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THE PEARL OF PRINCESSES



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*Marguerite d'Angoulême.*  
*Queen of Navarre.*

# THE PEARL OF PRINCESSES

THE LIFE OF MARGUERITE  
D'ANGOULÊME, QUEEN OF NAVARRE

BY

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# CONTENTS

## CHAPTER I

	PAGES
Charles d'Angoulême—Louise of Savoy—Birth of Marguerite d'Angoulême—The prediction of François de Paule—Death of Charles d'Angoulême . . . . .	1-12

## CHAPTER II

An attractive widow—The Court of Cognac—An episcopal poet—Character of Louise of Savoy—Death of Charles VIII . . . . .	13-21
--	-------

## CHAPTER III

Louis XII and Anne de Bretagne—Louise and her children at Chinon—The Maréchal de Gié—Birth of Claude de France—The companions of the Duc de Valois—The Duc de Valois goes to Court—Education of the Duc de Valois . . . . .	22-35
---	-------

## CHAPTER IV

A matrimonial project—A talented princess—Louise and the Maréchal de Gié . . . . .	36-44
--	-------

## CHAPTER V

Question of Louise's remarriage—Marguerite refuses Henry VII—Marguerite and Gaston de Foix—Passion of Bonnavet for Marguerite—A tender conversation—The Duc d'Alençon—Marguerite marries the Duc d'Alençon—Betrothal of the Duc de Valois—Misgivings of Anne de Bretagne . . . . .	45-61
--	-------

## CHAPTER VI

Reunion of Marguerite and Bonnavet—Marguerite's honour in danger—Stratagem of a virtuous princess—Morals of Louise of Savoy . . . . .	62-69
---	-------

## CHAPTER VII

First campaign of the Duc de Valois—Loss of Théroouanne and Tournai—The Brunette of Amboise—The Duc de Valois and Madame Disomme . . . . .	70-80
--	-------

## CHAPTER VIII

Death of Anne de Bretagne—A lengthy funeral oration—A luxurious Prince—Marriage of the Duc de Valois . . . . .	81-88
--	-------

## CHAPTER IX

A remarkable phenomenon—Arrival of Mary Tudor—An embarrassing situation—A fatal marriage—Accession of François I . . . . .	89-98
--	-------

## CHAPTER X

Louise created Duchesse d'Angoulême—Marguerite directs the King's patronage—Clément Marot—An atrocious accusation—An audacious gallant . . . . .	99-114
--	--------

# Contents

## CHAPTER XI

The campaign of Marignano—The Concordat—Charles of Austria—  
"The Field of the Cloth of Gold" . . . . . 115-122

## CHAPTER XII

Lefèvre d'Étaples—Religious views of Marguerite d'Angoulême—  
Guillaume Briçonnet, Bishop of Meaux—The Mystics of  
Meaux—Marguerite and Briçonnet—A mystical correspond-  
ence—Briçonnet prosecuted for heresy . . . . . 123-138

## CHAPTER XIII

First war between François I and Charles V—Fraud of Louise of  
Savoy—The Connétable de Bourbon—Louise of Savoy and  
Bourbon—Treason of the Constable—Reverses of the French  
—Death of Queen Claude—Illness of Madame Charlotte—  
Death of Madame Charlotte . . . . . 139-157

## CHAPTER XIV

Invasion of Provence—Louise and Marguerite at Lyons—The  
disaster of Pavia—Anguish of Marguerite . . . . . 158-168

## CHAPTER XV

François I a prisoner—Marguerite's letter to the King—Mar-  
guerite's letter to Montmorency—Disgrace of the Duc  
d'Alençon—"The King fasts upon turtles"—Marguerite a  
widow . . . . . 169-179

## CHAPTER XVI

Persecution of the Reformers—Pusillanimous conduct of Briçonnet  
—François I is transferred to Spain—François arrives in  
Spain—François at Venyssolo—Marguerite Ambassadors  
Extraordinary—François in the Alcazar—François falls dan-  
gerously ill—Marguerite reaches Madrid—Recovery of the  
King . . . . . 180-199

## CHAPTER XVII

Marguerite and Charles V—Marguerite plans her brother's escape  
—François resolves to abdicate—Letter of Erasmus to Mar-  
guerite—Marguerite sets out for France—The Emperor  
schemes to arrest Marguerite—Marguerite is warned—A  
hurried journey . . . . . 200-216

## CHAPTER XVIII

The Treaty of Madrid—Duplicity of François I—Illness of the  
King's children—Henri d'Albret, King of Navarre—A romantic  
escape from prison—Marguerite and the King of Navarre—  
François sets out for France—The King exchanged for his sons 217-232

## CHAPTER XIX

Clément Marot and Berquin imprisoned—The tables turned on the  
bigots—The King repudiates his engagements—A new  
Sultana—Madame de Chateaubriand discarded—Policy versus  
sentiment—The second marriage of Marguerite—A pretty  
allegory . . . . . 233-247

# Contents

## CHAPTER XX

Bourbon in Italy—The sack of Rome—Birth of Jeanne d'Albret—  
The Virgin of the rue des Rosiers—The fate of Berquin . . . 248-258

## CHAPTER XXI

Siege of Naples—Captivity of the Princes—François marries  
Eleanor of Austria—Liberation of the French Princes—An  
interesting event at Blois—The new Queen—Marguerite loses  
her son—Failing health of Louise of Savoy—Louise's last  
journey—Death of Louise . . . . . 259-277

## CHAPTER XXII

François I and Jeanne d'Albret—"La Messe à sept points"—Mar-  
guerite and her husband—Marguerite's life in Béarn—"Le  
Miroir de l'Âme pécheresse"—An outrageous affront—Mar-  
guerite and the Franciscans of Issoudun . . . . . 278-293

## CHAPTER XXIII

Isabeau d'Albret—Melanchthon invited to Paris—The affair of the  
placards—Marguerite attacked by the bigots—An expiatory  
procession—The fires of persecution . . . . . 294-305

## CHAPTER XXIV

War breaks out again—Marguerite visits the army—Retreat of the  
Imperialists—Death of the Dauphin François—Marguerite in  
Picardy—Illness of Jeanne d'Albret—Generosity of Marguerite  
—The Aigues-Mortes interview . . . . . 306-321

## CHAPTER XXV

Diane de Poitiers—Rival Sultanas—Marguerite and Montmorency  
—Policy of Montmorency—François the dupe of the Emperor  
—Mother and daughter—Jeanne d'Albret in revolt—An abject  
epistle—Protest of Jeanne d'Albret—Intrigues against Mont-  
morency—Disgrace of the Constable . . . . . 322-344

## CHAPTER XXVI

Marguerite's literary protégés—Bonaventure des Périers—Étienne  
Dolet—Marguerite's poetical work—The Heptaméron . . . 345-371

## CHAPTER XXVII

Marguerite and the Bishop of Condom—Marguerite at Cauterets  
—Marguerite's advice disregarded—Marguerite intercedes for  
the Rochellois—An ill-timed pleasantry—A critical situation—  
Panic in Paris—Peace of Crépy . . . . . 372-390

## CHAPTER XXVIII

The Vaudois—Marguerite eulogises the peace—Death of the Duc  
d'Orléans—Gloomy presentiments—A warning dream—Mar-  
guerite learns of the King's death . . . . . 391-401

## CHAPTER XXIX

Marguerite voices her grief—Marguerite appeals to Henri II—An  
unwelcome proposition—Second marriage of Jeanne d'Albret—  
Last days of Marguerite d'Angoulême . . . . . 402-414

INDEX . . . . . 415-423

## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

MARGUERITE D'ANGOULÊME, QUEEN OF NAVARRE . . . . .	.	<i>Frontispiece</i>
		<i>To face page</i>
ANNE OF BRITTANY . . . . .	,,	24
MARY TUDOR . . . . .	,,	90
EMPEROR CHARLES V . . . . .	,,	140
LOUISE OF SAVOY, COUNTESS D'ANGOULÊME . . . . .	,,	190
HENRI D'ALBRET, KING OF NAVARRE . . . . .	,,	227
MADAME DE CHATEAUBRIAND . . . . .	,,	242
JEANNE D'ALBRET, QUEEN OF NAVARRE . . . . .	,,	280
MARGUERITE D'ANGOULÊME, QUEEN OF NAVARRE . . . . .	,,	316



# THE PEARL OF PRINCESSES

MARGUERITE D'ANGOULÊME, QUEEN OF NAVARRE

## CHAPTER I

By his marriage with Valentina of Milan, Louis, Duc d'Orléans, the hapless brother of Charles VI, who, in November 1407, was so barbarously murdered in the streets of Paris, at the instigation of Jean-sans-Peur, Duke of Burgundy, had three sons; Louis, who succeeded to his father's title and the bulk of his parents' vast wealth, Philippe, Comte de Vertus, and Jean, Comte d'Angoulême. Jean's patrimony was very considerable, including as it did both the counties of Angouleme and Périgord; but having, when civil war broke out a few years later, joined his elder brothers in summoning the English to their aid, he found himself, after the Peace of Bourges, a hostage in the hands of the English Government for the subsidies which had been promised them by the Armagnac party. He remained in captivity for thirty-two years, seven years longer than his eldest brother, the Duc d'Orléans, whom the battle of Agincourt consigned to a similar fate; and, to obtain the sum demanded for his ransom, he was obliged to sell his county of Périgord to Jean de Bretagne, Comte de Penthièvre, and to mortgage other portions of his inheritance. On his return to France, the Comte d'Angouleme, who during his captivity had become exceedingly devout, wisely determined to take no further part in politics, but

## The Pearl of Princesses

to return to his estates and endeavour to repair his fallen fortunes. In this, however, he was only very partially successful, for though he received a considerable dowry with his wife, Marguerite de Rohan,<sup>1</sup> the greater portion of this appears to have been absorbed by the necessity of purchasing immunity from the predatory attacks of his English neighbours. He died in 1467, leaving behind him a reputation for sanctity which, we are assured, caused his memory to be revered like that of a saint, but comparatively little wherewith to enable his only son, Charles, to support the dignity of his rank.

At the time of his father's death, Charles d'Angoulême was only in his eighth year. He received his education under the august direction of Louis XI, and the more immediate supervision of Arnault du Refuge, who, while paying all due attention to its intellectual side, would appear to have been somewhat neglectful of the moral. When, in the summer of 1476, the lad emerged from the hands of his tutors, and, in token of his emancipation, did homage to the King, he had become a young prince of wide learning and elegant and refined tastes, amiable and courteous towards his equals, kind and considerate towards his inferiors, but far too much addicted to pleasure, and with very little strength of character.

Fully alive to the necessity of restoring the fortunes of his house by a wealthy marriage, the Comte d'Angoulême cast his eyes upon Marie of Burgundy, the richest heiress in Christendom. But Louis XI was by no means minded to allow a younger branch of the Royal House to be thus aggrandized and raised to an importance which in time to come might even overshadow that of the Crown, and

<sup>1</sup> Daughter of Alain IX, Vicomte de Rohan, and of Marie de Bretagne, daughter of François I, Duke of Brittany.

## Charles d'Angoulême

promptly extinguished his youthful kinsman's hopes in that direction by affiancing him, much against his will, to Louise of Savoy, the two-year-old daughter of Philip, Comte de Bresse, a poor cadet of the House of Savoy. The count, however, derived some consolation for his disappointment from the reflection that a good many years must elapse before the bride chosen for him would attain a marriageable age, and that long before that time arrived the project, like so many other marriages arranged by that confirmed matchmaker, Louis XI, might very well have ended in smoke. And so he supported with what patience he possessed the monotonous and shabby existence to which his poverty condemned him in his little Court of Cognac, and kept his eyes continually fixed on the horizon where was to appear the heiress, so ardently dreamed of, who was to restore the splendours of his House.

While awaiting this longed-for vision, he embarked upon a romance with a young lady of noble family in the service of his widowed mother, Mlle. Jeanne de Polignac, daughter of Henri de Polignac, Governor of Angoulême. To this damsel, we are informed, the count, in the course of the year 1477, made "a present of chemises," an article of feminine attire which in those days was often of a peculiar sumptuousness, being embroidered with gold and silver lace in the most prodigal manner. Such a gift naturally implied a certain tender intimacy between the parties; and it is therefore not altogether surprising to learn that the sequel was that not very long afterwards Mlle. de Polignac, in her turn, made the gallant donor a present—of a daughter, who was named after her mother, "Jeanne, bastard of M. le Comte"; for the count recognized her.



## The Pearl of Princesses

Several years passed ; Louis XI died and was succeeded by his son Charles VIII, a boy thirteen years old. But the death of Louis did not affect the matrimonial arrangement which that monarch had made, since the new king's masterful sister, Anne de Beaujeu, who, under her father's will, assumed the government of the kingdom during Charles's minority, had recently adopted the little Louise of Savoy, and was determined to hold the Comte d'Angoulême to his engagement. Anne, however, did not immediately call upon the count to fulfil it, since for some time matters of greater importance demanded her attention. But in 1485, when the political situation seemed more settled and her *protégée* had attained her tenth year, she charged the Bishop of Angoulême, Robert de Luxembourg, to refresh the memory of her flighty cousin.

The *fiancé*, it is only just to observe, neglected nothing to escape from his obligations ; and, though ordinarily the most peaceable of men, even went so far as to join the insurrection of 1487. He assembled his troops near Saintes, and elaborated a plan of campaign which, however, he had no opportunity of executing, as the royal army suddenly swooped down upon him, surprised and routed his forces and chased them as far as Blaye, where they surrendered. The count, who had taken refuge at Montlieu, retired sadly to Cognac, where, prudently rejecting all attempts of the rebel nobles to lure him again into the field, he proceeded to make his peace with the Court, and on February 16, 1488, he sealed his submission to the royal authority, by signing before a notary of Paris his marriage contract with Louise of Savoy.

It was not a document which made very pleasant reading for the prospective bridegroom, for the dowry which he received with the young lady was the exceed-



## Louise of Savoy

ingly modest one of 35,000 livres, payable in three years ;<sup>1</sup> while, on his side, he was obliged to settle upon her an income of 3000 livres, which absorbed no inconsiderable part of his scanty revenues. However, having achieved her object, the Regent took pity upon him, and on her advice, Charles VIII conferred upon the count the seigneurie of Melle, worth 20,000 livres.

Thus it was that at the age of twelve the little Louise of Savoy, destined to become one of the most interesting figures of her time, was wedded to a prince sixteen years her senior, who approached the altar about as cheerfully as does a criminal the scaffold.

The marriage, nevertheless, turned out happily enough. Charles d'Angoulême was too good-hearted a man and too courteous a gentleman to visit his chagrin upon an innocent child, who had had no voice in the disposal of her hand. It was not, indeed, in his nature to show anything but kindness to those about him. "There existed," writes de Saint-Gelais, "not one individual to whom he had done displeasure ; but, on the contrary, he bestowed succour and courteous words on all who sought his aid ; of which good deeds, the love and veneration of his servants, subjects, and neighbours afford sufficient testimony."<sup>2</sup> Moreover, he was soon obliged to recognize that, if Louise's *dot* was but a poor one, in other respects he had made by no means a bad bargain. For not only did his young wife possess considerable personal attraction, but, mere child though she was in years, she already gave promise of combining

<sup>1</sup> In point of fact, in five years the Comte d'Angoulême only received 22,000 livres, and perhaps the balance would never have been paid at all, if Anne de Beaujeu and her husband had not taken upon themselves to discharge it.

<sup>2</sup> *Histoire de Louis XII.*

## The Pearl of Princesses

with them an intelligence of an unusually high order, which in time to come was to make her the most accomplished woman in France, until she voluntarily yielded the palm for learning to her daughter Marguerite, whose education she so carefully supervised.

What, however, perhaps served as much as anything to reconcile the count to the marriage, was the girl's gentle and submissive ways, and the readiness with which she accommodated herself to his irregularities—irregularities which would surely have provoked even the most complaisant consort of our own time to rebellion. Not only did she accept without demur Mlle. de Polignac as maid-of-honour, and that lady's elder brother as one of her *maîtres d'hôtel*; not only did she permit the little Jeanne to take her place at her husband's court, but when the amorous prince, as the result of adventures concerning which history is silent, found himself the father of two other little girls, called respectively Souveraine and Madeleine, she gave them an apparently cordial welcome, and had the first brought up under her own supervision.

These intimate details, as one of Louise's historians has pointed out,<sup>1</sup> have their importance in the psychological appreciation of the character of that princess. The situation of Louise was not without example, notably in the House of Orléans, where Dunois, the celebrated "Bastard of Orléans," was brought up by Valentina of Milan. However that may be, Charles d'Angoulême would certainly appear to have been a little too negligent in the consideration due to a wife of such tender years; while his ideas of the degree of tolerance which he had the right to expect from the

<sup>1</sup> M. de Maulde la Clavière, *Louise de Savoie et François I<sup>er</sup>*.

## Birth of Marguerite d'Angoulême

partner of his joys and sorrows were somewhat in advance of his time, at least so far as France was concerned. For these ideas had not yet found any general acceptance in France ; it was not until a quarter of a century later that they acquired the rights of citizenship there, and Louise of Savoy and her children were perhaps not strangers to their diffusion. In Italy, on the other hand, they had long been firmly rooted, and many singular instances of conjugal resignation are recorded by contemporary writers, the most striking of which is perhaps the anecdote related of the celebrated Vittoria Colonna, who, seeing one night the nuptial chamber invaded by one of her own maids-of-honour, violently enamoured of her mistress's fascinating husband, instead of creating a "scene," promptly turned her face to the wall and feigned sleep.

Four years after her marriage, Louise of Savoy gave birth to a daughter at the Château of Angoulême, who received the name of Marguerite, a name which had been borne by both her grandmothers, Marguerite de Rohan, Comtesse d'Angoulême, and Marguerite de Bourbon, Comtesse de Bresse.

"My daughter Marguerite," writes Louise of Savoy, in that curious diary in which she afterwards recorded the chief events of her life, "was born in the year 1492, on the eleventh day of April, at two o'clock in the morning, or, counting after the manner of astronomers, on the tenth day of April, at ten minutes past its fourteenth hour."<sup>1</sup>

Louise, though naturally somewhat disappointed that her first-born was not a boy, was very proud of the little girl, who was not only a pretty and affectionate child, but

<sup>1</sup> *Journal de Louise de Savoie.*



## The Pearl of Princesses

very early began to show a remarkably sensitive intelligence. But when Marguerite was little more than a babe, a more important person arrived upon the scene—one who was henceforth to be the very centre of existence both to Marguerite and her mother.

“François, by the grace of God, King of France, and my pacific Cæsar,” so triumphantly runs Louise’s *Journal*, “underwent his first experience of worldly light at Cognac, about the tenth hour after noon 1494, the twelfth day of September.”

At the time of François’s birth never did the Crown of France seem less likely to become the heritage of a prince of the House of Angoulême. By his marriage with Anne de Bretagne, Charles VIII already had two sons, the younger of whom had been born only two days before François ; while even if the succession should fail in the direct line, the Crown would devolve upon Louis, Duc d’Orléans. That prince, it is true, was childless after nearly twenty years of marriage ; but his wife, Jeanne de France, might die, or a complaisant Pope might assent to annul their union, and enable him to marry some young woman who would soon give him an heir. Altogether, it is doubtful whether in all the ghettos of Europe a usurer could have been found bold enough to advance a hundred livres on the chance of the infant prince at Cognac one day becoming King of France.

Louise of Savoy, however, was firmly convinced that a great destiny awaited her son. There was living at this time at Plessis-lès-Tours a very holy monk, named François de Paule, whom Louis XI had installed there, with the object of acquiring thus an influence over Heaven for the furtherance of his political schemes. Although, apparently quite unknown to himself, “the

## The Prediction of François de Paule

good man," as he was generally called, inspired an extraordinary enthusiasm, particularly among women who desired to have children. Anne de Beaujeu attributed to him the birth of her daughter Suzanne; Anne de Bretagne the birth of Claude de France, the first wife of François I and Claude herself the birth of François II.

Attracted by the fame of the holy man, Louise of Savoy, a year after her marriage, made a pilgrimage to Plessis-lès-Tours. The monk received her very kindly, and inquired in what way he could serve her. She replied that the desire of her heart was to have a son, and a son who should have a great future, and begged him to assist her by his prayers; upon which he promised her a son, and announced that that son should be King.

The monk's words awakened the dormant ambition which had hitherto lain quite unsuspected beneath the gentle and submissive demeanour of Charles d'Angoulême's young wife. They became for her a dogma upon which she nourished her life; and when on that September night, five years later, the first part of the prediction was fulfilled, and a son was born to her, her joy knew no bounds, and from the child's earliest infancy she devoted all her energies to fit him for the great position which she never doubted that he was one day to occupy.

And a little more than a year brought the object of Louise's ambitious hopes, which at the time of her boy's birth had seemed so remote, appreciably nearer. The son born to Charles VIII and Anne de Bretagne in the autumn of 1494 only lived a few weeks, and on December 6 of the following year the Dauphin followed him to the grave. For the moment, the Duc d'Orléans alone stood between the Comte d'Angoulême and the throne.

The question whether that prince would ever become

## The Pearl of Princesses

King was, however, soon decided. On learning of the death of the Dauphin, the count, accompanied by his wife, left Cognac with the twofold object of presenting their condolences to their Majesties at Amboise, and offering their felicitations to the Duc d'Orléans at Blois on recovering his position as heir presumptive to the crown. The duke, it may be mentioned, had recently been obliged to retire from Court, having had the misfortune to give dire offence to the queen by his well-meaning efforts to divert the King from the melancholy condition into which the Dauphin's death had thrown him, but which Anne had construed into an insulting display of joy at the removal of her son from his path.<sup>1</sup>

The day upon which the Comte and Comtesse d'Angoulême quitted Cognac was bitterly cold, and in consequence of the severity of the weather and the condition of the roads, they journeyed only so far as Châteauneuf, where they stopped for the night. Shortly after their arrival, Charles d'Angoulême complained of feeling unwell, and during the night he became so ill that the countess, in great alarm, despatched messengers to summon all the physicians and surgeons of note in the neighbourhood to her aid. Soon half-a-dozen learned

<sup>1</sup> "After the death of the Dauphin, King Charles and his queen were full of such desolate grief that the doctors, fearing the weakness and feeble constitution of the King, were of opinion that excess of sorrow might be prejudicial to his health. They therefore advised as many distractions as possible, and suggested that the princes at Court should invent new pastimes, dances, and mummeries to give pleasure to the King and Queen, which being done, Monseigneur d'Orléans devised a masquerade with dances, in which he danced with such gaiety and played the fool so much that the Queen thought he was making merry because he was nearer the throne of France, seeing that the Dauphin was dead. She was extremely displeased, and looked on him with such aversion that he was obliged to leave Amboise, where the Court then was, and go to his Château of Blois."—BRANTÔME.



## Death of Charles d'Angoulême

practitioners of the healing art were gathered round the sick-bed, who, after a lengthy consultation, pronounced the patient to be suffering from intermittent fever in a very aggravated form, which, in their opinion, rendered his recovery hopeless. In point of fact, after lingering until New Year's Day 1496, Charles d'Angoulême died, though whether from his malady or the remedies employed by the posse of doctors who attended him it would be difficult to say. People in those days died almost as often from one cause as the other ; and perhaps the count's physician-in-ordinary, whom Louise promptly disgraced for incompetence, was less deserving of sympathy than one might suppose.

Jean de Saint-Gelais, Louise's chamberlain and intimate—perhaps too intimate—friend, represents the countess as displaying the most touching devotion during her husband's illness, refusing to quit his side, even to take needful refreshment, and when all was over, having to be lifted fainting from the bed and carried to her own room ;<sup>1</sup> while the historian Jaligny, attached to the Duc and Duchesse de Bourbon, asserts that it was reported at Moulins that, but for the presence of her children, the young widow would have died of grief, so terrible was her despair.

We are inclined, however, to doubt whether this by no means unprejudiced testimony is to be taken literally, readily as it has been accepted by certain modern writers. That so haughty a woman as Louise of Savoy subsequently showed herself to be could have entertained much affection, leave alone "an impassioned reverence,"<sup>2</sup> for a husband who expected her to receive his mistress as

<sup>1</sup> *Histoire de Louis XII<sup>e</sup>.*

<sup>2</sup> Madame Darmesteter, *Margaret of Navarre.*

## The Pearl of Princesses

one of her maids-of-honour and to superintend the bringing up of his illegitimate children seems highly improbable, nor must it be forgotten that in her *Journal*, in which something of the true sentiments of the writer is revealed to us, she speaks of "the adversities and inconveniences which befell her in her early years"; and records the death of Charles d'Angoulême in the following laconic form: "The first day of the year 1496 I lost my husband."



## CHAPTER II

THUS, in her twentieth year, Louise of Savoy found herself a widow, with a daughter three years old and a son fifteen months. From an attractive girl she had grown into a very pretty woman, somewhat thin, it is true, but very graceful, with light chestnut hair, grey eyes under delicately arched eyebrows, a small rosy mouth, and a clear complexion. It was tolerably certain that she would not lack consolation in her bereavement, if she were disposed to accept it.

Shortly before his death, Charles d'Angoulême had made a will, by which, after various charitable donations and a legacy of 2000 écus to his natural daughter Jeanne, the whole of his property was bequeathed to his legitimate children, though Louise was to enjoy the revenues of his estates during her lifetime. He also appointed her guardian of the children, and nominated a council of eight executors, including Élie de Polignac, a younger brother of his former inamorata, and the countess's chamberlain, Jean de Saint-Gelais, seigneur de Montlieu, to assist her. Solemnly, in the presence of all her Household, Louise swore to observe the provisions of the will which she had very evidently inspired. But very soon after the count's death, Louis d'Orléans, as head of the family, supported by Pierre de Rohan, Maréchal de Gié, cousin of the countess-dowager, Marguerite de Rohan, claimed the guardianship, on the ground that Louise could not legally undertake such duties until she had attained the age of twenty-five. Louise replied that, if

## The Pearl of Princesses

she were deprived of the guardianship of her children, she would feel obliged to demand the restoration of her dowry, which would place the already straitened finances of the House of Angoulême in an almost desperate condition. Finally, the Royal Council intervened and regulated the difficulty by a compromise : the Duc d'Orléans received the title of honorary guardian ; the young countess was to submit her accounts to him and obtain his consent to the sale or mortgage of any portion of the estates, and to any changes in her Household, the officers of which were to take an oath of allegiance to both. This arrangement was altogether in favour of Louise, and assured to her, for the time being, both the direction of her children's education and of her little court.

A few months after Charles d'Angoulême's death, Louise's father, Philippe, Comte de Bresse, became Duke of Savoy, through the death of his great-nephew Charles II. This event added not a little to his daughter's importance, though nothing to the revenues of the Court of Cognac, for the new sovereign, with half-a-dozen children to provide for by his second marriage with Claude de Brosses de Bretagne, and a throne continually threatened by his powerful neighbours, had many uses for his money. Early in 1497 Louise lost her mother-in-law, Marguerite de Rohan. The countess-dowager had, however, long since ceased to live, so to speak, her mind having given way many years before, and she had never interfered in any way with her son's wife. An inventory of the deceased's effects which Louise caused to be taken illustrates the poverty to which the House of Angoulême had been reduced. Apart from twenty pipes of wine and a quantity of linen, the countess-dowager left nothing worth taking into account, with the

## The Court of Cognac

exception of a gold cup, a few pieces of silver plate in a more or less bad condition, five tapestries and some velvet cushions. It was certainly not a luxurious nest in which the magnificent François I and "the Marguerite of Marguerites" were reared.

Accustomed to poverty from early childhood, for Anne de Beaujeu had led her the hard life of a poor relation and confined her generosity to a gift of eighty livres on New Year's Day, with which to buy herself a crimson satin gown for state occasions, Louise had learned to appreciate and to love money. But she loved also art and literature, as her husband had done, and painters, poets, and romancers found at Cognac a cordial welcome. She herself was already one of the most accomplished princesses in Europe; she was well grounded in Latin, and was fond of quoting it; she was well and widely read in French literature, and could speak several modern languages. Her excellent taste in art is shown by her patronage of Robinet Testard, the delightful illuminator of manuscripts, who remained in her service until an advanced age, and has so frequently reproduced the features of his protectress; and she appears to have shared the passion of her contemporaries for music. She had also a passion for flowers: myosotis, carnations, roses, and pansies were her favourites, but flowers of all kinds found a place in the gardens at Cognac, which were a kind of floral paradise. Fruit she cultivated too, and strawberries in particular, though more, it would seem, to delight the eye than to please the palate. She had a garden specially reserved for them, and caused them to be painted, together with her favourite flowers, in the margin of a manuscript which she purchased.

Louise's literary tastes account in a great measure for



## The Pearl of Princesses

the strange ascendancy exercised over her by two men whose influence was the very reverse of beneficial. These two men were Jean de Saint-Gelais, who, as we have mentioned, had been nominated by Charles d'Angoulême as one of his executors, and his younger brother, Octavien, Bishop of Angoulême.

The family of Saint-Gelais, which claimed descent from the ancient counts of Lusignan, was a very prolific one, but all its members seem to have possessed the gift of making their way in the world, and securing, by the aid of their good looks, their abilities, or their ingratiating manners, a rich heiress, a lucrative court office, or a fat benefice. Quite a number of them had descended upon Cognac, which, however, as a rule, merely served them as a stepping-stone; but Jean de Saint-Gelais, who had arrived there when quite a boy, had remained to become, under Charles d'Angoulême, the very pivot of the little court. It was at his château of Montlieu that the count took refuge after his abortive attempt at insurrection in 1487, and it was he who in all probability negotiated his master's submission to the royal authority and his marriage with Louise of Savoy. Appointed chamberlain to the young countess, the intimacy to which she admitted him gave rise to a good deal of gossip, and he was very generally regarded as the pendant of Mlle. Jeanne de Polignac. At the time when Louise became a widow, he was approaching his fortieth year, a handsome, frivolous, witty man, of charming manners and amazing versatility, and quite untrammelled by any scruple. The variety of his tastes and the suppleness of his character are well illustrated by his *Histoire de Louis XII*, which a political motive induced him to write in later years, a work of undeniable literary merit, but in which he suppresses

## An Episcopal Poet

or distorts a truth which does not happen to please him as coolly as though to do so was the most natural thing in the world for an historian.

His brother Octavien, his junior by eleven years, had been "destined from his cradle for ecclesiastical benefices," and, thanks to the good offices of the Comte d'Angoulême, had shortly before the count's death been appointed bishop of the diocese. But the bent of his mind was towards literature rather than theology, and he was more skilled in the winning of hearts than the saving of souls. In the rivalry between the old classical and the new Boccaccian influences in literature which enlivened the closing years of the fifteenth century, Octavien posed as the champion of the new school, and his poetical effusions, which are a tolerably good index of his character, enjoyed an immense vogue. He had made his *début* by the translation into the vernacular of an erotic poem by Pope Pius II, written, of course, during the pleasure-loving youth which had preceded his eminent pontificate. It was certainly not the type of work which might be safely placed in the hands of seminarists, for the licentiousness of the original had lost nothing by translation. Nevertheless, since the former was from the pen of one who in after years became the head of the Church, and contained besides an official ingredient of devotion, Octavien deemed himself justified in dedicating his book to the King and placing it under the ægis of the Holy Trinity.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Lystoire de Eurialus et Lucesse vrays amoureux selon pape pie*, éd. goth. petit in 8°, suivie de la traduction, par "Johannis Floridi," de *l'Histoire de Guisgard et Sigismonde*, de l'Arétin. Imprimé le 6 Mai 1493, par Ant. Vérard. The dedication was as follows—

En lonneur de la sainte Trinité,  
Louenge de vous, Charles roy très chrestien,  
De latin en françois j'ay translaté  
Lystoire du très fort amoureux lien

# The Pearl of Princesses

Encouraged by the flattering reception which this poem met with, the young ecclesiastic embarked upon an allegory, the *Séjour d'honneur*, which appears to have been inspired by Dante, or rather by Virgil. The author is alone in his study, sad, lonely, unloved, when "Sensuality" appears to him, in the shape of a blonde and buxom goddess, who beckons him to follow her. He does so, and meets with many adventures, including a visit to Hades, but eventually reaches a magnificent palace, the Paradise, essentially terrestrial, of which the Court holds the keys.

Octavien became the rage ; the ladies idolized him as an immortal poet, and at the age of twenty-seven he found himself a bishop. His promotion to high ecclesiastical office did not serve to restrain his poetical activity, and he continued to enrich the literature of his country with verse of all kinds, some of which is certainly difficult to reconcile with an episcopal signature.<sup>1</sup>

Such were the men to whom the young widow of Charles d'Angouleme so readily submitted herself. Jean de Saint-Gelais guided the body, and boasted that he had made of the little court of Cognac "a second Paradise" ; Octavien guided the mind. With them at her right hand, it would have been surprising if Louise of Savoy,

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D'Eurialus et de Lucesse, le maintien  
Qui en amours ont eu durent leur vie,  
Ainsi que la descript, ou temps ancien,  
Aeneas Silvius, nommé pape pie.

<sup>1</sup> Notably, a very scurrilous ballad directed against the Bernardine monks of Moulins, in which he describes the grief of the ladies of that town at the departure of the holy men, and the extremely coarse pieces on the satisfaction of the ladies of Florence and Tours at the arrival of the French army. Octavien had a natural son, Mellin de Saint-Gelais, to whom he transmitted his literary tastes, and who was to achieve a considerable reputation as an effeminate and licentious poet.



## Character of Louise of Savoy

thrown as she had been while still hardly more than a child, without transition and perhaps without sufficient preparation, from the austere circle of Anne de Beaujeu into one dominated wholly by pleasure, should have been other than she was : a woman refined and accomplished, a lover of literature and the arts, it is true, but a woman who cared only for the material side of life, though she was amazingly superstitious and combined with her Boccaccian morals a pedantry in the observance of religious ceremonies worthy of the most saintly of *dévotes*. She would almost as soon have given up a gallant as have missed a Mass.

The true religion of Louise was ambition, and it was one which did not serve to make her beloved. Egotistical, haughty, jealous, avaricious, and crafty, and shrinking from nothing that might secure her domination, she has, indeed, left a detestable reputation.

She serves in history as the pendant to the figure, far more delicate, of Catherine de' Medici, princess of the school of Macchiavelli, who combined the virile qualities of the French with Italian suppleness. But Catherine, more pure as a wife, more intelligent as a mother, more amiable as a woman, who would have been an illustrious queen, if the greatness of the end had not rendered her so little scrupulous in her choice of means, was infinitely the superior of Louise. They were both vindictive and corrupt, and dowered with a genius for intrigue. But violence and passion diminished the influence of Louise ; while Catherine's powers of self-control and dissimulation seldom failed her, and her irreproachable private life gave to her actions the appearance of disinterestedness.

Nevertheless, Louise of Savoy was a woman of unquestioned ability, and her regency, during the captivity

## The Pearl of Princesses

of François I at Madrid, would have entitled her to the nation's gratitude, had she not by her fatal avarice, the one passion of her later years, and of which the hapless Semblançai was the scapegoat, brought about more misfortune than she repaired.

With many vices, Louise must be credited with one great virtue—maternal tenderness. She was the most devoted of mothers; her children were her idols, the pride and joy of her life; she had them always with her; they slept in her room; she watched their every moment with tender solicitude. Yet this devotion was far from being entirely disinterested, for through them alone could her ambition be gratified: François she intended to become the most accomplished gentleman of his age, a model for all contemporary princes to form themselves upon; Marguerite, the most learned and the most charming of princesses; and their renown and glory would reflect upon herself. But, while devoting so much time and care to fitting them to adorn and grace the lofty stations which she intended them to fill, she troubled very little about their moral principles. Her idea of moral training appears to have been to win their childish affections for herself.

Eighteen months after he had ascended the ducal throne of Savoy, Louise's father died at the Château of Moulins, where he was staying with his brother-in-law, the Duc de Bourbon (November 1497). He was accorded a magnificent funeral, the church being hung in black and decorated with two hundred escutcheons painted by Étienne Lenain, while the Ducs d'Orléans and de Bourbon, wearing long mantles, the trains of which were carried by chamberlains, escorted the coffin, followed by



## Death of Charles VIII

a number of great nobles. Neither Louise nor her children, however, attended the ceremony.

In the spring of the following year, another death occurred, which was of infinitely more importance for the little Court of Cognac, the whole existence of which it was to change. On April 6, Charles VIII, whose health had been for some time declining, died in a few hours from an attack of apoplexy, brought on by accidentally striking his head against the low archway of the Galérie Hocquelebac at the Château of Amboise. Of the four children which Anne de Bretagne had borne him none had survived, and the Duc d'Orléans, in consequence, succeeded him under the title of Louis XII, and the little Comte d'Angoulême became heir presumptive to the Crown of France.

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### CHAPTER III

AT the time of the event which brought her brother so near the throne, Marguerite d'Angoulême was within a few days of completing her sixth year. The promise of a quite unusual intelligence which she had shown almost from her cradle had been more than confirmed; and Louise of Savoy was almost as proud of her as she was of her son.

Hitherto she had taught her little daughter herself, but now, finding that her time was too much occupied by the care of François's estates to allow her to continue to do so, she resolved to secure the assistance of a suitable *gouvernante*.

Ever since the abortive attempt at insurrection in 1487 the late Comte d'Angoulême had been relegated to a kind of semi-disgrace; and the time-serving courtiers, taking their cue from their Sovereign, had almost ignored the existence of his widow and children. But, now that the little François had become so important a personage, their attitude underwent a sudden change; and, as soon as Louise's intentions were made known, quite a number of noble dames proffered her their services. It must have afforded the countess not a little cynical amusement to observe the solicitude with which the post of *gouvernante* to her little girl was sought by ladies who had until then found it convenient to forget the existence of both mother and daughter, and the professions of attachment to herself which accompanied some of the applications. But she was

## Louis XII and Anne de Bretagne

not the woman to be won by flattery, and deliberated for some time before finally deciding in favour of Madame de Châtillon, wife of Jacques de Châtillon, who had been chamberlain to the late King, and had been continued in that office by his successor; and whom Brantôme describes as "a wise and virtuous dame, of unblemished virtue and descent." Louis XII, of whom the countess solicited the confirmation of this appointment, at once signified his approval, stating that he considered Madame de Châtillon "eminently qualified to discharge the arduous duties of *gouvernante* to his cousin, the Princess Marguerite."

It is probable that the anxiety of the ladies of the Court to secure the post in question would not have been nearly so great could they have foreseen the matrimonial intentions of their new Sovereign, which cast a cloud over the prospects of the little Comte d'Angoulême, and seemed likely to render the glorious vision of her son as King, and herself the mother of a king, which had brought so much joy to the ambitious heart of Louise of Savoy, a mere chimera. Within a few weeks of his ascending the throne, Louis XII, now master of his own actions, resolved to secure the dissolution of his childless marriage with Jeanne de France, in order to marry Anne de Bretagne, the young widow of his predecessor, and secure to France the duchy of Brittany, the sovereignty of which had reverted to Anne on her husband's death.

Louise, it is true, derived no small consolation from the prediction of François de Paule, and from the fact that the children whom Anne de Bretagne had had by Charles VIII had been so sickly that none of them had survived its infancy. Since Louis XII, though still a

## The Pearl of Princesses

comparatively young man, was continually ailing, it seemed doubtful whether, even if Anne bore him sons, they would live to grow up.

But the effect which it might have upon the prospects of her idolized son was not the only reason which caused Louise to regard his Majesty's proposed marriage with disfavour. Except in physical attractions, in which the countess had to yield the palm to the Queen, she and Anne de Bretagne were the exact antithesis of one another : Anne, the epitome of all the domestic virtues, modest, chaste,<sup>1</sup> charitable, honourable, sincerely pious, and, it must be added, a little dull and provincial, cordially detested the cultured, egotistical, immoral widow of Charles d'Angoulême, who had a fine and healthy boy who might one day succeed to the throne, while her own sons were lying in the cold vaults of the cathedral of Tours. This dislike, this jealousy, which was ere long to develop into a blind hatred, she had been at no pains to conceal during the last years of the late King's life. Hence, the mortifying neglect with which Louise had been treated by the Court, and which that lady foresaw would continue to be her fate if Anne for the second time became Queen of France.

It was, therefore, in a very uneasy frame of mind that Louise repaired to Paris to pay her respects to the new King, who received her very cordially. She demanded for her son the estates of the eldest branch of the House of Orléans, which were united to the Crown by the fact of Louis XII's accession. The King, notwithstanding the difficulty of alienating them, would probably have acceded to this request but for the intervention of Queen

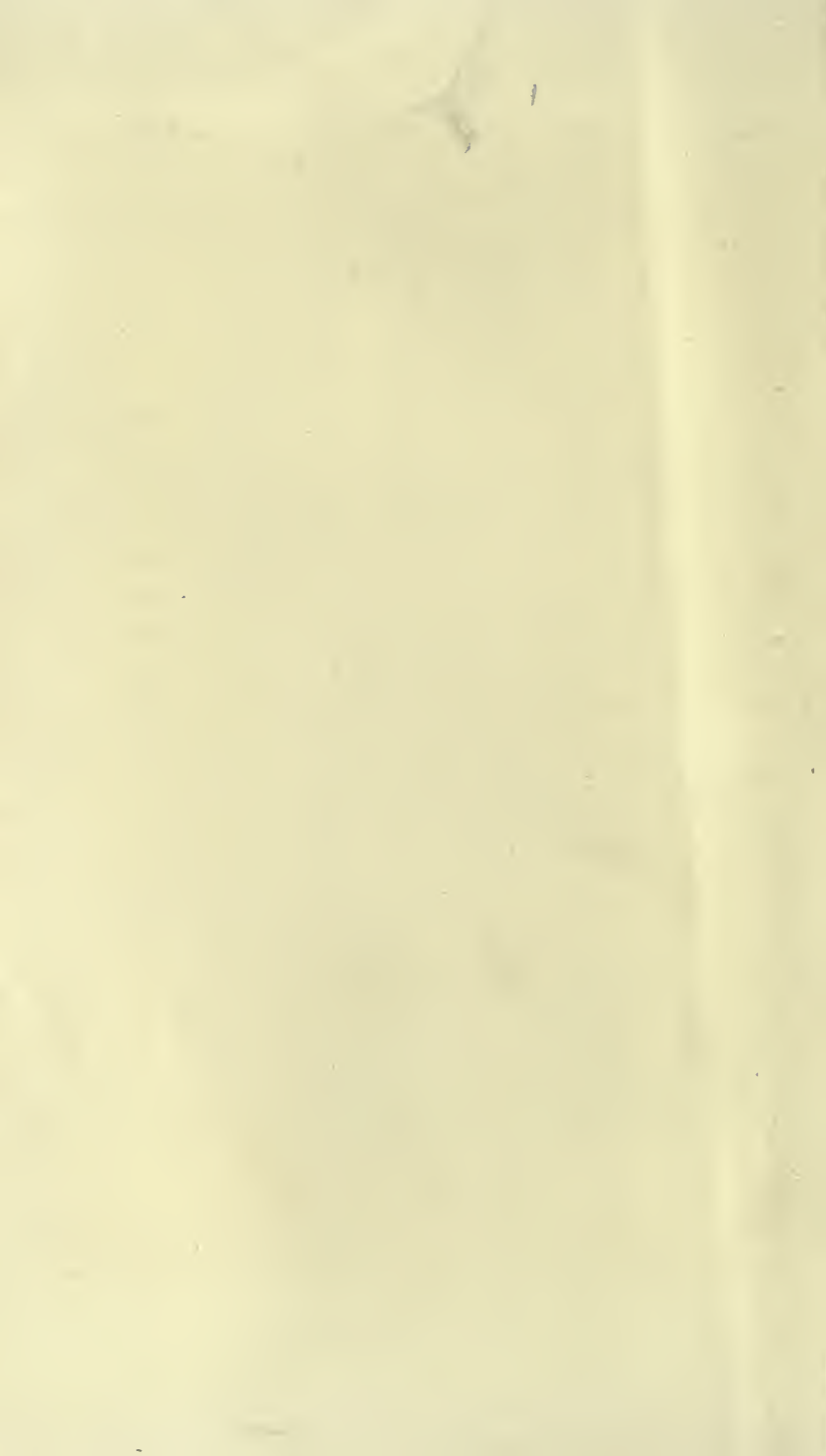
<sup>1</sup> "Another Vesta, another Diana," says Père Hilarion de Coste.





ANNE OF BRITTANY.





## Louise and her Children at Chinon

Anne, who wished him to preserve his private fortune for the benefit of their future children, as she intended to preserve the duchy of Brittany. However, he did what he could for Louise ; ceded to her the domains of Saint-Maixent, Civray, and Usson ; accorded to François a pension of 8000 livres, and gave her a verbal promise of complete liberty in the management of her children. At the same time, he intimated his desire that she should take up her residence for a time at Chinon, whither he intended to go to await the result of his divorce proceedings, and bring her children with her.

Louise left Paris very dissatisfied, for she felt convinced that the King's refusal to transfer the estates of the House of Orléans to her son was due to the influence of Anne de Bretagne, and she feared that her removal to Chinon was but a preliminary step to depriving her of the independence she had enjoyed at Cognac. At first, however, nothing occurred to confirm these suspicions. "My lord, the King," writes Jean de Saint-Gelais, who had accompanied the countess to Chinon, as he had to Paris, "received the party benignly and graciously, with honour befitting his nearest relatives on the paternal side. He gave Madame d'Angoulême lodgings in his Château of Chinon, over his own chamber, where he visited her frequently in most familiar fashion. As for the children, he knew not how to show them favour enough, for had he been their father he could not have made more of them. And, certes, there were few children to equal them in any rank of life ; since, for their years, they were so accomplished that it was pleasant and delightful even to look at them."

But this pleasant state of affairs did not last long. In a few days his Majesty's mood changed altogether ; he

## The Pearl of Princesses

became suspicious of Louise—cold, tyrannical, and even wished to deprive her of her children. The reason of this sudden and most unwelcome change is uncertain; but, in the light of subsequent events, the most probable explanation would appear to be that the King had learned of the too intimate relations existing between the countess and Jean de Saint-Gelais.

The Maréchal de Gié intervened on her behalf, and persuaded the King to allow Louise to keep her children with her, on condition of her going to reside at the Château of Blois, in the midst of the Scottish Guard. To this she very reluctantly consented, and the marshal charged himself with the mission of installing her there, and of reducing, at the same time, her entourage. Louise, who attributed already to the marshal her enforced departure from Cognac, received this new intervention on his part very badly; and when she learned that foremost among the attendants upon whose dismissal he insisted was her beloved Saint-Gelais, her indignation knew no bounds, and she conceived for him from that moment a rancorous hatred, which, however, she was careful to dissimulate.

Louis XII experienced little difficulty in obtaining from the Pope the nullity of his marriage with Jeanne de France. For the then occupant of the Papal See, the famous Roderigo Borgia (Alexander VI), was not the kind of man to hesitate where his interests were concerned, and the friendship of the King of France was a valuable asset. A mock trial was held before three Papal commissioners, and on December 19, 1498, the decree annulling the marriage was placed in Louis's eager hands at Chinon by his Holiness's natural son, Cæsar Borgia, who arrived clad in cloth-of-gold and covered

## The Maréchal de Gié

with jewels, on a horse shod with silver, at the head of an immense retinue. The grateful monarch overwhelmed him with gifts and honours. He conferred upon him the title of "*de France*," gave him the duchy of Valentinois, in Dauphiné, a splendid *gratification*, a large pension, and—a thing more difficult—a wife, to wit, the beautiful and virtuous Charlotte d'Albret, sister of the King of Navarre. Seven weeks later, and nine months after the death of Charles VIII, Louis married Anne de Bretagne in the chapel of the Château of Nantes.

Meanwhile, Louise of Savoy was experiencing a far from pleasant time, since residence at Blois placed her in an almost intolérable subjection. The Maréchal de Gié, aware of this, took advantage of the fact that the château was then in process of reconstruction and delivered over to the masons to represent to the King that the countess was not in sufficient security there, and, under this pretext, obtained authority to transfer her to Amboise, a place too full of memories of Charles VIII for Louis and his bride to have any desire to reside there. At the same time, Gié did not abandon his self-imposed task of surveillance, but reappeared with the title of Captain of Amboise. It was a singularly modest post for a marshal of France; nevertheless, he had had considerable difficulty in securing it; for its holder, a shrewd Scotsman named Carr, had only consented to surrender it on condition of receiving a pension equal to the emoluments of his office, a lucrative post at Milan, and a good round sum for his wife. The marshal's anxiety to be Captain of Amboise was due to his desire to obtain influence over the young François d'Angouleme, while, at the same time, ingratiating himself with Louise, for he believed that there was little likelihood of Louis XII having a son who would



## The Pearl of Princesses

grow up, and that he saw in the little heir presumptive his future sovereign.

To placate Louise, Gié took advantage of a visit which their Majesties paid him at his Château of Le Verger, in Anjou, to persuade the King, notwithstanding the opposition of his consort, to constitute a duchy of Valois with a portion of the ancient patrimony of the House of Orléans, and confer it upon the Comte d'Angoulême, whom we must henceforth call François de Valois. But great as was the service which he had thus rendered her son, it does not seem to have diminished to any appreciable degree the hatred which Louise had vowed against him. She could not forgive him the dismissal of Jean de Saint-Gelais, nor his subsequent treatment of that personage.

In consenting to the dismissal of her chamberlain, Louise had naturally interested herself in his fate, and had obtained for him, by way of compensation, the promise of the office of seneschal at Agen. However, a sort of fatality caused this post to be given to some one else, and, in consequence, Saint-Gelais continued to roam about the town of Amboise and to appear at the château. He even took to spending the night there, in the lodging of one of his friends, and his comings and goings became the talk of the town. The Maréchal de Gié, like a good courtier, appeared to ignore M. de Saint-Gelais's visits to the château; but one day the latter received an order direct from the King, which, without specifying any reason, forbade him to present himself there again, under any pretext whatsoever.

At the beginning of the summer of 1499, the plague broke out in the valley of the Loire and raged with great virulence. Every one who was able to do so took



## Birth of Claude de France

to flight, and Louise of Savoy obtained permission to remove her children to the Château of Romorantin, one of her dower-houses, situated about thirty miles south of Amboise. The King and Queen had taken up their residence at Blois early in April, but in July, the latter, driven away in her turn by the plague, sought an asylum with Louise at Romorantin, while Louis XII set out for the war in Italy. Anne was enceinte, and on October 13 she gave birth to a daughter,<sup>1</sup> to the great relief of her hostess, who had, of course, been in mortal fear lest the child should be a son. The little girl, who, though slightly deformed, appeared to be healthy enough, was called Claude, because the Queen had dedicated her to the saint of that name, usually invoked in perilous circumstances and at the approach of death. The King, who received the news near Milan, consoled himself for his disappointment by remarking that "there was good hope of having a son, since he had a daughter."

It might be supposed that the sojourn of these two women under the same roof, in circumstances so touching, would have served to bring about a better understanding between them. Unfortunately, it did nothing of the kind, and they separated at the beginning of December more hostile towards one another than ever. The Queen proceeded to Blois, while Louise returned to what she regarded as her imprisonment at Amboise.

It was not that the Maréchal de Gié was a very severe gaoler. He came but little to Amboise, since, being

<sup>1</sup> "My daughter [*i. e.* daughter-in-law] Claude, united to my son by marriage, was born at my house at Romorantin the thirteenth day of October at eight hours fifty-four minutes after midday, 1499."—*Journal de Louise de Savoie.*

## The Pearl of Princesses

high in the favour and confidence of the King, his presence was generally required at Court, and he delegated, in fact, the command of the château to a lieutenant named Ploret. But Louise resented any kind of restriction on her liberty of action, and she credited him with the design of taking her children away from her. Thus, when the marshal, who considered that it was unfitting that François, then seven years old, should sleep in the room of his late father's mistress, Jeanne de Polignac, and had obtained an order from the King withdrawing the little prince altogether from the charge of women, wished to give him one of his own sons as a companion, Louise refused absolutely and took the boy into her own room, where Marguerite still slept.

As time went on, she grew still more suspicious, so much so that she would hardly allow the children out of her sight. It was the universal usage in courts for the maids-of-honour to enter the bedchamber of princesses every morning, to wait upon them at their rising. But at Amboise it was not so; Louise and her children dispensed with all attendance when they rose. The Maréchal de Gié's deputy, Ploret, was in the habit of coming to the door to conduct François to Mass. Louise determined to put an end to this simple proceeding, fearful apparently lest some day her son might not be allowed to return. Accordingly, one morning, when Ploret, being absent, his place had been taken by one of his officers, the Sire de Durtal, she refused to allow the little prince to leave the room. Durtal, after waiting some considerable time, knocked and demanded admission, but was informed by the *valets de chambre* that they had orders not to open the door. Durtal, who was, after all, only a soldier, and bound to obey the orders

## The Companions of the Duc de Valois

of his superior officer, insisted and ended by forcing the door. Thereupon Louise flew into a terrible passion. "Since when," cried she, "do soldiers assist at the *lever* of the princes?" She wrote a furiously indignant letter to the Maréchal de Gié, who hastened to disavow his subordinate's action; but this did not serve to appease the anger of the exasperated countess, who went in person to appeal to the King. But she got little enough satisfaction in that quarter, for Louis XII was persuaded that to allow her to exercise such unbounded influence over her son was certainly not for the boy's good; and Louise was obliged to give her consent to François's having some young companions of his own age, who were to share his studies and recreations. Among these young nobles, who were entitled his pages of honour, were Gaston de Foix, the future hero of Ravenna; Henri d'Albret, afterwards King of Navarre; Charles de Bourbon, Comte de Montpensier, better known as the Constable de Bourbon; Anne de Montmorency, also a future Constable of France; Philippe de Chabot, Sieur de Brion, afterwards Admiral of France; and the Sieur de Fleuranges—*le Jeune Aventureux*—who appears to have been François's favourite playmate.

Louis XII was meditating a still more radical change at Amboise. He wished to remarry Louise and settle her children's future. From the year 1500, the question of marrying Marguerite d'Angoulême to Arthur, Prince of Wales, elder son of Henry VII, was discussed. The suggestion came from the Duchesse de Bourbon, who maintained an active correspondence with the King of England, and Louis XII threw himself heartily into the scheme and offered to give Marguerite a dowry of 200,000 écus. But the English Government, then on



## The Pearl of Princesses

rather cold terms with France, preferred Catherine of Aragon.

As for Louise, the king suggested as a husband for her Alfonso d'Este, the son and heir of Hercule d'Este, Duke of Ferrara; and the lady, notwithstanding her reluctance to be separated from her children, appeared not unwilling to exchange the *régime* of Amboise for one of the most brilliant little courts in Europe, and to find herself once more the centre of a select artistic and literary circle. However, Pope Alexander VI had also cast his eye on Alfonso, whom he decided would be a very suitable husband for his daughter, the celebrated Lucretia Borgia, and he had the fatal idea of communicating his desire to the French Government and soliciting their good offices at Ferrara. Louis XII was officially obliged to consent, and sent a special embassy to Italy; but, with characteristic duplicity, he, at the same time, caused the Duke of Ferrara to be informed, through his Ambassador in France, that he should not at all resent a refusal, advised him to postpone giving his Holiness a definite answer until he should see him a few months hence; and renewed his proposals in regard to Louise of Savoy. The Duke, following Louis's advice, sought to gain time by stipulating for a dowry which he never for a moment believed his Holiness would be willing to give his daughter. But, to his astonishment and chagrin, Alexander VI raised no difficulty at all; after which it was, of course, impossible for the Duke to refuse to conclude the matter.

And so Alfonso d'Este married the fair Lucretia, by which marriage he came ere long to a tragic end, and Louise remained in France, which would certainly have been well rid of her.

## The Duc de Valois goes to Court

At the beginning of the year 1501 she experienced a terrible fright.

“The day of the Conversion of St. Paul, the twenty-fifth of January 1501, about two hours after noon,” she writes in her *Journal*, “my King, my Lord, my Cæsar and my son, was run away with across the fields, near Amboise, on a palfrey which had been given him by the Maréchal de Gié, and so great was the danger that those who were present thought it irreparable. But God, the Protector of widows and the Defender of orphans, foreseeing the future, would not forsake me, knowing that if an accident had so suddenly robbed me of my love, I should have been too miserable to endure it.”

The following year she suffered another term of painful suspense, the Queen being again pregnant; but, as she records with almost savage joy, although the child was a son, “he was unable to retard the elevation of my Cæsar, for he had no life.” And the man who hastened to Amboise to be the first to bring her the news was “the poor gentleman who served my son and myself with very humble and loyal perseverance”; presumably Jean de Saint-Gelais.

The preceding entry in this curious diary records the death of François’s little dog Hapeguai, “*de bon amour et loyal à son maistre.*” It is worthy of note that she consecrates to the dog a longer funeral oration than to her husband.

Towards the end of the year 1502 the little Duc de Valois, who was now eight years old, began to make a figure in the world. He paid occasional visits to the Court, and the Ambassadors sometimes mentioned him in their despatches. “My son,” writes Louise in her *Journal*, “went away from Amboise to become a courtier, and left me all alone.” When at home he practised



## The Pearl of Princesses

every kind of manly exercise with the young companions whom the King had chosen for him : riding, *escaigne*—a kind of lawn-tennis—and “*la grosse boule*,” two games lately imported from Italy, archery, fencing, tilting, and so forth. Thanks to these exercises, in which he soon attained great proficiency, the young prince became a strong, active, and “very noble” lad ; generous, high-spirited, and good-humoured.

The intellectual part of his education was subordinate to the physical, and was entirely under the maternal direction. We do not know what it embraced during his early years. “It is probable,” writes M. de Maulde la Clavière, “that, in teaching him to read, she nourished him on the histories of Priam and Hector. We find among her manuscripts a *Recueil des Histoires de Troye*, of Raoul le Feuvre, with miniatures representing Hercules, in his cradle, strangling the serpents ; Hercules, when young, struggling with the lions ; and we should not be surprised if in buying this interesting manuscript Louise thought of her son.” None of his first tutors appear to have been in any way remarkable, if we except Christopher Longueil, a Parisian lawyer, who taught him history. His history copybook, when he was just ten, has been preserved, full of badly-scrawled jumbles of stray facts about miscellaneous people, with a list of the French kings.

In a panegyric of Saint-Louis delivered at Poitiers in 1510, and dedicated to the Duc de Valois, Longueil delivered a pompous eulogy of the Duc de Valois, whom he described as “conversant with the annals of the nations and very skilled in geography.” Like a true courtier, however, he disclaimed all credit for this, and attributed the progress which the prince had made in his studies to Louise of Savoy.

## Education of the Duc de Valois

The person, however, who had the most influence in shaping François's intellectual tastes at this early period of his life appears to have been Artus Gouffier, Sieur de Boisy, an elder brother of Bonnivet, who had been appointed the young duke's preceptor in 1505. Boisy had served for a long time in Italy, and had there formed literary and artistic tastes which he endeavoured to make his pupil share. He succeeded the more easily since the love of culture was for François a family tradition, which could be traced back to his great-grandmother, the noble and gracious Valentina Visconti, and his great-uncle Charles d'Orléans, the most elegant poet of the fifteenth century. But if the boy learned from his tutor to speak of the erudite with respect and to regard them as persons deserving of his distinguished protection and encouragement, he did not profit much by their knowledge, and drew almost all his instruction from the romances of chivalry, which he read with avidity and in which he sought his models. It was from the same source rather than from the *Instructions sur les devoirs d'un roi*, written by the worthy Jean de la Mare, Bishop of Condom, by order of Louis XII, presumably for the benefit of the heir presumptive, that he drew his notions of the rights and duties of royalty. He conceived the idea of a "*roi chevalier*"—gracious and magnificent for his courtiers, gallant for the ladies, terrible for his enemies, distinguishing himself by sweeping blows with the sword after the style of the Rolands and Amadis, without knowing or caring much about the art of war. Such was the ideal which he kept before him from his boyhood, and which appears to have commanded the warm approval both of his mother and of his youthful companions.

## CHAPTER IV

IN the spring of 1502 the project of marrying Marguerite, now eleven years old, to an English prince was resumed. Arthur, Prince of Wales, the husband of Catherine of Aragon, had just died, and his brother Henry, Duke of York (the future Henry VIII), had become heir to the throne. He was a year older than the French princess. Louis XII despatched the Comte d'Entremont, one of the gentlemen of his chamber, to England, to convey his condolences to Henry VII, and at the same time to propose a marriage between Marguerite and the new Prince of Wales. The Ambassador, in explaining the second part of his mission, observed that, "although it became not a demoiselle to make the first overtures of marriage, nor for her relatives so to do, yet that King Louis, out of regard for the King of England, and for his cousin Marguerite, had been pleased so to act."

The wary and avaricious Henry VII was sadly embarrassed what reply to make to these overtures. He did not wish to offend the French King, for the growth of the French monarchy in extent and power, through the extinction of the great feudatories by Louis XI, had raised France to a height far above that of her European rivals; and he would probably have accepted the proposal gladly enough had Marguerite been the King's daughter. But neither her rank at this time nor her dowry appeared to him sufficient to make her a suitable match for the Prince of Wales; and he was, besides, considering the possibility



## A Matrimonial Project

of obtaining a Papal dispensation to marry Prince Henry to his brother's widow, in order to retain possession of the rich dowry in money and jewels which Catherine of Aragon had brought with her from Spain. He therefore courteously excused himself from giving an immediate answer, and promised to send a special embassy to France to convey his decision to Louis XII.

On June 25, 1502, an Ambassador Extraordinary, in the person of Matthew Bacquier, arrived at Grenoble, whither Louis XII had proceeded on his way to Italy, and was received by the First Minister, the Cardinal d'Amboise, who spoke with unction of the affection of his master for Marguerite d'Angoulême, "whom he loved as his own child." To which the Ambassador answered that, doubtless this offer of marriage was an honourable one for the Prince of Wales, particularly as the count, brother of the princess, might perchance succeed to the Crown of France. Nevertheless, it appeared probable to the King his master, and to the lords of the Council, that the King of France, his good brother and cousin, and the Queen his consort, being yet young, might have a numerous progeny, both of sons and daughters, which the King his master hoped and desired above all things ; it therefore appeared to the said noble personages that the proposal made by the King of France was neither suitable nor to be desired, although had the said lady been the daughter of King Louis, the King his master would have accepted the offer with joy. Since the departure of the Comte d'Entremont, the King had received overtures of marriage for his son from the Ambassadors of Spain and Hungary ; but, before making any reply, he desired to express to the King of France his profound regrets, and to thank him for the very courteous proposal he had made him.

## The Pearl of Princesses

The cardinal expressed his regret that the King of France had only one daughter, and that that daughter was no longer free, and assured the Ambassador that, if it should please God to give him other daughters, the King of England should have the preference before any living prince.

The Ambassador was then ushered into the presence of Louis, who, having been apprised by his Minister of the rejection of his proposal, was not in the best of humours, and promised Bacquier somewhat sarcastically that, "should God give him other daughters, his good brother and cousin should receive the earliest notification of that event." Bacquier was next received by the Queen, and subsequently entertained to a grand banquet, at which he had a conversation with the Maréchal de Gié, who spoke in high terms of Marguerite and her brother, and described Mlle. d'Angoulême as "*très belle et bien sage de son âge.*" Marguerite was probably spared much unhappiness by the failure of the project to marry her to the heir to the throne of England. Nevertheless, it was afterwards a subject of deep regret to her brother François, and also, at one time, to Henry VIII, that the scheme had not materialized.

Louis XII, without allowing himself to be discouraged by this rebuff, began to seek for a prince of less importance, and offered the Duke of Calabria, son of the ex-King of Naples, the choice of his own niece, Mlle. de Foix, or of Marguerite, whom he decorated with the title of "the Dauphin's sister." But he failed again, for the Duke of Calabria had cast his eye upon Catherine of Aragon, in the hope that the Pope would refuse the dispensation necessary to allow her to marry her late husband's brother.



## A Talented Princess

The Maréchal de Gié was right when he described Marguerite as "*bien sage de son âge.*" Her aptitude for learning and the keenness of her comprehension astonished her tutors, and the progress she was making in her studies was extraordinary. She was already well grounded in the Italian, Spanish, and Latin languages, knew a little Greek, spoke and wrote her own tongue with ease and elegance, had made considerable progress in philosophy and divinity under the tuition of the learned Robert Hurault, Abbé of Saint-Martin d'Autun, and was studying Hebrew with the great teacher Paul Paradis. Knowledge, indeed, as one of her biographers has well observed, was as necessary to her mind as sustenance to her body, and she applied herself to its attainment with an energy and an enthusiasm beyond all praise. "She was a princess of enlarged mind," writes Brantôme, "being very able both as to her natural and acquired endowments."

But remarkable as were her intellectual qualities, her chief attraction lay in the sweetness of her disposition. She was born smiling, we are told, and held out her little hand to each comer—"a sure and certain sign of a generous nature." Sensible, modest, kind-hearted and affectionate, she endeared herself to all about her, and "showed in her eyes, her countenance, her deportment, her speech, and, indeed, in all her actions that the Spirit of God had been vouchsafed to her."<sup>1</sup> Though amiable to all, her affection in her early years was mainly concentrated on her mother and brother—*Notre Trinité*, as she liked to call the group, "of which I pray that I may become the smallest angle of an angle."

With the opening of the year 1504 came disastrous news from Italy; not only was the kingdom of Naples

<sup>1</sup> Sainte Marthe, *Oraison funèbre de Marguerite, Reine de Navarre.*

## The Pearl of Princesses

irrevocably lost to Louis XII, but the remnant of the French army, which had taken refuge in Gaetä, had been forced to capitulate. The King, who was at Lyons, took the misfortune which had befallen the French arms so much to heart that he could neither sleep nor eat, and at length fell so seriously ill that his physicians pronounced his recovery hopeless. Their verdict threw the whole realm into the utmost consternation, for Louis's popularity was unbounded. The people crowded to the churches to pray for the King's recovery; solemn processions were spontaneously organized everywhere; France became one vast camp of pilgrims.

The Queen, believing her husband's death inevitable, and aware of the bitter hatred which Louise of Savoy entertained for her, made preparations for a hasty retreat into Brittany as soon as the King should have ceased to exist. She therefore gave orders to the officers of her Household to load two or three barges with her most valuable effects: plate, jewels, furniture, and so forth, and to send them by the Loire to Nantes. Anne's marriage-contracts guaranteed her possession of her personal property, although it was an open question whether she was justified in removing it during the King's lifetime. But the Maréchal de Gié caused the barges to be stopped between Saumur and Nantes, and laid an embargo on their freightage, on the ground that, since Louis XII still lived, the Queen had no right to act thus.<sup>1</sup> He also caused the banks of the Loire to be guarded by 10,000 archers, to prevent Madame Claude, who was at Blois, being carried off by her mother.

<sup>1</sup> Martha Walker Frere, in her *Life of Marguerite, Queen of Navarre*, attributes the marshal's action to the "secret orders" of Louise of Savoy, but this is quite incorrect.

## Louise and the Maréchal de Gié

Louis XII did not die. A few days later his illness took a turn for the better, and in a month's time he was sufficiently recovered to return to Blois with the Queen.

As soon as he learned that the King was out of danger, the marshal, in great alarm, hastened to Amboise, where he informed Louise of the situation, and to secure her support against the vengeance of the Queen, offered to do everything in his power to bring about the marriage of the Duc de Valois with Madame Claude. No greater marriage than this could be desired for François, since Madame Claude was heiress to her mother's duchy of Brittany ; but though Louis XII was favourable to the project, the Queen was strongly opposed to it, having set her heart on marrying her daughter to the young Charles of Austria, afterwards the Emperor Charles V. Louise, however, though she received the marshal very graciously, declined to commit herself. She recognized that the hour for her revenge had come, since she was well aware that Anne de Bretagne detested the Maréchal de Gié and regarded him as a dangerous enemy. He had been one of the first of the great Breton nobles to transfer his services to France, and he had consistently thwarted her in the design she had cherished since her marriage with Louis XII, of leaving Brittany independent after her death.

Louise's revenge was typical of her character and of her century. Three brothers of the name of Pontbriant, creatures of Gié, were suborned by her, and, taking advantage of the King's weak condition, which left him for the time being completely under the influence of the Queen, charges of *lèse-majesté* and malversation were launched against the marshal. The Sieur Alain d'Albret, a kinsman of the King of Navarre and a bitter



## The Pearl of Princesses

enemy of Gié, who had been his successful rival for the hand and immense fortune of Marguerite d'Armagnac, daughter of the late Duc de Nemours, joined in the attack ; and the Queen, forgetting for the nonce her hatred of Louise in her desire for the ruin of a more redoubtable enemy, threw the whole weight of her influence into the same scale. The marshal defended himself valiantly and reproached Louise with her ingratitude in language which bears a strong resemblance to that subsequently used by Cardinal Wolsey on a similar occasion. "If," said he, "I had always served God as I have served you, Madame, I should not have a great account to render him at the hour of death." And he declared his conviction that the principal motive of the countess's animosity towards him was "his dismissal of a man whom it was superfluous to mention, since all France knew his name." And when called upon by the judges to give the name of this person, he, of course, named Jean de Saint-Gelais.

In the midst of this scandalous affair, at the beginning of April 1505, Louis XII had a dangerous relapse. The physicians again declared that the case was hopeless, and again consternation seized the realm. The Queen, in despair, vowed pilgrimages to all the principal shrines in Brittany ; the whole kingdom wept and spent its days in processions. "One would have said," writes one of Louis XII's historians, "that every one had lost his own child."<sup>1</sup>

The King, in the belief that his end was at hand, made known his last wishes. He gave orders, in a manner so peremptory and determined that his consort dared raise no objection, for the marriage of his daughter with the

<sup>1</sup> Seyssel, *Histoire du roy Loys XII*, cited by Maulde la Clavière.



## Louise and the Maréchal de Gié

Duc de Valois ; forbade Madame Claude to leave the kingdom before her marriage, under any pretext ; sent for the Duc de Valois, and received him as a son and heir ; and nominated a council of regency, in which the Queen and Louise of Savoy were relegated to a very subordinate rôle. Then, on a sudden, his Majesty, just as he had done the previous year, falsified all the predictions of his physicians by taking a turn for the better, and gradually began to recover—a result which he probably owed to his good sense in obliging the Queen to swear to observe the provisions of his will, whereby he delivered himself, for a time at least, from her obsessions. His unhoped-for convalescence was hailed by his subjects as a miracle, and compared to the “miracle” which had saved Trajan from the earthquake at Antioch.

As soon as her husband was declared to be out of danger, the Queen set out for Brittany, under the pretext of discharging her vows, where she remained for several months, being everywhere received with fêtes and ceremonies without end, as though to advertise her sovereignty and her determination to preserve the independence of the duchy. From Brittany she superintended the resumption of the proceedings against the Maréchal de Gié, and mobilized a whole army of lawyers to support the fabrications of Louise of Savoy and her friends. While the countess suborned witnesses, the Queen attempted to influence the judges through their relatives, to whom she sent cases of costly wine and other acceptable presents.

Happily for the marshal, the King appears to have intimated to the *Parlement* of Toulouse, before which the case was being tried, that he did not desire that too severe a sentence should be imposed ; and when at length the *Parlement* pronounced its decree (February 9, 1506),

## The Pearl of Princesses

the accused was merely deprived of his post at Amboise and various other charges, suspended for five years from his office of marshal of France, and banished from the Court for a like period.

This decree was a mere form, and when the marshal appealed to the King, it was the general opinion that the royal prerogative would be exercised in his favour. But Anne de Bretagne opposed so fiercely any suggestion of pardon that Louis XII refrained from intervention, and the decree was allowed to stand. The disgraced Minister accepted his fate with dignity and retired to his Château of Le Verger, where he died some years later, leaving to his sons a great fortune.

Thus, Louise of Savoy, after originating a political trial which had set the whole Court and half France by the ears, and compromised the Queen and a number of other personages who had imprudently mixed themselves up in the affair, recovered her liberty and avenged the humiliations, real or imaginary, which she had suffered. Nevertheless, she herself did not emerge scathless, and her recollection of the trial appears to have been so unpleasant that in her *Journal* she omits all mention of it.

## CHAPTER V

LOUISE OF SAVOY showed a commendable moderation in her hour of triumph. Beyond recalling Jean de Saint-Gelais to Amboise, where he occupied a very modest lodging in an obscure corner of the château, "as a simple friend," without apparently being restored to favour, and increasing to some extent her Household, which in 1506 numbered over one hundred persons, she made little use of her victory. She no doubt acted wisely, for the Court testified even less benevolence towards her than in the past; and the Queen, now that the common enemy was disposed of, showed herself more hostile than ever. Nothing was too insignificant to serve as an excuse for a quarrel between the two ladies; and thus matters continued until the death of Anne de Bretagne.

Under the pretext of initiating François into affairs of State, but really to counteract Louise's influence over her son, Louis XII gave him for *gouverneur* the Cardinal d'Amboise, "*avec la totale administration de la personne,*" and "commanded" the young prince's presence at Court more and more frequently. Then, finding that the countess had secured a stronger hold over François's affections than he had supposed, he reverted to his former project of getting rid of Louise by remarrying her.

In September 1505 his Majesty invited the countess to pass some days at Madon, where he informed her that she had been asked in marriage by Ferdinand the Catholic. Louise began to raise objections; the prince in question was too mature a bridegroom. Louis XII did not press

## The Pearl of Princesses

her, the reason being that he had another suitor in reserve ; and, a day or two later, an Ambassador Extraordinary from Henry VII, who had now been a widower for two years and was on the look out for a young and, needless to say, a well-dowered wife, presented himself and formally demanded her hand on behalf of his master. Again Louise hesitated, Henry being even less to her taste than Ferdinand, and finally declined the proposition ; she could not, she declared, bring herself to forsake her children. Repulsed by the mother, the English Ambassador, with perfect composure, demanded the daughter. This time, Louise raised no objection, while the King seemed highly gratified. Neither of them appeared to consider that there was anything very unusual in marrying a child of fourteen to a man almost on the threshold of old age, austere and morose. Marguerite would be Queen of England, and that ought to compensate her for everything.

The negotiations began forthwith, and, on leaving Madon, Lord Herbert carried away with him a diplomatic note, in which, to enhance the value of the alliance, Louis XII affected to treat Marguerite as his own child, and promised to dower her according to the way of Daughters of France. Shortly afterwards, a new Ambassador, the Duke of Somerset, brought back the King of England's reply. It was very favourable, though, like a practical man, Henry VII desired to be informed as to the amount of the *dot* which the young lady was to receive, insinuating that he had received from Spain an offer of a princess with a large dowry. Louis XII offered 175,000 livres and a trousseau ; his brother of England, after some hesitation, came to the conclusion that this was as much as he could reasonably demand, and, since everything



## Marguerite refuses Henry VII

appeared to be satisfactorily settled, as a last formality, Marguerite was informed of the honour which awaited her. The King and Louise of Savoy, of course, expected her to bow to their wishes, as every young princess had done since the time of Pharamond.

But Marguerite was an independent young lady, the representative of a new world, of new ideas. She had already planned out her life, and it was one in which residence as the consort of an avaricious old potentate, in a land which knew nothing of French elegance and Italian culture, and in which, she was credibly informed, the sun was sometimes invisible for days together, found no part. And so, to their surprise and mortification, she flatly declined to accept the illustrious monarch whom they, in their wisdom, had selected for her, and shed tears enough to melt the sternest of hearts. What! They wished to carry her away into a far country where a strange tongue was spoken! to marry her to a king it is true, but to what a king! old, decrepit! And her brother himself was going to be a king one day! Was it not possible for her to find a young, rich, and noble husband without crossing the sea?

She was allowed to have her way; perhaps, the more readily because her protestations were supported by the entreaties of François, who naturally did not wish to be separated from his sister, and to whom Louise of Savoy could refuse nothing.

Since Marguerite had now attained what, in those days, was considered a marriageable age, it is time to say something of her personal appearance. Beautiful she was not, despite all that the poets have written about her; but she possessed, nevertheless, sufficient attractions to

## The Pearl of Princesses

command numerous admirers, and, in one instance at least, as we shall presently see, to inspire a most violent passion. She was tall and slender, and very graceful in her carriage and all her movements. Her hair, which was very abundant and of a lightish brown colour, is concealed in the only authentic portraits which we possess of her under a close-fitting black coif—a fashion which imparts a certain severity to her countenance. Her eyes were of a violet hue and remarkably expressive; her eyebrows slightly arched, like her mother's; her forehead broad and straight, and she had the long nose which both she and her brother François had inherited from Charles d'Angoulême, and which she was to bequeath to her daughter, Jeanne d'Albret, and Jeanne, in her turn, to Henri Quatre. Her chin was small and round; while her mouth, "the lower lip rather full and sensitive, restrained by the upper, which is critical and austere,"<sup>1</sup> is that of a woman at once firm and kindly.

Young though she was, she was already a practised coquette in a strictly decorous kind of way, and cultivated the art of bewitching men and eluding their pursuit. In the resolution she had shown in refusing to share Henry VII's throne, she had been no doubt strengthened by the fact that for the last three years her heart was no longer hers to bestow. We have the whole history of this romance at first hand, since Marguerite has been pleased to relate it herself, in full detail, in the tenth *Nouvelle* of the *Heptaméron*, in which she figures under the name of Florida.

Two young princes, friends of her brother, she tells us, were particularly attentive to Florida; one, the "Duc de Cordone," whom M. de Maulde la Clavière has identified

<sup>1</sup> Miss Sichel, *Women and Men of the French Renaissance*.

## Marguerite and Gaston de Foix

with Marguerite's first husband, the Duc d'Alençon, found but little favour in her sight ; but the other, the *Infant fortuné*, inspired in her very tender sentiments. Some have supposed this young man to be the Infant of Navarre, Jacques de Foix, but Jacques de Foix, as the above-mentioned writer points out, died in 1501, and there can be no doubt that the *Infant fortuné* is identical with the Infant of Fouez, the brave and chivalrous Gaston de Foix, "who merits excellently the epithet of 'Child of Fortune,' since, during his short life, up to his heroic death, which he found at the age of twenty-three on the battle-field of Ravenna, everything smiled upon him."<sup>1</sup> Little wonder that Marguerite should have smiled upon him, too, for Gaston de Foix possessed the gift of winning hearts as well as of gaining battles ; and in later years the women adored him as well as his soldiers, whom he inspired with his own dashing courage. Louis XII was as fond of Gaston as if he were his own son, and perhaps in consequence of this Louise of Savoy made the lad very welcome at Amboise. As for Marguerite, she lost her heart to him entirely, while he, on his side, appeared to be far from insensible. She even seems to have cherished the idea of marrying him when they were both a little older. "We shall have," says one of her maids-of-honour in the *Nouvelle*, "the handsomest couple in Christendom. . . . He is one of the handsomest and most perfect young princes in existence."

While, however, this love-affair was still in the bud, there entered upon the scene a dashing cavalier of nineteen, who bears the name of Amadour in the *Nouvelle*, but who is easily recognized as Guillaume Gouffier, Sire de Bonnavet, the professional lover *par excellence* of his time. A kinsman

<sup>1</sup> *Louise de Savoie et François I<sup>er</sup>*.



## The Pearl of Princesses

of the Cardinal d'Amboise, Bonnivet had begun his career as one of Charles VIII's pages, and was now serving under the Marquis of Mantua in Italy, where he had already distinguished himself by his courage in the field, and still more by the havoc he had wrought with the hearts of the fair, since "he joined to an excellent understanding a rare and winsome comeliness that none could look upon without pleasure."

Bonnivet first saw Marguerite at Chaumont, whither, having returned on furlough from Italy, he had come to wait upon the King, and, "after gazing upon her for a time," found her so attractive that he "resolved to love her." However, as her age did not as yet permit her to understand any amorous discourse, he was obliged to defer his suit for the present, "fortifying himself with the hope and reflection that time and patience might bring the affair to a happy issue."

Meanwhile, he cast about him for a means of obtaining a footing at Amboise, since otherwise his opportunities of seeing the damsel might be but few; and was so fortunate as to discover in the neighbourhood a young girl, Bonaventure du Puy du Fou—the "Aventurada" of the tale—who was one of Marguerite's most intimate friends and passed a great deal of her time at the château. Her he resolved to wed, since, though she was unattractive in person, her father, the Sire d'Amillou, was very rich.

To win the heart of Bonaventure was, for so accomplished a gallant, the simplest thing in the world; but the paternal consent was not so easy to obtain, for M. Bonnivet, being a younger son, had but a slender patrimony. Indeed, it was not until he had enlisted the good offices of Louise of Savoy and Marguerite that the Sire



## Passion of Bonnivet for Marguerite

d'Amaillou allowed himself to be persuaded that the merits of his daughter's suitor might conceivably outweigh his lack of fortune. When, however, that had been accomplished, the old gentleman behaved very handsomely, and poor Bonaventure's dowry enabled her husband to vie in the splendour of his apparel with any gentleman at the Court.

This marriage furnished the enterprising Bonnivet with a very convenient cloak for the prosecution of his designs upon Marguerite, and "afforded him a pretext for resorting to the place where his spirit ever dwelt." His good looks and his agreeable manners made him a welcome guest at Amboise; Louise of Savoy received him very graciously, and encouraged his intimacy with her children, and Marguerite quite innocently admitted him to her friendship, and confided to him her attachment for Gaston de Foix. Bonnivet artfully pretended to sympathize with the girl's hopes in that direction, made it his business to cultivate Gaston's friendship, and talked to Marguerite incessantly about him, professing to entertain for him the warmest admiration. However, not long after his marriage, war broke out again in Italy, and he was obliged to take his departure.

Five years passed, during which Bonnivet paid several visits to France; but so short was his stay on each occasion that he was able to see very little of Marguerite. However, he maintained an active correspondence with his wife, and asked continually for news of the young princess; and the latter, flattered by his interest in her, frequently added a few lines in her own handwriting to Madame de Bonnivet's letters. This served to keep the flame of his passion burning brightly.

At length, peace being concluded, he obtained a long

## The Pearl of Princesses

leave of absence from his military duties and returned to France, with the intention of prosecuting another kind of campaign to that in which he had been engaged in Italy. He received a warm welcome at Amboise, where he was treated as one of the family; but, finding that Marguerite's heart was still occupied by Gaston de Foix, he decided that the time had not yet come to lay siege to it in earnest, and endeavoured to disguise his passion. "He had, however, a difficult task to escape the observation of those who knew by experience how to distinguish a lover's looks from another man's; for when Florida, thinking no evil, came and spoke familiarly to him, the fire that was hidden in his heart so consumed him that he could not keep the colour from mounting to his face or the sparks of flame from darting from his eyes." In order to divert suspicion in regard to his real sentiments, he began to pay court to a beautiful lady of the château, whose identity is concealed under the name of Paulina, and who appeared only too anxious to console him for his misfortune in being married to so unattractive a wife. But this lady, "being proud and experienced in love," soon arrived at the conclusion that he was not sincere in his professions of devotion, and that he was merely making use of her as a cloak for some other affair of the heart, and began to watch him very closely. "Her observation sorely troubled Amadour, for Florida, who was ignorant of all these wiles, often spoke to him before Paulina in such a familiar fashion that he was obliged to make wondrous efforts to compel his eyes to belie his heart." To avoid unpleasant consequences, he decided to take a bold step, and one day, when he and Marguerite were leaning out of one of the windows of the château, engaged in an agreeable *tête-à-tête*, he inquired whether

## A Tender Conversation

she would counsel a man in love to confess his passion or die. The princess replied that she should counsel any friend of hers to speak rather than to die, adding sententiously that, though there were few words that could not be mended, life once lost could never be regained.

Thus encouraged, Bonnavet begged her to promise him not to be displeased or alarmed at what he was about to say, until she had heard him to the end. Then, after a good deal of circumlocution, he declared, in burning words, that, from the time that she was a girl, he had striven to win her favour ; that he had married the unsuspecting Bonaventure solely to secure opportunities of sunning himself in her presence ; that he had cultivated the friendship of Gaston de Foix in order to please her ; in short, that all his efforts had no other end than that of spending his whole life near her. At the same time, he implored her to believe that "he was not one of those who would by such means seek to obtain from her any favour or pleasure otherwise than virtuous, and that he would rather see her dead than less worthy of being loved, or that her virtue had diminished for the sake of any pleasure to himself." The only boon that he craved of her was the honour of being allowed to serve her.

Marguerite lowered her eyes, blushed a little, and then gently reproved her admirer, observing that she could not understand why he should consider it necessary to employ so much eloquence in demanding a favour which he had already been accorded. "She feared lest beneath his honeyed words there lurked some hidden guile to deceive her ignorance and youth."

Bonnavet indignantly rejoined that, since she appeared



## The Pearl of Princesses

to doubt the purity of his intentions, he felt that nothing remained for him but to go away. Marguerite declared that that was not necessary ; she trusted entirely to his honour—to his virtue—she did not wish him to do anything of the kind. Certainly, she did not wish it ! What damsel ever yet denied herself a flirtation because of its potential danger ? She admits, indeed, that her heart experienced a new sensation. But, from that moment, it was impossible for her not to betray a certain embarrassment and reserve in her manner towards Bonnivet, so that the latter, affecting to believe that he had had the misfortune to displease her, ended by voluntarily exiling himself.

She wrote and begged him to return. He came. Possibly, Marguerite was beginning to forget Gaston, whom she had not seen for some time, and who was reported to be contemplating marriage with Jeanne la Folle, widow of Philippe le Beau, and mother of the future Emperor, Charles V. Any way, she now considered herself entitled to the exclusive devotion of Bonnivet, and showed herself so jealous of his attention to the fair Paulina, that it was necessary for him to assure her that “ he found it an intolerable martyrdom to speak either to Paulina or to any one else, save to do her honour and service.” Louise of Savoy, so far from warning her daughter, regarded the progress of the affair with a benevolent eye ; and Bonnivet had almost decided that the time had come when he might safely seek the reward of all his patient stratagem, when war again claimed him, and he was obliged to tear himself away. Naturally very brave, he accomplished divers deeds of valour ; but at length had the misfortune to be taken prisoner, to the great distress of Marguerite, who was



## The Duc d'Alençon

confronted with the prospect of an indefinite separation from her admirer.

Before they met again, indeed, a very important change had taken place in Marguerite's life, for in the autumn of 1509, when she had half completed her eighteenth year, the young lady found herself under the necessity of having done, for the time being, with romance and duly taking a husband.

Among the French nobles of sufficiently high birth to justify them aspiring to Marguerite's hand the Duc d'Alençon, already mentioned, held the first place. He was descended from the youngest brother of Philippe VI, and was the grandson of Jean, fourth Duc d'Alençon, condemned to death for high treason during the reign of Louis XI, but whose sentence was subsequently commuted to imprisonment at Loches, where he died in 1476. René d'Alençon, the son of the rebellious Jean, was fortunate enough to find favour with Louis XI, and was re-established in the duchy of which his father had been deprived. He married Marguerite de Lorraine, daughter of the Comte de Vaudémont, and Charles, born in 1489, was his eldest son.

Louis XII, who spent a considerable part of his life in unavailing attempts to reconcile the conflicting claims of various members of the Royal House, had conceived the idea of a marriage between Charles d'Alençon and Marguerite, as a means of terminating a long and vexatious lawsuit between the reigning branch and that of Alençon relative to the succession to the county of Armagnac, into the particulars of which we need not enter here. The King proposed to reconcile his dislike of litigation with his obligation to maintain the rights of the Crown by marrying Marguerite to the Duc d'Alençon,

## The Pearl of Princesses

and, as a free act of the royal bounty, ceding to her by way of a dowry all his rights, real and pretended, on the county of Armagnac.

Charles d'Alençon was then in his twentieth year. He had been affianced when a lad to Suzanne de Bourbon, only child of Anne de Beaujeu and Pierre II, Duc de Bourbon ; but the match had been arranged by Louis XII, and neither party was particularly anxious for it ; and, after the death of the Duc de Bourbon, it had been broken off, in order that the conflicting claims of Suzanne and her cousin, the Comte de Montpensier, to the inheritance of Bourbon might be adjusted by their union. Apart from his exalted birth, he had little enough to recommend him. Plain and insignificant in appearance, without capacity, without culture, without any taste for those intellectual pursuits which Marguerite followed with so much enthusiasm, of a jealous and morose temperament, reserved and unsociable both from habit and inclination, and possessed of an ambition which caused him to aspire to all kinds of offices which he was quite unfitted to fill, he presented the most complete contrast to the young princess for whom he was intended that could well be imagined.

Marguerite does not seem to have been consulted in the matter at all ; the King, Anne de Bretagne, and Madame d'Angoulême settled it between themselves, without any reference to her inclinations. When at length, everything being satisfactorily arranged, they condescended to inform her of how they had disposed of her hand, she experienced at first a violent shock. But this time there was no escape, since she could advance no reason for refusing to accept a French prince, only two years older than herself, except the fact that

## Marguerite marries the Duc d'Alençon

she was altogether indifferent to him. And so she resigned herself to her fate, observing that "God was to be praised for all things." Nevertheless, this submission, she tells us, was only accomplished by a mighty effort of will. "So strongly did she constrain herself, that her tears, driven perforce back into her head, caused so great a loss of blood from the nose that her life was endangered; and, that she might be restored to health, she espoused him whom she would willingly have exchanged for death."

The marriage contract was signed at Blois on October 9, 1509. Marguerite's dowry amounted to the sum of 60,000 livres,<sup>1</sup> in addition to the county of Armagnac, which Louis XII ceded to her. The nuptial ceremony was performed the same evening, "at fifteen minutes past six o'clock,"<sup>2</sup> the Cardinal de Nantes officiating,<sup>3</sup> in the presence of the King and Queen and the whole court. His Majesty conducted the bride to the altar, and gave her, we are told, so many tokens of his consideration and affection that the Comtesse d'Angoulême wept for very joy. After the ceremony, Anne de

<sup>1</sup> "This sum, the contract stipulated, was to be paid by instalments. The first portion of his sister's dowry, a sum of 6000 livres, François delivered to the Duc d'Alençon on the day the contract was signed. A document preserved in the Bibliothèque Royale, signed by Marguerite and Charles in acknowledgment of an advance of 7000 livres made by François I in liquidation of his sister's dowry in the year 1510, states that no further sums were received by the Duc d'Alençon until 1518. In this, and in the following year, the King paid 40,000 livres; and again, in 1520, François made a further advance of 7000. There still remained of the original sum of 60,000 livres, an arrear of 7000, which probably Marguerite never received, as from the period of the last instalment dates the commencement of the King's ruinous wars."—Frere, *The Life of Marguerite d'Angoulême, Queen of Navarre*.

<sup>2</sup> *Journal de Louise de Savoie*.

<sup>3</sup> Robert de Guibe, Bishop of Nantes, created Cardinal in 1505.



## The Pearl of Princesses

Bretagne, who had undertaken to defray all the expenses of the nuptials, gave a state banquet in honour of the occasion, and, on the following day, a tournament was held in the grand court of the château, at which the Queen and the young bride sat beneath a canopy of state in the midst of the gallery reserved for the ladies of the Court, and distributed the prizes to the victors.

Marguerite's marriage had been preceded by arrangements for the matrimonial future of her brother, the little Duc de Valois.

We have seen how, when lying on what he firmly believed to be his death-bed in the spring of 1505, Louis XII had given positive orders for the marriage of his elder daughter, Madame Claude, with François, and had obliged the Queen to swear to observe this and the other prescriptions of his will. But, on the King's recovery, Anne de Bretagne resumed her opposition to the marriage, and Louis, aware that the whole kingdom desired it, and, on the other hand, regarded with profound alarm the Queen's ruinous project of marrying the heiress of Brittany to the son of Philippe le Beau, resolved to overrule his consort's objections by a decisive manifestation of popular feeling; and accordingly convoked the States-General.

The States-General was never summoned save in altogether exceptional circumstances, when the Sovereign desired to ascertain the opinion of his subjects in regard to some question which affected the future of the whole kingdom. They had last been convened during the troubled minority of Charles VIII, when the session had been a stormy one, and they had been abruptly dissolved. But, on this occasion, the King had no fear of allowing the country to voice its demands.



## Betrothal of the Duc de Valois

The States assembled at Tours in the second week of May 1506. They presented a singular spectacle, for never before had such perfect unanimity, so complete an absence of dissentient voices, been witnessed. On the 13th, under the form of a verbal address, their votes were presented to the King in the *grande salle* of the château of Plessis-les-Tours, so full of memories of Louis XI, in the presence of the Duc de Valois, the princes, and the high dignitaries of the kingdom. The orator of the States, in a speech full of expressions of affection and gratitude, harangued the King, vaunted the justice and good order which reigned throughout the land, declared that the kingdom had never been so happy and so prosperous as under the beneficent rule of the monarch who so well deserved the name of "Father of the People," and ended by announcing that his Majesty's loving subjects were so perfectly contented that they had only one desire to express : that of the marriage of Madame Claude with "*Monsieur François, ici présent, qui est tout François.*"

The King shed tears ; the whole assembly did likewise. "It was, indeed, a solemn and touching occasion. A king so profoundly good, so beloved, with the sign of approaching death on his forehead, already reduced to the condition of a spectre, and outliving himself, so to speak, by a miracle, and by love for his people, was bidding adieu to the people of France." The Chancellor, in the King's name, made a suitable response and assured the States that his Majesty would at once take their request into consideration ; and on the 19th the deputies were informed that the marriage they desired would take place as soon as possible, and requested to cause an oath to be administered to the inhabitants of

## The Pearl of Princesses

every town throughout the kingdom that, in the event of the King's death, they would immediately recognize the Duc de Valois as his heir and son-in-law. After an enthusiastic response from the States and the thanks of the Chancellor, each deputy took a similar oath on his own account, and then dispersed with loud cries of "*Vive le Roi!*"

Two days later, a brilliant company which included the King and Queen, the Duc de Valois and his mother and sister, the Duchesse de Bourbon, the grand officers of the Crown, the principal personages of the Court, and the deputies, assembled once more in the *grande salle* of the château. Gaston de Foix held in his arms Madame Claude, who was now six years old. The Chancellor read to the assembly the marriage-contract, by which the King conferred upon his daughter in full ownership his own patrimony (Blois, Soissons, Coucy and Asti); and the Queen, a dowry of one hundred thousand écus and the succession to her duchy of Brittany; provided nevertheless that, in the event of the birth of a son, the princess would receive a pension of twenty thousand livres and the title of Duchess of Brittany, in lieu of the duchy itself and her father's estates.

Every one then took an oath to observe the contract, which was subsequently countersigned by the various distinguished persons of France and Brittany.

The betrothal of her son to Madame Claude was a fresh triumph for Louise of Savoy, and her satisfaction was not diminished by the reflection that it had taken place notwithstanding the persistent opposition of the Queen, who could with difficulty conceal her disgust. The attitude taken up by Anne de Bretagne on this

## Misgivings of Anne de Bretagne

question was not due simply to political motives. Whatever may have been her repugnances or her preferences, as Queen she might in time have reconciled herself to the match, but never as wife and mother.

The little Madame Claude had been very carefully brought up in the old notions of religion and duty which were, unfortunately, rapidly going out of fashion. She was not pretty, but simple, sweet-tempered, truthful, and very pious, in short, possessed of all the virtues useless to the Comtesse d'Angoulême, whose ideas of education and life were altogether different to those of Anne de Bretagne. And there was only too much reason to believe that the Duc de Valois, over whom the countess possessed so much influence, would prove to be a worthy son of his mother. How then could Claude expect to find anything but unhappiness in such a marriage?

And so, although for reasons of State, Anne had been obliged to yield and allow the betrothal to take place, she employed all the influence she possessed over her husband to defer the celebration of the marriage itself, in the hope that if a son—the object of her most ardent desires—were born to her, her daughter might escape an alliance which she had so much cause to dread. It was only, indeed, after the Queen's death, eight years later, that the ceremony was performed.



## CHAPTER VI

AT the conclusion of the wedding festivities, which lasted four days, Marguerite accompanied her husband to his Château of Alençon in Normandy. This separation from her family and friends, and from the brilliant circle of scholars and men of letters which she had begun to gather about her, and in intercourse with whom she found so much pleasure, was a great trial to the young princess, and did not tend to reconcile her to a marriage which had been so contrary to her inclinations. She felt deserted and solitary, and but for the consolation she found in the society of her faithful friend Madame de Châtillon, who had exchanged the post of *gouvernante* for that of *dame d'honneur*, she would have been very unhappy indeed. However, to her great relief, her exile only lasted a few weeks, and at the beginning of the following year she and the Duc d'Alençon returned to Blois, where a new experience awaited her.

One day, not long after her arrival, she was in the company of her mother and her mother-in-law, Marguerite de Lorraine, Duchesse d'Alençon, when she was informed that Bonnivet, who had recently recovered his liberty, was expected almost immediately. With difficulty dissembling her joy at the prospect of again meeting her admirer, she stationed herself at a window overlooking the courtyard of the château, to watch for his coming; and, "as soon as she caught sight of him, she went down by a dark staircase, in order that none might perceive her change countenance."



## Reunion of Marguerite and Bonnivet

The reunion of the lovers was naturally a very tender one ; the situation, indeed, had become what a cynic would have called idyllic, both being now legally bound to an uncongenial third party. Marguerite confesses to have thrown herself into Bonnivet's arms and embraced him ; while, as she told him of the marriage to which she had been constrained and the faithlessness of Gaston de Foix, who had had the bad taste to transfer his attentions to another lady, her tears fell fast. However, she soon recovered her self-possession, and, while deriving all the consolation she could for her misfortunes from the devotion of the young cavalier, gave him to understand that she regarded him "not as a lover, but as a true and perfect friend." M. de Bonnivet, of course, hastened to repeat the assurances that he had given her on a former occasion, that the only boon he craved at her hands was that of being permitted to serve her ; and the princess would appear to have believed them. She was soon to be disillusioned.

Like a bolt from the blue, a double tragedy descended upon the loving pair. Bonnivet received orders from the King to return to his military duties in Italy, and his wife, whom Marguerite, on her marriage, had, for obvious reasons, taken into her service, was so overcome on learning the news that she swooned away, fell down a flight of steps on which she happened to be standing at the time, and received such injuries that she died the same day. Thus, not only was he obliged, in deference to the royal command, to leave his inamorata, but he lost, by the death of his wife, his only plausible pretext for enjoying the princess's society either at the Court or at Alençon, when he should again find himself at leisure. Such was his despair that he was "like to lose his

## The Pearl of Princesses

reason," and, after his wife's funeral, in default of any other excuse for delaying his departure, he feigned illness and took to his bed.

Marguerite, aware that she herself was the cause, was assiduous in her attentions to her stricken admirer. "She spent a whole afternoon in the most gracious conversation with him, in order to mitigate his grief," and assured him that she would find means to see him as frequently as possible. Finally, on the day before his departure for Italy, whither urgent orders from his unsympathetic sovereign obliged him to proceed, although he assured the princess that he was so weak that he could scarce stir from his bed, she consented, in response to his piteous entreaties, to come late that evening, after every one else had left, to bid him a last farewell. "This she promised to do, not knowing that love in extremity is void of reason."

Her conduct was certainly sadly lacking in circumspection, for Bonnivet, "racked by secret passion and in despair of losing all means of seeing her in the future, had resolved to play at double or quits, and either lose her altogether or else wholly win her, and so pay himself in an hour the reward to which he considered himself entitled. Accordingly, he gave directions for his bed-curtains to be arranged in such a way that those who entered the room could not see him ; and he complained so much more than he had done previously that all about him thought that he had not twenty-four hours to live."

That evening, when every one else had left the room, the princess, with the knowledge and consent of her husband, we are told—the Duc d'Alençon must have been of a singularly unsuspecting nature—arrived according to promise, and, seating herself by her hapless gallant's side, sought to comfort him, "by declaring her affection and by

## Marguerite's Honour in Danger

telling him that, so far as honour permitted, she was willing to love him." But, to her astonishment and dismay, the supposed moribund suddenly rose up, and exclaiming : " Must I then lose sight of you for ever ? " seized her in his arms, and " strove to obtain that which the honour of ladies forbids."

More fortunate than that other princess, for whom, the second Book of Samuel tells us, a similar trap was laid, Marguerite, " who thought that he had lost his senses rather than that he was really bent on her dishonour," retained her presence of mind and called out to a gentleman whom she knew to be near at hand, whereupon the disappointed Bonnivet threw himself back on the bed, and lay so still that the gentleman imagined for a moment that he was dead. The princess despatched the newcomer for restoratives, and when these had had the desired effect, instead of leaving the room, began to reproach her admirer. Was this, she demanded, the conduct of one who had professed for her so pure a devotion ; who had over and over again declared that he desired nothing from her but the honour of being permitted to serve her ? The culprit, seemingly not one whit abashed, protested that no one could have held her honour more dear than himself. Before she was married, he said, he had been able to keep his passion in subjection, so that she had known nothing of his desires ; but, now that she had a husband, " her honour was shielded." " What wrong do I do you," cried he, " to ask for what is mine ? By force of love I have won you. He who first possessed your heart had so little desire for your person that he deserved to lose both. He who now possesses your person is not worthy to have your heart, and hence even your person does not properly belong to him." And so forth.



## The Pearl of Princesses

Marguerite replied to this specious reasoning gently but firmly. It was unfortunately true that she was unable to endure her husband, and that M. de Foix loved another. But, when she had sought consolation for her unhappiness in his society, she had done so in all innocence, expecting to find only a true and devoted friend. But alas ! she had found something altogether different. Never would she trust in man's honour again !

Bonnivet, recognizing that the day was lost, and that nothing remained for him but to endeavour to avoid such a defeat as would render a resumption of the campaign altogether hopeless, affected penitence and implored her forgiveness ; but Marguerite remained sceptical, and they separated. No sooner had she left him, however, than her fortitude gave way, and "so long as the night lasted she did naught but weep." Reason, she tells us, dictated that she should love him no more ; but her heart refused to be guided by reason. "Thus, she was unable to love him less than before, and, aware that love had been the cause of his offence, she decided to satisfy love, by continuing to love him with her whole heart, and to obey honour, by never giving any sign of her affection either to him or to any one else."

On his way to Italy, the disconsolate gallant passed a night at Amboise, whither Louise of Savoy had lately returned, and confessed to her his love for Marguerite. Probably, that lady was already aware of the fact ; at any rate, being much less severe in these matters than her daughter, she expressed her sympathy with him, and promised that she would make Marguerite write to him.

The princess, we are told, unwilling to acquaint her mother, "who was so discreet and virtuous," with the truth, lest some harm should befall Bonnivet, consented



## Stratagem of a Virtuous Princess

to do so ; but her letters were such cold and formal epistles that they drove him to despair, and he became, in consequence, “so sad and so changed that ladies, captains, and acquaintances alike could scarcely recognize him.”

At the end of two or three years he contrived to get sent on a mission to Louis XII, and set out for France, determined to make another effort to overcome Marguerite’s scruples. Learning that she was staying with her mother at Amboise, he sent a messenger to Louise of Savoy to announce his intention of visiting the château on his way to the Court, at the same time begging her to receive him at nightfall, without any one’s knowledge. The countess, whose conduct on this occasion is certainly very difficult to reconcile with either the discretion or virtue which her daughter attributes to her, hastened to inform Marguerite, and “sent her to undress in her husband’s room, in order that she might be ready when she sent for her and every one had retired to rest.” Marguerite pretended to obey ; but, instead of doing so, she repaired to her oratory, “to pray that her heart might be preserved from an evil affection,” and, “being more willing to spoil her beauty than to allow it to kindle an unhallowed flame in the heart of an honourable gentleman, she took up a stone which lay there, and struck herself so grievous a blow on the face, that her mouth, nose, and eyes were quite disfigured.” Then, in order that no one might suspect this to be of her own doing, she let herself fall on her face on leaving the oratory, when summoned by the countess, and cried out loudly. Louise of Savoy, finding her in this state, wasted no time in comment, but caused her face to be dressed and bandaged, and then bade her go to her apartments and

## The Pearl of Princesses

entertain Bonnivet until she herself should be at liberty. Marguerite obeyed, thinking that there were others with him, but when she found that he was alone, "she was as greatly troubled as he was pleased."

Bonnivet, notwithstanding her disfigurement, which she had counted upon to allay his passion, at once began to urge his suit, and, when he found that she gave him the same reply as before, "his countenance, usually so gentle and pleasant, became so horrible and furious as though fiery flames were blazing in his heart and face"; and seizing her little hands in his strong ones, he drew her roughly to him, vowing that no scruples on her part should rob him of the fruits of all his patience. She resisted, she entreated, she reminded him of the past; he would listen to nothing; and, as a last resource, she was obliged to call her mother, which she did with all the strength of her lungs. Louise had no alternative but to appear and demand an explanation of so imperative a summons. Marguerite merely replied that "she had felt afraid," and beyond that would say nothing. But, when questioned in his turn, Bonnivet, who was never at a loss for an answer, proceeded to explain that, having flattered himself that, notwithstanding his long absence, he still retained a place in the princess's good graces, he had asked to be allowed to kiss her hand; which favour being, to his astonishment, refused him, he had, in a moment of irritation, for which he now humbly asked pardon, taken her hand, as it were by force, and kissed it. He had asked nothing more of her, and could not understand why she should have been so alarmed.

He then took his departure, but, before doing so, drew Marguerite aside, and, having thanked her for not telling her mother the truth, begged her that, "since she

## Morals of Louise of Savoy

had expelled him from her heart, she would allow no one else to take his place." To which the lady replied that he need have no fear on that score, as, "having failed to find the qualities she sought in the heart that she had believed to be the most virtuous in the world, she could have no hope of finding them elsewhere."

When he had gone, Louise of Savoy scolded her daughter severely for her ridiculous prudery, for her unreasonableness, for her inconsistency, in "hating all things that she loved. In fact, so angry was she that for some days afterwards she would hardly condescend to speak to her."

"Morals have greatly changed," observes M. de Maulde la Clavière, "and we do not always understand very well those of that period. We must not measure them by our own standard. Probably, Louise of Savoy believed, in all sincerity, that she ought not to show herself more severe towards her children than towards herself. Certain of her contemporaries, who were not much better than herself, have, however, blamed her for it, and Cornelius Agrippa, although no saint, launched against her this coarse invective : '*Il y a des mères qui se font les proxénètes de leurs fils.*'" <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Louise de Savoie et François I<sup>er</sup>.*



## CHAPTER VII

THE Duc de Valois, meanwhile, was approaching manhood. Without being handsome, his face was one which pleased, for if his features were too strongly marked to satisfy connoisseurs of masculine beauty, he had a frank and good-humoured expression—the expression of one who found life very enjoyable and was on the best of terms with himself and all the world. In stature, he was tall and very strongly built, and carried himself with grace and dignity; and altogether appears to have been regarded by the people, who attach so much importance to outward appearances, as “*ung beau et grant prince*,” full of spirit, courage, and generosity.

François was a signal instance of a man too much surrounded by affectionate and admiring women. Both Louise of Savoy and Marguerite adored him; in their eyes he could do no wrong; they called him their Cæsar; and though, as he grew older, he began to lord it over them, they only loved him the better for it. Little wonder then that, almost from boyhood, he entertained the most exalted idea of his own importance. When he went to visit his mother at Amboise, he expected to be received in the towns through which he passed with almost as much ceremony as if he had been already King; he established his Household on a royal footing: 58 chamberlains and superior officers, 129 other officers; 10 secretaries and clerks; 6 huntsmen, 7 musicians, and so forth; and his expenditure on clothes, jewels and amusements must have far exceeded that of Louis XII, who, like a true father of



## First Campaign of the Duc de Valois

his people, economized in these directions as much as possible, even to the length of sometimes denying himself personal comforts in order that he might have more money to spend in relieving distress.

He took himself very seriously, too, and sharing the maternal antipathy to Anne de Bretagne, refused to be persuaded that any of the Queen's personal friends "could be truly his servant." Thus, Robert de la Marck, who, having been compromised by his friendship with the Maréchal de Gié, had thought it policy to endeavour to ingratiate himself with her Majesty, found, in after years, that this circumstance was remembered against him.

François had taken his place at the Court at a moment when the victories of Genoa and Agnadello had given rise to a great wave of military enthusiasm, and his imagination, nourished on the romances of chivalry, had been fired by the exploits of the brave captains whom France then possessed—the bravest since the time of Charlemagne, says Brantôme. Naturally, therefore, he burned to emulate the deeds of the Bayards and the La Trémoilles, and pestered the King to give him an opportunity of distinguishing himself. For some time Louis XII refused, but in August 1511 he obtained permission to join the army of observation under the young Duc de Bourbon on the Spanish frontier, and set out gaily for the Pyrenees, although he had barely recovered from a severe attack of fever, and was still very weak. But, to his intense disappointment, the Spaniards showed no inclination to take the offensive, and in November he returned to Blois with Bourbon, without having struck a blow.

In the following September, to the great joy of himself and his fond mother, François received the nominal

## The Pearl of Princesses

command of the army of Guienne, Odet de Foix, Seigneur de Lautrec, brother of the Comtesse de Chateaubriand, a lady of whom we shall have occasion to speak hereafter, being appointed chief of the general staff. A Spanish army under the Duke of Alva had crossed the mountains and overrun the country up to Saint-Jean Pied-de-Port; but at the approach of the French, whom François, with youthful ardour, had at once ordered to advance, Alva repassed the Pyrenees and nimbly avoided the turning movement which the young prince had decided on. The latter did not follow him; and the result of his inaction, which appears to have been due to ill-health, was that the Spaniards were able to complete at their leisure the conquest of the Spanish dominions of Jean d'Albret, King of Navarre. However, as they had quitted French soil, and an English army which had landed at Fontarabia, with the view of attacking Guienne, had mutinied and sailed home again without effecting anything, François's flatterers appeared to consider themselves justified in hailing him as a victor; and one Guillaume Piellei composed a long poem in Latin in praise of his supposed exploits. In point of fact, however, it was a very inglorious kind of campaign, and not at all an auspicious opening to a military career.

In the spring of 1513 an English army, commanded by Henry VIII in person, landed in the North of France and laid siege to Théroanne. A French force advanced to its relief, but the cavalry allowed itself to be surprised and routed by the English near Guinegate, in an engagement which received in derision the name of "*la Journée des Éperons*" ("Battle of the Spurs"), and in which Marguerite d'Angoulême's too persistent admirer Bonnivet and a number of other nobles were taken prisoners. Contrary

## Loss of Théroouanne and Tournai

to what some historians have stated, François was not present on this occasion, which was perhaps a fortunate circumstance for him. He was at Amiens at the time, and, on learning of the disaster, started at the head of four hundred men-at-arms to endeavour to rally the fugitives, which he succeeded in doing ; but it was impossible to save Théroouanne, which shortly afterwards capitulated. Nor was he able to save Tournai, to which the invading army next directed its attentions. The ancient privileges of this town exempted it from a garrison, and when the Duc de Valois offered to install one there, the citizens replied valiantly : “ *Tournay n’avoit jamais tourné et encore ne tournera* ” ; adding that, if the English came, they would soon learn the kind of men with whom they had to deal. The English duly arrived, and so soon learned to appreciate the valour of the burgesses of Tournai that in three days they had persuaded them to capitulate, to the profound mortification of François.

If, however, opportunities for military distinction hesitated to present themselves, the young prince doubtless derived some consolation from his successes in another direction. A French proverb says : “ *Une cour sans dames est une cour sans court,* ” or as François himself once expressed it : “ A court without ladies is like a summer without roses ” ; and, notwithstanding the severity of Anne de Bretagne,<sup>1</sup> the Court of France was as fertile in romances

<sup>1</sup> Anne was terribly strict with her maids-of-honour, who were treated like schoolgirls. They were placed under the direction of a *gouvernante*, who was supposed never to allow them out of her sight, and no man, except their confessors, was ever allowed to approach them, unless it was in the royal presence. This caution defeated its own ends, for, having no one else to flirt with, they sometimes flirted with the confessors. One holy man became so enamoured of Mlle. de Bourdeille, a relative of



## The Pearl of Princesses

as any other. The King himself had a little one, strictly under the rose, of course, with a certain Madame Spinola, who, Jean d'Autun assures us, was so passionately devoted to his Majesty that she actually died of a broken heart in 1505, when a false report of his death reached her, though truth compels us to observe that the lady postponed her demise until some years later.

François was as precocious in love as in other things, and at fourteen or fifteen he became sentimental over a Mlle. Anne de Graville, daughter of the Amiral de Graville, and one of the Queen's maids-of-honour. Mlle. de Graville, who, it may be mentioned, was about double the age of her illustrious admirer, was a very pretty young woman, with laughing dark eyes, rosy cheeks, and "a figure which permitted one to form the most agreeable conjectures." She had literary and artistic tastes; translated one of the romances of Boccaccio into French verse, and had some skill in painting. Probably François's intimacy with her was not without a certain influence on the intellectual side of his character. Not that it lasted very long or went very far, however, since, after sending several more or less eligible pretenders for her hand about their business, one fine morning in 1509, Mlle. de Graville, to the intense indignation of her family, eloped with an impetuous cousin of hers, Pierre de Balzac d'Entragues—a name which was to become only too well known in the reign of Henry IV—whom she subsequently presented with eleven children.

The Duc de Valois, though perhaps a little chagrined at this abrupt termination to his romance with Anne de

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Brantôme, that he lost his head and preached on the tender passion, much to the scandal of the Queen and the congregation. Her Majesty caused him to be whipped and expelled the Court.



## The Brunette of Amboise

Graville, wasted no time in regrets, but promptly began to pay attention to another of the Queen's maids-of-honour, Françoise de Foix, a sister of the Sire de Lautrec already mentioned. Mlle. de Foix, who was a very pretty girl about the prince's own age, would not appear to have taken his admiration very seriously, or perhaps she was of opinion that, since she had no dowry except what her royal mistress might be pleased to provide her with, it would be imprudent to give him any encouragement. Nor would the prince seem at this time to have any great desire to carry the affair beyond the bounds of flirtation; but, a few years later, when he had become King, and the lady's somewhat voluptuous type of beauty had attained its full development, she was to subjugate him entirely.

But if, at the Court, François was satisfied with mere flirtation, outside of it he sought amours of a less innocent description. The first known of these had Amboise as its scene. One day he perceived in church a young and attractive brunette, who, he learned on inquiry, was a daughter of a former officer of Louise of Savoy's Household, and had, when a child, been often permitted to play with Marguerite. She was now on a visit to her sister, who had married one of the butlers of the château. At the prince's request, Marguerite sent for her old playmate, made much of her and encouraged her to continue her visits, and took care that whenever there were any fêtes at the château an invitation should be sent to her. In this way François contrived to see a good deal of the damsel, and becoming more and more enamoured, finally deputed one of his gentlemen to propose to her terms of surrender. But the girl's virtue was proof against temptation, and the negotiation failed completely.

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## The Pearl of Princesses

The prince's pursuit became only the more tenacious after this refusal, and even bordered upon persecution. He attended Mass with unfailing regularity, installed himself behind his quarry, and obliged her constantly to change her place. Then, having succeeded in enlisting the sympathies of the butler and his wife, by means of generous gifts and still more generous promises, he had recourse to stratagem to gain his end. One day he went out riding, and, in passing the butler's house, he contrived to fall off into the gutter. His attendants hastened to his aid, and as he complained of being in pain and his clothes were covered with mud and worse—the gutter being in those days the receptacle for every kind of refuse—what more natural than that they should carry him into the nearest house and put him to bed? He despatched his people to the château for clothes to replace those which he had spoiled, and then asked the butler's wife to send her sister to him. The girl at first refused, but finally yielded to her relative's persuasions, and presented herself before him, pale and trembling. The pseudo-invalid begged her to take courage. "Do you regard me," he asked plaintively, "as so wicked a man, so strange and cruel, that I devour women by merely looking at them?" And he spoke with eloquence of his love, of the risk of serious injury he had run in order to procure this *tête-à-tête*, and, by way of a peroration, endeavoured to draw her to him and embrace her.

She, however, resisted, and inquired why so noble a prince should condescend to one so humble as herself, to such an "earthworm," when there must be so many beautiful and high-born ladies only too willing to accord him their favours. Why did he not make his choice among them? Did he fear their refusal, that he was trying to take advantage of her poverty? She reminded

## The Duc de Valois and Mme. Disomme

him, too, of the faithful services which her parents had rendered his family, and which surely merited some better return than that he should wish to "place her in the ranks of the poor unfortunates." The prince protested that he loved her alone, and never had and never could love any one else, and entreated her to have pity upon him; but she remained immovable, and presently his attendants arrived with his clothes, and he was obliged to take his departure.

A day or two later, François sent his belle a present of five hundred écus, which she promptly returned to him; and, not long afterwards, an officer of the château, who had learned the facts of the case and was struck with admiration at a fortitude so unusual, solicited her hand. François, who was too generous to bear any malice for the rebuff he had sustained, proved a good friend to both husband and wife.

After this abortive adventure, the young prince plunged into a series of promiscuous gallantries. "*Il aime fort et trop*," observes Brantôme; "*il embrassait qui l'une, qui l'autre*"; and the ill-health which would appear to have prevented him from prosecuting the campaign of 1512 was undoubtedly due to these excesses. Recognizing the folly of his conduct, he decided to reform and seek some object upon whom he might concentrate his affections. Nor had he far to seek.

There was at this time in Paris a rich and elderly advocate named Jacques Disomme, who had recently indulged in the luxury of a young wife, "one of the fairest maidens in the city, very handsome both in features and complexion, and still more handsome in figure." François made the acquaintance of this pearl of beauty, who up to then appears to have given the worthy advocate no cause to repent of his somewhat hazardous experiment,



## The Pearl of Princesses

at a wedding in Paris which he had honoured with his presence ; and “having, by the artlessness of love, so promptly gained what was worth the pains of being gained only by time, the young prince thanked God for his favour, and forthwith contrived matters so well that they agreed together and devised means for seeing one another in private.”

At the appointed hour, François repaired to the advocate’s house—“in order that he might not injure the lady’s honour, he went in disguise”—and found the door left ajar, as had been arranged. He entered and began to ascend the stairs, but had not taken many steps when whom should he meet but the husband, a candle in his hand? To retreat was impossible, for he perceived that Maître Disomme, whom he had had frequent occasions to consult on business matters, had recognized him, notwithstanding his disguise ; and for a moment he was at a loss what to do. However, Love, “which provides wit and boldness to contend with the difficulties he creates,” came to his aid, and, advancing resolutely, he saluted the advocate very courteously, and told him that he had come to seek his professional services on a matter of great importance, and, incidentally, to ask for some refreshment, as he was perishing with thirst. At the same time, he explained his incognito by saying that he had a visit to pay on leaving the house, and begged Maître Disomme to respect his confidence.

The unsuspecting advocate, highly flattered, protested that he was indeed deeply sensible of the honour which the prince was doing him, and conducting him to the salon, summoned his wife, and bade her prepare a collation of the best fruits and sweetmeats that she had. The lady hastened to obey, and while her husband was engaged in decanting a bottle of choice wine, she approached their



## The Duc de Valois and Mme. Disomme

guest with a plate of sweetmeats in her hand, and whispered to him that, on leaving the room, he must enter another, which he would find on his right hand, where she would join him as soon as possible.

François, although, we are told, the lady seemed to him more beautiful than ever, was careful to take no more notice of her than courtesy demanded, but addressed most of his conversation to her husband, and spoke for some time about the business matters which were supposed to account for his visit at so late an hour. At length, he rose to take his leave, begging Maître Disomme, who wished to escort him to the door, not to do so, on account of his incognito. Then, bowing low to the lady, he added: "Moreover, I am unwilling to wrong you by depriving you for one moment of this good husband. Well may you render thanks to God that you have such a husband! Well may you render him service and obedience! If you did otherwise, you would be blameworthy indeed!"

"With these virtuous words," continues the chronicler, "the prince took his departure, and, closing the door behind him, so that he might not be followed to the staircase, he entered the room aforementioned, whither also came the fair lady so soon as her husband had fallen asleep."

This affair lasted some little time, and, since François came always unattended, he chose a short cut to the advocate's house, which led him through an adjoining monastery;<sup>1</sup> and so well did he contrive matters with the prior that the porter received orders to open the gate for

<sup>1</sup> If the Disommes were then living in the Rue de la Pauhominerie, where François's inamorata is known to have died some years later, this monastery must have been that of the Blancs Manteaux, in the Marais district of Paris.

## The Pearl of Princesses

him about midnight, and to do the same on his return. He made no pause on his way to the rendezvous, but “never failed, when returning, to continue for a long time praying in the chapel. And the monks who, when going to and fro at the hour of matins, used to see him there on his knees, were thereby led to consider him the holiest man alive.”

Meanwhile, the Duchesse d’Alençon, who was becoming somewhat uneasy about the life her beloved brother was leading, had conceived the idea of recommending him to the prayers of all the devout persons of her acquaintance, and, amongst others, addressed herself to the prior of the monastery. “Ah, Madame!” exclaimed the good father, “whom are you recommending to me? You are speaking to me of one in whose prayers, above all others, I myself would fain be remembered! For if he be not a holy man and a just”—here he cited a passage of Scripture—“I cannot hope to be held for such!”

Marguerite, not a little astonished, pressed him for an explanation, and, at length, under the seal of the most profound secrecy, he told her of François’s nocturnal visits to his convent. “Nor comes he,” added the prior, “like a prince seeking honour of men, but hides himself in one of our chapels. Truly, such piety puts both the monks and myself to shame, so that we do not deem ourselves worthy to be called men of religion in comparison with him!”

Without taking her brother absolutely for an infidel, the princess could not bring herself to believe that he was accustomed to pass his nights in church. Accordingly, she told him when they next met of her satisfaction at learning that he was now regarded as a saint; and the merriment with which her congratulations were received put an end to the mystery.

## CHAPTER VIII

FRANÇOIS'S lax morals did not affect his filial relations, and he was almost as devoted a son as Louise of Savoy was a mother. At the end of December 1513, he posted to Cognac, to spend New Year's Day, according to custom, with Louise, only breaking his journey for an hour or two at Châtelherault. At Cognac he found Marguerite and the Duc d'Alençon, whose presence, however, did not disturb the harmony of this family gathering, since he had had the good taste to fall from his horse and dislocate his shoulder on the very day of François's arrival, an accident which necessitated his keeping his room. The party was a very merry one, for both Louise and Marguerite were naturally delighted to have their common idol back safe and sound after his campaign in Picardy. But their joy knew no bounds, when, on January 10, news arrived that Anne de Bretagne had died somewhat suddenly the previous day at Blois, at the early age of thirty-six. Nor did they make the smallest attempt to disguise their delight that there was no longer any chance of some inconvenient little boy coming into the world to interpose himself between François and the object of their most ardent desires ; but, on the contrary, proceeded to advertise it to all the country round and to summon it to rejoice with them. On the 11th, the little court set out gaily for Angoulême, into which town it made a formal entry, Louise reclining in a litter, while François walked by her side. At Angoulême they remained until the 14th, presumably to receive the homage of the municipality and the neighbouring gentry, and then



## The Pearl of Princesses

returned to Cognac, where François held a solemn reception, regardless of the fact that such unusual and almost puerile demonstrations were positively indecent at a time of public mourning. Louise remained at the château to assist her son to receive his vassals, while Marguerite, accompanied by one of her ladies, went into the town and mixed with the crowd, in order to give the signal for applause. Singularly enough, none of them appears to have considered the possibility of the widowed King contracting a third marriage, which might ruin all their hopes.

Their conduct appeared the more unseemly, inasmuch as the poor Queen, on recognizing that she was about to die, had resolved on a truly magnanimous action. Convinced that nothing could now prevent the marriage of her dearly-loved elder daughter to the Duc de Valois, she added a codicil to her will, by which she appointed Louise of Savoy trustee for both Madame Claude and her infant sister, Madame Renée, afterwards Duchess of Ferrara.

Anne de Bretagne was deeply regretted by the nation, if not by the Court, for her blameless life and sincere piety had commanded the respect of all, while the munificence of her charity had ensured her a wide popularity; and the pen even of the dullest of chroniclers grows eloquent in her praise.

As for the unhappy King, broken in health and in spirit by the military disasters of the previous year, he demanded only to die. "Go," said he, "and make the place where my wife is to be buried large enough both for her and for myself, since, before a year has passed, I shall be with her to keep her company." His condition justified the prediction.



## A Lengthy Funeral Oration

The obsequies began at Blois on February 14, when the embalmed remains of the Queen were transported in solemn state to the chapel. François, draped in the grand official mantle, with a train three ells in length, occupied the place of chief mourner and walked immediately behind the coffin, with his brother-in-law, the Duc d'Alençon. The Duc and Duchesse de Bourbon organized the long procession from Blois to Saint-Denis, where the funeral oration was delivered by Guillaume Parvi, the King's confessor, a divine of wondrous erudition and seemingly inexhaustible eloquence, who, since the deceased princess had attained the age of thirty-six, composed his discourse under thirty-six heads, each of which was devoted to some grace pre-eminent in her character. In conclusion, the preacher assured his audience that the thirty-six virtues, when united, formed a triumphal car to bear their possessor triumphantly to the gates of Heaven. "He then recapitulated the genealogy of the house of Brittany, beginning at the siege of Troy, and laboured in magnificent periods to prove the Queen's parentage with Brutus."<sup>1</sup>

The death of Anne de Bretagne produced a great commotion around François and his relatives. All the courtiers hastened to pay homage to the young prince, and those who, speculating on the chance of the late Queen giving birth to a son, had been so ill-advised as to neglect Louise of Savoy, were now feverishly eager to make their peace with that haughty dame. The poets, and their name was legion, since "any literate man of that day could, at a pinch, rank himself among them,"<sup>2</sup> exhausted all the vocabulary of eulogy in order to chant

<sup>1</sup> M. W. Frere, *The Life of Marguerite d'Angoulême, Queen of Navarre.*

<sup>2</sup> Sainte-Beuve.

## The Pearl of Princesses

her perfections and the noble deeds of the House of Savoy. Jean Marot, father of the celebrated Clément, who had been poet-in-ordinary to Anne de Bretagne, now that his patroness was no more, did not hesitate to join the general chorus, and, in return for his flattering verses, received a pension.

As for François, he began forthwith to play the sovereign, received the Ambassadors in private audience, and sent to Pope Leo X his assurances of devotion for the day when he should succeed "to the rank to which he was able to attain." His splendid prospects seemed to have turned his head, and he no longer placed the least restraint on his extravagance. His immense pensions not sufficing him, he proceeded to discount the future, and persuaded the generals of the finances to advance him large sums of money, to be repaid when he should ascend the throne. "The luxury and magnificence with which he surrounded himself were without parallel at this epoch, and probably also in that which followed, for Brantôme himself is retrospectively scandalized. . . . All was either gold or silver on his person or about him. He wore only spurs of gold or of silver; he made use only of silver mirrors; his fingers were covered with diamond or ruby rings, his clothes bedecked with buttons of gold, with clasps of gold or enamel; he rode upon a mule covered with a fillet of gold and trappings adorned with gold of Cyprus, with a silken bridle plated with gold and gold buttons on the tassels. As a matter of course, his chandeliers, his plate, even that used in the kitchen, the little bottles of his medicine-chest, the rebec on which he played and the case of this rebec, his seals, his inkhorn, were of silver at the least. The most delicate perfumes impregnated his bed and his linen; he used only the

## A Luxurious Prince

most costly hosiery, and handkerchiefs and shirts of the finest Dutch linen. A case of morocco leather preserved respectfully his shirts, embroidered with black silk. His wardrobe, although hung with dark curtains, contained a splendid assortment of garments, some in the fashion of Germany, others in that of Italy, all kinds of suits of gold and silver, embroidered or lined with the fur of martens or sables, here a cap of cloth of silver with fringes of silk, or a sword in a white velvet sheath; there a hunting-cape of morocco.”<sup>1</sup>

The sums paid to tailors in the course of the year 1514 alone amounted to 15,600 livres, and this, we are told, did not include his tournament equipment, nor the expense of his mourning for the Queen, but was simply his *budget de l'élégance*. In one respect only did the prince adhere to the traditions of chivalry: he slept on the bare floor, on a camp-bed or on a simple mattress.

The gentlemen of his Household were expected to adorn themselves in a manner worthy of so magnificent a master, and all wore sumptuous costumes of satin or velvet. Among his chamberlains were Bonnivet, his old tutor Artus Gouffier, and several famous captains, such as Bayard, Gamaches, and the Bastard René of Savoy. In imitation of the King, he had for his personal guard a company of twenty-five gentlemen, among whom were his old companions Montmorency and M. de Bourdeille, the father of Brantôme; the number of his pages, which varied like those of Louis XII, rose in January 1514 to twenty-four. The prince supplied them with shoes and shirts.

During that year, the expenses of the Due de Valois exceeded 140,000 livres, about 3,600,000 francs in money

<sup>1</sup> M. de Maulde la Clavière, *Louise de Savoie et François I<sup>er</sup>*.



## The Pearl of Princesses

of to-day, and that prodigious sum did not include the charge for the administration of his estates, nor the debts with which he was already overwhelmed. Cloth-of-gold and silver accounted for almost half of the amount, and jewellery for a considerable portion of the remainder (17,500 livres). Such lavish expenditure, if only by the contrast it presented to the parsimony of Louis XII, was bound to make François popular, and soon his praises were on every one's lips.

The King did not share the general admiration. The senseless extravagance of the heir presumptive scandalized and pained the good man profoundly. "*Ce gros garçon gâtira tout!*" he observed, meaning that, when François ascended the throne, he would undo all that he himself had accomplished for the benefit of his people. When he learned of the loans which the young prince had raised with the complicity of the Treasury officials, he was still more alarmed, and, sending for him, admonished him pretty severely. And, in conferring upon him an additional pension of 45,000 livres, in order that he might have no excuse for such transactions in the future, together with a promise that his debts should be paid, he recounted to him a little fable, by way of a gentle hint that his accession to the throne might not be so sure as he imagined.

This interview decided François to make sure of at least Madame Claude's dowry, and he began to press for the celebration of his marriage, for which he had until then been well content to wait. The King, on the contrary, notwithstanding that he had formerly promoted this arrangement, even at the expense of considerable domestic disquietude, was, now that his eyes were beginning to be opened to his prospective son-in-law's real character, by no means so anxious for the



## Marriage of the Duc de Valois

match. However, he had no legitimate excuse to offer for any further delay, and accordingly on May 18, 1514, the marriage was celebrated at Saint-Germain-en-Laye, in the strictest privacy, on account of the mourning for the Queen. François's only gifts to his bride were a four-post bed, a bolster, and a counterpane; the lady supplied a canopy and a pair of white damask curtains. The young prince presented himself at the altar in a simple suit of black damask, bordered with velvet; Claude did not abandon her deep mourning, nor did the Duchesse d'Alençon and the few other guests who were present. There were "no trumpets, no clarions, no fiddlers, neither jousts nor tournaments, not a shadow either of cloth-of-gold or silk." Altogether, a wedding-day which foreshadowed the unhappy life which the poor little bride was to lead.

A few days after his marriage, François, who had immediately assumed the title of Duc de Bretagne, though he had not yet been put in effective possession of the duchy, went off to Paris, presumably to continue the *Disomme* romance, while Claude meekly returned to Blois. They did not meet again until July was well advanced, when, François's friends having represented to him the necessity of living now and again with his wife, he condescended to pay her a short visit.

Since his marriage he had become more extravagant than ever, and, notwithstanding the splendid addition to his revenues which Louis XII had recently accorded him, he had again had recourse to the Treasury officials to raise money on his present and future possessions. He had, too, was full of ambitious schemes. He was determined on the conquest of the Milanese, which formed part of Claude's dowry, and the recovery of which he regarded as a point of honour, and had long

## The Pearl of Princesses

conferences with the Venetian Ambassador, Dandolo, on the subject.

In the midst of his life of pleasures and his dreams of conquest, he received a rude shock. The desertion of Ferdinand of Spain and the dissolution of the League of Cambrai had left Henry VIII to face France alone ; and, being in sore straits for money to continue the war, he was anxious for peace. France was no less willing, and for some months negotiations had been in progress between the two countries. The Duc de Longueville, who had been taken prisoner at the Battle of the Spurs, conducted them on behalf of France, and proposed, as a basis for a satisfactory settlement, a marriage between Louis XII and the King of England's eighteen-year-old sister, Mary Tudor, of whom he drew a most engaging portrait. In ordinary circumstances, Louis, who was still so inconsolable for the death of the Queen that he refused to receive an Ambassador unless he were habited in the deepest black, would probably have declined to entertain the suggestion ; but the conduct of the heir presumptive had caused him so much irritation that he had begun to conceive for him a positive antipathy. To endeavour to prevent the "*gros garçon*" from succeeding to the throne and "ruining everything" appeared to him as a duty which he owed his people ; and amongst all the marriageable princesses of Europe it would have been difficult to find one more likely to bear him a son than this young English girl.

And so, to the unspeakable indignation and alarm of François and his relatives, on August 7, 1514—exactly seven months after the death of Anne de Bretagne—the Duc de Longueville signed the treaty of peace with England and, in the name of his sovereign, married Mary Tudor.

## CHAPTER IX

ONE can well imagine the effect which this news had upon Louise of Savoy, and her disappointment, complicated by the indifference to her waning charms shown by the young Duc de Bourbon, for whom she had conceived a violent passion, seems to have deprived her temporarily of her reason. Any way, it is difficult to account otherwise for the following incident, related by her in her *Journal* :

“On the twenty-eighth of August, 1514, I began to predict by Divine prevision that my son would one day have great affairs against the Swiss ; for, as I was supping in my wood at Romorantin between seven and eight o'clock, a terrible apparition, in form like a comet, appeared in the heavens towards the west. I was the first of my party to perceive it ; but it was not without fear, for I cried out loudly, exclaiming : ‘*Suisses ! les Suisses ! les Suisses !*’ My women were with me, but the only men in attendance were Regnault du Refuge and my poor miserable servant Rochefort,<sup>1</sup> sitting upon his grey mule, for to go on foot was an impossibility to this poor man.”

As for François, though he admitted in private that the King's approaching marriage “pierced him to the

<sup>1</sup> François de Rochefort, who had been left as a hostage in the hands of the Swiss for the execution of the Treaty of Dijon, had been put to the question by them in a barbarous manner. Very possibly, the countess's exclamation about the Swiss may have been due to the fact that Rochefort may have been speaking to her about his experiences amongst them.



## The Pearl of Princesses

heart," he had sufficient self-control to conceal his mortification from the world, and talked only of the splendid fêtes which were to be given in honour of the royal wedding, and at which he, of course, intended to make a brilliant appearance. Perhaps, too, he was not without hope that his father-in-law's new matrimonial venture might, so far from depriving him of the throne, only hasten his accession, since, according to the Venetian Ambassador, Dandolo, it was the general opinion that "to amuse himself with a woman of eighteen, one of the most beautiful princesses in Europe, was a notable change for the King, and a very dangerous one in his state of health."

What is somewhat rare for a woman of such exalted rank, Mary Tudor appears to have deserved her reputation. She was a blonde, without anything insipid about her, with regular features, a beautiful complexion, and a graceful figure. A more unsuitable consort, however, for a valetudinarian monarch like Louis XII it would have been impossible to find, since she cared for nothing but dress and amusement and was a born coquette.

The young princess embarked at Dover on October 2, accompanied by an immense suite, which comprised "four of the chief lords of England, four hundred barons and knights, and a train of eighty ladies," and after a very rough passage, in which one of the vessels actually foundered with some loss of life and valuables, landed safely at Boulogne.<sup>1</sup> Here she was met by the Ducs de Valois, d'Alençon, and de Bourbon, and other great nobles, who escorted her to Abbeville, where she arrived on October 8.

<sup>1</sup> But in somewhat undignified fashion, as her ship having run aground on entering the harbour, she had to be carried on shore in the arms of a certain Sir Christopher Cornish.





MARY TUDOR.



## Arrival of Mary Tudor

About a league from the town she was met by Louis XII, accompanied by a gallant cavalcade of nobles and ladies. "The King, very antique and decrepit, left Paris to go to meet his young wife," wrote Louise of Savoy, with concentrated irony, *à propos* of these "amorous nuptials," which were celebrated on the morrow with the utmost magnificence. Louis's wedding-present to his bride was "a marvellous great pointed diamond, with a ruby almost two inches long"; while on the following day he bestowed upon her "a ruby two inches and a half long and as big as a man's finger, hanging by two chains of gold at every end without any foil—the value thereof few men could esteem."<sup>1</sup>

From Abbeville the Court proceeded to Saint-Denis, where on November 5 the new Queen's coronation took place, and on the 6th Mary Tudor, "wearing a robe of cloth-of-gold covered with precious stones, her fingers loaded with diamonds, and her neck adorned with a jewelled collar of inestimable value," made her entry into Paris in a magnificent litter, by the side of which rode François, almost as resplendent as the bride herself, and a brilliant company.

The Duchesse d'Alençon had accompanied the Court to Abbeville, but Louise of Savoy had, presumably under the pretext of ill-health, remained at Romorantin until the end of October, when she set out for Paris, and,

<sup>1</sup> Letter of the Earl of Worcester to Cardinal Wolsey, cited by Frere. In an earlier letter, Worcester, who had been sent as Ambassador to the French Court some weeks before, informs the cardinal that Louis had shown him "the goodliest and richest sight of jewels that ever I saw," some of which were reputed to be worth 100,000 ducats. "After the King had shown me these jewels," adds the Ambassador, "he observed: 'My wife will not have all these jewels at once; I shall give them to her one by one, that I may receive in turn more abundant thanks and tokens of her affection.'"

## The Pearl of Princesses

yielding to the urgent representations of her friends, constrained herself so far as to go to Saint-Denis and pay her respects to the Queen (November 3). Louise's interview with her Majesty must have afforded not a little curiosity to the courtiers, but the countess was, of course, careful to dissimulate her sentiments.

Almost at the same time, there arrived at Saint-Denis a personage whose presence was to occasion Louise considerable uneasiness. This was Charles Brandon, the recently created Duke of Suffolk, the foster-brother and favourite of Henry VIII, to whom he bore some resemblance both in person and character.<sup>1</sup> Gossip averred that more than friendly relations had existed between this nobleman and Mary Tudor, and, however that may have been, it is certain that the latter was deeply in love with Brandon, and had only consented to sacrifice herself to "reasons of State," on receiving a promise from her royal brother that, in the event of her becoming a widow, she should be at liberty to marry whom she pleased.

Louise was quick to perceive the danger which the arrival of Suffolk threatened to her son's prospects. The infirm King might be unable to make the Queen the mother of a Dauphin, but a Dauphin might be born, nevertheless. She imparted her fears to François, and the two of them immediately proceeded to organize a draconian surveillance. They enjoined upon Madame Claude that, on no pretext whatsoever, was she to leave the Queen alone

<sup>1</sup> He was the son of William Brandon, who was Henry VII's standard-bearer at Bosworth Field, and was, on that account, singled out and slain by Richard III in personal combat. Some writers state that Charles Brandon had accompanied Mary to France, but this is incorrect. He came two or three weeks later, ostensibly to attend the coronation of the young Queen, but really to arrange for a meeting between Henry VIII and Louis XII in the following spring and to make secret proposals for expelling Ferdinand of Aragon from Navarre.



## An Embarrassing Situation

during the day ; while at night Mary's *dame d'honneur*, Madame d'Aumont, who was devoted to Louise's interests, slept in her mistress's room.

The countess was just beginning to congratulate herself on the success of the measures which she had adopted for the preservation of her Majesty's virtue, when, on a sudden, matters took a surprising turn. The young Queen, to whom admiration was as the breath of life, finding herself debarred from enjoying the society of the man of her choice, cast about her for consolation, and, having decided that her time might be very agreeably employed in a flirtation with the brilliant young Duc de Valois, began to treat that prince with the most marked graciousness. It was enough ; François's inflammable heart took fire at once ; and he fell so desperately in love with his young mother-in-law that he felt ready to hazard, not only the Crown, but the entire world to win her. "How great is the ardour of love and of a sensual pleasure," exclaims Brantôme, "for which men abandon kingdoms and empires and lose them, as histories abundantly testify !"

Louise, who had begun by being delighted at the preference shown by the Queen for François, believing that it constituted an additional safeguard against any indiscretion with her Majesty's English admirer, ended by becoming terribly alarmed. Her situation was indeed a singular one : striving as she was in the interests of her son to keep the Queen and Suffolk apart, while that son seemed bent upon becoming the agent of his own undoing ! However, she prudently forbore from remonstrating with him personally, and deputed the task of recalling him to his senses to an old servant of Louis XI, named Grignols, who, on account of his age and long experience of the

## The Pearl of Princesses

Court, was permitted to speak pretty freely to the young prince.

One fine day, when François was on his way to the Queen's apartments, Grignols met him, and, drawing him aside, said : "What do you intend to do? Do you not see that this young woman, who is shrewd and cunning, is setting a trap for you? And, if she happens to have a son, you will remain as you are now, and will never be King of France." And he asked him bluntly whether he preferred to have to bow the knee one day before a natural son of his own to being King himself.

At first, the enamoured prince refused to listen to the voice of reason ; nevertheless, Grignols perceived that his words had not been without effect. He went to find Louise of Savoy, and her tears and entreaties at length succeeded in persuading François to renounce his conquest. Soon after this, mother and son came to an understanding with Suffolk, lately appointed English Ambassador to the Court of France, whereby, in return for a promise, that in the event of the Queen becoming a widow he should be authorized to marry her, he engaged to respect her virtue.

Mary Tudor, young, beautiful, gay, frivolous, and worldly, revolutionized the life of the Court, which now spent its time in a continual whirl of pleasure. As for the King, she had so bewitched him that the poor man was no longer recognizable. He was transformed into a gay and gallant cavalier. For years past he had observed the most severe regimen, the most infinite precautions, to preserve his feeble health, rising at dawn, dining at eight o'clock in the morning and going to bed at six in the evening. Now he dined at the fashionable hour of noon,

## A Fatal Marriage

retired to rest at midnight and "*fit gentil compagnon avec sa femme*" until the next day was far advanced,

Soubz le drap d'or couvert d'orfèbvrerie  
Qui reluysoit en fine pierrerie.<sup>1</sup>

And the result of this sudden revolution in all his habits, of this excess of conjugal devotion, was that people perceived their uxorious monarch wasting away before their very eyes, and declared bitterly that the King of England had given him "*une haquenée pour le porter plus vite et plus doucement en Enfer ou au Paradis.*"

In less than a week after his marriage his Majesty was taken ill and obliged to keep to his bed for some days, while the Queen sat by his side, singing romances to her guitar, to the great delight of the poor invalid. The royal physicians remonstrated, and spoke to him very seriously of the danger which he was running. It was to no purpose; so soon as Louis was on his feet again, he disregarded all their counsels and "rushed to his doom with the fervour of a neophyte."

At the jousts which followed Mary's coronation, he was so feeble that he was compelled to witness them reclining on a couch; while the Queen stood by his side, "so that all men might see her and wonder at her beautie."<sup>2</sup> A month later, towards the end of December, he was obliged to take to his bed again. His illness does not appear to have caused much anxiety amongst the public, the general belief being that it was merely a passing indisposition. The King, on the contrary, was convinced that his end was near, and, sending for François, gave him his last instructions with regard to the Queen and his younger daughter, Madame Renée. The prince,

<sup>1</sup> Bouchet, *Épître XIV*, cited by M. de Maulde la Clavière.

<sup>2</sup> Hall's *Chronicle*.



## The Pearl of Princesses

however, did not believe that there was any danger, and assured him that he was needlessly alarmed ; but Louis repeated : “ I am dying ; I commend my subjects to your care.” He confessed and communicated, and, according to his prediction, a few days later, his illness suddenly took a turn for the worse ; and in the evening of New Year’s Day 1515, in the midst of a violent hurricane, which razed several houses in Paris to the ground, he died, having survived his marriage with Mary Tudor less than three months.

In the middle of the night, François found his apartments invaded by a great crowd of courtiers, all eager to pay homage to the new monarch, before whom he made no attempt to conceal his joy. The Crown of France, as his friend Fleuranges observes in his *Mémoires*, was indeed a splendid New Year’s gift !

Mary Tudor learned of her widowhood the following morning. She affected to swoon away so well that restoratives had to be sent for.

Louise of Savoy, who, after negotiating with Suffolk the treaty of which we have spoken, had retired to Romorantin with Marguerite, learned the news the same day. Intoxicated with joy, she and her daughter started at once for Paris. At last, after so many years of anxious suspense, their ambition was realized ! At last, Louise was about to reap the fruit of her labours !

The economical Louis XII had disbursed 52,000 livres for the obsequies of his cousin Charles VIII, with whom his relations had never been particularly cordial ; the sumptuous François I considered a fourth of that sum sufficient for the interment of his father-in-law, who had treated him with the greatest kindness and generosity. No time was lost. On January 3, the body of the



## Accession of François I

deceased king was transported from the Palais des Tournelles to Notre-Dame, and to Saint-Denis on the 4th. François announced his accession by letters dated the 2nd.

For a moment, however, it seemed as though he had been a little premature. Mary Tudor declared that she was enceinte. But Louise, who had had experience in such matters, summoned the Queen's physicians and demanded evidence of her Majesty's assertions, which was not forthcoming. According to Brantôme, Mary, who had found her exalted position so much to her taste that she was ready to do anything to preserve it, intended to trick François out of his rights by means of a supposititious child. Du Bellay, however, acquits the young Queen of any such sinister design, and declares that she was herself mistaken. His version of the affair is no doubt the correct one.

Mary received a handsome dowry, composed of Saintonge, with La Rochelle and Saint-Jean d'Angely, Rochefort, Chinon, Loudun and the county of Pézenas, the revenues of which amounted to over 55,000 livres. Moreover, François kept his word to Suffolk, and authorized the duke to marry his lady-love, who was permitted to preserve the title of Queen-Dowager. This union, it may be observed, was by no means pleasing to Henry VIII, who was willing enough to see a Brandon in possession of his sister's favours, but not of her hand (It was the taste of the time); besides which, the lovers had not even gone through the formality of soliciting his royal permission. However, the jingling of the guineas — or rather the livres tournois — of Mary's dowry eventually healed the wound which his dignity had received; and they obtained his forgiveness.

## The Pearl of Princesses

On January 25, the *Sacre* took place at Rheims, in the presence of the whole Court and a brilliant assemblage of Ambassadors Extraordinary, who had been despatched from every state in Europe to offer their felicitations to the new monarch. "The day of the Conversion of St. Paul, 1515," writes Louise of Savoy, in her *Journal*, "my son was anointed and crowned in the cathedral of Rheims. For this event I am much beholden and grateful to the Divine mercy ; as by it I have been recompensed for all the adversities and reverses which befell me in my early years and in the flower of my youth. Humility was then my constant companion ; nevertheless, patience never forsook me."

On February 13 François made his state entry into Paris, with all the pomp and circumstance imaginable. Nothing, we are told, could surpass the splendour of his Majesty's attire. His dress was of cloth-of-silver, embroidered in the most sumptuous manner with his device and motto ; while on his head he wore a cap of white velvet, covered with jewels of priceless value, and adorned with a plume of feathers. The trappings of his horse were of cloth-of-silver, ornamented with a fringe of pure silver, and embroidered with his arms and motto. The Ducs d'Alençon and de Bourbon and the other princes and great nobles were only less sumptuously arrayed than their sovereign. Louise of Savoy, Marguerite, and Queen Claude witnessed the pageant from a gallery, surmounted by a *ciel royal*, spangled with stars and golden fleurs-de-lis, which had been erected near the Port Saint-Denis.

## CHAPTER X

THUS began the reign of François I, or rather of what Marguerite d'Angoulême styled "*Notre Trinité*," for the new king repaid the love and service of his two devout worshippers by his full confidence, and, in a way, they were scarcely less powerful than himself. No sooner was the *Sacre* and the fetes which followed it over, than he created Louise of Savoy Duchesse d'Angoulême and d'Anjou, ceded to her his hereditary estates, and decreed that she should hold equal rank in the kingdom with himself. In an edict, dated from Compiègne, February 4, 1515, his Majesty thus expresses himself—

“Desiring to show respect to our very dear and very loved lady and mother, the Duchesse d'Angoulême and d'Anjou; considering that while we remained under her care, government, and administration, she carefully and affectionately brought us up, and caused us to be well and diligently instructed in all good and virtuous morals, for which cause we therefore hold ourselves bound in honour and duty to impart and bestow upon her the highest honours and privileges of our realm.”

The King then proceeded to decree that the Duchesse d'Angoulême, on her first entry into any town or city in the kingdom, should enjoy the royal prerogatives of granting full and free pardon to criminals confined in the prisons of that town, whatever may have been their crimes, and that pardons and letters of *abolition* so granted were to remain valid.



## The Pearl of Princesses

Honours and pensions were showered upon Louise's favourites. Du Prat, First President of the *Parlement* of Paris, banished from the court of Louis XII for having too faithfully served his patroness's interests, was recalled and made Chancellor of France; Bourbon received a number of governments, which formed, together with his vast estates, a second France, and the *bâton* of Constable, which a traitor had left forty years before at the foot of the scaffold, and which a traitor was thus to inherit; Artus Gouffier, Seigneur de Boisy, François's former *gouverneur*, was appointed Grand Master, and given the county of Étampes for life and the estate and seigneurie of Ville-dieu, to which Louise added that of Maulevrier, in Anjou; Bonnivet—that prince of gallants—was created Admiral of France.

As for Marguerite, indifferent herself to honours and riches, she did not fail to use her influence with her brother to promote her husband's interests, notwithstanding the little affection which she entertained for him. She caused the Duc d'Alençon to be nominated Governor of Normandy, and obtained from the King a formal acknowledgment of his claim to the precedence and prerogatives appertaining to the first Prince of the Blood—a dignity which the Duc de Vendôme disputed with the House of Alençon; while François also surrendered to the duke and duchess the lucrative privilege enjoyed by every monarch on his accession of creating a master in each commercial guild throughout the realm. Nor did she neglect the interests of her friends and *protégés* and, in particular, the illustrious savants whom she desired to defend from the attacks of the Sorbonne, which denounced Greek as the language of heresy, Hebrew of Judaism. It was doubtless through her influence that Guillaume Petit, afterwards Bishop of Senlis, one of the most tole-



## Marguerite directs the King's Patronage

rant and enlightened men of his age, received the appointment of confessor to the King ; that Guillaume Cop, the first translator of Hippocrates, was made first physician ; that Pierre Duchâtel, "the only man," Françoise afterwards declared, "whose scientific knowledge he had not exhausted in two years," became the King's Reader, and the celebrated Greek scholar, Guillaume Budé, after being sent on a diplomatic mission to Rome, was made a *maître des requêtes*, and royal librarian.

If François I merits the title of "Father of Letters," Marguerite d'Angoulême may well be called their "Mother." It was she who fostered her brother's love of literature and art—the love, by the way, of the amateur rather than of the student ; for though there were few forms of knowledge which did not appeal to him, he much preferred to talk with experts upon all subjects, whether classics or philosophy, science or theology, painting or sculpture, than to attempt to master any one of them.

It was she who directed his patronage of learning, who chose the right person for the right place, without, however, wounding his vanity by allowing him to suspect that she was taking the lead. Inspired by her, he established the Collège de France ; he favoured, for a time at least, reform, and those who wished to purge the Church of the gross abuses which degraded it ; he assisted needy talent with a bountiful hand ; encouraged all that could interest the mind or charm the eye ; and gathered to his Court the choicest intellects of every civilized country.

In her great scheme of founding a college in Paris for the study of the learned languages, which appeared to her the easiest and most certain mode of combating the ignorance and prejudices of the schoolmen with their subtleties and arid philosophy, Marguerite had, as her

## The Pearl of Princesses

principal colleague, Guillaume Budé, though Cop, Petit, Duchâtel, and Etienne Poncher, Archbishop of Sens, were all warmly interested in the project. As originally designed, the college was to rise on a truly royal scale, on the site of the ancient Hôtel de Nesle. Within its precincts six hundred students were to be accommodated ; the professors were to be selected from among the most eminent scholars in Europe, as befitted a foundation which was to appeal to students of every country. The principal professorships were to be those of the Greek, Hebrew, and Latin languages. The King proposed to endow the college with an annual revenue of no less than 50,000 écus—an enormous sum in those days.

That nothing might be wanting to ensure success, Marguerite and the King determined to invite Erasmus to undertake the supreme direction of their college. During the years 1517-18 Budé was charged with this negotiation, and so great was François's desire to draw the illustrious scholar to his Court that the affair became invested with the importance of a State embassy.

Erasmus, however, cared nothing either for courts or colleges, and much preferred to pursue his studies in tranquillity at Basle than to engage in controversy with the Sorbonne, which was already beginning to fulminate against the proposal to found what it regarded as a nursery for heretics. And so the King of France fared no better than the other sovereigns who had endeavoured to lure the great man from his retirement.

The failure of the negotiations with Erasmus was a sore disappointment to François and his sister ; nevertheless, the organization of the Collège de France was proceeding steadily when, in 1521, the breaking out of the disastrous war with the Emperor Charles V put a stop to the scheme. It was not, however, abandoned, and some

## Clément Marot

years later, when tranquillity was once more restored, it was resumed, though on a much more modest scale.

If Marguerite showed so much interest in serious studies, lighter forms of literature appealed also to her. A writer of graceful verse herself, she was as much the patroness of the poets as she was of the savants, and a beautiful sonnet laid at her feet was as sure a passport to her favour as a profound philosophical dissertation. It was during the first years of her brother's reign, probably in 1519, that she took into her service a young poet whose name will always be associated with hers.

Clément Marot—"le gentil Maître Clément," as he was called—was the son of that facile rhymester, Jean Marot, already mentioned. His career was that of a typical French poet in the sixteenth century, "combining all that was piquant in his generation—the valour of a soldier, the manners of a courtier, brilliant gallantries, literary feuds, quarrels with the Sorbonne, and visits to the prison of the Châtelet." Born at Cahors, about 1495, his father brought him to Paris when he was ten years old, and, while still very young, sent him to the University, where he studied when the humour took him—which does not appear to have been very often—and conceived a hatred of ecclesiastical authority which lasted all his life. On leaving the University, he appears to have been associated for a time with the "Enfants de Sans-Souci," a company of players who regaled the public with farces and a kind of satirical drama known as *soties*; then, abandoning the boards, he became a Basochien, or student of the law, a class of young gentlemen whose idea of qualifying for a learned profession was to wander about the streets, hobnobbing with all the disreputable characters in the city, drinking a great deal more wine than was good for them, indulging in pro-



## The Pearl of Princesses

miscuous gallantries, fighting with the watch, and otherwise misconducting themselves. The future translator of the Psalms, we regret to say, was no better than the rest; indeed, he was, if anything, rather worse, and "divided his time between love and debauchery." Growing, after a time, a little weary of this kind of life, he decided that the law was not his *métier*, and resolved to try the profession of arms. Accordingly, he attached himself as page to Nicolas de Neufville, Seigneur de Villeroi, and took part in more than one campaign in the war against the League of Cambrai. In the midst of the tumult of camps, his taste for poetry awakened, stimulated perhaps by the success which his father had achieved. He resumed his interrupted studies, and began to read Virgil, the old French poets, Guillaume de Lorris, Jean de Meung, Charles d'Orléans, Coquillart, Villon, the troubadours, and the romances of chivalry. In perceiving this variety of tastes and enterprises, one will recognize that he has described himself with much truth, when he writes:—

Sur le printemps de ma jeunesse folle  
Je ressemblois à l'hirondelle qui vole  
Puis ça, puis là; l'âge me conduisait  
Sans peur ni soin au le cœur me défait.

His first poetical effort was a poem in the allegorical vein, which had then so prodigious a vogue, entitled *le Temple de Cupidon*, and dedicated to François I. The King took a fancy to Marot, whose wit and lively store of anecdote made him very agreeable company, and appointed him one of his *valets de chambre*. After the birth of the first Dauphin, an event which Marot had celebrated in some very charming verses, the poet was presented to Marguerite, who took so much pleasure in his society that not long afterwards François arranged



## Clément Marot

that his services should be transferred to her, the princess conferring upon him the same post in her Household as he had held in that of the King. Marot, in his poem *l'Enfer*, which he wrote when a prisoner in the Châtelet on a charge of heresy, thus refers to his entry into Marguerite's service :—

Rien n'y acquis des valeurs de ce monde,  
Qu'une maistresse, en qui gist, et abonde  
Plus de scavoir, parlant, et escrivant,  
Qu'en autre femme en ce monde vivant.  
C'est du franc lys l'issue, Marguerite,  
Grande sur terre, envers le ciel petite :  
C'est la princesse à l'esprit inspiré  
Au cœur esleu, qui de Dieu est tiré  
Mieux (et m'en croy) que le festu de l'ambre ;  
Et d'elle suis l'humble valet de chambre.  
C'est mon état. O juge Plutonique !  
Le Roy des Francs, dont elle est sœur unique  
M'ha fait ce bien : et quelque jour viendra,  
Que le sœur même au frère me rendra.

For his patroness Marot would appear to have entertained a boundless devotion, which finds expression in the most passionate declarations of attachment and fidelity. In one sonnet he tells the princess that, "in adoring her, she will see him hated by those who have power to harm ; but that the privilege of loving her is dearer to him, with all the evil it entailed, than all the honours his enemies had the power to bestow, provided that she knew his weakness, and rewarded it by one glance of pity" ; while in another he thus describes her manifold graces of mind and person :—

Ma maistresse est de si haulte valeur,  
Qu'elle a la corps droit, beau, chaste et pudique ;  
Son cœur constant n'est, pour heur, ou malheur,  
Jamais trop gay, ne trop mélancolique ;

# The Pearl of Princesses

Elle a au chef un esprit angélique,  
Le plus subtil qui oncq'aux cieulx vola.  
O grand merveille ! on peut voir par cela,  
Que je suis serf d'ung monstre fort estrange ;  
Monstre, je dy, car, pour tout vray, elle a  
Corps féminin, cœur d'homme, et teste d'ange.

The Abbé Lenglet-Dufresnoy, in his edition of Marot's works,<sup>1</sup> maintains that the numerous poems composed by Marot in Marguerite's honour supply proof of an amorous intrigue between the pair, and some later writers have endorsed this view. But in those directly addressed to the princess the writer does not appear to have exceeded the licence permitted to Court poets, and to give some likelihood to his conjecture, Lenglet-Dufresnoy had to suppose that Marot addressed Marguerite in certain verses which there is no reason whatever to suppose were intended for her. Of course, it is quite possible that the princess may have captivated the heart of the susceptible poet ; but, even if such were the case, it is very improbable that she reciprocated his passion. Had there really been any grounds for believing that a liaison existed between her and Marot, we may be sure that contemporary chroniclers would not have been silent upon the subject ; whereas it was not until nearly a century and a half after they were both dead that the charge was made.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Œuvres de Clément Marot, accompagnées d'une préface historique, par l'Abbé Lenglet-Dufresnoy* (Paris, 1731).

<sup>2</sup> Lenglet-Dufresnoy, who was very little scrupulous as to the use he made of the knowledge which he gained, and "fell into gross errors, which certain critics attribute to interested bad faith rather than to ignorance" (Article Lenglet-Dufresnoy, *Nouvelle Biographie Générale*), also charges Marot with a liaison with Diane de Poitiers, the famous mistress of Henri II, previous to the beginning of her intimacy with that prince. But, as we have shown in our work on *Henri II : his Court and Times*, the so-called proofs which he adduces in support of this story will not for a moment stand the test of examination.

## An Atrocious Accusation

It is a singular and very regrettable fact that the moral reputation of Marguerite d'Angoulême, respected by contemporary writers, even by those who were the least inclined to reticence in such matters, has not been free from attacks by modern historians. Génin, in his notes to *les Nouvelles Lettres de Marguerite d'Angoulême*, brings against the princess an odious charge, claiming to have discovered evidence that "the affection of Marguerite for her brother was of a criminal nature, and that this absolute devotion which impelled her to journey to Spain [during François's imprisonment at Madrid] and of which she did not cease to give the King proofs up to the end of his life, instead of exciting our sympathy and our admiration, ought rather to revolt us."

The evidence in question consists of "a document unique, but unexceptionable: a letter in Marguerite's own hand, filled with veiled allusions and obscure expressions, and the first half of which would be unintelligible, if the end did not help us to understand the beginning." This letter bears no date, but Génin expresses the opinion that it was written during the winter of 1521-2. Here it is:—

*"To the King my Sovereign Lord.*

"That which it has pleased you to write, saying that you would tell me further, causes me to continue to hope, and to hope still more, that you will not abandon your direct road to shun those who, for all their happiness, so greatly desire to see you, although worse off than before. Let my will, however, be prescribed by yours, if you ever need the honest and ancient service which I have borne and bear to merit your gracious favour. And if the perfect imperfection of a hundred thousand faults makes you disdain my obedience—then, at least, Sire, do



## The Pearl of Princesses

me so much honour and kindness as not to increase my lamentable misery, *en demandant l'expérience pour défaite* ;<sup>1</sup> knowing my impatience without your aid, as you will learn by a token<sup>2</sup> I am sending you ; only requiring from you for the end of my misfortunes, and to assure me a happy beginning to the new year, that it may please you to have for me in some small degree that which you are infinitely to me and will be, without ceasing, in my thoughts. While awaiting the joy of seeing you and of speaking with you, Sire, my desire of meeting you presses me very humbly to entreat you, if it be no trouble to you, to let me know the answer by this messenger. And I will forthwith set out, feigning another occasion. And there is no stress of weather nor roughness of the roads that will not be changed for me into a very pleasant and agreeable repose. And I shall be most grateful to you ; and yet more grateful, if it please you to bury my letters in the fire and my words in silence. Else you, will render :—

Pis que morte ma douloureuse vie  
Vivant en vous de la seule espérance  
Dont le savoir me cause l'assurance,  
Sans que jamais de vous je me défie,  
Et si ma main trop foiblement supplie,  
Vostre bonté excusera l'ignorance  
Pis que morte.

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<sup>1</sup> Michelet understands these words to mean : “By requiring the material experience of my moral defeat” ; Madame Darmesteter (then Miss Robinson), who believes this letter to have been written during Marguerite's return journey from Madrid in 1526, and interprets it in a totally different sense from Génin and Michelet, translates them : “By demanding experience in addition to defeat” ; Martha Frere : “By requiring me to conquer by experience that which you know my utter helplessness to do without your aid,” and describes the epistle as “a curious and mysterious letter,” which “nothing serves to elucidate.”

<sup>2</sup> Without doubt, the verses with which Marguerite terminates this letter.



## An Atrocious Accusation

Par quoy à vous seul je desdie  
Ma voulenté et ma toute puissance  
Recevez la, car la persévérance,  
Sera sans fin, ou tost sera finie,  
Pis que morte.

“Your very humble and very obedient more than subject and servant.”<sup>1</sup>

Génin is very severe upon Marguerite, whom he assumes without hesitation to have been the guilty party. Michelet, while placing, in the main, a similar interpretation upon the letter—it was an axiom of this inimitable embroiderer of historical fact that what is evil must of necessity be true—exonerates from blame Marguerite, for whom he entertains a great admiration, and makes François—“who under the appearance of a man conceals the soul of a satyr”—the culprit.<sup>2</sup> “Taking pity upon his state of mind (It was a time of disaster abroad and of popular discontent at home, and François was in a state of profound depression), his sister redoubled her maternal caresses, her religious tenderness and her sweet appeals to the love of God. His [François’s] heart was so debased by vulgar pleasures, that he conceived the shameful idea of ascertaining how far his power over this uniquely devoted woman extended. He affected to doubt her affection so tender; he dared to say that he would not believe it, at least until he had had the ‘proof’ and the definite ‘experience.’”

Michelet adds that Marguerite repulsed with horror this monstrous suggestion and quitted the Court for a time; and he admits that “nothing proves that François ever exacted from her this sacrifice.”

<sup>1</sup> The knife of the binder of the MS. has severed the signature to this letter: the only one of one hundred and thirty-eight so defaced. There is no question, however, as to its authenticity.

<sup>2</sup> Michelet mentions in a footnote that Génin had informed him that he himself was now of this opinion.

## The Pearl of Princesses

Another eminent French historian, Henri Martin, less eloquent, but more judicial, than Michelet, takes much the same view of the matter, though, as might be expected, he writes with more reserve.

“It is impossible,” he remarks, “not to say a word here concerning a sad mystery which has cast sombre shadows over Marguerite’s memory. Brought up amidst surroundings in which everything tended to excite the heart and the imagination without regulating the mind, Marguerite had received from her mother nothing but examples of unrestrained passion. She allowed herself to be invaded very early, and without knowing it, by a sentiment strong and fatal. She had loved her young brother with an affection so exclusive, so ardent, that she had ceased to love him as a brother. Fatal passion, which was the secret of her indifference, not only for a husband, little worthy of love or even of esteem, but also for the homage of the most brilliant cavalier of the Court, and which, in this naturally honourable as well as tender soul, remained a misfortune and did not become a crime. It did not remain thus with François, at a certain moment of their lives. At least, that is what seems to result from a strange, correspondence of the winter of 1521–2. M. Michelet’s version, though perhaps a little highly coloured, is much more probable than that of the lamented editor of Marguerite’s letters, M. Génin. If there were either on the part of the brother or of the sister a culpable intention, it was certainly not on Marguerite’s.”

Now the conclusion arrived at by these distinguished writers is really the purest conjecture, for the letter which forms the sole basis of this horrible accusation bears no date, and may be interpreted in a variety of different ways. The Comte de la Ferrière, in his introduction to *le Livre des Dépenses de Marguerite d’Angoulême*, is of

## An Atrocious Accusation

opinion that it was penned in 1525, prior to Marguerite's hasty departure for Madrid, where her brother was a prisoner in the Alcazar; while Le Roux de Linçy, in his edition of the *Heptaméron*, assigns it to a later date, remarking that it was probably written during one of the frequent quarrels that arose between François I and Marguerite's second husband, Henri d'Albret, King of Navarre. Finally, Lescure, in his *les Maîtresses du François I<sup>er</sup>*, a work which, notwithstanding its somewhat frivolous title, is a valuable contribution to the history of the period, marked by wide knowledge and judicious criticism, repudiates the aspersions cast upon François and Marguerite, and points out the error of judging the metaphorical and hyperbolic expressions with which the correspondence of that time abounds with mathematical eyes, "under the penalty of arriving at conclusions equally odious and absurd, for instance, in seeing an incestuous passion in that which is merely an exaggeration of familiar affection, or an artifice of coquetry or of feminine cleverness. M. Michelet," he continues, "allows himself to be seduced too easily by these unworthy romances of history, and is too ready to invest heroes of a superior rank with unnatural vices. There is nothing astonishing in his having fallen, to begin with, into the same snare of appearances in regard to François I and his sister as he will choose successively in regard to the Regent and Louis XV."<sup>1</sup>

What seems to us a convincing argument that Marguerite's affection for her brother, however exaggerated, was entirely innocent, is the complaisance which she showed for his mistresses, with whom she appears to

<sup>1</sup> Michelet supposes the existence of similar relations between Philippe d'Orléans and his eldest daughter, the notorious Duchesse de Barry, and between Louis XV and his daughters.



## The Pearl of Princesses

have been on the best of terms. In the case of his Majesty's early flame, Françoise de Foix, who had married in 1509 Jean de Montmorency-Laval, Seigneur de Chateaubriand, and whom François not long after his accession had raised to the rank of *maîtresse en titre*, she actually carried this complaisance to the length of composing amorous devices for the jewels which the King presented to the lady.

Madame de Chateaubriand, it may be mentioned, obtained a considerable influence over François, which she used to secure for her three brothers, Thomas, Seigneur de Lescun, Odet, Seigneur de Lautrec, and André, Seigneur de Lesparre, not only the highest dignities, but important military commands for which they were quite unfitted. She appears to have been much attached to her royal lover, but this did not prevent her from indulging in gallantries with both Bourbon and Bonnavet. Brantôme relates how, one fine day, when she had accorded the latter gentleman a rendezvous in her chamber, the King arrived unexpectedly, and Bonnavet had only just time to conceal himself under the green branches and ferns with which, as it was summer, the fire-place was filled, and which the lady piled on top of him, before his Majesty entered. In this cramped position, afraid to move and scarcely to breathe, the adventurous gallant was obliged to remain until the King took his departure.

Notwithstanding the rebuffs he had received, the audacious Bonnavet had not yet abandoned his pursuit of Marguerite; but, despairing of compassing his end by any other means, he determined to have recourse to stratagem. He accordingly persuaded the King to honour one of his country-seats, which was noted for the excellence of the hunting to be obtained in the neighbouring forests, with a visit, and so contrived matters that the



## An Audacious Gallant

room assigned to Marguerite was one situated immediately above that of his mother, and communicating with it by a trap-door, which, however, was concealed beneath the mats with which, according to the custom of the time, the floor was covered, in such manner that there was no chance of the princess perceiving it, while, at the same time, it would be easy to open from below without making any noise. Then, on the pretext that his mother had a cough which might disturb their illustrious guest, he induced the old lady to change rooms with him, and prepared to take by storm the fortress he had failed to reduce. One night, having waited until he was sure that Marguerite had fallen asleep, he let down the trap-door and ascended into her chamber. The princess, though taken entirely by surprise, offered a vigorous resistance, biting and scratching furiously, and, finally, having baffled his attempts to stifle her cries with the bedclothes, began to scream lustily. Her *dame d'honneur*, Madame de Châtillon, came hurrying in, upon which Bonnivet promptly fled by the way he had come, "his face all bleeding from the lady's scratches and bites, and his despair at finding himself in such an evil plight being no less than his desire and assurance of a gracious reception had previously been."

Marguerite was so indignant that, at first, she declared her resolve to report the matter to the King, and make Bonnivet pay for his attempt upon her virtue with his head. But the prudent Madame de Châtillon sought to dissuade her from such a step.

"If," said she, "you desire to be revenged on him, let love and shame do their work; they will torment him more grievously than could you. And if you would speak out for your honour's sake, beware, Madame, lest you fall into a mistake like to his own. He, instead

## The Pearl of Princesses

of obtaining the greatest delight he could imagine, has encountered the greatest vexation a gentleman could endure. So you, Madame, thinking to exalt your honour, may perhaps diminish it. If you make complaint, you will bring to light that which is known to none, for you may be sure that the gentleman, on his side, will never reveal aught of the matter. And even if my lord, your brother, should do justice to him at your request, and the poor gentleman should die, yet would it everywhere be noised abroad that he had had his will of you ; and most people would say that it was unlikely that a gentleman would make such an attempt unless the lady had given him great encouragement. You are young, fair ; you live gaily with all ; there is no one belonging to the Court who has not been witness of your gracious treatment of this gentleman. Hence, every one will believe that, if he did this thing, it was not without some fault on your side ; and your honour, for which you never had to blush, will be freely questioned wherever the story is related."

Marguerite recognized the force of this reasoning, and decided to remain silent. As for Bonnavet, "he passed the night in regrets such as I cannot describe, and in the morning, finding his face greatly disfigured, he feigned grievous sickness, and to be unable to endure the light, until the company had quitted his house." Nor did he appear again at Court until all traces of his defeat had disappeared, and whenever he found himself in the presence of the princess, he blushed and appeared greatly embarrassed. From that time Marguerite treated Bonnavet with marked coldness ; nevertheless, she could still weep for him when he fell, fighting valiantly, on the fatal field of Pavia.

## CHAPTER XI

THE reign of François I, so fertile in disaster, opened in a blaze of glory. The temptation to embark upon those Italian enterprises for which France had paid so dearly during the two previous reigns proved too strong for the restless ambition of the new King, and, undeterred by the sad experience of his predecessors, he at once resolved upon the recovery of the Milanese. To secure himself against external attack, he renewed with Henry VIII the treaty concluded by Louis XII in 1514, won over the Republic of Genoa, which commanded the communications between Milan and the sea, secured the co-operation of the Venetians, and negotiated with his future redoubtable rival the young Charles of Austria, Sovereign of the Netherlands, a treaty of alliance, in which he promised him his sister-in-law, Renée de France, in marriage, and engaged to assist him, when the time arrived, to secure the vast heritage of his two grandfathers, the Emperor Maximilian and Ferdinand the Catholic.

These negotiations completed, he entrusted the regency of the kingdom to Louise of Savoy—*Madame*, as she was now officially styled—with powers so wide as to produce a vigorous protest from the *Parlement* of Paris, sent his wife, who was near her confinement, to Amboise with his mother and sister, and set out for Italy, at the head of what was for those times a considerable army. In great alarm, the Papacy, Maximilian Sforza, Duke of Milan, and the Spaniards renewed their former alliance,



## The Pearl of Princesses

and the Swiss mercenaries of Maximilian promptly occupied the Alpine passes from Mont-Cenis to Mont-Genève. But François, guided by friendly peasants, succeeded in leading his army over the mountains by a pass to the south of Mont-Genève which had hitherto been deemed impracticable; and his great victory over the Swiss at Marignano (September 13-14, 1515) was speedily followed by the surrender of Milan.

“The 13th of September, which was Thursday, 1515,” writes his proud mother in her *Journal*, “my son vanquished and defeated the Swiss near Milan; the battle began at five hours after noon; it lasted all the night and the morrow until eleven o'clock in the morning; and this very day I left Amboise to go on foot to Notre Dame des Fontaines, to commend to her that which I love more than myself. It is my son, glorious and triumphant Cæsar, subjugator of the Helvetians.

“Sunday, the 14th of October, of the year 1515, Maximilian, son of the late Louis Sforza, was besieged in the castle of Milan by the French, and made a conditional surrender to my son.”

After despatching Maximilian Sforza to Paris, where he lived in a kind of honourable captivity until his death in 1530,<sup>1</sup> François, with the object of securing his position in Italy, entered into negotiations with the Pope and the Swiss. With the latter, he made a treaty, which subsequently took the form of a perpetual peace, and was destined to endure as long as the French Monarchy. With Leo X, he concluded, in February 1516, a “Con-

<sup>1</sup> Thus history repeated itself in a singular manner, for Maximilian's father, Ludovico il Moro, had been dispossessed of his duchy by Louis XII, and carried away captive to Paris, where he died in 1510, at the Château of Loches.



## The Concordat

cordat," which swept away that great charter of Gallican liberties, the Pragmatic Sanction of 1438, by recognizing the superiority of the Holy See over all ecclesiastical councils, and restoring to it the *annates* and other rich sources of revenues of which it had then been deprived, while, at the same time, giving the King of France the right of nomination to practically all vacant benefices. The *Parlement* of Paris and the University subsequently protested vehemently against this cynical bargain, which deprived the Gallican Church both of its wealth and its independence; but the only result of their remonstrances was that François ordered the imprisonment of several members of the latter body, and took away from the *Parlement* all cognizance of ecclesiastical affairs.

Having disbanded the greater part of his victorious army and left the remainder, under the command of Bourbon, to occupy the newly-conquered territory, the King returned to France. The Queen, who during his absence in Italy had given birth to a daughter, met him at Sisteron, in Provence, accompanied by the Duchesse d'Angouleme and Marguerite, whose adulation must have served to strengthen François's belief that Marignano and the conquest of the Milanese were the presage of far greater triumphs.

On January 23, 1516, Ferdinand V had died, leaving the crowns of Spain and Naples to Charles of Austria. The latter, whose accession was encountering grave difficulties, seemed disposed towards peace and even an alliance with France; and in the following August a treaty was signed at Noyon, whereby Charles was pledged to marriage with a French princess, and to accept, by way of dowry, the rights of the Kings of France to the crown of Naples. This was succeeded, thanks to

## 'The Pearl of Princesses

Charles's good offices, by a reconciliation between the Emperor Maximilian and François, and a treaty of alliance between the three sovereigns at Cambrai, by which they mutually agreed to guarantee their respective dominions and to act in concert against the Turk, whose power was daily becoming more threatening. To complete the pacification, François renewed his alliance with Venice (October 1517), and a year later came to an arrangement with Henry VIII, by which France recovered Tournai.

These successful negotiations, following his conquests in Italy, placed the crown upon the power and reputation of the young king. Enjoying, thanks to the absorption of the great fiefs, the Concordat, and the subservience of the *Parlements*, an authority which no French monarch had ever before exercised, he seemed called to the first place among the princes of Europe. But for such a position he was eminently unfitted. His qualities, indeed, were superficial rather than solid. Brave, open-handed, magnificent, capable of generous and even lofty impulses, he was, at the same time, thanks to the deplorable training of his adoring mother, vain, selfish, and easily led, without self-restraint, perseverance or sense of duty. He had no taste for the stern business of government; he cared nothing for justice, nothing for economy. So long as he had money to squander on his incessant wars and his licentious pleasures, he was content to leave the management of affairs in the hands of Louise of Savoy and her infamous favourite, the Chancellor du Prat—"one of the most pernicious men who ever existed," says Regnier de la Planche—both of whom showed a cynical indifference for law and justice which has seldom been surpassed, ground down the people by aggravated taxation, and

## Charles of Austria

diverted immense sums into their own coffers. Louis XII's prediction with regard to his heir was coming only too true.

Although François was so entirely devoid of statesmanlike qualities, there were no limits to his ambition. He aspired—or, at any rate, his mother aspired on his behalf—to a kind of world empire, which was to include Persia and India; and, as a first step towards the realization of this dream, he had resolved to secure the Imperial Crown of Germany. But, meanwhile, a rival had appeared upon the scene. He was the heir of the four dynasties—Burgundy, Austria, Castile and Aragon—that pale, taciturn, studious lad, who a little while before had almost seemed to court the friendship and protection of the all-conquering King of France. To François the young King of Spain appeared no very formidable adversary; he could not bring himself to believe that so unpromising an exterior concealed gifts which were to make him the greatest statesman of his age: a subtlety and a talent for organization rarely equalled, a tireless energy, an unconquerable tenacity. François's courtiers shared his scepticism in regard to Charles; "*un certain petit roi*" they called him, and laughed in their sleeves.

In January 1519, the Emperor Maximilian died, and Charles offered himself to the suffrages of the Electors. The union of Spain, Naples, the Netherlands, and the Empire under one head was a contingency which it was impossible for François I to contemplate without alarm, and one which he was determined to avert. Had he used his influence to secure the election of one of the other German princes, he would probably have succeeded in keeping Charles out; but, dazzled by the brilliant prospect of becoming the lay head of Christendom, and the



## The Pearl of Princesses

defender of the Faith against the Moslem, he entered the lists in person,<sup>1</sup> vowing that "he would have the Empire if it cost him three million crowns, and that three years after his election he would be in Constantinople or his grave." But neither the glamour of his military triumphs, nor the favour of the Pope, nor the mules laden with gold which he sent to support his pretensions, proved sufficient to balance the claims of a competitor whose House had already furnished six wearers of the Imperial purple, and whose hereditary dominions, bordering as they did on Turkey, enabled him to present himself as the natural defender of Germany. On July 5, 1519, "it was cried aloud in the great church of Frankfurt: Charles, Catholic King, elected Emperor! Which being done, gave great joy to those who wished well to the Catholic King, and great mourning to those who were for the King of France; and they were vexed and bewildered, seeing that they had spent in vain the money which they once had."<sup>2</sup>

François had lost the great prize which he had so ardently coveted, and a great deal of money as well, and his irritation at his defeat undoubtedly embittered his personal relations with his successful rival, and precipitated the outbreak of that long and sanguinary struggle which, with an occasional breathing-space, was to continue until the Treaty of Cateau-Cambrésis in 1557, and which inherited disputes in regard to Navarre, Naples, Milan, Burgundy, and Flanders would in any event have rendered inevitable.

In view of the approaching conflict, the great aim

<sup>1</sup> He came forward, in theory, as a German prince, basing his claim on his lordship of the old kingdom of Arles, a fief of the empire.

<sup>2</sup> Fleuranges.



## The "Field of the Cloth of Gold"

of both sovereigns was now to secure the alliance of England. François believed that he had the better chance, since Henry VIII had been, like himself, an unsuccessful candidate for the Imperial Crown. He accordingly invited him to an interview, and in the month of June 1520, the two Courts, "bearing their mills, their forests, and their meadows on their shoulders,"<sup>1</sup> met between Guines and Ardres, on a spot which received the name of the "Field of the Cloth of Gold."

Nothing came of this ruinous pageant, at which, by the way, Henry VIII saw for the first time Anne Boleyn, who came thither as one of the Duchesse d'Alençon's maids-of-honour; for, though François parted from his brother of England under the illusion that he was assured of his support, the latter had merely been acting a part. Wolsey indeed, who guided Henry's policy, had been already gained over by Charles V, and a few days before the English King sailed for France the Emperor had landed at Dover, and an interview had taken place between the two monarchs. On taking leave of François, Henry journeyed to Gravelines to return his nephew's visit. There were no silken tents or ladies or tourneys or banquets, but a great deal of business was done; and the King subsequently announced that he intended to adopt an attitude of strict neutrality towards the two rivals, and to declare against the aggressor.

The aggressor, as Henry VIII had doubtless foreseen, proved to be François, who, in April 1521, after several ineffectual efforts to gall his astute adversary into taking the offensive, struck the first blow, by sending an army under Bonnivet into Navarre, to assist Henri d'Albret to recover his kingdom, and another under the Duc

<sup>1</sup> Guillaume du Bellay, *Mémoires*.

## The Pearl of Princesses

d'Alençon to assist Charles's rebellious vassal, Robert de la Marck, who from his little principality of Bouillon was devastating the southern borders of the Netherlands. Charles, on his side, retaliated by invading France and laying siege to Tournai, and concluded (May 8, 1521) a treaty with Leo X for the expulsion of the French from Italy, that Machiavellian Pontiff having been induced to change sides, partly by the promise of territorial aggrandizement, and partly by the hope of inducing Charles to check the Reformation in Germany, by procuring the Diet's condemnation of Luther.

## CHAPTER XII

By the side of the struggle between François I and Charles V for the hegemony of Europe, another contest, and one of infinitely more importance was beginning—the contest between the Church of Rome and the Reformation.

Some years before Luther affixed his famous manifesto to the gates of the church at Wittenberg the New Ideas had begun to agitate the Sorbonne. There was at this time among the professors of the University one Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples, a man of very considerable learning and of undoubted piety, though it was rather as a philosopher and a mathematician than a theologian that he had acquired distinction. He had, however, always been much addicted to the reading of mystical works, of which he published several, and this eventually led him towards middle age to embark upon a profound study of the Bible, an occupation to which he devoted the rest of his life. In 1512, when Lefèvre was in his forty-eighth year, he undertook a revised version of the text of the Vulgate, which, however, does not appear to have been altogether a success, perhaps because he had never troubled to acquire much elegance in the writing of Latin. On the other hand, the commentaries which he subsequently published on various portions of the New Testament were of the highest value, and they form the truly original part of his work. "It was his special endeavour to discover the spiritual meaning of the Scriptures, that is to say, that which the Holy Spirit has concealed beneath the literal meaning, and which

## The Pearl of Princesses

is not revealed save to those who seek to understand divine things in a manner not carnal. To determine this spiritual meaning he had no confidence save in the aid of divine inspiration."

Lefèvre's writings gained him many disciples, among whom were Gérard Roussel and the fiery Guillaume Farel, a member of a noble family of Dauphiné, who was to become one of the most celebrated French Reformers ; but they soon brought him into collision with the more orthodox officials of the Sorbonne, headed by its bigoted syndic, Noël Bédac. A dissertation that he published in 1517 to prove, contrary to the opinion of the doctors of the time, that Mary Magdalene, Mary, the sister of Lazarus, and the woman mentioned by St. Luke in the seventeenth chapter of his gospel, were three distinct persons raised a tempest of controversy ; and in 1521, at the instance of Bédac, the Sorbonne solemnly condemned the dissertation, and reported its author to the *Parlement* of Paris as a heretic. The *Parlement*, which in cases of heresy was only the exponent of the law, and not the judge of doctrine, would undoubtedly have assigned Lefèvre to the stake, when the King, having caused the condemned treatise to be examined by his confessor, Guillaume Petit, who declared that he could find nothing in it contrary to orthodoxy, stopped the proceedings, and forbade the *Parlement* or the University to molest Lefèvre further.

It is generally believed that it was at the instigation of his sister that François had interposed his authority to save Lefèvre, which, if it be the case, constitutes the first of Marguerite's many acts of intervention on behalf of the Reformers.

To understand Marguerite d'Angoulême's sympathy



## Religious Views of Marguerite

with the Reformation in its early stages, before divergences of doctrine became clearly defined, is not difficult. "In France, the home of culture," observes a well-known authority on the French Renaissance, "for the first twenty years, or thereabouts, the Renaissance and Reformation went hand in hand. Scholars, Reformers, poets, philosophers, wits, and mystics all made common cause against the rule of ignorance and convention and the imprisonment of the imagination. Marguerite of Angoulême adopted the new faith in a great measure because she was a mystic ; because, too, her large-minded charity made tolerance a necessity. Any thought that helped men to live more nobly she included within the pale of religion, and Socrates was no less a saint to her than Augustine."<sup>1</sup> Marguerite was undoubtedly a convinced and even a fervent Christian, but of her dogmas we know little. The creed that used the fewest forms and dwelt most upon practical Christianity would seem to have been the one that appealed to her, and she felt a profound disgust for the superstition of the Middle Ages and the monks who exploited the popular credulity. It is, however, certain that she never at any time contemplated separation from Rome. She desired to purify an old order, not to found a new one, and if she sought in later years to protect the followers of Calvin from persecution, it was, as she herself declared, from compassion, not from conviction.

The ardent sympathy which the princess evinced for the New Ideas was largely due to the close friendship which existed between her and Guillaume Briçonnet, Bishop of Meaux, one of the most distinguished prelates of the Gallican Church.

<sup>1</sup> Edith Sichel, *Women and Men of the French Renaissance*.

## The Pearl of Princesses

Guillaume Briçonnet was the elder of the two sons of that Guillaume Briçonnet, Comte de Montbrun, who, entering the priesthood after the death of his wife, successively filled the sees of St. Malo and Nismes, and the archiepiscopal thrones of Rheims and Narbonne, and was created a cardinal by Alexander VI in 1495.<sup>1</sup> The heir to great wealth and an ancient title, Briçonnet had been intended for a political career, but, being of a very devout turn of mind, Court life was but little to his taste, and he soon decided to follow his father's example. After filling several minor ecclesiastical offices, he was, in 1504, created Bishop of Lodève, and three years later the rich Abbey of Saint-Germain-des-Prés was bestowed upon him. In 1507 Briçonnet was sent as Ambassador Extraordinary to Rome, where he eloquently and ably defended the foreign policy of Louis XII before the Sacred College, in a discussion which was subsequently translated into French and widely distributed; and in 1516 he was again accredited in a similar capacity to the Vatican, for negotiations which retained him at Rome for two years.

With his wealth, his learning, and his undoubted abilities, Briçonnet might, had he so desired, have played an important part at the Court of François I, but he was devoid of ambition, and, when not employed on diplomatic missions, preferred to reside in his diocese of Meaux, which he had exchanged for that of Lodève, or at the Abbey of Saint-Germain-des-Prés, where he occupied himself in instituting some sadly-needed reforms

<sup>1</sup> Guillaume Briçonnet was expelled from the Sacred College by Julien II for his adhesion to the decrees of the Council of Pisa, but he was restored by Leo X. He died in 1514, leaving a good reputation as a Churchman, a scholar, and a diplomat.

## Guillaume Briçonnet, Bishop of Meaux

among the monks and in augmenting the library of the monastery. On his return from his second mission to Rome, he found the Sorbonne in great agitation over the teaching of Lefèvre and his followers. Briçonnet was already well acquainted with Lefèvre, whose pupil he had formerly been, and whom he had sometimes invited to visit him at Saint-Germain-des-Prés, and, desiring to make himself more conversant with the views which the latter was now propounding, with the object, it appears, of being able to combat them more effectually in his own diocese, where they were reputed to have taken root, he renewed the acquaintance. He soon found, however, that he was far more in sympathy with his old master's views than he had believed possible, for, like him, he was an enthusiastic Biblical student ("The savour of divine food," he once wrote to Marguerite d'Angoulême, "is so sweet that it renders the mind insatiable; the more one tastes, the more one desires it"), and, like him, he deplored the growing corruption of the Church.

It may here be observed that Lefèvre's opinions were certainly not such as would be regarded as very dangerous by Roman Catholics of our own day. He never—at any rate, in his writings—attacked the authority of the Holy See or the constitution of the Catholic Church; he merely demanded the reform of abuses and the restoration of the Church to its primitive purity. As to dogma, he remained throughout his life attached to doctrines which the Reformers repudiated, such as Free Will and Transubstantiation;<sup>1</sup> and, unlike the Protestants, he did not base Justification on faith alone, but recognized the

<sup>1</sup> The author of the article on Lefèvre in the *Encyclopædia Britannica* says that "he agreed with Luther in rejecting Transubstantiation." This was precisely what Lefèvre did not do.



## The Pearl of Princesses

merit of works. "Seek," he wrote, "first to obtain the salvation of God, according to Paul, and add the works to the faith, according to James, for they are the signs of a living and abundant faith." He accepted monasticism and celibacy, and approved of abstinence and maceration, though he saw in them merely outward signs of penitence and demanded that they should be accompanied by an inward change of heart. Several years after the publication of his commentaries on the Epistles of St. Paul one saw him still religiously submitting to the ordinances of the Church, venerating relics, making, as Farel reports, "the most profound reverences to images," and vowing to the Virgin an ardent devotion; and he collected material for a martyrology, of which the first part, comprising the martyrs whose fêtes were celebrated in the month of January, appeared in 1524. There was, however, one important point, among others of much less importance, in which Lefèvre approached the Reformers: he desired that the Bible should alone be consulted on matters of dogma.

We have thought it necessary to explain what were the opinions held by the first prominent French Reformer, both because they have been much misrepresented by certain writers, notably by Martha Freer, in her *Life of Marguerite d'Angoulême*, in which she credits him with views differing but little from those of the most advanced Reformers, and also because these opinions seem to have coincided in the main with Marguerite's own beliefs.

When Bêda and his partisans began to fulminate against Lefèvre, Briçonnet offered him an asylum at Meaux, where he aided the bishop in reforming his diocese. How sorely such reform was needed may be gathered from the fact that, as the result of investigations made by Briçonnet in 1519,



## The Mystics of Meaux

he learned that in the whole diocese there were scarcely ten resident priests, and that out of some one hundred and thirty curés to whom the absentees had delegated their duties, while they took their ease in Paris and elsewhere, only fourteen were, in his opinion, fit to officiate.

Lefèvre was followed to Meaux by others who favoured the New Ideas, and soon a little group of earnest thinkers and students, all zealous for Reform, gathered around the good bishop, who gave them a cordial welcome, and Meaux became "a serene oasis amidst the spreading cupidity and corruption of the Church." Here were Roussel and Farel; Michel d'Arande, Briçonnet's chaplain, whom Marguerite afterwards appointed her almoner; Louis de Berquin, an officer of the King's Guards, "*le plus savant de la noblesse*," a fiery soul, whose zeal his friend, the prudent Erasmus, in vain endeavoured to moderate, and who was to die for his faith after the famous affair of the broken statue in 1528; Mazurier, the champion of the courageous German scholar Reuchlin against the persecution of the Dominicans of Cologne; Leclerc, a weaver of Meaux, like his scholarly friend Berquin, doomed to a martyr's death; and a few others no less fervent, if not as effectual, as their fellows. They had one or two outside associates, such as Duchâtel and Guillaume Petit, though these men, for a time their admirers, afterwards took fright and turned against them.

Strong in the episcopal protection, the Heretics of Meaux—as the little band of Reformers soon came to be called—were exceedingly active. They studied, they argued, they wrote, and they preached, and they found ready listeners among Leclerc's fellow-artisans, the

## The Pearl of Princesses

weavers of the town, who, being for the most part scantily clothed and half-starved, and altogether weary of their lot, since it was a time of famine and of war and rumours of war, were fit subjects for religious revival. Some of the preachers too, carried away by their enthusiasm, went a good deal farther than the bishop under whose protection they carried on their work had contemplated or than it was prudent to go. "In the year 1520," writes the Bourgeois of Paris, "there arose in the duchy of Saxony, in Germany, a heretic doctor of theology, named Martin Luther, who said many things against the power of the Pope . . . and wrote several books, which were printed and published throughout all the cities of Germany and throughout the kingdom of France . . . and in 1521 there was a great famine, so that in Paris no corn and no bread were to be found in all the town for any price; and throughout the land of Normandy a still greater famine and scarcity of corn and bread, so that sixty-two bushels of wheat sold for ten livres. . . . And it must be noted that the greater part of the town of Meaux was infected by the doctrine of Luther."

The learned and pious Bishop of Meaux had, of course, been well known by reputation to Marguerite for many years, but it is doubtful if she were more than slightly acquainted with him before the similarity of their religious opinions, and their common desire to protect the Reformers, created a bond of union between them. In the spring of 1521, however, when war and famine were casting their shadows over the land, and she felt sorely in need of religious consolation, she wrote to him from Troyes, where the Court then was, to demand "spiritual service," since "she must needs meddle with

## Marguerite and Briçonnet

many things which might well make her afraid," and to ask him to send to her, for comfort, his learned chaplain, Michel d'Arande :—

“Monsieur de Meaux.—Knowing that there is but one thing needful, I have recourse to you to entreat you that you will be, by prayer, the means that God may be pleased to lead M. d'Alençon according to His holy will. For, by the King's command, M. d'Alençon is setting out as lieutenant-general of the army, which I misdoubt me, will not return without war. And since peace and victory are in His hand, and believing that you wish well, not only to the public good of the kingdom, but also to my husband and to myself, I demand your spiritual service, since I must needs meddle with many things which may well make me afraid. And, again, to-morrow my aunt of Nemours<sup>1</sup> leaves us for Savoy, whereupon I recommend her and myself to you, and pray you, if you think this a fit season, to let Master Michel [d'Arande] make a journey hither, which I only desire for the glory of God, leaving it to your discretion and to his.”

In accordance with Marguerite's request, Michel d'Arande was despatched to Troyes, and a correspondence began between the princess and the bishop, which continued with but little intermission for several years—an amazing correspondence, fantastic, mystical, bewildering, and voluminous beyond all belief. For Briçonnet, who appears to have been lucid enough in the pulpit, no sooner took pen in hand than he allowed

<sup>1</sup> Philiberta of Savoy, half-sister of the Duchesse d'Angoulême, and wife of the Duc de Nemours. She was leaving for Turin to be present at her brother's marriage with Beatrice of Portugal, whose elder sister Isabella afterwards became the wife of Charles V.



## The Pearl of Princesses

his imagination to run away with him, so to speak, and incomprehensible metaphors, classical quotations, similes, parables, and obscure allegories confound the reader at every page. "I share my cake with you," cries Marguerite, telling the good bishop of her troubles; and Briçonnet forthwith responds: "Ah, Madame, understand that there is in the world a cake of tribulation for you to share with your useless son,<sup>1</sup> made from scattered tares, kneaded with cold water in the trough of infidel and disobedient presumption, baked in the furnace of self-love, whereof the eating has been a fig poisoning the architects and their posterity, until the unleavened meal has been put in the cask of human nature."

On another occasion, the princess unguardedly used the image of a "flame" to illustrate her meaning, upon which her correspondent hastens to send her in reply thirty-six closely-written pages, throughout which he fluctuates between dissertations on fire and heat, and on the breath of life, which shall kindle the flaming fire of faith. "*L'étendue de votre royaume, biens et honneurs,*" he continues, "*doivent être voix excitative et gros soufflet pour allumer un torrent de feu d'amour de Dieu. Hélas, Madame! j'ay paour qu'il ne soit à malaise car comme dit Jérémie, le soufflet qui doit allumer le feu; est failly: deficit sufflatorium in igne.*"

So far the writer's drift, if not exactly transparent, may at least be divined; but, in the next paragraph, as though ashamed of this comparative lucidity, he plunges into the

<sup>1</sup> Thus the bishop was in the habit of signing himself, notwithstanding that he was twenty-five years older than the princess. Marguerite varies between "your useless mother," and "your frozen, thirsty, and ravenous daughter."



## A Mystical Correspondence

lowest depths of mysticism : "Madame, who is deserted, is abysmed in the desert ; seeking the desert and not finding it ; and, finding it, is yet the more bewildered ; and a poor guide is he to guide another out of the desert and to lead him into the desert desired. The desert starves him with mortiferous hunger, although he be full to the eyes ; goading his desire, but to satisfy it and to impoverish it with poverty."

The subtleties and enigmas of her right reverend friend proved a little too much for Marguerite, who implores him to speak a little more plainly in a letter in which, however, she pathetically endeavours to assimilate her own language to the episcopal gibberish. "Demetaphorize yourself," she entreats. "The poor wanderer cannot understand the good which is to be found in the desert, for lack of knowing that she is benighted there. Prithee, out of kindness and pity, run not so swiftly through the desert that she cannot follow you, in order that the abyss which you invoke may not engulf the poor wanderer."

The bishop declines to demetaphorize himself. On the contrary, he seizes greedily on the idea of "the abyss" which Marguerite had unluckily suggested, and in the course of a letter of prodigious length plays upon the word through every spiritual simile to which it could be applied : "The abyss which prevents all abysses, which, in saving from the abyss, whelms in the abyss [without whelming or spoiling], which abyss is the bottomless bottom of things, the way of the wanderers, etc. etc."<sup>1</sup>

One cannot perhaps be surprised that the authors

<sup>1</sup> "L'abysme, qui tout abysme previent, pour en le desabysment l'abysmer en l'abysme [sans l'abysmer] ; au quel abysme est fond sans fond, voie des errants," etc.

## The Pearl of Princesses

of *la France protestante*, after wading through such epistles as these, should have pronounced the correspondence of Marguerite and Briçonnet to be "one of the strangest monuments of the aberration into which the human mind falls when it desires to free itself from the empire of reason"; adding that "all the greatest absurdities that mysticism ever imagined is here set forth in the style the most alembic."

Yet this judgment is altogether too sweeping, for not all the correspondence is in the tone of the letters we have just cited, and on such occasions as Briçonnet does deign to descend to the level of the average intelligence, and to forget for the nonce his similes and metaphors, his allegories and his Latin quotations, nothing can be more touching and more beautiful than his exhortations to the princess. "Madame," he writes, in response to a complaint concerning the loneliness of her life, "you write to me to have pity upon you, because you are lonely. I understand not this phrase. Who lives in the world, and has his heart there, is lonely, forasmuch as he is ill-companied; but she whose heart is dead to the world, and alive to the meek and gracious Jesus, her true and lawful spouse, is truly alone, for she lives in her one and only needful thing; and yet, withal, alone she is not, not being forsaken by Him, Who fills and keeps all things. Pity I cannot, and must not, such solitude, which is more to be esteemed than the whole world, from which I am persuaded that God's love has saved you, and that you are no longer the child thereof. Abide, Madame, therefore alone in your Holy One, Who for you has been pleased to suffer a painful and ignominious death. Commending myself, therefore, to your gracious favour, I beseech you to be pleased to employ no more

## A Mystical Correspondence

such words as you have used in your last. Of God alone you are daughter and spouse, and no other father should you require. I exhort and admonish you, Madame, that you be to Him such and so good a daughter as He is a faithful father ; and forasmuch as without His help you cannot attain to this, because what is finite cannot match with infinity, I beseech Him that He will be pleased to vouchsafe you increase of strength to love, serve, and adore Him with all your heart and being."

And in this correspondence, yes, even behind the mask of metaphor and allegory which so severely taxes the patience of the reader, one can perceive a great and tangible effort : the endeavour to convert François I and Louise of Savoy to the New Ideas, to the ever-growing necessity of Reform. For a little time things promised well, and it seemed not unlikely that François, the Father of Letters, might be brought to favour the opinions professed by some of the most brilliant scholars in Europe. "I have no wish to persecute," said he ; "I should only be preventing learned men from coming into my kingdom." Louise, too, seemed to incline in the same direction, and Marguerite was encouraged to attempt their further conversion. She took her mother to Meaux, where they appear to have spent some little time during the winter of 1521-2, and did not fail to improve the occasion ; she introduced Michel d'Arande into the family circle, and that divine read portions of the New Testament daily to his three royal friends, and discussed passages with them as he went on. Mother and son became more heterodox, and the daughter rejoiced exceedingly. "*Madame* has begun to read in the Holy Scriptures," she writes to Briçonnet. "You know the confidence that she and the King repose in you."



## The Pearl of Princesses

And to Lefèvre, who had written to felicitate her upon the progress of her good work: "The King and *Madame* are more than ever inclined to aid the reform of the Church, and resolved to let the world know that the truth of God is no heresy."

But Marguerite, in this matter, did not understand the attitude of François and her mother. With them, religion was always subordinated to statecraft, and, though they might be indifferent to the spiritual importance of Catholicism, they had a great respect for the Church of Rome as a temporal force, and regarded it as the root of all authority and good government. "Any other religion would prejudice my estate," François once observed; and though heresy as an opinion might be in accord with his liberal tastes, heresy as a political factor which threatened the authority of Rome, and, through that, his own prerogatives, was something which must be suppressed by every means in his power.

And, unhappily for Marguerite, the orthodox party in the Church, alarmed and incensed by the rapid progress of Luther's doctrines, was not inclined to discriminate between the moderate and advanced parties among the Reformers, and declared that Meaux was a nest of heretics which must be forthwith rooted out. "If we tolerate these heretics," cried Bédard, in the course of a violent attack on the writings of Lefèvre, "there is an end to our power, our authority, and our teaching. We shall become the derision of France, and the authority of the Sorbonne will be destroyed." And the Faculty of Theology proceeded to pass an unqualified censure on these and other works emanating from Meaux, and referred the matter to the *Parlement*, together with an accusation of Lutheranism preferred by the Franciscans of Meaux—the persistent enemies of Briçonnet, who had



## Briçonnet prosecuted for Heresy

forbidden them the pulpits in his diocese—against the bishop. The *Parlement*, after some discussion, decreed the arrest of all the ex-doctors of the Faculty refugees within the diocese of Meaux ; and summoned Briçonnet to clear himself of the charges brought against him by the Franciscans.

Briçonnet, though a sincerely pious and well-meaning man, was not of the stuff whereof martyrs are made. He had already begun to fear that he had gone too far, and, in sore distress of mind, had written to Marguerite : “ Let it please you to slacken the fire for some time. The wood you wish to burn is so green that it will put out the fire ; and we counsel you (for several reasons, of which I hope to tell you the rest some day) to leave it alone ; if you do not wish to extinguish the brand as well as the surplus which desires to burn and to inflame others.” Now that the storm which he had foreseen had actually burst, and he found himself menaced with exile, captivity, and perhaps even a worse fate, the gentle, cultured, timid bishop quailed before it, and repaired to Paris in a pitiable state of alarm. With the aid of Marguerite and his powerful friends and connexions, he succeeded in clearing himself of the charge of heresy, but he was required to prove the sincerity of his orthodoxy, by joining with the Sorbonne against his former friends and issuing decrees expelling them from his diocese (October 1523). In December he preached against the “ Lutheran pest,” and a little later presided over the trial of Leclerc, who was sentenced to be whipped with rods on three successive days through the streets of Meaux, to be branded on the forehead, and to be expelled the diocese.<sup>1</sup>

Leclerc retired to Rosay, in Brie, and subsequently to Metz, where he suffered death as a heretic.

## The Pearl of Princesses

It was a sad blow to all the hopes which Marguerite had founded on the activities of that little band of Reformers, but she succeeded to some extent in repairing the disaster, by obtaining the appointment of a special commission, which, after examining the grounds of the alleged heresy of Lefèvre, exonerated him completely ; by securing the recall to France of Michel d'Arande, who had taken to flight, as had Roussel and Farel, and the liberation of Berquin from the Conciergerie, by cleverly representing to the King the insolence of the Sorbonne in causing an officer of his own Guards to be arrested without having first ascertained his royal pleasure.

One might have supposed that after the completeness of Briçonnet's surrender had revealed the weakness of his character, Marguerite would have sought some more courageous spiritual guide ; but, singularly enough, no word of blame appears to have escaped her, and she continued her correspondence with the bishop in exactly the same tone of reverence and appeal as before. "Perhaps it was not all charity," writes Madame Darmesteter. "At least, I think, a factor in that long-suffering charity of hers was a certain chivalrous denseness, a certain obstinacy in clinging to an ideal, which made her patiently accept the faulty Briçonnet as her spiritual superior, even as she accepted François as her perfect hero, despite the many foibles, the long debasement, the patent degradation, which would have disenchanted any other worshipper. The pedestal on which this idealizing woman set her idols was so high that she did not see their feet of clay. And, bowed down before their shrines, she offered a lifelong, unparalleled devotion to those whose real qualities she never even saw."

## CHAPTER XIII

DURING the first few months of the war, Fortune inclined to the side of France. The Swiss in the Papal service were reluctant to fight against their compatriots in French pay, and little impression was made on the defences of the Milanese ; Bonnivet surprised Fontarabia, the key of North-western Spain, and the Count of Nassau, who commanded the army which had invaded France, was obliged by the advance of a superior force under the King in person to raise the siege of Mézières and fall back hurriedly across the frontier, leaving the French to ravage Hainaut and Western Flanders. François was strongly advised to pursue and fall upon the retreating Imperialists, but he hesitated and allowed them to escape him. "If he had attacked them," writes Guillaume du Bellay, "the Emperor would that day have lost both honour and fortune. . . . He was at Valenciennes in such despair that during the night he fled to Flanders with a hundred horse. That day God had delivered our enemies into our hands ; but we would not accept the gift, a refusal which afterwards cost us dear."

So hopeless, however, appeared Charles's position in the autumn of 1521, that Wolsey, who on August 2 had concluded on behalf of Henry VIII a secret agreement with the Emperor at Bruges, implored him to accept a truce, and his aunt, Margaret of Austria,<sup>1</sup> used her

<sup>1</sup> Daughter of the Emperor Maximilian and Mary of Burgundy ; born 1480 ; married first, in 1497, Don Juan, son of Ferdinand and Isabella ; secondly, in 1512, Philibert le Beau, Duke of Savoy ; Governess of the Netherlands ; died 1530.



## The Pearl of Princesses

influence in the same direction. But Charles declined to consent to such a step, and his obstinacy was speedily justified; for on November 25, the day after Wolsey, with many misgivings, had signed the treaty confirming the Bruges agreement and pledging England to an offensive alliance with France, came the news that the Imperialists and the Papal forces, aided by a popular rising, had occupied Milan.

The tide now turned strongly against France; Tournai at once capitulated; Lautrec, who commanded for François in Italy, left without money, supplies, or reinforcements, retreated towards the Swiss frontier, and all the towns of Lombardy, with the exception of a few scattered fortresses, followed the example of the capital.

As the months passed, the outlook grew more and more gloomy. The death of Leo X (December 21, 1521) was followed by the election to the Pontifical chair of the Emperor's old tutor, Adrian of Utrecht; at the end of the following April, Lautrec, who had re-entered the Milanese, rashly attacked the Imperialists in their almost impregnable position at La Bicocca, a country-house surrounded by a great moat near Milan, with the result that he met with a disastrous repulse and was obliged to evacuate Italy altogether; while shortly afterwards Henry VIII declared war against France, and an English force invaded Picardy.

The loss of the Milanese was a bitter blow to François, and what must have made it still harder to bear, was the knowledge that the shameful conduct of his own mother was largely responsible.

When the discomfited Lautrec returned to France, the King received him very badly and reproached him with having lost "his heritage of the Milanese." Lautrec





EMPEROR CHARLES V.



## Fraud of Louise of Savoy

replied hotly that it was his Majesty himself who had lost it. The troops had not been paid for eighteen months. If the Swiss had been paid, he would not, through fear of their desertion, have been obliged to engage the enemy at a disadvantage. The King rejoined that he had sent him 400,000 écus the previous year; but Lautrec assured him that, though he had certainly received letters announcing that the money was about to be despatched, it had never reached him. François, stupefied with astonishment, sent for the Surintendant des Finances, Jacques de Beaune, Seigneur de Semblançai, an old and valued servant of the State, who informed him that when, in accordance with his Majesty's instructions, he was on the point of remitting the 400,000 écus to Italy, he had received peremptory orders from the Duchesse d'Angoulême, François being then absent with the army on the Flemish frontier, to pay into her hands the money, for the disposal of which she had promised to be responsible to the King. And he added that he held Louise's receipt for the same, to prove the truth of his assertion.

The King hastened to his mother's apartments and demanded an explanation. Louise did not deny having received such a sum from the Surintendant—it was, of course, useless to do so in the face of the receipt—but boldly declared that it was her own property, savings from her revenues, which had been entrusted to the care of Semblançai. Such a statement would not bear the least examination, and at first François utterly refused to believe her, and there were stormy scenes between the pair. Marguerite, however, would appear to have intervened to reconcile mother and son, by which intervention she rendered a very bad service to France.



## The Pearl of Princesses

What is certain, is that Louise, aided by her infamous favourite, the Chancellor Du Prat, eventually succeeded in re-establishing her influence over François, and that Semblançai, who had seemed vindicated, and who had still sufficient credit shortly afterwards to transmit his office to his son, was summoned two years later to give an account of his stewardship before a commission nominated by the King. The catastrophe of the year 1525 caused this affair to be suspended; but the implacable Louise neither forgave nor forgot, and in January 1527, being once more Regent and all-powerful, she caused the hapless Semblançai to be arrested and brought to trial before another commission, which she and the Chancellor had carefully packed, on charges of fraud and malversation, with the result that this worthy old man—the faithful Minister of three successive kings—was found guilty, condemned to death, and hanged, like a common criminal, on the gibbet of Montfauçon.

Louise's embezzlement of the funds intended for the Army of Italy would appear to have been due less to avarice than to vindictiveness. She had vowed to ruin at all cost the credit of the brothers de Foix and of their sister, Madame de Chateaubriand, of whose influence over the King she was bitterly jealous; and she is said, moreover, to have cherished a special grudge against Lautrec, who had "spoken too freely of her unchastity."<sup>1</sup>

The passions of this woman were soon to cost France dearer still.

<sup>1</sup> "*Quod de ejus impudicitia liberius locutus fuisset.*"—Belcarius (Beaucaire). According to De Thou, she had to avenge an affront even less pardonable, namely, Lautrec's refusal to respond to her amorous advances. But this seems little probable, since Lautrec, a rough soldier, with a face covered with scars, was scarcely the kind of lover to appeal to Louise's fancy.

## The Connétable de Bourbon

The summer of 1523 witnessed the formation of a general league against France, which comprised the Pope, the Emperor Charles V's younger brother Ferdinand, Archduke of Austria, Francesco Sforza, now Duke of Milan, Venice, Savoy, Florence, Montferrato, and Lucca ; while at the very moment that all the resources of the kingdom were being strained to the uttermost to make head against this formidable coalition came the defection of the Connétable de Bourbon.

Charles de Bourbon-Montpensier, head of the younger branch of the house of Bourbon, was, thanks to his marriage with his cousin Suzanne, daughter of Pierre II, Duc de Bourbon and Anne de Beaujeu, the most powerful feudal prince in France, and until the birth of sons to François I had been heir presumptive to the throne. So vast indeed were his possessions that they might almost be called an *imperium in imperio*. They comprised the duchies of Bourbon, Auvergne, and Châtellerault ; the counties of Clermont, Montpensier, Forez, La Marche, and Gien ; the viscounties of Carlat and Murat ; the seigneuries of Beaujeu, Cambrille, Mercœur, Annancy, La Roche-en-Regnier, and Bourbon-Lancy. These immense estates were governed after the manner of real kingdoms. He possessed the right to administer justice, with the reservation of an appeal to the royal courts ; he appointed a chancellor ; he had his own pleaders. He had even the privilege of levying soldiers in the greater part of his dominions ; and this he could very well do, since he was almost as wealthy as the King.

Never had there been a more magnificent nobleman ; in all Europe no one could vie with him in splendour or generosity. At the supper which followed François's coronation he appeared wearing a robe of cloth-of-gold with a

## The Pearl of Princesses

train twelve ells long, lined with ermine, and a velvet cap sparkling with precious stones, which were said to be worth a hundred thousand crowns. When, in 1517, he entertained his sovereign at Moulins, where he kept almost regal state, the King was served at the banqueting-table by five hundred gentlemen in velvet costumes, each wearing a gold chain passed three times round his neck.

But Bourbon had other titles to respect besides his wealth and magnificence. He was one of the most renowned soldiers of his time, who had greatly distinguished himself in the Italian wars of Louis XII, and had had no inconsiderable share in the victory of Marignano, and a just man in the highest sense of the word, ruling his people and his soldiers with equal firmness and gentleness. Unfortunately, he was also ambitious, haughty, passionate, and overweeningly proud, for his mother had been a Gonzaga, and in his veins flowed the hot blood of generations of *condottieri*. These qualities ended by arousing the displeasure of François I, who, though he had, as we have mentioned, created Bourbon Constable of France on his accession to the throne and had loaded him with honours, ere long began to treat him with marked coldness.

The King's attitude appears to have been largely due to the malevolent insinuations of Louise of Savoy. Louise was fourteen years older than Bourbon—at the time when François became King she was forty, while the duke was twenty-six—but she was more ardent and passionate than in her youth, and very credulous as to the effect of her own charms; in fact, a woman made to be deceived. She fell madly in love with the young soldier, with his dark southern face, black hair, and great melancholy eyes, who had been brought up with her own children; and



## Louise of Savoy and Bourbon

for some time Bourbon appeared to return her affection. Any way, they went so far as the exchange of rings and actual promises of marriage, when the sickly, hunch-backed Suzanne should be no more. How far he was sincere, and how far he was playing a part, is a matter for speculation ; but it is certain that he made great use of Louise's infatuation. It was through her influence that he had been made Constable ; it was to her that he owed his government of Languedoc, with its splendid emoluments, and his post of Gentleman of the Chamber.

After the triumphant campaign of Marignano, Bourbon was appointed Governor of the Milanese, and took up his residence at Milan. Louise, in despair at his absence, the more so since the ladies of Milan were reported to be of surpassing beauty, resolved that he should come back, and intrigued for that purpose with Madame de Chateaubriand, who wanted the government of the Milanese for her brother, Lautrec, and had had tender relations of her own with Bourbon, which she was by no means unwilling to renew. Between them they persuaded the King to recall the Constable ; but the latter, who seems to have found his post at Milan a very congenial one, and whose vanity was wounded at having to make way for Lautrec, returned to France in a very ill humour, and, when he learned of Louise's share in his recall, he was beside himself with indignation. In an outburst of rage, he declared that he would never forgive her, and told her to her face that he had never loved her and had courted her merely to serve his own purpose. The fury of Louise may be imagined ; from that moment she hated Bourbon as much as she had once loved him, and swore to use every means in her power to compass his ruin.

François I had always regarded Bourbon with a jealous



## The Pearl of Princesses

and watchful eye ; nor can it be denied that so powerful a vassal was a distinct danger to the throne, particularly when to his immense wealth and vast possessions had been added the *bâton* of Constable, which gave him the virtual control of the Army. Aware of this and observing Bourbon's haughty and resolute mien when he saw him at the Field of the Cloth of Gold, Henry VIII had observed to François : "Were he subject of mine, his head would not remain two days on his shoulders." Had François acted upon this advice, he would perhaps not have paid too dearly for that celebrated pageant.

However, if he could not bring himself to treat the constable in quite so drastic a manner as his brother of England had suggested, he was now, thanks to the persistent efforts of the vindictive Louise, fully determined on Bourbon's humiliation. When the war with Charles V broke out in 1521, although Bourbon had raised at his own expense a force of 800 men-at-arms and 6000 foot, François would not trust him with any command, and in the Flemish campaign even refused to allow him to lead the vanguard—a post which, by right, belonged to the Constable of France—on the pretext that he wished to keep him near his own person. This affront deeply wounded the pride of Bourbon, but it proved to be merely an earnest of what was in store for him.

Towards the close of that year Suzanne de Bourbon died, and as soon, or perhaps rather sooner, than decorum permitted, her husband began negotiations for the hand of Queen Claude's younger sister, Madame Renée, a marriage which would, of course, have added greatly to his wealth and importance. At this moment, however, a veritable bolt from the blue descended upon him.

The great possessions of the House of Bourbon had

## Louise of Savoy and Bourbon

been originally bequeathed by Louis XI to Anne de Beaujeu, with the condition that, in the event of her death without a male heir, they should revert to the Crown. But, on the marriage of Charles de Montpensier to Suzanne de Bourbon, Louis XII had annulled this edict by another, which assured the inheritance of the Bourbon estates to the survivor. The Crown lawyers now, however, asserted that these estates reverted to the King by inalienable right, and that François could dispose of them at will; and Louise of Savoy announced her intention of claiming them as Suzanne's first cousin, whereas Bourbon was a mere distant kinsman. Thus, in her vindictive spite, Louise proposed to strip her former lover of the whole of the heritage of his dead wife.

She was, nevertheless, willing to give the Constable a chance of saving himself from the ruin which menaced him, either because of some return of her old affection, or because she and François feared the effect which the action they were contemplating might have upon the nobility, who looked upon Bourbon as their leader. Accordingly, the King sent one of his gentlemen to the Constable to suggest that the conflicting claims of himself and the Duchess d'Angoulême might be easily reconciled by a marriage between them. But the haughty and high-spirited Bourbon rejected this proposal with scorn. "When the duke heard these tidings," writes Fleuranges, "for a long time he spake no word, but stood looking upon the noble messenger, his brother-in-arms, and at length he said to him: 'Is it an act worthy of our friendship to bring me the offer of such a woman . . . the dread of all nations? . . . I would not do this thing—no, not for all the riches of Christendom.'" When the

## The Pearl of Princesses

King informed his mother of this answer, "she, like a woman bereft of her senses, began to tear her hair, saying that she had been a mad woman thus to abandon herself in order to receive such an answer. 'The matter shall not rest here,' quoth she in her wrath, 'for, by the Creator of souls, his words shall cost him dear. My son, I will not own you, I will condemn you as a coward king, if you do not avenge me.' The King answered that the hour had not yet come, as he had need of the Constable's services in the approaching campaign. 'Bear with me, mother,' he continued. 'When the time is ripe, I shall know how to reckon with him.'"

Shortly after this came the Semblançai affair, in which Bourbon joined with Lautrec in his endeavour to expose Louise.<sup>1</sup> His conduct in this matter removed any lingering scruples which the lady may possibly have entertained in regard to the Constable, and strengthened her determination to effect his ruin. On the death of Anne de Beaujeu, the Crown at once began its suit against Bourbon, and, thanks to the machinations of Du Prat, in August 1523, the *Parlement* of Paris sequestrated all the Bourbon estates and referred the case to the King's Council, whose decision was, of course, a foregone conclusion.

Meanwhile, the dishonourable and even fraudulent methods that were being adopted to despoil him had proved too great a strain on the Constable's loyalty and patriotism, and since the previous autumn he had been in communication with the agents of Charles V and Henry VIII. The Emperor hoped much from Bour-

<sup>1</sup> He also, if we are to believe Varillas, was imprudent enough to indulge in sarcastic allusions to a certain miller at Cognac, who, he declared, bore so striking a resemblance to the King, both in face and figure, that the likeness could scarcely be accidental.



## Treason of the Constable

bon's defection, and, though the latter's terms were high, he resolved to accede to them ; and in the spring of 1523 a secret treaty for the dismemberment of France was concluded between the Constable, Charles V, and Henry VIII, by which it was agreed that, in the event of success, an independent kingdom should be given to Bourbon, composed of Arles, Dauphiné and Provence, with his former possessions of Auvergne and the Bourbonnais, and the hand of the Emperor's elder sister, Eleanor, Queen-dowager of Portugal ;<sup>1</sup> while the Emperor received, as his share of the spoil, Burgundy, Champagne and Picardy, and Henry VIII the old English inheritance in the South and West. To such a pass had the rancour of Louise of Savoy and his own passionate resentment driven the Constable of France.

These negotiations were not completed without vague rumours of what was in progress coming to the ears of François I. He determined to tax Bourbon openly with his suspected treason, and, by assuming a knowledge which he did not possess, endeavoured to surprise him into a confession of his guilt, if guilty he really were. In March 1523 Bourbon visited Paris, where the Court then was, and whilst there visited Queen Claude. Suddenly, the King entered, and turning abruptly to the Constable, said : " It is true, I suppose, that you are going to be married ? " " No, Sire," replied Bourbon.

<sup>1</sup> Born at Louvain in 1498 ; married in 1519 to the old King of Portugal, Manoel the Great, by whom she was left a widow two years later. Charles V engaged to bestow a dowry of 200,000 crowns upon his sister, and, in the event of his own death, and that of the Archduke Ferdinand, without leaving male heirs, he promised to declare Eleanor heiress of the hereditary dominions of his House. The Queen also possessed an independent revenue of 20,000 crowns, and jewels valued at over half-a-million. The Constable was to settle the Beaujolais on his bride.



## The Pearl of Princesses

“But I know that you are—I am aware of all your traffic with the Emperor. It will be well for you to remember what I am saying.” “Sire, you threaten me! I have not deserved to be treated in this manner.” With which the Constable left the room and returned to his own house. And all the nobles present followed him, to show their sympathy.

Had Bourbon issued his challenge to his ungrateful sovereign from his own dominions, it might have awakened a response which, in conjunction with the English and Imperialist invasions, might have torn the sceptre from François’s grasp. For the whole country was seething with discontent under the intolerable burdens laid upon it for a war in which neither noble, citizen, nor peasant had any interest, and he not only commanded a large and influential following among the nobility, but was regarded by the *Parlement* as the advocate of its rights and privileges, persistently disregarded by the King, and by the people as one who had their wrongs at heart. But he delayed too long; his plans were discovered, and he was obliged to fly for his life, disguised as a servant, to the mountains of Auvergne, and thence to Italy.

“In the said year 1523, on Friday, September 11, news was brought to Paris by René, the Lyons messenger, that Monsieur de Bourbon had left the land of France; and on Our Lady’s Day in September had departed in secret from his land of the Bourbonnais; and by the sound of trumpet he was proclaimed a traitor throughout the land of France; and it was proclaimed that whoso should take the said Sieur de Bourbon and deliver him into the hands of the said Grand Master, the Sieur d’Alençon, or into the hands of Monsieur de la Palisse, the King would grant him 10,000 golden crowns; or for

## Reverses of the French

information as to where he could be taken, 20,000 silver crowns.”<sup>1</sup>

No one, however, succeeded in earning either of the promised rewards, and Bourbon arrived in safety at the camp of the Imperialist Army of Italy, in which he accepted a command under Lannoy, Viceroy of Naples.<sup>2</sup>

The fortunes of France were indeed at a low ebb ; domestic treason, foreign invasion, religious animosities, and financial difficulties seemed to be combining to ruin her. The King, however, faced the situation bravely enough. “It is true that the princes of Europe have conspired against me,” said he, “but I care not, for I have an answer and a defiance for each one of them. In the first place, I do not embarrass myself with the Emperor’s projects, because he has no money to maintain them ; nor with those of the King of England, for my province of Picardy is well fortified ; the Flemings are bad soldiers ; and, as for Italy, I will not yield one inch of the territory which my enemies have momentarily wrested from me.”

He had certainly need of all the optimism he possessed during the ensuing campaign. The English and the Flemings, whose fighting qualities he held so cheaply, penetrated to within eleven leagues of Paris ; while Bonnavet, to whom had been entrusted the command of the army which, previous to the discovery of Bourbon’s conspiracy, the King himself had intended to lead into the Milanese, proved no match for the Imperialist Generals,

<sup>1</sup> *Journal d’un bourgeois de Paris sous la règne de François I<sup>er</sup>* (1515-36), edited by Ludovic Lalanne (Paris, 1854).

<sup>2</sup> Charles, Marquis de Lannoy, born at Valenciennes in 1487, and brought up with the future Emperor, who was greatly attached to him. He was made a Knight of the Golden Fleece in 1515, and Viceroy of Naples in 1521.

## The Pearl of Princesses

and was driven back across the Sesia.<sup>1</sup> His retreat was rendered memorable by the death of the celebrated Bayard—*le chevalier sans peur et sans reproche*—who commanded the rear-guard, and saved the army from destruction at the cost of his own life (April 30, 1524). After this reverse the last French garrison in Lombardy speedily capitulated, and not a rod of Italian soil remained to François I.

Hard upon the evacuation of Italy came the news that the victorious Imperialists were preparing for an invasion of the south-eastern provinces, and that Bourbon intended to carry fire and sword through the land of which he had once been the foremost defender. To meet this new danger François issued orders that all the troops which could be spared from the defence of the North should assemble at Lyons, whither he set out at the beginning of July, accompanied by his mother and sister. At Bourges he was overtaken by a messenger from Blois with tidings that the Queen, who had been in failing health for some time past, was dangerously ill. The critical state of affairs prevented the King from returning; but Louise and Marguerite started at once, and travelled with all possible speed; but at Herbault, a country-house belonging to the King, situated a few miles from Blois, where they had been obliged to stop for a night, owing to Louise having become unwell, they learned that the Queen was already dead.

Neglected by her fickle husband, slighted by her mother-in-law,<sup>2</sup> and, towards the end of her life, a martyr

<sup>1</sup> Bonnavet appears to have owed his appointment to the command of the Army of Italy to the solace for Bourbon's disdain which he had brought to Louise of Savoy's wounded heart.

<sup>2</sup> Louise of Savoy, in her *Journal*, calls the universe to witness that she had always treated her daughter-in-law with respect and affection.



## Death of Queen Claude

to ill-health, poor Queen Claude had had a sad life. Most of her time had been spent in the embroidering of altar-cloths, in devotional exercises, and in works of charity; and the only joys she appears to have known were those of maternity, which were not spared her, since in ten years she had given birth to seven children—three sons and four daughters.<sup>1</sup> *En revanche*, she was accorded a magnificent funeral, and after lying in state for some time in the chapel of Saint-Calais at Blois, during which contemporary chroniclers assure us that several sick persons who had visited her tomb, “bearing offerings and candles,” were cured of their ailments,<sup>2</sup> her body was conveyed to Saint-Denis, in a hearse drawn by six horses, each ridden by a bareheaded “*enfant d’honneur*” dressed in black velvet. Louise and Marguerite followed on mules with black trappings, while before her went a great company of princes, prelates, ambassadors, nobles, and

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“Every one knows it,” she writes; “truth recognizes it; experience proves it; moreover, common report proclaims it.” Her indignant protestations, however, have been disregarded by historians, and there can be little doubt that she had treated the unfortunate Queen as though determined to avenge upon her all that she herself had suffered from the hatred of Anne de Bretagne.

<sup>1</sup> Here is the list:—

1. Louise, born in 1515; died in 1517. 2. Charlotte, born in 1516; died in 1524. 3. François, born in 1518; died in 1536. 4. Henri, born in 1519, succeeded to the throne as Henri II in 1547; died in 1559. 5. Madeleine, born in 1520, married in 1536 James V of Scotland; died in 1537. 6. Charles, born in 1522; died in 1545. 7. Marguerite, born in 1525; married in 1559 Emmanuel Philibert, tenth Duke of Savoy; died in 1574.

<sup>2</sup> “And by reason of the great opinion which they held of her sanctity, several persons carried to her offerings and candles, and attest that they were cured and saved from some malady by her intercessions. And likewise a notable lady, who affirmed that she had obtained, owing to her merits, the cure of a fever which had long tormented her.”—*Chronique du Roi François I<sup>er</sup>*.

## The Pearl of Princesses

presidents, and counsellors of the *Parlement*, with the four-and-twenty criers of Paris at their head, ringing their bells and proclaiming the titles and virtues of the deceased princess—virtues, alas! too little appreciated during her lifetime. All the streets and squares of Paris through which the *cortège* passed were hung with crape, and a wax taper burned before every house.

According to Marguerite, the death of the poor Queen, whom she had treated so badly, occasioned Louise “incredible distress,” and “increased her illness so greatly that, if its violence had not speedily abated, she could not have endured it long. The King,” she continues, “whom we left at Bourges awaiting the end, feels it not less. Perceiving that it [his wife’s death] could not long be averted, he mourned exceedingly, saying to *Madame* [Louise]: ‘If my life could be given in exchange for hers, willingly would I surrender it. Never could I have believed that the bonds of marriage, confirmed by God, were so difficult to sever.’ And so in tears we separated. Since, we have had no news how he [the King] fares, but I fear that he is burdened with heavy sorrow.”<sup>1</sup>

So intense was Marguerite’s affection for her mother and brother that it never seems to have occurred to her to doubt their sincerity. In the case of Louise, however, it must be admitted that she had cause enough for “incredible distress” in the dangers and disasters which her passions had brought upon the kingdom.

In dying, the poor Queen had left her children, the eldest of whom, Madame Charlotte, was but seven years old, to the care of her sister-in-law, and worthily did Marguerite discharge the trust reposed in her. No one could have been more kind and gentle, or more solicitous

<sup>1</sup> Letter to the Bishop of Meaux, August 1524.

## Illness of Madame Charlotte

for their welfare than she, and some of her most touching and charming letters are those which she wrote to the absent King about his motherless children.

The little princes and princesses usually resided at Amboise, as it was impossible for them to accompany their royal parents in the various perambulations of the Court, and Amboise, where the King and Marguerite had themselves been brought up, was considered the healthiest of all the royal residences. The Dauphin François, and his brothers, Henri, Duc d'Orléans, and Charles, Duc d'Angoulême, were strong and healthy boys; but their two elder girls, Mesdames Charlotte and Madeleine, had inherited their mother's delicate constitution. The children had been brought to Blois to take a last farewell of the Queen, and here they contracted measles, which in the case of little Madame Charlotte was followed by dangerous complications. Marguerite, who had remained at Herbault with Louise, whom a severe attack of gout—a malady from which she suffered excruciating torture in her later years—had prevented from returning to Lyons, hastened to Blois and nursed the little princess with tender care; but the poor child grew steadily worse. Fearing to add to the anxieties of François, she refused to allow him to be informed of his daughter's illness, nor did she even tell Louise, "who was not yet strong enough to bear the slightest sorrow." To judge, however, from a letter which she wrote to Briçonnet, the usual confidant of her troubles and anxieties, she appears to have been aware of the heavy responsibility she was thereby incurring:—

*"September 1524.*

"To render you evil for good (for I am bound to thank God and you for the consolation which your last



## The Pearl of Princesses

letter gave and still gives me, as I have read it often and yet not enough), I am going to impart to you a share of the tribulation with which it has pleased Our Lord to smite me (a grievous burden for this frail and feeble body to bear). My sorrow is that it has pleased God to inflict upon Madame Charlotte so grievous a malady of fever and flux after her measles that I know not whether it may not be His good pleasure to take her to Himself, without suffering her longer to taste the miseries of this world. As *Madame* is not yet strong enough to endure the smallest sorrow, I conceal this from her and from the King likewise, for you are aware that he has enough to think about elsewhere. Therefore, as upon me alone this care must fall, I ask the help of your fervent prayers that as the Almighty wills so it may be done. I pray you not to grow weary in giving me that succour which my unbelief renders so necessary. I hope that ere my messenger reaches you that she [Madame Charlotte] may be relieved from apprehension of death ; or else may have attained that state which we all ought to desire rather than dread, but which grace can alone comprehend—that grace which especially with all her imperfections needs,

“ *Vostre trop inutile mère,*

“ MARGUERITE.”

Poor Madame Charlotte lived on for some little time longer, when death at length released her from her sufferings. She appears to have been a pious, sweet and affectionate child, and Marguerite, who had been tenderly attached to her, and who in after days dedicated to her her poem, *le Myrouer de l'âme Pescheresse*, was deeply distressed by her death. She had, besides, the painful

## Death of Madame Charlotte

task of breaking the news to the King, from whom she had considered it her duty to conceal his little daughter's illness. In another letter to Briçonnet, she tells him that, notwithstanding that he was in ignorance of Madame Charlotte being ill, François "had dreamed three times that she appeared to him and said: '*Adieu, mon roy, je voys en Paradis!*' and so divined her death, which he took extremely to heart, but, by the goodness of God, endured patiently." And she adds: "Madame, who had not heard a word, learned it through the indiscretion of a captain of Adventurers, and bore it in such a manner that from dinner-time till supper (one tear not waiting for the other, without uttering sighs of impatience or vexation) she never ceased to exhort me to submission, and undertook towards me the office of comforter, which I owed her. I wished that you had been here to witness this sight; for, seeing her suffer such intense and almost insupportable bodily pain, while her eyes were raised to Heaven, praising God for His mercies, I beheld, as I thought, a soul wrapt in ecstasy of spiritual transport."

After what we know of Louise of Savoy's dealings with Semblançai and Bourbon, this makes strange reading; but, then, Louise was no ordinary woman.

## CHAPTER XIV

WHILST Marguerite was watching by the death-bed of her little niece and Louise was nursing her gout at Herbault, the Imperialist Army of Italy, under the command of Bourbon, advancing rapidly along the Corniche Road, had crossed the Var and entered Provence. The ex-Constable, aware that the French were but ill-prepared to meet an invasion from this quarter, had conceived the bold plan of marching straight upon Lyons, in the belief that, if he succeeded in penetrating to the heart of the kingdom, the discontented nobles, particularly those of his own former dominions, would hasten to rally round him. There was undoubtedly much to be said for this course, though Bourbon probably overestimated the strength of the rebellious faction. However, Charles V had other views. He was set upon the capture of Marseilles—the half-way house between Genoa and Barcelona—which would convert the Gulf of Lyons into a Spanish lake and definitely transfer the command of the Mediterranean from France to Spain; and the Marchese di Pescara,<sup>1</sup> who had been associated with Bourbon, and the Spanish officers, refused their consent to his project and insisted on his undertaking the conquest of Provence.

With the exception of Aix, whose defence was protracted for over a month, most of the Provençal towns

<sup>1</sup> Francesca Ferrante d'Avalos, a member of a noble Neapolitan family of Spanish origin, and the husband of Vittoria Colonna, who consecrated many of her poems to his memory. He was by far the ablest general whom Charles V possessed at this time.



## Invasion of Provence

opened their gates after scarcely a show of resistance, and on August 19 the Imperialists laid siege to Marseilles. The ramparts were ill-fitted to withstand artillery, while the inhabitants bore no very high reputation for courage; and Bourbon laughingly assured Pescara that "three cannon-shots would so astonish the good citizens that they would come with halters round their necks to bring him the keys of the town." His calculations were grievously at fault, for the "good citizens" offered an heroic resistance,<sup>1</sup> and when a breach had been made in the ramparts, threw up with astonishing rapidity a formidable earthwork, which was called "*le rampart des dames*," since all the women in the town had assisted in its construction. A Spanish squadron which was blockading the port was defeated by the French fleet, which was thus enabled to provision Marseilles, while the investing army, whose supplies reached them with difficulty, suffered severe privations. Finally, towards the end of September, the approach of the formidable army which François had by this time been able to assemble at Avignon obliged the Imperialists to raise the siege and retreat into Italy.

Unfortunately, François was not satisfied with having preserved his kingdom and secured his crown. Emboldened by the retirement of the enemy, he at once decided to make another descent into the Milanese, and revenge in person the reverses of Lautrec and Bonnivet, and the invasion to which his realm had just been exposed, by the splendour of a conquest which he believed to be certain and which he intended should be permanent.

<sup>1</sup> Du Bellay relates that one day a cannon-shot from the town passed through Pescara's tent, killing his almoner and two of his attendants *en route*. Pescara sent the deadly missile to Bourbon. "Here," wrote he ironically, "are the keys which the citizens of Marseilles bring you."

## The Pearl of Princesses

His most experienced generals, who had begun to entertain an almost superstitious dread of Italy and to regard it as a tomb in which successive French armies were destined to be swallowed up, endeavoured to dissuade him from undertaking a campaign so late in the year ; and Louise and Marguerite, who had arrived at Lyons, joined their solicitations to those of the King's military advisers. Louise, finding that her letters had no effect upon her son's resolution, decided to make a journey to Avignon, in the hope that a personal interview might induce him to abandon it, and begged the King on no account to set out before her arrival, as she had State secrets of great importance to communicate to him. But François would hear of no delay, and early in October, having nominated his mother Regent, at the head of 40,000 men, who included the flower of the French nobility, he marched rapidly through Dauphiné and over Mont-Genève into Italy, with the intention of cutting off the retreating Imperialists from Lombardy.

In this he all but succeeded ; indeed, he entered Milan by the western gate as Bourbon and Pescara retired through the eastern and fell back on Lodi. Here Pescara entrenched himself in a strong position, in order to defend the line of the Adda, while Bourbon hastened into Germany to raise a force of *landsknechts*. Pescara's troops were worn out with sickness and privation ; they had received no pay for months and were utterly discouraged ; and if François had attacked the disorganized army before Bourbon could return, he would probably have broken it up beyond all hope of rally. Instead of doing so, however, he laid siege to Pavia, which blocked the road from Milan south-

## Louise and Marguerite at Lyons

wards, and into which the Imperialists in their retreat had thrown a force of 6000 men, under Antonio de Leyva, a brave and experienced officer.

The news of François's recovery of Milan, practically without striking a blow, was hailed with transports of joy by his admiring relatives, and the exultant Marguerite writes to Briçonnet that the King had come to the decision that his success was "a miraculous work, achieved by the direct intervention of God, Who, without battle, had given victory to those who believed in Him, and who, relying not on their own knowledge and strength, trusted in His paternal goodness. The King, therefore, requires of *Madame* that she cause it to be proclaimed and published that all victory, honour and glory is alone due to the great God of Hosts." Alas! François's military incapacity, as we shall see, was sufficient to counter-balance any miracle.

Louise and Marguerite were still at Lyons, and the Reformers, driven from Paris and Meaux, gathered round the latter, and, strong in her protection, proceeded to sow the seed boldly. Michel d'Arande, Seville, minister of the Reformed Church at Grenoble, and one Maigret, a converted Dominican monk, preached the new doctrines publicly at Lyons, to the great wrath of the Dominicans of that city, who appealed to the Sorbonne and demanded the arrest of Seville and Maigret. "The heresy of the Pauvres of Lyons is revived," they wrote, "and schism rends the unity and subverts the authority of the Holy Roman Church." Béda and his colleagues applauded the zeal of the Dominicans, and orders for the arrest of both preachers were issued. Maigret took to flight; but Seville stood his ground and was forthwith arraigned for heresy. His



## The Pearl of Princesses

friends, however, besought Marguerite's intervention, and the princess, after having apparently failed to interest the Regent in her *protégé's* behalf, wrote to the King, who sent orders forbidding the *Parlement* and the Sorbonne to pursue the prosecution of the accused, and directing that he should be set at liberty. Seville was accordingly released, though a veto was placed on his disturbing eloquence; but Maigret returned to Lyons, where, under the patronage of Marguerite, he continued to preach publicly.

While her daughter thus openly protected the Reformers, Louise soothed to some degree the irritation of the orthodox by the frequent religious processions which she commanded to implore the intervention of Heaven in favour of the French army in Italy. On one occasion, she gave orders for a general muster of children of all ages, whom she caused to be marshalled in procession to the cathedral, that they might "raise their innocent voices in prayer" that God would grant success to her son's arms. "Remembering your continual troubles," writes Marguerite to Anne de Montmorency, who was with the army before Pavia, "she [Louise] perseveres daily in commanding processions and prayers. Next Sunday there is to be a grand procession of young and very little children, to supplicate Heaven to grant relief and prosperity to the King. I beseech Him, Who from the mouths of babes has perfected praise, to grant such accomplishment as He wills to their innocent prayers."

From this letter it will be gathered that matters in Italy were not going altogether as could be desired; and, in point of fact, the garrison and citizens of Pavia, whom Antonio de Leyva had succeeded in inspiring with his own indomitable spirit, had offered so stubborn a resist-

## The Disaster of Pavia

ance that time had been given to Pescara to reorganize his shattered forces ; to Bourbon to return from Germany with a large body of *landsknechts*, which his great name had attracted to his banner ; and to Lannoy, the Viceroy of Naples, to join his colleagues at the head of a considerable force of Spaniards and Italians. On the other hand, François, with criminal imprudence, had greatly weakened his own army by detaching 4000 men to attack Genoa, and sending nearly three times that number to the frontier of Naples.

Towards the end of January, the Imperialists quitted their camp at Lodi and advanced to the relief of Pavia. François's most prudent officers, La Palice, who had succeeded Bourbon as Constable, La Trémoille, and the Grand Master of the Artillery, Galiot de Génouillac, warned him of the danger of permitting himself to be shut in between the garrison of Pavia and the relieving army, and urged that he should temporarily raise the siege and retire on Milan, or occupy a strong defensive position in the environs. Bonnivet and the younger officers, however, cried out with one voice against this proposal, the former declaring, that "we other Frenchmen are not accustomed to make war by military artifices, but with banners waving, particularly when we have for general a valiant King, who ought to inspire the greatest poltroons to combat bravely."<sup>1</sup> Such advice was too much in accord with François's own inclinations not to be acceptable, and he accordingly determined to remain before Pavia.

So strong was the position occupied by the French, that for three weeks the Imperialists remained in sight of it without attempting any decisive movement ; and it was

<sup>1</sup> Brantôme.

## The Pearl of Princesses

only when, their provisions being exhausted, their generals found themselves faced with the alternative of fighting or disbanding, that they determined to attack. Though Francois's army had, in the interval, been still further weakened by the withdrawal of 6000 Swiss mercenaries, recalled to the Grisons by the necessity of defending their valleys against the incursions of a *condottiere* in the Emperor's pay, it was still superior to the enemy, particularly in cavalry and artillery, in both of which the Imperialists were lamentably deficient. They had, however, a large body of Spanish arquebusiers, at this time the best marksmen in Europe.

In the early hours of St. Matthias's Day (February 24), which happened to be the birthday of Charles V, the Imperialists advanced to the assault of the French position. Their march lay over an open plain, and the French artillery directed upon them so murderous a fire that, according to Du Bellay, "one saw only heads and legs flying in the air." To check this havoc, Pescara ordered his troops to take shelter in a hollow to the northward of the French, for which they accordingly made, the infantry at the double and the cavalry at a gallop. Observing this, François concluded that the Imperialists were in full retreat, and that victory was assured, and charged furiously down from the rising ground which he occupied, at the head of his bodyguard of nobles and gentlemen and the French men-at-arms. By this movement, he not only got between his own artillery and the enemy, and obliged the gunners to cease fire, but cut himself off from the main body, and left his centre and right unsupported by cavalry. As soon as the King charged, the whole army quitted their entrenchments and pressed forward likewise.



## The Disaster of Pavia

The King at first carried all before him, killed with his lance the Marchese di San Angelo, who commanded the Imperialist light horse, scattered the men-at-arms of Lannoy, and broke right through a body of pikemen. But Pescara and Bourbon rallied the fugitives, and the steady fire of the Spanish arquebusiers, which no armour could withstand, checked the triumphal progress of the men-at-arms, and drove them back upon the advancing Swiss, who formed the centre of the French line, and whom they threw into hopeless confusion. Meanwhile, the *landsknechts* on the French right were attacked on one flank by their compatriots in the Imperial service, and on the other by some Spanish battalions, and, overwhelmed by numbers, perished almost to a man. The victorious troops then advanced upon the disordered Swiss, upon whom the arquebusiers were now directing their fire; and, disheartened by the fate of their German comrades, the Swiss gave way and retreated towards Milan.

The day was now irretrievably lost, yet total disaster might well have been averted had the Duc d'Alençon, who commanded the cavalry of the left wing, which had not yet come into action, made a vigorous charge. But the unfortunate man appears to have lost his head altogether, and, notwithstanding the remonstrances of some of his officers, ordered the retreat to be sounded, and quitted the field without striking a blow; and though the infantry of that wing, composed mainly of Frenchmen, under La Palice, offered an heroic resistance, they eventually shared the fate of the Germans. Finally, Antonio de Leyva sallied out from Pavia, dispersed the corps which had been left to mask the fortress, destroyed the bridge over the Ticino—the principal avenue of escape—and fell upon the rear of the French cavalry,

## The Pearl of Princesses

whom François had so imprudently led to the charge, and who were now the only troops which still held their ground. They, comprising as they did the *élite* of the French nobility and inspired by the example of their King, performed prodigies of valour. But, hemmed in on every side by overwhelming numbers, their courage was useless ; François's horse fell dead under him, and the King, who had been wounded in three places, was made prisoner,<sup>1</sup> while almost all his followers were either killed or taken. Never had there been so great a slaughter of nobles. The gallant old Louis de la Trémoille, who had taken part in every war which France had waged since the accession of Charles VIII ; Louis d'Ars, the kinsman and teacher of Bayard ; the Connétable La Palice ; François de Lorraine, younger brother of Claude, Duc de Guise ; René, the Bastard of Savoy, Louise's half-brother ; the Grand Equerry, San-Sevarino, chief of the French party in the kingdom of Naples ; the Maréchal de Foix ; Richard de la Pole, the attainted Duke of Suffolk, called by the French "*Rose blanche*," to distinguish him from Charles Brandon, and Bonnivet, whose fatal advice had determined the King to remain before Pavia, were either killed or mortally wounded ; while Henri d'Albret, King of Navarre ; the Comte de Saint-Pol, brother of the Duc de Vendôme ; Anne de Montmorency ; Chabot de Brion, and the Prince de Talmont, heir of La Trémoille, were among the prisoners.

<sup>1</sup> François would probably have been killed had not Bourbon's equerry, Pomperant, ridden up and interposed himself between the King and those who were pressing upon him, crying out : "It is the King, spare him !" He suggested that he should surrender himself ; but this François refused to do ; and it was Lannoy who received his sword, handing him his own at the same time, "since it was unseemly that a king, although a captive, should be disarmed."

## Anguish of Marguerite

In less than two hours France was deprived of her Sovereign and a whole generation of paladins. Altogether, it is believed that over 10,000 of the French and their auxiliaries perished on the field of battle or were drowned in attempting to escape across the Ticino. The loss of the victors was comparatively small, probably not more than 1000.

The Duchesse d'Angoulême and Marguerite were still at Lyons when news of this disaster reached them. For some days Louise's fortitude seems to have entirely forsaken her, and she could do nothing but weep and lament her son's misfortune and the threatened ruin of the kingdom. "Alas! he did not wish to believe me!" she repeatedly exclaimed. "Ah! how many times did I warn him! Why did he not believe me, for my fears predicted all his misfortunes?" In vain Du Prat sought to arouse her to the necessity of immediate action, pointing out that the liberation of the King and the safety of the country depended upon her. For the moment, her spirit, usually so determined, was completely crushed beneath the weight of her trials, and she seemed like one distraught.

Marguerite's anguish was not less keen; for not only was her idolized brother a prisoner and many of her friends among the dead, but she had the terrible humiliation of knowing that the cowardice or incapacity of her own husband had largely contributed to the disaster. "It cannot be described," writes Moreau de Villefranche, "what lamentations were made, and tears shed by that noble lady, the mother of the King, after she had heard the piteous news that her very dear and only son, the Very Christian King François, first of that name, was



## The Pearl of Princesses

taken and subjected to the will of his vassal and greatest enemy. Oh! what regrets! Oh! how many were the deplorable lamentations! Oh! how numberless were the grievous exclamations uttered by the said lady! Afterwards also by Madame Marguerite, her only daughter; and by the ladies, demoiselles, princes, dukes, barons, and by all the courtiers likewise. The same mournings were made by the people of Lyons; and the lamentation was so great that scarce could it be appeased.”<sup>1</sup>

Marguerite was by turns overwhelmed by grief and indignation: grief for her captive brother, indignation at the conduct of her feeble husband. That luckless prince was making his way back to Lyons by slow marches, for he well knew the reception which awaited him there. All the peasants were singing *Chansons de Pavie*, and, as he rode dejectedly along, his ears must have been assailed by songs such as this:—

Qui vit jamais au monde  
Ung roy si courageux  
De sa mettre en bataille;  
Et délaissé de ceulx,  
En qui toute fiance  
Et qui tenait assure,  
L'ont laissé en souffrance!  
Véey là le malheur.

The whole country, indeed, was furious against *les fuyards de Pavie*, and Rabelais undoubtedly voiced the popular sentiment when he wrote: “I hate more than poison a man who flies when sword-play comes into fashion. Why am I not King of France for eighty or a hundred years? *Mon Dieu!* I would crop the tails of the curs who fled from Pavia.”

<sup>1</sup> *Docum. sur la captivité de François I<sup>er</sup>*, cited by Frere.

## CHAPTER XV

FRANÇOIS, after surrendering to Lannoy, had begged the Viceroy to spare him the humiliation of being sent as a prisoner to the city which he had lately been besieging, and to conduct him instead to the Imperialists' camp ; and to this request his chivalrous captor readily assented. Brantôme relates that on the way they passed the church of a Carthusian monastery, which the King asked permission to enter. The first object that met his eyes was this inscription : " It is good for me, Lord, that I have been in trouble, that I may learn thy statutes." François, deeply affected, fell on his knees and remained for some time in prayer before the high altar ; then he rose and followed his guards.

The following day the captive monarch was conducted to the citadel of Pizzighitone, there to await the Emperor's pleasure. Before, however, leaving the Imperialists' camp, he wrote to his mother the letter in which occurs that phrase which tradition\* reshaped for him into the famous "*Tout est perdu fors l'honneur.*" Here is the actual text :—

" Madame, in order that you may be acquainted with the extent of my misfortunes, know that of *all things there remain to me naught save honour and life, which are safe.*"

And he adds :—

" And so that, in your adversity, this news may bring you a little consolation, I have requested permission to write to you this letter ; begging you not to despair, but

\* Not tradition, but the Spanish historian Juan Antonio de Vera Jùniga

## The Pearl of Princesses

to employ your usual prudence, for I cherish hope that in the end God will not forsake me ; recommending your grandchildren and my children to your care, and requesting you to give a safe-conduct to the bearer of this to go and to return from Spain, for he journeys to the Emperor, to learn in what manner he wishes me to be treated. Commending myself to your favour and affection, I am your very humble and obedient son,

“FRANÇOYS.”

For the moment, it certainly seemed that François had not exaggerated the gravity of the situation. The overwhelming disaster of Pavia not only rendered the loss of Italy certain, but it exposed France herself to the gravest peril. With her King a prisoner, the troops to which she looked for defence against foreign aggression destroyed or dispersed, her best generals dead or in captivity, her Treasury exhausted, it was difficult to see how she could escape dismemberment, if her enemies prosecuted the war with vigour before she had time to recover from the blow which she had received ; while, even if they stayed their hands, the disturbed condition of the country and the hatred with which the Regent and Du Prat were regarded threatened within serious trouble.

However, Louise of Savoy, with all her faults and her vices, did not, as we know, lack either courage or capacity, and so soon as she had recovered a little from the blow she had sustained, her fortitude returned, and she rose to the occasion bravely enough. Her first care was to write to her son and send him a reassuring message. Here is her letter :—

“MONSEIGNEUR : I cannot make a better beginning to my letter than by praising God that He has been



## Marguerite's Letter to the King

pleased to preserve your honour, your life, and your health ; of which under your own hand you have been pleased to assure me. This news has been of such comfort to us in our tribulation that it cannot be sufficiently expressed ; also that you are now in the hands of so worthy a man,<sup>1</sup> who treats you so well. Monseigneur, hearing these things, and that it is your intention to endure with resignation the ills that God has inflicted upon you, I, for my part, likewise promise to bear this reverse as you hope and desire, in such manner, for the aid of your little children and the affairs of the kingdom, that I shall not be the occasion of greater grief to you. I beseech God, Monseigneur, to have you in His holy keeping, as prays with all her heart,

“ Your very humble and good mother and subject,  
“ LOYSE.”

And Marguerite, desiring to associate herself with the sentiment with which the letter concludes, inscribed in the margin : “ Your very humble sister, Marguerite.”

In accordance with the promise she had given the King, Louise proceeded to take energetic steps to meet the dangers which threatened France. She assembled at Lyons what troops she could muster, and entrusted the command to the Duc de Vendôme, with whom she associated Lautrec and Claude de Lorraine, Duc de Guise. She summoned to Lyons delegates from the *Parlement* of Paris, which was already sharply questioning her right to an uncontrolled regency, gave them many fair words, and submitted to them the measures which she proposed to take for the preservation of the kingdom. She convened a council of notables, which controlled

<sup>1</sup> The Viceroy of Naples.

## The Pearl of Princesses

Louise herself at times, but which put an end to all dissension, at least so far as regarded armaments and foreign negotiations ; and she sought friends everywhere, "even in hell," since not only did she renew the old alliance with the Venetians, and induce Henry VIII, jealous of the growing power of the Emperor, to recall his troops from the frontier of Picardy and enter into a treaty of neutrality with her, but opened negotiations with the Porte, the first of that long series of friendly dealings between France and Turkey directed against the House of Austria.

Even before the defection of England, whose co-operation was, of course, essential to the success of a fresh invasion of France, Charles V had already abandoned all idea of such an undertaking, which would have entailed demands upon the Imperial coffers which they were at that moment in no condition to meet, and had decided to confine his efforts to the exaction of a favourable treaty. "As it is not my desire to carry on the war if I can promote peace," he writes to the Regent, "I have caused things to be set down in writing which it is my intention to recover from the King, as justly belonging to us ; which paper my cousin De Rieux will show you, and then afterwards present to the King your son, in the hope that you will both maturely consider and not refuse demands so moderate and just, and which will insure the welfare and repose of Christendom."

The demands referred to, though not unjust, could scarcely be called moderate, including as they did the cession of the duchy of Burgundy, with its dependencies of Maçon, Auxerre, Auxonne, and Bar-sur-Seine. The indignation in France when they were made known was extreme ; while François refused even to consider them.

## Marguerite's Letter to Montmorency

However, Charles believed that his rival's impatience of imprisonment would ere long assure their acceptance.

Louise and Marguerite derived some consolation for their separation from their idol by maintaining an active correspondence with him. They also received news of the King from Anne de Montmorency and La Barre, the High Bailiff of Paris, who shared their Sovereign's captivity at Pizzighitone. Marguerite, on learning that Montmorency was at Pizzighitone, wrote to express her envy of the good fortune he enjoyed in being privileged to console the King in his misfortunes.

"The envy I experience at seeing you so good a servant," she writes, "is not so great but that I thank God for the grace that he has given you, in permitting you to serve, in this his hour of need and misfortune, him who deserves it of you. Believe me, the joy which the King felt at seeing you has been so sensibly reflected here, that with us it is no longer a question of weariness and sickness, but of eager anxiety to perform his mandates. True is it, nevertheless, that all my life I shall bear you envy that I cannot perform towards him [the King] the offices you are now fulfilling; for where the will to do so surpasses all that you can feel, Fortune serves me ill by rendering the way difficult to me—a woman. I hope that God, who knows this my earnest desire, will reserve for me an hour when I, too, may have my part; when life, death, and everything which can either be feared or desired, will be voluntarily sacrificed for him. I beseech the Almighty to grant me this opportunity. I pray you (if you deem it expedient) commend me to Monseigneur the Viceroy; for the courtesy which he shows towards the King makes me feel so obliged to him that I cannot refrain from asking you to express



## The Pearl of Princesses

to him what you know I feel. As often as you can, send *Madame* news of her son, on whose deliverance and health depends her life and consolation, as on the well-being of both these persons rests that of

“Your good cousin,  
“MARGUERITE.”

This letter to Montmorency was accompanied by a joint epistle from Marguerite and her mother to the King, the first part of which is in Louise's handwriting, and the latter in Marguerite's, while it is signed by both :—

“MONSEIGNEUR : The joy we yet feel from the good news contained in the letter which it has pleased you to write to me, your mother, reassures us so much for the safety of that health upon which our lives depend, that it seems as if we ought not to hold other discourse than to praise God and pray for the continuation of such joyful tidings, as the best and most reviving nourishment upon which we can subsist. And, inasmuch as God has always mercifully permitted that our trinity<sup>1</sup> shall be one, we

<sup>1</sup> The expression, “*Notre trinité*”, to indicate their mutual affection, concord, and union, is continually used by Louise of Savoy and her two children in the verses they wrote. The idea was taken up with enthusiasm by the Court poets; and Jean Marot celebrated it in the following sonnet :—

Ung seul cueur en trois corps au jour'dhui voy en France,  
Regnant en doux accord, sans quelque differance,  
D'amour tant enlacez, qu'il semble que nature,  
Les formant ayt chassé dissension, murmure,  
Pour nourrir sans discords amoureuse alliance.

Ung pin, bien m'en records, en Savoye eut croissance,  
Si très beau, que dès lors le lys pour sa plaisance  
Fleuron y a entez et mis par geniture,  
Ung seul cueur en trois corps.

## Disgrace of the Duc d'Alençon

beseech you that this letter, presented to you, our third, may be received with the same affection as with all their hearts it is offered to you by

“Your very humble and obedient mother and sister,

“LOYSE,

“MARGUERITE.”

Meanwhile, the disgraced Alençon had reached Lyons. Pursued all the way from the frontier by the taunts of his countrymen, and ill with shame and remorse, the unhappy prince had already been sufficiently punished; but his exasperated relatives were determined that no humiliation should be spared him. Immediately on his arrival, Louise sent him a peremptory summons to her presence, and overwhelmed him with the bitterest reproaches. Marguerite was even more cruel; she had never cared for her husband, and, now that she regarded him as the cause of her adored brother's captivity, he had become odious to her. She therefore refused to see him or to hold any communication with him. The Duc de Vendôme, Alençon's brother-in-law, appears to have followed her example.

Abandoned by all, and in momentary fear of arrest, for the *Parlement* of Paris had demanded that he should be brought to trial for high treason, the wretched man determined to quit Lyons privately and retire to his château of Argentan. But his anguish of mind so aggravated an attack of pleurisy from which he was suffering that he was

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L'ung est entre les forts nommé pour sa puissance,  
Francois, franc aux efforts des François la fiance ;  
La seur bien cognoissez, duchesse nette et pure,  
Bonne trop plus qu'assez. O noble geniture !  
Vous êtes unicorps comme une trine essence :  
Ung seul cueur en trois corps.

## The Pearl of Princesses

obliged to take to his bed, from which he never rose again.

When informed of the alarming state of her husband, compassion and her sense of duty prevailed over Marguerite's resentment, and, hastening to the dying man's bedside, she tended him body and soul with unceasing care and devotion (It was the first time that either appears to have received much attention from her). The duke expressed a great desire to obtain his Sovereign's pardon, and Marguerite consented to undertake the part of intercessor, though, from the very guarded manner in which she alludes to her husband, she would appear to have been very reluctant to remind the King of the shameful manner in which he had been deserted. The greater part of her letter, indeed, is consecrated to an eloquent appeal to François to renounce his reported intention of keeping a rigid fast throughout the remainder of Lent—a resolution which filled her with consternation, both because fish was considered injurious to the royal constitution, and because Louise, who was not strong enough to subsist upon Lenten fare, had vowed that she would follow her son's example.

“If, Monseigneur,” she writes, “you desire that she [Louise] should preserve her health, I beseech you to take care of your own. It has been told *Madame* that you purpose to pass Lent without eating either flesh or eggs; and sometimes, for the honour of God, not to break your fast at all. Monseigneur, as fervently as a most devoted sister can entreat, I beseech you not to do so, but to consider how very injurious fish is to your health. Believe me, if you persist in it, *Madame* has vowed that she will do likewise; and thus the thought of seeing you both growing weak makes me once more



## “The King fasts upon Turtles”

implore that it will please you to desist from this resolution, out of regard for her precious life and your own. For, if you continue in health, your friends will do so likewise ; but, if the contrary, you may imagine the alternative. Have, then, compassion upon yourself, Monseigneur, in thinking of us.”

And she concludes :—

“I will not add more now, save to entreat you to receive the very humble homage of Monseigneur d’Alençon, who esteems his captive freedom (*prisonnière liberté*) so great a misfortune that, until he sees you again, he holds his life to be as death ; which, with all that God has given him, he humbly devotes to your service, without forgetting her who desires more than ever to devote herself to your love.

“Your very humble and very obedient subject and sister,  
“MARGUERITE.”

Marguerite’s apprehensions as to the effect of a too rigorous fast upon the King’s health were relieved by a letter from François’s fellow-prisoner, La Barre, to the Regent, in which he informed her that “the King was fasting upon turtles, which he found very good” ; while, in response to her appeal on behalf of her husband, his Majesty sent the duke a gracious message. Nevertheless, the poetic narration of his misfortunes which François afterwards composed in the Alcazar at Madrid, to beguile the tedium of his captivity, proves that he was deeply incensed against his brother-in-law,<sup>1</sup> and had the latter

<sup>1</sup> In this poem the King thus indignantly alludes to Alençon’s disgraceful flight at Pavia :—

Trop tost je veis ceux-là qu’avois laissez.  
De tout honneur, et vertu délaissez.  
Les trops meschans s’enfuyoient sans combat,  
Et entre eulx tous n’avoient pour debat,

## The Pearl of Princesses

survived François's release, it is probable that his near connexion with the King would not have saved him from disgrace. As it was, he was already beyond hope ; and in her next letter to the King, "written at the foot of M. d'Alençon's bed," Marguerite says : "He [the duke] begs me to offer you, with my own, his very humble homage, and to say that, could he but see you before he died, he would go more happily towards Paradise. I know not what to say to you, Monseigneur. All is in the hand of God. Only I beseech you not to sorrow, either for him or for me ; and be assured that, whatever happens, God will give me strength to endure it."

On April 11, 1525, the luckless Alençon breathed his last. A manuscript chronicle, entitled *les Prisons*, preserved in the Bibliothèque Nationale, the authorship of which has been attributed by many to Marguerite herself, gives a minute account of the last hours of the duke, from which it would appear that he made a very edifying exit from the world, and that one of his last acts was to commend to the care of Louise of Savoy "her who had been his loving consort for so many years" ; adding, that "so prudent and virtuous had been her conduct that well did she deserve commendation from him."

However prudent and virtuous she may have been, it is to be feared that Marguerite could scarcely be described as a loving consort ; and when we find her assuring François that, "after the first two days of

---

Si n'est fouyr, laissant toute victoire  
Pour faire d'eulx honteuse la mémoire.  
Malheureux ! las : Et qui vous conduisoit,  
A telle erreur ne qui vous adisoit ;  
Abandonner fuyans en disarray,  
Honneur, pays, amys, et vostre roy !

## Marguerite a Widow

her bereavement, never had *Madame* seen her with a tearful eye or a mournful countenance, since she should esteem herself too miserable were she to be the cause of disquietude to her who was doing so much for him," we are inclined to doubt whether such stoicism called for quite so much effort on her part as she wished the King to believe. Nor would it appear to have jarred very greatly upon her when, the breath scarcely out of her husband's body, Louise offered her in marriage to Charles V, as the easiest means of terminating François's captivity; indeed, it is probable that the discourtesy of his Imperial Majesty, who did not even trouble himself to answer the proposal, hurt her feelings far more.



## CHAPTER XVI

THE fatal battle of Pavia brought other troubles to Marguerite d'Angoulême besides the captivity of her brother and the disgrace and death of her husband. The Sorbonne was not slow to appreciate the opportunity which now presented itself of dealing an overwhelming blow at the Reformers, and every pulpit in Paris resounded with clamours against the heretics, to whom, as in times of old, the calamities of the country were attributed. The *Parlement* joined in the agitation, and addressed to the Regent a remonstrance in which it ascribed the disaster of Pavia to celestial anger on account of the King's toleration of heresy, and demanded that vigorous measures should be taken against its adherents. "Heresy," she was told, "had raised its head amongst them ; and the King, by failing to erect scaffolds against it, had drawn down the wrath of Heaven upon the kingdom."

Louise of Savoy found herself unable to turn a deaf ear to this demand. At Lyons, it is true, she had offered no objection to the encouragement which her daughter had given the Reformers, and had listened with unconcern while the Papal Supremacy had been assailed in her very presence. But since the captivity of the King all was changed. The *Parlement* was showing itself exceedingly jealous of the powers with which the Regent had been invested, and the hostility it displayed towards the measures presented for its approval was the cause of much trouble and vexation to Louise. It was therefore

## Persecution of the Reformers

highly advisable to propitiate it and endeavour to divert its meddlesome activity into some other channel ; while, at the same time, it was of paramount importance to conciliate the new Pope, Clement VII,<sup>1</sup> who had the power to stir up all Italy against Charles V, and nothing was more calculated to secure the friendship of the Vatican than a rigorous suppression of those who disputed its authority.

Despite, therefore, the entreaties and remonstrances of Marguerite, the proscription of the "innovators" was resolved upon in Council ; and Louise wrote to the Pope to inquire what steps he would advise in order to secure the extirpation of heresy throughout the kingdom ; while the Bishop of Sens was despatched to the Sorbonne to invite the opinion of that body. Bédard and his partisans, overjoyed to find that the Court, which had so often snatched from their clutches the victims they had doomed to destruction, was at last awake to the fact that "the detestable doctrines of Luther were everywhere gaining fresh adherents," hastened to reply that "the writings of these heretics must be prohibited by proclamation" ; and that, if these means proved insufficient, force and constraint must be employed ; "for those who resist the light must be subdued by punishment and terrors." Clement VII, on his side, after preparing the way by the despatch of a cardinal's hat to Du-Prat, and by stimulating the Regent's hopes of a diversion in Italy in favour of François's release, boldly proposed the introduction of the Inquisition into France, and addressed a brief to the *Parlement* to that effect. The Papal recommendation was received with enthusiasm, and the *Parlement* lost no time

<sup>1</sup> Adrian IV had died in September 1523, and had been succeeded by Cardinal Giulio de' Medici, who assumed the name of Clement VII.

## The Pearl of Princesses

in appointing four commissioners "to do and accomplish the trial of those who should be attainted with Luther's doctrines," and decreed that those found guilty "should be delivered over to the secular arm, that is to say, to the said *Parlement*, which for the same shall condemn them to be burned alive" (May 17, 1525).

This ferocious decree struck dismay into Marguerite's heart. Death, proscription, or apostasy threatened her friends, and she felt herself powerless to defend them. For the success of her policy was more to Louise of Savoy than the fate of a few obscure theologians; and, convinced of the necessity of conciliating the *Parlement* and securing the alliance of the Pope, she steeled herself against all her daughter's entreaties. Nor did an appeal to the King himself hold out any prospect of success, since François, grateful for the devotion which his mother had shown for his interests, was very unlikely to interfere with any measures which the Regent and her advisers considered it necessary to adopt; and Louise and Du Prat had, moreover, anticipated any such action on Marguerite's part, by representing to the King that the Reformers had been endeavouring to sow dissensions during his absence. She therefore caused them to be informed, through Michel d'Arande, that, for the present at any rate, they must not rely on her protection, and that it would be advisable for them to exercise the utmost discretion; and on a hint from her, Lefèvre quitted Blois, where she had secured for him the post of royal librarian, and took refuge at Strasbourg, at the house of the Reformer Capito.

The other *Parlements* followed the example of that of Paris, and the fires of persecution were lighted. A young man of great promise, Jacques Pavanne by name, who



## Pusillanimous Conduct of Briçonnet

had been one of the little coterie of Meaux, and who, after having abjured the Reformed doctrines, had subsequently retracted his abjuration, was arrested, condemned, and burned in the Place de Grève (August 28, 1525). About the same time, a poor hermit of the forest of Livri, convicted of having preached to the peasants the doctrines of Meaux, was burned, with much solemnity, by a slow fire in front of Notre-Dame. Clergy and people were summoned to the spot by the tocsin of the cathedral, and the doctors assured the populace that the hapless hermit was a lost soul who was being spared the fires of hell. A gentleman named La Tour and a young student were the next victims ; while blood was also shed in the provinces, and one Du Blet, a friend of Farel, and a man named Moulin were burned at Lyons.

The Commissioners, emboldened by success, resolved to strike at higher game, and, after the *Parlement* had formally forbidden the reading of Lefèvre d'Étaples's translation of the New Testament (August 1525), they summoned the Bishop of Meaux to appear before them. For Bédard and his friends, not satisfied with the prelate's surrender two years before, were resolved that he should drink the cup of humiliation to the dregs. The unfortunate Briçonnet demanded to be tried before the assembled chambers of the *Parlement* ; but this claim was set aside, and, with the dreadful fate of his former disciple Jacques Pavanne before his eyes, he stooped to purchase his acquittal by the Commissioners at the cost of the most abject surrender, disavowing his past, condemning, in a diocesan synod, the works of Luther, and giving all the pledges for his future conduct that were demanded of him, except that of becoming a persecutor in his turn.

## The Pearl of Princesses

Having succeeded in extorting these unworthy concessions from Briçonnet, the Commissioners permitted him to return to his diocese, where, however, he continued to be subjected to the most galling espionage. Antoine Froment states that "soon afterwards this miserable bishop, haunted by remorse, resigned his see and died of despair : a marvellous example of the terrible judgments of God against those who persecute the truth, having known it." This, however, is quite untrue, as Briçonnet lived until 1533 and retained his see until the end. It is to be remarked, however, that about this time his correspondence with Marguerite d'Angoulême appears to have ceased ; any way, there are no letters of a later date in existence.

Marguerite was not in France at the time when her spiritual director was constrained to this second surrender to the bigotry of the Sorbonne. Some weeks earlier she had set out for Spain, whither François had been transferred early in the summer, charged with one of the most important missions ever entrusted to a woman.

Some misconception appears to exist in regard to François's transference from Italy to Spain. Several historians state that Charles V sent orders for the King's removal ; but Mignet has shown that Lannoy acted entirely on his own responsibility, and that Charles was greatly astonished on learning that his prisoner was on Spanish soil.

The fact is that the Viceroy of Naples had come to the conclusion that the King was no longer safe in Italy, where there was always the risk that a combination of some of the Italian States in his favour, or the return of Bourbon to his old allegiance, might restore him

## François I is transferred to Spain

to liberty, and that it was imperative that he should be transferred to Spain with the least possible delay. Since, however, this could not be effected without the royal prisoner's own consent, owing to the presence of a powerful French fleet in the Mediterranean, he persuaded François, who was daily growing more impatient at the slow progress of the negotiations for his release, that an agreement would be greatly facilitated by a personal conference between him and the Emperor; and the King undertook temporarily to disarm his fleet and to furnish seven galleys, which were to be manned by Spaniards and guarded by sixteen Imperial vessels, for his transport to Spain.

Both the Regent and Marguerite appear to have regarded this decision on the King's part with the gravest misgivings, since they argued, very rightly, that, if Charles V persisted in his exorbitant demands while his rival remained in Italy, where he could not consider him in permanent security, what treatment might not François expect when a prisoner in Spain, cut off from every chance of liberty?

Shortly before leaving Pizzighitone, the King received a letter from his sister, in which her earnest entreaties to him to submit patiently to his lot show that she foresaw the cruel disappointment which was in store for him.

"If it should please God," she writes, "to give you experience of the bitter sorrows which He suffered for you, and, at the same time, mercifully to endow you with grace to support patiently His dispensations, I entreat you to believe me, Monseigneur, that it is but for the trial of your faith, and to afford you leisure to meditate upon, and to be convinced of, the depth of His love towards you. He can content himself only



## The Pearl of Princesses

with your undivided heart, even as in love He has given you all His own, in order that, being united to Christ in tribulation, He may deliver you for His own glory, and your consolation, by the merits of His victorious and blessed resurrection; that, by your means, His great name may be known and adored, not only in your own kingdom, but throughout Christendom, even to the conversion of unbelievers. Oh! thrice happy, Sire, will be your brief captivity if, through it, God deigns to deliver so many precious souls from the prisons of infidelity and eternal damnation! Alas! Monseigneur, I am aware that you comprehend these truths better than I can do; but in all things I think of you as the only friend whom God has left me in the world, to be at once a father, a brother, and a husband, and being unable to say this in person, I have not feared to write this long letter, which seems short to me, so great a joy is it to feel that I am speaking to you."

Before Lannoy could remove his illustrious prisoner from Pizzighitone, it was necessary for him to obtain the assent of Bourbon and Pescara, who were bitterly jealous of the Viceroy's favour with the Emperor, and who, he knew, would most certainly refuse to allow the King to be transferred to Spain without an express order from Charles V, and perhaps not even then. To remove this obstacle, he had recourse to a very pretty piece of deception. Summoning a council of war at Milan, he pointed out that the intrigues of the French Government in Italy and the uncertain attitude of the States contiguous to the Milanese rendered it no longer safe to keep François at Pizzighitone, and proposed that he should be removed to a fortress in the kingdom of Naples. His colleagues having consented, he next pro-

## François arrives in Spain

posed that the journey should be made by sea, as the transfer of the King through Italy might be accompanied by serious difficulties. To this also they raised no objection, and at the beginning of June 1525 the King, escorted by the greater part of the army, set out for Genoa, where he embarked, with the Viceroy, on board the Imperialist squadron and sailed in the direction of Naples, whither, after seeing his Majesty depart, Bourbon and Pescara directed their march. On arriving at Porto Venere, however, where he was joined by Anne de Montmorency<sup>1</sup> with the French galleys, the Viceroy altered his course and made for the Spanish coast. On June 19 they arrived at Barcelona, where the King landed and passed the night at the palace of the Archbishop of Tarragona. Next day he re-embarked and sailed for Valencia. Here a mutiny broke out among the soldiers who had accompanied them from Italy. Clamouring for their arrears of pay, they assembled before the house where the Viceroy and his prisoner was lodged, and when Lannoy presented himself on the balcony and ordered them to disperse, several of them let fly at him with their arquebuses, one ball entering the room where the King was sitting and passing in unpleasantly close proximity to his Majesty's head. If we are to believe Du Bellay, the Viceroy, who was not remarkable for his courage, promptly made his escape over the roofs of the neighbouring houses until he reached a place of safety; but François, boldly stepping on to the balcony, haranged the mutineers, and, by distributing money amongst them and promising, in the

<sup>1</sup> Montmorency was no longer a prisoner, having been exchanged some weeks before for Don Ugo de Monçada, Prior of Messina, who had been captured by the French in the sea-fight off the coast of Provence in the previous year.

## The Pearl of Princesses

Emperor's name, that their demands should speedily be satisfied, succeeded in quelling the disturbance.

Charles V was at Toledo, holding the Cortes of Castile, when he learned of the captive monarch's arrival in Spain, upon which he wrote to François as follows:—

“It has given me great pleasure to learn of your arrival here [*i. e.* in Spain]—a circumstance which without doubt will tend to hasten a solid and general pacification, to the great benefit of Christendom, which is a thing to be desired by us above all others. I have sent orders to my Viceroy to repair immediately to my presence, that from him I may learn your intentions on this matter. I have likewise desired him to continue towards you the courteous treatment which you have been receiving; for I should be distressed, if, having found yourself well entertained in Italy, you should not meet with still better treatment here, that you may know and appreciate the great desire that I have to remain your brother and friend,

“CHARLES.”

At the same time, he caused the King to be informed, through Lannoy, that he should decline to accord him a personal interview—that personal interview which François had counted upon to smooth away all difficulties, and which the Viceroy had used as a bait to lure him to Spain—until conditions such as had already been presented to his Majesty at Pizzighitone had been accepted. Too late, François began to perceive the error he had committed in placing himself so completely in the power of his astute rival. It was soon to be brought home to him still more forcibly.



## François at Venyssolo

After remaining a few days at Valencia, the King was conducted to the castle of Venyssolo, about twelve miles from that city, belonging to the governor, Don Geronimo Cabanillas. Here, though treated with all the honour due to royalty, and permitted to take exercise amid the beautiful scenery of the Vega, he was none the less most rigorously guarded.

“The person of the French king is in the keeping of the Captain Alarçon,” writes the English Ambassador to Wolsey, “which so narrowly seeth him that no word escapes him, or is spoken to him, unmarked ; nor no man without the emperor’s knowledge speaketh with him, not otherwise than openly. And we understand by the emperor’s council that until the emperor and he shall be in a point on this treaty, the emperor will not speak to him, nor shall he come nigh the court.”

From Venyssolo, François despatched Montmorency to Toledo to demand a truce which would permit François de Tournon, Archbishop of Embrun, and Jean de Selve, First Président of the *Parlement* of Paris, the Ambassadors nominated by the Regent, to come to Spain to treat regularly for peace, and a safe-conduct for the Duchesse d’Alençon, whose presence would console his captivity and facilitate the negotiations. For François had a high opinion of his sister’s political capacity—an opinion which, as their despatches show, was shared by more than one of the Ambassadors at the Court of France—and, ever sanguine, he hoped much from the influence which she might exercise over the Emperor, notwithstanding that Charles had not even answered Louise’s proposal to give Marguerite to him in marriage. Moreover, possessing as she did his full confidence and that of their mother, and being so well acquainted with their desires and intentions,

## The Pearl of Princesses

she would have a great advantage over the official representatives of France.

The armistice was accorded without difficulty; but to Marguerite's journey to Spain, which would oblige him to treat personally for the release of the King, the Emperor, who had no great desire for prolonged *tête-à-têtes* with a lady who had made him a proposal of marriage, raised objections, observing that it was for the Ministers of France and Spain alone to arrange the conditions of peace. Montmorency replied, as he had been instructed to do, that "the King, through his sister, wished to complete within a month what otherwise would be a matter of endless length, to the infinite detriment of their Majesties, their subjects and territories"; and, after a good deal of delay, Charles consented. He, at the same time, declared that it was his wish that whatever powers might be given the princess—whom he regarded as accredited to himself—the Regent should still authorize her Ambassadors to treat for peace with his Ministers; though the treaty should be definitely concluded between Marguerite and the Emperor.

Marguerite was naturally overjoyed at the prospect of seeing her brother again, and personally negotiating his release; but Louise of Savoy distrusted Charles V so profoundly that at first she refused to sanction the journey to Spain, fearing lest, having already got her son into his power, the temptation, on some specious pretext, to make a prisoner of her daughter as well, and use this double captivity to extort the cession of Burgundy from France, might prove too much for that not over-scrupulous monarch. However, she finally yielded to Marguerite's persuasions, and we find the latter writing to the King:—



LOUISE OF SAVOY, COUNTESS D'ANGOUËME.





## Marguerite Ambassadors Extraordinary

“MONSEIGNEUR : According as it hath pleased you to send me word by the Maréchal de Montmorency, *Madame* has, at length, granted me permission to make the journey into Spain, to accomplish which I am making all speed, as the marshal will report to you, feeling only too thankful if, through my humble means, it be the will of God to give you deliverance. But, Monseigneur, the journey is long, and you know the amount of fatigue my strength will endure. Fearing, therefore, that I cannot be with you as soon as you desire, I very humbly entreat you to command your Ambassadors to proceed, so that I may know at once on my arrival how your affairs stand ; and do not delay them in anything, waiting for my presence. As *Madame* cannot give you the consolation of seeing her, she has been pleased to permit me the happiness of serving you. I will not attempt to describe how agreeable to me is obedience to your united will.”

Marguerite was formally invested by the Regent with full powers as Ambassadors Extraordinary to the Emperor to conclude whatever treaty she deemed advisable ; and the Archbishop of Embrun and the Président de Selve, who arrived at Toledo about the middle of July, were instructed to agree to nothing without her sanction. Early in August, she left Lyons, accompanied by the Regent and a numerous suite, and journeyed down the Rhone as far as Pont Saint-Esprit, where Louise took leave of her. Thence she proceeded to Aigues-Mortes, where she was to embark for Barcelona, only to find that the expected safe-conduct from Charles V, who seemed determined to do everything in his power to delay her journey to Spain, had not arrived. Nor was it until she had waited for nearly a fortnight that it at length came,

## The Pearl of Princesses

drawn, however, in vague and unsatisfactory terms, and valuable for three months only—a circumstance which appeared to the princess not a little suspicious. Such, however, was her impatience to reach her destination, that she refused to hear of any more time being wasted by efforts to obtain a more satisfactory document, and at the beginning of September she put to sea, escorted by a mixed squadron of French and Genoese vessels under the command of the famous naval *condottiere*, Andrea Doria, at that time in the service of France.

At the time when his devoted sister sailed for Spain, François was no longer at Venyssolo. In order that the French Ambassadors on their arrival might be able to communicate easily with their sovereign, the Emperor had directed that the King should be transferred to Madrid. On July 20, accordingly, François quitted Venyssolo, accompanied by the Governor of Valencia and a great number of noblemen and gentlemen, who escorted him as far as Requena, where he found the Bishop of Avila, who had been deputed to convey to him the Emperor's compliments. His journey to Madrid, which occupied three weeks, resembled rather that of a king than a captive. At Guadalajara, the Duke of Infantado gave the most magnificent fête in his honour,<sup>1</sup> and the three days which he spent there were one round of tournaments, bull-fights, balls and banquets; while at Alcala, the whole town came out to meet him, headed by the authorities and students of the University.

But what a cruel deception awaited him when, on

<sup>1</sup> And the duke's daughter, who was of a highly romantic disposition, fell so desperately in love with him that, from sheer despair, she took the veil and founded a monastery at Guadalajara.



## François in the Alcazar

August 17, he reached Madrid! There, after being confined for a few days in the tower of los Lujanes, the strongest of the towers which flanked the ramparts of the city, he was lodged in a narrow chamber in the donjon of the Alcazar, containing only such furniture as was absolutely necessary, and lighted by a single window with two iron gratings fixed into the massive walls, which overlooked the Manzanares, always dry at this season of the year, and the arid plain beyond. A company of arquebusiers guarded the tower, and no one but the King's gaolers were permitted to have access to him. This close and galling confinement, which could scarcely have been more rigorous had François been a State criminal awaiting his trial on a charge of high treason, soon began to have its effect upon the health of the unfortunate monarch, and towards the middle of September he fell seriously ill.

After a voyage which brought unspeakable anguish to the majority of her attendants, but which Marguerite herself appears to have borne very well—since she assures her brother that the extreme desire that she had to see his Majesty absorbed all other pains—the princess arrived safely at Barcelona, where she was received by the Viceroy of Naples and by Don Ugo de Monçada, Prior of Messina, representing the Emperor, accompanied by the civic fathers in their robes of office and many of the grandees of Catalonia. Her reception by the populace was a very flattering one, for the Spaniards generally disapproved of their Sovereign's treatment of his fallen foe, and sympathized with the devotion to her brother which had caused Marguerite to undertake so long and fatiguing a journey.

## The Pearl of Princesses

As it would take her more than a fortnight to reach Madrid, and the report which the Viceroy brought her of the King's health was far from reassuring, Marguerite made but the briefest stay at Barcelona, and then continued her journey, she and her suite travelling in litters, escorted by a guard of honour under the command of Monçada. As she travelled slowly on through the heat and dust of the Spanish summer, she consoled herself by writing frequent letters to her brother.

"I implore you," she writes, "to believe that whatsoever I can do in your service, were it to scatter to the winds the ashes of my bones (*jusques à mettre au vent la cendre de mes os*), nothing would be to me either strange or difficult, or painful; but, on the contrary, consolation, repose, and honour. And at this hour, Monseigneur, I well know the strength of that love which God has planted in the hearts of us three;<sup>1</sup> for that which seemed to me impossible, thinking only of myself, I find easy when I think of you. And this makes me desire, for your good, that which the pains of death should not make me desire for my own repose.

"Supplicating Him, the Author of my being, not to render life so useless to me but that it may serve to obtain your deliverance; to earn which blessing I should esteem captivity as welcome liberty.

"Your very humble and very obedient subject and sister,  
"MARGUERITE."

As she drew nearer Madrid, the news concerning the king's health grew more disquieting, and she was consumed with anxiety and impatience. She has described

<sup>1</sup> Herself, François, and Louise of Savoy.

## François falls dangerously Ill

her feelings in the following verses, which, if somewhat ornate, are not without literary merit :—

CHANSON FAICTE PAR MADAME MARGUERITE DANS  
SA LICTIERE DURANT LA MALLADYE DU ROI.

Le désir du bien que j'actendz  
Me donne de travail matière ;  
Une heure me dure cent ans,  
Et me semble que ma lictière  
Ne bouge, ou retourne en arrière  
Tant j'ay de m'avancer desir.  
O qu'ell'est longue, la carrière  
Où gist à la fin mon plaisir !  
Je regarde de tous costéz  
Pour voir s'il n'arrive personne ;  
Priant sans cesse, n'en doutez,  
Dieu que santé à mon Roy donne.  
Quand nul nevoz, l'œil j'abandonne  
À plurer ; puis sur le pappier  
Un peu de ma douleur j'ordonne :  
Voilà mon douloureux mestier.  
O qu'il sera le bien venu  
Celluy qui, frappant à ma porte,  
Dira ; le Roy est revenu  
Et sa santé très bonne et forte !  
Alors sa sœur, plus mal que morte,  
Courra baiser le messaiger,  
Qui telles nouvelles apporte  
Que son fière est hors de dangier.

But no messenger came to win Marguerite's embraces by such welcome tidings.

François, in fact, was growing steadily worse, and on the evening of September 18, as the Emperor was returning from hunting in the forest of Segovia, word was brought him that his captive was dying. In great alarm, for if the King really died, all the fruits he expected to gather from the victory of Pavia would escape him, he set out at once for Madrid, and travelling



## The Pearl of Princesses

all that night and all the following day, reached the Alcazar as darkness was falling. The Viceroy of Naples and Anne de Montmorency met him at the gate, and, accompanied by Lannoy and preceded by Montmorency, carrying a torch, Charles ascended to the dreary room where the most magnificent prince in Europe lay dying.

On perceiving the Emperor, François painfully raised himself into a sitting posture and bowed. But Charles, momentarily overcome by remorse, threw himself on his knees beside the bed, and clasped the sick man in his arms, and "they remained for some time in a close embrace without saying a word." The King was the first to break the silence. "My lord," said he, with some excusable irony, "you see before you your prisoner and your slave." "Nay," replied the Emperor affectionately, "but my good brother and true friend, whom I look upon as free." "Your slave," rejoined the King. "My good brother and friend who *shall* be free," insisted the Emperor. "My most ardent desire is your recovery, think only of that. All the rest shall be done, my lord, according to your wishes." "It will be as you order," replied François, "for it is yours to command; but, my lord, I entreat you, let there be no intermediary between us." The King then fell back exhausted on his pillow, and Charles withdrew, having assured him that when Marguerite arrived, peace and his liberty would speedily follow.

The next day, the Emperor again visited François, and did all in his power to console him; but the royal prisoner was in a very weak state, spoke as though he did not expect to recover, and besought Charles, in the event of his death, not to be too hard upon his sons,

## Marguerite reaches Madrid

but to take them under his protection and defend them against those who might attempt to despoil them. And the Emperor promised that everything should be arranged in accordance with his wishes, so soon as his sister arrived.

While he was still with the King, a message was brought him that Marguerite had entered Madrid and was approaching the Alcazar. Travelling with all possible despatch, both day and night, she had arrived two or three days earlier than she had been expected. The Emperor received her at the foot of the staircase of the Alcazar. She was dressed all in white, on account of the recent death of her husband, and her face was stained with tears. Charles greeted her with the utmost courtesy, and begged her not to despair; and, after the principal ladies and gentlemen of the princess's suite had been presented to him, he gave her his hand and conducted her to the sick-room, where François lay with scarcely life enough left in him to respond to his sister's agitated greetings. Then, leaving them together, he quitted the Alcazar and set out for Toledo, where the conferences with the French Ambassadors were being held.

The visits and assurances of the Emperor and the presence of his devoted sister served to arouse the captive monarch from the depths of discouragement into which he had fallen. But, though Charles would appear to have been under the impression that his illness was due far more to moral than to physical causes, this was certainly not the case. The King was suffering from an abscess in the head ("*un appostema nella testa*"),<sup>1</sup> and, three days after the departure of his "good brother,"

<sup>1</sup> *Della vita e della opere di Andrea Navagero*, cited by Mignet, *Rivalité de François I<sup>er</sup> et de Charles-Quint*.

## The Pearl of Princesses

he had so serious a relapse that both his own and the Emperor's physicians held out no hope of recovery. According to one of the French Ambassadors, the *Président de Selve*, all the signs of approaching death were evident, and he lay for several hours without speaking or recognizing any one.

Believing that the end was at hand, Marguerite caused an altar to be set up in the sick-room, summoned all her own and his Majesty's attendants, and directed the Archbishop of Embrun to celebrate Mass, and afterwards, if possible, to administer the Holy Sacrament to the King. "At the moment of the elevation," writes Selve to the *Parlement* of Paris, "when the archbishop exhorted him to regard the Host, my sovereign lord (who had been for long deprived of sight and hearing) turned his head, raised his hands, and murmured : 'It is my God, Who will restore me both in body and soul. I pray you let me receive Him.' Upon this it was observed to the said lord that he could not swallow the wafer ; but he replying that he was able, Madame la Duchesse [Marguerite] commanded that the holy wafer should be divided into two portions, which being done, he received it with such marks of contrition and extreme humility that there was not one person present who did not melt into tears. Madame la Duchesse then partook of the other half of the said Holy Sacrament. From that hour the said lord has continued to amend ; so much so, that he is now quit of all danger, which is a miraculous work of God, as all the French and Spaniards unanimously testify."

In point of fact, the agitation caused by his receiving the Holy Sacrament had caused the abscess in François's head to open, happily in an outward direction ; and,



## Recovery of the King

though the King remained for some time in a very weak state, he was soon out of danger. That he owed his comparatively rapid recovery to the tender care of his sister cannot be doubted ; “for,” says Brantôme, “she understood his temperament and complexion better than all his physicians, and caused him to be so well treated according to her own knowledge that he was speedily cured.”

## CHAPTER XVII

As soon as François was pronounced convalescent, Marguerite set out for Toledo. She was received with great ceremony, about three miles from the city, by the Emperor in person, attended by the Archbishop of Toledo, the Viceroy of Naples, the Duke of Alva, and a great cavalcade of nobles. She entered the city with Charles riding beside her litter, and was escorted to the palace of Don Diego de Mendoza, Count de Melito, where lodgings had been prepared for herself and her suite. His Majesty assisted her to alight, conducted her to her apartments, and "entertained her with many fair and obliging words," finally appointing the following afternoon for their first conference.

"I arrived last night at this place," writes the princess to her brother on October 4. "The Emperor gave me a courteous reception, and came to meet me and escort me to this house ; since which he has entertained me with many fair and obliging words, expressing his satisfaction at your recovered health and the hope that he has of your friendship. By the counsel of the Viceroy, I shall visit him to-day after dinner, and then we shall begin in good earnest to discuss the terms of your deliverance. He [the Emperor] insists that we shall confer together alone in a room, though he permits one of my ladies to stand without at the door.<sup>1</sup> This evening I will send you

<sup>1</sup> Charles's insistence on these strictly private interviews was no doubt due to his desire to be able to disavow afterwards any promises which he might find it inconvenient to keep.

## Marguerite and Charles V

word what passes at our conference. I beseech you, Monseigneur, to affect a feeble and ailing manner while in the presence of the Sieur Alarçon,<sup>1</sup> as your weakness will hasten my negotiation ; for I long more than I can tell you to see you at liberty, which, by the grace of God, will soon be."

That afternoon the duel of wits between Marguerite and the Emperor began. "I found him very cold," she writes to François, "but not inclined to stand on ceremony, for he put me off on the pretext of speaking to his Council, and said he would give me an answer to-day. And then he took me to see Queen Alyenor (*sic*), his sister, where I stayed until quite late. And last night I went to see her, and she spoke to me in terms of great friendliness. It is true she goes on her journey to-morrow,<sup>2</sup> and I must go and take leave of her. I think she goes more by obedience than by choice, for they keep her very much in subjection. And, as I was conversing with her, the Viceroy came in quest of me, and I went to the Emperor's apartments, who sent for me to come to his chamber. He told me he desired your deliverance in perfect amity, but, in the end, he stopped at the question of Burgundy."

Yes, Burgundy was the stumbling-block. The duchy had reverted to the Crown of France on the death of Charles the Bold, without male heirs, in 1477, when the Estates had recognized Louis XI as their liege lord. But the Emperor, as the grandson of Charles the Bold's daughter Mary, had always regarded it as his lawful inheritance, of which he had been unjustly deprived, and

<sup>1</sup> The Military Governor of Madrid, and the officer specially appointed to guard François.

<sup>2</sup> On a pilgrimage to a shrine of the Virgin near Talavera.



## The Pearl of Princesses

for sentimental, as well as political, reasons he was determined to recover it. The French negotiators, on their side, were instructed to resist to the utmost a demand which, if conceded, would not only deprive France of one of her largest and most wealthy provinces, but would place her redoubtable enemy within striking distance of the capital. They had suggested, however, that the case should be referred to arbitration, with the understanding that, if Burgundy were assigned to Charles, it should form the dowry of his sister Eleanor, the Queen-dowager of Portugal, whom François should then take to wife. To this the Emperor had refused to consent; but Marguerite did not despair of his being prevailed upon to alter his decision. She hoped much from the intercession of Eleanor herself. The widow of Manoel the Great had been promised to Bourbon; but she had shown the strongest disinclination for such a marriage, while, being of a romantic temperament, at the age of sixteen she had fallen desperately in love with Frederick, Prince Palatine, whom Charles, of course, promptly sent about his business. François's courage and misfortunes had not failed to appeal to her. The English Ambassadors, who had been instructed to endeavour to prevent any permanent *rapprochement* between Charles and François, were apprehensive lest this should be brought about by Marguerite wooing the Emperor for herself and Eleanor for her brother. "Being young and a widow," said they, "she comes, as Ovid says of women going to a play, to see and to be seen; that perhaps the emperor may like her; and also to woo the queen-dowager of Portugal for her brother. . . . Then, as they are both young widows, she shall find good commodity in cackling with her to advance her brother's matter." It was no

## Marguerite plans her Brother's Escape

doubt to prevent this "cackling" that Charles had suggested to his sister the propriety of a pilgrimage to Talavera.

Marguerite and the Emperor had several conferences, and discussed the situation for hours at a time; but though Charles was lavish in compliments and promises, on the question of Burgundy he would not budge an inch. "I assure you, Monseigneur," writes Marguerite to the King, "that the office of solicitor in so unreasonable a company is a far more difficult service than it was to be your physician when you were sick." When, on October 17, the princess returned to Madrid, matters were still in the same state as on the morrow of Pavia, and François found himself faced with the alternative of perpetual captivity or his consent to the practical dismemberment of France.

In despair of procuring her brother's liberation by any other means, Marguerite set about planning his escape from prison. By some means, a Moorish slave, whose duty it was to attend to the fire in the King's room, was won over. About dusk this man was in the habit of bringing in a supply of wood sufficient to last during the night, after which, his duties for the day being at an end, he was at liberty to leave the Alcazar; and the princess proposed that François should stain his face and hands until they resembled those of the Moor, exchange clothes with him, descend in his stead, and walk boldly out of the fortress gates, beyond which fleet horses would be waiting to take him to the frontier. In order to insure the fugitive monarch as long a start as possible of his pursuers, the accommodating Moor was then to place himself in his Majesty's bed and feign sickness: a device not likely to be speedily penetrated, as the King

## The Pearl of Princesses

was accustomed to retire early and spend a great part of the morning in bed.

It is difficult to see how such a scheme, which rests upon the authority of the Spanish historian Ferreras, could have succeeded, for reasons which will be sufficiently obvious ; but, any way, the conspirators had no opportunity of putting it to the test, as Champion, the King's secretary, mortally offended by his royal master's refusal to exact reparation from Montmorency's brother, the Sieur de la Roche, who had grossly insulted the secretary, went secretly to Toledo and informed the Emperor of what was in the wind. Charles, beyond causing the Moor whom Marguerite had suborned to be removed from the Alcazar, and giving orders that a stricter watch should be kept upon his captive, took no action in the matter. But he did not like Marguerite any the better for it, and determined to punish her when a favourable opportunity should present itself. He had little chivalry in his nature, and could make no allowance for the feelings which had prompted the princess to plot for her brother's liberation.

Foiled in her attempt to rescue the King, Marguerite fell back upon an expedient which she believed would prove as fatal to the Emperor's hopes as the death of his prisoner ; and François, at her instigation, drew up and signed an act of abdication, in which he declared that " We have willed and consented, by perpetual and irrevocable edict, that our very dear and beloved son François shall be henceforth declared Very Christian King of France, and as King shall be crowned, anointed, and consecrated." In the event of the death of Louise of Savoy, "*notre très chère et très amée seur unique Marguerite de France*" was to become Regent, but he



## François resolves to Abdicate

reserved to himself the right of resuming the Crown should he ever recover his liberty.

This abdication, she fondly believed, would oblige the Emperor to abate his terms, since, if it were allowed to take effect, François would become merely a private individual; and it would be with Louise of Savoy and her grandson, the free and independent monarch of France, that Charles would have to deal.

The King's resolution was duly communicated to the Emperor by Montmorency, accompanied by a request that he would permit his Majesty's entourage to be placed on such a footing as would be suitable for an ex-sovereign who had resigned himself to the idea of spending the remainder of his days in captivity. Charles, however, did not appear to be perturbed very greatly by the announcement. He knew that François was a bad subject for prison life, and believed that he was far too selfish to sacrifice himself for his kingdom.

Marguerite derived some consolation for the failure of her efforts on behalf of her imprisoned brother from the knowledge that the King enjoyed the sympathy and the admiration of Europe, and that François had acquired a greater reputation by his misfortunes than ever he had in the heyday of his prosperity. From almost every country, from all kinds of eminent men—princes, statesmen, poets, philosophers and theologians—letters reached her full of the most flattering expressions and assurances of the profound interest which the writers felt in the success of her mission. Among her correspondents was no less a person than Erasmus, to whose fastidious mind the princess made a strong appeal, both as a refined scholar and as a typical representative of that side of the Reformation which best embodied his tastes. They

## The Pearl of Princesses

had never met or corresponded, but Marguerite's friends had suggested that, in this time of adversity, a letter from the great scholar, for whom the princess was known to entertain a sincere admiration, could not fail to be most welcome, and had succeeded in overcoming his diffidence.

“The admirers of your Highness's virtues,” he writes, “have written several times, encouraging me to address some condolences to you in the midst of the tempest of misfortune by which you are now assailed. Therefore, as the learned and noble personage who has presented this letter to you was about to set off unexpectedly for Spain, to make a brief sojourn there, I hesitated whether it would be advisable to maintain absolute silence or to send you this short and badly-expressed letter. My fear and reluctance have yielded to the strong affection that I bear you ; for I have admired and loved you this long while, because of the many and goodly gifts with which God has endowed you. He has given you the prudence of a philosopher : chastity, moderation, piety, an unconquerable strength of mind, and a marvellous contempt for all the vanities of the world. Who could refrain from admiring in the sister of a great king qualities which are rare even among priests and monks? And I would not speak of them now were I not sure that you know that the merit lies not with you, but wholly with God, the Dispenser of all good. So with the wish to congratulate rather than to console have I ventured to address you. The calamity is great, I acknowledge ; but nothing in human affairs is so terrible that it need cast down a courage truly founded upon the rock—the immovable rock—Jesus Christ.

“If you ask me how I thus know you, I who have

## Letter of Erasmus to Marguerite

never seen you, there are many who know your Highness by your portraits, without ever having had the happiness of beholding your face. But, as for me, many men of worth and knowledge have painted your mind in their letters to me more faithfully than any painter could portray your person with his illusive colours. Nor should you doubt my good faith; I praise you, because I know your worth; I do not flatter your power, since I covet nothing from you save a return of esteem. Long have I loved the Most Christian King; or, to speak more truly, long have I returned his friendship, since it was he who first sought for mine in divers ways. And a woman, a heroine such as you are, I cannot refrain from loving in the Lord.

“I owe the Emperor not only fair deeds, but fidelity, and that for more than one reason. First, I am his born subject, and for some years I have been one of his Privy Councillors, and he has my oath of allegiance. Would to God it were the Turks over whom he had gained this victory! That would have been an answer to our most fervent prayers. Doubtless, the sinfulness of mankind was too great for God to esteem us worthy of so signal a mercy. Now, magnificent as is the victory of the Emperor, I have not been able to congratulate him from the depths of my heart; but I have great hope that soon the fatal issue of this battle will become as great an occasion of felicitation to you and to France as to the Emperor himself. So great a workman is He who in His secret counsels rules the affairs of this lower world, that often, when misfortunes appear irretrievable, suddenly He converts and renders them conducive to our most triumphant successes. I found this hope principally on the boundless mercy of God; then, partly



## The Pearl of Princesses

on the genius of the Emperor, whose goodness equals and even surpasses the grandeur of his fortune ; and partly on the marvellous dexterity of the Most Christian King. Furthermore, I feel certain that they have formed between them a bond of friendship, strong as a chain of adamant. My hopes are fortified by the letter which, just before the King's departure for Spain, your Highness wrote to the illustrious Polish baron, Jean de Lascar. He resides with me, and friendship has made all things common between us. In truth, your letter showed, not only your firm resolve to endure with unshaken courage the burden of adverse destiny, but refreshed our affectionate solicitude by words of good omen. Should this hope be realized, we shall wish joy to the Emperor—and not alone to him, but to all Christendom.

“I must, before I conclude, plead for a twofold pardon from you : first, for having presumed to address so puissant a lady ; next, for having done so impromptu—a liberty which even a plebeian scarcely permits himself towards a friend. But my scruples were banished from my mind when I heard the rumours of your surpassing kindness. The Lord Jesus keep you in health and safety—fresh in the full flower of prosperity in Him. At Bâle ; St. Michael's Eve, 1525.”

Meanwhile, the period covered by Marguerite's safe-conduct was slipping away, and when, on Francois's instructions, the French Ambassadors applied to the Emperor for its extension, the request was curtly refused, Charles observing that “there was now no occasion for the duchess to remain longer with the King, and that he deemed it best for her to return to France without delay.” The Ambassadors then asked that permission might be accorded the princess to travel by way of

## Marguerite sets out for France

Navarre, which would appreciably shorten her journey, instead of traversing Castile and Aragon to enter France by Roussillon ; but this very reasonable request was likewise refused. The fact is that the Emperor was greatly irritated against Marguerite, to whose influence he attributed the rupture of the negotiations, and whose continued presence in Spain served, he believed, to confirm her brother in his obstinacy ; and her unsuccessful attempt to secure the King's escape from the Alcazar had not lessened his resentment.

Though naturally very reluctant to part with his sister, François counselled her to start at once, pointing out that their mother's health was precarious, and that, since it was so obviously to the Emperor's interest to have in his power the only person who, in the event of the Regent's death or serious illness, was capable of taking her place, it would be most impolitic for Marguerite to afford him any pretext for arresting her. On November 19, accordingly, the princess left Madrid, with a heavy heart, for at no period since his captivity began had François's restoration to his kingdom appeared more hopeless, and, as his health was still far from fully restored and he suffered much from attacks of depression, he still stood sorely in need of her companionship.

Marguerite passed the first night of her journey at Alcala. On rising on the morrow, she received a letter from Montmorency with news of the King. "My cousin," she writes in reply, "I received your letter at my *lever*, and you can well believe what pleasure it afforded me to have tidings of the King. As for news concerning myself, I am well enough in body ; but my spirit, I cannot deny, pines for that which I have left behind. All night long I dreamed that I held the King's

## The Pearl of Princesses

hand ; and I would not rouse myself, so as to have that pleasant illusion a little longer. I try to bear this departure as well as I can ; but succour me with news of him as often as you may. Let me hear some good news—if you have any to tell.” And to her brother she writes by the same courier : “ Monseigneur, the farther I journey from you, the more I feel my separation from you, which would be too grievous a burden, if the desire to obey you, and to render you still greater service than I could by remaining, did not afford me strength to submit.”

From Alcalá, Marguerite proceeded to Guadalajara, where she spent some days at the palace of the Duke of Infantado, the nobleman who had entertained François so magnificently on his journey to Madrid, and whose eldest daughter, Donna Ximena de Mendoza, had conceived so romantic a passion for his Majesty. Neither the duke nor his son were present to receive the princess, the reason being that they had espoused the captive monarch's cause with such warmth at Court that the Emperor had forbidden them, on pain of his displeasure, “ either to see or speak with the Duchesse d'Alençon.” This prohibition, however, did not extend to the ladies of the family, and Marguerite informs the King that she intended to compensate herself for the enforced absence of their male relatives by talking all the more to them.

Marguerite remained at Guadalajara until the 29th, and appears to have been much gratified by the admiration and sympathy expressed by the Mendoza ladies for her brother. “ Never,” she writes to Montmorency, “ could I have imagined that I should find myself here amongst a party bearing such enthusiastic admiration for the King, which has been a source of great consolation to me.”



## Emperor schemes to arrest Marguerite

Before her departure, her hostesses presented her with a pair of splendid mules, richly caparisoned, to draw her litter.

The princess left Guadalajara on November 29, and journeyed slowly on to Siguenza, for heavy rains had reduced the roads to a very bad condition, and she seemed, moreover, reluctant to increase the distance between herself and the King, to whom she continued to write daily.

Meanwhile, affairs at Madrid had taken a new turn. By some means a copy of the act of abdication which François had signed had fallen into the Emperor's hands, much to the consternation of that monarch, who had been unable to bring himself to believe that the King really intended to carry out the heroic resolution which he had instructed Montmorency to announce to him. Charles at once recognized the necessity of preventing this all-important document from leaving Spain, and began to concert plans to that effect with his customary astuteness.

He had little doubt in his mind that the act of abdication was either already on its way to France in the custody of the King's sister, or would be confided to Montmorency, for whom François had recently applied to him for a safe-conduct, in order to enable the marshal to proceed to Lyons with important despatches (In point of fact, the King, whose original intention it had been to entrust it to Marguerite, had, just before the princess's departure, decided that it would be safer in Montmorency's hands, fearing lest Charles might find some pretext for arresting his sister). He therefore appears to have determined to make sure of them both, and proposed that the negotiations for the King's release should

## The Pearl of Princesses

be resumed, and that François should recall his sister to Madrid, in order that she might again confer with the Emperor. If, as he hoped rather than expected, she was more disposed to yield on the question of Burgundy, well and good ; if not, when her safe-conduct expired at the end of December, he intended to arrest her. As for Montmorency, it would be easy to invent some pretext for detaining him in Spain.

François's consent to a resumption of the negotiations was, of course, not refused, though he entertained but little hope that Charles would abate his demands ; but, being not without a shrewd suspicion that a belief that his sister carried with her the act of abdication was at the bottom of his Imperial Majesty's desire for her return to Madrid—a suspicion which was strengthened by Charles's refusal to extend the period of her safe-conduct—he firmly declined to recall her, observing that, as the matter of Burgundy had already been exhaustively debated between her and the Emperor, he failed to see the necessity for her presence.

On learning from her brother that the negotiations were about to be renewed, Marguerite, who was then at Siguenza, declared herself only too willing to retrace her steps. "If you see good signs of hope," she writes, "remember, I beseech you, Monseigneur, that I am as yet only twenty hours distant from you. . . . I entreat you, Monseigneur, do not hesitate to convert my sad and wearisome suspense (which cannot be termed repose) into happy labour and toil for you."

François, however, not only refused to hear of his sister's return, but directed Montmorency to send her instructions to hasten her journey, so as to make sure of reaching the frontier before her safe-conduct expired.

## Marguerite is Warned

“My cousin,” writes the princess in reply, “my messenger will inform you how diligently I intend to travel, in accordance with the injunctions you have sent me by command of the King. I will delay so little on the road that I hope to reach Narbonne by Christmas Day. I do not tell you that it is not without extreme reluctance that I make such haste to depart out of Spain, knowing with so little certainty how the King really is. Nevertheless, since you have written to desire me to make all possible diligence, and that very soon you will tell me wherefore, I have travelled as rapidly as my attendants can bear.”

This letter seems to dispose very effectually of the legend that Marguerite was indebted for the timely warning that enabled her to evade the designs of Charles V for her arrest, should she be found within his dominions after the expiration of her safe-conduct, to the ex-Connétable de Bourbon, who had lately arrived in Spain, and who had formerly been one of her *soupirants*. Of course, it is possible that Bourbon may have sent word to the King; but the Emperor's very significant refusal to extend the princess's safe-conduct beyond the end of the year, while, at the same time, he was proposing her recall to Madrid, was surely sufficient in itself to excuse François's suspicions.

On December 3, Marguerite left Siguenza and travelled to Medina-Celi, where she was hospitably entertained by the duke of that name, who had married a daughter of the Duke of Infantado, and, with his wife, shared that nobleman's sympathy for the captive King. While at Medina, Brion arrived, on his way from Lyons to Madrid, with intelligence that Louise of Savoy had just succeeded in concluding an alliance with the Pope, Venice and other Italian States against the Emperor. “You will learn



## The Pearl of Princesses

from Brion that which will encourage you to hold firm," writes Marguerite to her brother, "for your gaolers, Sire, will soon be compelled to lower their tone. God, who without any effort of their own, raised them to such prosperity, will humble them by your endeavours, if it pleases Him, so that you will yet emerge with great honour and profit."

On leaving Medina, Marguerite quitted her litter and performed the rest of the journey on horseback. The roads were in so terrible a condition as to be nearly impassable in some districts—she occupied from noon until seven o'clock in the evening to cover the distance between Medina and Montreal, a matter of some five leagues—while, as she approached the mountains, the cold became intense.<sup>1</sup> However, she struggled bravely on, starting at six o'clock in the morning and travelling until night-fall, and, though the ladies of her suite were sometimes almost ready to drop from their saddles with exhaustion, she herself appears to have suffered little from the strain of such continuous travelling; at any rate, wherever they stopped she never failed to write to her brother or the Regent or Montmorency, and sometimes to all three.

<sup>1</sup> François, in his final protest against the Treaty of Madrid, inveighs against the churlish conduct of the Emperor in compelling his sister to undertake so fatiguing a journey in the depth of winter, setting forth how "my said sister, the Duchesse d'Alençon, in the month of December, with her ladies, her train of gentlemen, and her baggage, was constrained, in the midst of cold, snow, and frost, to traverse the kingdoms of Castile and Aragon, and the countries of Barcelona and Roussillon, to enter France before the expiration of the truce, as the Emperor had refused to grant her a passport to travel through the kingdom of Navarre, in order to quit his dominions more quickly; all of which were very significant and apparent signs that he wished to detain the said Duchesse d'Alençon a prisoner, with her suite, in case she should be found within the territory of Spain after the termination of the truce."

## A Hurried Journey

Meanwhile, the negotiations for peace had been resumed, and François, finding the Emperor inexorable on the question of Burgundy, had decided to yield, provided that Charles would consent to his being first set at liberty, on the ground that the cession of so large an extent of territory presented difficulties which could only be overcome by the presence of the King in his own realm. The King immediately sent a courier to his sister to announce the decision at which he had arrived ; and Marguerite, who was then at Iqualada, wrote expressing her approval, though at the bottom of her heart she can scarcely have failed to feel some disappointment that, at the last moment, François had abandoned his determination to sacrifice himself for his kingdom. At the same time, she begged him to allow her to return to Madrid, unless he considered that she could be of more service to him in France. She did not, however, wait for his reply, but continued her journey, and, on nearing Barcelona, where she arrived on the 17th, she was overtaken by a courier from the King, urging her to make all possible haste to reach the frontier.

“ I hope to reach Narbonne by Saturday next,” writes the princess in reply, “ but these laborious daily journeyings are like fast days, which are generally accepted rather by compulsion than out of devotion and goodwill. However, it is absolutely necessary that I should so exert myself ; for, apart from the intimation which you, Monseigneur, have just sent me, I have myself seen here cause for much haste ; the reason is rather a startling one, as M. Delabarre will tell you, to whom I have written in greater detail upon the matter.”

What it was that necessitated Marguerite continuing to travel in such haste that she reached Salces, the first town

## The Pearl of Princesses

on the French frontier, in four days, although when she left Barcelona her safe-conduct had still a fortnight to run, we do not know ; but it is possible to hazard a shrewd conjecture. In her passport, and in those of her suite, the wily Emperor had caused a clause to be inserted to the effect that it held good, provided that the person in whose favour it was drawn had "committed nothing to the prejudice of the Emperor or the safety of the nation." Well, Marguerite's little plot to secure her brother's escape might certainly be construed into an act prejudicial to the Emperor ; and it would, therefore, appear that Charles had, for a moment, contemplated the arrest of the princess, notwithstanding the fact that the period for which her safe-conduct had been granted had not expired. That she was allowed to proceed unmolested was no doubt due to the fact that the Emperor had learned, though unofficially, that François was at length prepared to accede to his demands.

Marguerite returned to France with the mission on which she had set out unaccomplished. But, if she had failed, it was not from want of endeavour, and it is certain that the most experienced of diplomatists would have fared no better. The possession of the person of his rival placed the Emperor in so overwhelmingly strong a position that he was able to dictate his own terms ; and, since François had lacked the courage to carry out his threat of abdication, he had perforce to accept them or resign himself to an indefinite captivity. But to accept Charles's terms was one thing, and to execute them, as we shall presently see, was quite another matter.



## CHAPTER XVIII

ON December 19, 1525, François authorized his Ambassadors at Madrid to surrender Burgundy in full sovereignty, with the stipulation that the King should first be set at liberty. To this Charles consented, and on January 14, 1526, the Treaty of Madrid was signed.

By the terms of this famous treaty, François engaged to "restore" to the Emperor the possessions of Charles the Bold, the latter, however, abandoning the counties of Maçon and Auxerre and the *seigneurie* of Bar-sur-Seine, which he gave by way of dowry to his sister Eleanor, whom François undertook to marry. The King of France resigned all claims on the Milanese, Genoa, Asti, and Naples; abandoned Italy entirely to the Emperor; promised that a French fleet should escort Charles when he went to Italy for the purpose of his coronation, and that he would co-operate with him in person in a crusade against the Infidel, and in the suppression of Lutherans and other heretics; renounced all his rights of sovereignty over Flanders and Artois; withdrew his protection from Henri d'Albret, King of Navarre, and his allies on the Flemish frontier, Robert de la Marck and the Duke of Guelders, and restored Bourbon and his accomplices to their estates and dignities. Nothing was said about Bourbon's promised kingdom in South-Eastern France; but it was understood that, as compensation for this and the hand of Eleanor, he was to receive the Milanese, of which Francesco Sforza, who had placed himself at the head of an abortive movement for the independence of Italy, and was being blockaded by the Spaniards in the

## The Pearl of Princesses

citadel of Milan, was to be deprived. Lastly, either the two elder sons of the King, the Dauphin François and Henri Duc d'Orléans, or the Dauphin and twelve of the principal personages of the kingdom, were to be delivered up as hostages,<sup>1</sup> until all the stipulations of the treaty had been fulfilled.

It is difficult at first sight to understand how the shrewd and cautious Charles could have consented to the release of his prisoner until this treaty, so humiliating for France, had been executed, or at least until he had been placed in possession of Burgundy; and the Chancellor Gattinara protested in the strongest terms consistent with respect against a step which, he declared, would inevitably compromise, and perhaps lose altogether, the fruits of Pavia. But, though the Emperor entertained far from an exalted opinion of François's character, he probably found it difficult to believe that he intended to play him false. The long and stubborn resistance which the King had opposed to his demands seemed to be a guarantee of good faith, for, if his intentions were otherwise, why had he not yielded before and escaped those weary months in the Alcazar? Besides, the alternative was a renewal of the war, since the truce was on the point of expiring; and war at the present juncture would risk all that was assured by the treaty. For Charles could no longer rely on the support of those who had hitherto sustained him, or on the neutrality of those who had permitted him to conquer. Henry VIII, without as yet declaring himself his enemy, had become the ally of France; Venice, Florence, the

<sup>1</sup> Among the twelve were the Duc de Vendôme, the Duke of Albany, the Comte de Saint-Pol, Louis de Brézé, Grand Sénéchal of Normandy—the husband of Diane de Poitiers—Montmorency, Lautrec, and Guise. In other words, all the best generals who had survived the disaster of Pavia.

## Duplicity of François I

Pope, and the Duke of Milan were intriguing against him; his brother Ferdinand, crippled by a rebellion in the Tyrol, was quite unable to render him assistance. He was, in fact, completely isolated, and, so far from being in a position to invade France, would be obliged to act entirely on the defensive.

For these reasons he decided to disregard the advice of Gattinara, and to accept the advantages which were conceded to him under the conditions on which they were offered. If, however, he consented to the liberation of François, he did not fail to take every possible precaution to render the treaty inviolable. Not only did he insist upon the most precious hostages, but he demanded that the King should swear upon the Gospel to fulfil his engagements, and give his word of honour as a knight that he would return to prison, if within four months all the conditions of the treaty were not fulfilled.

François complied readily enough, but he had not the remotest intention of keeping his word. What moral fibre he possessed had been hopelessly sapped by his imprisonment; and on January 13, 1526—the day before the treaty was signed—he had summoned to the Alcazar the Président de Selve, the Archbishop of Embrun, Chabot de Brion, La Barre, the High Bailiff of Paris, and his secretary, Bayard, and, after exacting from each of them an oath of secrecy, entered a solemn protest against the treaty to which he was being compelled to submit “by force and constraint,” and declared the obligation which he was on the point of contracting “null and of no effect,” as attempts upon the rights of his crown, hurtful to France, and injurious to his honour.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See *Champollion, Captivité de François I<sup>er</sup>*, where the text of the protest is given.



## The Pearl of Princesses

Six days after the conclusion of the Treaty of Madrid, François was betrothed to the Queen-dowager of Portugal. As the King was suffering from an attack of fever, and, indeed, was too ill to leave his bed, the ceremony had perforce to take place in his apartment at the Alcazar, Lannoy representing his future consort. A betrothal in such circumstances could scarcely be considered to augur well for the happiness of the royal pair ; but Charles V was anxious to secure yet another guarantee for the fulfilment of his Most Christian Majesty's engagements.

Since etiquette required François to address a complimentary letter to his *fiancée*, he wrote to the Emperor to inquire by what title it was his pleasure that he should address her ; and Charles in reply authorized him to address her by the name of wife, "which before God she already is."

As some weeks must elapse before the hostages could arrive in Spain, François was obliged to remain at Madrid. It might be supposed that during this interval he would have been permitted to exchange his gloomy prison for some more cheerful residence, or, at least, that the constraint to which he had been so long subjected would have been relaxed. But, in spite of the representations of the gentlemen of his suite and the Archbishop of Embrun, he remained in the Alcazar and was kept under perpetual surveillance. Arquebusiers mounted guard at the door of his chamber both night and day, and even while he slept his attendants were obliged to admit the officers of the fortress, who came at intervals to satisfy themselves that he was still there.<sup>1</sup> The only concession

<sup>1</sup> This continued detention was one of the reasons afterwards given by François to excuse his refusal to execute the terms of the Treaty of Madrid. According to him, his word of honour as a knight having been

## Illness of the King's Children

was permission to leave his prison, though always accompanied by guards, in order to go and hear Mass at celebrated churches, or to visit convents. On these occasions the populace, whose admiration he had gained by his handsome presence and his reputation for courage, pressed eagerly to see him, and those afflicted with scrofula came to entreat him to lay his royal hands upon them.

From Salces, where she was met by the Seigneur de Clermont, the King's lieutenant in Languedoc, at the head of an escort of cavalry, Marguerite journeyed to Narbonne, in which city she spent Christmas Day, and thence, by way of Montpellier and Nîmes, to the Château of Rousillon, where Louise of Savoy, who had intended to come as far as Pont Saint-Esprit to meet her daughter, had been detained by an attack of gout. The princess, however, was not allowed to remain long with her, as in a few days she received an urgent summons to Blois, where her youngest and favourite nephew, the little Duc d'Angoulême, had fallen very ill with measles—a disease which quickly communicated itself to the rest of the royal children, with the exception of the infant Madame Marguerite. Although suffering from a painful accident which had befallen her at Douzère, where she had stumbled in alighting from her litter on a flight of steps and cut her knee to the bone, Marguerite, who never thought of herself where the welfare of those whom she loved was concerned, set out at once and travelled in all

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demanding and given, the Emperor was obliged to set him at liberty forthwith, and that, since this was not done, he was freed from his promise.

## The Pearl of Princesses

haste to Blois, whence she writes the following characteristic letter to the King :—

“MONSEIGNEUR : The written assurance that *Madame* sends you of her convalescence renders it needless for me to say more on that subject, save to confirm her assurance that your children, your kingdom, and herself are as well as we can desire them to be during your absence. But, Monseigneur, the fear that I have lately experienced concerning your children obliges me to tell you at length the joy I feel at their recovery. First, M. d'Angoulême caught the measles, with a violent and continued fever ; next, M. d'Orléans took them, with little fever ; afterwards, Madame Madeleine fell ill, but without fever or pain ; then, by way of company, the Dauphin, without suffering or fever. And now they are all quite cured and very well. The Dauphin performs wonders in the way of studying, and mingles with his schooling a hundred thousand other matters ; we hear no more of fits of passion, but, on the contrary, of all the virtues. M. d'Orléans is nailed to his book, and says that he wants to be good also ; but M. d'Angoulême knows more than all the others, and says things to be esteemed wonderful for his age rather than childish prattle, and which, Monseigneur, you would be amazed to hear. Little Margot resembles myself ; she refuses to be ill ; they tell me she has very graceful ways, and promises to be far prettier than Mlle. d'Angoulême<sup>1</sup> ever was. I have now told you, Monseigneur, the truth about your children, which has for once obliged me to run the risk of wearying you ; for, as seeing I am not worthy to serve you in weightier matter, I shall (since

<sup>1</sup> Marguerite herself.



## Henri d'Albret, King of Navarre

the thought of you is in all) devote life and energy to your trifling affairs ; esteeming nothing unimportant or impossible in which you are concerned,

“Your very humble and very obedient subject and sister,

“MARGUERITE.”

When Marguerite rejoined the Court, which had returned to Lyons, she found there a young prince with whom her fate was to be closely associated, in the person of Henri d'Albret, King of Navarre, who had been taken prisoner with François I at Pavia, but, more fortunate than his suzerain, had lately succeeded in effecting his escape from captivity.

One of the most ancient families in France, the House of Albret, which derived its name from the Château d'Albret, in the Landes, traced its origin from the middle of the eleventh century, an epoch when there lived one Amanieu, seigneur of that fief. Successively vassals of the Dukes of Gascony and Aquitaine, the seigneurs of Albret played an important part in all the events which agitated South-Western France in the eleventh century, furnishing warriors for the First Crusade and sustaining the Catholic cause against the Albigeois. By the middle of the thirteenth century, the family had greatly increased its possessions, by means of wealthy marriages, royal concessions and the annexation of lands belonging to the Church ; and in the Black Prince's campaign of 1367 we find the Amanieu d'Albret of that period furnishing him with one thousand men-at-arms. After having for some time supported the English cause, the seigneurs of Albret rallied to the French party, and rendered great service in the final conquest of Guienne. They did not fail of

## The Pearl of Princesses

their reward, and an alliance between Arnaud Amanieu d'Albret and Marguerite de Bourbon, the cession to them of the county of Dreux by Charles VI, of the county of Gacé and the seigneurie of Lesparre by Charles VII, and of the estates of the House of Armagnac by Louis XI, made them towards the end of the fifteenth century the richest family of the realm. Under Alain *le Grand* the sovereignty of Béarn and Navarre marked the zenith of the prosperity of this great feudal house; but Jean d'Albret, crowned King of Navarre at Pampeluna on January 10, 1494, lost his capital in 1512, which was taken by a Spanish army under the command of the Duke of Alva. He appealed for help to Louis XII, but the French army which was despatched to his assistance effected nothing; and all his dominions beyond the Pyrenees were soon lost. Jean died, a broken-hearted man, in 1516, and was succeeded by Henri d'Albret, the eldest of his fourteen children, who, when war broke out between François I and Charles V in 1521, made, with the assistance of a French army, an unsuccessful attempt to recover Pampeluna, and, three years later, followed François to Italy, where he shared his fate.

Henri was imprisoned in the citadel of Pavia. He offered the Emperor a very large ransom, which, however, was refused, for Charles's policy forbade him to release a captive whose claims on Navarre had recently been the cause of much trouble, and was determined to exact Henri's total renunciation of his rights on that kingdom as the price of his liberation. The young king, who, says an historian of Navarre, was "a prince endowed with singular ingenuity, and abounded in admirable and subtle invention, and in finding remedies for things

## A Romantic Escape from Prison

apparently most hopeless," thereupon determined to effect his escape. Having bribed two of the guards stationed outside his room to refrain from bestowing too close an attention on the movements of his servants as they passed in and out, he succeeded in getting a rope-ladder conveyed to him; and, one dark and stormy December night, he dressed himself in the clothes of one of his pages, François de Rochefort, and descended into the dried-up moat of the citadel, leaving Rochefort asleep in his bed.

The next morning, when the captain of the guard entered the King's room, according to custom, to assure himself of the safety of the prisoner, he found the curtains of the bed closely drawn, and was met by a request from Rochefort's colleague that his royal master might not be disturbed, as he had been ill during the night and had only just fallen asleep. The officer assented and left the room, nor was it until towards evening that the ruse was discovered; and by that time the fugitive, who had had a swift horse waiting for him outside the city walls, had got so long a start that pursuit was hopeless.

At the time of his romantic escape from the citadel of Pavia, the King of Navarre was in his twenty-third year,<sup>1</sup> a handsome, brave, impetuous young man, an adept at all manly exercises, a generous patron of men of letters, and something of a scholar himself. He and Marguerite

<sup>1</sup> He was born at Sanguessa, in Navarre, on April 3, 1503. His godfathers were two German pilgrims who happened to be passing through the town at the time, on a pilgrimage to St. Iago de Compostella. One of them was named Henry, the other Adam; and their selection as sponsors to the little prince was, according to the Spaniards, a presage of his future fate—that of a pilgrim and outcast from his kingdom of Navarre.



## The Pearl of Princesses

were already well acquainted, for since his mother's death, in 1519, Henri d'Albret had spent a good deal of his time at the Court of France, where François I had shown great favour to the spirited and clever lad ; but they had, of course, not met since the princess lost her husband.

Now, he found her a widow, and, at the same time, the heroine of Europe, for her embassy, though seemingly fruitless, had made her famous, and Charles V had grudgingly admitted that he had never thought it possible that a woman could possess so much capacity for affairs. Henri d'Albret, always ready to fall in love, like a true son of the South, conceived a great admiration for this charming woman, who had shown so much devotion and address ; and, as he was ambitious as well as impressionable, and eager to recover the lost dominions of his House beyond the Pyrenees, he did not forget the influence she possessed with the King, without whose assistance his hopes in that direction would certainly never materialize.

Marguerite, on her side, could hardly fail to feel a kindly interest in one who had suffered, like her own beloved brother, at the hands of the common enemy—an enemy who, in Henri's case, was not merely an ungenerous captor, but the usurper of his kingdom. They talked much together during those winter days at Lyons, and Marguerite found that there were other bonds of sympathy between them besides their indignation against the Emperor and their devotion to the captive King. Henri shared her love of learning, even to the extent of demanding it in women, and, like her, he favoured the Reformers and regarded the Inquisition as the deadliest blight that could fall upon any kingdom. She approved



*Le Roy de navarre Henry*



HENRI D'ALBRET, KING OF NAVARRE.



## Marguerite and the King of Navarre

warmly, too, of his plans for improving the condition of his subjects, for he was an excellent ruler, "loving his people," says Bordenave, "like his own children." Finally, she decided that, with the exception, of course, of François, no one approached so closely to her knightly ideal as the young King of Navarre, and proceeded to fall in love with him.

To most persons, the idea of a marriage between a woman of thirty-three and a young man of twenty-two—a young man, too, ardent, impressionable, and headstrong—must have seemed a very risky experiment. But Marguerite would not appear to have regarded it in that light, or, at any rate, considered the risk worth taking. Perhaps his faults were not as yet very apparent to her, for, as we have seen, she was always singularly blind to the deficiencies of those who had won her affection or esteem; or, if she did perceive them, she believed that time and her influence would serve to eradicate them.

But, before anything could be definitely settled, it was necessary for the lovers to await the return of the King and obtain his sanction; a circumstance which caused Marguerite to look forward more eagerly than ever to her brother's restoration to his kingdom.

On February 13, 1526, after having signed the peace at Toledo, Charles V returned to Madrid. François, mounted on a richly-caparisoned mule and dressed *à l'espagnole*, as a compliment to the Emperor, met him in the outskirts of the city, and the two monarchs embraced with a great show of affection. They entered Madrid amid the acclamations of the people, and proceeded to the Alcazar, where they supped together; and during the two following days made their devotions at the same

## The Pearl of Princesses

churches, and gave other proofs of the sincerity of their reconciliation.

On the 16th, François having expressed a desire to see his bride-elect before leaving Spain, their Majesties quitted Madrid to visit Queen Eleanor at the Castle of Illescas, one of the residences of the Archbishop of Toledo, where she had arrived on the previous day. They established themselves at the Castle of Torrejon, a few miles distant, and paid their first visit on the following afternoon. Although, as we have seen, François had not the slightest intention of sharing his throne with the lady, he appears to have acted the part of a gallant lover to perfection, and when Eleanor fell on her knees and was about to kiss his hand, he raised her up and embraced her warmly. The next day, the two monarchs paid a second visit to Illescas, on which occasion the Queen, whose heart François seems to have conquered completely, performed a saraband before her *fiancé*, with the Countess of Nassau, one of her ladies-in-waiting.

On the 19th, King and Emperor bade one another farewell, the former to return to Madrid and thence to France, the latter to proceed to Seville, where he was to wed the Infanta Isabella of Portugal. At parting, François, at the request of the Emperor, who, in this last interview, was unable to free his mind from some uneasiness in regard to the execution of the treaty, renewed his assurances of fidelity to his engagements, "under pain of being accounted a miserable scoundrel," and Charles warned the King that, "although he had never hated him, yet if he deceived him, particularly in what concerned his sister Eleanor, he should hold his person in detestation, and should seek every means of taking vengeance and of injuring him as much as possible." Then, after the

## Francois sets out for France

King had once more sworn to fulfil his obligations, they commended one another to God's keeping and separated.

Two days later (February 21), François joyfully quitted the gloomy fortress, where he had suffered so much in both body and mind, and where he had ended by purchasing his liberty at the price of his honour, and took the road to the French frontier. He was accompanied by the Viceroy of Naples and a numerous guard, under the command of Alarçon. At Aranda, on the Douro, fifty leagues from the frontier, which was reached on the 26th, Lannoy, in conjunction with the King, drafted the formalities which were to be observed at his release, which was to take place on the Bidassoa, between Fontarabia and Andaye, in the centre of the stream. Chabot de Brion and a Spanish officer named Peñalosa were then despatched to France, the former to hasten the arrival of Louise of Savoy and the hostages, the latter to carry to the Court the regulations for the exchange ; and the King and his escort continued their journey as far as Vittoria, where they halted to await news of the Regent.

Louise of Savoy and Marguerite had learned of the Treaty of Madrid at the end of January, when Anne de Montmorency arrived at Lyons, bringing with him the document for the Regent's signature, and Louise lost no time in making the arrangements required to secure her son's liberation. The clause relating to the hostages left France the alternative of replacing the second of the young princes by twelve of the principal personages of the kingdom. But Louise, who had, of course, been informed by Montmorency of what had occurred at the Alcazar on the eve of the signing of the treaty, and was aware that a refusal to execute its terms would certainly be followed by a renewal of the war, immediately decided



## The Pearl of Princesses

that to deprive the kingdom of its best generals in such circumstances would be an act of criminal folly, and that the little Duc d'Orléans must therefore accompany the Dauphin to Spain.

After having announced that peace had been concluded, and that the King would shortly be restored to his loving subjects, without, however, revealing the humiliating conditions by which his Majesty's liberty had been purchased, she set out for Amboise, where the young princes were, accompanied by Marguerite, the English and Imperialist Ambassadors, Dr. John Taylor and Louis von Praet. On arriving at Roanne, they embarked in barges upon the Loire, and made the rest of the journey by water, though, owing to continuous rain, the river had overflowed its banks, and "the wind was so ragious that no man might pass without danger."<sup>1</sup>

The Regent, "notwithstanding that she was vexed with the gout in her hand," says Dr. Taylor, only remained one night at Amboise, and then, with her elder grandsons, took the road to Bayonne, where they arrived on the evening of March 15, and "were received with a great triumph of gunshot." During the journey the task fell to Marguerite of preparing the two little princes for the change that awaited them, and of describing Queen Eleanor, their father's betrothed, who was coming as far as Vittoria to receive them, and in whose charge they were to remain until the principal conditions of the Treaty of Madrid had been fulfilled, when she would bring them with her to France. It was a difficult task that Marguerite had to perform, for while she kept assuring the poor boys that in a few weeks at furthest they

<sup>1</sup> Despatch of Taylor to Wolsey, in Sharon Turner, *The Modern History of England*.

## The King exchanged for his Sons

would be allowed to return to their relatives, she was well aware that, unless the conditions of the treaty were executed, it might be months and even years before they saw their native land again, and that, if their father declined to fulfil his obligations, the Emperor was quite capable of visiting his resentment upon the children.

The exchange of the King for his sons took place on the 17th, at seven o'clock in the morning. The most elaborate precautions had been taken to guard against any attempt at escape or rescue; no vessels of any description, with the exception of those required for the conveyance of François and the hostages, being allowed on the Bidassoa or within five leagues of its mouth, while for twenty leagues on either side of the frontier the country was evacuated by troops. At the appointed hour, François, accompanied by Lannoy, Alarçon, and ten Spanish gentlemen, armed only with sword and dagger, appeared on the southern bank of the river; while the Dauphin and the Duc d'Orléans, accompanied by Lautrec and ten French gentlemen, armed in like fashion, appeared on the opposite bank. Two barges of the same size and manned by the same number of rowers were in readiness. Each party entered one, and was rowed out to the centre of the stream, where a raft had been moored. Lannoy and Alarçon, followed by the King, mounted the raft, as did Lautrec and the little princes. The boys kissed their father's hand, and Lannoy said: "Sire, your Highness is now free; let him execute what he has promised!" "All shall be done," answered François, who then embraced his children, and stepping into the barge which had brought them, was rowed to the northern bank, while the princes were conveyed to the Spanish shore.

The King, who, in his selfish way, was much attached

## The Pearl of Princesses

to his children, had probably experienced some twinges of conscience at the thought of these two young boys—the elder but ten years old—condemned to a captivity which his intended repudiation of his engagements could not fail to make a long and painful one. But any compunction he may have felt was speedily stifled by joy at finding himself a free man once more. So soon as his foot touched French soil, he threw himself on horseback, crying: “Now I am King! I am King once more!” and rode away at a gallop to Saint-Jean-de-Luz, whither the nobles of the Court, the Chancellor Du Prat and the English Ambassador had come to welcome him.<sup>1</sup> After receiving their congratulations and snatching a hasty meal,<sup>2</sup> he hastened on to Bayonne, where the Regent and the rest of the Court had remained, and “was received with much shot of ordnance without the town a quarter of a mile.”<sup>3</sup> “Immediately on setting foot to ground he went to return thanks to God in the principal church of that town, and then hurried away to greet his mother and sister, who were impatiently awaiting him.”<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> “After the chancellor had saluted the King, he showed me to him that I was the orator of England. The King took me in his arms, whom I saluted in this manner: ‘Christianissimi Rex! ex parte serenissimi regis Angliæ, defensoris fidei, Deum omnipotentem ego congratulor, tuæ majestatis in suum regnum salvo reditur.’”—Despatch of Taylor to Wolsey, in Sharon Turner.

<sup>2</sup> The epicures among the King’s retinue must have been not a little disappointed that his Majesty refused to linger over this repast, since a most elaborate menu had been provided, including, since it was Lent, no less than fifteen different kinds of fish, to wit: pike, chad, mullet, cod, lampreys, sardines, oysters, turtle, plaice, roach, salmon, herrings, dorados, barbels, and sturgeon.

<sup>3</sup> Taylor.

<sup>4</sup> Président de Selve to the *Parlement* of Paris, March 18, 1526.



## CHAPTER XIX

By no class of his subjects was the liberation of François hailed with greater relief than by Marguerite's *protégés*, the Reformers and men of letters. After the departure of the princess for Spain, the Commissioners appointed by the *Parlement* had continued their work with unabated ardour. They had imprisoned Clément Marot, who had boasted openly of his sympathy with the New Ideas, on the accusation of one Bouchard, a doctor of the Sorbonne, who appears to have been a personal enemy of the poet, though, as Marot had many powerful friends at Court besides Marguerite and the King, and his theological opinions were not taken very seriously, it does not appear to have been their intention to proceed to extremities against him. They had caused Louis de Berquin to be arrested, condemned him as an heretic and delivered him over to the *Parlement* "*pour être conclu à mort*"; and other members of the King's entourage were being threatened by the Sorbonne, which did not attempt to dissimulate its hatred of Marguerite. One of the princess's friends, Papillon, for whom she had procured admission to the Council, had died under very suspicious circumstances, if we are to believe Erasmus, whose witty and amusing *Colloques*, wherein the writer indulged in biting pleasantries at the expense of the monks and the schoolmen, and attacked asceticism and superstition, had been denounced to the Faculty of Theology as heretical by the furious Bêda.

On Marguerite's arrival at Madrid, she had lost no

## The Pearl of Princesses

time in appealing to the King on behalf of the Reformers ; and François had sent directions to his mother to inform the *Parlement* that it was his pleasure that all proceedings pending against heretics should be suspended until his return, and that no further executions should take place until the decrees had been confirmed by himself. He had, however, only been partially obeyed, as, though the stake had claimed no more victims, the arrests had continued. As soon as he arrived in France, however, urged on by the representatives of his sister, he took more vigorous steps, and sent from Bayonne orders for the immediate release of Marot, and for the discontinuance of the proceedings against Berquin ; and when the *Parlement* remonstrated, directed him to be set at liberty.

Marguerite did not fail to fan the flame of her brother's resentment against the fanaticism of the Sorbonne and the insolence of the *Parlement*, and it was probably at her instigation that in June Erasmus addressed to the King a letter complaining of the strictures passed by the Sorbonne on his writings, and warning him that, unless the insolent temerity of the theologians met with prompt repression, they would soon venture to assail royalty itself. "They design, Sire," he writes, "to establish a tyrannical authority, even over their princes ; this, be assured, is their secret aim. If the prince does not surrender to their will, they will proclaim him an heretic and denounce him to the Church, which, according to them, consists of a few apostate doctors and renegade monks."

No more adroit appeal to the susceptibilities of a sovereign always so tenacious of his authority could have been devised, and it did not fail of effect. The King,

## The Tables turned on the Bigots

violently irritated against the Sorbonne, sent orders to the *Parlement* requiring them to prohibit the sale of Bédà's books, and to exercise a strict surveillance over the University and prevent its members from publishing and disseminating libels upon Erasmus ; and the syndic, having had occasion to present himself at Court, was arrested and kept in custody for a day, as a hint to moderate his zeal. Not long afterwards, François bethought him of a reprisal on that carping divine and his followers which shows that his Majesty had a very pretty sense of humour. He sent orders to the University to examine and report on the orthodoxy of a book published by its syndic against Erasmus and Lefèvre. "It has been reported to me," he wrote, "that the book abounds in grave errors ; of one thing, I feel assured, namely, that it abounds in gross calumny—a thing more reprehensible than much erroneous doctrine."

Thus, for the moment, the cause of the Reformers triumphed.

Charles V soon discovered that on the day on which he had allowed the French King to cross the Bidassoa, he had let slip the chance which comes to a man but once in his life.

On François's arrival at Bayonne, Louis van Praet, the Imperial Ambassador, lost no time in calling upon him to ratify the treaty, as he had engaged to do in the first town in his dominions. The King, on some plausible pretext, deferred the ratification. At Mont-de-Marsan, whither the Court proceeded from Bayonne, Peñalosa, who had been sent by Lannoy, joined Van Praet, and François was again summoned to fulfil his promise. This time, his Majesty replied that the treaty,



## The Pearl of Princesses

the terms of which had already been made public by the Emperor, was causing great indignation among his subjects; that the principal personages of the State, to whom he had applied to secure its acceptance, all implored him not to ratify it; that he had received advices from Burgundy that the cession of that province, "united and incorporated inseparably with the Crown," could not take place without the consent of the Estates, which were determined not to give it, and that he feared that the adhesion of the States-General of the kingdom and of the *Parlement* of Paris, which was equally necessary for such an alienation, would be impossible to obtain.

These evasive answers were communicated to Lannoy, who was at Vittoria with Queen Eleanor and the young princes, and by him transmitted to his master. Charles at once sent orders to the Viceroy of Naples to proceed in person to France, and demand in the most imperative terms the immediate fulfilment of the King's engagements. Lannoy set out in all haste and found the Court at Cognac, the royal physicians having advised that a sojourn in François's native air might be beneficial to his health, which was still causing some anxiety.

Two days after the Viceroy's arrival (May 10, 1526), he and Van Praet were requested to appear before the Council, when the Chancellor informed them that the King had no power to surrender a province of France, and that, though his Majesty's subjects were ready to obey him in all else, they would never consent to the dismemberment of the realm. François himself confirmed what his Minister had said, adding that the oath which he had taken either to execute the terms of the treaty or to return to Spain was not binding, inasmuch as it had been exacted from him while in prison. At

## The King repudiates his Engagements

the same time, he was prepared to pay a ransom of ten million crowns for Burgundy, and to execute faithfully the rest of the treaty.

Modern historians have rightly condemned François's conduct in severe terms; but it was very differently regarded at the time. "Our King," writes Brantôme,<sup>1</sup> "made the treaty of a very skilful prince," and such was undoubtedly the general opinion in France. Nor was foreign opinion, outside Charles's own dominions, disposed to judge the perjured monarch at all harshly. Those, indeed, to whom the growing power of the Emperor was a cause of jealousy and alarm declared that François was justified in repudiating engagements entered into while he was not a free agent. "Treaties made under fear do not stand," wrote Baldassare Castiglione, the Papal Nuncio at Toledo, to the Vatican, so soon as he was informed of the terms of the treaty, and Clement VII subsequently made not the smallest difficulty about absolving the King from his oath; while Wolsey instructed the English Ambassadors at the French Court "to say of themselves soberly, and in a manner of stupefaction and marvel, that these be great and high conditions, the like whereof have not been heard of, and such as were even here [in England] thought were either never agreed to, or being agreed to, shall never be performed."<sup>2</sup>

François's reply to the demands of Lannoy and Van Praet was communicated to Charles V, who, incensed and mortified at finding himself the dupe of a rival whose political capacity he held in such contempt,

<sup>1</sup> Brantôme, of course, wrote much later, but he echoes the sentiments of contemporary Frenchmen.

<sup>2</sup> Instructions of March 1526, in Sharon Turner.

## The Pearl of Princesses

rejected the proposed compromise with indignation, and called upon the King to keep his oath and return to prison, since he was either unwilling or unable to execute the articles of the Treaty of Madrid. The only response to this summons was the announcement of the formation of the "Holy League" of Cognac, between the King of France, the Pope, Venice, Florence, and Francesco Sforza, Duke of Milan, which, conceived ostensibly in the interests of universal peace, was in reality a challenge to a European War, and to which the Emperor was ironically invited to give his adhesion, on condition that he should restore the Milanese to Sforza, place the Italian States in the position in which they stood at his accession, and release the French princes for a reasonable ransom in money.

Never again was France to have so favourable an opportunity of arresting the forward march of its great enemy as at the moment of the formation of the League of Cognac. Charles V was without an ally in Europe, and beset with difficulties on every side. Germany was torn by religious strife; the Turks were overrunning Hungary; Naples was seething with discontent; in Lombardy his army had dwindled to ten or twelve thousand men, surrounded by a population which their tyranny had driven to exasperation. To crown all, his coffers were all but empty.

But the opportunity was allowed to pass. François was no longer the man he had been before his captivity. Then, whatever his shortcomings, he had at least possessed resolution and energy where the furtherance of his own ambitious schemes were concerned. Now, however, a marked change was perceptible both in mind and body. He had lost the fire and elasticity of youth; State duties



## A New Sultana

wearied him, and he appeared to take but a faint interest in the momentous struggle to which he found himself committed, and to be quite unable to decide upon a vigorous course of action. The pleasures of the chase, and, still more, the charms of a new mistress, occupied his mind to the exclusion of the important questions which called so urgently for his attention. "Alexander," wrote Tavannes, "used to pay attention to women when he had no affairs of State ; François attended to affairs of State when there were no more women."

Anne de Pisseleu, the lady in question, was born towards the close of the year 1508, at the Château of Fontainebleau-Lavaganne, near Beauvais. Her father was Guillaume de Pisseleu, Seigneur d'Heilly, a nobleman whose views on the subject of children were so completely in accord with those of the Psalmist that he married three times and gave to his Majesty no less than thirty lieges. Anne belonged to the second brood, her mother being a Mlle. Sanguin. As the years went by, the worthy seigneur began to find the weight of so very full a quiver somewhat difficult to sustain, and, so soon as Anne had attained a marriageable age, he procured her the post of maid-of-honour to Louise of Savoy, in the hope that her pretty face would suffice to secure her a husband who would be disposed to waive the question of dowry.

Many writers, on the authority of Brantôme, state that Anne de Pisseleu was presented at Court during the captivity of the King, and that François met her, for the first time, at Mont-de-Marsan, on his return from Spain, and fell in love with her at first sight. But, in point of fact, she had made her appearance at Court four years earlier, and there is reason to believe that she had attracted the attention of the King before the *débâcle* of

## The Pearl of Princesses

Pavia, and that it was to her, and not to Madame de Chateaubriand, that were addressed those plaintive verses with which the prisoner of the Alcazar endeavoured to beguile the tedium of his captivity.

However that may be, scarcely had François been restored to his kingdom, than their relations were a secret from no one, and Madame de Chateaubriand was completely discarded. Nor can we wonder at the monarch's infatuation, since Mlle. d'Heilly, by which name his new enchantress was henceforth known, was not only young and beautiful, but intelligent and accomplished. Charles de Sainte-Marthe called her "*la plus belle des savantes et la plus savante des belles,*" and Marot wrote :—

À Heilly  
Dix-huit ans je vous donne ?  
Belle et bonne ;  
Mais à votre sens rassis,  
Trente cinq et trente-six  
J'en ordonne.

Moreover, she was sprightly and vivacious, and possessed in a supreme degree of the art of pleasing. In short, it would have been difficult to find any one more calculated to appeal to a man of François's temperament, at a moment when his only desire was to forget his misfortunes and sufferings in a round of pleasure and excitement.

The subjugation of the King was as complete as it was speedy, and when his new favourite imperiously demanded that he should require her predecessor in his affections to restore the jewels which he had given her, "not because of their price and value," says Brantôme, "but because she coveted the beautiful devices upon them which his sister had made and composed," François was mean enough to consent. To the messenger charged with the royal commands Madame de Chateaubriand replied that

## Madame de Chateaubriand discarded

she was ill, but that he might return in three days. She profited by this respite to send for a goldsmith and have the jewels melted down, and, when the messenger returned, she handed him the simple ingots. "Go," said she, "carry them to the King, and tell him that, since it is his pleasure to take back what he gave so generously, I restore his gifts in ingots of gold. As for the mottoes, they are so indelibly engraved on my mind, and I hold them so sacred, that I cannot suffer another than myself to appropriate or find pleasure in them."

When the message was delivered to François, he had the grace to feel ashamed of his shabby treatment of the woman whom he had once professed to love, and whom he had cast off for Mlle. d'Heilly "*ainsi qu'un clou chasse l'autre.*" "Take them all back to her," he exclaimed; "I valued them not for their intrinsic worth, but for the mottoes and devices which they bore, for willingly would I have given her double. Since she has caused them to be destroyed, I do not wish for the gold, and she may keep it. She has given proof of more courage and generosity than I should have believed a woman capable of showing."

It may here be observed that there is no truth in the tradition which has been accepted by so many historians, that, overwhelmed by the loss of the royal favour, Madame de Chateaubriand retired to her husband's Château in Brittany, where, after being kept in solitary confinement for many months, in a room draped with black, she was put to death by orders of her injured consort. That gentleman had long since accepted his allotted part of *mari complaisant* and had found it a not unprofitable one; and, so far from hastening to avenge his honour, he lived with his erring wife for more



## The Pearl of Princesses

than ten years; and in 1532, when François visited Brittany, he was magnificently entertained by the count and countess. Nor did the fair *délaissée's* wounded heart cause her to eschew altogether the pleasures of the Court, since in the following year she attended the wedding of the Duc d'Orléans (afterwards Henri II) and Catherine de' Medici at Marseilles, where we hear of her preferring a petition to Clement VII that she might be permitted to eat meat three times a week during Lent.

Like Madame de Pompadour, two centuries later, Anne de Pisseleu had the talent to assure by the charms of her mind the empire which her beauty would not have perhaps sufficed to maintain, and she ruled her royal lover to the day of his death, though, unfortunately for himself, François was not always proof against the attractions of other facile beauties. In order to save appearances and diminish the scandal, the King married the lady to a complaisant nobleman, Jean de Brosse, a direct descendant of the Vicomtes de Limoges, who consented to confer the shelter of his name upon the avowed mistress of his Sovereign in return for the restoration of his family estates, which had been confiscated owing to the treason of his father, René de Brosse, who had taken part in the conspiracy of Bourbon, followed the Constable to Italy, and fallen on the field of Pavia, fighting in the Imperialist ranks. So accommodating did this nobleman prove himself that the grateful King not only restored to him his confiscated property, but created him Comte de Penthièvre, appointed him Governor of Brittany, gave him the collar of the Order of Saint-Michel, and, finally, erected for him, or rather for his wife, the county of Étampes into a duchy.

There can be little doubt that Louise of Savoy had



MADAME DE CHATEAUBRIAND.





## Policy *versus* Sentiment

deliberately encouraged the King's passion for her beautiful maid-of-honour, out of hatred for Madame de Chateaubriand and also because she believed that she had little to fear from the influence of Mlle. d'Heilly, who, haughty as she afterwards showed herself to the world in general, always behaved towards the Duchesse d'Angoulême with becoming deference. As for Marguerite, she accepted the new favourite with even more complaisance than she usually showed in regard to her brother's love-affairs, since the latter favoured the Reformed ideas and used her credit with the King to protect artists and men of letters.

Meanwhile, the project of a marriage between Marguerite and the young King of Navarre was encountering unexpected obstacles. It might have been thought that François, who had so much reason to be grateful to his sister, and who had lately experienced so touching a proof of her devotion, would have found it difficult to refuse her anything, more especially since Louise of Savoy had expressed her full approval of the alliance, and had actually caused a marriage-contract to be drafted before the news of the conclusion of the Treaty of Madrid and the approaching liberation of her son had reached her. The King, however, declined for some months to give his sanction, his sense of the obligations under which his sister had placed him not being sufficiently keen to override certain political considerations.

François was exceedingly anxious to secure the adhesion of England to the League of Cognac, and, aware that Henry VIII was contemplating the repudiation of Catherine of Aragon, he despatched the Bishop of Tarbes to England to promise him his assistance in procuring

## The Pearl of Princesses

the Papal sanction to the dissolution of his marriage, and to propose that, when that was accomplished, an alliance between Henry and Marguerite should take place. Wolsey entered with alacrity into this project, and warmly commended the French princess to his master. "There is a woman in France," said he, "who is above all other women; none other is so worthy of your hand." And he added a portrait of Marguerite, which he had procured from Paris, to his persuasions.

In order to conceal his design of sharing his throne with Anne Boleyn, which was the real motive of his desire to repudiate Catherine, Henry VIII feigned to receive the proposition very favourably, and secret negotiations continued throughout the summer of 1526; for Marguerite, though they must have occasioned her the bitterest mortification, appears to have had too much docility to offer any active opposition to her brother's plans. When, however, Henry's infatuation for Anne Boleyn became a matter of common knowledge, and she realized that she was in the degrading situation of competing with her former maid-of-honour for the hand of a monarch whose wife was living, she could no longer conceal her disgust, and declared that she should refuse even to listen to the proposed marriage. The project was therefore allowed to drop, the more readily that François had reluctantly come to the conclusion that, if Henry obtained his divorce from Catherine, it would be Anne Boleyn, and not Marguerite, who would replace her. At the same time, it was represented to him that his sister's reputation must inevitably suffer, should the secret overtures which he had made to bring about an alliance between her and the King of England transpire after the divorce of Catherine, while Marguerite remained

## The Second Marriage of Marguerite

unmarried. François recognized the force of this reasoning, and towards the end of 1526 gave a somewhat grudging consent to his sister's marriage with Henri d'Albret.

The formal betrothal of Marguerite to the King of Navarre appears to have taken place at the end of November or the beginning of December, after which the princess travelled southwards, escorted by her *fiancé*, and paid a short visit to one of his sisters, Catherine d'Albret, at Saint-Preuil, in Languedoc, where Catherine had taken the veil. From a letter, which she wrote on the way, to her friend Anne de Polignac, Comtesse de la Rochefoucauld, it would appear as if some fresh difficulty had arisen in regard to her marriage, since she alludes to it as still uncertain. "My cousin,—” she writes, "Yesterday the King of Navarre decided that I shall quit this place on Friday next. On Saturday, I shall be at Tarbes, where I mean to spend the approaching festival, and thence journeying to Prouille (*sic*), at which place I intend to make some sojourn, and hope to see you there: I beg you very earnestly to meet me. If all things were as I could wish, there is not a child belonging to you that I would not take back with me; but our marriage is not yet so certain an event that I dare venture to invite my relatives, as I will explain to you more at length when we meet."

However, by the time Marguerite returned to Court the King's objections to the match had been finally overcome, and the marriage-contract of the "very high and puissant prince and princess, Monseigneur Henri, by the grace of God, King of Navarre, lord of Béarn, son of the very high and puissant Jean and Catherine, by the same grace late King and Queen of Navarre, Duc and Duchesse



## The Pearl of Princesses

de Gandie, de Montblanc and de Penafiel, Comte and Comtesse de Foix, Seigneur and Dame de Béarn and Bigorre ; and Madame Marguerite de France, only sister of the King, Duchesse d'Alençon and de Berry, Comtesse de Roddes [Rhodez], du Perche, de Lisle, Vicomtesse de Lemaigue, and Dame de Baugé," was duly signed.

By this contract, Marguerite resigned to her future husband the revenues and administration of all her estates, with the exception of those of the duchy of Berry, the town and county of Bourges, and certain lordships, "which it had pleased the King since his joyful accession to bestow upon his sister," and which she reserved to herself. She also presented the King of Navarre with her gold and silver plate, and the sum of 45,000 livres, owing to her from the sisters and co-heiresses of the Duc d'Alençon, the Duchesse de Vendôme, and the Marchioness of Montferrato. The King of Navarre, on his part, assigned to his future bride a jointure of 20,000 livres on lands in the principality of Béarn, and promised her "rich rings and jewels, over and above what she now possesses, to the amount of 10,000 crowns." In the event of Henri d'Albret predeceasing her, Marguerite was to remain sole guardian of any children of the marriage and Regent of Navarre and Béarn, until the majority of her eldest son or daughter.

The marriage-ceremony was performed in the chapel of Saint Germain-en-Laye, where the unfortunate Claude de France had been married to François thirteen years earlier. Like François's wedding, it took place at a time of great national depression, and, with the exception of a grand banquet and a "marvellous triumphant joust," was not attended by any special rejoicings. *En revanche*, the poets and savants, not only in France, but throughout Europe,

## A Pretty Allegory

vied with one another in celebrating the beauty, virtues and talents of the bride, and though a good many of their effusions are couched in a somewhat hyperbolic strain, they, nevertheless, form a striking testimony to the admiration and esteem which Marguerite enjoyed. Among the poems may be mentioned an allegory in Latin by Jean Dorat, wherein he recounts how a beautiful pearl (Margaris) was formed in the shell which supported the radiant form of Venus, as she rose from the bosom of the waves. It was a stray drop of the fragrant dew from which the goddess sprang. One day, during her pregnancy, Louise of Savoy, while eating oysters, accidentally swallowed this priceless gem, with the result that the daughter to whom she gave birth shortly afterwards partook of the divine nature of Venus, and was named Marguerite :—

Qualis et esca fuit, talem quoque ventre puellam,  
Edidit, et nomen Marguerite inde manet.

## CHAPTER XX

AND so Marguerite d'Angoulême changed her title and became Queen of Navarre. It was a position of finer sound than substance, for since 1512 the whole of Upper Navarre, that is to say, of Navarre beyond the Pyrenees, had passed into the possession of Spain. However, François had given her and her husband his sacred promise to reconquer the latter's lost dominions—a promise which, by the way, he never intended to fulfil, since it did not suit his interests to have a real king for so near a neighbour—and had bestowed upon his dispossessed brother-in-law the government of Guienne, the most important one in France.

Marguerite's marriage did not mean her immediate departure from the Court of France; indeed, it was not until towards the end of the following year that she made acquaintance with her husband's little kingdom. Her presence near her brother was, indeed, sorely needed to awaken the King from the apathy and indifference to everything but pleasure which seemed to have possessed him since his return to France. François had pushed his Italian allies into war by the promise of the most vigorous co-operation, but for more than a year he made no move, and by that time two of the leaders of the Italian League had fallen, and the whole situation in the peninsula had undergone a complete change.

The Duke of Urbino, the general of the Confederates, though far superior to the Imperialists in numbers, failed in his attempt to relieve the citadel of Milan, and at the end of July 1526, starvation obliged Sforza to capitulate.



## Bourbon in Italy

After Sforza, it was the turn of Clement VII. In March 1527, the Pope, who had begun to regret his share in a war in which he had embarked in the confident assurance of energetic support from France, concluded a treaty with the Viceroy of Naples, by which he was to abandon the Confederation, while the Imperialists were to evacuate the States of the Church. This move, however, did not save him from paying a bitter price for his reliance on François's promises, for the solution of the Papal-Imperial problem had passed into other hands.

In the summer of 1526, Bourbon had assumed command of the Imperialists in Italy, where towards the end of the year he was joined by 13,000 *landsknechts* under George Fründsberg. The ex-Constable's troops, unpaid, ragged and starving, were in full mutiny, and the Germans soon followed the example of the Spaniards. Fründsberg, while endeavouring to pacify them, was struck down by apoplexy and carried away to Ferrara, where he died; and Bourbon, recognizing that in order to quell the mutiny there was but one course open to him, offered to lead the troops to the pillage of Florence and Rome. Brantôme asserts that, as a proof of his good intentions, he distributed among the soldiers all his jewels and plate, reserving for himself only his clothes and a coat of cloth-of-silver, and declared that he was "but a penniless cavalier, no richer than they were, not by one sol"; but, according to other accounts, they pillaged his quarters and also killed one of his attendants. Any way, his decision was hailed with enthusiasm by the army, which was already preparing to march, when one of Lannoy's officers, named Feramosca, arrived in the camp with the announcement of the truce which had just been concluded with the Pope. Bourbon, however, who was by

## The Pearl of Princesses

this time thoroughly disgusted with the ingratitude of the Emperor, and is believed to have contemplated carving out a kingdom for himself in Southern Italy, told him sarcastically that, if he wished the truce to be observed, he had better persuade the troops of the necessity of submitting to it. This Feramosca rashly essayed to do, and had to fly for his life from the exasperated soldiery.

At the beginning of April, Bourbon's polyglot army of French outlaws, Spanish soldiers, Italian bandits, and German mercenaries crossed the Apennines and descended into Tuscany, "like a living avalanche," devastating every town and village through which it passed. But finding that the Duke of Urbino had fallen back to cover Florence, it turned to the south-east and advanced rapidly on Rome, for whose defence Clement, relying on his convention with Lannoy, had made but the feeblest preparations. On May 5 the invaders beheld the spires and domes of the Eternal City rising before them; and on the following day they advanced to the assault. It was Bourbon himself who planted the first scaling-ladder against the walls, but, as he placed his foot on the second rung, a ball from an arquebus struck him, and he fell back into the trench, mortally wounded. Benvenuto Cellini claims, in his autobiography, the honour of having fired the fatal shot, but the writer's weakness for self-glorification is too evident for much importance to be attached to such a statement.

Roused to fury by the death of their leader, the assailants poured over the ramparts in a resistless torrent; the terror-stricken Pope fled to the Castle of St. Angelo, and in a few hours all resistance was at an end. The grim tragedy which followed is well known. For weeks

## The Sack of Rome

the city was a prey to the ferocious soldiery, who pillaged, murdered, and committed every act of brutal violence, without respect of age or sex or dignity. "The sack of Rome," writes Brantôme, "was so terrible that neither before nor since has anything like it been seen." "Never," says Guillaume Paradin, "had there such calamity, misery, damage, cruelty, and inhumanity been witnessed."

The sack of Rome and the captivity of the Pope, who, after sustaining a siege of a month in the Castle of St. Angelo, was obliged to capitulate, sent a thrill of horror through Europe, and though the Emperor made every effort to exculpate himself, his protestations fell on unheeding ears. The opportunity thus offered was too favourable for François to lose. At the end of April—a few days before Rome fell—he had concluded a treaty with Henry VIII, whereby it was arranged that François himself, or his second son Henri, should marry Mary Tudor, then eleven years old; that the King of England should renounce his pretensions to the Crown of France, in return for an annual payment; that, in the meanwhile, the two monarchs should present an ultimatum to the Emperor calling upon him to make peace, liberate the captive French princes on payment of the ransom already offered, and discharge his debts to England, and that, in the event of his refusal, they should make joint war upon him. The tragic news from Italy caused this alliance to bear speedy fruit, and, at the beginning of August, Lautrec, at the head of an army of 30,000 men, subsidized by "the Kyng of Englande's money, that the cardinal [Wolsey] brought out of Englande in barrels,"<sup>1</sup> entered Lombardy and carried all before him.

<sup>1</sup> Hall's *Chronicle*.



## The Pearl of Princesses

Alessandria capitulated ; Pavia was taken by assault and ruthlessly sacked, in revenge for the disaster of 1525, and before the end of the year practically the whole of the Milanese, with the exception of the capital, was lost to the Emperor ; while Genoa, which had refused to join the League of Cognac, also surrendered. The few Italian princes who remained faithful to the Imperial cause now abandoned it, and on December 9 Clement VII succeeded in effecting his escape from Rome, in disguise, and took refuge at his palace of Orvieto.

At the end of January 1528, the heralds of England and France brought to the Emperor, who was then at Burgos, a formal declaration of war. Charles replied in very moderate terms to the English herald, but said to the other : "The King, your master, has done a sorry, dastard deed in breaking his plighted word to me in regard to the Treaty of Madrid, and for this I am ready to maintain my person against his."

From these words, used partly in bravado by the Emperor, sprang that strange episode in these eventful times of a challenge to mortal combat exchanged between the two most powerful monarchs. For François, stung to the quick by his rival's language, replied by a violent cartel, in which he informed the Emperor that, "if he had wished, or wished to accuse him of having done anything unworthy of a gentleman of honour, he lied in his throat"; and begged him to name a time and place where they might meet to decide their quarrel. The Emperor thereupon despatched the herald-at-arms, "Burgundy," with a letter, in which he ironically suggested a meeting on the Bidassoa between Fontarabia and Andaye, "a place which must be well known to you, for there I restored you to freedom and received your children as hostages, on the

## Birth of Jeanne d'Albret

faith of your solemn promise to return, if our treaty were not executed." This letter he was instructed to read to François before his assembled Court. But when, on September 9, after being kept waiting for seven weeks on the frontier, he reached Paris and was admitted to the royal presence, François demanded the safe-conduct he had asked for ; and as "Burgundy" refused to deliver it before he had done his office in the form prescribed, and the King refused to hear him otherwise, he eventually retired with the cartel still in his hand. Perhaps, François was reluctant to allow his Court to hear the exceedingly candid opinion which the Emperor expressed of his conduct ; but, more probably, he was only too glad of a pretext to put an end to an affair which was exciting the ridicule of Europe.

On January 7, 1528, at Fontainebleau, the Queen of Navarre gave birth to a daughter, the celebrated Jeanne d'Albret, the future mother of Henri Quatre. The fact that her first marriage had been a childless one had been a sore disappointment to Marguerite, who was passionately fond of children, and her joy that her wishes had at length been fulfilled was great, though doubtless she would have been still more delighted had her first-born been a son. It is a coincidence not without interest that Lefèvre d'Étaples, for whom, soon after François's restoration to his kingdom, Marguerite had procured the post of tutor to her youngest and favourite nephew, Charles de Valois, Duc d'Angoulême, should have been at Fontainebleau at the time, and one of the first to welcome into the world the young princess who was to become so ardent a champion of the Reformed faith.

In the summer of that year, the Reformers, whom the

## The Pearl of Princesses

attitude of the King on his return from captivity had inspired with such ardent hopes, found themselves again menaced by the fires of persecution. Once more, to the great grief of Marguerite, was religious toleration sacrificed to statecraft, for François, desiring that his zeal for the Church should present a contrast to the conduct of the Emperor, whose soldiers had laid sacrilegious hands on the Pope, deemed it advisable to withdraw his protection from his Lutheran subjects. Encouraged by this, Du Prat convoked a diocesan synod of his archiepiscopal see of Sens, which proceeded to pass severe decrees against the Reformers, and conjured the King "*par les entrailles de la miséricorde divine*" to exterminate heresy from the realm.

While this Council was in session, an incident occurred which increased the ferocious zeal of the bigots and made the King only too willing to listen to their exhortations. At the angle of the Rue des Rosiers and the Rue des Juifs, in the Faubourg Saint-Antoine, stood a statue of the Virgin with the Child in her arms, which was held in particular veneration by the Parisians. One morning in June 1528, the inhabitants of the district were horrified to find that during the night the shrine had been brutally desecrated. The heads of both Madonna and Child had been lopped from the trunk, and lay, fallen and mutilated, in the gutter. This detestable outrage aroused indescribable grief and indignation throughout the city, and "the King, who was in Paris, being told thereof, was so much angered and so far undone that, saith report, he wept bitterly." Solemn processions and prayers were ordered to expiate the sacrilegious deed, the perpetrator of which remained undiscovered, though a large reward was offered for his apprehension; and



## The Virgin of the Rue des Rosiers

François caused a silver statue to be made to replace the one so impiously defaced. On June 11, attended by the Princes of the Blood, the great officers of the Crown, the Ambassadors, the university and municipal authorities, the suffragan bishops of the diocese, and representatives of every church and convent in Paris, the King went in solemn state to the church of the Couvent de Sainte-Catherine, where he heard Mass; and, at its conclusion, carrying a lighted taper and preceded by the Bishop of Lisieux, Grand Almoner of France, bearing aloft the silver statue, he repaired to the Rue des Rosiers, where with his own hands he replaced the Virgin in her niche, an ironwork trellis being afterwards erected to guard the new statue from similar desecration.<sup>1</sup>

The mutilation of the Virgin of the Rue des Rosiers sounded the tocsin for a general persecution of the Reformers throughout France. Seven edicts prohibiting their public meetings or *prêches* were issued by the King's Council and eagerly registered by the *Parlement*; their writings were more rigidly scrutinized than ever by the zealots of the Sorbonne, and in most instances suppressed, and, though for some months afterwards there were no public executions for heresy, yet those whose orthodoxy was suspected were subjected to the most rigorous surveillance.

Early in October, the Queen of Navarre left Fontainebleau and set out with her husband for Béarn. No differences had apparently yet arisen to cloud her

<sup>1</sup> Notwithstanding this precaution, the silver statue was stolen some years later. It was then replaced by one of wood, which remained until 1551, when it was cut down and destroyed by the Huguenots. The vacant niche was then filled by a marble statue.

## The Pearl of Princesses

domestic happiness, and on the journey we find her writing to Anne de Montmorency "to give him news of the marriage, which goes so well that I have much reason to felicitate myself." And yet the days were not so very far distant when she was to write to him: "You are better as a relation than the King of Navarre."

To Marguerite, the little kingdom to which Henri d'Albret brought her must have seemed like a foreign country. In the north, all around the capital of Nérac, stretched the dreary Landes, great wastes of ash-coloured sand, streaked here and there with forests of pine and cork-oak, with the sea on the western horizon: a strange, desolate country, sparsely peopled by rough peasants who clothed themselves in skins and used enormous stilts to make their way over the sandy plain. Pau, the southern capital, with its steep, narrow streets and little fortress-like château, with the rugged, white-capped Pyrenees beyond, presented no less singular a contrast to Fontainebleau or Saint-Germain or the royal residences on the banks of the Loire; and it was long ere Marguerite became entirely reconciled to her new surroundings. The idiom of the country, too, perplexed and prevented her from responding as she would have wished to the enthusiastic welcome which the Béarnais gave their queen. "I have been here five days," she writes to François, "and I am now just beginning to understand the language."

Marguerite had not been many weeks in Béarn when bad news reached her from Paris. Notwithstanding the indignation with which the outrage in the Rue des Rosiers had been received, the more intemperate followers of Luther had continued their acts of sacrilege,

## The Fate of Berquin

and several images of the saints in various streets of the capital were torn from their niches and mutilated. Most unfortunately for himself, it happened that this very moment, when King, clergy and people, were alike exasperated against the Reformers, had been selected by the imprudent Berquin to come into fresh collision with the Sorbonne. In vain had his friend Erasmus exhorted him to moderation, bidding him "remember that hornets must not be irritated." Relying on the protection of the Court, which had twice snatched him from the clutches of his enemies, Berquin attacked the University, demanding the reversal of censures recently pronounced on the works of Erasmus and redress for its past persecutions of himself, and presented several memorials to the King, couched in language which certainly did not err on the side of moderation. The Sorbonne was not slow to retaliate, and promptly renewed its charge of heresy against Berquin, at the same time demanding that he should again be brought to trial, in accordance with the canons of the Council of Sens. This time, the King, perhaps not unnaturally incensed by Berquin's foolish persistence in tempting Providence, abandoned him to his fate, and signed a decree authorizing the resumption of the proceedings against him. Conscious at last of his folly, Berquin appealed to Marguerite, who had already twice persuaded her brother to use his authority to save him; and his protectress hastened to address an eloquent letter to the King on his behalf. Her intervention was so far successful that Berquin, instead of being consigned to the flames, was condemned to make the *amende honorable*, by a public abjuration of his heresy before the porch of Notre-Dame, which done, his writings were to be burned before his



## The Pearl of Princesses

face by the public executioner, his tongue to be pierced, his forehead branded with the *fleur-de-lis*, as a perpetual mark of ignominy, and he was to be imprisoned for life in the Conciergerie.

Berquin refused to retract, and, though Marguerite again appealed to her brother, it was of no avail; and, having been condemned to death as an obstinate and contumacious heretic, he was burned in the Place de Grève (April 24, 1529), enduring his torments with heroic fortitude. "You would have said," wrote Erasmus, "that, when he was led forth to be tortured, he was at home in his library, pursuing his studies, or in a temple meditating on holy things." And the Bourgeois de Paris writes: "*Le dit Berquin etait moult grand clerc, expert en science et subtil;*" adding that he wore "a velvet gown and gold stockings, for he was of noble birth."

## CHAPTER XXI

WHILE the fires of persecution were being relighted in France; the fate of Italy was trembling in the balance. After his successes over the Imperialists in Lombardy, Lautrec had advanced southward, without encountering anything but the feeblest opposition, for disease had so terribly avenged the Romans of the brigands who had despoiled them, that by the beginning of 1529 they had been reduced to a mere wreck of an army; and, on the approach of the French, they evacuated the city and the surrounding country and fell back on Naples. If Lautrec had shown a little more activity he might have destroyed them, in which case Naples must have fallen; but he allowed them to escape him. Nevertheless, the end of April found him besieging the town, while the French and Genoese fleets blockaded the port. The plight of the garrison was desperate, for neither supplies nor reinforcements could reach them; and when, in the last days of May, the Imperialist fleet was defeated and practically destroyed in a desperate attempt to break the blockade, their last hope seemed to be extinguished.

Had Naples fallen, Italy would have been irrevocably lost to Charles V, but the apathy and puerile folly of François ruined all his hopes of establishing his dominion in the peninsula, just when they appeared on the point of being realized. He sent scarcely any reinforcements or money to Lautrec; he alienated the Genoese, by depriving them of their free constitution and converting Savona into a rival port; and by these measures and

## The Pearl of Princesses

the haughtiness and injustice with which he treated them, he mortally offended their compatriot Andrea Doria, who had long served France with a squadron organized and equipped by himself. At the beginning of July, Doria withdrew the Genoese galleys from the Bay of Naples, upon which troops and supplies from Spain and Sicily were at once thrown into the beleaguered city. Shortly afterwards, a terrible epidemic—probably a virulent form of typhus, engendered by the heat of an exceptionally hot summer and the insanitary condition of the besiegers' camp—broke out amongst the French, and in a month more than two-thirds of the army were swept away, Lautrec himself being one of the victims. The survivors, of whom only some 4000 are said to have been fit for service, raised the siege and evacuated the whole kingdom of Naples; but the Imperialists pressed hard upon the retreating army, and it was eventually obliged to capitulate.

The catastrophe of Naples was followed by other reverses. In September, Andrea Doria went over with his ships to the Emperor, appeared off Genoa and incited a revolt, which resulted in the French garrison being driven out, and the city, which was the watergate of Northern Italy, placing itself under Imperial protection. Reinforcements from Spain were thus enabled to reach Lombardy, and in June a second French army, under the Comte de Sainte-Pol, which had been despatched thither, was totally defeated by Antonio de Leyva at Andriano. The last blow came when, almost immediately afterwards, François's pseudo-ally, the Pope, deserted the league and made an "Eternal Peace" with Charles.

François's one wish was now for peace. He had already lost two armies, and to raise a third was impos-



## Captivity of the Princes

sible. Moreover, he was becoming alarmed about his sons, who had now been more than three years in captivity, and whose tender age had not saved them from paying dearly for the perfidy of their sire. On the latter's refusal to fulfil the terms of the Treaty of Madrid, they had been withdrawn from the care of Queen Eleanor and confined in the fortress of Ampudia, and afterwards in that of Villalpando ; while, when war was declared, they had been separated from all their French attendants, some of whom were sent to the galleys, and removed to the citadel of Pedraza, in the midst of the mountains of Castile, where they were surrounded entirely by Spaniards, for the most part rough soldiers, and most rigorously guarded, no person from the outside world being allowed to approach them. The King feared that, unless they were soon set at liberty, the health and character of the boys might be seriously affected.

Fortunately for François, the resources of the Emperor were almost as exhausted as his own, while the religious dissensions in Germany, which were threatening to develop into civil war, and the advance of the Turks, who, after overrunning Hungary, were threatening Vienna, made peace an urgent necessity.

Louise of Savoy and Margaret of Austria were called upon to arbitrate between the two monarchs. They met at Cambrai on July 7, 1529, whither Louise proceeded, accompanied by the King and Queen of Navarre and a magnificent suite, which is said to have required no less than 3000 carts and wagons to transport their baggage, it being François's object to persuade the Regent of the Netherlands that, notwithstanding the calls which the war had made upon the resources of his kingdom, they were still boundless.

## The Pearl of Princesses

The old ground of the negotiations was laboriously retraced by the two royal ladies ; Margaret of Austria began by insisting on nothing less than the Treaty of Madrid without modifications ; and, as Louise showed herself as inflexible on the question of Burgundy as had her daughter at Toledo, it seemed as though the conference would come to nothing and the war be resumed. Finally, however, they came to an agreement, and on July 24, 1529, "*la Paix des Dames*," the famous Treaty of Cambrai, was signed. It was, in the main, a recapitulation of the Madrid treaty, save that Burgundy remained a French province, with the proviso that, if a son should be born to François and Eleanor of Portugal, he should inherit the duchy, to the prejudice of the elder children of the King ; and that the young princes were to be restored to their father on the payment of the 2,000,000 crowns already offered. The Italian allies of France were abandoned to their fate, François excusing his mean desertion of them by pleading the necessity of his kingdom and his impatience to deliver his sons from captivity.

Impatient though François might be to recover his sons, nearly a year was to elapse before they were restored to him. Of the ransom of 2,000,000 crowns, 1,200,000 had, by the terms of the treaty, to be paid before the young princes would be permitted to touch the soil of France, and, in the exhausted condition of the kingdom, the raising of such a sum proved no easy task. The King demanded an extraordinary aid from the three Estates of the realm, and the appeal was generously responded to. Every town in France contributed, Paris alone giving 400,000 crowns ; the Church, the nobility, and the gentry contributed largely, while numbers of persons advanced additional sums on the security of

## François marries Eleanor of Austria

Treasury bonds—a decidedly risky experiment under the administration of the unscrupulous Du Prat. With all these contributions, however, there was still a considerable deficit. François therefore appealed again to his nobles, and himself set the example of sending to the Mint a quantity of gold plate to be melted down and coined into crowns. The King and Queen of Navarre did likewise, and the Chancellor, Anne de Montmorency, Chabot de Brion, and the Cardinal de Tournon, the High Bailiff of Paris and other notable persons followed suit. They received an acknowledgment of their gifts, and it must be recorded to the King's credit that, at a more prosperous period of his reign, restitution was made to them.<sup>1</sup>

At the beginning of 1530, the Vicomte de Turenne was despatched to Spain to wed Queen Eleanor on behalf of François. The marriage was celebrated at Toledo on March 30, and immediately afterwards the Queen set out for Vittoria, where she was to remain until the arrangements for the liberation of the princes had been completed, when she was to accompany them to France. The boys had hoped that they would be at once conducted to Vittoria to join their stepmother; but they were kept at Pedraza for some weeks longer, and it was not until the beginning of June that they reached Vittoria, under the escort of Don Pedro Hernandez de Velasco, Constable of Castile.

<sup>1</sup> Among the names of those who contributed to the ransom of the princes, that of Louise of Savoy is missing, although on her death, not long afterwards, the enormous sum of 1,100,000 crowns, largely the fruit of her peculations, was found in her private treasury. With increasing years, Louise had become so miserly that not even to hasten the liberation of her grandchildren could she bring herself to unloose her purse-strings.



## The Pearl of Princesses

Towards the end of April, Anne de Montmorency, who, after the return of the King from captivity, had been created Grand Master of France, arrived at Bayonne, accompanied by the Cardinal de Tournon, to make the final arrangements for the payment of the ransom and to receive the Queen and the princes. Here he was joined by Louis van Praet, who was to represent the Emperor, and several officials of the Spanish Treasury. A few days later the French began to deliver the money, which was packed in sacks of 10,000 crowns each, and conveyed to the house occupied by Don Alvaro de Lugo, a high official of the Imperial Treasury, who carefully counted the contents of each sack as it was brought to him. But when the money came to be weighed it was discovered that the coinage had been so debased by the unscrupulous Du Prat that most of the money was of short weight, and the French had, in consequence, to find a further 41,000 crowns to make good the deficiency. After this difficulty had been satisfactorily adjusted, the gold was packed in boxes of 25,000 crowns each, which were sealed up by the officials on either side and placed in a room in Don Alvaro's house, twelve guards being posted "above, below, and about it."

All these formalities naturally occupied a great deal of time, and fresh delay was continually being occasioned by the exasperating punctiliousness of the Spaniards, which drove Montmorency and Tournon to the point of distraction. At length, however, it was arranged that the princes and the money should change hands on the Bidassoæ between Fontarabia and the Andaye, on the same spot where François had been released four years before, on the morning of July 1. Owing to fresh difficulties between the French and Spanish representa-

## Liberation of the French Princes

tives, it was not until between five and six o'clock in the evening that the Queen and the princes arrived on the southern bank of the river, where the exchange took place, with very much the same formalities as had been observed at that of the King, the most minute precautions being taken on both sides to guard against treachery. Montmorency and Don Alvaro de Lugo, with the coffers containing the ransom, embarked in a barge, which was manned by twelve rowers and a steersman. They were accompanied by eleven French gentlemen and two pages of the same height as the Dauphin and the Duc d'Orléans. At precisely the same moment, the Constable of Castile and Van Praet entered a similar barge, which was propelled by the same number of oarsmen. The princes and the pages wore poniards, the gentlemen both sword and poniard. Both barges then rowed out to midstream, where a raft had been moored, on which stood two gentlemen, one French, the other Spanish: the Spaniard called the Constable, the Frenchman the Grand Master; and the two plenipotentiaries mounted the raft together and passed thus from one barge to the other. The persons of their respective suites—summoned one by one, a Frenchman and a Spaniard alternately—followed, until the Spanish barge, in which the princes had remained, was occupied by the French, and that containing the ransom was filled by Spaniards. Then the barges cast off from the raft and made for either bank, "the Spaniards bearing away the gold crowns, and the Grand Master the treasure of France."

Meanwhile, Queen Eleanor had crossed the river with her ladies and the Cardinal de Tournon, and, guided by torchlight, the whole company set out at once for Saint-Jean-de-Luz, where they arrived at midnight.

## The Pearl of Princesses

From that town Montmorency despatched a messenger to Bordeaux to announce the glad tidings to the King and Louise of Savoy, who were waiting there with the whole Court ; and on July 3 François started to meet his bride and his sons.

On the 6th, the Queen and the princes, who were greeted in every town and village through which they passed with transports of joy, reached Mont-de-Marsan, where her Majesty was informed that the king would meet her that evening at the Convent of Veyrières, about four leagues distant. Eleanor reached the rendezvous at nine o'clock, and was escorted by the Grand Master and the Spanish Ambassador to the apartment prepared for her. François arrived two hours later, accompanied by the Cardinal de Lorraine, Chabot de Brion and a few gentlemen of his Household, and gave the Queen "as good and honourable a reception as it was possible for a man enamoured of a lady to do."<sup>1</sup> The Queen then retired to adorn herself for the nuptial ceremony, which was performed at two o'clock the following morning, in the chapel of the convent, by the Cardinal de Tournon, assisted by the Bishop of Lisieux, the King's almoner. It had been stipulated by Charles V that his sister's marriage should be solemnized immediately after her first interview with the King, which accounts for the strangeness of the hour selected for the ceremony.

A few days later (July 11), the new Queen made her triumphant entry into Bordeaux, the magnificence of her attire, we are assured, exceeding anything that had before been witnessed, and was borne through the gaily-decorated streets in an open litter, "so that all men might reverently gaze upon her."

<sup>1</sup> Godefroy, *Cérémonial français*.



## An Interesting Event at Blois

The Queen of Navarre had not accompanied François to the South to meet Queen Eleanor and the young princes. She was again enceinte, and, as the doctors considered it unsafe for her to undertake so long a journey, it had been decided that she should remain at Blois until after her child was born. Her disappointment was very keen, the more so since it necessitated a separation of some considerable time from the King of Navarre, who was, of course, to accompany the Court, and whose unfortunate sensibility to the charms of the fair, when his consort's eye did not happen to be upon him, was already beginning to cause Marguerite many heart-burnings. "When the King of Navarre arrives," she wrote to Montmorency, "I pray you counsel him in all that he has to do, for we both place perfect confidence in you. As you are with him, I fear not that everything will go well; except that I am afraid you cannot prevent him from paying assiduous court to the Spanish ladies."

Marguerite solaced the tedium of her residence at Blois by incessant correspondence with her absent relatives and friends, and by superintending the construction of the new gardens which the King was having laid out at immense expense, and in which she took a great interest. On July 16, to her intense joy, she gave birth to a son, who was named Jean, after his paternal grandfather, and was sent to the Château of Lonray, about three miles from Alençon, to be brought up with his little sister.

François, who was then at Angoulême with his bride, expressed great delight on learning the news, and lost no time in despatching a courier to bear his congratulations to his sister. He also published an edict conferring upon Marguerite and her husband the privilege of

## The Pearl of Princesses

creating a freeman in every guild throughout the realm, "in order to manifest to our very dear and beloved brother-in-law, the King of Navarre, and to our sister, his consort, the joy which we feel at the birth of our very dear and beloved nephew, Jean, Prince of Navarre."

Marguerite's recovery was rapid, and before the end of August she was able to join the court at Fontainebleau. Fontainebleau, which, at the beginning of the reign, had been a mere hunting-box—"une âpre solitude"—was the home of François's heart, and he was bent on converting it into a fairy palace, a masterpiece of magnificence. The splendid gallery known by his name, the Cour Ovale and the Château du Donjon were in progress; and gardens were being cut out of the surrounding forest. But, for the moment, the raising of the young princes' ransom and the sums expended on Queen Eleanor's reception had so drained the King's privy purse that, to his Majesty's intense mortification, the work had been suspended from want of funds. It was not for long, however, for the suspension of his cherished schemes at Fontainebleau was a privation altogether beyond François's fortitude to endure; and he accordingly gave orders for a great sale of timber in the forest, to the amount of 100,000 livres, and, "to the end that no time may be lost and my buildings may not be retarded," sent directions to the Provost of Paris and others "to take counsel together and find some merchant who will be willing, on the faith of my commission authorizing the sale of timber, to advance a sufficient sum for my said buildings."

At Fontainebleau, Marguerite renewed the acquaintance begun at Toledo with Queen Eleanor. The new Queen, though not strictly beautiful, was decidedly pre-

## The New Queen

possessing, with a high forehead, arched eyebrows, a fresh complexion, and very white teeth, and, as she was, if somewhat dull, of a kind and amiable disposition, and had come to France prepared to love her husband, for whom she had always felt great sympathy and admiration, there appears to have been no reason why the King, notwithstanding his infatuation for Anne de Pisseleu, should not have lived on affectionate terms with her. Unhappily, the hatred which François felt for the Emperor recoiled on everything that belonged to that monarch, and caused him to regard his marriage with his former captor's sister as the most grievous of all the penalties imposed by the recent treaty. Accordingly, though he treated his new consort with the most profound respect and surrounded her with all the pomp and ceremony to which her rank entitled her, he showed her not a vestige of affection; and when the poor woman ventured to manifest some resentment at the attentions which he paid the reigning sultana, no longer troubled to conceal his indifference, and seldom saw her except in the presence of the Court.

François might have been more favourably—or less unfavourably—disposed towards his Queen, had he not been so much disturbed by the change in his two sons, whom Eleanor had brought with her from Spain, which furnished him with an additional grievance against Charles V.

Contrary to what he had feared, the health of the young princes would not appear to have been much affected by their captivity. The same, however, could not be said for their characters.

The Dauphin, who was now twelve years old, returned to France a grave, reserved lad, speaking little, and then



## The Pearl of Princesses

in slow, measured tones, drinking scarcely anything but water, wearing only the most sombre clothes, and showing a regard for the minutiae of etiquette most unusual in so young a prince—in a word, far more of a Spaniard than a Frenchman.

In the Duc d'Orléans—his junior by a year and of a more sensitive nature—the change was even more marked. He had left France a bright, intelligent lad, and Dr. Taylor, the English Ambassador, who saw him at Amboise on the eve of his departure for Spain, had praised him warmly in one of his despatches to Wolsey. He returned apparently an altogether different being, awkward, taciturn, morose, unsociable. The poor boy's spirit, in fact, had been crushed by the dreary existence which had been his lot for more than four years—an existence in which he had not only been deprived of the affection and sympathy so necessary for one of his age, but subjected, it is but too probable, to constant petty humiliations at the hands of his callous gaolers. So profound was the impression that his sufferings had left upon him, that in 1542—that is to say, twelve years after his return from Spain—Matteo Dandolo, the Venetian Ambassador in France, wrote that few people at the Court could ever remember to have heard him laugh.

François, who was not the kind of man to make allowance for the shortcomings of others, could not conceal his displeasure at the change which had taken place in his sons, and particularly in the younger. He might have endeavoured to win the boy's confidence and affection, and thus gradually to dissipate his melancholy humour and persuade him that life held joys as well as sorrows. But the task was not one which commended itself to his selfish nature; and so, observing

## Marguerite loses her Son

that the mark of a true Frenchman was to be always gay and lively, and that "he did not care for dreamy, sullen, sleepy children," he left his two elder sons severely alone, and bestowed all the paternal affection of which he was capable on their younger brother, the Duc d'Angoulême, a frank, high-spirited boy, now in his ninth year, who bade fair to become a replica of his father in both appearance and character.

Towards the end of the autumn, Marguerite received bad news of the health of her little son, and she and the King of Navarre quitted the Court for their Château of Alençon, in order to be near him. They found the poor child in a very weak state, and, though Marguerite had him removed from Lonray to Alençon and placed under the care of Jehan Goinret, one of the best doctors of the time, he grew worse and died on Christmas Day, having lived less than six months. The queen informed the inhabitants of the town of the loss she had sustained and of her resignation to the decrees of Providence by causing placards to be posted in the principal quarters of the town announcing the sad event, while beneath were the words: "*Dieu l'avoit donné, Dieu l'a osté!*" She then wrote to inform François of his nephew's death.

"As it has pleased God," she says, "to take to Himself him whom you acknowledged as your little son, and whom you honoured so greatly as to rejoice with me at his birth, I write, in the fear that you and *Madame* may be deeply grieved at the sorrowful event, to beseech you both rather to rejoice at the glory to which he has been translated than to bewail his departure. If it pleases God to preserve you both in good health, I will try to bear all other earthly tribulations patiently; for, Monseigneur, the King of Navarre and myself are content to

## The Pearl of Princesses

submit to the will of Him who can, if it pleases Him, give us many more children to serve you and your children."

It was a melancholy close of the year for Marguerite, and the news which she received from François that their mother, who, "with her gout and her accustomed sorrows seemed to be celebrating unconsciously in her own body the obsequies of her grandson," did not tend to raise her spirits. In February 1531, she returned to Court to attend Queen Eleanor's coronation, which took place at Saint-Denis on March 5, with all the splendour proper to such ceremonies. On this occasion the Queen of Navarre wore "a royal crown, very richly adorned with precious stones; a surcoat furred with ermine and ornamented with costly gems; and a long royal mantle, lined with ermine and powdered with *fleurs-de-lis* in gold embroidery, the train of which was carried by the Comtes de Candale and de Roussy." Marguerite also attended the Queen on her state entry into Paris a few days later, and at the grand banquet given by the municipality of Paris to the Royal Family at the Hôtel de Ville, on March 19, which brought the coronation festivities to a close, and at which the city fathers presented her Majesty with two magnificent candelabra of silver gilt, six feet high, and valued at the sum of 10,000 livres.

Early in May, Marguerite, whose health since her little son's death had been very indifferent, was advised by her physicians to spend some time at Saint-Cloud, then merely a village, but much frequented by persons anxious to escape for a season from the narrow streets and noisome odours of the capital, owing to the purity of the air and the supposed medicinal qualities of its water. She was not, however, allowed to remain there



## Failing Health of Louise of Savoy

long, being summoned to Saint-Germain, where the Court was then in residence, by a message from her mother, who was again seriously unwell.

Louise's health had been gradually failing for some years past, and she suffered intolerable torment from gout. Her mind, however, remained as clear and energetic as ever, and she continued to take the same active part in public affairs. Although it was only too clear that her days were numbered, none of her physicians dared to tell her the truth, for she had always evinced a marked dread of death, and bitterly resented any reference to it, insomuch that more than one divine who had had the misfortune to make the forbidden subject the theme of his discourse when preaching before her had thereby forfeited all chance of preferment. "Preachers, when they are at a loss what to say in their sermons and have run the length of their knowledge," she observed contemptuously on one occasion, "invariably take refuge in discussing this one everlasting subject of death. As if one did not know well enough that the fate of all is to die."

At the beginning of June, Louise, accompanied by her daughter, removed to Fontainebleau, for which she shared the King's affection, and which appears to have agreed with her better than any of the other royal residences in the neighbourhood of Paris. Here they were soon joined by the King and Queen, but, finding *Madame* in better health and so far recovered as to be able to take occasional exercise in the gardens, François only remained a few days and then set out for Blois, where the alterations which he was having executed at the château required his attention. Before leaving, he received a promise from Louise that she would join him as soon as she felt well

## The Pearl of Princesses

enough to make the journey. Mother and son, however, were never destined to meet again.

Shortly afterwards, the three young princes arrived from Amboise on a visit to their grandmother, who, since the King's departure, had been in a very depressed state, as she appears to have had a secret presentiment that she had taken her last farewell of her idolized son. Their visit had a cheering effect upon the spirits of Louise, who was much attached to the boys, and Marguerite hastened to communicate her delight at this welcome result to François :—

“MONSEIGNEUR,—I have not feared to trouble you with this letter, in order to report the improvement in the health of *Madame*, which has failed her gravely since your departure, until this afternoon, when she received a visit from three little doctors, who speedily made her forget her pain. I assure you it is impossible she could have derived greater benefit than she has done from this visit. The princes, however, were very sorrowful and discontented when they learned of your departure ; for M. d'Angoulême had made up his mind that, if he could only see you again, never to loose your hand ; for he says that, even if you go to hunt the wild boar, he knows that you will take good care that nothing hurts him. Believe me, Monseigneur, that *Madame*, while listening to this and other discourses, could not refrain from shedding abundance of tears, which have done her great good ; for you know the saying :—

Qui pleur larmes par amour,  
N'en sent jamais mal ny douleur.

I close my letter by assuring you of the good health of the princes, which I beg that God may speedily

## Louise's Last Journey

restore to you. Monseigneur d'Aire<sup>1</sup> has given me ample assurance that they are healthy, and under good treatment, as I hope you will soon be able to judge for yourself. I beseech you, Monseigneur, always to retain in your gracious favour

“Your very humble and very obedient subject and *mignonne*,

“MARGUERITE.”

The improvement in Louise's health was not maintained; and, instead of being able to rejoin the King at Blois, she remained at Fontainebleau until the middle of September, when, owing to an outbreak of plague in the neighbourhood, of such severity that Marguerite declares, in a letter to Montmorency, that “she dared not write either to the King or the Queen, and scarcely to him, from fear that her letter should convey the infection,” it was considered no longer safe for her to remain there. Being unwilling apparently to approach the Court after residence in an infected district, *Madame* expressed a desire to visit her château of Romorantin, which had been the scene of some of the happiest hours of her youth; and she and her daughter set out for Berry.

Louise travelled in a litter, and bore the journey much better than had been anticipated, until they arrived at Grès-en-Gatinais, where it had been decided that she should rest for a few days. Brantôme relates that, during the night following her arrival, her room was suddenly illuminated by a bright light. Summoning her attendants, she inquired why they had kindled so large a fire, as the weather was still very warm. They replied that they

<sup>1</sup> Sub-preceptor to the Dauphin and his brothers.



## The Pearl of Princesses

had not done so, and that it was the moon which shed the brilliant light. Louise, remarking that the moon was on the wane, rose from her bed and went to the window, when she perceived that the light proceeded from an immense comet burning in the heavens. Always very superstitious, she was overcome with alarm, being convinced that it portended that her death was at hand. "Ah!" she exclaimed, when she returned to her bed, "that is a sign which is not intended to warn people of lowly condition; God sends it to admonish the great ones of the earth. It announces my speedy departure from this world; I must prepare myself, therefore, for death!"

Next morning, she sent for her director, a Franciscan monk, and, having confessed, requested him to celebrate Mass without delay. In vain the physicians sought to reassure her, declaring that, in their opinion, there was no immediate cause for alarm, as she was no worse than she had been for some time past. She persisted in her belief that her end was close at hand, and in her weak state this conviction served to verify her words. Towards evening she became very ill, and the last Sacraments were administered; and early in the afternoon of the following day (September 22, 1531), she expired, so calmly, we are told, that Marguerite, who was watching beside her, was unaware of the precise moment of her death.

Louise of Savoy is, in many respects, a repulsive character, but her faults and her vices did not prevent her being sincerely beloved by her children, and her devotion to them certainly merited their gratitude and affection. If she had often abused the confidence which François reposed in her, and used it for the furtherance

## Death of Louise

of her own unworthy ends, she had, on the whole, shown herself a shrewd and sagacious counsellor, and her conduct of affairs both at home and abroad during the King's captivity, and, in particular, the successful intrigues which she pursued with the Italian States, proved her to have been a woman of real ability. Her death, therefore, little as it was deplored except by her children, must be regarded as a distinct loss to France; and, had her life been prolonged, it is possible that she would have saved the kingdom from some of the disasters which marked the latter part of her son's reign.

The mortal remains of Louise of Savoy were embalmed and conveyed to Saint-Denis, where they were interred in the family mausoleum which François had erected there. Her heart, enclosed within a leaden casket, was buried at the foot of the high altar at Notre-Dame. A brass plate covered the tomb, on which were engraven the Arms of France and Savoy, while beneath was a heart surmounted by a crown and the following inscription—

*Cor magnorum opifex, Francum quæ viscera Regem  
Portavere hic sunt, spiritus in superis.*

## CHAPTER XXII

TOWARDS the close of the autumn of that year, the King and Queen of Navarre set out for Béarn. Although, at the time of their marriage, François had promised to do everything in his power to restore Spanish Navarre to the House of Albret, he had shown not the smallest anxiety to fulfil this engagement, and, since the Treaty of Cambrai, in which Henri's claims were ignored, the draft of an agreement, never, however, executed, had fallen into the young king's hands, from which it would appear that François had been prepared to pledge himself "neither to aid nor to favour the King of Navarre in his designs for the recovery of his kingdom." Incensed by this evidence of his brother-in-law's bad faith, and in the belief that it was due to the counsels of Montmorency, Henri d'Albret allowed himself to be drawn into the rivalry between the Grand Master and Chabot de Brion, which then divided the Court, and supported the latter with more warmth than prudence. Montmorency was not the kind of man to pardon such interference, and, thanks to his insinuations, François began to treat his relative with some coldness. Nor were matters improved by the zeal with which Marguerite espoused her husband's cause, since François, so long accustomed to a monopoly of his sister's devotion, had begun to conceive no little jealousy of the King of Navarre, and sometimes showed himself angrily impatient of the deference which she paid the latter. Henri d'Albret had therefore resolved to withdraw for a



## François I and Jeanne d'Albret

time to his own little kingdom, and to take his wife with him.

Marguerite departed with reluctance, and this reluctance was much increased by the fact that François had insisted that her little daughter Jeanne should remain under his guardianship, instead of accompanying her parents. The little princess, a lively and intelligent child, whose features already bore a striking resemblance to those of her mother, was a great favourite of the King, who treated her like one of his own children. But the motive which rendered him unwilling to allow her to quit his dominions was a political one.

In default of another son being born to the King and Queen of Navarre, Jeanne would inherit Béarn and her father's other possessions in the South of France; and a rumour had reached his ears that Charles V had opened secret negotiations with Henri d'Albret for the future marriage of the little princess with his eldest son Philip, and had accompanied this proposal by the most tempting offers. It was further reported that the Emperor had stipulated that the young heiress of Navarre should be sent to Spain, that she might be educated with her future husband at Toledo. Marguerite, when approached by François on the subject, had denied emphatically that any such negotiations were in progress; but, though the King readily acquitted his sister of participation in a scheme which would establish the House of Hapsburg on the soil of France, she failed to allay his suspicions concerning her husband, who, he was aware, had been deeply mortified that his interests had been ignored at Cambrai. Accordingly, he determined to assure himself against all risk of such a contingency by retaining his niece in his own custody; and, when the King of Navarre began to

## The Pearl of Princesses

raise objections, promptly decided the matter, by formally assigning to the little princess and her household the royal château of Plessis-les-Tours as a residence.

On her arrival at Nérac, the Queen of Navarre was met by a little band of Reformers to whom she had lately offered an asylum in her husband's dominions, headed by Lefèvre d'Étaples and Gérard Roussel. After the King's return from captivity, Lefèvre had, thanks to Marguerite's good offices, been appointed King's librarian at Blois, which was soon followed by his nomination to the post of preceptor to the little Duc d'Angoulême. François held Lefèvre in high esteem, and had on more than one occasion offered him a bishopric; but, aware that his religious views would be sure to render him a mark for the enmity of the Universities, he had always declined episcopal honours. But neither his refusal of preferment nor his patriarchal age—he was now in his eighty-eighth year—sufficed to save him from further persecution; and, at the beginning of 1533, proceedings were instituted, in accordance with the decrees of the Council, to revive the process for heresy against him, which the intervention of the King had caused to be suspended. Warned by some of his friends of what was in contemplation, Lefèvre appealed to the Queen of Navarre, who at once responded by offering him an asylum at Nérac, and, moreover, contrived to secure his removal thither without exciting the suspicion of his enemies, by representing that he was in indifferent health and desired permission to absent himself for a while from his duties at Blois, “in order to visit a friend for change of air.” At Nérac, the good old man passed the remainder of his days in the peace and security denied him elsewhere.



JEANNE D'ALBRET, QUEEN OF NAVARRE.





## “La Messe à Sept Points”

Upon Roussel Marguerite had already bestowed the abbey of Clairac, in the Agénois, and she now appointed him one of her chaplains-in-ordinary. She also authorized him to use in the royal chapels of Pau and Nérac a missal in French, in which all allusion to the Virgin and the saints had been suppressed, and which was soon in general use in Béarn. But she went much farther than that, for, by her permission, the more advanced of the Reformers of Béarn met frequently, at first in an underground apartment beneath the château of Pau, afterwards in one of the secret chambers belonging to the Mint, to celebrate the heterodox “*Messe à sept points*” or “*Messe à deux espèces.*” No elevation of the Host, or adoration of the Species was allowed; no commemoration of the Virgin and the saints; and the officiating priest was not obliged to be celibate. He wore lay dress, took a common loaf, ate of it and gave it to the congregation, who all together communicated in both Species at once. These assemblies were held in profound secrecy, after nightfall. Marguerite, accompanied by those of her Court who inclined to the Reformed faith, often attended and received the Sacrament in both kinds.

The attitude of the King of Navarre towards these innovations seems to have varied. Always strongly opposed to religious persecution, he had readily opened the portals of his kingdom to his wife’s *protégés*, and had sometimes been present at the sermons preached privately by one or other of them in the Queen’s apartments. He is even said to have been induced by Marguerite to attend the secret celebrations of the “*Messe à sept points*” during the winter of 1532-3. Catholic historians of those times, however, deny that he was ever actually persuaded to countenance heresy, and assert that he became

## The Pearl of Princesses

ere long decidedly uneasy at the lengths to which his consort's sympathy for the Reformers was carrying her. The story runs that, on one occasion, being informed that the Queen was in her apartments, listening to the exhortations of a certain divine of the most pronounced Lutheran views, he proceeded thither, with the intention of chastising the reverend gentleman for his presumption. Warned in time, however, the latter had prudently taken to flight, and he found Marguerite alone. Angry at being foiled in his design, he vented his indignation on her, and dealt her a sound box on the ear, exclaiming : "Madame, you want to know too much !" Not content with this, he forthwith despatched a courier to his royal brother-in-law, requesting him to interpose his authority to check her Majesty's heretical proclivities ; while Marguerite entrusted the same messenger with a letter to François, in which she complained bitterly of the affront she had received and appealed to him for redress and protection. François, as might be expected, warmly espoused his sister's cause, and threatened the King of Navarre with his severe displeasure, if he ever again forgot the respect due to his consort.

There is probably little or no truth in this story, for Henri d'Albret was far too chivalrous a prince to treat his consort in such a manner, even if she had not been the sister of his suzerain ; while Marguerite was too proud a woman to refer domestic disputes to her brother's arbitration. Moreover, the King of Navarre was aware that François had been most reluctant to allow Marguerite to leave his Court, and that the mere suspicion that she was being subjected to insult would have furnished him with a pretext for insisting on her taking up her residence there permanently. In point



## Marguerite and her Husband

of fact, Henri, although he may not have altogether approved of the encouragement given by his wife to the sectarians to propagate their doctrines, allowed her to do pretty much as she pleased, and refused to circumscribe the activities of the Reformers, notwithstanding repeated protests from the bishops of Béarn. He was, indeed, believed to share their views, and to have communicated according to their rites, and the Cardinal de Gramont and the Bishop of Rhodéz took the extreme step of travelling to Paris to lay a formal complaint before the Council and the *Parlement*, declaring that this was the only course left to them to save the true faith from extinction in the dominions of the King of Navarre.

Before betaking themselves for the winter to their picturesque château of Pau, the King and Queen of Navarre made a kind of royal progress through a part of their States. They were already estranged at heart, these two, for it was becoming daily more evident that Henri was weary of fidelity to a consort eleven years his senior, and, though Marguerite could scarcely have expected anything else, she did not perhaps accept the inevitable with as much philosophy as she might have shown. Moreover, though intensely proud of his brilliant wife, the King was not a little jealous of her intellectual superiority. They had, however, one great interest in common, the desire to improve their principality of Béarn, and during this journey they appear to have decided upon more than one beneficent scheme for promoting the prosperity of their subjects. The country, though fertile and productive enough, had hitherto remained almost uncultivated, through the ignorance and neglect of the inhabitants, who knew

## The Pearl of Princesses

little or nothing of agriculture and preferred hunting or the rearing of sheep and cattle to tilling the soil. Under the wise administration of Henri and Marguerite the aspect of the country was soon changed for the better. Engineers and skilled agriculturists were introduced, and the sandy Landes were drained and cultivated, and planted with vineyards and cork-oak woods. A large cloth manufactory was established at Nai, and the Béarnais were taught how to weave the fine wool of the Pyrennean sheep. The criminal code of the principality, which had been administered in a very lax manner, with the result that robbery and sanguinary brawls were of frequent occurrence, was reformed, and life and property rendered secure by a vigorous and, at the same time, strictly impartial execution of justice. For Henri d'Albret piqued himself on the fact that, in his dominions, the nobleman who had offended against his laws was punished with the same severity as the peasant, and neither the high rank of the guilty nor the most influential intercession on his behalf was permitted to interfere with the course of justice. Olhagaray relates that, one Good Friday, the Bishop of Lescar, Jacques de Foix, came to intercede with the King for the life of a certain gentleman, a near relation of his own, and implored him to perform this act of clemency for the honour of our Lord, who on that day suffered a cruel death to save sinners. Henri heard him to the end without interruption, and then replied: "My cousin, God has commanded us to administer justice by punishing the wicked. He would be dishonoured, and not honoured, if, at your solicitation, I abetted the evil-doer, instead of obeying this righteous command. I purpose, therefore, by suffering justice to take its course, and by consigning the

## Marguerite's Life in Béarn

guilty to the punishment that he has deserved, to offer to God the only honour worthy of His acceptance."

Henri d'Albret also devoted himself to strengthening the defences of his little kingdom and fortified several of the towns. Navarreins, commanding the valley of the Gave of Oloron, was virtually rebuilt by him, and transformed into a formidable stronghold, as was proved during the Wars of Religion, when it successfully withstood a siege by a considerable Catholic army. Long afterwards, when Vauban inaugurated his new style of fortification, he was so impressed by the strength of the ramparts which Marguerite's husband had raised that he left them almost untouched, and contented himself with adding to them and making a few improvements. The King of Navarre was anxious to refortify Sauveterre, which had been taken by a Spanish army in 1523, when the old castle of Montreal, then the strongest citadel in Béarn, had been half demolished; but, as time and money were lacking, he was reluctantly obliged to abandon his plans; and the ruins left by the Imperialists, the ivy-clad keep and the mutilated bridge over the Gave soon fell into irremediable decay.

Marguerite, who had now mastered the dialect of the country, soon became immensely popular in Béarn. She was accessible to every one who had any request to make of her, and, when receiving *placets*, it was her custom, if time permitted, to read them herself in the presence of the petitioners, that she might question them upon the matter if she considered it necessary. She then handed the petition to an officer of her Household, declaring her pleasure thereon, and gave orders that it was to be executed with as little delay as possible. She liked walking almost alone in the streets of Pau and Nérac, that poor



## The Pearl of Princesses

people might approach her the more easily and talk frankly to her. "To see her you would never have thought she was a queen, for she went about like a simple demoiselle." "No one," she said, "ought to go away sad or disappointed from the presence of a prince, for kings were the ministers of the poor, not their masters; and the poor were the members of God." She would like to be the servant of all who served the body, and the Prime Minister of the Poor was the title she gave herself. Her charity was boundless, far, indeed, in excess of her revenues; nor was she content to leave her bounty to be distributed by her almoners, but, when any circumstance of peculiar distress had been reported to her, went to visit the sufferers and inquired herself into the particulars of the case. Frequently, she sent her own physicians to visit the sick, and brought them money and necessaries with her own hands.

At the Court of France, the most magnificent in Europe, Marguerite dressed with all the sumptuousness that was naturally expected of the King's sister and shared in all its costly pleasures. But in Béarn, the revenues of which did not admit of a luxurious mode of life, she adopted great simplicity in her habits and attire. Her dress was of plain black velvet: from the skirt, half-hidden by the long cloak, to the cornette, or square hood, coming low down on the forehead. She wore no jewels or trimming; but her high collar was lined with martens' fur and fastened by pins in the front. As sister of the King of France, she was obliged to keep up a certain state, and the number of attendants considered indispensable was out of all proportion to the size of her husband's little kingdom. She had ten *maîtres d'hôtel*, twenty *valets de chambre*, seventeen secretaries,

## Marguerite's Life in Béarn

four doctors, two chamberlains, a chancellor, and twenty-eight ladies, besides councillors and notaries. She allowed the men and women of her suite twenty-five crowns a year for their dress, giving, however, more to the slovenly and ungainly, because, as she once explained, they needed more clothes to make them look well, and she liked to see comely people about her person. She also kept up the princely tradition of providing her *demoiselles* with trousseaux, though they appear to have been very modest ones: eight ells of black velvet, eight of black satin, a cloak lined with lamb's wool, and thirty francs for the purchase of a mule. She dined daily *au grand couvert*, but in a very frugal manner. Two tables were laid. At the upper table the Queen dined alone, served by her officers; the second was reserved for strangers whom she had honoured by an invitation to dinner, and was presided over by her *dame d'honneur*. When Marguerite wished to show a visitor a special mark of attention, she sent him some dish from her own table.

Affairs of State, study, correspondence, religious exercises, and works of charity occupied most of her time. The King of Navarre consulted her in regard to all his plans for the welfare of his people, and during his frequent absences the entire administration remained in her hands. Certain hours of each day were set apart for theological studies, during which she conferred with leading divines, both Reformers and orthodox. A part of every afternoon was devoted to embroidery with her ladies, but, since this was a task which only required a small part of her attention, she carried on some other occupation simultaneously. "When she occupied herself in tapestry or in other needle-work," writes Sainte-Marthe, "she always employed a person to read to her the work of some historian, poet,

## The Pearl of Princesses

or notable author; or she dictated some meditation, which was immediately taken down in writing. I will recount another habit of hers that may possibly surprise many to hear of, but which is, nevertheless, most true, and that might be confirmed, were it deemed necessary, by the united testimony of many great and honourable personages, who, with myself, have often witnessed it—that, while she diligently worked with her needle, she had two secretaries employed about her chair, one in taking down French verse, which she composed very rapidly and with admirable erudition and facility; the other in writing letters at her dictation to despatch to her numerous friends.”

Early in the winter of 1532–3, Marguerite returned to Paris, where the Court was then residing. She had been separated from her brother for more than a year, and he was impatient to see her again. Shortly after her return, a long, mystical poem of hers, entitled *le Miroir de l'Âme pécheresse*, first published at Alençon in 1531,<sup>1</sup> was reissued by one Augereau, a bookseller of the capital. The poem bore as its motto the words, *Cor mundum crea in me Deus*—a prayer constantly on Marguerite's lips—and the author's doubts and fears, anxieties and aspira-

<sup>1</sup> *Le Miroir de l'Âme pécheresse en quel elle recongnoist ses fautes et pechez, aussi ses graces et benefices à elle faitez par Jésus Christ, son espoux. La Marguerite très noble et precieuse, s'est proposée a ceulx qui de bon cueur la cerchoient. À Alençon, chez maistre Simon du Bois, MDXXXI.* In 1541 this poem was translated into English by Queen Elizabeth, under the following title: “A godly medytacyon of the Christen sowle, compiled in French by Lady Margarete, Quene of Navarre, and aptely translated into English by the right vertuose lady Elizabeth, daughter to our late sovereyne, King Henry the VIII. Imprimed in the year of our Lorde, 1548, in Apryll.” A copy, bound in blue and gold, is preserved in the Bodleian Library at Oxford.



## “ Le Miroir de l'Âme Pécheresse ”

tions, were all revealed in rhyming decasyllables. In this mist of nebulous piety it would be no easy task to name precisely any error of commission ; but keen-scented “ smellers-out ” of heretics had no difficulty in fastening upon several of omission. There was, for instance, no mention either of the saints or of Purgatory ; while the prayer to the Virgin, the *Salve Regina*, was paraphrased in honour of our Lord. The Sorbonne, long exasperated against the King's sister on account of her consistent protection of the Reformers, perceived their opportunity and resolved to seize it.

It was the practice of the Faculty of Theology to appoint Commissioners to examine and report upon new books before they were admitted to the University library, that is to say, upon all new publications, since authors were obliged to send a copy of their works to the Sorbonne ; and this, together with the fact that *le Miroir* was published anonymously, though its authorship was an open secret, afforded the champions of orthodoxy the means of affixing the stigma of heresy to Marguerite's writings, without the necessity of venturing upon a direct attack.

In due course, the poem in question came under the inspection of the Commissioners, of whom Bêda was one, and, after a pretence of examining it, since they were already well acquainted with its contents, they, with one voice, condemned it as heretical, and ordered it to be placed on the Index Expurgatorius of the Sorbonne, feigning ignorance of its authorship. The following day, in accordance with the report of the Commissioners, a list of the condemned works was published, amongst which figured *le Miroir de l'Âme pécheresse*.

By feigning ignorance of the authorship of the poem, the crafty theologians believed they had secured themselves

## The Pearl of Princesses

against the resentment with which the King would be sure to visit an open accusation of heresy against his sister ; but François, who had little love for the zealots of the Sorbonne, was not deceived, and his wrath was extreme. Summoning the Rector of the University, Nicholas Cop, he demanded the names of the theologians upon whose representations the Queen of Navarre's poem had been condemned. Cop, himself in secret a sympathizer with the Reformers, replied, quite truly, that he had had nothing to do with the matter and was ignorant of the parties concerned, upon which his Majesty ordered him to institute a searching investigation of the affair, and to report in person to the Council on the following day. He then sent for his confessor, Guillaume Petit, Bishop of Senlis, and instructed him to undertake the defence of his sister's poem before the University and to prove its orthodoxy. This the bishop did *con amore*, and concluded a long and erudite harangue by informing the assembled theologians that it was the King's will that an immediate revocation of their censure on *le Miroir de l'Âme pécheresse* should be promulgated. To this they were, of course, obliged to consent, and, since the turbulent Bêda, who had been the prime instigator of their action, was already in such bad odour with the King that it was felt that it would be dangerous for him to admit the part he had played, a comparatively innocuous personage, the curé of Saint-André-des-Arts, was persuaded to shield him, and to declare that it was he who had first denounced *le Miroir* to the Commissioners. The condemnation was then formally revoked, and Cop was requested to inform the King that the book had been inadvertently included in the list of prohibited works by the curé of Saint-André, not, however, for its heretical tendencies, but because it

## An Outrageous Affront

had been published without the approbation of the Faculty of Theology as required by law.

Marguerite had triumphed ; but the bigots were by no means silenced. A few weeks later, the professors and students of the college of the Navarrene Fathers at Paris, indignant at the humiliation inflicted on the Sorbonne, and resolved to show that their college, despite its appellation, was not in any way implicated in the heresy of the Queen of Navarre, composed an allegorical play, which was publicly performed by four professors and several scholars in the great hall of the college. In the first act, Marguerite is represented sitting at her spinning-wheel ; a hideous Fury enters carrying a French translation of the Gospels, and the Queen drops her spindle in order to receive it. Then, after a good deal of dialogue between the various *dramatis personæ*, full of insolent allusions to the Reformers and their patroness, the play concludes with the transformation of Marguerite herself into a Fury and her departure for the infernal regions.

This outrageous attack upon the Queen of Navarre aroused widespread indignation, and even the persecuting Du Prat counselled the King to visit the offenders with condign punishment. François, beside himself with wrath at the insult to his sister and to his own dignity, needed no incitement to take vengeance upon these insolent churchmen ; and the Council forthwith issued a warrant directing the Provost of Paris to proceed to the Collège de Navarre and arrest the author and all concerned in the production of the play. The college authorities, however, having received warning of what was intended, prepared to resist ; and when the Provost, accompanied by a detachment of archers, arrived, he



## The Pearl of Princesses

found students and professors drawn up in battle-array, with their principal in his academic robes at their head, and was received with a volley of stones. The Provost sent for reinforcements, and, after a desperate struggle, the scholars tearing up their forms and desks to serve as weapons, the forces of the Law prevailed over those of the Church, and the latter surrendered. An inquiry was then held, though it failed to reveal the name of the author of the play, and, after the actors had been compelled to repeat their parts, they were marched off to the Conciergerie, together with their principal. That it would have gone hardly with them but for the intercession of the victim of their indecent buffoonery cannot be doubted, since they had outraged the King, not only in his affections, but in his royal dignity; and that was an offence which François never forgave. Marguerite, however, with real magnanimity, besought her brother to pardon them, even, it is said, on her knees, and very reluctantly the King consented. Accordingly, after being kept in prison for a while that they might have leisure to repent of their audacity, the culprits were set at liberty, with a severe admonition as to the terrible things that would befall them if they offended again. Nevertheless, the King was determined to make an example of some one, and, being suspicious either that the play had been performed at the instigation of Bédarides, or that he was actually the author of it, he exiled the combative syndic for two years.

Neither admiration for Marguerite's magnanimity nor dread of the King's resentment served to protect the Queen of Navarre from further attacks. The monks were particularly incensed against her, owing to the merciless manner in which, in her writings, she had

## Marguerite and the Franciscans

ridiculed their ignorance and exposed the shocking depravity then so common among them; and in an assembly held at Issoudun to devise measures for the more effectual suppression of heresy, the prior of the Franciscan monastery in that town—the Order of St. Francis was the favourite butt of Marguerite's satire—delivered a most violent harangue, in which he declared that, if this patroness of heretics had her deserts, she would be seized, tied up in a sack, and drowned in the Seine. No sooner were these words reported to the King than, in furious wrath, he sent orders to the authorities of Issoudun to arrest this insolent fanatic, vowing that he should suffer the same punishment as he had declared his sister to be worthy of. The monks, however, stirred up a riot among the populace, over whom they possessed great influence, and it was only with the greatest difficulty that the prior was eventually laid by the heels. Nor did the trouble end there, for, a few days later, the officer who had succeeded in executing the warrant was murdered, and his body dragged through the streets by the infuriated rabble. Notwithstanding this aggravation of the original offence, the prior escaped with his life, for once more the kind-hearted Queen of Navarre intervened between her enemies and her brother's vengeance. He was not allowed to go scot-free, however, being degraded from his ecclesiastical dignities and condemned to two years in the galleys.

## CHAPTER XXIII

To François I, the Peace of Cambrai was merely a truce to enable his exhausted kingdom to gather strength for fresh exertions ; he had no thought of abiding by it for a moment longer than it suited his convenience. For François's passion for Italy was the scourge of his reign ; it was the passion of a lover for a beautiful and capricious mistress, and the rebuffs which he had sustained only made him the more eager to prosecute his suit. And so, scarcely was the ink dry upon the parchment of the treaty than he was planning new combinations, with the ultimate object of once more gaining a footing in that fatal land which had already proved the grave of so many French armies.

Although the Papacy was not strong enough to unite Italy in opposition to foreign influence, it was, nevertheless, the pivot of the Italian political system, since it wielded a great influence, and could always foment a formidable opposition to any prince who aimed at the domination of the peninsula. François, therefore, determined to leave no stone unturned to detach, this time definitely, the scheming, shifty Pontiff from the Emperor, and after long and tortuous negotiations a marriage was arranged between his second son, the Duc d'Orléans, and Catherine de' Medici, daughter of Lorenzō de' Medici Duke of Urbino, and Madeleine de la Tour d'Auvergne, and a cousin *à la mode de Bretagne* of Clement VII, though he called her his niece. The marriage took place at Marseilles on October 28, 1533, with great magnificence, and



## Isabeau d'Albret

François promised himself great advantages from this close connexion with Clement, who had brought his niece to France and with whom he had numerous conferences. Unfortunately for him, the Pope did not live long enough to be able to fulfil his engagements, as in September of the following year his career of duplicity and prevarication was cut short by death. Consequently, François gained nothing by the marriage which he had been at such pains to bring about, not even the whole of Catherine's dowry, which was being paid by instalments, as the new Pontiff, Paul III, naturally refused to be bound by the obligations of his predecessor.

During the early months of 1534 the Queen of Navarre was engaged in negotiating a marriage between her sister-in-law, Isabeau d'Albret, the young lady whose charms have been immortalized by Clément Marot, and René, Vicomte de Rohan, a Breton noble of illustrious birth, but impoverished fortunes, upon whom she had set her affections. François, whose adopted daughter Isabeau was, at first strongly opposed the project, pointing out that the princess ought to look far higher for a husband, as her hand had already been demanded in marriage by more than one prince, though, for political reasons, their proposals had not been accepted, and that M. de Rohan was not only poor, but endowed with very extravagant tastes. Eventually, however, Marguerite succeeded in overcoming his objections, and in the following summer she set out for Brittany, to negotiate Isabeau's marriage-contract with the Rohans and to be present at the wedding.

While in Brittany, Marguerite was for a short while the guest of her brother's former inamorata, Madame de Chateaubriand, after which she proceeded to Alençon,

## The Pearl of Princesses

where she remained for some time. On the way thither she had an interview with the King at Rouen, in which she urged him to invite Melanchthon, the most moderate and persuasive of all the Reformers, to Paris, and offer him a professor's chair at the University, in order that he might confer with the theologians of France on the causes which had brought about the deplorable schism in the Church, and endeavour to arrive at some compromise acceptable to both parties. The Duchesse d'Étampes, whose good offices the Queen of Navarre had taken the precaution to enlist, supported her; and the two ladies represented to the King the advantages which he would derive in his struggle with the Emperor by acquiring the goodwill of the German Protestants.

François, much impressed by this argument, promised to give the matter serious consideration, and shortly afterwards offered Melanchthon, through the Archbishop of Senlis, a professorship in the University of Paris and a generous pension. Melanchthon replied thanking the King for his bounty, adding, however, that he could not leave the dominions of the Elector of Saxony without that prince's permission; and François therefore instructed Guillaume du Bellay, his Ambassador to the confederated princes of Germany, to approach the Elector on the subject. The latter readily gave his assent to Melanchthon's departure, predicting that his arrival in France would be followed by the speedy conversion of the whole nation to the Protestant creed; and everything seemed to favour Marguerite's schemes, when, at the request of Luther, Melanchthon decided to postpone his journey for a few weeks, in order to complete an important theological treatise against the Anabaptists, upon which he was then engaged. In explaining the cause of the delay to the King,

## Melanchthon invited to Paris

he sent a treatise embodying his views on reform, for Francis to submit to the Sorbonne. Melanchthon's treatise was condemned in the most sweeping terms by the University, and almost with one voice the cardinals and bishops protested against the proposal to invite this dangerous heretic to Paris. The King, prompted by Marguerite, refused to withdraw his invitation to the German Reformer, observing that, "in his opinion, he was profitably serving both God and man, by seeking, through the medium of conciliation, to heal the divisions in the Church." But this pronouncement served only to intensify the bitterness of the opposition. The bigoted Cardinal de Tournon, who dreaded lest Melanchthon, aided by the influence of the Queen of Navarre and the kind-hearted and tolerant Archbishop of Senlis, should prevail upon the King to repeal the edicts against heresy, was particularly bold in giving expression to his views. One morning he appeared at the King's *lever*, ostentatiously carrying a pretty and richly-bound volume. François inquired the title of the book. "It is a volume of the works of St. Irenæus," replied the cardinal. "I have just come upon the passage wherein this holy father relates that St. John, having unwittingly entered a public bath in company with the heretic Cerinthus, quitted it on the instant, refusing to remain longer in a place defiled by the presence of that blasphemer. Yet you, Sire, you are bold enough to invite Melanchthon into the heart of your dominions ; you fear not the power of the deadly poison of heresy which he diffuses with such subtle skill. It would appear, therefore, that your Majesty feels greater strength to resist temptation than the beloved disciple of Christ !" The King, we are told, vouchsafed no reply to this reproof, but shortly afterwards left Paris for Blois,



## The Pearl of Princesses

presumably to be out of the way of further episcopal remonstrances.

The Queen of Navarre, undeterred by the indignation which her project of bringing Melanchthon to Paris was arousing, or by the scarcely-veiled attacks which were continually being made upon her by the more fanatical preachers of the capital, solicited a licence from the King to enable Gérard Roussel and two Augustinian monks of decidedly heterodox views, named Berthaut and Courant, to preach in Paris, with the idea of preparing the way for Melanchthon's mission. This request was accorded by the King, and the singular spectacle was presented of ecclesiastics who only in name retained their obedience to the Holy See preaching publicly under royal protection, while, at the same time, the edicts for the suppression of heresy were being rigorously enforced against those who held less advanced opinions. Nothing could have been more calculated to exasperate the champions of orthodoxy, and the appearance of Roussel and the two monks in the pulpit was the signal for turbulent scenes.

While matters were in this state, an event occurred, whether the work of the fanatical element among the Protestants or of unscrupulous Catholics it is impossible to decide, which placed the Reformers hopelessly in the wrong, exasperated their enemies to the point of frenzy, and dissipated all hopes of the compromise between the rival parties for which the Queen of Navarre was striving.

On the night of October 18-19, 1534, the doors of all the public buildings and churches in Paris were covered with placards, assailing in the grossest terms the mysteries of the Catholic faith, and repudiating the Mass, the Host, the Prayers for the Dead : in a word, whatever was held

## The Affair of the Placards

most mystical and most sacred. The movement appeared to be simultaneous throughout France. In every large town throughout the realm similar placards appeared, and at Blois, where the King was then in residence, they were affixed to the gates of the château.

One universal cry of horror and indignation resounded throughout France; the Sorbonne clamoured for a general *auto-da-fé* of heretics as the only means of expiating so unspeakable an outrage, and even ardent Reformers bowed their heads in shame and sorrow at the abominable and blasphemous manner in which the most sacred subjects were treated.

The composition of these placards was ascribed to Farel, and they were supposed to have been printed at Neufchâtel, where he had taken refuge. But the Protestants denied most strenuously that they had been either composed or affixed by persons of their communion, and declared that they were the outcome of a dastardly conspiracy on the part of the Sorbonne and the Cardinal de Tournon to arouse the resentment of the King against the Reformers and counteract the efforts of the Queen of Navarre in favour of toleration. Such undoubtedly was the view of Marguerite herself, who, in a letter to her brother some years later, reminds him of "the opinions that she formerly expressed to him relative to those abominable placards, namely, that they were affixed by persons who would fain prove others guilty of their own misdemeanour"; and, when we consider the exasperation which had been excited among the more bigoted Catholics at the project of bringing Melancthon to Paris, it must be admitted that she may quite possibly have been right. On the other hand, we must bear in mind that there was an element among the Reformers which, in its hatred of

## The Pearl of Princesses

what it called idolatry, was capable of committing any folly or extravagance.

The King at once left Blois and proceeded to Paris, to investigate the matter. On the very night of his return the placards appeared again ; they were on all the public buildings, on all the churches, on the walls of the Louvre, yes, even on the doors of the King's private apartments, as though in insolent defiance of the royal authority.

François, equally outraged in his dignity and in his faith, ordered the *Parlement* to institute the most rigorous inquiry ; Gérard Roussel and the two Augustinian monks were arrested and thrown into prison, and their apprehension was followed by that of numbers of persons suspected of favouring the new doctrines. Every church in Paris rang with denunciation of the Reformers and demands for their extermination. Béda, but lately returned from exile, mounted the pulpit and delivered an impassioned harangue against the King, whose misplaced leniency towards heretics, he declared, was responsible for these outrages. François, exasperated by his insolence, banished him a second time ; but the syndic's words had struck home ; and he determined to show no mercy.

As the result of its investigations, the *Parlement* declared that it had discovered a plot on the part of the heretics to murder all the faithful assembled in Paris at Mass on a given day. Nothing could be more ridiculous than such a charge, and at any other time the so-called proofs would not have stood the most superficial examination ; but such was the frenzy against the Protestants that it was eagerly accepted by the Council as a pretext for carrying on the persecution with relentless severity.



## Marguerite attacked by the Bigots

Meantime, Marguerite had returned to Nérac. Here she learned of the Affair of the Placards. Her dismay was great, particularly when she was informed of the arrest of Roussel, for whom she hastened to intercede ; but her enemies now possessed the King's ear, and she was informed that her almoner's trial would have to take its course. Emboldened by their success, and believing that the influence of the Queen of Navarre over her brother was on the decline, the Cardinal de Tournon and the fanatical party in the Council did not hesitate to affirm that she was herself an heretic ; upon which François angrily informed them that he would summon his sister to Paris, that she might answer her accusers in person. She came at once, not a little to the consternation of the bigots, who infinitely preferred to combat her influence while she remained at a distance. François received her with great severity, laid the blame of all the troubles upon the encouragement which she had given to the Reformers, and told her that women who followed new doctrines were hateful, and that she must alter her ways. She defended herself, protesting that all that she had done had been done with one object, the union of the Church, presented the king with a copy of *la Messe à sept points*, and urged him not to surrender to the clamour of the Sorbonne. François rejoined, with somewhat ominous wit, that *la Messe à sept points* "smelled of faggots." In great alarm Marguerite chose an orthodox confessor and took the Holy Communion, which had the effect of silencing her accusers ; and, finally, the King relented so far that Roussel was set at liberty and allowed to return to his abbey in Béarn ; while her monastic *protégés*, Berthaut and Courant, having tendered a recantation of their opinions and assumed the habit of their

## The Pearl of Princesses

Order, were also released.<sup>1</sup> Marguerite likewise succeeded in procuring the release of certain German Reformers arrested in Paris for their supposed connivance in the *Affair of the Placards*, who were handed over to commissioners appointed by their several sovereigns to be punished or not as was deemed advisable. But to his own subjects François was pitiless; and, despite his gentle sister's prayers and entreaties, several unhappy Lutherans were condemned to the stake; and it was decided that their execution should be preceded by a great public procession to Notre-Dame, in which the King announced his intention of taking part, with all his Court.

Finding her intercession of no avail, Marguerite entreated of her brother permission to return to Béarn; and this he reluctantly accorded, to the intense chagrin of the Cardinal de Tournon and the Sorbonne, whose triumph would have been complete, had the heretic queen been forced to walk in the procession and give an apparent sanction to the horrible scenes which were to follow it.

Early in January 1535, Marguerite set out on her journey to the South with a heavy heart, for it must have seemed to her as though all her dreams of culture, beneficence, and toleration had crumbled to nothing, and that France had returned to the gloomy fanaticism of the Dark Ages. A few days later (January 21), the expiatory procession which François had commanded traversed Paris from the Louvre to Notre-Dame, carrying with it all the relics of all the shrines in the capital. The King walked in the procession, bareheaded, with a

<sup>1</sup> Berthaut remained in the bosom of the Church; but Courant fled to Geneva, where he became an ardent disciple of Calvin.

## An Expiatory Procession

lighted taper in his hand, and with him went his sons, the Princes of the Blood, the grand officers of the Crown, the foreign ambassadors, the cardinals, archbishops and bishops, the gentlemen of the Royal Household, the officials of the Sorbonne, the *Parlement*, the Provost of Paris and the municipal authorities, the guilds of the capital, and monks and priests without number. The Host was borne aloft by the Bishop of Paris, under a canopy of crimson velvet, spangled with *fleurs-de-lis*, supported by the Dauphin and his two younger brothers, and the Duc de Vendôme, first Prince of the Blood.

On the arrival of the procession at Notre-Dame, the Host was reverently deposited on the high altar by the Bishop of Paris, and, the Queen and her ladies having arrived, High Mass was celebrated. On its termination, the royal party proceeded to the bishop's palace, where François dined *au grand couvert* with the Queen and the princes. Then the King gave orders that as many as the hall could contain should be admitted, and, ascending the throne, addressed them in words which sounded strange indeed in the mouth of him who enjoyed the reputation of being the most enlightened monarch of his time. But, at that moment, François was no longer the "Father of Letters," but the gloomy fanatic of the Middle Ages. He spoke, with tears in his eyes, of the unspeakable outrage offered to all that they esteemed most holy, "through the machinations of certain wicked and blasphemous men of mean condition"; he denounced in burning words the enemies of God and the Church. "And if my own right arm," he cried, in conclusion, "were infected with the heretical pestilence, I would cut it off and cast it from me; and, if one of my children were so miserable as to favour it, I would with my own hand



## The Pearl of Princesses

deliver him up to the just doom of the heretic and the blasphemer." Murmurs of applause rose from the assembly, and when the King had finished his address, the Bishop of Paris advanced, and, kneeling before the throne, humbly thanked his Majesty for his gracious speech, in the name of the clergy of the realm.

From the bishop's palace, François, followed by his Court, repaired to the Place de Grève, to see the fires lighted which were to consume the victims whose sufferings were to conclude this day of atonement: "three Lutherans," says the Bourgeois of Paris, "and a clerk of the Châtelet, and a fruiterer, and the wife of a cobbler, and a schoolmaster; this last for eating meat on Friday." These hapless persons were not burned in the usual manner; to propitiate an outraged Deity, or rather to gratify the savage vindictiveness of the Sorbonne, their sufferings were prolonged as long as possible. Fastened by iron chains to a lofty gibbet, they were lowered into the fire; then hauled up and exhorted to make recantation, and, on their refusal, let down again into the flames. So it continued until death put an end to their torments. According to some historians, even the Queen and the ladies of the Court were obliged to witness this horrible scene, and were only permitted to retire when Madame d'Étampes complained of the sickening odour of the burning flesh. But, as the Bourgeois of Paris does not mention the presence of the King at the actual sacrifice, it is probable that the Court returned to the Louvre after seeing the preparations completed.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> In 1548, Henri II was present at the burning of a Protestant tailor, who had grossly insulted the King's mistress, Diane de Poitiers, in the royal presence. "But never since that time," writes Théodore de Bèze, "did the King wish to assist at this spectacle, by which he was so horrified, that he said on several occasions afterwards that it seemed

## The Fires of Persecution

The wrath of the King was not yet appeased ; a horror of his own laxity seemed to be upon him, and throughout the winter and spring of 1535 the burnings continued ; until the Lutheran princes of Germany, whose alliance he so much desired against the Emperor, complained bitterly of his severity towards persons whose only crime was the profession of a creed which they themselves held ; until even the new Pope, Paul III, felt obliged to interfere, and “require the Very Christian King to appease his anger and to pardon.” Then, at last, François consented to stay his hand, and shortly afterwards, hostilities with Charles V having begun again, veered round once more towards Reform ; and when the irrepressible Bêda reappeared upon the scene, and, disdainingly to learn wisdom from experience, began to upbraid his Majesty publicly with encouraging heretics, caused him to be brought to trial on a charge of high treason, and, after doing public penance in a sheet and with a lighted taper in his hand before the porch of Notre-Dame, “for having spoken malignantly and falsely of his sovereign lord the king,” to be imprisoned in the fortress of Mont Saint-Michel, where he died eighteen months later.

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to him that on the following night he saw this person, and that even in the daytime the fear came over him that he was following him ; in consequence of which, he swore that he would never again witness a burning, so dearly had he paid for this pleasure.”

## CHAPTER XXIV

ALTHOUGH the death of Clement VII, in September 1534, had deprived him of the expected support of the Papacy, François was none the less determined to challenge his arch-enemy's supremacy in Italy. Already, indeed, he had found a spacious pretext for disturbing the peace of Europe, in the arrest and execution by Francesco Sforza, after a summary trial, of one Maraviglia, a secret agent of his, on a charge of having hired *bravi* to assassinate a gentleman of Milan who had insulted him; and, in default of the Holy Father, sought the assistance of the Commander of the Faithful, Soliman II, with whom he concluded a secret alliance, which stipulated that, while the King of France invaded the Milanese, the Ottoman fleet should make a descent on the Neapolitan coasts. Pope or Sultan, it was all the same to this Very Christian King, if, by the aid of one or the other, he could contrive to regain a footing in Italy!

Just as François was preparing to fulfil his part of this odious contract, Francesco Sforza died, leaving no heir (October 24, 1535), whereupon Imperial troops promptly entered the Milanese and occupied it, as a fief which had reverted to its suzerain. The King of France, on his side, lost no time in demanding the duchy for the Duc d'Orléans, and, not receiving a satisfactory reply, requested of Charles III, Duke of Savoy, a passage for the French army through his States. This being refused, he revived a frivolous and long-



## War breaks out Again

abandoned claim of Louise of Savoy to her father's dominions, and early in February 1536 despatched an army under Chabot de Brion and the Comte de Saint-Pol across the frontier. Neither in Savoy nor in Piedmont did the French meet with any serious resistance, and by the middle of March Turin and nearly all the towns of Piedmont had opened their gates to the invaders.

Had the victorious French marched at once into the Milanese, they might have subdued it with almost equal facility, for the Imperialists there were too weak to offer an effective resistance. But François, unwilling to take the offensive against the Emperor so long as there remained any chance of an accommodation, allowed Charles to delude him with negotiations into which that astute monarch had entered with no other object than that of gaining time to send reinforcements to Lombardy; and when hostilities began, the invasion of the duchy was no longer possible, and the King was obliged to act on the defensive. However, the Marchese di Saluzzo, a shifty Italian to whom he had been imprudent enough to entrust the command in Piedmont, deserted to the Emperor, and by the end of June the French had been driven in confusion across the Alps. The garrisons of Turin, Pinerolo, and one or two other places alone held out.

Charles, whose recent triumphant expedition against Barbarossa and his pirate hordes appears to have encouraged him to depart from his usual caution, now determined on the invasion of Provence, and, though Antonio de Leyva, who had a lively recollection of the fiasco of 1524, besought him to forgo so hazardous an undertaking, his remonstrances were unheeded, and on July 25 the Emperor crossed the Var at the head

## The Pearl of Princesses

of 50,000 men ; while, almost simultaneously, another army under the Comtes de Nassau and de Rœux invaded Picardy from the Netherlands.

François entrusted the defence of Provence to Anne de Montmorency, who, with the authorization of the King, had recourse to the barbarous expedient of laying waste the whole of the country from the sea to the Durance, and from the Alps to the Rhône, in order to arrest the invader. Vineyards, oliveyards, mills, and bakehouses were ruthlessly destroyed, cattle driven away, wine-casks emptied into the gutters, wells filled up, and even towns burned to the ground. Thousands of the unhappy peasants perished of starvation, and the fields were strewn with dead bodies. Meanwhile, Montmorency had seized Avignon, despite the protests of the vice-legate who commanded for the pope in the Venaissin, and had formed an entrenched camp between the Durance and the Rhône ; while the King established himself at Valence, in order to be near at hand in case of emergency.

Henri d'Albret, in his twofold quality of King of Navarre and Governor of Guienne, showed great activity in raising troops for the assistance of his brother-in-law, while Marguerite superintended defensive measures in Béarn. Since, however, there did not appear to be much likelihood of any hostile movement on the part of the Spaniards, and she was anxious to be nearer the seat of war, she obtained permission from her husband to join the King at Valence. At Montfrin, near Nîmes, where the illness of her lady-of-honour, the Sénéchale de Poitou, compelled her to make a stay of some days, she inspected a troop of a thousand Gascons, which had been raised by Jean de Montpezat, Comte

## Marguerite visits the Army

de Carmain, a cadet of the house of Foix, surnamed from his swarthy complexion the Comte de Carbon; and we find her writing to Montmorency: "Do not hurry yourself about providing guards for the bank of the Rhône whilst we remain in the neighbourhood, for we will keep good watch. If the Emperor could only behold the swarthy faces of the soldiers in our troop, who are all of Carbon's complexion, it would so frighten him that he would not dare approach us. If our Basques prove themselves equally serviceable people, I am sure you will feel satisfied with them."

From Nîmes, Marguerite journeyed up the Rhône to Valence to visit the King, who received her with great delight. "When I arrived," she writes to Montmorency, "the King was on the ramparts, superintending the fortifications which he is having constructed. When he saw me, his face expressed so much joy, and he gave me so warm a welcome, that, at any rate, I was assured that my arrival had not increased his many troubles."

Marguerite only made a short stay at Valence, and then set out for Montfrin, to meet the King of Navarre and review the troops which he was bringing from Guienne. On the way, she visited Montmorency's camp at Avignon, which, she informs François, she had found "a most salubrious place, clean almost as a private cabinet, and filled with numbers of fine men, whose countenances and speech prove the ardour to do you service which inspires them."

Such, indeed, was the dread which the Grand Master inspired among those whom he commanded that his lines resembled a well-governed city rather than a camp composed of soldiers of various nationalities. Never was there a more terrible martinet. For the



## The Pearl of Princesses

slightest symptoms of insubordination he ordered death or torture, and sentence once passed on an offender, nothing could induce him to mitigate it. A devout Catholic, he was most punctilious in the discharge of his religious duties. "Never," says Brantôme, "did he fail in his devotions or his prayers, and there was not a morning on which he omitted to say his Paternosters." But he adds that "Beware of the Constable's<sup>1</sup> Paternosters" became a saying in the Army, "for, as he muttered them, he used to interject orders in connexion with justice, police, or military matters, such as: 'Hang me that man! Tie that fellow up to yonder tree! Run him through with your pikes! Burn that village!' without, however, interrupting his prayers until he had finished them."

Marguerite was received with every honour by Montmorency, and, attended by him, inspected every part of the camp, being greeted with great enthusiasm by the soldiers. Afterwards, she requested that the chief officers should be presented to her, to each of whom she paid some graceful compliment, since "this princess had great tact, making many apt speeches, and teaching others to become communicative. For which reason, the King placed great reliance on her, and used to say that she afforded him signal aid."<sup>2</sup>

After spending a day or two at Avignon, the Queen of Navarre proceeded to Montfrin, where her husband received her at the head of his troops, which were drawn up in battle-array. "Monseigneur," she writes to her brother, "I came yesterday to this place [Montfrin], where are the levies of the King of Navarre,

<sup>1</sup> Montmorency received the *bâton* of Constable in 1539.

<sup>2</sup> Brantôme.

## Retreat of the Imperialists

which I have inspected in battle-array. I will say nothing of the men-at-arms, but there are few soldiers better mounted than our light horse. You will be pleased with the Gascons, and would to God the Emperor would make an attempt to cross the Rhône while I am here ! For, with the succour you propose to send (and we should not need much), I will gladly undertake—mere woman though I be—to defend the passage.”

The Emperor did not attempt to cross the Rhône. He advanced without encountering any serious opposition as far as Aix, which he occupied ; but there his success terminated. The country round had been so remorselessly devastated as to be incapable of supporting a single division, much less an army ; the supplies which the Imperialist fleet landed at Toulon were repeatedly intercepted by the starving peasantry, and famine and disease wrought havoc among the invaders. Finally, towards the middle of September, when nearly half his army was either dead or unfit for service—among the former being his best general, Antonio de Leyva—Charles, learning that his communications were threatened by a rising of the French party in Liguria, decided to retreat. On September 23 he repassed the Var with the wreck of his army, and made his way to Genoa, where he embarked for Barcelona, in order, according to a *bon-mot* of the time, “to inter in Spain his honour, which had died in Provence.”

Victory had attended the arms, or rather the strategy of the French ; but the expulsion of the Imperialists had been only gained at the expense of the devastation of the fairest province of the realm, and the joy which the retreat of the invader occasioned was further discounted by a calamity which might well have been regarded by the

## The Pearl of Princesses

devout as a judgment upon the King for all the misery to which his restless ambition had condemned his unhappy subjects, and which was to change profoundly the future of France.

The Dauphin François had remained at Lyons, awaiting the orders of the King to rejoin him. This prince, now in his twentieth year, had to some degree abandoned the gravity and reserve which had aroused so much surprise on his return from Spain, though he still continued to affect the most sombre colours in his dress and to drink principally water. In his relations with the fair sex he is said to have been far less austere, and had selected a mistress from among the Queen's maids-of-honour; "a very modest and virtuous girl," says Brantôme, whose first cousin the lady was, "for the great choose their mistresses as much for their virtues as for other qualities." If, however, Monsieur le Dauphin shared the paternal susceptibility to feminine charms, he appears to have been an intelligent and level-headed youth, who gave every promise of one day making an excellent king.

The day before that on which the Dauphin was to leave Lyons, he went to play tennis at Ainay. As the weather was intensely hot, the prince soon became very thirsty, and despatched one of his pages to draw him some water from a neighbouring well. The page hurried off, taking with him a Portuguese pitcher which had been given his master by Doña Agnese Pachecho, *dame d'honneur* to Queen Eleanor. This pitcher, Brantôme tells us, was of a peculiar clay, "which was said to possess the virtues of keeping the water cool and, at the same time, preventing it having any injurious effect, even when imbibed after



## Death of the Dauphin François

violent exercise." A rather hazardous assertion in view of what followed.

While the page was raising the bucket from the well, a certain Count Sebastano di Montecuculi, a nobleman of Ferrara, who held the post of sewer in the Dauphin's Household, approached and took up the pitcher, as though to examine its workmanship.

Having drawn the water, the page, without waiting to rinse the pitcher, filled it and returned to the Dauphin, who emptied it almost at a draught, for, though he seldom touched wine, it was his habit to drink immoderate quantities of water. Shortly afterwards, he was seized with agonizing pains and nausea, and five days later (August 10), despite all the efforts of the doctors who attended him, he was dead.

It was an age when the death of noble persons was continually attributed to foul play—not infrequently, it must be admitted, with good reason—and though modern historians are agreed that the death of the Dauphin was due to an attack of pleurisy, occasioned by his imprudence in drinking a copious draught of cold water after taking violent exercise on a hot summer's day, the physicians were unanimously of opinion that he had been poisoned. Suspicion naturally pointed to Montecuculi, who, it was pointed out, might easily have slipped some deadly poison into the pitcher while the page was engaged in drawing the water. Unhappily for the supposed culprit, he appears to have been a student of toxicology, as a great many of his countrymen were in those days, generally for very practical reasons; and when he was arrested, a packet of arsenic was found at his lodging. He was immediately put to the *question*, and, to curtail his sufferings, confessed that he had poisoned the

## The Pearl of Princesses

Dauphin, and added that he had been bribed by the Imperialist generals Antonio de Leyva and Ferdinando di Gonzaga, cousin of the Duke of Mantua, who, he understood, were acting under superior authority, to remove the King himself and his two other sons by the same means. He was brought to trial and condemned to be dismembered by horses ; and this barbarous sentence was duly carried out at Lyons, in the presence of the King and the whole Court, including even the ladies (October 7, 1536).

After the execution, François addressed a circular letter to the German Protestant princes, wherein he acquainted them with all the details of his eldest son's death and the fate of the supposed criminal, and openly accused the two Imperialist generals of having instigated Montecuculi to the commission of the deed. Antonio de Leyva had died at Aix in September ; but Gonzaga indignantly protested against such an accusation, and expressed his readiness to meet in arms all who dared to impeach his honour. The Cardinal de Granvelle, the Imperial Chancellor, wrote a letter intended to demonstrate the utter absurdity of such reports, and to exculpate, not only Leyva and Gonzaga, but also his master, who was accused by implication ; and the Duke of Mantua sent an Ambassador Extraordinary to the French Court to defend his cousin. Eventually, the charge was allowed to drop ; and, indeed, it was one in which it was impossible to persist, since the only persons to profit by the removal of the unfortunate prince were the Duc d'Orléans and his wife, who now found themselves on the highest step of the throne.

The Queen of Navarre was very active in her brother's interests during the winter and spring which followed

## Marguerite in Picardy

Charles V's disastrous invasion of Provence. Towards the end of the year 1536, she was in Brittany, where she was again the guest of the Chateaubriands, inquiring, apparently, into the condition of affairs in that province, where considerable disaffection existed among the garrison of Brest, owing to their pay being in arrears. In the spring of 1537 we find her in Picardy, the Imperialist invasion of which had likewise been repulsed the previous year, but which was soon to be subjected to another, inspecting Théroouanne, Boulogne, Amiens, and other fortresses. At the same time, she did not forget the interests of her husband, and writes to demand the despatch of a force to the frontiers of Béarn, to guard against any surprise on the part of the Spaniards, and to recommend Montmorency to place the kingdom of Navarre "in the hands of him who was deprived of it for having declared himself French. . . . It will be an action very much redounding to the King's honour," she continues, "if he should succeed in restoring the heritage of his brother-in-law, and would afford a notable example to all princes that the King never omits to reward good service." Montmorency, however, had no desire to forward the interests of the King of Navarre, though, as Marguerite's friendship was still of use to him, and he looked to it to assist him to the goal of his ambition—the *bâton* of Constable of France—he was careful not to allow her to suspect it; nor is it probable that François, even if he had wished to do so, could have succeeded in exacting from Charles V a kingdom incorporated in every respect with the Spanish monarchy.

In June, Marguerite was called upon to nurse her husband, who had fallen ill of a malignant fever which was ravaging the country, and had carried off a number



## The Pearl of Princesses

of well-known persons, including the Duc de Vendôme. For several days Henri d'Albret's life was despaired of, but eventually he recovered, and so soon as he was well enough to travel, set out with his wife for Guienne, where an incursion of the Spanish was apprehended. On the way, however, they were overtaken by a courier from François, with orders to the King of Navarre to join him at Lyons, where he was assembling an army for a fresh expedition across the Alps, and an authorization for Marguerite to discharge the functions of Governor of Guienne during her husband's absence.

The Queen undertook these responsible duties with her usual energy and courage, and in the course of the next few weeks traversed nearly the whole of Guienne, Béarn, and Gascony, visiting the various towns and fortresses, inspecting the garrisons, and conferring with their commanders. Her sojourn at Bordeaux afforded her an opportunity of intervening on behalf of Andrew Melanchthon, brother of the celebrated Reformer, who had been arrested and imprisoned in the Conciergerie, for preaching in the town of Agen. In her character of governor, she went down in state to the Palais de Justice and demanded his release of the *Parlement* of Bordeaux, which was accorded, on condition that he betook himself and his doctrines beyond the borders of Guienne.

In October, Marguerite received orders from her brother to join him at Lyons, as he wished to take leave of her before he set out for Italy. After spending some days with the King, whom she found full of confidence in regard to the result of his coming descent into the fatal plains of Lombardy, she proceeded, at his desire, to Fontainebleau, where both Queen Eleanor and the Dauphine lay ill of the fever which was still ravaging



MARGUERITE D'ANGOULÊME, QUEEN OF NAVARRE.





## Illness of Jeanne d'Albret

the north and centre of France, and of which François himself had had a slight attack. Fortunately, both the illustrious ladies were soon convalescent, and on their recovery the Court removed for the winter from Fontainebleau to Saint-Germain-en-Laye.

In the last days of December, the Queen of Navarre was in Paris, when she received a message from Plessis-Tours that her little daughter, who had just completed her ninth year, was lying seriously ill of fever and dysentery. The journey from the capital to that town was no light matter in those days, and when the news arrived, night was falling, few of her servants were at hand, and none of her travelling equipages available. Nevertheless, she refused to wait until the morning, and having summoned those of her attendants whom she had brought with her, and borrowing a litter from her niece, Madame Marguerite, set out for Touraine.

Rain was falling in torrents and the roads were in a terrible condition, and, on reaching Bourg-la-Reine, her people besought her to remain there for a while. To this she reluctantly consented, but before going to the lodging which had been prepared for her, entered the church accompanied only by her *dame d'honneur*, the Sénéchale of Poitou, bidding the rest of her suite await her in the porch, "as her heart was very heavy with a presentiment of her daughter's approaching death." Advancing to the high altar, she prostrated herself before it, weeping bitterly and accusing her own sins as the cause of her child's illness. When she rose again, she was calm, and, as she rejoined her attendants, exclaimed: "Now have I indeed good hope of God's mercy; and in faith do I humbly rely that He will restore my child to me." She then proceeded to her lodging and sat down to

## The Pearl of Princesses

supper, "discoursing all through the meal of God's pity and mercy, and the miseries and tribulations of men, with a great gravity of language."<sup>1</sup>

After supper, Marguerite dismissed her attendants, and, taking up the Bible, opened it at the prayer of Hezekiah, which she took as a good omen. At that moment she heard in the distance the sound of a horn, which in those days heralded the approach of a royal courier, and shortly afterwards the horseman galloped up the street and drew rein before the door of the inn. Going to the window, she threw it open and inquired whence he came, and what news he brought; but not receiving any reply, for her voice was drowned by the noise and confusion attending his arrival, she concluded that he must be the bearer of ill tidings, and, overpowered by grief, fell on her knees and covered her face with her hands. Thus she was found by the Bishop of Séz, when he entered the room a few minutes later. "Ah, Monsieur de Séz," she exclaimed, rising slowly to her feet, "do you come to tell a sorrowing mother of the death of her only child? I know full well that she is now with God." Such was her state that the bishop had some difficulty in making her comprehend that he was the bearer of good news, and that her daughter had been pronounced out of danger. "Upon which she lifted her hands to Heaven and gave thanks to God."

The Queen of Navarre remained for a day or two at Bourg-la-Reine, since she was worn out with fatigue and anxiety, and then continued her journey to Plessis-les-Tours, where she assisted in nursing the little invalid back to health. Scarcely, however, was Jeanne able to

<sup>1</sup> Sainte-Marthe.

## Generosity of Marguerite

leave her bed, than Marguerite found herself obliged to make a hurried journey to Boisgency in Brittany, in response to the piteous entreaty of her sister-in-law, Isabeau d'Albret, whose husband, the improvident Vicomte de Rohan, had mismanaged his affairs so disastrously that he was on the verge of total ruin. The generous princess had already provided for the three children of the marriage, obtaining for the boys appointments as pages to the Dauphin, which insured them maintenance and education free from all expense to their parents, and taking the girl, Françoise de Rohan, under her own protection; and she now offered to place Isabeau with her daughter at Plessis-les-Tours, until the viscount had succeeded in re-establishing his affairs—which, as a matter of fact, he never did. The expenses of Isabeau's household—no inconsiderable item, by the way—were liquidated by Marguerite from her own revenues, with some assistance from the King. That sprightly young lady was therefore spared the humiliation of returning to Béarn as a pensioner on her brother's bounty, which would have been the more distressing, as she was about to present the viscount with another pledge of her affection.

Meanwhile, the French in Italy had been carrying all before them. Montmorency, with the vanguard of the invading army, forced the pass of Susa, descended the valley of the Dora, and compelled the Imperialists to raise the siege of Turin and fall back across the Po. Then, on receiving reinforcements, he pressed on, obliged them to take refuge under the cannon of Asti, and by the time the King with the remainder of the army joined him, had succeeded in reducing the whole country



## The Pearl of Princesses

between the Po and the Tanaro. Everything seemed to encourage the most flattering hopes, when suddenly negotiations took the place of hostilities. Paul III, eager to unite Christendom against the Turk, who had just inflicted a crushing defeat upon Ferdinand of Austria at Essek, on the Drave, pressed his mediation on the belligerents, and, on November 16, 1537, an armistice for three months was signed at Monçon; while, in the following June, as the outcome of a conference at Nice, a ten years' truce was concluded between the rivals, which left each in possession of the territory which he occupied at the moment of its signature.

Thus, France retained Savoy and the greater part of Piedmont, and for the first time since the campaign of Marignano a war ended to the advantage of François, who, with the Alpine passes and the strongest fortresses in Piedmont in his hands, found himself in a singularly favourable position for prosecuting his designs on the Milanese. Nevertheless, in the opinion of many historians, the King committed a grave error in concluding peace at a moment when the Emperor, threatened by the Turks, hampered by the German Protestants, unpopular in Northern Italy, where his soldiers lived by rapine and plunder, and unable to count on any effective support from the Netherland provinces, where the town of Ghent was in full revolt, found himself in a most critical situation. But the reproaches of the Pope on his sacrilegious alliance with Soliman filled him with remorse, and, after having borne all the odium of the Turkish alliance, he abandoned it just when he might have derived from it substantial advantages.

There can be no doubt that Montmorency's influence counted for much in this decision. One of the most

## The Aigues-Mortes Interview

bigoted of Catholics, the Grand Master's conscience revolted against alliances with infidels and heretics, and, though he did his duty against the Imperialists in the field, he was always a consistent advocate of peace with the Emperor, insomuch that his enemies did not hesitate to accuse him of preferring the interests of Rome to those of France.

To the same influence may be traced the ostentatious reconciliation between the two rivals, which, to the profound astonishment of Europe, took place at Aigues-Mortes a month later. It was commonly reported that Charles's galley had been obliged to take shelter in that harbour by stress of weather, but it seems more probable that the meeting was a prearranged one. Any way, before the Emperor quitted the shores of France, the King, lured on by the bait of the Milanese, had promised to abandon the German Protestants, to give no encouragement to the Ghent burghers, and to aid Charles in his struggle against the infidel and his efforts for Catholic unity. It was the beginning of an entirely new policy, which was to cost France dear.

## CHAPTER XXV

THE untimely death of the Dauphin François had brought about a great change at the Court of France. Henri, the King's second son—the taciturn, melancholy Henri, with his olive skin, his long, straight nose, and his lustreless black eyes—now stood upon the highest step of the throne. And at his elbow stood a woman—a woman already approaching her fortieth year, but still eminently seductive: tall and splendidly proportioned, with jet-black hair, fine eyes, regular features and a dazzling complexion, which certain of her contemporaries believed to have been due to the possession of some wonderful elixir, but which, in point of fact, she owed to healthy exercise, early hours and the regular use of cold water. This woman was the celebrated Diane de Poitiers, widow of Louis de Brézé, Grand Sénéchal of Normandy, and she was to govern Henri for the rest of his life.

It is related, and the anecdote has been accepted by such authorities on the period as Niel and Bouchot, that, annoyed at the melancholy humour and uncouth manners of his heir, François had, so to speak, thrown the lady into the Dauphin's arms, with instructions to polish him a little. "They say," writes Le Laboureur, "that, one day after the death of the Dauphin François, the King having expressed to her [Diane] his displeasure at the little animation which he saw in the Prince Henri, she told him that he must be made to fall in love, and



## Diane de Poitiers

that she would make him her gallant.”<sup>1</sup> If this anecdote be true, it confirms the supposition that the affair did not begin until Henri had become heir to the throne and a quarry worthy of the pursuit of so haughty and ambitious a lady as the Grande Sénéchale.

Never was quarry pursued with more determination or with more adroitness. To assure a greater and more durable ascendancy, Diane was in no hurry to complete the young prince's subjugation, but posed before every one as the mentor of youth and inexperience, the guide of the future King of France towards noble thoughts and generous actions; encouraging the taciturn, reserved lad to converse freely with her—a thing which it is doubtful if he had ever done before with any human being—to express opinions to which he had never yet dared to give utterance, to open his mind to her and to make her the confidante of his hopes and fears.

Henri was completely fascinated. His had been a dreary, almost friendless, existence. He had lost his mother when he was a child; he was perhaps the least loved of all François's children; he disliked his younger brother, who presumed on the King's indulgence to give himself intolerable airs, and he had no affection for his wife, whom he despised, because she was not of royal birth, and whose reputation for cleverness made him feel awkward and constrained in her presence. Craving companionship and sympathy, it is not surprising that he should have yielded himself unreservedly to the counsels of the new Egeria.

For a time, the *liaison* was conducted with such circumspection that the Court appears to have been

<sup>1</sup> Le Laboureur, *Additions aux Mémoires de Castelneau*, vol. i. "Gallant" must be here understood in the Platonic sense.

## The Pearl of Princesses

completely deceived as to the lady's intentions, and so shrewd an observer as the Venetian Ambassador, Marino Cavalli, wrote that her affection for her royal pupil was "like that of a mother for a son." But, while awakening Henri's intellectual powers, she had not failed to awaken his dormant passions as well, for "she knew what Catherine was absolutely ignorant of, and she had studied her prince with the pitiless penetration of an anatomist."<sup>1</sup> Soon he was completely in her toils, and his initiation into the mysteries of love was proceeding simultaneously with his instruction in courtly manners and the duties of his exalted position.

Although bitterly humiliated at her husband's preference for another woman, Catherine's innate talent for dissimulation came to her aid, and not only did she refrain from reproaching him, but she treated the S<sup>én</sup>échale with the same courtesy as before; and the curious sought in vain for any indication of the jealousy and hatred which consumed her, and which the necessity for repression served only to aggravate.

Nevertheless, Diane was not permitted to triumph with impunity. For some years past Madame d'Étampes had regarded the S<sup>én</sup>échale, who was one of the few women at the Court who declined to acknowledge her ascendancy, with far from friendly feelings, and that lady's conquest of the Dauphin roused her slumbering hatred to malignant activity. Great as was the influence she exercised, she knew that it must terminate with the King's life, and she feared the moment when the favourite of the Dauphin would reign in her place and be in a position to mete out to her the same treatment which she had received at her hands. It is true that François was still in the prime of

<sup>1</sup> Bouchot, *Catharine de Médicis*.

## Rival Sultanas

life, and that, in the ordinary course of Nature, he might be expected to reign for many years ; but none knew better than she that the King's health was already undermined by the excesses of his youth, and that it would probably not be so very long before the sceptre passed to another. She accordingly determined to employ every means in her power to expel the enemy from the citadel she had captured before that moment arrived.

Then began a bitter strife between the two sultanas : the duchess, in the hope of making the Dauphin ashamed of his choice, letting slip no opportunity of expressing her astonishment that the prince should have had the bad taste to choose for his mistress a "toothless, wrinkled hag," who, she asserted, had been married on the same day on which she herself was born—there was, as a matter of fact, only nine years difference between them ; while Diane retaliated by assailing the reputation of Madame d'Étampes, whom she accused, not without good grounds, it would appear, of infidelity to her royal lover.

The antagonism between the two women became a veritable war, which divided the Court into two hostile camps. Madame d'Étampes favoured those who viewed the Reformation with approval ; Diane declared openly for the suppression of heresy. The duchess had for allies Chabot de Brion, who was regarded as the King's rival in her affections, her uncle, Antoine Sanguin, Archbishop of Orléans, most of the men of letters—some of whom did not hesitate to prostitute their pens in their patroness's service, and composed biting epigrams at the expense of her rival<sup>1</sup>—and the majority of the

<sup>1</sup> Notably Jean Vouté, who in 1537 published, under the name of Vulteijs, a collection of Latin verses, in which he assailed the favourite of the Dauphin with a licence worthy of Martial.



## The Pearl of Princesses

courtiers, who naturally preferred to worship the risen planet rather than one who might be many years before it reached its zenith. The Sénéchale was assured of the support of the Cardinal de Lorraine, who shared her hatred of the new doctrines, less from sincere religious conviction than from fear of losing his benefices and episcopates, of the cardinal's three nephews, the elder sons of the Duc de Guise,<sup>1</sup> of certain ladies whom the jealousy of Madame d'Étampes had excluded from the royal circle, and of those courtiers who had the foresight to sacrifice present to future advantages. But her most influential adherent was Montmorency, for the moment the most powerful personage at Court. Montmorency detested Madame d'Étampes, who had consistently striven to thwart his ambitions ; while the warm friendship which had sprung up between him and the Dauphin during the Italian campaign of 1537, when the young prince had been associated with the Grand Master in the command of the vanguard, naturally inclined him to take the side of that prince's mistress, with whose intolerant religious views he was, moreover, in the fullest sympathy.

It was certainly a very bold step to champion the cause of the Dauphin's favourite against that of the King, particularly in view of the dislike with which François was known to regard the heir apparent. But in February 1538 the office of Constable of France, vacant since the treason of Bourbon, had been revived in Montmorency's favour, as the reward of his services in the late war, and had inspired him with the belief that he was indispensable to the King both in the council-chamber and the field.

<sup>1</sup> François, Comte d'Aumale, afterwards Duc de Guise ; Charles, afterwards Archbishop of Rheims and Cardinal de Lorraine ; and Claude, afterwards Marquis de Mayenne.

## Marguerite and Montmorency

Montmorency, however, had not secured the *batôn* of Constable without a struggle, for Madame d'Étampes had opposed a strenuous resistance to his elevation to that coveted office, and, had it not been for the Queen of Navarre, who had warmly supported the claims of her old friend, the tears and entreaties of the duchess would probably have prevailed. The new Constable, however, showed himself singularly ungrateful, and not only did he make no effort to persuade François to obtain for Henri d'Albret the restoration of his kingdom, but, no sooner did he find himself in possession of the highest office in the State than he felt no scruples about endeavouring to destroy the influence which had helped him to it.

His motives in seeking to estrange the King from his sister were partly personal and partly political and religious. His vanity was wounded by the thought that any one should share with him—Constable and Grand Master of France—the confidence of his sovereign; he knew that in the Queen of Navarre, animated as she was by the most profound distrust of the Emperor, he possessed a resolute opponent of the new policy which he had inaugurated; and, finally, to his bigoted mind the encouragement and protection which Marguerite afforded the Reformers, to whom he would fain have seen applied the same summary methods of punishment which he employed in the camp, was a crime of the deepest dye. “I have heard it related by a person of good faith,” writes Brantôme, “that the Connétable de Montmorency, then in the highest favour, speaking of this matter of religion one day with the King, made no difficulty or scruple about telling him that, ‘if he really wished to exterminate the heretics of his kingdom, he ought to begin with his Court and with his nearest relative,’ mentioning

## The Pearl of Princesses

the queen his sister. To which the King replied : ' Do not speak of her ; she loves me too much. She will never believe anything save what I believe, and will never embrace a religion prejudicial to my State.' ”

The Constable's words were duly reported to the Queen of Navarre, probably by François himself, and confirmed the rumours which had already reached her from more than one source of the secret animosity of the man whom she had placed under such great obligations. “ From that moment,” continues Brantôme, “ the queen never liked Monsieur le Connétable more ; and her displeasure greatly contributed to procure his subsequent disgrace and banishment from Court.” There would not appear, however, to have been any open breach between them at the time, though in the year 1538 the voluminous correspondence which Marguerite had so long carried on with Montmorency comes to an end, and she ceases to allude to him in her letters to the King and others.

Towards the close of that year, while the Court was at Compiègne, François was attacked by a severe illness—*“ une recrudescence du mal aigu et honteux qui l'avait frappé dès sa jeunesse,”* if we are to believe Henri Martin.<sup>1</sup> Any way, it left him for a time a physical wreck, and affected his mind to some degree as well as his body. Affairs now fell completely into the hands of Montmorency, who was thus able to give a free rein to his Catholic and Imperialist predilections. He broke off the friendly relations which had existed with England, the German Protestant princes, the Duke of Clèves and the Turks, and not only persuaded the King, dazzled by

<sup>1</sup> In view of the promiscuous gallantries in which his Majesty had been prone to indulge in his youthful days, this is likely enough ; but there appears to be no truth in the unpleasant legend of *“ la belle Ferroniere,”* accepted by so many historians.



## Policy of Montmorency

the chimerical hope of a voluntary restitution of the Milanese, to reject the offer of the rebellious Ghent burghers to acknowledge him as their suzerain, but to reveal their proposals to Charles V, and to promise him a safe passage through France to Flanders, when he journeyed thither to reduce his revolted subjects to obedience.

The Queen of Navarre, who had been at Compiègne when the King fell ill, and had tended him with all her customary devotion, did what she could to counteract the fatal counsels of Montmorency. But, entertaining as she did for her brother an almost servile adoration, she could not bring herself to remonstrate boldly with him on his folly, but preferred to work on him through Madame d'Étampes. "If you would have anything of importance done," she told the English Ambassador, the Duke of Norfolk, "seek to win over Madame d'Étampes, who can do more with the King than all the rest. Only she can impress a thing in his head against the Constable; and I myself, when the Constable had turned the King against me, had to seek the aid of Madame d'Étampes." And to his colleague, Wallup, when he pressed her to remonstrate personally with the King, she declared that "these things could only be wrought by Madame d'Étampes," and that she would not speak herself, "since she would be noted partial, and also suspected." Any way, she had little hope that any one would be able to divert his steps from the path along which the Constable was guiding him. "My brother is of this nature, that, a thing being fixed in his head, it is half impossible to be plucked away."

And so, to the astonishment of all Europe, the Emperor came, and, by François's express orders, was received everywhere "like the Kings of France on their joyous

## The Pearl of Princesses

accession," and made a solemn entry into the capital, amid the ringing of church bells and the firing of cannon ; and, after a week of magnificent fêtes, went his way, leaving François under the fond delusion that the Milanese was already as good as his.

At the beginning of 1539, a provisional agreement had been arrived at between the two sovereigns, in regard to a marriage between the King's youngest son, who had now assumed the Dauphin's former title of Duc d'Orléans, and the daughter of Ferdinand of Austria, Charles promising that he would "dispose of the duchy and state of Milan, in virtue and contemplation of the said marriage, in such a manner that the said lord king would have reason to be well contented with it" ; and before his departure for Flanders, it had been arranged that, after Charles had induced the Gantois to return to their submission and had seen his brother Ferdinand, who was to join him at Brussels, Montmorency and the Cardinal de Lorraine should proceed thither, where his Majesty would make a definite pronouncement concerning the Milanese. By the end of February 1540, the Gantois had made their submission, and Ferdinand had arrived at Brussels ; but Montmorency waited in vain for the Imperial summons. None came ; and when the French Ambassador at Brussels reminded Charles of his promises with regard to the Milanese, he answered that he had never made any which could be considered binding upon him. Finally, at the beginning of April, he submitted, through his Ambassador at the French Court, Saint-Vincent, an entirely new proposition : François and he were to renounce their respective pretensions to the Milanese and to Burgundy ; the Duc d'Orléans was to marry the Emperor's eldest daughter, with the Netherlands, Franche-Comté and the

## François the Dupe of the Emperor

Charolais as her dowry, while François was to accord his son an appanage worthy of so great an alliance, in proximity to the territory ceded to the bride. To bind yet closer Hapsburg and Valois, Charles's son, Philip, was to wed Jeanne d'Albret and purchase her rights over Lower Navarre and Béarn.

This project, which, if accepted, would have created a new House of Burgundy under the protection of Spain and the Empire, and inevitably have caused a feud between the Duc d'Orléans and his elder brother, already on sufficiently bad terms, was very ill-received by the French Court. François was bitterly mortified to find that he had once more sacrificed the substance for the shadow and permitted Charles to re-establish his authority in Flanders and Germany, while deluding him with promises which he had not the remotest intention of fulfilling. Urged on by Montmorency, indignant at having allowed himself to be made the dupe of the Emperor, he continued to insist on the cession of Lombardy; but, after the negotiations had dragged on for some months, Charles proceeded to dissipate the King's last remaining hopes, by formally investing Don Philip with the duchy of Milan. From that moment, notwithstanding that both monarchs announced their intention of respecting the truce of Nice, a fresh rupture between them was plainly inevitable.

We have seen that, at the same time, as the Emperor proposed an alliance between the Duc d'Orléans and his eldest daughter, he had also suggested one between his son and Jeanne d'Albret. Even had François been inclined to favour the former proposition, he would most certainly have rejected the latter, since it was with the express object of preventing a marriage which would give



## The Pearl of Princesses

the House of Hapsburg a footing on the French side of the Pyrenees, that he had removed his little niece from her parents' control and constituted himself her guardian. Jeanne, however, was now twelve years old, and in a year or two, when her education would be considered completed, it was certain that her father would demand permission which the King could not well refuse, to take her to Béarn, that she might receive the homage and recognition of her future subjects. Now, François had never been able to rid himself of the suspicion that it was the King of Navarre's intention to give his daughter in marriage to Philip of Spain, and he was aware that, once in Béarn, nothing would be easier than to convey the young princess across the Spanish frontier. To prevent such a contingency, the King determined to marry Jeanne to some prince of his own choosing whose States were far removed from those of the future Queen of Navarre. Nor had he long to seek for one who would serve his purpose.

It had happened that while the Emperor was at Ghent, Guillaume de la Marck, Duke of Clèves and Juliers, had journeyed thither to petition Charles to confirm him in the possession of the duchy of Guelders, which had lapsed to his father, Guillaume II, by right of inheritance and the election of the Estates, shortly before that prince died. His request, however, was refused, and Charles announced his intention of incorporating the duchy in the Netherlands. The Duke of Clèves, after vainly endeavouring to shake his suzerain's resolution, repaired, in high dudgeon, to the Court of France, and demanded of the King the investiture of the duchy of Guelders, with troops to maintain his rights. Such an opportunity of testifying his resentment for the Imperial duplicity in

## Mother and Daughter

regard to the Milanese was too agreeable to François for him not to take advantage of it; and not only did he readily accede to the Duke's request, but offered him the hand of Jeanne d'Albret, stipulating only that she should remain under his care for another three years, when her education would be completed.

Now, although but a child in years, Jeanne's mind was a very precocious one, and she had already begun to show that haughty character and strength of will which were to make her, in years to come, so redoubtable a party leader. Like her mother, she possessed great intellectual powers and a remarkable faculty for absorbing knowledge; but in other respects she was the exact opposite of Marguerite—a person of convictions rather than of sympathies, “seeing one thing at a time and not wanting to see more”;<sup>1</sup> cold, proud, obstinate, and ambitious. Marguerite worshipped her, but the little girl was far from returning her affection; indeed, if anything, she appears to have disliked her mother, and to have regarded her confiding and generous nature with something very like contempt, though she was only too ready to take advantage of her liberality in money matters.

Since the King had assumed the guardianship of his niece, Jeanne had lived at the Château of Plessis-les-Tours, with her tutor, the learned Nicholas Bourbon, and a *gouvernante*, Marguerite's friend Madame de Silly, Baillive of Caen, to instil the social graces. The Baillive also held the purse and kept her charge's accounts, which show that the young lady had some decidedly expensive tastes, notably in the way of theatricals, private performances of plays being frequently given before her.

<sup>1</sup> Edith Sichel, *Women and Men of the French Renaissance*.

## The Pearl of Princesses

Notwithstanding diversions of this kind, Jeanne, if we are to believe the historian Olhagaray, was very unhappy at Plessis, which, considering its lonely position and the dark deeds which were commonly reported to have been enacted within its gloomy walls in the time of Louis XI, was certainly the reverse of a cheerful residence for a young girl. "This abode," he writes, "proved very wearisome to our princess, so that her chamber often echoed with her lamentations and the air with her sighs, while she gave a loose rein to her tears. The lustre of her complexion, for she was one of the fairest princesses of Europe, was marred by the abundance of her tears; her locks hung loose upon her shoulders; her lips remained without a smile. And when King François heard of this," continues the historian, "he offered the demoiselle to the Duke of Clèves, without the consent of her father or mother."

It was certainly not out of compassion for his little niece's unhappiness that François desired to marry her to the Duke of Clèves, but because the marriage of the princess whose hand Charles V had demanded for his son to a rebellious vassal of the Emperor would be like a glove thrown in that monarch's face. Nor is it true, notwithstanding the assertions of Olhagaray and many contemporary writers, that the King arbitrarily disposed of Jeanne's hand, in defiance of the entreaties of her parents. Whether they approved of his Majesty's choice of a husband for their daughter, is another matter. It is certain that the King of Navarre did not, for the alliance, though it might secure a useful ally for France, would be most prejudicial to the interests of Béarn, since, not only would it offend Spain, but remove its future sovereign to a distance from her subjects. However,



## Jeanne d'Albret in Revolt

much as he might disapprove of the match, he did not dare to oppose the will of his imperious brother-in-law.

As for Marguerite, though she must have been aware that this whim of the King was opposed to every interest of her husband, of her subjects, even of her child, her intense and all-absorbing devotion to her brother was such that she refused to allow any consideration to weigh with her; and not only did she give her consent to the marriage, but did not scruple to have recourse to the most drastic means to enforce Jeanne's submission to the royal will.

For the girl, far less complaisant than her parents, offered the most resolute resistance to François's plans. A petty sovereign, she protested, was no fit match for a princess; to marry him would be to degrade herself. While, when he was presented to her, her whole soul revolted against the idea of becoming the wife of this heavy, coarse German, whose manners disgusted her and whose language she could not understand. And so she took the liberty of "very humbly entreating the King that she might not be compelled to marry M. de Clèves."

François was at first inclined to be amused at seeing the spectacle of his little niece laying claim to the privileges of a woman. He tried coaxing, but in vain; threatened her, half-playfully, with his displeasure, declaring that he would never come to see her again; to no purpose. "I would rather throw myself into a well!" was the girl's reply.

Then he became seriously angry, and, suspicious that Henri d'Albret had instigated his daughter to revolt, expressed himself to that effect in violent terms to Jeanne's *gouvernante*, Madame de Silly, who hastened to inform the Queen of Navarre.

## The Pearl of Princesses

Scarcely able to credit such intelligence, for rebellion against parental fiats was practically unknown in those days, while disobedience to the King was nothing short of treason in her eyes, Marguerite summoned her daughter to account for the observations which had provoked the avuncular wrath. To which the young lady coolly replied that "she had taken the liberty of speaking frankly to the King, having been in the habit of saying to him all that she thought and wished."

Alarmed and horrified beyond measure, Marguerite lost not a moment in writing to the King, to intercede for her misguided offspring and to exonerate herself and her husband from all responsibility for such outrageous conduct. Here is her letter, than which it would be difficult to find a more abject epistle:—

"MONSEIGNEUR,—In my extreme tribulation, I have but one comfort, which is the certain knowledge that neither the King of Navarre nor myself have ever had any other wish or intention than that of obliging you, not only in the matter of this marriage, but in whatsoever you might command. But now, Monseigneur, having heard that my daughter—neither recognizing the great honour you do her in condescending to visit her, nor the obedience that she owes you, nor yet that a maiden should have no will of her own—has spoken to you so madly as to say that she begged of you that she might not be married to M. de Clèves, I know not what to think, Monseigneur, nor how to address you; for I am grieved to the heart, and have neither relative nor friend in this world to whom I can apply for consolation or counsel. And the King of Navarre is, on his part, so amazed and grieved, that never have I seen him before

## An Abject Epistle

so provoked. I cannot divine whence comes this great boldness, she never having even mentioned such a desire to us. She excuses herself towards us, on the plea that she is more intimate with you than even with ourselves; but this intimacy ought not to give rise to such boldness, without ever, so far as I know, seeking counsel from any one. For if I could discover the personage who had put such an idea into her head, I would make so great a demonstration of my displeasure, as should convince you, Monseigneur, that this madness has no sanction from her father and mother, who have never had, and never will have, any other wish but your own. Knowing therefore, Monseigneur, that it is your habit rather to pardon errors than to punish them—more particularly when the understanding fails, as it has assuredly done in the case of my unhappy daughter—I entreat you very humbly, Monseigneur, that for one unreasonable request which she has preferred, and which is the first error she has committed in respect of yourself, you will not withdraw that paternal favour which you have ever manifested towards her and ourselves; but, reflecting on the many perfections with which God has endowed you, you will bear with our infirmities without displeasure. If the dread of your anger makes your subjects tremble, believe me, Monseigneur, that it smites us with death; since you could not visit us with a more severe punishment than to withdraw your favour, which we have ever prized above kingdoms or treasure whatsoever.”

It is indeed singular to find the mother who had been thrown into such despair by her child's illness displaying not the smallest compunction at causing that child so much unhappiness. But, as one of her biographers observes,



## The Pearl of Princesses

her servile love for the King seems sometimes to have acted as a poison, perverting her nature and deadening her affections,<sup>1</sup> and when she declared, in a subsequent letter to François, that "she and her husband would rather have seen their daughter die, as she told them she should do, than they would have stayed her from going to the place where she [Marguerite] deemed that she could do him service," she was not indulging in hyperbole. Marguerite considered that the noblest lot on earth was to live or die for the King. François was her religion, and Jeanne's refusal to sacrifice herself in his interests seemed to her like an act of sacrilege.<sup>2</sup>

Jeanne thought otherwise, and Marguerite, furious at her daughter's contumacity, proceeded to deal with her with the relentless severity of a fanatic whose idol has been outraged; and ordered Madame de Silly to administer a daily castigation until her stubborn spirit had been broken. We know not how many castigations were administered, or what degree of severity was resorted to; but, any way, they altogether failed to effect their purpose; and, finding her objections disregarded by François and her parents, the brave little girl adopted the singular expedient of making a formal protest against her compulsory nuptials in a document which she herself drew up and caused to be witnessed by three officers of her household, to whom she first read it aloud:—

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<sup>1</sup> Edith Sichel, *Women and Men of the French Renaissance*.

<sup>2</sup> In justice to Marguerite, it should be observed that she appears to have looked upon Jeanne's aversion to the Duke of Clèves as a mere childish caprice, and to have considered that, when she had resigned herself to her husband's table-manners and other Teutonic peculiarities, she would not be unhappy. The fact that the Duke, though not an avowed Lutheran, was a protector of the Reformers, no doubt inclined her to regard him more favourably than she might otherwise have done.

## Protest of Jeanne d'Albret

“ I, Jehanne de Navarre, persisting in the protestations that I have already made, do hereby again affirm and protest, before these present, that the marriage which it is desired to contract between myself and the Duke of Clèves is against my will ; that I have never consented to it, and never will consent ; and that all that I may do or say hereafter, by which it may be attempted to prove that I have given my consent, will be forcibly extorted against my wish and desire, from fear of the King, my father, and of the Queen, my mother, who has threatened me and had me whipped by the Baillive of Caen, my *gouvernante*. By the command of the Queen, my mother, my said *gouvernante* has several times declared that, should I not do in regard to this marriage all that the King requires, and give my consent, I should be so severely thrashed and maltreated as to bring about my death, and that, by refusing, I shall be the cause of the total ruin and destruction of my father, my mother, and all their House ; the which has inspired me with such fear and dread—particularly, that I should be the cause of the ruin of my said father and mother—that I know of no one who can succour me save God, seeing that my father and mother abandon me, who both well know what I have said to them : that I can never love the Duke of Clèves, and that I will have none of him. Therefore, I declare beforehand that should it come to pass that I am affianced or married to the said Duke of Clèves, in any way or manner, it will be, and will have been, against my heart and will ; and that he shall never become my husband, and that I shall never consider him as such ; and that the said marriage shall be null, and that I call God and you to witness thereof, so that you may sign my protestation with me and recognize the force, the violence,

## The Pearl of Princesses

and constraint which is used towards me in the matter of this marriage.

*Signed* {  
“JEHANNE DE NAVARRE,  
“J. B. ARRAS,  
“FRANCÈS NAVARRO,  
“ARNAULD DUQUESSE.”

This was pretty daring for a little girl who had only just completed her twelfth year, and on the day after her betrothal, she drew up and signed, in the presence of the same witnesses, another protest, as vehement as the first. But it did not help her to escape going through a marriage ceremony with the Teutonic ogre, though she derived some consolation from the knowledge that the ogre was returning immediately to his own country, and that she would not be required to live with him for another three years.

The marriage took place at Châtelherault with great *éclat*, but its importance, in the eyes of the Court, was somewhat overshadowed by the significance of an episode which took place in the church, and which was regarded as heralding the disgrace of the most powerful personage in the realm.

The intrigues of the palace rather than the humiliation into which the Constable's almost pathetic trust in the Emperor's friendship and good faith had led his sovereign were the cause of Montmorency's fall.

As time went on, the struggle between the parties of Madame d'Étampes and Diane de Poitiers, with the latter of which the Constable had so imprudently associated himself, became more and more envenomed, and both François and the Dauphin found themselves involved in it. The two ladies began active hostilities in the person



## Intrigues against Montmorency

of their partisans, "seeming to regard one another as kings upon a chessboard, who are not attacked until the principal pieces have been taken."<sup>1</sup> The Admiral, Chabot de Brion, Madame d'Étampes's principal champion and long Montmorency's sworn enemy, was accused of enriching himself in various ways at the expense of the State. Abandoned by the King, already irritated against the Admiral by the friendship, a little too tender, which Madame d'Étampes testified for him, he was brought to trial before a commission presided over by the Chancellor Poyet, a creature of Diane and the Constable, who, notwithstanding the reluctance of some of the judges, succeeded in securing the condemnation of the accused, who was deprived of all his dignities, banished from Court, and mulcted in a fine of 1,500,000 livres.

Montmorency was not allowed much time to rejoice over the downfall of his rival. The arrest of Chabot had greatly infuriated Madame d'Étampes, who became from that moment the implacable enemy of the Constable and left no means untried to destroy his credit with the King. While the *rapprochement* with the Emperor lasted, she appears to have made but little impression on Montmorency's position, for François naturally looked to its author to secure the cession of the Milanese. But when, in April 1540, the King's eyes were suddenly and rudely opened to the real value of the Imperial promises, her task was, of course, immensely facilitated. Already she had succeeded in alienating father from son, and in persuading his Majesty to express to the Dauphin in very plain language his disapproval of his infatuation for the Sénéchale; and it was not difficult for her to awaken the King's suspicions in regard to the intimacy between Henri

<sup>1</sup> Forneron, *les Ducs de Guise et leur époque*.

## The Pearl of Princesses

and Montmorency, declaring her conviction that the Constable had sacrificed his interests to those of his heir, and secretly connived at the Emperor's duplicity, from a desire to prevent the aggrandizement of the Duc d'Orléans, of whom his elder brother was jealous. "The Constable is a great villain," she exclaimed one day. "He has deceived the King, telling him that the Emperor would immediately surrender to him the Milanese, when he knew the contrary."

In her efforts to undermine the Constable's credit, the favourite was ably seconded by the Queen of Navarre, justly exasperated by the ingratitude with which Montmorency had requited her good offices; and the persuasions of his mistress, joined to those of his sister, proved too strong for the King to resist. His manner towards the Constable became cold and constrained; he no longer left the absolute direction of affairs in his hands, and, when the Emperor's bestowal of the Milanese upon Don Philip had destroyed all hope of an accommodation, instructed his Ambassadors at foreign Courts to address their despatches in future not to Montmorency, but to himself; while not long afterwards he placed the Foreign Office under the direction of the Chancellor. Finally, the marriage of Jeanne d'Albret afforded him an opportunity of indicating to the Constable in a singularly humiliating manner that he had altogether forfeited his sovereign's favour.

On her wedding-day, the child-bride appeared arrayed in a robe of cloth-of-gold, so studded with jewels that "it was a sight to behold," and a violet satin cloak, with an ermine train of immense length. Determined to show to the last her aversion to the marriage to which she had been constrained, when her royal uncle approached to

## Disgrace of the Constable

conduct her to the altar, she complained of feeling unwell and declared that it was perfectly impossible for her to walk, on account of the weight of her gilded and jewelled gown. Then the idea occurred to François of exalting the bride of the Emperor's rebellious vassal at the expense of the Emperor's dupe, before his Court and the representatives of foreign States, and, turning to Montmorency, he ordered him brusquely to carry the princess. The Constable did not dare to disobey, and the Court looked on in speechless astonishment, while the Constable of France, the highest dignitary of the realm, whose privilege it was to bear the sword of State before his sovereign, was turned into a lackey for a petulant child.

Montmorency did not pretend to misunderstand the significance of the indignity which had been put upon him, and, as he returned to his place in the bridal procession, he was heard to murmur : "*C'est fait désormais de faveur ! Adieu luy dit.*" But his enemies rejoiced exceedingly, and amongst them the Queen of Navarre, whose tender heart had been hardened by the Constable's unworthy efforts to alienate from her her brother's affection—the one offence that she was unable to forgive. "See," she whispered to those near her, "he who would have ruined me in the favour of the King my brother now serves to carry my daughter to church !"

Next day, the Constable quitted Châtelherault and retired to Chantilly, and afterwards to Écouen, where he had begun the construction of a magnificent château. Unable, however, to believe that the King intended his disgrace to be permanent, he solicited, towards the end of the summer, permission to return to Court, to which his Majesty replied by a curt refusal, and an intimation that, if he came without his permission, he would have



## The Pearl of Princesses

reason to regret it. Several persons ventured to remonstrate with François on his treatment of Montmorency, reminding him of the services which the object of his displeasure had rendered during the last war, and pointing out the need which France had of so experienced a general, at a moment when she was about to measure swords once more with her redoubtable enemy. But, thanks to the efforts of Madame d'Étampes, the King remained inexorable; and the Constable remained in disgrace until Henri II ascended the throne.

At the conclusion of the wedding festivities, which were on the most sumptuous scale, the Duke of Clèves returned to Germany, and the little bride set out with her parents for Béarn. Hitherto Jeanne had not been allowed to visit her future dominions, but, now that she could not marry Philip of Spain, François had no longer any object to serve in keeping her under his control.

## CHAPTER XXVI

THE little Court of Béarn was not only an asylum for persecuted Reformers, but the most celebrated literary centre of the time. Men of letters of all kinds, from the most erudite of philosophers to the most frivolous of poets, were sure of a welcome at Pau or Nérac, and few there were who did not at one time or another avail themselves of it.

Here might be found Clément Marot, who divided his time between Marguerite's Court and that of France. It was to Béarn that he fled after the Affair of the Placards, before making his way for greater security to Ferrara and Venice; and it was owing to the Queen of Navarre's intercession on his behalf that, in 1536, he received permission to return to France. Compromised anew by his famous translation of the Psalms, which the Protestants had adopted, he was obliged, in 1543, to resume the road of exile, and in the following year, at Turin, terminated his life of vicissitudes, leaving to his patroness, by way of a legacy, a natural daughter, whom Marguerite placed in a convent which she had founded.

Then there were the two free-thinking scholars, Bonaventure des Périers and Étienne Dolet, whose presence at Nérac so scandalized Calvin, when the attentions of the Sorbonne rendered it advisable for him to accept Marguerite's hospitality. A born despot, he countenanced no form of religion but the one which he himself had evolved; and Marguerite's tolerance, which he praised when directed towards the Calvinists, he regarded as a

## The Pearl of Princesses

fatal weakness when extended to others. The whole race of *libertins*, or free-thinkers, were outcasts in his eyes, and, after his departure from Béarn, he published a ferocious pamphlet, *Ex Libertinis*, in the course of which he bitterly reproached the Queen of Navarre for harbouring Des Périers and Dolet.

“It is impossible,” he wrote to her subsequently, “not to wish that your house should prove worthier of being the true family of Jesus Christ, instead of which certain of its members deserve to be called the slaves of the devil; his slaves, I repeat, and his colleagues.” Marguerite, deeply hurt, replied accusing him of want of Christian charity, to which he rejoined assuring her of his faithful attachment, but protesting that “he was far from seeking the favour of princes. It was quite enough for him to have been admitted to the service of a greater master.” Nevertheless, he had been glad enough of the protection of princes when his life was in danger.

It is sad to reflect on the tragic fate which awaited these two gifted men, though doubtless the Pope of Geneva considered that they met with nothing less than their deserts.

Bonaventure des Périers—“*le joyeux Bonaventure*”—was one of those brilliant, erratic creatures who are at once the admiration and the despair of their friends. Born about 1500, he was associated with Lefèvre d'Étaples, Calvin and Olivetan in the first translation of the Bible into the French language, that famous translation which was published at Neufchâtel in 1535. But, though he proclaimed himself a champion of the New Ideas, he was far too much of an adventurer in thought to be bound by the tenets



## Bonaventure des Périers

of any sect, and his reckless sarcasm gave deep offence to Catholic and Protestant alike. Forced to leave Paris by the persecution which followed the Affair of the Placards, he took refuge at Lyons, which was then a centre of artistic and literary culture, and a city of refuge for those whose bold views had rendered residence in the capital unsafe. Here he assisted Étienne Dolet in the composition of the first volume of his Commentaries on the Latin language, defended the exiled Marot, an edition of whose works he subsequently edited, from the cowardly attacks of the poet Sagon, the mouthpiece of the Sorbonne, and foregathered with artists like Philippe Delorme, and men of letters like Charles Fontaine, Maurice Scève, Pelletier, Noël d'Alibert, *valet de chambre* to the Queen of Navarre, and Nicolas Bourbon, Jeanne d'Albret's preceptor. It is also probable that he knew Rabelais, though there is no record of their having been acquainted.

Recommended by Alibert and Nicolas Bourbon to Marguerite, he would appear to have been already on her pension list for some time when in 1536 he definitely entered the Queen's service, with the title of *valet de chambre* and secretary, an appointment which he celebrated in the rondeau, *Trop plus qu'heureux*. He believed that he had now found "leisure and liberty," though he does not seem to have been always very satisfied with the position which he occupied at the Court of Béarn, which, however, did not prevent him from bitterly regretting it, when, some years later, he was so unfortunate as to lose it.

Des Périers's disgrace has been frequently attributed to the publication, in 1537, of his famous book, the

## The Pearl of Princesses

*Cymbalum Mundi*, a sceptical work in the style of the *Pantagruel* of Rabelais, which drew upon him the condemnation of Calvin and the Reformers, besides the wrath of the Sorbonne. This, however, is an error; indeed, it was mainly due to Marguerite's protection that he was permitted to remain unmolested, although his book was burned by the public executioner and its printer imprisoned; and it is certain that, as his *Voyage à l'Île Barbe* proves, he was still in favour in 1539. However, Marguerite appears to have ended by being scandalized at the opinions of this new Lucian, or, at any rate, she decided that it would be highly impolitic to countenance him any longer, and in 1541 he was exiled from Béarn and his name erased from the list of her Household. Des Périers humbled himself, made confession of his faults, and pleaded piteously for reinstatement; but Marguerite was firm, and though it is believed that she continued to assist him with money, through one of her ladies, Mlle. de Saint-Pather, his pension was not continued after the autumn of that year.

Abandoned by his protectress, the unhappy poet probably fell into poverty, and certainly into despair, and in 1544 he committed suicide, by throwing himself on his sword, it is said, leaving his unpublished writings to Marguerite—“*le vray appuy et entretènement des vertus*,” as he called her in his last testament.

The career of Étienne Dolet was even more chequered than that of his friend Des Périers, and ended still more tragically, which is not surprising, since his capacity for getting himself into trouble seems to have been altogether abnormal. Born in 1509, at Orléans, a member of a prosperous middle-class family, he studied at

## Étienne Dolet

Paris under Nicolas Bérauld, afterwards the tutor of Coligny, and at the age of seventeen proceeded to the University of Padua, at that time the centre of classical criticism, where he sat at the feet of the learned Simon Villovanus and became, like him, an enthusiastic admirer of Cicero. "Let others choose other masters," said he, "I approve only of Christ and Tully; Christ and Tully are enough for me."

In 1530, he became secretary to Jean de Langeac, Bishop of Limoges, then Ambassador to the Venetian Republic, and remained with him for three years. Then, on the advice of his patron, he went to study law at the University of Toulouse. Here his pronounced latitudinarian views soon brought him into collision with the authorities, and eventually he was banished from the city by a decree of the *Parlement*.

Shaking the dust of bigoted Toulouse off his feet, he repaired to the more congenial atmosphere of Lyons, where he entered the lists against Erasmus, by the publication of a *Dialogus de imitatione Ciceronia*, in which he assailed the great scholar with more vigour and ability than good taste. This was followed by the publication in two folio volumes of a Commentary on the Latin language—no mere verbal dictionary, but a classification of words according to ideas—in the first of which he had the assistance of Bonaventure des Périers. Soon afterwards, François I and his Court happening to pass through Lyons, Dolet appealed to the King on behalf of the law-students of the town, who had stirred up a riot which had resulted in the closing of their schools by the authorities. This was the occasion of his introduction to the Queen of Navarre, who had accompanied her brother, and, though he does not appear to have had



## The Pearl of Princesses

much intercourse with her at the time, she subsequently invited him to visit her in Béarn.

Marguerite proved a good friend to Dolet in many ways. She assisted him with her purse, as she assisted so many of her impecunious guests ; she secured a royal pardon for him when he was forced to flee from Lyons, for having killed a painter named Compaing, who had attacked him in a brawl ; and when, in 1538, he decided to set up a printing-press of his own at Lyons, it was doubtless she who persuaded the King to grant him the privilege of printing during ten years any work in Latin, Greek, Italian, or French which had received his personal supervision.

For three or four years after he became a printer, Dolet conducted his business with commendable discretion, and even went so far as to throw a sop to the bigots, whom he knew were watching him narrowly, by the publication of a *Cato christianus*, or Christian moralist. But, at length, his natural impulsiveness got the better of his caution, and a stream of heretical books began to issue from his press. The consequence was that, in 1542, he was arrested, brought to trial and condemned ; but the King's reader, Pierre du Châtel, Bishop of Tulle, contrived to get the ear of his master, and after fifteen months in prison he was set at liberty. His enemies, however, were resolved on his destruction, and soon afterwards a charge of selling copies of his condemned books was fabricated against him, and he was again arrested. He met stratagem with stratagem, succeeded in effecting his escape, and took refuge in Piedmont. But, instead of remaining there, he was so imprudent as to venture back to Lyons, in order to see his little son, to whom he was tenderly attached, and was recaptured.

## Étienne Dolet

This time, he was brought to trial in Paris, not on the former charge, but on a fresh one, that of having changed the sense of a passage in an apocryphal dialogue of Plato, which he had translated and printed, into a proclamation of materialism. He appealed to Marguerite to intercede for him ; but in such a case she was powerless, and, having been pronounced guilty of blasphemy and sedition, he was strangled and burned in the Place Maubert (August 1546). The story that, on his way to execution, he composed the punning pentameter : “ *Non dolet ipse Dolet, sed pia turba dolet,*” is of very doubtful authenticity.

It has been the fashion to claim Dolet, to whose memory a statue was erected in 1889 on the spot where he had suffered, as the first martyr of free-thought. But, though he was repudiated by Calvin, who accused him of having uttered “ execrable blasphemies against the Son of God,” and he is known to have detested the Lutherans, whom he stigmatized as “ that foolish sect, led away by a pernicious passion for notoriety,” the religious character of a large number of the books which he translated or printed renders it very doubtful whether he ought to be regarded as a Rationalist in the modern acceptation of the term.

Of less distinction than the writers we have mentioned, but, nevertheless, of considerable prominence in the literary world of their time, were Marguerite’s secretary, Antoine le Maçon, the translator of Boccaccio’s *Decameron* ;<sup>1</sup> Marot’s friend, Victor Brodeau, and Jehan Frotté, the author of some pretty verses, both of whom occupied similar posts ; while on the list of the Queen’s *valets de chambre* figure the names of Jean de la Haye,

<sup>1</sup> This translation was undertaken at Marguerite’s special request, as Le Maçon tells us in his dedication to her, and has always been considered one of the ablest literary works of the period.

## The Pearl of Princesses

who published *les Marguerite de la Marguerite*; Antoine du Moulin, author and translator, who edited the works both of Marot and Bonaventure des Périers, and Claude Gruget, who edited, in 1559, the second edition of the *Heptaméron*.<sup>1</sup> Among other intimates of Marguerite were Nicolas Denisot and Jacques Pelletier, who, like Des Périers, endeavoured to introduce into French poetry the metrical verses of the ancients, and the learned Nicolas Bourbon, to whom the Queen confided the education of her daughter.

Marguerite d'Angoulême, so enlightened and so generous a patroness of literature and men of letters, was herself one of the most distinguished women of letters whom France has produced. Her work, which was very considerable, falls into three divisions: her letters, her poems, and the collection of *nouvelles*, or tales, on which her literary reputation chiefly rests—the famous *Heptaméron*.

Her letters, of which sufficient have already been cited in this volume to render it needless to discuss them at length, are naturally of the first importance, both for the light which they throw upon the events of her time and for determining the character of the writer. In purely literary interest, however, they are greatly inferior to her efforts in both poetry and fiction; for the age of accomplished women letter-writers was not yet, and it is almost painful to compare their interminable sentences, and their laboured, ceremonious style, with the simple, natural language of Madame de Sévigné or Madame de Maintenon.

<sup>1</sup> There was, of course, no question of these *valets de chambre* performing any of the ordinary duties of that office, such services as were required of them being of a purely literary character.



## Marguerite's Poetical Work

Much of Marguerite's poetical work, which is very voluminous, is disfigured by the same faults which we find in her letters. A number of her poems were collected and published in 1547 by Jean de la Haye, under the attractive title of *les Marguerite de Marguerite des princesses, très illustre Royne de Navarre*. These included, besides *le Miroir de l'Âme pécheresse*, already twice published separately, another piece of about the same length as the *Miroir* and of somewhat similar character, entitled *Oraison de l'Âme fidèle à son Seigneur Dieu*, and a shorter *Oraison à Notre Seigneur Jésus-Christ*; four so-called "comédies," or, rather, mystery-plays, on the Nativity; a poem something in the style of the *Miroir*, but much superior to it, *le Triomphe de l'Agneau*; a number of *chansons spirituelles*; four *épîtres* addressed to François I, and a fifth to the King of Navarre; a secular comedy, entitled *les Quatre Dames et les Quatre Gentilhommes*, composed of long and rather tedious monologues; a farce, *Trop, Prou [much], Peu, Moins*, and a long love-poem called *la Coche*, dedicated to the Duchesse d'Étampes. An excellent edition of the *Marguerites* was published in 1873, with an introduction by M. Félix Franck.

With the exception of a spiritual poem, *le Miroir de Jésus-Christ crucifié*—the last work of the Queen's pen—which was published the year following her death by a priest named Olivier, to whom she had entrusted the manuscript, with a dedication to her well-loved niece Madame Marguerite; an eclogue, which appeared in 1553, and two farces, *le Malade* and *l'Inquisiteur*, published in the appendix to the first volume of Le Roux de Linçy's edition of the *Heptaméron*, most of the remainder of Marguerite's verse remained in manuscript until 1896,

## The Pearl of Princesses

when M. Abel Lefranc published *les Dernières poésies de Marguerite d'Angoulême*. This new collection, which is of a very interesting character, consisted of verses, epistles, and "comédies"; *les Prisons*, a long allegorical poem of that amorous religious tendency so characteristic of the time; some miscellaneous verse; and a poem, *le Navire*, expressive of her despair at her brother's death.

Marguerite's longer poems make, as a rule, somewhat tedious reading, for the tradition of her day was a dull one, and she was more intellectual than poetic. This is particularly the case with her religious verse, which is, besides, not always easy to understand; but to characterize it in a lump as a "mystical rhodomontade," as does Madame Darmesteter, is altogether too sweeping a condemnation. The *Triomphe de l'Agneau*, for example, contains passages of singular beauty, and the same may be said of some of her *chansons spirituelles*.

In her lighter verse, her pen often had its sprightly moods, and in these was very charming indeed. Take, for instance, her recipe for Life—

Trois onces faut prendre de patience ;  
Puis de repos et paix de conscience  
Il en faut bien la livre entière . . .  
Pomme d'amour faut prendre, mais bien peu—  
De moquerie une once, voire deux . . .

Finally, we come to the book on which, as we have said, the literary reputation of Marguerite chiefly rests, the collection of *Nouvelles* which, when it was first published, in a mutilated form, nine years after its author's death, bore the not very appropriate title of *l'Histoire des Amants fortunés*, but which is known to fame by the name chosen by Claude Gruget, the editor of the greatly-improved edition of 1559, that of *l'Heptaméron*.

## The Heptaméron

Constructed, as this title indicates, on the lines of Boccaccio's *Decameron*, the book consists of seven complete days of ten tales each and an eighth of two tales only, death having prevented Marguerite from carrying out her original intention, as announced in the Prologue, of presenting us with a French *Decameron*.

Marguerite's enthusiastic English biographer, Martha Freer, misled apparently by the constant repetition of the names Argentan and Alençon, and yet more perhaps by a laudable, if mistaken, desire to remove what she considers a stain upon an otherwise spotless career, has committed herself to the bold assertion that the *Heptaméron* is the work of Marguerite's thoughtless youth, written when she was about nineteen, that is to say, soon after her marriage to the Duc d'Alençon. With all respect for one of the most conscientious and painstaking writers of historical biography which England has produced, we feel bound to express the opinion that Miss Freer's early-Victorian modesty prevented her from making more than a very perfunctory examination of a work which she stigmatizes as "a closed book in these days [1854]"; otherwise, she must have recognized, as we shall presently show, that the *Heptaméron* abounds in evidence that it was the product of the Queen of Navarre's mature years.

But this error is more pardonable than the sweeping condemnation which she proceeds to pass upon Marguerite's book. "To suit the licentious tastes of the age," she writes, "Marguerite condescended, in these tales, to do violence to every principle and virtue which then, and always throughout her life, adorned her character. It is lamentable to behold the mental and religious falling away in the mind of one so gifted with right perception



## The Pearl of Princesses

which these tales exhibit. A vague consciousness of the sin and folly of her compliance with the perverted tastes of the corrupt age evidently often stole across the mind of the Duchesse d'Alençon. This is forcibly demonstrated in the ingenious method by which the duchess almost invariably winds up her narratives, by moral and religious reflections and pious warnings against the wickedness she has been so wittily portraying, as if she would, by this means, tranquillize her conscience and deceive herself into a palliation of the sin she was committing."

This tirade would be amusing did it not reveal so painful an inability to understand one of the most striking characteristics of the French Renaissance, of which Marguerite is so typical a representative: the blending of religiosity and voluptuousness.

But let us listen to another biographer of Marguerite's own sex, Madame Darmesteter:—

✓ "The peculiarity of the *Heptaméron* is its union of an ideal of chivalry, honour, and religion with an entire absence of the moral sense. Piety is an affair of the thoughts, the opinions, the ideas, possibly a matter for one's own personal life and soul. That it should attempt to regulate the lives of others would be to fall into the deadly sin of pride. Mystical as Marguerite ever is, she is naturally lenient to the grosser sins; for all her esoteric dogmas go to prove, firstly, that the sins of the body are of small account compared with the sins of the soul, such as pride and deadness of spirit; and, secondly, that the soul exists only in its relations to the idea of God, and that it has no duties and no relations to the external world. The militant and responsible side of virtue is dead in such a soul."

## The Heptaméron

In fact, as Génin and Sainte-Beuve have both pointed out, there is really nothing in the *Heptaméron* which is at variance with Marguerite's life and natural habits of thought. Gross it certainly is, but then what book which purported to portray the manners and morals of that age could be otherwise? Yet it is much less gross than its Italian prototype—there is none of that gloating over licentious episodes which may be found there—much less gross than the *Cent Nouvelles nouvelles*, from which, by the way, Marguerite borrowed the plot of at least one story; and it compares very favourably in this respect with many works of the sixteenth century, notably, with Brantôme and Rabelais, and even with some parts of Shakespeare. Further, its grossness is to a large extent redeemed by qualities which are entirely absent from the works of Boccaccio or Castiglione.

Boccaccio's immortal tales are supposed to be related by a party of ladies and gentlemen who have sought refuge in a country-house in the environs of Florence to escape from the contagion of the Black Death, then ravaging that city. Marguerite has chosen a less lugubrious setting, though not without its element of tragedy.

The author tells us, in her Prologue, that at the beginning of September, "when the hot springs of the Pyrenees begin to enter upon their virtues," a number of persons of quality, both French and Spanish, had assembled at Cauterets, "some to drink the waters, others to bathe, and others again to make trial of the mud." But when the time came for them to return home, the rain set in with such severity that "it seemed as though God had forgotten His promise to Noah never to destroy the world again"; and they found their roads, especially those on the French side of the mountains,

## The Pearl of Princesses

rendered well-nigh impassable by the rising of the Gave Béarnais and other rivers. Some of the travellers were drowned in attempting to cross the swollen torrents ; but an elderly widow, Dame Oisille, succeeded, after losing most of her attendants and horses, in making her way in safety to the Abbey of Notre-Dame de Serrance, where she was presently joined by five gentlemen and four ladies, who had met *en route* with divers tragic adventures, with bears, brigands, and so forth.

The little company of refugees thus numbers ten persons, both sexes being equally represented, as required for the author's purpose, and is composed as follows : Oisille, already mentioned ; a married couple, Hircan and Parlamente ; Longarine, a lady whose husband had been killed in the affray with the brigands ; two young gallants, Dagouçin and Saffredant ; two demoiselles, Ennasuite and Nomerfide ; Simontault, gentleman-in-waiting to Oisille and the *très affectueux serviteur* of Parlamente ; and Geburon, a gentleman older and more discreet than his male companions.

Each of these persons is supposed to represent a distinct type of character. Hircan is depicted as fond of his wife Parlamente, to whom, however, he makes no pretence of fidelity. He is, in fact, a pronounced libertine and of a somewhat rough and ruthless general character, and is doubtless intended to personify the Rabelaisian cynicism of the French Renaissance movement, the attempt to make nature and freedom the sole standards of human conduct. "You would fain," his wife tells him, "have neither God nor law other than your own desires might set up." Dagouçin shows us the warm, impulsive Platonic idealism of youth. "He would rather die than do aught to offend the conscience



## The Heptaméron

of his lady." His friend Saffredant, wild and reckless, but not unlovable, represents that blending of amorous licence with chivalrous devotion so characteristic of the French Renaissance. Simontault, not quite the equal in rank of his associates, is a merry fellow, though with a strong vein of sentiment in him, and is a proficient at airy badinage. "Of a truth," says he, in reference to the story of a gentleman who, being "disdained in marriage," had, in his despair, become a monk, and had resisted all the efforts of his repentant lady-love to persuade him to return to the world, "of a truth, I think he did wisely; for who has well considered the marriage state will not esteem it less vexatious than an austere devotion, and he, so greatly weakened by fasts and abstinences, feared to take upon him such a lifelong burden." Finally, Geburon represents knightly experience, and passions which have cooled with the passing years.

With the exception of Hircan, it cannot be said that any of the male characters are very firmly drawn. The women, however, are much more distinct, and bear the unmistakable impress of a feminine hand.

Oisille, who, in deference to her age, rank, and unblemished reputation, is regarded with great respect by the rest of the company, and accepted as a kind of mistress both of the revels and of more serious matters, represents chiefly the religious side of the French Renaissance, in so far as it was a compound of Protestant teaching with Romish ritual. Of all that is purest and best in the Old Religion she is a staunch upholder; she is even ready to defend practices which, though derided by the Reformers, are at any rate harmless; and when Dagouçin describes as "poor simpletons" those who carry candles to the shrines of the saints, she answers that

## The Pearl of Princesses

“those who least know how to tell it are often those who feel the most the love of God and of His will.” ↓ But she is merciless towards the grosser superstitions, and she denounces in scathing terms the corruption of the clergy, and particularly of the monks. With all her piety and virtue, Oisille is a thorough woman of the world; and, as such, she accepts the conventional gallantry of the time, and it is only on occasion that she ventures a mild protest against the very free stories and sentiments of her companions. She possesses, however, a singular talent for drawing an edifying conclusion from the most unedifying narrative, and never loses an opportunity of impressing upon her audience that every example of human frailty only goes to prove that strength to resist temptation should be sought in Heaven, and not on earth.

¶Parlamente, apparently devoted to her somewhat churlish husband Hircan, yet, at the same time, by no means wholly averse to the devotion of Simontault, is a very charming character, perfectly virtuous, if a trifle coquettish, vivacious, witty, cultured and refined; in a word, an admirable representative of the intellectual side of the Renaissance.

↓ The recently widowed Longarine, discreetly unhappy for her dead husband, but willing enough to be consoled by Saffredant, is an amiable, modest young woman with a tender heart, in which the sufferings of others awaken a quick response. She may be considered to typify the average well-bred, well-conducted woman of the time.

↓ Ennasuite and Nomerfide seem to stand for what may be called the Radical side of the Renaissance movement, in which revolt against the religious discipline of Rome vented itself in an unseemly license of speech and indif-

## The Heptaméron

ference to high principles. The first is a haughty damsel, with a sovereign disdain for the "lower orders"; the second a merry, high-spirited girl, "the youngest and maddest of us all." She it is who relates the one really objectionable tale in the book.

The identity of these ten personages has naturally been provocative of much speculation among the various editors and critics of the *Heptaméron*. But, without going quite so far as Dr. George Saintsbury, who stigmatizes the results of their efforts as "the idlest conjecture," and "puerile guesswork," we cannot think they have been particularly successful. To assert, for instance, that Oisille is intended for Louise of Savoy, as does M. Félix Frank,<sup>1</sup> would seem to argue a very imperfect acquaintance with the character of the mother of François I, which was certainly very little consistent with some of the sentiments expressed by that personage; and when we find three distinguished critics, in Le Roux de Lincy, Frank and Madame Darmesteter, identifying Simontault with three separate persons so entirely different as Brantôme's father, François de Bourdeille, Henri d'Albret and Clément Marot, and at variance again in regard to the identity of Nomerfide and Saffredant, it would seem that, whoever these characters may have been intended to represent, Marguerite did not wish them to be recognized. At the same time, it is only fair to observe that

<sup>1</sup> M. Félix Frank further identifies Parlamente with Marguerite herself; Hircan with Henri d'Albret; Longarine with Aimée de la Fayette, Dame de Silly, Jeanne d'Albret's *gouvernante*; Ennasuite with Anne de Vivonne, Dame de Bourdeille; Simontault with François de Bourdeille; Dagouçin with Nicolas Dangu, Abbé de Juilly; Nomerfide with Isabeau d'Albret, and Saffredant with that lady's husband, René de Rohan; M. Frank's arguments are highly ingenious, but, save in one or two instances, scarcely convincing.



## The Pearl of Princesses

practically all authorities agree that Ennasuite is Brantôme's grandmother, Anne de Vivonne, Dame de Bourdeille, who, her grandson tells us, was one of the "*dévisantes*" of the *Heptaméron*; and we think that a very strong case has been made out by Imbert de Saint-Amand and Madame Darmesteter for their conclusion that, in the character of Oisille, the Queen of Navarre meant to draw her own likeness.

When the fugitives from the floods assembled at the Abbey of Notre-Dame de Serrance had ended relating to each other their adventures, and had returned thanks to God, who, "contenting Himself with the servants, had saved the masters and mistresses," they made inquiries as to the possibility of continuing their homeward journey; and, on learning that the Gave was still rising, and that a long time must elapse before it was again fordable, they resolved to build a bridge. The abbot, says the author, with whom that holy man was evidently no favourite, was very pleased that they should go to this expense, since the bridge would increase the number of pilgrims to his monastery; but, though he furnished workmen, "his avarice did not suffer him to pay anything." The workmen reported that the bridge could not be finished in less than ten or twelve days, whereupon the company began to cast about them for some means of passing the time of waiting as pleasantly as possible. All are agreed that to spend nearly a fortnight without a pastime would be altogether insupportable; and the madcap Nomerfide goes so far as to declare that were she a single day without amusement, she would be found dead in the morning. To avert this catastrophe, Hircan and all the gentlemen entreat Oisille, as the eldest of the party, to find them some occupation at once "pleasant and

## The Heptaméron

virtuous." To which request that pious lady replies in a speech which we shall make no apology for giving at length, since it appears to dispose very effectually of the contention of M. Félix Frank and others that Oisille is intended to personify Louise of Savoy, and, at the same time, to confirm the opinion of those who see in her none other than the author herself :—

“ My children, you ask me a thing I find very difficult, to teach you—a pastime that may deliver you from weariness ; for, having sought such a remedy all my life, I have never found but one, which is the reading of the Holy Scriptures, wherein is found the true and perfect joy from which repose and bodily health proceed. And, if you ask me to tell you the recipe which keeps me at my age so joyous and so healthy, it is that so soon as I rise in the morning, I open the Holy Scriptures and read therein, seeing and contemplating the will of God, who sent His Son for our sake into this world to announce His Holy Word and glad tidings, whereby He promises remission from our sins and the full discharge of all our debts, by the gift of His love, His passion, and His martyrdom. When I meditate upon this, I am so filled with joy that, taking up my Psalter, I sing in my heart and say with my mouth the beautiful canticles and psalms which the Spirit of God composed in the heart of David and of other writers. And the satisfaction that I find therein so consoles me that all the evils that my days may bring seem to me as benedictions ; forasmuch as in faith I keep in my heart even Him who for my sake hath borne them all. In like manner, before supper, I retire and pasture my soul in some holy lesson ; while, at night, I call to mind my

## The Pearl of Princesses

doings of the day, seek forgiveness for what I have done amiss, and praise God for His mercies. And in His love, and fear, and peace, I take my rest, assured against all evils. There, my children, you behold the pastime which, for long enough, has sufficed me, who, having made trial of all things, have found in none of them satisfaction for the spirit. Perchance, if every morning you would read in the Scriptures for an hour, and afterwards say your prayers devoutly during Mass, you would find in this desert the beauty which one may find in every place. For he who knows God sees all things fair in Him; and, afar from Him, there is naught save uncomeliness. Wherefore I pray you accept my counsel, if you would live in gladness."

However, this gay company is unable to resign itself absolutely to so austere a regimen, and Hircan, on behalf of the gentlemen, proposes a division of their time between the sacred and the profane, that is to say, that Oisille should read to them in the morning from the New Testament, and that between dinner and vespers they should choose "some pastime which shall be pleasant to the body and yet not hurtful to the soul." Oisille rejoins that, since she had been at pains to forget every kind of worldly pleasure, she fears that she would succeed but ill in the choice of such a diversion; and it is therefore agreed that Parlamente shall choose for them.

Parlamente thereupon gives her decision in favour of story-telling. "I think," she says, "that there is not one of you who has not read the Hundred Tales of Boccaccio, lately translated from the Italian into French.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Marguerite is here alluding to Antoine le Maçon's famous translation, which was published in 1545.



## The Heptaméron

So highly were these esteemed by the Very Christian King François, first of the name, Monseigneur le Dauphin, Madame la Dauphine, and Madame Marguerite,<sup>1</sup> that could Boccaccio only have heard from the place where he lay the praises of such illustrious persons, they would have raised him from the dead. Now I heard not long since that the two ladies of whom I have spoken, together with several others of the Court, deliberated to do as much—only in one thing differing from Boccaccio, that they would write no tale that was not veritable history. And the said ladies, and Monseigneur le Dauphin with them, undertook to tell ten stories each and to assemble in all ten persons from amongst those whom they judged most capable of relating something. But students and men of letters were excepted, for Monseigneur le Dauphin would not allow of them being brought in, fearing lest the flowers of their rhetoric should in some wise prove injurious to the truth of their tales. But the weighty matters in which the King has since engaged—the peace with England,<sup>2</sup> the bringing to bed of Madame la Dauphine,<sup>3</sup> and many other matters of a nature to engross the whole Court, caused the

<sup>1</sup> Monseigneur le Dauphin and Madame la Dauphine are François I's second son Henri (afterwards Henri II) and Catherine de' Medici, who assumed these titles on the death of the Dauphin François in August 1536. Opinions differ as to who is meant by Madame Marguerite. Some authorities think that the author is referring to herself, the Queen of Navarre being usually called thus at her brother's Court; others that Marguerite de France, youngest daughter of François I, married in 1559 to Emmanuel Philibert X, Duke of Savoy, is intended.

<sup>2</sup> Two of the best authorities on the *Heptaméron*, MM. Montaignon and Dillaye, are of opinion that a word or two is deficient in the manuscript, and that the writer intends to imply the rupture of the peace with England in 1543.

<sup>3</sup> Catherine de' Medici gave birth to her first child, the future François II, at Fontainebleau on January 19, 1543.

## The Pearl of Princesses

enterprise to be forgotten entirely. By reason, however, of our now great leisure, it can be accomplished in ten days while we wait for our bridge to be completed. If it pleased you, we might go every day from noon till four of the clock into yonder pleasant meadow beside the River Gave. The trees there are so leafy that the sun can neither penetrate the shade nor change the coolness to heat. Seated there at our ease, we might each one tell a story of something we have ourselves seen or heard related by one worthy of belief. At the end of ten days we shall have completed the hundred ;<sup>1</sup> and if God wills it that our work be found worthy in the eyes of the lords and ladies of whom I have made mention, we will, on our return from this journey, present them with it in lieu of images and paternosters, and feel assured that they will esteem this to be a more pleasant gift. If, however, any one can devise some plan more agreeable than mine, I will fall in with his opinion."

Parlemente's speech is very important, since it enables us to determine with some approach to certainty the date at which the Prologue of the *Heptaméron* was written. Too much attention need not be paid to the date of Le Maçon's publication of his translation of Boccaccio, since it appears to have been circulated at the Court in manuscript long before it was printed. But those of the important events which caused the literary plans of the Dauphin and Dauphine to be abandoned prove conclusively that the Prologue could not have been written before 1544 ; and the general opinion now is that Marguerite began writing the book during her residence at Alençon in the spring of that year. Of course, it is quite possible that the Queen may already have had laid by

<sup>1</sup> This plainly indicates that it was Marguerite's original intention to write a *Decameron*.

## The Heptaméron

several of the tales which appear in it, since story-telling was a fashionable diversion of the time. Even, however, if such were the case, it is very improbable that any of them were the work of her youth, since her first husband, the Duc d'Alençon, is always spoken of as dead (1525); more than one reference is made to the death of the Dauphin François (1536), and the future Henri II and Catherine de' Medici are usually called Monseigneur le Dauphin and Madame la Dauphine. Marguerite was still engaged upon the book down to a year or so before her death, as an amusing adventure which befell Jeanne d'Albret and her husband, Antoine de Bourbon, Duc de Vendôme, who were married in September 1548, forms the subject of one of the last tales.

And, if we admit, as we can hardly refuse to do, that the *Heptaméron*, with the possible exception of a few tales, was written subsequently to the spring of 1544, what becomes of the theory of Charles Nodier, based on the untrustworthy testimony of the Abbé Goujet and a supposed similarity of style between the *Heptaméron* and the *Cymbalum Mundi*, that it is the work of Bonaventure des Périers? For Des Périers, as we know, died in 1544, and he had been exiled from Marguerite's Court three years earlier. But, even if dates did not furnish a complete answer to Nodier's contention, could any one reasonably believe that the *Heptaméron*, which combines with its grossness a tone of almost unctuous piety, was penned by an unbeliever?

That one or more of the Queen of Navarre's literary *entourage*, or of her personal friends, may have had a hand in the book is, of course, not only possible, but even probable.<sup>1</sup> But that the tales in the main and the

<sup>1</sup> We ourselves find it very difficult to believe that that singularly unpleasant story which describes the misadventure of Madame de Ronex



## The Pearl of Princesses

whole of the intermediate discussions—by far the most interesting and valuable portion of the *Heptaméron*—are Marguerite's work cannot, we think, be doubted. All tradition, all authority, is on her side, from Claude Gruget, who gave the book its title, and Brantôme, who tells us that his grandmother held the ink-horn for Queen Marguerite as she wrote the tales, journeying in her litter about the country, to distinguished modern critics like Le Roux de Lincy, Paul Lacroix ("the Bibliophile Jacob"), and Félix Frank.

Parlemente's proposal is received with acclamation by all the company, who declare that it was not possible to give better advice. Early next morning they all repair to Oisille's chamber, where they find that pious lady already at her devotions. They listen to her reading for a full hour, then piously hear Mass, and at ten o'clock<sup>1</sup> go to dinner. After dinner they withdraw each to his own apartment; but at noon they all assemble in the meadow by the river, "which was so fair and pleasant that it would need a Boccaccio to describe it as it really was." And when they have seated themselves on the grass, "which was so fine and soft that they needed neither cushion nor carpet," Simontault opens the proceedings by relating the tragic story of "the misdeeds of the proctor's wife who had a bishop for her gallant."

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in the Franciscan monastery at Moulins (Nouvelle XIV), and which Oisille, with only too much justice, stigmatizes as "a dirty and disagreeable tale," can have been written by Marguerite. It was very probably written by some personal friend, and included by the Queen of Navarre in her collection in deference to the wishes of its author and against her better judgment.

<sup>1</sup> At this period ten o'clock was the dinner-hour of the Court and the upper classes.

## The Heptaméron

The *nouvelles*, or rather the subjects, are not very easy to classify. A good many are consecrated to the deceptions practised by wives on husbands, or husbands on wives, and occasionally by lovers on both. Another large division is composed of stories to the discredit of the monks, and especially of the Cordeliers, or Franciscans, an Order whose brutal antipathy to learning, no less than their gross immorality, rendered them highly obnoxious to Marguerite and her friends, though the Queen was ready enough to recognize merit when she found it among them, and it was a Franciscan who administered to her the last consolations of religion. Nor are the secular clergy spared, though they escape more lightly. Not a few stories refer to well-known persons of the time, who are sometimes mentioned by name, while at others their identity is veiled under disguises which are not difficult to penetrate. Thus, the amours of François I furnish material for more than one story, as does the pursuit of Marguerite herself by the audacious Bonnivet. Some deal with celebrated crimes, like the murder of Alessandro de' Medici by his cousin Lorenzaccio (Nouvelle XII). The most pathetic, perhaps the only truly pathetic, story in the book, is that of the wife of the muleteer of Amboise, who preferred death to dishonour (Nouvelle II).

Each story is followed by a discussion in which the whole of the company take part. Some approve the conduct of the hero or the heroine; others condemn it severely. There are paradoxical opinions and judicious ones. The men, and particularly Hircan, often hold morality very cheap; but the ladies, led by Oisille, protest in the name of virtue. "The experienced widow is the soul of the reunion. She regulates the order of the

## The Pearl of Princesses

tales ; she is the court of last resort in delicate questions and the most arduous problems of sentimental casuistry ; she formulates the most serious reflections on human frailty, the inconsiderate ardour of youth, and the illusions of hope.”<sup>1</sup> At four o'clock the monastery bell rings for vespers, the *séance* terminates, and the company repair to the chapel, though, if an interesting point is being debated, the monks have to wait for them. However, they do not complain, but sometimes hide behind the hedge to listen to the stories.

These stories, with rare exceptions, are not of a high order of interest, nor is the author's style particularly attractive. Some of the longer ones are too much drawn out, overcharged with useless details ; there is not a living portrait in any of them—a prince “*si charmant que oncques ne vis* ; a lady “*la plus belle que se puisse rencontrer*,” and so forth—there is little either of real humour or of true pathos. But, when the general colour and tone of the stories is taken in connexion with the tenor of the intermediate conversations, which form so striking a feature of the book, the *Heptaméron* must be regarded as a most remarkable work and as the most complete literary exponent of the close of the French Renaissance which exists.

In 1559, nine years after the author's death, one Pierre Boaistuau gathered together the tales of the Queen of Navarre, already familiar in manuscript to the Court, and published them under the title of *les Amans fortunez*. The editor dedicated his work to Marguerite de Bourbon, Duchesse de Nevers, but he carefully avoided naming Marguerite as the author of these *nouvelles*. The text, however, was much mutilated, and all the passages in

<sup>1</sup> Imbert de Saint-Amand, *les Femmes de la cour des derniers Valois*.



## The Heptaméron

which Marguerite expounded her own views on religion, and even some of the stories which Boaistuau considered too heretical for safety, were ruthlessly suppressed. In the following year, Claude Gruget brought out another edition, in which he restored the order of the tales and some of the text suppressed by Boaistuau. Moreover, he acknowledged Marguerite as the author of this unfinished *Decameron*, which he entitled *l'Heptaméron des Nouvelles de très illustre et très excellente princesse, Marguerite de Valois, Royne de Navarre*, and dedicated to her daughter, Jeanne d'Albret. "I should not have presumed, Madame," he says in his dedication, "to present to you this book of *nouvelles*, composed by the late queen, your mother, if her name had not been omitted or excluded in the first edition of her work, and the entire plan of the narratives so changed that they cannot be recognized as the same composition." Gruget's work, of which an English translation appeared in 1654, obtained a great success, but though the next two centuries saw the publication of numerous new editions of the *Heptaméron*, it was not until that of the Société des Bibliophiles Français appeared in 1853, under the auspices of M. Le Roux de Lincy, that justice may be said to have been done to the style and sentiments of the Queen of Navarre. Of several modern English translations, infinitely the best is that of the Society of the English Bibliophilists, published in 1892, in five volumes, from the text of Le Roux de Lincy's work, illustrated by the original engravings designed by Freudenberger, and the head- and tail-pieces by Dunker, and to which Dr. George Saintsbury has contributed an Introduction, in which his profound knowledge and fine critical discrimination have seldom been more happily displayed.

## CHAPTER XXVII

DURING the winter which followed her daughter's marriage, the Queen of Navarre's attention was chiefly occupied by ecclesiastical disputes in Béarn. Although since the Affair of the Placards Marguerite had been less fervent in the expressions of her sympathy with the Reformers, she had continued to protect them, and the new doctrines had made considerable progress in the principality. This progress was largely due to the teaching of Gérard Roussel, for whom the Queen had obtained the bishopric of Oloron. That Marguerite should have ventured to recommend to the Holy See for episcopal honours a divine who had notoriously departed from the ritual of Rome, and had twice been brought to trial for heresy, is remarkable enough; but what is still more extraordinary, is that Paul III should have sanctioned the appointment, and that, though, after his consecration, Roussel continued his unorthodox practices, notably, the administration of the Holy Sacrament *in both kinds* to the laity, no attempt was made to remove him. But Roussel's sincere piety, large-hearted charity and sweetness of disposition, even more than his eloquence and learning, had gained him numberless friends, even among those who differed from him in doctrine; and his metropolitan, the Bishop of Lescar, himself a member of the House of Albret, was a supple prelate, who paid the Queen the most assiduous court, and carefully refrained from any interference with those who enjoyed her protection.

Some of the bishops, however, whose sees lay wholly

## Marguerite and the Bishop of Condom

or in part within the states of the King of Navarre were not disposed to show so much complaisance. Chief among these was Érarard de Grossoles, Bishop of Condom, one of the most zealous champions of the Papacy in the South of France, who aspired to play in Béarn and Gascony a similar rôle to that which Bêda had undertaken in Paris. Some two years before, the bishop had delivered a violent harangue from the pulpit of his cathedral, in which he denounced the proceedings of the Bishop of Oloron, and boldly attacked the orthodoxy, not only of the King and Queen of Navarre, but of François I himself. Marguerite thereupon caused information to be laid against Grossoles, and he was temporarily suspended from his episcopal functions, and summoned to Paris to clear himself of the charge against him. The Queen besought her brother to compel the bishop to resign his see and bestow it on her friend the Cardinal du Bellay, "the poorest cardinal in his dominions"; but, as the Council was opposed to the punishment of a prelate merely for excess of zeal for the Faith, Grossoles escaped with an admonition, and was allowed to return to his diocese. Here, encouraged by his partial vindication, it was not long before he resumed his denunciations of Roussel and of his royal protectors, upon which Marguerite again made representations to the King and urgently demanded the removal of "him who was converting the Holy Word of God into a cause for disobedience towards superiors and of noisy pulpit declamation."

In accordance with his sister's request, François nominated two commissioners to proceed to Bordeaux and investigate the charges against the Bishop of Condom, promising that, whatever might be their decision, the



## The Pearl of Princesses

turbulent prelate should be translated to some distant diocese.

Grossoles, however, was the head of a comparatively small, but exceedingly fanatical, party in Béarn and Gascony; and during the interval between the announcement of the appointment of the Commissioners and their arrival, his adherents made desperate efforts to induce the Queen of Navarre to stay the proceedings. Arguments and even threats proving futile, some of the more fanatical spirits among them resolved to go farther, and began conspiring against her life. Word was brought to the King of Navarre of a plot to poison his consort on Christmas Day, during the celebration of High Mass, by, so it was alleged, burning deadly drugs in the censers which were to be wafted round her, in homage to her sovereign dignity, after incense had been offered at the altar. Whether this was the actual form which the attempt against the Queen was to take may be doubted; but it is certain that an extensively organized conspiracy existed, and that several persons of rank were concerned in it, among whom was the Baron de Lescure, who had long been distinguished for his bitter criticism of Marguerite's encouragement of the Reformers. The King of Navarre gave orders for the baron's arrest, but, warned in time, the latter succeeded in effecting his escape, and took refuge in Spain. An arrest, however, which was apparently of great importance, was effected at the beginning of the following year; but Marguerite, in her correspondence, carefully suppresses the name of the suspect and merely refers to him as "our prisoner." From which it may be inferred that he must have been a person of unusual distinction, possibly even connected with the House of Albret.

In this alarming situation, the Queen displayed her usual

## Marguerite and the Bishop of Condom

courage, and, though urged to retire for a while to her brother's Court, declined to do so, and announced her intention of awaiting the arrival of the Commissioners appointed to investigate the conduct of the Bishop of Condom. But, as will be gathered from the following letter addressed to her steward, Izernay, whom she had despatched on a special mission to François, every precaution was taken to guard her against the evil designs of her enemies—

“ I must mention for your guidance that I feel no less indebted to the King for his project of translating M. de Condom to Blois than for his intention of sending here the Commissioners whom you name ; since I bear the bishop no personal enmity, and only desire that the King should be honoured and obeyed in this country as he ought, and acknowledged to be a clement prince. These are matters upon which, as you know, I am loath to torment the King, but since the return of the Bishop of Condom, the King can have little conception of the audacity displayed by the relatives of this prelate. Owing to warnings that I have received to guard myself against poison, which, I learn, is very much in vogue with them, I have requested the King of Navarre to dismiss from the town [of Pau] all the adherents of the said bishop, which he has done gradually, after explaining to them the opinion I entertained of them all. He has, moreover, given strict orders to prevent any one entering our culinary offices here. It is reported that the monks have invented a new mode of poisoning their enemies, by the smoke of incense, of which, however, I have no present dread, as, since your departure, I have been more indisposed from ill-health than ever. On Christmas Day,

## The Pearl of Princesses

High Mass was chanted in the grand salon here, and from my bed I heard matins, and subsequently Mass also."

In a letter to the King, Marguerite speaks of the mysterious prisoner already mentioned, who, in the hope of saving his life, had "freely confessed to the design of poisoning us both" (*i. e.* herself and her husband), and whom she suspected "of concealing something of still greater magnitude," and of "holding secret and traitorous correspondence which he fears to own." From further correspondence of the Queen of Navarre with her brother, we learn that the culprit had been brought to trial before a special commission appointed by François, and condemned to some exemplary punishment; but that Marguerite had then interceded for him, and obtained permission from the King to accord him a free pardon—one more instance of the readiness with which she forgave even the gravest injuries. Beyond what can be gathered from Marguerite's letters, nothing appears to be known about the proceedings against this personage, whose identity has remained a mystery.

The affair of the Bishop of Condom continued for some time longer to agitate the little Court of Béarn, when the investigation into his conduct was terminated by his translation to the see of Blois—a post in which he was naturally obliged to curb his eloquence—while Condom was conferred on Charles de Pisseleu, brother of Madame d'Étampes.

Late in the following spring, the King of Navarre having been advised by his physician to take the baths of Cauterets, Marguerite accompanied him thither, in order, she writes to her brother, "to prevent him from worrying



## Marguerite at Cauterets

and to transact his business for him," for when one is at the baths, "one must live like a child, without any care." This, however, was not her only motive in going to Cauterets, for, in a letter to the Duke of Clèves, she states that she had herself been recommended a course of the baths, as she was suffering from a "*caterre*" which "had fallen upon half her neck and obliged her to keep her bed." This visit to Cauterets, it may be observed, evidently left a deep impression upon Marguerite's mind, since it is in this neighbourhood that she laid the scene of the prologue of the *Heptaméron*.

Since the disgrace of Montmorency, François, in anticipation of a new war with Charles V, had been striving to renew the alliances which had been broken during the administration of the Constable. The task was no easy one, for the majority of his former allies, among whom was Soliman, had been profoundly disgusted by the King's credulous and vacillating conduct. However, thanks to the untiring efforts of the French diplomatists, the suspension of the persecution against the Reformers, and the marriage of Jeanne d'Albret with the Duke of Clèves, with whom François formed an offensive and defensive alliance, some of the German Protestants were wooed back and Soliman was persuaded to promise the assistance of his fleet.

Before this had been accomplished, the Emperor had considerably furnished his rival with an admirable pretext for breaking the truce of Nice. In July 1541, as two of François's agents, Rinçon and Fregoso, the one bound for Constantinople, the other for Venice, were passing down the Po, the barge in which they were travelling was attacked, near Pavia, by a party of Spanish

## The Pearl of Princesses

soldiers, sent by the Viceroy of the Milanese, the Marquis del Guasto, and both the diplomatists were killed. The seizure of their papers was the object of this crime, but, as the most compromising of these had been entrusted to Guillaume du Bellay, the Governor of Piedmont, it was not attained. Del Guasto, when accused of having instigated the assassination, declared that the culprits were merely banditti ; but it was soon proved beyond all reasonable doubt that they were soldiers from the garrison of Pavia ; and François filled all Europe with denunciations of the outrage perpetrated on the sacred persons of his Ambassadors, and demanded reparation. However, as the chain of alliances which he had hoped to form was not yet complete, and the Pope besought him not to attack Charles until the latter's return from his approaching expedition against Algiers, he decided to postpone hostilities until the following year.

The expedition against Algiers ended in a lamentable fiasco, and the Emperor returned to Spain with prestige and power both seriously diminished. The Very Christian King had, of course, no scruple in turning the common misfortune of Christendom to his own advantage ; his deliberate exaggeration of Charles's losses encouraged both Christian III of Denmark and Gustavus Wasa of Sweden to join the Anti-Imperial Alliance ; the co-operation of the Porte was tacitly acknowledged, and on July 12, 1542, war was formally declared.

In former contests between François and Charles, Italy had been the chief theatre of war ; and the former had consistently sacrificed everything to his Italian ambitions. But, on the present occasion, he resolved to remain on the defensive beyond the Alps, while he invaded Luxem-

## Marguerite's Advice disregarded

bourg in the north, and Roussillon in the south. It is probable that Soliman had insisted on the adoption of this plan of campaign as a condition of his support, since it would necessarily prevent the Emperor from sending any considerable force into the valley of the Danube.

The command of the Army of the North was entrusted to the Duc d'Orléans, with Claude, Duc de Guise, to advise him ; that of Roussillon was given to the Dauphin, Annebaut being selected to act as his lieutenant-general and counsellor, while the King, who hoped to draw his rival into a great battle in the Rousillon valleys, announced his intention of joining it in person if the Emperor should cross the Pyrenees. Three other armies were set on foot : one, consisting almost entirely of German mercenaries hired by the Duc de Clèves with French gold, invaded Brabant ; the second, under the Duc de Vendôme, defended the Flemish frontier ; while the third held Piedmont.

The objective of the Army of Roussillon was warmly debated in the Council. Marguerite repeatedly urged her brother first to undertake the conquest of Upper Navarre, which Henri d'Albret offered to garrison and defend, while the French army advanced towards Madrid. She represented that Fontarabia would present an easy conquest, and that, this place once in their hands, the Dauphin's army would meet with little resistance as it marched upon Pampeluna, since the population of Navarre could be counted on to rise on behalf of their former rulers.

Unfortunately, as it was to prove, her advice was not accepted, and it was decided to adhere to the original plan of invading Roussillon and to make the taking of Perpignan the main objective. Early information of the



## The Pearl of Princesses

designs of the French, and the failure of the Dauphin to occupy the mountain passes leading into Aragon, gave the Emperor time to strengthen the fortifications and throw a considerable force, under the command of Alva, into place; and at the beginning of October the invading army, decimated by disease and seeing its communications on the point of being cut off by the mountain torrents, swollen by the autumn rains, was obliged to raise the siege and retreat into France.

In the Netherlands, the Duke of Clèves defeated the Flemish militia and overran Brabant, which his troops pillaged mercilessly. Then, marching into the duchy of Luxembourg, he effected a junction with the Duc d'Orléans, and their combined forces stormed or reduced several towns, including the capital. But, thanks to the folly and egotism of the youthful commander-in-chief, whose jealousy of his elder brother led him to disband the greater part of his troops and post off to the south, in order to share the Dauphin's expected glory, the Imperialists were enabled to recover Luxembourg, and, but for the courage and activity of the Duc de Guise, the other places taken by the French would also have been lost. In Piedmont, Guillaume du Bellay and his brother Martin bravely held their ground against the superior forces of the Imperialists; but his exertions proved too much for the former, whose health was already shattered, and he died at the beginning of the following year.

At the end of November, François, who had established himself at Montpellier to await the result of the operations in Roussillon, paid a visit to the King and Queen of Navarre at Nérac, where he was magnificently entertained and "regaled with banquets, comedies, and joustings." On leaving Nérac, he proceeded to Bordeaux, whither his

## Marguerite intercedes for the Rochellois

sister accompanied him, and, while there, received intelligence that the inhabitants of La Rochelle had revolted against the increase of the *gabelle*, or salt-tax, which the war had necessitated, had attempted the life of their governor, the Sieur de Jarnac, and had closed their gates against the troops sent to preserve order in the town.

François was extremely incensed on learning of these violent proceedings, and at once announced his intention of setting out for La Rochelle, to quell the revolt in person, and mete out condign punishment to the rebellious citizens. The Queen of Navarre, however, hastened to intercede for the Rochellois, pointing out that, were the King to act with clemency on this occasion, instead of imitating the severity with which the Emperor had recently punished the inhabitants of Ghent, the contrast between the conduct of the two sovereigns could not fail to provoke comparisons very greatly to her brother's advantage. The King recognized the wisdom of this advice, and, though he came to La Rochelle accompanied by a force sufficient to overcome the most strenuous resistance, had it been offered him, he contented himself with representing to the trembling deputation from the inhabitants, which waited upon him to implore his pardon, the magnitude of the offence of which they had been guilty, and the penalties to which they had rendered themselves liable. Then he informed them that, gravely as they had offended, he had no intention of punishing them as they had deserved, and should merely impose on the town a fine of 200,000 livres.<sup>1</sup> "I will never voluntarily," said he, "inflict upon my subjects the

<sup>1</sup> This sum was given by the King to the Chancellor, Montholon, who returned it to the authorities of La Rochelle, to be employed in building a hospital.

## The Pearl of Princesses

penalties by which the Emperor punished the revolt of Ghent, even for a less offence than you have committed ; for his hands were stained with the blood of his people, from which mine, by the mercy of God, are yet free. But the Emperor, by this rigour, alienated their love and affection ; while I hope, on the contrary, by the exercise of mercy and clemency, to confirm your loyalty and obedience.” The joy of the Rochellois when the King’s decision was made known was in proportion to the fears they had previously entertained, and so great was their enthusiasm for their sovereign that François dismissed his troops and remained for some days the guest of the town.

A copy of the King’s speech was sent to the Queen of Navarre, who caused it to be printed and circulated in Béarn ; while a number of copies also appear to have been smuggled into Spain. “Monseigneur,” she writes to her brother, “the Bishop of Tulle has sent me an account of the piteous supplication made to you by your unhappy subjects of La Rochelle, with your Christian and most merciful response ; on reading which, methought I heard and saw you thus exercise your accustomed goodness and gentleness. I have caused so many copies of this your answer to be circulated here, in Spain, and elsewhere, that your humanity can henceforth be no more concealed from men than it is from Him whom I implore, Monseigneur, to lengthen your life by a century, if only for the honour and welfare of your realm.”

The war in 1543 was confined to Italy and the Netherlands. In the Low Countries, Fortune at first smiled upon the French and their allies ; at the end of March, the Duke of Clèves gained a victory over the Imperialists



## An Ill-timed Pleasantry

at Sittard, while in June François and the Dauphin invaded Hainaut and took Landrecies, on the Sambre, which the King proceeded to fortify and garrison. Then, deeming that he had done enough for glory, his Majesty disbanded the greater part of his army and retired to Rheims, where he divided his time between the beasts of the forest and the beauties of the Court.

From these agreeable occupations he was presently aroused by the news that the emperor had arrived at Speyer at the head of a formidable army. That Charles's first move would be to take summary vengeance upon his rebellious vassal, the Duke of Clèves, could not be doubted, and that prince in great trepidation sent courier after courier to François to implore his assistance; but the King, having disbanded most of his troops, was unable to take the field for more than a month, by which time the fate of his ally was already sealed.

In mid-August, the Imperialists invaded the Duke's dominions, and on the 22nd appeared before Düren. The town was reputed to be impregnable, and, when summoned to surrender in the Emperor's name, the citizens, affecting to believe that Charles had perished during his stormy voyage from Algiers to Spain, in which a number of his ships had been lost, flippantly replied that "they must take them for fools and simpletons to make such a demand, since it was well known to the people of Düren that the Emperor Charles had long served as food for the fishes of the ocean." Two days later, after a struggle of three hours, the town was taken by storm, and the people of Düren expiated this ill-timed pleasantry in torrents of blood: the garrison and all the male inhabitants, save old men and children, being ruthlessly massacred. No second example of the

## The Pearl of Princesses

consequences of resistance to the Imperial arms was required; town after town opened its gates to the invaders, and on September 7 the Duke of Clèves, who was not of the stuff whereof heroes are made, rode into Charles's camp at Venloo, on the Meuse, declaring that "he came to throw himself at the feet of the most illustrious Emperor, to receive the chastisement of his fault or some ray of mercy or pardon."

The news of the Duke's submission reached François at Luxembourg, which had surrendered to the French on September 10. Although the loss of this valuable ally was mainly due to his own indolence and want of foresight, he chose to consider himself the aggrieved party, and inveighed loudly against his conduct; while Marguerite stigmatized her son-in-law as "*vilain et infame.*" The King avenged himself upon the Duke by refusing to send him his wife, whom he had demanded; and the indefatigable Jeanne resumed her policy of protestation, this time with the full approval of her mother and uncle. Finally, both parties presented separate suits to the Holy See, praying for the dissolution of their union, and affirming on oath that, on account of the tender age of the princess, the ceremony performed at Châtelherault ought to be regarded in the light of a betrothal; and at the end of 1545 Paul III issued a decree annulling the marriage and permitting both parties to contract a fresh alliance. The Duke of Clèves subsequently married the Archduchess Mary, daughter of the King of the Romans.

The defection of the Duke of Clèves had been preceded by the loss of a more valuable ally. Owing to the support accorded by François to James V of Scotland, who had married the King's daughter, Madame

## A Critical Situation

Madeleine, in the previous February Henry VIII had concluded a treaty with the Emperor, in which the old design of a partition of France was renewed ; and in September an English contingent joined the Imperialists in the Netherlands, though the combined forces failed to effect anything of importance during the remainder of the campaign.

Meantime, the ports of Provence had been witnessing the strange spectacle of the white cross of the Very Christian King and the crescent of the Infidel floating side by side. But the assistance of the dreaded Barbarossa and his pirate galleys brought François no advantage commensurate with the storm of execration which so unnatural an alliance, and the atrocities committed by the Turks on the hapless inhabitants of the Mediterranean coasts, raised against him. The capture of the town of Nice, the bulk of whose population was carried off as slaves by Barbarossa, was indeed sorry compensation for the alienation of the German Protestant princes.

The campaign of 1544 opened under the gloomiest auspices. François was now completely isolated, for during the winter Charles had succeeded in detaching Denmark and Sweden from the hostile coalition, and the Lutheran princes had made their peace with the Emperor. Henry VIII had taken the field in person, and with an English army of 30,000 men, subsequently reinforced by 15,000 Netherlanders, was preparing to march through Picardy straight upon Paris ; while the Emperor was to advance upon the capital from Lorraine, and Del Guasto, the governor of the Milanese, to sweep the French out of Piedmont and enter France by way



## The Pearl of Princesses

of Lyons. François's resources were practically exhausted, and he had no money to hire the mercenaries from which his armies were mainly recruited. The situation could scarcely have been more critical.

At the beginning of the year, the King, ill and despondent and overwhelmed with cares, had written urging his sister to come to the Court. But since the summer of 1542, when she had given birth to twin sons, neither of whom had survived more than a few hours, Marguerite's health had been very indifferent, and she had already developed symptoms of consumption, the malady which was to cut short her life. Greatly, therefore, as she desired to be by her brother's side to share his troubles, she was unable to comply with his request until April, when, in response to a pathetic entreaty from the harassed monarch to join him without delay, she courageously resolved to undertake the fatigues of the long journey. "Monseigneur," she writes, "if I had one foot in the grave, and my physicians declared my death to be inevitable, your letter must have restored me to life. I have heard from your envoy the message that you have sent me, and the affectionate remembrance you bear me, so that even now I cannot recall his words without shedding tears of joy."

The King was then engaged in inspecting the fortresses of Normandy and Picardy, and it was at Marguerite's Château of Alençon that the brother and sister met. It must have been a sad reunion, to themselves and to those who witnessed it; for not only did the shadow of invasion and possible dismemberment hang over the realm of France, but both the King and his sister, once so full of the joy of life, were now alike the victims of maladies which could have but one termination.

The people of Alençon, by whom Marguerite was

## Panic in Paris

greatly beloved, greeted her return with all manner of rejoicings, and an ingenious poet of the town composed and presented to her an ode on behalf of the nightingales of her park at Alençon, which, he supposes, had assembled to chant a chorus of welcome. The opening lines of this pretty fancy were as follows :—

Par cestre epistre, en style rude escripte,  
Princesse illustre, ô Royne Marguerite,  
Puisque plus loing ne t'on peu convoyer,  
Humble salut te veullent envoyer  
Ceulx qui par toy ont dit mainte chanson,  
Les rossignols de ton parc d'Alençon.

While François, too unwell to take the field himself, remained his sister's guest at Alençon, hostilities had been resumed. From Piedmont came news which served to cheer in some degree the King's drooping spirits. The Comte d'Enghien had gained a great victory over the Imperialists at Ceresole, which freed France from all fear of invasion on the side of Italy and set at liberty a part of the victorious troops to assist in opposing the armies of the Emperor and the English King. And sorely indeed was their assistance needed, for from the Lorraine frontier the tide of invasion, though stemmed for a time by the heroic defence of Saint-Dizier, was advancing steadily towards the capital ; and when, in the first days of September, the capture of Épernay and Château-Thierry brought the Emperor to within striking distance of Paris, the panic that reigned there was indescribable. "Never since the foundation of the town," writes Paradin, "was there seen such tumult and confusion. You might then have beheld rich and poor, great and little, persons of all ages and all conditions, flying and carrying away their property, by land, by water, by wagon ; some dragging their children after them, others bearing old men on

## The Pearl of Princesses

their shoulders." The Seine was so thickly covered with boats, "that it was impossible to see the water of the river," and several of them, overloaded with passengers, sank with their cargoes. The same terror and confusion prevailed in the country round Paris, and the roads were blocked by flocks of sheep and herds of cattle which their distracted owners were driving towards Normandy or the Loire."<sup>1</sup>

François, who had left Alençon early in May, was at Fontainebleau when he learned of the approach of the enemy and the panic prevailing in the capital. Although so unwell as to be confined to his room, he at once set out for Paris, and, accompanied by the Duc de Guise, rode on horseback through the streets, pausing at intervals to address the people and assure them that they need have no cause for alarm. "I cannot," said he, "protect you from the effects of your own fears; but I will undertake to protect you against the enemy, since I would rather die in your defence than live after having failed to save you." The resolute attitude of the King, who, in this crisis at least, proved himself a worthy head of the State, produced an extraordinary effect; the various trade guilds, whose charters bound them to aid in the defence of the capital in case of emergency, rushed to arms; and in a few hours the emotional Parisians had passed from craven terror to the most boundless confidence.

Nevertheless, if Henry VIII had advanced direct upon Paris, instead of lingering to lay siege to Boulogne, the city would probably have fallen, since the weak army commanded by the Dauphin, which was covering the capital, could then have been assailed on two sides simultaneously. But the English King was not disposed

<sup>1</sup> *Histoire de notre temps.*



## Peace of Crépy

to forgo so valuable a prize, besides which sickness was rife among his troops, and his transport-service had broken down. Despite, therefore, of urgent entreaties from the Emperor, he declined to cross the Somme.

Charles's army was in even worse case, and, now that Henry's co-operation, upon which he had based all his hopes of success, had failed him, the Emperor decided that an advance upon Paris would be altogether too hazardous an undertaking. He accordingly retired on Soissons, which he took and sacked, and from there opened negotiations with the French Court. François was, of course, only too ready to treat, and on September 18, 1544, a peace was signed at Crépy, in the Laonnais, which was practically a reversion to the arrangement proposed by Charles V in 1540, rendered a little more acceptable, so far as the King was concerned, by a few concessions. All conquests made by either monarch since the truce of Nice were to be restored; François renounced his pretensions to Naples, Charles his claims to Burgundy. The Duc d'Orléans was to marry, at the expiration of two years, either the Infanta Maria, or the Archduchess Anne, daughter of the King of the Romans, the Emperor being allowed four months to decide which of the two princesses he should give him. If he decided in favour of the Infanta, she should receive the Netherlands, though, during the lifetime of the Emperor, the young couple would only rule the provinces in his name. In that event, François engaged to abandon his claim to the Milanese; but, if Orléans left no heirs, the King and Emperor would resume their respective rights to the Milanese and Burgundy. If Charles selected his niece, she should be given the Milanese; the Emperor, however, reserving the fealty of the duchy until an heir was born. Orléans was to

## The Pearl of Princesses

receive as an appanage the duchies of Orléans, Angoulême, Bourbon, and Châtelherault, and François agreed to restore the territories of the Duke of Savoy so soon as either the Netherlands or the Milanese was conferred upon his son. Finally, the King, "like a penitent sinner," agreed to break off his alliance with infidels and heretics and to take up arms against them conjointly with the Emperor.

The faithful Marguerite wrote from Alençon to congratulate her brother on the peace which had been concluded between "*le lys et la pomme ronde.*" But it was certainly not a subject for congratulation, but very much the reverse; and the Dauphin was so exasperated when he learned of the proposed aggrandizement of his younger brother at the expense of his future kingdom that, although he did not dare to refuse his signature to the treaty, he subsequently entered a secret protest against it, in the presence of the Duc de Vendôme, the Comte d'Enghien, and François de Lorraine, eldest son of the Duc de Guise, in which he protested that he had only signed "*pour la crainte et révérence paternelle*" (December 12, 1544). His example was followed a few weeks later by the *Parlement* of Toulouse.

But this was not the worst feature of the Peace of Crépy, which consisted in the fact that a King of France had consented to range himself definitely on the side of the Inquisition and to pledge himself to extirpate heresy with fire and sword. Nor were many months allowed to elapse before he—or rather his Ministers—proceeded to carry out this undertaking in a manner which sent a thrill of horror throughout Europe and cast an indelible stain upon his name.

## CHAPTER XXVIII

IN the secluded green valleys of the Piedmontese Alps dwelt a race of peaceful shepherds, the remnant of the disciples of Pierre de Waldo, of Lyons, a Reformer of the twelfth century, who were known in France by the name of Vaudois, Pauvres de Lyon or Insabbatés, from their custom of wearing sandals instead of shoes, in imitation of their founder. Cruelly persecuted for more than two centuries, they had in recent times been left comparatively unmolested; and Louis XII, after perusing the report of a commission which he had appointed to inquire into their manner of life and doctrines, had exclaimed: "*Ils sont meilleurs Chrétiens que nous!*"

In 1536 the Vaudois, who, thanks to the immunity from persecution which they had so long enjoyed, had greatly increased in numbers, had given their formal adhesion to the Church of Geneva, whose doctrines bore a very close resemblance to those preached by Pierre de Waldo; and this step and their growing numbers drew upon them the attention of the bigots of the *Parlement* of Aix. Four years later, in November 1540, some act perpetrated by one of the Vaudois against a priest provided the pretext for which the Provençal magistrates had been seeking, and the *Parlement* issued a decree delivering over the head of every household in the towns of Mérindol and Cabrières to the secular arm, and declaring all the property of the inhabitants confiscated; while every house was to be



## The Pearl of Princesses

razed to the ground, every orchard to be uprooted, every tree to be burned as accursed.

Thanks to the remonstrances of the enlightened Cardinal du Bellay, and the fear of alienating the Lutheran princes, the King ordered the suspension of this ferocious decree. But, unhappily, it was not annulled, and no sooner was the Peace of Crépy signed than the cruel and fanatical Cardinal de Tournon began to urge him to authorize its execution. Deceived by false reports that the Vaudois were meditating an insurrection, in January 1545 François weakly consented; while in August he formally expressed his approval of the measures taken against them. But when he learned the truth; when he knew that hundreds of these hapless peasants had been ruthlessly massacred, without distinction of age or sex; that scores of women and children had been burned alive in a church; that Cabrières and Mérindol had been utterly destroyed, together with twenty-two of the neighbouring villages; that the whole region had been changed into a desert; when he heard the cry of horror and indignation which arose in Switzerland, in England, even in France, the King was overwhelmed with shame and remorse. He declared that his orders had been cruelly exceeded, and sent for the Baron d'Oppède, President of the *Parlement* of Aix and Lieutenant-Governor of Provence, to render an account of his conduct; and it required all the influence of Tournon to save his fellow-criminal from a violent death. As it was, though he escaped with his life, d'Oppède left the court a disgraced and ruined man.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> On the accession of Henri II, the new King, animated mainly by the desire to condemn the work of his father's Ministers, caused proceedings to be instituted against d'Oppède and a number of other

## Marguerite eulogises the Peace

And what of Marguerite? With what feelings must she—the champion of the oppressed—have learned of this abominable crime? Must it not have been of shame likewise—shame, not only for the sake of the King, but for her own? For, true to her rôle of loading with extravagant praise every public act of this adored brother, she had at the New Year—only a few days before the fatal orders condemning the Vaudois to fire and sword went forth—addressed to François a long epistle in verse in praise of that ignoble Peace of Crépy, whereof the massacre of the Vaudois was the blood-stained firstfruits, in which, after rejoicing over the reunion of the Very Christian and Catholic Kings and the triumph of Holy Church over its enemies which must speedily follow it, and declaring that “all other good or gain, compared to this, appears imperfect,” she continues:—

Car par eulx veult que la foy confirmé  
Soit, et aussi l'Église reformée,  
Et d'une part oustées les hérésies,  
De l'autre aussi les vaines fantaisies,  
Et que la foy nous fasse en toute guise  
Et triumpans triumpher sainte Église.

Poor Marguerite! Little could she have foreseen, when she urged her brother “to the suppression of heresies,” how speedily and in what an atrocious manner her wishes were to be granted!

Great efforts have been made by certain Protestant historians, notably by Marguerite's English biographer, Miss Freer, to prove that the Queen of Navarre had

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persons concerned in the massacre of the Vaudois. But, after one of the less important culprits had been condemned to death and executed, the affair was proceeded with in a very half-hearted manner and eventually allowed to drop.

## The Pearl of Princesses

actually embraced the Reformed Faith, and was only restrained from proclaiming her allegiance to it by prudential motives. But the warm approval expressed by her of the Peace of Crépy, and, in particular, the verses just cited, constitute, we think, very strong proof to the contrary. On the other hand, they also tend to show that, notwithstanding the assertions of Catholic writers, that, in her later years, she abandoned those heterodox views on certain matters which had provoked the hostility of her Sorbonne, she still clung to the hope of a peaceful reform of the Church, which would have purged it of its "*vaines fantaisies*" and restored it to its primitive simplicity, without breaking its unity.

The war with England still continued, and all the efforts of the French were now directed to the recovery of Boulogne, which had surrendered to Henry VIII a few days before the Peace of Crépy was signed. In October 1544, an attempt was made to take the lower town by *camisado*, but it was repulsed with considerable loss, and nothing further was attempted that year. However, in the following summer the place was regularly invested, and François, who, notwithstanding his feeble health, wished to be in touch with the army, proceeded to Picardy, accompanied by his two sons, and established himself at the Abbey of Forêt-Moutiers, between Abbeville and Montreuil.

The operations did not lead to the recovery of Boulogne, which, in fact, remained in English possession until it was restored by treaty in 1550; but they had one important result: they rendered the Treaty of Crépy, to all intents and purposes, mere waste parchment.

In the last days of August, the plague broke out



## Death of the Duc d'Orléans

with fearful virulence among the besiegers, and soon the soldiers were dying in such numbers that it was no longer possible to bury them. The survivors were terror-stricken ; but the Duc d'Orléans laughed at their fears, and one day, in a spirit of bravado, entered with some young nobles as thoughtless as himself a house in which several persons had recently succumbed to the pestilence, slashed open the beds with his sword, and scattered the feathers over himself and his companions, observing that "never yet had a Son of France died of the plague."

The sequel was a grim commentary on the boasted immunity of the Royal House. That same evening, the prince was taken ill. Three days later, he was dead.

The death of his much-loved younger son, in which he may well have seen a judgment of Heaven upon him for the massacre of the innocent Vaudois, was a terrible blow to François. In wretched health and frequently a prey to the most cruel sufferings, wounded alike in his affections and his ambitions, his domestic life embittered by the quarrels between Madame d'Étampes and Diane de Poitiers, the enmity of the former towards the Dauphin, and the fears which that lady was constantly expressing as to the fate which awaited her when she should lose her protector, this once brilliant monarch was now indeed an object for commiseration. In his isolation, he turned for solace to the one being whose devotion had never failed him and wrote begging his sister to join him. Marguerite, who had returned to Béarn in the spring, set out at once and arrived at Saint-Germain-en-Laye, where the Court was then in residence, in the first days of 1546. She found the King in somewhat better health, but in a state of the most profound depression.

## The Pearl of Princesses

However, Marguerite's presence exercised over him its accustomed charm, and when he felt a little stronger, the fancy took him to revisit, in the company of his beloved "*mignonne*," the châteaux which he had built or embellished, all full as they were of the souvenirs of his joyous youth; and they went in succession to the Château of Madrid, in the Bois de Boulogne, to Fontainebleau, Folembrai, Villers-Cotterets, and Chambord.

"Other sovereigns," writes La Ferrière, "have protected the artists, François loved them. In his passion for the arts he sought forgetfulness of his sorrows, a truce to his sufferings. He consoled himself for Italy lost by this other Italy which he had created around him. It is under the grey sky of winter that he revisits the park of Chambord, of melancholy aspect, one of those places consecrated to mourning in anticipation. Leaning on the arm of his sweet Marguerite, from the high-pointed window his enfeebled gaze wandered over those great woods despoiled of their leaves, where but lately he had hunted the stag; over that gloomy horizon, faithful image of his present fortunes. It is then that, under the influence of those sad reflections against which we are powerless to defend ourselves in the presence of afflicted Nature, he traced those words which Brantôme has preserved for us—

Souvent femme varie  
Mal habil qui s'y fie."<sup>1</sup>

On parting from the King, Marguerite went to visit her daughter at Plessis-les-Tours, to which, after the dissolution of her marriage with the Duke of Clèves, that

<sup>1</sup> *Marguerite d'Angoulême : son livre de dépenses*, par le Comte Hector de la Ferrière-Percy.

## Gloomy Presentiments

spirited damsel had, to her profound disgust, been again relegated, until another husband could be found for her. Then, after spending a few days in retreat at the Abbey of Fontevrault, she returned to Béarn.

In June, peace was signed between England and France, and, since on the death of the Duc d'Orléans all the old subjects of controversy between François and Charles V had sprung into life again, and the Emperor's attention was now occupied with the war against the League of Schmalkalde, it seemed as though the King could scarcely have desired a more favourable opportunity for realizing his lifelong ambitions beyond the Alps. But, though the Dauphin pressed his father earnestly to invade Lombardy while his rival's hands were tied, François had lost the power of resolution, and could not make up his mind to take definite action ; and, on the advice of the miserable old Cardinal de Tournon, persecuted the Protestants in France, in place of assisting their co-religionists in Germany. And so amidst infamy at home and impotence abroad the reign which had once been so brilliant drew towards its close.

Early in February 1547, while the Court was at Saint-Germain-en-Laye, François received the news of the death of Henry VIII, which had occurred on the 26th of the previous month. "This death," writes Martin du Bellay, "occasioned the King much sorrow, not only because of the hope which he had entertained of making with him a firmer alliance than that which he had begun, but because they were almost of an age, and of the same constitution ; and he feared that he must soon follow him. Those, moreover, who were about his person perceived that from that time he became more pensive than before."



## The Pearl of Princesses

Since the beginning of the winter the King's health had been much worse. He had, it would appear, contracted a slow fever, which was remorselessly sapping what vitality still remained to him. Nevertheless, he still continued to hunt, observing to those who endeavoured to dissuade him, that, "when old and sick he would be carried to the chase, and that perhaps when he was dead he would want to go in his coffin." A strange restlessness now seized upon him, and, as though seeking to escape from the death which was so near, he led his weary Court from Saint-Germain to La Muette, thence to Villepreux, and subsequently to Dampierre, Chevreuse, Limours, and Rochefort, "revisiting all the places which he had loved, all the forests in which he had hunted in his vigorous youth."<sup>1</sup>

At length, towards the end of March, he arrived at Rambouillet, intending to remain there but one night and to return to Saint-Germain. But recollections of the happy hunting-days he had enjoyed in the surrounding forests and a temporary alleviation of pain induced him to order a boar-hunt for the morrow. All day the King followed the chase with an ardour which seemed to those who accompanied wellnigh incredible in a man so wasted by disease; but he returned to the château utterly worn out and retired at once to bed. He never rose again, and, after terrible sufferings, he expired on March 31, in his fifty-fourth year. He retained his faculties to the end, and his last counsels to the Dauphin to diminish as far as possible the taxes which the necessities of war had compelled him to impose, never to recall Montmorency, and to be on his guard against the Guises, whose greed, ambition, and audacity had begun to cause

<sup>1</sup> La Ferrière, *Les Grandes Chasses au xvi<sup>e</sup> siècle*.

## A Warning Dream

François serious uneasiness, were such as that prince would have done well to lay to heart. All contemporary authorities agree in attributing to him a very edifying end ; and the Secretary of Finance, Bochetel, in a letter to l'Aubespine, expresses his conviction that "for a century past no prince had ever died with so much contrition and repentance."

The winter of 1546-7 had been an unusually severe one, and so intense was the cold that Marguerite, whose health was growing more and more feeble, was seldom able to go out or even to leave her apartments in the Château of Pau. Even had she been well enough to travel, it would have been difficult to have joined the King, for the mountain roads were deep in snow, which often delayed the arrival of the couriers constantly passing between brother and sister. Ill and suffering as she was herself, all her thoughts were for François, and, as the reports concerning him became more alarming, her anxiety was pitiable to witness ; and this, and the sleepless nights which it entailed, told heavily upon her fragile constitution.

With March came an improvement in the weather, and, the roads being once more open for travellers, Marguerite left Pau for the convent of Tusson, in the Angoumois, where she intended to spend Lent, and afterwards to proceed to the Court. She was now somewhat less anxious about the King, as the news which reached her of his astonishing activity and rapid changes of residence appeared to indicate a decided improvement in his health. However, one night at the beginning of April, she dreamed that her brother, pale and wan, stood beside her bed, and that, in a voice of anguish, he exclaimed : "*Ma*

## The Pearl of Princesses

*sœur ! Ma sœur !*” She awoke and gazed about her, but the vision had disappeared. Nevertheless, so profound was the impression which it had left upon her mind, weakened by illness and the fasts and vigils of Lent, that she rose and forthwith despatched messengers to Rochefort, where she believed the King to be, to ascertain the condition of his health. While awaiting their return, she withdrew from the company of the nuns, whose tranquillity was a reproach to her feverish anxiety, and seldom left her room. But day after day passed, and not one of her messengers came back.

Her suspense became unendurable. “Whoever,” she cried, “comes to my door to announce to me the cure of the King my brother, were such a messenger weary, tired, muddy, and dirty, I would embrace him as though he were the cleanest prince and gentleman in France; and, if he lacked a bed and could not find one on which to repose, I would give him mine and sleep on the floor, for the sake of the good news he brought me.”

No one, however, had the courage to tell her the truth. Knowing her passionate attachment to her brother, they feared that the shock might be too much for her in her weak condition.

Marguerite’s messengers had been gone a week, and the King had been a fortnight dead, when she dreamed again that her brother stood by her bed and addressed her in the same manner as before. Wellnigh distracted, she summoned her attendants and questioned them closely; and, to calm their mistress, they assured her that the last reports of the King’s health were favourable. Only half-convinced, she rose and went to the convent chapel to pray. “On her way thither,” writes Sainte-Marthe, “she summoned Thomas le Coustellier, a young



## Marguerite learns of the King's Death

man of good intelligence and her secretary, and, as she was dictating to him the substance of a letter that she wished to write to a princess of the Court, to obtain from her some news of the King's health, she heard, on the other side of the cloisters, a nun, whose brain was somewhat affected, weeping and lamenting bitterly. Queen Marguerite, naturally inclined to pity, hastened to this woman, inquired why she was weeping, and encouraged her to tell whether she wished for anything. Thereupon the nun began to lament still more loudly, and, looking at the Queen, told her that she was deploring her ill-fortune. When Queen Marguerite heard these words, she turned towards those who were with her and said to them: 'You were concealing the King's death from me, but the Spirit of God has revealed it to me, through the instrumentality of this poor mad woman.' This said, she returned to her room, humbly thanking the Lord for all the goodness He was pleased to show her."

## CHAPTER XXIX

WHEN, in the spring of the previous year, the negotiations for peace with England were beginning to take a favourable turn, Marguerite had written to her brother : “I entreat you, Monseigneur, that when you have concluded the peace that we desire, you will be pleased to inform *those whose life depends on yours.*”

So far as she herself was concerned, this was no mere figure of speech. Her life, indeed, had been so intertwined with that of her idolized brother that she had been firmly convinced that she would not survive him an hour ; and it was a marvel to her that he could be dead and she still alive. However, her belief had proved fallacious, and many a dreary hour had yet to be lived through without the one who had been the centre of her existence.

For forty days after the fatal news reached her she remained at Tusson, “singing daily with the nuns at matins and at evensong.” Sometimes her anguish found relief in verse, and the lyrics she wrote at this time—the cries of a broken heart—are by far the most moving of her poems :—

Qui pleurera François qui Marguerite,  
Qui fut liée par enfance en son bers [berceau]  
. . . depuis les pieds jusque sus le sommet  
En moi ne sens que désolation.

Her tears flow in such abundance as to obscure all things about her ; her lamentations are unceasing :—

Tant de larmes jettent mes yeux,  
Qu'ilz ne voyent terre ne cieux,

## Marguerite voices her Grief

Telle est de leur pleur abondance.  
Ma bouche se plaint en tous lieux ;  
De mon cœur ne peut saillir mieux  
Que soupirs sous nulle allégeance.

Her isolation terrifies her, and, in her distress, she turns to Heaven and cries :—

Je n'ay plus ny père ny mère,  
Ny sœur, ny frère,  
Sinon Dieu seul, auquel j'espere.

Through prayer she arrives at resignation :—

La mort du frère a changé dans la sœur  
En grand desir de mort la craint et peur  
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.  
.  
.  
Sa grand douleur elle estime douceur,  
Sachant que c'est la porte et chemine seur (sâr)  
Par où il faut au Créateur voler.

“Here,” observes La Ferrière, “we have the side on which Marguerite is truly a poetess. Her verse, which, when treating of subjects in which her feelings are not deeply concerned, drags itself laboriously along, a little obscure and painfully distorted, from the moment that she feels herself profoundly moved, assumes characteristics more true, more vivid, and rises to the level of her emotion. Then her whole soul passes into her poetry ; it is no longer a lifeless instrument, which obeys a given impulsion ; it is a voice which laments, a heart which suffers, and tells us of it. At these moments she is perhaps the only writer of her epoch who is inspired by her own sentiments, by her private life, who speaks that simple language which alone can express great sorrows, great afflictions.”

Feeling quite unequal to occupying herself with her ordinary affairs, Marguerite had delegated her authority to Jacques Groslet, the Chancellor of Alençon ; but soon



## The Pearl of Princesses

financial embarrassments recalled her to the stern necessities of this world and became for her the cause of new sorrows. For some years past she had only been enabled to make her revenues balance her expenditure by the aid of a pension of 25,000 livres which François I had allowed her, for, as has been said, her generosity was boundless, and charitable gifts, the education of destitute students—a whole legion of them—pensions to men of letters, refugee Reformers, and aged servants, the support of her needy sister-in-law, Isabeau d'Albret, and, above all, the extravagance of her daughter Jeanne, who was now living in Paris, where she maintained an almost royal establishment, constituted a heavy drain upon her resources. This pension had ceased with the late King's life, and it was not at all improbable that the new Sovereign, who of late years had been none too favourably disposed towards his aunt, would refuse to continue it, in which event Marguerite would be obliged to curtail her expenditure in every way possible, and many of those who had subsisted upon her bounty would find themselves in sore straits. "You know," she writes to her faithful *maître d'hôtel*, Izernay, whom she had sent to the Court to represent her circumstances to the King and to solicit the continuance of her pension, "that without it, it would be impossible for me to keep up my position—that I have only just sufficient to provide for the rest of this year—and it may surely be believed that without great necessity it is not my habit to ask for anything."

If it had only been the King whom she had to petition, her pride would not have suffered; but Henri II could only really be approached through his favourites: through Diane de Poitiers, who had now blossomed into the Duchesse de Valentinois; through Montmorency,

## Marguerite appeals to Henri II

recalled to Court almost as soon as François had drawn his last breath, and restored to all his former offices ; or through the greedy and ambitious Guises, who between them formed a sort of bodyguard around the throne to prevent any one else coming near it. And so the poor Queen found herself obliged to stoop to solicit the patronage of her nephew's mistress, the good offices of Montmorency's friend the Président Bertrandi, and finally—greatest humiliation of all—those of the Constable himself, who had treated her with such base ingratitude in the past, and whose disgrace she had contributed to bring about. "I see well," she writes to him, on learning that the all-powerful Minister had condescended to intercede for her, "that time has not conquered your memory, and has not made you forget the love I have borne you from your childhood onwards." We can imagine what it must have cost her to write this, knowing that Montmorency's memory could have evoked very different impressions from those of love.

Meanwhile, the Queen of Navarre had left Mont-de-Marsan, where she had been spending the early part of the summer, and had returned to Nérac. Uncertain as to the result of her appeal to the new King's generosity, she resolved to prepare for a refusal, and accordingly began to impose upon herself the severest economy. But, while sternly denying herself every luxury and even comforts, she could not be persuaded to discharge any of her attendants, or to curtail her gifts to the poor, which were continued on the same munificent scale as heretofore.

At length, towards the end of the year, to her great relief, her pension of 25,000 livres was restored to her ; none too soon, since for some time past money had been unpleasantly scarce at the Court of Pau, and in the last

## The Pearl of Princesses

days of May Marguerite had been obliged to send Oliver Bourgoing, Treasurer of Berry, and Jehan Geler, one of her private secretaries, to Paris, to endeavour to negotiate a loan on her behalf. The ordinary expenses of Jeanne d'Albret's Household had not been paid for nearly two years and were now in arrears to the extent of 11,877 livres, to say nothing of a sum of over 2000 livres which Mathieu Javette, Treasurer of Alençon, had advanced to that young lady for her *menus plaisirs* and almsgiving; so that the first two quarters of Marguerite's pension and part of the third had to be diverted into her daughter's coffers.

Marguerite complained bitterly to Izernay of the girl's reckless extravagance, and besought him to endeavour to check it. "For the King of Navarre and I do find it insupportable, and deem that it is impossible it should long continue, since we have not the means to defray it; and the said lord has told me that, when he was at Paris, he found the expenses of my daughter marvellously great, wherefore I warned you of it, as I do again, beseeching you to stay your hand; for, with the expenses that I have already, I could not find the means to support this extra charge."

Remonstrances, however, appear to have been lost upon Jeanne, who declared that it was quite impossible for her to reduce her Household by so much as a single officer, if she were to maintain a position in accordance with her rank; and in the first ten months of the ensuing year her expenses absorbed the whole of her mother's pension.

Meantime, negotiations had begun for that damsel's marriage—or re-marriage. Henri II had inherited his father's fears lest the King of Navarre should marry



## An Unwelcome Proposition

his only daughter to Philip of Spain, and, to frustrate any attempt in that direction, he determined that Jeanne should be wedded with as little delay as possible.

The husband that he chose for her was Antoine de Bourbon, Duc de Vendôme, the first Prince of the Blood, the son of Françoise d'Alençon, a sister of Marguerite's first husband, a handsome and chivalrous young man, but vain and frivolous and without any stability of character. His Majesty had broached the subject of this alliance to Henri d'Albret, when the latter came to Rheims, in the summer of 1547, to attend the *Sacre*. At the same time, in order to spare his susceptibilities and accustom him by degrees to the idea of a match which was contrary to his own projects for his daughter, he bade him take time for reflection, and suggested that he should return to Béarn, discuss the matter at his leisure with Marguerite, and inform him of their decision within the next six months. When, however, the period of grace had expired without any answer reaching him, Henri II took umbrage and despatched the Sieur d'Estrées to Pau, with a letter in his own hand for the King and Queen of Navarre, in which he invited them in pressing terms to come to Court and acquaint him with the resolution at which they must by this time have surely succeeded in arriving.

Henri d'Albret, who could not make up his mind to forgo the advantages which the alliance of his daughter with Philip of Spain promised him, excused himself on the plea of illness—it was true that he had been ill, but political reasons were undoubtedly retarding his convalescence; Marguerite sent a letter full of vague protestations of loyalty and devotion. "As to the marriage of which it pleases you to write," she says,

## The Pearl of Princesses

“you may do anything to the father and to the mother, if you do not firmly believe that their property, their daughter, and their own lives are dedicated to your service.” Perhaps, she too hankered after the Spanish marriage; perhaps, she had penetrated the fickleness and futility of Antoine de Bourbon’s character, and recognized how little fitted he was to guide her self-willed, courageous daughter. Any way, notwithstanding that the young prince appeared in every respect a most suitable match for Jeanne, and that his mother had been one of Marguerite’s dearest friends, she was bitterly opposed to the project.

And so she and her husband, not daring openly to oppose the King’s wishes, had recourse to shuffling, in the futile hope of finding some way of escape. But they got no quarter from Henri II, and no support from Jeanne, to whom the Duc de Vendôme had been paying assiduous court, and who was very well content to wed a French prince, standing next in the line of succession to the King’s children; and did not hesitate to say so. And, at last, Henri II succeeded in getting hold of his elusive vassal and wrung from him a reluctant consent. “I have got rid of him [the King of Navarre] cheaper than I thought,” wrote he contemptuously to Montmorency. “I am giving him only 15,000 livres a year for the government of his kingdom. This is less than I offered him by Monge, which, if you recollect, was 10,000 écus (30,000 livres).” His Majesty might have added that the astute Béarnais had stipulated that the lesser sum should be secured upon the taxes levied in Guienne, all of which passed through his hands, in his quality of governor of that province.

But though Henri d’Albret, making a virtue of neces-

## Second Marriage of Jeanne d'Albret

sity, affected to yield with a good grace, and, writes the King, "will swear by nothing but the allegiance which he owes me," his suzerain "trusted his protestations just as much as he ought," which meant not at all; and when, towards the end of September 1548, Marguerite joined the Court for Henri II's "superb and triumphal entry into the noble and ancient city of Lyons," and made no attempt to conceal her dissatisfaction, his Majesty became so suspicious that he went the length of causing their correspondence to be intercepted, to make sure that they were concocting no scheme to interfere with his own. Nothing, however, of a compromising nature appears to have been discovered, and on October 1, at Moulins, whither the Court had proceeded on leaving Lyons, the marriage of Antoine de Bourbon and Jeanne d'Albert—that marriage which was to give to France the best of all her long line of kings—was duly celebrated, "*avec toute espèce de festins, joyeusetés et pompes royales.*"

Jeanne, delighted at the good fortune which had brought her a handsome and gallant French prince for a husband in place of a German boor, and sublimely indifferent to the long-cherished ambitions of which her wedding-bells were the death-knell, was radiantly happy. "Never have I seen so joyous a bride," wrote Henri II to Montmorency; "she did nothing but laugh." Marguerite, on the other hand, was resentful to the last, and only at the King's express command consented to affix her signature to the marriage-contract.

A few days later the newly-married pair started for Vendôme. The separation of Marguerite and her daughter was heartrending, though the grief was all on the former's side, for Jeanne, the King informs his confidant, "makes no account of her mother." "You



## The Pearl of Princesses

never saw such tears as my aunt shed when they went away ; and, if it had not been for me, she would never have gone home with her husband."

Everything was giving way at once around the poor Queen of Navarre. She had lost the brother whom she had adored ; her only daughter, married to a prince whom she disliked and distrusted, showed but too plainly that all the affection that she had lavished upon her had awakened no response ; her husband was no longer anything but a stranger to her. His frivolity, his continual infidelities, had ended by alienating Marguerite, and he repaid her for the displeasure which she evinced at his conduct by flaunting his facile conquests even in the midst of their little Court. "It is true that there is no love lost between my good aunt and her husband," writes their royal nephew ; "never were any couple less united." The King and Queen of Navarre had combated together the projects of Henri II in regard to their daughter ; but no sooner was the marriage celebrated than Henri d'Albret suddenly changed his attitude, and, either in order to pay his court to the King, or to annoy his wife, "pretended to be the best-contented father in the world." "The Queen of Navarre," continues Henri II, "is on the worst terms possible with her husband, through her love for her daughter."

On leaving Moulins, Marguerite did not immediately return to Béarn. She went to Sancerre and thence to Gien and Jargeau, and in the middle of November joined her daughter at Vendôme. The latter part of January and the month of February were passed at Castel-Jaloux, and it was not until March was well advanced that she arrived at Pau. Early in the summer, the Duc and Duchesse de Vendôme visited Béarn, to receive the

## Last Days of Marguerite d'Angoulême

homage of the Estates as Henri d'Albret's successors. The enthusiastic reception accorded by the people to Jeanne was the last ray of happiness in her mother's life. "Oh, what joy!" cries the historian Olhagaray. "What joy to the people of Béarn and Foix, who had until then believed that their princess, whom they dearly loved, was held a prisoner in France! She was received with pomp incredible; the people flocked together to welcome her, and to render her homage as their future rightful mistress, and one whom they expected to prove nothing less than a second Marguerite; like her, she had been the precious flower growing in the parterre of that Royal House, and the odour of whose perfume attracted into Béarn the choicest minds of Europe, like as a fragrant bed of thyme draws the honey-bees to suck its sweetness."

But the precious flower of whom the writer speaks—"*la Marguerite des Marguerites*"—was closing her petals. Day by day her strength was declining, and another of those dreams to which her visionary brain seems to have been peculiarly subject had lately convinced her that she had but a little while to live. A very beautiful woman appeared to her, holding in her hand a garland of many-coloured flowers, and pointing to it, said: "Soon it will be yours!"

From that moment, she decided to have done with the things of this world and to consecrate her few remaining days to preparation for the next. She abandoned the administration of her property to her husband; she renounced all her usual occupations; she refused even to discuss her personal affairs. If we are to believe Brantôme, there were times when a great fear of death possessed her, and she wept, observing that she was not yet so old but that she might well be permitted to live a few years longer; and that when her attendants strove to

## The Pearl of Princesses

comfort her by reminding her of the glory reserved for the children of God in Paradise, she replied sadly : “ All that is very true ; but we stay so long a time under the earth before we reach it.” As, however, La Ferrière very justly remarks, Marguerite’s whole life contradicts such assertions. From her youth, at the moment when the future seemed to hold for her nothing but the fairest promises, she had already familiarized herself with the idea of death, as the following verses testify :—

Seigneur, quand viendra le jour  
Tant désiré  
Quand je serai par amour  
A vous tiré.

Ce jour des nopces  
Ma tarde tant !  
Que de nul bien ni honneur  
Ne suis content.

Essayez des toutes yeux  
Le long gémir,  
Et me donnez pour le mieux  
Un doux dormir.<sup>1</sup>

At the same time, Brantôme is probably correct enough in what he says concerning the intense curiosity which she entertained concerning the nature of the soul, since this is perfectly consistent with the mysticism which she had derived from her close friendship with Briçonnet, and which clung to her to the end of her life. One of her maids-of-honour falling ill and being near to death,<sup>2</sup> Marguerite established herself at her bedside, weeping and yet watching every movement of the dying girl with the utmost eagerness. Nor did she quit her post when the end had come, but remained, silent and motionless,

<sup>1</sup> *Les Marguerites de la Marguerite*, édit. de J. Tournes, p. 513.

<sup>2</sup> Probably Florette de Sara, who died in 1542, and to whom Marguerite is known to have been tenderly attached.



## Last Days of Marguerite d'Angoulême

with her eyes fixed upon the pallid features of the dead. At length, one of her ladies, after a vain attempt to persuade her to leave the chamber of death, ventured to inquire why she still lingered. To which the Queen replied, that "having often heard the most learned doctors and ecclesiastics maintain that at the moment of dissolution the immortal spirit was set at liberty and unloosed, she could not repress her desire to observe whether any symptom or indication of such a separation were visible ; also, if the spirit assumed a visible form, or gave utterance to any sounds on its departure ; but that nothing of the kind had she been able to discover."

In the autumn of 1549, the Queen of Navarre moved to the Château of Odos, in Bigorre, situated about a league from Tarbes, and rather more than twice that distance from Bagnères, the waters of which it was hoped might afford her relief, as they were deemed very efficacious in affections of the chest. In Marguerite's case, however, the disease was too far advanced for her to derive any benefit from such remedies, and she grew steadily weaker.

An act of imprudence hastened the end. One night at the beginning of December, a great comet appeared in the sky, which the superstitious regarded as a prognostic of the death of Pope Paul III. Marguerite, wishing to get a better view of it than could be obtained from her window, insisted on going out on to an open balcony, and remained there for some little time silently contemplating the heavens, and doubtless reflecting on that other comet which had appeared before her mother's death at Grez-en-Gatinois. Suddenly, the Queen's physician, Escuranis, who was standing beside her, observed that her mouth was drawn a little awry. He persuaded her to go indoors and to bed, and lost no time in treating

## The Pearl of Princesses

her. But the biting air of the December night, to which she had so unwisely exposed herself, had done its work. The chill which she had contracted developed into a severe attack of pleurisy, and, though the doctors who attended her at first refused to admit that she was in any danger, they were soon obliged to alter their tone and to warn her that she must prepare for death. She received the announcement with calm courage and, always more thoughtful for others than for herself, begged her weeping attendants not to distress themselves on her account. A Franciscan monk, Gilles Caillau, received her confession and administered the last Sacraments, and to him she is said to have protested that "she had never separated herself from the Catholic Church, and that what she had done for the Reformers proceeded from pure compassion."<sup>1</sup> We see no reason to doubt that she did make such a statement, though Protestant writers are, for the most part, inclined to regard the story with angry incredulity. However, it was only partially true, for, if her heart had often ruled her reason, she had certainly protected some of the Reformers as much from taste as from pity.

Marguerite died in December 1549, in her fifty-eighth year, and was buried with all the pomp and ceremony befitting her rank in the cathedral church of Lescar. All the learned men in Europe hastened to celebrate the memory of one of the greatest benefactresses of letters which the world has known; but the tears shed over her bier by her poor subjects of Béarn formed, as Martha Freer very truly observes, a more glorious tribute to her memory than all the elegies and eulogies which her death called forth.

<sup>1</sup> Florimond de Rémond, *Histoire de l'Hérésie*.

## INDEX

- ABBEVILLE, 90, 91  
 Agen, 28, 316  
 Agnadello, 71  
 Aigues-Mortes, 191, 321  
 Ainoy, 312  
 Aire, Monseigneur d', sub-preceptor to  
     Dauphin and his brothers, 275  
 Aix, 158, 314  
 Alarçon, 229  
     —, Sieur, 201  
 Albret, Alain, Sieur d', 41  
     —, Amanieu d', 223  
     —, Arnaud Amanieu d', 224  
     —, Catherine d', 245  
     —, Charlotte d', 27  
     —, Henri d', King of Navarre,  
     Marguerite's second husband, 31,  
     111, 166, 217, 223, 224, 226, 245,  
     246, 256, 261, 267, 271, 278, 279,  
     280, 281, 282, 284, 287, 309, 315,  
     316, 334, 335, 374, 379, 406-7, 408,  
     409  
     —, Isabeau d', 295, 319, 404  
     —, Jean d', King of Navarre, 72,  
     224  
     —, Jeanne d', daughter of Henri d'  
     Albret, King of Navarre, 48, 279,  
     318, 331-2, 333, 334, 335, 338, 339,  
     342, 371, 377, 385, 404, 406-7, 409,  
     411  
 Alcala, 192, 209, 210  
 Alençon, 386, 388, 390  
     —, Charles, Duc d', 55, 56, 62, 64,  
     65, 81, 83, 90, 122, 165, 175  
     —, Françoise, 407  
     —, Marguerite de Lorraine, Duchesse  
     d', 62, 87, 91  
     —, René d', 55  
 Alessandria, 252  
 Alexander VI, Pope, 26, 32  
 Algiers, 378  
 Alibert, Noël d', 347  
 Alva, Duke of, 72  
 Amaillou, Sire d', 50, 51  
 Amboise, 10, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33,  
     45, 49, 50, 52, 66, 67, 70, 75, 230,  
     270, 274  
 Amboise, Cardinal d', 37, 38, 45  
 Amiens, 73, 315  
 Ampudia, 261  
 Andriano, 260  
 Angoulême, 81, 267  
     —, Bishop of. *See* Luxembourg,  
     Robert de.  
     —, Charles, Count d', 2-6, 10-14,  
     16, 17, 22, 24, 48  
     —, Charles, Duc d', son of Francis I,  
     and Dauphin after his brother's death,  
     153, 155, 222, 274, 303, 330, 331  
     —, Françoise, Comte d', afterwards  
     Francis I of France, 8, 9, 20-23, 27,  
     28, 30, 33, 35, 41, 43, 45, 47, 48,  
     58, 60, 61, 70-102, 104, 107, 109-  
     26, 135, 139-52, 160-7, 170-9,  
     181, 184, 186, 188, 197-9, 202-5,  
     217, 220, 223, 224, 226, 231-9, 242,  
     245, 246, 248, 251-5, 260-3, 266-8,  
     270, 274-6, 280, 282, 290, 294-296,  
     300, 302-4, 306, 314, 316, 317, 320,  
     324, 327-9, 332, 334, 335, 338, 340,  
     344, 353, 373, 378, 383, 384, 389,  
     390, 395, 397, 398, 401, 405  
     —, Jean, Comte d', 1, 2  
     —, Marguerite d', afterwards Queen  
     of Navarre, her ancestry, 1-6; her  
     birth, 7; she loses her father, 11;  
     her early days, 22, 30; her marriage  
     with Arthur, Prince of Wales sug-  
     gested, 31; or his brother Henry,  
     Duke of York, 36-8; her intellectual  
     qualities and amiable disposition, 39;  
     she declines an offer of marriage with  
     Henry VII, 46, 47; her personal  
     appearance, 48; stories in the *Hép-  
     taméron* founded on her own affairs,  
     48-54, 62-9; her marriage to the  
     Duc d'Alençon, 57; she repulses  
     Bonnivet, 62-9; her friendship with  
     Mlle. de Foix, 75; she uses her  
     influence with her brother the King



# Index

- in the interests of her husband and friends and of learning, 100-4; her moral character discussed, 106-12; a letter from her to the King, 107-9; Bonnivet again repulsed, 112-4; her sympathy with the Reformation, 124-9; her correspondence with the Bishop of Meaux, 130-5, 155, 156, 161; at the Queen's death is bequeathed the care of her children, 154; at Lyons she hears of her brother's defeat and capture before Pavia, 167; her letters to her brother in captivity, 174-7; death of her husband, 178; her grief at the persecution of the Reformers, 182-4; her embassy to Spain, 184, 190, 191, 193, 195-206, 208-16; Erasmus's letter to her, 206-8; has an accident at Douzère, 221; her letter to François about the young princes, 222-3; at Lyons she meets Henri of Navarre, 223; their community of tastes, 226; her continued interest in the Reformers, 233-5; François puts obstacles in the way of her marriage with Henri of Navarre, 243; and proposes her for wife to Henry VIII, 244; her betrothal to Henri of Navarre, 245; their marriage, 245, 247; birth of her daughter Jeanne d'Albret, 253; she leaves for Navarre, 255, 256; intercedes for the Reformers, 257, 258; birth of her son Jean, 267; renews her acquaintance with Queen Eleanor, 268; death of her son, 271; attends at the coronation of Queen Eleanor, 272; the death of her mother, 276; her return to Navarre, 278; her care for the Reformers, 280-3; her popularity in Béarn, 285-6; the simplicity of her attire, 286, 287; her poem *le Miror de l'Âme pécheresse*, 288-91; she is attacked in an allegorical play, 291, 292; and by the Franciscans, 292, 293; arranges a marriage for her sister-in-law, Isabeau d'Albret, 295, 296; her endeavours to fetch Melanchthon to Paris, 296-8; the attacks made upon her for her part in the Reformation, 298-302; she visits François at Valence, 309; Montmorency in camp at Avignon, 309, 310; and her husband at Montfrin, 310; her activity in her brother's interests, 314, 315; nursing her husband, 315, 316; acts as Governor of Guienne, 316; joins François at Lyons, 316; at Paris hears of the illness of her daughter, 317; and on her way to, hears that the child is out of danger, 318; affords assistance to Isabeau d'Albret, 319; Montmorency denounces her to the King on account of her sympathy with the Reformers, 327; tends François in his illness, 329; her love for her daughter Jeanne, 333; tempered by her desire to please the King, 335, 336; her letter to him on the subject, 336-9; more intercourses with the Reformers, 347-52; her poems, 353, 354; the *Heptaméron*, 355-71; her attention occupied with ecclesiastical disputes, 372-6; accompanies her husband to the baths of Cauterets, 376, 377; her influence on her brother's treatment of the revolt of La Rochelle, 380-2; she develops consumption, 386; her grief at the massacre of the Vaudois, 393, 394; she joins her brother at Saint-Germain-en-Laye, 395; and thence goes to visit her daughter, 396; her growing weakness, 399; hears of her brother's death, 400, 401; her grief at his loss and the lyrics she wrote, 402, 403; she fears the loss of her pension, 404; but it is continued, 405; her distress at her daughter's extravagance, 406; her declining strength and preparation for the end, 411, 412; her death, 414
- Angoulême, Louise of Savoy, Countess of, 3, 16, 18-34, 40-50, 54-7, 60-1, 66-70, 75, 81-3, 89, 91-4, 96-9, 115, 118, 135, 141-4, 149, 153, 160-2, 167, 170-9, 189-91, 204, 205, 221, 229, 239, 242, 243, 247, 261, 266, 273, 274, 276-7
- Anne, Queen of Charles VIII, King of France, afterwards of Louis XII, 8, 23, 24, 25, 27, 29, 40, 41, 42, 43, 45, 56, 58, 60, 61, 71, 73, 81, 82, 83, 84, 88
- Annebaut, 379
- Aragon, Catherine of, 32, 36, 37, 38, 243-5
- Aranda, 229
- Arande, Michel d', 131, 138, 161, 182
- Arles, 149
- Armagnac, Marguerite d', 42
- Arras, J. B., 340

# Index

- Arthur, Prince of Wales, 31, 36  
 Aste, 60  
 Asti, 217  
 Augereau, 288  
 Aumont, Madame d', 93  
 Austria, Charles V of, 41, 117, 120  
 —, Ferdinand of, 320, 330  
 —, Margaret of, 139, 261  
 Autun, Jean d', 74  
 Avignon, 159, 160, 309  
 Avila, Bishop of, 192  
 Avs, Louis d', 166
- Bacquier, Matthew, 37, 38  
 Bagnères, 413  
 Barbarossa, 307, 385  
 Barcelona, 187, 191, 194, 215, 216, 311  
 Barre, la, High Bailiff of Paris, 219  
 Basle, 102, 208  
 Baugé, Dame de, 246  
 Bayard, 85, 151, 166, 219  
 Bayonne, 230  
 Béarn, 255, 278, 281, 285-6, 302, 319, 332-4, 335, 336, 337, 372, 395, 407, 411, 415  
 Beaujeu, Anne de, 4, 9, 10, 15, 19, 56, 148  
 Beaune, Jacques de, Seigneur de Semblançai, 141, 142, 148  
 Béda, Noël, 124, 128, 181, 233, 289, 290, 292, 300, 305  
 Bellay, Guillaume du, 97, 139, 165, 187, 296, 373, 378  
 —, Martin du, 380, 397  
 Bérauld, Nicolas, 349  
 Berquin, Louis de, 129, 138, 233, 234, 257, 258  
 Berry, 275  
 Berthaut, 298, 301  
 Bertrandi, Président, 405  
 Bidassoa, 229  
 Blois, 10, 26, 27, 29, 40, 41, 57, 60, 62, 71, 83, 87, 152, 153, 182, 222, 267, 273, 275, 299, 375  
 Boaistuau, Pierre, 370  
 Bochetel, 399  
 Boisgency, 319  
 Boisy, Sieur de. *See* Gouffier, Artus.  
 Boleyn, Anne, 121, 244  
 Bonnivet, Madame, 50, 51, 53  
 —, Sire de. *See* Gouffier, Guillaume.  
 Bordeaux, 266, 316, 373  
 Bordenave, 227  
 Borgia, Cæsar, 26, 27  
 —, Lucretia, 32  
 Bouchard, a doctor, 233  
 Bouchot, 322  
 Boulogne, 90, 315, 394  
 Bourbon, 217  
 —, Constable de. *See* Montpensier, Count de.  
 —, Duc de, 20, 83, 90  
 —, Duchesse de, 31, 60, 83  
 —, Marguerite de, Duchesse de Nevers, 224, 370  
 —, Nicholas, 333, 347  
 —, Suzanne de, 56, 143, 146, 147  
 Bourdeille, M. de, 85  
 Bourges, 154  
 Bourg-la-Reine, 317, 318  
 Bourgoing, Oliver, 406  
 Brabant, 379  
 Brantôme, 23, 39, 71, 77, 84, 85, 93, 97, 112, 169, 199, 237, 239, 251, 275, 310, 327, 357, 368, 396, 411, 412  
 Bresse, Philippe, Count de, 3, 14, 20  
 Bretagne, Anne of. *See* Anne, Queen of Charles VIII, and afterwards of Louis XII.  
 —, Duke de. *See* Angoulême, François, Count d'.  
 Briçonnet, Guillaume, Bishop of Meaux, 125, 126, 131-8, 155, 161, 183, 184  
 —, Guillaume, Count de Montbrun, 126, 412  
 Brion, Philippe de Chabot, Sieur de, afterwards Admiral of France, 31, 166, 213, 214, 219, 229, 263, 266, 278, 307, 325, 341  
 Brittany, 40  
 Brodeau, Victor, 351  
 Brosse, Jean de, 242  
 —, René de, 242  
 Bruges, 139, 140  
 Budé, Guillaume, 101, 102  
 Burgos, 252  
 Burgundy, 201, 203, 218, 262  
 —, Jean-sans-Peur, Duke of, 1  
 —, Marie of, 2
- Cabanillas, Don Geronimo, 189  
 Cabrières, 391  
 Caen, Baillive of. *See* Silly, Madame de.  
 Cahors, 103  
 Caillau, Gilles, 414  
 Calabria, Duke of, son of the ex-King of Naples, 38  
 Cambrai, 118, 261-2, 294  
 Candale, Count de, 272  
 Carr, 27

# Index

- Castel-Jaloux, 410  
 Castiglione, Baldassare, 237  
 Catalonia, 193  
 Cauterets, 376  
 Cavalli, Marino, 324  
 Cellini, Benvenuto, 250  
 Ceresole, 387  
 Chabot, Philippe de, 31  
 Chambord, 396  
 Chantilly, 343  
 Charles II, Duke of Savoy, 14  
 — III, Duke of Savoy, 306  
 — V, Emperor, 102, 121, 123, 139, 140, 148, 149, 158, 172, 179, 184-6, 188-91, 193, 195-7, 200, 202, 205, 207, 211-3, 216-8, 220, 224, 226-8, 235, 237, 252, 259-61, 266, 269, 304, 307, 311, 320, 321, 327, 329-32, 334, 342, 343, 378, 383, 384, 389, 397  
 — VIII, King of France, 4, 5, 8, 9, 21  
 — the Bold, 201, 217  
 Charlotte, Madame, daughter of Francis I, 154-7  
 Chateaubriand, Countess de, 72, 112, 242, 243, 295  
 Châteauneuf, 10  
 Châtel, Pierre du, Bishop of Tulle, 350  
 Châtelherault, 81, 340  
 Châtillon, Jacques de, 23  
 —, Madame de, 23, 62, 113  
 Chaumont, 50  
 Chevreuse, 398  
 Chinon, 25, 26  
 Civray, 25  
 Clement VII, Pope, 181, 250, 252, 260, 294, 306  
 Clermont, Seigneur de, 221  
 Clèves, Duke of. *See* Marck, Guillaume de la.  
 Cognac, 3, 4, 10, 14-16, 21, 25, 26, 81, 82, 236, 237, 243, 252  
 Compaing, 350  
 Compiègne, 99, 328  
 Condom, Bishop of. *See* Grossoles, Érarid de.  
 Cop, Guillaume, 101, 102, 290  
 Coucy, 60  
 Courant, 298, 301  
 Coustellier, Thomas le, 400  
 Crépy, 389, 390, 392, 394  
  
 Dagoucin, 358  
 Dampierre, 398  
 Dandolo, Venetian ambassador, 88, 90, 270  
 Darmesteter, Madame, 138, 356  
 Dauphin. *See* François.  
 Dauphiné, 149  
 Delorme, Philippe, 347  
 Denisot, Nicolas, 352  
 Denmark, Christian III of, 378  
 Disomme, Jacques, 77, 78, 79  
 —, Mme., 77-80, 87  
 Dolet, Étienne, 345-51  
 Doria, Andrea, 192, 260  
 Douzère, 221  
 Dover, 90, 91  
 Duchâtel, Pierre, 101, 102, 129  
 Dunker, 371  
 Dunois, Bastard of Orléans, 6  
 Duquesne, Arnauld, 340  
 Düren, 383  
 Durtal, Sire de, 30  
  
 Écouen, 343  
 Embrun, Archbishop of. *See* Tournon, François de.  
 Enghien, Count d', 387, 390  
 Entragues, Pierre de Balzac d', 74  
 Entremont, Count d', 36, 37  
 Epernay, 387  
 Erasmus, 102, 205, 233, 257, 258  
 Escuranis, Physician to Marguerite, 414  
 Essek, 320  
 Este, Alfonso d', 32  
 —, Hercule d', Duke of Ferrara, 32  
 Estrées, Sieur d', 407  
 Étampes, Duchesse d', 296, 304, 324-9, 340-1, 344, 395  
 Étaples, Lefèvre, 253, 346  
  
 Farel, Guillaume, 124, 129, 183, 299  
 Feramosca, 249  
 Ferdinand, Archduke of Austria, 142  
 — V, King of Spain, 45, 46, 115, 117  
 Ferrara, 249, 345  
 Ferreras, Spanish historian, 204  
 Ferrière, Count de la, 110, 403, 412  
 Flanders, 139, 329  
 Fleuranges, Sieur de, 31, 96, 147  
 Florence, 218, 249  
 Foix, André, Seigneur de Lesparre, 112  
 —, Françoise de, 38, 75, 112  
 —, Gaton de, 31, 49, 51, 52, 53, 63, 66  
 —, Jacques de, Bishop of Lescar, 112, 284, 372  
 —, Odet de, Seigneur de Lautrec, 72, 112  
 —, Thomas de, Seigneur de Lescun, 112



# Index

- Folembrai, 396  
 Folle, Jeanne la, 54  
 Fontaine, Charles, 347  
 Fontainebleau, 253, 255, 268, 275, 316, 388, 396  
 Fontarabia, 72, 139, 229, 264, 379  
 Fontevault, Abbey of, 397  
 France, Claude de, daughter of Louis XII by Anne de Bretagne, 9, 29, 40, 41, 43, 58-60, 82, 86, 87, 92, 98, 146, 149, 151, 152, 246  
 —, Jeanne de, Queen of Louis XII, 23, 26  
 François, Dauphin, son of Francis I, 153, 155, 218, 222, 230, 231, 236, 267, 269, 274, 303, 312, 322, 324, 325, 395  
 Frank, M. Félix, 363  
 Frederick, Prince Palatine, 202  
 Freer, Martha, 128, 353, 393, 415  
 Fregoso, 377  
 Freundenberger, 371  
 Froment, Antoine, 184  
 Frotté, Jehan, 351  
 Frundsberg, Georg, 249  
  
 Gaetà, 40  
 Gamaches, 85  
 Gattinara, Chancellor, 218, 219  
 Geler, Jehan, 406  
 Génin, 107, 109, 110, 357  
 Genoa, 71, 163, 187, 217, 252, 260, 311  
 Génouillac, Galiot de, 163  
 Ghent, 320  
 Gié, Maréchal de, 13, 26-31, 33, 38-42, 43, 44, 71  
 Gien, 410  
 Goinret, Jehan, 271  
 Gonzaga, Ferdinando di, 314  
 Gouffier, Artus, Sieur de Boisy, an elder brother of Bonnivet, 35, 85, 100  
 —, Guillaume, Sire de Bonnivet, 49, 50, 51, 53, 54, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 68, 72, 85, 100, 112, 113, 114, 121, 139, 151, 159, 163  
 Goujet, Abbé, 367  
 Gramont, Cardinal de, 283  
 Granvelle, Cardinal de, 314  
 Granville, Amiral de, 74  
 —, Mlle. Anne de, 74  
 Grenoble, 37, 161  
 Grès-en-Galinais, 275  
 Grez-en-Gatinois, 414  
 Grignols, 93, 94  
 Groslet, Jacques, chancellor of Alençon, 403  
  
 Grossoles, Énard de, Bishop of Condom, 373, 374-5  
 Gruget, Claude, 352, 354, 368, 371  
 Guadalajara, 210, 211  
 Guasto, Marquis del, 378, 385  
 Guelders, Duke of, 217  
 Guienne, 72, 223, 248, 316  
 —, Governor of. *See* Albret, Henri d', King of Navarre, 308  
 Guinegate, 72  
 Guise, Claude de Lorraine, Duc de, 171, 379, 388  
  
 Haye, Jean de la, 352, 353  
 Heilly, Mlle. d', 241, 243  
 —, Seigneur d', 239  
 Henry VII, King of England, 31, 36, 46  
 — VIII, King of England, 36, 72, 88, 97, 115, 121, 140, 148, 149, 243, 244, 251, 385, 388, 397  
*Heptaméron, The*, 48-54, 62-69, 355-71  
 Herbault, 152, 158  
 Herbert, Lord, 46  
 Hurault, Robert, Abbé of Saint-Martin d'Autun, 39  
  
 Infantado, Duke of, 192, 213  
 Issoudun, 293  
 Izernay, 404, 406  
  
 Jaligny, 11  
 Jargeau, 410  
 Jarnac, Sieur de, 381  
 Javette, Mathieu, 406  
  
 Lacroix, Paul, 368  
 Langeac, Jean de, Bishop of Limoges, 349  
 Languedoc, 145, 221  
 Lannoy, Charles, Marquis de, 151, 163, 169, 186, 187-8, 220, 228, 231, 235, 237, 249  
 Lascar, Jean de, 208  
 Lautrec, 140-2, 145, 148, 159, 171, 231, 251, 259, 260  
 Leclerc, 129, 137  
 Lefèvre, 123, 124, 127, 136, 138, 235  
 Lefranc, M. Abel, 354  
 Lemaigne, Vicomtesse de, 246  
 Leo X, Pope, 84, 116, 122, 140  
 Lescar, Bishop of. *See* Foix, Jacques de.  
 Lescure, 111  
 —, Baron de, 374

# Index

- Leyva, Antonio, de, 161, 162, 165, 307, 311, 314  
 Liguria, 311  
 Limoges, Bishop of. *See* Langeac, Jean.  
 Limours, 398  
 Linçy, Le Roux de, 111, 353, 368, 371  
 Lisieux, Bishop of, 255, 266  
 Loches, 55  
 Lodi, 160  
 Loire, 40  
 Longueil, Christopher, tutor to François, Count d' Angoulême, 34  
 Longueville, Duc de, 88  
 Lorraine, Cardinal de, 266, 330  
 —, François de, 166, 390  
 —, Marguerite de, 55  
 Louise of Savoy. *See* Angoulême, Countess of.  
 Louis XI, King of France, 2, 3, 8, 36  
 — XII, King of France, 21, 23, 24, 26, 27, 29, 31, 32, 36, 37, 38, 40, 41, 42, 45, 46, 47, 49, 55, 56, 57, 67, 70, 71, 86, 88, 90, 91, 92, 94, 95, 96, 115, 119, 224  
 Lugo, Don Alvaro de, 265  
 Luther, Martin, 122, 123, 129, 181, 183, 256, 296  
 Luxembourg, 384  
 —, Robert de, Bishop of Angoulême, 4  
 Lyons, 40, 151, 161, 167, 168, 171, 213, 229, 312, 314, 316, 350, 386  
 Maçon, Antoine le, 351, 366  
 Madeline, Madame, daughter of Francis I, 153, 155, 222, 385  
 Madon, 45, 46  
 Madrid, 20, 107, 111, 177, 194, 209, 211, 213, 215, 217, 220, 227-9, 233, 243, 252, 261, 262, 379  
 Mantua, Duke of, 314  
 Maraviglia, 306  
 Marck, Guillaume de la, Duke of Clèves and Juliers, 332-4, 336-9, 377, 379, 383, 384, 396  
 —, Robert de la, 71, 122, 217  
 Mare, Jean de la, Bishop of Condom, 35  
 Marignano, 116, 117, 144, 145  
 Marot, Clément, 103, 233, 234, 345, 347  
 —, Jean, 84, 103-6  
 Marseilles, 158  
 Martin, Henri, 110, 328  
 Maulde la Clavière, *Louise de Savoie et François I<sup>er</sup>*, 49, 69  
 Maximilian, Emperor, 115, 118, 119  
 Meaux, 126, 128, 129  
 Medici, Catherine de', daughter of Lorenzo de' Medici, Duke of Urbino, 294, 324  
 Medina-Celi, 213, 214  
 Melanchthon, Andrew, 316  
 —, Philipp, 297-9  
 Melle, 5  
 Mendoza, Don Diego de, Count de Melito, 200  
 —, Donna Ximena de, 210  
 Méridol, 391  
 Mézières, 139  
 Michelet, 109, 110, 111  
 Mignet, 184  
 Milan, 27, 29, 116, 140, 145, 160, 161, 163, 165, 186, 248  
 —, Duke of, 219  
 Monçada, Don Ugo de, 193  
 Monçon, 320  
 Monge, 408  
 Mont-de-Marsan, 235, 266  
 Montecuculi, Count Sebastino di, 313, 314  
 Montfaçon, 142  
 Montferrato, Marchioness of, 246  
 Montfrin, 308, 309  
 Montmorency, Anne de, 31, 166, 173, 187, 189, 190, 191, 205, 209-14, 229, 256, 263, 264, 265, 267, 278, 308, 310, 315, 319, 320, 326-7, 328, 329, 330, 340, 341, 342, 343, 344, 377, 398, 404-5, 408, 409  
 Montmorency-Laval, Jean de, 112  
 Montpellier, 221  
 Montpensier, Charles de Bourbon, Count de, 31, 143-7, 249, 250  
 Montpezat, Jean de, Comte de Carmain, 309  
 Moulins, 11, 20, 144, 408  
 Nai, 284  
 Nantes, 40  
 —, Cardinal de, 57  
 Naples, 39, 163, 187, 217, 259, 260, 389  
 Narbonne, 126, 213, 215, 221  
 Nassau, Count of, 139, 308  
 —, Countess of, 228  
 Navarre, 121, 209, 227, 248  
 —, Jean, Prince of, 268  
 —, Jehanne de. *See* Albret, Jeanne d'.  
 —, King of. *See* Albret, Henri d'.  
 —, Queen of. *See* Angoulême, Margaret.

# Index

- Navarreins, 285  
 Nemours, Duc de, 42  
 Nérac, 260, 280, 281, 285, 301, 345, 405  
 Neufville, Nicolas de, Seigneur of Villeroi, 104  
 Nice, 331, 377, 385  
 Niel, 322  
 Nîmes, 221, 309  
 Nodier, Charles 367  
 Norfolk, Duke of, English Ambassador, 329  
 Noyon, 117  
  
 Odet, Seigneur de Lautrec, 112  
 Oisille, Dame, 358-64  
 Olhagary, 284, 334  
 Olivier, 353  
 Oloron, Bishop of, 373  
 Oppède, Baron d', 392  
 Orléans, 348  
 —, Charles d', 35  
 —, Henri, Duc d', son of Francis, afterwards King Henri II, 153, 155, 218, 222, 230, 231, 236, 242, 251, 267, 269, 270, 274, 294, 303, 322, 326, 331, 395, 405-10  
 —, Jeanne de France, Duchess of, 8  
 —, Louis, Duc d', 1, 8-10, 13, 14, 20, 21; afterwards Louis XII, *q.v.*  
 —, Valentina of Milan, Duchess d', 1, 6 35  
 Orvieto, 252  
  
 Pachecho, Dona Agnese, 312  
 Palisse, Monsieur de la, 150, 163, 165  
 Pampeluna, 224, 379  
 Papillon, 233  
 Paradin, Guillaume, 251, 387  
 Paradis, Paul, 39  
 Paris, 1, 4, 24, 25, 77, 78, 87, 91, 96, 100, 103, 116, 137, 154, 161, 171, 175, 182, 244, 254, 256, 272, 288, 298, 301, 347, 387, 388, 406  
 —, Bishop of, 303-4  
 Parvi, Guillaume, 83  
 Pau, 256, 285, 345, 399, 405, 410  
 Paul III, Pope, 295, 305, 320, 372, 384, 413  
 Paule, François de, 8, 9, 23  
 Pavanne, Jacques, 182, 183  
 Pavia, 114, 160, 162, 163, 165, 166, 168, 170, 180, 203, 223, 240, 252, 337, 338  
 Pay du Fou, Bonaventure du. *See* Bonnivet, Madame.  
 Pedraza, 261, 263  
  
 Pelletier, Jacques, 347, 352  
 Peñalosa, 229  
 Penthievre, Count de, 1, 242  
 Périers, Bonaventure des, 345-8, 367  
 Perpignan, 379  
 Pescara, Marchese di, 158-160, 164, 165, 187  
 Petit, Guillaume, afterwards Bishop of Senlis, 100, 102, 124, 129, 290, 297  
 Philip, eldest son of Charles V, 279  
 Philippe, Duke of Savoy. *See* Bresse, Philippe, Count de.  
 Picardy, 81  
 Piellei, Guillaume, 72  
 Pinerolo, 307  
 Pisseleu, Anne de, 239, 242, 269  
 —, Guillaume de, 239  
 Pius II, Pope, 17  
 Pizzighitone, 169, 173, 185, 186, 188  
 Planche, Regnier de la, 118  
 Plessis-lès-Tours, 8, 9, 280, 318, 319, 396  
 Ploret, Lieutenant, 30  
 Poitiers, 34  
 —, Diane de, widow of Louis de Brézé, 322-6, 340, 395, 404  
 Poitou, Sénéchale of, 308, 317  
 Pole, Richard de la, the attainted Duke of Suffolk, 166  
 Pognac, Anne de, Countess de la Rochefoucauld, 245  
 —, Élie de, 13  
 —, Mlle. Jeanne de, 3, 6, 16, 30  
 Poncher, Etienne, Archbishop of Sens, 102  
 Pontbriant, The brothers, 41  
 Portugal, Eleanor, Queen-Dowager of, 149, 202, 217, 220, 228, 230, 261, 262, 263, 266, 267, 268, 272, 312, 316, 405  
 —, Infanta Isabella of, 228  
 Praet, Louis van, 230, 235, 264, 265  
 Prat, du, Chancellor, 100, 118, 142, 148, 167, 170, 181, 232, 263, 264, 291  
 Provence, 149  
  
 Rambouillet, 398  
 Ravenna, 31, 49  
 Refuge, Arnault du, 2  
 —, Regnault du, 89  
 René, Bastard of Savoy, 85, 144  
 —, the Lyons Messenger, 150  
 Renée, Madame, afterwards Duchess of Ferrara, 82, 95, 146  
 Requeña, 192



# Index

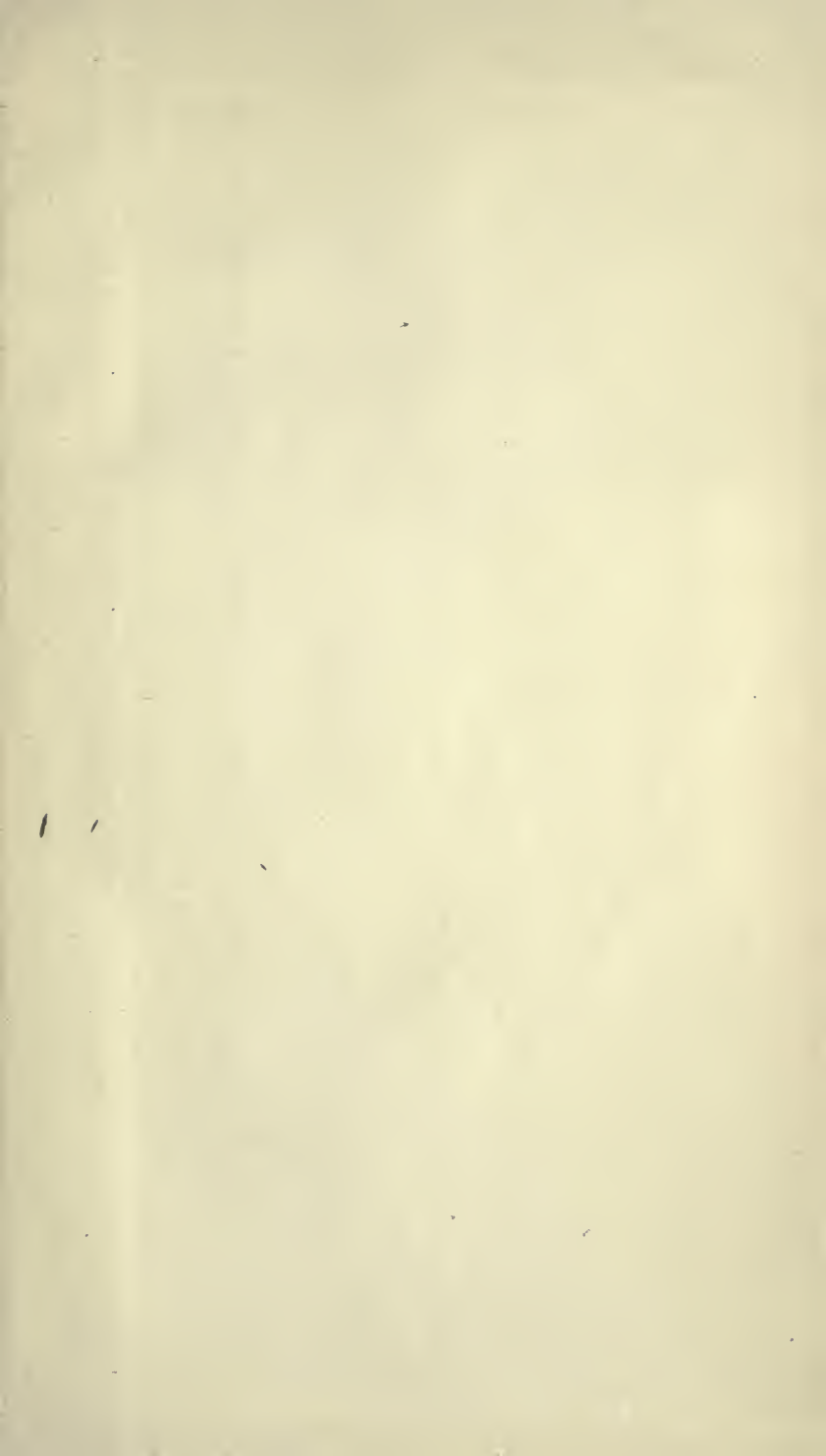
- Rheims, 98, 126, 407  
 Rhodéz, Bishop of, 283  
 Rieux, de, 172  
 Rinçon, 377  
 Roanne, 230  
 Roche, Sieur de la, 204  
 Rochefort, 398  
 —, François de, 225  
 Rœux, Count de, 308  
 Rohan, Françoise de, 319  
 —, Marguerite de. *See* Angoulême, Countess de.  
 —, Pierre de, 13  
 —, René, Viscount de, 295, 319  
 Rome, 249, 251, 252  
 Romorantin, Château of, 29, 89, 91, 96, 275  
 Roussel, Gérard, 124, 129, 138, 280, 281, 298, 300, 372  
 Roussillon, 209, 379  
 Roussy, Count de, 272  
  
 Saigon, 347  
 Saint-André-des-Arts, Curé of, 290  
 Saint-Cloud, 272  
 Saint-Denis, 91, 92, 97, 98, 151, 272  
 Saint-Dizier, 387  
 Saint-Gelais, Jean de, 5, 11, 13, 16, 18, 25, 26, 28, 33, 42, 45  
 —, Octavien de, Bishop of Angoulême, 16-18  
 Saint-Germain, 275, 398  
 Saint-Germain-en-Lay, 246, 317, 395, 397  
 Saint-Jean-de-Luz, 232, 265  
 Saint-Maixent, 25  
 Saint-Pather, Mlle. de, 348  
 Saint-Pol, Count de, 166, 260, 307  
 Saint-Preuil, 245  
 Saint-Vincent, 330  
 Sainte-Beuve, 357  
 Sainte-Marthe, Charles de, 240, 287  
 Saintonge, 97  
 Saintsbury, Mr. George, 371  
 Salces, 215, 221  
 Saluzzo, Marchese di, 307  
 Sanguin, Antoine, Archbishop of Orléans, 325  
 —, Mlle., 239  
 Sauveterre, 285  
 Savona, 259  
 Savoy, Claude de Brosses de Bretagne, Duchess of, 14  
 Scève, Maurice, 347  
 Scotland, James V of, 384  
 Sééz, Bishop of, 318  
 Segovia, 195  
  
 Selve, Jean de, 189, 191, 198, 219  
 Senlis, Bishop of. *See* Petit, Guillaume.  
 Seville, 228  
 Sforza, Francesco, 142, 217, 238, 248, 306  
 —, Louis, 116  
 —, Maximilian, Duke of Milan, 115  
 Siguenza, 212  
 Silly, Madame de, Baillive of Caen, 333, 335, 338-9  
 Sisteron, 117  
 Soissons, 60  
 Soliman II, 306, 320, 377  
 Somerset, Duke of, 46  
 Spain, Philip of, 332, 342-4, 407  
 Spinola, Madame, 74  
 Strasbourg, 182  
 Suffolk, Charles Brandon, Duke of, 92-4, 96, 97  
 Susa, 319  
  
 Talavera, 203  
 Talmont, Prince de, 166  
 Tarbes, 245  
 —, Bishop of, 243  
 Tarragona, Archbishop of, 187  
 Taylor, Dr. John, English Ambassador, 230, 270  
 Testard, Robert, 15  
 Théroüanne, 72, 73, 315  
 Toledo, 188, 197, 227, 237, 263, 268, 279  
 —, Archbishop of, 228  
 Torrejon, Castle of, 228  
 Toulon, 311  
 Toulouse, 43, 349  
 Touraine, 317  
 Tournai, 73, 122, 140  
 Tournelles, Palais des, 97  
 Tournon, François de, Archbishop of Embrun, 189, 191, 198, 219, 220, 263, 264, 297, 299-302, 392, 397  
 Tours, 59  
 Trémoille, Louis de la, 163, 166  
 Troyes, 130, 131  
 Tudor, Mary, afterwards Queen of Louis XII, King of France, 88, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97  
 Tulle, Bishop of. *See* Châtel, Pierre du.  
 Turenne, Viscount de, 263  
 Turin, 307, 319, 345  
  
 Urbino, Duke of, 248, 250  
 Usson, 25  
 Utrecht, Adrian of, 140

# Index

- Valence, 308  
Valencia, 187  
Valentinois, Duchess de. *See* Poitiers,  
Diane de.  
Valois, Charles de, Duke d'Angoulême,  
nephew of Marguerite, 253  
—, Duc de. *See* Angoulême, Fran-  
çois Count d'.  
Vauban, 285  
Vaudémont, Count de, 55  
Vaudois, 393  
Velasco, Don Pedro Hernandez de,  
Constable of Castile, 263  
Vendôme, Duc de, 100, 171, 175,  
303, 316, 379, 390, 406, 408, 409  
—, Duchesse de, 246, 411  
Venice, 118, 213, 218, 345  
Venysolo, 189  
Vertus, Philippe, Count de, 1  
Veyrières, Convent of, 266  
Vienna, 261  
Villalpando, 261  
Villefranche, Moreau de, 167  
Villepreux, 398  
Villers-Cotterets, 396  
Vittoria, 229, 230, 263  
Waldo, Pierre de, 391  
Wallup, 329  
Wasa, Gustavus, 378  
Wolsey, Cardinal, 121, 139, 140, 244,  
251, 270  
York, Duke of, afterwards Henry VIII,  
King of England, 36, 38

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