

Life and Death of John of Barneveld, Advocate of Holland : with a view of the primary causes and movements of the Thirty Years' War, 1610a eBook

Life and Death of John of Barneveld, Advocate of Holland : with a view of the primary causes and movements of the Thirty Years' War, 1610a by John Lothrop Motley

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THE LIFE AND DEATH of JOHN OF BARNEVELD, ADVOCATE OF HOLLAND

WITH A VIEW OF THE PRIMARY CAUSES AND MOVEMENTS OF THE THIRTY
YEARS' WAR

By John Lothrop Motley, D.C.L., LL.D.

MOTLEY'S HISTORY OF THE NETHERLANDS, Project Gutenberg Edition, Volume 87

The Life and Death of John of Barneveld, v2 1609-10

CHAPTER II.

Passion of Henry IV. for Margaret de Montmorency—Her Marriage with the Prince of Conde—Their Departure for the Country—Their Flight to the Netherlands—Rage of the King—Intrigues of Spain—Reception of the Prince and Princess of Conde by the Archdukes at Brussels— Splendid Entertainments by Spinola—Attempts of the King to bring the Fugitives back—Mission of De Coevres to Brussels—Difficult Position of the Republic—Vast but secret Preparations for War.



“If the Prince of Conde comes back.” What had the Prince of Conde, his comings and his goings, to do with this vast enterprise?

It is time to point to the golden thread of most fantastic passion which runs throughout this dark and eventful history.

One evening in the beginning of the year which had just come to its close there was to be a splendid fancy ball at the Louvre in the course of which several young ladies of highest rank were to perform a dance in mythological costume.

The King, on ill terms with the Queen, who harassed him with scenes of affected jealousy, while engaged in permanent plots with her paramour and master, the Italian Concini, against his policy and his life; on still worse terms with his latest mistress in chief, the Marquise de Verneuil, who hated him and revenged herself for enduring his caresses by making him the butt of her venomous wit, had taken the festivities of a court in dudgeon where he possessed hosts of enemies and flatterers but scarcely a single friend.

He refused to attend any of the rehearsals of the ballet, but one day a group of Diana and her nymphs passed him in the great gallery of the palace. One of the nymphs as she went by turned and aimed her gilded javelin at his heart. Henry looked and saw the most beautiful young creature, so he thought, that mortal eye had ever gazed upon, and according to his wont fell instantly over head and ears in love. He said afterwards that he felt himself pierced to the heart and was ready to faint away.



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The lady was just fifteen years of age. The King was turned of fifty-five. The disparity of age seemed to make the royal passion ridiculous. To Henry the situation seemed poetical and pathetic. After this first interview he never missed a single rehearsal. In the intervals he called perpetually for the services of the court poet Malherbe, who certainly contrived to perpetrate in his behalf some of the most detestable verses that even he had ever composed.

The nymph was Marguerite de Montmorency, daughter of the Constable of France, and destined one day to become the mother of the great Conde, hero of Rocroy. There can be no doubt that she was exquisitely beautiful. Fair-haired, with a complexion of dazzling purity, large expressive eyes, delicate but commanding features, she had a singular fascination of look and gesture, and a winning, almost childlike, simplicity of manner. Without feminine artifice or commonplace coquetry, she seemed to bewitch and subdue at a glance men of all ranks, ages, and pursuits; kings and cardinals, great generals, ambassadors and statesmen, as well as humbler mortals whether Spanish, Italian, French, or Flemish. The Constable, an ignorant man who, as the King averred, could neither write nor read, understood as well as more learned sages the manners and humours of the court. He had destined his daughter for the young and brilliant Bassompierre, the most dazzling of all the cavaliers of the day. The two were betrothed.

But the love-stricken Henry, then confined to his bed with the gout, sent for the chosen husband of the beautiful Margaret.

“Bassompierre, my friend,” said the aged king, as the youthful lover knelt before him at the bedside, “I have become not in love, but mad, out of my senses, furious for Mademoiselle de Montmorency. If she should love you, I should hate you. If she should love me, you would hate me. ’Tis better that this should not be the cause of breaking up our good intelligence, for I love you with affection and inclination. I am resolved to marry her to my nephew the Prince of Conde, and to keep her near my family. She will be the consolation and support of my old age into which I am now about to enter. I shall give my nephew, who loves the chase a thousand times better than he does ladies, 100,000 livres a year, and I wish no other favour from her than her affection without making further pretensions.”

It was eight o’clock of a black winter’s morning, and the tears as he spoke ran down the cheeks of the hero of Ivry and bedewed the face of the kneeling Bassompierre.

The courtly lover sighed and—obeyed. He renounced the hand of the beautiful Margaret, and came daily to play at dice with the King at his bedside with one or two other companions.

And every day the Duchess of Angouleme, sister of the Constable, brought her fair niece to visit and converse with the royal invalid. But for the dark and tragic clouds which were gradually closing around that eventful and heroic existence there would be



something almost comic in the spectacle of the sufferer making the palace and all France ring with the howlings of his grotesque passion for a child of fifteen as he lay helpless and crippled with the gout.



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One day as the Duchess of Angouleme led her niece away from their morning visit to the King, Margaret as she passed by Bassompierre shrugged her shoulders with a scornful glance. Stung by this expression of contempt, the lover who had renounced her sprang from the dice table, buried his face in his hat, pretending that his nose was bleeding, and rushed frantically from the palace.

Two days long he spent in solitude, unable to eat, drink, or sleep, abandoned to despair and bewailing his wretched fate, and it was long before he could recover sufficient equanimity to face his lost Margaret and resume his place at the King's dicing table. When he made his appearance, he was according to his own account so pale, changed, and emaciated that his friends could not recognise him.

The marriage with Conde, first prince of the blood, took place early in the spring. The bride received magnificent presents, and the husband a pension of 100,000 livres a year. The attentions of the King became soon outrageous and the reigning scandal of the hour. Henry, discarding the grey jacket and simple costume on which he was wont to pride himself, paraded himself about in perfumed ruffs and glittering doublet, an ancient fop, very little heroic, and much ridiculed. The Princess made merry with the antics of her royal adorer, while her vanity at least, if not her affection, was really touched, and there was one great round of court festivities in her honour, at which the King and herself were ever the central figures. But Conde was not at all amused. Not liking the part assigned to him in the comedy thus skilfully arranged by his cousin king, never much enamoured of his bride, while highly appreciating the 100,000 livres of pension, he remonstrated violently with his wife, bitterly reproached the King, and made himself generally offensive. "The Prince is here," wrote Henry to Sully, "and is playing the very devil. You would be in a rage and be ashamed of the things he says of me. But at last I am losing patience, and am resolved to give him a bit of my mind." He wrote in the same terms to Montmorency. The Constable, whose conduct throughout the affair was odious and pitiable, promised to do his best to induce the Prince, instead of playing the devil, to listen to reason, as he and the Duchess of Angouleme understood reason.

Henry had even the ineffable folly to appeal to the Queen to use her influence with the refractory Conde. Mary de' Medici replied that there were already thirty go-betweens at work, and she had no idea of being the thirty-first—[Henrard, 30].

Conde, surrounded by a conspiracy against his honour and happiness, suddenly carried off his wife to the country, much to the amazement and rage of Henry.

In the autumn he entertained a hunting party at a seat of his, the Abbey of Verneuille, on the borders of Picardy. De Traigny, governor of Amiens, invited the Prince, Princess, and the Dowager-Princess to a banquet at his chateau not far from the Abbey. On their road thither they passed a group of huntsmen and grooms in the royal livery. Among

them was an aged lackey with a plaster over one eye, holding a couple of hounds in leash. The Princess recognized at a glance under that ridiculous disguise the King.

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“What a madman!” she murmured as she passed him, “I will never forgive you;” but as she confessed many years afterwards, this act of gallantly did not displease her.’

In truth, even in mythological fable, Trove has scarcely ever reduced demi-god or hero to more fantastic plight than was this travesty of the great Henry. After dinner Madame de Traigny led her fair guest about the castle to show her the various points of view. At one window she paused, saying that it commanded a particularly fine prospect.

The Princess looked from it across a courtyard, and saw at an opposite window an old gentleman holding his left hand tightly upon his heart to show that it was wounded, and blowing kisses to her with the other: “My God! it is the King himself,” she cried to her hostess. The princess with this exclamation rushed from the window, feeling or affecting much indignation, ordered horses to her carriage instantly, and overwhelmed Madame de Traigny with reproaches. The King himself, hastening to the scene, was received with passionate invectives, and in vain attempted to assuage the Princess’s wrath and induce her to remain.

They left the chateau at once, both Prince and Princess.

One night, not many weeks afterwards, the Due de Sully, in the Arsenal at Paris, had just got into bed at past eleven o’clock when he received a visit from Captain de Praslin, who walked straight into his bed-chamber, informing him that the King instantly required his presence.

Sully remonstrated. He was obliged to rise at three the next morning, he said, enumerating pressing and most important work which Henry required to be completed with all possible haste. “The King said you would be very angry,” replied Praslin; “but there is no help for it. Come you must, for the man you know of has gone out of the country, as you said he would, and has carried away the lady on the crupper behind him.”

“Ho, ho,” said the Duke, “I am wanted for that affair, am I?” And the two proceeded straightway to the Louvre, and were ushered, of all apartments in the world, into the Queen’s bedchamber. Mary de’ Medici had given birth only four days before to an infant, Henrietta Maria, future queen of Charles I. of England. The room was crowded with ministers and courtiers; Villeroy, the Chancellor, Bassompierre, and others, being stuck against the wall at small intervals like statues, dumb, motionless, scarcely daring to breathe. The King, with his hands behind him and his grey beard sunk on his breast, was pacing up and down the room in a paroxysm of rage and despair.

“Well,” said he, turning to Sully as he entered, “our man has gone off and carried everything with him. What do you say to that?”



The Duke beyond the boding “I told you so” phrase of consolation which he was entitled to use, having repeatedly warned his sovereign that precisely this catastrophe was impending, declined that night to offer advice. He insisted on sleeping on it. The manner in which the proceedings of the King at this juncture would be regarded by the Archdukes Albert and Isabella—for there could be no doubt that Conde had escaped to their territory—and by the King of Spain, in complicity with whom the step had unquestionably been taken—was of gravest political importance.

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Henry had heard the intelligence but an hour before. He was at cards in his cabinet with Bassompierre and others when d'Elbene entered and made a private communication to him. "Bassompierre, my friend," whispered the King immediately in that courtier's ear, "I am lost. This man has carried his wife off into a wood. I don't know if it is to kill her or to take her out of France. Take care of my money and keep up the game."

Bassompierre followed the king shortly afterwards and brought him his money. He said that he had never seen a man so desperate, so transported.

The matter was indeed one of deepest and universal import. The reader has seen by the preceding narrative how absurd is the legend often believed in even to our own days that war was made by France upon the Archdukes and upon Spain to recover the Princess of Conde from captivity in Brussels.

From contemporary sources both printed and unpublished; from most confidential conversations and revelations, we have seen how broad, deliberate, and deeply considered were the warlike and political combinations in the King's ever restless brain. But although the abduction of the new Helen by her own Menelaus was not the cause of the impending, Iliad, there is no doubt whatever that the incident had much to do with the crisis, was the turning point in a great tragedy, and that but for the vehement passion of the King for this youthful princess events might have developed themselves on a far different scale from that which they were destined to assume. For this reason a court intrigue, which history under other conditions might justly disdain, assumes vast proportions and is taken quite away from the scandalous chronicle which rarely busies itself with grave affairs of state.

"The flight of Conde," wrote Aerssens, "is the catastrophe to the comedy which has been long enacting. 'Tis to be hoped that the sequel may not prove tragical."

"The Prince," for simply by that title he was usually called to distinguish him from all other princes in France, was next of blood. Had Henry no sons, he would have succeeded him on the throne. It was a favourite scheme of the Spanish party to invalidate Henry's divorce from Margaret of Valois, and thus to cast doubts on the legitimacy of the Dauphin and the other children of Mary de' Medici.

The Prince in the hands of the Spanish government might prove a docile and most dangerous instrument to the internal repose of France not only after Henry's death but in his life-time. Conde's character was frivolous, unstable, excitable, weak, easy to be played upon by designing politicians, and he had now the deepest cause for anger and for indulging in ambitious dreams.

He had been wont during this unhappy first year of his marriage to loudly accuse Henry of tyranny, and was now likely by public declaration to assign that as the motive of his

flight. Henry had protested in reply that he had never been guilty of tyranny but once in his life, and that was when he allowed this youth to take the name and title of Conde?



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For the Princess-Dowager his mother had lain for years in prison, under the terrible accusation of having murdered her husband, in complicity with her paramour, a Gascon page, named Belcastel. The present prince had been born several months after his reputed father's death. Henry, out of good nature, or perhaps for less creditable reasons, had come to the rescue of the accused princess, and had caused the process to be stopped, further enquiry to be quashed, and the son to be recognized as legitimate Prince of Conde. The Dowager had subsequently done her best to further the King's suit to her son's wife, for which the Prince bitterly reproached her to her face, heaping on her epithets which she well deserved.

Henry at once began to threaten a revival of the criminal suit, with a view of bastardizing him again, although the Dowager had acted on all occasions with great docility in Henry's interests.

The flight of the Prince and Princess was thus not only an incident of great importance to the internal politics of France, but had a direct and important bearing on the impending hostilities. Its intimate connection with the affairs of the Netherland commonwealth was obvious. It was probable that the fugitives would make their way towards the Archdukes' territory, and that afterwards their first point of destination would be Breda, of which Philip William of Orange, eldest brother of Prince Maurice, was the titular proprietor. Since the truce recently concluded the brothers, divided so entirely by politics and religion, could meet on fraternal and friendly terms, and Breda, although a city of the Commonwealth, received its feudal lord. The Princess of Orange was the sister of Conde. The morning after the flight the King, before daybreak, sent for the Dutch ambassador. He directed him to despatch a courier forthwith to Barneveld, notifying him that the Prince had left the kingdom without the permission or knowledge of his sovereign, and stating the King's belief that he had fled to the territory of the Archdukes. If he should come to Breda or to any other place within the jurisdiction of the States, they were requested to make sure of his person at once, and not to permit him to retire until further instructions should be received from the King. De Praslin, captain of the body-guards and lieutenant of Champagne, it was further mentioned, was to be sent immediately on secret mission concerning this affair to the States and to the Archdukes.

The King suspected Conde of crime, so the Advocate was to be informed. He believed him to be implicated in the conspiracy of Poitou; the six who had been taken prisoners having confessed that they had thrice conferred with a prince at Paris, and that the motive of the plot was to free themselves and France from the tyranny of Henry IV. The King insisted peremptorily, despite of any objections from Aerssens, that the thing must be done and his instructions carried out to the letter. So much he expected of the States, and they should care no more for ulterior consequences, he said, than he had done for the wrath of Spain when he frankly undertook their cause. Conde was important only because his relative, and he declared that if the Prince should escape,

having once entered the territory of the Republic, he should lay the blame on its government.



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“If you proceed languidly in the affair,” wrote Aerssens to Barneveld, “our affairs will suffer for ever.”

Nobody at court believed in the Poitou conspiracy, or that Conde had any knowledge of it. The reason of his flight was a mystery to none, but as it was immediately followed by an intrigue with Spain, it seemed ingenious to Henry to make use of a transparent pretext to conceal the ugliness of the whole affair.

He hoped that the Prince would be arrested at Breda and sent back by the States. Villeroy said that if it was not done, they would be guilty of black ingratitude. It would be an awkward undertaking, however, and the States devoutly prayed that they might not be put to the test. The crafty Aerssens suggested to Barneveld that if Conde was not within their territory it would be well to assure the King that, had he been there, he would have been delivered up at once. “By this means,” said the Ambassador, “you will give no cause of offence to the Prince, and will at the same time satisfy the King. It is important that he should think that you depend immediately upon him. If you see that after his arrest they take severe measures against him, you will have a thousand ways of parrying the blame which posterity might throw upon you. History teaches you plenty of them.”

He added that neither Sully nor anyone else thought much of the Poitou conspiracy. Those implicated asserted that they had intended to raise troops there to assist the King in the Cleve expedition. Some people said that Henry had invented this plot against his throne and life. The Ambassador, in a spirit of prophecy, quoted the saying of Domitian: “Misera conditio imperantium quibus de conspiratione non creditor nisi occisis.”

Meantime the fugitives continued their journey. The Prince was accompanied by one of his dependants, a rude officer, de Rochefort, who carried the Princess on a pillion behind him. She had with her a lady-in-waiting named du Certeau and a lady’s maid named Philippote. She had no clothes but those on her back, not even a change of linen. Thus the young and delicate lady made the wintry journey through the forests. They crossed the frontier at Landrecies, then in the Spanish Netherlands, intending to traverse the Archduke’s territory in order to reach Breda, where Conde meant to leave his wife in charge of his sister, the Princess of Orange, and then to proceed to Brussels.

He wrote from the little inn at Landrecies to notify the Archduke of his project. He was subsequently informed that Albert would not prevent his passing through his territories, but should object to his making a fixed residence within them. The Prince also wrote subsequently to the King of Spain and to the King of France.

To Henry he expressed his great regret at being obliged to leave the kingdom in order to save his honour and his life, but that he had no intention of being anything else than his very humble and faithful cousin, subject, and servant. He would do nothing against his service, he said, unless forced thereto, and he begged the King not to take it amiss if he

refused to receive letters from any one whomsoever at court, saving only such letters as his Majesty himself might honour him by writing.

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The result of this communication to the King was of course to enrage that monarch to the utmost, and his first impulse on finding that the Prince was out of his reach was to march to Brussels at once and take possession of him and the Princess by main force. More moderate counsels prevailed for the moment however, and negotiations were attempted.

Praslin did not contrive to intercept the fugitives, but the States-General, under the advice of Barneveld, absolutely forbade their coming to Breda or entering any part of their jurisdiction. The result of Conde's application to the King of Spain was an ultimate offer of assistance and asylum, through a special emissary, one Anover; for the politicians of Madrid were astute enough to see what a card the Prince might prove in their hands.

Henry instructed his ambassador in Spain to use strong and threatening language in regard to the harbouring a rebel and a conspirator against the throne of France; while on the other hand he expressed his satisfaction with the States for having prohibited the Prince from entering their territory. He would have preferred, he said, if they had allowed him entrance and forbidden his departure, but on the whole he was content. It was thought in Paris that the Netherland government had acted with much adroitness in thus abstaining both from a violation of the law of nations and from giving offence to the King.

A valet of Conde was taken with some papers of the Prince about him, which proved a determination on his part never to return to France during the lifetime of Henry. They made no statement of the cause of his flight, except to intimate that it might be left to the judgment of every one, as it was unfortunately but too well known to all.

Refused entrance into the Dutch territory, the Prince was obliged to renounce his project in regard to Breda, and brought his wife to Brussels. He gave Bentivoglio, the Papal nuncio, two letters to forward to Italy, one to the Pope, the other to his nephew, Cardinal Borghese. Encouraged by the advices which he had received from Spain, he justified his flight from France both by the danger to his honour and to his life, recommending both to the protection of his Holiness and his Eminence. Bentivoglio sent the letters, but while admitting the invincible reasons for his departure growing out of the King's pursuit of the Princess, he refused all credence to the pretended violence against Conde himself. Conde informed de Praslin that he would not consent to return to France. Subsequently he imposed as conditions of return that the King should assign to him certain cities and strongholds in Guienne, of which province he was governor, far from Paris and very near the Spanish frontier; a measure dictated by Spain and which inflamed Henry's wrath almost to madness. The King insisted on his instant return, placing himself and of course the Princess entirely in his hands and receiving a

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full pardon for this effort to save his honour. The Prince and Princess of Orange came from Breda to Brussels to visit their brother and his wife. Here they established them in the Palace of Nassau, once the residence in his brilliant youth of William the Silent; a magnificent mansion, surrounded by park and garden, built on the brow of the almost precipitous hill, beneath which is spread out so picturesquely the antique and beautiful capital of Brabant.

The Archdukes received them with stately courtesy at their own palace. On their first ceremonious visit to the sovereigns of the land, the formal Archduke, coldest and chastest of mankind, scarcely lifted his eyes to gaze on the wondrous beauty of the Princess, yet assured her after he had led her through a portrait gallery of fair women that formerly these had been accounted beauties, but that henceforth it was impossible to speak of any beauty but her own.

The great Spinola fell in love with her at once, sent for the illustrious Rubens from Antwerp to paint her portrait, and offered Mademoiselle de Chateau Vert 10,000 crowns in gold if she would do her best to further his suit with her mistress. The Genoese banker-soldier made love, war, and finance on a grand scale. He gave a magnificent banquet and ball in her honour on Twelfth Night, and the festival was the wonder of the town. Nothing like it had been seen in Brussels for years. At six in the evening Spinola in splendid costume, accompanied by Don Luis Velasco, Count Ottavio Visconti, Count Bucquoy, with other nobles of lesser note, drove to the Nassau Palace to bring the Prince and Princess and their suite to the Marquis's mansion. Here a guard of honour of thirty musketeers was standing before the door, and they were conducted from their coaches by Spinola preceded by twenty-four torch-bearers up the grand staircase to a hall, where they were received by the Princesses of Mansfeld, Velasco, and other distinguished dames. Thence they were led through several apartments rich with tapestry and blazing with crystal and silver plate to a splendid saloon where was a silken canopy, under which the Princess of Conde and the Princess of Orange seated themselves, the Nuncius Bentivoglio to his delight being placed next the beautiful Margaret. After reposing for a little while they were led to the ball-room, brilliantly lighted with innumerable torches of perfumed wax and hung with tapestry of gold and silk, representing in fourteen embroidered designs the chief military exploits of Spinola. Here the banquet, a cold collation, was already spread on a table decked and lighted with regal splendour. As soon as the guests were seated, an admirable concert of instrumental music began. Spinola walked up and down providing for the comforts of his company, the Duke of Aumale stood behind the two princesses to entertain them with conversation, Don Luis Velasco served the Princess of Conde with plates, handed her



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the dishes, the wine, the napkins, while Bucquoy and Visconti in like manner waited upon the Princess of Orange; other nobles attending to the other ladies. Forty-eight pages in white, yellow, and red scarves brought and removed the dishes. The dinner, of courses innumerable, lasted two hours and a half, and the ladies, being thus fortified for the more serious business of the evening, were led to the tiring-rooms while the hall was made ready for dancing. The ball was opened by the Princess of Conde and Spinola, and lasted until two in the morning. As the apartment grew warm, two of the pages went about with long staves and broke all the windows until not a single pane of glass remained. The festival was estimated by the thrifty chronicler of Antwerp to have cost from 3000 to 4000 crowns. It was, he says, "an earthly paradise of which soon not a vapour remained." He added that he gave a detailed account of it "not because he took pleasure in such voluptuous pomp and extravagance, but that one might thus learn the vanity of the world." These courtesies and assiduities on the part of the great "shopkeeper," as the Constable called him, had so much effect, if not on the Princess, at least on Conde himself, that he threatened to throw his wife out of window if she refused to caress Spinola. These and similar accusations were made by the father and aunt when attempting to bring about a divorce of the Princess from her husband. The Nuncius Bentivoglio, too, fell in love with her, devoting himself to her service, and his facile and eloquent pen to chronicling her story. Even poor little Philip of Spain in the depths of the Escorial heard of her charms, and tried to imagine himself in love with her by proxy.

Thenceforth there was a succession of brilliant festivals in honour of the Princess. The Spanish party was radiant with triumph, the French maddened with rage. Henry in Paris was chafing like a lion at bay. A petty sovereign whom he could crush at one vigorous bound was protecting the lady for whose love he was dying. He had secured Conde's exclusion from Holland, but here were the fugitives splendidly established in Brussels; the Princess surrounded by most formidable suitors, the Prince encouraged in his rebellious and dangerous schemes by the power which the King most hated on earth, and whose eternal downfall he had long since sworn to accomplish.

For the weak and frivolous Conde began to prattle publicly of his deep projects of revenge. Aided by Spanish money and Spanish troops he would show one day who was the real heir to the throne of France—the illegitimately born Dauphin or himself.

The King sent for the first president of Parliament, Harlay, and consulted with him as to the proper means of reviving the suppressed process against the Dowager and of publicly degrading Conde from his position of first prince of the blood which he had been permitted to usurp. He likewise procured a decree accusing him of high-treason and ordering him to be punished at his Majesty's pleasure, to be prepared by the Parliament of Paris; going down to the court himself in his impatience and seating

himself in everyday costume on the bench of judges to see that it was immediately proclaimed.

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Instead of at once attacking the Archdukes in force as he intended in the first ebullition of his wrath, he resolved to send de Boutteville-Montmorency, a relative of the Constable, on special and urgent mission to Brussels. He was to propose that Conde and his wife should return with the Prince and Princess of Orange to Breda, the King pledging himself that for three or four months nothing should be undertaken against him. Here was a sudden change of determination fit to surprise the States-General, but the King's resolution veered and whirled about hourly in the tempests of his wrath and love.

That excellent old couple, the Constable and the Duchess of Angouleme, did their best to assist their sovereign in his fierce attempts to get their daughter and niece into his power.

The Constable procured a piteous letter to be written to Archduke Albert, signed "Montmorency his mark," imploring him not to "suffer that his daughter, since the Prince refused to return to France, should leave Brussels to be a wanderer about the world following a young prince who had no fixed purpose in his mind."

Archduke Albert, through his ambassador in Paris, Peter Pecquius, suggested the possibility of a reconciliation between Henry and his kinsman, and offered himself as intermediary. He enquired whether the King would find it agreeable that he should ask for pardon in name of the Prince. Henry replied that he was willing that the Archduke should accord to Conde secure residence for the time within his dominions on three inexorable conditions:—firstly, that the Prince should ask for pardon without any stipulations, the King refusing to listen to any treaty or to assign him towns or places of security as had been vaguely suggested, and holding it utterly unreasonable that a man suing for pardon should, instead of deserved punishment, talk of terms and acquisitions; secondly, that, if Conde should reject the proposition, Albert should immediately turn him out of his country, showing himself justly irritated at finding his advice disregarded; thirdly, that, sending away the Prince, the Archduke should forthwith restore the Princess to her father the Constable and her aunt Angouleme, who had already made their petitions to Albert and Isabella for that end, to which the King now added his own most particular prayers.

If the Archduke should refuse consent to these three conditions, Henry begged that he would abstain from any farther attempt to effect a reconciliation and not suffer Conde to remain any longer within his territories.

Pecquius replied that he thought his master might agree to the two first propositions while demurring to the third, as it would probably not seem honourable to him to separate man and wife, and as it was doubtful whether the Princess would return of her own accord.



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The King, in reporting the substance of this conversation to Aerssens, intimated his conviction that they were only wishing in Brussels to gain time; that they were waiting for letters from Spain, which they were expecting ever since the return of Conde's secretary from Milan, whither he had been sent to confer with the Governor, Count Fuentes. He said farther that he doubted whether the Princess would go to Breda, which he should now like, but which Conde would not now permit. This he imputed in part to the Princess of Orange, who had written a letter full of invectives against himself to the Dowager—Princess of Conde which she had at once sent to him. Henry expressed at the same time his great satisfaction with the States-General and with Barneveld in this affair, repeating his assurances that they were the truest and best friends he had.

The news of Conde's ceremonious visit to Leopold in Julich could not fail to exasperate the King almost as much as the pompous manner in which he was subsequently received at Brussels; Spinola and the Spanish Ambassador going forth to meet him. At the same moment the secretary of Vaucelles, Henry's ambassador in Madrid, arrived in Paris, confirming the King's suspicions that Conde's flight had been concerted with Don Inigo de Cardenas, and was part of a general plot of Spain against the peace of the kingdom. The Duc d'Epéron, one of the most dangerous plotters at the court, and deep in the intimacy of the Queen and of all the secret adherents of the Spanish policy, had been sojourning a long time at Metz, under pretence of attending to his health, had sent his children to Spain, as hostages according to Henry's belief, had made himself master of the citadel, and was turning a deaf ear to all the commands of the King.

The supporters of Conde in France were openly changing their note and proclaiming by the Prince's command that he had left the kingdom in order to preserve his quality of first prince of the blood, and that he meant to make good his right of primogeniture against the Dauphin and all competitors.

Such bold language and such open reliance on the support of Spain in disputing the primogeniture of the Dauphin were fast driving the most pacifically inclined in France into enthusiasm for the war.

The States, too, saw their opportunity more vividly every day. "What could we desire more," wrote Aerssens to Barneveld, "than open war between France and Spain? Posterity will for ever blame us if we reject this great occasion."

Peter Pecquius, smoothest and sliest of diplomatists, did his best to make things comfortable, for there could be little doubt that his masters most sincerely deprecated war. On their heads would come the first blows, to their provinces would return the great desolation out of which they had hardly emerged. Still the Archduke, while racking his brains for the means of accommodation, refused, to his honour,

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to wink at any violation of the law of nations, gave a secret promise, in which the Infanta joined, that the Princess should not be allowed to leave Brussels without her husband's permission, and resolutely declined separating the pair except with the full consent of both. In order to protect himself from the King's threats, he suggested sending Conde to some neutral place for six or eight months, to Prague, to Breda, or anywhere else; but Henry knew that Conde would never allow this unless he had the means by Spanish gold of bribing the garrison there, and so of holding the place in pretended neutrality, but in reality at the devotion of the King of Spain.

Meantime Henry had despatched the Marquis de Coeuvres, brother of the beautiful Gabrielle, Duchess de Beaufort, and one of the most audacious and unscrupulous of courtiers, on a special mission to Brussels. De Coeuvres saw Conde before presenting his credentials to the Archduke, and found him quite impracticable. Acting under the advice of the Prince of Orange, he expressed his willingness to retire to some neutral city of Germany or Italy, drawing meanwhile from Henry a pension of 40,000 crowns a year. But de Coeuvres firmly replied that the King would make no terms with his vassal nor allow Conde to prescribe conditions to him. To leave him in Germany or Italy, he said, was to leave him in the dependence of Spain. The King would not have this constant apprehension of her intrigues while, living, nor leave such matter in dying for turbulence in his kingdom. If it appeared that the Spaniards wished to make use of the Prince for such purposes, he would be beforehand with them, and show them how much more injury he could inflict on Spain than they on France. Obviously committed to Spain, Conde replied to the entreaties of the emissary that if the King would give him half his kingdom he would not accept the offer nor return to France; at least before the 8th of February, by which date he expected advices from Spain. He had given his word, he said, to lend his ear to no overtures before that time. He made use of many threats, and swore that he would throw himself entirely into the arms of the Spanish king if Henry would not accord him the terms which he had proposed.

To do this was an impossibility. To grant him places of security would, as the King said, be to plant a standard for all the malcontents of France to rally around. Conde had evidently renounced all hopes of a reconciliation, however painfully his host the Archduke might intercede for it. He meant to go to Spain. Spinola was urging this daily and hourly, said Henry, for he had fallen in love with the Princess, who complained of all these persecutions in her letters to her father, and said that she would rather die than go to Spain.

The King's advices from de Coeuvres were however to the effect that the step would probably be taken, that the arrangements were making, and that Spinola had been shut up with Conde six hours long with nobody present but Rochefort and a certain counsellor of the Prince of Orange named Keeremans.

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Henry was taking measures to intercept them on their flight by land, but there was some thought of their proceeding to Spain by sea. He therefore requested the States to send two ships of war, swift sailors, well equipped, one to watch in the roads of St. Jean and the other on the English coast. These ships were to receive their instructions from Admiral de Vicq, who would be well informed of all the movements of the Prince and give warning to the captains of the Dutch vessels by a preconcerted signal. The King begged that Barneveld would do him this favour, if he loved him, and that none might have knowledge of it but the Advocate and Prince Maurice. The ships would be required for two or three months only, but should be equipped and sent forth as soon as possible.

The States had no objection to performing this service, although it subsequently proved to be unnecessary, and they were quite ready at that moment to go openly into the war to settle the affairs of Cleve, and once for all to drive the Spaniards out of the Netherlands and beyond seas and mountains. Yet strange to say, those most conversant with the state of affairs could not yet quite persuade themselves that matters were serious, and that the King's mind was fixed. Should Conde return, renounce his Spanish stratagems, and bring back the Princess to court, it was felt by the King's best and most confidential friends that all might grow languid again, the Spanish faction get the upper hand in the King's councils, and the States find themselves in a terrible embarrassment.

On the other hand, the most prying and adroit of politicians were puzzled to read the signs of the times. Despite Henry's garrulity, or perhaps in consequence of it, the envoys of Spain, the Empire, and of Archduke Albert were ignorant whether peace were likely to be broken or not, in spite of rumours which filled the air. So well had the secrets been kept which the reader has seen discussed in confidential conversations—the record of which has always remained unpublished—between the King and those admitted to his intimacy that very late in the winter Pecquius, while sadly admitting to his masters that the King was likely to take part against the Emperor in the affair of the duchies, expressed the decided opinion that it would be limited to the secret sending of succour to Brandenburg and Neuburg as formerly to the United Provinces, but that he would never send troops into Cleve, or march thither himself.

It is important, therefore, to follow closely the development of these political and amorous intrigues, for they furnish one of the most curious and instructive lessons of history; there being not the slightest doubt that upon their issue chiefly depended the question of a great and general war.



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Pecquius, not yet despairing that his master would effect a reconciliation between the King and Conde, proposed again that the Prince should be permitted to reside for a time in some place not within the jurisdiction of Spain or of the Archdukes, being allowed meantime to draw his annual pension of 100,000 livres. Henry ridiculed the idea of Conde's drawing money from him while occupying his time abroad with intrigues against his throne and his children's succession. He scoffed at the Envoy's pretences that Conde was not in receipt of money from Spain, as if a man so needy and in so embarrassing a position could live without money from some source; and as if he were not aware, from his correspondents in Spain, that funds were both promised and furnished to the Prince.

He repeated his determination not to accord him pardon unless he returned to France, which he had no cause to leave, and, turning suddenly on Pecquius, demanded why, the subject of reconciliation having failed, the Archduke did not immediately fulfil his promise of turning Conde out of his dominions.

Upon this Albert's minister drew back with the air of one amazed, asking how and when the Archduke had ever made such a promise.

"To the Marquis de Coeuvres," replied Henry.

Pecquius asked if his ears had not deceived him, and if the King had really said that de Coeuvres had made such a statement.

Henry repeated and confirmed the story.

Upon the Minister's reply that he had himself received no such intelligence from the Archduke, the King suddenly changed his tone, and said,

"No, I was mistaken—I was confused—the Marquis never wrote me this; but did you not say yourself that I might be assured that there would be no difficulty about it if the Prince remained obstinate."

Pecquius replied that he had made such a proposition to his masters by his Majesty's request; but there had been no answer received, nor time for one, as the hope of reconciliation had not yet been renounced. He begged Henry to consider whether, without instructions from his master, he could have thus engaged his word.

"Well," said the King, "since you disavow it, I see very well that the Archduke has no wish to give me pleasure, and that these are nothing but tricks that you have been amusing me with all this time. Very good; each of us will know what we have to do."

Pecquius considered that the King had tried to get him into a net, and to entrap him into the avowal of a promise which he had never made. Henry remained obstinate in his assertions, notwithstanding all the envoy's protestations.



“A fine trick, indeed, and unworthy of a king, ‘Si dicere fas est,’” he wrote to Secretary of State Praets. “But the force of truth is such that he who spreads the snare always tumbles into the ditch himself.”

Henry concluded the subject of Conde at this interview by saying that he could have his pardon on the conditions already named, and not otherwise.



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He also made some complaints about Archduke Leopold, who, he said, notwithstanding his demonstrations of wishing a treaty of compromise, was taking towns by surprise which he could not hold, and was getting his troops massacred on credit.

Pecquius expressed the opinion that it would be better to leave the Germans to make their own arrangements among themselves, adding that neither his masters nor the King of Spain meant to mix themselves up in the matter.

“Let them mix themselves in it or keep out of it, as they like,” said Henry, “I shall not fail to mix myself up in it.”

The King was marvellously out of humour.

Before finishing the interview, he asked Pecquius whether Marquis Spinola was going to Spain very soon, as he had permission from his Majesty to do so, and as he had information that he would be on the road early in Lent. The Minister replied that this would depend on the will of the Archduke, and upon various circumstances. The answer seemed to displease the King, and Pecquius was puzzled to know why. He was not aware, of course, of Henry's project to kidnap the Marquis on the road, and keep him as a surety for Conde.

The Envoy saw Villeroy after the audience, who told him not to mind the King's ill-temper, but to bear it as patiently as he could. His Majesty could not digest, he said, his infinite displeasure at the obstinacy of the Prince; but they must nevertheless strive for a reconciliation. The King was quick in words, but slow in deeds, as the Ambassador might have observed before, and they must all try to maintain peace, to which he would himself lend his best efforts.

As the Secretary of State was thoroughly aware that the King was making vast preparations for war, and had given in his own adhesion to the project, it is refreshing to observe the candour with which he assured the representative of the adverse party of his determination that friendliest relations should be preserved.

It is still more refreshing to find Villeroy, the same afternoon, warmly uniting with Sully, Lesdiguieres, and the Chancellor, in the decision that war should begin forthwith.

For the King held a council at the Arsenal immediately after this interview with Pecquius, in which he had become convinced that Conde would never return. He took the Queen with him, and there was not a dissentient voice as to the necessity of beginning hostilities at once.

Sully, however, was alone in urging that the main force of the attack should be in the north, upon the Rhine and Meuse. Villeroy and those who were secretly in the Spanish interest were for beginning it with the southern combination and against Milan. Sully



believed the Duke of Savoy to be variable and attached in his heart to Spain, and he thought it contrary to the interests of France to permit an Italian prince to grow so great on her frontier. He therefore thoroughly disapproved the plan, and explained



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to the Dutch ambassador that all this urgency to carry on the war in the south came from hatred to the United Provinces, jealousy of their aggrandizement, detestation of the Reformed religion, and hope to engage Henry in a campaign which he could not carry on successfully. But he assured Aerssens that he had the means of counteracting these designs and of bringing on an invasion for obtaining possession of the Meuse. If the possessory princes found Henry making war in the Milanese only, they would feel themselves ruined, and might throw up the game. He begged that Barneveld would come on to Paris at once, as now or never was the moment to assure the Republic for all time.

The King had acted with malicious adroitness in turning the tables upon the Prince and treating him as a rebel and a traitor because, to save his own and his wife's honour, he had fled from a kingdom where he had but too good reason to suppose that neither was safe. The Prince, with infinite want of tact, had played into the King's hands. He had bragged of his connection with Spain and of his deep designs, and had shown to all the world that he was thenceforth but an instrument in the hands of the Spanish cabinet, while all the world knew the single reason for which he had fled.

The King, hopeless now of compelling the return of Conde, had become most anxious to separate him from his wife. Already the subject of divorce between the two had been broached, and it being obvious that the Prince would immediately betake himself into the Spanish dominions, the King was determined that the Princess should not follow him thither.

He had the incredible effrontery and folly to request the Queen to address a letter to her at Brussels, urging her to return to France. But Mary de' Medici assured her husband that she had no intention of becoming his assistant, using, to express her thought, the plainest and most vigorous word that the Italian language could supply. Henry had then recourse once more to the father and aunt.

That venerable couple being about to wait upon the Archduke's envoy, in compliance with the royal request, Pecquius, out of respect to their advanced age, went to the Constable's residence. Here both the Duchess and Constable, with tears in their eyes, besought that diplomatist to do his utmost to prevent the Princess from the sad fate of any longer sharing her husband's fortunes.

The father protested that he would never have consented to her marriage, preferring infinitely that she should have espoused any honest gentleman with 2000 crowns a year than this first prince of the blood, with a character such as it had proved to be; but that he had not dared to disobey the King.



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He spoke of the indignities and cruelties to which she was subjected, said that Rochefort, whom Conde had employed to assist him in their flight from France, and on the crupper of whose horse the Princess had performed the journey, was constantly guilty of acts of rudeness and incivility towards her; that but a few days past he had fired off pistols in her apartment where she was sitting alone with the Princess of Orange, exclaiming that this was the way he would treat anyone who interfered with the commands of his master, Conde; that the Prince was incessantly railing at her for refusing to caress the Marquis of Spinola; and that, in short, he would rather she were safe in the palace of the Archduchess Isabella, even in the humblest position among her gentlewomen, than to know her vagabondizing miserably about the world with her husband.

This, he said, was the greatest fear he had, and he would rather see her dead than condemned to such a fate.

He trusted that the Archdukes were incapable of believing the stories that he and the Duchess of Angouleme were influenced in the appeals they made for the separation of the Prince and Princess by a desire to serve the purposes of the King. Those were fables put about by Conde. All that the Constable and his sister desired was that the Archduchess would receive the Princess kindly when she should throw herself at her feet, and not allow her to be torn away against her will. The Constable spoke with great gravity and simplicity, and with all the signs of genuine emotion, and Peter Pecquius was much moved. He assured the aged pair that he would do his best to comply with their wishes, and should immediately apprise the Archdukes of the interview which had just taken place. Most certainly they were entirely disposed to gratify the Constable and the Duchess as well as the Princess herself, whose virtues, qualities, and graces had inspired them with affection, but it must be remembered that the law both human and divine required wives to submit themselves to the commands of their husbands and to be the companions of their good and evil fortunes. Nevertheless, he hoped that the Lord would so conduct the affairs of the Prince of Conde that the Most Christian King and the Archdukes would all be satisfied.

These pious and consolatory commonplaces on the part of Peter Pecquius deeply affected the Constable. He fell upon the Envoy's neck, embraced him repeatedly, and again wept plentifully.

CHAPTER, III.

Strange Scene at the Archduke's Palace—Henry's Plot frustrated—
His Triumph changed to Despair—Conversation of the Dutch Ambassador
with the King—The War determined upon.

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It was in the latter part of the Carnival, the Saturday night preceding Shrove Tuesday, 1610. The winter had been a rigorous one in Brussels, and the snow lay in drifts three feet deep in the streets. Within and about the splendid palace of Nassau there was much commotion. Lights and flambeaux were glancing, loud voices, martial music, discharge of pistols and even of artillery were heard together with the trampling of many feet, but there was nothing much resembling the wild revelry or cheerful mummery of that holiday season. A throng of the great nobles of Belgium with drawn swords and menacing aspect were assembled in the chief apartments, a detachment of the Archduke's mounted body-guard was stationed in the courtyard, and five hundred halberdiers of the burgher guilds kept watch and ward about the palace.

The Prince of Conde, a square-built, athletic young man of middle stature, with regular features, but a sulky expression, deepened at this moment into ferocity, was seen chasing the secretary of the French resident minister out of the courtyard, thwacking him lustily about the shoulders with his drawn sword, and threatening to kill him or any other Frenchman on the spot, should he show himself in that palace. He was heard shouting rather than speaking, in furious language against the King, against Coeuvres, against Berny, and bitterly bewailing his misfortunes, as if his wife were already in Paris instead of Brussels.

Upstairs in her own apartment which she had kept for some days on pretext of illness sat the Princess Margaret, in company of Madame de Berny, wife of the French minister, and of the Marquis de Coeuvres, Henry's special envoy, and a few other Frenchmen. She was passionately fond of dancing. The adoring cardinal described her as marvellously graceful and perfect in that accomplishment. She had begged her other adorer, the Marquis Spinola, "with sweetest words," that she might remain a few days longer in the Nassau Palace before removing to the Archduke's residence, and that the great general, according to the custom in France and Flanders, would be the one to present her with the violins. But Spinola, knowing the artifice concealed beneath these "sweetest words," had summoned up valour enough to resist her blandishments, and had refused a second entertainment.

It was not, therefore, the disappointment at losing her ball that now made the Princess sad. She and her companions saw that there had been a catastrophe; a plot discovered. There was bitter disappointment and deep dismay upon their faces. The plot had been an excellent one. De Coeuvres had arranged it all, especially instigated thereto by the father of the Princess acting in concurrence with the King. That night when all was expected to be in accustomed quiet, the Princess, wrapped in her mantilla, was to have stolen down into the garden, accompanied only by her maid the adventurous and faithful Philipotte,



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to have gone through a breach which led through a garden wall to the city ramparts, thence across the foss to the counterscarp, where a number of horsemen under trustworthy commanders were waiting. Mounting on the crupper behind one of the officers of the escort, she was then to fly to the frontier, relays of horses having been provided at every stage until she should reach Rocroy, the first pausing place within French territory; a perilous adventure for the young and delicate Princess in a winter of almost unexampled severity.

On the very morning of the day assigned for the adventure, despatches brought by special couriers from the Nuncius and the Spanish ambassador at Paris gave notice of the plot to the Archdukes and to Conde, although up to that moment none knew of it in Brussels. Albert, having been apprised that many Frenchmen had been arriving during the past few days, and swarming about the hostelries of the city and suburbs, was at once disposed to believe in the story. When Conde came to him, therefore, with confirmation from his own letters, and demanding a detachment of the body-guard in addition to the burgher militiamen already granted by the magistrates, he made no difficulty granting the request. It was as if there had been a threatened assault of the city, rather than the attempted elopement of a young lady escorted by a handful of cavaliers.

The courtyard of the Nassau Palace was filled with cavalry sent by the Archduke, while five hundred burgher guards sent by the magistrates were drawn up around the gate. The noise and uproar, gaining at every moment more mysterious meaning by the darkness of night, soon spread through the city. The whole population was awake, and swarming through the streets. Such a tumult had not for years been witnessed in Brussels, and the rumour flew about and was generally believed that the King of France at the head of an army was at the gates of the city determined to carry off the Princess by force. But although the superfluous and very scandalous explosion might have been prevented, there could be no doubt that the stratagem had been defeated.

Nevertheless, the effrontery and ingenuity of de Coeuvres became now sublime. Accompanied by his colleague, the resident minister, de Berny, who was sure not to betray the secret because he had never known it—his wife alone having been in the confidence of the Princess—he proceeded straightway to the Archduke's palace, and, late in the night as it was, insisted on an audience.

Here putting on his boldest face when admitted to the presence, he complained loudly of the plot, of which he had just become aware, contrived by the Prince of Conde to carry off his wife to Spain against her will, by main force, and by assistance of Flemish nobles, archiducal body-guard, and burgher militia.

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It was all a plot of Conde, he said, to palliate still more his flight from France. Every one knew that the Princess could not fly back to Paris through the air. To take her out of a house filled with people, to pierce or scale the walls of the city, to arrange her journey by ordinary means, and to protect the whole route by stations of cavalry, reaching from Brussels to the frontier, and to do all this in profound secrecy, was equally impossible. Such a scheme had never been arranged nor even imagined, he said. The true plotter was Conde, aided by ministers in Flanders hostile to France, and as the honour of the King and the reputation of the Princess had been injured by this scandal, the Ambassador loudly demanded a thorough investigation of the affair in order that vengeance might fall where it was due.

The prudent Albert was equal to the occasion. Not wishing to state the full knowledge which he possessed of de Coeuvres' agency and the King's complicity in the scheme of abduction to France, he reasoned calmly with the excited marquis, while his colleague looked and listened in dumb amazement, having previously been more vociferous and infinitely more sincere than his colleague in expressions of indignation.

The Archduke said that he had not thought the plot imputed to the King and his ambassador very probable. Nevertheless, the assertions of the Prince had been so positive as to make it impossible to refuse the guards requested by him. He trusted, however, that the truth would soon be known, and that it would leave no stain on the Princess, nor give any offence to the King.

Surprised and indignant at the turn given to the adventure by the French envoys, he nevertheless took care to conceal these sentiments, to abstain from accusation, and calmly to inform them that the Princess next morning would be established under his own roof; and enjoy the protection of the Archduchess.

For it had been arranged several days before that Margaret should leave the palace of Nassau for that of Albert and Isabella on the 14th, and the abduction had been fixed for the night of the 13th precisely because the conspirators wished to profit by the confusion incident on a change of domicile.

The irrepressible de Coeuvres, even then hardly willing to give up the whole stratagem as lost, was at least determined to discover how and by whom the plot had been revealed. In a cemetery piled three feet deep with snow on the evening following that mid-winter's night which had been fixed for the Princess's flight, the unfortunate ambassador waited until a certain Vallobre, a gentleman of Spinola's, who was the go-between of the enamoured Genoese and the Princess, but whom de Coeuvres had gained over, came at last to meet him by appointment. When he arrived, it was only to inform him of the manner in which he had been baffled, to convince him that the game was up, and that nothing was left him but to retreat utterly foiled in his attempt, and to be stigmatized as a blockhead by his enraged sovereign.

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Next day the Princess removed her residence to the palace of the Archdukes, where she was treated with distinguished honour by Isabella, and installed ceremoniously in the most stately, the most virtuous, and the most dismal of courts. Her father and aunt professed themselves as highly pleased with the result, and Pecquius wrote that “they were glad to know her safe from the importunities of the old fop who seemed as mad as if he had been stung by a tarantula.”

And how had the plot been revealed? Simply through the incorrigible garrulity of the King himself. Apprised of the arrangement in all its details by the Constable, who had first received the special couriers of de Coeuvres, he could not keep the secret to himself for a moment, and the person of all others in the world to whom he thought good to confide it was the Queen herself. She received the information with a smile, but straightway sent for the Nuncius Ubaldini, who at her desire instantly despatched a special courier to Spinola with full particulars of the time and mode of the proposed abduction.

Nevertheless the ingenuous Henry, confiding in the capacity of his deeply offended queen to keep the secret which he had himself divulged, could scarcely contain himself for joy.

Off he went to Saint-Germain with a train of coaches, impatient to get the first news from de Coeuvres after the scheme should have been carried into effect, and intending to travel post towards Flanders to meet and welcome the Princess.

“Pleasant farce for Shrove Tuesday,” wrote the secretary of Pecquius, “is that which the Frenchmen have been arranging down there! He in whose favour the abduction is to be made was seen going out the same day spangled and smart, contrary to his usual fashion, making a gambado towards Saint-Germain-en-Laye with four carriages and four to meet the nymph.”

Great was the King’s wrath and mortification at this ridiculous exposure of his detestable scheme. Vociferous were Villeroy’s expressions of Henry’s indignation at being supposed to have had any knowledge of or complicity in the affair. “His Majesty cannot approve of the means one has taken to guard against a pretended plot for carrying off the Princess,” said the Secretary of State; “a fear which was simulated by the Prince in order to defame the King.” He added that there was no reason to suspect the King, as he had never attempted anything of the sort in his life, and that the Archduke might have removed the Princess to his palace without sending an army to the hotel of the Prince of Orange, and causing such an alarm in the city, firing artillery on the rampart as if the town had been full of Frenchmen in arms, whereas one was ashamed next morning to find that there had been but fifteen in all. “But it was all Marquis Spinola’s fault,” he said, “who wished to show himself off as a warrior.”



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The King, having thus through the mouth of his secretary of state warmly protested against his supposed implication in the attempted abduction, began as furiously to rail at de Coeuvres for its failure; telling the Duc de Vendome that his uncle was an idiot, and writing that unlucky envoy most abusive letters for blundering in the scheme which had been so well concerted between them. Then he sent for Malherbe, who straightway perpetrated more poems to express the King's despair, in which Henry was made to liken himself to a skeleton with a dried skin, and likewise to a violet turned up by the ploughshare and left to wither.

He kept up through Madame de Berny a correspondence with "his beautiful angel," as he called the Princess, whom he chose to consider a prisoner and a victim; while she, wearied to death with the frigid monotony and sepulchral gaieties of the archiducal court, which she openly called her "dungeon" diverted herself with the freaks and fantasies of her royal adorer, called him in very ill-spelled letters "her chevalier, her heart, her all the world," and frequently wrote to beg him, at the suggestion of the intriguing Chateau Vert, to devise some means of rescuing her from prison.

The Constable and Duchess meanwhile affected to be sufficiently satisfied with the state of things. Conde, however, received a letter from the King, formally summoning him to return to France, and, in case of refusal, declaring him guilty of high-treason for leaving the kingdom without the leave and against the express commands of the King. To this letter, brought to him by de Coeuvres, the Prince replied by a paper, drawn up and served by a notary of Brussels, to the effect that he had left France to save his life and honour; that he was ready to return when guarantees were given him for the security of both. He would live and die, he said, faithful to the King. But when the King, departing from the paths of justice, proceeded through those of violence against him, he maintained that every such act against his person was null and invalid. Henry had even the incredible meanness and folly to request the Queen to write to the Archdukes, begging that the Princess might be restored to assist at her coronation. Mary de' Medici vigorously replied once more that, although obliged to wink at the King's amours, she declined to be his procuress. Conde then went off to Milan very soon after the scene at the Nassau Palace and the removal of the Princess to the care of the Archdukes. He was very angry with his wife, from whom he expressed a determination to be divorced, and furious with the King, the validity of whose second marriage and the legitimacy of whose children he proposed with Spanish help to dispute.

The Constable was in favour of the divorce, or pretended to be so, and caused importunate letters to be written, which he signed, to both Albert and Isabella, begging that his daughter might be restored to him to be the staff of his old age, and likewise to be present at the Queen's coronation. The Archdukes, however, resolutely refused to permit her to leave their protection without Conde's consent, or until after a divorce had been effected, notwithstanding that the father and aunt demanded it. The Constable and Duchess however, acquiesced in the decision, and expressed immense gratitude to Isabella.



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“The father and aunt have been talking to Pecquius,” said Henry very dismally; “but they give me much pain. They are even colder than the season, but my fire thaws them as soon as I approach.”

“P. S.—I am so pining away in my anguish that I am nothing but skin and bones. Nothing gives me pleasure. I fly from company, and if in order to comply with the law of nations I go into some assembly or other, instead of enlivening, it nearly kills me.”— [Lettres missives de Henri vii. 834].

And the King took to his bed. Whether from gout, fever, or the pangs of disappointed love, he became seriously ill. Furious with every one, with Conde, the Constable, de Coeuvres, the Queen, Spinola, with the Prince of Orange, whose councillor Keeremans had been encouraging Conde in his rebellion and in going to Spain with Spinola, he was now resolved that the war should go on. Aerssens, cautious of saying too much on paper of this very delicate affair, always intimated to Barneveld that, if the Princess could be restored, peace was still possible, and that by moving an inch ahead of the King in the Cleve matter the States at the last moment might be left in the lurch. He distinctly told the Advocate, on his expressing a hope that Henry might consent to the Prince’s residence in some neutral place until a reconciliation could be effected, that the pinch of the matter was not there, and that van der Myle, who knew all about it, could easily explain it.

Alluding to the project of reviving the process against the Dowager, and of divorcing the Prince and Princess, he said these steps would do much harm, as they would too much justify the true cause of the retreat of the Prince, who was not believed when he merely talked of his right of primogeniture: “The matter weighs upon us very heavily,” he said, “but the trouble is that we don’t search for the true remedies. The matter is so delicate that I don’t dare to discuss it to the very bottom.”

The Ambassador had a long interview with the King as he lay in his bed feverish and excited. He was more impatient than ever for the arrival of the States’ special embassy, reluctantly acquiesced in the reasons assigned for the delay, but trusted that it would arrive soon with Barneveld at the head, and with Count Lewis William as a member for “the sword part of it.”

He railed at the Prince of Orange, not believing that Keeremans would have dared to do what he had done but with the orders of his master. He said that the King of Spain would supply Conde with money and with everything he wanted, knowing that he could make use of him to trouble his kingdom. It was strange, he thought, that Philip should venture to these extremities with his affairs in such condition, and when he had so much need of repose. He recalled all his ancient grievances against Spain, his rights to the Kingdom of Navarre and the County of St. Pol violated; the conspiracy of Biron, the intrigues of Bouillon,



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the plots of the Count of Auvergne and the Marchioness of Verneuil, the treason of Meragne, the corruption of L'Hoste, and an infinity of other plots of the King and his ministers; of deep injuries to him and to the public repose, not to be tolerated by a mighty king like himself, with a grey beard. He would be revenged, he said, for this last blow, and so for all the rest. He would not leave a troublesome war on the hands of his young son. The occasion was favourable. It was just to defend the oppressed princes with the promptly accorded assistance of the States-General. The King of Great Britain was favourable. The Duke of Savoy was pledged. It was better to begin the war in his green old age than to wait the pleasure and opportunity of the King of Spain.

All this he said while racked with fever, and dismissed the Envoy at last, after a long interview, with these words: "Mr. Ambassador—I have always spoken roundly and frankly to you, and you will one day be my witness that I have done all that I could to draw the Prince out of the plight into which he has put himself. But he is struggling for the succession to this crown under instructions from the Spaniards, to whom he has entirely pledged himself. He has already received 6000 crowns for his equipment. I know that you and my other friends will work for the conservation of this monarchy, and will never abandon me in my designs to weaken the power of Spain. Pray God for my health."

The King kept his bed a few days afterwards, but soon recovered. Villeroy sent word to Barneveld in answer to his suggestions of reconciliation that it was too late, that Conde was entirely desperate and Spanish. The crown of France was at stake, he said, and the Prince was promising himself miracles and mountains with the aid of Spain, loudly declaring the marriage of Mary de' Medici illegal, and himself heir to the throne. The Secretary of State professed himself as impatient as his master for the arrival of the embassy; the States being the best friends France ever had and the only allies to make the war succeed.

Jeannin, who was now never called to the council, said that the war was not for Germany but for Conde, and that Henry could carry it on for eight years. He too was most anxious for Barneveld's arrival, and was of his opinion that it would have been better for Conde to be persuaded to remain at Breda and be supported by his brother-in-law, the Prince of Orange. The impetuosity of the King had however swept everything before it, and Conde had been driven to declare himself Spanish and a pretender to the crown. There was no issue now but war.



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Boderie, the King's envoy in Great Britain, wrote that James would be willing to make a defensive league for the affairs of Cleve and Julich only, which was the slenderest amount of assistance; but Henry always suspected Master Jacques of intentions to baulk him if possible and traverse his designs. But the die was cast. Spinola had carried off Conde in triumph; the Princess was pining in her gilt cage in Brussels, and demanding a divorce for desertion and cruel treatment; the King considered himself as having done as much as honour allowed him to effect a reconciliation, and it was obvious that, as the States' ambassador said, he could no longer retire from the war without shame, which would be the greatest danger of all.

"The tragedy is ready to begin," said Aerssens. "They are only waiting now for the arrival of our ambassadors."

On the 9th March the King before going to Fontainebleau for a few days summoned that envoy to the Louvre. Impatient at a slight delay in his arrival, Henry came down into the courtyard as he was arriving and asked eagerly if Barneveld was coming to Paris. Aerssens replied, that the Advocate had been hastening as much as possible the departure of the special embassy, but that the condition of affairs at home was such as not to permit him to leave the country at that moment. Van der Myle, who would be one of the ambassadors, would more fully explain this by word of mouth.

The King manifested infinite annoyance and disappointment that Barneveld was not to make part of the embassy. "He says that he reposes such singular confidence in your authority in the state, experience in affairs, and affection for himself," wrote Aerssens, "that he might treat with you in detail and with open heart of all his designs. He fears now that the ambassadors will be limited in their powers and instructions, and unable to reply at once on the articles which at different times have been proposed to me for our enterprise. Thus much valuable time will be wasted in sending backwards and forwards."

The King also expressed great anxiety to consult with Count Lewis William in regard to military details, but his chief sorrow was in regard to the Advocate. "He acquiesced only with deep displeasure and regret in your reasons," said the Ambassador, "and says that he can hope for nothing firm now that you refuse to come."

Villeroy intimated that Barneveld did not come for fear of exciting the jealousy of the English.

ETEXT EDITOR'S BOOKMARKS:

He who spreads the snare always tumbles into the ditch himself Most detestable verses that even he had ever composed She declined to be his procuress

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