The Life of Marie de Medicis — Volume 2 eBook

The Life of Marie de Medicis — Volume 2 by Julia Pardoe

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Duchesse de Mercoeur
Marquise de Guercheville
Due de Lesdiguieres
Comtesse de Fervaques
Comtesse du Fargis
Ravaillac
Duchesse de Sully
Marechal de Brissac
Cardinal Bentivoglio
M. de Souvre
Stefano Galigai
M. de Thou
M. Arnaud
Pere Cotton
Henri *ii*, Duc de Longueville
Duque de Feria
Marechal de la Chatre

Duc d’Elboeuf
M. de Chateauvieux
Marquis de Chateauneuf
Marquis de Rambouillet
Cardinal de Gonzaga
M. de Breves
M. de Brosse
Comte de Buquoy
Don Rodrigo Calderon
Chevalier de Guise
Duc de Luxembourg-Piney
Cardinal de Gondy
Cosmo, Grand Duke of Tuscany
Duc de la Rochefoucauld
Duc de Retz
Bishop of Saintes
M. de Verdun
M. de Servin
Comte de Brienne
Baron du Pont-Saint-Pierre
M. Miron
M. Le Fevre
M. de Rivault
Comte de Laval
Cardinal de Richelieu
M. Le Jay
Comte de Saint-Pol
Duque d’Usseda
M. Mangot
M. de Puisieux
M. Barbin
Madame de Motteville
Marquis de Themines
M. de Saint-Geran.
M. Deageant
Marechal de Schomberg
Marechal d’Ornano
Marquis de Bressieux
M. de Rouvray
Comte de Fiesque
Jean Goujon
Mlle. de Montbazon

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2. *Louis* XIII, *king of France* Engraved by Freeman from the Original by Lestang in the Versailles Gallery.

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3. *Marechal de Bassompierre* Engraved by Gouttiere from the Original by Alaux.

4. *Cardinal de Richelieu* Engraved by Bourgeois.

5. *Anne of Austria* Engraved by W. Greatbach from a Print by Masson, after P. Mignard.

6. *Marechal de Schomberg* Engraved by Rouargue from the Original by Rouillard.

BOOK I

(Continued)

MARIE DE MEDICIS AS QUEEN

THE LIFE

OF

MARIE DE MEDICIS

CHAPTER IX

1610

Preparations for the coronation of Marie de Medicis—Wherefore deferred—They are resumed—The Cathedral of St. Denis—-Gorgeous *coup d'oeil*—The procession—-Indignation of the ex-Queen Marguerite—The Comte and Comtesse de Soissons leave Paris—Magnificence of Marie de Medicis and her Court—The coronation—The Queen is affectionately received by the King on reaching the Palace—The banquet—The Court returns to the Louvre—Last advice given by the King to the Queen-Regent—Gloomy forebodings—The Queen's toilet—The Duc de Vendome and the Astrologer—The King's coach—Assassination of Henri *iv*—The Queen and the Chancellor—The royal children are placed under the care of M. de Vitry—Examination of the royal body—The King's heart—The state bier—The royal funeral.

Having resolved that the coronation of the Queen should take place before his departure for Germany, and being anxious to commence the projected campaign with the least possible delay, Henry named the 5th of May as the day on which the ceremony was to be performed; but having learnt from a private despatch that the Archduke had resolved at the eleventh hour not to incur the hazard of a war with France upon so frivolous a pretext as the forcible retention of a Princess, who moreover, remained

under his charge against her own free will, and that Madame de Conde was accordingly about to return to the French Court, he resolved to defer the pageant until the advent of the fair fugitive who would, as he felt, constitute its brightest ornament. The succeeding courier from the Low Countries, however, dispelled this brilliant vision. Whatever might have been the personal inclination of the Archduke, Philip of Spain determined to retain his hostage; and the return of the Princess to France was interdicted. Enraged by the deceit which had been practised upon him, but unwilling to forfeit his word to the Queen, Henry had no alternative save to order the instant renewal of the preparations which he had himself suspended; and despite the entreaties of the municipal authorities of Paris, who represented the impossibility of completing their arrangements before the end of the month, he persisted in his resolution of causing the Queen to be crowned on the 13th, and commanded her public entry into Paris for the following Sunday.[1]

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On the 11th (Tuesday) he said to those around him, “I shall sleep at St. Denis to-morrow night, and return to Paris on Thursday; I shall arrange all my private affairs on Friday; on Saturday I shall drive about the city; Sunday will be the state entry of the Queen; on Monday my daughter De Vendome will be married; on Tuesday the banquet will take place; and on Wednesday I mount for Germany.” [2]

The Court accordingly slept at St. Denis on the night of the 12th, in order to be in readiness for the ceremony of the morrow; and the morning of the eventful day which was to witness the crowning triumph of Marie de Medicis at length dawned. A brilliant spring sun robed the earth in brightness; but nowhere did it light up a scene of greater magnificence than when, filtered through the windows of stained glass, it poured itself in a living mosaic over the marble pavement of the cathedral, and flashed upon the sumptuous hangings and golden draperies which were distributed over the spacious area of the edifice. Immediately in front of the high altar a platform had been erected eleven feet in height, and upwards of twenty feet square, in the centre of which was a dais richly carpeted, supporting the throne of the Queen, covered with crimson velvet embroidered with *fleurs-de-lis* in gold, and overshadowed by a canopy of the same material. On either side of this throne two other platforms were appropriated to the Princes of the Blood, the Knights of the several Orders, the Gentlemen of the Bedchamber, the great nobles, the foreign ambassadors, and the ladies of the Queen’s household. Within the altar-rail on the left hand, a bench draped with cloth of gold was prepared for the cardinals; and behind this was a second bench reserved for the archbishops, bishops, and other ecclesiastics who were to assist at the ceremony; while on the same side of the shrine stood a table overlaid by a costly drapery, upon which were to be deposited the crown, the coronet, the sceptre, the hand of justice, and the ring destined to be employed during the ceremony. On the right hand of the altar was placed a *prie-dieu* covered with violet velvet bordered and fringed with gold, upon which were placed two cushions of the same material for the use of the Cardinal de Joyeuse, who was to officiate; and behind this was a table corresponding with that on the left, and covered by a similar drapery, supporting the bread, wine, and waxen tapers which the master of the ceremonies was instructed to deliver to the ladies who were selected to make the offering for the Queen.

The floor of the choir extending from the principal platform to the high altar was carpeted with crimson velvet edged with gold; and above this was stretched a second drapery of cloth of gold for the passage of her Majesty; myriads of lights were grouped about the lateral shrines, the carved columns of the venerable edifice were veiled by magnificent hangings, and the gorgeous vestments of the prelates cumbered the open presses of the sacristy.

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An hour after dawn a compact crowd peopled the vast interior of St. Denis; persons of all ranks, from the artizan to the petty noble and his family, rushed tumultuously towards the sacred edifice, in order to secure a sight of the august solemnity; and great was the surprise of all to find themselves already preceded by the King, who came and went throughout the early part of the morning, superintending every arrangement in person, and apparently overlooking his bodily ailments in the extraordinary excitement under which he laboured.

The Dauphin, Madame the elder Princess, the ex-Queen Marguerite, the Princes of the Blood, and great dignitaries who were summoned to assist at the ceremony, accompanied by the Cardinals de Gondy and de Sourdis, proceeded at an early hour to the Louvre to conduct the Queen to the cathedral; and it was no sooner announced that her Majesty was prepared to set forth than the procession formed.

The ceremonial had not, however, been definitively arranged without considerable difficulty. Marguerite, who, whatever might be her errors, could not contemplate her presence at this solemnity as a mere spectator without considerable heart-burning, considered herself aggrieved by the fact that instead of following immediately behind the Queen, she was to be preceded by Madame Elisabeth, still a mere child; and so great was her indignation at this discovery, that she was very reluctantly induced to abandon her intention of pretexting illness, and absenting herself entirely from the pageant. The earnest remonstrances of her friends, who represented to her the certainty of the King's serious displeasure, alone determined her to sacrifice her dignity; and although she ultimately consented to submit to an arrangement which she considered as an encroachment upon her rights as the daughter of a long line of sovereigns, rather than draw down upon herself the resentment of the monarch, she wept bitterly while she prepared to swell the retinue of her successor.[3] The Comte de Soissons was less compliant; for it was no sooner announced to him that the Duchesse de Vendome, the wife of the King's natural son, was to appear in a mantle embroidered with *fleurs-de-lis* similar to those worn by the Princesses of the Blood, than he loudly declared that he would not countenance so disgraceful an innovation; and having ordered his household to prepare for an instant departure from Paris, he left the capital with the Princess his wife, and retired to one of his country seats.[4]

Despite this secession, however, the suite of Marie de Medicis was one of supreme magnificence. The procession was opened by the Swiss Guards, habited in velvet vests of her own colours, tawny, blue, crimson, and white; then followed two companies, each composed of a hundred nobles, the first wearing habiliments of tawny-coloured satin braided with gold, and the second pourpoints of white satin and breeches of tawny colour; these were succeeded by the Lords of the Bedchamber, chamberlains, and other great officers of the royal household, superbly attired; who were, in their turn, followed by the Knights of the Holy Ghost wearing the collar of their Order. A body of trumpeters walked after them richly dressed in blue velvet; and then came the heralds in full armour, and the Ushers of the Chamber with their maces.

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When these had passed the more important personages of the procession issued from the gates of the Louvre; and the glorious spring sun flashed upon the jewelled caps and capes of the Princes of the Blood, glistened over their vests of cloth of gold, and toyed with the gemmed hilts of their diamond-studded weapons. Preceding the Queen were the Prince de Conti and the Comte d'Anquien;[5] while immediately before her walked the Dauphin clad in a habit of cloth of silver, profusely ornamented with precious stones; and then came Marie herself, in the full glory of conscious dignity and triumph, wearing a coronet of jewels, a richly-gemmed stomacher, a surcoat of ermine, and a royal mantle seven French ells in length, composed of purple velvet embroidered with *fleurs-de-lis* in gold and diamonds, and bordered with ermine, which was borne on either side of her by the two Cardinals, and at its extremity by the Dowager Princess of Conde,[6] the Princesse de Conti, the Dowager Duchess of Montpensier, and the Duchesse de Mercoeur;[7] whose trains were in like manner supported by four nobles habited in cloth of gold and silver, and covered with jewels.

Then followed Madame Elisabeth de France and the ex-Queen Marguerite, wearing mantles covered with *fleurs-de-lis* embroidered in gold, carried by four nobles richly attired, with their capes and caps laced with jewels; and the gorgeous train was finally closed by the Princesses of the Blood and Duchesses, whose trains were in like manner borne by some of the principal noblemen of the Court. All these ladies wore their coronets enriched with pearls and diamonds, save such as were widows, to whom the use of gems was interdicted by the fashion of the age.

To these succeeded the ladies of the Queen's household, among whom the Marquise de Guercheville[8] and Madame de Concini excited the most curiosity; the latter from the high favour which she enjoyed, and the extraordinary elevation to which it had conduced; and the former from a cause infinitely more honourable to her as a woman. While the widow of her first husband, Henri de Silly, Comte de la Rochepot, her grace and beauty attracted Henri IV, who pertinaciously endeavoured to win her affections. His degrading suit was, however, so resolutely although respectfully rejected, that the King, impressed by her merit, on one occasion declared that the title which would be the most applicable to her would be that of a lady of honour, and that such she should become whenever another Queen ascended the throne of France. The Marquise curtsied her thanks, without attaching any importance to so very prospective a distinction; but six years subsequently, when the Court of Marie de Medicis was formed, the promised appointment was conferred upon her; and she fulfilled the duties of her office with a dignified and unobtrusive zeal which secured to her the esteem and respect of her royal mistress.[9]

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Thus escorted, Marie de Medicis entered the cathedral; where, having been conducted to the front of the high altar, she knelt upon a cushion near which stood the Cardinal de Joyeuse in his pontifical robes, surrounded by a group of high ecclesiastical dignitaries, and supported by the Cardinal Duperron. When the Queen had concluded her prayer, and kissed the reliquary which was presented to her by Mgr. de Joyeuse, she was led to her throne in the same state as that with which she had approached the altar; and she had no sooner taken her place than the Dauphin seated himself in the chair which had been prepared for him; and Madame and the ex-Queen, followed by the Princesses of the Blood and the great ladies of the Court, after having successively made a profound curtsey to the Queen, followed his example. This done, the Cardinals de Gondy and de Sourdis descended from the platform, and took up their position on the left of the altar, while the Princes were marshalled to their places by the royal ushers; and meanwhile the musicians of her Majesty performed divers melodies suited to the place and the occasion.

After the lapse of a few moments the two Cardinals again ascended the platform to reconduct her Majesty to the altar, which she reached in the same order as she had previously done, save that the Dauphin now walked on her right hand and Madame Elisabeth upon her left. Having knelt as before in silent prayer, she was ultimately raised by the Prince and Princess, and stood with her head bowed upon her breast while the Cardinal de Joyeuse commenced the appropriate orisons, and received from the hand of two of the bishops the vase containing the holy oil, and the platen. Having poured out a portion of the former, the prelate anointed the Queen upon the head and chest; after which he received from a third bishop the consecrated ring, which he placed upon her finger.

The sceptre and the hand of justice were then tendered to him, and transferred to the august recipient; and finally the crown of state was presented upon a cushion, and held above her head by the Dauphin and Madame Elisabeth, by whom it was subsequently consigned to the keeping of the Prince de Conti, while another of smaller size, enriched with a profusion of diamonds, rubies, and pearls of immense value, was placed upon her brow; and Marie de Medicis at length stood in the midst of her assembled Court the crowned and anointed Queen of France.

A vigorous flourish of trumpets proclaimed the termination of the ceremony. Marie resigned the sceptre and the hand of justice to the two Princes who stood next to her, and once more ascended the throne; where she was no sooner seated than M. de Conti placed before her the crown of state which he had carried upon a stool covered with cloth of gold, and knelt beside it. The Prince who bore the sceptre then assumed the same attitude on the right hand of the Queen, and his companion carrying the hand of justice upon her left. A solemn high mass was next performed, and at its close the herald-at-arms cast, in the Queen’s name, a shower of gold and silver coin among the crowds who thronged the church; while Marie herself, descending from the platform, and attended as before, slowly left the sacred edifice and returned to the robing-room.

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The King, who had witnessed the whole ceremony from his private tribune, was more rapid in his movements, and hastened to regain his chamber; whence he watched the brilliant procession as it advanced with an undisguised delight that was inexplicable to those who were aware of the reluctance with which he had yielded to the desire of the Queen, and who had consequently anticipated no demonstration on his part save one of irritation and annoyance. Greatly, therefore, were they surprised when, as she passed beneath the window at which he had taken up his station, they saw him scatter some perfumed water on her head in order to induce her to look up; after which he hurriedly descended the great staircase to receive and welcome her, and with every possible exhibition of affection and respect conducted her to the hall in which the banquet had been prepared.

Throughout this sumptuous repast the gaiety of the monarch excited the comments of all by whom he was surrounded; and it was generally remarked that he had not for many months yielded to such an effervescence of spirits. At length, however, the festival drew to its close; lords and ladies were alike overwhelmed by the fatigues of the past day; and their Majesties, having taken a gracious leave of their illustrious guests, entered one of the royal carriages and proceeded to the Louvre.[10]

The numerous foreigners who had assembled from every part of Europe in order to witness the ceremony were lost in astonishment at the profusion of jewels displayed upon the occasion, declaring that they had never before witnessed such a spectacle; and that even at the world-famed entry of the Spanish Queen into Madrid, where Italy and Spain had alike exhibited all their riches, they could not be compared with those possessed by the French Court alone; nor was their surprise diminished when they learnt that on the following Sunday, when Marie de Medicis was to enter Paris in state, they would be convinced that they had not as yet seen a tithe of the splendour which the great nobles and ladies of the kingdom were enabled to display upon such occasions.[11]

From the moment in which the King decided upon personally superseding the Marechal de Lesdiguieres[12] in his command of the army in Champagne, he had been unwearied in his advice to the Queen for the efficient government of the country. He exhorted her to great caution in changing her ministers, earnestly impressing upon her the danger of entrusting state affairs to individuals whose probity and experience were not well assured, or of displacing others without great and serious cause. He, moreover, especially besought her never to permit the interference of foreigners in the internal economy of the kingdom, as by such ill-placed confidence she could not fail to alienate from herself the affections of all true Frenchmen; to uphold the authority of the Parliament, but on no account to countenance its dictation, confining its operations to their legitimate sphere,

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and enforcing its submission to her own delegated supremacy; never to suffer herself to be misled by her passions or prejudices, but to weigh all her measures maturely before she insisted upon their enforcement; to protect the Jesuits, but at the same time to be careful not to allow them to increase their numbers, or to form establishments upon the frontiers; to attach the nobility by favours which could not endanger the interests of the throne, but to be cautious in her concessions where they might tend to any undue aggrandizement of their former power and influence; and, above all, not rashly to undertake any war against the Huguenots until she had received full assurance of being enabled to terminate it successfully. As regarded the Dauphin, he declared that his greatest desire was to see him the husband of Mademoiselle de Lorraine, provided the Duke should not have other children; as, in such case, the French nation would be aggrandized by the territories of a state from which it had received much and grievous injury. He expressed, moreover, the greatest repugnance to the proposed marriage between Madame Elisabeth and the Infant of Spain, alleging as his reason the perpetual rivalry of the two powers, and the circumstance that the prosperity of the one must necessarily involve the abasement of the other; and finally he declared that were he compelled to give the hand of his daughter to a Spanish Prince, it should be to a younger brother who might be declared Duke of Flanders, and not to the heir to the throne.[13]

The Queen, while listening to these counsels, did not cease her entreaties that he would abandon his intention of quitting the kingdom, and leave the conduct of the campaign to his generals. She represented her own inexperience in state affairs, the extreme youth of the Dauphin, and the long life which he himself might still enjoy if he did not voluntarily place himself in situations of peril, which was the less required of him as he had already established his fame as a soldier throughout the whole of Europe. Henry answered only by a jest. Love and ambition alike lured him on; and beneath their baneful influence prudence and reason were silenced.[14]

On the morning succeeding the coronation of his royal consort, the King attended mass at the church of the Feuillants, where he was accompanied by the Duc de Guise and M. de Bassompierre; and as he was still in the same exuberant spirits as on the preceding day, a great deal of light and desultory conversation took place during their return to the palace; which was, however, abruptly terminated by Henry, whose countenance became suddenly overcast as he said in reply to a gay remark made by M. de Guise—

“Even you do not understand me now; but one of these days, when I am dead, you will learn my value.”

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“My God! Sire,” exclaimed Bassompierre, “will you never cease to pain us by these constant allusions to your approaching death? These are things which should not be said. You will live, please God, long and happy years. What fate can be more enviable than your own? You are now in the prime of life, strong and healthy; surrounded by honour and respect; in tranquil possession of the most flourishing kingdom upon earth; adored by your subjects; rich in money, palaces, and lands; wooed by fair women; loved by handsome favourites; with a host of noble children growing up about you. What can you require beyond this, and what more do you wish?”

“My friend,” replied the King with a long-drawn sigh, “I must resign all these things.”

As he uttered these words, the usher on duty threw open the door of his closet; and extending his hand to his two companions, which they successively raised to their lips, he disappeared.[15]

As the Queen was to dance a *branle* and to appear in a ballet that evening at the Louvre, she was on the King’s return closeted with the Princesse de Conti, the Marechale de Fervaques,[16] the Comtesse du Fargis,[17] and Madame Concini, her ladies of honour, busied in the selection of the costume in which she purposed to appear. Having ascertained this fact, Henry remained alone in his apartment, until it was announced to him that the Duc de Vendome solicited the honour of a private audience. He was instantly admitted; and after having excused himself for thus intruding upon the privacy of the monarch at a moment when, as he was well aware, the mind of the King was occupied by subjects of importance both to himself and to the state, he informed his royal father that La Brosse, a famous astrologer, had declared that the constellation under which his Majesty was born threatened him with imminent danger during that particular day; and that he consequently implored of him to be more than usually cautious until its close.

“Pshaw!” exclaimed the King gaily; “La Brosse is an old sharper who is anxious to obtain some of your money; and you are a young fool to believe him. My days are numbered before God.”

When he had dined Henry threw himself upon his bed, but he tried in vain to sleep; he then rose and paced gloomily about the room for a considerable time, after which he once more lay down; but the result proving the same, he again sprang to his feet, and turning abruptly to the *exempt* of the guard, he demanded to know the time.

“It is just four o’clock, Sire,” replied the officer; “and I would venture to suggest to your Majesty to try the effect of the open air, as you appear harassed and out of spirits.”

“You are right,” said the King; “cause my coach to be prepared, and I will go to the Arsenal and visit the Duc de Sully, who is unwell, and takes a bath to-day.”

When the carriage was announced, the King stepped into it, followed by the Ducs de Montbazon and d’Epernon, the Marechaux de Lavardin and de Roquelaure, the Marquises de Mirabeau and de la Force, and M. de Liancourt, his first equerry.

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Being anxious to obtain a good view of the preparations which were making for the entry of the Queen, Henry desired that the leathern curtains, which were at that period the clumsy substitute for windows, should be looped back; and during this operation M. de Vitry presented himself, with the intention of escorting the royal equipage with his company of the bodyguard.

“No, no,” said the King impatiently; “remain in the palace, and see that everything goes on as I have ordered, and with as much speed as possible.”

“At least, Sire, suffer my guards to attend you,” urged De Vitry.

“I will neither take you nor your guards,” was the abrupt reply; “I want no one near me.”

And upon this command the disappointed courtier was compelled to withdraw.

“Drive from the palace,” shouted the monarch in a tone of excitement; “in the direction of the Hotel de Longueville.” The carriage started at a rapid pace, and it had no sooner reached the spot indicated, than he again exclaimed, “And now to the Cross of Trahoir.” [18] Arrived at this wretched nook, he next desired to be driven to the Cemetery of the Innocents, for which purpose it was necessary to pass from the Rue St. Honore into that of La Ferronnerie, which was at that period extremely narrow, and rendered still more so by the numerous shops built against the cemetery wall. On reaching this point the progress of the royal carriage was impeded by two heavily-laden waggons, and the footmen who had hitherto run beside it pressed forward towards the end of the thoroughfare in order to rejoin it at the other extremity of the street. Two attendants only remained at their station, one of whom was employed in hastening the movements of the embarrassed waggoners, while the other was engaged in arranging some portion of his dress which had become displaced. At this moment a man advanced towards the King’s equipage, wrapped in a wide mantle, and carefully picked his way between the trading-booths and the carriage, which he had no sooner reached than, placing one of his feet on a spoke of the wheel, and the other on a doorstep, he plunged a knife into the side of the King, who was at that moment engaged in reading a letter.

As he felt the blow Henry exclaimed, “I am stabbed!” While he uttered the words, he flung up his arms, an action by which the assassin profited to take a surer and more fatal aim; and before the horror-stricken companions of the unfortunate monarch could make a movement to prevent it, a second thrust pierced the lobe of his heart. The blood gushed in torrents from his mouth, and from the wound itself, when again the remorseless knife descended, but only to become entangled in the sleeve of the Duc d’Epernon;[19] while with one thick and choking sob Henri IV fell back a corpse.

No one had seen by what hand the King had fallen; and had the regicide flung away his weapon, he might have stood unquestioned among the crowd which instantly collected upon seeing the six nobles who had accompanied the sovereign spring to the ground,

with loud exclamations of dismay; but Ravaillac[20] stood firm, with his reeking and two-edged knife still in his hand, and avowed his crime with a boldness which in a better cause would have savoured of heroism.[21]

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Meanwhile one of the royal party, perceiving that Henry remained perfectly motionless, while the carriage was inundated with his blood, incautiously exclaimed, “The King is dead!” upon which a loud wail arose from the assembled spectators; and the agitation of the crowd became so excessive that the Duc d’Epernon called loudly for a draught of wine, asserting that his Majesty was faint from a hurt, and required refreshment. A number of the inhabitants of the adjacent houses thereupon hastened to procure the desired beverage; while the companions of the monarch, profiting by the movement, let fall the leathern curtains of the coach, and informed the populace that they must immediately convey his Majesty to the Louvre in order to secure proper assistance.[22] This was done with all speed, while as they passed through the city the attendants replied to the inquiries which were made on every side that the King was merely wounded; and on arriving at the palace the body was stretched upon a bed, without having been cleansed or clothed, and in this state it remained for several hours, exposed to the gaze of all who thought proper to visit the chamber of death.[23]

During this time the Queen, fatigued by her previous exertions, was lying upon a sofa in her private cabinet, in order to recruit her strength against the evening, which was, as we have shown, to have been one of gaiety and gala, when her affrighted attendants hastened to convey to her the fatal tidings of her widowhood. In a paroxysm of uncontrollable anguish she rushed towards the door of the closet, and was about to make her way to the chamber in which the royal body had been deposited, when she was met by the Chancellor, to whom the fearful news had already been communicated, and who obstructed her passage.

“Let me pass, Sir,” she faltered out, “the King is dead.”

“Pardon me, Madame,” said Sillery, still impeding her purpose, “the Kings of France never die. Return, I implore of you, to your apartment. Restrain your tears until you have insured your own safety and that of your children; and instead of indulging in a grief which can avail you nothing, exert all your energies to counteract the possible effects of this disastrous and lamentable event.”

M. de Vitry was immediately instructed to assemble all the royal children in the same apartment, and not to permit any one, whatever might be his rank or authority, to have access to them; an order which was implicitly obeyed; and meanwhile six-and-twenty physicians and surgeons, who had been hastily summoned to the palace, commenced opening the corpse, which was discovered to be so universally healthy as to promise a long life. The intestines were, according to the prescribed custom, at once forwarded to St. Denis; while the Jesuits demanded the heart, in order to convey it to their church of La Fleche; and it was no sooner removed from the body, and placed in a silver basin, than it was eagerly pressed to the lips of all the nobles who assisted at the operation; each of those who carried away traces of the blood which issued from it upon his moustachios, esteeming himself highly honoured by the vestiges of the contact.[24]

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The royal remains were then embalmed, and placed in a sumptuous coffin upon a bed of state, in one of the most spacious apartments of the Louvre, which was hung with the richest tapestry appertaining to the crown. A magnificent canopy of cloth of gold surmounted the bier, and on either side of the catafalque were placed two temporary altars; ten others having been erected in the state-gallery, at which the bishops and the cures of the several metropolitan parishes daily performed six high and one hundred low masses. Platforms covered with cloth of gold had been prepared for the cardinals and prelates; and at the foot of the royal body, cushions of black velvet were arranged for the Princes of the Blood and the higher nobility. A golden crucifix and a silver vase containing holy water were deposited on a table of carved oak; and at the extremity of the room were grouped enormous tapers of wax, near which stood two heralds-king-at-arms, in their splendid state costume, leaning upon their swords. The face of the corpse was exposed, the head covered by a cap of crimson velvet laced with gold, and the body attired in a vest of white satin, over which was flung a drapery of cloth of gold, having in the centre a cross elaborately embroidered in silver.[25]

On the day which succeeded the embalmment, while the clergy were praying in suppressed voices at the several altars, a distant sound was heard, which gradually approaching nearer and nearer to the death-chamber, became ere long blent with their murmured orisons; and as they looked towards the entrance of the apartment, they saw the young King standing upon the threshold, attended by a numerous suite of Princes and nobles. Louis XIII was wrapped in a mourning cloak of violet-coloured velvet; his vest was of dark silk; and his pale and melancholy face was half-hidden by the hood which had been drawn over his head. The high dignitaries who composed his retinue wore mantles of black velvet, and were entirely without arms. The two younger sons of France, the Ducs d'Orleans and d'Anjou, walked on either side of the new-made sovereign, each grasping a fold of his heavy cloak; and immediately behind them came the Cardinals de Joyeuse and de Sourdis. The Prince de Conde, the Comte de Soissons, the Duc de Guise, the Prince de Joinville, and the Duc d'Elboeuf bore the royal train; and were in their turn succeeded by the prelates who assisted at the ceremony, each wearing his mitre, and carrying his crozier. In the rear followed a crowd of nobles and great officers of the household, who, however, advanced only a few yards from the doorway, while Louis and his immediate attendants slowly approached the bier. The scene was an affecting one: the boy-King, timid and trembling, surrounded by the flower of his nation's chivalry and greatness, moved with a faltering step towards the resting-place of that father who had so lately wielded like a toy the sceptre which he was himself still too impotent to bear, and whose bold spirit had been quenched while it was yet strong within him. On every side the vanity of human pride, which will not learn a lesson even under the stern teaching of death, was contrasted with the awe that sat upon the faces of the assistants, and with the immobility of the livid countenance which gleamed out pale and ghastly from amid its glittering drapery!

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As the youthful mourner reached the death-couch, the kings-at-arms were about to present to him the aspergillus, in order that he might sprinkle the corpse with the consecrated water, when a movement among the nobles who stood near the entrance of the apartment caused them to pause; and in another moment a group of ladies, attired in deep mourning, appeared beneath the portico; where, separating into two ranks, they left a passage open for the widowed Queen; who, clad in violet velvet like her son, with a high ruff, and her head uncovered, advanced with an unsteady step and streaming eyes towards her children.

“Pray with me, my son,” she murmured amid her sobs as she stood beneath the mortuary canopy; “there lies your happiness and mine. May it please God that our hopes may not also have expired with him who was but a few short hours ago the glory and the greatness of his kingdom! The sturdy tree has fallen, and the saplings are still weak and frail. The mission of the great Henry is accomplished, and the weight of sovereignty is transferred to your own brow. And you also, my beloved ones,” she continued, glancing towards her younger sons, “come nearer to me, and let us kneel together beside the body of your august and lamented father.”

The two young Princes relaxed their hold of the royal mantle, and placed themselves beside their mother. The illustrious widow and her orphans then sank upon their knees, and continued for a considerable time absorbed in silent and earnest prayer. At intervals a sob which could not be controlled broke upon the stillness, but at length the mourners rose; and Marie, taking the hand of the boy-King, drew him towards her, and murmured in his ear a few hurried words which were inaudible to all save himself. As she ceased speaking, Louis glanced up into her face for an instant; and then, extending his right hand towards the corpse, he said in a clear and steady voice—

“Mother, I swear to do so.”

Even at that awful moment a strange light flashed from the eyes of the Queen, and a smile, which was almost one of triumph, played about her lips as she glanced at the assembled nobles; but the emotion, by whatever cause produced, was only momentary; and after having cast another long and agonized look upon the face of the dead monarch, and aspersed the body with holy water, she bent her head reverentially to the King, and withdrew, followed by her ladies.

When the whole of the royal party had paid this last mark of respect to the remains of the deceased sovereign, the coffin was finally closed; and the death-room, in which the corpse was to remain for the space of eighteen days, was opened to the public from ten o’clock in the morning until six in the evening. Then, indeed, as the vast crowds succeeded each other like the ceaseless waves of an incoming sea, the bitter wail of universal lamentation rang through the halls and galleries of the palace. Henri IV had been essentially the King of the People; and, with few and rare exceptions, it was by the people that he was truly mourned; for his sudden decease had opened so many arenas

to ambition, hatred, jealousy, and hope, that the great nobles had no time to waste in tears, but were already busily engaged in the furtherance of their own fortunes.

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During the exposition of the body the necessary preparations had been completed for the interment of the deceased King, which exceeded in magnificence all that had previously been attempted on a similar occasion; and this pomp was rendered even more remarkable by the privacy with which his predecessor Henri III had been conveyed to St. Denis only a week previously, the remains of the latter sovereign having hitherto been suffered to remain in the church of St. Camille at Compiegne, whence they were removed under the guard of the Ducs d'Epernon and de Bellegarde, his former favourites; the etiquette in such an emergency not permitting the inhumation of the recently deceased King in the vaults of the royal abbey until his predecessor should have occupied his appointed place.

The first stage of the funeral procession was Notre-Dame; and as the gorgeous *cortege* approached the church, all its avenues, save that which was kept clear by the Swiss Guards, were thronged by the citizens and artizans of the capital; sounds of weeping and lamentation were to be heard on every side; yet still, divided between grief and curiosity, the crowd swept on; and as the last section of the melancholy procession disappeared beneath the venerable portals of the cathedral, its vast esplanade was alive with earnest and eager human beings, who, fearful of exclusion from the interior of the building, pressed rudely against each other, overthrowing the weak and battling with the strong in their anxiety to assist at the awful and solemn ceremony which was about to be enacted.

Only a few moments had consequently elapsed ere a dense mass of the people choked almost to suffocation the gothic arches and the nave of the sacred edifice, while the aisles were peopled by the more exalted individuals who had composed the funeral procession. Upwards of three thousand nobles, and a great number of ladies, all clad in mourning dresses, and attended by their pages and equerries, blended their melancholy voices with the responses of the canons of the cathedral; the bishops of the adjacent sees, and the archbishops in their rich raiment of velvet and cloth of silver, carried in their hands tapers of perfumed wax; Oriental myrrh and aloes burned in golden censers, and veiled the lofty dome with a light and diaphanous vapour which gave an unearthly aspect to the building; the organ pealed forth its deep and thrilling tones; and amid this scene of excitement, splendour, and suffering, the Cardinal de Gondy celebrated the mass, and the Bishop of Aire delivered the funeral oration. The coffin was then raised, and the crowd, hurriedly escaping from the church, once more spread itself over the neighbouring streets until the procession should again have formed; after which all this immense concourse of people accompanied the body of their beloved monarch to St. Lazare, where the clergy halted and returned to Paris; while the nobles who were to escort the mortuary-car to St. Denis, and who had hitherto followed it on foot, either mounted on horseback, or entered their carriages, in order to reach the Leaning Cross at the same time as the corpse.

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There, the grand prior and the monks of the royal abbey, in their mourning hoods, received the body of Henri IV from the hands of De Gondy, the Archbishop of Paris; and on the following day the Cardinal-Duc de Joyeuse celebrated a solemn mass and performed the funeral service of his late sovereign.

At the close of the lugubrious ceremony the iron gates of the house of death swung hoarsely upon their hinges. The “De Profundis” pealed from the high altar, and Henry the Great was gathered to his ancestors.

FOOTNOTES:

[1] L’Etoile, vol. iv. pp.17, 18. Montfaucon, vol. v. p.429.

[2] Matthieu, vol. 9361 of the royal manuscripts, p. 804.

[3] Dupleix, p. 403.

[4] L’Etoile, vol. iv. p. 30.

[5] Charles de Bourbon-Conti, Comte d’Anquien, son of the Comte de Soissons.

[6] Charlotte Catherine de la Tremouille, Princess Dowager of Conde, was the daughter of Louis III, Seigneur de la Tremouille, and was born in 1568. The Prince de Conde, the chief of the Protestant party, enamoured of her beauty, made her his wife in 1586; and having died by poison two years subsequently, suspicion fell upon the Princess and some of her confidential attendants, several of whom were put to death as accessories to the crime. Madame de Conde herself was imprisoned, and, despite her protestations of innocence, was not set at liberty for upwards of seven years, when she was at length liberated by Henri IV (1596). She died in 1629.

[7] Marie de Luxembourg, the daughter of Sebastien de Luxembourg, Duc de Penthievre and Vicomte de Martigues, and wife of Philippe Emmanuel de Lorraine, Duc de Mercoeur.

[8] Antoinette de Pons, Marquise de Guercheville, whose second husband was Charles du Plessis, Seigneur de Liancourt, First Equerry, and Governor of Paris.

[9] *Remarques sur l’Invention de la Bibliotheque*, de M. Guillaume, art. 33.

[10] *Mercure Francais,* 1610, pp. 419-423.

[11] *Mercure Francais*, 1610, p. 423.

[12] Francois de Bonne, Duc de Lesdiguieres, was born at St. Bonnet, in Upper Dauphiny, in 1543. He became general of the Huguenots, and obtained several victories over the Catholic troops. On the accession of Henri IV to the French throne, that Prince appointed him lieutenant-general of his armies in Piedmont, Savoy, and Dauphiny. His success in Savoy was brilliant, and he was created Marshal of France in 1608. Four years subsequently he embraced the Romish faith; and died in 1626 with the title of Connetable.

[13] Richelieu, *La Mere et le Fils*, vol. i. pp. 27-32.

[14] *Idem*, pp. 24, 25.

[15] Bassompierre, *Mem*. p. 71.

[16] Andree d'Alegre, Comtesse and Marechale de Fervaques, was the widow of Guy de Coligny, Comte de Laval, de Montfort, *etc*., and the wife of Guillaume de Hautemer, Comte de Grancy, Seigneur de Fervaques, and Marechal de France.

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[17] Madeleine de Silly, Comtesse du Fargis, was the daughter of Antoine, Comte de la Rochepot, and the wife of Charles d'Angennes, Seigneur du Fargis, ambassador in Spain from 1620 to 1624. She became the confidential friend and favourite of Anne of Austria, and in 1636 was entrusted with the keeping of the crown jewels. Madame du Fargis was considered to be one of the most beautiful women at the French Court; but her spirit of intrigue rendered her a dangerous companion for a youthful and neglected Queen, and her morals were unfortunately not above suspicion.

[18] The Cross of Trahoir was a small irregularly shaped space, surrounded by miserable hovels, with high pointed roofs, most of which were in a state of dangerous dilapidation; the broken casements in every instance replaced by rags or straw; the doors ill-hung and swinging upon their rusty hinges, and the whole of the buildings lost in dirt and wretchedness. The inhabitants of this filthy nook were of the lowest and most depraved description, and no other tenants could indeed have been found to make their dwelling there; as in addition to the squalor of the buildings themselves, the deeply-sunk and humid soil, which in fact formed an open sewer that drained the adjacent streets, supported several permanent gibbets arranged in the form of a cross; while the thoroughfares by which it was approached were foul and fetid lanes, breathing nothing save disease and infection.

[19] Mezeray, Perefixe, and Daniel say that it was the Due de Montbazon whose arm warded off the blow.

[20] Francois Ravaillac was a native of Angouleme, the son of a lawyer, and was about thirty-two years of age. He was a descendant through the female line of Poltrot de Mere, the assassin of the Due de Guise. He had been originally destined to follow the profession of his father, but the loss of a lawsuit having reduced his parents to beggary, he took refuge in the monastery of the Feuillants, where he entered upon his novitiate. His weakness of intellect and extreme irritability caused him, however, to be rejected by that community; and he returned to his native province, where he was imprisoned for twelve months as an accomplice in a case of manslaughter. During his confinement he had, as he affirmed, visions connected with the conduct of the King which determined him to take his life; and for three years he had persisted in this horrible design, in furtherance of which he had thrice visited Paris. Upon the last of these occasions he had reached the capital during the Easter festivals, but he determined to delay his purpose until after the coronation of the Queen.

[21] Perefixe, vol. ii. pp. 496-498. Mezeray, vol. x. p. 395. *Mercure Francais*, p. 424. L'Etoile, vol. iv. pp. 36-40.

[22] *Mercure Francais*, pp. 424, 425. L'Etoile, vol. iv. pp. 40, 41. Daniel, vol. vii. p. 507.

[23] Mezeray, vol. x. p. 397.

[24] *Mercure Francais*, pp. 440, 441.

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[25] Perefixe, vol. ii. pp. 498, 499.

BOOK II

MARIE DE MEDICIS AS REGENT

CHAPTER I

1610

Self-possession of Marie de Medicis—The Ducs de Guise and d'Epernon assemble the nobility—Precautions for the security of the metropolis—The first audience of the widowed Queen—Impolicy of Sully—The Duc d'Epernon announces to the Parliament the authorized regency of Marie—By whom it is ratified—Precarious position of the Queen-mother—The first night of widowhood—Injudicious apathy of Marie de Medicis on the subject of her husband's murder—Her incautious display of favour towards the Duc d'Epernon—The Duke is suspected of having been an accessory to the assassination of Henri IV—He demands the punishment of the authors of the rumour—-A lawyer and a courtier—Fearless reply of the President de Harlay to the rebuke of the Regent—Suspicions against Philip of Spain—Louis XIII holds his first Bed of Justice—-The Queen requests the support of the Parliament—Return of the Court to the Louvre—The Duc de Sully visits the Queen—Effect of his reception—The Princess-Dowager of Conde urges the return of her son to Court—M. de Soissons is invited by Marie de Medicis to the capital—His disappointment—His arrogance—A courtly falsehood—-Reception of M. de Soissons at the gates of Paris—His numerous retinue—The recompense of obedience—Congratulatory deputations—Trial of the regicide Ravaillac—His execution—Arrival of the Duc de Bouillon in Paris—His quarrel with the Duc de Sully—They are reconciled—The Court attend a funeral service at Notre-Dame—-Presumption of the Duc d'Epernon—Marie de Medicis devotes herself to state affairs—-Jealousy of the Princes of the Blood and great nobles—Marie endeavours to conciliate them—The Spanish Minister endeavours to prevent the return of the Prince de Conde—Without success—The Regent forms a council—Pretensions of the nobles—The Duc d'Epernon takes possession of apartments in the Louvre—He leagues with the Comte de Soissons against the Prince de Conde—Speculations of the Ministers—Their policy—Boyhood of Louis XIII—A delicate position—A royal rebuke—Court favour—The visionary Government—Discontent of the citizens of Paris—Unpopularity of the Regent—The ex-Queen's entertainment—Imprudence of Marie de Medicis—Confirmation of the Edict of Nantes—Return of the Prince de Conde—The Regent is alarmed by his popularity—Double-dealing of the Duc d'Epernon—The Prince de Conde declares his intention to uphold the interests of the Regent—His reception at the Louvre—He rejoins his wife—The Court of the Hotel de Conde—A cabal—Marie is advised to arrest the Prince de Conde—She refuses—The secret council—Indignation of Sully—Mischievous

advice of the Duc de Bouillon—Munificence of the Regent to M. de Conde—The royal treasury—Venality of the French Princes—The

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English Ambassador—Royal pledges—Philip of Spain proposes a double alliance with France—The Regent welcomes the offer—Policy of Philip—The secret pledge—-Madame de Verneuil urges her claim to the hand of the Duc de Guise—The important document—A ducal dilemma—The Regent discountenances the claim of the Marquise—Madame de Verneuil is induced by Jeannin to withdraw her pretensions—Her subsequent obscurity.

The news of the King's decease had no sooner been communicated to Marie de Medicis than, profiting by the advice of the Chancellor, she made a violent attempt at composure; and although still with streaming eyes and ill-suppressed sobs, she gave her assent to the suggestions of her councillors. The Ducs de Guise and d'Epernon were instructed to mount upon the instant, and to assemble as many of the nobles as were within reach, whom they were to accompany through the streets of the city, declaring upon their way that the King was not dead, although grievously wounded; the city gates were ordered to be closed, the keys delivered to the lieutenant of police, and strict commands issued to prevent all gatherings of the populace in the thoroughfares; while the guards who were distributed through the faubourgs were hastily concentrated in the environs of the Parliament, in order, should such a measure become necessary, to enforce the recognition of the Queen as Regent of the kingdom.

These arrangements made, MM. de Guise, d'Epernon, de Villeroy, and de Lavardin demanded an audience of the august widow, at which, kneeling before her, they kissed her hand, and assured her of their unalterable devotion. Their example was imitated by all the great nobles of the Court, with the sole exception of the Duc de Sully, who was encountered by Bassompierre in the Rue St. Antoine, accompanied by about forty mounted followers, and evidently in a state of intense agitation. "Gentlemen," he exclaimed, as the two parties met, "if the loyalty which you each vowed to the monarch whom we have just been unhappy enough to lose is as deeply impressed upon your hearts as it should be upon those of all faithful Frenchmen, swear at this precise moment to preserve the same fidelity towards the King his son and successor, and that you will employ your blood and your life to avenge him."

"Sir," haughtily replied Bassompierre, who had probably more deeply mourned the death of his royal master and friend than any other individual of the Court, and who was consequently revolted by the imperious tone of this address, "it is we who have been enjoined to enforce this oath upon others, and we do not need any exhortations to do our duty."

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Sully regarded the speaker gloomily for an instant, and then, as though overcome by some sudden apprehension, he coldly saluted the group of nobles, and retraced his steps to the Bastille, where he forthwith closed the gates; having previously, on his way thither, caused his attendants to carry off all the bread which they could collect either in the shops or markets. He, moreover, no sooner thus found himself in safety than he despatched a courier to his son-in-law, the Duc de Rohan, who was with the army in Champagne at the head of six thousand Switzers, desiring him to march straight upon Paris; an indiscretion which he was subsequently destined to expiate, from the heavy suspicion which it necessarily entailed upon him. Vainly did MM. de Praslin and de Crequy, who were sent to summon him to the presence of the young King, endeavour to induce him to lose no time in presenting himself at the Louvre; the only concession which he could be prevailed upon to make, was to desire the Duchess, his wife,[26] to hasten to the palace, and to offer to the Regent and her son his sincere condolence upon their irreparable misfortune.[27]

The Duc d'Epernon, after having stationed the guards at the palace, was instructed by the Queen to proceed at once to the Parliament, which was then assembled, and to inform its members that her Majesty had in her possession a decree signed and sealed by the late King, conferring upon herself the regency of the kingdom during the minority of her son; entreating them at once to ratify the appointment in order to ensure the public tranquillity. She also privately despatched a messenger to the President de Harlay, whom she knew to be attached to her interests, and to be at once able and zealous, to instruct him to assemble the Court without delay, and to use all his influence to enforce her rights. De Harlay, who on receipt of her message was confined to his bed by gout, immediately caused himself to be dressed, and proceeded in a chair to the Augustine monastery; where he had scarcely arrived when the Duc d'Epernon entered the hall, and declared the will of the late King, and the confidence felt by the Queen that the Parliament would, without repugnance, recognize her right to the dignity thus conferred upon her.[28] This they immediately did; and owing to the absence of the Prince de Conde and the Comte de Soissons, both of whom aspired to the high office about to be filled by Marie de Medicis, without the slightest opposition or disturbance.

This happy intelligence was conveyed to the Queen by M. d'Epernon, who returned to the palace accompanied by one of the members of the Parliament, when the latter, after having been presented to his royal mistress, on whose right hand sat the young King bewildered by what was passing about him, bent his knee before their Majesties, and tendered to Marie a scroll, which having been returned by her to the accredited envoy of the supreme court, was read aloud as follows:—

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“THE ATTORNEY-GENERAL, having represented to the Parliament in full assembly that the King having just expired by the act of a most cruel, most inhuman, and most detestable regicide committed upon his sacred person, it became necessary to provide for the safety of the reigning monarch and of his kingdom, required that an order should be promptly issued concerning his safety and that of the state, which could only be ruled and governed by the Queen during the minority of the said Lord her son; and that it should please the said Court to proclaim her Regent, in order that it might, through her, administer the affairs of the realm; The subject having been duly considered, the said Court declared, and still declares, the said Queen, the King’s mother, Regent of France, to be entrusted with the administration of all matters of state during the minority of the said Lord her son, with all power and authority.

“Done in Parliament, this 14th of May, 1610.

“(Signed) DU TILLET.” [29]

During the course of the day guards had been sent to the residence of the several foreign ambassadors, in order to protect them from the violence of the populace, and especially to that of the Spanish minister, who was peculiarly obnoxious to the Parisians. The governors of provinces and fortresses who chanced to be at that moment sojourning in the capital were ordered to repair without delay to their several commands, to maintain tranquillity within their separate jurisdictions; and, save the audible lamentations which throughout the night broke the silence of the mourning city, all was calm and quiet, except in the immediate neighbourhood of the Augustine monastery, where the Attorney-General had authorized the workmen to prepare the great hall for the reception of the young King, and where the necessary preparations for his presence on the following day were continued until dawn.[30]

The parliamentary envoy having quitted the palace, and the crowd of nobles, by whom its spacious halls and galleries had been filled, having retired, Marie was at length left at liberty to indulge her grief, rendered only the more poignant from the constraint to which she had been so long subjected. Her first impulse was to command that the bed of the young sovereign should be removed to her own chamber, and this done, she abandoned herself to all the bitterness of her sorrow.

She had, indeed, legitimate cause for tears. With a son still almost a child, ambitious nobles jealous of her power, and a great nation looking towards herself for support and consolation, she might well shrink as she contemplated the arduous task which had so suddenly devolved upon her. Moreover, death is the moral crucible which cleanses from all dross the memories of those who are submitted to its unerring test; and in such an hour she could not but forget the faults of the husband in dwelling upon the greatness of the monarch. Who, then, shall

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venture to follow her through the reveries of that fatal night? Who shall dare, unrebuked, to assert that the ambition of the woman quenched the affection of the wife? or that Marie, in the excess of her self-gratulation, forgot the price at which her delegated greatness had been purchased? That some have been found bold enough to do this says little for their innate knowledge of human nature. The presence of death and the stillness of night are fearful chasteners of worldly pride, and with these the daughter of the Medici was called upon to contend. Her position demanded mercy at the hands of her historians, and should not have sought it in vain.

From one reproach it is, however, impossible to exonerate her, and that one was the repugnance which she evinced to encourage any investigation into the real influence under which Ravaillac had committed the murder of the King. In vain did she receive communications involving individuals who were openly named; she discouraged every report; and although among these the Duc d'Epernon made a conspicuous figure, she treated the accusation with indifference, and continued to display towards him an amount of confidence and favour to which he had never previously attained.

Indignant at this extraordinary supineness, the President de Harlay only increased his own efforts to unravel so painful a mystery; and refusing all credence to the assertion of the regicide that he had been self-prompted—an assertion to which he had perseveringly adhered amid torture, and even unto death, with a firmness truly marvellous under the circumstances—the zealous magistrate carefully examined every document that was laid before him, and interrogated their authors with a pertinacity which created great alarm among the accused parties, of whom none were so prominent as Madame de Verneuil and the Duc d'Epernon.

The latter, indeed, considered it expedient to wait upon the commissioners appointed by the Parliament to investigate these reports, in order to urge the condemnation of their authors; these being, as he asserted, not only guilty of defaming innocent persons, but also of exciting a dangerous feeling among the people, at all times too anxious to seek the disgrace and ruin of their superiors. He found, however, little sympathy among those whom he sought to conciliate; and on addressing himself to the President, whom he entreated to inform him of the details of the accusation made against himself, that magistrate, without any effort to disguise his feeling of repulsion towards the applicant, coldly replied, "I am, Sir, not your prosecutor, but your judge."

"I ask this of you as my friend," was the retort of the Duke.

"I have no friend," said the uncompromising minister. "I shall do you justice, and with that you must content yourself."

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So uncourteous a reception excited the indignation of M. d'Epernon, who forthwith hastened to the Louvre to complain to the Regent of the insult to which he had been subjected; and Marie had no sooner been apprised of the affair than, with a want of caution highly detrimental to her own reputation, she despatched a nobleman of her household to M. de Harlay, to inform him that she had just learnt with extreme regret that he had failed in respect to the Duke, and that she must request that in future he would exhibit more deference towards a person of his quality and merit. This somewhat abrupt injunction, addressed to the first magistrate of the kingdom, and under circumstances so peculiar, only tended, however, to arouse M. de Harlay to an assumption of the dignity attached to his office, and he replied with haughty severity to the individual who had been charged with the royal message:—

"During fifty years I have been a judge, and for the last thirty I have had the honour to be the head of the sovereign Court of Peers of this kingdom; and I never before have seen either duke, lord, or peer, or any other man whatever might be his quality, accused of the crime of *lese-majeste* as M. d'Epernon now is, who came into the presence of his judges booted and spurred, and wearing his sword at his side. Do not fail to tell the Queen this." [31]

So marked an exhibition of the opinion entertained by the Parliament on the subject of the complicity of the Duke in the crime then under investigation, did not fail to produce a powerful effect upon all to whom it became known, but it nevertheless failed to shake the confidence of Marie de Medicis in the innocence of a courtier who had, in the short space of a few days, by his energy and devotion, rendered himself essential to her; while thus much must be admitted in extenuation of her conduct, reprehensible as it appeared, that every rumour relative to the death of her royal consort immediately reached her, and that two of these especially appeared more credible than the guilt of a noble, who could, apparently, reap no benefit from the commission of so foul and dangerous a crime. In the first place, the Spanish Cabinet had been long labouring to undermine the power of France, in which they had failed through the energy and wisdom of the late King, whose opposition to the alliance which they had proposed between the Dauphin and their own Infanta had, moreover, wounded their pride, and disappointed their projects; and there were not wanting many who accused the agents of Philip of having instigated the assassination; while another rumour, less generally disseminated, ascribed the act of Ravaillac to the impulse of personal revenge, elicited by the circumstance that Henry had first dishonoured and subsequently abandoned a sister to whom he was devotedly attached.

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That M. d'Epernon was politic enough to impress upon the mind of the Queen the extreme probability of either or both of these facts, there can be little doubt, as it would appear from the testimony of several witnesses that the intention of the murderer was known for some time before the act was committed; and nothing could be more rational than the belief that if the agents of Spain were indeed seeking to secure a trusty tool for the execution of so dark a deed, they would rather entrust it to one who could by the same means satiate his own thirst for private revenge, than to a mere bravo who perilled life and salvation simply from the greed of gain.

Day by day, moreover, the ministers were overwhelmed by accusations which pointed at different individuals. Those who had opposed the return of the Jesuits to France openly declared that they were the actual assassins; while even in the provinces several persons were arrested who had predicted before its occurrence the death of the King, and the means by which it was to be accomplished; and finally the affair became so involved that, with the exception of the woman De Comans to whom allusion has been elsewhere made, and who was condemned to imprisonment for life, all the suspected persons were finally acquitted.[32]

At eight o'clock on the morning succeeding the assassination of the King all the members of the different Chambers assembled in their scarlet robes and capes, the presidents wearing their cloaks and mortar-shaped caps; and half an hour afterwards the Chancellor, accompanied by several masters of the Court of Requests, and dressed from head to foot in black velvet, took his place below the First President in the great hall of the Augustine monastery, where the young King was to hold his Bed of Justice, the ordinary place of meeting being still encumbered with the costly preparations which had been made for the state-reception of the Queen. This ceremonial was essential to the legal tenure of the regency by his mother, which required the ratification of the sovereign; and his assent in the presence of his princes, dukes, peers, and officers of the Crown, to her assumption of entire and complete control over his own education, and the administration of the government during his minority, as well as his approval of the decree delivered on the previous day by the Parliament.[33]

Then arrived in rapid succession the Duc de Mayenne, the Connetable de Montmorency, the cardinals, prelates, and other great dignitaries; who were finally succeeded by the King himself, habited in a suit of violet velvet, and surrounded and followed by a numerous retinue of princes, dukes, nobles, and high officers of the Court. Louis himself was mounted on a white palfrey, but all the members of his suite, whatever their rank, were on foot. The Queen came next in her coach, attended by the Princesses of the Blood and the other great ladies of her household; not as she had anticipated only two days previously, blazing with jewels and clad in royal robes, but covered with an ample mourning drapery of black crape.

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The necessary ceremonies having been observed, the King at length took his place upon the Bed of Justice, having the Queen upon his right hand; while below their Majesties were seated the Prince de Conti, the Comte d'Enghien, who represented his father, M. de Soissons, the Duc de Guise, the Duc de Montmorency, the Duc d'Epernon, the Duc de Sully, all peers of France, and the Marechaux de Brissac,[34] de Lavardin, and de Bois-Dauphin;[35] while the other dignitaries of the State and Church were arranged upon either hand of the young monarch, and the body of the hall was occupied by the members of the several Courts.

When all had taken their places, and silence was restored, the Queen, rising from her seat, and throwing back her veil, proceeded to address the assembly, but for a time her voice was inaudible, and choked with sobs. At length, however, she mastered her emotion, and with a gesture full of mournful dignity, she besought all present to continue to her son and to herself the same loyalty and devotion which they had exhibited towards the monarch of whom the state had been so cruelly bereft; assuring them that it should be her study to induce the King to be guided by their counsels in all things, and imploring of them to afford him such advice as should on all occasions be compatible with his own dignity and the welfare of the country over which he was called upon to rule.

Short as was this harangue, it was not without considerable difficulty that she accomplished its utterance. More than once, suffocated by her grief, she was compelled to pause until she could regain her voice; and when at its close she drew her veil once more over her head, and prepared to leave the hall, the assembly rose simultaneously, and implored of her to honour the meeting by her presence until it should be dissolved. Exhausted and wretched, Marie strove to utter her thanks, and to retire; but the opposition offered to this resolution was so great and so unanimous that she was at length prevailed upon to resume her seat; and she had no sooner done so than Louis, raising for a moment the cap from his head, in his turn addressed the Court.

The reply of the Chancellor was pregnant with wisdom and loyalty; in it he assured the King of the fidelity and devotion of all ranks of his subjects, and confirmed the Queen in her regency; after which the Attorney-General having spoken at great length to the same effect, the royal and august personages rose and returned to the Louvre in the same order as they had observed on their arrival, followed throughout the whole distance by the acclamations of the citizens, and reiterated cries of "Vive le Roi!" [36]

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An hour or two subsequently Marie de Medicis accorded an audience to the Duc de Sully, who had, with considerable difficulty, been induced by M. de Guise to present himself at the palace, to offer his condolences to the young sovereign and his august mother;[37] and he was accordingly introduced into the private apartment of the Queen, where he found her surrounded by the ladies of her household, and absorbed in grief. As he was announced she burst into a passion of tears, and for a time was unable to welcome him; but having at length succeeded in controlling her emotion, she desired that the King should be brought to her; and he had no sooner appeared than she pointed out to him the Duc de Sully, when the young monarch threw himself into his arms, and loaded him with the most affectionate caresses.

“You do well, my son,” sobbed Marie, as she remarked the emotion of the boy; “you must love M. de Sully, who was one of the best and most faithful servants of the King your father, and who will, I trust, continue to serve you with the same zeal.” [38]

The interview was a lengthy one, and the urbanity of the Queen produced so powerful an effect upon the mind of the finance minister that he ceased to apprehend any diminution of his influence, and accordingly sent to countermand the return of the Duc de Rohan, who had already advanced a day’s march towards the capital.[39]

Meanwhile the Dowager-Princesse de Conde had hastened to inform her son of the assassination of the King, and to urge his instant return to the capital; a summons to which he replied by forwarding letters of condolence both to the King and the Regent, containing the most earnest assurances of his loyalty and devotion alike to their personal interests and to those of the nation; and declaring that he only awaited their commands to return to Court, in order to serve them in any manner which they might see fit to suggest.

The Comte de Soissons, who had left Paris only a few days before the coronation of the Queen, for the reason elsewhere stated, and who had retired to his estate near Chartres, was invited by a messenger despatched by Marie to return without delay to the capital, where the interests of the state required his presence. This command he prepared to obey with alacrity; but his zeal was greatly damped when, on arriving at St. Cloud, he ascertained that the Queen had been already recognized by the Parliament as Regent of the kingdom, and that her dignity had been publicly confirmed by the young sovereign. On first receiving this intelligence his rage was without bounds; he even questioned the legality of an arrangement of this description made without his sanction, he being, during the absence of the Prince de Conde, the first subject in France after the Queen herself; and then, moderating the violence of his expressions, he complained that by the precipitation of the Parliament, he had been deprived of the privilege of signifying his assent to the nomination,

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as he had previously pledged himself to do. He next questioned the right of the Parliament to interfere in so important a measure; declaring that their fiat was null and void, as the Chambers had no authority to organize a government, and still less to appoint a regency, which could only be effectively done by a royal testament, a declaration made before death, or by an assembly of the States-General. He, moreover, insisted that the case was without precedent; that the power of the Parliament was restricted to the administration of justice; and that while it was desirable that the mothers of princes, heirs to the throne, should be entrusted with the care of their education, the government of the country belonged by right to the Princes of the Blood, to the exclusion of all other claimants.[40]

Every effort was made to calm his anger; and it is probable that the representations of his personal friends convinced him of the impolicy of further opposition; although he so long delayed his arrival in the capital that he could only explain his tardiness by declaring that the sudden intelligence of the King's murder had so seriously affected his health that he was unable to obey the summons of the Queen until the 16th of May, when he was met at the gate of the city by the Duc d'Epernon, at the head of a large body of the nobility.

The pomp in which he reached Paris, however, sufficed to prove that he was totally unprepared for the existing posture of affairs, and that he had taken every precaution to enforce his claims, should he find the public mind disposed to admit them. His retinue consisted of three hundred horse, and he travelled with all the pretensions of royalty. A few words, nevertheless, sufficed to dispel the illusion under which he laboured, and once convinced that the supreme authority of the Queen had been both recognized and ratified, he had no other alternative save to offer his submission; which he did, moreover, with so good a grace that Marie bestowed upon him, in token of welcome, the government of Normandy, which had hitherto been held by the Dauphin; while a short time subsequently, when he manifested fresh symptoms of discontent, the Duc de Bouillon was instructed to inquire by what means he could be conciliated; upon which he demanded a pension of fifty thousand livres, the reversion of the government of Dauphiny for his son, who had not at that time attained his fifth year, and the sum of two hundred thousand crowns with which to pay a debt to the Duke of Savoy, contracted on the duchy of Moncalieri belonging to his wife. These exorbitant claims were at once admitted, and M. de Soissons forthwith declared himself the firm ally of the Queen.[41]

All the cities and provinces of the kingdom hastened to despatch deputations to the capital, to present their assurances of respectful homage to the young sovereign, and to recognize the regency of his mother; and these were shortly afterwards succeeded by the plenipotentiaries and envoys of the different European states, whose condolences and congratulations were graciously acknowledged by Marie and her ministers in the name of the new monarch.

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On the 18th of the month the regicide Ravaillac was put upon his trial, during which he exhibited a stoical indifference, that filled his judges with astonishment. Far from seeking to evade the penalty of his crime, he admitted it with a calmness and composure perfectly unshaken; and on the 27th his sentence was pronounced and executed with such barbarity that we shall avoid the detail.

On the following day the Duc de Bouillon arrived in Paris, and proceeded directly to the palace to kiss the hand of the Queen-Regent and take the oath of fidelity to the King, by both of whom he was warmly welcomed; Marie being anxious to rally about her all the high nobility, especially such as had formerly exhibited symptoms of discontent. M. de Bouillon had not, however, been long in the capital when a quarrel arose between himself and the Duc de Sully, whom he accused of arrogance and presumption, reminding him that he had not always been in the exalted position which he then occupied, while as regarded himself, he was born to higher fortunes than he had yet attained. The anger of both parties was so much excited during the interview, that great apprehensions were entertained of the result of so serious a misunderstanding; nor was it until the Due de Guise had exerted all his influence with both parties that a partial reconciliation took place, which was subsequently completed through the good sense of the two nobles themselves, who in their cooler moments reflected upon the injury which must accrue alike to the national interests and to those of the reformed religion, of which they both were adherents, should they permit their private feelings to interfere with their public duties.

On the second day after the interment of the King the Regent proceeded in state to Notre-Dame, in order to assist at a solemn service which she had caused to be celebrated for the repose of his soul. The *cortege* consisted of seven coaches, containing herself, the Princesses of the Blood, the Duchesses, and other great ladies of her household, under a strong escort of guards and harquebusiers, commanded by M. de la Chataigneraie. All the principal nobility, with the exception of the Comte de Soissons, attended by their several retainers, were already mounted when she descended to the court of the palace, and were awaiting her without the gates, when considerable excitement was created by the Duc d'Epernon, who, detaching himself from his followers, rode to the side of her carriage. As no Prince of the Blood had ever assumed this privilege, not even the Guises, lofty as were their pretensions, a general murmur arose among the assembled nobles; but M. d'Epernon, regardless of this demonstration of displeasure, and aware that he had already obtained considerable influence over the mind of the Queen, retained his position, to the extreme indignation of the other Princes.[42]

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The Regent and her retinue first proceeded to the Archbishop's palace, whence the procession was formed to the cathedral. At its head walked the Princes of the Blood then present at the Court, and the principal nobles, with the exception of the Prince de Conti and the Comte de Soissons, who supported the Queen, whom they upheld by each placing a hand beneath her arms. The Dowager Princess of Conde, the Princesse de Conti, and the Comtesse de Soissons bore her mourning train, which was seven French ells in length; and after them came Madame and the ex-Queen Marguerite, both habited in the deepest black; who were in their turn followed by all the great ladies of the Court and household.[43] At the conclusion of the service, the Regent returned to the Louvre; and in the afternoon, attended as she had been on the previous occasion, she proceeded to perform her devotions in the church of St. Victor, amid the respectful salutations of the assembled populace.

The grief of the citizens still continued unabated, but it was apparent that a struggle for pre-eminence had already commenced among the higher class. The Regent, whose affliction was as brief as it had been violent, seemed suddenly endowed with a new nature. Her ambition grew with her responsibility, and instead of participating in political questions as she had previously done with undisguised reluctance, she entered eagerly into public affairs, and sought earnestly to establish her authority; an attempt in which she was seconded by the principal ministers of state, who at once felt that by supporting her power they were consolidating their own.

M. de Conde, the first Prince of the Blood, was still in Italy; his brother the Prince de Conti, being totally deaf and partially dumb, was incapable of government; the Comte de Soissons was at variance with both; and the Duc de Nevers was commanding the army in Champagne, until he should be superseded by the arrival of the King in person, according to the arrangement made by that unhappy monarch before the departure of the troops from France; while the Prince de Joinville, who, it may be remembered, had been banished from the Court for his intrigue with Madame de Verneuil, and who had been travelling in England and Germany, and afterwards retired to Lorraine until his brother the Duc de Guise should be enabled to procure his recall, was also absent. To each and all of these Princes Marie, who at once felt the necessity of their immediate presence in order to give dignity and stability to her position, hastened to forward messengers to request their instant return; a summons which was promptly obeyed by the Duc de Nevers and all the principal officers under his command, as well as by M. de Joinville, who also received a pressing letter from the Duc de Guise, enjoining him to profit without delay by so admirable an opportunity of regaining his forfeited favour. But whatever were the haste with which all endeavoured to reach the Court, it still required time for them to do so;[44] and meanwhile the other great nobles were anxious to shake off the control to which they had been subjected during the previous reign. Individual hatred came to the assistance of personal ambition, and those whose talent enabled them to acquire influence at Court began to exercise it no less zealously in the ruin of others than in their own aggrandizement.[45]

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The Prince de Conde had no sooner forwarded to the Queen the letter to which allusion has been already made, than he received a pressing invitation to return to France, for which purpose he prepared to leave Milan; a step so obnoxious to Spain that the Conde de Fuentes spared no pains in dissuading him from its adoption. He represented in earnest terms the exceptional position of the Prince, whose rank as the first subject of the realm justified him in aspiring to a throne filled by a mere boy, who could be considered only as a puppet in the hands of an ambitious woman; following up his arguments by an offer of efficient aid from his own monarch to enable M. de Conde to enforce his pretensions; and while he was thus endeavouring to shake the loyalty of his guest, the Spanish Ambassador at the Court of Rome was engaged with equal zeal in seeking to impress the necessity of the same policy upon Paul V. Both were, however, destined to fail in their efforts, the Sovereign-Pontiff declining to interfere in so extreme a case, and the Prince resolutely refusing to adopt the course thus treacherously suggested.

At Brussels the persecution was renewed by the Spanish minister, seconded by the Papal Nuncio, Cardinal Bentivoglio,[46] whose zeal for the interests of Spain caused him to overlook the wishes of the Pope. All, however, proved unavailing; and the Prince, after a brief sojourn in the Belgian capital, finally departed for Paris; whither his wife had previously repaired, accompanied by her step-sister the Comtesse d'Auvergne, and where she had been warmly and honourably welcomed by the Queen.[47]

Meanwhile, it having been considered advisable that the King should make a declaration on the Edicts of Pacification, it became previously necessary to form a council, under whose advice the Queen-Regent might proceed to act. When preparing to quit France, Henri IV had drawn up a list of fifteen persons whom he had selected for this purpose, and had decided that every question should be determined by a majority of votes, the Queen herself commanding only one vote; the death of the King had, however, unfortunately tended to render the execution of his purpose impossible, all the Princes and great officers of the Crown asserting their right to admission, and resolutely maintaining their claim.

The Comte de Soissons urged his privilege of birth, and haughtily declined to advance any other plea; while the Connetable de Montmorency loudly declared that no council could legally be formed from which he was excluded; and the Cardinal de Joyeuse maintained the same argument. As regarded the Guises, who affected at this juncture a perfect equality with the house of Bourbon, their eagerness to hold office defeated its own object, the Duc de Mayenne and the Duc de Guise equally declaring their right to assist in the government of the kingdom; while it was considered as incompatible with the interests of the Crown that two members of the same family should be admitted

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into so important an assembly. The Duc de Nevers, who disputed precedency with the Guises, also came forward as a candidate; while the Ducs de Bouillon and d'Epernon, who were at open feud, and each ambitious of power, heightened the difficulty by arrogantly asserting their personal claims. To receive both was impossible, as from their known enmity nothing but opposition could be anticipated; and thus, upon the threshold of her reign, Marie de Medicis found herself trammelled by the very individuals from whom she had hoped for assistance and support.

To select between the two last-mentioned nobles was difficult as well as dangerous; the position of M. d'Epernon as colonel-general of the infantry, and his immense possessions, rendering him a formidable adversary; while the Duc de Bouillon was still more powerful from his occupation of Sedan, his intelligence with foreign states, and his influence over his co-religionists. Moreover, Marie was no longer in a position to oppose the pretensions of the Duc d'Epernon, even had she felt it expedient to do so; the unlimited confidence which she had reposed in him since the death of her royal consort having invested him with a factitious importance, by which he was enabled to secure a strong party in his favour upon every question in which he was personally interested. She had assigned to his use a suite of apartments in the Louvre, declaring that his continual presence and advice were essential to her; and, in addition to this signal favour, she communicated to him the contents of all the despatches which she received, and followed his advice upon all matters of state as implicitly as though she considered it to be unanswerable.

His credit at Court was also greatly increased by the Comte de Soissons, who, having ascertained the extent of his favour with the Regent, spared no pains to secure his friendship before the arrival of the Prince de Conde, believing that the support of one who was all-powerful for the moment might be of essential service in counteracting the ambitious views of so formidable a rival; and, moreover, advantageous in assisting him to accomplish the marriage of his son Louis de Bourbon with Mademoiselle de Montpensier, an alliance which was the great object of his ambition.[48]

Thus the Duc d'Epernon was not only powerful in himself, but found his pretensions recognized and sanctioned by a Prince of the Blood, an advantage of which he was not slow to appreciate the value; and he consequently listened to the expostulations which were addressed to him by those who dreaded the effects of his interference in state affairs with a quiet indifference that satisfied them of their utter inutility.

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But while the Queen was bewildered by these conflicting claims, her ministers, who were anxious to retain the power in their own hands, were not displeased to see the number of candidates for place daily increase. They were aware that on the arrival of the Prince de Conde he must necessarily take his seat in the council, while it would be equally impossible to exclude the Comte de Soissons, the Duc de Montmorency, or the Cardinal de Joyeuse; and they felt that nothing could more effectually limit the power of these great dignitaries than the admission of so large a number as must tend to diminish their influence over the Queen, and to create a confusion in the management of public affairs which would necessarily render her more dependent upon their own wisdom and experience. Under this persuasion they consequently impressed upon her the absolute necessity of satisfying every claimant; and a council was accordingly formed which was more noisy than efficient; and where, although each was free to deliver his opinion, the ministers were careful, in their secret audiences of the Queen, during which they exposed their own views and sentiments, to carry out their preconceived measures.[49]

The struggle which the late King had foretold between the Regent and her son had, meanwhile, already commenced. The character of Louis XIII was, from his earliest boyhood, at once saturnine and obstinate; and thus, aware of the importance which the Queen attached to the exercises of religion, he commenced his predetermined opposition to her will by refusing to observe them. Remonstrances and arguments were alike unavailing; the boy-King declined to listen to either; and Marie ultimately commanded that he should undergo the chastisement of the rod. The order was given, but no one volunteered obedience; the vengeance of the man might hereafter compensate for the mortification of the child; and the son of Marie de Medicis, stolid and gloomy though he was, had already imbibed a full sense of the respect due to his sovereign rank.

“How now, M. de Souvre!” [50] exclaimed the Queen; “is the frown of a wayward boy more dangerous than the displeasure of a mother? I insist that the King shall undergo the chastisement which he has so richly merited.”

Thus urged, the unwilling governor was compelled not only to lay his hands upon the sacred person of royalty, but also to prepare to execute the peremptory command of his irritated mistress; and the young Louis no sooner perceived the impossibility of escape than he coldly submitted to the infliction, merely saying, “I suppose it must be so, M. de Souvre, since it is the will of the Queen; but be careful not to strike too hard.”

An hour or two afterwards, when he paid his usual visit to the Regent, her Majesty rose on his entrance, according to the established etiquette, and made him a profound curtsey. “I should prefer, Madame,” said the young Prince, “fewer curtseys and fewer floggings.” [51]

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At the commencement of June intelligence reached the Court of the death of the Archbishop of Rouen, the natural brother of the late King, and it was no sooner authenticated than the Regent hastened to bestow his abbey of St. Florent upon M. de Souvre, and that of Marmoutier, one of the most wealthy and beautiful in France, upon the brother of her favourite Leonora,[52] an unhappy being who was not only deformed in person, but so wholly deficient in intellect that every effort even to teach him to read had proved ineffectual. So abject was he, indeed, that Concini had been careful never to allow him to come into contact with Henri IV lest he should be banished from the Court; and this ill-advised donation consequently excited great disapprobation, and elicited fresh murmurs against the Italian followers of the Queen.

These were, moreover, augmented by another circumstance which immediately supervened. A report was spread of the decease of M. de Boece, the Governor of Bourg-en-Bresse, a brave and faithful soldier, who had rendered good service to his country; and the Queen, urged by her favourite, was imprudent enough, without awaiting proper confirmation of the rumour, to confer the government upon Concini, whose arrogance, fostered as it was by the indulgence of his royal mistress, was already becoming intolerable to the native nobility. This fact was, however, no sooner made known to M. de Boece, who had not, as it subsequently appeared, even laboured under indisposition, than he addressed a letter of respectful expostulation to the Regent, in which he expressed his concern at the necessity of interfering with the pleasure of her Majesty in the rapid disposal of his government, and assured her that he was still able and anxious to discharge the duties of the trust confided to him by the late King; informing her, moreover, that he had in his possession a grant from her royal husband, bestowing the survivorship of his appointment upon his son, of which he solicited the confirmation by herself, feeling convinced that she could never be served by a more zealous or able subject.[53]

Concini was accordingly divested of his government as abruptly as he had acquired it; reluctantly resigning the coveted dignity amid the laughter and epigrams of the whole Court.

In addition to these extraordinary instances of imprudence, Marie de Medicis had also compromised herself with the people by the reluctance which she evinced to investigate the circumstances connected with the murder of her husband. Ravaillac had suffered, as we have shown, and that too in the most frightful manner, the consequences of his crime; persisting to the last in his assertion that he had acted independently and had no accomplices; but his testimony, although signed in blood and torture, had failed to convince the nation which had been so suddenly and cruelly bereft of its monarch; and among all classes sullen rumours were rife which involved some of the highest and proudest in the land.[54] Among these the Duc d’Epernon, as already stated, stood out so prominently that he had been compelled to justify himself, while the favour which he had so suddenly acquired turned the public attention towards the Queen herself.

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Suspicions of her complicity, however ill-founded, had, indeed, existed even previously to this period, for Rambure, when speaking of the visit of Sully to the Louvre on the day after the assassination, a visit in which he professes to have accompanied him, says without any attempt at disguise, “The Queen received us with great affability, and even mingled her tears and sobs with ours, although we were both aware of the satisfaction that she felt in being thus delivered from the King, *of whose death she was not considered to be wholly guiltless*, and of becoming her own absolute mistress.... She then addressed several other observations to the Duke, during which time he wept bitterly, while she occasionally shed a few tears of a very different description.” [55]

These assertions, vague as they are, and utterly baseless as they must be considered by all unprejudiced minds, nevertheless suffice to prove that the finger of blame had already been pointed towards the unfortunate Marie; an unhappy circumstance which doubled the difficulties of her position, and should have tended to arouse her caution; but the haughty and impetuous nature of the Tuscan Princess could not bend to any compromise, and thus she recklessly augmented the amount of dislike which was growing up against her.

On the 8th of July the ex-Queen Marguerite gave a magnificent entertainment to the Court at her beautiful estate of Issy; on her return from whence to the capital, the Regent mounted a Spanish jennet, and, surrounded by her guards, galloped at full speed to the faubourg, where she dismounted and entered her coach, still environed by armed men. As she had her foot upon the step of the carriage, a poor woman who stood among the crowd exclaimed with an earnestness which elicited general attention, “Would to God, Madame, that as much care had been taken of our poor King; we should not then be where we are!”

The Queen paused for a moment, and turned pale; but immediately recovering her self-possession, she took her seat, and bowed affably to the people. The greeting on their part was, however, cold and reluctant. They were still weeping over the bier of their murdered sovereign, and they could not brook the apparent levity with which his widow had already entered into the idle gaieties of the Court.[56]

“Only five months after Henry’s assassination,” says Rambure, “such of the nobles as were devoted to his memory expressed among themselves their indignation at the bearing of the Queen; who, although compelled at intervals to assume some semblance of grief, was more frequently to be seen with a smiling countenance, and constantly followed the hunt on horseback, attended by a suite of four or five hundred princes and nobles.” [57]

In order to avert all discontent among the people, the ministers had induced the Regent not only to diminish the duty upon salt, a boon for which they were always grateful, but also to delay the enforcement of several obnoxious commissions, and to revoke no less than fifty-four edicts which had been issued for the imposition of new taxes; while

presents in money were made to the most influential of the Protestant party, and the Edict of Nantes was confirmed.

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Such was the state of the French Court on the return of the Prince de Conde, whose arrival had been anxiously anticipated by his personal friends and adherents, and strongly urged by the Regent herself; but when she ascertained that a large body of nobles had gone as far as Senlis to receive him, and that among these were all the Princes of Lorraine, the Marechal de Bouillon, and the Duc de Sully, she became apprehensive that a cabal was about to be formed against her authority; a suspicion which was augmented by the regal state in which he entered the capital, attended and followed by more than fifteen hundred individuals of rank.

Her fears were, moreover, eagerly fostered by the Comte de Soissons, the Duc d'Epernon, and the Cardinal de Joyeuse, who, desirous of retaining the influence which they had already acquired, neglected no method of arousing her jealousy against the first Prince of the Blood. In pursuance of this purpose M. d'Epernon, to whom the safety of the city had been confided during the first alarm created by the murder of the King, no sooner learnt the approach of the Prince than he doubled the guards at the different gates, and even proposed to form garrisons in the avenues leading to them; a circumstance which was immediately made known to M. de Conde, who expressed great indignation at such an imputation upon his loyalty. This affront was, however, remedied by the able courtier, who, being anxious to conciliate both parties, had no sooner convinced the Queen of his zeal for her interests than he proceeded, accompanied by a hundred mounted followers, to welcome the Prince before he could reach the city.

M. de Conde dined at Le Bourget, where he expressed his acknowledgments to the several nobles by whom he was surrounded, and declared his intention of upholding by every means in his power the dignity and authority of the Regent. At the close of the repast he once more ordered his horses, and retraced his steps as far as St. Denis, where he caused a mass to be said for the soul of the deceased King, and aspersed the royal coffin; after which he proceeded direct to Paris, receiving upon his way perpetual warnings not to trust himself within the gates of the capital. He, however, destroyed these anonymous communications one after the other, and was rewarded by a note hastily written by the President de Thou,[58] in which he was entreated to disregard the efforts which were made to dissuade him from entering Paris, where the Queen was prepared to receive him with all possible honour and welcome.

Thus assured, M. de Conde, mounted upon a pied charger, which had been presented to him by the Archduke, and habited in the deepest mourning, continued his journey, having his brother-in-law the Prince of Orange on his right hand and the Comte de Beaumont on his left, with whom he occasionally conversed; but it was remarked that as he drew near the capital he became absent and ill at ease; and his discomposure was destined

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to be increased by the circumstance that on his arrival at the Louvre the gates were closed upon the greater number of his followers, and only a slender retinue permitted to enter with him. On ascending the great staircase, in order to pay his respects to the King, he was informed that his Majesty was in the Queen's apartment, towards which he immediately proceeded. His reception was gracious and affectionate, and he had no sooner knelt and kissed hands than the Regent assured him of the joy that she felt at his return, and the confidence with which she looked forward to his advice and assistance. On quitting the royal presence, after a prolonged interview, the Prince warmly expressed his gratification at the welcome which had been accorded to him, declaring that he should for ever hold himself indebted to the Queen for an amount of affability which he could not have anticipated.

From the palace M. de Conde proceeded to his residence at the Hotel de Lyon, accompanied by the Duc de Guise, and followed by the same suite with which he had entered the capital; and thence he hastened to the residence of the Comtesse d'Auvergne to greet the Princess. Their meeting was warm and affectionate; both were anxious to forget the past, and to profit by the future; while the sincerity of the reconciliation on the part of Madame de Conde was fully proved by her subsequent devotion to his interests and happiness. Their interview was a long and affecting one, and the Prince spent the remainder of the day in her society, returning, however, in the evening to the Louvre to be present at the *coucher* of the King, whom he assisted to undress; after which he waited upon the Queen, with whom he remained until a late hour.[59]

During the ensuing week Conde was entirely occupied in receiving the visits of the nobility, who unanimously hastened to pay their respects, and to solicit his protection. He held, in fact, a species of court, upon which the favourites of the Regent did not fail to comment with an emphatic bitterness that once more awakened the suspicions of Marie; who, aware of the popularity of the Prince, was easily persuaded to believe that these demonstrations were pregnant with danger to the interests of her son; and, aware of the instability of her own position, the prejudices which were entertained against her person, and the ambition of the great nobles, she listened with avidity to the suggestions of MM. de Soissons, d'Epernon, and de Joyeuse, that she should effect the arrest of Conde before he had time to organize a faction in his favour. In addition to the public homage of which he was the object, they pointed out to her that frequent councils were held, which were attended by all the chiefs of his party, both at the Hotel de Mayenne and at the Arsenal, where the treasure amassed by the late King still remained under the guardianship, and at the discretion of, the Duc de Sully. They reminded her also of the manner in which the Prince had quitted the capital, and the vehemence with which he had expressed his indignation at the treatment he had received, not only to his personal friends, but also at the foreign courts which he had

visited during his absence; and they besought her to take proper precautions before it became too late.[60]

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These arguments were also warmly advocated by Concini and his wife, the Papal Nuncio, the Spanish Ambassador, the Chancellor Sillery, Villeroy, Jeannin, Arnaud,[61] and the celebrated Pere Cotton,[62] who had fully possessed himself of the confidence of the Queen, and who was admitted to all her private councils.[63] Fortunately, however, Marie hesitated to hazard so extreme a step; and day after day went by without any hostile manifestation on the part of the Prince, who openly declared himself resolved to support her authority. As her alarm on this subject diminished, the private friends of the Queen turned their attention to other matters of political interest; and according to the testimony of Sully, zealously employed themselves in contravening all the wishes, and disappointing all the views, of Henri IV. "There can be no difficulty," he says with a bitterness which shows how deeply he felt his own exclusion, "in deciding upon the subject of their deliberations. The union of the crowns of France and Spain, the abolition of ancient alliances with foreign powers, the abolition of all the edicts of pacification, the destruction of the Protestants, the exclusion of those of the reformed religion from places of trust, the disgrace of all who will not submit to the yoke of the new favourites, the dissipation of the treasures amassed by the late King, in order to secure the services of the greedy and the ambitious, and to load with wealth and power such as are destined to rise to the highest dignities in the realm—that is to say, a thousand projects as pernicious to the King and to the state as they were advantageous to our most mortal enemies,—such were the great objects of the deliberations of these new counsellors." [64]

Be this as it may, it is certain that as regarded the Prince de Conde, the Queen was better served by accident than she would have been by the dangerous advice of her friends. The wise precaution which she had taken of arming the citizens of Paris, and of placing them under the command of individuals chosen by herself, and who had taken an oath of fidelity to her service in the Hotel de Ville, secured the loyalty of the populace; while the jealousy of the Guises, who, even while professing the most ardent attachment to M. de Conde, were gradually becoming cooler in his cause and quarrelling among themselves, gave no encouragement to an attempt at revolt on his part, even should he have been inclined to hazard it.

The Duc de Bouillon alone laboured incessantly to undermine the power of the Regent; and he at length suggested to the Prince that in order to counterbalance the authority of the Court, and to maintain his own rightful dignity, he would do well to return to his original religion, and to place himself at the head of the Protestants, who would form a very important and powerful party. M. de Conde, however, declined to follow this advice, protesting that he had no desire to involve the kingdom in intestine commotion, and

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was content to await the progress of events.[65] It is probable that he was the more readily induced to exert this forbearance from the extreme generosity of the Queen, who, remembering the abruptness with which he had been deprived, on the occasion of his marriage, of the many lucrative appointments bestowed upon him, hastened to present him with a pension of two hundred thousand livres; to which she added the Hotel de Conti in the Faubourg St. Germain, which she purchased for that purpose at a similar sum, the county of Clermont, and other munificent donations.[66]

Nor was M. de Conde the only recipient of her uncalculating generosity, as may be gathered from the following document from the pen of Richelieu:

“The good management of the savings fund of the late King left us, when he was taken away, five millions in the Bastille; and in the hands of the treasurer of the fund from seven to eight millions more, with which he had intended to pay the army that he had raised in order to extend the limits of his glory, which would admit no others than those of the universe itself. The uncertainty in which we were left by that fatal event rendering it necessary that we should secure the safety of the state by the counterpoise of a certain body of troops, we found ourselves constrained to employ a portion of the finances in maintaining during a few months a large military force which had already been raised; so that this outlay, the funeral of the King, and the coronation of the Queen, of which the expenses were not paid, reduced these savings very considerably. After the death of that great Prince, who was the actual ruler of the state, it was impossible to prevent a certain disorder, which even went so far as to induce several individuals, who measured their deserts by their ambition, shamefully to seek, and pertinaciously to persist in demanding, benefits which they could never have hoped to secure during his lifetime. They profit by the difficulties of the period, offer to serve the state, declare how they have it in their power to injure the national interests, and, in short, make it clearly understood that they will only do their duty upon the most advantageous terms; and so conduct themselves that even those who had assisted the King in amassing his treasure advise the Queen to yield to the exigences of the time, to open her hands, and to give largely to every one.

“In accordance with these counsels she increases the pensions and establishments of the Princes, the nobles, and the old servants of the Crown; she grants new ones; she augments the garrisons of her fortresses, as much to satisfy those who hold them as for the safety of the country, and maintains a greater number of troops than formerly; the increase of these pensions amounting on an average to three millions annually. The expense of the light horse and infantry is at present (1617) three millions three hundred thousand livres; while in 1610 it amounted only to fifteen hundred

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thousand francs. She makes numerous presents, and this under advice, without increasing her receipts, as well as reducing them annually two millions five hundred thousand livres by the diminution of the duty on salt; and so augments her expenses that, upon mature consideration, we shall rather be applauded for being in the state we still are after so many necessary outlays, than blamed for having incurred them. M. le Prince (Conde) received during six years three millions six hundred and sixty thousand livres; the Prince and Princesse de Conti above one million four hundred thousand; the Duc de Guise nearly one million seven hundred thousand; M. de Nevers one million six hundred thousand; M. de Longueville[67] one million two hundred thousand; MM. de Mayenne, father and son, two millions and several thousands; M. de Vendome near six hundred thousand; M. d'Epernon and his children near seven hundred thousand; and M. de Bouillon near a million.

"All the Marshals of France, of which the number was increased one half, received four times as much as formerly, their pensions being augmented twenty-four thousand livres, which, in six years, allowing to each one hundred and forty-four thousand livres, and calculating them at eight in number, as they have always been, make, one with the other, one million one hundred and fifty-two thousand livres.

"Six other dukes, or officers of the Crown, received the same allowance, augmenting the outlay in six years by eighty-six thousand four hundred livres. Hence it is easy to see how the treasury of France was exhausted, since eleven or twelve articles in favour of the great nobles of the state carry off nearly seventeen millions, without including all that was paid to them in the shape of salaries and appointments, the *deniers du talion*[68] for their companies of men-at-arms, grants for the maintenance of the garrisons of their fortresses, and finally, without calculating the troubles occasioned by several among them; troubles which, having compelled us on three several occasions to take up arms, have cost us, upon a strict computation, more than twenty millions of additional outlay." [69]

We have copied this document at full length, and in this place, in order, in so far as we are enabled so to do, to exonerate Marie de Medicis from the charge of reckless extravagance unsparingly brought against her by the Duc de Sully. Richelieu himself, at the period at which this report was furnished to the ministers, was little disposed to extenuate the errors of the Regent; and cannot, consequently, be supposed to have volunteered any palliative circumstances. Moreover, it is worthy of notice that the enormous sums registered above were not lavished upon the personal favourites of the Queen, but were literally the price paid by the nation to purchase the loyalty of its Princes and nobles; a frightful state of things, which exhibits more forcibly than any argument the utter powerlessness of Marie to restrain the excessive expenditure by which the kingdom was so soon reduced to the brink of bankruptcy.

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The Regent having renewed all the alliances of France with the several European powers, they at this period accredited extraordinary ambassadors to the French capital, to offer the condolences and congratulations of their respective sovereigns to the young King and his mother. Among these the most interesting to the personal feelings of Marie was Lord Wharton; who, in addition to the merely verbal compliments common on such occasions, presented to Louis XIII, in the name of his royal master, James I, the Order of the Garter, accompanied by his affectionate assurances that he had not forgotten the promise exchanged between himself and the late monarch, that whichever of the two survived would be as a father to the children of the other; a pledge which he declared himself to be both ready and anxious to ratify. Nor was this the first proof of sympathy which the English monarch had evinced towards Marie and her son, the Court of London having immediately put on mourning on learning the death of Henri IV, and a suspension of all public amusements having taken place throughout the capital. Gratified by so signal a demonstration of respect and regard, the Regent accordingly no sooner ascertained that the British envoy was approaching Paris than she despatched a party of four hundred mounted nobles to meet him outside the gates, and herself took her station at a window in order to see him pass; a condescension which was considered to be a signal honour at that period.

The most important of these missions, politically considered, was, however, that of the Duque de Feria,[70] who arrived in France with a brilliant suite, charged with the most specious and high-sounding professions and promises of Philip of Spain, who pledged himself to support the Regency under all circumstances, and to place at the disposal of the Queen whatever assistance she might require against both external and internal enemies. These magnificent assurances were coldly received by most of his hearers, who distrusted alike the Spanish monarch and his envoy; and who had not yet forgotten that only a few months had elapsed since Philip had himself endeavoured, not merely to dispossess Marie of her authority, but also to incite M. de Conde to dispute the throne itself with her young son. Upon the Queen and her immediate friends they, however, produced a contrary effect; her leaning towards the Court of Spain inducing her to welcome every symptom of a desire on the part of that Cabinet to maintain a good understanding with her own Government. Her reception of the Duque de Feria was consequently so gracious that he immediately proceeded to renew the negotiation already mooted for the double alliance between the two nations, which must, should it ever be effected, render their interests, at least for a time, inseparable. No proposition could be more acceptable to Marie de Medicis, who, harassed and dispirited, gladly welcomed any prospect of support by which she might hope to keep her turbulent nobility in check; while Philip on his side was anxious to effect so desirable an alliance, as it would enable him, irrespectively of its contingent advantages, to gain time, and thus secure the means of settling the affairs of Germany, which were embroiled by the misunderstanding between the Emperor and his brothers.

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The Spanish Cabinet was, moreover, desirous of widening the breach between the Catholics and Protestants of France, an attempt in which it was zealously seconded by the Pope, who was readily persuaded that no measure could be so desirable for the accomplishment of such a purpose as a union between the two crowns. Thus the objections which had appeared insuperable to Henri IV lost all their weight in the mutual anxiety of Marie and Philip to secure the advantages which each sought to gain; and, as the youth of Louis XIII forbade the immediate celebration of the marriage, a private pledge was exchanged between the ministers of France and the Spanish envoy, that the Regent should not interfere with the measures of the House of Austria in Germany, while Spain should refuse all support to the malcontents in her own kingdom; and this mutual understanding once established, the double alliance was concluded.[71]

In the midst of the important interests by which the mind of Marie de Medicis was at this period occupied, a fresh demand upon her attention was made by Madame de Verneuil, who on the 15th of September laid before the Comte de Soissons, the Cardinal de Joyeuse, and the Duc d'Epernon, the written engagement which she had received from the Duc de Guise, and urged its enforcement. Her claim was warmly espoused by M. de Soissons, who at once declared the document to be valid and unanswerable; while it was admitted by all by whom it was examined to be strictly legal in form, and to authorize her in demanding its ratification. Unlike that which she had previously extorted from Henri IV, the promise which the Marquise now produced was not only signed by M. de Guise himself, but also by two notaries, a priest, and several witnesses. Unfortunately, however, whether by accident, or intention on the part of the Duke, both the notaries by whom it had been attested were aged men, one of whom had subsequently died; while the other had become so imbecile that when interrogated upon the subject, he first doubted, and subsequently denied, all knowledge of the transaction; but as these contingencies did not affect the signature of M. de Guise himself, his position was sufficiently embarrassing; and the rather that, his passion for the Marquise having been long extinguished, he had become the acknowledged suitor of the Dowager Duchess of Montpensier.

There can be little doubt that had Henri IV still lived Madame de Verneuil would have been enabled to enforce her claim, as that monarch would not have suffered so admirable an opportunity of mortifying the Guises to have escaped him; and thus individual imprudence would have afforded him a triumph which the fortune of arms had hitherto denied, and the most jealous watchfulness failed to secure; but his death had changed the position of all the parties interested in the affair, and Marie de Medicis looked upon it with very different feelings. Her old and still existing hatred of the Marquise was renewed by an exhibition of arrogance which recalled to memory some of the most bitter moments of her existence; and her pride as a sovereign was revolted at the prospect of seeing the woman by whom her peace had been destroyed elevated to the rank of a Princess of the Blood, and placed beside the very steps of her throne.

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She was, moreover, anxious to limit the power of the Comte de Soissons, and to prevent the proposed marriage of his son Louis de Bourbon with the heiress of Montpensier, which would have opened up a still wider field for his ambition. She accordingly espoused the cause of the Duc de Guise, who, having no other alternative by which to rid himself of the Marquise, did not scruple to deny the authenticity of the signature ascribed to him; and he had no sooner resolutely done this, than the Regent placed the affair in the hands of the President Jeannin, who with his usual ability at length succeeded in inducing Madame de Verneuil to withdraw her claims. Aware that he could hope nothing either from her generosity or her dread of ridicule, the astute lawyer represented to her the inequality of the contest in which she was about to engage without any ulterior support; whereas the Duc de Guise was not only powerful in himself, but would necessarily be supported by all the members of his family, as well as protected by the Queen.

The Marquise for a time affected to believe that the legality of the document in her possession must enable her to triumph even over these obstacles, formidable as they were; but Jeannin reminded her of the death of one of her witnesses, the denial of another, and the solemn declaration of the Duke that his own signature was feigned; assuring her that these circumstances must prove more than sufficient to prevent the recognition of the deed in any court of law. When he found that this argument had produced the desired impression, he next proceeded to expatiate upon the benefit which she could not fail to derive from the gratitude of the Guises, should she voluntarily withdraw her claim without subjecting the Duke to the annoyance of a public lawsuit; during which, moreover, her former *liaison* with his brother, the Prince de Joinville, could not fail to be made matter of comment and curiosity. He urged upon her the desirability of avoiding a publicity which must tend to dishonour both herself and her children; and, finally, he pointed out the propriety and policy of seizing so favourable an opportunity to secure the goodwill of the Regent, who would as a natural consequence be gratified by such a concession, and be thus induced to bury the past in oblivion.

Madame de Verneuil wept and argued in vain. Jeannin was indeed too subtle an antagonist to afford her one inch of vantage-ground; and he so thoroughly undermined the reasonings which she advanced, that, wearied and discouraged, she at length consented to forego her claim.

Deprived of the position which she had formerly held at the Court, she never re-appeared there, but spent the remainder of her life either on her estate at Verneuil, or in her hotel at Paris, in such complete retirement that nothing more is known of her save the period of her death, which took place on the 9th of February 1633, when she had reached her fifty-fourth year.[72]

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FOOTNOTES:

[26] Madame de Sully, the second wife of the Duke, was Rachel de Gochefilet, the daughter of Jacques, Seigneur de Vaucelas, and of Marie d'Arbalete. She was first married to Francois Hurault, Sieur de Chateaupers et du Marais, who died in 1590. She survived the Duc de Sully, and died in 1659, at the age of ninety-three years. The arrogance of this lady was so notorious that it became the subject of one of those biting epigrams for which Henri IV had rendered himself famous; for it is on record that upon an occasion when he was a guest at the table of the finance minister, he drank her health, accompanied by the following impromptu:—

"Je bois a *toi*, Sully;
Mais j'ai failli;
Je devois dire a *vous*, adorable Duchesse,
Pour boire a vos appas
Faut mettre chapeau bas."

Dictionnaire des Hommes Illustres.

[27] Bassompierre, *Mem*. p. 72.

[28] Richelieu, *Hist. de la Mere et du Fils*, vol. i. p. 55.

[29] Extracted from the Parliamentary Registers in the Memoirs of Phelipeaux de Pontchartrain, Secretary of the Orders of Marie de Medicis.

[30] L'Etoile, vol. iv. p. 49.

[31] *Mem. pour l'Hist. de France*, vol. ii. p. 359.

[32] *Mercure Francais*, 1611, p. 17.

[33] Richelieu, *Hist. de la Mere et du Fils*, vol. i. p. 56.

[34] Charles de Cosse, Comte de Brissac, Governor of Paris, in the year 1594 delivered up that city to Henri IV, by whom he was on that occasion raised to the dignity of Marshal of France. In 1626 Louis XIII erected his estate into a duchy-peerage, and in the following year he died Duc de Brissac.

[35] Urbain de Laval, Marquis de Bois-Dauphin, was one of the four Marshals of France created by the Duc de Mayenne whose rank was subsequently confirmed by Henri IV. He was one of the original chiefs of the League.

[36] Matthieu, *Hist. des Derniers Troubles*, 1610, pp. 446-453.

[37] Bassompierre, *Mem.* p. 72.

[38] Sully, *Mem.* vol. viii. p. 30.

[39] Bassompierre, *Mem.* p. 72.

[40] Richelieu, *Hist. de la Mere et du Fils*, vol. i. pp. 57-59.

[41] Richelieu, *Hist. de la Mere et du Fils*, vol. i. pp. 83, 84.

[42] L'Etoile, vol. iv. p. 155.

[43] *Mercure Francais*, 1610, vol. i. p. 492.

[44] Matthieu, *Hist. des Derniers Troubles*, book iii. p. 454.

[45] *Mem. de Henri, Duc de Rohan*, edit. Petitot.

[46] The Cardinal Guido Bentivoglio, born in 1579, was descended from an illustrious Bolognese family, who had formerly been the sovereigns of that state, and had produced alike great warriors, renowned poets, and celebrated prelates. He was himself a distinguished diplomatist and an able writer. Literature is indebted to his pen for the *History of the Civil Wars of Flanders*, sundry *Memoirs*, and a *Narrative of Flanders*. He died in 1644.

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[47] *Mem. de la Regence de Marie de Medicis*, pp. 5-14. D'Estrees, *Mem*., edition Michaud, pp. 375, 376.

[48] *Hist. de la Vie du Duc d'Epernon*, pp. 248, 249.

[49] *Mem. de la Regence*, pp. 6-8. Mezeray, vol. xi. pp. 7, 8. D'Estrees, *Mem*. p. 376.

[50] M. de Souvre was the governor of Louis XIII.

[51] L'Etoile, vol. iv. pp. 97, 98.

[52] Stefano Galigai, known from his extreme ugliness as "the baboon of the Court." When he went to take possession of his abbey the monks refused to receive him as their abbot, alleging that they had been accustomed to be governed by princes, and not by carpenters like himself, who had been seen to handle the plane and the saw. Stefano Galigai withdrew into Italy after the execution of his relatives.

[53] L'Etoile, vol. iv. pp. 143, 144.

[54] Mezeray, vol. xi. p. 5.

[55] Rambure, unpublished *Mem*. vol. vi. pp. 44, 45.

[56] L'Etoile, vol. iv. p. 157.

[57] Rambure, MS. *Mem*. vol. vi, p. 79.

[58] Jacques Auguste de Thou was the representative of an ancient family of Champagne, celebrated alike in the magistracy and the Church. One of his ancestors, Nicolas de Thou, clerk of the parliamentary council, and Bishop of Chartres, performed the coronation service of Henri IV in 1594, and died in 1598. Christophe de Thou, the brother of Nicolas, was first president of the Parliament of Paris, chancellor to the Ducs d'Anjou and d'Alencon, and a faithful servant of Henri II, Charles IX, and Henri III, whom he served with untiring zeal during the intestine troubles of the kingdom. He died in 1582. His son, the subject of the present note, embraced the legal profession, and became, from parliamentary councillor, president *a mortier*. In 1586, after the day of the Barricades, he left Paris, and entered the service of Henri III, who confided to him several missions in England and Italy. On the accession of Henri IV, De Thou eagerly embraced his interests, and by this sovereign he was also employed in negotiations of importance. At the death of Amyot he was appointed grand master of the King's library. During the regency of Marie de Medicis he became director-general of finance, and was deputed, in conjunction with Cardinal Duperron, to reform the University of Paris, and to aid in the construction of the Royal College. Posterity is indebted to De Thou for a *History* of his time, in one hundred and thirty-eight books, embracing sixty years, from

1545 to 1607. His style is terse, elevated, and elegant, and the work is full of elaborate and most minute detail. De Thou died in 1617.

[59] L'Etoile, vol. iv. pp. 164-169.

[60] Mezeray, vol. xi. pp. 9, 10.

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[61] Antoine Arnaud was the elder son of Antoine Arnaud, captain of the light horse, and subsequently attorney and advocate-general of Catherine de Medicis. The younger Arnaud embraced the legal profession, and became an advocate of the Parliament of Paris, where he distinguished himself by his probity and eloquence. Henri IV rewarded his merit by the brevet of councillor of state, and Marie de Medicis appointed him advocate-general. When offered the dignity of secretary of state, he resolutely refused to accept it, representing to the Regent that he could more effectually serve her as advocate-general to the King than in the secretaryship. His able and erudite speech in the celebrated Jesuit cause tried at Paris in 1594, in the presence of Henri IV and the Duke of Savoy, and his work entitled *The Plain and True Discourse against the Recall of the Order to France*, are well known. At the conclusion of the trial named above the University offered him a handsome present; which, however, he declined, declaring that he required no recompense, and had given his services gratuitously; whereupon that learned body passed a solemn act pledging itself to eternal gratitude alike towards him and his posterity; an obligation which it would, however, appear to have forgotten in 1656, in the case of his son. His great talents and high character procured for him an alliance with the first president, who bestowed upon him the hand of his daughter Catherine, by whom he became the father of twenty children. Although adverse to the League, Arnaud was a member of the Romish Church.

[62] Pierre Cotton, subsequently so famous as the confessor of Henri IV, was born at Neronde, in the department of the Loire, in 1564, and was received into the Order of the Jesuits in 1585 at Arona, in the Milanese, whence he was sent to Milan to study philosophy. Thence he was removed to Rome, where he remained twelve months engaged in the same pursuit; and finally he proceeded to Lyons, where he completed his education, and began to preach. During a sojourn at Grenoble he was presented to the Duc de Lesdiguieres, in whom he inspired so much confidence that it was to his good offices that he was indebted for his selection as confessor to the King. The Duke having represented him as a sound and eloquent preacher, he was instructed to proceed to Paris, where his sermons having realized the report of his patron, Henri IV at once adopted him as his director. After the death of that monarch, he was for some time the confessor of Louis XIII. In 1617 he abandoned the Court, and travelled through the southern provinces as a missionary-apostle. He was the author of several controversial and religious works, and died in 1626.

[63] Sully, *Mem*. vol. viii. pp. 36, 37.

[64] Sully, *Mem*. vol. viii. p. 37.

[65] Mezeray, vol. xi. p. 10.

[66] Sully, *Mem*. vol. viii. p. 81 *note*.

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[67] Henri II, Duc de Longueville, was still a mere youth, having been born in 1595. Appointed plenipotentiary at the Congress of Muenster in 1648, as well as Governor of Normandy, he threw himself into the party of the Fronde, on the pretext of mortification at being refused the government of Havre, but in reality in compliance with the entreaties of his wife. As the result of this concession he, in 1650, shared the imprisonment of the Princes de Conde and de Conti; but having recovered his liberty during the following year, he renounced all partisanship, and died peaceably in 1663.

[68] Fines paid for the commutation of offences.

[69] Instruction de M. de Schomberg, Comte de Monteuil, conseillier du Roi en son conseil d'etat, lieutenant-general de sa Majeste es pays de Limosin, haute et basse Marche, pour son voyage d'Allemagne, 1617. *Pieces Justificatives;* signed by Richelieu.

[70] Lorenzo Balthazar de Figueroa y Cordova, Duque de Feria, who in 1618 was appointed Governor of the Milanese.

[71] Mezeray, vol. xi. p. 17. Richelieu, *Hist. de la Mere et du Fils*, vol. xi. pp. 106, 107. D'Estrees, *Mem*. p. 379.

[72] Dreux du Radier, vol. vi. pp. 105-107.

CHAPTER II

1610

A temporary calm—Louis XIII—Marie de Medicis purchases the Marquisate of Ancre for Concini—Rapid rise of his fortunes—His profusion—He intrigues to create dissension among the Princes of the Blood—His personal endowments—The Duc de Bouillon endeavours to induce M. de Conde to revolt—He fails—He disposes of his office at Court to the Marquis d'Ancre—Marie de Medicis continues the public edifices commenced and projected by Henri IV—Zeal of the Duc de Mayenne—Cupidity of the Court—M. de Conde and his advisers—The Prince and the Minister—Forebodings of Sully—He determines to resign office—His unpopularity—The Regent refuses to accept his resignation—The war in Germany—The Regent resolves to despatch an army to Cleves—The Duc de Bouillon demands the command of the troops—Is refused by the Council—Retires in disgust to Sedan—The command is conferred on the Marechal de la Chatre—A bootless campaign—The French troops return home—New dissensions at Court—The Duc d'Epernon becomes the declared enemy of the Protestants—-Apprehensions of the reformed party—Quarrel of Sully and Villeroy—The Regent endeavours to effect a reconciliation with the Prince de Conti—Princely wages—M. de Conti returns to Court—The Princes of the Blood attend the Parliament—The Marquis d'Ancre is admitted to the State Council—Sully and Bouillon retire from the capital—-

Sully resolves to withdraw from the Government, but is again induced to retain office—-The King and Pere Cotton—The Court leave Paris for Rheims—Coronation of Louis XIII—His public entry into the capital—The Prince de Conde and the Comte de Soissons are reconciled—Quarrel between

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the Marquis d'Ancre and the Duc de Bellegarde—Cabal against Sully—The Huguenots petition for a General Assembly—Reluctance of the Regent to concede their demand—-She finds herself compelled to comply—M. de Villeroy garrisons Lyons—Sully retires from the Ministry—Demands of the Princes—Sully's last official act—His parting interview with Louis XIII—The Minister and the Mountebanks.

For a short time Marie began to hope that the conciliatory measures she had adopted would ensure the tranquillity of the country over which she had been called to govern. All the cities and provinces had sworn fidelity to the King, and obedience to herself; all the governors of fortresses had followed their example; and the great nobles, whose plans were not yet matured, and whose cupidity was for the moment satisfied, testified no inclination to disturb, or to trammel the measures of the Government. The relief afforded to the middle and lower classes by the diminution of some of the national imposts, and the abolition of others, began to produce its effect upon the popular mind; and the young King was received whenever he appeared in public with warm and enthusiastic greetings. All the members of the House of Guise, traditionally the most dangerous enemies of the Crown, affected a respectful deference towards the Regent, and an earnest desire to uphold her authority; while the Duc d'Epernon, who had, in her first hour of trial, at once declared himself her devoted adherent, appeared to exist only to fulfil her wishes. The ministers deferred to her opinions with a respect which caused their occasional opposition to be rather matter of argument than mortification; and, finally, Concini and his wife seemed to have forgotten their own interests in those of their royal mistress.[73]

Meanwhile, the bearing of the young sovereign, ably prompted by the wisdom of M. de Souvre, was admirable. Gifted with an intellect beyond his years, and with an agreeable person, he soon engaged the affections of the people; who, eager to love the son of Henri IV, and to anticipate under his rule the same glory and greatness which had characterized the reign of his father, drew the happiest auguries from his slightest actions; while the modesty of his demeanour towards the princes and nobles equally tended to establish a feeling of interest and sympathy towards his person which promised a favourable result. When he received the homage of his Court on his accession he said sadly: "Gentlemen, these honours have devolved upon me too soon; I am not yet old enough to govern; be faithful, and obey the commands of the Queen my mother." [74]

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Unfortunately, the ambition of Concini was more powerful than his devotion to his benefactress; and his influence continued unabated. Moreover, his vanity was mortified, as he could not conceal from himself that he was indebted for his position at Court, indefinite as it was, to the affection of the Regent for his wife; and he consequently urged Leonora to induce the Queen to purchase for him the town of Ancre in Picardy, whose possession would invest him with the title of marquis, and assure to him the consideration due to that rank. Madame de Concini accordingly proffered her request, which was conceded without difficulty; for Marie was at that moment, to adopt the expression of Richelieu, keeping her hands open; and this purchase formed a comparatively unimportant item in her lavish grants. Encouraged by so facile a success, the Italian adventurer was, however, by no means disposed to permit even this coveted dignity to satisfy his ambition, and through the same agency he ere long became Governor of Peronne, Roye, and Montdidier, which he purchased from M. de Crequy for the sum of forty thousand crowns. The Queen had been induced to furnish an order upon the royal treasury for this amount, which was presented without any misgiving by the exulting favourite; but M. de Villeroy, who considered himself to have been slighted on some occasion by her Majesty, refused to countersign the document, an opposition which so enraged Concini that he hastened to pour out his complaints to Marie; who, overcome by the wrath of the husband and the tears of the wife, summoned the Duc de Sully, of whom she inquired if it were not possible to procure the requisite amount by having recourse to the money lodged at the Arsenal. Sully replied in the negative, declaring that the sums therein deposited were not available for such a purpose, and reminding her that seven millions of livres had already been withdrawn since the death of the King.[75] It was, consequently, necessary to raise the desired purchase-money by other means, which having been at length effected, Concini found himself not only placed by his court-appointment on a par with the peers of the realm, but also enabled, by the munificence of the Regent, and the revenues of his new government, to rival them in magnificence.

Then it was that his talent for intrigue boldly developed itself. In vain did his wife warn him of the danger of further forcing his fortunes, and thus drawing down upon himself the hatred and envy of the native nobility; in vain did she represent that by indulging his passion for power and display he must eventually create enemies who were certain to prove fatal to his prosperity; Concini, as weak and vain as he was greedy and ambitious, disregarded her advice, and strenuously turned his attention to fomenting a misunderstanding among the most influential of the nobles, in order to prevent a coalition which threatened to diminish his own importance. He was well aware of his unpopularity

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with the Princes of the Blood, who could not without indignation see themselves compelled to treat with him almost upon equal terms, protected as he was by the favour of the Queen; and he consequently lived in perpetual apprehension of their forming a cabal to effect his ruin. Skilfully, therefore, with a smiling countenance, but an anxious heart, he availed himself of every opportunity to foment the jealousies and hatreds which policy had for a brief while laid to rest. To each and all he appeared zealous in their several interests, but to each and all he was alike a traitor.

Nature had been lavish to Concini; his person was well-formed and graceful, while his countenance beamed with intelligence, and gave promise of far greater intellect than he in reality possessed. It was this handsomeness which had inspired Leonora Galigai with a passion that was destined to be her destruction, for no doubt can be entertained that had she never become his wife her career might have been one of happiness and honour; but while Concini, absorbed in his wild schemes of self-aggrandizement, trampled upon every consideration of honour and honesty in order to attain his object, Leonora, conscious of her own want of personal attractions, and loving her husband with a devotion made up of gratitude and admiration, suffered herself to be overruled by his vanity and arrogance, and sacrificed her reason and her judgment to her affection.

The Marechal de Bouillon having failed in his attempt to induce M. de Conde to revolt against the authority of the Regent, by one of those sudden transitions of feeling which formed so strange a feature in his character, next sought to reconcile that Prince and the Duc de Guise, who were already at feud upon the prerogatives of their rank; and he began to anticipate a successful issue to his enterprise, when the ministers, being apprehensive that a good understanding among the Princes of the Blood would tend to weaken their own influence over the Regent, gave him to understand that should M. de Conde and the Due de Guise become firm friends, his personal importance in the country would be greatly lessened, if not entirely overthrown. This argument was all-sufficient with the ambitious and intriguing Bouillon, who forthwith began to slacken in his exertions to restore peace. But these had already proceeded so far as to render his position extremely embarrassing; and between his apprehension of sacrificing his own interest on the one hand, and of incurring suspicion upon the other, he was somewhat at a loss how to proceed, when the adroit interference of Concini, who deprecated the coalition of the Princes as much as the ministers themselves, furnished fresh fuel to the expiring flame, and widened the chasm between them more hopelessly than ever; and that, moreover, with such dexterity, that M. de Bouillon never suspected what friendly hand had come to his aid; although the Italian favourite did not fail to propitiate the haughty Duke by every means in his power,

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and so thoroughly succeeded in flattering his vanity, and encouraging his ambitious aspirations, that, anxious to secure the interest and assistance of so influential a person as the husband of the Queen's foster-sister and confidential friend, M. de Bouillon was induced to sell to him his office of First Lord of the Bedchamber; a circumstance which at once secured a permanent footing at Court to Concini, and opened before him a long vista of prosperity.[76]

One of the first decisions arrived at by the Regent was the completion of all the public edifices commenced by the late King, and the erection of such as he had resolved upon, but had not lived to commence; an admirable act of policy by which she at once evinced her respect for the memory of her husband, and procured employment for hundreds of workmen, who must otherwise have been severe sufferers from want of occupation. Those which were originated under her auspices were the castle of Vincennes and the Royal College, the latter of which she caused to be built strictly according to the design executed by Henry himself; and the first stone was laid on the 28th of August by the young King, assisted by his whole Court. It bore the arms of France and Medicis, and beneath them was inscribed in deeply-chiselled characters: "In the first year of the reign of Louis XIII, King of France and Navarre, aged nine years, and of the regency of the Queen Marie de Medicis his mother, 1610." Four medals, bearing the same inscription, two of gold, and two of silver gilt, having been placed at the corners of the stone, which was then lowered, the Due de Sully presented the silver trowel, while two of the attendant nobles alternately offered the hammer and the silver trough containing the mortar.

During the following month the Queen herself performed the same ceremony at Vincennes, respecting the fortress, and the magnificent tower built by Charles VII, but erecting beneath its shadow a commodious residence on the space which had heretofore been cumbered with a mass of unsightly buildings, totally unsuitable for the reception of a Court.[77]

The Due de Mayenne, although suffering from severe indisposition, had hastened to offer his services to the Regent; who, recognizing his ability, and grateful for the zeal which he evinced in her interests, expressed all the gratification that she felt at his prompt and earnest offers of aid; which he moreover followed up with such untiring perseverance that he caused himself to be conveyed every day to the Louvre in his chair, in order to discuss with her Majesty the various measures necessary to the peace and welfare of the state. Above all he exhorted her to restrain her munificence, by which not only the Treasury fund, but also the revenues of the country could not fail ere long to be dangerously affected; representing to her the indecency of those who, profiting by the calamity with which France had so suddenly been stricken, were endeavouring to build up their own fortunes upon

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the misfortune of the nation, and who were aspiring to honours suited only to such as by their high birth and princely rank were imperatively called upon to uphold the dignity of the Crown. This argument was warmly seconded by Sully, Villeroy, and Jeannin; but Marie had already suffered so deeply from the arrogance and presumption of the nobles that she was anxious to purchase their support, and her own consequent tranquillity, however exorbitant might be the demands of those about her; and, accordingly, scarcely a day passed in which fresh claimants did not present themselves, while the original recipients remained still unsatisfied.[78]

It was not long ere the parties most interested in these donations became aware of the attempt made to limit the liberality of the Queen, and they did not affect to disguise their indignation at what they designated as an interference with their just claims. It appeared to have grown into an admitted opinion that all who had not revolted against her authority should be recompensed for their forbearance, as though it had been some signal service rendered to the state; and immediate deliberations were held as to the best measures to be adopted in order to silence the prudent counsels to which she could not finally fail to yield. As regarded the Duc de Mayenne, he was beyond the reach of the cabal; while Jeannin and Villeroy could oppose nothing save words; with Sully, however, the case was widely different; he was not only finance minister, but also keeper of the royal treasury, and his fearless and sturdy nature was so well understood and appreciated, that none who knew him doubted for an instant that should the Regent persevere in her generosity in opposition to his advice, he would not hesitate to adopt the most extreme measures to limit her power in the disposal of the public funds.

Sully, meanwhile, like a generous adversary, had not only endeavoured to restrain the liberality of the Queen, but had even ventured to expostulate with many of the applicants upon the ruinous extravagance of their demands; a proceeding which was resented by several of the great nobles, and by none more deeply than the Prince de Conde, who was upheld in his pretensions by his adherents, all of whom alleged that as the royal treasury was daily suffering diminution, and must soon become entirely exhausted, he had a right to claim, as first Prince of the Blood, the largest portion of its contents after their Majesties. They also reminded him of the offices and honours of which he had been despoiled by the late King, when he would not consent to retain them as the price of his disgrace; and, finally, they bade him not to lose sight of the fact that liberal as the Queen-Regent might have appeared on his return to France, he did not yet possess the revenues necessary to maintain his dignity as the first subject in the realm. M. de Conde was haughty and ambitious, and he consequently lent a willing ear to these representations; nor was it long ere he became equally convinced that his power was balanced by that of Sully; that a Bourbon was measured with a Bethune; a Prince of the Blood with a *parvenu* minister; and that such must continue to be the case so long as he permitted money to be poised against influence.

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The effect of these insidious counsels soon made itself apparent in the altered manner of the Prince towards the man whom he had thus been taught to consider as the enemy of his greatness; for although he endeavoured to conceal his growing dislike, his nature was too frank, and moreover too impetuous, to second his policy; and Sully, on his side, was far too quick-sighted to be easily duped on so important a matter. The resolution of the Duke was therefore instantly formed; eager as he had been for office under the late King, he had, at the death of that monarch, ceased to feel or to exhibit the same energy. He already saw many of the favourite projects of Henry negatived; much of his advice disregarded; and as he looked into the future he taught himself to believe that he contemplated only a long vista of national decline and personal disappointment. While he had preserved the confidence and affection of his sovereign, he had held popularity lightly, too lightly it may be, for he was conscious of his strength, and scorned to seek for support where he believed that he ought only to afford it; but the knife of Ravaillac had changed the whole tenor of his existence: he saw that he was regarded with suspicion and distrust by those who envied the greatness which he had achieved; that however the Queen might veil her real feelings in the garb of esteem and kindness, she shrank from the uncompromising frankness of his disapproval, and the resolute straightforwardness of his remonstrances; that his desire to economize the resources of the country rendered him obnoxious to the greedy courtiers; and that his past favour tended to inspire jealousy and misgiving in those with whom he was now called upon to act. He was, moreover, no longer young; his children were honourably established; and, whatever it may have accorded with the policy of his enemies to assume, there can be no doubt that M. de Sully was perfectly sincere in the desire which he at this period expressed to retire from the cares and responsibilities of office to the comfort and tranquillity of private life. That such a resolution was most unpalatable to the Duchess is equally certain; but Sully nevertheless persisted in his intention, and even announced his proposed resignation to the Regent, entreating at the same time that she would not oppose the measure.

The moment was one of extreme difficulty for Marie. On all sides she was pursued by complaints of the finance minister, whose want of deference wounded the pride of the Princes, while the ministers reproached him with an undue assertion of authority, and the nobles murmured at his interference in matters unconnected with his official character. The Marquis d’Ancre and his wife were, moreover, among the most bitter of his enemies, and at this precise period their influence was all-sufficient with the Queen, who had so accustomed herself to be guided by their advice, and led by their prejudices, that they had obtained a predominance

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over her mind which invested them with a factitious power against which few ventured to contend. She endeavoured, nevertheless, to temporize, for she was aware of the absolute necessity of securing the services of Sully until he could be satisfactorily replaced; and although there were not wanting many about her who would readily have undertaken to supersede him in his ministry, Marie herself doubted that, wherever her selection of a successor might be made, its duties would be as efficiently fulfilled. She was, moreover, at that particular time earnestly occupied with the preparations necessary for the coronation of her son, and the retirement of Sully could not fail to involve her in embarrassment and difficulty; she consequently sought to conciliate the veteran minister, expressed her resentment at the annoyances of which he complained, declared her perfect satisfaction with everything that he had done since the recognition of her regency, and finally entreated him to take time and to reflect calmly upon the subject before he pressed her to accede to his request.

Sully complied with her wishes, but he did so without the slightest feeling of exultation. He was convinced that his favour was undermined and his removal from office already determined, and he accordingly experienced no sensation of self-gratulation at the expressed reluctance of the Queen to deprive herself of the oldest and ablest servant of her late consort. He was, perhaps, proud of being so acknowledged, but he was also aware that what he had been to the murdered King he could never hope to become to the Regent, who had already suffered herself to be governed by greedy sycophants and ambitious favourites.

The most important subject which occupied the Council at the commencement of the Regency was the question of the expediency or non-expediency of pursuing the design of the late King relative to the duchies of Juliers and Cleves. During the time which had elapsed since the levy of the French troops the several pretenders to the succession had not been idle, and hostile measures had already been adopted. The Catholic Princes of Germany were opposed to the claims of the Protestant party, the Dutch and the Spaniards siding with the former and the English with the latter; several towns had already been taken by each faction, and the virulence displayed on both sides threatened the infraction of the truce with Flanders, if not a universal war throughout Christendom. Nevertheless, the general voice was against any interference on the part of France, the ministers being anxious to avoid an outlay which under the then circumstances of the kingdom they deemed alike useless and impolitic, while the nobles, fearing to lose the advantages which each promised himself by confining the attention of the Queen to the internal economy of the state, came to the same decision. Sillery alone combated this resolution, declaring that as the protection of the Princes who had appealed to him for aid had been one of the last projects of the late King, his will should be held sacred and his intentions fully carried out.

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To this declaration, which produced an evident effect upon the Regent, Sully replied by asserting that in order to have done this effectually, and with the dignity worthy of a great nation, the French troops should long ago have taken the field; whereas they had been suffered to remain so long inactive that their interference was no longer required, and could only be regarded by all parties as superfluous, the Prince of Orange having so skilfully invested the city of Juliers that it would be impossible for the enemy to make any effectual resistance; while Austria remained perfectly inactive, evidently considering the struggle at an end.[79] The argument of the Chancellor had, however, decided the Queen, who exclaimed vehemently: "Say no more; I will never abandon the allies of the French Crown; and you have now, gentlemen, only to decide upon what general it will be expedient to confer the command of the campaign." [80]

The Duc de Bouillon, on ascertaining the decision of the Regent, immediately advanced his claim. He had already become weary of the Court, and he was, moreover, anxious to obtain some employment which might form an honourable pretext for his departure before the approaching coronation of the King, at which he could not assist owing to his religious principles. This difference of faith, however, determined the Council to decline his services, his ambition and spirit of intrigue being so notorious as to render it inexpedient to entrust him with a command of so much importance, and one which must, moreover, bring him into constant contact with his co-religionists; a refusal by which he was so much mortified that he made immediate preparations for retiring to Sedan.[81] The choice of the Council ultimately fell upon the Marechal de la Chatre,[82] who was appointed chief and lieutenant-general of the King's army, consisting of twelve thousand infantry and two thousand horse.

The brave old soldier was not, however, fated on this occasion to add to his well-earned laurels, the words of Sully having been verified to the letter. Juliers was invested in the beginning of August, and on the 18th of the same month, when the French troops arrived before the city, the Prince of Orange had already made himself master of the fortress; and although the Imperial general gallantly persisted in his defence, he found himself at its close compelled to capitulate, being no longer able to resist the cannonade of the enemy, who had effected an irreparable breach in one of the walls, by which they poured an unceasing fire into the streets of the town.

The capitulation was signed on the 1st of September, and executed on the morrow, after which M. de la Chatre and his forces returned to France, and the different Princes who had been engaged in the campaign retired to their several states.[83]

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Meanwhile the Court of Paris was rapidly becoming a scene of anarchy and confusion. The Prince de Conti and the Comte de Soissons were alike candidates for the government of Normandy, which the Regent, from its importance and the physical disqualifications of the Prince, conferred, despite the solicitations of Madame de Conti, upon M. de Soissons; and she had no sooner come to this decision than the two Princes were at open feud, supported by their several partisans, and the streets of the capital were the theatre of constant violence and uproar. The Duc d'Epernon, who was the open ally of the Count, on his side supported M. de Soissons in order to counterbalance the influence of the Prince de Conti and the Guises; an unfortunate circumstance for Marie, who had so unguardedly betrayed her gratitude for his prompt and zealous services at the first moment of her affliction, that the vain and ambitious Duke had profited by the circumstance to influence her opinions and measures so seriously as to draw down the most malicious suspicions of their mutual position, suspicions to which the antecedents of M. d'Epernon unhappily lent only too much probability.[84]

In addition to this open and threatening misunderstanding between two of the first Princes of the Blood, a new danger was created by the imprudence of the same noble, who, presuming upon his newly-acquired importance, uttered the most violent and menacing expressions against the Protestants, declaring that they had been tolerated too long, and that it would soon become necessary to reduce them to a proper sense of their insignificance; an opinion which he had no sooner uttered than the Marquis d'Ancre in his turn assured the Regent that if she desired to secure a happy and prosperous reign to her son, she had no alternative but to forbid the exercise of the reformed religion, to whose adherents the late King had owed his death.[85]

Conscious of the cabal which was organizing against them, and having been apprised that M. d'Epernon had doubled the number of his guards, the Ducs de Bouillon, de Guise, and de Sully adopted similar precautions, and even kept horses ready saddled in their stables in order to escape upon the instant should they be threatened with violence. The minor nobility followed the example of their superiors, and soon every hotel inhabited by men of rank resembled a fortress, while the streets resounded with the clashing of arms and the trampling of horses, to the perpetual terror of the citizens.

Coupled with these purely personal feuds others were generated of an official nature, no less subversive of public tranquillity. M. de Villeroy had purchased the government of Lyons from the Duc de Vendome, for his son the Comte d'Alincourt, having at the same time disposed of the appointment of Lieutenant of the King previously held by the Count, and this arrangement was no sooner concluded than he resolved to solicit from the Queen a force of three hundred

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Swiss Guards to garrison the city; a demand in which he succeeded in interesting Concini, and to which he consequently anticipated no opposition on her part. He was correct in his conclusion, but the sole consent of the Regent did not suffice upon so important a question, which it was necessary to submit to the consideration of the Council, where it was accordingly mooted. Sully, although previously solicited by the Queen to support the proposal, resolutely refused to do so, alleging that he would never consent to see the King subjected to an outlay of twelve hundred thousand livres in order to enable M. d'Alincourt to pocket one hundred thousand, and that Lyons, by the treaty concluded with the Duke of Savoy, had ceased to be a frontier town, and consequently required no garrison. This reply, which made considerable impression upon Marie, she repeated to M. de Villeroy, who retorted, loud enough to be heard by a friend of Sully, that he was aware the Spaniards and Savoyards were no longer to be feared, and that it was consequently not against them that he was anxious to secure the city of Lyons, but that the real enemies whom she had to fear were the Huguenots, who were at that moment better situated, more prepared, and probably also more inclined to oppose her authority than they had ever before been. This intemperate and ill-judged speech was instantly reported to Sully, who, rising indignantly from his seat, approached the Queen and audibly informed her that he considered it his duty to remark that, as in order to render her favourable to the demand of his son, M. de Villeroy had not scrupled to malign the Protestants, but had designated them as more dangerous enemies to herself and to the state than those who were labouring to further the interests of Spain, he only entreated her to afford to his denial the same weight as that which she attached to the assertion of the State Secretary, and by placing both upon the same footing exclude them equally from the Council, to which neither could any longer advance a claim for admittance. To this bold and public accusation M. de Villeroy attempted no reply, but thenceforward the two ministers no longer maintained even a semblance of amity.[86]

Hitherto M. de Conde had taken no part in the dissensions which were going on about him, but on the night of the 10th of July he in his turn received a warning to be upon his guard, and in consequence he caused a strong patrol to keep watch on all sides of his palace. Not an hour passed in which the gallop of a party of horsemen was not heard clattering over the rough and ill-paved streets. At midnight the Marquis d'Ancre waited upon the Prince to convey to him an invitation from the Regent to take up his abode in the Louvre should he not consider himself safe in his own house, but M. de Conde coldly declined to avail himself of the offer, alleging that the manner in which her Majesty had replied on the previous day, when he had informed her of his having been assured

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of her intention to cause his arrest, had given him no encouragement to become her guest; an answer which by no means tended to relieve the increasing apprehensions of the Queen, who felt the necessity of appeasing at any sacrifice the discontent of the Princes. She accordingly desired the presence of M. de Conde at the Louvre, a summons which he reluctantly obeyed; and it was long before the urbanity of her welcome assured him of the sincerity with which she entreated him to endeavour in her name to conciliate the Prince de Conti, who, on the refusal of the coveted government, had quitted Paris in disgust, and to induce his return to the Court.

It was not the fashion of that period even for Princes of the Blood to make concessions whence they derived no personal benefit, and it was accordingly without any compunction that M. de Conde declared the terms upon which he would undertake the proposed mission. He was to receive as recompense for his condescension the sum of fifty thousand crowns, with the first government which should become vacant, and was authorized to promise two hundred thousand crowns to the Duc de Guise for the payment of his debts, as well as several lesser sums to others of the Princes, on condition that they should return to their allegiance and forego their personal animosities.

These preliminary arrangements concluded, M. de Conde hastened to represent to his uncle the necessity of his immediate return to Paris before the departure of the King for Rheims, whither he was about to proceed for his coronation; and the Prince de Conti having with considerable difficulty been induced to comply with his request, the princely relatives entered the capital with so numerous a retinue of nobles and gentlemen that it excited general remark.

On the following day the two Princes, similarly attended, and accompanied by the Duc de Guise and M. de Joinville, proceeded to the Parliament, where they took their accustomed seats; but neither M. de Soissons nor the Duc d’Epernon were present, the first pretexting indisposition and the second declining to adduce any reason for his absence.[87]

On the 27th the Marquis d’Ancre was admitted into the Council of State, and took the customary oaths at the Louvre; but he received few congratulations on this new honour, the arrogance in which he indulged tending to disgust the higher nobles, and to alarm those who had reason to deprecate his daily-increasing influence.

Both M. de Bouillon and the Duc de Sully, professing the reformed religion, were ineligible to officiate at the coronation of the sovereign, and they accordingly received the royal permission to absent themselves, by which both hastened to profit, but from very different motives. Sully, who was well aware that he must either voluntarily resign his governmental dignities or submit to see them wrenched from him, proceeded to his

estate at Montrond with the firm intention of never returning to the capital; a resolve which he

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was, however, subsequently induced to forego by the entreaty of the Queen that he would continue to afford to her son the same good service as he had done to the late King his father, coupled with assurances of her firm confidence in his zeal and fidelity; while Bouillon prepared to resume his attempts to reconcile the Princes, by which means he hoped to overthrow the Regency and to secure to himself a prominent position in the government of the kingdom. This effort was, however, destined to fail, too many interests adverse to any such coalition being involved in the question to enable him to carry out his project; and he accordingly departed for Sedan, where he forthwith began to excite the Huguenots to discontent, representing that they would never have a more favourable opportunity for enforcing their rights than at a moment when the nation was shaken to its centre by the assassination of the King, and during the minority of his successor. This argument produced, as he had anticipated, a powerful effect upon the minds of his co-religionists, to whom he also expatiated on the repugnance with which the Regent conferred place or power upon a Protestant, whatever might be his personal merit. In conclusion he urged them to demand a general assembly, a proposition to which they readily acceded, and with the greater willingness that the time allowed to them for this purpose by the edict of 1597 would expire at the close of the year.[88]

Thus the weight of government pressed heavily upon Marie both from within and without; and meanwhile the young King began to betray symptoms of that suspicious and saturnine temper by which he was afterwards so unhappily distinguished. On one occasion when all the efforts of Pere Cotton, his confessor, had failed to overcome his gloom and reserve, the priest inquired in a tone of interest the nature of the annoyance by which he was thus oppressed. “I shall not tell you,” was the resolute reply; “for you will immediately write to Spain to inform them.”

The confessor, whose intimate connection with the ministers of Philip had rendered him obnoxious to the French people, was startled by this unexpected answer, and immediately complained to the Queen of the affront that had been offered to him; upon which Marie summoned the offender, and insisted upon his immediately informing her who had dared to suggest such an idea, when with considerable reluctance the boy-King stated that his nurse had warned him to be cautious because the reverend father was in correspondence with that country.

“Since she permits herself to play the politician,” said the Queen, “she shall be dismissed.”

“Be it so,” retorted the young Prince; “but,” turning towards the Jesuit, “I shall remember that it was his work, and I shall not always be a child.”

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A short time subsequently, while playing with a favourite fawn, he hid himself among the shrubs in the gardens of the Tuileries, and remained so long in his concealment that his attendants became alarmed and were compelled to inform the Queen that although they had sought the King everywhere, to entreat him to return, they could not ascertain where he had gone. Marie in great alarm caused all around her to join in the search, while she remained at one of the windows in a state of agonizing anxiety. At length the retreat of the fugitive was found, and M. de Souvre threatened him with the rod.

“As you please,” he said sullenly; “but if, in order to satisfy the Queen, you lay a hand upon me to-day, I will keep up appearances with you, but I will never forget it.” [89]

Only a few days subsequently (2nd of October) Louis XIII, attended by his Court, proceeded to Rheims for his coronation, the royal ornaments used upon such occasions having been removed from St. Denis to that city. The Cardinal de Joyeuse performed the ceremony, the archiepiscopal chair being vacant at the time; and the Princes de Conde and de Conti, the Comte de Soissons, the Ducs de Nevers, d’Elboeuf,[90] and d’Epernon represented the ancient Dukes of Burgundy, Normandy, and Aquitaine, and the Counts of Toulouse, Flanders, and Champagne.

[Illustration: LOUIS XIII. KING OF FRANCE.]

On the morrow the young sovereign was invested with the Order of the Holy Ghost, which he immediately afterwards conferred upon the Prince de Conde, and on Tuesday the 19th he stood sponsor for the child of the Baron de Tour; after which he proceeded to St. Marcou, where he touched a number of persons suffering under the loathsome disease which it was the superstition of the age to believe could be removed by contact with the royal hand.

On the 30th of the month the Court returned to Paris, and was met at the Porte St. Antoine by the civic authorities, at the head of two hundred mounted citizens, amid a cannonade from the Bastille, and ceaseless flourishes of trumpets and hautboys. The Regent had, however, preceded her son to the city, and stood in a balcony at the house of Zamet to see him pass, where he no sooner perceived her than he withdrew his plumed cap, which he did not resume until having halted beneath the window he had saluted her with a profound bow. He then proceeded by torchlight to the Louvre, accompanied throughout his progress by the same acclamations of loyalty and enthusiasm as had greeted the ears of his dead father only a few months previously.

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It had been a great relief to Marie de Medicis that before the departure of the Court for Rheims a reconciliation had been effected between the Prince de Conde and the Comte de Soissons; but her tranquillity was not destined to last, the attendants of the Cardinal de Joyeuse and those of the Marquis d'Ancre having had a violent altercation during the journey on the subject of the accommodation provided for their respective employers; and this quarrel was no sooner appeased than the new-made Marquis originated another with the Duc de Bellegarde, alleging that as First Lord of the Bedchamber he had a right to take precedence of the Duke, who was Grand Equerry of France. M. de Bellegarde, irritated by this presumption, complained loudly of the affront, and was supported in his indignation by the Duc d'Epernon and by the Comte de Soissons, who was becoming weary of the Italian adventurer.

Even the Queen herself could neither support nor justify such undue pretensions; and M. d'Ancre, reluctantly convinced that he had on this occasion swooped at too high a quarry, swallowed his mortification as best he might, and endeavoured to redeem his error; an attempt in which he was seconded by the Queen, in obedience to whose wishes M. le Grand somewhat contemptuously consented to forego any further demonstration of his resentment; while the Duc d'Epernon agreed, with even more facility, to follow his example. The Comte de Soissons was not, however, so easily to be appeased; and he accordingly, with the ever-wakeful policy for which he was proverbial, made his reconciliation with the mortified Marquis conditional upon his promise of assistance in his two darling projects of obtaining the hand of the heiress of Montpensier for his son the Comte d'Enghien, and of accomplishing the ruin of the Duc de Sully.

At this crisis the finance minister could ill afford to see a new antagonist enter the lists against him, surrounded as he already was by enemies eager for his overthrow. The Prince de Conde had neither forgotten nor forgiven his advice to Henri IV to order his arrest when he fled to Flanders to protect the honour of his wife; the Duc de Bouillon was jealous of his interest with the Huguenot party; while the Chancellor, Villeroy, and Jeannin were leagued against him, in order to support their own authority. To Concini, moreover, his very name was odious, and consequently the new adversary who had thus been evoked against him was the most dangerous of all, inasmuch as he was the most subtle and vindictive, and also because he possessed the ear of the Queen, who had so long accustomed herself to support him against what he saw fit to entitle the oppression of the French nobles, that she had ceased to question the validity of his accusations. The religion of Sully also tended to indispose the Queen towards him. Herself a firm adherent of the Church of Rome, she looked with an eye of suspicion upon a minister whose faith differed from her own; and this circumstance operated

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powerfully in adding weight to the accusations of his enemies. The Prince de Conde alone for a time refused to sanction the efforts which were made to ensure his political ruin, but he was in his turn eventually enlisted in the cause by the prospect which was held out to him of sharing in the profits resulting from the confiscation of the minister's public property; his retirement from office necessarily involving his resignation of all the lucrative appointments which he held under the Government.[91]

It was at this precise moment that the Huguenots petitioned the Regent for the general assembly, as advised by the Due de Bouillon; a circumstance which could not have failed to prove fatal to the interests of Sully had he still desired to retain office, as the comments of the anti-Protestant party by which she was surrounded, seconded by her own personal feelings, tended to exasperate Marie against all who professed the reformed faith. She consequently received the appeal with considerable asperity, declaring that it was impossible to calculate the demands which would be made upon the indulgence of the Crown, although there was no doubt that they would prove both unjust and extravagant; but being unable to refuse to confirm the provisions of the edict, she finally instructed the ministers to suggest delay as the best means of delivering herself for a time from the consequences of compliance.

In this attempt she, however, failed; the Duc de Bouillon being well aware that should the prescribed period be suffered to elapse without some pledge upon the part of the Government, the demand would be evaded by a declaration that the allotted time was past; and accordingly the Protestants persisted in their claim with so much pertinacity that the Regent found herself compelled to authorize their meeting at Saumur in the course of the ensuing year.

Under these circumstances it is scarcely matter of surprise that despite the opposition of the finance minister, M. de Villeroy succeeded in effecting the establishment of a garrison at Lyons; and the misunderstanding was shortly afterwards renewed between the two functionaries by a demand on the part of the State Secretary that the maintenance of the troops should be defrayed from the general receipts of the city. The Orientals have a proverb which says, "it is the last fig that breaks the camel's back," and thus it was with Sully. Exasperated by this new invasion of his authority, he lost his temper; and after declaring that the citizens of Lyons were at that moment as competent to protect themselves as they had ever been, and that it was consequently unreasonable to inflict so useless an outlay upon the King, he accused the Chancellor, who had favoured the pretensions of Villeroy, of leaguing with him to ruin the Crown; a denunciation which, as it equally affected all the other ministers who had espoused the same cause, sealed his own overthrow.[92]

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Satisfied of a fact so self-evident, Sully resolved no longer to breast the torrent of jealousy and hatred against which he found himself called upon to contend, but without further delay to resign at once the cares and dignities of office; a design which was vehemently opposed not only by his own family, but also by his co-religionists, the whole of whom, save only such of their leaders as had private reasons for seeking his dismissal, were keenly sensible of the loss which their cause must necessarily sustain from the want of his support. The Duke, however, firmly withstood all their expostulations; wearied and disgusted by the inefficiency of his endeavours to protect the interests of the sovereign against the encroachments of extortionate nobles, and the machinations of interested ministers, he felt no inclination to afford a new triumph to his enemies by awaiting a formal dismissal; and he accordingly took the necessary measures for disposing of his superintendence of the finances, and his government of the Bastille (the most coveted because the most profitable of his public offices), in order that he might be permitted in his retirement to retain the other dignities which he had purchased by a long life of labour and loyalty.[93]

While this important affair was in progress, the Duke paid a visit to M. de Rambure, during which he said with evident uneasiness: "The Bishop of Fenouillet was with me yesterday, and assured me that in the morning a secret council had been held at the residence of the Papal Nuncio, at which were present the Chancellor, the Marquis d'Ancre, Villeroy, the Bishop of Beziers, and the Duc d'Epernon; and that after a great deal of unseemly discourse, in which the memory of the late King was treated with disrespect and derision, it was decided that everything should be changed, that new alliances should be formed, new friendships encouraged, and new opinions promulgated. It was, moreover, arranged that a letter should be forthwith sent to the Pope, informing him that it was the intention of France to be guided in all things by his advice, while every guarantee should be given to the Duke of Savoy until the conclusion of a proposed alliance with Spain; and finally, that all persons adverse to this line of policy should be compelled to resign their places, especially those who professed the Protestant faith. Thus then, my good De Rambure," he added bitterly, "if I am wise I shall quietly dispose of my places under Government, making as much money of them as I can, purchase a fine estate, and retain the surplus, in order to meet such exigencies as may arise; for I foresee that all the faithful servants of the late King who may refuse to defer to the authority of the Marquis d'Ancre, will have enough upon their hands. As for me," he pursued vehemently, "I would rather die than degrade myself by the slightest concession to this wretched, low-born Italian, who is the greatest rascal of all those concerned in the murder of the King." "Which," adds Rambure for himself, "he truly is." [94]

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Every circumstance, moreover, conspired to strengthen the Duc de Sully in his resolution. He had, as we have shown, returned to the capital at the express invitation of the Regent; but he had no sooner arrived there than he discovered how little his tenure of office was really desired. As, however, both his public and private interests required his presence in Paris for a time, he considered it expedient to suppress his indignation, and to hasten his arrangements, in order to be at liberty to withdraw whenever he should be prepared to do so; and he had accordingly no sooner recovered from the fatigue of his journey than he proceeded to pay his respects to the King and his august mother.

On reaching the Louvre he was informed that Louis was at the Tuileries, where he would spend the morning, and that the Regent dined at the Hotel de Zamet; upon which the Duke determined to proceed thither, where he found her attended by the Duc de Villeroy, Bassompierre, M. and Madame d'Ancre, and the principal members of her household. As Sully was announced Marie uttered a gracious welcome, and ungloving her hand, presented it to him to kiss; which he had no sooner done than she assured him of her continued regard and requested that he would talk no more of retiring from the service of the King, whose youth and helplessness rendered the good offices of those who had enjoyed the confidence of his royal father doubly necessary to himself; and finally, despite all that had previously occurred, the Duke took his leave almost shaken in his belief that Marie had been induced to sanction his dismissal.

This illusion was, moreover, encouraged by the conduct of the courtiers, who had no sooner ascertained the nature of his reception by the Queen, than they flocked to the Arsenal to compliment him upon his return to Court; and Zamet took an opportunity of impressing upon him that he was indebted for the undisguised favour of Marie to the influence of the Marquis d'Ancre; who subsequently visited him in his turn, but so visibly with the intention of inducing him to uphold the extravagant pretensions which he was about to advance, that Sully did not disguise his disgust, and they separated mutually dissatisfied.

On the morrow the Duke proceeded, according to appointment, to the Louvre, where he was immediately admitted to the private closet of Marie; but he had scarcely crossed the threshold ere he became aware that his contention with Concini had induced a coldness on the part of the Regent, which she strove in vain to conceal. She, however, made no allusion to their interview, confining her complaints to the extortionate importunities of the great nobles, which she declared her resolution to resist; and, by referring them to the Council, cause them to be subjected to so rigorous an examination as must tend to their diminution. She then placed in the hands of the finance minister a list of the demands which had been made upon her, entreating him

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to assist her in opposing claims that would end, if satisfied, by ruining the interests alike of the King and of the nation; and she concluded by pledging her royal word that she would uphold the Duke in his opposition, as resolutely as ever he had been supported in his former measures by the deceased monarch. More and more bewildered by this apparent inconsistency, Sully respectfully took possession of the document, declaring his perfect willingness to serve both her Majesty and the state by every means in his power; and he then awaited her pleasure upon other matters of more public importance; but on all else Marie was silent, and the disappointed minister at length withdrew to examine the paper which had been delivered to him, and of which we will transcribe the principal contents as singularly illustrative of the venal state of the Court at that period.

The Prince de Conde demanded the captaincy of the fortress of Chateau-Trompette, the government of Blaye, and the principality of Orange as far as the bank of the Rhone; the Comte de Soissons solicited the captaincy of the old palace of Rouen, and the fortress of Caen, with the tax upon cloth, flax, and hemp, which he had previously endeavoured, as elsewhere stated, to obtain from Henri IV; the Duc de Lorraine requested payment in full of the whole sum specified in his treaty, although he had previously consented to accept two-thirds of the amount; the Duc de Guise demanded the royal assent to his marriage with Madame de Montpensier, the revocation of all the patent taxes in Provence and the port of Marseilles, and the liquidation of his debts; the Duc de Mayenne, who had warned the Regent to resist the extravagant pretensions of the Princes, also came forward with a demand for large sums independently of those insured to him by his treaty; the Duc d'Aiguillon[95] sought to obtain a donation of thirty thousand crowns, the governments of Bresse and the city of Bourg, together with the embassy to Spain, and enormous emoluments; the Prince de Joinville, so lately an exile from the Court, requested the government of Auvergne, or failing this, that of the first province which should become vacant; the Duc de Nevers asked for the entire proceeds of the tax upon salt produced in the Rethelois, with the governments of Mezieres and Sainte-Menehould; the Duc d'Epernon demanded the command of a corps of infantry, to be constantly kept in an efficient state, the survivorship of his governments for his son, and that fortifications should be formed at Angouleme and Saintes, with three or four other equally important concessions; the Duc de Bouillon sought the liquidation of some alleged debts, the proceeds of the excise, and salt duties, and all other imposts levied in the viscounty of Turenne, the arrears of pay due to his garrisons, the liquidation of all pensions which had been discontinued during his exile, with the royal assent to a general assembly of the Protestants; the Chancellor followed with a

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demand of all the fees appertaining to the lesser seals, that the salary of his office should be doubled, and that he should have letters of nobility in Normandy. All the officers of the Crown sought an increase of twenty-four thousand livres to their several pensions; members of the Council, augmented emoluments; governors of provinces, the revenues of these provinces which had hitherto reverted to the Crown; municipal companies, exemptions and privileges previously unthought of; and finally, Concini, who had arrived in the French capital only a few years previously comparatively destitute, set forth his requirements to be these—the *baton* of Marshal of France, the governments of Bourg, Dieppe, and Pont-de-l'Arche, the proceeds of the salt duties of Languedoc, and those of the reduction accorded at Moissets and Feydant.

Such, and much more of the same description, were the contents of the documents upon which the wrath of Sully scarcely permitted him to dwell with patience. It was a chaos whence he dreaded even to attempt to draw the elements of order, feeling as he did that every concession made to one of the parties must necessarily evoke the jealousy and indignation of another, while it was utterly impossible, and would, moreover, be dangerously impolitic in any case, to satisfy the pretensions of all. The enormous sums produced by the imposts, whose transfer from the Crown to individuals was thus unblushingly demanded, would have rendered the Princes to whom they might be granted more wealthy than many of the petty sovereigns of Europe; while the governments and provinces sought to be obtained by others must inevitably make them independent of the King, and thus place the subjects who should have been the support of the throne in direct rivalry with their sovereign. The finance minister was aghast; and the more earnestly he considered the subject, the more he became convinced that there was no alternative save to negative all these egregious claims *en masse*; a conviction which satisfied him that by fearlessly adopting this course, his tenure of office would, had he still desired to contend with the cabal which had already been formed against him, become utterly impossible.

Nevertheless Sully did not shrink from what he considered an imperative duty; and accordingly he resolved no longer to trust the lip-deep assurances by which he had been beguiled since his return to Court, but immediately to declare his resignation of office, and to follow it up by the most resolute and determined opposition.[96]

He had no sooner, therefore, irrevocably arrived at this decision, than he addressed a letter to the Regent, in which he requested her permission to retire from the Government; and, satisfied that his suit must prove successful, he calmly awaited her reply. Meanwhile, resolved that no reproach should be cast upon him after his departure, he demanded an audience of the King, in order to explain to him the exact

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state of the royal treasury, and the manner in which its contents had been diminished since the demise of his royal father; but as a private interview with a mere child would not have satisfactorily sufficed to accomplish this object, Sully produced his papers before all the members of the royal household; and while engaged in the necessary explanation, he remarked that the antiquated fashion of his costume, which he had not changed for years, had excited the hilarity of the younger courtiers. He suddenly paused, and after glancing coldly round the giddy circle, looked fixedly at the young monarch, and said with a dignity which chased in an instant every inclination to mirth in the bystanders: "Sire, I am too old to change my habits with every passing wind. When the late King, your father of glorious memory, did me the honour of conferring with me upon state affairs, he was in the habit of previously clearing the apartment of all buffoons and mountebanks." [97]

To the Princes of the Blood, the ministers of state, and the nobles of the Court, Sully that day added to the list of his enemies the boy-courtiers of the royal circle.

Thus in heart-burning and uncertainty closed the year which had commenced with the assassination of the King. An arrogant and unruly aristocracy, a divided and jealous ministry, and a harassed and discontented population were its bitter fruits.

FOOTNOTES:

[73] Richelieu, *La Mere et le Fils*, vol. i. p. 91.

[74] *Mercure Francais*, 1610, p. 505.

[75] L'Etoile, vol. iv. pp. 191, 192.

[76] Mezeray, vol. xi. pp. 10, 11. D'Estrees, *Mem*. p. 379.

[77] *Mercure Francais*, 1610, pp. 510, 511.

[78] Matthieu, *Hist, des Derniers Troubles*, book iii. p. 455.

[79] Sully, *Mem*. vol. viii. pp. 81-84.

[80] *Mercure Francais*, 1610, p. 505.

[81] Mezeray, vol. xi. p. 11. L'Etoile, on the contrary (vol. iv. p. 132), asserts that the command was offered to Bouillon, but that he wisely declined it.

[82] Claude de la Chatre was originally one of the pages of the Duc de Montmorency, who continued to protect him throughout his whole career. He distinguished himself in several battles and sieges, and having embraced the party of the League possessed himself of Berry, which he subsequently surrendered to Henri IV. At the period of his death, which occurred on the 18th of December 1614, at the advanced age of seventy-eight years, he was Marshal of France, Knight of the King's Orders, and Governor of Berry and Orleans.

[83] Mezeray, vol. xi. p. 13.

[84] L'Etoile, vol. iv. p. 146.

[85] L'Etoile, vol. iv. p. 147.

[86] Sully, *Mem*. vol. viii. pp. 121-124.

[87] L'Etoile, vol. iv. pp. 183, 184.

[88] Richelieu, *Hist, de la Mere et du Fils*, vol. i. p. 109.

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[89] L'Etoile, vol. iv. pp. 192, 193.

[90] Charles de Lorraine, Duc d'Elboeuf, was the grandson of Rene, Marquis d'Elboeuf, the seventh son of Claude, Duc de Guise. He married Catherine Henriette, the daughter of Henri IV and *La belle Gabrielle*, and was involved in the intrigues of the Court during the ministries both of Richelieu and Mazarin. His posterity terminated in his grandson, Emmanuel-Maurice, who died in 1763, after having served the Emperor in Naples. During his sojourn in Italy the Duc Emmanuel built a superb palace at Portici; and it is worthy of remark that it was while searching for ancient marbles to decorate that edifice that the ruins of Herculaneum were discovered. The subject of the note died in 1657.

[91] It may not be uninteresting to our readers to learn the honours and offices to which Sully had attained at the death of Henri IV. Here follow his titles: Maximilien de Bethune, Knight, Duc de Henrichemont and Boisbelle; Marquis de Rosny; Comte de Dourdan; Sire d'Orval, Montrond, and St. Amand; Baron d'Espineuil, Bruyeres, le Chatel, Villebon, la Chapelle, Novion, Bagny, and Boutin; King's Counsel in all the royal councils; Captain-Lieutenant of two hundred ordnance men-at arms; Grand Master and Captain-General of the Artillery; Grand Overseer of the highways of France; Superintendent of Finance, and of the royal fortifications and buildings; Governor and Lieutenant-General of his Majesty in Poitou, Chateleraudois, and Loudunois; Governor of Mantes and Gergeau; and Captain of the Bastille.

[92] Richelieu, *Hist. de la Mere et du Fils*, vol. i. pp. 109-113.

[93] Sully, *Mem*, vol. viii. pp. 125-129.

[94] Rambure, MS. *Memoires*, vol. vi. pp. 78, 79.

[95] Henri de Lorraine, Duc d'Aiguillon, peer of France, elder son of the Duc de Mayenne.

[96] Sully, *Mem*, vol. viii. pp. 109-118.

[97] Bonnechose, vol. i. p. 450.

CHAPTER III

1611

A cold correspondence—Increasing influence of the Marquis d'Ancre— Animosity between the Duc d'Epernon and Concini—Disunion of the Princes de Guise and de Lorraine—Renewed dissensions between M. de Bellegarde and the Marquis d'Ancre—-They are reconciled by the Comte de Soissons—Marriage of the Duc de Guise—-

Jealousy of M. de Soissons —Quarrel between the Prince de Conti and the Comte de Soissons— Mission of the Duc de Guise—A new rupture—Intervention of the Duc de Mayenne—Alarm of the Regent—Sully leaves Paris—Madame de Sully—Retirement of M. de Thou—Unpopularity of the Duc d'Epernon —Marie de Medicis endeavours to reconcile the Princes—The royal closet—The Protestants prepare for the General Assembly—The Prince de Conde retires to Guienne—The Duc d'Epernon is charged to watch his movements—Arrogance of Concini—Concini seeks to marry his daughter to a son of the Comte de Soissons—Indignation

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of the Prince—Cunning of Concini—Bouillon returns to Court—He offers his services to the Regent at the General Assembly—He proceeds to Saumur—He desires to be appointed President of the Assembly—He is rejected in favour of M. du Plessis-Mornay —He attributes his defeat to Sully—He resolves to conciliate the ex-Minister of Finance —Meeting of the Assembly—The Court determines to dissolve the meeting—Prudence of Du Plessis-Mornay —Death of M. de Crequy—The Marquis d'Ancre succeeds to the government of Amiens—His insolent disregard of the royal prerogative—Indignation of the ministers—The Regent resents his impertinence—She refuses to receive Madame d'Ancre—Intrigues of the Princesse de Conti—The favourites forgiven—Marie de Medicis issues several salutary edicts—Court festivities—The Duchesse de Lorraine arrives at Fontainebleau—Death of the Duc de Mayenne—Death of the Queen of Spain —The Duchesse de Lorraine claims the hand of Louis XIII for her daughter—Death of the Duc d'Orleans—Departure of the Duchesse de Lorraine—Rival claims—M. de Breves appointed preceptor to the Duc d'Anjou—The Comte de Soissons applies for the duchy of Alencon—Rebuke of the Regent—A hunting-party—A new cabal—Recall of the Marechal de Lesdiguieres—Marie de Medicis purchases the Hotel de Luxembourg.

The first political event worthy of record which occurred in France at the commencement of the year 1611 was the retirement of the Duc de Sully; who, on the 24th of January, received the reply of the Regent to the letter in which he had solicited her permission to withdraw from the Government. It contained a faintly-expressed regret at the resolution he had taken; "but that," as he himself says, "was merely for form's sake;" [98] and the accuracy of his judgment is evidenced by the fact that only two days after he had again written to declare that his determination was unalterable, the Duc de Bouillon delivered to him the official warrants by which he was discharged from his duties of Superintendent of Finance, and Captain of the Bastille. These were worded in the most flattering terms; and he was guaranteed against all inquiry or annoyance upon either subject from the day in which he resigned his tenure of office. A third warrant was, moreover, added, by which, in consideration of his past services, the Queen bestowed upon him the sum of three hundred thousand livres; and a few days subsequently he received letters from the King and the Regent authorizing him to transfer the command of the Bastille to M. de Chateauvieux;[99] which he had no sooner done than he turned all his attention to the final arrangement of his public accounts, in order that he might, with as little delay as possible, be enabled to quit the capital.[100]

The transfer of the Bastille was shortly afterwards followed by that of the ministry of finance, which was placed under the joint direction of M. de Chateauneuf[101] and the Presidents de Thou and de Jeannin; the latter of whom was, however, invested with the rank of Comptroller-General, which gave him the entire management of the public funds, to the exclusion of his colleagues, who were in consequence only eligible to assist in the official distribution of the public monies. The charge of Grand Master of the

Artillery, which was resigned with the command of the Bastille by Sully, the Regent retained in her own hands.[102]

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From that time the Marquis d'Ancre became pre-eminent at Court; and not only the ministers, but even the Princes of the Blood themselves, looked with distrust upon his power over the Queen. Between the Italian favourite and the Duc d'Epernon especially, a feeling of hatred had grown up, which, although as yet veiled by the policy for which each was so distinguished, only awaited a fitting opportunity to reveal itself on both sides; and the struggle for power was not the less resolute because it was carried on amid smiles and courtesies. Meanwhile, also, the Princes de Guise and de Lorraine evinced symptoms of disunion, which threatened the most serious consequences; and amid all this chaos of conflicting interests and passions the royal authority was treated with contempt, and Marie began to tremble for the stability of her regency.[103]

Early in the month Concini entered upon his duties as First Lord of the Bedchamber, and had a serious misunderstanding with the Duc de Bellegarde, who refused to allow him to take possession of the apartments in the Louvre set aside for the person holding that rank during the year in which he was on duty, on the pretext that the Marquise his wife being already lodged in the palace, he had no right to claim any further accommodation. Concini insisted on the privilege of his office, upon which M. le Grand, to whom he had become hateful from his arrogance and pretension, retorted in a manner which excited his temper; and high and bitter words were exchanged that threatened the most serious results, when the Italian, suddenly recollecting that he was exasperating by his violence an enemy too powerful for him to contend against without support, declared that he would pursue the quarrel no further in person, but would place his honour in the hands of the Comte de Soissons, and abide by his decision. Against such a determination M. de Bellegarde had, of course, nothing to urge; and the Italian forthwith requested the Marquis de Coeuvres, in whom M. de Soissons had great confidence, to represent the affair to that Prince, and to assure him that he would be entirely governed by his advice.

The Duc d'Epernon, delighted to find that Concini had made a new enemy, strenuously exerted himself to induce M. le Grand to maintain his ground, a counsel which the latter was well disposed to follow; but the Comte de Soissons, who was anxious to secure the influence of the Italian Marquis that he might the more readily effect the marriage of his son, eagerly embraced so favourable an opportunity of purchasing his good offices; and consequently represented in stringent terms to his opponent the utter impracticability of refusing to concede to M. d'Ancre the same consideration and indulgence which had been enjoyed by his predecessors in office, together with the danger that he personally incurred by so gratuitously offending an individual protected by the Regent. Whatever additional arguments he may have advanced, it is impossible to decide; suffice it that the Duke yielded, the quarrel was terminated, and Concini established in the coveted apartments; at which his gratification was so unmeasured that he pledged himself to M. de Soissons to induce the ministers to consent to the union of the Comte d'Enghien with the heiress of Montpensier, as well as to exert himself in preventing the marriage of the Duc de Guise and the Duchess her mother.[104]

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On the 5th of January the marriage of the Duc de Guise and the Duchesse de Montpensier was, however, celebrated by the Cardinal de Joyeuse at the early hour of four in the morning, in the chapel attached to the hotel of the lady; an arrangement which was in all probability caused by the opposition made to this alliance by the Comte de Soissons, who, still anticipating a union between his son and the daughter of the Duchess, was apprehensive that Madame de Montpensier might be induced to enrich the family of which she thus became a member with no inconsiderable portion of the wealth which must otherwise form part of the property of the young heiress.

Only three days subsequently, while the Court were still occupied with the festivities which took place on the occasion, the Prince de Conti and his brother M. de Soissons, who was on his way to the Louvre, unfortunately met in a narrow street leading to the Cross of Trahoir, when it had become so dark that it was impossible to distinguish the appointments or liveries of either equipage; and the carriages were no sooner entangled than the coachman of the Comte, ignorant of the rank of his opponent, compelled the servants of the Prince to make way, an insult which he resented with a bitterness that induced him to refuse the apology subsequently proffered by his brother.[105]

Alarmed by this new feud, the Queen requested the Duc de Guise to see the Prince de Conti, and to beseech him to effect a reconciliation with his turbulent brother, a mission which the young Duke cheerfully undertook; but it unfortunately happened that in order to reach the Abbey of St. Germain, where M. de Conti was then residing, it was necessary for him to pass beside the Hotel de Soissons, which he accordingly did, followed by a retinue of thirty horsemen. This circumstance was construed into a premeditated insult by the Count, who immediately assembled his friends, and informed them that he had been braved in his own house by the Duc de Guise; whose adherents had no sooner ascertained that there was an assemblage hostile to his interests forming at the Hotel de Soissons, than they in their turn flocked in such numbers to afford him their support that in a short time more than a thousand nobles were collected under his roof.

When this fact was communicated to M. de Soissons he sent to request that the Prince de Conde would accompany him to the Louvre, to demand from the Regent that she should afford them satisfaction for the insolence of the Duc de Guise; who, when summoned to explain his motives for inflicting an affront upon the Count, simply and calmly replied that he had never sought to insult M. de Soissons; but had, in obedience to the command of her Majesty, been compelled to pass an angle of his hotel, which he had moreover done without a demonstration of any description, and accompanied only by the escort suitable to his rank. That his sincere anxiety had been to second the wishes of her Majesty; and that so far from seeking to envenom an unfortunate misunderstanding which could only tend to involve the Court in new disorder, he had from the first moment resolved not to offer an opinion upon the merits of the feud; a determination to which he still meant to adhere.

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This manly declaration in no degree softened the ire of the Count; who, enchanted at having discovered an opportunity of annoying and harassing M. de Guise during the first week of his marriage, retorted in a manner which impelled the Queen to request that each would retire to his hotel; and to express at the same time her earnest hope that a little calm reflection would induce the disputants to become reconciled.

The quarrel was nevertheless sustained throughout the whole of that and the following day; and so great was the commotion which it excited in the capital that the Regent, apprehending its result, considered it necessary to order that chains should be in readiness to be stretched across the streets, and that the citizens should be prepared to take up arms at a moment's notice. On the morrow new efforts were made to pacify the irritated parties, but all having alike failed, a detachment of the royal guard was stationed near the person of each of the Princes in order to ensure his safety.[106]

Meanwhile the Queen requested of M. de Guise, by a confidential messenger, that he would wait upon the Comte de Soissons, and apologize for having inadvertently given him offence; a proposition to which he readily consented; feeling that such was in reality the case, and that the rank of the Count as a Prince of the Blood demanded this concession. Previously, however, to putting his design into execution, he informed the Duc de Mayenne of the promise which he had made to comply with the desire of the Regent, when he was instantly and vehemently dissuaded from his purpose; M. de Mayenne representing that being himself the party aggrieved by the groundless accusation brought against him, he could not, without impairing the dignity due to his position, personally declare his regret for an act which he had never committed. He then counselled the Duke to place the affair in his hands, alleging with a sophistry which it is difficult to reconcile with reason that an apology made for him, instead of by him, would at once answer every purpose, and spare his own pride.

M. de Guise, who throughout the whole transaction would appear to have been impatient to rid himself of all trouble and annoyance, and consequently careless by what means it was terminated, readily accepted the offer; and the Duc de Mayenne accordingly repaired to the palace, where he informed the Queen that he was authorized by his nephew to offer his excuses for the displeasure which he had unconsciously given to his Highness the Comte de Soissons; to which he begged to add the assurance that the House of Guise, individually and collectively, were desirous to live upon terms of friendship and courtesy with the Count, if he would accept their advances in the same spirit.[107]

Delighted by the prospect of restored peace, Marie made no comment upon the fact that the Duc de Guise had failed to fulfil the promise which he had made of offering his own apology to the Prince. She was terrified by the anarchy that had grown up about her, and by the facility with which those who should have been the most earnest supporters of the dignity and safety of the Crown found means to involve the Court in confusion and cabals; a fact which moreover tended to place her more completely in the

power of Concini and his wife than would probably ever have been the case under other circumstances.

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On the 14th of January in the present year the Regent, through the active agency of Concini, gave her solemn consent to the marriage of the Comte d'Enghien with Mademoiselle de Montpensier, despite the opposition of the Cardinal de Joyeuse, the Duc d'Epernon, and a number of the Court nobles, who were alarmed at the prospect of so close an alliance between M. de Soissons and the Duc de Guise.

The next event of interest was the final departure of M. de Sully from the capital, who, previously to quitting Paris, returned to the Regent the warrant for three hundred thousand livres with which she had, as she declared, sought to repay his past services. The letter by which the deed was accompanied was, although perfectly respectful, haughty, cold, and resolute: nor did the Duke make an effort to disguise from her that the onerous duties which he had performed to the late monarch, to the nation, and to herself, could not be repaid by an order upon the royal treasury; while his retirement was voluntary, and not intended to be contingent on any such arrangement. The Court gossips made merry over an altercation which they declared to have taken place between the Duke and Duchess on the occasion of this transaction; Madame de Sully, whose vanity was wounded by the loss of dignity and influence consequent on the retirement of her husband, considering this additional pecuniary sacrifice alike idle and uncalled-for, and reproaching him with undue haughtiness in thus refusing the last favour which the Regent had desired to confer upon him; and the ex-minister retorting by reminding her that she, at least, had no cause for complaint, since from the obscure condition of the daughter of a petty lawyer he had elevated her to the rank of a Duchess, and made her the companion of Princes.[108]

When the dismissal of Sully had been decided, it will be remembered that De Thou was one of those appointed to succeed him in his office as a director of finance. The appointment was not, however, accepted; M. de Harlay, fatigued and disgusted by the intrigues which daily grew up about him, being anxious to resign his office of First President of the Parliament, which had previously been held by Christophe de Thou, to a son so worthy of inheriting his honours. The younger De Thou was, moreover, his brother-in-law, and he anticipated no difficulty in transferring his charge to that minister. Even to the last he was, however, fated to disappointment; for not only was this nomination opposed by the Pope, but Villeroy, who desired to see the place bestowed upon one of his own adherents, had sufficient influence with the Regent to induce her to confer it upon M. de Verdun, over whom he possessed an unlimited control.[109]

This affront so deeply wounded M. de Thou that he resigned the office which he had previously held, and even refused to obey the summons of the Regent, conveyed to him through the Marquis d'Ancre; alleging that she had treated him with so much disrespect, and had subjected him to mortification so severe, that he must decline an interview. In vain did Concini impress upon him that the Queen was willing to allow him to name his own successor, and to indemnify himself as he considered just; he would listen to no conditions. To every argument he coldly replied: "She has treated me ill, and I will not go."

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“You are a philosopher,” said the Italian sarcastically.

“I had need be one,” was the calm retort; “when I consider how I have been used.”

Concini reported the ill-success of his mission, but Marie, unfortunately blinded by those about her to her real interests, was indifferent to the just resentment of an able and faithful servant. “*Non lo faro mai*,” was her only remark; and one of the most efficient and zealous of her ministers was carelessly cast off.[110]

Meanwhile the jealous dissensions of the nobles continued to increase, and constant quarrels took place between the Cardinal de Joyeuse, the Comte de Soissons, and the Duc d’Epernon. The latter was, at this period, detested by all other aspirants to royal favour; his rapid success at Court had made him insolent; and he advanced such preposterous claims, and arrogated to himself such an indefeasible right to the gratitude and indulgence of the Regent, that the Princes of the Blood took the alarm, and the Prince de Conde and the Comte de Soissons resolved to effect his disgrace. Concini, as we have already shown, had long nourished the most bitter resentment against one whom he considered as a formidable rival in the good graces of the Queen, and he was consequently induced without difficulty to join in the conspiracy; his vanity suffering bitterly from the contempt with which he was ostentatiously treated by the Duke, who was, as the Italian asserted, a mere gentleman of fortune like himself, until raised to his present rank by the favour of Henri III, a favour as ill-gained as it was unbecomingly exhibited. M. d’Epernon, with an absence of tact as astonishing as it was lamentable in a man whose ambition was unbounded, and who had no party to support his pretensions against the Princes of the Blood, lent himself meanwhile by his puerile and headstrong folly to their enmity, by affecting to brave it; and after a sharp altercation with M. de Soissons, who did not conceal his intention of insulting him whenever and wherever they might meet, the infatuated Duke, on the pretext that he considered his personal safety endangered by the menaces of the Prince, paraded the streets of Paris with a retinue of seven or eight hundred mounted followers; and occasionally proceeded on foot to the Louvre, with his guards ranged in order of battle, and in such force that the van had frequently reached the gates of the palace before the rear had quitted those of the Hotel d’Epernon, a distance of two thousand paces.[111]

This external affectation of almost regal state did not, however, prevent him from experiencing the most bitter mortification at his exclusion from all public affairs. He still considered that as he had been the first to swear fealty, and to place his services at the command of the Regent, he had a right to retain the supremacy which he had then assumed; and this arrogant pretension enabled him for a time to support the daily affronts to which he was subjected; but it soon became apparent that his position must ere long prove untenable.

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The Cardinal de Joyeuse, whose favour depended upon that of the Duc d'Epernon, having perceived that his credit with the Regent was on the decline, determined to proceed to Rome. He accordingly took leave of the King and his mother, and left France; while M. d'Epernon endeavoured to effect a reconciliation with the Comte de Soissons, an attempt which was repulsed with resolute coldness on the part of the Prince, who was daily attaching himself more and more to the interests of Concini.

Early in the spring the Court left Paris for Fontainebleau, accompanied by all the Princes of the Blood; and during their sojourn in that palace Marie de Medicis constantly caused M. de Soissons and the Ducs de Guise and d'Epernon to form her party at *prime*, trusting that constant companionship, and the equal favour which she was cautious to show to all, might tend to a general reconciliation.[112]

These efforts on the part of the Regent, however, were of little avail; individual jealousies and individual interests absorbed all the great nobles of the Court; and every concession to which they were induced was purchased at a price, and even then ungraciously yielded. Marie de Medicis at times lost alike courage and temper under the difficulties by which she was beset; and on one occasion, when she had retired to her closet, after having occupied herself for a time with the transaction of public business, she gave way to a train of thought so agitating and so painful that she suddenly rose and summoned the ladies of her suite to her presence. Mesdames de Conti, du Fargis, and de Fervaques hastened to obey her commands; and as the tapestry fell behind them, the Queen-mother silently, but with an imperious gesture, motioned them to be seated. A deep spot of crimson burned on the cheek of Marie, and there was a harsh glitter in her eye which betrayed the coming storm; nor was it long ere it burst forth.

"I have asked your presence, Mesdames," she said, fixing a stern look upon the Princesse de Conti, "when you were each, in all probability, more pleasantly engaged than in sharing the disquiet and *ennui* of your harassed mistress; but, *per Dio!* the present position of affairs leaves me no alternative, my own thoughts having become—-thanks to those who should lend their assistance in bearing the grievous burthen which has been thrust upon me—but sorry companions. The Princes are still conspiring against my authority, and questioning my acts, as though I were responsible to each and all of them for the measures which I consider it expedient to adopt. According to the creed of these gentlemen, the Regent of France should be but a mere puppet, of which they, at their good pleasure, may pull the strings. Scarcely have I recalled them to Court, scarcely have I restored them to favour, than they organize new cabals excite the nobles to discontent, and breed discord, alike in the Parliament and among the people.

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What more can they require at my hands than what I have already bestowed? The national treasury is well-nigh exhausted in meeting their demands. Look back an instant: M. de Conde has, within the last two years, received more than nine hundred thousand crowns—the Comte de Soissons six hundred thousand—and MM. de Longueville, d'Epernon, and de Vendome, two millions among them! Nor is this all: in contenting them I have been compelled to lavish enormous sums upon others, who would have considered themselves aggrieved had they not also shared in my munificence. But let these proud spirits—who, despite their noble blood and their princely quality, do not disdain to barter their loyalty for gold—let them beware lest they urge me beyond my patience. Your brothers and brothers-in-law, Madame la Princesse, will do well to be warned in time. They are playing a hazardous game. If they believe that by exhausting the royal treasury they will succeed in rendering themselves masters of the kingdom, they are deceived; the Queen-mother watches alike over the life and the crown of her son. Once more I say, let them be warned in time; not a plot, not a cabal shall escape my knowledge; and should they disregard the caution which I now condescend to give them through yourself, they will learn too late what it is to incur the vengeance of Marie de Medicis."

The silence of a moment succeeded to this outbreak of impassioned eloquence; for Madame de Conti, fearful of augmenting the anger of her royal mistress, ventured no reply; and after a brief struggle with herself the Queen-mother smoothed her ruffled brow, and forcing a smile to her still quivering lips, she resumed in an altered tone: "Enough of this, however; tell me now somewhat of your ballet of last night, Princesse: you have as yet made no mention of its success."

"I awaited the commands of your Majesty ere I intruded the subject," replied Madame de Conti coldly; "its success was all that I could desire."

"Did the Duc de Guise honour your festival with his presence? He seldom, as I am aware, encourages our Court frivolities."

"MM. de Conde and de Guise were both among my guests, Madame; and I could have ill brooked the absence of either."

"Ay, ever together, in feast and feud," murmured Marie bitterly to herself. "And Bassompierre?" she pursued aloud—"the gallant courtier who has as many mistresses as I have halberdiers in my bodyguard, and who creates an atmosphere of gladness about him, be he where he may; was he as gay and gorgeous as his wont?"

"Your Majesty is probably not aware," replied Madame de Conti with increased formality, "that M. de Bassompierre has quarrelled with one of my relatives; a circumstance which deprived me of the honour of his presence."

“And the Marquis d’Ancre?” demanded the Queen-mother abruptly; “did he at least partake of your splendid hospitality?”

The cheek of the Princess blanched, and her voice slightly trembled as she said hurriedly: “M. d’Ancre was on duty, Madame, about the person of your Majesty, and I did not presume to ask for his absence from the palace.”

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"*Veramente, principessa*" exclaimed Marie de Medicis with sudden vehemence, "you excel yourself to-day! But have a care! My faithful servants were no meet guests, as it would seem, at a festival in honour of the House of Guise. Truly your energetic kinsmen are goodly diplomatists. Not content with conspiring in the Louvre—under the very roof which shelters their sovereign—they conspire also in their own palaces, by the glare of tapers as busily as in the shade. Even to the measure of soft music they can adapt their treasonable practices; and amid the murmurs of flattery can breathe the whispers of disaffection as glibly as when closeted together secure from all intrusion. So be it then; exclude from your glittering *salons* all those who are the known adherents of the sovereign and his mother; they will be careful for the future to repay the courtesy in kind. I have as great a dread of spies as yourself, Madame de Conti, and henceforward I will profit by the lesson which you have taught me."

"I can assure your Majesty—" faltered the lady of honour.

"Nay, Princesse," interposed the Queen-mother bitterly, "do not wrong yourself. Have at least the courage necessary for the personage which you have seen fit to enact, and believe me that you will need it when you venture to cope with a Medicis. Florence can also boast of her diplomatists, and they may chance to prove even more subtle than those of our good city of Paris. There is a stern and a profitable lesson in the past should you read it aright."

So saying Marie de Medicis rose from her seat, and with a stately step walked to a window overlooking the river, where she remained for a considerable time apparently absorbed by the busy scene beneath her; but at length she turned slowly towards the three ladies, who had also risen, and said calmly: "His Majesty is about to visit me. Mesdames du Fargis and de Fervaques will assist me to receive him. I excuse Madame de Conti; after the manifold exertions of the past night she must need repose."

The Princess made the three low curtsies customary on such occasions, and disappeared behind the tapestried hangings which were held back by the usher on duty; while the Queen-mother threw herself once more upon her seat, and burying her face in her hand, again fell into a deep and bitter reverie.

Meanwhile the Protestants were preparing for the General Assembly, and the Marechal de Bouillon proceeded to Sedan, in order to assist at their deliberations. He had no sooner done this than the Prince de Conde requested permission to go and take possession of his government of Guienne, a project which at that particular moment created universal suspicion, and excited the alarm of Marie, who was apprehensive that he was about to solicit the support of the reformed party. Under this impression she exerted all her ingenuity to invent pretexts for delaying his purpose without awakening his distrust; but they ultimately proved unavailing, and she found herself compelled to allow him to depart.

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At this particular juncture the Duc d'Epernon, irritated by the persevering avoidance of M. de Soissons, and the covert sarcasms of Concini, resolved in his turn to absent himself, and to proceed to his estate at Angouleme, flattering himself that the Regent would be but too happy to recall him when she discovered how great a blank his departure must cause at Court. It is moreover probable that he anticipated the same gratifying impediments which had delayed the journey of the Prince de Conde; and consequently his disappointment was extreme as he perceived the pleasure which Marie could not conceal when he mentioned his wish to retire for a brief interval from the capital. The wound thus inflicted upon his vanity was, however, soon healed, when, with a renewal of all her former confidence and condescension, she confessed to him that no proposition could have been more agreeable to her at that moment, from her anxiety to secure the services of a friend upon whom she could rely to keep a zealous watch over the movements of the Prince de Conde, whose departure had awakened her fears. She then explained the suspicions she had formed, and gave M. d'Epernon full and ample instructions for his future guidance, accompanying them with assurances of her firm reliance upon his attachment and fidelity; thus enabling the crestfallen courtier, who must otherwise have withdrawn in partial disgrace, to leave the palace with every mark of favour and distinction.[113]

The precaution thus taken with regard to M. de Conde proved, however, supererogatory, the Prince having no further object in view in absenting himself from the capital than the gratification of that love of personal splendour and amusement in which he had always indulged whenever an opportunity presented itself; and thus while the Duc d'Epernon was watching all his movements with eager and anxious suspicion, M. de Conde was simply enacting the quasi-sovereign at Bordeaux and the adjacent cities where he was received with great ceremony, harangued by the municipal bodies, and surrounded by a petty court composed of all the nobles of the province.[114]

Concini had watched the departure of the exulting Duc d'Epernon with a delight as great as his own; the only rival who threatened to counterbalance his influence was now removed from the immediate sphere in which he could prove obnoxious to his fortunes, and he soon felt the effect of his absence in the increased dependence of the Regent upon himself and his wife. Nor was the result less obvious to all the members of the Court, who, as their several interests prompted, were either overjoyed or dismayed at the unconcealed supremacy of the vainglorious Marquis, whose bearing became more arrogant than ever, and who appeared at each moment ready to dispute precedency even with the Princes of the Blood themselves. All bowed before him. He was the only certain channel of favour and preferment; and whenever, as frequently occurred, some act of presumption more glaring than usual aroused against him the ire of the great nobles, the tears and entreaties of his wife always sufficed to induce the Regent to make new sacrifices for the purpose of ensuring his impunity.

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This imprudence on the part of Marie, although originating, as it obviously did, in an inclination to maintain that peace at Court of which she had now learned by bitter experience to appreciate all the value, increased the evil which it was intended to obviate, the Italian only seeing in her indulgence a new motive for continuing his moral aggressions; and thus the evil increased slowly but surely, and the hatred engendered by the preposterous pretensions of the Marquis acquired new force, even when all around him appeared to admit his supremacy, and to bend before his will.

One of the most striking proofs of the power to which he had at this period attained is afforded by the fact that a nobleman known as a firm adherent of M. de Soissons, while conversing with the Marquis de Coeuvres on the subject of the increasing feud between the Princes of the Blood, suggested that he could perceive no more certain method for the Count to maintain himself in favour at Court than that he should effect the marriage of one of his daughters with the son of the Italian favourite. This project startled the Marquis, who never for an instant suspected that the proposition could have originated with M. de Soissons himself; and whose proud ancestral blood boiled within him at the idea of so close an alliance between one of the first subjects of France and an adventurer of obscure birth, whose very claim to respectability was even yet disputed. He was, however, fated to feel even greater surprise when, a short time subsequently, as both parties were conversing with the Marquis in the Queen's gallery at Fontainebleau, he heard a third person openly, and without the slightest hesitation, enter upon the subject with Concini himself; who, with evident gratification but affected humility, immediately replied that such an alliance was an honour to which he could not pretend, but that were it ever to be seriously proposed to him, he could only reply in the words of Cardinal Farnese to an individual who suggested to him an arrangement which at once flattered his self-love and appeared impossible of completion, "*Tu m'aduli, ma tu mi piaci*." The subject was not pursued, but it was one not readily to be forgotten by those who were aware that it had been mooted; and there can be little doubt that the self-esteem of the Marquis d'Ancre gained fresh force, even from a passing allusion to the possibility of such an event.

Encouraged, as it would appear, by the brilliant prospect thus opened up for his son, Concini soon began to think no aggrandizement beyond the reach of his ambition; and readily overlooking both personal hatred and political good-faith in the pursuance of his darling passion, it was not long ere he argued that since a Prince of the Blood had seen fit to solicit an alliance with himself, he might readily infer that a noble of inferior rank could not but esteem it as an honour; and accordingly he commenced a negotiation with the Duc d'Epernon,

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between whose second son, the Marquis de la Valette, and his own daughter he desired to effect a marriage. This proposal was, however, resented as an insult by the Duke, who was not sparing in his comments upon the insolence of the Italian adventurer; and so unmeasured were his expressions that his ruin must have been ensured from that moment, had not a circumstance shortly afterwards occurred which rendered his services necessary to the Regent.

Before the end of April the Duc de Bouillon returned from Sedan, and manifested an earnest inclination to devote himself, in so far as his honour and religious principles would permit him to do so, to the interests of the Regent during the approaching assembly at Saumur; adding, moreover, that should the Queen deem his absence from the meeting desirable, he would remain at Court until it had terminated. So unexpected a concession highly gratified Marie, who, with many acknowledgments for his devotion to her cause, referred him to M. de Villeroy, by whom, his proposal having been demurely considered, it was declined; the minister being aware that the influence of M. de Bouillon would be alone able to counteract that of Sully, who, having left the Court disappointed and dissatisfied, would not fail to profit by so favourable an opportunity of asserting his power over his co-religionists. He, moreover, while thanking the Prince for a proof of loyalty so welcome to the Government, and so important to the sovereign, hinted that should he succeed in weakening the power of Sully, and in inducing the Assembly to consent to such terms as could prudently be conceded, he would confer upon him the government of Poitou, of which it had been decided to deprive the ex-finance-minister.[115]

This new impulse added fresh energy to the sudden loyalty of M. de Bouillon, who at once proceeded to Saumur in order to secure his election as President of the Assembly, a distinction which he declared to be due to his long services. The Protestant deputies were, however, by no means inclined to admit his claim, and more than suspicious of his intentions; and they consequently, despite his undisguised annoyance, selected for that dignity M. du Plessis-Mornay, the governor of the city; a circumstance which did not fail to increase the hatred felt by the Marechal towards Sully, to whom he immediately attributed the mortification. Soon made conscious, by the coldness with which his invectives and threats were received by the principal Huguenot nobles, that he was only injuring by his unseemly violence the cause he sought to serve, M. de Bouillon nevertheless resolved to restrain himself, and to endeavour to effect a good understanding with Sully, whose personal importance on this occasion was powerfully increased by the influence of his son-in-law the Duc de Rohan. The Assembly met for the first time in May, and continued their sittings until September, at which period their demands and grievances were despatched to the Court, the dismissal of Sully being indicated as one of the latter.

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This fact alarmed the Council, who moreover could not contemplate without great apprehension the union and perfect understanding which had, throughout the whole proceedings, characterized the Protestant leaders, who had taken their usual oath to uphold each other and the faith which they professed; and who were, as the ministers well knew, able to redeem their pledge so effectively should they see fit to exert their power, that any demonstration on their part could not fail to convulse the nation from one extremity to the other. After considerable deliberation it was agreed that the only method by which the impending evil could be averted was to dissolve the Assembly before it could proceed from words to acts; and accordingly a pretext for this breach of faith was at once found in the declaration that the King had permitted the assembling of the reformed party to enable them to select six individuals, from among whom he might himself nominate two as general deputies; while at the same time the documents forwarded to the Court were returned, with an emphatic refusal to make any reply to their contents until such time as the required nomination had been made. All opposition, save what must have assumed a decidedly hostile character, was of course impossible on the part of the Protestants, whose indignation, loud as it naturally became for a time, was finally silenced, even if not extinguished, by the calm and dignified eloquence of the Comte du Plessis-Mornay, who reminded the Assembly that their first duty as Christians was obedience to the ruling powers.

“Let us separate,” said this prudent and right-minded man, as exclamations of anger and violence resounded on all sides. “Let each, on leaving this spot, leave also all animosity behind him. We should only heighten the evil by spreading it through the provinces. Each has failed, yet each has done well. Let us now endeavour to obtain by respectful silence and Christian patience what has been refused to our remonstrances and requests.” [116]

A short time subsequently, the death of M. de Crequy, governor of the town and citadel of Amiens, having taken place, a great number of the nobles were ambitious to succeed to the vacant dignity, among whom was the Marquis d’Ancre, whose insatiable ambition grasped at every opportunity of acquiring honour and advancement. Having confided his wish upon this subject to M. de Soissons, he was encouraged in his pretensions by that Prince; and having obtained the royal permission to absent himself for a time from the Court, he hastened to Picardy, attended by a hundred horsemen, in order to negotiate the affair with the entire sanction of the Queen; where, although opposed by the ministers who were anxious to curb his daily increasing power, he ultimately succeeded in his attempt.

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Nevertheless the objections raised by the Council, not only to his acquirement of the government, but also to the marriage of his son with the daughter of M. de Soissons, which had been communicated to them by the Marquis de Rambouillet,[117] embittered his temper, and determined him to discover some means of revenging what he considered as an undue interference with his personal affairs. The extraordinary imprudence of which he was soon afterwards guilty rendered him, however, for a time unable to indulge his vindictiveness, and even threatened to involve him in the disgrace which he was so anxious to see visited upon his adversaries. In the first place, intoxicated by his newly acquired dignities, he affected the utmost attachment for M. de Soissons, who had exerted all his influence in his behalf; and remarked that the proposition lately made to him by the Prince for an alliance between their families was no longer so unequal as it had then appeared, although he was still aware that it would be a great honour conferred upon himself; but that as the Duc de Longueville was about to marry another daughter of the Prince, and that their governments were contiguous, the union of his own son with the sister of the bride might prove a mutual advantage, and of considerable service to M. de Soissons himself. This unseemly boast he followed up by a still more flagrant proof of presumption; for, being anxious to assert his entire authority over the citadel of Amiens, he entered into a financial treaty with M. de Rouillac the lieutenant, and M. de Fleury the ensign of the fortress, and replaced them by adherents of his own, without the sanction of the Regent; after which he borrowed, on his own responsibility, twelve thousand livres from the receiver-general of the province for the payment of his garrison.

Such an unprecedented disregard of the royal prerogative had never before occurred in France; and it no sooner became known to the ministers than they hastened to represent it in its most heinous aspect to the Queen, impressing upon her in no measured terms the danger of such a precedent, which could not fail to bring contempt upon her authority, and to introduce disorder into the finances of the nation; and entreating her to remember that should she sanction an alliance between the imprudent favourite and a Prince of the Blood, she could no longer hope to restrain his extravagances. Marie de Medicis was jealous of her dignity, and moreover fully conscious of the fault which had been committed by Concini, and her anger was consequently unbounded. In the first burst of her indignation she refused to see Madame d’Ancre, whom she accused of having incited her husband to these demonstrations of disrespect towards herself; and her wrath was skilfully increased by the Princesse de Conti, who looked upon the favour of the low-born Leonora with impatience and disgust, and could not desire a more ready means of ensuring her discredit than that of following up the arguments of the ministers, of dwelling upon the little respect which had been shown to the person and privileges of her royal mistress, and of expatiating on the ruinous effect of so pernicious an example upon the discontented nobility.

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The effect of these frequent and confidential conversations may be imagined; the mind of the Queen became more and more excited against her former favourites, while she clung with the tenacity of helplessness to Madame de Conti, through whose medium the Princes began to hope that they should at length triumph over the detested Italian. But the sun of Concini was not destined to set so soon; and although he had fierce enemies, he still possessed zealous friends; the more zealous, perhaps, because they had accurately read the character of the Tuscan Princess, and were well aware that she had so long leant upon others that she had at last become incapable of perfect self-reliance. Through the medium of those friends, but undoubtedly still more from the daily and hourly *ennui* experienced by Marie herself while thus deprived of the society of her foster-sister, the pardon of Concini was finally obtained. He was declared to have erred through ignorance; and a perfect reconciliation took place which overthrew all the half-fledged projects of the disappointed courtiers.

Two circumstances alone tended to mitigate the satisfaction of the Marquis d'Ancre. The representations of the ministers had succeeded in so thoroughly awakening the apprehensions of the Regent, that she had, at their first interview, strictly forbidden him thenceforward to attempt the accomplishment of his anticipated alliance with the House of Bourbon; while he had found himself compelled to apologize to the Comte de Soissons for the excesses in which he had indulged in Picardy, and which had drawn down upon the Prince the resentment, not only of the Queen herself, but of the whole Council, by whom he was accused of having upheld the pretensions of the Italian in order to aggrandize his own daughter.

In the month of July Marie de Medicis bestowed great happiness upon the whole nation by remitting the arrears of taxes which had remained unpaid from the year 1597, until that of 1603; while she also, at the same period, decreed the abolition of the gaming academies to which allusion was made in the preceding volume; and, finally, ascertaining that the edict against duelling issued by the late King had been evaded by certain sophistical observances, she published a declaration setting forth that all hostile meetings, however arranged, would not only entail the penalties already denounced against them, but henceforward be regarded as acts of assassination. This wholesome and well-timed declaration was verified by the Parliament on the 11th of July, and great hopes were entertained that so stringent a measure would effectually terminate an abuse which, during the reign of the late King, had deprived France of several thousand of her best chivalry.[118]

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Throughout the autumn, notwithstanding the gravity of the affairs then pending, the Court at Fontainebleau was one ceaseless scene of dissipation. High play still formed a prominent feature in the amusements of the palace, and the extent to which it was carried may be estimated by the fact that Concini, before his return to the capital, had lost at cards and dice the enormous sum of twenty-six thousand pistoles;[119] and while the *branle* and the gaming-table occupied the night, the day was devoted to hunting, a diversion in which the Queen constantly participated, accompanied by the Princesses and ladies of the Court, and attended by a suite of between four and five hundred of the principal nobles. The arrival of the Duchesse de Lorraine and the Cardinal de Gonzaga[120] gave a new impetus to the gaiety of the royal circle, while their sumptuous reception at the palace induced new outlay and new rivalry among the courtiers.[121]

It was in the midst of this splendid dissipation that the Regent received tidings of the death of the Duc de Mayenne, a loss which, from the good understanding recently established between herself and that Prince, was of serious importance to her authority; while the event produced a still more painful impression from the fact that his wife, Henrietta of Savoy, had died of grief a few days subsequently, and that they had been carried to the grave together.

The next news which reached the Court was that of the demise of Marguerite of Austria, Queen of Spain; an event which, from the recent treaty concluded between the two countries, had become doubly interesting to France. This Princess, who was the daughter of Charles, Archduke of Gratz, Duke of Styria and Carinthia, and of Marie of Bavaria, had become the wife of Philip III in November 1599; and had left four sons, *viz*. Philip, Charles, Ferdinand, and Alfonso; and two daughters, Anne and Marguerite, the former of whom was promised to Louis XIII.

Other and more personal interests sufficed, nevertheless, to dry the tears of the Queen-mother, as at this period the Duchesse de Lorraine explained the purport of her visit; which, it is asserted, was to induce her royal niece to redeem the pledge given by her deceased husband that the Dauphin should espouse the Princesse de Lorraine, who would bring as her dowry to the young King the duchies of Lorraine and Bar. Marie was, however, too deeply compromised with Spain as well as with the Pope and the Grand Duke of Tuscany, both of whom were earnest to effect the completion of that alliance, to follow up a policy which could not but have proved much more beneficial to the French nation; while the Conde de Fuentes, who immediately suspected the purpose of Madame de Lorraine, loudly and arrogantly asserted that the French King could not have two wives; that his marriage with the Infanta was concluded; and that his sovereign was not to be cheated with impunity.[122]

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Oppressed by this double weight of regret and anxiety, Marie and her Court returned to the Louvre; but her grief was still fated to be fearfully increased, for she had scarcely established herself in the palace when her maternal terrors were suddenly awakened by intelligence of the dangerous illness of her second son, the Duc d'Orleans, upon which she hastened to St. Germain. The fiat had, however, gone forth, and two days subsequently the little Prince, upon whose precocious intellect and sweetness of disposition so many hopes had been built up, was a corpse in his mother's arms; and within a few hours Madame de Lorraine and her brother had taken leave of their illustrious relative, while the Court of the Louvre, so lately giddy with gaiety, was once more draped in sables.[123]

Devotedly attached to her children, the Queen was for a time inconsolable; her greatness was embittered by private suffering, and her authority was endangered by intestine broils; she looked around her, and scarcely knew upon whom to depend, or upon what to lean. The constant exactions of the Princes convinced her of the utter hopelessness of satisfying their venality, and securing their allegiance, save by sacrifices which gradually tended to diminish her own power, and to compromise the interests of the Crown, while the people murmured at the burthens inflicted upon them in order to gratify the greed of the nobility.

To increase her anxiety, the death of her second son was destined to add to the number of malcontents by whom the Queen was surrounded, all the principal officers of his household advancing their claim to be transferred to that of the infant Duc d'Anjou, who, on the demise of the Duc d'Orleans, assumed the title of Monsieur, as only brother of the King. It was, however, impossible to place all these candidates about the person of the young Prince, and it was ultimately decided that M. de Breves,[124] a relative of M. de Villeroy, to whom the appointment had already been promised by Henri IV, should be selected as the preceptor of Monsieur, to the exclusion of M. de Bethune, who had held the same post about the Duc d'Orleans, and who consequently demanded to be transferred to the service of his brother. But the relative of Sully was little likely to prove a successful candidate; he had owed his previous appointment to the influence of the powerful kinsman whose counsels swayed the actions of a great monarch; that monarch was now in his grave, and that kinsman in honourable exile; and his claim was no longer admitted. The Marquis de Coeuvres, who had been master of the wardrobe to the deceased Prince, was fated to be equally disappointed. The ministers had not forgotten that he had been an active agent in the proposed alliance between the Comte de Soissons and Concini, and they did not fail to impress upon the Queen the extreme danger of placing an individual of so resolute and enterprising a character about the person of the heir presumptive. As

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he could obtain no decided reply to his application, M. de Coeuvres solicited the assistance of the Marquis d'Ancre, who met his request with civil professions of regard, but declined to oppose the will of the ministers; an exhibition of ingratitude which so enraged the applicant that he forthwith declined all further interference in the affairs or claim upon the friendship of the fickle Italian, and attached himself exclusively to the interests of M. de Soissons.[125]

This Prince was also destined, at this particular period, to augment the difficulties of the Regent. The duchy of Alencon had been mortgaged by the French Crown to the Duke of Wuertemberg; and hopes had, some months previously, been held out to the Prince that, should he ever be in a position to redeem the debt, he might avail himself of the opportunity, and become its possessor. This time had now come; the Princess his wife had recovered from the Duke of Savoy a large amount for her estates in Piedmont, which he resolved to devote to the acquisition of the coveted duchy, and he accordingly applied for the sanction of the King, without whose consent the transfer could not be legally executed.

It is probable that, having already received a partial consent to his wishes, M. de Soissons was far from apprehending any serious impediment to their realization; but the jealousy of Marie had been aroused, and she did not fail to perceive that such a concession must be dangerous to the interests of the younger Children of France. The Prince had therefore no sooner made his request than she assumed an attitude of offended dignity and cold rebuke; and while he awaited her reply with a smile of anticipatory success, she said drily, "Do you wish, Monsieur, to acquire a duchy which has constantly been set apart as the appanage of one of the sons of the sovereign? I begin to perceive that your designs are somewhat lofty."

Thus repulsed, M. de Soissons withdrew, but with a demeanour which convinced the Regent that she had made a new enemy, whom she must consequently prepare herself to resist; a conclusion at which she had no sooner arrived than she summoned the Prince de Conde and the Duc d'Epernon to her assistance.[126]

This measure was not, however, destined to prove entirely successful. The Marquis de Coeuvres, who at once felt that M. de Soissons was in no position to maintain single-handed any effectual opposition to the host of adversaries about to be marshalled against him, lost not a moment in seeking to convince him that he had but one prospect of avoiding the disgrace by which he was threatened. The impetuous Count poured forth all his wrath in invectives, and declared his readiness to endure any mortification rather than not enforce what he persisted in designating as his legitimate claims as a Prince of the Blood, but his zealous adviser was not to be thus silenced.

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“Remember, Sir,” was the rejoinder of the Marquis, “that you are now embroiled with both the Regent and her ministers; that the momentary truce between yourself and Concini is merely lip-deep, and may be broken by a breath; that you are the open and declared enemy of the Guises and the Duc d’Epernon; and that each and all of these are interested in your ruin. I do not attempt to deny that your quality as a Prince of the Blood must, as a natural consequence, avail you much; and it is this very conviction that encourages me to persist in counselling you to place no reliance upon minor friendships, but at once to ally yourself closely with your nephew the Prince de Conde, and thus strengthen the very rights upon which you presume. During a minority the Princes of the Blood have an influence in France, which once earnestly and truthfully united and exerted, must eventually prove irresistible.”

After some further difficulty M. de Soissons suffered himself to be convinced by the arguments of the Marquis, and it was ultimately resolved that overtures should be made to this effect on the part of the Count through the medium of M. de Beaumont, the son of the President de Harlay, who was at that period expected in the capital, and who was in the confidence of the Prince de Conde. Beaumont had accordingly no sooner arrived than the Marquis de Coeuvres made him acquainted with the desire of the Count, and it was finally agreed that, upon the pretext of a hunt, the two Princes should meet at the residence of the former. As, however, it was immediately ascertained that the Regent had expressed some suspicions of this interview, and declared the reconciliation which had taken place to be too sudden not to involve some occult purpose, M. de Soissons deemed it expedient to silence her fears by inviting Concini to join the party.

The invitation was accepted; the hunt took place, and was succeeded by high play, after which the different personages apparently separated for the night; but within half an hour the two royal kinsmen and their confidential friends were closeted together, and before dawn an alliance offensive and defensive was concluded between the Princes, who each pledged himself to receive no favour or benefit from the Government to the exclusion or loss of the other; and that, moreover, in the event of the disgrace or disgust of either, the other should withdraw from the Court at the same time, whither neither was to be at liberty to return alone; and this compact, which, as will immediately be seen, could not fail to prove dangerous to the interests of Marie, was religiously observed until the death of M. de Soissons.[127]

The credit of the ministers was greatly increased by this new cabal, as the Regent instantly perceived the necessity of opposing their authority to the probable pretensions of the Princes, neither of whom attempted to disguise their discontent at the insignificant position to which they had been reduced at Court. To Jeannin, in particular, the Queen expressed in unmeasured terms the confidence which she placed in his zeal and loyalty; she called him her *friend*, her *arm*, and her *head*, and assured him that she would be guided entirely by his counsels.

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Anxious to respond to these flattering demonstrations, and to justify the trust reposed in them, the ministers resolved, in order still further to protect the Crown against any aggression on the part of the Princes, to recall to Court the Marechal de Lesdiguieres, who was easily induced to resign his command of the army in Champagne by the prospect which they held out to him, of verifying and confirming the ducal patent which he had obtained from Henri IV. They, however, subsequently failed to keep this promise, and the disappointment so irritated the Marechal that he resolved to revenge himself by joining the party of the Princes, and otherwise harassing the Council; a determination which was unfortunately too easily realized at a period of such internal convulsion.[128]

The last event worthy of record which took place in the present year was the purchase towards the close of September of the Hotel de Luxembourg by the Queen-Regent, for the sum of thirty thousand crowns, in order to erect upon its site the celebrated Palais d'Orleans, now once more known by its original name of the Luxembourg. The construction of this splendid edifice was entrusted to Jacques de Brosse,[129] who immediately commenced removing the ruins of the dilapidated hotel which encumbered the space destined for the new elevation; and four years subsequently the first stone was laid of the regal pile which transmitted his own name to posterity, linked with those of Marie de Medicis and Peter Paul Rubens.[130]

FOOTNOTES:

[98] Sully, *Mem*. vol. viii. p. 129.

[99] Joachim, Sire de Chateauvieux, had been captain of the bodyguard to Henri IV.

[100] Sully, *Mem*. vol. viii. pp. 133, 134.

[101] Charles de l'Aubespine, Marquis de Chateauneuf-sur-Cher, was born on the 22nd of February 1580. He was abbot and sub-dean of Preaux, and was successively ambassador to Switzerland, Holland, Brussels, England and Venice. On the 14th of November 1630 he was appointed Keeper of the Seals of France; was deprived of his office on the 25th of February 1633, and recalled on the 2nd of March 1650. He, however, voluntarily resigned the appointment on the 3rd of April 1651, and retired from the Court. He died at Leuville on the 17th of September 1653.

[102] D'Hericourt, *Hist. de France*, vol. i. p. 524.

[103] Mezeray, vol. xi. pp. 16, 17.

[104] Richelieu, *Hist. de la Mere et du Fils*, vol. i. pp. 121, 127.

[105] D'Estrees, *Mem*. p. 384, edit. Petitot, suite de Bassompierre.

[106] Bassompierre, *Mem*. p. 75.

[107] Richelieu, *Hist. de la Mere et du Fils*, vol. i. pp. 224, 225.

[108] L'Etoile, vol. iv. p. 206.

[109] D'Estrees, *Mem*. p. 385.

[110] L'Etoile, vol. iv. pp. 210, 211.

[111] Le Vassor, *Hist. de Louis XIII*, vol. i. pp. 57, 58.

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[112] Bassompierre, *Mem*. p. 77.

[113] Richelieu, *Hist. de la Mere et du Fils*, vol. i. p. 136.

[114] Le Vassor, vol. i. p. 58.

[115] Mezeray, vol. xi. p. 22.

[116] Mezeray, vol. xi. pp. 22, 23. Le Vassor, vol. i. pp. 72-79.

[117] Nicolas d'Angennes, Marquis de Rambouillet, and Vidame du Mans, was captain of the bodyguard to Charles IX, and subsequently, under Henri III, Knight of all the royal Orders, and ambassador to Germany and Rome. M. de Thou asserts that to high birth M. de Rambouillet united superior merit; and that, combined with an unusual taste for literature, he possessed an extraordinary knowledge of public business.

[118] Richelieu, *Hist. de la Mere et du Fils*, vol. i. pp. 152, 153.

[119] L'Etoile, vol. iv. p. 223.

[120] Louis, Cardinal de Gonzaga, was the last member of the Novellare branch of the illustrious Italian house of Gonzaga, Dukes of Mantua, and was canonized in 1621 under the title of St. Louis de Gonzaga.

[121] Bassompierre, *Mem*. p. 78.

[122] Siri, *Mem. Rec*. vol. ii. pp. 577-586.

[123] Bassompierre, *Mem*. p. 78.

[124] Francois Savary, Seigneur de Breves, had served as ambassador both at Constantinople and Rome, and was a man of great erudition. Well versed in history, an able diplomatist, and possessed of considerable antiquarian lore, he had travelled in Greece, Asia Minor, and the Holy Land. His pupil, at the period of his appointment, being still a mere infant, he did not enter upon his official functions until 1615, when the young Prince was placed under his care, on the departure of the Court for Bordeaux to celebrate the marriage of Louis XIII with Anne of Austria.

[125] Richelieu, *Hist. de la Mere et du Fils*, vol. i. pp. 163, 164. D'Estrees, *Mem*. p. 392.

[126] Le Vassor, vol. i. pp. 88, 89.

[127] Le Vassor, vol. i. pp. 89, 90. Richelieu, *Hist. de la Mere et du Fils*, vol. i. pp. 157, 158.

[128] Richelieu, *Hist. de la Mere et du Fils*, vol. i. pp. 160, 161. D'Estrees, *Mem*. p. 393.

[129] Jacques de Brosse was the most renowned architect of his day, and left behind him more than one work calculated to justify his celebrity. In addition to the Luxembourg Palace, which was built entirely according to his designs, he erected the magnificent portico of St. Gervais, the aqueduct of Arcueil, and the famous Protestant church of Charenton (destroyed in 1685).

[130] *Curiositez de Paris*, edit. Sangrain, Paris 1742, vol. ii. p. 37.

CHAPTER IV

1612

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The Princes of the Blood retire from the Court—Increased influence of the Ducs de Guise and d'Epernon—Jealousy of Concini—The ministers desire the recall of the Princes—The Lent ballets—The government of Quilleboeuf is offered to the Comte de Soissons—The Princes are invited to return to the capital—Arrival of the Princes—M. de Soissons abandons Concini—An attempt is made to create dissension between M. de Soissons and the Prince de Conde—They again withdraw from Paris—The Regent resolves to announce publicly the approaching marriage of the King—Disaffection of the Princes—Frankness of the Duc de Guise—The Duc d'Epernon is recalled—The Duc de Bouillon is despatched to England—The Council discuss the alliance with Spain—The Princes return to the capital—Undignified deportment of the Prince de Conde—Insolence of M. de Soissons—Indignation of the Regent—The young Duc de Mayenne is appointed ambassador extraordinary to Spain—An unpleasant truth—Arrogance of the Spanish King—Concession of the Regent—Death of the Duke of Mantua—The Chancellor announces the King's marriage—An ambassador and a quasi-Queen—-Disappointment of the Princes—They again withdraw—Caution of the Duc de Montmorency to the Regent—She disregards the warning—Love of Marie de Medicis for magnificence and display—Courtly entertainments—The circle of Madame—The Marquise d'Ancre—A carousal—Splendid festivities—Arrival of the Spanish envoys—-The Chevalier de Guise—Alarm of Concini—The Queen and her foster-sister—Concini resolves to espouse the party of the Princes—The Duc de Bouillon endeavours to injure the Duc de Rohan in the estimation of James I—Reply of the English monarch—-Bouillon returns to Paris—The Marechal de Lesdiguieres retires from the Court—The Duc de Vendome solicits the royal permission to preside over the States of Brittany—Is refused by the Regent—Challenges his substitute—And is exiled to Anet—Concini augments the disaffection of the Princes—The Duke of Savoy joins the cabal—-Lesdiguieres prepares to march a body of troops against the capital—Concini deters the Regent from giving the government of Quilleboeuf to the Comte de Soissons—-Indignation of the Duc de Guise—He reveals the treachery of Concini to the Princes—-All the great nobles join the faction of M. de Conde with the exception of the Duc d'Epernon—The Duc de Bellegarde is accused of sorcery—Quarrel between the Comte de Soissons and the Marechal de Fervaques—Marie de Medicis resolves to persecute the Protestants—Bouillon endeavours to effect the disgrace of the Duc de Rohan—The Regent refuses to listen to his justification—He takes possession of St. Jean d'Angely—Anger of the Queen—Conflicting manifestoes—M. de Rohan prepares to resist the royal troops—The ministers advise a negotiation, which proves successful—Departure of the Duc de Mayenne for Madrid—Arrival of the Duque de Pastrano—His brilliant reception in France—His magnificent retinue—His

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first audience of Louis XIII—The Cardinals—Puerility of the Princes—Reception of the Spanish Ambassador by Madame—*The year of magnificence*—Splendour of the Court of Spain—Signature of the marriage articles—Honours shown to M. de Mayenne at Madrid—The Spanish Princess and her Duenna—The Duke of Savoy demands the hand of Madame Christine for his son—Marie desires to unite her to the Prince of Wales—Death of Prince Henry of England—Death of the Comte de Soissons—The Prince de Conti claims the government of Dauphiny—The Comte d'Auvergne is released from the Bastille, and resigns his government of Auvergne to M. de Conti—The Prince de Conde organizes a new faction—The Regent espouses his views—Alarm of the Guises—-Recall of the Duc de Bellegarde—He refuses to appear at Court—The Baron de Luz is restored to favour—The Guises prepare to revenge his defection from their cause.

The Prince de Conde and the Comte de Soissons having withdrawn from the capital, MM. de Guise and d'Epernon found themselves once more the principal personages of the Court, but their triumph was nevertheless greatly moderated by the jealousy of Concini, who began to apprehend that their ceaseless efforts to gratify the wishes of the Queen, and to flatter her love of splendour and dissipation, might ultimately tend to weaken his own influence; while the ministers, on their side, aware that the negotiations then pending with Spain for the marriage of the King could not be readily concluded without their aid and concurrence, however they might deprecate their return from other causes, also felt the necessity of securing their co-operation, for which purpose it was essential that such measures should be adopted as might render this concession acceptable to the royal malcontents.[131]

While this subject was under consideration, and Lent rapidly approaching, the Queen, who, being still in slight mourning, could not, according to the established etiquette, hold any assemblies in her own apartments, but who was unwilling to forego the customary amusements of the Carnival, desired the Duc de Guise, the Prince de Joinville, and M. de Bassompierre to perform a ballet every Sunday, which they accordingly did, "dividing," says the latter, "the expense between us."

The first of these allegorical dances was executed in the apartments of the Princesse de Conti, where a supper was prepared for her Majesty with an exclusiveness uncommon at the time, and which created considerable disappointment in the Court circle. None but the Princes then resident in the capital, namely MM. de Guise, de Nevers, and de Reims, with a few chosen courtiers, were permitted to attend, while the number of ladies was equally limited.

The second took place in the apartments of the Duchesse de Vendome, upon which occasion the banquet was offered to the Queen by Madame de Mercoeur; the third at the Hotel de Guise, where the Regent was entertained in the private *salon* of the

Duchess; and the fourth and last in the suite of rooms appropriated to Madame de Guercheville in the Louvre.[132]

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“I took the liberty,” says Rambure, with his usual quaintness, “of representing to the Regent that the people would murmur on witnessing balls at Court while she was still in mourning, but she only laughed at me, and bade me dismiss such an idea from my thoughts; at which I was not at all pleased, from the respect that I entertained for the memory of his late Majesty.” [133]

These gaieties did not, however, serve to divert the thoughts of the ministers from their desire to recall the absent Princes of the Blood; and it was finally arranged that as M. de Soissons had been the original cause of their absence, owing to his indignation at the ill-success of his attempt to purchase the duchy of Alencon, it would be expedient to hold out to him a prospect of obtaining the government of Quilleboeuf. It was accordingly decided that the Marquis d’Ancre, on the part of their Majesties, and M. de Villeroy on that of the ministers, should proceed to Nogent, where the Princes were then residing, and invite them to return to Court, with a full assurance from all parties that they would there occupy the station befitting their exalted rank, and be received with the dignities and honours which were due to them as Princes of the Blood.

The mission of the two envoys proved successful; and on their arrival at Fontainebleau the uncle and nephew were welcomed with a warmth and magnificence which alike flattered their self-love and tended to inspire them with confidence. Nevertheless, M. de Soissons had no sooner discovered that the Marquis d’Ancre, who, when he had himself retired from the Court, had lost the favour of the Queen, was now the firm ally of the ministers, through whose good offices he had regained his former position, than he exhibited towards the Italian a haughtiness and avoidance which ere long terminated in an open rupture.

Fearful of incurring through the means of the Count the additional enmity of M. de Conde, Concini endeavoured to win over the Marquis de Coeuvres, and to effect through his interposition a reconciliation with the indignant Prince. To this solicitation M. de Coeuvres replied that in order to establish a good understanding between two persons whom he had already so strenuously sought to serve, he was willing and ready to forget his private wrongs; but when it was suggested to him that he should exert his influence to renew the proposed marriage without reference to the Queen-Regent, he declined to make any effort to induce M. de Soissons to adopt so onerous a course, alleging that he had already suffered sufficiently by his interference in a matter which had been productive of great annoyance and injury to the Prince, and that he would not again lend his assistance to the project until the Marquis d’Ancre and his wife pledged themselves to reconcile M. de Soissons with the ministers, to restore him to the favour of the Regent, and to obtain her sanction to the proposed alliance.

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The firmness of this refusal staggered Concini, who, only recently reinstated in the good graces of the Queen, was for once apprehensive of the failure of his influence. He consequently confined his reply to a simple acknowledgment of the courtesy with which his proposal had been met by the Marquis, and then endeavoured personally to regain the confidence of the Prince by assurances of the sincere inclination of the Queen to meet his wishes upon every point within her power. As a natural consequence M. de Soissons listened willingly to these flattering declarations, uttered as they were by an individual well known to be in the entire confidence of his royal mistress; but they soon became blended with the regrets of the Marquis that his listener should have formed so close an alliance with his nephew as to have drawn down upon him the suspicion of the Court; and plausibly as these regrets were expressed, M. de Soissons was soon enabled to discover that the wily Italian had been instructed to detach him from Conde.

A similar endeavour was made with the Prince de Conde, but both were ineffectual. The two royal kinsmen had become fully aware that mutual support was their only safeguard against the party opposed to them; and they had no sooner detected the symptoms of coldness which supervened upon the ill-success of their advisers, than they resolved once more to leave the Court; and accordingly having taken leave of their Majesties, and resisted the pressing solicitations poured forth on all sides, they again retired; the Prince to St. Valery, and the Count to Dreux. This renewed opposition to her wishes roused the spirit of the Regent. She saw, as she asserted, that there no longer remained a hope of restraining the haughtiness, or of satisfying the pretensions, of the great vassals of the Crown; and she accordingly declared that in order to maintain her authority, and to secure the throne of her son, she would not allow the absence of the two Princes of the Blood to delay the publication of the King’s marriage. Immediate measures were consequently taken for concluding the necessary arrangements; and this was done with the less hesitation that the Marechal de Lesdiguieres (who for some time after his arrival at Court had continued to anticipate that the pledge given to him by the ministers would shortly be redeemed) had induced both the one and the other to state that they would offer no opposition to the alliance which had been determined. [134]

But this concession, which they were destined subsequently to deplore, was all that could be extorted from the Princes, who considered themselves aggrieved by the fact that so important a negotiation should have been carried on without their participation, when special couriers had been despatched to acquaint both the Cardinal de Joyeuse and the Due d’Epernon with the pending treaty. The Comte de Soissons, moreover, complained loudly and bitterly of the undue power of the ministers, and especially inveighed against the

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Chancellor Sillery, whom he unhesitatingly accused of extortion and avarice, of publicly making a trade of justice to the dishonour of the nation, and of ruining those who were compelled to solicit his protection. On this point alone he was in accord with Concini; and it was to this mutual hatred of the ministers that their partial good understanding must be attributed. The reasons which induced the Marechal de Lesdiguieres to approve the alliance we have already stated: the ducal crown which he was so anxious to secure must have been irretrievably lost by any opposition on his part to the proposed alliance, and this vision was for ever before his eyes. The approbation of the Connetable de Montmorency, who had originally declared his objection to so close a union between the two countries, was purchased by a promise that the hand of one of the Princesses of Mantua, niece to the Regent, should be conferred upon his son; and the brilliant promise of the one marriage caused him to overlook the probable perils of the other; while the Duc de Bouillon, although he occasionally declared in the Council that he seriously apprehended the result of so intimate a connection with Spain, never remonstrated with any energy against the measure, and was believed by those who knew him best to have already made his conditions with Philip. On the departure of the two Princes, Marie urged the Duc de Guise to afford her his support, together with that of his house, which he did with a frankness worthy of record, concluding, however, with these emphatic words: “I have but one favour to request of you, Madame; and that is, that after this important service your Majesty will not abandon us, as you have already once done, to the resentment of the Princes of the Blood.” [135]

The Duc d’Epernon, who had left the Court, as elsewhere stated, if not in actual disgrace, at least mortified and disappointed, was now recalled; and as his failing was well known, he was received on his arrival at Fontainebleau with such extraordinary distinction that all his past grievances were at once forgotten. Sillery, Villeroy, and Concini overwhelmed him with respect and adulation, and his adherence to the party of the Regent was consequently purchased before the question had been mooted in his presence.

Meanwhile the English Ambassador declaimed loudly against the contemplated alliance, which he declared to be unequivocally antagonistic to the interests of his sovereign; and his undisguised indignation so alarmed the Council that it was immediately resolved to despatch the Duc de Bouillon on an extraordinary embassy to the Court of London in order to appease the displeasure of James. The minister of the United Provinces was equally violent in his opposition, and exerted all his energies to prevent the conclusion of a treaty which he regarded as fatal to the interests of the republic that he represented, but his expostulations were disregarded. An envoy was sent to the Hague with assurances of amity to Prince Maurice and the States-General; and finally, the Marechal de Schomberg was instructed to visit the several Protestant Princes of Germany in order to dispel any distrust which they might feel at the probable results of an alliance so threatening to their interests.[136]

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These important measures concluded, the double marriage was proposed to the Council, where the Prince de Conde and the Comte de Soissons, who had recently returned to the capital, occupied their appointed seats; and at the commencement of the proceedings, when the question of the projected alliance had been submitted to the Assembly, M. de Conde demanded that each should deliver his opinion according to his rank. The Chancellor then opened the subject by a warm panegyric on the prudent administration of the Queen-Regent, dwelling at great length upon the extraordinary benefit which must accrue to the French nation from the contemplated alliance with Spain; and he was followed by the Duc de Guise, who, with more brevity but equal force, maintained the same argument. "No deliberation," concluded the Duke, "can be required upon so advantageous a proposal. We have only to thank God that her Majesty has so happily accomplished the noble purpose with which heaven had inspired her." As he resumed his seat the Connetable de Montmorency and the Ducs de Nevers and d'Epernon warmly applauded his words; after which the Marechaux de Bouillon and de Lesdiguieres declared their approval of the alliance, simply expressing a hope that proper precautions would be taken to prevent the treaty with Spain from proving prejudicial to the interests of France in her more ancient alliances with other foreign powers; and finally it became the turn of M. de Conde to declare his sentiments. The young Prince had, however, been so astonished by the fearless address of the Duc de Guise that he had entirely lost his self-possession, and merely said with great coldness: "Since the affair is decided, it was unnecessary to ask our advice."

The surprise was universal, as the general impression throughout the Council had been that the two Princes had determined to attend the meeting in order to oppose the projected marriages; a supposition which the words immediately afterwards addressed to M. de Conde by his uncle served to confirm. "You see, sir," said the Count, turning towards him with an impatient gesture, "that we are treated here like valets."

The Regent, irritated by this remark, which was uttered so audibly as to be generally overheard, was about to make some bitter rejoinder, when Sillery, perceiving her intention, again possessed himself of the ear of the Assembly; and it was ultimately concluded that the double marriage should be proclaimed on the 25th of March, and that the young Duc de Mayenne[137] should proceed to Spain as Ambassador-Extraordinary to demand the hand of the Infanta.

At the close of the Council the general topic of discourse was the extraordinary part played by the two Princes. It is well known that they were both strongly opposed to the measure which had just been carried, and their conduct was severally judged according to the particular feeling of those by whom it was discussed; some asserting that it was from a fear of the consequences of resistance, and others declaring that they indulged a hope of profiting largely by so unexpected a neutrality. The Duc de Montmorency was meanwhile furious at the contempt incurred by the unmanly bearing of his son-in-law, M. de Conde. "Sir," he said, as the Prince shortly afterwards approached him, "you neither know how to resist with courage, or to yield with prudence." [138]

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An unforeseen difficulty, however, now presented itself. The Spanish Cabinet no longer entertained the same apprehensions of the power of France that it had felt during the preceding year. The supremacy which it had so reluctantly recognized had ceased to exist, and the arrogance of Philip grew with this conviction; thus, where he had only a few months previously condescended to solicit, he now prepared to impose conditions, and the renewed negotiations were haughtily met by fresh proposals. Upon the pretext that the Princesses of France brought with them no right of succession to the crown, he declared his disinclination to give the hand of the elder Infanta to the young King, upon which Marie de Medicis replied that she was willing to accept his younger daughter as the bride of Louis XIII, provided that he, in his turn, were prepared to receive the Princesse Christine instead of Madame, as by this arrangement she should be enabled to fulfil the pledge given by the late King to the Duke of Savoy, that the eldest Daughter of France should be united to the Prince of Piedmont.

This explicit declaration at once silenced Philip, who was by no means desirous that Charles Emmanuel, whom he was anxious to crush, should by so close a connexion with France secure an ally through whose support he could not fail to protect himself against all aggression; and he accordingly signified with somewhat less arrogance than before that he was ready to ratify the original treaty, provided that Anne of Austria were permitted to renounce, both for herself and her children, all claim to the sovereignty of Spain.

This point having been conceded, immediate preparations were made for the proclamation of the royal marriages; but the ceremony was unavoidably delayed by the death of the Duke of Mantua, the brother-in-law of the Regent, and did not take place until the 5th of the following month,[139] on which day it was solemnly announced by the Chancellor, in the presence of the Prince de Conti, the peers and officers of the Crown, and the Spanish Ambassador, who gave his assent to the duplicate alliance in the name of the King his master, and from that period treated the little Princess with all the honours due to a Queen of Spain; never addressing her save on his bended knee, and observing many still more exaggerated ceremonies which excited at once surprise and amusement at the French Court.

It will have been remarked that neither M. de Conde nor the Comte de Soissons were present at the formal announcement, both having once more withdrawn from the capital with the determination of continuing absent until the majority of the King, in order to avoid signing the marriage contract.

“The Queen,” said M. de Soissons, when one of his friends would have dissuaded him from so extreme a course, “is quite able to conclude without our assistance the negotiation into which she has entered. God grant that we at least may be spared all participation in the slight offered to the memory of the late King, by refusing to falsify the pledge which he gave to the Duke of Savoy, whose house has so long been the firm ally of France.”

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Pity it is that this generous burst of high-mindedness and loyalty will not bear analysis. Both the Princes had discovered that the professions to which they had so complacently listened, and which had induced their recent return to Court, had merely been intended to lure them thither at a period when their presence was more than ever essential to the interests of the Regency; and while M. de Conde found his position in the Government as undefined and unsatisfactory as ever, and that his vanity had been flattered at the expense of his interests, the Count on his side saw the possession of Quilleboeuf more remote than ever, and openly declared that they had both been duped.

This undisguised admission at once revealed the selfishness of the views with which the malcontent Princes had lent themselves to the wishes of Marie and her ministers; and assuredly no worse policy could have been adopted than that by which they were again induced to exile themselves from their proper sphere of action. Too many interests were, however, served by their absence for either counsellor or courtier to point out to the Queen the extreme danger of driving them to extremities, save in the instance of the Connetable, who, more and more chagrined by the pitiful and even precarious position occupied by his son-in-law, remonstrated earnestly with the Regent upon the peril of the course which she had been induced to pursue.

“Remember, Madame,” he said, “that the civil wars and wretchedness of which this nation has been the prey during the last few reigns all owed their origin to the fatal advice given to Catherine de Medicis to disregard the legitimate claims of the Princes of the Blood; and those who would induce your Majesty to follow her example are more bent upon the furtherance of their own fortunes, and the increase of their own power, than anxious for the welfare of the state. Should your Majesty, therefore, suffer yourself to be influenced by their counsels, I foresee nothing in the future but anarchy and confusion.”

Unfortunately, however, the close alliance of the veteran Duke with one of those very Princes whose cause he thus warmly advocated, and his enmity towards the Guises, deprived his remonstrances of the force which they might otherwise have possessed, and Marie de Medicis consequently disregarded the warning until after-events caused her to feel and acknowledge its value. Supported by the House of Guise and the Duc d’Epernon, assured of the good faith of the Connetable and the Marechaux de Bouillon and de Lesdiguieres, as well as deeply incensed by the bearing of the two Princes in the Council; and, moreover, urged by her more immediate favourites to assert her dignity, and to display towards the malcontents a coldness and indifference as marked as that which they exhibited towards herself, she dismissed the subject from her thoughts as one of slight importance, and turned all her attention to the brilliant festivities by which the declaration of the royal marriages was to be celebrated.[140]

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The besetting sin of Marie de Medicis was a love of magnificence and display, and one of her greatest errors a wilful disregard of the financial exigencies which her profuse liberality had induced. Thus the splendour of the preparations which were exciting the wonder and curiosity of all Paris engrossed her so wholly that she had little time for dwelling on contingent evils. The departure of the Princes had, moreover, relieved her from the annoyance of encountering discontented countenances and repellent frowns; and as she saw herself surrounded only by beaming looks and complacent smiles, her spirits rose, and she began to believe that her long-indulged vision of undisputed supremacy was about to be realized.

It was a pleasant dream, and one in which the self-deceived Regent was eagerly encouraged by those around her. The halls and galleries of the Louvre were crowded with animated and obsequious courtiers, and the apartments of Marie herself thronged by the greatest and proudest in the land; all of whom appeared, upon so joyous an occasion, to have laid aside their personal animosities and to live only to obey her behests. Madame had also formed her separate Court, in the midst of which she received, with the grace of a girl and the premature dignity of a Queen, the elaborate homage of her future subjects; and meanwhile the young Louis, delighted by a partial emancipation from ceremony and etiquette for which he was indebted to the unusual movement about him, pursued his favourite sport of bird-hunting in the gardens of the Tuileries, and attached more importance to the feats of a well-trained sparrow-hawk than to the probable qualities of the bride provided for him by the policy of his royal mother.

And amid all this splendid excitement, gliding from one glittering group to another with a quiet self-possession and a calm composure strangely at variance with the scene around her, moved a lady whose remarkable appearance must have challenged attention, even had her singular career not already tended to make her an object of universal curiosity and speculation. Short of stature and slender of form, with a step as light and noiseless as that of an aerial being; her exquisitely-moulded although diminutive figure draped in a robe of black velvet, made after a fashion of which the severe propriety contrasted forcibly with the somewhat too liberal exposure of the period; with a countenance pale almost to sallowness; delicately chiselled features; and large eyes, encircled by a dark ring, only a few shades less black than the long lashes by which they were occasionally concealed; a mass of rich and glossy hair, tightly banded upon her forehead, and gathered together in a heavy knot, supported by long bodkins tipped with jewels, low in her neck behind; and above all, with that peculiar expression spread over her whole person which is occasionally to be remarked in individuals of that exceptional organization which appears to be the lot of such as are predestined to misery.

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Not a Princess of the Blood, not a Duchess of the realm, but had a smile and a courteous and eager word to bestow upon this apparently insignificant personage, at whose signal even the door of the Queen's private closet, closed against other intruders, opened upon the instant, as though she alone of all that brilliant galaxy of rank and wealth were to know no impediment, and to be subjected to no delay.

We have been somewhat prolix in our description of this extraordinary woman, but we shall be pardoned when we explain that we here give the portrait of Leonora Galigai, Marquise d'Ancre, the friend, confidante, and foster-sister of Marie de Medicis.

It is, however, time to return to the festivities to which allusion has already been made. Among these the most remarkable was a splendid carousal which took place in the Place Royale, and which is elaborately described by Bassompierre. The French Kings had originally held their tourneys, tilts, and passages-at-arms in the Rue St. Antoine, opposite the palace of the Tournelles; but the unfortunate death of Henri II, who was killed there by the lance of the Duc de Montgomery, caused the spot to be abandoned, and they were subsequently transferred to the Place Royale, which had been built in the ancient park of the same palace.

The lists on the present occasion were two hundred and forty feet in length, and were surrounded by barriers and platforms arranged in tiers, and reaching to the first stories of the houses. Facing the lists was erected the magnificent pavilion destined for their Majesties, which was richly draped with blue and gold, and surmounted by the great national standard, upon which the eagles of Austria and the arms of the Medici were proudly quartered with the *fleurs-de-lis* of France.

By command of the Queen the lists were held by the Ducs de Guise and de Nevers and the Marquis de Bassompierre, an honour which cost each of the individuals thus favoured the enormous sum of fifty thousand crowns; a fact which is easily understood when it is considered that their retinue consisted of five hundred persons and two hundred horses, the whole of whom, men and animals, were clad and caparisoned in scarlet velvet and cloth of silver. The number of spectators, exclusive of the Court and the armed guards, was estimated at ten thousand; and from nine in the morning until six in the evening the lists were constantly occupied. Salvos of artillery, fireworks, and allegorical processions succeeded; and the populace, delighted by "the glorious three days" of revel and relaxation thus provided for them, forgot for the time to murmur at an outlay which threatened them with increased exactions.

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At the termination of this carousal, which was followed by balls, banquets, and tiltings at the ring, the Court removed to Fontainebleau; where their Majesties shortly afterwards received the Marquis de Spinola, the Comte de Buquoy,[141] and Don Rodrigo Calderon,[142] who were entertained with great magnificence, and lodged in the house of Bassompierre.[143] At this period, indeed, everything sufficed as a pretext for splendour and display; as Marie de Medicis especially delighted to exhibit the brilliancy of her Court to the subjects of the nation with which she was about to become so intimately allied. In this endeavour she was ably seconded by the Guises and the Duc d'Epernon, who, since the departure of the two Princes, had shared her intimacy with the Marquis d'Ancre and his wife; while a new candidate for her favour had moreover presented himself in the person of the young and handsome Chevalier de Guise, the brother of the Duke,[144] who at this time first appeared at Court, where he had the honour of waiting upon her Majesty at table whenever she was the guest of the Duchess his mother, or the Princesse de Conti his sister. His youth, high spirit, inexhaustible gaiety, and extraordinary personal beauty rendered him peculiarly agreeable to Marie, who displayed towards him a condescending kindness which was soon construed by the Court gossips into a warmer feeling.

Concini immediately took the alarm, and hastened to confide his apprehensions to the ministers, whom he knew to be as anxious as himself to undermine the influence of the Duc d'Epernon and the formidable family to which he had allied his interests. In ridding themselves, by neglect and disrespect, of the Princes of the Blood, the discomfited confederates had anticipated undivided sway over the mind and measures of the Regent; and their mortification was consequently intense when they discovered that she had unreservedly flung herself into the party of their enemies.

The annoyance of the ministers was, however, based rather on public grounds than on personal feeling; but the case was far different with the Marquis, who had been reluctantly compelled to acknowledge to himself that he was indebted for his extraordinary fortune entirely to the influence of his wife, and that he was individually of small importance in the eyes of her royal mistress. This conviction had soured his temper; and instead of responding to the ardent affection of Leonora, he had recently revenged his outraged vanity upon the woman to whom he owed all the distinction he had acquired. The high spirit of the Marquise revolted at this ingratitude, and scenes of violence had consequently occurred between them which tended to increase the schism, and to render his position still more precarious. The tears of Leonora were universally all-powerful with the Queen, who did not hesitate to express her indignation at the unbecoming deportment of the aggrandized parvenu; upon which, unaccustomed to rebuke, he threatened to withdraw entirely from the Court and to reside at Amiens, a design which he, however, abandoned when he discovered that it met with no opposition.

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The Duc de Guise and the other members of his family, rejoicing in these domestic discords, which they trusted would ultimately tend to the disgrace of the arrogant Italian whose undue elevation had inspired them with jealousy and disgust, warmly espoused the cause of Leonora, and exerted all their power to irritate the mind of the Queen against the offending Marquis. Nor was it long ere the ministers adopted the same line of policy; and finally, Concini found himself so harassed and contemned that he resolved to attach himself to the party of the Princes, and to aid them in their attempt to overturn the Government.[145]

The Marechal de Bouillon had, as already stated, been despatched to England, in order to render James I. favourable to the alliance with Spain; and at the same time with strict instructions to induce him, should it be possible, to declare his displeasure at the recent conduct of the Protestants at Saumur, and especially at that of the Duc de Rohan. This was a mission which Bouillon joyfully undertook, his personal hatred and jealousy of the young Duke warmly seconding the instructions of the ministers. Rohan had, however, been warned in time of the intention of his enemies; and being in constant correspondence with Prince Henry, he hastened to entreat his interest with his royal father to avert the impending danger.

Unaware of this fact, the Marechal commenced his harangue by assuring the English monarch of the respect and attachment felt for his person by his own sovereign and his august mother, and their decided resolution that the alliance with Spain should in no way interfere with the good understanding which they were anxious to maintain with the Protestant Princes. To this assurance James listened complacently; and encouraged by his evident satisfaction, the envoy proceeded to inform him that he was moreover authorized to state that the Pope had no intention of exercising any severity against the reformed party in France, but would confine himself to attempting their conversion by means of the pulpit eloquence and good example of the Roman priesthood. The satisfaction of James increased as he listened, and when he had warmly expressed his gratification at the intelligence, Bouillon ventured to insinuate that the Regent had been deeply wounded by the fact of his having entered into the Protestant League of Germany; and besought him, in her name, to be favourable to his Catholic subjects.

At this point of the discourse James cautiously replied that the League involved no question of religion, but was purely a measure adopted for the reciprocal security of the confederated states; and that, as regarded the English Catholics, he would willingly permit the peaceable exercise of their faith in his dominions, so soon as they should have given pledges of their fidelity and obedience. Still undismayed, Bouillon then exposed what was to himself personally the most important feature of his mission, and urged

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his Britannic Majesty to express his disapproval of the proceedings of the Assembly at Saumur, and especially of the attitude assumed by the Duc de Rohan. Here, however, he was fated to discover that James had not for a moment been the dupe of his sophistical eloquence, ably as it had been exerted. A cloud gathered upon the brow of the English monarch, and as the Marechal paused for a reply, he was startled by the coldness and decision with which it was delivered.

“If the Queen your mistress,” said James with marked emphasis, “sees fit to infringe the edicts accorded to the Protestants of her kingdom, I shall not consider that the alliance into which I have entered with France ought to prevent me from assisting and protecting them. When my neighbours are endangered from a cause in which I am personally involved, I am naturally called upon to avert an evil that may extend to myself. Believe me, moreover, Marshal, when I say that you will be wise to effect a reconciliation with the Due de Rohan; and I shall cause him to understand that such is my wish.”

The ill-success of his mission was a bitter mortification to M. de Bouillon, who, dispirited and crestfallen, returned to Paris to report his failure. He, however, met with no sympathy, the ministers declaring that he had failed through his neglect of their instructions, and of the express orders of the Regent; while the Marechal complained on his side that he had been selected for this delicate embassy from the express intention, on the part of those who inveighed against him, of accomplishing his disgrace.

M. de Lesdiguieres also, at this period, discovered that he had been the dupe of his own ambition, and the tool of that of others. The ducal brevet of which he had considered himself secure was refused to him upon the plea that MM. de Brissac and de Fervaques were both senior marshals to himself, and that such a favour could not be conferred upon him without exciting their indignation. Vainly did he urge the promise made to him by Henri IV; neither the Regent nor her ministers would yield; when, irritated by the part which he had been made to play while his co-operation was necessary to the accomplishment of their measures, and the after-affront to which he was thus subjected, he retired from the Court in disgust, and transferred his services to the Princes of the Blood.

As we have already stated, Concini had, although less openly, followed the same course; but, in the first instance, he had skilfully effected a reconciliation with his wife, and induced her to assist him in his endeavour to weaken the extraordinary influence which the Duc d’Epernon and the Guises were rapidly acquiring over the Regent, who willingly forgot, amid the constant amusement and adulation with which they surrounded her, the cares and anxieties of government. The Duc de Vendome had also attached himself to the Court party, and this domestic league had consequently become more formidable than ever in the eyes of those who saw their interests compromised by its continuance.

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Marie could not, however, conceal from herself the absolute necessity of conciliating the disaffected Princes before the arrival of the ambassador of Philip, who was shortly expected to claim the hand of Madame for the Prince of Spain; and she accordingly determined to pave the way towards a reconciliation by thwarting the ambition of the great nobles who were obnoxious to the Princes. The first opportunity that presented itself of adopting this somewhat ungenerous policy was afforded by the Duc de Vendome, who demanded the royal sanction to preside over the States of Brittany, of which province he was governor; but his intention having been discovered by the Comte de Soissons and M. de Conde, they lost no time in warning their friends at Court against such a concession, and in reminding them that he had allied himself with the enemies of his royal father and the House of Bourbon; and that his influence might prove fatal to the tranquillity of the nation should he be permitted to exert it in a distant province, where his personal consideration and the enormous wealth of his wife must conduce to render him all-powerful. These arguments were impressed upon the Regent alike by the ministers and by the Marquis d'Ancre, who no sooner saw himself once more in favour than he exerted all his influence to undermine the power of the rival faction; and as her private views warmly seconded their representations, Marie instantly resolved to refuse the coveted favour.

When, therefore, the Duc de Vendome proffered his request, the Queen met it with a cold denial, and instructed M. de Brissac to proceed at once to Brittany as his substitute; an affront which so stung the Duke that he immediately challenged De Brissac; but before the meeting could take place it was betrayed to the Queen, who, irritated by this disregard of her authority, would not be induced to wait until a reconciliation could be effected between them, but issued a peremptory order that M. de Vendome should leave the Court on the instant, and retire to his estate of Anet, and that the Marechal de Brissac should forthwith proceed to Brittany. In vain did the fiery young Prince explain and expostulate; Marie was inexorable; and although the Ducs de Guise and d'Epernon interceded in his behalf, they were equally unsuccessful; nor did they discontinue their entreaties until the Queen bade them rather look to the stability of their own favour than hasten its termination by upholding the cause of those who rebelled against her pleasure.

This incident afforded unmitigated satisfaction to the absent Princes; but to the Comte de Soissons it was nevertheless only the herald of more important concessions on the part of the Regent. In his temporary retirement he had dwelt at leisure on his imaginary wrongs; his hatred of the ministers had increased; and, above all, he had vowed the ruin of the Chancellor. In his nephew the Prince de Conde he found a willing listener and an earnest coadjutor; but from a very different impulse. M. de Soissons panted for power, and loathed every impediment to the gratification of his ambition; while the young Prince, less firm of purpose, and more greedy of pleasure and ostentation, was wearied by the obscurity of his existence, and the tedium of his self-imposed exile.

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Concini, with admirable tact, played upon the weaknesses of both Princes, and augmented their discontent; while he was at the same time careful to exonerate the Regent from all blame. Conscious that without her support he could not sustain for an hour the factitious power to which he had attained, he laboured incessantly to throw the whole odium of the disunion upon the ministers, who were fully as obnoxious to himself as to the Princes.

“They it is,” he continually repeated, “who are the true cause of your estrangement. The Queen is, as I know, well disposed towards all the Princes of the Blood; but Sillery, Villeroy, and Jeannin are constantly representing to her the danger of allowing you to become too powerful. Your real enemies are the ministers who are fearful of affording you the opportunity of overbalancing their influence.”

This assurance was too flattering to the self-love of the Princes to be repulsed; they forgot that Concini himself had been as eager as those whom he now inculpated to destroy their importance, and to limit their power; they saw the great nobles, whose ambition was disappointed, or whose vanity was wounded, successively espouse their cause, and they were easily induced to believe that the time was not far distant when they should triumph over their opponents, and be repaid for all their mortifications. This was precisely the frame of mind into which Concini had endeavoured to bring them; and so ably did he avail himself of his advantage that at length, when on one occasion he found himself in company with the Prince de Conde, the Comte de Soissons, and the Marechaux de Bouillon and de Lesdiguieres, he induced them to unite with him in attempting the ruin of the ministers.

He was, moreover, powerfully abetted in his intrigue by the Duke of Savoy; who, outraged at the insult which had been offered to him by the Regent in bestowing the hand of Madame Elisabeth, which had been solemnly promised to the Prince of Piedmont, upon the Infant of Spain; and who, moreover, hoped to profit by the internal dissensions of France, and to recover through the medium of the disaffected Princes the provinces which Henri IV had compelled him to relinquish in exchange for the marquisate of Saluzzo, omitted no opportunity of endeavouring to foment a civil war; from which, while he had nothing to apprehend, he had the prospect of reaping great personal advantage.

Thus supported, Concini, who was aware of the intimate relations subsisting between Charles Emmanuel and the Comte de Soissons, did not hesitate to urge the Princes to a resolute resistance; nor was this seed of rebellion scattered upon sterile soil. M. de Soissons pledged himself that on his return from Normandy, where he was about to sojourn for a short time, he would publicly insult the Chancellor; while M. de Lesdiguieres, who was still furious at the disappointment to which he had been subjected, and who was about to return to Dauphiny, volunteered, should the Princes decide upon enforcing their claims, to march ten thousand infantry and fifteen hundred horse to the gates of Paris.

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Nor did the vindictive Italian confine his efforts to thus tampering with the disaffected Princes; he was equally indefatigable with the Regent, who, even had she been disinclined to regard his own representations, never neglected those of her beloved Leonora; and who was, moreover, the better disposed to yield to his arguments because she saw her foster-sister once more happy, and believed that the affection of the Marquis had been restored to his wife through her own influence.

Success rendered Concini bold. He was aware that he had secured a strong hold upon the confidence and regard of the malcontents; but when he found the Queen inclined to make concessions in their favour which threatened to invest them with a power as dangerous to his own interests as that now wielded by the ministers, he did not hesitate to dissuade her from her purpose. Anxious to conciliate the Comte de Soissons, Marie declared her determination to effect this desirable result by bestowing upon him the government of Ouilleboeuf, the refusal of which had been the original cause of his estrangement; a resolve from which she was, however, diverted by the representations of the Italian that such a concession, thus tardily and reluctantly made, must be fatal to her dignity, and would only lead to fresh demands on the part of the Prince, whose insatiable ambition was no secret; while, fearful lest his own representations should fail to change her purpose, he employed his confidential friend and ally the Baron de Luz to entreat of the Due de Guise to second his endeavour. In this attempt, however, the Marquis failed through an excess of subtlety, as the Duke, outraged by this double treason, not only refused to lend himself to so dishonourable an act of treachery, but immediately informed M. de Soissons of the deceit which was practised towards him; and feeling deeply aggrieved moreover by the affront that had been offered to Cesar de Vendome, he declared himself prepared to espouse the cause of the Princes against the machinations of the Marquis d'Ancre. His example was followed by the whole of his family, as well as by the Cardinal de Joyeuse and the Due de Bellegarde; and thus the unfortunate Regent was suddenly deprived of all her friends with the sole exception of the Duc d'Epernon, who, either from an excess of pride which would not permit him to humble himself so far as to induce him to pay his court to the Princes from whom he had received so many and such bitter mortifications, or from the state of indisposition under which he was at that period labouring, refused to take any share in the intrigues of the Court.

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Concini became alarmed; he had so long been the spoilt child of fortune that every reverse overthrew his self-possession; and in the first paroxysm of his terror he considered himself lost. Chance and his own ready cunning still, however, stood his friends. The Grand Equerry (Bellegarde) was, with the insane superstition of the time, accused of having suborned witnesses to prove that the Marquis had endeavoured by means of a magic mirror to inspire some of the highest ladies of the Court with a passion for his person; and as Concini demanded reparation for this injury, an investigation was instituted, to effect which it was necessary that summonses should be issued to the witnesses. Sillery, to whom the Italian was peculiarly obnoxious, and who was the friend of the Duc de Bellegarde, made some difficulty when called upon to affix the official seal to these documents; upon which Concini hastened to complain to the Regent that the Chancellor was endeavouring to sacrifice him to his enemies; and Marie, indignant no less at the apparent injustice shown to her favourite than at the delay evinced in obeying her commands, made no attempt to disguise her displeasure.

On the other hand, the Comte de Soissons, who still hoped to obtain from the courtesy, or to wring from the fears, of the Regent the promised government of Quilleboeuf, made a voyage into Normandy, which so alarmed the Marechal de Fervaques, who held the city, and who apprehended that the Prince was about to possess himself of it by force, that he privately reinforced the garrison; a fact which M. de Soissons no sooner ascertained than he bitterly upbraided the Marechal, and a quarrel ensued between them that produced new difficulties.

Unfortunately Marie de Medicis was at this moment surrounded by evil and interested advisers, by whom she was induced to embroil herself, not only with the Princes of the Blood and great nobles, but also with the Parliament, and eventually with the Protestants. The misunderstanding which had arisen between the Duc de Rohan and the Marechal de Bouillon unhappily produced a disunion among the Huguenot party which laid them open to the machinations of their enemies; and Marie, whose zeal for the Romish communion always made her eager to harass and oppress the Protestants, was readily persuaded to undertake the annullation of the edicts by which their allegiance had hitherto been secured. Bouillon had never forgiven the Duc de Rohan for the energetic part which he had played at the Assembly of Saumur; and secure of his influence over the mind of the Regent, who felt grateful for the offer of his services upon that occasion, and the efforts which he had made to carry out her wishes, he resolved to undermine the interests of the young Duke, and to attempt to deprive him of his government of St. Jean-d'Angely which had been bestowed upon him by Henri IV.

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Apprised of his intention, M. de Rohan hastened to Court in order to justify himself, but the mind of Marie had been poisoned against him, and she treated his remonstrances with chilling indifference. Aware that the mayor of the town had been bought by his enemies, and that should that official be continued in his authority he must himself inevitably lose his government, and thereby forfeit all his influence, the Duke no sooner saw the period of the municipal election approach than, pretexting the dangerous illness of his brother, he took his leave of the Court and hastened back to St. Jean-d'Angely in order to compel the retirement of the obnoxious functionary. As he had anticipated, on the day of the canvass a letter was received from the ministers, ordaining the re-election of the mayor without modification or explanation of any kind; an affront which so exasperated M. de Rohan that he at once resisted its enforcement; declaring that the Regent had been misinformed with regard to the state of the town, which, according to the terms of the letter, was inferred to be divided into parties; and that, as he would undertake to convince her Majesty of the error under which she laboured, they had only to proceed at once to a new election.

Bouillon had been prepared for this opposition; and found it easy to induce Marie, whose jealousy of power always rendered her on such occasions as the present a mere tool in the hands of her *soi-disant* friends, to forward a second and more stringent order for the continuance in office of the existing mayor. The Duke, however, persisted in disregarding the mandate; and after having despatched his secretary to the Louvre to explain the reasons of his resistance, he proceeded to authorize the nomination of three persons, all eligible for the office, in order that the Regent might make her own selection; and, while awaiting her reply, the keys of the city were confided to the senior sheriff; and he found himself complete master of the place.[146]

Nothing could exceed the indignation of Marie de Medicis on learning this contempt of her authority. The messengers of M. de Rohan were forthwith committed to the Bastille; orders were issued to the Duchess his mother, to his wife, and to his sisters, not to leave the capital; and preparations were even made to besiege the Duke in St. Jean-d'Angely as a rebel. Manifestoes to the Protestants were next put forth by both parties; that of the Queen-mother protesting that the aggressive measures which she was about to adopt involved no question of faith, but were destined to be directed simply against M. de Rohan as an individual; and that consequently they would in no degree affect the edicts of pacification, which would be rigidly observed; and calling upon all faithful subjects of the King, whatever might be their religious persuasion, to aid and abet the effort by which she trusted to subdue the nascent rebellion threatened by so gross a disregard of the constituted authorities of the realm. The Duke, on his side, threw himself upon the justice and generosity of his co-religionists, reminding them that it was through zeal for their common faith that he had incurred the resentment of the Court; and having so done, he hastened to place the city in such a state of defence as should enable him to resist the attack of the royal troops.

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The resolute position thus assumed by M. de Rohan alarmed the ministers; who apprehensive that the neighbouring provinces, already disaffected by the negative result of the Assembly of Saumur, would support the cause of so bold a recusant, and thus renew the civil war by which the nation had formerly been convulsed, became anxious to temporize. Negotiations were accordingly commenced between the adverse factions; and it was ultimately agreed that the keys of the city should be restored to the mayor from whom they had been taken, and some subaltern officers displaced by the Duke reinstated in their functions, and that so soon as this arrangement had been completed a new election should take place, by which M. de Rohan was to be at liberty to substitute others more agreeable to himself. This absurd ceremony was accordingly performed; the royal authority was supposed to have enforced its recognition; and the Duke, by a merely visionary concession, preserved his government.[147]

Meanwhile the young Duc de Mayenne had taken leave of the Court, and departed with a brilliant suite for Madrid, to demand the hand of the Infanta for the King of France; and on the same day the Duque de Pastrano left the Spanish capital on his way to Paris to solicit that of Madame Elisabeth for the Prince of Spain.

The ducal envoy reached the French capital early in the month of July, accompanied by his brothers Don Francisco and Don Diego de Silva and a number of Spanish grandees, having been received with extraordinary honours in every town which he had traversed after passing the frontier. The Ducs de Luxembourg[148] and de Nevers met him beyond the gate of the city, accompanied by five hundred nobles on horseback, sumptuously attired in velvet and cloth of gold and silver, with their horses splendidly caparisoned. The retinue of the Iberian grandee was not, however, as the French courtiers had fondly flattered themselves that it would have been, eclipsed by the lavish magnificence of their own appearance, his personal costume being of the most splendid description, his horses and equipages costly and gorgeous, and his numerous train of attendants habited in a livery of extreme richness.

On the 16th of the month the Spanish Duke had his first audience of the young King, at which were assembled the Princes of the Blood, all the high nobility of France, and the Cardinals de Sourdis and de Gondy.[149] The two latter dignitaries endeavoured to excuse themselves, on the pretext that their rank as Princes of the Church would not permit them to seat themselves below the Princes of the Blood; but this pretension on their part was considered so monstrous, even by the Regent herself, that, anxious as she was to secure their attendance in order to render the ceremony more imposing to the Spanish envoy, she did not venture to support them in their arrogant assumption of equality with the first subjects of the Crown; and she accordingly informed them in reply that upon the present occasion there would be no regard paid to precedence, but that each individual who was entitled to attend the audience would be at liberty to seat himself as he saw fit.

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Thus assured, the two prelates, attired in their rich robes of violet-coloured velvet, entered the hall; and were about to take their places near the royal dais, when the Princes of the Blood, led by M. de Conde, hastily passed them, and ranged themselves in a line on the right hand of the King. The Cardinals then proceeded to adopt a similar position beside the Queen-Regent, but they were immediately displaced by the Dowager Princess of Conde, her daughter-in-law, and Madame de Conti; and upon finding themselves thus excluded from the immediate neighbourhood of the sovereign, they withdrew in great displeasure, no effort being made to detain them.

Nor was this the only altercation which took place before the commencement of the ceremony; and the one which we are about to relate is so characteristic of the manners of that age among the great, that it must not be omitted. The Duc de Nevers had taken his place upon the bench appropriated to the Princes of the Blood, immediately below M. de Soissons, who, being engaged in conversation with his brother, the Prince de Conti, did not remark the intrusion. M. de Conde, however, who was seated above his two uncles, at once discovered the enormity of which the Duke had been guilty, and he forthwith commenced pushing the Prince de Conti so violently that he excited his attention; and his purpose was no sooner understood than his example was imitated with an energy which was instantly communicated to the Comte de Soissons, who in his turn so pressed upon M. de Nevers that he became extremely irritated, and demanded why he was subjected to such ungracious treatment.

“Because this is not a place for you,” haughtily retorted the Prince de Conde.

The Duc de Nevers made a bitter rejoinder, and high words ensued, which were at length terminated by the Prince, who said significantly: “We can explain ourselves better elsewhere, M. le Duc; follow me.”

The conversation had, however, been overheard by the Marechal de Bouillon, who hastened to inform the King that the two Princes had retired for a hostile purpose; upon which Louis ordered them to be instantly recalled, and after having rebuked M. de Nevers for assuming a place to which he was not entitled, insisted upon their immediate reconciliation.[150]

The Duque de Pastrano was then introduced by M. de Guise and his two brothers; and after the usual ceremony of welcome on the one side and obeisance on the other, he presented to the King and his royal mother the letters with which he had been entrusted by his sovereign. Thence he proceeded to the apartments of Madame Elisabeth, where he delivered the missives of the Prince of Spain; after which he was conducted to the presence of the other Children of France; and finally, having paid his respects to every member of the royal family, he was attended by a brilliant retinue of nobles to the residence which had been appropriated to his use during his sojourn in the capital.

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So unparalleled was the splendour displayed upon this occasion, that the year 1612 was long known in Europe as “the year of magnificence,” the festivities having been alike gorgeous throughout France, Spain, and Naples; and considerable mortification was experienced in the former kingdom when it was ascertained, on the return of the Duc de Mayenne, that the display made in Paris, extraordinary as it was, could not equal that exhibited at Lerma and Madrid. In the former city the favourite of Philip had received the French envoy in his own palace, and had lodged him in an apartment hung with tapestry of silk and gold, intermingled with emeralds and rubies. In Madrid it is true that the mourning still worn for the late Queen somewhat modified the brilliancy of the spectacle; but as every effort had been made to counteract the effect of this drawback, it became rather a singular feature than an actual blot upon the gorgeousness of the spectacle presented by the Spanish capital.[151]

On the 25th of August the marriage articles were signed between Madame Elisabeth and the Prince of Spain, the dowry of the girl-bride being five hundred thousand golden crowns; after which the Duque de Pastrano, laden with magnificent presents, and satiated with pleasure and festivity, took his leave of the French Court, and left Paris on his return to Madrid.

The contract between Louis XIII and the Infanta was meanwhile completed on the 22d of the month in the Spanish capital; and at the close of the ceremony the Duc de Mayenne was conducted to an audience-chamber in which Philip was seated with the betrothed Prince and Princess on his right and left, awaiting his arrival. After having profoundly saluted the King in perfect silence, the Duke approached the Infanta, to whom he addressed himself as to the Queen of France. His compliment was courteously received; and before the termination of this private audience, when on taking leave he would have bent his knee and kissed the hand of the sovereign and his son, each in succession saluted him upon the cheek; an honour as great as it was unexpected, particularly in a Court where the observances of strict etiquette were more rigidly enforced than elsewhere in Europe.

The festivities consequent upon the double betrothal occupied several days, and they no sooner came to a close than the French envoy demanded a parting audience of his future sovereign, at which he entreated of her to entrust him with some letter or message for the King his master.

“Tell him,” said the Princess eagerly, “that I am very impatient to see him.”

“Oh, Madame!” exclaimed the Condesa d’Altamira, her *gouvernante*, “what will his Majesty of France think of your Royal Highness when my Lord Duke informs him that you are in such haste to become a wife?”

“You have always taught me to tell the truth,” was the ready retort; and charged with this sincere and singular communication, M. de Mayenne returned to Fontainebleau.

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The Duke of Savoy had no sooner ascertained that the hand of Madame Elisabeth was definitely pledged to the Spanish Prince than he declared to the Queen-Regent his readiness to receive that of the Princesse Christine for his own son; and for awhile Marie had affected to favour the alliance; but her great ambition was to see each of her daughters upon a throne, and she had accordingly entered into a negotiation with the English monarch for effecting a marriage between the younger Princess and Henry, Prince of Wales, who was about to be betrothed to the Princess of Savoy. She was the more encouraged to hope for the success of this proposal as James had already been a candidate for the hand of her elder daughter; nor was she deterred by the knowledge that the Grand Duke of Tuscany[152] had offered one of his sisters, with an enormous dowry, to the British Prince.[153]

So eager, indeed, was Marie de Medicis to effect this alliance for the Princesse Christine, that the English Ambassador did not hesitate to declare to his Government that from the manner in which the affair had been urged upon him by M. de Villeroy, he felt a conviction that his royal master might conclude the treaty of marriage whenever he considered it expedient to do so, and might moreover make whatever conditions he thought proper.

While the negotiations were still pending, however, the lamentable death of the high-spirited and promising young Prince terminated at once the struggle for his hand; and Marie de Medicis, to her undisguised regret, found herself unable to realize one of her most cherished hopes.

On the 1st of November the Comte de Soissons, who was suddenly attacked by scarlet fever while still engaged in projects of ambition and revenge, also breathed his last; an event which was destined to effect a complete change in the aspect of the Court. By his decease the governments of Dauphiny and Normandy, as well as the appointment of Grand Master of the King’s Household, became vacant; and four-and-twenty hours had not elapsed before as many claimants presented themselves, eager to secure these coveted honours. The Prince had, however, left an infant son, to whom the Queen-Regent immediately transferred both the government of Dauphiny and the place at Court recently held by his father. As regarded Normandy, she resolved to retain it in her own hands, and to appoint a lieutenant-governor to whom she could confide the command of the province; but she had no sooner declared her intention than she was met by the expostulations of M. de Conti, who reminded her that having formerly ceded the government of Dauphiny to the Comte de Soissons at her request, he considered himself entitled to succeed to that which had now become available by his death.

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Determined to retain her possession of the province, and yet fearful of exciting once more the resentment of the Princes of the Blood, the Regent was compelled to propose a compromise, which, after some hesitation, was accepted by M. de Conti. It will be remembered that the Comte d'Auvergne, Charles de Valois, recently become Duc d'Angouleme, had been committed to the Bastille by Henri IV for conspiring with his father and sister against the person of the King and the tranquillity of the realm; nor is it probable that Marie de Medicis would have felt the slightest inclination to show any indulgence to the step-brother of Madame de Verneuil, had it not on the present occasion been a matter of policy to do so. The Marquis de Coeuvres was accordingly instructed to visit him in his prison, and to offer him his liberty provided he would resign to the Prince de Conti his government of Auvergne; and although the Duke at first evinced extreme reluctance to comply with this condition, he was ultimately induced to yield to the solicitations of the royal envoy, who convinced him that the freedom for which he yearned so eagerly could be purchased at no other price.[154]

The body of the Comte de Soissons was conveyed to the Chartreuse at Gaillon, and there deposited in the tomb of his ancestors;[155] and before the close of the month the Queen-Regent assisted, at the Hotel de Soissons in Paris, at the baptism of his son, which was celebrated in the presence of all the most distinguished personages of the Court.[156]

At this period a new cabal was organized which effectually neutralized all attempt at opposition. The chief of this formidable faction was the Prince de Conde; and it was moreover composed of the Ducs de Nevers, de Mayenne, and de Longueville, the Marechal de Bouillon, and the Marquis d'Ancre. By this combination of rank, influence, and favour, the Guises, the Duc d'Epernon, and their adherents saw themselves thrown into the background, and threatened with utter annihilation as a political party. The Connetable de Montmorency, who believed the power of the Guises to be firmly established, and who had consequently allied himself to their interests, was absent in Languedoc, of which province he was governor; while the Grand Equerry, M. de Bellegarde, who was also their friend, was sojourning in Burgundy; and thus they found themselves exposed, almost without support, to the evil offices of the rival faction. The Queen openly espoused the cause of M. de Conde and his party, while the ministers soon saw themselves utterly deprived of both influence and credit; and at length, seriously alarmed by the posture of affairs, the Duc de Guise wrote to entreat M. de Bellegarde to return with all speed to Paris, in order to assist him in his endeavour to overthrow the rapidly-growing power of their mutual adversaries. M. le Grand was preparing to comply with this request, when an order to the same effect reached him from the Regent, which tended to hasten his departure; but on arriving at Sens he was met by one of his friends, who warned him not to trust himself in the capital, as he had only been recalled in order that he might either be bribed or frightened into the resignation of his government, of which the Marquis d'Ancre had undertaken to effect the transfer to the Duc de Mayenne.

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In consequence of this intimation M. le Grand, instead of appearing at Court in compliance with the royal mandate, returned in all haste to Languedoc, and the Duc de Guise found himself deprived of his anticipated assistance.[157] Bellegarde himself, who attributed this attempt to deprive him of his government to the Baron de Luz—who through the influence of Bassompierre had been reinstated in the favour of the Queen, and had consequently abandoned the faction of the Guises, of whose projects and designs he was cognizant, in order to espouse the interests and to serve the ambition of the Marquis d'Ancre—vowed vengeance against the recreant baron, and complained bitterly to his friends of the insult to which he had been subjected through this unworthy agency.

The Guises, already apprehensive of the consequences which might accrue to themselves from the defection of M. de Luz, were only too ready to sympathize with the indignant Duke, and unfortunately for all parties they did not confine their sympathy to mere words. Ever prompt and reckless, they at once resolved to revenge themselves upon their common enemy; nor was it long ere they carried their fatal determination into effect.

FOOTNOTES:

[131] D'Estrees, *Mem*. p. 394.

[132] Bassompierre, *Mem*. p. 78.

[133] Rambure, MS. *Mem*. vol. vi. p. 81.

[134] Richelieu, *Hist. de la Mere et du Fils*, vol. i. pp. 175-177.

[135] Siri, *Mem. Rec*. vol. ii. pp. 607-612.

[136] Le Vassor, vol. i. p. 127.

[137] Henri de Lorraine, Due d'Aiguillon, who had succeeded to the title of his late father.

[138] Siri, *Mem. Rec.* vol. ii. pp. 618-620.

[139] Mezeray, vol. xi. pp. 30, 31.

[140] Siri, *Mem. Rec*. vol. ii. pp. 640-642.

[141] Charles de Longueval, Comte de Buquoy, was so eminently distinguished for his military talents that Philip III of Spain and the Emperor Ferdinand II confided to him the command of their joint armies in 1619. He completely defeated the forces of the

malcontents in Bohemia; and then marched upon Hungary, which had just elected Bethlem-Gabor as its sovereign. In 1621 he overcame the troops of the Magyar monarch, which were entirely routed; but was killed the same year in a skirmish with a small party of the enemy.

[142] Don Rodrigo Calderon was a statesman rendered famous by his extraordinary elevation and his equally remarkable reverses. Born at Antwerp, the son of a Spanish trooper and a Flemish woman of low extraction, his talents ultimately raised him to the rank of confidant and favourite of the Duque de Lerma, prime minister of Philip III, through whose influence he subsequently became Conde d'Oliva, Marques de Siete-Iglesias, and secretary of state. In 1618 the disgrace of his patron involved his own ruin. Accused of having poisoned the Queen Marguerite, he was (in 1619) committed to a dungeon, and two years afterwards was sacrificed by the Conde-Duque d'Olivares to the public hatred against the Duque de Lerma. He perished upon the scaffold in 1621.

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[143] Bassompierre, *Mem*. pp. 78, 79.

[144] Francois Paris de Lorraine, Chevalier de Guise.

[145] Le Vassor, vol. i. p. 139.

[146] *Mem. du Duc de Rohan*, book i. *Vie de Du Plessis-Mornay*, book iii.

[147] Le Vassor, vol. i. pp. 142-152. Mezeray, vol. xi. pp. 36-38. D'Estrees, *Mem*. pp. 294-298. Matthieu, *Hist. des Derniers Troubles*, book iii. pp. 473, 474.

[148] Henri, Duc de Luxembourg-Piney, was a descendant of the celebrated Comte de Saint-Pol, and the last male representative of his family. He died in 1616, leaving one daughter, Marguerite Catherine de Luxembourg, who married the Comte Charles Henri de Clermont-Tonnerre, and became the mother of Madeleine, wife of Francois de Montmorency, commonly known in history as the Marechal de Luxembourg.

[149] Pierre de Gondy, Bishop of Langres, and subsequently first Archbishop of Paris, who was created a Cardinal by Sixtus V in 1587. He died in the French capital in 1616, in his eighty-fourth year.

[150] Siri, *Mem. Rec*. vol. ii. pp. 697-700.

[151] Le Vassor, vol. i. pp. 153, 154. *Mercure Francais*, 1612.

[152] Cosmo II, Grand Duke of Tuscany, succeeded his father Ferdinand in 1609. He was a Prince of liberal and peaceful sentiments, and greatly endeared himself to his subjects. He married Marie Madeleine, Archduchess of Austria, sister of the Queen of Spain and the Duchess of Savoy; and died in 1621, leaving his duchy to his elder son, Ferdinand II.

[153] Siri, *Mem. Rec*. vol. ii. pp. 647-654.

[154] Mezeray, vol. xi. pp. 39, 40. Le Vassor, vol. i. p. 160. D'Estrees, *Mem*. p. 398.

[155] Matthieu, *Hist. des Derniers Troubles*, book iii. p. 474.

[156] Bassompierre, *Mem*. p. 80.

[157] Le Vassor, vol. i. p. 161. Bassompierre, *Mem*. p. 80.

CHAPTER V

1613

State of France at the commencement of 1613—Characteristics of the Baron de Luz—-His imprudence—He is challenged by the Chevalier de Guise, and killed—The Regent summons a council—The nobles assemble at the Hotel de Guise—The Duke is forbidden to enter the Louvre, and ordered to disperse his friends—M. de la Rochefoucauld refuses to leave the Hotel de Guise—He is exiled from the Court—-Moderation of the Duc de Guise—Inflexibility of Marie de Medicis—Her anger against the Chancellor—She holds a secret council—The Prince de Conde is directed to demand the seals from M. de Sillery, and to command him to retire from the capital—-Marie determines to arrest the Duc d'Epernon—Her designs are thwarted by Concini—-The Marquis d'Ancre introduces the son of M. de Luz to the Regent—Marie promises him her protection— Bassompierre endeavours to effect the recall of the Duc de Guise, and succeeds—His reception by the Regent—Arrogance of the Duchesse

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de Guise—The Prince de Conde forms an alliance with M. de Guise— Influence of the Prince—He demands the captaincy of the Chateau Trompette—Over-zealous friends—-Alarm of the Queen—She resolves to conciliate the Guises—The Marquis d'Ancre and his wife incur the displeasure of the Queen—Marie purchases the loyalty of the Duc de Guise—Dignified bearing of the Duc d'Epernon—A reconciliation—"Put not your faith in princes"—Exultation of the ministers—A private audience—Eavesdroppers—-Mortification of the Prince de Conde—Concini endeavours to conciliate the Queen—He is repulsed—The young Baron de Luz challenges the Chevalier de Guise—Wounds his adversary, and is killed—Royal solicitude—Death of the Chevalier de Guise—Banquet at the Hotel de Conde—Affront to Bassompierre—Concini retires to Amiens—The Duc de Vendome joins the faction of the Prince de Conde—A new intrigue—Suspicions of the Regent—Midnight visitors—The Prince de Conde and the Duc de Vendome leave the Court—The Regent refuses to sanction the departure of M. de Guise—The Queen and her favourite—The ministers pledge themselves to serve Concini—Peril of Bassompierre—He determines to leave France—Is dissuaded from his purpose by the Regent—Troubles in Mantua—Negotiation with the Duke of Savoy—James I. offers the hand of Prince Charles of England to the Princesse Christine—Satisfaction of Marie de Medicis—The Pope takes alarm—The Regent and the Papal Nuncio—Death of the Marechal de Fervaques—Concini is made Marechal de France—Ladies of Honour—-The Queen and her foster-sister—The Princesse de Conti—A well-timed visit—The new Marechal—A sensation at Court.

The state of France at the commencement of the year 1613 was precarious in the extreme. As yet no intestine war had broken out, but there existed a sullen undercurrent of discontent and disaffection which threatened, like the sound of distant thunder, to herald an approaching storm. The Court was, as we have shown, the focus of anarchy and confusion; the power and resources of the great nobles had steadily increased since the death of Henri IV, and had they only been united among themselves, the authority of Marie de Medicis must have been set at nought, and the throne of the boy-King have tottered to its base. The provinces were, in many instances, in open opposition to the Government; the ministers indignant at the disrespect shown alike to their persons and to their functions; the Parliament jealous of the encroachments on its privileges; the citizens outraged by the lavish magnificence, and indignant at the insolent assumption of the nobility; and the people irritated and impoverished by the constant exactions to which they were subjected in order to supply the exigencies of the state.

Such was the condition of a kingdom dependent for its prosperity upon the rule of a favourite-ridden woman, and a helpless child.

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We have already stated the anxiety of the Guises to revenge themselves upon M. de Luz; and we have now to relate the tragedy which supervened upon this resolution. It appears to be the common fate of all favourites to accelerate their own ruin by personal imprudence; nor was M. de Luz destined to prove an exception. His life had been a varied one; but the spirit of intrigue and enterprise with which he was endowed had enabled him to bid defiance to adverse fortune, and to struggle successfully against every reverse. Patient under disappointment because strong in his confidence of future compensation, he was less cautious in his more prosperous moments; and in one of these he was unhappy enough to afford a pretext for the violence of the enemies who had vowed his ruin.

Disregarding the presence of the Chevalier de Guise, or perhaps unconscious of his propinquity, De Luz, shortly after the return of the Duc de Bellegarde to Languedoc, was relating to a group of nobles, who were lounging away the time in the great gallery of the Louvre while awaiting the appearance of the King, the circumstances which preceded the assassination of the Duc de Guise at Blois; boasting that he was present with the Marechal de Brissac when Henri III decided upon the murder, and had even prevented the former from intimating his danger to the intended victim. The Chevalier, who was young, impetuous, and, like all the members of his house, utterly careless of the consequences of his actions, would have felt himself justified in demanding satisfaction of M. de Luz simply for the insult offered to his brothers and himself by his abrupt and unscrupulous abandonment of their interests, and the affront given to their friend and ally the Duc de Bellegarde; but when to these real or imagined injuries was superadded the fact that he had publicly boasted of the share which he had gratuitously and wantonly taken in the murder of his father, no wonder that the fiery young man, disregarding alike the royal edicts against duelling and the dictates of humanity, at once resolved to silence the vauntings of the quasi-assassin, or to perish in the attempt.

At the moment in which he volunteered the fatal communication De Luz was protected by the roof that covered him. It was certain death to any individual, whatever might be his rank, who drew a hostile weapon within the precincts of the royal palace; and De Guise was aware that by such an act of imprudence he might forfeit all hope of vengeance. He affected, consequently, not to have overheard the imprudent admission of the baron, and controlled the impulse which would have led him to fell him as he stood; but his thirst of vengeance only became the more unquenchable by delay, and he watched the movements of his destined victim with an assiduity which soon enabled him to slake it.

On the 5th of January, at mid-day, his carriage encountered that of M. de Luz in the Rue St. Honore, when he immediately summoned him to alight and defend himself; and at the second pass stretched him lifeless at his feet.[158]

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The Regent, who since she had pardoned M. de Luz had found him a most zealous and efficient adherent, was angered beyond measure, not only at the wilful disregard of the royal authority exhibited by the Chevalier, but also at the loss of an active and useful agent; and the intelligence had no sooner reached her than, rising from her dinner, which she had just commenced when the news was brought, she burst into tears, and retired to her closet. When she had become somewhat more calm she assembled the Council, by which she was advised to refer the matter to the Parliament; but while the subject was under deliberation tidings reached the Louvre that a numerous body of nobles had assembled at the hotel of the Duc de Guise, who was himself about to set forth for the palace attended by a strong party of his friends. Alarmed at the prospect of such a demonstration, which bore the semblance of an enforcement of impunity rather than of a deprecation of justice, the Queen was entreated by those around her to despatch M. de Chateauvieux to the residence of the Duc de Guise, to forbid his approach to the royal presence until formally summoned to appear; and to command in her name that all the persons who had assembled under his roof should immediately retire.

The Regent followed this advice, and on his return to the palace M. de Chateauvieux reported that he had rigidly performed his duty; that the Duke had abandoned his intention of demanding an audience of her Majesty; and that although many of those by whom he was surrounded had originally refused to obey her commands, they had ultimately been induced to do so by the persuasions of M. de Guise himself, who represented the propriety of their compliance with her will; with the sole exception of M. de la Rochefoucauld[159] who had declined to quit the hotel.

The Queen immediately issued an order for his exile from the Court, which was communicated to him upon the instant; nor was her indignation towards the Duc de Guise appeased, even upon learning that he had evinced the greatest respect for her authority, and the most perfect submission to her will; or that when, after his encounter with M. de Luz, the Chevalier had presented himself at his hotel and claimed his protection, he had refused to receive him, or in any way to countenance the crime of which he had been guilty.

The displeasure of the Regent was, moreover, greatly excited by the Chancellor, who had evinced no disposition to proceed against M. de Guise; and she accordingly declared her determination to deprive him of the seals, and to bestow them upon some individual who would perform his duty more efficiently. For this purpose she secretly summoned the Prince de Conde, the Duc de Bouillon, and the Marquis d’Ancre to the Louvre, the whole of whom approved her intention; and it was arranged that M. de Conde should demand the seals, and at the same time command the Chancellor in the name of their Majesties to retire to one of his estates.

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It was, moreover, resolved that Marie should name a day when she would dine at the hotel of Zamet, and that on her way she should enter the Bastille and cause the arrest of the Duc d'Epernon, who had only a week previously returned to Court, after a serious illness. The accomplishment of these hasty measures was, however, frustrated by the ambition of the Marquis d'Ancre, who was desirous of replacing the Chancellor by some creature of his own, while his wife was equally anxious that the vacant dignity should be conferred upon a person who was obnoxious to the Duc de Bouillon; and as it was necessary that in order to effect their purpose they should each propose the same individual, so much time was lost that Marie had leisure to reconsider her intention, and to abandon it.[160]

The Marquis d'Ancre had, however, aggravated her displeasure against M. de Guise by introducing to her presence the son of the murdered man, who threw himself at her feet, weeping bitterly, and demanding justice.

The woman-heart of Marie de Medicis was deeply moved; and while her anger increased against the Guises, her sympathy for the sufferer before her melted her to tears. Bidding him take comfort, she promised all he asked; and before he withdrew conferred upon him the offices and pensions of his father, assuring him that he might thenceforward rely upon her protection.

[Illustration: Marshal Bassompierre.]

At the close of a few days Bassompierre, who was First Gentleman of the Chamber to the Regent, and greatly in her confidence; and who was anxious to reinstate the Duc de Guise in her favour, on account of his attachment to the Princesse de Conti,[161] ventured to impress upon his royal mistress, not only the inexpediency of utterly estranging from her interests so powerful a family, but also the policy of recognizing with indulgence and pardon the ready obedience and loyalty of the Duke, who had not scrupled to sacrifice the safety of a brother to whom he was tenderly attached to his sense of duty towards herself. Marie suffered him to proceed for some time in silence; but at length his zeal was rewarded by her consent to receive M. de Guise, and to listen to his offered justification, provided he came to the Louvre at nightfall, and alone.

After expressing his deep sense of this concession Bassompierre hastened to communicate his success to the Duke, who lost no time in presenting himself before his offended mistress; and so ably did he plead his cause, replacing his accustomed haughtiness and impetuosity by a demeanour at once respectful and submissive, that Marie de Medicis, whose attachment to his house had long been notorious, declared herself satisfied, and assured him that thenceforward she should hold him exonerated from any participation in the crime of his brother. Upon one point, however, the Regent

remained firm; and although the Duke earnestly implored the recall of M. de la Rochefoucauld, he was

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met by so decided a refusal that he was compelled to abandon all immediate hope of success. He had, nevertheless, save in this respect, every reason to congratulate himself upon his reception; and the affair would probably have elicited no further consequences, had not the Duchess his mother, whose pride of birth, and natural arrogance, led her to believe herself inferior to no crowned head in Europe, and who ill-brooked the authority of one whom she was accustomed to consider as a mere petty Princess, indebted to circumstances for her temporary position of command, resolved to demand an interview upon the same subject; which having been accorded by the Regent, renewed with greater violence than ever the anger of Marie, who, justly irritated at finding herself defied and braved by one of her own subjects, dismissed the imprudent Duchess with so much harshness that the position of the offending parties became more onerous than before, and the interference of Bassompierre was rendered worse than useless.

Disconcerted by this unexpected disappointment, M. de Guise, aware that no influence less than that possessed by the Marquis d'Ancre could any longer avail him, compelled himself to overcome his pride sufficiently to entreat the good offices of the astute Italian; who, eager to seize so favourable an opportunity of strengthening the faction of the Princes of the Blood, referred him to M. de Conde as the only individual likely to accomplish his reconciliation with the indignant Queen, and the rather as the Duc d'Epernon declared himself ready to second the appeal.[162]

This advice was eagerly adopted by M. de Guise; who found little difficulty in effecting his object, the Princes having no sooner discovered that he had lost the favour of the Queen than they became anxious to attach him to their own interests; and so rapidly did this new alliance ripen that, with his usual impetuous recklessness, the young Duke ere long requested Bassompierre never again to mention the recall of M. de la Rochefoucauld to the Regent, as he should shortly accomplish it through the medium of the Prince de Conde; adding that thenceforward their mutual understanding would be so perfect that on the next occasion of the Queen's displeasure against himself, she would find no rod with which to chastise him.[163]

The influence of M. de Conde at this precise period was indeed so great as almost to justify the confidence of his new ally; but it was destined to be rapidly undermined by his own imprudence. He had long coveted the command of the Chateau Trompette, of which, although it was situated in the principal city of his government, he was not in possession; and believing that the Regent would not venture, under existing circumstances, to refuse to him what he had taught himself to consider as a right, he induced the Ducs de Mayenne and d'Epernon and the Marquis d'Ancre to make the demand in his name. His friends zealously obeyed his bidding, and urged the Queen to this, as they declared, unimportant concession; reminding her that as M. de Conde had

devoted himself to her cause, he merited every favour which she could bestow upon him without danger to the state.

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Marie de Medicis was not, however, prepared to regard this new demand upon her indulgence in so unimportant a light. She apprehended, and not without reason, that the Princes were endeavouring to sap the foundations of her authority, by possessing themselves of the fortresses of the Crown; and it was consequently with a heightened colour that, having heard the arguments addressed to her, she briefly replied that she would give the subject her consideration. The three nobles, anxious for the success of their mission, were not, however, to be so easily discouraged; and they consequently proceeded to impress upon her Majesty the impolicy of a delay which could not fail to wound the susceptibility of the Prince; but the patience of Marie was not proof against this pertinacity, and again declaring that she should take time to consider the subject, she rose from her seat and withdrew to her private closet, still closely followed by the applicants, her eyes flashing with anger as she discovered that they were even yet resolved to persecute her with their entreaties. Soon, however, she recovered her self-possession; and turning with a smile towards her obnoxious guests, she said, as playfully as though no cause of annoyance were coupled with their presence: "I have just learnt a new gallantry of which Bassompierre has been the hero; he did not know that it would reach my ears, nor will he be well pleased to find that I have heard of it."

"I trust that your Majesty will inform him of the discovery," said the Duc de Nevers, instantly adding: "Approach, M. de Bassompierre; the Queen has something to confide to you."

"No, no," replied Marie, in the same tone of banter which she had so suddenly assumed, "I shall not tell him one word of the matter."

At once surprised and alarmed, the Marquis immediately approached the Regent, and entreated her to let him hear the intelligence which she had to communicate; and he had no sooner done so than Marie, whose subterfuge had succeeded, moved to a distant window, and motioned to him to follow her. When she had reached the recess, she still continued to stand with her back towards the two Dukes; and as Bassompierre gained her side, she said in a hasty whisper: "I know nothing of your intrigues; but tell me, has M. de Guise ceased to urge you to effect the return of La Rochefoucauld?"

"Only three days ago, Madame, he bade me desist from importuning your Majesty upon the subject, as the Prince de Conde had promised him that it should be shortly accomplished through his own means; adding, moreover, that he could scarcely be blamed for adopting the interests of the Princes, since your own creature, M. d'Ancre, had done the same."

As Bassompierre spoke warm tears gushed from the eyes of the Queen. "Yes," she exclaimed bitterly; "the very men who induced me to oppose the Princes and to offend the ministers are now endeavouring to profit by my unsupported position, to undermine my authority, and to ruin my credit with the people. You heard how insolently they

demanded a royal fortress for their leader; and I am well aware that should I grant their request it would only expose me to the necessity of making new concessions."

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“Do not distress yourself, Madame,” replied the skilful courtier, eager to avail himself of so favourable an opportunity of serving his friends; “you can always command the means of recalling them to their allegiance; and, did I dare to proffer a counsel to your Majesty, I would suggest that you should employ them.”

“We will talk no more at present,” said Marie; “return here when I have risen from table, and by that time I shall have had leisure to reflect upon your advice.”

She then advanced once more to the centre of the apartment, and commenced a trivial conversation, which she maintained until the departure of the two Dukes, thus effectually preventing all recurrence to the obnoxious subject; but she was not destined to escape so readily as she had hoped from this new persecution. Concini and his wife had alike pledged themselves to M. de Conde that they would support his pretensions with all their influence, and their vanity was consequently enlisted in the cause as much as their interests. The Queen-mother, therefore, no sooner found herself alone with Leonora than the subject was renewed; and that with so much pertinacious resolution that the dignity of the Regent took alarm, and she expressed herself with considerable bitterness to the presumptuous favourite. At this crisis Concini entered the apartment; and with as little caution as his wife had previously exhibited, persisted in urging upon his harassed mistress the same unpalatable advice; until, utterly wearied, and deeply indignant at an interference which exceeded all the bounds of courtesy and respect, Marie commanded them both to quit her presence, and gave instant orders that they should not again be admitted until she had signified her pleasure to that effect.

As the officers of the household were about to marshal the Regent to the mid-day meal, Bassompierre encountered the Duc de Guise, of whom he immediately inquired if he had abandoned the cause of the unfortunate La Rochefoucauld, who would inevitably die of *ennui*, should he be long exiled from the gaieties of the Court.

“No, no,” vehemently replied the Duke, “he shall return to share them; nor will I be under an obligation to the Queen for his reappearance. I have served her with zeal, and have been repaid by coldness and neglect. I have therefore made new interests, and now recognize no leader but M. de Conde, no coadjutors but his cabal; nor will I abandon them although I adopted their policy with reluctance; a determination, Monsieur,” he added pointedly, “which you at least will not condemn, as you are a member of the same party.”

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“Your Lordship is partially in error,” said Bassompierre gaily. “I am, it is true, the very humble servant of all such individuals as are favoured by the Prince, but I do not recognize them as a political body. I am the devoted adherent of their Majesties, and I know no other masters. Pardon me, moreover, if I venture to say that you have yourself, M. le Duc, been very ill-advised. You were formerly the leader of your own faction, since it would appear that we are to talk of factions; you were dependent upon no one, and responsible only to yourself for your actions and opinions; and now you have allied your fortunes to those of persons by whom you will be subjected to a thousand indignities and annoyances when they no longer require your support. How, then, do you imagine that you will be able to brook such treatment, when you suffer yourself to be angered and alienated by a cold word from the Regent? You should remember that your brother killed M. de Luz almost under her eyes, and in defiance of a stringent edict; and that you could scarcely anticipate the immediate recall of one of the officers of the King’s household who had peremptorily refused to obey the royal command by which he was enjoined to leave your hotel.”

“Well, well,” exclaimed the Duke impatiently, “the Queen will one day discover her error in having ventured to offer me a slight in order to gratify those by whom she suffers herself to be governed. She will ere long seek my friendship, but I shall either refuse to listen or compel her to purchase it at a high price.”

The Regent had no sooner returned to her closet than, in obedience to her orders, Bassompierre again presented himself; and as soon as she had dismissed her attendants she at once entered upon the subject that occupied her thoughts. “Bestein,” she said, addressing the Marquis by the name which she usually applied to him during their confidential interviews, “this wretched affair has totally unnerved me. I was unable to swallow any food, and unless my mind is relieved at once I shall go mad. You must reconcile me to the Duc de Guise at any price. Offer him a hundred thousand crowns for himself, the commission of Lieutenant-General of Provence for his brother, and the reversion of the Abbey of St. Germain for the Princesse de Conti. In one word, promise him what you please, and I will consent, provided you annihilate this cabal and detach him from the interests of the Princes.”

“Madame,” replied Bassompierre with a gay smile, “you have filled my hands so amply that I am sure of making a successful bargain. But have I no similar commission with regard to M. d’Epernon?”

“Ah, would that I could hope so much,” said Marie gloomily; “but I have wounded his vanity, and he never forgives.”

“Seldom, perhaps, Madame,” was the ready rejoinder of the shrewd courtier, “his enemies, but readily his rulers.”

“Endeavour then,” exclaimed the Queen eagerly, “to effect this also, Bestein; remind him of all that I have already done, both for himself and his children, and assure him that I have never lost the inclination to serve him. If any one can accomplish so desirable an object, you are the person.”

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Bassompierre lost no time in opening the important negotiation with which he was entrusted; and the wiliness with which he first enlisted the ambition and cupidity of the females of the family presents a curious picture of the manners of the time. His success could not long remain doubtful at a period when the allegiance of the highest nobles of the land was bought and sold like the most common merchandise; and accordingly, although, as he informs us, the Duc de Guise for a time indulged in his ordinary extravagance of speech, he gradually yielded, and—as a natural consequence—-received the price of his venal concession!

On this occasion, however, M. d'Epernon, whose birth was far inferior to that of his friend, displayed a higher sense of what was due to himself and to his rank. "In matters of this importance," he said proudly, as Bassompierre urged him once more to espouse the interests of the Regent, and hinted at the benefit likely to accrue to himself from his compliance with her wishes, "I never condescend to bargain. Decisions of real weight should be formed frankly and disinterestedly. I have no wish to capitulate with my sovereign. Offer me no bribe, for I should consider it only as an insult. Any service which I can render to the Queen has been already amply recompensed, and I should be unworthy alike of the name I bear and of the offices I hold did I place my loyalty at a price. I have only one favour to request of her Majesty before I again devote myself to her interests, and that is that she will henceforward exhibit more firmness, and attach a greater value to those who have served her with fidelity and zeal. This conceded, I am ready to attend her pleasure whenever she may see fit to summon me to her presence."

The exultation of Marie de Medicis at the happy termination of his mission rendered her profuse in her expressions of gratitude to Bassompierre, which she terminated by the assurance that he should be appointed First Lord of the Bedchamber to the young King, even should she, as she declared, be compelled to purchase the post from her own private funds; and these preliminaries arranged, on the following morning, at nine o'clock, the two Dukes proceeded to pay their respects to her Majesty, by whom they were most graciously received, and who commanded that a seat should be placed for M. d'Epernon, whose recovery from a severe illness was, as we have already stated, only recent. The interview was a long one, and no allusion was made on either side to the late defection of the distinguished guests, who, on rising to retire, were invited by the Queen to attend her to the theatre that evening; and they had no sooner expressed their acknowledgments than she gave orders to the captain of her guard to have benches prepared for both the Duc d'Epernon and M. Zamet, by whom he was to be accompanied.

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This extraordinary favour excited universal comment when the assembled courtiers perceived that it was not even extended to the Duc de Mayenne, who was also present at the performance; and Concini, in particular, was so struck by the sudden change of affairs that he exclaimed energetically to Bassompierre, beside whom he stood: "*Per Dio!* Monsieur, I can but laugh over the mutations of this strange world; the Queen has found a seat for Zamet, and there is none for the Duc de Mayenne. Place your faith in princes after this!"

Great was the exultation of the courtiers when the disgrace of Concini became known; but that of the ministers, as they learnt its cause, was even more profound. One web of the complicated mesh which had been woven about the spirit of the Queen had at length given way, while her refusal to accede to the request of the Prince de Conde convinced them that he was no longer likely to prove so formidable an enemy to themselves as he had recently been. Acting upon this impression they hastened to solicit a private audience of the Regent, declaring that they had matters of great importance to treat with her, which they would only communicate to herself; and their satisfaction was complete when an answer was returned appointing an hour for their appearance at the Louvre, and naming as the place of their reception the private closet of the Queen.

"Messieurs," said Marie graciously, as they paused upon the threshold of the apartment to make the accustomed obeisance, "your request shall be strictly complied with." And then turning to the captain of her guard she added: "M. de Senneterre, you will suffer no one to enter here, be he whom he may."

Delighted by the manner of their reception, the ministers at once entered upon the subject which had induced them to solicit the interview, and respectfully represented to the Regent the alarm which they had felt at the dangerous demand advanced by the Prince de Conde, and the exertions which they had ascertained were to be made by the Marquis d'Ancre to induce her Majesty's compliance; assuring her that the surrender of a royal fortress of such importance as the Chateau Trompette to the control of the first Prince of the Blood could not fail to prove prejudicial to the interests of the King and the tranquillity of the nation.

"I am fully aware of the importance of such a concession, Messieurs," replied Marie with dignity; "and my resolution is already formed. I have not yet forgotten that my late lord your sovereign more than once assured me that had he, while at war with Henri III, gained possession of the Chateau Trompette, he could have made himself Duc de Guienne. A fact like this is well calculated to rivet itself upon the memory."

At this moment the usher scratched upon the door, and entered to announce that the Marquis d'Ancre desired admission to the presence of the Queen; but the ministers had scarcely had time to exchange one glance of alarm and annoyance before Marie, with

considerable vehemence, repeated her former order, and the mortified Marquis was compelled to retire.

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Cautiously as the audience had been accorded, the Italian had not failed to ascertain through his spies the presence of the ministers in the palace; and aware of his own danger should they regain their legitimate influence over the mind of the Queen, he unhesitatingly resolved to brave her interdict in order to counteract the effect of their representations. He had, however, as we have shown, signally failed; and with the most gloomy forebodings of impending evil he returned to the apartments of his wife to report the ill-success of his attempt.

Nor was Concini the only visitor who sought admission to the Queen during her conference with the ministers. M. de Conde, who was still unaware of the moral revolution which had been effected, had, as was his custom, proceeded to the Louvre in order to consult with her on state affairs; and had been panic-struck when denied admission to her presence, and informed that she was then closeted with his mortal enemies. In his consternation he sought a solution of the mystery from Bassompierre, who, after expressing his utter ignorance of its meaning, cunningly insinuated that it was, in all probability, an intrigue of the Marechal de Bouillon, who had effected a reconciliation with the Regent and her ministers at his expense; a suggestion which appeared so probable to the Prince that he immediately hurried to the apartments of Concini to discuss with him the necessary measures for averting this new danger.

Madame d'Ancre, who was well aware of the extent of her own power over the spirit of her foster-sister, would not permit herself to regard her present disgrace as more than a passing shadow, and urged her less confident husband to persevere in his attempt to regain the good graces of Marie, assuring him that the Queen would ere long be as anxious for a reconciliation as himself. Somewhat encouraged by this declaration, Concini, whose vanity was only rivalled by his ambition, and who, despite daily experience, believed his own society to be as indispensable to the Regent as that of his wife, took measures to ascertain the precise moment at which the ministerial audience terminated, when, profiting by the opportunity, he threw himself upon his knees before the justly-offended Queen, and entreated her forgiveness of his involuntary offence. Marie was, however, in no mood for trifling, and she sternly bade him leave her; a command which he obeyed only to wreak upon his wife the consequences of his own mortification.[164]

The son of the Baron de Luz finding that, despite her promise, the Regent had taken no measures to avenge the death of his father, but that, on the contrary, she had stopped the proceedings which previously to her reconciliation with the Duc de Guise had been commenced against his brother, determined to demand satisfaction in his own person; and he accordingly despatched a challenge to the Chevalier, which was immediately accepted by the hot-headed young noble. Seconds

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were appointed, and in compliance with the barbarous custom of the time the four combatants fought on horseback at the Porte St. Antoine. At the first pass Francois de Guise was wounded, but at the third his sword pierced the body of his antagonist, who fell from his saddle and expired a few minutes afterwards. Notwithstanding this tragical result, however, the murderer alike of the father and the son boldly returned to Paris, where he was visited and congratulated by numbers of the nobles, who, instead of shrinking from all contact with a man who had desolated the hearth and home of a sorrowing and now childless widow, were loud in their encomiums on his bravery and skill. Nor was this the most revolting feature of the case; for it is on record that Marie de Medicis herself, in her eagerness to retain the alliance of his family, no sooner learnt that the Chevalier had received a wound in the encounter than she despatched an officer of her household to convey to him her regret and to inquire into the extent of his hurt, overlooking, with extraordinary inconsistency, or still more reprehensible recklessness, the fact that only a few weeks previously she had instructed the Parliament to put him upon his trial for the murder of his first victim.

The unslumbering eye of Heaven, however, and the unerring fiat of divine justice, proved less oblivious of this monstrous crime. In the course of the following year, while at the fortress of Baux near Arles, Francois de Guise was in the act of firing off a cannon, which burst and wounded him in so frightful a manner that he expired two hours subsequently in extreme torture, thus partially expiating by a death of agony a youth of misrule and bloodshed.[165]

The murder of the younger De Luz had no sooner reached the ears of M. de Luynes than he resolved to avail himself of the circumstance to awaken the ambition of Louis, and to induce him to fling off the shackles of maternal authority. Eager as he had long been for an opportunity of effecting this object, his attempts had hitherto been negatived by the ceaseless energy with which Marie de Medicis had smothered in their germ all attempts at sedition, thus rendering herself essential to the well-being and security of the kingdom; and he accordingly felt all the importance of the present crisis.

Under this impression, after listening attentively to the narrative of his informant, he hastened to the apartment of the King, who was still engaged in the cares of his morning toilet; and no contrast could have been more striking than the simple costume of the young sovereign and the elaborate dress of his favourite. The pourpoint of Louis was of deep crimson velvet, slashed with satin of the same colour, and totally without ornament, a simplicity which marked his own observance of the sumptuary edict that he had lately issued; whereas De Luynes, with an arrogant disregard of the royal proclamation, was attired in a vest of pale blue, richly embroidered with gold and relieved by a short mantle of amaranth, clasped by a rich jewel similar to that which attached the snowy plume to his black velvet cap.

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As the cap was doffed, however, and the long feather swept the tapestried floor, Louis forgot to chide this ostentatious defiance of his will, and with a smile motioned his splendid courtier to a seat.

“You come like a bridegroom from the wedding feast, Albert,” he said cheerfully; “and you surely bring me a message of good import, or your garb belies you. Has De Brantes announced the speedy arrival of my sparrow-hawks?”

“Of one only, Sire; the smaller of the two died under his training.”

“Ah!” exclaimed the King, with great petulance; “it is always so. Whatever is destined to give me pleasure fails when I am the most eager to possess it.”

“And yet,” interposed De Luynes gaily, “never, in so far as I can judge, did fortune show herself more favourable to your Majesty.”

“What mean you?” asked Louis, roused for an instant from his usual apathy.

“Oh! it is a long tale, and a strange one,” said the favourite. “You may remember, Sire, the quarrel that arose between the old Baron de Luz and the Chevalier de Guise, and which grew out of the cabal against Concini. You cannot have forgotten, moreover, that the Baron was killed. Well, his son Antoine de Luz, impatient for a vengeance which was too tardy according to the principle of his filial chivalry, took, as it seems, the affair into his own hands, and flattered himself that where his father had failed he should come forth victorious. Poor boy! he has paid dearly for his mistake. His sword has proved duller than his hopes. He has encountered the Chevalier in his turn, and in his turn has bit the dust. Francois de Guise pierced him through and through one day last week near the Porte St. Antoine.”

“Holy Virgin!” exclaimed Louis in an agitated voice; “do you mean that he is dead?”

“Dead, like his father,” was the unmoved reply.

“And her Majesty the Queen-Regent was no sooner informed of the fact than she commanded M. de Bassompierre to arrest the Chevalier.”

“I will not permit it!” cried the young King vehemently. “I love Francois de Guise; he is one of my firmest friends; he shall not be imprisoned.”

“Calm yourself, Sire,” said De Luynes with a significant smile; “Madame la Regente was soon appeased, and so little does she resent the crime of M. de Guise that she has this morning condescended to cause inquiries to be made after his health.”

“Right, right,” murmured Louis; “and yet it is a bad precedent, and a dangerous example to the lesser nobles. I hate this spilling of blood. The Princes are too bold. Upon what will they next venture?”

“Nay, it requires no sphynx to solve that problem, my gracious master,” said the favourite, toying with his plumed cap; “they will endeavour to effect the exile of Concini and his dark-browed wife: your good subjects have no love for foreigners, and believe that you, their sovereign, would find no want of faithful and devoted servitors among themselves. Then Jeannin, Sire, and Sillery are obnoxious to them; and they trust, with your good help, to be ere long freed from all these incubi.”

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“Luynes,” said Louis in a tone of weariness, “I hate to hear you talk upon such subjects. I have more than enough of them from others. Is De Guise recovering from his wound? for he must also have suffered in the fray, or the Queen-mother would not have sought tidings of him.”

“Fear not for him, Sire,” said the favourite; “he will be quite able to keep the saddle when M. de Conde heads an army to snatch the crown of our fair France from your own brow.”

“Stay, sir!” exclaimed the young King with sudden dignity. “Have *you* also forgotten that I am the son of Henri IV?”

“May your Majesty never forget it more than I do,” said De Luynes, with an audacity before which the eye of Louis sank; “but believe me that the fact will avail you little until you have purged the nation of the foreign fungus which is corroding the root of your authority.”

“Albert,” murmured the weak young monarch, “in the name of Heaven, what would you ask?”

“To see you in reality the King of France, Sire.”

“And for this purpose—”

“You must appease the Princes. They are weary of the despotic rule of the Queen-mother and of the influence of these Florentines.”

“I dare not urge the Queen to banish them.”

“Nor should you, Sire. It is for subjects to solicit, and for sovereigns to command. There is, moreover, a safer cure than exile for such an evil.”

“Nay, now, De Luynes, you jest,” said Louis, striving to force a sickly smile; “you surely would not counsel—”

“Your Majesty mistakes me,” interposed the favourite; “I would dare anything to secure your safety. Justice holds her sword as firmly as her balance, and wields the one as freely as she weighs the other.”

“Enough, enough,” gasped out Louis; “we will talk of this again—but blood, blood, always blood! It is sickening. You will attend me to Fontainebleau, Albert; I must have some sport to-day, and endeavour to forget for a time all your moody arguments.”

De Luynes bowed low as he glanced significantly towards Roger, the favourite valet of the King, who replied to the meaning look by an almost imperceptible shrug of the shoulders as he adjusted the mantle of his royal master.

“Go, Monsieur le Grand Fauconnier,” pursued the King, “and see that all is prepared. I will follow on the instant.”

Ten minutes subsequently the Court of the Louvre was thronged with courtiers, equipages, and led horses; and within a quarter of an hour the voice of the usher was heard at the foot of the great staircase announcing “The King.” Then Louis himself appeared, and taking his place in the coach which was awaiting him, he motioned De Luynes to his side, gave the signal of departure, and left the palace at a rapid pace. The royal suite mounted in haste; and ere long nobles, pages, and equerries had disappeared, and all was once more silent beneath the deep shadows of the regal pile.

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It is evident that, crafty as Bassompierre had shown himself when conversing with M. de Conde on the subject of the extraordinary changes which had taken place at Court, he was nevertheless suspected by the Prince of having contributed to effect them, as a short time subsequently a banquet was given at the Hotel de Conde, to which every nobleman in office was invited save the handsome and popular Gentleman of the Bedchamber, who was generally one of the most coveted guests at entertainments of that description; but the exclusion, marked as it was, failed to cause any mortification to Bassompierre, who had no sooner communicated the circumstance to the Regent than she commanded his attendance in her private *salon*, where he passed the afternoon at cards with herself and her ladies.

Concini, finding that the Queen did not relax in her coldness towards himself and his wife, withdrew in great displeasure to Amiens; and at the same period Marie discovered that, despite his promise to the contrary, the Duc de Vendome had joined the faction of Conde, and that they were conjointly endeavouring to win back M. de Guise. Alarmed by this new cabal, and made aware that the latter had betrayed symptoms of irresolution which augured ill for his adhesion to her cause, she lost no time in reminding him of the pledges which he had given, and in entreating him not to abandon her interests. The Duke, flattered by the importance that the Queen-mother attached to his allegiance, readily promised all she wished; and she had reason to congratulate herself upon her promptitude, as only a few days subsequently M. de Vendome and Concini arrived at Fontainebleau, where the Court had recently established its residence, when the former hastened to take leave of their Majesties previously to his departure for Brittany, where he was about to preside over the Assembly of the States, and the latter on the pretext of bearing him company; but in reality to induce Zamet, who possessed considerable authority in the palace, to assign rooms to them in that portion of the building occupied by the Duc de Guise.

Such an arrangement could not, however, be effected without reaching the ears of the Regent, whose suspicions of their motive were immediately excited; and she desired Bassompierre not to lose sight of M. de Guise until he had retired to rest, and to prevent his holding any communication with the Duc de Vendome. Resolved, moreover, to ascertain the correctness of those suspicions, she directed M. de Senneterre to watch throughout the night upon the staircase of the Duc de Guise; a vigilance which was rewarded by his discovery of the two nobles, who, shortly after Bassompierre had withdrawn, paid a visit to the Duke which lasted upwards of two hours. The astonishment of the Regent was consequently by no means great when M. de Guise in his turn waited upon her Majesty to take leave, upon the pretext that he had been chosen by Madame d’Elboeuf, conjointly

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with the Duc de Mayenne, as her arbitrator in a reconciliation which was about to be attempted between herself and Madame de la Tremouille, who had on her side selected the Prince de Conde and the Marechal de Bouillon. Marie, however, refused to consent to his departure, and informed him that she would despatch Bassompierre as his substitute; an arrangement with which he was compelled to comply, but which greatly embarrassed his friends.

Meanwhile the anger of the Queen against Concini had been seriously increased by this new instance of ingratitude; and even the pleadings of his wife, who had been restored to favour, failed to appease her displeasure. In imparting her commands to Bassompierre, Marie had inveighed bitterly against the attitude assumed by a man who owed everything to her indulgence; and as her listener endeavoured to excuse him, she said vehemently:—

“Urge nothing in his behalf. He has thought proper to judge for himself, and to join a cabal which he knows to be opposed to my authority. Tell him from me that if he does not return here by Thursday evening, I will teach him in future to obey me; and that had it not been from consideration for his wife, I should already have provided him with a lodging which he would have found it difficult to quit. Leonora is indignant at his conduct; while he continues to act more disgracefully from day to day. Inform him that he will do well not to neglect my orders.”

The arrogant Italian was, however, by no means inclined to obedience; nor was it without considerable difficulty that Bassompierre succeeded in impressing upon him the extent of the danger to which he exposed himself by the line of conduct he had so recklessly adopted, and in ultimately effecting his reconciliation with his justly offended mistress.[166]

This was no sooner accomplished than the ministers, who thenceforward despaired of ever permanently counterbalancing the influence of Concini and his wife, determined, if possible, to unite their interests to his; and for this purpose the President Jeannin, who had maintained a better understanding with the Marquis than any of his colleagues, proposed to the Queen that an effort should be made to reconcile the Chancellor and Villeroy with her favourite, a suggestion which she eagerly adopted, being anxious to strengthen her own party by weakening that of the Princes. She had been apprised that the Marechal de Bouillon, who was indignant that he could not attain to the degree of power which he had anticipated under a regency, was perseveringly employed in endeavouring to detach the Duc de Guise from her interests, and to fortify the cabal of the Prince de Conde, in order to render his own allegiance indispensable to the Crown; and she consequently welcomed any method of circumventing a conspiracy which was becoming formidable. It was therefore determined that a marriage should be proposed between the daughter of Concini and the Marquis de Villeroy, the grandson of the

Secretary of State; and this overture was accompanied by the most lavish promises on the part of the ministers that they would serve him by every means in their power, and exert all their energies to advance his fortunes.

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This negotiation, which was undertaken without the knowledge of Bassompierre, had nearly proved fatal to his prospects; as both parties, dreading his influence with the Regent, determined to undermine him in her regard; and for this purpose they so wilfully misrepresented his actions, and contrived to invest them with so suspicious an appearance, that Marie, who had begun to misdoubt every one about her, treated him with a harshness which his proud spirit could not brook; and he accordingly made preparations for quitting the Court of France, with the intention of entering the service of some foreign Prince.

His design was no sooner ascertained, however, than his friends, particularly the Duc de Guise and the Princesse de Conti, hastened to represent to the Queen the impolicy of forfeiting the friendship and assistance of one who had so faithfully espoused her cause; and their representations prevailed. Bassompierre was permitted to justify himself, and Marie frankly admitted her conviction that she had been misled by his enemies.

In addition to these intestine intrigues, the Regent was occupied with the troubles generated by the disputed succession of the duchy of Mantua, regarding which she was reluctant to come to any resolution without securing the advice of the Princes and great nobles; upon which she was, moreover, the more anxious to insist, as it would afford an opportunity of summoning to the capital not only M. de Conde himself, but all the other leaders of the adverse faction; who had, as we have shown, withdrawn from the Court, and were exasperated by the reconciliation of the Regent with the Ducs de Guise and d'Epernon, and the recall of the ministers. The Council accordingly met; and as the Cardinal-Duke of Mantua was a near relative of the Queen, it was decided that France should support him in his pretensions against the Duke of Savoy. An army was consequently organized, which was to march on Monferrat from three several points: one division under the Marechal de Lesdiguieres, a second under the Duc de Guise, and the third under the Grand Equerry M. de Bellegarde. The troops were not, however, destined on this occasion to cross the frontier, the friends of the Duke of Savoy having soon succeeded in convincing Marie de Medicis of the danger of investing three great nobles with the command of an armed force of such importance during the minority of the sovereign; while Ubaldini, the Papal Nuncio, jealous of the presence of the French soldiery in Italy, and apprehensive that Lesdiguieres would be accompanied by a large number of Huguenots, was equally strenuous in dissuading her from her purpose; assuring her that the King of Spain had resolved to oppose the Duke of Savoy, and to compel him to restore to the House of Mantua the territories which had been wrested from it in Monferrat. The Duke of Savoy himself, moreover, alarmed at the demonstration about to be made by France, and conscious that he was unable to compete with such an adversary, resolved to open a negotiation; upon which the Marquis de Coeuvres was despatched to Italy to arrange the terms of the treaty.[167]

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While the whole of the other European Princes were occupied with the succession in Mantua, James of England was engrossed by his anxiety to divert the minds of his subjects from the grief which was universally felt at the untimely death of his eldest son; and so little did he himself feel the bereavement that he entered with apparent enjoyment into every kind of entertainment which presented itself. The unfortunate Prince had expired on the 6th of November; and as his demise threatened to prevent that close alliance with France which he had so eagerly anticipated, James caused its announcement to the Regent to be accompanied by an offer of the hand of his other son, Charles, who had thus become Prince of Wales, to the Princesse Christine; a proposal which reached the French Court only three days subsequently to the decease of Henry, and which consequently created considerable surprise.[168] Marie de Medicis, however, felt no inclination to quarrel with this indecent haste, as she trusted that by giving her daughter to the son of a Protestant sovereign, she should conciliate the Huguenots, whom she had greatly alienated by concluding the double alliance with Spain; but the Sovereign-Pontiff was no sooner apprised of the offer of James, and of the gracious reception afforded to it by the Regent, than he expressed his extreme displeasure, and refused to listen to any arguments, declaring that no question of state policy should sanction a contract the observance of which must prove detrimental to the interests of the Church. Ubaldini, the Papal Nuncio at the French Court, seconded these remonstrances with more zeal than judgment; and at length proceeded so far as to reproach the Queen with the ill return which she was about to make to God for the blessings He had vouchsafed to her. The haughty spirit of Marie de Medicis could brook no more; and her reply is worthy of record. “Monseigneur,” she said with dignity, “I do nothing more upon this occasion than several Princes of Italy have done before me, and that too under the very eyes of the Pope. The Grand Duchess of Tuscany, with all her devotion, did not refuse her consent when she was formerly asked to give the hand of her daughter to the Prince of Wales.” [169]

Thus the proposal was accepted, and the heir to the British throne was thenceforward considered as the future husband of the young Princess.

At this period the death of M. de Fervaques left a marshal’s *baton* disposable, which, to the extreme disgust of the nobility, was bestowed by the Regent upon Concini, who had never throughout his life been present at the firing of a hostile shot. The ill-judged manner in which this dignity was conferred is so characteristic that it merits mention. Her temporary estrangement from Madame d’Ancre had been a source of great discomfort as well as sorrow to the Queen; and her ladies, hoping still further to disgust her with the favourite, had unwittingly compelled her to feel her dependence upon the disgraced mistress of the robes. To every petty requirement she was answered that it was not within their province, and that reference must be made to the Marquise.

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“I desire to have the entrance to my closet draperied by a screen of crimson velvet edged with gold,” said the Regent on one occasion to Madame de Guercheville; “be good enough to have it done immediately.”

“Your Majesty has probably overlooked the fact that such orders must be issued by the Marquise d’Ancre,” was the formal reply of the stately lady of honour.

“Madame du Fargis,” resumed the Queen, a short time afterwards, “I have mislaid a letter—a petition—bearing the name of the Comtesse de Touraine; I wish it to be found and answered.”

“Madame,” responded the beautiful Countess meekly, “the Marquise d’Ancre has charge of all the petitions addressed to your Majesty.”

Marie de Medicis turned away in silence. She had striven to believe that she could dispense with the services of Leonora; but every day, and almost every hour, she became more convinced of her utter helplessness without her. Madame d’Ancre had been the playmate of her infancy, the friend of her girlhood; she was the confidante of her most hidden thoughts, her counsellor in difficulty, and her consoler in her moments of trial. The ill-advised bearing of those about her sufficed to remind her of these facts, and her resolution was forthwith formed. Concini might still be made to feel and to suffer for his fault, but she could not dispense with the society and support of Leonora.

The Queen retired to her private closet, and the mistress of the robes was summoned to her presence by a page. As she entered, Marie was startled by the change which had taken place in her appearance; her eyes were swollen with weeping, and her cheek was even more sallow than its wont. Whatever might be her faults, there can be no doubt that Leonora was deeply and tenderly attached to her royal foster-sister; and that the disgrace into which she had fallen had consequently affected her to an intense degree. She was no longer the proud and imperious favourite who through the Regent sought to govern France, but a weak and sorrowing woman, mourning over the ruin of all her hopes.

The apartment to which the Queen-mother had so unexpectedly summoned her foster-sister was, as we have said, her private closet, in which she passed several hours each day while residing at the Louvre. The walls were covered to the height of ten feet from the floor by magnificent hangings of crimson damask, surmounted by a dome of pale blue silk, upon which were elaborately embroidered the arms of the Medici. From the centre of this dome hung a silver lamp, chiselled by the hand of Benvenuto Cellini, and suspended by a chain of the same metal; a table of carved oak stood in the centre of the room, upon which were placed a pair of globes, sundry astronomical instruments, an illuminated missal, and a flask of Hungary water; while a low divan, heaped with cushions of black velvet sprinkled with *fleurs-de-lis* in gold, occupied two entire sides of the apartment, and completed its furniture.

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“Approach, Leonora,” said the Queen. “Here, place yourself on this cushion at my feet, and wipe the tears from your eyes. Even if we part, we may do so without bitterness.”

“Ha, Madame!” exclaimed the Florentine, “should such a feeling indeed exist it can be only in the bosom of your Majesty, for no true subject can do otherwise than love and venerate her sovereign.”

“Would that it were so,” said Marie; “but that is a delusion under which I have long ceased to labour; for too often where I have sought to excite affection I have only engendered hatred.”

“I know not if your Majesty would address that reproach to me,” said Madame d’Ancre, raising her drooping head with the sudden energy of honest pride; “but should it really be so, I can summon the past to vindicate my good faith. I can call upon the Queen-Regent of France herself to do me justice; I can invoke the two years of that regency, so full of trial, of struggle, and of calamity, during which I have at times perilled my head to ensure alike the tranquillity and the triumph of my august mistress; I can quote the several cabals which I have helped to crush; and, above all, I can prove the fidelity and submission with which I have constantly obeyed the behests of my sovereign lady. All this is, however, worse than idle; the servant only sins the more in every attempt at self-justification. Monarchs are accustomed from their cradles to punish upon suspicion, however strong may be the evidences of the past. Gratitude, as the term is understood between man and man, never drapes itself in purple; perfect confidence cannot steady its foot upon the steps of a throne, for the royal canopy is a heaven of impunity for those whom it overshadows. Yet think not, Madame,” she continued, in a more subdued voice, as she clasped her thin fingers together so forcibly that they became ashy white beneath the pressure—“think not, I beseech you, that I say this of myself. I have no such presumption. I have not forgotten what I was, in feeling what I am. I yet remember, deeply, thankfully, that I was poor, obscure, and insignificant, and that it was your royal hand which raised me to rank and honour; and thus it is with the most fervent gratitude that I now thank you for your past bounties; and with the utmost humility that I prepare to take my leave of you for ever.”

Marie did not reply; the outburst of outraged feeling in which the Marquise had indulged was so unexpected and so bold that she remained speechless, and the tears which had risen to her eyes on the entrance of her foster-sister congealed upon their lids. Leonora awaited for an instant some token of relenting in her royal mistress, but as the threatening silence continued, she became alarmed, and casting herself upon her knees, she gasped out falteringly, “I am at your feet, Madame; I kneel before you, wretched and repentant; I am here to bid you farewell—a life-long farewell. Pardon, and forget me.”

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The heart of Marie was moved; and as her favourite knelt before her she pressed her to her bosom, and bade her be of good cheer, for that all was forgiven. Leonora, unprepared for such an admission, wept abundantly; and it was long ere she could recover her composure, while the Queen on her side was scarcely less distressed.

“I cannot part from you, *mia cara, mia dolce*” pursued Marie passionately; “you are my good angel, the friend and sister of my happy years—for we were happy then, *Leonora mia*, before a crown and a court came between us. You have said truly that you have been my guardian spirit, and we do not part with our best security in the hour of peril. No, Leonora, no; I will listen no more to the evil accusations of those who would fain separate us. You shall not quit the Louvre.”

Madame d’Ancre pressed her hand forcibly upon her heart as if to control its tumultuous throbbings; and then, fixing her large dark eyes earnestly upon those of her royal mistress, she said in a low deep accent of earnest emotion, “And thus you love me still—you, the proud daughter of the Medici, the wife and the mother of kings—you love me still, and I have not lived in vain! Did you hear those words, Countess?” she asked, suddenly springing to her feet, and addressing Madame du Fargis, who was standing in the recess of one of the tall windows, with the tears falling fast over her fair cheeks; “the Regent will not suffer me to leave France—the Regent will not allow me to wither away my life an alien from her presence. Now I am once more calm and strong—calm in the security of my happiness, strong in the consciousness of my honesty. Let them accuse me now, I defy their malice, for my royal mistress believes in me, and loves me.”

“Compose yourself, Leonora,” said the Queen-mother affectionately; “your feeble frame is unequal to these bursts of passion. Come hither, child, and pillow your aching head upon my knees, as you were wont to do long, long ago, when we sang together the beloved songs of our fair Florence, or indulged in day-dreams which were never destined to be realized. Let Madame de Conti beware in her turn: higher heads than hers have been brought low; and from this day I will teach a bitter lesson to her and to her kinsmen. I have borne much, but I am still a Medicis; I can be as firm as Catherine, although I shall endeavour to act with greater justice, and to be in all things worthy of the name I bear.”

“Ha, Madame!” exclaimed the favourite, “you have already proved that however others may endeavour to forget that you are the widow of Henry the Great the fact is ever present to yourself.” And as she spoke, Leonora buried her face in the lap of her royal foster-sister, while her long black hair, which had become unfastened by the energy of her movements, fell to the floor and covered her like a pall.

Little did either the Queen or the Marquise at that moment anticipate how soon a deeper and a denser pall would replace those luxuriant and gleaming tresses! Happy was it for both that no prophetic glance into the future darkened the joy of that bright hour of reconciliation!

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Meanwhile the Princesse de Conti, who dreaded the effect of this same reconciliation upon herself and her family, privately despatched a messenger to the Prince de Conde to inform him that Madame d'Ancre was at that very time closeted with the Regent, and that he must forthwith devise some method of terminating so dangerous a conference. M. de Conde was for a moment aghast; and on reflection could adopt no better expedient than that of prevailing upon M. de Breves, the governor of the Duc d'Orleans, to suggest to the young Prince that he should proceed to the apartments of his royal mother, in order to pay his respects to her Majesty. Monsieur obeyed; and Leonora was still seated on a cushion at the feet of her foster-sister, with her pale face pillowed upon her knees, when Madame de Conti threw open the door of the royal closet, and announced the Prince.

"Let Monseigneur await my pleasure without," exclaimed Marie angrily. "I understand the motive of this breach of etiquette, and shall reward it as it deserves. *Leonora cara*" she added, as the drapery again closed over the portal, "dry your tears; I owe you some recompense for all that you have suffered, and I will not be tardy in my requital."

At this instant some one scratched upon the door of the royal closet.

"Again!" cried the Queen indignantly. "See who waits, Madame du Fargis."

The Countess proceeded to draw aside the tapestry. "Madame," she said, as she retired a pace or two with a profound curtsey, "his Majesty the King."

"Ha!" exclaimed the Regent, starting from her seat, and advancing towards the young sovereign, whom she tenderly embraced, "your visit could not have been more welcome or better-timed, my son. The death of M. de Fervaques has created a vacancy which must be at once filled, and I have a marshal's commission for you to sign."

The wife of Concini gazed eagerly into the face of her royal mistress. Marie smiled. "Go, Madame," she said affectionately, "and bid the Marquis d'Ancre hasten here upon the instant to kiss the gracious hand from which he is about to receive a marshal's *baton*."

Leonora knelt before the startled King, who suffered her in silence to perform the same ceremony; and then radiant with happiness she pressed the jewelled fingers of the Queen to her quivering lips. "And hark you, Leonora," pursued Marie, "cause Concini to be announced by his new title when he seeks admission here. This will at once put an end to a host of rivalries which are now unavailing."

Madame d'Ancre hastily withdrew; but as she passed through the apartments of the Queen she remarked that the antechamber was already thronged with a crowd of courtiers, who had been attracted thither by curiosity; while they, in their turn, did not fail

to detect in the flushed cheek and flashing eye of the Marquise the indications of some new triumph. Little, however, were they prepared for its extent; and when

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Concini, some minutes afterwards, appeared, with a sarcastic smile upon his lips, and glanced a look of defiance around him, even while he bowed right and left alike to his friends and to his enemies, every pulse quickened with anxiety. The suspense was but momentary. The Italian was preceded by one of the royal pages, who, as the captain of the guard flung back the door of the cabinet in which Louis XIII was still closeted with his mother, announced in a voice so audible that it was heard throughout the apartment, “Monseigneur le Marechal d’Ancre.”

“Concini a Marshal of France!” exclaimed simultaneously the Ducs de Guise, d’Epernon, and de Bellegarde, who were standing together; and then there was a dead silence as the draperied door closed upon the exulting favourite.

FOOTNOTES:

[158] Siri, *Mem. Rec*. vol. iii. pp. 23, 24. D’Estrees, *Mem*. pp. 398, 399. Bassompierre, *Mem*. p. 80. Mezeray, vol. xi. pp. 40, 41.

[159] Francois, Comte (and subsequently Duc) de la Rochefoucauld, Master of the Wardrobe to Louis XIII, was descended from one of the most ancient and noble families of France. He died in 1650.

[160] Richelieu, *Hist. de la Mere et du Fils* vol. i. pp. 204-206. D’Estrees, *Mem*. p. 399.

[161] This lady, who had commenced her career at Court by the most bitter enmity towards Bassompierre, was not long ere she became one of his firmest friends; and it was even asserted that, after the death of the Prince her husband, she privately bestowed her hand upon the fascinating Gentleman of the Bedchamber.

[162] Mezeray, vol. xi. pp. 40-42. Le Vassor, vol. i. pp. 172, 173.

[163] Bassompierre, *Mem*. p. 81.

[164] Bassompierre, *Mem*. pp. 81-87. Le Vassor, vol. i. pp. 174-178. Richelieu, *Hist. de la Mere et du Fils*, vol. i. pp. 207-209. Mezeray, vol. xi. pp. 42, 43.

[165] *Mercure Francais*, 1614.

[166] Bassompierre, *Mem*. pp. 88, 89.

[167] Le Vassor, vol. i. pp. 191, 192.

[168] Lingard, *Hist. of England*, vol. ix. p. 271.

[169] Siri, *Mem. Rec*. vol. iii. pp. 50-52.

CHAPTER VI

1614

New anxieties—Disaffection of the Princes—They demand a Reformation in the Government—Cunning of the Duc de Bouillon—Imprisonment of M. de Vendome—He escapes—The Regent suspects the sincerity of Bouillon—Conspiracy of the Ducs de Vendome and de Retz—The Duc de Nevers seizes Mezieres—Recall of M. d'Epernon—Marie de Medicis resolves to resign the Regency, but is dissuaded by her Council—Treasonable reports—Precarious position of the Queen—Levy of troops—Manifesto of the Prince de Conde—Reply of the Regent—Death of the Connetable—Duc de Montmorency—Bassompierre is appointed Colonel-General of the Swiss Guards—The

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march against M. de Conde—Marie endeavours to temporize—The price of loyalty—-The Prince de Conde leaves Paris—Christening of the Duc d'Anjou and the Princesse Henriette Marie—A temporary calm—The Ducs de Vendome and de Retz excite the Burgundians to revolt—The Protestants refuse to join their faction—They are compelled to lay down their arms—The Prince de Conde marches upon Poitiers—The Church "military"—The prelate and the populace—A governor superseded—The Prince is compelled to withdraw to Chatellerault—He burns down the episcopal palace—The Court proceed to Poitou—Their reception—The Duc de Vendome makes his submission—The States assemble at Nantes—Enormities perpetrated by the troops of M. de Vendome—Folly of that Prince—Death of the Prince de Conti—A bachelor-Benedict—A *nom de guerre*—Majority of Louis XIII—The Bed of Justice—The assembly of the States-General is deferred—The King solicits his mother to retain her authority in the Government—Meeting of the States—The early years of Louis XIII—Charles Albert de Luynes—His antecedents—His ambition—His favour with the young King—He is made Governor of Amboise.

The commencement of the year 1614 was productive of new anxieties to the Queen-Regent. The Marechal de Bouillon, whose restless ambition was ever prompting him to some new enterprise, had warily, but not the less surely, possessed himself of the confidence of the Princes and the other dis-affected nobles, and had succeeded in aggravating their feelings against the Court party to such an extent that he experienced little difficulty in inducing them to abandon the capital and to retire to their several governments. M. de Conde had never forgiven the refusal of Marie to bestow upon him the command of the citadel of Chateau Trompette, or the recall of the ministers; and he also deeply resented the desertion of the Marechal d'Ancre from his interests, as well as the wealth and honours to which he had attained; while the Ducs de Nevers, de Mayenne, de Vendome, de Longueville, and de Piney-Luxembourg, together with a host of others, considered themselves aggrieved by their exclusion from power, and were consequently ready to espouse his cause. Thus Bouillon found it easy to induce them to retire simultaneously from the Court; and it was agreed that they should assemble in Champagne, and collectively demand a reform in the Government.

Accordingly the Prince de Conde took his leave of their Majesties on the 6th of January, and retired for a time to Chateauroux, whence he afterwards proceeded to Mezieres. This example was shortly followed by the other chiefs of his faction. The Duc de Nevers retired at once to Champagne, the Duc de Mayenne to the Isle of France, and M. de Longueville to Picardy. In February the Duc de Vendome prepared in his turn to join his friends; but as their purpose had by this time become apparent to the Regent, she caused him to be confined in an apartment of the Louvre; whence, however, he succeeded a short time afterwards in escaping by a door that had long been unused, and which being covered by the tapestried hanging of the chamber had been at length forgotten.

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The Marechal de Bouillon, however, upon whom the cabal mainly relied, as his sovereignty of Sedan gave them the assurance of a secure retreat should they be menaced with reprisals, made no haste to imitate his dupes. He had been far too crafty to compromise himself beyond redemption with a party which might ultimately fail; and he had consequently calculated with great care the probable chances of furthering his own fortunes. After the departure of the Princes he formed his decision; and his first act was to wait upon the ministers, and to reveal to them the intentions of M. de Conde and his adherents; a communication which excited more annoyance than surprise in those to whom it was addressed. He then proceeded to the Louvre, where he repeated to the Regent what he had previously declared to her ministers; and although he tempered his information with assurances of the respect and attachment of the self-exiled Princes towards her person, Marie considered the mere fact of such a coalition so dangerous, that even when Bouillon volunteered to exert all his influence to induce them to abandon their design, and to return to the capital, although she accepted his offer, and permitted him to follow them ostensibly for that purpose, she was far from feeling reassured; and she soon had reason to discover that her fears were only too well—grounded; as the Duke, after an elaborate leave-taking at the palace, publicly declared that he was about to proceed to Sedan in order to avoid arrest.

This fact, coupled with the escape of M. de Vendome, who lost no time in reaching Brittany, where he was joined by the Duc de Retz[170] with an armed force, and took the town of Lamballe, sufficed to convince Marie that no faith must be placed in the professions of Bouillon; and she accordingly forwarded orders to all the governors of the royal fortresses to forbid the entrance of the Duc de Vendome within their walls, and commanded the Parliament to issue an edict for the suppression of levies of troops throughout Provence. This done, she next despatched the Duc de Ventadour to Chateauroux with letters of recall to M. de Conde; but before his arrival the Prince had left that city for Mezieres; and as the letters, which were forwarded to him, remained unanswered, the royal envoy was compelled to return to the capital without accomplishing his mission.

The next intelligence which reached the capital was the seizure of the citadel of Mezieres by the Duc de Nevers; and as matters daily assumed a more serious aspect, the Queen resolved to recall M. d’Epernon from Metz, whither he had withdrawn a few months previously, and to conciliate him by reviving in the person of his son M. de Candale the nominal office of First Lord of the Bedchamber, which he had himself held under Henri III; while, at the same time, she held out to the Duc de Guise the prospect of commanding the armies of the King, should it be found expedient to march against the Prince de Conde.

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These precautions were, however, far from sufficient to tranquillize the mind of Marie de Medicis, who began to apprehend a renewal of the intestine calamities which had overwhelmed the nation during the preceding reigns; and satisfied that despite all her efforts at conciliation she was personally obnoxious to the Princes, she expressed her determination to resign the regency. Nor did either Concini or his wife, although their own fortunes were involved in her retirement, venture to dissuade her from her purpose, the threats of the disaffected nobles against themselves having convinced them that they had little mercy to expect at their hands should they still further urge the Queen to aggressive measures. From this hasty resolution Marie was, however, with some difficulty, dissuaded by her Council, who represented to her the dangerous position in which she could not fail to place the young King; who, utterly unaccustomed to public business, must prove incompetent to maintain his interests at so perilous a crisis as that which now excited her own fears.

The Regent readily admitted the validity of this argument; but in support of her purpose she informed them that she had just been apprised of a rumour which had spread in Brittany since the Duc de Vendome had retired from the Court, by which she was accused of having attempted to poison the King in order to lengthen her own period of power; and with pardonable indignation she declared that she possessed no other means of refuting so horrible a calumny than that which she had adopted, and that she consequently owed this justice to herself. As she was, however, still entreated to sacrifice her own feelings to the safety of the sovereign and the welfare of the kingdom, she at length yielded; but that she made the concession with reluctance was sufficiently evident.

“As regards the horrible crime imputed to me, Messieurs,” she said, “I can only swear that I would rather suffer death than continue to live on under such an accusation. I am well aware, moreover, that this is not the only calumny which has been circulated against my person and reputation; nor is it the first time that the Marechal d’Ancre has been designated as the instigator of my unpopular measures; every new cabal inventing some fallacy to undermine my authority and to throw discredit upon my government. Since, however, you give it as your opinion that I shall better serve the King by retaining the regency until he shall be of fitting age to act upon his own responsibility, I will continue to exercise the power delegated to me by my late lord and husband; and to maintain that good understanding with my son which has ever hitherto existed between us.”

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The question was then discussed of whether it were more desirable to levy such troops as still remained faithful to the Crown, and at once endeavour to reduce the faction of the Princes by force, or to attempt a reconciliation by pacific means. The Cardinal de Joyeuse, Villeroy, and Jeannin were urgent that the former measure should be adopted; assigning as their reason that after the tergiversation and deceit of which the cabal had been convicted, they would profit by any delay on the part of the Government to strengthen their army, and to effect other means of defence, thus augmenting the difficulty of their suppression; the Chancellor was, however, of a different opinion, and counselled the Queen to avert, so long as it might be possible to do so, the horrors of a civil war. He represented to her the fact that all the principal nobles, with scarcely one exception, had leagued themselves with M. de Conde, while she had on her side only the Ducs de Guise and d'Epernon, who were, moreover, at variance; each coveting the dignity of Connetable, and scarcely seeking to disguise his jealousy of the other; and finally, he pointed out to her the dangerous attitude assumed by the Huguenots, who would not fail to take advantage of any civil dissension to advance their pretensions, which could only be done successfully during the minority of the sovereign.

Between these conflicting opinions Marie at length resolved to steer a middle course; and she consequently declared her intention of attempting by negotiation to reconcile the Princes, while at the same time she made a levy of six thousand Swiss troops.[171] She, moreover, by the advice of her Council, addressed a circular-letter to all the Parliaments of the kingdom, governors of provinces and fortresses, and mayors of towns, exhorting them to remain faithful to the Crown, and not to suffer themselves to be seduced by the Prince de Conde and his partisans; and terminating by the declaration that her Majesty had determined to convoke the States, in order to consult upon the measures necessary for ensuring the welfare and prosperity of the nation.

Meanwhile M. de Conde had assembled the leaders of his party at Mezieres, whence he forwarded a species of manifesto to the Queen-Regent, in which he complained in the name of his faction of "the waste of the public money; of the unworthiness of the individuals in power; of the undue authority assumed by the ministers; of the want of respect displayed towards the Princes of the Blood, the peers, and the officers of the Crown; of the obstacles endured by the Parliaments in the exercise of their jurisdiction; of the ruin of the great nobles; the excessive charges of the law courts; the oppression suffered by the people; the neglect exhibited in assembling the States-General; and the precipitation shown in concluding the marriage of the sovereign before he had attained his majority." Other objections followed, and then succeeded the conditions upon which the cabal declared themselves willing to return to their allegiance. The States-General were to be convened within three months; the royal marriages were to be deferred until the close of the Assembly; and the then-existing household of his Majesty was to be replaced by individuals of acknowledged probity.

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The Prince at the same time wrote to the two Parliaments, to the Prince de Conti, to the dukes and peers, and to the great officers of the Crown, soliciting their assistance in the work of reform which he was about to undertake. Neither of the Parliaments, however, replied to his letter; and that addressed to Paris was placed unopened in the hands of the Regent, who forthwith forwarded it to the Chancellor.

The answer of Marie de Medicis to the manifesto addressed to herself was calm and dignified. She declared her willingness to assemble the States-General; but accompanied this concession by expressing her regret that the Prince should not, during the last four years, have personally made the representation, and assisted her in averting the evils of which he now complained, instead of absenting himself from the Court on the pretext of disapproving the proposed alliance with Spain, to which he had previously affixed his consent and signature. To each of his other objections he received an equally categorical reply; and the document terminated by an expression of her conviction that his offer to effect a reform in the state by pacific means rather than have recourse to force was desirable indeed, but little to be anticipated, since the formation of a cabal like that of which he had constituted himself the leader, and which was opposed to the legitimate authority of the sovereign, could only terminate in intestine broils, and compel the King to adopt the most violent measures in order to suppress it.

Precisely at this period intelligence reached the Court of the death of the veteran Connetable de Montmorency, one of the most gallant soldiers of his day, whose judgment and strong sense had long been proverbial, although he was utterly without education, and could scarcely sign his own name.

While the negotiation with Conde was still pending, a new anxiety added to the embarrassment of the Regent. The Swiss levies were about to be raised; but suspicions of the loyalty of the Duc de Rohan, who was colonel-general of this force, rendered her unwilling to confide so important a body of troops to his control; and she ultimately resolved to offer him a sum of money, and to induce him to resign his appointment. M. de Rohan readily acceded to the proposal, his position at that moment rendering him indifferent to its possession; and the Queen next sought to find an individual whose popularity with the Switzers, and devotion to her own interests, might render him an eligible successor to the displaced Duke. After considerable reflection she selected Bassompierre; but the suggestion was at once negatived by M. de Villeroy, who reminded her Majesty that the office was one which had never been filled by any person under the rank of a prince. So brilliant a prospect, however, gave the favoured courtier courage to plead his cause so successfully with his royal mistress, that she was at length induced to consent that, if he were enabled to persuade the

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Swiss themselves to solicit his appointment, the difficulty should be overcome. Fortunately for the aspirant the officer to whom the levies were entrusted was his personal friend, and so zealously did he advocate his cause that the Thirteen Cantons united in consenting to receive him as their leader; and Bassompierre, although only a petty noble of Lorraine, found himself invested with a command which was coveted by all the proudest subjects of France.

Two days subsequently the Court were informed that the Prince de Conde and the Duc de Nevers had taken Mezieres and Sainte-Menehould, upon which the newly-raised troops received orders to join M. de Praslin, who, with the remainder of the army, was concentrating his forces at Vitry. Their arrival so alarmed the insurgent party that they resolved to evacuate the latter city, and demanded that even should the troops remain in their vicinity, Bassompierre himself, who, from the share that he had taken in the affair throughout, was peculiarly obnoxious to them, should be recalled. The Duc de Ventadour and the President Jeannin, through whom M. de Conde and his party carried on their negotiation with the King, accordingly wrote to the young commander to apprise him that the Regent required his services in the capital, for reasons which she would explain on his arrival; and, greatly to his mortification, Bassompierre found himself compelled to retrace his steps.[172]

Once more Marie de Medicis resolved to afford to the adverse faction the opportunity of terminating their ill-advised struggle without bloodshed; and she accordingly despatched a trustworthy messenger to M. de Conde, volunteering to send deputies who should be authorized to effect a reconciliation. The offer was accepted, the malcontents having become paralyzed by the unexpected energy of their opponents; and after sundry meetings between the agents of the Government and the chiefs of the cabal, in which each made particular conditions for himself which were veiled by three demands of a more public nature, a treaty of peace was drawn up and signed by both parties, and amity was once more restored. Situated as they were, the Princes had been careful not to insist on more than they were aware would be readily conceded; and thus they asked only that the States-General should be convoked with as little delay as possible, that the double alliance with Spain should be delayed until the termination of the King’s minority, and that the royal troops should be immediately disarmed.

To this last requisition the reply of the commissioners of the Crown was positive; the rebel faction were in the first place to lay down their own arms after which they pledged themselves that their example should be followed by the troops of the sovereign; and to this arrangement M. de Conde, after some hesitation, agreed.

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Thus far all had progressed favourably; but the subsequent exactions of the disaffected party caused considerable anxiety in the Council of the Regent. The exorbitant pretensions of its leaders alarmed the ministers, but the crisis was sufficiently critical to induce them ultimately to satisfy the demands of their dearly-purchased allies. The Prince de Conde was invested with the government of Amboise, and received four hundred and fifty thousand livres in ready money. The Duc de Mayenne three hundred thousand, and the survivorship of the government of Paris; and all the other chiefs of the cabal the sums or governments that they had seen fit to exact; after which they ceased to insist upon the public grievances, and the Ducs de Longueville and de Mayenne returned to Court; an example which was followed by the Prince de Conde as soon as he had taken possession of his new government. The coldness with which he was received, however, and the little desire evinced to pay him that deference which he was ever anxious to exact, soon disgusted him with the capital, and he once more withdrew, little less disaffected than before.

On the 5th of June the Duc d'Anjou and the younger Princess were baptized at the Louvre with great ceremony, by the Cardinal de Bonzy, the almoner of the Queen. The sponsors of the Prince, who received the names of Gaston Jean Baptiste, were the ex-Queen Marguerite and the Cardinal de Joyeuse; while those given to his sister, who was held at the font by Madame and the Cardinal de la Rochefoucauld, were Henriette Marie; this being the Princess who subsequently became the wife of the unhappy Charles I. of England.

The completion of the treaty with the Princes had restored the nation to apparent tranquillity, and the government of the Regent bore a semblance of stability to which it had not previously attained, when new troubles broke out through the restlessness and jealousy of Cesar de Vendome; who, having merely been reinstated in his government and other dignities, considered himself to have been ill-treated by the Prince de Conde, to whose care he had confided his interests, and who consequently resolved to enforce more ample justice for himself. With a view of effecting his purpose, he induced the Duc de Retz, who was equally dissatisfied, to follow his example, and Brittany soon became ripe for revolt. As, however, Vendome did not fail to perceive that without extending his faction he could not hope to make head successfully against the Court, he next endeavoured to engage M. de Rohan and the Protestants in his interest, believing the Duke to be much more powerful with the reformed party than he really was; and Rohan so far yielded as to attempt a convocation of the General Assembly in Gascony; but the prudence of Du Plessis-Mornay, who represented to the Huguenots the impolicy of embroiling themselves with the Government in order to gratify the ambition of an individual, decided them to refuse all participation in a political movement of that nature.

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Repulsed but not discouraged, Vendome still persevered, and as his intrigues tended to unsettle the minds of the people, and to harass the Regent, she resolved to despatch the Marquis de Coeuvres, then recently returned from his embassy in Italy, to expostulate with him, and endeavour to recall him to reason. This mission was peculiarly distasteful to the Marquis, who, being nearly connected with M. de Vendome through his mother (Gabrielle d'Estrees), was fearful, should he fail to effect his purpose, that he must offend one or the other party; but as the commands of the Queen-mother were stringent, he was compelled to obey. His task proved an arduous one, the two Dukes warmly asserting their right to share in the benefits which M. de Conde had secured for himself and his immediate friends, and declaring their intention to obtain by force what they had been denied by the ingratitude of the Crown: nor was it until the envoy had been a second time instructed to assure them that should they persist in their disloyalty the King was prepared to march an army against them, that they were at length induced to sign a treaty which had been drawn up for that purpose, and to lay down their arms.

This desirable result had scarcely been accomplished when the Prince de Conde, disappointed by his government of Amboise (which he soon discovered to be of much less importance than he had imagined when he insisted upon its possession), resolved to make himself master of the city of Poitiers, where he had secured many and active allies, among whom the most considerable was the Due de Roannois, the governor; while in addition to this advantage he had also received from the Marquis de Bonnivet a promise that he would furnish a body of troops to assist him in his enterprise. The city was about to elect a mayor, and the friends of Conde had exerted themselves to the utmost to cause the choice of the citizens to fall upon an individual of their own party, but their design was penetrated by the Bishop,[173] who hastened to apprise the Regent of the cabal which had once more been commenced against her authority.

The communication of the prelate renewed all the apprehensions of Marie, who, after expressing her acknowledgments for his zeal, commanded him to adopt every means in his power to contravene the endeavours of the Prince and his adherents; and so ably did he fulfil her directions that he succeeded in winning over to the royal cause the greater number of the inhabitants; which he had no sooner accomplished than he caused the guards to be doubled, and thus rendered himself more powerful in the city than M. de Roannois himself. This fact soon became apparent to Conde, but he still trusted to the support of his friends, and accordingly presented himself at the gates with a small retinue, believing that the citizens would obey their governor, and refuse to oppose his entrance. The Bishop had, however, by the promptitude of his measures, effectually defeated

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the hopes of the Prince. He had loudly proclaimed in the streets that there was a conspiracy on foot for delivering up the city to the enemies of the King; and this announcement had at once sufficed to arouse all the energy of the inhabitants. In a short time the gates were closed, chains were stretched across the thoroughfares, and numerous barricades were erected. The prelate, gratified by these fearless evidences of his influence, became to the full as excited as his adherents, and arming himself with a pike, he placed himself at the head of the people, urging them to resist to the utmost the dishonour by which they were threatened; while the Governor, who was then inhabiting a suburban residence, no sooner became apprised of the belligerent demonstrations of the Bishop, and the effects which they had produced, than he galloped to the gates with the intention of opposing his authority to that of his clerical antagonist. At his command the gates were opened, and directing the immediate demolition of the barricades, he proceeded to the episcopal palace; not, however, without being subjected to the abuse of the irritated populace. The Bishop, whose policy was not inferior to his courage, offered him an asylum until the fury of the crowd should be appeased; and M. de Roannois, alarmed by the rough reception he had already encountered, at once accepted the offer, and thus became the prisoner of the prelate; who, producing the letter of the Regent, issued the orders necessary to ensure the safety of the city. Nor was this all; for with a sword by his side, the Bishop personally posted the sentinels at nightfall, and distributed money from his own private purse to the non-military combatants who had formed themselves into a militia.

Enraged by his disappointment, M. de Conde, after vainly attempting to obtain a hearing from the excited citizens, found himself compelled to retire with his companions, having on his way burnt down the country palace of the bishops of Poitiers; and he had no sooner reached that city than he wrote to the Regent to complain of the insult to which he had been subjected by the inhabitants of Poitiers, and to demand justice. The sympathies of the Court were, however, with the adverse party; but Marie de Medicis was so well aware of the consequences to be apprehended from Conde's irritation that she resolved to proceed to Poitou and Brittany in person, on the pretext of the weak health of the King, by whom she was to be accompanied. She accordingly caused a rumour to be spread that Louis had displayed symptoms of disease which rendered it probable that he could not long survive; and having done this, the troops were warned to hold themselves in readiness to leave the capital with his Majesty. Meanwhile the Due de Mayenne was despatched to M. de Conde to assure him on the part of the Regent that every respect should be paid to his representations, and at the same time letters of abolition were sent to all his adherents; although he was requested to retire from Poitou during the sojourn of their Majesties. To this demand Conde at first demurred; but finding that he could not succeed in securing the assistance of the reformed party, he at length consented to withdraw; and not venturing to return to Amboise, he took up his temporary residence at Chateauroux in Berry.

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The retreat of the Prince was a great triumph for the warlike Bishop, who lost no time in proceeding to Tours (where the Court had already arrived), at the head of two hundred of his supporters, to entreat of their Majesties to proceed at once to Poitiers, in order to restore public confidence. His reception by the Regent was gracious in the extreme, nor did the young sovereign fail to express to the exulting prelate his own sense of obligation. At Poitiers the Court was met by the most enthusiastic acclamations: their Majesties honoured the election of the new mayor with their presence; and the lieutenant-generalship of the province was bestowed upon the Comte de la Rochefoucauld, an adherent of the Due de Guise.

From Poitiers the Court proceeded to Angers, on its way to Brittany; where, however, the Due de Vendome did not wait its arrival to make his submission. The inertness of the Government upon previous occasions not having prepared him for the energy now exhibited by the sovereign, his alarm was correspondingly increased; and he hastened to meet their Majesties accompanied by all the nobility of the province. On approaching the King he laid his sword at his feet; and, as he knelt beside it, entreated his forgiveness of his past errors, and expressed his determination thenceforward to give him no further subject of complaint; upon which Louis commanded him to rise, and granted him a free pardon, which was ratified by the Regent. Letters patent were despatched by which he was reinstated in his government, and made irresponsible for all the excesses committed by his troops; and once more the son of Gabrielle d'Estrees was restored to the favour, if not to the confidence, of his sovereigns.

The assembly of the States then took place at Nantes, presided over by the Duc de Rohan; and during its meetings the King was apprised by its members of the enormities of which the followers of Vendome had been guilty throughout the province, and respectfully solicited to exclude from the letters of abolition the authors of the frightful crimes of which the people had been made the victims. Among those of which they complained were the ransom of wives by their husbands, of daughters and young children by their parents, and of fields of grain by their owners. They, moreover, demanded justice for still greater enormities; and revealed to the Council the appalling fact that wealthy individuals had been subjected to torture, and in many instances even put to death, in order to obtain possession of their money; while others had been compelled to pay a heavy sum to save their dwellings and their property from the brand of the incendiary.

These frightful revelations excited the horror and indignation of Marie and her Council; and, in reply to their requisition, the complainants were assured that, although the King and his Government had preferred to pardon the injuries which they had personally sustained from the faction of M. de Vendome, rather than visit them with the vengeance that they had legally merited, neither the sovereign nor those who held office under him could permit crimes like those detailed in their remonstrance to be exercised with impunity upon the people, and those crimes would consequently be punished with the most extreme rigour.

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The first independent act of the Duc de Vendome had thus greatly injured him in the estimation of the young monarch and his mother; nor did his afterlife tend to give them cause to alter the opinion which they then formed either as regarded his stability or his capacity. Even the marriage which his father, Henri IV, had with so much difficulty contracted for him with the heiress of the House of Mercoeur,[174] failed to produce the result that had been anticipated, as he squandered her wealth, without increasing his own political importance.[175]

On her triumphant return to the capital Marie de Medicis was apprised of the death of the Prince de Conti, which had taken place on the 13th of August; but the void was little felt, the infirmities under which he laboured, and the weakness of his intellect, having, despite his exalted rank, rendered him a mere cipher at the Court. By the nation his loss was totally unfelt; while this indifference was shared by his wife, whose violent passion for Bassompierre had long been notorious, and who shortly afterwards privately gave him her hand. Mademoiselle d'Entragues, the sister of the Marquise de Verneuil, to whom he had previously been betrothed, and who had made him the father of a son, [176] had in vain endeavoured in the law courts to compel him to fulfil his contract, and persisted in bearing his name; a fact which was so well known as to induce many persons to believe that she was in reality his wife. On one occasion, when he was in attendance upon the Queen, the royal carriage was detained for a moment by the crowd near that of Mademoiselle d'Entragues, whom Marie immediately recognized. "See," she said with a malicious smile, as she pointed towards the lady with her fan, "there is Madame de Bassompierre."

"That is merely a *nom de guerre*, Madame," was the ready reply, uttered in a tone sufficiently loud to reach the ears of the person named, who angrily exclaimed:

"You are a fool, Bassompierre!"

"If I be not," was the quiet rejoinder of the ungallant Lothario, "it has at least, Madame, not been your fault." [177]

Thus, after his union with the Princesse de Conti, Bassompierre, although claimed as a husband by two celebrated women, the one of a family notorious for the profligacy of its members, and the other a daughter of the proud house of Guise and, moreover, the widow of a Prince of the Blood, still continued to assume the privileges of a bachelor; resolutely disowning the one, while the other did not dare publicly to declare her marriage.[178]

A fortnight after the return of the Court to Paris it was followed by the Prince de Conde, who had been summoned to attend the sovereign to Parliament on the termination of his minority, which ended when he entered his thirteenth year. On the 1st of October, the day preceding that on which the ceremony of his recognition as actual monarch of France was to take place, Louis XIII issued a declaration confirmatory

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of the edict of pacification previously published, and renewing his prohibition against duelling and blasphemy. On the following morning the King ascended his Bed of Justice; and both the procession and the meeting were conducted with the greatest pomp. He was attended by the Queen-mother, Monsieur, and the Princes de Conde and de Soissons, the Ducs de Guise, d'Elboeuf, d'Epernon, de Ventadour, and de Montbazon, and upwards of eight hundred mounted nobles, all attired in the most sumptuous manner. On his arrival at the palace the King was received by two presidents and four councillors, by whom he was conducted to the great hall; and after all the persons present had taken their places, his Majesty briefly declared the purpose for which he had convened the meeting. Marie de Medicis then in her turn addressed the Assembly, declaring that she had resigned the administration of public affairs into the hands of the sovereign, who had some days previously attained his majority; and when she had ceased speaking Louis expressed his acknowledgments for the valuable services which she had rendered to the kingdom, his resolution still to be guided by her advice, and entreated her not to withhold from him her important assistance in the Government. The Chancellor, the First President,[179] and the Advocate-General[180] each delivered a harangue; after which the Chancellor pronounced the decree which declared the majority of the sovereign; and the declaration that he had forwarded to the Council on the previous day was duly registered. This act terminated the ceremony, and Louis XIII returned to the Louvre accompanied and attended as he had reached the Parliament, amid the acclamations of the populace.

The assembly of the States-General at Sens had been fixed for the 10th of September, and would consequently have been held before the King had attained his majority, had not this arrangement been traversed by the Regent, who apprehended that they would seize so favourable an opportunity of thwarting all her views; and would not only demand the dismissal of the ministers and the Marechal d'Ancre, but also, which was still more important, dissuade the sovereign, whose minority would terminate during their sitting, from permitting her to retain any share in the Government. The Prince de Conde and his partisans, whose interests undoubtedly demanded such a result, had, however, themselves been instrumental in the delay so earnestly desired by Marie; the hostile demonstrations of Vendome in Brittany, and the ill-judged movements of Conde himself in Poitou, having furnished her with a plausible pretext for deferring the opening of the States until the King could preside over them in person; when the public declaration made before the Parliament by the young sovereign of his intention still to be guided by the counsels of his mother at once freed her from all her apprehensions; and she accordingly lost no time in transferring the Assembly from Sens to Paris, and proroguing it till the 10th of October.

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Nevertheless much was to be feared should the clergy, the nobility, and the people act unanimously; and in order to prevent such a coalition, neither Marie de Medicis nor her ministers spared any exertion. As much depended upon the presidents whom they might select, the first care of the Queen-mother was to ensure the election of persons favourable to her own interests; but as great caution was necessary with regard to the agent to whom she could entrust so delicate a mission as that of causing such individuals to be chosen, she hesitated for a time before she came to a decision. Ultimately, however, she fixed upon the young Comte de Brienne;[181] and so thoroughly did he justify her preference, that he eventually succeeded, without any appearance of undue interposition, in securing the election of three presidents, all of whom were favourable to the Court party.[182]

This important point gained, the Government recovered its confidence; and its next care was to awaken the jealousy of each order against its coadjutors, and thus to paralyze the influence of the Assembly. In this attempt it was perfectly successful; and the general welfare of the country was overlooked in the anxiety of the several parties to carry out their own individual views. The clergy demanded the publication of the decrees of the Council of Trent, and their unrestricted admission throughout the kingdom; the nobility asked that the privilege of the *paulette* should be abolished;[183] and the *tiers-etat*[184] solicited either the suppression or diminution of the pensions by which the public treasury was involved in debt.

The speaker elected by the clergy was the Archbishop of Lyons; the nobility chose as their spokesman the Baron du Pont Saint-Pierre,[185] while the *tiers-etat* was presided over by M. Miron.[186] The two first-named orators addressed the King standing and bareheaded; but this privilege was considered too great for a body which could boast of neither hereditary nor ecclesiastical nobility; and the able diplomatist and rhetorician who upon that occasion pleaded before his sovereign the rights and immunities of the class which he had been called upon to represent, was compelled to address that sovereign upon his knees. Miron had, previous to the meeting of the States, excited the indignation of the more patrician orders by declaring that he regarded the three bodies of which it was composed as one family, of which the nobility and clergy represented the elder, and the *tiers-etat* the junior branches; while the Queen herself, even while she felt the importance of his support, did not hesitate to treat the deputies of his order with the greatest arrogance and discourtesy, although they distinguished themselves by a loyalty and devotion to the interests of the Crown which met with no response from the haughtier members of the Assembly. Ably, indeed, through the agency of Miron, did they persist in defending the royal prerogative,

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and demand that a principle should be established forbidding the deposition of their sovereigns on accusations of heresy; expressing their desire that the Crown should be recognized by law as completely independent of spiritual power; and although the clergy, through Cardinal Duperron, formally and strenuously opposed these propositions, so little was Miron affected by the adverse circumstances under which he appeared, that he replied with a logic and energy which compelled the States to defer their decision until the following year.[187]

Louis XIII, at this period, was in so delicate a state of health as to require constant care and attention, while his sullen and self-centred disposition demanded no less watchfulness. His first preceptor was M. Vauquelin des Ivetaux, a man of great talent, and quite equal to the task of forming the mind and intellect of a Prince, but of dissolute principles and sensual habits.[188] He, however, did not long remain about the person of the boy-King, having been replaced a year after the death of Henri IV by Nicolas Le Fevre,[189] who was distinguished alike for his learning and his piety. Unfortunately for the young Louis, this excellent man only lived a year after his appointment, and was, in his turn, replaced by M. de Rivault,[190] a celebrated mathematician, who had been educated with Guy, Comte de Laval.[191] Thus, however competent these several individuals might have been to conduct his education, it will be at once evident that the perpetual changes of method and purpose to which he was subjected greatly tended to impede the progress of the illustrious pupil; and it consequently ceases to be matter of surprise that at his majority he had by no means attained to the degree of knowledge common to his age. Louis XIII knew little Latin; cared nothing for literature; but although either irritable or inert when compelled to study, could develop great energy when he was engaged in gunnery, horsemanship, or falconry. The latter pursuit was his principal amusement, His purity of heart and propriety of language were extreme, and deserve the greater mention from the contrast which they afforded to the morals and manners by which he was surrounded. He would neither permit an oath nor an obscene expression to be uttered in his presence, and never failed to rebuke any violation of his pleasure in this respect. He was passionately attached to dogs, and conversed with them, according to a contemporaneous historian, in a peculiar language;[192] but as regarded his kingly duties he was utterly incompetent. With good intentions, a love of justice, and a deep sense of religion, he was vacillating and indolent; and cared little either to assert his privileges, or to take upon himself the cares and fatigues of government while he could transfer them to others, and thus secure time to abandon himself to more congenial pursuits.

In this circumstance were comprised all the errors of his reign; as even while deeply imbued with a sense of his dignity as the sovereign of a great nation, he exhibited the feeling only in acts of petty and obstinate opposition which tended to no result, and were productive only of a want of attachment to his person, and of respect for his opinions,

which increased the arrogance of the great nobles, and fostered the ambition of his ministers.

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It is now time that we should introduce an individual whose subsequent importance in the kingdom, humble as were his antecedents, was one source of the bitter trials to which the unfortunate Marie de Medicis was subjected during a long period of her life. The Comte de Lude had in his service a page, who was subsequently transferred to that of the young King; and it is the history of this apparently insignificant person which we are now called upon to detail to the reader. Albert de Luynes, his father, was the son of Guillaume Segur, a canon of the cathedral of Marseilles, and of the housekeeper of the said ecclesiastic; and derived the name of Luynes from a small tenement upon the bank of that river, between Aix and Marseilles, which was the property of the canon, who preferred that his son should adopt the appellation of his farm rather than his own. There was, however, an elder brother, on whom the little property belonging to the priest was exclusively bestowed, and Luynes accordingly discovered that he must become the architect of his own fortunes. With all the fearless confidence of youth he made his way, as he best could, to the capital, where he enlisted as an archer of the bodyguard, displayed great aptitude and courage, and finally obtained the governorship of Pont-St.-Esprit. While thus prospering in the world he married, became the father of seven children, of whom three were sons; and died without suspecting that his name would be handed down to posterity through the medium of one of these almost portionless boys, whose sole inheritance was a small dairy-farm of the annual value of twelve hundred livres.

Charles de Luynes, the elder of this numerous family, became, as already stated, the page of the Comte de Lude; and, as his brothers were totally without resources, he induced his patron to receive them gratuitously into his suite, in order that he might be enabled to share with them the four hundred crowns a year which, together with his slender patrimony, formed his own income. This favour had no sooner been conceded than the three young men discarded the modest names of Charles, Honore, and Leon d'Albert, by which they had previously been known, and assumed those of Luynes, Cadenet, and Brantes, from the field, the vineyard, and a small sandy island beside them, which composed their joint estate.[193] "Possessions," as Bassompierre facetiously observes, "over which a hare leapt every day." On the miserable pittance of the elder brother the three young adventurers, nevertheless, contrived with considerable difficulty to exist, although it was notorious that they had but one cloak, at that period an indispensable article of costume, among them; a circumstance by which two were compelled to avoid observation while the third fulfilled his duties; and so little, moreover, were their services valued by M. de Lude that he was in the habit of declaring that they were fit for nothing but "to catch green jays," a reproach which they owed to their skill in training sparrow-hawks to catch small birds; and to which he was far from supposing when he gave it utterance that they would ultimately be indebted for a prosperity almost fabulous.

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Such, however, was fated to be the case. Charles de Luynes had not been long at Court before he ascertained the passion of the young King for falconry, and having carefully trained two of his miniature hawks, he caused them to be offered in his name to his royal master. Louis was delighted with their docility and skill, and desired that the donor should be presented to him; when he found that the page was deeply versed in all the mysteries of that sport to which he was himself so much attached; and thenceforward he constantly commanded his attendance whenever he pursued his favourite pastime in the gardens of the Tuileries.

At this period M. de Luynes had already attained his thirtieth year; and, with admirable self-government, he had so thoroughly controlled himself as to disguise the salient features of his character. No one consequently suspected either his latent ambition, or the violent passions which he had craft enough to conceal; and thus the very individuals who were the objects of his hatred regarded him merely as a shallow and superficial young man, whose whole soul was in the puerile sports to which he had addicted himself.

It was not, however, solely to take small birds that De Luynes aspired when he thus found himself the chosen companion of the Dauphin; he had other talents which he exerted so zealously that he ere long made himself indispensable. Gifted with a magnificent person, insinuating manners, and that ready tact by which an indolent nature is unconsciously roused to excitement, he soon obtained an extraordinary influence over his royal playmate by the power which he possessed of overcoming his habitual apathy, and causing him to enter with zest and enjoyment into the pleasures of his age. Henri IV, who perceived with gratification the beneficial effect produced upon the saturnine nature of his son, and who was, moreover, touched by the fraternal devotion of the page, transferred him to the household of the Dauphin, and augmented his income to twelve hundred crowns; and thenceforward he became at once the companion, counsellor, and friend of the young Louis; and at the desire of the Prince he was created Master of the Aviary.

Time passed on. The Dauphin succeeded to the throne of his murdered father; the Regency tottered under the machinations of the great nobles; faction grew out of faction; cabals and conspiracies kept the nation in one perpetual state of anxiety and unrest; but the influence of De Luynes continued undiminished; and neither Marie de Medicis nor her ministers apprehended any danger from an association that was fated to produce the most serious consequences; while the Princes were equally disinclined to disturb the amusements in which the young monarch was so entirely absorbed as to pay little attention to the important events which succeeded each other around him.

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As he grew older Louis became still more attached to his favourite. His discontented spirit made him irritable under every disappointment, and vindictive towards those by whom his wishes were opposed: he detested alike explanation and remonstrance, and from De Luynes he never encountered either the one or the other. Under the remonstrances of his mother he became sullen; to the arrogant assumption of the Princes and the Marechal d'Ancre he opposed an apathetic silence which caused them to believe that it was unfelt; and it was only to De Luynes that he poured forth all his indignation, that he complained with bitterness of the iron rule of Marie, the insolence of his nobles, and the ostentatious profusion of the Italian: contrasting the first with his own helplessness, the second with the insignificance to which he was condemned, and the last with the almost penury to which he was compelled to submit.

No Prince had ever a more attentive or a more interested auditor. The enemies of the young Louis were also those of his favourite; for, as before remarked, the grandson of the reverend canon of Marseilles was alike vain and ambitious, and consequently inimical to all who occupied the high places to which he himself aspired. Moreover, the powerlessness and poverty of the young monarch necessarily involved those of his follower; and thus both by inclination and by interest De Luynes was bound to share the antipathies of his master.

Like all favourites, moreover, he soon made a host of personal adversaries; while, as these were far from suspecting the height to which he was ultimately destined to attain, they took little pains to dissemble their dislike and contempt of the new minion; and thus, ere long, De Luynes had amassed a weighty load of hatred in his heart. To him it appeared that all the great dignitaries of the kingdom, although born to the rank they held, were engrossing honours which, possessed as he was of the favour of the sovereign, should have been conferred upon himself; but the especial antipathy of the arrogant adventurer was directed against the Queen, the Marechal d'Ancre, and the President Jeannin. To account for his bitter feeling towards Marie de Medicis, it is only necessary to state that, blinded by his ambition, he had dared to display for the haughty Princess a passion which was coldly and disdainfully repulsed; and that he had vowed to revenge the overthrow of his hopes.[194]

His hatred of Concini is as easily explained; it being merely the jealousy of a rival favourite. The Italian was to the mother of the King precisely what De Luynes was to the King himself; and as Marie possessed more power than her son, so also was her follower more richly recompensed. Still, however, the game was an unequal one, of which the chances were all in his own favour; for the Marechal was playing away the present, while his adversary was staking upon the future. The President Jeannin was also, as we have stated, especially distasteful to De Luynes, as he made no secret of his dissatisfaction at the frivolous existence of the young sovereign, and his desire that he should exchange the boyish diversions to which he was addicted for pursuits more worthy of his high station; while at the same time he exhibited towards the favourite an undisguised disdain which excited all the worst passions of its object.

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Thus, insignificant as he appeared to those who were basking in favour, and who esteemed themselves too highly to waste one thought upon the obsequious dependent of a youthful and wayward sovereign, who suffered himself to be guided by those about him as though reckless of the result of their conflicting ambitions, it will be readily understood that De Luynes was laying up a store of antipathies which required only time and opportunity to develop themselves, and to bear the most bitter fruits; and already did the active favourite begin to enjoy a foretaste of the coming harvest. Ever earnest for right, Louis XIII never exhibited any personal energy to secure it, and consequently could effect nothing of himself; readily prejudiced, alike by his own caprices and by the representations of others, his very anxiety to act as became a monarch rendered him vulnerable to the intrigues of those whose interests tended to mislead his judgment; and as De Luynes, while sharing in his superstitious acts of overstrained devotion, or amusing his idleness by the futilities of falconry and other even less dignified sports, did not fail occasionally and cautiously to allude to more serious subjects, the boy-King listened eagerly to the recitals and opinions of his chosen friend, and finished by adopting all his views.

This fact soon became so obvious to Concini, that the wily Italian, who dreaded lest the day might not be far distant when the son of Marie de Medicis would shake off the yoke of her quasi-regency and assert his own prerogative, resolved to secure the good offices of De Luynes, and for this purpose he induced M. de Conde to restore to the King the government of Amboise; representing to the Prince the slight importance of such a possession to a person of his rank, and the conviction which its voluntary surrender must impress upon the ministers of his desire to strengthen the royal cause. Let it not be supposed, however, that, at the period of which we write, such a surrender could for a moment be effected gratuitously; and thus, when the first Prince of the Blood was at length induced to yield to the representations of his insidious adviser, the terms of the bargain were fully understood on both sides; but even when he had succeeded in obtaining the consent of M. de Conde himself to the arrangement, Concini had still to overcome the scruples of the Queen-mother, to whom he hastened to suggest that the vacant government should be bestowed upon Charles de Luynes.

As he had anticipated, Marie de Medicis was startled by so extraordinary a proposition. De Luynes was a mere hanger-on of the Court; the companion of the boyish pleasures of her son; and without one claim to honour or advancement. But these very arguments strengthened the position of the Marechal. The poverty of the King’s favourite secured, as he averred, his fidelity to those who might lay the foundations of his fortune; and if, as the astute Italian moreover cleverly remarked, De Luynes were

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in truth merely the playmate of the monarch, he possessed at least the merit of engrossing his thoughts, and of thus rendering him less desirous to control or to criticize the measures of others. Marie yielded to this argument; she had begun to love power for its own sake; and she could not disguise from herself that her future tenure of authority must depend solely upon the will of the young sovereign. In order, therefore, to secure to herself the good offices of one so influential with his royal master as De Luynes, she consented to follow the advice of Concini, who forthwith, in her name, remunerated M. de Conde for his secession by upwards of a hundred thousand crowns, and the grandson of Guillaume Segur became governor of the city and fortress of Amboise.[195]

FOOTNOTES:

[170] Emmanuel de Gondy, Due de Retz, and General of the Galleys, was the grandson of the celebrated Marechal Gilles de Laval, Baron de Retz, who, under Charles VII, greatly contributed to the expulsion of the English from France, but who subsequently suffered strangulation by a decree of the ecclesiastical tribunal of Nantes for his frightful debaucheries. He was the father of the well-known Cardinal de Retz, the enemy of Mazarin, and one of the heroes of the Fronde.

[171] Richelieu, *Hist. de la Mere et du Fils*, vol. i. pp. 247-254. Mezeray, vol. xi. pp. 53-55.

[172] Bassompierre, *Mem*. pp. 94, 95.

[173] Henri de Chatiegnier de la Rocheposay.

[174] In 1598 Henri IV had marched against the Duc de Mercoeur, who still held part of Brittany; and as the Duke found himself, immediately on the appearance of the King, deserted by the nobility of the duchy, he gave himself up for lost. Opposition was of course useless; and he was about to surrender to the royal troops upon the best terms which he could obtain, when he saved himself by a lucky expedient. He was aware of the violent passion still felt by Henry for Gabrielle d'Estrees, and in order to escape the penalty of his rebellion he offered the hand of his only daughter, with the duchies of Estampes, Penthievre, and Mercoeur as her dowry, to the King's natural son Cesar de Vendome; a proposal which was at once accepted, as the monarch was aware that it would gratify the ambition of his mistress. Subsequently, however, after the death of her father, the family of Mademoiselle de Mercoeur had objected to the alliance, and it had required all the authority of Henry to compel its accomplishment.—Davila, *Hist. of Modern Europe*, London, 1794, book xv. vol. iii. p. 49.

[175] Richelieu, *Hist. de la Mere et du Fils*, vol. i. pp. 260-277. Mezeray, vol. xi. pp. 55-67. Le Vassor, vol. i. pp. 253-261. Brienne, *Mem*. vol. i. pp. 296, 297, edition Petitot.

[176] Louis de Bassompierre, who subsequently became Bishop of Saintes.

[177] Petitot, *Avertissement sur M. de Bassompierre*.

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[178] Le Vassor, vol. i. p. 263.

[179] Nicolas de Verdun, First President of the Parliament of Paris, a devoted adherent of M. de Villeroy.

[180] Louis Servin, Councillor of State, Advocate-General of the Parliament of Paris, and one of the most able magistrates of his time, served with zeal and fidelity under Henri III, Henri IV, and Louis XIII. He died suddenly, at the feet of the latter monarch, on the 19th of March 1626, while remonstrating with him in the name of the Parliament, where he was holding his Bed of Justice, against certain financial edicts. He was the author of several legal writings, orations, and sundry other works.

[181] Henri Auguste de Lomenie, Comte de Brienne, was the son of Antoine de Lomenie and of Anne d'Aubourg, and was born in 1594. In 1609 he attracted the attention of Henri IV, who occasionally admitted him to his councils, in order to familiarize him with public affairs; and Marie de Medicis continued, after the death of that monarch, to honour him with her regard. In 1617 he became Master of the Ceremonies and Provost of the King's Orders. In 1621 he followed Louis XIII to Languedoc, where he distinguished himself at the siege of Clerac; and in the following campaign he served under the Prince de Conde with equal credit. After struggling successfully throughout the long and stormy administration of Richelieu, he incurred the displeasure of Louis XIII a short time after the death of that minister, and disposed of his office as secretary of state; but during the regency of Anne of Austria he was recalled; and until Louis XIV undertook to govern the nation in his own person, he retained great influence in the Council. Age was, however, creeping upon him; and a short time subsequent to the marriage of that monarch, having attained his sixty-seventh year, he retired from the Government. He died in 1666.

[182] Petitot, *Notice sur le Comte de Brienne*, p. 278.

[183] This privilege rendered the financial and judicial offices hereditary, on the payment of an annual tax of one-tenth of the sum at which they had been originally purchased; and the nobility were jealous of this hereditary tenure of the most lucrative civil appointments under the Crown, all of which were thus, as a natural consequence, engrossed by the *tiers-etat.* The *paulette* owed its name to Charles Paulet, who was the inventor of this extraordinary source of revenue.

[184] *Tiers-etat,* or middle state, was the name given to that portion of the French people who belonged neither to the aristocracy nor to the Church.

[185] Pierre de Roncherolles, Baron du Pont Saint-Pierre.

[186] Robert Miron, Provost of the Merchants, an able politician, whose zeal and talents were recompensed by the confidence and favour of Louis XIII, by whom he was, in 1625, entrusted with the embassy to Switzerland.

[187] Bonnechose, vol. i. pp. 451, 452. Mezeray, vol. xi. pp. 73-78. Le Vassor, vol. i. pp. 298-302.

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[188] Marville, *Melanges d'Histoire et de Litterature*.

[189] Nicolas Le Fevre was born at Paris, in 1544, and devoted himself to literature. Henri IV entrusted to him the education of the Prince de Conde; and he subsequently became, under Marie de Medicis, the preceptor of Louis XIII. He died in 1612.

[190] David de Rivault, Sieur de Flurance, was born at Laval in 1571, and died at Tours in 1616. He was the author of several works, which elicited the admiration of Malherbe and other distinguished writers.

[191] Guy, Comte de Laval, was the brother of the Duc de la Tremouille.

[192] Bernard, *Hist, de Louis XIII*, book i.

[193] Sismondi, *Hist. des Francais*, vol. xxii. p. 296.

[194] Bernard, book iv. *Additions aux Memoires de Castelnau*, book vi. pp. 455-457. Richelieu, *Hist, de la Mere et du Fils*, vol. i. p. 284.

[195] Richelieu, *Hist, de la Mere et du Fils*, vol. i. pp. 284, 285.

CHAPTER VII

1615-16

Close of the States-General—The Bishop of Lucon—Declaration of the royal marriages—Ballet of Madame—State of the Court—Cabal of Concini—Death of Marguerite de Valois—Conde seeks to gain the Parliament—Distrust of Marie de Medicis—Conde leaves Paris—He refuses to accompany the King to Guienne—Perilous position of the Court party—The Marechal de Bois-Dauphin is appointed Commander-in-Chief—The Court proceed to Guienne—Illness of the Queen and Madame Elisabeth—The Court at Tours—Enforced inertness of M. de Bois-Dauphin—Conde is declared guilty of *lese-majeste*—He takes up arms—Murmurs of the royal generals—The Comte de St. Pol makes his submission—The Court reach Bordeaux—The royal marriages—Sufferings of the troops—Disaffection of the nobility—Irritation of the Protestants—Pasquinades—Negotiation with the Princes—The Duc de Guise assumes the command of the royal army—Singular escape of Marie de Medicis—Disgrace of the Duc d'Epernon—He retires to his government—The Queen and the astrologer.

The assembly of the States-General occupied the commencement of the year 1615; and was closed on the 22nd of February, by their Majesties in person, with extreme pomp. When the King and his august mother had taken their seats, and the heralds had proclaimed silence, Armand Jean du Plessis, Bishop of Lucon,[196] presented to the sovereign the requisition of the clergy; and after a long harangue, in which he

detailed their several demands, he entered into an animated eulogium of the administration of the Queen, exhorting his Majesty to continue to her the power of which she had so ably availed herself during his minority. He spoke fluently, but in a broken and uncertain voice, and with an apparent apathy, which, according to contemporaneous authors, gave no indication of the extraordinary talents that he subsequently displayed.

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The States-General had no sooner closed than Marie de Medicis resolved to terminate the double alliance which had been concluded with Spain, and in honour of this event she determined that Madame, the promised bride of Philip, should appear in a ballet, which by the sumptuousness of its decorations, the beauty of its machinery, and the magnificence of its entire arrangements, should eclipse every entertainment of the kind hitherto exhibited at the French Court.

“It is necessary,” she said, “that my daughter should give a public festival before her departure for Spain, and that the Parisians should remember a Princess who is about to be lost to France.”

That the worthy citizens were on their part most anxious so to do, is evident from the testimony of Bassompierre, who states that the Court officials, being unprepared for so great a crowd as that which presented itself upon the occasion, had not taken proper precautions, and it was subsequently found necessary to postpone the amusement for some days, and to arrange that no one should enter the Salle de Bourbon without a ticket; which the Duc d’Epernon and himself were entrusted to receive.[197]

[Illustration: RICHELIEU.]

This entertainment was followed by another of a similar description at the Hotel de Conde; but although they affected to be equally engrossed by the festivities in which they shared, neither the Queen nor the Prince were so indifferent to their personal interests as they endeavoured to appear. Marie de Medicis was striving to discover some means of frustrating the cabals which were perpetually thwarting her designs, and threatening her authority, while M. de Conde was as eager as ever to undermine her power. The Marechal d’Ancre was intriguing to effect the disgrace of the ministers, particularly that of Villeroy, whose alliance he no longer coveted; and the great nobles were busied in searching for some pretext sufficiently plausible to cause the ruin of the domineering favourite who presumed to treat them rather as inferiors than as equals. Thus the gilded surface of the Court concealed a mass of hatred, jealousy, and unrest, which threatened every instant to reveal itself, and to dispel an illusion as false as it was flattering: and while the foreign guests of the young monarch danced and feasted, and the native nobility struggled to surpass them in magnificence and frivolity, the more thoughtful spectators of the glittering scene trembled at its instability, and every instant anticipated an outbreak.

The attempt of Concini proved successful, and the deportment of Marie towards M. de Villeroy became so chilling that he withdrew from the Court, without seeking to ascertain the cause of his disgrace.

On the 27th of March the ex-Queen Marguerite breathed her last, but for some time previously she had appeared so seldom at Court that her death did not tend to disturb

the gaieties of the royal circle, who had almost ceased to remember her existence. She had outlived even the reputation of her vices.

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When the Prince de Conde and his faction demanded a meeting of the States they were far from anticipating its results; the unanimous loyalty of the deputies having greatly subserved the interests of the Queen, and thus weakened their own position. Aware too late of the error which they had committed, they were consequently compelled to seek elsewhere for support, and it was at length decided that they should excite the disaffection of the Parliament, by representing that all the services which its members had rendered to Marie on her assumption of the regency had been repaid by ingratitude and neglect; and that they no longer commanded that authority in the Government to which they were justly entitled. Coupled with these insidious arguments were profuse offers of assistance to enable them to enforce their rights, and the object of the faction was at once gained; the ambition and the vanity of the Parliament being alike engaged in a question which involved their own influence and importance. Strong in the support of the Princes, they, however, overacted the part assigned to them, and proceeded so arrogantly to remonstrate with the sovereign upon what they termed the abuses of the Government, that the King issued a decree in Council, by which he abrogated both their own decree and their remonstrances, declaring that they had exceeded the power accorded to them by the law; and commanding that those documents should be cancelled, torn from the registers, and delivered to his Majesty on the receipt of the royal decree. The Parliament, however, expostulated, and although they were again commanded to deliver up the obnoxious records, they failed to obey; and thus, by their determination, overruled the will of the sovereign.

During this struggle for power the Prince de Conde had absented himself from Paris, in order to avert any suspicion of connivance; but previous experience had rendered the Queen distrustful of his movements, and she was consequently prepared to counteract his subsequent intrigues. The Council had, accordingly, no sooner annulled the decree of the Parliament, than she sent to forbid him, in the name of the King, from assisting in their deliberations; upon which the Prince availed himself of so specious a pretext for abandoning the Court, alleging that he no longer considered it safe to remain in the capital.[198]

In accordance with this declaration he left Paris by the Porte St. Antoine, followed by the acclamations of the populace, who, weary of the rule of the Queen, and exasperated by the arrogance of her favourites, regarded M. de Conde as a victim, and thus rendered his retreat a new subject of anxiety to the Court party. Nor was their annoyance decreased when they ascertained that throughout his journey to Creil, where he possessed an estate on the banks of the Oise, he was met by numerous bodies of armed citizens from Senlis, Mantes, Beaumont, and other towns, and was accompanied by the Duc de Longueville and the nobles attached to his cause. Within a league of Creil the harquebusiers were drawn up to receive him, with drums beating and colours flying, and thus escorted he finally entered the city.

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On learning these circumstances Marie de Medicis became apprehensive that he might avail himself of so favourable an opportunity to raise an army, and enter into open rebellion against the Crown; and in order to avert this contingency, she lost no time in despatching a messenger who was instructed to invite him to return to Paris, and to accompany the Court in their approaching journey to Guienne. M. de Conde was, however, aware of the advantage which he had gained, and resolutely refused to retrace his steps until the King reformed the Council, replied to the remonstrances of the Parliament, and redressed the alleged wrongs of himself and his friends; demanding in his own name the presidency of the Council, and the ministry of finance which had been promised to him; while the Marechal de Bouillon, in his turn, asked as the price of his obedience the office of Connetable de France vacant by the death of the Duc de Montmorency.[199]

These demands not being conceded, the Prince de Conde refused to accompany the King to Guienne, an example which was followed by many of the high nobility; and the faction became ere long so formidable that a civil war appeared inevitable.

Nevertheless, the Marechal d'Ancre and his adherents affected to treat the warlike demonstrations of the adverse party with contempt, and assured Marie de Medicis that all the efforts of the Prince must prove abortive while the King possessed a strong army and able generals to oppose the forces of the malcontents; and, in support of his assertion, the Ducs de Guise and d'Epernon alike offered their services to her Majesty. In the former, however, Marie dared not confide; his near relative, the Duc de Mayenne, being the ally of Conde, while De Guise himself was the avowed enemy of Concini. Of M. d'Epernon's sincerity she felt more assured; but she was aware that she could not bestow upon him the command of the royal army without exciting the jealousy of Guise, and thus opening up a newsource of difficulty. Desirous of proceeding to Guienne without further delay, the Queen consequently urged her advisers to suggest some other individual to whom so serious a responsibility might be entrusted; and after considerable deliberation the Duc d'Epernon, the Chancellor, and his son the Chevalier de Sillery proposed to the Marechal d'Ancre that he should become a candidate for the command, offering at the same time to exert all their influence with the Queen to ensure his success.[200]

Blinded by vanity, Concini, who was a soldier only in name, did not fail to listen with greedy ears to this unexpected proposition; and while his seeming friends were speculating upon his ruin, and calculating that during his absence they should have time to impress upon Marie de Medicis that, by the sacrifice of her favourite, she might reconcile the disaffected Princes. Concini himself foresaw that the increase of influence which so important a command could not fail to secure

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to him must tend to diminish that of the Duc d'Epernon, whose overthrow had been for some time his greatest wish. Moreover, by quartering his troops in the neighbourhood of M. de Conde, an opportunity would present itself of effecting his reconciliation with that Prince, which he ardently desired; and this end accomplished, he flattered himself with the hope that his vision of becoming first minister of France could not fail to be realized.

Unfortunately, however, for the ambitious Italian, it was not long ere D'Epernon and Sillery recognized the error into which they had been led by their eagerness to injure him. They suddenly remembered that Concini had already once joined the faction of the Princes, and they were aware that the Duc de Bouillon had made more than one subsequent effort to induce him to abandon the royal cause; and they were no sooner convinced of the fault which they had committed, than they hastened to represent to the Queen that the appointment of the Marechal d'Ancre to the command of the King's armies had caused great dissatisfaction throughout the capital; the citizens affirming that the troops of a sovereign of France ought not to be led against the enemy by a man who was ignorant of the art of war, and who was, moreover, a foreigner, detested by the people to an extent which rendered it probable that, should Concini be invested with the command, they would open the gates of Paris to M. de Conde, in the event of his marching upon the city. Marie de Medicis yielded to these reasons, and simply replied by reminding Sillery that if she had committed an error in accepting the proposal of the Marechal d'Ancre, she had done so at his own instigation; but that as he considered it desirable to appoint some other individual to the command, she would offer no opposition. Concini was accordingly superseded, and the veteran Marechal de Bois-Dauphin was selected as his successor, with the title of lieutenant-general.[201] Indignant at the disappointment to which he had been subjected, Concini left Paris, and proceeded to his government at Amiens, vowing vengeance against the Duc d'Epernon and Sillery.

The impatience of the Queen to conclude the double alliance with Spain was so great that she disregarded the advice of Jeannin and Villeroy; who, in conjunction with Concini and his wife, had endeavoured to induce her to delay her departure for Guienne, and to proceed either to Laon or St. Quentin, in order to secure the Isle of France and Picardy, and to prevent the Prince de Conde and his adherents from concentrating their forces in the vicinity of the capital; while, on the contrary, she was urged by the Chancellor and his brother, the Commandeur de Sillery, who was her first-equerry and gentleman-usher, to carry out her original design. The 17th of August had been already fixed for the commencement of the royal journey; and Marie eagerly availed herself of their advice to persist in her purpose; contenting herself with giving orders to the Marechal de Bois-Dauphin to cover Paris, to impede the approach of the disaffected forces, and, at all risks, to avoid coming to an engagement. She then

withdrew from the Bastille eight hundred thousand crowns for the purpose of defraying the expenses of the Court during its progress.

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Despite the absence of the Princes, the royal retinue was magnificent and numerous. The troops by whom the august travellers were attended consisted of a thousand horsemen, and the royal bodyguard amounted to three thousand men, who were placed under the command of the Duc de Guise, who was also to accompany Madame Elisabeth to the frontier of the kingdom, and to receive the Infanta, whom he was to conduct to the capital of Guienne, where their Majesties were to await her. The King left Paris soon after dawn; the Queen followed some hours subsequently, having previously caused the arrest of M. Le Jay,[202] in order to intimidate the Parliament; and finally, in the course of the afternoon, Madame took leave of the municipal authorities, and departed in her turn. The Marquise d'Ancre having in vain endeavoured to dissuade her royal foster-sister from this journey, became so thoroughly dispirited by the disappointment of her husband, and the evident decline of her own influence, that she resolved to excuse herself from accompanying the Court, and to remain in the capital; a project from which she was, however, dissuaded by MM. de Villeroy and Jeannin, who represented to her the impolicy of incurring the displeasure of her Majesty, and thus insuring her own ruin. She was consequently induced to join the royal suite, but she did so with a heavy heart, and without one hope of resuming her original empire over the mind of Marie.

The Court reached Orleans on the 20th of August, and Tours on the 30th, whence their Majesties proceeded to Poitiers, at which city they arrived on the 9th of September; but the anxieties of Marie de Medicis were not yet to terminate. Madame was attacked a day or two subsequently with small-pox, while the Queen herself was confined to her bed by a severe illness, which compelled the constant attendance of Madame d'Ancre in her sick-room, where, by her affectionate assiduity, she soon succeeded in recovering the good graces of her royal mistress. She had secured to her interests a Jewish physician, in whose astrological talent Marie de Medicis placed the most implicit confidence; and eager to revenge her husband upon Sillery, who, as she was well aware, had been the cause of his losing the coveted command, she instructed this man, whom the Queen had hastened to consult, to persuade the credulous invalid that she had been bewitched by the Chevalier de Sillery. Strange as it may appear, Leonora was perfectly successful; and believing herself to have been the victim of the Chancellor and his party, Marie entered earnestly into the views of her favourite, consenting to withdraw her confidence from Sillery, and to follow thenceforward the counsels of Villeroy and Jeannin.[203]

The delay consequent upon the recovery of the Queen and her daughter enabled the Prince de Conde to strengthen his party, and to advance towards Paris, with an army of five thousand infantry and two thousand horse. His troops were, however, badly armed, and might at once have been beaten or dispersed by the Marechal de Bois-Dauphin, had that general marched against them; but, fettered by the stringent orders which he had received not to give battle to the enemy, he remained inactive; and the Duc de Bouillon profited by his inertness to seize Chateau Thierry, whence he marched to Mere-sur-Seine.

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Meanwhile M. de Conde ascertained that the King had issued on the 10th of September a proclamation of *lese-majeste* against himself and his adherents; to which he replied by another, wherein he affirmed that he had taken up arms for the sole purpose of preventing a foreign invasion. He then crossed the Seine, with the intention of possessing himself of the town of Sens; a project in which he, however, failed, Bois-Dauphin and his adjutant-general, the Marquis de Praslin, having already garrisoned the place.[204]

The two armies were at this period in such close juxtaposition that an engagement appeared inevitable; but whether it were that Bois-Dauphin was deficient in ability, or that he had resolved, whatever might be the result of his inaction, to obey implicitly the instructions of the Queen, he vacated Sens after a few slight skirmishes. Be the real cause of his supineness what it might, it excited the indignation of Bassompierre, Praslin, the Marquis de Coeuvres, and the other leaders of the royal army, who did not scruple to accuse him of incapacity; declaring, moreover, that he had harassed the troops far more than if he had led them into action.[205]

On the arrival of the Court at Angouleme the Queen was agreeably surprised by the appearance of the Comte de Saint-Pol,[206] who, she had been led to believe, had joined the faction of Conde with his nephew the Duc de Longueville; and her exultation was increased when, with assurances of his fidelity to the Crown, he placed under her orders the two fortresses of Fronsac and Caumont.[207]

Profiting by the retreat of the Marechal de Bois-Dauphin, the Duc de Bouillon had made all haste to pass the Loire, and to reach the confines of Touraine and Poitou; nor would it have been possible for their Majesties to have reached Bordeaux in safety, had it not been for the secession of the Comte de Saint-Pol from the faction of the Princes, together with the impossibility of marching the rebel troops upon Poitou in so short a space of time. Thanks to this combination of circumstances, however, the Court arrived without accident in the capital of Guienne on the 7th of October; where the King and his august mother were received with great magnificence, and enthusiastically welcomed by all classes of the citizens, whom the Marechal de Roquelaure, lieutenant-general for the King in Guienne, and Mayor of Bordeaux, had adroitly gained, by his representations of the honour conferred upon them by the sovereign in selecting their city as the scene of his own marriage and that of his sister, the future Queen of Spain.[208]

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It had been arranged that the royal marriages should be celebrated on the same day (the 18th of October), at Bordeaux and Burgos; and accordingly the Duc de Guise, as proxy for the Prince of Spain, espoused Madame Elisabeth, with whom, accompanied by the Duchesse de Nevers and the ladies of her household, he immediately departed for the frontier, after a painful leave-taking between the young Princess and her family; while the Duque d'Usseda[209] performed the same ceremony for Louis XIII, with the Infanta Anna Maria of Austria. The exchange of the two Princesses took place on the 9th of November, in the middle of the Bidassoa, with a host of petty and futile observances which excite mirth rather than admiration; but at the same time with a magnificence surpassing all that had ever previously been exhibited on such an occasion; the two Courts of France and Spain vying with each other in splendour and profusion. De Luynes, to whom such a mission appeared peculiarly adapted, presented to the Infanta the letters of welcome with which he had been entrusted by Louis XIII and his mother, and which were received by the Princess with an undisguised delight that the favourite did not fail to report to his royal master.

The guard with which the Duc de Guise had conducted Madame Elisabeth to the frontier consisted of fifteen hundred horse, four thousand infantry, and four pieces of ordnance; and it was with the same troops that he escorted the newly made Queen of France to Bordeaux, who, previously to her departure from Burgos, had signed a formal renunciation, written entirely by her own hand, of all her claims to the Spanish succession.[210] On her arrival at Bordeaux on the 21st of November, the young Queen was received with all the splendour of which the circumstances were susceptible, and the marriage ceremony was immediately repeated by the Bishop of Saintes; after which, on the 17th of December, the Court, under the escort of a strong body of troops, left the capital of Guienne for Tours, which latter city they did not, however, reach for five weeks, owing to the long halts that they were compelled to make in the several towns through which they passed, where every species of entertainment had been prepared for the reception of the august travellers. Meanwhile the army suffered fearfully from exposure to the cold, from sickness, and from want of provisions and forage; numbers of the men died, and the progress of the royal party consequently resembled a disastrous retreat rather than a triumphant procession.

In addition to this misfortune the Queen-mother had other and still more serious motives for anxiety. Although her personal ambition had been gratified by the accomplishment of that close alliance with Spain which she had so long and so earnestly desired, she could not conceal from herself that as regarded the nation over which she had been called to govern, the irretrievable step thus taken was one of extreme impolicy.

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On every side she was surrounded by difficulties. The first Prince of the Blood, and nearly the whole of the high nobility, were not only disaffected, but actually in arms against the Crown. The Protestants, to whom she had repeatedly promised that she would observe the Edict of Nantes, incensed by her breach of faith, had revolted against her authority; her troops had failed to offer any effective resistance; and meanwhile foreign soldiers had traversed Champagne, and advanced into Berry to join Conde, without any impediment from the royal army. The intelligence that she received from Paris was equally alarming; scarcely a day passed in which pamphlets and pasquinades of the grossest description were not published and circulated among the population, assigning the most foul and degrading motives for her journey to Guienne under the protection of the Ducs d'Epernon and de Guise; while her anxiety for the Spanish alliance was represented as arising from her desire to conciliate those who were accused of being the assassins of her husband.

Angered as she was by these insults, Marie de Medicis still pined to return to the capital. She was wearied alike by the exacting and arrogant temper of M. d'Epernon, and by the monotony of the provincial cities, where she saw herself surrounded only by aldermen and citizens with whom she had no feeling or habit in common; and as the several individuals of her circle were equally ill at ease in so novel a position, far from allaying her impatience, they aggravated the *ennui* which she did not attempt to disguise, until she eventually brought herself to attach all the blame of her own disappointment and mortification upon those who had advised her to leave the capital; and to evince the greatest eagerness to follow the counsels of their adversaries.[211]

The Court left Bordeaux at the close of the year 1615; and in the month of January following proceeded to take up its abode at Tours, there to await the close of a negotiation into which the Queen-mother had entered with the Princes; while at the same time her agents secretly exerted all their efforts to induce the allies of M. de Conde to abandon his cause. The command of the troops was taken from the Marechal de Bois-Dauphin and conferred upon the Duc de Guise, with the title of lieutenant-general of the King's army; and an immediate attempt was made to gain over the Duc de Mayenne and the Marechal de Bouillon, as being the most influential of the revolted nobles. James I offered to Marie de Medicis his services as a mediator on the occasion; they were gratefully accepted, and the English Ambassador was forthwith despatched to the Prince de Conde at St. Jean-d'Angely, with instructions to avert, by every argument in his power, the horrors of a civil war. Convinced that no better opportunity could possibly occur for securing to himself and his party the advantageous conditions which he coveted, Conde received the royal envoy with great courtesy, declaring that he had acted throughout the whole affair solely in the interests of his country, and that he was ready to write respectfully to his Britannic Majesty, to offer to him the same assurance.

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His proposal was accepted; the letter was forthwith prepared; and the Baron de Thianges was entrusted with its delivery into the hands of the English monarch. A reply was returned by the same messenger; and finally a conference was decided on, which was to take place at Loudun on the 10th of February.[212]

While preparations were making for this important event, the Queen-mother, on the 29th of January, summoned the nobles of her Court to her apartment, in order to discuss the necessary measures to be adopted for securing the allegiance of the disaffected Princes; and on this occasion she nearly lost her life by a singular accident. The young Comte de Soissons, the Ducs de Guise and d'Epernon, Bassompierre, Jeannin, and many others who held office about the Court or in the Government were scarcely assembled when the flooring of the room gave way, and twenty-eight persons were precipitated into the hall beneath. The arm-chair of Marie herself had fortunately been placed above a beam which held firm, and to which the President Jeannin resolutely clung, thus breaking his fall; but MM. de Soissons, d'Epernon, de Bassompierre, de Villeroy, and several others were less fortunate, and all were more or less gravely injured. With great presence of mind the Queen retained her seat; and with the help of the Duc de Guise ultimately contrived to reach her bed, over which she passed, and thus escaped into an adjoining apartment; and meanwhile the unfortunate victims of the accident were conveyed to their respective residences, where her Majesty caused them to be immediately visited by one of the officers of her household, who was commissioned to inquire into their condition, and to express her regret at the event.

There was one exception, however, to this royal act of sympathy and consideration, and that one was the Duc d'Epernon; who, although the greatest sufferer on the occasion, was entirely overlooked; a marked and threatening want of courtesy on the part of the Queen-mother, which convinced the arrogant courtier that his period of favour was past, and that his enemies had triumphed. This conviction at once determined him to retire voluntarily from the Court before he should be compelled to do so by an order which he felt satisfied would not be long delayed; and he was accordingly no sooner sufficiently recovered to leave his bed than he waited upon their Majesties to take leave, alleging that his shattered health having received so violent a shock, he felt it necessary to withdraw for a time from all participation in public affairs, and to endeavour by perfect repose to overcome the effects of his accident.

His reasons were graciously accepted both by the King and Queen, who assured him of their deep sorrow at his sufferings, and expressed the most flattering wishes for his recovery; but the Queen-mother uttered no word either of regret or sympathy. With the most chilling indifference she returned his parting salutation; and M. d'Epernon quitted her apartment with a demeanour almost as haughty as her own.[213]

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Marie de Medicis, who possessed the most implicit confidence in the so-called science of astrology, and who was always anxious to penetrate the mystery of the future, having been informed on her return to Paris that a certain Giorgio Luminelli, a native of Ragusa who was celebrated as a soothsayer, had recently arrived in the capital, and taken up his abode in the Place Royale, immediately expressed a wish to consult him; for which purpose she despatched a messenger to his residence, by whom he was invited to wait upon a person of high rank who, attracted by his renown, was desirous of testing his skill. To this somewhat imperious summons Luminelli, however, simply replied by declaring that he never quitted his own apartments for any one, whatever might be the station of the person who required his services; but that those, who sought his aid were at liberty to visit him whenever they saw fit to do so. This answer only increased the eagerness of the Queen-mother; nevertheless, previously to seeking him in person, she requested M. de Crequy, the Duc de la Force, Bassompierre, and Rambure to go to his house in disguise, in order to ascertain whether he were indeed worthy of the reputation by which he had been preceded.

While they were making the necessary arrangements, and deciding to exchange dresses with their confidential valets in the hope of being enabled to mystify the necromancer, to whom they were entirely unknown, the Marechal d'Ancre arrived to pay his respects to his royal mistress; and, upon being made acquainted with the project, he determined to join the party in the character of a Venetian noble, of whom there were at that moment several residing in Paris. On the completion of their preparations the merry masquers set forth, and soon reached the abode of Luminelli; where, on their arrival, they found a servant stationed at the door, as if awaiting the advent of expected guests, who no sooner saw them pause beside him than, addressing Concini and the disguised serving-men, he politely requested them to follow him; coupling the invitation with an assurance that his master had desired him to watch for the arrival of five great nobles who were about to consult his art. Lavallee, the lackey of M. de Bassompierre, assuming an air of importance, expressed both for himself and his companions their sense of this attention; and then, somewhat startled by the coincidence, for as such they simply considered it, the whole party followed their guide upstairs.

On reaching the apartment of the astrologer the four disguised courtiers remained respectfully upon the threshold, while their unliveried representatives advanced to the middle of the room; and courteously saluting their host, informed him that they had been induced by his great renown to solicit a display of his skill, and to claim from him a knowledge of their future fortunes. Lavallee was once more their spokesman; and the eyes of Luminelli remained fixed upon him until the conclusion of his address, when he turned away abruptly, without vouchsafing any reply, and drew back a curtain behind which was placed a large globe of polished steel. He looked earnestly upon this for a few moments; and then rising, he put on a cap of dark velvet which lay beside him, took Lavallee by the hand, and approaching Bassompierre placed his valet a few paces behind him, saying as he did so:

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“Monseigneur, why should you thus have assumed a disguise? You are already a great noble, but your fortunes have not yet reached their acme. You will one day be Marechal de France, and the dignity will be conferred upon you on the other side of the Rhone. Beauty has great influence over you; but with those whom you seek to please your purse has even more charms than your person. You will ere long have immense success at the gaming-table, far beyond any which you have yet achieved. You have been engaged in a lawsuit against an unmarried woman.[214] You hold one of the highest offices in the kingdom.[215] You are not by birth a Frenchman, but a German. One of the greatest ladies in the world will cause you considerable misfortune,[216] through the medium of a red animal.[217] You will, however, finally triumph over your troubles, although the trial will be a long and a severe one.”

Luminelli then consulted his magic globe a second time; led the lackey of M. de Crequy to the rear of his master; made a profound salutation to the latter; and addressing him in his turn, detailed, as he had previously done in the case of Bassompierre, all the leading events of his past and future life. He next went through the same ceremony with the Duc de la Force and M. de Rambure; and ultimately he turned towards the Marechal d’Ancre, exclaiming:

“You, Sir, are no Venetian, although you have sought to appear such; but it would be well for you if you were so. As it is, if you will follow my advice, you will leave Paris to-morrow for Venice; for should you long delay your departure, it will be too late to effect it. When you arrived in France you were alike poor and obscure, although you are now rich both in gold and honours. Leave the country, nevertheless, or these advantages will avail you nothing. With few exceptions, you are detested by all classes; and you will find your native air of Florence more wholesome than that of the country which you have adopted. You possess governments, and wield the *baton* of a Marechal de France, but your tenure of these dignities is unstable; and you will do well to save yourself while you have yet the opportunity. You place your reliance on the favour of a crowned head, but that very favour shadows forth your ruin.”

As Concini stood motionless before him, the astrologer took him by the hand, and leading him towards the globe, by a slight touch caused it to revolve. As he gazed upon the polished surface of the mysterious instrument, the colour of the Italian came and went so rapidly that his companions believed him to be attacked by sudden indisposition; and depositing a heavy purse of gold upon the table, they urged him to withdraw. Before they could effect their object, however, Luminelli thrust the purse from him, having previously withdrawn from it a single pistole which he flung to his attendant. He then cast himself back upon his chair; the heavy curtain again fell

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before the globe; and he appeared totally unconscious of the continued presence of his visitors, whose departure was retarded for a few seconds by the utter incapacity of Concini to leave the room. With a powerful effort the Italian, however, suddenly suppressed his emotion, although he still trembled so violently that he was compelled to lean upon Bassompierre for support; nor did the attack, as had been anticipated, yield to the influence of the external air, for the Marechal continued throughout the entire space of two hours wholly unable to control its violence; while not all the eager questioning of his companions could induce him to reveal the cause of his frightful agitation; a fact by which they were firmly persuaded that the astrologer had revealed to him an intimate acquaintance with past events which justified his warning, or had foreshadowed a future well calculated to arouse alarm.[218] Be this as it might, it appears at least certain that the five nobles were each and all deeply impressed by the scene through which they had just passed, by whatever agency it might have been effected; and that the report which they made on their return to Marie de Medicis effectually indisposed her from seeking any further knowledge of Giorgio Luminelli.

CHAPTER VIII

1616

Conference of Loudun—Venality of the Princes—Mutual concessions—Indisposition of M. de Conde—He signs the treaty—Concini is insulted by a citizen of Paris—The Court return to the capital—Schism in the cabal—The seals are transferred to M. du Vair—-Disgrace of the ministers—Triumph of Concini—Mangot is appointed Secretary of State, and Barbin Minister of Finance—The young sovereigns—Court costumes—Anne of Austria and Marie de Medicis—Puerility of Louis XIII—The Marechal de Bouillon and the Duc de Mayenne return to Court—They seek to ruin Concini—The Prince de Conde effects a reconciliation with the Queen-mother—James I. sends an embassy to Paris to negotiate a marriage between the Prince of Wales and the Princesse Christine—-Gorgeous reception at the Louvre—Court festivities—Concini returns to Paris—He is abandoned by the Prince de Conde—He is compelled to retire—His forebodings—He endeavours to induce Leonora to leave France—She refuses—Increasing influence of De Luynes—Death of Mademoiselle d'Ancre—Despair of Concini—Ambitious projects of the Prince de Conde—Devotion of Sully—His advice is disregarded—Popularity of Conde—Marie de Medicis resolves to arrest him—He disbelieves the rumour—The other Princes withdraw from the capital—The King is induced to sanction the arrest—-Dissimulation of Louis XIII—Arrest of Conde—Fearless reply of M. du Vair—The Prince is conveyed to the Bastille—A batch of Marshals—Noble disinterestedness of Bassompierre—The Dowager Princess of Conde endeavours to excite the populace to rescue her son—The mob pillage the hotel of the Marechal d'Ancre—The Queen-mother negotiates with the Guises—The council of war—The seals are transferred from

Du Vair to Mangot—Richelieu is appointed Secretary of State—Concini returns to Court —The Marechale d’Ancre becomes partially insane—Popular execration of the Italian favourites—Subtle policy of Richelieu—Threatening attitude assumed by the Princes.

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The famous Conference of Loudun assembled on the 13th of February 1616; but as the Prince de Conde presented no less than thirty-one articles for consideration, many of which required careful examination, it was mutually agreed that the truce should be prolonged until the decision of his Majesty might be formed. The position of the Court was, moreover, rendered more difficult from the fact that several great nobles, who had not hitherto openly espoused the faction of the rebels, hastened to swell their ranks, not with the intention of caballing against the Government, but simply of being included in the concessions to which it was evident that the Council would be compelled in order to accomplish a peace. Among others the Duc de Vendome, who had so recently solicited his pardon, and declared his intention of adhering to the royal cause, was conspicuous in the ranks of the enemy; together with the young Duc de Candale, the son of D'Epernon, who had embraced the reformed faith, the Duc de Piney-Luxembourg, and the Dowager Countess of Soissons, who withdrew from the Court at Tours, and joined her son at Loudun. This example, contemptible as it was, proved contagious, and was followed by two of the greatest Princesses of the Blood, the Dowager Princesses of Conde and Longueville,[219] to the extreme annoyance of the Queen-mother, who was aware of the extent of their influence, and quite alive to its probable consequences.

Meanwhile both armies were suffering so severely from extreme cold and scarcity of provisions, that more than ten thousand men fell victims to exposure and famine; and the bodyguard of the King became at length so much weakened that he found himself compelled to summon the Swiss under Bassompierre for the protection of his person.

The demands with which Conde and his partisans opened the Conference were such as required little deliberation; but as the proceedings advanced they became more and more onerous; until, finally, as the Council had foreseen, they all resolved themselves into questions of individual interest. The Duc de Longueville claimed full authority over all the fortresses in his government of Picardy which were held by the Marechal d'Ancre, and refused to accede to any terms with the Crown until they were given up; while the other Princes and nobles asked either gratuities for themselves, or vengeance upon their enemies; and all agreed in claiming the payment of their troops by the royal treasury before they would consent to lay down their arms.[220]

Finally, on the 5th of May, the Conference was closed; several of the articles presented by M. de Conde having been conceded, others deferred, and the remainder conditionally agreed to. In the meantime, however, the Prince had been taken seriously ill, and the fear that he might not survive so threatening an attack determined the leaders of his faction to accept whatever terms the Court should decide to offer. While the disease was at its height, the Princes and royal

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commissioners assembled about his bed, where the English Ambassador also presented himself; but, although he had taken so active a part in the reconciliation about to be effected between the Crown and the rebel nobles, M. de Villeroy vehemently refused to permit him to remain, declaring that upon such an occasion it was impossible to allow a foreigner to interfere between a sovereign and his subjects. This dispute was followed by a second, the deputies of La Rochelle having demanded a continuance of their assembly; a demand which was opposed with such warmth and violence that M. de Conde, unable to support the disturbance, weakened as he was by the fever which preyed upon him, commanded instant silence; and desiring that a pen might be brought to him, together with the edict of pacification which had been drawn up, he forthwith affixed his signature to the document, declaring that those who loved him would do the same, while such as refused to follow his example should be compelled to do so. He then pronounced a short prayer, in which he thanked God for the cessation of hostilities, after which he desired to be left alone; and on the morrow preparations were commenced for disbanding the rebel troops.[221]

This apparent precipitation did not, however, involve any sacrifice either on the part of the Prince himself or on that of his principal adherents, since Richelieu has recorded that the peace for which M. de Conde so piously uttered his thanksgiving cost Louis XIII upwards of six millions of livres;[222] every individual of mark having cause to feel satisfied with the result of the Conference save the Protestants, who, as a body, derived no benefit whatever from the treaty.[223]

Concini, who had remained in Paris during the absence of the Court, had meanwhile been subjected to a mortification which, to his haughty spirit, far exceeded a more important evil. The citizens who had continued to keep watch and ward, despite the cessation of hostilities that had taken place, persevered in requiring that all who entered or quitted the capital should be provided with passports; a formality with which the arrogant Italian considered it unnecessary to comply; and, accordingly, when on one occasion he was about to proceed to his house in the faubourg attended by some of the gentlemen of his suite, he had no sooner reached the Porte de Bussy, where a shoemaker named Picard was on guard, than this man compelled his carriage to stop, and demanded his passport. Enraged by such a mark of disrespect, the Marechal imperiously ordered his coachman to proceed, but this was rendered impossible by the threatening attitude of the well-armed guardian of the gate.

“Rascal!” shouted Concini, showing himself at the door of the carriage; “do you know who I am?”

“Right well, Sir,” was the unmoved reply; “and nevertheless you shall not stir a step beyond the walls without a passport.”

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The Italian was pale with indignation, but he dared not resent the insult, as a crowd was rapidly collecting from whom he was aware that he could expect no mercy; and he accordingly restrained himself sufficiently to despatch a messenger for an order of egress, which promptly arrived. His southern blood, however, beat and burnt in his veins, and he awaited only an opportunity of revenge. A few days subsequently, unable any longer to control his rage, he desired his equerry to proceed to the residence of Picard with two valets, and to repay his insolence by a sound cudgelling; an order which was so implicitly obeyed that the unfortunate shoemaker narrowly escaped with his life; while a mob, attracted by the uproar, seized the two serving-men—who, confiding in the power of their master, treated their menaces with contempt—and hanged them before the door of the house in which they had committed the outrage. The equerry, who had also fallen into the hands of the populace, was put upon his trial, and it was only by means of a heavy bribe that the discomfited Marechal, alarmed by what had taken place, was enabled to induce Picard to withdraw his accusation against him.[224]

At the close of the Conference of Loudun the Court returned to Paris, where the reception of their Majesties was enthusiastic, while that of Marie de Medicis was cold and constrained, although it was well known that M. de Conde had all but obtained the presidency of the Council, and that the Queen-mother had made other concessions which she had previously repelled with considerable haughtiness at Tours; such as granting to the Duc de Longueville the exclusive authority in Picardy, which deprived the Marechal d’Ancre of his cherished fortresses; while on the other hand, despite the advantages which they had reaped from the weakness of the Government, the discontented nobles had separated in no better spirit. The Ducs de Rohan and de Sully loudly complained that they had been deceived by the Prince; M. de Longueville, who had vainly sought to obtain the government of Normandy, and who was afraid to return to Picardy until convinced that he had nothing to fear from the resentment of the Marechal d’Ancre, considered himself aggrieved; and such, in short, was the general jealousy and distrust exhibited by the lately coalesced nobles that, with the exception of the Duc de Mayenne and the Marechal de Bouillon, who found themselves involved in one common interest—that of destroying the influence of the Ducs d’Epernon and de Bellegarde—the whole of the late cabal appeared by mutual consent to have become inimical to each other.[225]

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On the arrival of the Court in Paris the seals were taken from the Chancellor, and delivered into the keeping of Guillaume du Vair, who was at that period in his sixtieth year, on the pretext that so important a charge must be oppressive to M. de Sillery at his advanced age; a subterfuge which could not have failed to excite the discontent of the people had they not distrusted his cupidity as much as Marie was wearied of his services. Certain it is, however, that his dismissal occasioned no regret, and was speedily forgotten.[226] Villeroy and Jeannin were the immediate agents of his dismissal from office, as they ascribed to him their own previous discredit at Court, and had long been secretly labouring to repay him in kind; but their triumph was destined to be short-lived. Concini had effected the disgrace of his old and hated rival the Duc d'Epernon; and that feat accomplished, he next resolved to rid himself of the two veteran ministers who were the most formidable stumbling-blocks upon his path of ambition. Aware of the distrustful nature of the Queen-mother, whose experience had made her suspicious of all by whom she was surrounded, he at once decided upon his plan of action; and it was not long ere he induced her to believe that they had acted in the interests of the Prince de Conde, rather than her own, during the Conference of Loudun; while such plausible proofs did he adduce of this assertion, that once more Marie de Medicis consented to exclude them from the Council.

This was the moment for which the Italian favourite had so long sighed. From the death of Henri IV he had exerted all his energies to overthrow the Princes of the Blood, and to replace the old ministers by creatures of his own; but so hopeless did the attempt appear that more than once he had despaired of ultimate success. Now, however, he found himself pre-eminent; the Queen-mother, harassed and worn-out by the cabals which were incessantly warring against her authority, and threatening her tenure of power, threw herself with eagerness into the hands of the adventurer who owed all to her favour, and implicitly followed his advice, in the hope that she might thus escape the machinations of her enemies. Mangot,[227] whose devotion to the Marechal d'Ancre was notorious, was appointed Secretary of State, in which dignity he replaced M. de Puisieux;[228] while the administration of finance was conferred upon M. Barbin,[229] although Jeannin nominally retained office.[230]

While these changes were convulsing the Cabinet, irritating the great nobles, and exciting the apprehensions of all those who desired the welfare of the nation, the young sovereigns, whom they more immediately concerned, were either ignorant or careless of their consequences. The girl-Queen, surrounded by her Spanish attendants, spent her time in the enjoyment of the pleasures congenial to her age. According to Madame de Motteville,[231] she was strikingly handsome, but rather Austrian than

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Spanish in her style of beauty, with an abundance of fair hair which she wore in ringlets about her face. On her arrival in France she retained the national costume; and discarding the tapestried chests common at the period, made use of a pile of cushions as her seat. The Marquise de Morny (quoted by Madame de Motteville) described her on the occasion of her own presentation as reclining upon this Moorish sofa in the midst of her attendants, habited in a dress of green satin embroidered with gold and silver, with large hanging sleeves looped together at intervals by diamond buttons; a close ruff, and a small cap of green velvet with a black heron-feather.[232]

[Illustration: ANNE OF AUSTRIA.]

At once regal and elegant as such a costume must have been, it is deplorable to contrast it with those which she adopted in after-years, when the most monstrous caprices were permitted at her Court; and when it was by no means uncommon to see women of the highest rank, about to ride on horseback, present themselves in the royal circle in dresses reaching only to the knee, with their legs encased in tight pantaloons of velvet, or even in complete *haut-de-chausses;* while the habitual attire of the sex was equally *bizarre* and exaggerated. There were the *vasquines* or rollers which encircled the waist and extended the folds of the petticoats, thus giving additional smallness to the waist; the *brassards-a-chevrons* or metallic braces for expanding the sleeves; and the *affiquet* of pearls or diamonds coquettishly attached to the left breast, and entitled the *assassin*. Added to these absurdities there were, moreover, bows of ribbon, each of which had its appropriate name and position; the *galant* was placed on the summit of the head; the *mignon* on the heart; the *favori* under and near the *assassin*; and the *badin* on the handle of the fan. Short curls upon the temples were designated *cavaliers*; ringlets were *garcons*; while a hundred other inanities of the same description compelled the great ladies of the period to adopt a slang which was perfectly unintelligible to all save the initiated; and when we add to these details the well-authenticated fact that the royal apartments were fumigated with powdered tobacco (then a recent and costly importation into France), in lieu of the perfumes which had previously been in use for the same purpose, it will scarcely be denied that caprice rather than taste dictated the habits of the Court under Louis XIII.

To revert, however, to the earlier years of Anne of Austria, it would appear that the troubles of the royal bride did not await her womanhood. Like Marie de Medicis, she clung to all which appeared to link her to her distant home, and caused her to forget for a time that it was hers no longer; and under this impulse it was by no means surprising that she attached herself with girlish affection to the individuals by

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whom she had been followed in her splendid exile; but even as her predecessor had been compelled to forego the society of her native attendants, so was Anne of Austria in her turn deprived of the solace of their presence. With the exception of Dona Estefania, her first waiting-woman, to whom she was tenderly attached, and who had been about her person from her infancy, all were dismissed by Marie de Medicis, who, anxious to retain her authority over the wife of her son, dreaded the influence of Anne's Spanish followers.

Nor was this her only disappointment. We have already shown with what eagerness she looked forward to her first meeting with her intended bridegroom, whose grave but manly beauty so fully realized all her hopes that, as she ingeniously confessed, she could have loved him tenderly had he possessed a heart to bestow upon her in return. But she soon discovered that such was not the case; and that Louis XIII saw in her nothing more interesting than a Princess who was worthy by her rank and quality to share with him the throne of France.

This was a sad discovery for a lovely girl of fifteen years of age, who had anticipated nothing less than devotion on the part of a young husband by whom she had been so eagerly met on her arrival; nor did she fail to contrast his coldness with the ill-disguised admiration of many of his great nobles, and to weep over the wreck of her fondest and fairest visions. But, young and high-spirited, she struggled against the isolation of soul to which she was condemned; and probably resented with more bitterness the coercion to which she was subjected by the iron rule of her royal mother-in-law than even the coldness of the husband to whom she had been prepared to give up her whole heart. [233]

Louis, on his side, although the sovereign of a great nation, was also exposed to privations; merely physical, it is true, but still sufficiently irritating to increase his natural moroseness and discontent. While the Marechal d'Ancre displayed at Court a profusion and splendour which amounted to insolence, the young King was frequently without the means of indulging the mere caprices common to his age; but although he murmured, and even at times appeared to resent the neglect with which he was treated, he easily consoled himself amid the puerile sports in which he frittered away his existence; and attended by De Luynes and his brothers, found constant occupation in waging war against small birds, and in training their captors. In such pursuits he was moreover encouraged by the Queen-mother and her favourites; who, anxious to retain their power, did not make any effort to awaken him to a sense of what he owed to himself and to the kingdom over which he had been called upon to rule. The only occasions upon which he appeared to feel the slightest pleasure in the society of his beautiful young wife was when he engaged her to share in his rides and hawking-parties, in order to excite her admiration of his skill, an admiration of which Anne was lavish, as she trusted by flattering his vanity to awaken his affection; while she moreover enjoyed, with

all the zest of girlhood, so agreeable an escape from the etiquette and formalities of a Court life.

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The treaty of Loudun was no sooner concluded than the revolted nobles separated, each dissatisfied with the other, and all murmuring at the insufficiency of the recompense by which their several concessions had been met. The Prince de Conde, on his convalescence, withdrew to Berry, which government had been given to him in exchange for that of Guienne; Sully retired to Poitou, and the Duc de Rohan returned to La Rochelle; while of all the lately disaffected leaders the Marechal de Bouillon and the Duc de Mayenne alone proceeded to Court, in order to claim the immunities promised in requital of their secession from the interests of the Prince de Conde. The King and the two Queens were residing at the Louvre on their arrival, where they had every reason to be satisfied with their reception; and the Marechal d'Ancre, who, terrified by the undisguised hostility of the Parisians, had not ventured to accompany his royal mistress, no sooner ascertained the return of the two nobles to the capital than he hastened to make them the most brilliant offers in the event of their consenting to espouse his interests. Neither the Marechal nor the Duke were, however, disposed to second his views, and only profited by his advances to swell the ranks of his enemies. This was a task of comparatively slight difficulty, as all classes in the kingdom considered themselves aggrieved by his unparalleled prosperity; and thus, ere long, the Duc de Guise was prevailed upon to join the new cabal, into which it was only further deemed necessary to enlist M. de Conde. Bouillon, who possessed great influence over the Prince, exerted himself strenuously to prevent his return to Court, in order to increase his own consequence in the estimation of the Queen-mother; but his efforts proved ineffectual, as M. de Conde believed it to be more compatible with his own interests to effect a reconciliation with the Crown; and, acting upon this impression, he pledged himself to support Concini, on condition that he should be appointed chief of the Council of Finance, and take a share in the government. His proposal was accepted, and to the great annoyance of M. de Bouillon, the Prince once more appeared at Court. His reception by the citizens was, however, so enthusiastic that Marie de Medicis became alarmed, until she was assured by Richelieu, then the open and zealous ally of the Marechal d'Ancre, that the King had nothing to fear from a popularity which would only tend to render M. de Conde a more efficient ally; an assurance which afforded so much gratification to the Queen-mother, that she repaid it by appointing the Bishop of Lucon Almoner to the young Queen, and shortly afterwards Councillor of State.[234]

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Ten days subsequently to the return of M. de Conde to Paris a new embassy arrived from James I., to renew the negotiation of marriage between the Prince of Wales and Madame Christine de France, upon which occasion the Court of Louis XIII displayed all its magnificence, without, however, eclipsing that of the English nobles to whom the embassy had been entrusted. The hotel of the late Queen Marguerite was prepared for their reception, where they were visited by all the great nobles and foreign ministers; and finally, on the following Sunday, they were received in state at the Louvre. Lord Hay (afterwards Earl of Carlisle) was the accredited ambassador; while Mr. Rich (subsequently Lord Holland), Goring, and other individuals of mark contributed to increase the splendour and importance of his mission.

Nothing could be more sumptuous than the spectacle which was presented by the Louvre upon this occasion. The halls and galleries were alike thronged by all that was noble and beautiful at the Court of France. Princes of the Blood, nobles, marshals, and prelates were mingled with the great ladies of the household in their state dresses, rustling in silks, velvets, and cloth of gold and silver, and glittering with diamonds. Amid this galaxy of magnificence the Queen-mother shone conspicuous. Still remarkable for her stately beauty and dignified deportment, she had left no means untried to enhance their effect, and she had been eminently successful. She was attired in a long robe of amaranth velvet, of which the wide and open sleeves were slashed with white satin, and looped together by large pearls, save at the wrists and elbows, where they were fastened by immense brilliants. Her ruff of rich Alencon lace rose half a foot in height at the back of her neck, whence it decreased in breadth until it reached her bosom, which was considerably exposed, according to the fashion of the period. A coronet of diamonds surmounted her elaborately curled hair, which was drawn back, so as to exhibit in its full dimensions her broad and lofty brow; and the most costly jewels were scattered over her whole attire, which gave back their many-coloured lights at every movement of her person.

The Prince de Joinville, the Ducs de Guise and d’Elboeuf, the Marquises de Rosny and de Crequy, and M. de Bassompierre, accompanied by a numerous train of nobles, escorted the English envoys to the palace; while more than fifty thousand persons crowded the streets through which the glittering train was compelled to pass.

During the following week Paris was the scene of perpetual gaiety and splendour. All the Princes and great nobles vied with each other in the magnificence of the balls, banquets, and other entertainments which were given in honour of their distinguished guests.[235] Presents of considerable value were exchanged; and the British Ambassador had every reason to anticipate the favourable termination of his mission; but subsequent circumstances compelled him to abstain from seeking a definite reply.[236]

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The arrival of M. de Conde in Paris, and the pledge given by that Prince to support him with his influence, determined Concini once more to hazard his own return to the capital under the escort of Bassompierre; but he found the popular irritation still so great against him, that when he visited the Prince he was accompanied by a suite of a hundred horse. His reception by his new ally was, moreover, less cordial than he had hoped; for Conde had already begun to regret his promise, and to feel apprehensive that by upholding the interests of the Italian favourite he should lose his own popularity. He also believed that the amount of power which he had at length succeeded in securing must render him independent of such a coalition; and he resolved to seize the earliest opportunity of impressing upon Concini the unpalatable fact.

This opportunity soon presented itself. On the 14th of August the Prince gave a banquet to the English envoy, which was attended by all the principal nobility of the Court, but from which the Marechal d'Ancre had been excluded. While the guests were still at table, however, Concini, on the pretext of paying his respects to Lord Hay, entered the banqueting-hall, attended by thirty of those gentlemen of his household whom he arrogantly called his *conios di mille franchi*.[237]

He had no sooner seated himself than Mayenne, Bouillon, and others of the cabal which had been formed against him proposed that so favourable an opportunity should not be lost of taking his life, and thus ridding the country of the incubus by which it had so long been oppressed in the person of an insolent foreigner; but the project was no sooner communicated to M. de Conde than he imperatively forbade all violence beneath his own roof. Meanwhile Concini, although he did not fail to perceive by what was taking place about him that he had placed himself in jeopardy by thus braving his enemies, nevertheless maintained the most perfect self-possession, and was suffered to depart in safety. On the following morning, however, he received a communication from the Prince, who, after assuring him that he had experienced great difficulty in restraining the Princes and nobles into whose presence he had forced himself on the preceding day from executing summary justice upon him in order to avenge their several wrongs; and that they had, moreover, threatened to abandon his own cause should he persist in according his protection to an individual whom they were resolved to pursue even to the death, concluded by declaring that it would thenceforward be impossible for him to maintain the pledge which he had given, and advising him to lose no time in retiring to Normandy, of which province he was lieutenant-general.[238]

Although exasperated by the bad faith of M. de Conde, Concini was nevertheless compelled to follow this interested suggestion; but, before he left the field open to his enemies, he resolved to strike a parting blow; and he had accordingly no sooner dismissed the messenger of the Prince than he proceeded to the Louvre, where, while taking leave of the Queen-mother, he eagerly impressed upon her that she was alike deceived by Conde and trifled with by Bouillon, and that all the members of their faction were agreed to divest her of her authority; an attempt of which the result could only be averted by the seizure of their persons.[239]

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It is probable, however, that, even despite the avowed abandonment of the Prince de Conde, Concini might have hesitated to quit his post had not the affair of Picard convinced him that his prosperity had reached its climax. Even the Queen-mother, indignant as she expressed herself at the insult to which he had been subjected, betrayed no inclination to resent it; and so entire was his conviction that his overthrow was at hand, that there can be no doubt but that thenceforward he began seriously to meditate a return to his own country.[240]

Nearly at the moment in which the Marechal d'Ancre was thus unexpectedly compelled to leave Paris, his untiring enemy the Duc de Longueville made himself master of the three towns of Peronne, Roye, and Montdidier in Picardy, which, by the Treaty of Loudun, had been secured to Concini. Publicly the Princes blamed this violation of the treaty, and exhorted the Duke to relinquish his conquests; but being in reality delighted that places of this importance, and, moreover, so immediately in the neighbourhood of the capital, should be in the possession of one of their own allies, they privately sent him both men and money to enable him to retain them.[241]

Meanwhile Marie de Medicis made no effort to compel the restitution of the captured towns; the insult to which Concini had been subjected by Picard remained unavenged, and the Italian could no longer conceal from himself that he had outlived his fortunes. It is scarcely doubtful, moreover, that, with the superstition common to the period, the prediction of Luminelli had pressed heavily upon his mind; as from that period he became anxious to abandon the French Court, and to retire with his enormous wealth to his native city. It was in vain, however, that he sought to inspire Leonora with the same desire; in vain that he represented the prudence of taking the initiative while there was yet time; the foster-sister of Marie de Medicis peremptorily refused to leave Paris, alleging that it would be cowardly to abandon her royal mistress at a period when she was threatened alike by the ambition of the Prince de Conde and the enmity of De Luynes, whose power over the mind of the young sovereign was rapidly making itself felt.

At this precise moment a new and grave misfortune tended to augment the eagerness of the Marechal d'Ancre to carry out his project. His daughter, through whose medium he had looked to form an alliance with some powerful family, and thus to fortify his own position, was taken dangerously ill, and in a few days breathed her last. His anguish was ungovernable; and while his wife wept in silence beside the body of her dead child, he, on the contrary, abandoned himself to the most vehement exclamations, strangely mingling his expressions of fear for his future fate with regret for the loss which he had thus sustained.

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“Signore,” he replied vehemently to Bassompierre, who vainly attempted to console him, “I am lost; Signore, I am ruined; Signore, I am miserable. I regret my daughter, and shall do so while I live; but I could support this affliction did I not see before me the utter ruin of myself, my wife, my son, and my whole house, in the obstinacy of Leonora. Were you not aware of my whole history I should perhaps be less frank, but you know that when I arrived in France, far from owning a single sou, my debts amounted to eight hundred crowns; now we possess more than a million in money, with landed property and houses in France, three hundred thousand crowns at Florence, and a similar sum in Rome. I do not speak of the fortune accumulated by my wife; but surely we may be satisfied to exist for the remainder of our lives upon the proceeds of our past favour. Had you not been well informed as to my previous life I might seek to disguise it from you, but you cannot have forgotten that you saw me at Florence steeped in debauchery, frequently in prison, more than once in exile, generally without resources, and continually lost in disorder and excess. Here, on the contrary, I have acquired alike honour, wealth, and favour, and I would fain disappoint my enemies by leaving the country without disgrace; but the Marechale is impracticable; and were it not that I should be guilty of ingratitude in separating my fortunes from those of a woman to whom I owe all that I possess, I would forthwith leave the country and secure my own safety and that of my son.” [242]

The allusion made by Concini to the growing ambition of the Prince de Conde was unfortunately not destitute of foundation; and suspicions were rapidly gaining ground that he meditated nothing less than a transfer of the crown of France to his own brow, on the pretext that the marriage of Henri IV with the Tuscan Princess was invalid, his former wife being still alive, and his hand, moreover, solemnly pledged to the Marquise de Verneuil. On more than one occasion, when he had feasted his friends, their glasses had been emptied amid cries of *Barre a bas*; a toast which was interpreted as intended to signify the suppression of the bar-sinister which the shield of Conde bore between its three *fleurs-de-lis*.[243] Neither Sully, who had recently returned to Court, nor the Duc de Guise could be induced to join in so criminal a faction; and the former had no sooner been informed of the dangerous position of the King than, dissatisfied as he was with the treatment which he had personally received, he demanded an audience of the young sovereign and his mother, in order to warn them of their peril. In vain, however, did Marie, touched by this proof of loyal devotedness, urge him to suggest a remedy.

“I am no longer in office, Madame,” he replied proudly; “and you have your chosen counsellors about you. I have done my duty, and leave it to others to do theirs.”

He then made his parting obeisance, and had already reached the door of the apartment, leaving the Queen-mother in a state of agitation and alarm which she made no effort to disguise, when, suddenly pausing upon the threshold, he once more turned towards her, saying impressively:

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“Sire, and you, Madame, I beg your Majesties to reflect upon what I have said; my conscience is now at rest. Would to God that you were in the midst of twelve hundred horse; I can see no other alternative.” And without awaiting any reply, he then withdrew. [244]

The advice of the veteran minister appeared, however, to the friends of the Queen-mother too dangerous to be followed. France had so recently been delivered from the horrors of a civil war that it was deemed inexpedient to provoke its renewal by any hostile demonstration on the part of the Crown; while, moreover, the popularity of Conde was so notorious that no doubt could be entertained of his success should the *ultima ratio regum* be adopted. His influence was alike powerful with all classes; the people were unanimous in his cause; the Princes and great nobles were his zealous adherents; and since his entrance into the Council as its president, not content with dividing his authority with the Queen-mother, he had gradually absorbed it in his own person. His hotel was crowded by those who formerly thronged the apartments of the Louvre; all who had demands to make, or remonstrances to offer, addressed themselves to him only; and thus he had become too dangerous an enemy to be lightly opposed.[245]

Under these circumstances it appeared impossible to proceed openly against him, while it was equally essential to deliver the Crown from so formidable an adversary; his arrest offered the only opportunity of effecting so desirable a result, but even to accomplish this with safety was by no means easy. In his own house he was surrounded by friends and adherents who would have rendered such an attempt useless; and after mature deliberation it was accordingly agreed that he must be made prisoner in the Louvre.

Under a specious pretext the Swiss Guards were detained in the great court of the palace; the Marquis de Themines[246] undertook to demand the sword of the Prince, and to secure his person, volunteering at the same time to procure the assistance of his two sons, and seven or eight nobles upon whose fidelity he could rely; arms were introduced into one of the apartments of the Queen-mother in a large chest, which was understood to contain costly stuffs from Italy; and a number of the youngest and most distinguished noblemen of the Court, to whom Marie appealed for support, took a solemn oath of obedience to her behests, without inquiring into the nature of the service to which they were thus pledged.

All being in readiness, Bassompierre was awakened at three o’clock in the morning of the 1st of September by a gentleman of the Queen-mother’s household, and instructed to proceed immediately to the Louvre in disguise. On his arrival he found Marie only half-dressed, seated between Mangot and Barbin, and evidently in a state of extraordinary agitation and excitement. As he entered the apartment she said hurriedly:

“You are welcome, Bassompierre. You do not know why I have summoned you so early; I will shortly explain my reason.”

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Then, rising from her seat, she paced to and fro across the floor for nearly half an hour, no one venturing to break in upon her reverie. Suddenly, however, she paused, and beckoning to her companions to follow her, she entered her private closet; and the hangings no sooner fell behind the party than, turning once more towards him, she continued with bitter vehemence:

“I am about to arrest the Prince, together with the Ducs de Vendome, de Mayenne, and de Bouillon. Let the Swiss Guards be on the spot by eleven o’clock as I proceed to the Tuileries, for should I be compelled by the people to leave Paris, I wish them to accompany me to Nantes. I have secured my jewels and forty thousand golden crowns, and I shall take my children with me, if—which I pray God may not be the case, and as I do not anticipate—I find myself under the necessity of leaving the capital; for I am resolved to submit to every sort of peril and inconvenience rather than lose my own authority or endanger that of the King.” [247]

The final arrangements were then discussed, and Marie de Medicis was left to her own thoughts until the hour of eight, when M. de Themines was announced.

“Ha! you are come at length,” she exclaimed joyfully; “I was awaiting you with impatience. The Council is about to open, and it is time that we were all prepared. Can you depend on those by whom you are accompanied?”

“They are my sons, Madame.”

“Bravely answered!” said Marie forcing a smile, as she extended her hand, which the Marquis raised to his lips. “Go then, and remember that the fate of France and of her monarch are in your keeping.”

Although surrounded by devoted friends, the Queen-mother was agitated by a thousand conflicting emotions. She was well aware that her own future existence as a Queen hung upon the success or failure of her enterprise, as should the slightest indiscretion on the part of any of her agents arouse the suspicions of the Prince and induce him to leave the capital, he had every prospect of obtaining the crown. Moreover, MM. de Crequy and de Bassompierre, who were in command of the French and Swiss Guards, and who had received orders to draw up their men in order of battle at the great gate of the Louvre immediately that the Prince should have entered, and to arrest him did he attempt to leave the palace, became alarmed at the responsibility thus thrust upon them, and declined to comply with these instructions until they had received a warranty to that effect under the great seal; but this demand having been conceded, they hesitated no longer.[248] All the precautions which had been taken nevertheless failed in some degree in their effect, as the Duc de Mayenne and the Marechal de Bouillon were apprised by their emissaries of the unusual movements of the Court, and at once adopted measures of safety. Bouillon feigned an indisposition, and refused to leave his hotel, where, after a long interview with the Duke, it was resolved that Conde should be

warned not to trust himself in the power of the Queen-mother. The Prince, however, who had been lulled into false security by the specious representations of Barbin, treated their caution with contempt, being unable to believe that Marie would venture to attempt any violence towards himself.

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“If there be indeed any hostile intention on the part of the Crown,” he said disdainfully, “it probably regards M. de Bouillon, whose restless spirit excites the alarm of the Queen-mother. Let him look to himself, if he see fit to do so. Should he be committed to the Bastille my interests will not suffer.”

Angered by his presumption, the two friends made no further protest, but contented themselves with redoubling their own precautions. Bouillon retired to Charenton with a strong escort, while the Duc de Mayenne remained quietly in his hotel, having made the necessary preparations for instant flight should such a step become essential to his safety.[249]

Meanwhile at the Louvre nothing remained to be done but to communicate to the young King the project which was about to be realized, and to induce him to sanction it by his countenance; an attempt which offered little difficulty, the jealousy of Louis having been excited by the assumed authority of the Prince, and his dissimulating nature being gratified by this first participation in a state intrigue.

At ten o’clock a great clamour upon the quay near the gate of the palace attracted the attention of the Queen-mother, who commanded silence, and in another moment distinct cries of “Long live the Prince!” “Long live M. de Conde!” were heard in the apartment. Marie de Medicis rose from her seat and approached an open window, followed by the Marechale d’Ancre.

“The Prince is about to open the Council,” said Leonora with a bitter smile.

“Rather say the King of France,” replied Marie with a flushed cheek, as she saw Conde graciously receiving the petitions which were tendered to him on all sides. “But his royalty shall be like that of the bean;[250] it shall not last long.” [251]

When he alighted at the palace Conde proceeded to the hall of the Council, which was on the ground-floor; and at the termination of the sitting ascended, as was his custom, to the apartments of the Queen-mother, where Louis, who had entered eagerly into the part that had been assigned to him, and who had just distributed with his own hands the arms which had been prepared for the followers of M. de Themines, met him in the gallery, entered into a cheerful conversation, and, finally, invited him to join a hawking-party which was to take place within an hour. Conde, however, whose thoughts were otherwise engaged, declined to participate in the offered pastime, and the young King, having accomplished all that had been required of him, accepted his excuses, and returned to the apartment of his mother. At the same moment Themines and his two sons issued from a small passage, and, approaching the Prince, announced that they had received an order to arrest him.

“Arrest me!” exclaimed Conde in astonishment. “It is impossible!”

“Such are my instructions,” said the Marquis, as he extended his hand to receive the forfeited sword, while his two sons placed themselves on each side of the prisoner.

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“You are aware that I am the first Prince of the Blood.”

“I know, Monseigneur, the respect which is your due,” was the reply, “but I must obey the King.”

“I must see their Majesties,” persisted the Prince.

“It is impossible. Come, sir, suffer me to conduct you to the apartment to which I have been directed to escort you.”

“How!” vehemently exclaimed Conde, looking round upon the nobles who were collected in the hall of which he had just reached the entrance, “is there no one here who has sufficient courage to spare me this outrage? You, Monsieur,” he continued, addressing himself to Du Vair, “you at least I know to be a man of probity. Did you counsel this violation of all the solemn promises which have been made to me?”

“I was not consulted upon the subject, Monseigneur,” replied the Keeper of the Seals; “nor shall it be my fault if so grievous an error be not speedily redeemed. The more brief the folly the better the result.”

This imprudent retort was destined to seal the disgrace of the upright minister without serving the Prince, who, seeing that he had nothing to anticipate from any demonstration on the part of the assembled nobles, haughtily desired his captor to conduct him to his allotted prison.[252] “And when you have done so,” he added in a firm voice, as he swept the apartment with an eye as bright and as steady as though he had not stood there unarmed and a captive, “you may tell the Queen-mother that she has anticipated me only by three days, for had she waited beyond that time, the King would no longer have had a crown upon his head.” [253]

The Prince was then conducted by a back staircase to an upper chamber strongly barred, where he remained guarded by M. de Themines until he was conveyed to the Bastille.

The exultation of Marie de Medicis was at its height. She embraced her son as fervently as though by the imprudence of which she had just been guilty she had ensured the security of his throne, and received the congratulations of the courtiers with undisguised delight. “See, Sire,” she exclaimed, as with one hand resting upon the shoulder of the young King she advanced to the centre of the great hall, “here is our brave M. de Themines, to whom we are so greatly indebted. Can you not offer him a royal recompense? He is not yet a Marshal of France.”

“I salute you, M. le Marechal,” said Louis with regal gravity. “In an hour I will sign your brevet.”

M. de Themines bowed low, and kissed the hand of the King.

“And I,” smiled Marie de Medicis, “present you with a hundred thousand crowns. Your elder son the Marquis de Themines is henceforth captain of my bodyguard, and your younger the Baron de Lauziere equerry of Monsieur.”

Again the captor of M. de Conde bent low and uttered his acknowledgments.

Low murmurs were heard among the nobles.

“Advance, M. de Montigny,” continued Marie, turning graciously towards an individual who had only just reached the capital, having on his way provided the Duc de Vendome with a relay of horses in order to facilitate his escape. “Sire, the Comte de Montigny was a faithful and devoted follower of your father. You owe him also some mark of favour.”

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“M. de Montigny shall be a marshal,” said Louis XIII, delighted with his new and unchecked exhibition of power.

“It would appear that to ask a *baton* is to have one on this occasion,” said M. de Saint-Geran[254] in a low voice to the Marquis de Crequy; “let us therefore put in our claim.”

“With all my heart,” replied the Marquis gaily. “The ladies do not refuse us their smiles, nor the Queen-mother the festivities in her honour by which we impoverish our estates; why, therefore, should the King deprive us of our share of the easily-won distinctions of the day?”

So saying, the two courtiers moved a pace nearer to Marie de Medicis, who did not fail to observe and to comprehend the action.

“Happy is the monarch who sees himself surrounded by loyal subjects and by faithful friends,” pursued the exulting Princess; “your Majesty has not yet completed the good work so royally commenced?”

“M. de Crequy has already a *baton*,” said Louis, somewhat bewildered by the new part he was called upon to enact on so large a scale.

“But you have forgotten, Sire, that he is neither duke nor peer.”

“I salute you, M. le Duc et Pair,” said the young King.

The Marquis acknowledged his new honours, and made way for his companion.

“Our list of marshals is full, M. de Saint-Geran,” said Louis coldly.

The disappointed courtier bowed, and was about to retire, when Marie de Medicis met his eye, and its expression was far from satisfactory.

“MM. de Praslin and de Saint-Geran have both, nevertheless, merited high distinction, Sire,” she said anxiously. “Your pledge for the future will suffice, however, as they are both young enough to wait.”

“Be it so, Madame,” rejoined her son, who was becoming weary of the rapacity of his loyal subjects and faithful friends. “Gentlemen, your services shall not be forgotten on the next vacancy.”

And thus, as Bassompierre has recorded, did M. de Saint-Geran “extort the promise” of a *baton*.

“And you, M. de Bassompierre,” exclaimed the Queen-mother, as in advancing up the hall their Majesties found themselves beside him, “unlike the others, you have put in no claim.”

“Madame,” was the dignified reply, “it is not at such a moment as this, when we have merely done our duty, that we should seek for reward; but I trust that when by some important service I may deserve to be remembered, the King will grant me both wealth and honours without any claim upon my own part.”

Louis hesitated for a moment, and then, with a slight bow, passed on; and he had no sooner entered his private closet, still accompanied by his mother, than a herald announced in a loud voice that a great public council would be held on the following day at the meeting of the Parliament.

It might well be imagined that when she retired Marie de Medicis left grateful hearts behind her, but such was not the case; lavish as she had proved upon this occasion, she was far from having satisfied those who had assisted in the arrest of the Prince, and who did not fail openly to express their discontent.[255]

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During this time the Dowager-Princess of Conde had been apprised of the arrest of her son; and, maddened by the intelligence, she had immediately rushed out of her house on foot, and hurried to the Pont Neuf, crying as she went, “To arms! To arms!”

“It is Madame de Nemours!” shouted the crowd which gathered about her. “Long live Madame de Nemours!”

“Long live Madame de Nemours!” echoed a voice, which was immediately recognized as that of the shoemaker Picard, who had, since his insult to the Marechal d’Ancre, been the idol of the mob. “Concini has assassinated the first Prince of the Blood in the Louvre!”

Even this announcement, however, failed in the effect which had been anticipated by the Princess, whose object was to accomplish the rescue of her son; for while the respectable citizens hastened to close their shops and to place their families in safety, the lower orders rushed towards the hotel of the Marechal d’Ancre in the Faubourg St. Germain. The doors were driven in, furniture and valuables to the amount of two hundred thousand crowns were destroyed, and lighted torches were applied to the costly hangings of the apartments, which soon caused the carved and gilded woodwork to ignite; while a portion of the mob at the same time attacked the house of Corbinelli his secretary; and soon the two residences presented only a mass of bare and blackened walls. M. de Liancourt, the Governor of Paris, opposed his authority in vain; he was hooted, driven back, and finally compelled to retire. Couriers were despatched to the Louvre to inform the Queen-mother of the popular tumult, but no orders were issued in consequence; the counsellors of Marie de Medicis deeming it desirable that the populace should be permitted to expend their violence upon the property of Concini, rather than turn their attention to the rescue of the Prince, until the public excitement had abated.

The arrest of M. de Conde had alarmed all the leaders of the late faction, who hastened to secure their own safety. Bouillon, as we have stated, had already reached Charenton; and the Duc de Vendome had fled in his turn on learning that all egress from the Louvre was forbidden, and that the outlets of the palace were strongly guarded. M. de Mayenne, who had hitherto remained in the capital, awaiting the progress of events, followed his example attended by a strong party of his friends. The Duc de Guise and the Prince de Joinville, alarmed lest they should be involved in the ruin of Conde through the machinations of Concini, with whom they were at open feud, hastened to Soissons, in order to join M. de Mayenne, whither they were shortly followed by the young Count and his mother; and, finally, the Duc de Nevers, who had indulged in a vain dream of rendering himself master of the Turkish empire through the medium of the Greeks, by declaring himself to be a descendant of the Paleologi, suddenly halted on his way to Germany, and declared himself determined to join the new faction of the Princes.[256]

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These defections created a great void at the Louvre, but the Queen-mother disdained to express her mortification; and, on the contrary, affected the most entire confidence in the nobles who still maintained their adherence to the Crown.

She was well aware that Conde had lost much of his popularity by abandoning the interests of the people at the Treaty of Loudun, and that the Protestants similarly resented the selfishness with which he had sacrificed their cause to his ambition; while she had, moreover, ascertained that the flight of the Duc de Guise and his brother had been simply induced by misrepresentation, and that through the medium of the females of their family they might readily be recalled. These circumstances gave her courage; and when, on the morning of the 2nd of September, she came to the council of war, which was held in the Augustine Monastery and presided over by the Marechal de Brissac, accompanied by her two sons, she remarked with undisguised gratification that more than two thousand nobles were already assembled. When the King, the Queen-mother, Monsieur, the great dignitaries, and the ministers had taken their seats, the doors were thrown open to all who chose to enter; and in a few moments the vast hall was densely crowded. Silence was then proclaimed; M. de Brissac declared that the session was open, and the President Jeannin forthwith commenced reading, in the name of the King, the celebrated declaration explaining the arrest of the Prince de Conde; proclaiming him a traitor, and, finally, promising a free pardon to all who had aided and abetted him in his disloyal practices, on condition of their appearing within fifteen days to solicit the mercy of his Majesty, in default of which concession they would be involved in the same accusation of *lese-majeste*[257]

More than once, during the delivery of this discourse, many of the nobles who were attached to the faction of the Princes gave utterance to a suppressed murmur; but it was not until its close that they openly and vociferously expressed their dissatisfaction. Then, indeed, the hall became a scene of confusion and uproar which baffles all description; voice was heard above voice; the clang of weapons as they were struck against the stone floor sounded ominously; and the terrified young King, after glancing anxiously towards De Luynes, who returned his look by another quite as helpless, fastened his gaze upon his mother as if from her alone he could hope for protection. Nor was his mute appeal made in vain, for although an expression of anxiety could be traced upon the noble features of Marie de Medicis, they betrayed no feeling of alarm. She was pale but calm, and her eyes glanced over the assembly as steadily as though she herself played no part in the drama which was enacting before her. For a few moments she remained motionless, as if absorbed in this momentous scrutiny; but ultimately she turned and uttered a few words in a low voice to Bassompierre, who was standing

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immediately behind her; and she had no sooner done so than, accompanied by M. de Saint-Geran, the captain of the King's Guard, he left the hall. In an instant afterwards both officers re-appeared, followed by a company of halberdiers, who silently took up their position in the rear of the sovereign and his mother; and the Queen no sooner saw the gleam of their lances than she caused it to be intimated to the President Jeannin that she desired to address the meeting.

When her purpose was communicated to the assembly silence was by degrees restored; and then the clear, full voice of Marie de Medicis was heard to the furthest recesses of the vast apartment.

"Nobles and gentlemen," she said with a gesture of quiet dignity, "as Regent of France I have also a right to speak on an occasion of this importance; for since the death of Henry the Great, my lord and husband, it is I who have constantly borne the burthen of the Crown. You know, one and all, how many obstacles I have had to oppose, how many intrigues to frustrate, how many dangers to overcome. An intestine war throughout the kingdom; disaffection alike in Paris and in the provinces; and amid all these struggles for the national welfare, I had to combat a still more gnawing anxiety. I had to watch over the safety of the King my son, and that of the other Children of France; and never, gentlemen, for one hour, did my dignity as a Queen cause me to forget my tenderness as a mother. I might have been sustained in this daily struggle—I might have found strong arms and devoted hearts to share in my toils, and in my endeavours—but that these have too often failed me, I need scarcely say. Thus, then, if any among you complain of the past, they accuse me, for the King my son having delegated his authority to myself can have incurred no blame, nor do I wish to transfer it to another. Every enterprise which I have undertaken has had the glory and prosperity of France as its sole aim and object. If I have at times been mistaken in my estimate of the measures calculated to ensure so desirable a result, I have at least never persisted in my error; I have surrounded myself with able and conscientious counsellors; MM. de Villeroy and de Jeannin were chosen by the most ancient and noble families in the kingdom—the Cardinal de la Valette and the Bishop of Lucon-Richelieu are my advisers—the estimable Miron, Provost of Paris, in conjunction with Barbin represent the *tiers-etat*—while as regards the people, I have ever been careful to mete out justice to them with an equal hand."

Marie paused for an instant, and she had no sooner done so than loud shouts echoed through the cloistral arches, as the crowd vociferously and almost unanimously responded, "You have—you have. Long live the Queen!"

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“Nor did I limit the sacred duties of my mission here,” pursued the Regent; “I had work to do without as well as within the kingdom; and it has not been neglected. I undertook and accomplished a successful negotiation for the marriage of the King my son with the Infanta of Spain; our ancient rival England has become our ally; Germany has learnt to fear us; and the Princes of Italy have bowed their heads before our triumphant banners. Have I not then, gentlemen, consulted in all things the honour of France, and increased her power? Have I not compelled respect where I have failed to secure amity? Can you point to one act of my authority by which the interests of the nation have been compromised, or her character tarnished in the eyes of foreign states? I boldly await your answer. Thus much for our external relations, and now I appeal to your justice; I ask you with equal confidence if, when within the kingdom faction after faction was detected and suppressed, I yielded to any sentiment of undue vengeance? Has not every outbreak of unprovoked disaffection rather tended to exhibit the forbearance of the King my son and my own? Need I recall the concessions which we have made to those who had sought to injure us? Need I ask you to remember that we have bestowed upon them governments, titles, riches, high offices of state, and every honour which it was in our power to confer? What more then could you require or demand, gentlemen? And yet, when the King my son has pardoned where he might have punished, you have responded by seditious shouts, by wilful disrespect, and even by attempts against his royal person! It was time for him to exert his prerogative, gentlemen,—you have compelled him to assert his power, and yet you murmur! Now, with God’s help, we may hope for internal peace. France must have lost her place among the European nations had she been longer permitted to prey upon her own vitals. One individual alone could have condemned her to this self-slaughter, and we have delivered her from the peril by committing that individual to the Bastille.”

As the Queen-mother uttered these words her voice was drowned in the universal burst of fury and violence which assailed her on all sides; nobles, citizens, and people alike yelled forth their discontent, but the unquenchable spirit of Marie de Medicis did not fail her even at this terrible moment. Rising with the emergency, she seemed rather to ride upon the storm than to quail beneath it; her eyes flashed fire, a red spot burned upon her cheek, and scorn and indignation might be read upon every feature of her expressive countenance. When the tumult was at its height she rose haughtily from her seat, and striking her clenched hand violently upon the table before her, she exclaimed in a tone of menace: “How now, Counts and Barons! Is it then a perpetual revolt upon which you have determined? When pardon and peace are frankly offered to you, and when both should be as welcome to all good Frenchmen

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as a calm after a tempest, you reject it? Do you hold words less acceptable than blows? Do you prefer the sword to the hand of friendship? Be it even as you will then. If friendship does not content you we will try the sword, for clemency exerted beyond a certain limit degenerates into weakness. You shall have no reason to deem your rulers either feeble or cowardly. You have here and now defied me, and I accept the defiance. Do you desire to know how I respond? It is thus. In the name of the King my son and in my own, in the name of my offended dignity and in the name of France, I, in my turn, declare the most stringent and unsparing war against rebellion, be it the work of whom it may. Neither high blood nor ancient title shall suffice to screen a traitor; war, war to the death, shall be henceforward my battle-cry against the malcontents who are striving to decimate the nation; and do not delude yourselves with the belief that I shall be single-handed in the struggle, for I will call the people to my aid, and the people will maintain the cause of their sovereigns. We will try our strength at last, and the strife will be a memorable one; our sons shall relate it with awe and terror to their descendants, and it will be a tale of shame which will cleave to your names for centuries to come. Ah, gentlemen, the rule of a woman has rendered you over-bold; and you have forgotten that there have been women who have wielded a sceptre of iron. Look to England—is there no sterner lesson to be learnt there? Or think you that Marie de Medicis fears to emulate Elizabeth? You have mistaken both yourselves and me. My forbearance has not hitherto grown out of fear; but the lion sometimes disdains to struggle with the tiger, not because he misdoubts his own strength, but because he cares not to lavish it idly. I also feel my strength, and when the fitting moment comes, it shall be put forth. To your war-cry I will answer with my war-cry; to your leaders I will oppose my leaders; and when you shout Conde and Mayenne! I will answer triumphantly Louis de France and Gaston d'Orleans! Draw the sword of rebellion if it be too restless to remain in the scabbard; you will not find me shrink from the flash of steel; and should you take the field I will be there to meet you. Rally your chiefs; the array can have no terrors for me, prepared as I am to confront you with some of the best and the bravest in all France. Deny this if you can, you who seek to undermine the throne, and to sacrifice the nation to your own ambitious egotism, and I will confound you with the names of Guise, Montmorency, Brissac, Sully, Bassompierre, Lesdiguieres, Marillac, and Ornano; these, and many more of the great captains of the age, will peal out my war-cry, and rally round the threatened throne of their legitimate sovereign. My son will be in the midst of them; and mark me well, gentlemen, the struggle shall no sooner have commenced than every pampered adventurer who has poisoned the ear of the monarch, and steeled his heart against his mother, shall be crushed under her heel; and should he dare to raise his head, I will assign to him as his armour-bearer the executioner of Paris."

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Never before had the Regent evinced such an amount of energy; never before had she so laid bare the secret workings of her soul. The adherents of the Princes trembled as they discovered with how formidable an enemy they should be called thenceforward to contend; while the majority of the nobles who were faithful to the royal cause, and above all those whose names she had so proudly quoted, uttered loud acclamations of delight and triumph.

Bewildered by the daring of his mother, Louis once more sought for support from his favourite, but De Luynes was in no position to afford it. The allusion to himself with which Marie de Medicis had concluded her harangue was too palpable to be mistaken, and he felt that should she maintain her purpose he was lost. Even Richelieu, as if crushed beneath the impassioned eloquence of the Regent, sat with drooping head and downcast eyes; and meanwhile Marie herself, after having glanced defiantly over the assembly, calmly resumed her seat, and desired that the business of the meeting might proceed.

Before the sitting closed it was determined that the army should be placed upon the war footing, and that a levy of six thousand Swiss should immediately be made; and this arrangement completed, the Queen-mother proceeded to attempt by every means in her power a reconciliation with the Guises.

For this purpose she despatched four nobles in whom she could confide to Soissons, to negotiate with the Princes, nor was it long ere they ascertained that individual jealousy had tended to create considerable disunion among them; and that each appeared ready, should any plausible pretext present itself, to abandon the others. Under these circumstances it was not difficult to convince the Due de Guise and his brother that no hostile design had ever been entertained against them, and to induce them to admit their regret at the hasty step which they had taken, together with their anxiety to redeem it. The Duc de Longueville was equally ready to effect his reconciliation with the Court; and having arranged with the royal envoys the terms upon which they consented to return, they were severally declared innocent of all connivance with the rebellious Princes. The Duc de Nevers, however, refused to listen to any compromise with the Crown; and, in defiance of the royal command, continued his endeavours to possess himself of the fortresses of Champagne, which were not comprised in his government. [258]

The persevering disaffection of M. de Nevers occasioned the disgrace of Du Vair, who betrayed an indisposition to proceed against him which so irritated Marie de Medicis that she induced the King to deprive him of the seals, and to bestow them upon Mangot, making Richelieu Secretary of State in his place; that wily prelate having already, by his great talent and ready expedients, rendered himself almost indispensable to his royal patroness.

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The arrest of the Prince de Conde had restored the self-confidence of Concini, who shortly afterwards returned to Court and resumed his position with an arrogance and pretension more undisguised than ever. The Marechale, however, had never recovered from the successive shocks to which she had been subjected by the death of her child and the destruction of her house; but had fallen into a state of discouragement and melancholy which threatened her reason.[259] For days she shut herself up in her apartments, refusing to receive the most intimate of her friends, and complaining that she was bewitched by those who looked at her.[260] Her domestic misery was, moreover, embittered by the public hatred, of which, in conjunction with her husband, she had become more than ever the object. It would appear that the injury already inflicted upon the Italian favourites had stimulated rather than satiated the detestation of the people for both of them. Every grievance under which the lower orders groaned was attributed to the influence of Concini and his wife; they were accused of inciting the Queen-mother to the acts of profusion by which the nation was impoverished; while every disappointment, misfortune, or act of oppression was traced to the same cause. Many affected to believe that Marie was the victim of sorcery, and that such was the real source of the influence of Leonora; and thus the heart-broken mother and unhappy wife, whose morbid imagination had caused her to consider her trials as the result of magical arts, was herself accused of having employed them against her royal benefactress.[261]

The nomination of Richelieu as Secretary of State had been effected through the influence of Concini, who in vain endeavoured to persuade him to resign the bishopric of Lucon, as incompatible with his new duties. The astute prelate had more extended views than those of his patron; nor was it long ere he succeeded in arousing the jealousy of the Marechal, and in convincing him, when too late, that he had, while endeavouring to further his own fortunes, only raised up a more dangerous and potent enemy than any to whom he had hitherto been opposed. Richelieu had no sooner joined the ministry than he made advances to the ancient allies of Henri IV, whom he regarded as the true friends of France; and for the purpose of conciliating those whose support he deemed most essential to the welfare of the kingdom, he hastened to despatch ambassadors to the Courts of England, Holland, and Germany, who were instructed to explain to the several monarchs to whom they were accredited the reasons which had induced Louis XIII to arrest the Prince de Conde, and to assure them that the measures adopted by the French Court were not induced, as had been falsely represented, by any desire to conciliate either Rome or Spain. To this assurance he subjoined a rapid synopsis of the means employed by the Queen-mother to ensure the peace of the kingdom, and the efforts made by the Prince to disturb it; and, finally, he

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recapitulated the numerous alliances which had taken place between the royal families of France and Spain during several centuries as an explanation of the close friendship which existed between the two countries.[262] Meanwhile considerable difficulty was experienced in the equipment of the army which had been raised. The royal treasury was exhausted, and in several provinces the revolted nobles had possessed themselves of the public monies; financial edicts were issued which created fresh murmurs among the citizens; the Princes assumed an attitude of stern and steady defiance; and the year 1616 closed amid apprehension, disaffection, and mistrust.

FOOTNOTES:

[196] Armand Jean du Plessis, afterwards the celebrated Cardinal de Richelieu, was the third son of Francois du Plessis, Seigneur de Richelieu, Knight of the Orders of the King, and Grand Provost of France. He was born in Paris, on the 5th of September 1585; and having been educated with great care, became an accomplished scholar. At the age of twenty-two years he was received as a member of the Sorbonne; and having obtained a dispensation from Paul V for the bishopric of Lucon, was consecrated at Rome by the Cardinal de Givry, in 1607. On his return to France he was introduced to the notice of Marie de Medicis by the Marquise de Guercheville and the Marechal d'Ancre.

[197] Bassompierre, *Mem*. p. 96.

[198] Richelieu, *Hist. de la Mere et du Fils*, vol. i. p. 334.

[199] Continuation of Mezeray. *Hist. de France*.

[200] *Vie du Duc d'Epernon*, book iii.

[201] Le Vassor, vol. i. pp. 439, 440. Mezeray, vol. xi. pp. 98, 99. D'Estrees, *Mem*. p. 408.

[202] Nicolas Le Jay, Baron de Tilly, *etc*., Keeper of the Seals, and First President of the Parliament of Paris. He rendered important services both to Henri IV and Louis XIII, and acquired great celebrity as a learned scholar and an upright minister. He died in 1640.

[203] Richelieu, *Mem*. book vi. pp. 268-272.

[204] Matthieu, *Hist, des Derniers Troubles*, p. 550.

[205] Fontenay-Mareuil, *Mem*. pp. 290-298.

[206] Henri, Duc de la Ferte de Senectere, Comte de Saint-Pol et de Chateauneuf, Vicomte de Lestrange et de Cheylard, Baron de Boulogne et de Privas, Seigneur de Saint-Marsal, de Ligny, de Dangu, de Precy, *etc*.

[207] Sismondi, vol. xxii. p. 348.

[208] Mezeray, vol. xi. pp. 101, 102. Le Vassor, vol. i. p. 464.

[209] The Duque d'Usseda was the son of the Duque de Lerma.

[210] Sismondi, vol. xxii. p. 351.

[211] Sismondi, vol. xxii. pp. 352-354.

[212] *Mercure Francais,* 1615. De Rohan, *Mem*. book i. Mezeray, vol. xi. pp. 105, 106.

[213] Le Vassor, vol. i. pp. 498, 499. *Vie du Duc d'Epernon*, book vii. *Mercure Francais*, 1616. Bassompierre, *Mem*. p. 110.

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[214] Mademoiselle d'Entragues, who had endeavoured to compel Bassompierre to fulfil the promise of marriage which he had made to her.

[215] The colonel-generalship of the Swiss Guards.

[216] The Princesse de Conti, whom he privately married.

[217] The Cardinal de Richelieu, who was exasperated at his marriage, and through whose agency Bassompierre incurred his subsequent disgrace and long imprisonment in the Bastille.

[218] Rambure, MS. *Mem*. vol. vi. pp. 380-386.

[219] Conference of Loudun at the close of the *Mem*. of Philippeau de Pontchartrain, vol. vii. p, 315.

[220] Richelieu, *Mem*. vol. vii. p. 287. Le Vassor, vol. i. p. 450.

[221] Le Vassor, vol. i. p. 509. Richelieu, *Mem*. book vii. p. 288. Pontchartrain, *Conference de Loudun,* p. 406. Rohan, *Mem*. p. 134. D'Estrees, *Mem*. p. 411.

[222] Richelieu, *Hist. de la Mere et du Fils*, vol. ii. p. 14.

[223] Sismondi, vol. xxii. p. 361.

[224] Le Vassor, vol. i. p. 514.

[225] D'Estrees, *Mem*. p. 411.

[226] Sismondi, vol. xxii. p. 363.

[227] Claude Mangot, President of the Parliament of Bordeaux, and Assistant-Secretary of State.

[228] Pierre Brulart, Seigneur de Puisieux, son of Nicolas Brulart, Seigneur de Sillery et de Puisieux en Champagne, Chancellor of France, was Secretary of State. In 1622 he took Montpellier, and died in 1640.

[229] M. Barbin was Comptroller of the Household of the Queen-mother. "A man of little consequence," says Philippeau de Pontchartrain; "but upright, and well versed in business."

[230] Rohan, *Mem*. book i. *Mem. de la Regence de Marie de Medicis*.

[231] Francoise Bertaut, Dame de Motteville, was the daughter of Pierre Bertaut, Gentleman in ordinary of the Bedchamber, and of Louise Bessin de Mathonville, of the

Spanish family of Saldana. At the age of fifteen she married Nicolas Langlois, Seigneur de Motteville, a man already advanced in years, but with whom she lived happy until 1641, when she was left a widow with a very slender jointure. Two years subsequently, at the age of twenty-two, she entered the household of Anne of Austria, rather as a personal friend than as an official attendant; a post which she retained for many years with honour, her sweetness of disposition and total absence of ambition causing her to be respected by all parties. She was present at the death of her royal mistress, who, by a bequest of ten thousand crowns, enabled her to quit the Court, and to devote her whole attention to the revision of her well-known Memoirs. Intimately acquainted with Mesdames de la Fayette and de Sevigne, she for some time maintained a constant intercourse with both; but on the termination of her self-imposed task she retired to the convent of *Ste*. Marie de Chaillot, where she died on the 29th of December 1689.

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[232] Motteville, *Mem*, edition Petitot, vol. i. pp. 336, 337.

[233] Motteville, *Mem*. vol. i. p. 337.

[234] Mezeray, vol. xi. pp. iii, 112. Sismondi, vol. xxii. p. 365.

[235] Matthieu, *Hist. des Derniers Troubles*, book iii. p. 577.

[236] Bassompierre, *Mem*. pp. 113, 114.

[237] The Marechal d'Ancre had formed a large establishment by engaging in his service a number of impoverished French nobles, whose necessities had induced them to accept a thousand livres a year, and to submit to the insults which were heaped upon them by their low-born patron.

[238] Bassompierre. *Mem*. p. 114. D'Estrees, *Mem*. p. 413. Richelieu, *Hist. de la Mere et du Fils*, vol. ii. p. 57.

[239] Rohan, *Mem*. p. 141.

[240] Le Vassor, vol. i. p. 514.

[241] Sismondi, vol. xxii. p. 371, 372. D'Estrees, *Mem*. p. 412. Bassompierre, *Mem*. p. 114. Mezeray, vol. xi. pp. 113, 114.

[242] Bassompierre, *Mem*. pp. 121, 122.

[243] Richelieu, *Mem*. book vii. p. 333. Fontenay-Mareuil, pp. 338-358.

[244] Richelieu, *Mem*. book vii. p. 326.

[245] Sismondi, vol. xxii. p. 374.

[246] Ponce de Lauziere, Marquis de Themines, Senechal de Quercy, and subsequently Marechal de France.

[247] Bassompierre, *Mem*. p. 117.

[248] Sismondi, vol. xxii. pp. 375, 376.

[249] Le Vassor, vol. i. pp. 541, 542. *Mem. de la Regence de Marie de Medicis*.

[250] On Twelfth-Night in France a bean is introduced into the cake, and the person selecting the slice in which it has been concealed is elected King for the evening.

[251] Bassompierre, *Mem*. p. 117.

[252] Rohan, *Mem*. p. 141. Fontenay-Mareuil, p. 350. D'Estrees, p. 414. Le Vassor, vol. i. pp. 542, 543. Brienne, *Mem*. vol. i. pp. 315, 316.

[253] Manuscript Memoirs of the Cardinal de Richelieu in the archives of the Minister for Foreign Affairs.

[254] M. de Saint-Geran was an ensign of the gendarmes of the King's bodyguard, and one of the nobles who were known by the soubriquet of *The Seventeen*, among whom were the Marquis de Crequy and Bassompierre. He was a devoted ally of the Duc de Sully.

[255] Bassompierre, *Mem*. p. 118. Sismondi, vol. xxii. pp. 378, 379. Richelieu, *Mem*. book vii. p. 335.

[256] Richelieu, *Mem*. book vii. p. 335.

[257] Unpublished *Mem*. of Richelieu in the archives of the Foreign Office.

[258] Richelieu, *Mem*. book vii. p. 359.

[259] Unpublished *Mem*. of Richelieu.

[260] Richelieu, *Mem*. book vii. p. 368. Fontenay-Mareuil, p. 361.

[261] Fontenay-Mareuil, book iii. p. 369.

[262] Sismondi, vol. xxii. pp. 387, 388.

CHAPTER IX

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1617

The royal forces march against the insurgent Princes—Indignities offered to the young sovereign—Louis XIII and his favourite—Arrogance of the Marechal d'Ancre—-Indignation of the King—Confiscation of the property of the rebel Princes—Household of Louis XIII—Cabal of De Luynes—Infatuation of the Marechal d'Ancre—An evil counsellor—Marie de Medicis resolves to withdraw from the Government, but is dissuaded from her purpose—Popular discontent—Precautions of Concini—Alarm of Louis XIII—The Duc de Nevers is declared guilty of *Use-majeste*—Firmness of the Queen-mother—Insolence of Concini and Richelieu—Conde is refused permission to justify himself—Success of the royal forces—Louis XIII consents to the arrest of the Marechal d'Ancre—Bassompierre warns Marie de Medicis of her danger—She disregards the warning—Concini and Leonora prepare to leave France—Old grievances renewed—A diplomatic Janus—Blindness of Marie and her ministers—A new conspirator—How to be made a marshal—Incaution of De Luynes—Treachery of Richelieu—A narrow escape—A morning mass—Singular position of the Court—-Assassination of Concini—Public rejoicings—Imprisonment of the Queen-mother—-Barbin is sent to the Bastille—The seals are restored to Du Vair—A royal reception—-Anguish of Marie de Medicis—She demands to see the King, and is refused—Her isolation—A Queen and her favourite—A mother and her son—Arrest of Madame d'Ancre—The Crown jewels—Political pillage—The Marechale in the Bastille.

In the month of January the Comte d'Auvergne, who had recently been liberated from the Bastille, was despatched at the head of fourteen thousand men against the insurgent Princes; and his departure was made a pretext for depriving the young King of the gentlemen of his household and of his bodyguard, an insult which he deeply although silently resented. He had been attacked in the November of the preceding year by an indisposition which for a time had threatened the most serious consequences, and from whose latent effects he had not yet recovered. As time wore on, moreover, he was becoming more and more weary of the insignificance to which he was reduced by the delegated authority of his mother; and had easily suffered himself to be persuaded by De Luynes that her repeated offers to resign it had merely been designed to make him feel the necessity of her assistance. As we have already shown, Louis XIII derived little pleasure from the society of his young and lovely wife; he made no friends; and thus he was flung entirely into the power of his wily favourite, who, aware that the King could hate, although he could not love, was unremitting in his endeavours to excite him against Marie de Medicis and her favourite. The infatuated Concini seconded his efforts but too well; for, unable to bear his fortunes meekly, he paraded his riches and his power with an insolence which tended to justify the aversion of his enemies. On one occasion,

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shortly after the dismemberment of his little Court, the monarch of France having refused to join a hunting-party organized by the Queen-mother, found himself entirely deserted save by De Luynes and a single valet; and overcome by mortification and melancholy, he leant his head upon his hand and wept bitterly. For some time not a sound was heard in the Louvre save the soughing of the wind through the tall trees of the palace-garden, and the measured tread of the sentinels, when suddenly a tumult arose in the great court; the trampling of horses, the voices of men, and the clashing of weapons were blent together; and dashing away his tears, Louis desired his favourite to ascertain the cause of the disturbance.

“It is the Marechal d’Ancre, Sire, who has just alighted,” said De Luynes as he approached the window.

In a few minutes the Italian was announced, and entered the royal apartment followed by a train of forty gentlemen all magnificently attired. At this spectacle Louis started from his seat; and with a bitter smile inquired of the arrogant Marquis his motive for thus parading before his sovereign a state which could only be intended as a satire upon his own privations.

To this question the vainglorious adventurer replied in a tone of affected sympathy and patronage which festered in the heart of the young King; assuring him that his followers were at his own cost, and not at that of the state; and concluding his explanation by an offer of pecuniary aid, and a company of his regiment of Bussy-Zamet, which he had just brought from Normandy. Justly incensed by such an insult, Louis commanded him instantly to quit his presence; and he had no sooner withdrawn, followed by his glittering retinue, than the young monarch sank back upon his seat, and uttered the most bitter complaints of the affront to which he had been subjected.[263]

“And to this, Sire,” said De Luynes, as he stood beside his royal master—“to this insult, which is but the precursor of many others, you have been subjected by the Queen-mother.”

“I will revenge myself!” exclaimed Louis with a sudden assumption of dignity.

“And how?” demanded the favourite emphatically. “You are called a King, but where are your great nobles? where are the officers of your household? where are your barons? So many princes, so many powers. France has no longer a King.”

“And my people?” shouted the excited youth.

“You have no people. You are a mere puppet in the hands of an ambitious woman and an unprincipled adventurer.”

“A puppet!” echoed Louis haughtily. “Do I not wear the crown of France?”

“So did Charles IX,” was the unmoved reply; “yet he died to make way for Henri III. Concini and his wife, Sire, come from the same country as Catherine de Medicis. Isabeau de Baviere was a mother, yet she preferred her lover to her son.” [264]

“Enough, enough, Sir,” said Louis, clutching the hilt of his sword; “I will hear no more, lest it should make me mad!”

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De Luynes bowed in silence; he knew that the poisonous seed was sown, and he was content to wait until it should germinate.

The pecuniary difficulties of the kingdom exercised no influence over the festivities of the Court; balls, banquets, and comedies took place in rapid succession; and the young Queen danced in a ballet which was the admiration of all the spectators; an example which was followed by the nobles of the royal household.[265] Still, however, it was necessary to recruit the national treasury; and, accordingly, on the 10th of March a declaration was published by which the King confiscated all the property of the disaffected Princes, and made it forfeit to the Crown; while at the same time three separate bodies of troops attacked the rebels with complete success, and the royal arms were everywhere triumphant, when intelligence was forwarded to their leaders from the capital which induced an immediate cessation of hostilities.[266]

We have seen the effect of the insolence of Concini, and the insidious inferences of De Luynes, upon the mind of the young King, who had only six months previously been taught a lesson of dissimulation on the occasion of the arrest of Conde; and consequently it can scarcely be subject of surprise that, wounded to the heart's core, he was easily persuaded to exert in his own cause the subtlety which he had evinced at the bidding of another. He was now between fifteen and sixteen years of age, and was deeply imbued by the idea that he possessed an unlimited control alike over the properties, the liberty, the honour, and the lives of his subjects; but he was still utterly incapable of fulfilling his duties as a sovereign. His conceptions of right and wrong were confused and unstable; and he willingly listened to the advice of those whose counsels flattered his selfishness and his resentment. De Luynes had skilfully availed himself of this weakness; and as he was all-powerful with his suspicious and saturnine master, who saw in every one by whom he was approached either an enemy to be opposed, or a spy to be deceived, he was careful to introduce to him none save individuals whose insignificance rendered them incapable of interfering with his own interests, and who might be dismissed without comment or danger whenever he should deem their absence desirable. Against this arrangement neither the Queen-mother nor her ministers entered any protest. Louis truly was, as his favourite had so insolently asserted, a mere puppet in their hands; and the consequence of this undignified neglect was fatal to the intellectual progress of the young sovereign. On the pretext of requiring assistance in training the royal falcons, De Luynes had presented to Louis two young nobles, MM. du Troncon and de Marcillac, men of good birth, but who had become dishonoured by their own vices; the former being accused of having betrayed his master, and the latter his sisters in order to enrich himself;[267] facts of which the favourite was, however, careful that the King should remain ignorant.

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In addition to these disreputable adventurers, De Luynes also introduced to the intimacy of his royal patron Deageant,[268] the principal clerk of Barbin, whom he had won over by promises of aggrandizement should he succeed in effecting the disgrace of Concini, which, as a natural consequence, must also involve that of his master; and, finally, a private soldier, and one of the gardeners of the palace. All these persons were instructed to excite the suspicions of the King against his mother and her ministers, a task in which it was by no means difficult to succeed; particularly when the treacherous Deageant had placed in his hands a number of forged letters, wherein Barbin, at the pretended instigation of Concini, was supposed to entertain a design against his life, in order not only to prolong the authority of the Queen-mother, but also to ensure the crown to her second and favourite son, Gaston d'Orleans.[269]

Skilfully as De Luynes conducted this affair, and despite the natural dissimulation of Louis XIII, the reiterated assertions and cautions of his familiar associates did not fail to produce an involuntary effect upon his manner and deportment which aroused the suspicions of the Italian; who, with an infatuation almost incredible, instead of endeavouring to conciliate the young King, and to render himself less obnoxious to the people, resolved to make all bow before him, and to break the stubborn spirits that he failed to bend. In this desperate and insane policy he was, moreover, seconded by the counsels of Barbin, whose impetuous temper and anxiety to secure his own safety alike urged him to support any measure which promised to maintain the government in the hands of Marie de Medicis and her favourite, in whose ruin he could not fail to be involved. So intemperately, indeed, did he pursue his purpose, that even Marie herself became alarmed; her most faithful adherents were absent with the army, while she had daily evidence of the activity of her enemies; and more than once at this period she declared her determination to withdraw from all participation in state affairs, and to resign her delegated authority, in order that her son might rule as he saw fit. From this purpose she was, however, constantly dissuaded by Barbin. "Madame," he said on one occasion when the Queen-mother appeared more than ever resolved to follow out her determination, "if you once abandon the administration of government you will cut the throats of your children. Should you cease to rule they will be utterly lost." [270]

No wonder that her tenderness as a mother, joined to her ambition as a Queen, induced Marie de Medicis to yield to the representations of one of her most trusted counsellors, even while the cloud was deepening around her. As the great nobles murmured at the insolence and tyranny of the audacious Italian, their murmurs were echoed by the curses of the people; and in every murmur and in every curse the name of the Queen-mother was coupled with that of Concini and his

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wife. Even the Marechal himself at length betrayed tokens of alarm; he never ventured to traverse the streets of Paris without a numerous retinue, and even so attended he cowered beneath the menacing looks and gestures which he encountered on all sides. Again and again he urged Leonora to leave France; but he urged in vain; and finally he resolved to take measures for securing a safe retreat in his government of Normandy, should he be compelled to escape from the capital. As a preliminary and important step towards the accomplishment of this purpose, he caused the fortifications of Quilleboeuf to be put into a state of perfect repair, and endeavoured to purchase the governments of several other places upon the Loire and the Seine; which, had he been enabled to carry out his object, could not have failed to render him independent of the royal authority. He also lavished large sums on every side, in order to secure partisans; and so excited the apprehensions of the citizens that bitter complaints were made, and threats uttered against himself, his royal mistress, and the new ministry.

All these, many of which had been fomented by themselves, were faithfully reported by De Luynes and his agents to the young King, to whom they pointed out the probability of a general insurrection.

“What is to be done?” exclaimed Louis on one occasion; “the Marechal d’Ancre has, as it would seem, undertaken the ruin of my kingdom, and yet I dare not expostulate with my mother, for I cannot encounter her rage.”

This puerile avowal decided the measures of the confederates; and ere long they succeeded in convincing the King that it would be quite possible to accomplish the overthrow of Concini without exposing himself to the anger which he dreaded.

On the 17th of January a royal declaration was confirmed by the Parliament against the Duc de Nevers, who, although not yet in open revolt, was condemned as guilty of rebellion and *lese-majeste*; and this premature act of severity caused general discontent throughout the capital. In vain did his sister the Dowager Duchess of Longueville and Bentivoglio the Papal Nuncio endeavour to effect his reconciliation with the Court. At the instigation of Richelieu, Concini, and Barbin, Marie de Medicis imperiously refused to revoke, the sentence.

“The period of forbearance is gone by,” she said coldly in reply to the persevering representations of the prelate. “Indulgence has proved ineffectual hitherto; and it has consequently become imperative upon the King to adopt more rigorous measures. These gentlemen are enacting the petty sovereigns in their respective governments, but I shall take steps to repress their insolence. Things have now been pushed to extremity; and we must either crush these rebellious and restless spirits, or permit the royal authority to be wrested from the sovereign.”

Still, aware of the fatal consequences which must result from the uncompromising condemnation of one of the first Princes in the land, Bentivoglio would not be discouraged; and on retiring from the presence of the Queen-mother he reiterated his expostulations to Concini and Richelieu. With them, however, the zealous Nuncio achieved no better success.

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“His Majesty,” said the Italian Marshal haughtily, “will ere long possess an army of eighty thousand infantry and four thousand horse; the Comte de Schomberg[271] has received an order to import experienced troops from Germany; and I have determined to raise five thousand men at my own cost; being resolved to teach the French people how all the faithful servants of the Crown should feel it their duty to act on such an emergency.” [272]

[Illustration: MARSHAL SCHOMBERG]

The new Secretary of State followed in the track of his patron, and with equal explicitness: “The King, Monseigneur,” he replied to the appeal of the Nuncio, “is resolved to be the ruler of his own nation; and his Majesty trusts, moreover, that should the Duc de Nevers and the other Princes openly take up arms, the Pope will excommunicate them as rebels to their sovereign.” [273]

In addition to the discontent created among the people by this ill-judged pertinacity on the part of Marie and her Government, a new cause of disaffection was elicited by the harshness with which the Queen-mother refused to comply with the demand made by the two Princesses of Conde, that the Prince should either be released from the Bastille, or put upon his trial, in order that he might prove his innocence of the crime of which he was accused. Compliance with this request would have placed Marie and her ministers in a position of such difficulty and danger that it was, moreover, refused with an abruptness which not only betrayed their alarm, but which also tended still further to aggravate the irritation of his friends; and thus at a moment when the interests of the young King required that none but conciliatory measures should be adopted, the reckless ambition of a few individuals threatened to shake the very foundations of his throne, and to reduce the nation to a state of anarchy and convulsion.

The time was ripe for the project of De Luynes. The royal forces were everywhere victorious against the insurgent nobles; and Concini openly attributed to his own counsels a success which promised to make him all-powerful at Court.

“You see, Sire,” said the favourite, “that this arrogant Italian, not content with insulting your royal person, also claims the merit due to your brave army, and to your faithful generals. Will you continue to suffer this presumption to degrade you in the eyes of your people, and to undermine your authority over your barons? Take the reins of government into your own hands, and prove that you are a worthy descendant of St. Louis. Reform the Government, and you will soon restore tranquillity to France; but do not any longer submit to see a base-born foreigner openly play the sovereign at your very Court.”

“Show me the means of doing this,” was the sullen reply; “I am as anxious as yourself to escape my present state of slavery. Devise some sure method of ridding me of the

thrall to which I have been so long condemned, and I will second your designs as earnestly as you can decide them.”

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“You have but to assert yourself, Sire, and to exert your authority.”

“Were I to do so,” retorted Louis, “I should only incur the hatred and ill-offices of my mother, for I should forthwith visit my vengeance upon her favourite; but we have had brawls enough in France, and I am weary of all these conflicting murmurs. Induce the Marechal and his wife to quit the country; let them carry away all their wealth, and even bribe them, by new gifts should it be necessary. Impoverished as she is, France will still be able to find a few thousand crowns with which to purchase their departure.”

Although this extraordinary leniency by no means fulfilled the wishes of De Luynes, he dared not venture further at the moment; and he accordingly induced the Bishop of Carcassonne to propose to the Queen-mother that she should herself suggest the return of Concini and Leonora to Italy. A year or two previously Marie de Medicis would have repelled such a proposition with anger and impatience, but she had begun to feel that her own authority had been invaded by the Marechal; and she consented to act upon the advice of the prelate.

Heart-stricken by misfortune, the Marechale listened without one expostulation to the order of her royal foster-sister; her ambition had long been crushed, and she pined for rest. Aware, moreover, that by obeying the wishes of the Queen-mother she should also fulfil those of her husband, she promised immediate compliance with the will of Marie, and forthwith commenced the necessary preparations.

This unqualified acquiescence in the pleasure of the Queen did not, however, satisfy the views of De Luynes, who could not brook that the immense wealth of the Marechal d’Ancre should pass into other hands than his own; and he consequently laboured to impress upon the King that the apparent obedience of Concini was a mere subterfuge, as he publicly boasted that France contained not a single individual who would dare to attempt anything to his prejudice.

“Convince him to the contrary, Sire,” said one of his confidential friends to the young monarch. “Declare to the Queen-mother your determination to be governed no longer in your own kingdom, although you are still willing to be guided by her advice; and then command the instant departure of her dissimulating favourites. Do this, and you will not fail to be obeyed.”

“Be not misled, Sire,” said De Luynes in his turn, when this officious but well-meaning counsellor had withdrawn; “your Majesty will not be obeyed so readily as many would lead you to anticipate. Concini is too rapacious willingly to leave the country while there remains one jewel to be filched from your royal crown; and he is too ambitious to abandon without a struggle the factitious power which he has been permitted to exert.” [274]

“What is to be done then, if the Italian refuses to quit France? I am in no position to compel his obedience, nor am I inclined to issue an order which I cannot enforce.”

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“Sire,” said De Luynes approaching the monarch, the querulousness of whose manner warned him that unless he caused him to fear for his personal safety Louis would rather retire from the struggle than brave the anger of his mother, of whom he even now stood as much in awe as he had done during his childhood, “I see that the moment is at length come in which I must peril my own security in order to ensure that of your Majesty. You have no longer an alternative if you desire to escape the machinations of the Marechal d’Ancre. I have sure information that an attempt is about to be made to seize your person, and to take you out of the country.”

“You rave, De Luynes!” exclaimed Louis, whose cheeks blanched at this unexpected announcement.

“Would that I did, Sire,” was the reply; “but should you not adopt immediate measures for circumventing the traitor whom I have denounced to you at the hazard of my own life, you will find that I have only too much foundation for the assertion that I have made.”

“In that case,” vehemently retorted the young King, grasping the hilt of his sword, “it is indeed time that France should recognize her legitimate ruler, and that her monarch won his golden spurs. I will leave Paris, and place myself at the head of my army.”

“Concini will then remain in undisputed possession of the capital,” remarked De Luynes coldly.

“What is my alternative, Albert?” demanded Louis, utterly discouraged. “Name it, and I will no sooner have become in fact as well as name the sovereign of France than you shall receive the *baton* of a marshal,”

“Commit M. d’Ancre to the Bastille, Sire. It is difficult to conspire within the gates of that fortress.”

“Where shall I find an individual hardy enough to undertake such an enterprise?”

“I will present him to your Majesty within an hour, Sire.”

“So be it, M. le Marechal,” said Louis as he turned away. “My mother had the courage to provide a lodging for the first Prince of the Blood in the same prison, and I do not see why I should shrink from compelling him to share his dungeon with the husband of Leonora Galigai.”

While this plot was forming in the closet of the young King, Marie de Medicis was warned on her side that should she not adopt the most stringent measures to counteract the intrigues of De Luynes, she would soon lose all her authority over the mind of her son, who had latterly betrayed increased impatience of her control; and who was evidently desirous to emancipate himself from the thraldom to which he had hitherto so

patiently submitted. Bassompierre among others, with his usual frankness, replied to his royal mistress, when she urged him to declare his sentiments upon the subject: “You have been well advised, Madame; you do not sufficiently consider your own interests; and one of these days the King will be taken from beneath your wing. His adherents have commenced

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by exciting him against your friends, and ere long they will excite him against yourself. Your authority is only precarious, and must cease whenever such may be the will of the sovereign. He will be easily persuaded to annul it, for we know how eagerly youth pants for power; and should his Majesty see fit one day to remove to St. Germain, and to command his principal officers, both Frenchmen and foreigners, no longer to recognize your rule, what will be your position? Even I myself, whose devotion to your Majesty is above suspicion, should be compelled to take my leave, humbly entreating your permission to obey the orders of the King. Judge therefore, Madame, if such must inevitably be the case with those who are deeply attached to your royal person, what may be the bearing of the rest. You would find yourself with your hands empty after a long regency."

Marie, however, refused to be convinced. She had become so habituated to the passive obedience of her son that she could not bring herself to believe that he would ever venture to resist her will; and thus she rejected the wholesome advice of those who really desired her own welfare and that of the country; and increased the exasperation of Louis and his followers by lavishing upon Concini and his wife the most costly presents, in order to reconcile them to their enforced separation from herself.[275]

The profuse liberality of the Queen-mother to her favourites sealed their death-warrant, as every increase of their already almost fabulous wealth only strengthened the determination of De Luynes to build up his own fortunes upon the ruin of those of his detested enemy; but after the first burst of resolution which we have recorded, Louis had once more relapsed into vacillation and inertness. He still wept, but he no longer threatened; and it became necessary yet further to excite his indignation and hatred of Concini, in order to induce him to follow up the design which he had so eagerly formed against his liberty.

Means were not wanting. The young King was reminded by those about him of the niggardly spirit in which the Italian had supplied his wants during his boyhood, after having obtained the sanction of the Regent to regulate the expenses of his little Court. How often he had been compelled to ask as a favour that which was his own by right, while Concini was himself daily risking thousands of pistoles at the gaming-table, all of which had been drawn from the royal treasury! How insolently the Marechal had, upon an occasion when he was engaged at billiards with his Majesty, requested the royal permission to resume his plumed cap, and had replaced it on his head before that permission was expressed; with a hundred other trifling but mortifying incidents which made the blood of Louis boil in his veins, and placed him wholly in the power of his insidious associates.[276]

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In order to hasten the resolution of the King De Luynes next resolved to impress upon his mind that his former warning was about to be realized, and that ere long he would find himself a prisoner in his own capital; while, with a view to render this declaration plausible, he took means to have it reported to Marie de Medicis that Louis was about to escape from Paris, to cast off her authority, and to form a coalition with the insurgent Princes. In consequence of this information the counsellors of the Queen-mother induced her to double the guard at the Louvre, and to prevent the King from passing the city gates, either for the purpose of hunting, or of visiting, as he was frequently in the habit of doing, the suburban palaces. This was a crowning triumph for the cunning favourite, who thus saw his royal master reduced to seek all his recreation in the gardens of the Tuileries; and he soon became convinced that his project had succeeded. For a few days Louis was too indignant to make any comment upon the treatment to which he was subjected, and he even affected to derive amusement from constructing miniature fortresses, bird-hunting, and other similar pursuits; but it was not long ere he became disgusted with these compulsory pastimes, and wandered moodily through the avenues of the gardens, communing with his own thoughts, and nursing the bitter feelings which were rapidly sapping his better impulses.

When he had thus convinced himself that the King's powers of endurance had reached their extreme limit, De Luynes and his confederates on one occasion entered his chamber in the evening, but instead of suggesting to the young monarch, according to their usual habit, some method of whiling away the time until he retired to rest, they approached him with a melancholy and almost frightened deportment which at once aroused alike his curiosity and his apprehension. "What is the meaning of your manner, gentlemen?" asked Louis. "What has occurred?"

His attendants glanced at each other, as if trusting that some one of their number would be bold enough to take the responsibility of a reply upon himself; but no one spoke.

"I have asked a question, and I demand an answer," said Louis with a threatening frown. "Do the very members of my household—those who call themselves my friends—forget that, spite of all my trials, and all my privations, I am still the King of France?"

"Sire," murmured the one upon whom his eye had rested as he spoke, "it is because we are devoted heart and soul to your Majesty that you see us in this mortal anxiety. In losing you we should lose everything; but since it is your command that we should tell you all, it is our duty to obey. The citizens of Paris are in a state of consternation. All your loyal subjects fear for your life. Tears and sobs are to be heard on every side. You are in the hands of Italians—of the countrymen and countrywomen of Catherine de Medicis; and everything is to be apprehended from people who know so well how to work out their ends by poison."

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“Is it come to this?” gasped the young King as he sank back upon his chair. “Am I to die mocked as I have lived? A sovereign without a will, a king without a throne, a monarch without a crown? The tool of needy adventurers and intriguing women? the victim of treachery and murder?” and the credulous boy leant his head upon his hands, and wept.

Before the chamber of Louis was closed that night upon his confidential friends it was decided that the weapon of the assassin and the axe of the executioner should rid him of Concini and his wife; and that his mother should be banished from the Court.

When the King awoke on the following morning De Luynes was already at his bedside, in order to counteract by his specious arguments and gloomy prognostics any less violent and criminal decision at which his royal master might have arrived during the solitude and silence of the night; and ably did the tempter perform his task. An increase of devotion and respect was skilfully blended with an apparent anxiety and alarm, which flattered the self-esteem and vanity of Louis, at the same time that they renewed all the terrors of the previous evening. His feeble remonstrances were overruled; his filial misgivings were stifled; and the favourite at length quitted his presence satisfied that he would not seek to retract his orders.

The advice of De Luynes was not needed when he implored his Majesty to observe the greatest circumspection until the important design was carried out, for, naturally timid and suspicious, Louis was already an adept in dissimulation; and the idea instantly occurred to him that should Concini or Leonora once have cause to apprehend that he meditated their destruction, his own life would pay the forfeit. De Luynes, however, strange as it may appear, was less discreet, and admitted so many persons to his confidence that rumours of their peril reached the ears of the Queen-mother and her favourites; but, unhappily for themselves, they despised both the King and his minion too much to attach any importance to the idea of danger from such a quarter. Satisfied that Louis still pursued his boyish sports, which as a measure of precaution he had resumed apparently with greater enthusiasm than ever, and that he could not leave the capital without the express permission of Marie de Medicis herself, they considered themselves safe; and thus lulled into a fatal security, took no measures to avert the impending catastrophe.[277]

The mind is a species of moral daguerreotype; surround it with images of order, virtue, and beauty, enlighten it by the sun of truth, and every object will trace itself unerringly upon the surface, remaining engraven there for ever; but, on the other hand, if the accessories be evil, it will in like manner become invested with the attributes amid which it exists, and the luminous spark will be darkened by the pernicious atoms that have been suffered to collect about it.

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Louis XIII of France was at this moment an illustration of the principle. His boyhood and his youth had alike been familiar only with intrigue, deception, jealousy, and falsehood. His habits were at once saturnine and selfish; his temper gloomy and distrustful, and his feelings cold and self-centred. His youth had already shadowed forth his manhood.

De Luynes was aware that he should experience little difficulty in finding the man he sought, when he assured his royal master that he knew one bold enough to attempt the life of Concini; his selection was indeed already made, and he had no misgiving of a refusal. The Baron de Vitry, captain of the bodyguard then on duty at the Louvre, and who was peculiarly obnoxious to the Italian favourite, returned his hate so openly that he refused to salute him as he entered and quitted the palace, and publicly declared that no command, come from whence it might, should ever compel him to do so.[278] De Luynes no sooner felt that a man of this determination might be useful than he sought his friendship; and now that the conspiracy had become ripe, he sent to invite him to an interview, during which he assured him that the King had great confidence not only in his affection for his person, but also in his inclination to serve him when the opportunity should present itself; that he believed him capable of great deeds, and that he would confide his life to him.

De Vitry was a soldier of fortune, dependent upon his sword, and the little sentiment that he possessed was at once awakened by so unexpected a communication. As a natural consequence, therefore, he protested his readiness to risk life and limb at the pleasure of his Majesty; and declared that, whatever might be the nature of the service required of him, he would execute it without hesitation or remonstrance.

On receiving this pledge, De Luynes, after exacting an oath of secrecy and obedience, beckoned to his companion to follow him; and throwing open the door of the royal closet, which was never closed against him, he introduced De Vitry without further preamble into the presence of the King.

“M. de Vitry,” said Louis, when the favourite had explained the errand of the captain of the royal guard, “I thank you for your zeal, and I have faith in its sincerity. The Marechal d’Ancre has conspired against my life. He must sleep to-morrow night in the Bastille.”

“He shall be there, Sire, should the fortress still possess a bolt to draw upon him, if it be your royal will that I accomplish his arrest.”

“M. de Vitry, you will have earned a marshal’s *baton*.”

“Sire!” exclaimed the soldier, dropping on his knee before the King, “I will obey you to the death.”

“I must never again be insulted by his presence,” said Louis, fixing his eyes, which flashed for an instant with a threatening light, full upon the upturned countenance of De

Vitry. “Rise, Sir,” he added as he turned suddenly away, “I have perfect confidence in your fidelity.”

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“But—should he resist, Sire?” asked the new conspirator, anxious not to exceed his orders.

“Kill him!” replied De Luynes in a hoarse whisper. “Do you not yet understand how you are to earn your *baton*?”

The two friends exchanged glances; and after a profound bow, De Vitry withdrew from the royal closet.

The indiscretion of De Luynes had been so great that a rumour of the perilous position of Concini did not fail to reach the ears of Richelieu. We have already stated that on his arrival at Court the Bishop of Lucon had been warmly patronized by the Italian favourite, who openly declared that he had found a man capable of giving a lesson *a tutti barboni*, [279] thereby alluding to the ancient ministers of Henri IV;[280] and that it was moreover through his agency that Marie de Medicis had appointed the wily prelate Secretary of State; but Richelieu was too subtle a diplomatist to allow a feeling of gratitude to interfere with his advancement; and he consequently no sooner ascertained beyond all possibility of mistake that his two patrons, the Queen-mother and her favourite, were about to succumb to the insidious attack of De Luynes, than, anxious to retain office, he hastened to despatch his brother-in-law, M. de Pontcourlay, to the latter, with instructions to offer his services, and to assure him that he had only consented to accept the charge which he then held in order that he might through this medium be enabled to devote himself to the interests of the King.

Anxious to strengthen his party, De Luynes received the advances of Richelieu with great courtesy, although he was far from desiring the co-operation of so dangerous an ally; and a day or two subsequently the treacherous prelate was introduced into the private closet of Louis; where, in addition to his previous professions, he went so far as to pledge himself to the young monarch that he would give him timely intimation of the most hidden designs of the Queen-mother and the Marechal d’Ancre.

It was at length decided that Concini should die on Sunday the 23rd of April; but as the day approached Louis became terrified at his own audacity, and it required all the influence of De Luynes and his brothers to prevent his retracting the fatal order which he had given. He was too young coldly to contemplate treachery and murder, and withal so helpless in the event of failure, that his conscience and his timidity alike urged him to revoke the sentence of the unsuspecting victim; nor was he ultimately induced to persevere, until reminded by his insidious advisers that too many persons were now aware of his intentions for them to remain secret, should their execution be long delayed.

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On this occasion, however, although every preparation had been made, Concini was saved by a mere accident. He chanced to be delayed as he was about to leave his house, and did not in consequence reach the Louvre until the King had quitted the palace in order to attend mass at the chapel of the Petit Bourbon. Instead, therefore, of proceeding in the first place to the apartments of his Majesty, as had been anticipated, the Marechal no sooner ascertained that Louis was already gone than he hastened to pay his respects to the Queen-mother, for which purpose he took a different direction. This unexpected impediment greatly embarrassed the conspirators, who, secure of success, had displayed an extraordinary want of caution. In addition to his brother M. du Hallier, Vitry had assembled a great number of his friends in the court of the palace, who, although they all wore their cloaks, had nevertheless allowed it to be perceived that they carried pistols in their belts, contrary to the edict forbidding the use of such weapons within the limits of the royal residence. In compliance with the commands of Louis himself, moreover, the bodyguard were under arms; and the unwonted movement in the immediate vicinity of his apartments was so evident, and withal so threatening in its aspect, that a rumour soon spread through the palace that some serious enterprise was in contemplation.

And meanwhile the young monarch was on his knees before the altar of his God, praying, or seeming to pray; asking that his trespasses might be forgiven as he forgave those who trespassed against him; although he anticipated that before his return to his desecrated palace-home the deed of blood would be accomplished. Suddenly, however, his devotions were interrupted by the entrance of De Vitry into the chapel, who, approaching De Luynes, whispered to him the tidings of his disappointment. In another second the lips of the favourite touched the ear of his royal master, to whom he hurriedly murmured—

“Sire, the man you wot of is now in the apartment of the Queen-mother. What do you decide? All is in readiness.”

“Touch him not in her presence as you value your lives,” was the agitated reply; “we shall find him at the Louvre on our return.”

A brief interval of suspense succeeded. The prelate who had officiated then uttered the final blessing; and as the carriage which contained the King and his favourite entered the palace by one gate, that of Concini quitted it by another. Inexperienced as he was, however, Louis at once perceived that he was no longer in a position to recede; and hasty orders were issued to Vitry and his friends to accomplish their fatal project on the following day, while the King at the same time secretly commanded that the light horse of his bodyguard, and the members of his household, should be in attendance at an early hour in the morning, as well as a coach and six, at the entrance of the grand gallery. The pretext for this arrangement was a hunting-party; but its actual intention was to ensure and protect the King’s flight, should his purpose prematurely transpire or

prove abortive. And meanwhile Marie de Medicis slept, wholly unsuspicious of the change which was about to be effected in her fortunes!

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There is something singularly appalling in all the circumstances which formed the prelude to this contemplated tragedy. Hitherto the Queen-mother had created dangers for herself—had started at shadows—and distrusted even those who sought to serve her; while her son, silent, saturnine, and inert, had patiently submitted to the indignities and insults which had been heaped upon him, as though he were either unconscious or reckless of their extent; and the Italian adventurer had braved his enemies, and appeared to defy fate itself. Now, however, when the blow was about to be struck, when the ball and the blade were alike ready to do their deadly office, all the principal personages in the bloody drama had suddenly assumed new characters. Marie slept; the boy-King had become the head of a conspiracy; and the Marechal d'Ancre, enriched and ennobled beyond the wildest dreams of his ambition, was preparing to quit the country of his adoption, and to seek rest and peace in his own land. Another month, perhaps another week, and he would have left France, probably for ever.

History presents few such anomalies; and it appears scarcely credible that so ill-organized a plot, hatched, moreover, under the very eyes of those who were to become its victims, and revealed to upwards of a score of persons, many of whom were incited to join it from merely venal motives, should ever have attained its accomplishment. The fiat had, however, gone forth; and the unfortunate Concini, whose tragical fate compels sympathy despite all his faults, entered the court of the Louvre at ten o'clock in the morning of the 24th of April 1617, there to meet his death.

An hour or two after dawn one of the gentlemen of the royal bedchamber announced that the King having been indisposed throughout the night, the great gates of the Louvre were to remain closed, and the public excluded, in order that his Majesty might not be disturbed. This order did not, however, affect the Marechal d'Ancre, as he was no sooner seen to approach, followed by a numerous retinue of gentlemen, and attended by several of his friends, than the bolts were withdrawn, and he was permitted to pass the barrier, which was instantly closed again, to the exclusion of the greater number of his suite. A man who had been stationed over the gate then waved his hat three times above his head, upon which De Vitry, who had until that moment been seated in one of the windows of the guard-room calmly conversing with the officers on duty, immediately rose, and drawing his cloak closely about him, hurried down the staircase, at the foot of which he was joined as if accidentally by Du Hallier and others of the conspirators, who, apparently engaged in conversation, slowly approached their intended victim. Among the persons who surrounded Concini there chanced to be several who were acquainted with De Vitry, and greatly to his annoyance he was compelled to allow the Marechal to pass on while he returned their greetings; in a few moments, however, he again found himself at liberty, when he discovered that amid the crowd he had lost sight of the Italian.

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“Where is he?” he inquired hurriedly of one of his confederates.

“Yonder,” was the reply; “he has stopped at the foot of the bridge to read a letter.”

De Vitry sprang towards his prey; and as Concini, absorbed in his occupation, still read on, he felt the grasp of a strong hand upon his arm, and on looking up he saw the Captain of the Guard standing at his side. Before he had time to inquire the meaning of this affront, De Vitry had already uttered the ominous words, “I arrest you in the King’s name.”

“Arrest me!” exclaimed the Marechal, with astonishment, as he clutched the hilt of his sword.

“Yes, you,” replied De Vitry haughtily; and while he spoke he made a signal, which was instantly responded to by the simultaneous report of three pistol-shots. As the sounds ceased Concini dropped upon his knees, and fell against the parapet of the bridge. Several weapons were then thrust into his body; and finally De Vitry, with wanton and revolting cruelty, gave him so violent a kick that he extended his body at full length upon the pavement, where it was immediately pilfered of every article of value; among other things, diamonds of great price and notes of hand to a large amount were abstracted from the pockets of his vest.[281]

A few of his followers endeavoured to interpose; but in a second or two all was over, and they were warned by the bystanders instantly to sheathe their swords, and to beware of opposing the orders of the King. They had scarcely had time to obey this bidding when Louis presented himself at the window of a closet adjoining the guard-room, to which, from its height, he was obliged to be lifted by M. d’Ornano;[282] there, by the advice of those about him, the young King appeared with a smile upon his face; and as the members of the cabal raised a cry of “Vive le Roi!” he shouted to his Captain of the Guard, “I thank you, Vitry; now I am really a King.” Then showing himself, sword in hand, successively at each window of the guard-room, he cried out to the soldiers who were posted beneath, “To arms, comrades, to arms!”

Meanwhile De Vitry, by the direction of De Luynes, proceeded to the hall occupied by the bodyguard of the Queen-mother, and demanded their weapons, which they refused to deliver up without an express order to that effect from their own officers; upon which the latter were commanded in the name of the King to withdraw their men, and to remain in the antechamber of their mistress. The royal guards then took possession of all the approaches to the Louvre; and horsemen were despatched with instructions to traverse the streets of the capital, and to apprise the citizens of the death of Concini. A dense crowd soon collected in the court of the Louvre, and cries of “Vive le Roi!” resounded on all sides.

A murder had been committed, and the ovation was one which would only have befitted a victory. Louis XIII had proclaimed himself a King, and the hand with which he grasped his sceptre was steeped in blood. Louis “the Just”—we append to his baptismal appellation that which was gravely conferred upon him on this occasion by both clergy and laity—stood an undisguised assassin and a moral matricide before the people who were about to be subjected to his rule.[283]

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Within an hour not only was the Queen-mother a prisoner in her own apartments, but the seals were restored to M. du Vair, and Barbin was in the Bastille *in the most rigorous confinement*.[284] These precautionary measures taken, Louis proceeded to the grand gallery leaning upon the arm of De Luynes; and on perceiving M. de Brienne, who with many other nobles had hastened to present his respects and congratulations (!) to the young monarch, he was so little able to control his delight that, without awaiting the salutation of the Count, he exclaimed triumphantly, “I am now a King, and no one can take precedence of me.” [285]

Shortly afterwards the King encountered the Bishop of Lucon-Richelieu, whose confident deportment betokened his conviction of a gracious reception, as he prepared to pay his court in his turn; but the compliments of the prelate were abruptly broken in upon by an imperative command to quit the palace, and the announcement of his discontinuance in office. No wonder that Richelieu murmured under his breath at this unlooked-for severity; for he had in truth that very morning striven to merit the royal smile—striven against conscience, however, and all the holiest and most sacred feelings of humanity. One of the friends of Concini, alarmed by the ominous proceedings at the Louvre, and instinctively persuaded that the life of the Italian was threatened, had hurriedly despatched a letter to Richelieu, in which he stated his reasons for the apprehensions he expressed; and urged the prelate, in memory of the many services for which he was indebted to the intended victim, to interpose his influence in his behalf, and to endeavour to avert the blow. The Bishop, who had not yet left his bed, glanced over the missive, thrust it beneath his pillow, desired the messenger to withdraw, and remained quietly in his chamber until he was apprised by the tumult without that all was over. Then, and not till then, he hastened to the Louvre; where we have already stated the nature of his reception.

As the throng of nobles increased, and crowded about the King so as considerably to inconvenience him, he was lifted upon a billiard-table, from which extraordinary eminence he received their compliments and congratulations upon the murder to which he had been accessory only an hour before; and which the First President of the Parliament of Paris (whose extreme haste to pay his court to his new master was such that, being unable immediately to procure a carriage, he proceeded to the Louvre on foot) designated *his happy deliverance*.[286] Nothing, in short, but plumed hats sweeping the marble floor, flexile forms bending to the earth, and lips wreathed in smiles, was to be seen in the kingly hall in which Henri IV had loved to discuss grave topics with his sturdy minister, the Duc de Sully, and which Marie de Medicis, in her day of pride and power, had enriched with the glorious productions of her immortal *protege*, Rubens the painter-prince, as she was wont to call him. None cared to remember at that moment that Henry the Great was in his grave, and that his royal widow had been sacrificed to the insatiable ambition and the quenchless hate of a low-born minion.

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But it is now time that we should return to the Queen-mother.

Alarmed by the report of firearms within the boundary of the palace, Marie de Medicis, who had not yet completed her toilet, desired Caterina Selvaggio to throw open one of the windows, and to demand the cause of so singular and unpardonable an infraction of the law. She was obeyed; and the Italian waiting-woman no sooner perceived De Vitry advancing below the apartments of her royal mistress than she inquired of him what had occurred.

“The Marechal d’Ancre has been shot,” was his abrupt reply.

“Shot!” echoed Caterina; “and by whom?”

“By myself,” said De Vitry composedly; “and by the command of the King.”

“Madame!” exclaimed the terrified attendant, as she rushed to the side of the Queen-mother, “M. le Marechal has been killed by order of his Majesty.”

Marie de Medicis started from her seat; her cheeks were blanched, her lips quivered, and she wrung her hands convulsively, as she gasped out, “I have reigned seven years. I must now think only of a crown in heaven.”

Her attendants, stupified with terror, rapidly gathered round her; and ere long she learnt that her guards had been disarmed, and replaced by those of the King. She listened vaguely to each successive report, and paced the room with rapid but uncertain steps. At length she exclaimed vehemently, “I do not regret that my son should have taken the life of Concini, if he believed it necessary to the safety of his kingdom; but his distrust of myself in concealing such a project from my knowledge is more than I can bear.”

When the first violence of her emotion had subsided she sank into a seat, and with clasped hands and drooping head appeared to be absorbed in deep and bitter thought; for at intervals the blood mounted to her brow and burned there for a time, after which she again became pale as ashes, and as motionless as a corpse. She was still in this attitude when one of her confidential servants imprudently approached her, and inquired how the melancholy event was to be communicated to the Marechale d’Ancre? “Perhaps,” he incautiously suggested, “your Majesty will condescend to acquaint her with it yourself.”

Marie de Medicis suddenly raised her hand, swept back her dishevelled hair from her face, and fixing her flashing eyes upon the officious gentleman, passionately replied, “I have other things to attend to at this moment. If no one can tell the Marechale that her husband has been killed, *let them sing it to her*. Let me never again hear the name of those people. I told them long ago that they would do right to return to Italy. Yes,” she continued, more particularly addressing the Dowager Duchess of Guise, the Princesse

de Conti, and the other ladies who were standing near her, “they have at last accomplished my ruin. I foresaw it; I warned them, but they would not be convinced. I told Concini that he had no time to lose, but with his habitual self-sufficiency he declared repeatedly that the King became more courteous to him every day. I was not deceived, however; I charged him not to trust to appearances, for that Louis never said all he thought; he disregarded my words, and he has now involved me in his own destruction.” [287]

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After this outburst of temper no one ventured to intrude even a remark upon the Queen-mother, who once more fell into a deep reverie, from which she, however, ultimately aroused herself to demand M. de Bressieux.[288] The equerry immediately approached.

“Go, sir,” she said, “to his Majesty, and request that he will grant me an interview.”

Her command was obeyed, and in a few moments De Bressieux found himself in the presence of the King, to whom he delivered his message.

“I am occupied at present,” was the cold reply; “and the visit of the Queen must be delayed until a better opportunity. Tell her, however, from me that I shall always honour her, and that I feel towards her all the sentiments of a good son; but God willed that I should be born a King, and I am resolved henceforth to govern for myself. It is desirable that the Queen should have no other guards but mine. Let her know that such is my will.”

Marie de Medicis listened incredulously when, on his return to her apartment, the equerry announced the failure of his mission. She would not comprehend that the stripling who had until that day shrunk before her frown could thus suddenly have acquired the necessary courage to brave her authority; and once more M. de Bressieux was instructed to urge her request upon the King. As he reached the royal anteroom her envoy encountered De Luynes, who dreaded nothing so much as a meeting between the mother and son, which could scarcely fail to prove fatal to himself; and he accordingly reported the return of the applicant in a manner which induced Louis to exclaim impatiently, “If he is here by desire of the Queen his mistress, tell him that there is nothing to apprehend, as I shall treat her well.” [289]

Still Marie de Medicis would not be discouraged. She felt that in order to avert the ruin which impended over her she must put every instant to its use; and accordingly M. de Bressieux was a third time despatched to solicit in still more urgent terms that she might be permitted to see his Majesty, were it only for a few moments. But, unfortunately for the agonized Queen, the triumphant favourite was as fully aware as herself of the value of time at so critical a juncture; and he had accordingly profited so well by the opportunities which he was enabled to command, that on this last occasion the Marquis was rudely ordered to abstain from all further intrusion upon his Majesty unless he wished to repent his pertinacity within the walls of a prison.

Convinced at last that there was no hope through her own agency of effecting her object, the Queen-mother next endeavoured to secure its accomplishment through the medium of her daughter-in-law, the two Princesses, and the Duc d’Anjou; but when she summoned them to her apartment, she was informed that each and all had been forbidden to hold any intercourse with herself until the pleasure of the King should be made known.

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The despair of the unhappy Marie was at its height; and as she paced her apartment, and approached a window looking upon the gardens, she discovered that a bridge which she had caused to be constructed for the purpose of reaching them without being compelled to traverse the galleries of the palace, was already in process of demolition; while she was also made aware that every other avenue leading to her apartments was strictly guarded, and thus she saw herself a prisoner in her own palace and entirely at the mercy of her son's advisers. Even yet she struggled against so cruel a conviction; and, eager to test its truth, sent to desire the presence of one of her confidential friends. Her messenger was not, however, permitted to accomplish his errand, but returned with the heart-sickening intelligence that thenceforward her Majesty would not be permitted to hold any communication, save with the members of her own immediate household, without the express sanction of the King.[290]

While the Queen-mother was still writhing under this new indignity, the unfortunate Leonora, who had been apprised of the murder of her husband, rushed into the apartment, and flinging herself at the feet of her royal foster-sister, implored her protection for herself and her young son; but sudden adversity had steeled the heart of Marie de Medicis, and sternly upbraiding her former favourite as the cause of her own overthrow, she refused to afford her any aid, and commanded her instantly to retire. The wretched woman obeyed without comment or remonstrance; and having regained her own apartment, which was immediately contiguous to that of the Queen, she hastened to conceal the Crown jewels which were in her keeping between the mattresses of her bed, with the exception of the rings, which were of great value, and which she habitually wore. This task accomplished, she threw herself upon her miserable couch to await in trembling and in tears the next act of the frightful tragedy in which she was called upon to play so conspicuous a part. Her suspense was not of long duration, as only a few minutes had elapsed when a tumult was heard without, amid which cries of "Vive le Roi!" "Vive M. de Luynes!" and "Death to the Italian!" were distinctly audible.

Leonora bounded from her recumbent position like a lioness at bay. Her parted lips were bloodless, her breath came quick and hard, and her heart heaved by its violent pulsations the rich velvet of the robe in which she was attired.

"My child!" she at length gasped out, as her attendants gathered about her—"save my child! He at least is guiltless."

The appeal was not made in vain. M. du Rouvray[291] took her little son, the Comte de la Pena, by the hand, raised him in his arms that his lips might once more touch those of his mother, and then, without uttering a syllable, led him from the apartment. In another instant the Norman noble was once more at her side. "The child is in sure hands," he said hurriedly; "and now, Madame, to provide for your own safety. Follow me—you have no time to spare."

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It was, however, already too late; for as Du Rouvray ceased speaking, De Vitry, still reeking with the blood of Concini, stood upon the threshold of the chamber, attended by a troop of halberdiers.

“You are my prisoner, Madame,” he exclaimed harshly: “prepare to accompany me to the Bastille.”

“I am ready, Sir,” replied the Marechale, with the composure of utter despair, “All is as it should be. The murderer of the husband is well fitted to be the gaoler of the wife.”

The rings belonging to the Crown were then removed from the fingers of the Marquise; and upon her refusal to reveal where the remainder of the jewels were secreted, her apartments were strictly searched; and not only were the royal ornaments carried off by De Vitry and his companions, but also every other article of value which fell into their hands. While this unmanly outrage was going on around her, the Marechale d’Ancre passively permitted her women to fasten her mantle, and to adjust her mask and hood; her thoughts were evidently elsewhere. Within a few yards of where she was then seated, and within hearing of the tumult occasioned by the reckless insolence of the men-at-arms by whom she was surrounded, her foster-sister, the playmate of her girlhood, the friend of her youth, and the protectress of her latter years—whose tears she had so often wiped away, whose sorrows she had so often soothed, and whose hopes and fears she had equally shared throughout so long a period—remained cold and unmoved by her misery. It was a bitter pang: and drops of anguish, wrung from the deepest recesses of a bursting heart, fell large and heavy upon the cheek of the new-made widow and the abandoned favourite, and moistened her clasped hands. None, however, heeded her agony; each of her attendants, whatever might have been the previous attachment of all to her person, was absorbed by her own terrors; while the strangers who had invaded her privacy were eager, under the specious pretext of performing their duty to the King, to avail themselves to the uttermost of so favourable an opportunity of furthering their individual interests.

At length all was over: every cabinet and chest had been ransacked to its deepest recesses; every article of use or ornament had been displaced in search of plunder; and the wretched Leonora was warned that it was time to depart. She rose silent and rigid; and as De Vitry preceded her from the room, his guards closed up behind her. A carriage was in waiting at the foot of the staircase by which she descended; the twilight was rapidly deepening into night, and her melancholy path was lighted at intervals by the torches of the numerous attendants who were hurrying through the corridors in the service of their several employers. The long dark shadows of the Louvre lay heavy on the dull pavement of the court, save where they were broken at intervals by the resinous flambeaux which glared and flickered against the walls

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of the building. All looked wild, and sad, and strange; and not one kindly accent fell upon the ear of the unhappy captive as she was hurried onward. A few harsh words were uttered in a tone of authority: she was lifted into the conveyance which had been prepared for her: the cavalcade slowly traversed the enclosure; and then as the iron gates of the palace were passed, the horses were lashed into a gallop; and in less than an hour the life-long companion of Marie de Medicis, husbandless, childless, and friendless, was an occupant of the gloomy prison-chamber which had recently been vacated by the Prince de Conde.

The noise created by the entrance of the new prisoner, the clashing of arms, the grating of the heavy portcullis, as it groaned and strained in its ascent, the dull fall of the drawbridge, the voices of men, and the rattling of wheels, awakened the Prince; who, with the natural weariness of a captive, had already retired to rest. Summoning an attendant he demanded to know the cause of the disturbance.

“It is M. de Vitry, Monseigneur,” was the reply; “who has just transferred the Marechale d’Ancre to the safe keeping of the governor.”

“Good!” said the Prince, as he once more settled himself to sleep; “I have now one enemy the less.” [292]

This rapid succession of misfortunes produced an extraordinary effect upon the sensitive organization of Leonora Galigai. As we have already hinted, she had for a considerable period suffered under mental hallucination; and the disease had latterly fastened so tenaciously upon her system that she had even shunned the presence of the Queen, believing that every eye which rested on her produced some baneful result; while her very attendants were dismissed from her presence when they had terminated their duties, and she thus remained hour after hour in solitude, brooding over the sickly fancies of her disordered brain. The sight of her husband’s murderer had, however, instantly and for ever restored the healthful tone of her mind. She did not weep, for she had already exhausted all her tears; she asked no mercy, for she was aware that, whatever might be her fate, she was alike prejudged and pre-condemned; but she resigned herself passively into the hands of her persecutors, with a Spartan firmness which she maintained to the last hour of her existence.

Who shall venture to follow her to her prison-cell, and to trace the tide of back-flowing thought which rolled like a receding wave from the present to the past? Now, indeed, she left little behind her to regret. From the husband to whom she had once been devoted with a love which blinded her to all his errors and to all his egotism, she had, during the last two years, been almost utterly estranged; her first-born and idolized daughter was in her grave; the royal friend and almost relative, to whom she had clung from her youth up, had refused even a tear to her sufferings, or a shelter to her peril; her

hoarded wealth was in the hands of her enemies; and of all that she once boasted there remained only her son. And what might be his fate?

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But memory held wider stores than these; and who can doubt that throughout that first long night of captivity they were probed to their very depths! What palace-pageants—-what closet-conspiracies—what struggles for pre-eminence and power—what heart-burnings at defeat, and exultation at success—must have swept hurricane-like across her awakened soul, to be forgotten in their turn as she recalled the childish sports of her early and hopeful years, under the sunny sky and among the orange-groves of her native Florence, where, with her royal playmate, she chased the hours along as though they were made only for the happy!

Did she sleep the weary and outworn sleep of the wretched while those sweet and soothing visions were still busy at her heart? And if so, breathes there one who would have roused her, whatever may have been her faults, from such a slumber?

FOOTNOTES:

[263] Richelieu, Unpublished MSS.

[264] Mezeray, vol. xi. p. 134.

[265] Bassompierre, *Mem*. p. 123.

[266] Bassompierre, *Mem*. p. 126. D'Estrees, *Mem*. p. 418.

[267] Richelieu, *Mem*. book viii. p. 411.

[268] Deageant was a man of considerable talent, but crafty and ambitious; his whole career was one of deceit and truckling. After numerous vicissitudes he was committed to the Bastille, where he beguiled the weariness of captivity by composing his Memoirs.

[269] Sismondi, vol. xxii. pp. 391, 392. Le Vassor, vol. i. p. 583. Richelieu, Unpublished MSS.

[270] Siri, *Mem. Rec*. vol. iv. pp. 29-31. *Mercure Francais*, 1617.

[271] Henri de Schomberg was the representative of an ancient family of Meissen established in France. He succeeded his father, Gaspard de Schomberg, in the government of La Marche, and in 1617 served in Piedmont. He was also one of the generals of Louis XIII, in 1621 and 1622, and in 1625 was created Marshal of France. He distinguished himself by defeating the English in the battle of the Isle de Rhe in 1627, and in forcing the defile of Susa in 1629. In the following year he took Pignerol. He was then despatched to Languedoc against the rebels, and in 1632 gained the battle of Castelnaudary, at which the Duc de Montmorency was made prisoner. For this victory he was invested with the government of Languedoc. He died in 1633.

[272] In his *History of the Parliament of Paris*, Voltaire, whose party-spirit was ever too ready to betray his judgment, and to obscure his genius, has not hesitated, in allusion to the arrogant boast of the Italian adventurer, to express himself thus:—“This Concini, at this very time, performed an action which merited a statue. Enriched by the liberality of Marie de Medicis, he raised at his own expense an army of between five and six thousand men against the rebels; he supported France as though she had been his native country.” It is impossible to dwell upon the career of Concini, and not be startled by so extraordinary an encomium.

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[273] *Mercure Francais,* 1617. Siri, *Mem. Rec*. vol. iv. pp. 27-35.

[274] Deageant, *Mem*. pp. 38-44.

[275] Le Vassor, vol. i. pp. 614-617. Deageant, *Mem*. pp. 43-56. Bassompierre, *Mem*. pp. 123, 124.

[276] Siri, *Mem. Rec*. vol. iv. pp. 26, 27. Relation de la mort du Marechal d'Ancre, at the end of the *Histoire des Favoris*.

[277] Deageant, *Mem*. pp. 56, 57.

[278] Richelieu, *Mem*. book viii. p. 416.

[279] Brienne, *Mem*. vol. i. p. 300 *note*.

[280] Deageant, *Mem*. p. 48. Le Vassor, vol. i. pp. 625, 626.

[281] Brienne, *Mem*. vol. i. p. 329.

[282] Alphonse d'Ornano, colonel-general of the Corsican troops in the French service, and himself a native of Corsica, was the son of San Pietro di Bastelica, a man of low birth, who attained to the rank of colonel of the Corsican infantry in France, and who married (in 1548) Vanina d'Ornano, the daughter and heiress of one of the most wealthy nobles in Corsica. The avowed enemy of the Genoese, by whom himself and his family were proscribed and banished from their native island, San Pietro strangled his wife with his own hands on discovering that she had attempted to escape from Marseilles in order to obtain a revocation of the edict issued by the Genoese in 1563. Alphonse, the son of San Pietro, to whom his very name had become odious, adopted that of his mother, under which he rendered important services to Henri IV during the wars of the League, and by whom he was first appointed lieutenant of the King in Dauphiny, and subsequently Marshal of France (1595). He died in 1620, at the age of seventy-two. He was a man of probity, but had inherited the violent character of his father.

[283] Le Vassor, vol. i. pp. 625-632. Brienne, *Mem*. vol. i. p. 327. Sismondi, vol. xxii. pp. 393-395. Mezeray, vol. xi. pp. 134-136. Matthieu, *Hist. des Derniers Troubles*, book iii. p. 603.

[284] Richelieu, Unpublished MSS. The words underlined in the text are in the Cardinal's autograph on the margin of the manuscript.

[285] Brienne, *Mem*. vol. i. p. 327.

[286] Le Vassor, vol. i. p. 637. Sismondi, vol. xxii. p. 396.

[287] *Lumieres pour l'Histoire de France*. Le Vassor, vol. i. pp. 634, 635.

[288] The Marquis de Bressieux was first equerry to Marie de Medicis.

[289] Siri, *Mem. Rec*. vol. iv. pp. 61, 62.

[290] Rambure, MS. *Mem*. vol. vii. p. 66. Mezeray, vol. xi. p. 138. Bassompierre, *Mem*. p. 126.

[291] Louis, Sieur du Rouvray, was a Norman noble, and a descendant of the celebrated Louis du Rouvray, who was one of the hundred and eighty devoted men who in 1421 shut themselves up in the Mont Saint-Michel, in order to defend it against the English.

[292] Richelieu, *Hist. de la Mere et du Fils*, vol. i. p. 219.

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CHAPTER X

1617

The Comte de la Pena—Anne of Austria and the orphan—Popular atrocities —The wages of crime—Submission of the Duc de Mayenne—Suspension of hostilities—The great nobles return to the capital—Louis refuses to be reconciled with his mother—-Insolence of De Vitry—Generosity of the Duc de Rohan—Marie de Medicis resolves to retire from the Court—Richelieu offers to share her exile—He becomes the secret emissary of De Luynes—Gratitude of the deluded Queen—A parting interview—Marie de Medicis proceeds to Blois—Destitution of the Marechale d'Ancre—Her despair—-Royal recreations—A fatal parallel—Madame de Conde requests permission to share the captivity of her husband—Trial of Madame d'Ancre—Her execution—Cupidity of De Luynes—Justice of the Grand Duke of Tuscany—Death of the President de Thou—-Marriage of De Luynes with Mademoiselle de Montbazon—De Luynes is created duke and peer—Death of M. de Villeroy—Recall of the old ministers—Policy of De Luynes—-His suspiciousness—His ambition—De Luynes lodges his brothers in the Louvre—The sign of "the Three Kings"—Louis resolves to re-establish the Roman Catholic religion in Bearn, and to annex that principality to the Crown of France—Meeting of the *Notables* at Rouen—The French march to the support of the Duke of Savoy.

On the return of De Vitry from the Bastille he found the hotel of the Marechal d'Ancre entirely pillaged, not even excepting the chamber of the little Comte de la Pena, whose escape having been prevented, he was also placed under arrest, and left until the following morning without clothes, food, or bed. On the morrow, however, the Comte de Fiesque,[293] touched by the extreme beauty and desolate condition of the child, and probably anxious to secure one friend to him in his necessity, became answerable for his safe keeping; and, wrapping him in the cloak of one of his lackeys, he carried him to the Louvre, and introduced him to the young Queen, informing her Majesty that no one at Court could dance a *branle* in such perfection. Anne of Austria was enchanted with the beauty of the boy, who had just attained his twelfth year, and whose intellect was as remarkable as his person; but giddy, thoughtless, and ever eager for amusement, the girl-Queen, overlooking the fatal circumstances in which he was placed, immediately commanded that he should exhibit his talent; and the poor fatherless child, whose whole career had been blighted only a few short hours before, was compelled to this unseemly display; after which he was regaled with sweetmeats, and returned to the custody of his gaolers, by whom he was shortly afterwards imprisoned in the castle of Nantes.[294]

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While this incredible scene was being enacted in an apartment of the palace, another of a far more terrible nature was to be witnessed in the streets of Paris; but before we describe this, we must explain all that had passed since the murder of the Marechal d'Ancre. As we have already stated, the body was pillaged where it lay; and then, as no further booty could be anticipated, it was carried into a small closet attached to the common guard-room, where it remained until nightfall, when a coarse sheet, for which fifty sous were given, was folded about it, and it was buried without any religious ceremony under the organ of the church of St. Germain l'Auxerrois near the Louvre. A priest who attempted to chant a funeral-hymn as it was laid in the earth was compelled to desist, in order that the place of burial might not be known; and the flags which had been raised were so carefully replaced that it was only by secret information that the spot could possibly have been discovered. This information was however given; and early in the morning the pavement was torn up, and a rope fastened round the neck of the corpse, which was then dragged through the streets by the infuriated mob; and the desecrated remains of the recently powerful favourite were hung by the feet to a gibbet, dismembered in the most brutal manner, and finally burned.[295]

At the close of this tragedy the Baron de Vitry received the wages of his brutality, and found himself before sunset a Marshal of France: while Du Hallier his brother became his successor as Captain of the Royal Guard; and Persan, the husband of his sister, who had also assisted in the massacre of Concini, was recompensed by the lieutenancy of the Bastille, and entrusted with the safe keeping of the Prince de Conde. On the same day it was publicly proclaimed in the streets of Paris that all the relatives and adherents of the Marechale d'Ancre were forthwith to leave the capital, and that the Sieur de Vitry had acted throughout the late execution by the express command of the King; the ministers who had recently held office under the Queen-mother were dismissed, and those whom she had displaced were restored to power; De Luynes was formally invested with the confiscated property of Concini; and a new Government was organized which had for its leading object the subversion of all previously concerted measures.[296]

The death of Concini no sooner became known in the provinces than the Duc de Mayenne resigned Soissons and all the other towns and fortresses throughout his government into the hands of the King. Both parties suspended hostilities; and the royal troops and those of the insurgents drank and feasted together in a general rejoicing. This example was followed by the army in Champagne; and on every side the rebel Princes declared their readiness to offer their submission to the King. The moment was a perilous one for De Luynes, but to Louis it afforded only triumph and exultation; and ere long the self-exiled nobles reappeared

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in the capital, where they were graciously received. On the 12th of May a declaration was registered by the Parliament in which their past offences were pardoned, and they were assured that thenceforward they would be held as good and loyal subjects to the Crown; while no single exception was made save in the person of the Prince de Conde, who was still retained a prisoner in the Bastille, and who appeared to be totally forgotten by his former adherents.

Rendered confident by this increase of strength, Louis remained inflexible to the tears and prayers of his mother, and readily suffered himself to be persuaded by those about him that she had, in conjunction with Concini, determined to take his life by poison in order to place the Duc d'Anjou upon the throne. In vain did the estimable Marquise de Guercheville throw herself at his feet, and offer the most solemn assurances of the innocence of her unhappy mistress: she was listened to with impatience, and dismissed with an abruptness which left no room for hope.[297] Meanwhile the captivity of Marie de Medicis became each day more irksome, through the unrestrained insolence of De Vitry, who caused her apartments to be searched by the officers under his command, her chests to be emptied, and even her bed to be displaced. The Queen devoured her mortification, and bore the insult in silence; but Madame de Guercheville could not restrain her indignation, and insisted upon learning the reason for such an outrage.

"I am ordered to ascertain, Madame," was the reply of the individual to whom she addressed herself, "if there be not a cask of powder in these apartments destined to destroy the King who sleeps above."

"Let them obey their orders," said Marie coldly; "their employers are capable of even more than this." [298]

As she learnt each successive arrival at Court, the unfortunate Princess trusted from day to day that her position would be ameliorated through the influence of some of her former friends; but until the Duc de Rohan reached the capital none of the great nobles appeared to remember her existence. Well might the Duke exclaim when he learnt how utterly friendless she had become in her adversity, "There are few generous and bold enough to cleave to the misfortunes of those whom they honoured in their prosperity." [299] He was himself, however, one of those noble exceptions; and although he excited the undisguised displeasure of De Luynes, he persisted in demanding the royal sanction to pay his respects to the Queen-mother; an example which was subsequently followed by Bassompierre, who, being unable to obtain the permission which he sought, availed himself of the medium of the Queen's tailor to offer his assurances of devotion and fidelity to her person, through the Duchesse de Guise and the Princesse de Conti.[300]

Weary of her utter isolation in a palace of which she had so lately been the undisputed mistress, and where she had received the homage of all by whom she was approached;

heart-sick and disgusted with the ingratitude of those whose fortunes had been her own work; and pining for that rest which she could never hope to find amid the persecutions to which she was daily subjected, Marie de Medicis at length resolved to retire to Moulins in the province of Bourbon, which was one of her dower-cities; and she accordingly sent to request the consent of the King to her departure.

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This was precisely what De Luynes had hoped; and his exultation was consequently great. Her exile by the command of her son might have excited a murmur, and he had therefore forborne from advising such a step; but when it could be publicly asserted that the Queen-mother was about to leave the Court for a few months by her own express desire, not even those who still remained faithful to her cause would be enabled to resent her absence. Her demand under such circumstances could not fail to prove successful; and it was conceded by Louis himself with the greater alacrity that her presence as a prisoner in the Louvre was irksome and painful to a youth whose conscience was not yet totally seared; and who professed, even while exposing her from hour to hour to the insults of his hirelings, to feel towards her “all the sentiments of a good son.”

The contemplated retirement of Marie de Medicis from the capital soon became publicly known, and at once decided the measures of Richelieu. He himself informs us that immediately after his cold reception by the King he despatched his valet to assure the Queen-mother of his sympathy in her sorrows, and of his anxiety to serve her;[301] nor could he fail to believe that such an assurance at such a moment had produced the desired effect, unconscious as the unfortunate Marie must necessarily have been of the circumstances which had induced him to feel for her reverses when all the other members of the Court were intent only upon winning the good graces of the monarch and his favourite. The time was now come, as he at once saw, to profit by so signal a proof of policy and forethought; and Richelieu was prepared to use it with the craft and cleverness which were destined to shape out his future fortunes. To his active and ambitious spirit a residence in the capital in the character of a deposed minister was impossible; while he equally deprecated the idea of burying himself in his diocese among the marshes of Lower Poitou. He resolved, therefore, to share the exile of the Queen-mother, and by this display of devotion to gain her confidence; while, at the same time, he communicated his intention to De Luynes in a manner which ensured its sanction. Few words were needed. Ere the conference was at an end the favourite was aware that no *safer* person could be admitted to the privacy of Marie de Medicis; while Richelieu had, on his side, been careful to avoid any acknowledgment of the real motive by which he was influenced.[302]

“You incur no risk by acceding to his request, Sire,” said De Luynes in a subsequent interview with the King; “M. de Lucon will understand how to calm the mind of the Queen-mother, and to advise her as we could wish. He may be the means of establishing a good understanding between you; and even should he fail to do this, it will be easy to compel him to reside in his diocese, or to banish him to a distant province, should your Majesty not be satisfied with his conduct.”

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“It must not be expected,” gravely observed Richelieu in his turn, while negotiating the arrangement, “that I should act as a Court spy when I am admitted to the confidence of the Queen; nor that I should report all which may take place; but to this I will pledge myself—that I will immediately retire to Lucon should she refuse to be guided by my advice, or adopt any resolutions inimical to the interests of the King.”

It would have been unreasonable to require more, and with a thrill of pleasure to which she had been long a stranger, the beguiled Queen learnt that the Bishop of Lucon-Richelieu had received the royal permission to devote himself to her fallen fortunes. This was, indeed, more than she had ever ventured to hope, for she was capable of appreciating to the utmost the talents of the individual who thus, as she fondly believed, sacrificed his own interests to her necessities; and she consequently lost no time in making him the medium of her communications with the King. Before her departure she was anxious to secure such terms as might tend, in some degree, to diminish the bitterness of her exile; and she accordingly availed herself of the services of her new adherent to convey her wishes to Louis. These were that she might be permitted to reside for some days at Blois, until the castle of Moulins, which had been uninhabited for a considerable time, could be prepared for her reception; that she might be informed of the number and identity of those who would be allowed to follow her in her retreat; that she might retain unlimited authority in the place of her residence; that she should be immediately informed whether it were the pleasure of the King that she should be left in possession of the whole of her revenues, or restricted in her income, in order that she might be prepared to regulate the expenses of her household accordingly; and, finally, that her son would accord her an interview before her departure.

In reply to these demands, Louis, after having conferred with his favourite, replied that, had circumstances permitted such a measure, he should not, during the last few days, have deprived himself of the happiness of her society, of which he had deeply felt the privation; but that since it was her wish to retire from the Court, she was at perfect liberty to reside at Moulins, or in any other city which she thought proper to select, and to include in her suite all the individuals whom she might be desirous of retaining about her person: that she was fully authorized to exert the most absolute authority, not only in the city, but throughout the province in which it was situated; and that so far from seeking to diminish her resources, although they greatly exceeded those of any previous Queen-Dowager of France,[303] he would willingly augment them should she deem it necessary, even to his own inconvenience; while as regarded her desire for a parting interview, he could not, on his side, suffer her to leave the capital without assuring her in his own person of his anxiety for her happiness.[304]

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Despite these professions, however, it was agreed on both sides that each party should previously arrange, and submit to the other, the substance of all that was to pass between them; and in consequence of this extraordinary arrangement Richelieu was desired by the Queen-mother to compose her address to the King, which having been submitted to the Council and approved, the reply of Louis was in like manner prepared by the ministers. A flight of stairs alone separated the mother and the son: the footsteps of the stripling monarch could be heard in the apartment of Marie as he passed from one room to the other; and were not the subject too sad for ridicule, it would be difficult to suppress a smile at these puerile and undignified formalities. No political negotiation was ever conducted, however, with more circumspection and mutual distrust; every detail of the interview was regulated beforehand; the two principal actors pledged themselves to say no more than was set down for them; and each committed to memory the harangue which was to be pronounced. The Princesses were to pay their parting respects to the Queen-mother so soon as she should have assumed her travelling-dress, but the nobles and officers of the Court were only to be permitted to salute her after she had taken leave of the King; a privilege from which, at her express request, De Vitry and his brother were, however, excluded.

On the 4th of May, the day fixed for her departure from the capital, Marie caused her ladies to dress her with extraordinary care, but at the same time with extreme simplicity; the slighted mother and the humbled Queen yet entertained a hope that the sight of her mourning attire and subdued deportment might produce their effect upon her son; and as, at the appointed hour, she left her chamber, and with words of gratitude and affection joined her attendants, there was a faint smile upon her lips, and a tremulous light in her dark eyes which betrayed her secret trust. The members of her household were assembled in one of those noble halls which were enriched by the grand creations of Jean Goujon,[305] and the magnificent tapestried hangings that were subsequently destroyed during the Revolution; they were grouped together near the door by which she entered, and, despite every effort which she made to overcome her emotion, Marie de Medicis could not suppress a sigh as she marked how small a space they occupied in that vast apartment which had so lately been thronged with princes and nobles, all professedly devoted to her cause. Suddenly, as she was exchanging a few words with the Marquise de Guercheville, the royal bodyguards appeared upon the threshold; and a page, advancing one step into the hall, announced—“The King!”

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At the same instant Louis XIII appeared, with the Duc d'Anjou on his right hand, leaning upon his favourite, preceded by Cadenet and Brantes, and followed by the Prince de Joinville and Bassompierre. As he entered the Queen-mother rose and curtsied profoundly, while the ladies and gentlemen of her household imitated her example, as they retired a pace or two behind her. Hitherto the Queen-mother had exhibited the most perfect composure, but she no sooner found herself once more in the presence of her son than she burst into a passionate flood of tears, which she attempted to conceal as she approached him by spreading her fan before her face. Louis moved forward in his turn, still clinging to De Luynes, but no trace of emotion was visible in his countenance, which was cold, and almost careless in its expression.

"Sir," said the unhappy Queen so soon as she had recovered her composure, "the tender care with which I watched over your youth, the efforts which I made for the preservation of your kingdom, the dangers which I braved, and which I might have avoided had I been induced to hazard the safety of your crown, will justify me before God, and prove that I have never had any other view than that of securing your welfare. I have repeatedly entreated that you would be pleased to take the reins of government into your own hands, and relieve me from so heavy a responsibility, but you considered my services to be necessary, and commanded their continuance. I have obeyed you, both because I was bound to respect your will, and because I felt that it would have been cowardly to abandon you when you were threatened with danger.[306] If I have failed to meet your wishes, or have contravened them, I can only entreat of you to pardon me; and to believe that had you explained your pleasure it should have been fulfilled. I rejoice that you are now about to govern your kingdom in your own person; and I pray God to grant you every prosperity. I thank you for the concessions which you have made; and I trust that you will henceforward act towards me like a good son and a good sovereign; while I, on my side, pledge myself that I shall ever continue to be your very humble and very obedient mother and servant."

"Madame," replied Louis in a cold and constrained tone, while the Queen was still struggling to suppress her tears, "I am convinced that you have always acted with the greatest zeal and affection. I am perfectly satisfied, and beg to thank you. You have expressed a wish to retire to Blois, and I have consented to that wish. Had you remained near me you should still have retained that share in the government which you have so long held; and you are still at liberty to do so, whenever you may desire it. Rest assured that I shall never fail to love, honour, and obey you as my mother upon every occasion; and that I shall continue throughout my life to be your very humble son."

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This notable oration had been delivered by the young King with all the monotonous intonations of a studied recital, and was terminated by a sigh of relief as he saw himself near the conclusion of the comedy. It had been arranged that so soon as he ceased speaking the Queen should stoop forward to embrace him; but in the excess of her agitation the outraged mother disregarded the instructions which she had previously received, and in an accent of heart-broken anguish she exclaimed: "I am about to leave you, Sir; do not deny my last prayer. Release my faithful Barbin, and suffer him to share my exile."

Louis, unprepared for this request, was uncertain how he should reply, and glanced uneasily from De Luynes to Richelieu.

"Do not refuse me this, Sir," urged Marie once more; "it is the only boon I ask—-perhaps," she added after a moment's pause, "the last I shall ever ask of you,"

Still Louis remained silent, with his cold stern eyes riveted upon her agitated countenance.

The unfortunate Queen could not mistake the meaning of that fixed and passionless look: her lip quivered for an instant, and then she bent her stately head and slightly touched the forehead of her son. Louis replied to the embrace by a profound and silent bow, and turned away hurriedly, as if weary of the scene in which he had played so undignified a part. As he moved aside, De Luynes approached the Queen-mother; and having bent his knee, and kissed the hem of her robe, he uttered a few words in so low a voice that they were inaudible to those who stood behind her. In reply she was overheard to say that she had solicited his Majesty to allow Barbin to follow her to Blois, and to continue his duties as superintendent of her household; and that she should consider herself greatly indebted to the kindness of the favourite if he would exert his influence to that effect. De Luynes was about once more to speak, when the voice of the King was heard loudly calling for him; and putting forward as an excuse the impossibility of compelling his Majesty to wait, he once more bowed to the ground, and made his retreat.

When she saw him disappear in the crowd Marie de Medicis gave free vent to the emotion which she had so long partially controlled; and as the other great nobles of the Court successively bent before her, she remained with her face buried in her handkerchief, sobbing audibly, and apparently unconscious of their homage. Ten minutes afterwards she descended the great staircase, and took her seat in the coach which was to convey her to Blois, accompanied by the Princesses and all the principal ladies of the Court, who were to attend her to the city gates. An immense crowd had collected on the quay of the Louvre to see her pass; but, contrary to the apprehensions of her friends, not a word of insult or reproach was uttered. There was something so appalling even to the most reckless in her sudden fall; something so sad in this gorgeous procession which seemed rather to mock than to honour her misfortunes; so

sharp and bitter a lesson in the spectacle of a Princess lately all-powerful thus driven from her palace-home to immure herself in a fortress, and this too in broad daylight, under the eyes of her subjects, and in the streets of the capital, that she excited the involuntary sympathy even of her enemies.

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This sympathy was, however, unfelt by her son; who no sooner became aware that she was about to enter her carriage than he hurried to the balcony of the Queen's apartment, whence he attentively watched the departure of the *cortege*, manifesting the most lively interest in the preliminary arrangements; and as the last equipage disappeared, he returned to the room saying gaily: "Now then, gentlemen, we will start for Vincennes."

Some minutes afterwards, the palace resounded with the voices of ushers, pages, and men-at-arms; a dozen carriages rolled into the Court; the King paid a farewell visit to his dogs, his birds, and his wife; and then, desiring that the Queen and her ladies should follow him on the morrow, he left orders that the Louvre should be minutely searched throughout, in order to ascertain beyond all possibility of doubt that no gunpowder had been concealed within the edifice for the purpose of effecting his destruction; after which he sprang into his coach, with an undisguised cheerfulness which left no doubt that his affected respect and attachment for his mother were by no means incompatible with a hearty sense of relief at his emancipation from her control.[307]

The Marechale d'Ancre had been committed to the Bastille on the 29th of April, lightly dressed, despoiled of all her ornaments, and without the most trifling pecuniary resource; so thoroughly destitute, indeed, of the common necessaries of life that she was indebted to Madame Persan, the wife of the lieutenant of the fortress, for a couple of changes of body-linen. Even the Prince de Conde, who was professedly her enemy, was deeply moved when he ascertained her pitiable condition. "It was not to Leonora that political crimes should be attributed," he said, with an indignation which did honour to his heart; "but to the insatiable ambition of her husband."

Her only attendants were an Italian maid and her apothecary, whose constant care was required from the precarious state both of her bodily and mental health; but she nevertheless maintained a self-command and composure which astonished all by whom she was approached. She uttered no complaint; exhibited no resentment; and in reply to the condolences of her gaolers, simply replied: "I must have patience; my enemies are powerful, the Queen-mother is absent, and no doubt I shall be compelled to leave France. I will retire with my son to Florence; we have still the means of subsistence, and I must endeavour to forget the past."

Some days subsequently her women succeeded in conveying to her a few changes of apparel and two hundred crowns in money; but when, on the 11th of May, she was transferred to the prison of the Conciergerie, these effects were in their turn stolen from her, and she once more found herself totally penniless. In addition to this misfortune she was apprised that she could no longer be permitted to retain her attendants, as the regulations of a felon prison did not admit of such an indulgence; and on hearing this, she said with a cry of agony: "I am lost!"

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The Court remained a fortnight at Vincennes, after which the King returned to the Louvre. There, instead of endeavouring, according to the sage advice of his ministers, to render the absence of his mother unfelt by the adoption of measures calculated to prove that he was equal to the responsibility which he had been so eager to assume, he soon returned to the puerile amusements he had latterly affected to despise; and spent the day in colouring prints, beating a drum, blowing a bugle, or making *jets d'eau* with quills.[308] On one occasion when Bassompierre was complimenting him upon the facility with which he acquired everything that he desired to learn, he replied with great complacency: "I must begin again with my hunting-horn, which I blow very well; and I will practise for a whole day."

"Be careful, Sire," was the reply of the courtier; "I would not advise your Majesty to indulge too much in such a diversion, as it is injurious to the chest; and I have even heard it asserted that the late King Charles IX burst a blood-vessel on the lungs from his abuse of that instrument; an accident which terminated his life."

"You are wrong, Sir," said Louis with one of his cold saturnine looks; "it was his quarrel with Catherine de Medicis which caused his death. If he had not followed the bad advice of the Marechal de Retz, and resided with her subsequently at Monceaux, he would not have died so young."

Bassompierre was silenced; and thenceforward resolved never again to mention the name of the Queen-mother in the presence of his royal master.[309]

Meanwhile it was universally anticipated that as all the other Princes had been restored to favour, M. de Conde would be liberated; but such a measure by no means accorded with the views of De Luynes, who, aware of the influence of the noble prisoner, felt himself too weak to cope openly with the first Prince of the Blood; and, consequently, the only benefit which Conde derived from the death of the Marechal d'Ancre was a mitigation of the extreme vigilance with which he had hitherto been guarded. The conduct of the Princess his wife was at this juncture above all praise. She had, from the first period of his imprisonment, been persevering in her efforts to accomplish his liberation; and having failed to do this, had solicited the permission of the King to share his captivity; but, by the advice of his favourite, Louis had hitherto resolutely refused to accede to such an arrangement; although he might justly have been struck by the heroism of a sacrifice which in her case was heightened tenfold by the fact that, despite the jealousy which he had constantly exhibited, M. de Conde had made no secret of his utter indifference to his wife, and would never forgive her relations with Henri IV. After the departure of the Queen-mother, however, De Luynes judged it expedient to accept the offer of the Princess; and she was accordingly informed that she might proceed to the Louvre, where the King

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would grant her an audience. She had no sooner received this permission than she hastened, accompanied by the Duchesse d'Angouleme her sister, to throw herself at the feet of the young sovereign; where, bathed in tears, she sobbed out her acknowledgment of the indulgence extended to her, and implored him to extend his clemency to the Prince her husband. "But should you unhappily consider it expedient to detain him in the Bastille, Sire," she concluded with deep emotion, "I entreat of your Majesty to allow me to share his prison."

"Madame," replied Louis, "it was already my intention so to do. I am sincerely attached to M. de Conde, and to all his house; and every attention shall be paid to him until my government is perfectly established. I greatly regret that at the present moment I am prevented by circumstances from restoring him to liberty; but assure him from me that I will cause his liberation at the earliest opportunity."

Again and again did the delighted Princess utter her thanks; and after having been graciously dismissed by the King, she lost not a moment in proceeding, armed with the royal authority, to the Bastille, where, having constituted herself a prisoner, she hastened to impart her hopeful tidings to the Prince.

Despite the assurances which she had received, however, from the lips of Louis himself, four more weary months were passed by M. and Madame de Conde in the fortress, in that daily and hourly fever of expectation which is more agonizing than utter despair; and even at the close of that dreary time, instead of the liberty for which the husband and wife alike panted, an order arrived at the Bastille for the transfer of the deluded and unhappy couple to the Castle of Vincennes, which was communicated to them as a signal mark of the royal clemency; and in that citadel they were detained until the autumn of 1619.[310] The result of Madame de Conde's admirable self-abnegation was, however, a source of triumph for her woman-heart, as the Prince was not proof against so unequivocal a demonstration of attachment, and thenceforward evinced towards her a tenderness which amply repaid her sacrifice.

Shortly after the transfer of Madame d'Ancre to the Conciergerie she was put upon her trial; but as her mental hallucination, together with her estrangement from her husband, rendered it probable that sufficient proof of political delinquency could not be adduced against her to justify an extreme sentence, and as her escape from the scaffold must necessarily tend to render his tenure of the confiscated property of Concini (of which he had already obtained the reversion) difficult, if not impossible, De Luynes did not hesitate to tamper with her judges, and to induce them, alike by bribes and threats, to accomplish her death. For this purpose a second charge was coupled with that of *lese-majeste*, which was brought conjointly against herself and her murdered husband. She was accused of sorcery as well as of conspiring against

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the state; of casting alike nativities to compass the destruction of the King, and cannon for the service of the disaffected Princes; together with a host of other crimes, none of which could be proved against her. So palpable, indeed, was the motive of her persecutors, that it excited the popular indignation; and the masses, who had so recently execrated the name of the unfortunate woman, began, ere the conclusion of her trial, to look upon her only as the victim of De Luynes. "You will see," said some of the citizens, as they learnt with what dignified calmness and logical precision she refuted the several charges brought against her, "that here the case of the Duc de Biron will be reversed—like her he was the victim of policy, but he died like a woman, while she will meet her fate like a man."

And they were correct in their conclusion. Whatever might have been her faults while she continued the favourite of fortune, Leonora Galigai was grand in her adversity; and one of her judges was so much overpowered by his conviction of her innocence, that on recollecting the pledge which he had given to De Luynes to decide upon her guilt, he fainted and was carried from the Court. When accused of treason against the state, the prisoner replied by reminding her accusers of her total estrangement from her husband during the last two years, throughout which period he had been all-powerful with the Queen-mother, and her own consequent loss of influence; and when questioned as to the nature of the sorcery by which she had so long governed her royal mistress, she answered that it was simply the magic exercised by a strong mind over a weak one. [311] To the other charges she responded with equal composure and conclusiveness; and many among them were of so puerile a character that, despite the fearful position in which she was placed, she could not suppress a smile of mingled pity and amusement.

She was foredoomed, however; and on the 8th of July the sentence was pronounced. It was in truth a frightful one! Both the husband and the wife were declared guilty of *lese-majeste* divine and human; and she herself was condemned to lose her head, and to be afterwards burned; their house was to be levelled with the ground; their property, not only in France, but also all that they possessed at Rome and Florence, was to be confiscated to the Crown; and their son deprived of his rank, and rendered incapable of holding any office in the kingdom.[312]

When this sentence was declared the wretched woman, who had never anticipated a more severe fate than exile, exclaimed in a piteous voice: "Oime poveretta!" but shortly recovering herself, she resumed the same calm courage which she had previously evinced.

Perhaps the most merciful portion of her sentence was that which condemned her to suffer on the same day; and for this she was undoubtedly indebted to the impatience of De Luynes, who did not feel himself secure of the succession until she should have ceased to breathe. The revelations which she had made of the extent of her wealth

during the preliminary examinations in the prison had sealed her fate, as they so far exceeded all his anticipations that they silenced every throb of compunction and negatived every other feeling; and they thus at least spared her a night of agony during which she might have brooded over the miserable prospects of her idolized son.

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It is painful to reflect upon the position which the Marquise had filled, and to see her thus shaken and withered both in mind and body; abandoned by the protectress to whom she had clung so long and so confidingly; widowed by violence; separated from her only surviving child; and compelled to drain her cup of bitterness to the very dregs. Not a pang was, however, voluntarily spared to her. She might, in consideration of her rank as the wife of a Marshal of France, and out of respect for the Queen-mother, of whom she had not only been the foster-sister but also the familiar friend, have been conveyed to the place of execution in a covered carriage, and thus have been in some degree screened from the public gaze; but no such delicacy was observed. The criminal's cart, with its ghastly faggot for a seat, was her ordained conveyance; but her step did not falter as she stepped into the vehicle which had been previously tenanted by the vilest and most degraded culprits. Never had there been seen so dense a crowd in the Place de Greve; and as she glanced hurriedly around, unaware of the popular reaction of feeling, she cowered for an instant panic-struck, and murmured helplessly: "Oh, what a multitude to gaze upon a miserable woman!"

Not a word, not a gesture of vengeance or of hate, escaped, however, from the populace. Her deportment had been so dignified, her courage so great, her piety so perfect, that those who were once her bitterest enemies looked on her through their tears. Her charities had been unremitting and extensive; and those whom she had aided in their necessities had thronged, through a morbid and mingled feeling of gratitude and awe, to see her die.[313]

Her head fell—her body was burned—and her ashes were scattered to the wind.

De Luynes had, as we have stated, constituted himself her heir; but it was not without difficulty that he succeeded in appropriating the principal portion of the coveted wealth of his victims. Du Vair, with a firmness for which the favourite was not prepared, refused for a considerable time to countersign the letters of consignment which had been granted by the King to that effect; declaring that as the property of Concini and his family had been confiscated to the Crown, it could not be otherwise disposed of. This difficulty was, however, surmounted after the fashion of the period, and the signature of the scrupulous minister was purchased by the rich bishopric of Lisieux; after which De Luynes himself negatived the destruction of the magnificent hotel of the Marechal, to which he transferred his own establishment, and then proceeded to enforce his claims upon the funded property in Rome. This pretension was, however, opposed by the Pope, who declared that all monies confiscated within the Roman states must necessarily revert to himself; and Louis XIII, after having in vain endeavoured to induce the Sovereign-Pontiff to rescind this declaration, found himself ultimately compelled to make a donation of the five hundred thousand francs claimed by his favourite to the cathedral of St. Peter's.

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The Grand Duke of Tuscany, in his turn, refused to recognize the right of De Luynes to the funds which had been entrusted to him by the Marechal d'Ancre, but from a higher and a holier motive; as the young Comte de la Pena was no sooner set at liberty, with an injunction immediately to leave France, than he received him with all the sympathy due to his unmerited misfortunes, and put him in possession of this remnant of his inheritance. Thenceforward the son of Concini remained in Italy until the year 1631, when he fell a victim to the plague.[314]

Before we quit the Court to follow exclusively the fortunes of Marie de Medicis, it is necessary that we should record three circumstances of social interest which occurred during the year 1617. The first in order is the death of the President de Thou, one of the most able and upright ministers, and, perhaps, the most conscientious historian that France had ever known. He expired on the 7th of May. The next, in point of chronology, is the marriage of De Luynes, who—having obtained the most absolute power, not only over the King personally, but also over all state affairs—being anxious to strengthen his position yet more by a great alliance, after having for a time contemplated an union with the daughter of the Duc de Vendome, ultimately entered into a negotiation for the hand of Mademoiselle de Montbazon.[315] This negotiation proved successful; and through her means he became closely connected with the most ancient and powerful families in the kingdom. The marriage took place on the 13th of September, and the bride was admitted to the honours of the *tabouret*;[316] while in order to render him more acceptable to the haughty houses into which the favour of his sovereign had thus afforded him ingress, the exulting favourite was elevated to a duchy-peerage, and took his seat in the Parliament. The last circumstance to which allusion has been made is the death of M. de Villeroy, who terminated his life at the ripe age of seventy-four years on the 30th of December. As we have already stated, he was possessed of little education, had no taste for either literature or art, but was singularly upright and shrewd in the management of public business; while he was, moreover, so thoroughly disinterested, that in the midst of all the cupidity which at that period disgraced the Court of France, after having been fifty-one years in office, he died with the mere addition of two thousand livres *per annum* to his patrimonial income.[317]

In order to enlist popular opinion in his favour, De Luynes had, as we have seen, induced the King to recall the old ministers to power; and the people, still remembering the wisdom which they had displayed during their administration, welcomed with joy the reappearance of Sillery, Villeroy, and Jeannin in the Council; but although the favourite ostensibly recognized their privileges, he was far from intending to permit their interference with his own interests;[318]

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and so thoroughly did he enslave the mind of the young King, that while Louis, like a schoolboy who had played truant, and who was resolved to enjoy his new-found liberty to the uttermost, was constantly changing his place of abode, and visiting in turn St. Germain, Fontainebleau, Villers-Cotterets, and Monceaux, without one care save the mere amusement of the hour, De Luynes was multiplying his precautions to prevent a reconciliation between the mother and the son; an event which must, as he believed, whenever it should occur, prove the ruin of his own fortunes. For this purpose, so soon as he saw a cloud upon the brow of the royal stripling, he hastened to devise for him some new and exciting pursuit, which might tend to deaden his remorse for the past, and to render him more conscious of the value of that moral emancipation which he had purchased at so fearful a price; but ere long even this subtle policy failed to dissipate the apprehensions of the favourite. Like all persons who occupy a false position of which they fully appreciate the uncertain tenure, he became suspicious of all around him; and would not allow any individual, whatever might be his rank, to approach the King without his knowledge, nor to attempt to converse with him in private. Thus, therefore, while Louis fondly believed that he had indeed become a monarch in fact as well as name, he was in reality more enslaved than ever.

Enriched by the spoils of Concini and his wife, De Luynes next caused himself to be appointed lieutenant of the King in Normandy; and this was no sooner done than he entered into a negotiation for one of the principal governments in the kingdom. He appeared suddenly to have forgotten that one of the most cogent reasons which he had so lately given for the necessity of sacrificing the Marechal d'Ancre and his wife was the enormous wealth of which they had possessed themselves at the expense of the state. His ambition as well as his avarice became insatiable; and not contented with pushing his own fortunes to a height never before attained by a mere petty noble, he procured great advantages for his brothers, and lodged them in his apartments in the Louvre. But while Louis remained unconscious or careless of the new bondage into which he had thus fallen, the courtiers and the people were alike less blind and less forbearing. With that light-heartedness which has enabled the French in all ages to find cause for mirth even in their misfortunes, some wag, less scrupulous than inventive, on one occasion, under cover of the darkness, affixed above the door leading to the rooms occupied by the brothers a painting which represented the adoration of the Magi, beneath which was printed in bold letters, "At the sign of the Three Kings"; a practical jest which afforded great amusement to the Court.[319]

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At this period Louis XIII, still a mere youth, and utterly inexperienced in those great questions of public policy which determine the prosperity or the peril of a nation, resolved upon a measure which Henri IV himself had not ventured to undertake. The Roman Catholic religion had been abolished in Bearn by Jeanne d'Albret, his grandmother, and the property of that church seized in virtue of an Act passed at the assembly of the States; and now, on the demand of his clergy, he determined to issue a decree ordaining the restitution of all the ecclesiastical property, and the re-establishment of the Roman faith. This was, of course, resisted by the Protestants, as well as the annexation of the principality of Bearn to the Crown of France; but the advisers of the young King considered the opportunity to be a favourable one for effecting both measures; and they easily persuaded him to persevere in his purpose. The edict was consequently published; and its effects were destined to be painfully felt by the reformed party throughout the remainder of his reign.

The people, on their side, had not forgotten the promises which they had received of a reform in the government, and De Luynes still continued to give them hopes of their accomplishment; but as no measures to that effect were taken, they, at this period, demanded a new assembly of the States-General. They were, however, induced to modify this demand; and a meeting of the *Notables*[320] was finally conceded, which was to take place at Rouen on the 24th of November, in the presence of the sovereign. This assembly was accordingly held, but thanks to the influence of De Luynes produced none of the results which had been anticipated.[321]

A few days before the departure of Marie de Medicis from Paris the King of Spain declared war against the Duke of Savoy, who immediately appealed to France for aid, which was in the first instance refused; but, on the representations of the Marechal de Lesdiguieres, it was finally accorded, and troops were raised which proceeded to Piedmont under the command of that general.[322]

Such was the general aspect of the Court and kingdom of France at the close of the year 1617; of which we have considered it necessary to sketch the principal features, in order to remind the reader of the exact position of the country at the period of the Queen-mother's exile. Henceforward we shall principally confine ourselves to following her in her banishment.

FOOTNOTES:

[293] The Comte de Fiesque was the equerry of Anne of Austria.

[294] Le Vassor, vol. i. pp. 643, 644. Pontchartrain, *Mem*. p. 223.

[295] Sismondi, vol. xxii. pp. 396, 397. Richelieu, *Mem*. book viii. pp. 420-428. Rohan, *Mem*. p. 144. Le Vassor, vol. i. pp. 647-649. Mezeray, vol. xi. p. 139. Richelieu, *Hist, de la Mere et du Fils* vol. i. pp. 200-202.

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[296] Richelieu, *Hist. de la Mere et du Fils*, vol. i. pp. 202-204.

[297] Siri, *Mem. Rec*. vol. iv. p. 63.

[298] Le Vassor, vol. i. p. 643.

[299] Rohan, *Mem*. book i.

[300] Bassompierre, *Mem*. p. 126. Le Vassor, vol. i. p. 653.

[301] Richelieu, *Hist, de la Mere et du Fils*, vol. i. p. 200.

[302] Deageant, *Mem*. pp. 65, 66.

[303] The dower of the widowed Queens of France was twelve hundred thousand annual livres.

[304] Mezeray, vol. xi. pp. 140, 141. Le Vassor, vol. i. pp. 655, 656. Sismondi, vol. xxii. p. 403.

[305] Jean Goujon, a celebrated architect and sculptor, who was surnamed the Correggio of sculpture from the grace and beauty of his productions. The finest of his statues was the Hunting Diana, which long formed one of the treasures of Malmaison. The Fountain of the Innocents, the bas-reliefs of the Hotel de Carnavalet, and those of the Louvre were alike the monuments of his genius. He was occupied in completing the latter when he was killed by the ball of a carbine during the massacre of St. Bartholomew.

[306] Richelieu, Unpublished MSS.

[307] Sismondi, vol. xxii. pp. 398-404. Bassompierre, *Mem*. pp. 126, 127. Le Vassor, vol. i. pp. 653-659. Mezeray, vol. xi. pp. 137-142. Brienne, *Mem*. vol. i. pp. 327-329.

[308] Rohan, *Mem*. book i. Le Vassor, vol. i. p. 659.

[309] Bassompierre, *Mem*. p. 128.

[310] Le Vassor, vol. i. p. 666. *Relation de la mort du Marechal d'Ancre*. Mezeray, vol. xi. pp. 142, 143. Dreux du Radier, vol. vi. pp. 123, 124. Brienne, *Mem*. vol. i. p. 333.

[311] Sismondi, vol. xxii. pp. 407, 408. Le Vassor, vol. i. pp. 667-672. Richelieu, *Hist, de la Mere et du Fils*, vol. i. pp. 223-230.

[312] This incapacity to hold office under the French Government was, moreover, on this occasion, declared thenceforward to extend to all individuals who were natives of other

countries; and an attempt was made thirty years subsequently to render it applicable to Cardinal Mazarin.

[313] Bernard, book iii.

[314] Sismondi, vol. xxii. pp. 410, 411. Le Vassor, vol. i. pp. 674, 675.

[315] Marie de Rohan-Montbazon was the daughter of Hercule de Rohan, Due de Montbazon, and of his first wife, Madeleine de Lenoncourt. After the death of the Connetable de Luynes she married Claude de Lorraine, Due de Chevreuse, and became celebrated towards the close of the reign of Louis XIII, and during the minority of his successor, for her wit, her beauty, her profligacy, and her political intrigues. She died at a very advanced age in the year 1679.

[316] Brienne, *Mm*. vol. i. p. 333.

[317] Le Vassor, vol. i. p. 675. Sismondi, vol. xxii. pp. 430, 431.

[318] D'Hericourt, vol. i. p. 529.

[319] Le Vassor, vol. i. p. 678.

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[320] By the *Notables* was understood a body of the most eminent individuals among the nobles, the clergy, and the law-officers; and as these were chosen by the ministers themselves, such an assembly could excite no apprehension among the Court party.

[321] Mezeray, vol. xi. pp. 144, 145.

[322] Sismondi, vol. xxii. p. 331.

END OF VOL. II