzac, one of the captains of Charles VII at the time of the expulsion of the English from France. Charles d'Entragues, who was nicknamed both *le bel* and Entraguet, has been mentioned in earlier chapters of this volume.\* A daring duellist, and a great favourite with women, he has left a somewhat better reputation than that of his elder brother, François de Balzac, Baron de Marcoussis and Lord of Entragues and Malesherbes. The latter was twice married, first to Jacqueline de Rohan, Lady of Gié, by whom he had a son and a daughter, and secondly to Marie Touchet, Lady of Belleville, and sometime mistress of Charles IX. Marie had two sons by her royal lover, one who died in childhood, and one, born in April, 1573, and christened Charles, who became Grand Prior of France, Count d'Auvergne, Count de Poitiers, and finally Duke d'Angoulême. Many folk, moreover, referred to him as the Bastard of Valois. But it is by his title of Count d'Auvergne that he will figure in our pages. It was in 1578, four years after the death of Charles IX, that Marie Touchet † became the wife of François de Balzac d'Entragues. According to the *anecdotiers*, he had loved her for many years, and she was certainly a very beautiful woman and not yet thirty years of age at the time of her espousals. Fair, tall, with a good figure, a full bright face, and a fascinating smile, she had adopted as her device an anagram of her name: *Je charme tout*; and it is related that she had so much confidence in her beauty that on seeing the portrait of Elizabeth of Austria, daughter of

\* He died in 1599. See pp. 11, 44, *ante*.

† We here refer very briefly to Marie Touchet. We shall possibly have to write of her in more detail in a volume on the Favourites of Francis I, his son and grandsons.

Maximilian II, whom her lover Charles espoused for reasons of state, she quietly remarked : "I shall not fear that German."

She presented François d'Entragues with three children, two daughters and a son ; and although she had been the mistress of a King, she strove to do all her duty as a wife and a mother. In regard to her children, however, she failed most pitifully. Her son by Charles IX proved a restless, ambitious, perfidious, dishonest conspirator, a saturnine scoundrel who repeatedly deserved the scaffold, but was spared by Henri de Navarre in some measure because he was one of the last of the Valois. The Count d'Auvergne inherited, we think, more of his father's than his mother's nature, and much the same happened with respect to Marie Touchet's elder daughter by François d'Entragues.

He is said to have been really in love with his wife, but from a worldly point of view the marriage he contracted with the whilom favourite of Charles IX proved of great advantage to him, for it procured him not only the dignities of Councillor of State and Knight of the King's orders, but the Orleans governorship to which we have already referred, those appointments being bestowed upon him by Henri III. Apart from the question of his marriage, there were two nasty pages in the life of François d'Entragues. In 1567, at the outset of the second religious war, his aunt, the Protestant Marchioness de Rothelin, shut herself up in the château of Blandy with the Prince de Condé's children, who had been committed to her charge. Under the pretext of bringing her some news Entragues gained admittance to the château with a body of armed men, and after massacring the Marchioness's retainers, he carried her and the little Condés to Paris, where he handed them over to Catherine de' Medici. It was thus that the young Prince de Condé happened to be a prisoner at the Louvre at the time of the St. Bartholomew massacre, and was compelled, like Henri de Navarre, to abjure his faith.

At a later period, when the League was in the ascendant and Entragues held Orleans on its behalf, he offered to sell the city to Henri de Navarre, and the scheme only failed by reason of the stout opposition which was offered by the inhabitants. As Count de la Ferrière-Percy remarks in his *Henri IV : Le roi*



*et l'amoureux*, when a man offers to sell a town confided to his safe keeping, it is not particularly surprising to find him willing to sell his daughters. In spite of all Marie Touchet's watchfulness her girls seem to have been predestined to lives of shame. While Henriette, the elder one, became the mistress of Henri IV, Marie, the younger, contracted a *liaison* with Bassompierre, by whom she had a son, the connection lasting for ten years, during which Bassompierre resisted every effort to induce him to marry the girl he had wronged.

Marie was frail like her mother, but that is the only reproach one can level at her. Henriette, however, largely inherited her father's nature. Like him, she was dark and slim, of average height, and with a wasp-like waist. The brow seemed placid enough, but it bulged as one often observes in the case of persons of tenacious natures. The glittering eyes were quick and somewhat imperious; the lips thin and inclined to a slightly sarcastic smile. The chin was fleshy, the short straight nose, with quivering nostrils, was sensuously provoking. A feline grace was cast, as it were, over all her person. She was as perfect an example of the woman-cat as the world has known. She knew well both how to purr and how to scratch. She could be very gay when it pleased her, and she possessed considerable wit. In fact, her lively sallies and sarcastic remarks about men, women, and things greatly helped to attract Henri to her. But, on the other hand, if anything displeased her, she did not hesitate to use her claws.

Her nature was essentially a scheming, crafty and perfidious one. She stood on the threshold of life resolved to make her way in the world by hook or crook, and mentally adopting the saying "nothing for nothing" as her motto. In a sense we do not blame her, for King Henri's reputation was too notorious for any woman to trust to his mere word; and, when all is said, he certainly deserved the trouble into which he was plunged by his infatuation for Henriette d'Entragues.

It is uncertain whether he first met her by chance or by design. We know, however, that La Varenne and Du Lude were employed by him in some of the negotiations, and remembering La Varenne's receipt for expenses incurred by him in making a journey to Marcoussis in 1598, it is possible

that he then met her there, and subsequently praised her to the King. That would agree with what Sully's *Économies* say about some of Henri's companions vaunting Mlle. d'Entragues' beauty, wit and winning ways to such a point as to inspire Henri with a desire to see her. At all events, subsequent to Gabrielle's death, the King, at the suggestion of some of his courtiers who wished to divert his mind, made a journey to Blois, where he stayed for some time; and in June (1599), while on his way back towards Fontainebleau and Paris, he halted at the estate of Bois-Malesherbes, the usual residence of the Entragues family. It is in the department of the Loiret, and overlooks the narrow valley of the river Essonne near the town of Pithiviers. Count de la Ferrière tells us that the bedroom which the King occupied on his visit there is still shown, and is decorated with a series of tapestries which date from his time, and depict the visions of Ezekiel. One of them bears this inscription :

" Mort, femme, et temps,  
Tant soit vieil et antique,  
Mondaine amour et chasteté pudique,  
Tout prendra fin."

It is certain that Henriette, who could show herself very sprightly when she chose, made a keen impression on the King the first time he visited the château,\* for a little later, when he heard that Mme. d'Entragues and her daughter had repaired to Paris, he hastened there after them, and as the Louvre was not ready for his reception, installed himself for some days at Cardinal de Gondi's house, whilst the others stayed at the Hôtel de Lyon, otherwise the residence of the archbishop of that city. Henri visited them there daily, and speedily asked Mlle. d'Entragues to accept a rope of pearls, or, as L'Estoille says, "a very rich and beautiful necklace." The *demoiselle* made difficulties, however, and refused the proffered gift, whereupon "His Majesty, after carefully putting it away, carried it off and himself also to the Louvre, and in lieu of that present sent her on the morrow a box of a hundred apricots." These new amours, adds L'Estoille, led to the publication of some

\* She was then twenty years old, having been born at Orleans in 1579.



HENRIETTE D'ENTRAGUES, MARQUISE DE VERNEUIL.

*After the Portrait by Jérôme Wierix.*



verses called the "Complaint of the Shade of the Duchess de Beaufort to the King." According to the same writer, the offer of the necklace took place on August 5. Five days later Henri went to sup with the Marquis d'Elbeuf, and on returning at a very late hour either to the Arsenal or to Zamet's house, where he intended to spend the night—he slept everywhere at that time, except in his own big lonely palace where there was now no Gabrielle to occupy the apartments of the Queens of France—he immediately went to bed, as he felt, he said, extremely tired. However, a dispute suddenly arose in the courtyard, between the Duke de Bellegarde, the grand Equerry, and Claude, Prince de Joinville, the fourth son of Henri le Balafré of Guise. According to some accounts it was a mere squabble between courtiers respecting some disservice which one had done to the other, but according to others it all arose over Mlle. d'Entragues, to whom Joinville had been paying his addresses before Henri appeared upon the scene. And we are told that Bellegarde—previously the King's rival for the affections of Gabrielle d'Estrées—had now also come forward as a competitor for those of Henriette. In any case, whatever caused the altercation it was a violent one, and Joinville suddenly drew his rapier, rushed on Bellegarde, and pierced his thigh. The Duke might have been killed had it not been for the timely intervention of MM. de Villars and de Rambouillet. The King, who had been roused from his slumber by the uproar, suddenly appeared, it is said, on the steps of the house, carrying his sword, and clad only in his shirt. Such was his indignation on hearing of what had occurred that he at once gave orders to summon the President of the Parliament of Paris in order that Joinville, who was arrested, might be brought to trial; but in the morning the Prince's grandmother, the Duchess de Nemours, came to intercede for him, and the King thereupon contented himself with banishing him.

A week later, August 18, we find Henri requesting Mlle. d'Entragues to go with him to see his children—Gabrielle's sons and daughter—at St. Germain, and sending her by way of a present some hangings valued at three thousand crowns. He was apparently quite losing his heart to her, for when she returned to Bois-Malesherbes, he soon took the same road.

But it seems that his hopes were again disappointed, and so, going on to Blois and thence to Chenonceaux, at which château Louise of Lorraine, widow of Henri III, was living in retirement, his attention was bestowed on one of the Dowager Queen's maids of honour, Mlle. de la Bourdaisière, a member of the same flighty family to which Gabrielle d'Estrées' mother had belonged. At the same time, however, two royal emissaries La Varenne and Du Lude, were actively engaged in regard to Henriette, and she, who without entirely discouraging the King had hitherto refused all his offers, now seems to have become somewhat anxious as to whether he might not throw her over for Mlle. de la Bourdaisière.

This part of the story is sordid and repulsive, and we may therefore well spare the reader all but the essential details. It appears certain that Henriette acted with her eyes open, and in connivance with her disreputable father. Her mother's attempts to prevent her from engaging in a *liaison* with the King proved of no avail. At the same time, the intrigue was not entered upon lightly, for Henriette and her father insisted on onerous conditions: a formal written promise of marriage, the payment of a sum of a hundred thousand crowns, and the appointment of Entragues as a Marshal of France. Henri consented willingly enough to the two former stipulations, but—and this was somewhat to his credit—he strenuously objected to the third.

Sully, for his part, was amazed when the King applied to him for the amount of money we have mentioned. The Treasury already had the greatest difficulty to meet its engagements, and a large sum was required that year to subsidize the Swiss. However, as the Superintendent of Finances knew his master and did not wish to lose his post, he ended by obeying the royal command, revenging himself, according to his own account, by maliciously delivering the whole of the hundred thousand crowns in silver pieces, much to the King's astonishment. As for the promise of marriage, Sully asserts that Henri showed it to him one day at Fontainebleau and repeatedly asked his advice upon it. The minister read it, and on the King pressing him for his opinion, he solicited an assurance that his Majesty would not be angry

with him, whatever he might say or do. Henri gave that assurance, and thereupon Sully tore the compromising document in halves.

"There, Sire, since you wish to know it, is what I think of such a promise," said he.

"*Morbleu!*" cried the King, "What are you about? I begin to think that you have gone mad!"

"That is so, Sire," Sully answered. "I am a lunatic and a fool, and I wish I were so to such an extent as to be the only one in France."

Then—still according to *Les Économies royales*—the minister went on to point out that Entragues and his daughters had already given cause for scandal in the time of the Duchess de Beaufort, and that the King himself had then told him to give "all that baggage orders to quit Paris." The divulgation of such weakness as was implied by that promise of marriage would, in the minister's opinion, bring his Majesty into derision, and besides, the document might prove a serious obstacle both to the projected divorce from Queen Marguerite and to a suitable matrimonial alliance which might benefit France, for the Queen was not the woman to surrender her title to any demoiselle d'Entragues, and the Pope was not the man to authorize her to do so. The King seemed to feel the weight of that argument, says Sully, and without answering he quitted the gallery where they had been conversing, and repaired to his private room. There, however, still according to the minister, he asked M. de Loménie, his private secretary, for ink and paper, and wrote out a fresh promise of marriage to replace the one which Sully had torn in halves. And a little later he mounted horse and went off on a hunting expedition, which ended by taking him to Bois-Malesherbes, where he remained a couple of days or so.

Whether Sully's narrative be strictly accurate or not it is certain that a promise of marriage was given. The full text appears in the King's correspondence, which also contains the official *procès-verbal* which was drawn up, when, some years afterwards, the compromising document was at last recovered. Here then, as a great historical warning both for young persons who might be inclined to put their trust in Princes and in the

sons of men, and for amorous and heedless individuals disposed to allow their passions rein regardless of the consequences, is what the impetuous, self-willed and also unscrupulous Henri de Navarre wrote and delivered to the father of Henriette d'Entragues :

“We, Henry fourth, by the grace of God, King of France and Navarre, promise and swear before God on our faith and word as a King, to Messire François de Balzac, Lord of Entragues, a Knight of our Orders, that [he] giving us as companion Demoiselle Henriette Catherine de Balzac, his daughter, in case in six months, beginning from the first day of this present one, she should become *enceinte*, and should give birth to a son, then and instantly we will take her to be our wife and legitimate spouse, whose marriage we will solemnize publicly and in face of our Holy Church according to the rites required and customary in such a case. For greater confirmation of the present promise we promise and swear as herein stated to ratify and renew it under our seals, immediately after we have obtained from our Holy Father the Pope the dissolution of our marriage with Dame Marguerite of France, with the permission to marry again as may seem fit to us. In witness whereof we have written and signed these presents. At the Wood of Malesherbes, this day the first of October, 1599.

“HENRY.”

But although the promise and the 100,000 crowns were handed over to M. d'Entragues, matters did not at once go any further. There were various interviews between the King and Henriette's infamous father and one of the latter's acolytes, a man named Nau. It seems certain that Entragues was bent on exacting the third of his original stipulations, that is his appointment as a Marshal of France, of which, of course, he was quite unworthy, besides lacking the necessary military qualifications for it. On October 10 we find the King writing to Henriette :

“*Mes chères amours*, La Varane and the lackey arrived at the same time. You order me to surmount, if I love you, all the difficulties. . . . By the proposals I have made I have sufficiently shown the strength of my love for those on your side



to raise no further difficulties. What I said before you I will not fail in, but nothing more [the Marshalship ?]. I will willingly see Monsieur d'Entragues, and will leave him but little rest until our affair is arranged or falls through. That man of Normandy [Nau ?] has been here, and has told me that between now and the next fortnight we shall have the greatest falling out possible, which will be caused by your father, mother or brother,\* and will be plotted in Paris; that you and I shall regard everything as broken off; and that to-morrow he will tell me by what means to prevent it. . . . Good-night, heart of mine, I kiss you a million times." †

A falling out certainly ensued, but it seems to have been confined to Entragues and the King. The former was not satisfied with his 100,000 crowns, he still hankered for the marshalship, and he ended by informing Henri that his Majesty need not again return to Bois-Malesherbes as his daughter was no longer there! At those tidings the baffled monarch was thunderstruck. Entragues had told no falsehood. In the hope that, by prolonging the delays, he might secure the dignity he coveted, he had removed Henriette to his castle of Marcoussis. This was rather nearer than Bois-Malesherbes to Fontainebleau, where Henri was installed, but instead of being a pleasure residence, it was a stronghold with three ramparts, and a keep which was only reached after crossing three drawbridges. Standing on a wooded height less than two miles from the great fortress of Montlhéry (Seine-et-Oise) the castle of Marcoussis had been erected by a certain Jean de Montaigu in the fourteenth century, since which time it had been more than once besieged, notably by John the Fearless of Burgundy in 1417. Eighty years later Louis XII had signed at Marcoussis a treaty of peace with the sovereigns of Castille and Aragon.‡ It seemed as if Henriette d'Entragues would be safe enough within its walls, but she by no means appreciated such confinement. It has been surmised by some writers that her father merely wished to save appearances by subjecting her to it. In any case, it did

\* Her half-brother the Count d'Auvergne.

† In this letter Henri invariably addresses Henriette as *vous* not as *tu*. This indicates that he was still only a suitor.

‡ The castle of Marcoussis was demolished in 1807.

not last long. She again became anxious as to whether her royal lover, in presence of such frequent obstacles, might not decide to let her go and definitively devote himself to Mlle. de la Bourdaisière or Mlle. de La Chastre, with both of whom rumour was then coupling his name, and she therefore communicated with him, suggesting that some duty might be assigned to her father which would remove him from the spot. This was contrived, and directly M. d'Entragues had left the castle, the King presented himself, carried off Henriette, and installed her at the Hôtel de Larchant, in Paris, which, a short time previously, had been beautified for her reception. "A pretty bird should have a pretty cage," as Henri himself remarked.

Thus Mlle. d'Entragues became the royal favourite, in which capacity one of her very first actions was to solicit the pardon of the Prince de Joinville, this tending to confirm the surmise that he had previously been her lover. Henri granted the request, and on November 7 (1599) the Prince repaired to St. Germain-en-Laye, accompanied by his uncle, the Duke de Mayenne, and knelt and did obeisance to the King, who received him with much kindness. On the other hand, Mlle. d'Entragues' royal lover speedily presented her with a domain, the Marquisate of Verneuil, near Triel, and from that time onward she was "Madame la Marquise" for everybody, even as Gabrielle had been "Madame la Duchesse"—it being quite unnecessary to specify which Marchioness or which Duchess was referred to.

The dissolution of the King's marriage with Marguerite de Valois having been pronounced by the Pope, Henriette, who held the King's promise to marry her, and who towards the end of the year became *enceinte*, believed that she would indeed be Queen of France, for she at first gave very little heed to the attempts which were being made to negotiate a marriage between her lover and the Grand Duke of Tuscany's niece, Marie de' Medici. She possibly imagined that those negotiations would fail, even as they had failed in the time of Gabrielle d'Estrées. But a special envoy, Baccio Giovannini,\* arrived from Florence, and by the end of 1599 the Tuscan marriage was finally agreed upon, it being arranged that the bride's portion

\* Many French writers call him Joannini.

should be a sum of 600,000 crowns, of which 350,000 were to be paid in cash, the remaining quarter of a million being written off the French indebtedness to the Grand Duke Ferdinand.

Thus Henriette's hopes seemed to be suddenly crumbling. But she was not the woman to surrender without a fight. She held the King's marriage promise, and from inquiries which she and her father made, it appeared that if that promise were drawn in proper form it might invalidate the marriage with Marie de' Medici in the eyes of the Church, particularly too if Henriette should give the King a son, as was stipulated in the document he had signed. Thus, already being *enceinte*, she continued hopeful in spite of an unpromising outlook.

Let us now turn to some other matters which may at first seem foreign to our theme, but which it will be found are really connected with it. During the long religious wars, Charles Emmanuel, Duke of Savoy, a son-in-law and ally of Philip II of Spain, had conquered various territories previously held by France. He had been compelled to restore most of them by the treaty of Vervins, concluded in May, 1598, but he still held the Marquisate of Saluzzo, situated on the Italian side of the Alps, and regarded by the French monarchs as a very important point of vantage whence they might descend at their ease on Italy, whenever they were lured thither by that fatal fascination which they were at times powerless to resist, though it invariably cost them an infinity of blood and treasure. Now Charles Emmanuel, who well realized the importance of Saluzzo, refused to surrender it to France in spite of the repeated demands addressed to him to that effect by King Henri and his ministers.

This Savoyard Duke was in his way as remarkable a character as the Béarnais. He had not escaped the curse which had fallen on every third or fourth generation of his house since the far-off days of Humbert with the White Hand, and which has indeed extended down to our own period, in such wise that the present King of Italy at first hesitated to marry. In a word, Charles Emmanuel was humpbacked. A large head, with an abnormally broad brow crowned by an abundance of brush-like hair, was set on his short and slender frame. Nevertheless, his mistresses had been as numerous as those of Henri de Navarre,

and had presented him with even more children. He had married one of the daughters of Philip II of Spain, and was very jealous of the preference which that monarch displayed for his wife's sister, the Infanta Isabella Clara Eugenia, whom some of the Leaguers had attempted to set upon the throne of France, with the young Duke de Guise as King.\* Isabella had just ended by marrying (1599) the Archduke Albert of Austria (sometime Cardinal Archbishop of Toledo),† bringing him as her dowry the sovereignty of the Low Countries and Franche-Comté. The Duke of Savoy held, however, that the latter province ought to have passed to his own wife. Somewhat indisposed, then, against the House of Austria and Spain, he was not unwilling to draw nearer to France, and there had been a prospect of that occurring when it was suggested that one of his daughters should marry César de Vendôme, who, following on the marriage of his mother, Gabrielle d'Estrées, with King Henri, would have become Dauphin. But Gabrielle was dead, all the schemes devised for an arrangement between France and Savoy were at an end, and the demands for the surrender of the Marquisate of Saluzzo became more and more urgent.

In this posture of affairs Charles Emmanuel resolved to attempt personal negotiations with Henri, and in December, 1599, he repaired to Fontainebleau with an interminable baggage-train which comprised many costly gifts for the French monarch and the members of his Court, besides half a million crowns in cash. On his way, both coming and going, the Duke passed through Burgundy, where Marshal Biron was governor. At Fontainebleau he found Mme. de Verneuil, the royal favourite. And both she and Biron, as well as various others—her brother, the Count d'Auvergne, and MM. de Soissons and de Montpensier—had, at this moment, cause for resentment against the King.

In Henriette's case that cause was her lover's projected marriage with Marie de' Medici, to which the Duke of Savoy, on his side, was also opposed; perhaps because he foresaw that the bride's dowry would be employed as the sinews of war against himself. Biron, for his part, was resentful because,

\* See p. 134, *ante*.

† See the account of the siege of Amiens, pp. 164, 167, 168, *ante*.

owing to the untimely death of Gabrielle d'Estrées, he had never obtained the counties of Périgord and Bigorre or a formal undertaking of the reversion of the post of Constable of France on Montmorency's death: all things which were to have been allotted to him had Gabrielle become Queen.

To Henriette the Duke of Savoy offered his good offices, both in regard to throwing obstacles in the way of the Medici marriage and in regard to compelling Henri to keep the promise of marriage given at Bois-Malesherbes. To Biron he offered a rank equal to his own, that is, the sovereignty of the Duchy of Burgundy, which the King of Spain was to guarantee. In addition, Charles Emmanuel was willing to give the Marshal one of his daughters in marriage with a splendid dowry. The negotiations with Biron were carried on by one of the Duke's agents, an intriguer named La Fin. Among other influential French nobles handsome presents and large sums of money were distributed with a lavish hand, in the hope of thereby gaining their support and stirring up civil war in France, for the Duke had speedily discovered that Henri would only consent to let him retain the Marquisate of Saluzzo on condition that he should hand over the county of Bresse, the Alpine valley of Barcelonnette, and Pignerol, Perosa and the Stura valley beyond the mountains. When Charles Emmanuel left France, in March, 1600, there was an understanding that he would take one or the other of those courses within a period of three months.

Meantime he had done nothing to prevent the marriage of Henri and Marie de' Medici. Brulart de Sillery and his son Alincourt were despatched to Florence to sign the contract and make all other preliminary arrangements, while, day by day, Henriette d'Entragues became more and more peevish and resentful. It is probable that the King asked her more than once to return his marriage promise, and that she refused or evaded his requests. At all events, he lost patience, and on April 21, 1600, we find him writing both to Henriette and to her father, on the subject:

“MADEMOISELLE,

“The love, honour and benefits you have received from me would have checked the most frivolous of souls had

it not been accompanied by such a bad nature as yours. I will not scold you further although I could and ought to do so, as you know. I beg you to send me back the promise you know of, and not to give me the trouble of recovering it by other means. Send me back also the ring which I returned you the other day. Such is the subject of this letter, to which I require an answer by to-night.

“Friday morning, 21 April, 1600, at Fontainebleau.

“HENRY.”

MONSIEUR D'ENTRAGUES,

“I send you the bearer to bring me back the promise which I gave you at Malesherbes. Do not fail, I beg you, to send it back to me, and if you wish to bring it me yourself, I will tell you what reasons induce me to this, which are domestic and not state ones. On hearing them you will say that I am right and recognize that you have been mistaken [or deceived] \* and that I have rather too good a nature than otherwise. Feeling sure that you will obey my command, I finish by assuring you that I am your good master,

“HENRY.

“This Friday morning, 21 April, 1600, at Fontainebleau.”

The result of those letters is not exactly known. A long undated epistle from Henriette to the King is thought by some writers to have been her answer to the note which we have here printed, but like Dreux du Radier, Musset-Pathay and Lescure, we believe that it was written a few months later and under different circumstances. All one can say for certain is that the King's demand for the return of his marriage promise was not complied with, either by Henriette or by her father; and that, nevertheless, no open breach between the favourite and the King ensued, although four days after the writing of the letters we have reproduced the Tuscan marriage contract was signed at Florence, it being decided, however, that Marie de' Medici should not come to France until the month of September, after the celebration of a marriage by proxy in the Tuscan capital. If that delay was specified it was not in any

\* The French is *trompé*, which lends itself to either interpretation.

degree by reason of consideration for the Marchioness de Verneuil, but on account, principally, of the King's designs with respect to Savoy, for he and his ministers well realized that Charles Emmanuel, in requiring three months to decide what territory he would surrender to France, had merely sought to gain time in order to devise a means whereby he might surrender nothing at all. Thus, preparations were made for hostilities, and directly the delay accorded to the Duke of Savoy had expired the King set out for another campaign.

It is certain that Henriette still had much influence with her lover, for he wished to take her with him, but she was now in very delicate health, and some writers hold that, remembering a particular part of the promise of marriage given her by the King, she herself was unwilling to incur the fatigues and risks of a long journey. According to Sully, the occasion of Henri's departure without her prompted "folk of a certain calling" to write "the song"—

"Cruelle départie,  
Malheureux jour."

But that, assuredly, is another of Sully's many mistakes, the above lines being merely a part of the refrain of the famous song celebrating Gabrielle d'Estrées.

It came to pass that the very misfortune which Henriette had feared might supervene if she ventured on a long and trying journey, fell upon her, in the most unexpected manner, almost as soon as the King had gone southward. She had repaired to Fontainebleau, in order that she might be the better able to communicate with her lover by means of the couriers who followed the high roads to Dauphiné and Savoy, and on July 2 a terrific thunderstorm burst upon the palace beautified by Francis I, the lightning striking it and "bringing down and spoiling all the ciphers of King Henri and Madame the late Duchess [Gabrielle] in one of the galleries." So great was the shock experienced by the terrified Marchioness de Verneuil, that a premature accouchement supervened, and she gave birth to a dead child, a boy. The calamity overwhelmed her. Not only was her physical health most sorely tried, but she was reduced to the lowest depths of despair, for she still

and ever remembered her marriage promise, and felt that if that child had lived he might have made her Queen of France.

It is, at least, very remarkable that a misfortune of this description should have successively overtaken both Gabrielle d'Estrées and Henriette d'Entragues. While one succumbed, however, the other recovered, thanks to her strong constitution.

Meantime, Henri, with Marshals Lesdiguières and Biron, was invading the territory of the Duke of Savoy, rapidly overrunning the county of Bresse,\* where the citadel of Bourg (besieged by Biron) alone offered a stout resistance. Communications between the King and Mme. de Verneuil may well have been occasionally delayed, and it was at this time, we think, that Henriette, in some acute fit of despondency, fearing that, her child being dead, the King might altogether forsake her, addressed him the long, undated letter to which we previously referred.†

“SIRE,

“I am reduced to the misfortune which a great hero always caused me to fear. It is necessary for me to confess, however, that I owed that fear to my knowledge of myself, since the great difference between my station and yours constantly threatened me with the change which has now precipitated me from the heaven to which you had raised me down to the earth where I was found by you.

“This does not mean, Sire, that I attribute this mortal fall more to fortune than to a displeasure which has nothing in common with the work of fate; for my happiness depended more on you than on the power of destiny, to which I will not ascribe the cause of my grief, since it pleases you that this should be the price of the public desires of France for your marriage; a grief which I am constrained to confess, not because you have to fulfil the desire of your subjects, but because your nuptials will be the funeral of my life, and subject me to the power of a cruel discretion which will banish me from your royal presence, even as from your heart. So that I may not

\* It comprised the greater part of the present department of the Ain.

† It does not figure in the King's collected correspondence, but in Dreux du Radier's time it was preserved at the Bibliothèque Ste. Geneviève.



henceforth know merely the scornful glances of those who have seen me in your good graces, I prefer, by far, to suffer in freedom in my loneliness, rather than breathe with fear in a great assemblage. That is a disposition which your generous heart fostered in me, and a courage with which you inspired me, and which, as you have never taught me to humiliate myself in misfortune or make of it a yoke, does not allow me to return to my former condition.

“I here speak to you but in sighs, O my King, my lover, my all ! As for my other secret lamentations, your Majesty can divine my thoughts since you know my soul so well. . . . Now, Sire, in my inevitable exile there remains to me but the sole glory of having been loved by the greatest monarch of the earth, by a King who was willing to lower himself to such a degree as to give the title of mistress to his servant and subject ; by a King of France, I say, who only recognizes the King of Heaven, and who, here below, has none equal to himself. . . . If it be a familiar practice for Kings to retain a recollection of that which they have loved, keep in remembrance, Sire, a *damoyelle* who was yours, and (save what she allowed on your sole promise) has had as much power [control?] over her honour as your Royal Majesty has over my [her] life. Sire,

“From your humble servant, subject creature, and (shall I say ?) forgotten lover,

“HENRIETTE DE BALSAC.”

If, as is surmised, the above letter was written in the summer of 1600, it seems to indicate that Henriette, confronted both by her child's death and by all that had been done already in the matter of Henri's marriage to Marie de' Medici, clung to the idea of at least remaining his mistress if she could not become his wife. The King certainly missed her, and endeavoured to dry her tears by repeated protestations of his love, and all sorts of promises, saying, for instance, that if he could not possibly escape from the political marriage arranged for him, he would procure her a high position by marrying her to a Prince of the blood royal ! At one moment he even went so far as to suggest Charles Gonzaga, Duke de Nevers, as a suitable husband for her, but that nobleman unkindly forestalled His Majesty's

gracious intentions by marrying Catherine de Lorraine, daughter of the Duke de Mayenne.

As soon as Henriette could travel the King wrote to her to come southward and join him. This he did some time in August, for on the 20th of that month we find him instructing La Varenne to accompany Henriette on her journey. We reproduce that letter (which is not in the collected correspondence) in the original French, in order that the reader may judge for himself how the King often wrote—that is, with a royal disregard for spelling, grammar, and punctuation :

“La Varane je vous fay ce mot pour vous dyre que Dieu mercy cete vylle cest remyse an mon obeyssance no come suyes du duc de Savoye mes come mes suyes quy ne veullent plus vyvre que sous ma domynacyon tant yls ce sont byen trouvés de celles de mes predecesseurs, vous acompaygneres Me la marquyse de Verneule et vyendres avec elle me mandant tous les jours le lyeu ou elle vyendra coucher et de ces nouvelles bon soyr je man vays myeus dormyr que ie nay fet depuys que ie suys ycy ce dimanche au soyr xxme aut aus fausbours de Chambéry.

“HENRY.”\*

Thus Henriette went southward, and on reaching Lyons made as triumphal an entry into that city as Diana of Poitiers had made many years previously. At the neighbouring *bourg* of Charbonnières she had found a royal present awaiting her : a number of standards taken by the King's forces from the enemy and sent to her, no doubt, in the same spirit as the banners of Coutras had long ago been sent to Corisanda. But Henriette was an intelligent woman, and though she certainly

\* In the collection of the Count de Bagneux. Translation:—“La Varane, I write you this note to tell you that, thank God, this town [Chambéry] has again placed itself under obedience to me, not as subjects to the Duke of Savoy, but as my subjects, who wish to live only under my dominion, so well off did they find themselves under that of my predecessors. You are to accompany Madame the Marchioness de Verneuil and come with her, sending me every day word of the place where she will sleep and news of her. Good night, I am going to sleep better than I have done since I have been here. This Sunday evening, twentieth August, in the faubourgs of Chambéry.

“HENRY.”

carried the flags into Lyons, she immediately afterwards caused them to be ceremoniously presented, as on the King's behalf, to the ancient church of St. Jean.

It was at La Côte St. André, on the road to Grenoble, that she and Henri eventually met, and they immediately began to quarrel, not, however, on account of the approaching royal marriage, but on account, we are told, of Mlle. de la Bourdaisière or Mlle. de la Chastre. It is generally supposed that those two demoiselles had merely been passing flames of the King's, such as Henriette after the lapse of several months could hardly have felt jealous about; but it occurs to us as being well within the bounds of possibility that one of those young persons may have accompanied the irrepressible Henri on his campaign. *Inde irae.* However, the King and the favourite were reconciled, it seems, by the obliging intervention of Bassompierre, and thereupon betook themselves to Grenoble, whence, a little later, they repaired to Chambéry.

In that latter town Henriette entered—or perhaps it is preferable to say, from the standpoint of impartiality, was inveigled—into a fresh intrigue. Although the cunning little hunchback Duke of Savoy was being defeated on all sides, he still hoped to save himself by stirring up dissension in France; and thus Mme. de Verneuil was approached by one of his secret agents, a Capuchin called Father Hilaire, whose real name was Alphonse Travail. This individual's scheme was to deal the French monarch a severe blow by raising the question of the promise of marriage given to Henriette in such a way as to prevent the marriage with Marie de' Medici. Briefly, this was a renewal of the negotiations which the Duke of Savoy had personally attempted at the time of his stay at Fontainebleau; and Mme. de Verneuil seems to have lent herself to them readily enough. The Duke was to pay her an extremely large sum of money, and Father Hilaire was to take the King's marriage promise to Rome and lay it before the Pope.

It has been said that Henri was a party to this scheme, and that as he did not want Marie de' Medici herself, but only her dowry, it would have pleased him if his marriage with the latter had been invalidated. Certain it is that Father Hilaire went to Rome provided with letters from the King, accrediting him

as an agent there, and we shall presently see the result of his negotiations. But either Henri was deceived respecting the real purpose of the Capuchin's journey, or else he embarked in the intrigue simply with the object of recovering possession of the document for which he had hitherto repeatedly but vainly applied.

Meantime, in spite of his *liaison* with Henriette he was writing numerous love-letters to his future wife. Marie de' Medici was at that time twenty-seven years of age. "She is a light brown beauty," wrote the Duchess de Bouillon to the Duchess de la Trémoille on October 19, 1600, "she has rather thick lips, black eyes, a large forehead, and plenty of *embonpoint*. There is an expression of great gentleness on her face, but nothing which approaches the beauty of the late Duchess de Beaufort." Marie's mother, it may be added, had been the Archduchess Joan of Austria, and from her she had inherited the Hapsburg lip and chin, as well as her fair hair and brilliant complexion, while from her father, Francesco de' Medici—the lover of the famous Bianca Capello—she had derived her intelligent brow and assured glance, as well, too, as her tendency to stoutness.

Henri knew little about her personal appearance save what he had learnt from an official portrait which had been sent to him from Florence, and which may have been as deceptive as the one of Anne of Cleves sent many years previously to his English namesake. However, two of his envoys, Alincourt and Frontenac, gave him good accounts of the Princess, and he expressed himself as quite satisfied. In fact on July 11, at the outset of the Savoy war, and only a few days after Henriette's accident at Fontainebleau, he had written to Marie de' Medici: "Frontenac has pictured you to me in such a manner that I don't merely love you as a husband ought to love his wife, but as a passionate *serviteur* should love his mistress. That is the title I shall give you until you reach Marseilles, where you will change it for a more honourable one. I shall not allow any opportunity to pass without writing to you, and assuring you that my keenest desire is to see you and have you near me. Believe it, mistress mine, and believe that every month will seem to me a century. I received a letter in French from you

this morning ; if you wrote it without help, you are already a great mistress of the language."

On July 24 he again writes to Marie, advising her that he is sending her some dolls dressed in the French fashion, and promising to provide her with a first-rate tailor. He also asks her to make and send him a favour, as he is resolved to wear none save one of hers during the war in which he has embarked. He tells her, too, of the mineral water he drinks in order to keep himself in good health, expresses solicitude for her health also, and concludes with the hope that when they are married they will have offspring "that will make our friends laugh and our enemies weep."

On August 23—that is, three days after writing to La Varenne to bring Mme. de Verneuil to him—the King informs his *fiancée* that he is sending the Duke de Bellegarde to Florence to act as his proxy at their wedding ; and the terms in which he speaks of the Duke seem to indicate that he has quite forgotten the jealousy which possessed him in the early days of his passion for Gabrielle d'Estrées :

"My beautiful mistress, I am sending you my grand equerry with all necessary procurations for our marriage. He the more desired to make this journey as he knows that he could never make one that would be more agreeable to me or more useful to the welfare of my kingdom and all my good servants, among whom, in addition to being in the first rank, he is my particular creature, and always remains near me, so that nothing whatever is hidden from him."

Writing again on the morrow, the King indulges in a little characteristic gasconading: "I thank you, my beautiful mistress, for the present you have sent me. I shall fix it to my head-gear if we have a fight, and give a few sword thrusts for love of you. I think you would willingly exempt me from giving you that proof of my affection, but as for what pertains to the acts of soldiers I do not ask the advice of women." Both in that letter and in the previous one Henri begs the Princess Marie to expedite her coming, and on September 3, he again writes: "Hasten your journey as much as you can. If it were fitting for one to say that one is in love with one's wife, I would tell you that I am extremely in love with you." On September 16

he writes thanking his *fiancée* for the present of a fine horse ; on the 22nd he sends her another love letter, and on the 30th he addresses her for the first time as “ My wife,” probably because he was aware that by the time she received this letter at Florence the wedding would have taken place. It was, indeed, solemnized on October 5.

Thus, canonically and legally, Henri is again a married man. But that does not prevent him from writing *billets doux* to Henriette, who at this moment is at Lyons. On October 11 he sends her two letters, one beginning *mon menon*, and saying that he fears he will not see her before Sunday, and that the interval will seem longer to him than to her ; while in the other letter he writes : “ My dear Heart,—Since I could not kiss you, I have kissed your letter a thousand times. You may be sure I shall have much to say to you. It could not be otherwise, as we are so well together. . . . But this is too much talk, wet as I am. Good night, heart, heart of mine ; I kiss and kiss thee again a million times.” That being written, however, his Majesty resumes his loving correspondence with the wife whom he has not yet seen.

In December the Duke of Savoy, being virtually starved out in the midst of his mountains, was compelled to withdraw into Piedmont, and Henri thereupon hastened to Lyons, where Marie de' Medici had now arrived. Before pursuing our narrative of the King's domestic affairs, it is as well to mention that early in the following year Cardinal Aldobrandini offered the mediation of the Pope between France and Savoy, and peace was at last restored by Charles Emmanuel surrendering to France the whole tract of territory lying between the southern Jura, the Rhône, and the Saône (otherwise the department of the Ain), as well as Château Dauphin in Dauphiné. In the course of the negotiations there was some leakage respecting the Duke of Savoy's intrigues with various French nobles ; and Biron, who was the most compromised of all, found it necessary to make some confession of the manner in which he had been tempted, and to cast himself on the King's mercy. Henri generously pardoned him, without even dismissing him from his service, for he afterwards sent him as ambassador to England and Switzerland ; but Biron, unfortunately, was not a man of honour, for,

as we shall presently see, he became involved in another conspiracy which cost him his life. At the period with which we are dealing the King himself does not seem to have suspected that not only had a man whom he had loaded with benefits contemplated treachery towards him, but that his mistress, Mme. de Verneuil, had also been involved in the intrigue. That discovery was only made at the time when she, like Biron, again ventured to conspire.

Let us now return to Henri when he hurries to Lyons to meet his wife. He reached the city gates at a rather late hour on the evening of Saturday, December 9. The gates were closed, it was freezing hard, and an hour elapsed, says Michelet, before the King could gain admittance. Repairing at once to Marie de' Medici's residence, "and being directed to the room where she sat at supper, he there watched her, concealing himself behind M. de Bellegarde, nor would he disclose his presence until Marie had retired to her chamber. Having knocked at the door of this, Henri made himself known to his wife, overwhelmed her with caresses, and even embraced her companion, Leonora Galigai, *à la française*. That done, however, he declared that there was for him neither chamber nor bed in the Queen's residence, of which she signified her understanding."\* On the morrow, the nuptial ceremony, previously performed by proxy at Florence, was repeated, Aldobrandini, the Cardinal-Legate, officiating.

The honeymoon was spent at Lyons and lasted for rather more than a month, during which time, moreover, the King occupied himself with various affairs of State, notably the position with regard to Savoy. He appeared to be very well satisfied with his wife, whom he continually praised to his courtiers, but no sooner had she set out on a slow state progress towards Paris than he rode post haste to Fontainebleau, where he arrived on January 21, and immediately cast himself into the arms of Mme. de Verneuil, who was there awaiting him.

When, on the evening of February 9, the new Queen at last reached Paris, she found the Louvre so dingy and so ill-furnished—little, if anything, having been renewed there for a score of years previously—that she felt she could not be

\* Batiffol's *Marie de Medicis*.

comfortable in such a place (accustomed as she was to Florentine elegances and luxuries), until a good deal of work had been executed. Accordingly she installed herself in the first instance at the mansion of Cardinal de Gondi, then the finest private residence in Paris, and it was there that those Princes and Princesses, nobles and other high personages, who had not waited upon her at Lyons, came to pay her their respects. She was well aware that her husband had a mistress, but she scarcely expected that the Marchioness de Verneuil would be presented to her and become a more or less frequent attendant at Court. It was, however, the King's intention that this should happen, though he was not prepared to carry matters so far as they were afterwards carried by our Charles II, who compelled Catherine of Braganza to accept Lady Castlemaine as a Lady of her Bedchamber.

Looking about him for a suitable *grande dame* who might be willing to undertake the duty of presenting his mistress to his wife, Henri first thought of Diane, Duchess d'Angoulême,\* an illegitimate daughter of his predecessor, Henri II, and that lady, not daring to refuse compliance, was momentarily at a loss as to how she might avoid the performance of what she regarded as a very unpleasant duty. She finally adopted the only possible device, which was to feign illness and take to her bed. Henri then bethought him of the Duchess de Nemours,† whose grandson, the Prince de Joinville, he had pardoned for his murderous attack on the Duke de Bellegarde; and Mme. de Nemours felt constrained to obey his Majesty, though by

\* Diane de France, Duchess d'Angoulême and de Châtelherault, Countess de Ponthieu and du Limousin, was born in 1538 in Northern Italy, her mother being a Piedmontese. Very accomplished, knowing Latin and Spanish as well as Italian and French, and proficient as a musician, she also played an important part in public affairs during the religious wars. She died in January, 1619, after seeing seven Kings on the French throne.

† This Madame de Nemours, previously mentioned on p. 217, was none other than Anne of Este, daughter of Ercole II, Duke of Ferrara, and wife, in the first instance, of François, Duke de Guise, by whom she became the mother of Henri le Balafre, the Duke de Mayenne and Cardinal Louis de Lorraine. Left a widow in 1563, she was married three years later to Jacques, Duke de Nemours, of the House of Savoy. The Nemours who defended Paris against Henri de Navarre in 1590 was her son by that second union. Born in 1531, she died in 1607.



doing so she gained the enmity of Marie de' Medici for the remainder of her days. Accompanied, then, by this Princess of the House of Lorraine, Henriette presented herself at the Hôtel de Gondi.

"May I have the honour of presenting to your Majesty, the Marchioness de Verneuil," said Mme. de Nemours, as, making an *obeissance*, she drew near to Marie de' Medici, by the side of whom the King was standing.

He turned towards his wife: "Mademoiselle is my mistress," he said to her; "she will be your most obedient and submissive servant."

The Queen—all this is taken from one of the despatches of Contarini, the Venetian Ambassador—remained silent and impassive, whilst Madame de Verneuil prepared to bow. But the King placed his hand upon her head and compelled her to kneel and touch with her lips the hem of the Queen's robe.\*

As the favourite rose again a flash of resentment darted from her eyes. It is doubtful whether she ever forgave the affront to which she had been subjected in presence of the whole Court. For nine years she helped to turn the domestic life of Henri and his consort into a veritable hell upon earth.

\* Bibliothèque Nationale: *Dépêches vénitiennes, filza 42*. In some other accounts the King's first words are given as: "Mademoiselle *has been* my mistress"—which version certainly seems the more probable one.

## X

### HENRIETTE D'ENTRAGUES

#### II. AMBITION AND FALL

Henriette and Leonora Galigai—Concini—Birth of the Dauphin and of Gaston Henri de Verneuil—The King and his Children—Father Hilaire's Intrigues at Rome—Henriette's Impunity—The Joinville Letters and Mme. de Villars—Henriette's High Favour—The Ballet of the Virtues—Fall and Execution of Marshal Biron—Pardon of Auvergne—Accouchements of the Queen and Henriette—Gabrielle Angélique de Verneuil—Domestic Broils at the Louvre—Henri, falling ill, promises Amendment—Henriette to be the Queen's Sister—Count de Soissons' Export Tax—Rupture between the King and Henriette—She demands a Place of Safety—Sully's Negotiations with Henriette and with the Queen—The Entragues' Conspiracy—The King recovers his Promise of Marriage—His *Liaison* with Jacqueline de Bueil—Pardon of Entragues and Henriette—Return of Queen Marguerite to Paris—Plotting of Bouillon and others—Henri seizes Sedan—He is reconciled to Henriette—His Affair with Mlle. des Essars—Renewed Rupture with Henriette.

HENRIETTE D'ENTRAGUES was, as we have already indicated, a shrewd woman. Having been humiliated at her presentation to Marie de' Medici, and fearing, perhaps, lest worse should be in store for her, she felt it necessary to secure powerful support among those who were attached to the Queen's person. Marie had arrived in France accompanied by a certain Leonora Galigai, who had been her playmate in childhood and had remained beside her ever since. Lean and ugly, inclined to hysteria, this young person, the Queen's junior by a few years, exercised great influence with her. Her origin was obscure, but she was said to have been the daughter of a cabinet-maker and a fallen woman, though, according to her own account, her father, whom she admitted she had never seen, was a Florentine gentleman, her mother being a certain Caterina Dori. Leonora had become the playmate of Marie de' Medici owing to the

circumstance that the latter had found herself entirely isolated after her mother's death, her only surviving sister having married the Duke of Mantua. Another sister, and a brother also, had died some time previously.

Now, Henriette d'Entragues and Leonora Galigai were kindred souls, scheming and ambitious women; and each being in need of the other, they speedily came together and concluded an alliance. It was Leonora's ambition to become the Queen's Mistress of the Robes, a post which Henri was unwilling to give her, desiring to appoint a French lady in her stead. In fact, he selected both Mme. de Richelieu and Mme. de l'Isle for the office, but his wife would accept neither of them, it being her wish, indeed, that Leonora should have this particular appointment. One of the chief objections raised to it by the King was that only ladies of noble birth were allowed to ride in the Queen's coach, and it was then that Belisario Vinta, the Tuscan Secretary of State, declared that Leonora was *cittadina*, otherwise of good burgher birth, which at Florence was equivalent to noble rank.

Nevertheless, this Italian adventuress, for such she was, would have failed to secure the post she coveted had it not been for the influence of the King's favourite, Henriette d'Entragues. It is somewhat uncertain which of the two initiated the compact which was soon concluded. But each was in a difficulty. Henriette realized that the Queen was incensed with her and would do all she could to induce the King to cast her off; while Leonora, on her side, was threatened with nothing less than expulsion from France, that being the King's plan for getting rid of his wife's ugly favourite, who had already become unpopular with the French *noblesse*.

It should now be mentioned that another noteworthy person had come from Florence in the Queen's train. This was a certain Concino Concini, who, according to the legends, was the son of a draper or a carpenter, though in reality his grandfather had been the Florentine envoy at the Court of the Emperor Maximilian II, while his father had occupied one of the chief ministerial posts in Tuscany.\* Vinta, the Secretary

\* Full details on the subject of Concini's origin will be found in M. Batiffol's work on Marie de' Medici.

of State, was his uncle on the maternal side, and it was he who procured for Concini a post in Marie de' Medici's train, less, however, to further the interests than to get rid of the young man who, after failing egregiously in his studies at the University of Pisa, had soon dissipated the paternal fortune and made himself so notorious by a variety of vices that Florentine society had shut its doors in his face.

If, however, Concini was poor, ill-educated, and effeminately dissolute, he was also intelligent, greedy, and unscrupulous. He was of a nervous disposition, and the worries of his after life rendered him exceedingly irritable and excitable, but at the time of his coming to France, he showed himself an easy companion, with a light, airy way which would have been perfect but for a predisposition to boastfulness. Moreover, Concini was then very good looking, says M. Batiffol, "with a full, high forehead, an aquiline nose, a slight moustache curled elegantly upward, large eyes, arched brows and a regular mouth." Bent on making his way—he must be classed, as M. Batiffol says, in the category of the great adventurers—he had already endeavoured to ingratiate himself with both Marie de' Medici and her companion, Leonora, before their departure from Florence. The latter was dazzled by the attentions of so fine a gentleman, and speedily lost her heart to him. She was, no doubt, a very ugly creature, but her position as the *confidante* of the new Queen of France made her a very desirable *partie* for such a man as Concini. He therefore made love to her on the journey to Paris, and by the time they reached Avignon they had plighted their troth. The Queen, however, hesitated to authorize their marriage, and for a time their relations assumed a very equivocal character, which caused no little scandal among the royal party. In fact, after the arrival of Marie de' Medici in Paris, the King lost his temper in consequence of all the tittle-tattle, and curtly informed Leonora that he would give her a little money, have her married to Concini, and then pack them both out of the country. In this emergency, Leonora took council with her lover, and this led up to a bargain being struck with the royal favourite, Mme. de Verneuil.

Leonora, on her side, undertook to prevent the Queen from insisting on Henriette's dismissal, and to serve the favourite's

interests generally as far as might be in her power; while Henriette, for her part, covenanted not only to prevent the expulsion of Leonora and her lover, but to prevail on the King to sanction their marriage and residence in France and bestow on Leonora that appointment as Mistress of the Robes of which he had hitherto held her to be quite unworthy. This unholy alliance was carried into effect and proved perfectly successful, or at least Leonora secured the husband and the post she coveted, while the Queen's animosity towards Henriette was for a time kept in check. Henri unreservedly lent himself to this intrigue, which enabled him to reconcile duty with desire, that is to keep both his wife and his mistress. So well, apparently, did the arrangement satisfy him that he gave Leonora twenty thousand crowns on the occasion of her marriage, and even spoke of appointing Concini as a Gentleman of the Chamber. Thus began the astonishing rise of that unscrupulous pair, who like a couple of vampires gradually fastened themselves upon France. Their career reached its apogee after the death of Henri de Navarre, when Marie de' Medici created Concini Marquis d'Ancre and Marshal of France. But Nemesis was watching, and in 1617 there came his assassination as he was leaving the Louvre, followed by the burning of the predatory Leonora as a "sorceress," on the Place de Grève.\* Henriette, but for whom they would, in all probability, have been expelled from France before embarking on their career of plunder and infamy, survived them by many years.

But let us return to the *modus vivendi* which resulted from the alliance of Leonora and the favourite. When Marie de' Medici at last installed herself at the Louvre, the King provided his mistress with a house in front of the palace, greatly to his wife's annoyance and the scandal of a good many courtiers. Early in the autumn of 1601 both consort and favourite left the capital, the former repairing to Fontainebleau and the latter to her estate of Verneuil. It was at Fontainebleau on September 27 that the Queen gave birth to her first child, the

\* When she was asked at her trial by means of what charm she had gained such ascendancy over the mind of Marie de' Medici she is said to have answered, truthfully if sarcastically: "By the charm of a strong mind over a weak one." Batiffol states, however, that this remark was really made by her secretary, Andreas de Lizza, Abbot of Livry.

Dauphin, subsequently Louis XIII; and exactly a month later (October 27) Henriette also gave birth to a son, who received the Christian names of Gaston Henri.\* If the favourite was well pleased the Queen was naturally highly indignant. As for the King he evinced huge delight at the birth of these two children, and it is quite certain that however fickle Henri might be in his relations with women he possessed a well-developed bump of paternity. Nine days after the Queen's *accouchement* we find him writing to his mistress :

“ My DEAR HEART,

“ My wife is going on well and my son also, praise God. He has grown and filled out so much that he has become half as big again during the five days I did not see him. For my part I have slept remarkably well and am free from all pain save that of being absent from you, which though a grief to me is moderated by the hope of soon seeing you again. Good morrow, *mes chères amours*, always love your *menon*, who kisses your hands and lips a million times.”

The King was very anxious to be with Henriette at the time of her *accouchement*, and seeking for an excuse to quit the Queen, he availed himself of some little trouble which had arisen with the Court of Spain to make a journey to Calais, on the pretext that the Spanish troops in Flanders might make a raid on northern France. It appears that Queen Elizabeth was then at Dover, and it was suggested that the French monarch should cross the Channel to see her. But for some reason or other, perhaps because even Kings are not exempt from sea-sickness, Henri was unwilling to make the trip, and sent as his ambassador the seemingly repentant Biron.† That

\* He was appointed Bishop of Metz and Abbot of St. Germain des Prés in 1608 when, of course, he was only seven years old. In 1632, however, he renounced his bishopric and his orders. Thirty years later he was created a Duke and Peer of France, and in 1665 was sent on a mission to Charles II of England. He married Charlotte Séguier, daughter of the famous Chancellor, and widow of Sully's dissipated son, and survived until May, 1683. Having been “ legitimated ” by Henri IV the Court of Louis XIV went into mourning on his death, and the same compliment was paid to his widow's memory when she passed away in 1704. See also Appendix B.

† See p. 234, *ante*.

done, he was able to cut across country to Verneuil where, according to L'Estoille, he arrived on the day before the birth of his illegitimate son. "And the King," says the same chronicler, "kissed the child and dandled him, calling him his son, and saying that he was a finer child than that of the Queen, his wife, which he declared resembled the Medicis, being dark and stout as they were, whereat the Queen, being advised of the saying, did weep bitterly." Her grief turned to furious resentment when a little later her husband signified to her his intention that all his children—those he had by Gabrielle and by Henriette, as well as by herself—should be brought up together. All Marie's protests in that respect were fruitless, Henri's will ended by prevailing.\*

However, both Sully and his colleague, Nicolas IV de Neufville, Sieur de Villeroy and Minister of State, were anxious to get rid of the Marchioness de Verneuil. They fully realized that there would be no peace in the royal household so long as Henri's infatuation for his mistress continued. Villeroy, looking about him for a means of effecting Henriette's overthrow, at last directed his attention to that Father Hilaire who had gone to Rome to seek an audience of the Pope † respecting the promise of marriage given by the King to his favourite. Hilaire had presented himself before Cardinal d'Ossat, the French representative in the Eternal City, as though he were one of Henri's *confidants*, declaring, indeed, that his Majesty and himself were on such familiar terms as to "thee-and-thou" one another. Ossat was seemingly unable to fathom the exact motives of Father Hilaire's journey to Rome, but being full of suspicion he endeavoured to frustrate the Capuchin's attempts to obtain an audience of the Holy Father. Nevertheless, Hilaire proved successful, and Ossat failed to discover what had occurred at the interview. Thereupon, as Hilaire now proposed to return to France, the Cardinal endeavoured to prevent it by having him shut up in some Italian monastery. But the

\* Shortly after Henriette's *accouchement* we find the King writing to her: "*Mes chères amours*, Love me always and rest assured that you will always be the only one to possess my love. With those true words I kiss and re-kiss you a million times, and the little man as well."

† See p. 231, *ante*.

Capuchin again outwitted him, and succeeded in reaching Paris. There, however, he was overtaken by destiny in the person of M. de Villeroy, with whom Ossat had communicated.

Having been arrested, Hilaire was interrogated by the Papal Nuncio, and a perquisition among his belongings resulted in the discovery of two compromising letters written by Henriette. It seems certain that the wily monk had not lost his time at Rome. Jurists, if not the Pope, had told him (as we previously indicated) that the royal promise of marriage given to Mme. de Verneuil might make the union with Marie de' Medici null and void, and that the Marchioness might either choose her time and bring a suit for annulment, or await King Henri's death and then claim her rights and those of her son; while, as a third course, if the King were willing, she might take the place of Marie de' Medici should the latter die. All this came in one or another way to the Queen's ears, and she, in her turn, sought the opinion of various Roman canonists, who gave her the not very reassuring answer that, if the King's marriage should, indeed, be found invalid it was yet possible that the Dauphin's legitimacy might be affirmed.\*

Although it was patent that Henriette had authorized the steps taken by Father Hilaire at Rome, she incurred no punishment for doing so. It may be that Henri dreaded the production of the marriage promise (which was in the keeping of Henriette's father) and the consequences which might then ensue. It may be, as some have surmised, that he was privy to the intrigue, and had really authorized Hilaire's mission during some moment of infatuation with his mistress, and at a time when he had not yet met his wife and was uncertain whether he would be able to care for her. Again, it may be that his mistress cajoled him with protests of affection, and that, linked to her as he was, not by any gay and generous passion such as had drawn him to Corisanda, or by such love as had bound him to Gabrielle, but, it must be said, by the shameful ties of materialistic depravity—it may be, we say, that he felt absolutely unable to give her up and was only too willing to overlook offences in order that he might not lose her. That last view, it should be added, is the one generally entertained by historians.

\* Batiffol, *l.c.*



In any case, matters went no further. The King and his favourite remained on the same terms as before, and to the infinite disgust of the zealous Villeroy orders were issued for the release of Father Hilaire. The Capuchin came to a dreadful end, however. Like most narrow-minded women Marie de' Medici was not merely obstinate (as Batiffol has it), she was also vindictive; and thus it came to pass in after years that the odious monk who had dared to seek weapons by which her marriage might be invalidated and her children bastardized, was broken on the wheel and then committed to the flames, on the charge of complicity in a plot to poison her.

Villeroy's attempt to get rid of Mme. de Verneuil had failed. The next effort to do so was made by a woman, that Juliette Hippolyte d'Estrées, Marchioness and later Duchess de Villars, to whom we frequently alluded in telling the story of her sister Gabrielle. The King had paid her some attention in the latter's lifetime, and for a moment, on the "deceased wife's sister" principle, Juliette had imagined that she would be offered Gabrielle's place. She was not at all pretty, however, having it is said, only her comparative youth and her hair in her favour; and the King, having contracted a *liaison* with Henriette, treated her merely in a friendly way.

It is doubtful whether Mme. de Villars, in plotting against Henriette, acted entirely on her own initiative, under feelings of jealous envy, or whether there was some complicity on the part of the Queen, who, of course, also desired to get rid of the favourite. At all events, Mme. de Villars made love to the Prince de Joinville, who, it will be remembered, had been Henriette's lover at the time when she first attracted the King's attention. Joinville, flattered by the partiality which Mme. de Villars evinced for him, responded to her advances, and with a desire, perhaps, to punish Henriette for having preferred the King to himself, he ended by giving Mme. de Villars a number of letters which, he told her, the royal favourite had written to him. The story runs (we do not say it is true) that Mme. de Villars thereupon gave the King an appointment at a church, and there handed him the letters in question. In any case they reached him and he became furious, talking of ordering the immediate execution of Joinville, and of banishing his mistress

after confiscating all he had given her. Henriette, however, boldly protested that the letters were false, and Joinville, fearing for his life or liberty, thereupon confirmed that statement, declaring, through his uncle the Duke de Mayenne, that he had never wished to give Mme. de Verneuil offence, and that whatever he had done had been solely inspired by his extreme passion for Mme. de Villars. Briefly, in order to satisfy her, though he really held no letters from the royal favourite, he had caused some to be concocted, employing for that purpose an individual, who, according to some accounts, was his own secretary, and according to others that of the young Duke de Guise. On this individual being produced, he confirmed Joinville's statement, and was promptly committed to prison.

Some doubt attaches to both sides of the story. Those writers who are inclined to favour Henriette believe the letters to have been concocted, even as Joinville stated, whilst others think that they were authentic, and that the story of their being forged was invented by Joinville when he found himself in danger. L'Estoille, who is entitled to a hearing on the subject, writes as follows, under date December, 1601: "In this same month in reference to some letters full of love and affection, and supposed to have been written by Madame la Marquise de Verneuil to Monsieur le Prince de Joinville, which letters he had skilfully had forged by a secretary, who for that reason was shut up in the Bastille, the Prince contested [the authenticity of] these letters, which had been placed in the King's hands by Madame la Marquise de Villars, to whom the said Prince de Joinville, who was making love to her, had given them by way of gallantry and for a joke, though he thereby risked both his fortune and his life, for his Majesty, in great anger (greater indeed than he had ever been seen in before), gave orders to have the said Sieur de Joinville poniarded, and commanded M. de Rosny [Sully] to dismiss the Marchioness and take from her all he had given her. But the Marchioness's innocence being at last recognized, the Prince de Joinville having disculpated her of everything, and the whole farce being discovered, which was that he had played a game (very improperly, however) in order to win his mistress's favour, peace was made with the Marchioness, though many would have pitied

her less for her ill fortune than they would have pitied Montauban \* had he been hanged. However, the Prince de Joinville was obliged to go away, particularly as the King declared that he did not wish to see him, and the Marchioness, on the contrary, was triumphally reinstated [in her position] to the point of sleeping at the Louvre; and on the day of the Holy Innocents, in testimony of her own innocence, she said, she gave a magnificent feast to the ladies of the Court."

In whatever way one looks at the affair there is, as we have said, an element of doubt in it. Now, an accused person is always entitled to the benefit of the doubt, so let us in this instance extend it to Henriette. Her royal lover, for his part, appears to have been convinced that the letters were forged. Mme. de Villars was exiled from Court, and not allowed to return until 1604, whilst, as for Joinville, we find the King writing to him as follows, under date February 28, 1602:

"MY NEPHEW,

"You do right to confess your fault, which could not have been greater, bearing in mind myself and her whom it concerned. Since you regret that you offended me and beg me to forgive you, I will do so on the condition that you will behave better in the future. In proof of that get ready to go to Hungary with Monsieur le Duc de Mercœur when he returns there, and when he is ready to start on that journey I am willing that you should come to me, so as to be near me for three or four days, in order that before your departure I may make it known to everybody and yourself also, that it is my nature to love my relations when they are upright and well-behaved."

As our quotation from L'Estoille has indicated, Henriette's favour had become greater than ever. About the time of the Joinville *fracas*, Marie de' Medici, who was extremely fond of ballets, was arranging to dance in one which was to be called the Ballet of the Eight Virtues. Mme. de Verneuil, not content with a handsome present she received from the King when he made peace with her, particularly desired to take part

\* We have failed to identify the individual to whom L'Estoille alludes.

in this ballet, and although the unfortunate Marie de' Medici again protested, her husband insisted that his mistress should participate in the diversion. We do not know which particular virtue the sprightly Marchioness claimed to personify, but the ballet opened with a recitative written by Jean Bertaut, subsequently Bishop of Séz,\* in which figured some lines which Count de la Ferrière thinks must have referred to the power of Henriette's eyes. Bertaut, who is nowadays generally considered to have been the author of *Charmante Gabrielle*, undoubtedly celebrated Gabrielle's successor on certain occasions, but it seems to us that in this particular instance the eyes to which he refers in his verses may very well have been the Queen's:

"Flambeaux étincelans, clairs astres d'ici-bas,  
De qui les doux regards mettent les cœurs en cendre,  
Beaux yeux qui contraignent les plus fiers de se rendre,  
Ravissant aux vainqueurs le prix de leurs combats."

According to the *anecdoteurs* it was during the performance of this particular Ballet of the Virtues that when the King approached Bentivoglio, the Papal Nuncio, and asked him jovially what he thought of the sight, the prelate answered, "*Bellissimo e pericolosissimo*" ("most beautiful and extremely dangerous"), adding that he only dared to look at it with twinkling eyes, even as one looks at the sun. This, perhaps, was hardly correct on the part of a right reverend father when confronted by the Virtues. In later years Bentivoglio was less bashful with that beautiful Princess de Condé, who became the King's last infatuation, and who remarked one day with a sigh that it had always been her destiny to be loved by old men.

Those Louvre ballets were, so to say, danced on volcanoes, for plotting was always rife in one or another direction, the emissaries of Philip III of Spain displaying the greatest activity. Mme. de Verneuil's restless half-brother, the Count d'Auvergne, was ever lending himself to some fresh intrigue, and Biron relapsed into the same courses. Henri de La Tour d'Auvergne, Duke de Bouillon, once his sovereign's trusty friend, was drawn into their orbit by the baseless suggestion that the King had become

\* See *post*, Appendix C.

such a fervent Catholic since his marriage with the devout Florentine Princess that he was resolved to exterminate the Huguenots. Thus Bouillon, now one of the chief leaders of the Huguenot party, joined forces with Auvergne although the latter's attempts to stir up sedition were made in the interests of the fanatically Catholic Spanish monarch. Disaffection became rife in Touraine and Poitou, and in the spring of 1602 King Henri repaired to those provinces to devise measures for subduing the unrest. At this juncture revelations were made to him by the Baron de Luz and the Sieur de La Fin, the former agent of the Duke of Savoy, both of whom had lately been acting in the Spanish interests. Those revelations applied particularly to Biron and Auvergne, several letters written by the former being handed to the King. He thereupon wrote to Biron to meet him at Orleans on Corpus Christi day, but the Marshal devised an excuse for not doing so; and it was only after repeated summonses, and an intimation that if he did not come to the King the latter would have to go to fetch him, that on June 13 he at last presented himself at Fontainebleau, whither the Court had returned. Biron imagined that La Fin had made no revelations, and that the King really knew nothing positive concerning his plotting; and so, when his sovereign appealed to him to confess, he boldly affirmed that he had no confession to make, being absolutely guiltless. He was allowed twenty-four hours for reflection, and when on the morrow it was found that he obstinately adhered to the attitude he had taken up, Henri, who had been disposed to pardon him again, ordered his arrest. The wretched Count d'Auvergne was also at Fontainebleau at this time, and directly he heard of the Marshal's apprehension he endeavoured to escape. According to one account he was already on horseback when one of the King's gentlemen caught hold of the horse's bridle, while another compelled the traitor to alight and arrested him. Both he and Biron were sent to the Bastille, and the latter was arraigned before the Parliament of Paris.

In the course of the examinations to which Biron was subjected before his actual trial took place, the letters which La Fin had delivered up were produced, and he was asked if he acknowledged having written them. He thereupon made this

remarkable answer: "I cannot affirm whether they are all mine. In the case of Mme. la Marquise de Verneuil, when certain letters alleged to have been written by her to the Prince de Joinville, were produced, did she not at first exclaim: 'Has my hand betrayed my heart then?' And, after looking at them more attentively, did she not disown them?" By that answer the Marshal, of course, wished to suggest that he, like Henriette, was the victim of some forger.

When the Parliament was convoked to try him, all the Peers of France abstained from attending. It seemed to them that these proceedings, instituted against one of their number, were levelled at their order generally, and they would not participate in them. Convicted of treason, Biron was sentenced to death, and every effort made to save him proved fruitless. His old mother interceded on his behalf, and the King weakened more than once, but his ministers, particularly Sully and Villeroy, protested so strenuously against clemency, pointing out the absolute need of inflicting a severe lesson on those who hitherto had repeatedly conspired with impunity, that the law was allowed to take its course, and on July 31 Biron, who until his last moment expected a pardon, was beheaded in one of the courtyards of the Bastille.

So great was Bouillon's alarm at this juncture that he fled for a while from his stronghold of Sedan into Germany, while the wretched Auvergne was pardoned, thanks to the joint intercession of his step-sister Henriette, his father-in-law Constable de Montmorency, and his brother-in-law the Duke de Ventadour. To save his life and secure his freedom this "last of the Valois," as he was called, though that was not strictly accurate, offered to keep up his intercourse with the Court of Spain, worm out its secrets and reveal them to his sister's lover.

On the 22nd of November of that year, 1602, Marie de' Medici gave birth to a daughter, who was christened Elisabeth, and became, at the tender age of thirteen years, the wife of Philip IV of Spain. A couple of months after the Queen's *accouchement*, that is, on January 21, 1603, the Marchioness de Verneuil also gave birth to a daughter, who was christened Gabrielle Angélique, and who, on December 12, 1622, was married to Bernard de Nogaret, Marquis de la Valette and

second son of the Duke d'Épernon.\* Three days before that child's birth, Henri had caused the Parliament to register letters-patent by which he legitimated her brother, Gaston Henri, and somewhat later she also was legitimated.

All this greatly incensed Marie de' Medici. Owing to her husband's infatuation for Henriette the life of the royal pair was becoming a perfect hell. The Queen wept and stormed alternately, and on one occasion, carried away by her resentment, she went so far as to raise her hand against her husband's sacred person. Sully assures us that he caught her arm in time and arrested the blow, which may well be true. Among ordinary folk a blow dealt by a jealous wife to her unfaithful husband would be merely accounted an assault (to be expiated, in those days, by means of the ducking-stool), but in the case of Marie and Henri it would have been *lèse-majesté* of a high degree, and consignment to the Bastille or ignominious expulsion from France might well have ensued. Fortunately, then, the war between the royal couple was confined to words, bitter ones undoubtedly, for there is plenty of evidence to show that Marie de' Medici was a woman with a tongue. According to Sully and others she more than once treated her husband to curtain lectures, *à la* Mrs. Caudle, and he, in his dismay, jumped out of bed and sought a refuge in the room of one of his officers.

For a little while the Vert-galant, who dearly loved a quiet life, but (through his own fault, in domestic matters at any

\* Count de la Ferrière gives the bride's name as Marie Eugénie, but on what authority we cannot say, every other work that we have consulted mentioning her by the names of Gabrielle Angélique. The marriage took place during the reign of Louis XIII, who added 200,000 crowns to the 100,000 which Mme. de Verneuil gave her daughter by way of dowry. M. de la Valette (who became Duke d'Épernon after his elder brother's death) was a haughty, vicious, and rapacious individual. In a fit of jealousy he had struck Mile. de Verneuil in the presence of witnesses prior to their marriage, and it is said that Louis XIII tried to dissuade her from marrying such a man. She died in April, 1627, and several writers, including Mme. de Motteville, have expressed the opinion that she was poisoned by her husband, who speedily took another wife. For conspiring against Richelieu he was condemned to death, but succeeded in escaping to England, where he was favourably received by Charles I, who even created him a Knight of the Garter—perhaps the only instance in the history of that exalted order of a man under sentence of death being admitted as a member. See also Appendix B.

rate) never secured it, was at a loss how to pacify and silence his irate and nagging consort—with whom, let us hasten to add, we feel considerable sympathy. Fortunately, there came a diversion in the form of a serious outbreak at Metz, where the deputy-governor had so displeased the citizens that they had risen against him, and he had been obliged to shut himself up in the citadel, where he was besieged by the malcontents. Henri thereupon resolved to repair to Metz with a body of troops and suppress the sedition; and, partly to gratify the Queen and partly because he could seldom, if ever, make war unless some member of the fair sex was near him, he proposed to her that she should accompany him on his expedition. It was a delightful prospect that he offered to her. Madame la Marquise would be far away and—well, for a while, at all events—he and his cherished spouse would be all in all to one another. So they set out, and when peace and quietness had been restored at Metz they repaired to Nancy on a visit to Henri's sister, Catherine, Duchess de Bar.

On their return to Paris the King fell ill. He was now fifty years of age and had always led a very active and careless life, which, coupled with a morbid predisposition to gallantry, might well have taxed the health and strength of any man. On this occasion a chill led to nephritic colics followed by a passing stricture. In spite of the favourable report concerning the King's general condition which the royal physicians signed after his assassination, it is known that he suffered from several complaints in his later years, notably gout and indigestion, besides having a predisposition to vesical calculus. His illness in 1603 was at one moment regarded as very serious, and tended to draw him and his wife more closely together than before. She was an ambitious woman, anxious to govern, although lacking a real governing faculty, and it was her particular desire to secure full powers as Regent if her husband should predecease her. That alone would have inclined her to become reconciled with him, but during his illness he also promised to amend his ways, following in that respect the proverbial rhyme:

“The devil was sick, the devil a saint would be,  
The devil got well, the devil a saint was he.”



That is exactly what happened in King Henri's case, but Marie de' Medici was the more disposed to pass the sponge over the past as Mme. de Verneuil, who had come to Paris on hearing of her lover's illness, sought an interview with her—probably through the medium of Leonora Galigai—and also promised to give her no cause for offence in future. It is impossible to say how far Henriette's promise was sincere. In any case, it must have been dictated by self-interest. If the King should die she would have everything to fear from Marie de' Medici ; and thus her move was a politic one. The Queen is said to have replied to her that if she kept her word she would treat her as a sister ; and it certainly seems that Henriette did about this time make an effort to break off her connection with the King.

But he, having recovered, became furious when the favourite closed her doors to him ; and, refusing to accept her explanations, he came to the conclusion that there must be another man in the case. His suspicions fell on the Count de Soissons, his sister's old lover, who it appears certain, however, was merely mixed up with Mme. de Verneuil in financial affairs, he having sought her influence to secure the privilege of levying a tax of fifteen *sols* on every bale of linen sent out of the kingdom. Such a tax, by the way, agreed with the "protectionist" theories of the time, but the idea that it should be levied for the benefit of M. de Soissons and the favourite, who was to have had a share of the plunder, was nonsensical, and although the King had promised Soissons the privilege on the condition that the total amount levied by him should not exceed 50,000 crowns a year, Sully protested hotly against any such arrangement.\* A great dispute arose, and on the matter being fully explained to the King he decided that Soissons should not be granted the promised privilege. Henriette, however, had so warmly supported the Count in this affair that the King's jealous instincts were fully aroused ; and yielding to a fit of pique, he told her that she need no longer rely on a sum of 100,000 crowns which he had promised to enable her to

\* Sully estimated that the tax would yield, not 50,000 but 300,000 crowns per annum, rightly adding that it would be most prejudicial to the trade of several provinces.

purchase the county of Joigny. Thereupon, according to Sully, she retorted, "You become insupportably jealous as you grow older. There is no longer any means of being at peace with you."

"Well, then, get you back to Verneuil," the King replied, turning his back upon her.

She did as she was told (August, 1603), but Henri could not cast her off, and there is reason to believe that before long they again met privately, probably when the King was on his way to or from Normandy in the latter part of that year. When the Duchess de Bar died in the following February, leaving no children, in such wise that some of her property reverted to the King, he presented a house at St. Germain-en-Laye, which had belonged to her, to the Queen, and another, at Fontainebleau, to Henriette, with the result that the unfortunate Marie de' Medici was again incensed—as well she might be—at her husband's mistress being treated on a footing of equality with herself. And not only was the Queen incensed, but, feeling that Henriette had utterly failed to keep the promises she had made her, she this time spoke to her *confidante* Leonora of her intention to revenge herself. Leonora, however, wishing, for purposes of her own, to keep on good terms with the favourite, seems to have warned her of what was brewing, besides telling her husband, Concini, who on his side communicated everything to the King. Then, as Count de la Ferrière relates, Henriette, alarmed, applied to her lover to assign her some place of safety, suggesting for instance one of the Norman fortresses previously included in the appanage of the Duchess de Bar. Henri replied by proposing the castle of Caen,\* where M. de Bellefonds was governor, but the favourite distrusted him and suggested some castle in Poitou. That, however, was still a somewhat disaffected region (the Duke de la Trémoille, who had great possessions there, was one of the plotters associated with Entragues and Auvergne), and, probably on that account, the King was unwilling to grant his mistress's request.

A complete rupture ensued, Henriette again retiring to

\* The King had been at Caen during the previous year. At that time the castle comprised within its precincts a magnificent palatial pleasure residence.

Verneuil and refusing to see the King. The latter was also at this moment on the worst possible terms with his wife, and thus Sully was called in to bring about a *modus vivendi*. His account of the affair is confirmed by others. To put it briefly, he was charged to inform Henriette that she must absolutely conform to the King's wishes or else he would have nothing more to do with her, but would simply abandon her to disgrace. She retorted by declaring that she would only renew the *liaison* provided she were placed in such a position that she might have no occasion to fear giving or receiving offence, that implying, of course, that she should be allotted some place of safety to which she might in case of necessity retire. Sully appears to have tricked her in regard to the exact wording of the stipulations which it was proposed to impose upon the King, with the result that the latter at first became very angry, much to Sully's satisfaction, his desire being to see the favourite entirely cast off.

As regards the Queen, Sully apparently endeavoured to prevail on her to accept things as she found them, and to accustom herself to the King's disposition, he being "free and easy," fond of laughing, of hearing himself praised, of being caressed, and of being spoken to in a cheerful manner. The minister tells us that he quoted the example of the Duchess de Guise, who always tried to please the King, and told him amusing stories, in such wise "that he often leaves you [the Queen] to go and chat with her, and says that you, instead of coming forward to kiss him, praise him and talk to him gaily, receive him with frigid looks, as if he were an ambassador." All that, according to the minister, was the cause of their "minds becoming embittered and of the worst ensuing."

Marie de' Medici, however, declared that her vexation and anger, which alone caused what people blamed in her, sprang from the King's love affairs; and that she had not enough command over herself to endure that Mme. de Verneuil should speak disrespectfully of her, or talk of her children as if she wished to establish a comparison between them and hers (the Queen's); besides which, being informed of intrigues against the King's service, both in France and abroad, in which Mme. de Verneuil was connected with her father and her brother, she

could not endure it that the King should in no wise punish them. However, Marie de' Medici made some attempt, it seems, to conform to Sully's advice in the hope of thereby weaning her husband from his infatuation.

There came a moment when it seemed as if the *liaison* would be broken off, less, however, on account of any efforts of the Queen's than on account of the course which Henriette took in denying herself to her royal lover. Early in April, 1604, we find the King writing to her: "If your words were followed by effects I should not be so dissatisfied with you as I am. Your letters speak solely of affection; but your behaviour towards me is nothing but ingratitude. For five years and more you have persisted in that style of life which everybody finds strange. Judge what it must be to me, whom it touches so closely. It is useful to you that people should think I love you, and shameful to me that they should see I suffer because you do not love me. That is why you write to me and I reply to you by silence. If you will treat me as you ought to do I shall be more than ever yours; if not, keep this letter as the last you will ever receive from me, who kisses your hands a million times."

No arrangement of a kind to satisfy the King having been arrived at, he wrote to Sully, on Good Friday, April 16, saying, so that minister avers: "Since Madame de Verneuil is resolved on what you write me, I also am resolved on what I told you on Monday. I shall inform her of my intentions, and show that I have more command over myself than is said, and I do not think that this news will trouble her thoughts, which I would not do during these good days."

It must be mentioned that one of the causes of the disagreement between the King and Henriette was the latter's real or affected piety. It is well known that women who have led more or less loose lives frequently end by becoming extremely religious. The history of the upper circle of the French *demi-monde* abounds in such examples. In Henriette's case she gave out, either sincerely or in a calculating spirit, that she could only obtain forgiveness for the mortal sin in which she had been living by a great abundance of religious practices, penances, novenas, the rigid observance of fasts,

jubilees and so forth, and it repeatedly happened, as the King's letters show, that those matters clashed with his desire for her company. Thus, again and again, he was subjected to the torments of Tantalus, and his passion became exasperated. It may be, as we previously suggested, that Henriette's behaviour was inspired by the thought that if she humoured her lover's every whim he would soon grow tired of her, whereas, by the course she decided to adopt, she might attach him to her more closely than ever, and wring from him also more than he would otherwise have given.

It would seem, however, that at the last extremity, when it really appeared as if she was in danger of losing her royal lover altogether, she softened somewhat towards him. At all events, some kind of reconciliation was patched up, and as Henri had given her a house at Fontainebleau, he wrote asking her to come to that locality and bring her children with her in order that he might carry out his intention of having them brought up with his wife's. When Marie de' Medici heard of all this she absolutely refused to receive Henriette, whereupon the King, in a tantrum, rode off to meet his mistress on her way and, getting into her coach, proceeded with her to Paris. At this the Queen's friends were greatly alarmed and prevailed upon her to write her husband an affectionate and judicious letter, which induced him to return to her.

But a very different kind of storm was now brewing. An individual named L'Hoste, one of the secretaries of Villeroy, the Minister of State, was accused of having delivered copies of important papers to the Spanish ambassador. Before he could be arrested he took to flight, and would probably have made good his escape had he not been drowned in attempting to cross the Marne. Henriette's brother, the Count d'Auvergne, knew more of this affair than he cared to admit, for another conspiracy, in which, as we shall see, his stepfather, M. d'Entragues, participated, was now afoot. Auvergne probably felt that he might be suspected; and in order to divert the King's attention by drawing, as it were, a red herring across the track, and thereby save himself, he went to Henri and informed him that he had made an important discovery, namely, that M. de Bellegarde, the Grand Equerry, was

betraying him with Henriette. She, on being confronted with her stepbrother, indignantly repelled the charge, whereupon Auvergne asserted that his information had been derived from a certain M. de Sigognes. The latter, who was present at the confrontation, bluntly answered that the Count d'Auvergne had lied. A duel would have ensued had not the King forbidden Sigognes to fight. As for the wretched Auvergne, who, in his alarm for himself, had been prepared to sacrifice his stepsister, to whose interposition he had once previously owed his liberty and perhaps also his life, he hurriedly fled from Paris into central France.

Almost immediately afterwards the King received an autograph letter from James I of England, in which he was advised to have a watch set on a certain Morgan, who had gone to France as a secret agent of the Court of Spain. Morgan was arrested, and some compromising letters were found on him. Among them, so the King informed his mistress, were some written by her father, and he wished to have them explained. She replied that they were, perhaps, letters to introduce Morgan to her cousin, the Duke of Lennox.\* The King rejoined, however, that such was not the case, for they were letters in which her name was mentioned. M. d'Entragues was next summoned, and after an interview with him the King, who as yet did not believe in any guilty complicity on Henriette's part, told her it was certain that her father had been engaged in some intrigue with Morgan, and he pressed her to tell him what it was. She pleaded that she knew nothing of the matter; but the King, after a second private conversation with M. d'Entragues at the Tuileries, reproached her with having deceived him, adding that her father had been negotiating with Spain on her behalf, and that she must surely know all about it. Once more she protested the contrary, whereupon Henri, remarking that her father would dine with her that day, urged her to prevail on him to reveal everything.

Henri then betook himself to St. Germain, to which locality

\* Ludovick Stuart, second Duke of Lennox and Richmond, son of Esmé Stuart, the first Duke, by Catherine de Balzac d'Entragues, sister of Henriette's father. Born in 1574, the Duke of Lennox was appointed ambassador to France by James I.

M. d'Entragues likewise repaired after dining with his daughter. All he would admit to the King, however, was that as Henriette's position was already precarious and might become one of real danger if his Majesty should unhappily die, the question had arisen of providing her with some safe retreat, and that the Prince of Orange, the Duke of Lennox, and Taxis, the Spanish ambassador, had been sounded on the subject. And M. d'Entragues added that the Spanish envoy, knowing that the King had formerly given Henriette a promise of marriage, had offered to pay him 200,000 crowns in exchange for it. He, Entragues, however, as in duty bound, had promptly refused the proffered bribe. The King pretended to believe this explanation, and Entragues, on being allowed to depart, promptly shut himself up in his stronghold of Marcoussis.

As a matter of fact, he was involved in a real conspiracy, one somewhat wild and fantastic, but embracing in one or another degree such men as Auvergne, Bouillon, La Trémoille, Lesdiguières, and perhaps Épernon, in addition to minor fry like Villeroy's secretary, L'Hoste, a certain Chevillard, Father Hilaire, and also Father Archange, that reputed son of Queen Marguerite,\* who had now become confessor to the King's mistress. It seems quite certain to us that Henriette was really privy to the affair, which was largely based on her royal lover's promise of marriage, by virtue of which Spain was to recognize her son, Gaston Henri, as Dauphin, and stir up a war of succession in France. In the event of success, the country would have been almost dismembered, as it was to have been cut up into great commands, where the chief conspirators would have exercised almost sovereign sway. In fact, France would have found herself in much the same position as Germany was, with her infinity of independent princelings, and, thus divided, she would no longer have been able to offer any effective opposition to the Spanish ascendancy in Europe. But the ambitious nobles who participated more or less in this plot, and others who would have joined it had it developed successfully, were not concerned about the interests of France as a whole. National patriotism did not exist in those days, and thus the conspirators thought only of their own immediate interests.

\* See p. 74, *ante*.

They saw the feudal system crumbling, and they were bent upon giving it a new lease of life and reducing the royal authority to such as it had been in a previous age. Some, moreover, were influenced by religious motives, desiring to make their own faith preponderant, many Huguenots being quite dissatisfied with the provisions of the Edict of Nantes, and lacking confidence in their King, as he had abjured what they deemed to be the only true religion.

As matters stood, the royal authority was more nominal than real. A Mayenne governed the Isle of France, a Guise governed Provence, an Épernon governed Saintonge, Angoumois and Limousin, a Trémoille governed Poitou, a Montmorency governed Guienne, a Nevers governed Champagne, a Longueville governed Picardy, and a Bouillon held the stronghold of Sedan. Under such conditions there certainly were chances of a conspiracy succeeding. We all know that the plotting of nobles still went on for many years, ever threatening, to more or less extent, the virtual dismemberment of the country; and although the policy of Richelieu in the succeeding reign led to a monarchical absolutism which, foreign as it was to the character of the nation, crumbled within a hundred and fifty years, it was nevertheless a beneficial policy, as it gave great impetus to the homogeneity of France.

It was certainly possible, however, that the conspiracy in which Entragues and Auvergne had engaged might fail. Time was needed to attract one and another great noble to the cause, and in the meanwhile all might be discovered and frustrated. Thus, in negotiating with Spain the leaders of the plot had stipulated for safe places of retreat, with honours and pensions in the event of failure.

Now, Entragues had shown great imprudence in speaking to the King about the promise of marriage for which Spain was willing to pay an extravagant price. That promise had been hanging over Henri's head like a sword of Damocles for several years, and he realized that the time had come to secure possession of it. He felt tolerably certain that it might be found at Entragues' stronghold of Marcoussis, where, moreover, decisive proofs of his criminal practices might also be discovered. The King sent, then, for the provost of the Marshals of France, whose



name is said to have been *Defunctis*,\* and inquired if he could effect an entry into the château of Marcoussis. The provost replied that it was too strong a place for any open attack on his part to succeed, but that he might possibly effect an entry by means of some stratagem. He eventually did so, accompanied by a party of archers, and finding Entragues in bed he arrested him, and in spite of the offer of a casket containing 50,000 crowns' worth of jewels, carried him off to the Conciergerie in Paris. But the King instantly instructed the provost to return to the château, which the archers held in his absence, and to make all necessary perquisitions there. The result was the discovery of a variety of papers, letters from Auvergne, the cipher of the King of Spain, and a promise, signed by that monarch, to the effect that on the death of the present French King he would recognize the son of the Marchioness de Verneuil, and not the son of Marie de' Medici, as sole legitimate heir to the Crown of France.

The discovery of those papers led to the arrest of various subaltern plotters, notably a certain Chevillard, who was conveyed to the Bastille, where, in order to rid himself of a draft of the conspirators' treaty with the King of Spain, which he had managed to secrete about his person, he ended, it is said, by gradually eating it at his meals. Entragues, for his part, was now quite overwhelmed with alarm, and in order to save his life he tendered a proposal to return the King the much-coveted promise of marriage, which hitherto had not been discovered during the perquisitions at Marcoussis.

The King accepted the offer and sent his secretary, M. de Loménié,† to the castle, where, acting on information supplied by Entragues, he discovered the promise underneath some cotton in a bottle, which had been secreted in one of the castle

\* We have our doubts on that point. The name is sometimes written *De Functis* and we think it may merely have been the dog Latin of the period for "on duty" or "in office."

† Antoine de Loménié, Lord of Ville-aux-Clercs, born 1560, died 1638. He was the son of Martial de Loménié, Lord of Versailles, who was killed at the St. Bartholomew massacre, and who had acquired and enlarged the fief of Versailles by purchase. After his death it was sold to the Gondi family, from one of whom, François, Archbishop of Paris, it was purchased by Louis XIII, for the sum of 66,000 *livres*, in 1632.

walls. In presence of several functionaries and others a solemn *procès-verbal* of the return of the document was drawn up, setting forth that it was indeed the original promise signed by the King.\*

In the earlier stages of the affair, Henri had been very unwilling to believe in his mistress's guilt. In fact, he had treated her with the utmost consideration and friendliness, inviting her, for instance, to go to St. Germain, where her children were now being reared with those of Gabrielle d'Estrées and Marie de' Medici. But the *anecdotiers* tell us that when, on this occasion, she approached the Dauphin to kiss his hand, as in duty bound, he would not allow her to do so, and that a day or two later his royal Highness punched the face of Gaston Henri de Verneuil. How serious all that was may be gathered from the fact that those little children were not yet three years old!

Henriette returned to Verneuil, but on receiving news that her father had been carried off from Marcoussis and lodged in the Conciergerie, she hastily repaired to Paris to intercede for him. The King, however, now absolutely refused to see her, and after a few days she received orders to go back to Verneuil again. In the interval a perquisition had been made at her château there and had resulted in the discovery of some letters from her father, none of which seems to have been particularly compromising, though, from another standpoint, the same cannot be said of various *billets doux* addressed to her by that same M. de Sigognes, who, according to her stepbrother Auvergne, had accused her of a weakness for Bellegarde.

Her royal lover was distressed, and some of his intimates now made a determined effort to detach him from his whilom favourite. As had happened after the death of Gabrielle d'Estrées, it was suggested that he should endeavour to forget his worry in a *distraction*. His attention was directed to Mlle. Jacqueline de Bueil, a portionless orphan who had been in a measure adopted by Charlotte de La Trémoille, Dowager Princess de Condé. Jacqueline came of that notorious Babou de la Bourdaisière race to which La Belle Gabrielle belonged on her mother's side. She was the daughter of Georges Babou, Lord of Bueil, by his wife Madeleine du Bellay, and at this

\* Bibliothèque Nationale : *Fonds Français*, vol. 4120.

time (1604) she was between twenty and twenty-four years of age, a blonde beauty with a dazzling complexion, large luminous eyes and exquisite shoulders. Proposals being made to her on the King's behalf, she retorted that in the first instance she desired to be married, and that she must have a present of 50,000 crowns, an estate with a title, and an allowance of five hundred crowns a month. A husband was found in the person of a certain Philippe de Harlay, Count de Césy, a nephew of Champvallon, the whilom lover of La Reine Margot. Harlay, who was poor, consented to become the husband in name only of Jacqueline de Bueil, on condition of receiving a modest pension of 1200 crowns per annum. For the rest, the county of Moret was bestowed on the bride, and directly after the wedding on October 5, 1604, she became the King's mistress. The *liaison* proved of an intermittent character, as Mme. de Moret failed to secure any real hold on the King's affections, being, it is said, a very beautiful but utterly brainless doll. Thus the King (before reverting to Henriette as we shall presently relate) did not restrict his attentions to La Belle Jacqueline, but bestowed them also on a very lively young person of the Court, Mlle. Charlotte des Essars, whom he afterwards made Countess de Romorantin. Nevertheless, in 1607, Jacqueline de Bueil\* presented the King with a son, who, being legitimated in the following year, became known as Antoine de Bourbon, Count de Moret.

Directly after the arrest of the Englishman, or Welshman, Morgan, it had been decided (August 12, 1604) to send him before the Parliament for trial. The proceedings remained suspended, however, in consequence of the discoveries made with respect to Entragues and the advisability of securing the person of the Count d'Auvergne, who had found a refuge at his castle of Vic-le-Comte in his own province, where it was difficult to seize him. He tried, moreover, to gain time and indulgence by making a variety of offers, such as to supply compromising letters written by his sister Henriette, to furnish further revelations, and to resume his intercourse with Spain in the King's

\* Her marriage was annulled by the Court of Rome in 1605, and in 1617 she married the Marquis de Vardes, father of Louis XIV's companion and confidant in the affair of Mlle. de la Vallière. Mme. de Moret died in 1651.

interest. At the same time he secretly made fresh overtures to Spain, as was proved by some communications which were intercepted. At last, a certain M. de Nerestang, who commanded a regiment of the royal troops stationed in the region, succeeded by stratagem in making Auvergne his prisoner, and the scoundrel was forthwith conveyed by road to Montargis and thence by the Loing and the Seine to the Bastille, where he arrived on November 20, 1604. Shortly afterwards the King remarked to the Venetian ambassador: "I have put the Count d'Auvergne in a place where he will no longer be able to do any harm." Then, in a tone of commiseration, he added, "Madame la Marquise [Henriette] has embarked on a very pitiable adventure."

She had again been summoned to Paris, and, though she was not consigned to the Bastille or the Conciergerie, the order went forth that she was to remain under arrest in the house where she had taken up her residence, a mansion in the Faubourg St. Germain—the Chevalier du Guet, or Captain of the Watch, being appointed to guard her. The King having sent Brulart de Sillery to see her, she was informed by that envoy that if she would make a full confession of everything the King was disposed to grant her a pardon and also to pardon those whom she might designate. She answered, it is said: "Death does not frighten me. On the contrary I shall welcome it. If the King takes my life it will, at all events, be said that he has put his wife to death, for I was Queen before the Italian was."

When M. de Sillery pressed her for such an answer as he might take back to the King she would not at first say anything, but finally she curtly replied: "I desire but three things, justice for myself, clemency for my father, and a rope for my brother."

At that period the First President of the Parliament of Paris was the famous Achille de Harlay, who personally interrogated Entragues, Auvergne, and Morgan before the actual trial took place. Morgan began by declaring that Entragues had only given him letters to introduce him to his nephew the Duke of Lennox, but it was presently established that the Englishman had carried letters from the Spanish ambassador to Entragues. The latter, for his part, informed

Harlay that as a father he had naturally desired to save his daughter's life, and that in all he had done he had merely endeavoured to provide her with a safe place of refuge. He had first applied to England, said he, and next to Flanders, but in vain, and it was only then that he had addressed himself to the Spanish ambassador. When Henriette's turn to be interrogated arrived—she was accused, curiously enough, of having borrowed the keys of the Sainte Chapelle from the King in order to have a secret interview there with the Spanish envoy—she largely confirmed her father's assertions, declaring that he had sought to provide for her safety because she was threatened with perpetual imprisonment by Marie de' Medici. Harlay afterwards reproached her with having in her possession two portraits of the last Marshal Biron, who had been decapitated for treason, and whom many malcontent nobles regarded as a martyr. One of these portraits had certainly been in her possession before Biron's last sedition, but it was established that she had purchased the second one since his execution as a traitor. To Harlay, therefore, it seemed evident that she sympathized with the late Marshal. The painter who had executed the second picture was called, and, judging by what he said, a very lucrative business was carried on in such portraits, there being quite a demand for copies : a significant circumstance indeed. Finally, Henriette was confronted with Auvergne, who was only too anxious to cast the responsibility for everything on her shoulders. She, however, had nothing but lofty scorn for the man, who, said she, "had traduced her honour to the King."

On January 14, 1605, the Duke of Lennox, the English ambassador, arrived in Paris. It had been presumed that, by reason of his official position, he would remain neutral in this affair, although he was so closely related to the Entragues family. But he soon began to intervene, much to the disgust of Villeroy, the Minister of State, who wrote complaining about it to M. de Beaumont, the French representative in England. However, the trial proceeded, and on February 2 the Parliament convicted Entragues, Auvergne and Morgan of *lese-majesté*, and sentenced them to be degraded from all their honours and dignities, and to be decapitated on the Place de Grève. With

respect to Henriette she was only convicted of having formed a design to quit the kingdom with her children, without the necessary sanction of the King; but the court specified that there should be further investigations into her case, and that in the meantime she should be removed to the abbey of Beaumont, near Tours, and detained there.

On the morrow the Duchess d'Entragues (Marie Touchet) and her younger daughter, came and cast themselves at the King's feet, imploring his clemency. He gave them an indefinite answer, but on the Duke of Lennox requesting him to defer the execution of the sentence he consented to do so, and addressing a personal letter to M. de Beaumont he told him to inform King James that he had done this solely at the English ambassador's request.

Having convoked the royal council, Henri next commuted the death sentences to perpetual imprisonment, and authorized Henriette to return to Verneuil,\* afterwards issuing "letters of abolition" which pronounced her to be innocent, and forbade further investigations into her case. Finally, while Auvergne was very properly kept under lock and key, remaining at the Bastille for several years,† letters of remission were granted to Entragues, and he was allowed to return (at first under surveillance) to Marcoussis. All this again was attributed to his Majesty's desire to show his regard for the ambassador of his good brother and ally, the King of England. But although it seems that Henriette did not solicit any pardon for herself, deeming it sufficient to protest her love for the King—in which connection she wrote him as passionate a letter as she had ever written in her life ‡—there is reason to believe that she intervened on behalf of her father. Moreover, in spite of all that the King said about the English ambassador, many people were convinced that the pardons he had granted were due solely to

\* Verified by the Parliament on March 28, 1605. The "letters of abolition" were issued on the ensuing 16th of September.

† According to L'Estoille, when Auvergne's wife (who was a daughter of Constable de Montmorency) solicited his pardon, the King replied: "I feel for your sorrow and your tears, but if I were to grant your request it would be the same as declaring that my wife is a woman of evil life, my son a bastard, and my kingdom fit prey for anybody."

‡ It is now in the National Library, Paris.

his passion for Henriette. For instance, Bertaut, the poet-abbé, who, as will be remembered, was one of the King's secretaries, improvised this effusion on the subject :

“ Quand Jupiter qui la regrette,  
 Espris de si grande beauté,  
 Le glaive de Thémis arrête,  
 Qui tendait à la cruauté,  
 Partisan d'amour en son âme,  
 Il donne à la Parque le tort ;  
 Par ce moyen, sauvant la dame,  
 Amour est vainqueur de la mort.”

Further, we have this letter written by the King himself : \*

“ MY DEAR HEART,—

“ I have received three letters from you, to which I will make but one reply. I consent to your making a journey to Boisgency [Beaugency?], and also to your seeing your father, whose guards I have had removed. But remain with him only one day, for the contagion from him is dangerous. I deem it good that you should go to Saint Germain to see our children. I will send you La Guesle, for I also wish that you should see the [their?] father, who loves and cherishes you too much. One [the Queen?] has heard nothing at all of your journey. Love me, my little one, for I swear to thee that all the rest of the world is nothing to me in comparison with thee, whom I kiss and kiss again a million times.”

There is reason to believe that the correspondence being thus resumed was not broken off, although the King was still occupying himself, more or less, with Mme. de Moret and Mlle. des Essars ; but in the collection of his *Lettres-missives*, the next letter addressed by him to Henriette is dated October, 1606. During that interval several notable incidents had occurred, not the least of them being the return of Henri's first wife, Queen Marguerite, to Paris.

It was a resurrection, and a somewhat weird one. During her long semi-captivity at Usson Marguerite had repeatedly

\* Undated. Formerly assigned to the latter part of 1604, but evidently written, we think, after the trial.

solicited permission to fix her residence in Paris again, frequently writing to her former husband, flattering him, and even rendering little services by transmitting more or less important information which had come to her knowledge. She wrote to congratulate him on the birth of the Dauphin, on the fortunate discovery of the conspiracy of the Duke de Biron, and that of the Count d'Auvergne, "whom," said she, "I no longer call my nephew since he has shown himself to be your Majesty's enemy." Having at last obtained leave to return to Paris, she set out in jubilation, and, according to the *anecdotiers*, on arriving at Francis I's Château de Madrid, in what is now called the Bois de Boulogne, she was received there on the King's behalf by his eldest legitimated son, César de Vendôme, in attendance on whom was that same Harlay de Champvallon who is said to have been many years previously her lover! Madrid, by the way, was really the property of Marguerite, as heiress of the private domain of her brother, Henri III,\* and it became now and again her country residence.

But on her return from Usson she speedily moved into Paris, and installed herself at the old Hôtel de Sens, formerly the Parisian abode of the Archbishops of Sens,† and adjacent to the Hôtel St. Paul, where several Kings of France had resided. Twenty-five years had elapsed since Marguerite had last cast her eyes over Paris, and owing to the improvements effected by the King, by François Miron, the Prévôt des Marchands, and by others, she found many changes there. Still the greatest of them was not to be compared to the change in herself. Charles IX's *grosse Margot*, all lascivious charm and beauty, had become a huge, unwieldy creature with baggy cheeks and a bushy, flaxen wig. She was but fifty, yet at first she seemed almost antediluvian, retaining as she did the attire and the manners of the vanished Court of the Valois. She duly repaired to the Louvre to pay her respects to her successor, Marie de' Medici. The scene was an interesting, almost impressive one when those two Queens, each in turn the wife of

\* The Duchess d'Étampes, mistress of Francis I, Diane de Poitiers, mistress of Henri II, Marie Touchet and Mlle. de la Beraudière, mistresses of Charles IX, had resided there. It was the birthplace of the Count d'Auvergne.

† Paris originally only had bishops, and was in the archdiocese of Sens.



the same King, at last stood face to face. Marguerite, for her part, was calm and dignified, but Marie was pale and manifestly ill at ease. But she soon became reassured, for Marguerite's manner towards her, as towards her ex-husband, was perfect, and they speedily became very good friends indeed.

By Henri and Marie, Marguerite was invariably called "sister," and by their children "aunt." She heaped presents on them, took them to St. Germain's Fair, and petted them in every possible way. While she was still at Usson she had instituted, through her legal representatives in Paris, proceedings against the Count d'Auvergne for the recovery of a large amount of landed and other property which her mother, Catherine de' Medici, had bequeathed to her by will. Her brother, Henri III, had despoiled her of it, however, and transferred it to his illegitimate nephew, Auvergne.\* Early in 1606 judgment was given in Marguerite's favour, and on March 10 she legally made over everything to the Dauphin—the future Louis XIII—on condition, however, that she should either retain the use thereof during her lifetime, or surrender all claim to it in consideration of a large annuity. The latter course was adopted; nevertheless, Marguerite paid no heed to the King's advice that she should moderate her expenditure, particularly in regard to benefactions, for she was constantly in financial difficulties, and again and again one finds Marie de' Medici lending her money from her own purse, or procuring her advances from Sully.

Her life at the Hôtel de Sens gave rise to no little scandal. Among her "gentlemen in waiting" was a handsome young Provençal of somewhat low extraction, who called himself Dat de Saint Julien. The favour shown him by Queen Marguerite is said to have aroused the jealousy of another of her retainers, named Vermond, and about midday on April 5, 1606, just as Marguerite was reaching the Hôtel de Sens in her coach, after hearing mass at the Celestine Monastery, Saint Julien, who was in attendance at the coach door, was shot dead by Vermond, who, armed with a pistol, had been waiting for an opportunity

\* He seems to have lost the title of Count d'Auvergne by participating in the Entragues' conspiracy. From this time he is called Count, and in the next reign, Duke d'Angoulême. He then secured high military commands.

to despatch his rival. The crime committed, Vermond fled, but was speedily caught, and Marguerite is said to have vowed that she would neither eat nor drink till he had been punished for that murder. Whether she really made that vow and whether she kept it, we cannot say, but two days later Vermond was certainly beheaded in her presence on the square outside the Hôtel de Sens. It was then that one of the satirists of the period penned the following lines :

“ La Royne-Vénus, demi-morte  
De voyr mourir devant sa porte  
Son Adonis, son cher Amour,  
Pour vengeance a, devant sa face,  
Fait defaire, en la mesme place,  
L’assassin presque au mesme jour.”

After those tragic occurrences Marguerite would no longer reside at the Hôtel de Sens, and acquiring, in part by a donation from the King and in part by purchase, a large site across the Seine and then known as the Petit Pré aux Clercs, she there erected both a palatial mansion and a monastery for monks of the reformed Augustine order, who undertook to consecrate and maintain an altar which she set up in the fulfilment of a vow which she had made in the days of her captivity at Usson. This vow was similar to that of Jacob at Bethel,\* for which reason the altar was long known as Jacob’s altar. Its memory is perpetuated, though few are aware of it, by the present Rue Jacob, which crosses the site. Moreover, it was also largely by reason of her vow at Usson that Marguerite so often found herself in financial straits, for her gifts to the clergy and the poor of Paris were innumerable. These, coupled with her great expenditure in building her palace in the Rue de Seine and her lordly pleasure-house “Olympus,”† in the village of Issy, severely taxed her handsome income of 123,000 crowns a

\* “ And Jacob vowed a vow, saying, If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, so that I come again to my father’s house in peace; then shall the Lord be my God: And this stone, which I have set for a pillar, shall be God’s house: and of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee.”—*Genesis* xxviii, 20, 21, 22.

† In that name we find the pagan side of the Renaissance asserting itself amidst Marguerite’s religiosity.

year. Her display of piety was as exaggerated as that of Henriette d'Entragues. It seemed as if the so-called *Reine galante* feared that she would never be able to cleanse herself of her sins. She attended mass every day, partook of the Blessed Sacrament three times a week, and often followed religious processions through the streets to one or another shrine.

At the same time she held the first *salon* of the seventeenth century. Receptions, ballets, concerts, and banquets were ever following one upon the other at the palace in the Rue de Seine, whither, cultured as she most certainly was, possessed of a splendid library, several volumes in which she had personally annotated, Marguerite attracted a very large number of writers and artists, to whom she showed herself a most generous patron. It is true, however, that the greatest poet of the age, Malherbe, would have none of her hospitality, but growled and spat on the ground whenever he passed her residence. That was due, no doubt, to that same cantankerous disposition which landed him in so many lawsuits. Lax as he was in morals himself, he had no right to take offence at any immorality in Marguerite. She survived till the age of sixty-three—passing away on March 27, 1615, that is, some five years after the assassination of the King—and the last period of her life, like virtually all the rest, was devoted alternately to religion and love. When her affairs were investigated it was found that she owed over 260,000 crowns. An infinite number of lawsuits ensued, the possessions she had acquired since her donation to the Dauphin were all sold, and, as M. Batiffol remarks, "there remained nothing of this brilliant Princess, not even the memory that she had been a bountiful and intellectual woman, an 'up-to-date' hostess, an affectionate 'aunt,' a faithful friend—nothing, indeed, save the recollection of the scandals associated with the appellation of La Reine Margot." Cardinal Richelieu subsequently summed up her public career in one impressive sentence: "She beheld herself the greatest Princess of her age, the daughter, sister, and wife of great Kings, but, notwithstanding that advantage, she became the sport of fortune, the contempt of people who should have been subject to her, and she saw another occupying the place which had been intended for herself."

Let us now revert to the period of Queen Marguerite's return to Paris. The proceedings against Entragues and Auvergne had by no means stamped out sedition in France. Not only was there grave suspicion of Marshal Lesdiguières and other prominent Huguenots, but the rebellious sentiments of the Duke de Bouillon were manifest. Early then, in 1606, the King set out to subdue Bouillon's stronghold of Sedan, which for several years had been regarded by the Huguenot party as a second Geneva. Receiving no support, however, either from his co-religionaries or from Spain, Bouillon, who had long aimed at becoming an absolutely independent sovereign, was constrained to surrender Sedan to the King, who then definitely annexed it to the crown of France. Not wishing, however, to carry matters too far with a party to which he himself had once belonged, he pardoned the Duke, and appointed as governor of Sedan a Huguenot officer on whom he could depend.

When he returned to Paris he had to give his attention to his love affairs, for he discovered that in his absence the irrepressible Prince de Joinville had been paying too much attention to the beautiful if insipid Jacqueline de Moret. In the result Joinville had to take to his heels, and seek a refuge in Lorraine. About this time there were fresh negotiations with Mme. de Verneuil, who, angry with her royal lover on account of his infidelities with others, again turned from him and expressed a desire to go and live abroad, though, as she had no desire to die of starvation, she requested the King to provide her with an income of 100,000 *livres* a year. Henri, who was not inclined to give her any such income or even to let her go, retorted to her charges by accusing her also of unfaithfulness, which she denied. They still met, at first secretly and afterwards publicly, though Henriette no longer went to Court. Now that the storm which had so seriously threatened her father was past, she had recovered all her biting power of speech and revenged herself for the enmity of Marie de' Medici by deriding her in the most caustic terms possible, even in the presence of the King. She called the Queen her lover's "fat banker," and laughed when she heard of an accident at the Neuilly ferry, when the Queen and young César

de Vendôme were nearly drowned, remarking that if she had been present she would willingly have cried "The Queen drinks!" That, of course, was repeated to Marie de' Medici, and added fresh fuel to her resentment against Henriette, besides again embroiling her with her husband, whom she could not forgive for the indulgence which he evinced in regard to the Marchioness's sarcastic and insulting remarks.

Having again patched up their differences in one way or another, the King and Henriette were once more on the best of terms during the autumn of that year, 1606, as several of the royal letters, often very passionate ones, fully testify. But in the winter there was again a cooling down on either side, the Queen apparently regaining considerable influence over her husband, and gradually prevailing on him to keep his mistress at "a respectful distance" from the Court. In the summer of 1607, for instance, when the royal family was staying at St. Maur-les-Fossés, near the famous Benedictine abbey, and Henriette was sojourning at Charenton, Sully was sent to her to say that she had better go to drink the waters at Vannes. Nevertheless, the King still wrote to her from time to time and sent her presents, and his letters indicate that in the autumn he was seeing her once more. Then, however, yet fresh storms arose. Henriette again became very *exigeante*, wishing to have the King entirely to herself or else not at all. As he mentions in a letter of October 20, on his going to see her she had received him in the worst possible manner, even saying: "I pray you, never come to see me again. You have never brought me anything but misfortune"; whereupon Henri had replied: "Reflect a little, madam, I do not deserve this treatment." His dismissal again aroused his suspicions, and on October 25 we find him writing to Sully and reporting a rumour that the sempiternal Joinville was now visiting Henriette!

In December, however, there came another reconciliation. Mme. de Verneuil wished to secure the bishopric of Metz for her young son, and so she once more treated the King as a lover. On the thirteenth he writes to her: "My Heart, My joy is extreme at the thought of seeing you on Saturday. Make up your mind to cherish me well when I arrive. . . . I am going to bed, for it is one o'clock, and I have lost my

money [at play]. Good night, heart of mine, I kiss thee a million times."

On April 25, 1608, Marie de' Medici gave birth to her son Gaston (of Orleans), and this time there was no corresponding *accouchement* on the part of Henriette de Verneuil.\* But on May 22, a hunting expedition takes the King to the vicinity of Bois-Malesherbes, where he first met his mistress, and then, all the past rising up before him, he sends her what may be called the one really sentimental letter among the many which he addressed to her :

"A hare led me to the rocks before Malesherbes, where I experienced 'how sweet the memory is of pleasures past.'† I wished I had held you in my arms as I once saw you there. Recall it while you read this letter. I feel sure that the memory of the past will cause you to scorn everything of the present. In any case you would do so did you follow the paths along which I so often passed in going to see you. *Mes chères amours*, if I sleep my dreams are of you, if I lie awake my thoughts are the same."

Until the end of 1608, the correspondence is, so to say, a commingling of kisses and reproaches. The virtual end of the *liaison* was fast approaching. The truth seems to be that, while the King was not tired of Henriette, she was utterly tired of him. Let all remember that the woman who sells herself *never* loves the man who buys her. She may feign love, certainly, but that is all. Now, Henriette had been bought, and whatever she may have now and again professed, we do not believe that throughout that long *liaison*, she ever for one moment really loved the King. She had yielded from personal vanity and ambition, to which had succeeded ambition for her son, whom she wished to see King of France. In the last negotiations which took place between her and her royal lover she asked—indeed, one might almost say she demanded—like the tenacious woman she was, the right of returning to Court, the guardianship of her children, and the city of Metz, of which

\* On the other hand, Mme. de Moret had presented him with a son in May, 1607, and the Countess de Romorantin with a daughter in or about January, 1608. See p. 263, *ante*, and Appendix B., pp. 298, 299, *post*.

† "Què des plaisers passez douce est la souvenance."

her little son had been appointed bishop, as a safe place of retreat. From the King she obtained fair words but nothing more, and thus early in 1609 the *liaison* came to an end. The King continued seeing her from time to time down almost to the date of his death, attracted as he was by her caustic wit and invincible sprightliness, which so far remained as great as ever. But although Henriette seems to have tried once or twice to regain her former ascendancy over him, she failed in the endeavour, for another and much younger beauty had now inspired him with the most insensate passion of his life.

Here, then, let us leave the Marchioness de Verneuil in her semi-retirement. We shall meet her again after the King's assassination, for she was accused of having prompted it.

## XI

### THE PRINCESS DE CONDÉ—THE ASSASSINATION OF THE KING AND AFTERWARDS

Charlotte de Montmorency and her Beauty—The King's Passion for her—He prevents her Marriage with Bassompierre—The Prince de Condé, his Position and Character—He is married to Charlotte—He keeps his Wife from Court—His Altercation with the jealous King—Henri's Attempts to see the Princess secretly—A Divorce suggested—Condé carries off his Wife—The Flight to Flanders—The Royal Rage—Attempts to capture the Fugitives—Their Asylum at Brussels—Scheme to carry off the Princess—Renewed Suggestions for Divorce—Last Days of Henri de Navarre—The projected War against the House of Austria—François Ravaillac—The Assassination of the King—Suspected Instigators of the Crime—La d'Escoman—Henriette d'Entragues and the Duke d'Épernon accused—Trial of d'Escoman—She is Walled-up for Life—Henriette and Marie de' Medici—Henriette's last Years—The Prince and Princess de Condé—Marriages of Guise and Joinville—Conclusion.

IN 1609 Henri was fifty-six years old, and though that is by no means a great age, it appears tolerably certain that in some respects he was no longer a young man. Yet a sudden passion now inspired him with unwonted ardour. It is scarcely pleasant to think of a man of his years conceiving a violent love for a girl who, however precocious in physique, had scarcely seen her fifteenth summer. Yet so it happened, and never, perhaps, did Sultan rave and storm as Henri did when he found obstacle after obstacle placed in his way, and never did wooer exhibit more desperate energy in striving to overcome those obstacles. The King failed, as we shall see, but as the object of his infatuation never became his mistress we shall give only a brief account of the affair. It cannot be altogether passed by, as in various respects it is historically interesting and important.

The young girl who inspired Henri with this extraordinary



passion was named Charlotte Marguerite de Montmorency. Born on May 11, 1594, she was the daughter of the Constable of France by his deceased second wife, that marvellously beautiful Louise de Budos,\* who fascinated every man and alarmed every woman who saw her, in such wise that her premature death appeared like a happy deliverance, as it saved so many from the necessity of loving or hating her. Superstitiously minded folk—and there were still many in those days—held that the amazing beauty of Louise de Budos could only have been the result of some compact with the fiend.

Her daughter Charlotte likewise grew up all loveliness, a perfect blonde, possessed already of a most shapely figure at the youthful age we have mentioned. And Malherbe, fired with enthusiasm for her charms, and the King's poetic ally in the royal attempt to win her, sang of her in such lines as these—

“ A quelles roses ne fait honte  
De son teint la vive fraîcheur ?  
Quelle neige a tant de blancheur  
Que sa gorge ne la surmonte ?  
Et quelle flamme luit aux cieux,  
Claire et nette comme ses yeux ? ”

It was in January, 1609, while a ballet called “Diana's Nymphs” was being rehearsed at the Louvre under the supervision of Marie de' Medici that the King first saw this young beauty, and immediately fell desperately in love with her. All the worries of his expiring *liaison* with Henriette d'Entragues were immediately forgotten; as Aubigné tells us, he had no thoughts, no eyes, left save for Charlotte de Montmorency. In accordance with his favourite expedient, one which he had employed in the case of Gabrielle d'Estrées and that of Jacqueline de Bueil, he thought of giving the youthful Princess a husband, as that would remove her from the parental control and allow her more freedom of action. As it happened, Bassompierre was already a suitor for Charlotte's hand, but the King feared that the Colonel of his Swiss Guard might not prove so complaisant a husband as was desired. One of Henri's intimates thereupon suggested another one, the Prince de Condé, a reserved, taciturn and slightly built young

\* See p. 151, *ante*.

fellow, whom many took to be a fool, though he was nothing of the kind, for in after years he displayed ambition and energy, as well as real power of speech. On the other hand, he owed whatever fortune he possessed to the King's liberality, and was without supporters, some folk even contesting his right to the title he bore, for he was a posthumous child, the son of that Prince de Condé who was supposed to have been poisoned, and whose wife, suspected of the crime, had been cast into prison.\* Born at St. Jean d'Angely, on September 1, 1588, Condé was now twenty-one years old, and living on the King's bounty evinced a very docile disposition. He did not care for Court life, but was attracted somewhat towards sport, and also to reverie, preferring the loneliness of moors and the gloom of forests to the gaieties of the Louvre. To all appearance very cold and very bashful, he paid no attention to women, and it was held that if he were given a wife he would be incapable of loving her, while the idea of her loving him appeared quite nonsensical.

At the beginning of the affair the King had a very bad attack of gout, and remained confined to his bed for some time, during which *Astrée* and *Amadis de Gaule* were repeatedly read to him. Those works doubtless helped to fire his imagination, and possibly tended to subdue the twinges of his complaint. In any case, this historic example should suffice to prove that the gout is no obstacle to love. While Henri was laid up, Diane d'Angoulême paid him a visit, accompanied by the beautiful Charlotte, and the King took advantage of this opportunity to question the young Princess respecting her sentiments for Bassompierre, for he was anxious to ascertain if her proposed marriage with that dashing courtier and soldier would be one of duty only or of inclination as well. And we are told that the blushing young beauty modestly replied to the royal inquiries that it would always be a happiness to her to obey her father, and that such was the limit of her ambition. Now, M. de Montmorency favoured the Bassompierre match, and as it seemed evident that it did not displease the Princess, the King immediately resolved to prevent it. He treated Bassompierre in a meanly jealous manner, compelled

\* See p. 102, *ante*.

the Constable to assent to his daughter's marriage with Condé, and hurried on the betrothal (March, 1609), when he bestowed a fairly large income on the Prince, and made some splendid presents to the bride.

The marriage was celebrated at Chantilly on May 17, the King being present, and lingering there for a day or two, full of doubts, it seems, as to whether he had taken the right course, for he had suddenly begun to feel very suspicious of the seemingly humble and docile bridegroom. At this moment, however, the Duke of Cleves died, and the question of war with the House of Austria at once arose. The King was obliged to devote himself to affairs of State and preparations for hostilities, and Condé, in lieu of following him to Paris with his wife, carefully kept away from the capital, even putting a greater and greater distance between himself and the King, for he was well aware of the feelings inspired in the latter by the contemplation of his wife's beauty.

Michelet denounces the young Prince as hypocritical and Machiavelian, but assuredly most people will admire the course which he adopted under very difficult circumstances. Why, indeed, should a young fellow of two and twenty, married to the most beautiful girl in France, have surrendered her to any rival, a man who, unhappily, had now become one of the most depraved *roués* in the world? Doubtless the Prince practised dissimulation, but dissimulation and prudence were necessary under the circumstances, and beneath them there was real energy, a proper solicitude for his own honour, and, whatever Michelet may have thought to the contrary, love for the girl whom he had married.

In July, 1609, the wedding of César de Vendôme and Mlle. de Mercœur at Fontainebleau took Condé and his wife thither. The King, then in excellent health, paid great attention to the Princess, and her husband profited by the first opportunity to remove her from the Court. In the autumn, however, he was compelled to return to Paris (as was the duty of every Prince of the blood royal) for the expected *accouchement* of Marie de' Medici.\* On this occasion Henri reproached him for

\* She gave birth to a girl, who received the names of Henriette Marie, and became the wife of Charles I of England.

keeping his wife from Court, and an altercation, it is said, ensued, Condé, in spite of his usual prudence, allowing the word "tyranny" to escape him, while the King, according to L'Estoille's assertions, told him that he really had no right to his title, as the previous Prince de Condé had never been his father. In any case, there was undoubtedly most serious trouble, and so the Prince removed his wife as soon as possible to the abbey of Breteuil, on the confines of Picardy. It seems unfortunately true that the young Princess, who was still little more than a child—according to more than one account the marriage had not hitherto been consummated—felt flattered by the King's suit, and even sent him a portrait of herself. The *anecdottiers* allege, moreover, that he went on expeditions to see her, now at Breteuil and now at Muret, disguising himself in a variety of ways on those occasions. However, he only saw her at her window, or in her coach as she passed by, well attended.

Malherbe, who asserts that the marriage was as yet only nominal, at last shows us the King writing to M. de Montmorency, suggesting to him the propriety of soliciting a divorce on his daughter's behalf. A communication on that subject was made to Condé, who pretended to consent, but (after consulting the famous President de Thou) claimed the right to retain his wife under his guardianship until the *procédure* should be entirely finished, that being in accordance with the Canon Law. The baffled King was fairly enraged at this, and so threatened Condé's secretary, a certain M. de Virey, that the Prince resolved to seek a refuge across the frontier.

Apparently he had again returned to Paris with his wife for the Queen's *accouchement*, for we are told that he quitted the city with the Princess on the evening of November 25, 1609—that is, a few hours before the birth of Henrietta Maria—and travelled at first very slowly, perhaps in order to avoid exciting any suspicion. It seems that his wife did not as yet know his real design, but thought that they were going on some hunting trip. After halting at Muret and Soissons, however, her husband told her the truth, whereupon, according to Virey, she began to laugh; whereas Malherbe, who, although a great poet, acted in the affair much as the King's pander, asserts that she began to weep and scream. A guide whom they had with



CHARLOTTE DE MONTMORENCY, PRINCESSE DE CONDÉ.

*After the Portrait in Montfaucon's "Monuments de la Monarchie Française."*



them ended by betraying the Prince, sending a messenger to warn the King of what was impending, and striving to delay the journey. Malherbe celebrates in verse—often most excellent of its kind—the royal despair when Henri heard the doleful tidings. That despair soon turned to rage, however, and after summoning the Royal Council his Majesty despatched Testu, Chevalier du Guet, and La Chaussée, an officer of the body-guard, to arrest the Prince and everybody who might be with him, the instructions also stating that should Condé have already reached foreign territory the authorities were to be called upon for assistance, on the understanding that they should receive similar help on the part of the French authorities should any such case in which they might be interested arise. Within the next few hours several other emissaries—Marshal de Balagny, M. de Praslin, M. d'Elbène, and M. de Rodelle—likewise set out with armed men to scour the roads by command of the impatient and desperate monarch.

Balagny was the first to reach the fugitives, but they were already at Landrecies, in Flanders, whereupon a parley ensued. Condé sent a messenger to the Archduke Albert, Sovereign of the Netherlands, asking for an asylum for himself and his wife; but on the spur of the moment the Archduke, who as yet knew next to nothing of the matter and feared an affray with France, ordered Condé to quit his territory in three days, but consented to give the Princess a temporary asylum at Brussels. She proceeded thither on horseback, riding behind M. de Chabannes, who was one of Condé's retainers, while the Prince set out for Cologne, there to await developments. The Spanish authorities promptly espoused his cause, Spinola in particular urging on the Archduke the necessity and advantage of giving the Prince all proper protection in this scandalous affair provoked by the unbridled depravity of the King of France. Thus Condé was invited to Brussels, and received an excellent reception there on December 17, 1609.

Again did Henri storm and threaten. But the Prince refused to return to France, and the Archduke Albert and the Spanish authorities refused to give him up. All the negotiations failed. Then another device was thought of: the Marquis de Cœuvres, brother of Gabrielle d'Estrées, having been sent to

Brussels, endeavoured to carry the Princess off, she apparently being a consenting party; \* but the scheme failed, as one of the persons in the plot revealed everything to Spinola. Matters then becoming very dangerous for Condé personally, as he daily ran the risk of being kidnapped or assassinated—not that King Henri had ordered the latter course to be followed, but emissaries are sometimes over zealous—he decided to quit Flanders, leaving his wife in charge of the Archduke Albert's wife, who, to protect her the better, lodged her in the Palace in a room beyond her own apartment, which anybody having evil designs would have been obliged to cross. The French monarch now at last prevailed on M. de Montmorency to institute proceedings for a divorce, and the letter which Montmorency wrote to Condé on the subject (May 9, 1610) seems to indicate that he had his daughter's consent in the matter. He—and the King also—had apparently succeeded in corresponding with her, though not without difficulty, as is shown by a note of Henri's, in which he requests the return of all letters written by him to the Princess, which had not been delivered.

But the end was near. M. de Montmorency's letter to Condé was dated, as we have said, May 9, and on May 14 Henri de Navarre was assassinated.

War had long been impending. As far back as 1601 one will find the first germs of a coalition to put an end to the ascendancy of the House of Austria in Europe. In 1610, many states had entered into the compact—France, Holland, England, Sweden, Denmark, Venice, Tuscany, and smaller Italian principalities, together with a score of German ones. The chief commanders were to be Henri de Navarre and Maurice of Nassau, and it was held that they would dispose of formidable forces for that age—280,000 men, with two hundred guns. No means were to be left untried to achieve success. The Moors, who were now being expelled from the Peninsula, were to be let loose on Spain, and a rising was also to be fomented in the trans-Pyrenean provinces of Navarre. But on the east there lay before Henri the dazzling prospect of enlarging France to the banks of the Rhine, and some of his most ardent supporters even dreamt of seeing him proclaimed “Emperor of the

\* It was proposed to lower her from a window in an arm-chair.



Christians." Despite the various conspiracies among his own nobles, despite also his numerous love affairs, and particularly that last insensate passion for the Princess de Condé, the King had not ceased to devote attention to that great European design against the Austrian House—he was a man, indeed, to make love and war at one and the same time—and thus early in May, 1610, all was ready for the opening of hostilities.

In the King's absence, Marie de' Medici was to be appointed Regent, with, however, restricted powers which did not satisfy her. The King sought some means of silencing her complaints, and finally decided that if he could not without imprudence gratify her ambition, he might at least gratify her vanity, although, as money was urgently needed for the war, this was hardly a moment for extravagance. However, she had never yet been crowned Queen of France, and so it was settled that this should be done with all fit pomp and ceremony in the ancient fane of St. Denis before Henri took his departure for the war.

The programme of the last days which he proposed to spend in Paris was fixed by him as follows :

Thursday, May 13. Coronation of the Queen.

Friday, May 14. All private matters to be set in order.

Saturday, May 15. Grand hunt in the forests round Paris.

Sunday, May 16. Solemn entry of the newly crowned Queen into the capital.

Monday, May 17. Marriage of Mlle. de Vendôme (Gabrielle d'Estrées' daughter) with M. d'Elbeuf.

Tuesday, May 18. State banquet.

Wednesday, May 19. Boot and saddle.

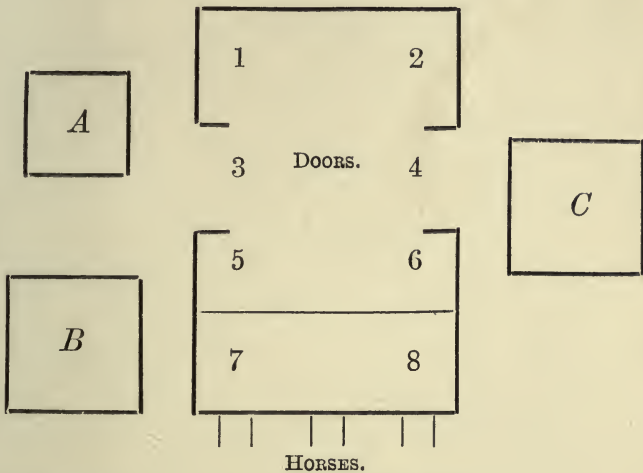
There is evidence from various sources that during the last week of his life Henri, in spite of all his projects, repeatedly experienced gloomy presentiments which he found it difficult to shake off. On Friday the 14th, after transacting, early in the morning, a variety of business at the Louvre, he repaired to the church of the Feuillants monastery to hear mass there, and then returned to the palace for dinner. He was followed to the church by a certain François Ravailac, a man between thirty and forty years of age, who, after serving as clerk to a councillor of the Parliament named Rozière, had become a kind of legal *agent*

*d'affaires*, supplementing whatever money he earned in that way by teaching. He was, however, devoured by religious mania, a prey to mystical hallucinations, and might be compared to those morbid *solitaires* who have arisen among the modern anarchists, though his actions were inspired by a fanatical desire to promote the glory of God and not to revolutionize society. In his estimation, the King was no true Catholic, but a man of Belial who betrayed the Holy Church, at which he was really directing that war which he was now about to undertake. And for that reason Ravallac resolved to strike him down.

He would have committed his crime when the King drove into the Louvre again on returning from mass, but it so happened that the Duke d'Épernon was then occupying the place in the coach where Henri usually sat, and Ravallac therefore had to defer his attempt. He waited about to see if the King would come out again, as he did, for, after dinner Henri decided to drive to the Arsenal in order to see Sully, who was in bad health. His Majesty was in his coach, attended by the noblemen whose names figure on the diagram which we print on our next page; and when the vehicle slowly turned out of the Rue St. Honoré into the narrow Rue de la Ferronnerie, Ravallac sprang forward, jumped upon the hind-wheel of the coach, and stabbed the King twice through the unglazed window, the leather curtain of which was at that moment drawn back. A mounted equerry, M. de St. Michel, at once wished to cut Ravallac down, but was prevented from doing so by the Duke d'Épernon, whose action in this respect has often been misinterpreted by historical writers, for the Duke's one desire was that the assassin should be taken alive, as if he were killed it might be impossible to ascertain by whom the crime had really been instigated. The King, after exclaiming, "I am wounded!" sank back in the coach, and almost immediately afterwards brought up a quantity of blood. Épernon covered him with his cloak, the leather curtains of the coach were closed, and it returned with all possible speed to the Louvre. But before arriving there the King was dead. The first thrust had not inflicted a mortal wound, but at the second one the assassin's knife, entering the left lobe of the lung, had severed the aorta and one of the arterial veins, in such wise that the

lung immediately became choked with blood (Post-mortem Report) and death ensued.

Ravaillac was promptly seized, and although several persons, fired with indignation, wished to despatch him on the spot, he was carried off in custody. Tried and convicted, he was quartered on the Place de Grève on May 27. There was, at first, a general disposition to believe that his crime had been inspired by somebody else. All sorts of surmises were made.



- |                         |                              |
|-------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. The King.            | 2. Duke d'Épernon.           |
| 3. Duke de Montbazon.   | 4. Count de Roquelaure.      |
| 5. Marquis de la Force. | 6. Marshal de Lavardin.      |
| 7. Marquis de Mirabeau. | 8. M. de Liancourt, Equerry. |

A. Ravaillac.

B. M. de St. Michel, mounted.

C. M. de Courtomer, mounted.

Was that assassination a public or a private vengeance? Was Spain at the bottom of it? Was it a deed of revenge on the part of the deserted Marchioness de Verneuil? In that connection it certainly happened that on the very evening of the crime her young son was confined to his room under the guard of an officer and two archers, lest he should be carried off, and—who could tell?—proclaimed King of France. But had the crime been inspired by Condé? Was this his means of for ever frustrating Henri's designs upon the Princess? Some who

did not think the assassination due to political reasons, inclined to that view. And there were others who, remembering the royal proclivities, and opining that the affair might, after all, well be an *affaire de femme*, suggested that Ravailac's deed had been his revenge for Henri's seduction of his sister! But it was never established that the assassin had a sister, or if he had, that Henri had ever seduced her.

Thanks to the energy of Épernon, Marie de' Medici became Regent of France, with unlimited powers, on the day after her husband's death, and a new political era began. On January 11, 1611, however, that is, eight months after the assassination of Henri de Navarre, Queen Marguerite was accosted in the church of Ste. Victoire by a woman who boldly accused Mme. de Verneuil and the Duke d'Épernon of having compassed the death of the late monarch. This woman was named Jacqueline Levoyer, and she was the wife of a certain Isaac de Varennes, Sieur d'Escoman, serving in the guards of Épernon's province. Lame and almost hunchbacked, La d'Escoman had entered the service of Mme. de Verneuil at the time when the latter was detained under surveillance after the discovery of the Entragues conspiracy, and she was also more or less connected with the Duke d'Épernon's mistress, Charlotte du Tillet. She asserted to Queen Marguerite that Henriette had been personally acquainted with Ravailac, whom she had met more than once at Bois Malesherbes. Her suspicions being aroused by things she had heard both at Mme. de Verneuil's and at Mlle. du Tillet's, she had wished, she said, to warn the King, and had tried to see Father Cotton, the Jesuit Superior, with that object. But, unhappily, she had been sent to prison for exposing, on the Pont Neuf, a child of hers, of which her husband would not admit the paternity. Thus much time had been lost and it had been impossible for her to frustrate the King's assassination. She declared, however, to Queen Marguerite that he had been murdered as the result of a plot by which Mme. de Verneuil's son by Henri was to be raised to the throne, she marrying the Duke de Guise, who was to be proclaimed Regent during the new King's minority, while at the same time M. d'Épernon was to be appointed Constable of France.

La d'Escoman was arrested as the result of her alleged

“revelations.” President de Harlay thought there was truth in them. Épernon and Henriette, who protested vigorously against the charges, urged that the woman should be tortured in order to make her confess her imposture, but the Queen-regent, fearing, it is said, revelations which might have implicated other great personages, and possibly have led to civil war, would not allow it. La d’Escoman was brought to trial, however, and a despatch from Giustiniani, who had become Venetian envoy in France, states, under date August 10, 1611, that the Court absolved the Dukes de Guise and d’Épernon and Mme. de Verneuil of the charges preferred against them, and that as for the prisoner, who was convicted of false denunciation, sorcery, and coining, the court was equally divided as to the sentence to be passed on her, nine of the judges pronouncing for capital punishment, and the other nine favouring imprisonment for life. The latter was the penalty inflicted. The unfortunate woman, according to Giustiniani, was not responsible for her actions, being clearly insane. Nevertheless, she was “walled up” at the Couvent des Filles Répentes, and there dragged out a miserable existence for several years.

As for Henriette d’Entragues she succeeded in making her peace with the Queen-regent, though the latter would not allow her to marry the Duke de Guise, from whom she had certainly obtained a formal promise of marriage, even as La d’Escoman had asserted. Nor would the Queen allow the ex-favourite’s unfortunate sister, Marie d’Entragues, to marry Bassompierre, who had so greatly wronged her. Indeed, when Marie took proceedings against that brilliant and profligate noble, the Queen so influenced the judges that they decided against her. However, the Regent’s vengeance on the Entragues family went no further. She was satisfied with preventing the sisters from rehabilitating themselves in some degree by marriage, after long leading lives of shame; and that was certainly a form of revenge such as a woman might well take.

Henriette, whose every ambitious scheme had failed and who never secured any husband, finally retired to Verneuil, where she ended by solacing herself with good cheer to such an extent that she, once so slender and sprightly, became, it is said, even fatter than Queen Marguerite, whose *vertugadin* so

often blocked up the doorways of the Louvre. Gaston de Verneuil quarrelled with his mother as he grew up, and ended by scarcely seeing her. At last her so-called "Sardanapalian retirement" came to a close, for she succumbed to apoplexy on February 9, 1633. She was then only fifty-four years old.

As for the Prince de Condé, he ended by recovering his wife; and an imprisonment, to which he was subjected in the new reign, inspiring her with some affection for him, she joined him in his detention. And at last she gave him several children, including a daughter, who became the famous Mme. de Longueville, and a son renowned as the Great Condé. For the rest, however, the beautiful Princess paid little heed to her marriage vows and finished, indeed, by glorying in the number and the eminence of her lovers. We may meet her again in another volume.

Of the Duke de Guise we need only say here that instead of marrying Henriette d'Enragues he espoused in 1611 Henriette Catherine, only daughter of Henri Duke de Joyeuse, Marshal of France, and widow since 1608 of Henri Duke de Montpensier. Mme. de Verneuil's volatile first lover, Claude, Prince de Joinville, likewise married a widow, that is the beautiful Marie de Rohan-Montbazon, whose first husband was the Constable de Luynes, the well-known favourite of Louis XIII. Joinville at the time of his espousals in 1622 was forty-four and his bride twenty-two years old. Ten years previously he had been created Duke de Chevreuse, Peer, Grand Chamberlain and Grand Falconer of France, and it was as Duchess de Chevreuse that his wife became famous for her conspiracies and her *amours*.\*

On the career of Henri de Navarre as a whole it is not necessary for us to pass judgment. Our main object in this volume has been to depict that side of his character and disposition which so often supplied the mainspring of his actions. Although he did not surrender the control of affairs of State to women, as Louis XIV did in the case of Mme. de Maintenon

\* As we have said a good deal of M. de Joinville-Chevreuse, it may interest the reader to add that he was Charles I's proxy at the latter's marriage with Henrietta Maria, whom he escorted to England. He was at the siege of La Rochelle with Richelieu in 1628, and died in Paris on January 24, 1657.

and Louis XV in that of Mme. de Pompadour, it is certain that feminine influence had much to do with the course of Henri's career and the destinies of France in his time. This is evidenced first by the consequences of his unfortunate marriage with Marguerite de Valois, which so repeatedly led to a variety of trouble, and, in part, at all events, to two renewals of civil war. But Corisanda appears upon the scene and inspires her royal lover, and the great contest for the crown of France becomes keener and keener. To Corisanda succeeds Gabrielle d'Estrées, who without wielding any direct power repeatedly exercises the greatest influence in politics. She counsels the royal abjuration, she reconciles the King and Mayenne, she assists in bringing about the submission of Merccœur, she intervenes in favour of the Huguenots when the Edict of Nantes is signed, she helps to raise Sully to a high position—all those actions being good services to France as well as to her lover. Her ambition to become Henri's wife, and thus Queen-consort, was at least justifiable from the feminine standpoint, even though its realization might well have had disastrous after-results. She dies, however, and Henriette d'Entragues takes her place. Henriette's ambition is similar to Gabrielle's, but she deliberately sells herself for the purpose of attaining it, and for years nothing stops her desperate attempts to win the day. She stirs up strife on every side. She turns the royal household into an *inferno*. If she cannot be Queen her son at all events shall be King of France. There shall be rebellion, Savoy and Spain shall be called in to support her claims for her boy, and at certain periods the very fate of France is at stake. Less momentous, no doubt, yet at times of real importance, are the results of Henri's other *amours*. They demoralize the Court, they stir up jealousy and enmity in one and another direction, rendering many a noble only too willing to embark in dangerous intrigues. Yet amidst all his *affaires de femmes* the King never ceases giving his attention to affairs of State. He certainly had some able men about him, but he also possessed a wonderful personality. Even amidst that last passion of his, that almost senile passion for Charlotte de Montmorency, we see him making ready for another great war, preparing for battle once again. It is in his striking

virility, his thorough manliness even when one and another serious ailment is laying hold of him and old age seems close at hand, that one finds perhaps the best trait of his character. And as we wrote in our opening pages he was also a clement king, and a ruler solicitous for the general welfare of his subjects. Thus he was long held in affectionate remembrance by the masses. With his qualities and his defects, moreover, he seemed to typify the French race. And the popular instinct was not at fault when, recalling the amorous side of his nature, it associated his name more particularly with that of Gabrielle d'Estrées, for whatever judgment may be passed on her from the standpoint of the present-day code of morality, she, more than any other of Henri's many favourites, deserved to be remembered.



## APPENDIX

### A

#### WOMEN ASSOCIATED WITH HENRI DE NAVARRE

THE following is as complete a list as can be given of the women, both high-born and low-born, whose names have been rightly or wrongly associated with Henri de Navarre. The list is based on one supplied many years ago by M. de Lescure, but has been revised in various respects. The chief sources are the writings of Sully, Aubigné, Queen Marguerite, L'Estoille, Bassompierre, Dreux du Radier, Vanel, Bascle de Lagrèze, Sauval and Tallemant des Réaux, the King's published correspondence, and the romance entitled *Les Amours du Grand Alcandre*. In many instances, however, the authority is only traditional; whenever there is genuine historical authority we have added the letter "H" to the woman's name. It should be noted that all the women mentioned were not the King's mistresses, for here and there will be found the names of some who rejected his addresses. Briefly the list may be taken rather as one of women who at one or another period attracted the attention of the ever-amorous monarch.

- I. Charlotte de Beaune-Semblançay, Lady of Sauves and Marchioness de Noirmoutier (H), 1573-1576.
- II. Jeanne du Montceau de Tignonville, later Countess de Pangeas (H), 1576.
- III. Dayelle the Cyprian (H), 1578.
- IV. Catherine du Luc of Agen, 1578.
- V. Anne de Balzac de Montaignu, 1578.
- VI. Arnaudine of Agen, 1578.
- VII. Mlle. de Rebours (H), 1579.

- VIII. Fleurette, daughter of the gardener of Nérac, and sometimes called La Jardinière d'Anet. Traditional.
- IX. Françoise de Montmorency-Fosseux (H), 1579.
- X. Mme. Sponde.
- XI. Mlle. Maroquin.
- XII. Xaintes (H), maid to Queen Marguerite.
- XIII. Picotin Pancoussaire, sometimes called La Boulangère de St. Jean (Aubigné).
- XIV. Mme. de Petonville.
- XV. La Baveresse.
- XVI. Mlle. de Duras.
- XVII. Countess de Saint-Mégrin.
- XVIII. The wet nurse of Casteljaloux. Traditional.
- XIX and XX. Two Demoiselles de l'Espée.
- XXI. Diane d'Andouins, Countess de Gramont and de Guiche, "la belle Corisande" (H), 1582-1591.
- XXII. Dame Martine.
- XXIII. Esther Imbert, of La Rochelle, 1587.
- XXIV. Antoinette de Pons, Marchioness de Guercheville and later Countess de Liancourt. In attendance on Marie de' Medici. (H.) Rejected (1589-90) the King's advances, and retained his respect and friendship.
- XXV. Catherine de Verdun, a nun of Longchamp in the Bois de Boulogne, later abbess of Vernon, 1590.
- XXVI. Marie de Beauvilliers, nun and later abbess of Montmartre, *cir.* 1590.
- XXVII. Gabrielle d'Estrées, "la belle Gabrielle" (H), 1591-1599.
- XXVIII. Angélique d'Estrées, abbess of Maubuisson and sister of Gabrielle. Doubtful.
- XXIX. Juliette Hippolyte d'Estrées, later de Villars. Doubtful.
- XXX. Mme. de Montauban.
- XXXI. La Glandée.
- XXXII. La Raverie.

- XXXIII. Mlle. d'Harancourt.
- XXXIV. Mlle. de Senante (Bassompierre).
- XXXV. Henriette d'Entragues (H), 1599–1609.
- XXXVI. Marie Babou de la Bourdaisière (H), later Viscountess d'Estauges, cousin of "la belle Gabrielle." Perhaps the same as LIX.
- XXXVII. Countess de Limoux.
- XXXVIII. Jacqueline de Bueil, Countess de Moret (H), *cir.* 1604–1608.
- XXXIX. Charlotte des Essars or Essarts, Countess de Romorantin (H), *cir.* 1604–1608.
- XL. Mme. Lanery.
- XLI. Mme. de Maupeou.
- XLII. Charlotte de Foulebon, later Mme. de Barbezières-Chemerault.
- XLIII. La Bretoline.
- XLIV. Catherine, Duchess de Nevers. Repulsed by her.
- XLV. Henriette de Joyeuse, Duchess de Montpensier. Repulsed by her.
- XLVI. Catherine de Rohan, Duchess de Deux-Ponts. Repulsed by her.
- XLVII. Mlle. de Guise, later Princess de Conti. Very doubtful.
- XLVIII. Mme. Clein, or Quelin, wife of a councillor of the Paris Parliament.
- XLIX. La Fannuche.
- L. Mme. de Boinville.
- LI. Mme. Aarsen. Doubtful.
- LII. Mme. de Sault. Doubtful.
- LIII. Mme. de Ragny. Doubtful.
- LIV. Mme. de Champlivault. Doubtful.
- LV. Mme. de Pontcarré. Doubtful.
- LVI. Charlotte de Montmorency, Princess de Condé (H). Repulsed by the Prince, 1609–1610.
- LVII. Mlle. Paulet.
- LVIII. Anne Dudey, wife of Oudart du Puy, President of the Élection d'Épernay, 1592.
- LIX. Mlle. de la Bourdaisière. } (H). See pp. 218,  
 LX. Mlle. de la Chastre. } 222, 231.

## B

NATURAL CHILDREN OF HENRI DE NAVARRE AND THEIR  
DESCENDANTS

THE following is a list of the offspring of Henri de Navarre by his mistresses, with some particulars respecting the posterity of those who grew up and married :—

I. A daughter, stillborn (Nérac, 1581), by Françoise de Montmorency, born in or about 1563, daughter of Pierre de Montmorency, Marquis de Thury and Baron de Fosseux, (from whom sprang the Boutteville branch of the Montmorencys), by his wife, Jacqueline d'Avaugour, who was descended, through the Penthièvres, from the old Ducal House of Brittany.

II. A son, Christian name unknown, by Diane, Countess de Gramont and de Guiche (Corisanda), died 1590, aged about two years.

*Children by Gabrielle d'Estrées, Marchioness de Montceaux and  
Duchess de Beaufort.*

III. CÉSAR DE BOURBON, DUKE DE VENDÔME, Étampes, Mercœur, Beaufort and Penthièvre, Prince de Martigues, Count de Royannais, Lord of Anet, Peer and Admiral of France, Governor of Brittany, Knight of the King's Orders, etc., born at the château of Coucy, in Picardy, in June, 1594, legitimated January 1595, granted the Duchy of Vendôme as an appanage by letters patent dated Angers, April 3, 1598, married on July 7, 1609, at Fontainebleau, Françoise de Lorraine, Duchess de Mercœur, Étampes and Penthièvre, Princess de Martigues (which titles in their masculine form she conveyed to her husband), only daughter and heiress of Philippe Emmanuel, Duke de Mercœur, etc., and Marie de Luxembourg. By the marriage contract, signed at Angers, April 5, 1598, the parents of the bride granted her an income of 50,000 livres per annum, and the Duke de Mercœur transferred his governorship of

Brittany to his intended son-in-law, whose mother, Gabrielle d'Estrées, further assigned to him her Duchy of Beaufort. César de Vendôme often played a prominent part in the political affairs of his time. In 1626 he became mixed up in the Prince de Chalais' conspiracy and was arrested and sent to the castle of Vincennes, where he remained until 1630, when he secured his release by surrendering to Richelieu his claims on the governorship of Brittany. On again conspiring he had to flee to England, where he resided until after Richelieu's death. In conjunction with his second son, the Duke de Beaufort, he afterwards plotted against Mazarin, but was pacified by his appointment as Governor of Burgundy and General Superintendent of Navigation. He served the Crown faithfully during the Fronde. In 1655, as Admiral of France, he defeated a Spanish fleet off Barcelona. He died in Paris on October 22, 1665, when in his seventy-third year; his heart was buried in the church of the Capuchins, Rue St. Honoré, his other remains being laid to rest in the chapel of the Fathers of the Oratory at Vendôme.\* By his marriage he had issue as follows:—

1. *Louis de Bourbon, Duke de Vendôme*, Mercœur, Étampes and Penthièvre, Prince de Martigues, Lord of Anet, Peer of France, Governor of Provence, etc. Born in Paris in October, 1612, he was known in his earlier years as Duke de Mercœur. In July, 1651, he married at Brühl, near Cologne, Laura, daughter of Michele Lorenzo Mancini and Geronima Mazarini, sister of Cardinal Mazarin. After the death of his wife in 1657, the Duke took orders, and on being raised to the purple in 1667 became known as the Cardinal de Vendôme. He died August 6, 1669, at Aix-en-Provence, but was buried in the collegiate chapel of St. George at Vendôme. By his marriage to Laura Mancini he had three sons and a daughter, for particulars respecting whom see *post*, p. 299.

2. *François de Bourbon-Vendôme, Duke de Beaufort*, Peer and Admiral of France, etc., born in Paris in 1616.

\* He had built the establishment of the Oratorians, which is now the Lycée of the town. A good portrait of him, attributed to Vandyck, is preserved there.

Between 1630 and 1640 he took an active part in the wars in Savoy, Flanders, etc., but having become involved in the conspiracy of Cinq-Mars against Richelieu, he was compelled to seek an asylum in England. Returning to France soon after the death of Louis XIII, he acquired a high position at Court, but speedily lost it by his pride and vanity. In conjunction with the Duchesses de Chevreuse and de Montbazon (the latter of whom was his mistress) he conspired against Mazarin and was imprisoned, but after five years' captivity succeeded in effecting his escape (May, 1648). Siding with the Parliament against the Court he became very popular with the Parisians, and after contriving to get some convoys of provisions into the city while Condé was besieging it, received the nickname of "King of the Markets." After the first Fronde, the Duke de Beaufort became reconciled with Condé, who made him Governor of Paris. Having killed his brother-in-law, the Duke de Nemours, in a duel, he was excluded from the amnesty at the general pacification, but was at last privileged to return to Court, and was appointed acting Admiral of France under his father. He commanded (1664-65) various expeditions against the Algerine pirates, and was subsequently placed in command of a French relief force despatched to Candia, which the Turks were besieging. He landed in Crete in June, 1669, and nine days later disappeared in an engagement with the Turks. It has been supposed that he was then killed, but as his body was never found he may have been reduced to slavery. The Duke de Beaufort never married. There has been a theory that he was the Man with the Iron Mask.

3. *Élisabeth*, called *Mademoiselle de Vendôme*, and later *Duchess de Nemours*, born in 1614, married July, 1643, to Charles Amadeus of Savoy, Duke de Nemours, Gênois, Aumale, etc., son of Henry of Savoy, Duke de Nemours, and Anne of Lorraine, Duchess d'Aumale. The Duchess *Élisabeth* died in Paris, of the smallpox, on May 19, 1664, and was buried at the convent of the Filles de Ste. Marie in the Rue St. Antoine. No issue.

IV. ALEXANDRE DE BOURBON, CHEVALIER DE VENDÔME, and GRAND PRIOR, born at Nantes, April 19, 1598, legitimated in April, 1599, admitted at the Temple in Paris as a Knight of Malta in 1604, appointed Prior of Marmoutiers in 1610, and subsequently Grand Prior of France and General of the Gallies of the Knights of Malta. Imprisoned at the castle of Vincennes in 1626, died there February 8, 1629, buried in the chapel of the Oratory at Vendôme. Never married.

V. CATHERINE HENRIETTE DE BOURBON, called MADEMOISELLE DE VENDÔME, and later DUCHESS D'ELBEUF, born at Rouen, November 11, 1596, legitimated in March, 1597, married to Charles de Lorraine, Duke d'Elbeuf, Count d'Harcourt, Lislebonne and Rieux, Lord of Rochefort, Governor of Picardy, etc., son of Charles de Lorraine, Duke d'Elbeuf by his wife Marguerite Chabot de Charny. The Duke d'Elbeuf died in Paris in 1663, the Duchess in 1633. She left no issue.

*Children of Henri de Navarre by Catherine Henriette de Balzac d'Entragues, Marchioness de Verneuil.\**

VI. A son, stillborn. Fontainebleau, July 2, 1600.

VII. GASTON HENRI DE BOURBON, sometime Bishop of Metz and Abbot of St. Germain-des-Prés, Paris; subsequently DUKE DE VERNEUIL, Governor of Languedoc, Peer of France, etc. Born October 27 (some accounts say November 3), 1601, at the Château de Verneuil, he was legitimated in 1603, baptized December 9, 1607, the sponsors being the Dauphin (Louis XIII) and his sister, Mme. Élisabeth of France (later Queen of Spain). The Duke de Verneuil married Charlotte, dowager Duchess de Sully, née Séguier (see *ante*, p. 242). He was of a very affable disposition, fond of study and well read in history. He formed a famous collection of antique coins and medals. Sport also attracted him, and he entertained freely at his château de Verneuil. He was on particular terms of friendship with the great Condé, and was often at Chantilly. The Duke died at Verneuil on May 28, 1683, and was buried at the Carmelites

\* Verneuil near Triel. Nothing now remains of the château which the King enlarged and beautified for his favourite.

at Pontoise, his heart being inured at St. Germain-des-Prés. His wife survived him until June 5, 1704. No issue.

VIII. GABRIELLE ANGÉLIQUE DE BOURBON, called MADEMOISELLE DE VERNEUIL, and later DUCHESS D'ÉPERNON, born in Paris on January 21, 1603, baptized at St. Germain-en-Laye, December 9, 1607, the sponsors being her half-brother, César de Vendôme, and her half-sister, Mlle. de Vendôme. On December 12, 1622, Mlle. de Verneuil was married to Bernard de La Valette, who became Duke d'Épernon, Foix and Candale, Governor of Guienne, and Colonel-general of the French Infantry, he being the son of Jean Louis, Duke d'Épernon, by his wife Marguerite de Foix and de Candale. Gabrielle Angélique died at Metz on April 29, 1627, and was buried at Cadillac. No issue. See also p. 251, *ante*.

*Child of Henri de Navarre by Jacqueline de Bueil, Countess de Moret, and subsequently Marchioness de Vardes.*

*Note.*—We find there are conflicting accounts of the origin of Mme. de Moret. Some authorities say that her parents were Georges Babou, Lord of Bueil and Madeleine du Bellay (see p. 263, *ante*), but according to others she was the daughter of Claude de Bueil, Lord of Courvallon, and Catherine de Montecler.

IX. ANTOINE DE BOURBON, COUNT DE MORET, born at the château of Moret on May 9, 1607, legitimated January, 1608. His half-brother, Louis XIII, wished to give him a high position in the Church, and provided him with several benefices, but he abetted Gaston d'Orléans in conspiring against Richelieu, and is supposed to have been killed at the engagement of Castelnaudary on September 1, 1632, when Henri de Montmorency (afterwards decapitated at Toulouse) was defeated by the Marquis de Schomberg. The question of Antoine de Bourbon's fate, however, has never been fully elucidated, and there is a legend that he was still living in 1689, in the guise of a hermit who called himself Jean Baptiste, and had his abode near the abbey of Asnières in Anjou. This hermit was questioned with respect to his identity, but would neither deny nor acknowledge the truth of the surmise that he was the lost Count de Moret. Writers of historical romance might find a theme for their pens in the above mentioned legend.



*Children of Henri de Navarre by Charlotte des Essars (sometimes called Mlle. de la Haye), Countess de Romorantin.*

*Note.*—Mme. de Romorantin was the daughter of François des Essars, or Essarts, Lord of Sautour, an equerry of the royal stables, by his marriage with Charlotte de Harlay-Champvallon. Born in or about 1580, Charlotte de Romorantin became, after the King's death, the mistress of Louis de Lorraine, Cardinal de Guise and Archbishop of Reims, by whom she had five children. In 1630, however, she married François du Hallier, Marshal de l'Hôpital. By the King she had :—

X. JEANNE BAPTISTE DE BOURBON, ABBESS OF FONTEVRAULT, born in or about January, 1608, legitimated March, 1608, died and buried at Fontevrault. Maids of honour who misconducted themselves at the Court of Louis XIV, were from time to time placed in her charge.

XI. MARIE HENRIETTE DE BOURBON, ABBESS OF CHELLES, in 1627. Date of birth very uncertain. Died and buried at Chelles in February, 1629.

The above list comprises all the natural children of whom Henri de Navarre acknowledged the paternity. The only one of them who left posterity that can be traced was César de Vendôme through his elder son, Louis (see p. 295, *ante*), whose children proved to be the last generation of the acknowledged illegitimate descendants of Henri de Navarre. To complete this summary we append a list of these offspring.

*Children of Louis, Duke de Vendôme.*

1. *Louis Joseph, Duke de Vendôme*, Mercœur, Étampes and Penthievre, Prince de Martigues, Peer of France, General of the Galleys, Grand Seneschal and Governor of Provence, Viceroy of Catalonia, etc., born in Paris July 1, 1654, baptized at Vincennes, where Louis XIV and Anne of Austria acted as his sponsors. Louis Joseph de Vendôme became one of the great generals of his period, gaining several important battles in Flanders, Spain and Italy. His dearly-bought victory at Brihuega over General, afterwards the first Earl, Stanhope virtually ensured the possession of Spain to Louis XIV's grandson, Philip V. Inclined to be somewhat dissolute, cynical in his language, careless in

his habits, naturally indolent and often negligent in regard to details even in his chosen profession of arms, Vendôme none the less frequently showed at critical moments that he was a really great captain, and Prince Eugène, whom he defeated at Cassano, rendered testimony to his high talents and remarkable intrepidity. In an age when nearly every man wore a wig, Vendôme contented himself with his own flaxen hair which streamed over his shoulders, rendering him very conspicuous. He stood over six feet high and was broad in proportion, in fact, inclined to stoutness. Severe with his soldiers, but otherwise goodnatured, he was quite free from any such defects as vanity and envy. Without doubt he showed himself to be the most capable of all the descendants of Henri de Navarre. He espoused, at Sceaux, on May 15, 1710, Marie Anne de Bourbon, called Mademoiselle d'Enghien, fifth daughter of Henri Jules, Prince de Condé (son of the great Condé), by Anne of Bavaria, Princess Palatine. There was no issue of this marriage. The Duke de Vendôme died of apoplexy at Vinaros in Spain, in the summer of 1712, and by command of Philip V was buried in the Pantheon de los Infantes at the Escorial.

2. *Philippe de Bourbon-Vendôme*, known first as the *Chevalier de Vendôme*, and later as the *Grand Prior*, born at the family mansion on the site of the present Place Vendôme in Paris on August 23, 1655, became a Lieutenant-General, and shared several of the campaigns of his elder brother, whom he resembled in physique but whose talents he did not possess. Cowardice even has been imputed to him, and it is certain that he was disgraced either on that account or for incapacity after his brother's victory at Cassano in 1705. Owing to that disgrace Philippe de Vendôme did not return to France until Louis XIV had passed away, when he ceded his office as Grand Prior to Jean Philippe, Chevalier d'Orléans, son of the Regent by Marie Louise de Séry, Countess d'Argentan, and gave himself up to debauchery, which shortened his life. He was even more self-neglectful in his habits than his brother, and he drank and took snuff to excess. Nevertheless Saint Simon's highly coloured portrait of him is doubtless exaggerated. Saint Simon hated all the "legitimated" offspring of the royal house because they took precedence of himself and other common or garden dukes,

and he libels them in his memoirs as often as he finds it possible to speak of them. Philippe de Vendôme never married. He died in Paris on January 24, 1727, and was buried at the Temple.

3. *Jules César de Bourbon-Vendôme*, born in Paris on January 27, 1657; baptized March 18, 1657; godfather, Cardinal Mazarin; died July 28, 1660, buried at the Church of the Capuchins in the Rue St. Honoré, Paris.

4. An illegitimate daughter, called *Françoise d'Anet*, who married a certain Arquier, and died June 7, 1696. Not known to have left issue.

From the above it will be seen that the posterity of Henri de Navarre and Gabrielle d'Estrées became extinct in the third generation.

## C

## SONGS ATTRIBUTED TO HENRI DE NAVARRE

As mentioned on p. 105, signs of a poetical instinct may be found here and there in the correspondence of Henri de Navarre, yet it is very doubtful whether he wrote any of the songs commonly ascribed to him, although he certainly sang, and was very likely fond of doing so, as, indeed, his letter respecting Marans and its scenery seems to indicate. In that connection it may well have happened that people came to look upon songs which were favourites with him as being his own work, a tradition thus arising that he was the author of such effusions as *Charmante Gabrielle* and *Viens Aurore*.

It is, of course, well known that the King's grandmother, Marguerite d'Angoulême, wrote verse, though mostly of a very indifferent kind, and that his father, Antoine de Bourbon, also trifled with the muses. In regard to the latter, however, it remains doubtful if he were really, as some have said, the author of the well-known song beginning :

“ Si le roi Henri me donnait  
Paris, sa grande ville—— ”

a song attributed, by the way, to Henri de Navarre himself

both by Molière in *Le Misanthrope*, and by Beaumarchais in *Le Mariage de Figaro*; whilst Collé, in his *Partie de Chasse*, assigned its authorship to one of the characters in that play, and had it sung in presence of the King, who, according to others, had composed it. Ampère, however, in his *Instructions relatives aux Poésies populaires de la France*, gave the authorship to King Henri's father on the strength of statements made in M. de Pétigny's *Histoire archéologique du Vendômois*. According to that account the song was composed at the Château de la Bonnaventure, near the hamlet of Le Gué du Loir (Loir-ford), a property belonging to a M. de Salinet, a member of Antoine de Bourbon's household. Antoine and others often met there and caroused together, many a gay song, we are told, being composed on those occasions, on some of which, by the way, Ronsard, the poet, whose Manoir de la Poissonnière was at no great distance in the same region, figured among the company. It thus came to pass that the song we speak of was composed, but whether it were Antoine's own work, or that of a member of his set, or the outcome of some *collaboration*, is a point which cannot well be elucidated. It may be recollected that there are two distinct forms of the song's refrain, one usually running :

" La bonne aventure O gué !  
La bonne aventure ! "

whilst the other runs :

" J'aime mieux ma mie O gué !  
J'aime mieux ma mie. "

In both cases the expression *O gué !* is simply a corruption of *au gué* (at the ford), the first refrain being a play on the name of the château where the song is said to have been written, that is, "La Bonnaventure at the ford of the Loir"; while in the second instance the sense is "I prefer my sweetheart at the ford." Strictly speaking, of course, *ma mie* ought to be written *m'amie*, but there is nothing to warrant the supposition (indulged in by some writers) that *O gué* is simply a corruption of *O gai*. As for the King Henri who figures in the song, this is not Henri de Navarre, who was not born at the time of its composition, but Henri II, the son of Francis I.

With respect to *Charmante Gabrielle*, the most famous of the songs attributed to Henri de Navarre, there was formerly much discussion. Édouard Fournier held that the King composed neither the words nor the air, the refrain, *Cruelle départie*, etc., having been current long before his time.\* The air is nowadays said to be that of a very old French nowell, and to have been adapted to the song by a certain Ducaurron, sometime Master of the King's Chapel, while the words, it seems, were written by Jean Bertaut, a native of Caen, who became secretary and reader to the King, and was appointed, in 1594, Abbot of Aunay, near Bayeux. He contributed to Henri's abjuration of the Huguenot faith, became for a time chaplain to Marie de' Medici, and finally, in 1606, was made Bishop of Séez. After that event he tried to suppress all the lighter verse he had written, for he had long courted the muses, there being considerable tenderness and sweetness in some of his efforts. Bertaut studied Ronsard and Desportes, the latter of whom was his uncle, while he himself was uncle to Mme. de Motteville.

The song known as *Viens Aurore* may also have been written by Bertaut. Philarète Chasles was strongly of the opinion that it could not have been the work of Henri IV. However, both *Charmante Gabrielle* and *Viens Aurore* are closely associated with the King's memory. Both were certainly sung in his time, and he may have sung them himself. The words being little known to English readers we here reproduce them :

## CHARMANTE GABRIELLE.

## I

Charmante Gabrielle,  
 Percé de mille dards,  
 Quand la gloire m'appelle  
 A la suite de Mars,  
 Cruelle départie,  
 Malheureux jour !  
 Que ne suis-je sans vie  
 Ou sans amour ?

---

\* Fournier's *L'Esprit dans l'Histoire*, 2nd edition, 1860. *Bulletin de l'Académie de Bruxelles*, vol. xi., p. 380. Fétis's *Curiosités de la Musique*, p. 376. Philarète Chasles in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, June 1, 1844, and Ste. Beuve, *Derniers Portraits*, p. 63.

## II

L'amour sans nulle peine  
 M'a, par vos doux regards,  
 Comme un grand capitaine,  
 Mis sous ses étendards.  
 Cruelle départie;  
 Malheureux jour !  
 C'est trop peu d'une vie  
 Pour tant d'amour !

## III

Si votre nom célèbre  
 Sur mes drapeaux brillait,  
 Jusqu'au delà de l'Ebre  
 L'Espagne me craindrait.  
 Cruelle départie, etc., as in verse 2.

## IV

Je n'ai pu dans la guerre,  
 Qu'un royaume gagner ;  
 Mais sur toute la terre  
 Vos yeux doivent régner !  
 Cruelle départie, etc.

## V

Partagez ma couronne,  
 Le prix de ma valeur ;  
 Je la tiens de Bellone,  
 Tenez-la de mon cœur !  
 Cruelle départie, etc.

## VI

Bel astre que je quitte,  
 Ah, cruel souvenir !  
 Ma douleur s'en irrite :  
 Vous revoir ou mourir !  
 Cruelle départie, etc.

## VII

Je veux que mes trompettes,  
 Mes fifres, les échos,  
 A tout moment répètent  
 Ces doux et tristes mots :  
 Cruelle départie,  
 Malheureux jour  
 C'est trop peu d'une vie  
 Pour tant d'amour !

## VIENS AURORE.

## I

Viens Aurore,  
 Je t'implore,  
 Je suis gai quand je te voi ;  
 La bergère  
 Qui m'est chère,  
 Est vermeille comme toi !

## II

Elle est blonde,  
 Sans seconde,  
 Elle a la taille à la main ;  
 Sa prunelle  
 Étincelle  
 Comme l'astre du matin !

## III

Pour entendre  
 Sa voix tendre,  
 On déserte le hameau ;  
 Et Tityre,  
 Qui soupire,  
 Fait taire son chalumeau.

## IV

De rosée  
 Arrosée,  
 La rose a moins de fraîcheur ;  
 Une hermine  
 Est moins fine ;  
 Le lis \* a moins de blancheur.

## V

D'Ambroisie  
 Bien choisie,  
 Hébé la nourrit à part ; †  
 Et sa bouche,  
 Quand j'y touche,  
 Me parfume de nectar.

---

\* *Lait* is given instead of *lis* in some versions.

† In the version current in Champagne (see p. 133, *ante*), this line runs  
 " Du Puy se nourrit à part."





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\* We omitted to mention in the body of our work that it was Mlle. de Montmorency's marriage with Henri II de Condé which made the latter's family so extremely wealthy. *Inter alia*, that marriage eventually conveyed to the Condés the famous estate of Chantilly.

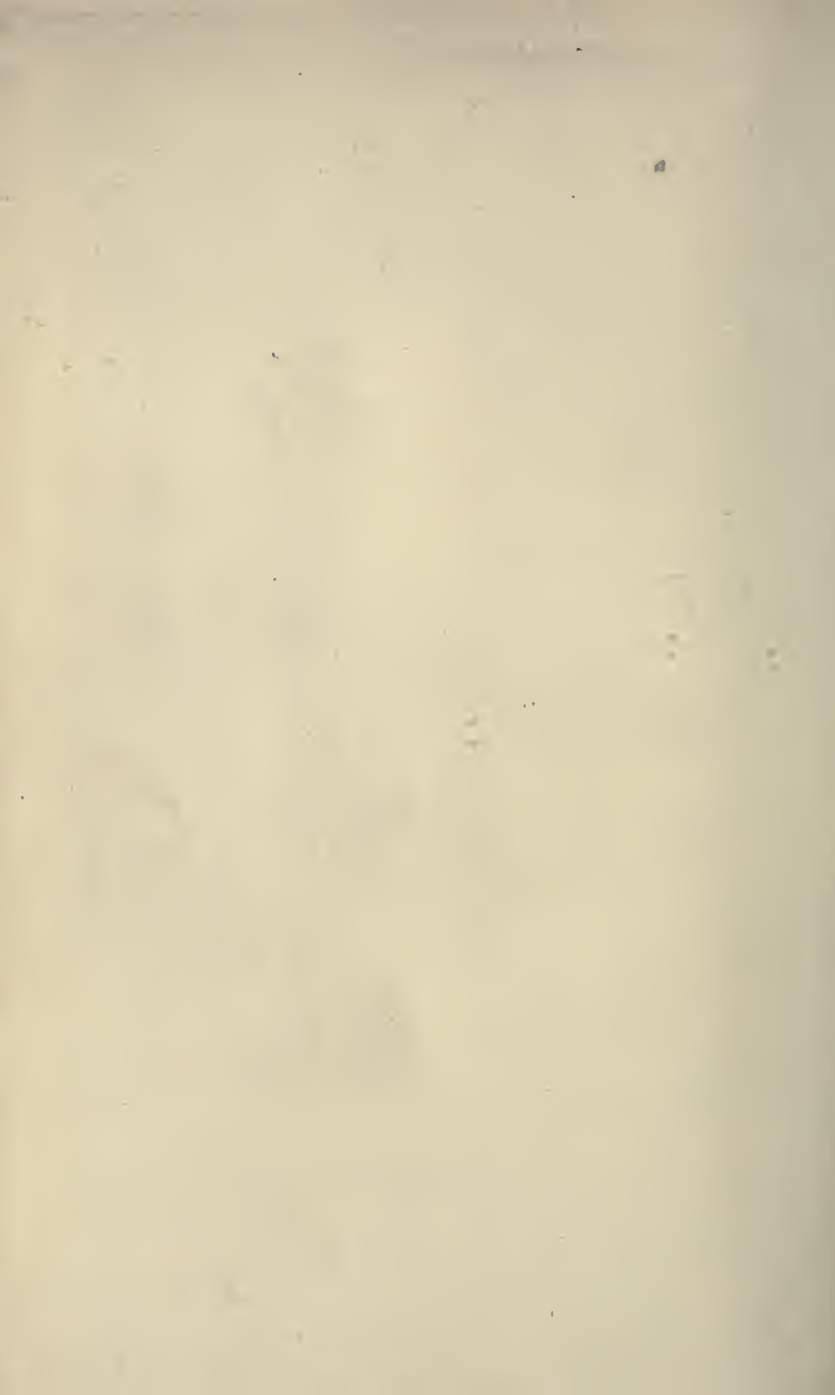
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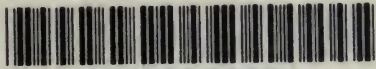
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