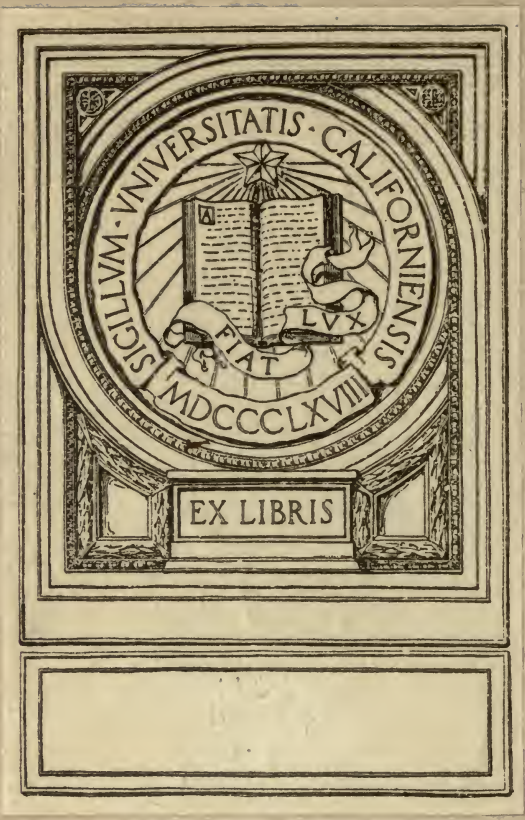
The Regency of MARIE DE MÉDICIS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THE REGENCY

OF

MARIE DE MÉDICIS

A Study of French History from 1610 to 1616

By

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With Five Portraits

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PREFACE

The withdrawal of the Duc de Sully from affairs some months after the death of Henry IV. has always seemed to me a subject inviting more attention and research than has been given it in these days. It was a momentous step for him to take, and fraught with the most far-reaching results for France.

I have considered his position for a long time, and have tried, by the aid of all the side-lights possible, chiefly the works of the late Professor Berthold Zeller, under whose eye I laboured, to bring before my readers what the real situation was; why and how the all-powerful Sully became gradually stripped of his power until he was compelled to resign early in the year 1611.

I have tried to point out the consummate skill for intrigue which Marie de Médicis possessed, and how she turned to account quarrels which seemed of no significance. I have tried to deal succinctly with such characters as the Prince de

Condé, the Duc de Bouillon, the Maréchal d'Ancre, the Comte de Soissons, and the minister de Villeroy. It has been my object to place them as nearly as possible in the relations which they seem to have occupied towards the Regent. I have tried to show how the struggle between the Queen and Condé resulted in the shifting of the power into the hands of a ministry appointed by the Florentine Concino Concini. Finally, I have attempted to give a clear account of the death of the Maréchal d'Ancre.

If my task has been successful, and if this book has any degree of merit, it is, in a large measure, owing to the advice and counsel of such scholars as Professor Berthold Zeller of the University of Paris, and Professors George B. Adams, Oliver H. Richardson, and William Lyon Phelps of Yale, to each and all of whom I wish to return thanks.

ARTHUR POWER LORD.

NEW HAVEN,
June 23, 1903.

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CHAPTER I

May to October, 1610—Preparations for war against Spain—Secrecy of the King's plans—His reasons for appointing a Regent—The cabinet—The Duc de Sully—Murder of Henry IV.—Its consequences—Rise of the Catholic party—Antagonism between it and Sully—The secret council—Plan for Sully's removal—Arrival of the Prince de Condé—Plot of the Feudal party against the Regency—The Queen's Spanish policy—Agreement for the double marriage—Disavowal of the Feudal party by Philip III.—Arrival of the Duc de Feria.

FRANCE had rested since 1595. The Paris of the League had become the city of Henry IV. Art and commerce prospered, and there seemed to be no cloud in the serene political atmosphere.

Suddenly, in the spring of 1610, soldiers began

to pour into the town in ever-increasing numbers. Tents began to whiten the green hills; the clink of the armourers' hammers became incessant; the forges glowed by day and by night, the lights helping to throw into relief strange figures of men, bearded and bronzed, who brought helmets and breastplates to the anvils. Long lines of creaking vans crawled slowly through the streets escorted by troops of horsemen, toiling slowly along towards the south. The Parisians stared open-mouthed. Gradually the army marched away, but when the last squadron had disappeared the burghers turned to each other. "What does it all mean? Whither are the soldiers going, and for how long? Who is to be attacked?" they asked, but no one could give an exact answer to these queries, for Henry IV. had confided in only one person, his favourite minister, the Duc de Sully.

What eager looks followed the figure of the great Huguenot as he moved between the palace and the arsenal! What questions were put to him by the courtiers who strove to pierce his

reserve! But he was impenetrable, and his very reticence seemed to give a new impulse to the wild rumours of which the town was full.

The excitement was intensified when the King announced his intention of appointing the Queen Marie de Médicis Regent, and of crowning her at St. Denis before his departure. This precaution made one thing unmistakable; France was about to begin a struggle to the death with some great power.

From the modern standpoint the wisdom of the King's choice is open to discussion, but Henry could not hesitate; the Dauphin was a baby of six; disaffection reigned among the Princes of the Blood. One had fled from Paris and lived in exile; another was so infirm in his speech and so deaf that he passed for an imbecile. The third, Louis de Bourbon, Comte de Soissons, had retired to his estates in a rage because his wife was forbidden to wear the lilies of France on her cloak at the Queen's coronation. The King was obliged to place the sceptre in a hand sufficiently strong to hold it, and he hoped that his wife would overcome her Italian sloth-

fulness, calm her temper, and apply herself to mastering the science of government.

He surrounded her with his ablest ministers. Villeroy, and his colleague, Brulart de Sillery, men broken to diplomacy by the experience of two reigns; the president, Pierre Jeannin, one of the ablest councillors of the robe, whose parliamentary career fitted him exceptionally well for the position he was to hold, and the Duc de Sully composed the cabinet. Undoubtedly the latter was the man upon whom the King relied most. He was Henry's other self. His great mind had raised France from the state of anæmia resulting from the religious wars to an enviable position in riches and power. He had devised the system of finance which had enabled the monarch to interfere in continental politics; he had gained such an influence over the King that often his single word was a bulwark against his master's extravagance, and Henry could not see how it was possible for affairs to go wrong in his absence, so long as his counterpart remained in Paris. Yet no one knew how close the monarch stood to the brink of the grave, nor how soon

those plans which he had formed for the good of his kingdom would be annihilated by the rapacity of his subjects. On the 10th of May, 1610, the blow fell. Towards the middle of the afternoon the King called his coach with the intention of driving to the arsenal; on the way the carriage halted in the rue de la Ferronnerie, and a fanatic, who had been watching Henry for days, seized the opportunity to spring upon the wheel and stab him to the heart.

Much may be seen in this act of regicide. It was not merely a murder committed by a private individual, it was not an act of revenge or personal malice, but the expression of a feeling which lay like a weight upon the hearts of the common people. The King's policy was ahead of his time, and he had made no calculation for the fanaticism of the men who but yesterday marched under the banners of the League. The treaty of Brussol shows *us* that Henry's object was to attack Spain,* but in 1610 his intentions were almost unknown, and the populace was pro-

* See *Du Mont.*, *Corps Universel Diplomatique du Droit des Gens*, I. p. 85.

foundly agitated. Rumours were rife that war was to be declared upon the Pope, and Ravaillac confessed that he had been impelled to kill the King owing to this very idea.* His act marks the end of a period as distinctly as if the stroke of the knife had been a point of punctuation which closed a chapter in France's history, and its consequences reached farther than the keenest mind could foresee.

The Queen was to be a ruler, not a puppet, and henceforth her personal equation became the prime factor of the situation. France ceased to be a united power. The rule of the strong man gave way to the weak administration of a woman whose support lay in a party. Two factions, based upon religious prejudices, immediately sprang into activity. Sully and the Regent became antagonists instead of allies.

Two men of action, the Duc d'Epernon and the Duc de Guise, whose father Henry III. murdered at Blois, seized the opportunity to become the Queen's advisers. They posted guards

* *Mercure François* ou suite de l'histoire de la Paix, I. pp. 442–443.

about Paris, harangued the Parliament, and took all the measures necessary for establishing the Regency.* Sully in his arsenal heard the rumour of what was going on, but at the time when he should have been all firmness and decision he was torn with doubts and fears; when he finally mounted his horse to go to the Louvre the golden opportunity had gone. In the rue St. Antoine he met Bassompièrre, who was posting the guard; checking his tears as best he could, he begged the Count to swear fealty to Louis XIII., out of his love for the child's father, if not for the lad's own sake. "Sir," answered Bassompièrre coldly, "*we* are administering that oath to others and will do our duty without being urged." †

"We are administering that oath to others."

* A little less than three hours after the King's death Parliament made the Queen Regent by a solemn decree, but the act had no precedent, so the next day Louis XIII. held a *Lit de Justice* to confirm the title which the court had given his mother. The *Lit de Justice* was the most solemn function which a monarch could perform. The King sitting in the midst of his Parliament, surrounded by all the dignitaries of France, registered his will as a law.

† *Bassompièrre, Journal de ma vie,* T. I. p. 277, ed. Chantérac. Paris, 1870.

The words fell with an ominous sound on the Huguenot's ear, for they meant that the power had passed into other hands. The person whose presence had united all *Frenchmen*, and had obliterated party distinctions, was gone, and men had once more become Catholics and Protestants, Guisards and Bourbons. Turning his horse he retreated to the Bastille, which he proceeded to provision for a siege. All the bread in the quarter was seized and a courier went galloping off to the Duc de Rohan with an order to bring his regiment of Swiss mercenaries to the capital.*

If Sully expected the Catholic party to attack him by force he had mistaken the character of the Regent. Marie de Médicis preferred intrigue to strength, and the Duke might have spared himself several nights of anxiety as he watched from the battlements of his fortress. The assault was to be delivered in the cabinet, not in the field. What could have been more logical than for the Catholics to rid themselves of Sully, the one discordant element in their midst? They left him his seat at the council for

* *Bassompièrre*, pp. 277–278.

a time, but gradually affairs were discussed more and more in a third or inner council from which the Comptroller of the Currency was excluded.*

This the historian L'Estoile calls "le conseil du petit escritoire," and comprised the Papal Nuncio, the Spanish Ambassador, the Duc d'Epernon, Villeroy, the Chevalier Sillery and his brother the Chancellor, the President Jeannin, Arnault and Dolé, members of the financial administration, Duret the Queen's physician, the confessor Cotton, and last, but most important, Concino Concini, and his wife Leonora Galigaï.

Leonora was the Regent's foster-sister, and had come from Florence with her. Concino had also made his appearance in the train of the new Queen. This handsome and unscrupulous Florentine paid court to Leonora, who, small and deformed, was flattered and finally won by Concini. Owing to the influence which his wife possessed, his advancement was rapid. The Concinis had often been the witnesses of the furious quarrels which the late King had had with his wife about

* *Rohan Mémoires*, ed. Michaud et Poujoulat, 2me série, V. p. 493.

his mistresses. When Henry wished to make peace he approached Leonora, and she, whose one desire in life was money, would often precipitate these scenes, hoping that the negotiations for reconciliation might bring her rich rewards.

The King saw their influence upon his wife, and hated the couple intensely. He threatened to send the Queen and her confidants back to Florence, and no one knows what the result might have been had not Ravaillac settled it. After the catastrophe Concino's fortune increased by leaps and bounds. Leonora held the Queen's attention at all times, and there seemed to be no limit to Marie de Médicis' liberality.

The only logical aim of the inner council was to commit the Queen to a policy so ultra-Catholic that Sully should be forced to retire from the court. Their first move was to stop recruiting for the army, which lay at the foot of the Alps waiting the signal to burst into Italy. Then the Papal Nuncio filed a protest against sending help to the Protestant Princes who were besieging Juliers, but it was a little too soon

after Henry's death to knock the foundations out from under his political structure, and the attempt failed.* Neither the Queen nor Villeroy, who had assumed all authority in the council, was ready to break absolutely with the traditions of the last reign, for the Prince de Condé had not yet returned to court.

This Prince, who had gone into voluntary exile in order to remove his wife from the attentions of Henry IV., was a factor in the situation which could not be overlooked. If he came back well disposed towards the Regency, all might be well. If, on the other hand, he should return with the idea of opposing the government he might either become the chief of the Huguenots or assume the leadership of the Princes, who, already dissatisfied, were only kept in subjection by immense sacrifices.† Villeroy preferred that Condé should return and find nothing irrevocably decided, that Sully should

* *Mercure François*, T. I. p. 523.

† Conti and Soissons had applied for the government of Normandy. Their request was refused, though the province was finally given to Soissons; he also received immense sums of money.

still appear to be in office, and that he—Villeroy —should have a chance to win the Prince by bribes and fair words.

Condé arrived in Paris on the 16th of July. He was well received, but the Queen's kindness seems to have inspired him with contempt. He judged that the Regent needed his friendship, and was willing to buy it rather than have him for an enemy. He accepted the gifts which were showered upon him, and became the chief of her opponents.

A league was formed which comprised most of the great nobles of the Kingdom. This party resolved not to endure the Regency, and intended to insist upon summoning the Estates General; they hoped to gain the people and the clergy by putting forward the reduction of taxes, and the immunities of the Church. In the interest of this coalition Condé interviewed the Comte de Bucquoy at Saint Maur, one of his country seats, asking him to sound Spinola and ascertain what he might expect in case of a rupture.*

* *Bucquoy*, July 27, 1610. Archives of Brussels, cited by

It is reasonable to infer that the King of Spain warned the French cabinet about the proposed rebellion, for the policy of the government, which had as yet assumed no definite shape, suddenly became entirely Spanish. The Regent listened to the propositions which had been made to her husband by Matteo Botti, the Florentine Ambassador, concerning a double marriage between the heirs of France and Spain. Henry had spurned the proposal, but the Queen had no antipathy against the house from which she was descended on her mother's side, and she rejoiced because the glorious task of assuring the peace of Europe by a marriage between the two crowns had fallen to her.* The Convention of Brussol, which the dead King had made with the Duc de Savoie, was absolutely disregarded. France offered Charles Emmanuel an empty mediation, proposing at the same time, with

Ranke, Französiche Geschichte: French trans. by J. J. Porchat, III. pp. 5–6. Don Inigo de Cardenas to the Council of State, August 10, 1610, cited by F. T. Perrens in Les Mariages Espagnols sous Henri IV. et la Régence de Marie de Médicis, p. 306.

* *Ranke, Französiche Geschichte*, T. III. p. 15.

monumental assurance, that the Prince Victor Amadeus, who was to have married Elisabeth of France, should wed a Florentine princess.* To remove the last shadow of suspicion from Madrid, the army of Lesdiguières, which had remained inactive since May, was disbanded.

Philip III. could now afford to declare his policy with regard to the Feudal party and to reassure the French Queen; so, shortly before Louis XIII.'s coronation, which was fixed for October, Feria, the Spanish envoy, arrived in Paris. His very first act was to disavow Condé and his partisans.

Freed from the fear that the Princes might receive help from Spain, Marie de Médicis gave full sway to her policy. The inner council had already suggested that, if she cared for the good will of the Pope, she could not maintain a Huguenot in the first office of the Kingdom.† Sully's removal was decided upon, but this was no easy task, for in his capacity of chief of the Hugue-

* *La Minorité de Louis XIII., Marie de Médicis et Sully.* B. Zeller, pp. 245–256.

† *Rohan Mémoires*, p. 493, ed. Michaud et Poujoulat.

nots, and of captain of the Bastille, he might have made a great deal of trouble for the government. In order to ruin him it became necessary to isolate him. This was Villeroy's idea, and the Regent, relying implicitly upon his ability, gave her consent. The old diplomat had set himself to solve a difficult problem; his enemy had made firm friends of the Duc de Guise and the Prince de Condé.* Nothing daunted, to quote the energetic language of Cardinal de Richelieu, "he put the irons in the fire to bring about the removal of the Duc de Sully."

*Sully had paid the Duke an advance on his pension and had settled Condé's claim to the arrears due him since his flight.

CHAPTER II

October, 1610, to March, 1611—The coronation—Disposition of Condé towards the Regency—Understanding between the Bourbon Princes—Favour of the House of Guise—The Queen's need of their support—Isolation of Sully—Quarrel between Bellegarde and Concini—Agreement between Soissons and the ministers—Quarrel between the Bourbons and the Guises—Sully's mistake in siding against the Princes—Probability that his dismissal was the pivot upon which the settlement of the dispute turned—Bribes offered to Condé—Sully's impressions—His resolution to make a supreme test—His quarrel with Villeroy—His dismissal—Success of the Queen's schemes—Satisfaction at Madrid.

THE early days of October found the Regent and the court at Monceau, whither they had gone by easy stages from Paris. All the King's journeys were made to savour as much as possible of the chase, and he arrived at the old residence with his falcon on his wrist. A week later, on October 16, 1610, Louis entered Reims, in whose venerable cathedral he was to receive the crown of his ancestors. Nothing of especial note marked the coronation, except that the jeal-

ousy of the Guises for the Bourbons found an opportunity of showing itself when the Order of the Holy Ghost was conferred upon the Prince de Condé. The Cardinal de Joyeuse, the patriarch of his family, was likewise offered this decoration, but he excused himself, saying that in his quality of Prince of the Church he could not be second to a layman.*

With this exception all parties appeared to have laid aside their differences to do honour to their young monarch. The Prince de Condé figured in the ceremony as the Duc de Bourgogne, the Prince de Conti took the part of the Duc de Normandie, and the Comte de Soissons represented the Duc d'Aquitaine. But as soon as the coronation was over it became evident that Condé was not likely to submit quietly to the rule of Marie de Médicis.

Foiled by Philip III.'s categorical refusal to aid the Feudal party, he turned his attention to centralising the resistance of the nobles. The court had given him permission to visit his wife

* *Journal de Jean Héroard* sur l'enfance et la jeunesse de Louis XIII., ed. Soulié et Barthélémy, II. 26–32.

at Valèry, and under cover of this specious excuse he went to see the Duc de Bouillon.*

A visit to this personage was sufficient to arouse the viligance of the ministers; for his ability in the field rendered him a valuable addition to the party; his wisdom in council was recognised even by his foes; his capacity for intrigue was unsurpassed; while his influence with the Huguenots was greatly dreaded. Richelieu calls him "the genius of rebellion," and it is certain that Henry IV. feared him as much as any of his great nobles. Holding in his control one of the frontier cities of France, Bouillon felt that he might summon aid from outside at any time; he had the opportunity of becoming a great leader, but was too frivolous and too grasping to care to lead; he preferred advantages, money, offices, or governments. When there was nothing to gain by being against the party in power he was its most humble servant.

The Duke showed the Prince that a united party had more chance of making head against

* *Histoire des Princes de Condé* pendant le XVI. et le XVII. Siècle, Duc d'Aumale, III, 11, Paris, 1885.

the Regent than he, single-handed. He advised him to come to an understanding with the Comte de Soissons, whom Condé had just beaten in a law suit. The Prince de Conti was not approached. He was on bad terms with his brother owing to a dispute about the government of Normandy, of which we shall speak later, and his wife, who belonged to the Guise faction, did all in her power to animate his resentment.

The conference took place at Chantilly under the auspices of the Constable de Montmorency, whose son-in-law, the Comte d'Auvergne, was languishing in the Bastille for complicity in Biron's conspiracy, and in spite of Montmorency's efforts the Regent refused to release him. The old warrior's irritable temper was not improved by this treatment, and he was glad to do all he could to unite the Princes against the Queen.

The coalition of the Bourbons assured the favour of the Guises. This family comprised the Duke and his brother the Chevalier, a young reckless blade whose sword was always ready to serve his party; the Cardinal de Joyeuse and the

old Duc de Mayenne, Henry IV.'s quondam foe; besides these formidable names the relatives and friends of the House of Lorraine numbered in their ranks the Ducs d'Epernon, d'Elbœuf, and de Bellegarde. The traditional dislike of the Guise for the Bourbon was always sufficient reason for him to side with the Queen, if his rivals led the opposition.

But Marie de Médicis needed support in a far more important matter than to show a bold front to the Princes. We have already said that Villeroy and the Queen had resolved to remove Sully, and that, in order to ruin him, it was necessary to deprive him of allies, and to tie the hands of the Guises by some enormous favour; as luck would have it, the occasion presented itself almost as soon as it was desired.

The widow of the Duc de Montpensier, whom Guise wished to marry, was the last link in the chain by which the Regent intended to hold the allegiance of the family. The match was a genuine love affair, but unfortunately the Duke had had many, and among others he had won the Marquise de Verneuil, the accredited mistress

of the late King. To overcome her scruples a secret marriage contract was resorted to, and the lady threatened to produce this document and begin an action. Marie de Médicis was too good a politician to allow such a chance to pass. She condescended to plead with her old rival,* who, influenced by the Queen's arguments, withdrew her opposition, and the betrothal took place on the 18th of December, in the Regent's own apartments at the Louvre.† The marriage was celebrated on the 5th of January, 1611, and its immediate effect was to increase the tension between the rival houses.

The great wealth of the Montpensiers had attracted the attention of the Comte de Soissons, who had demanded the hand of the heiress for his son, notwithstanding that Henry IV. destined her for the Duc d'Orléans. This pretension was extremely disagreeable to the Cardinal de Joyeuse, and to the Duc d'Epernon, who preferred to see their niece married to a Prince of the royal

* *Andréa Cioli*, September 14, 1610, cited by B. Zeller in La Minorité de Louis XIII., Marie de Médicis et Sully, 140–142.

† *Héroard*, II. 42.

house; they had persistently refused to listen to the Count whenever he broached the subject. When the young lady's mother became Duchess of Guise her husband assumed the cares of the family, and proved himself no more tractable than her relatives of longer standing. But the eagerness of the Count's suit had not escaped Marie de Médicis, who, having won the Duke, must have been overjoyed to find another bait for her cousin so ready to her hand. She resolved to make him side with her against Sully by allowing him to hope that, at some future time, his desires for his son might be realised. The great difficulty lay in approaching Soissons. Neither Villeroy nor any of the Ministers could fill the office of intermediary, for they all had taken part in refusing the Count the government of Normandy when he and the Prince de Conti had put in rival claims for the province.

There was one person, however, who had served Soissons well in this instance, and who, therefore, was likely to influence him; this was the Italian Concini, newly made Marquis

d'Ancre and chamberlain to His Majesty. When the Count made his demand for Normandy, Sully and the cabinet had been unanimous in their refusal, but Concini, relying on the influence which his wife possessed over the Queen, had undertaken to obtain satisfaction for him.* His success placed Soissons under great obligation, and when, early in January, a quarrel broke out between the Italian and the Duc de Bellegarde, the ministers caused the Count to be chosen for umpire, though numbers of great men offered their services.

The choice served a double purpose; first it flattered the Prince that the Queen's favourite should have selected him at a time when his relations with the Regent were none of the best, and secondly, it enabled him to acquit himself of the debt he had owed Concini since the beginning of the Regency. At the same time the Marquis was able to approach him about the great affair which Villeroy had in hand, and he did it all the more eagerly because Concini,

* *Andréa Cioli*, June 26, 1610, cited by Zeller in La Minorité de Louis XIII., Marie de Médicis et Sully, p. 18.

clever though he was, had been duped himself by the minister, who hinted to him that, if Sully was dismissed, he might aspire to his offices.

This quarrel, the true meaning of which has escaped the piercing eye of Ranke, was settled to the satisfaction of both parties, and the Count and the Marquis d'Ancre entered into a most important agreement. Concini was to influence the ministers to allow Mlle. de Montpensier to marry the Duc d'Enghien, *provided that Soissons would agree to carry out in concert with them a plan for overthrowing the Duc de Sully.**

Fate, which seems to have furnished all the opportunities for this remarkable intrigue, now prepared the last act. A terrible broil arose between the Duc de Guise and the House of Bourbon, in which Sully took the step leading to his downfall. One evening, the carriages of the Bourbon Princes met in the rue St. Honoré. Soissons' equerry, who was walking ahead, called

* *Richelieu Mémoires*, Michaud et Poujoulat, T. VII. p. 36. *D'Estrées' Mémoires*, Michaud et Poujoulat, T. VII. p. 383.

to Conti's coachman to stop, and, little knowing with whom he had to deal, seized the bridles of the horses. The difference over the government of Normandy was still uppermost in Conti's mind, and, thinking that his equipage had been stopped purposely to insult him, he leaned out of his coach, and vociferated to his brother, who had hastened on foot to apologise, "à demain pour point bas!" This was the ordinary formula of a challenge. Both Princes withdrew in a white heat, but the trouble was already noised abroad, and their doors had scarcely closed upon them when one of the Queen's officers presented himself to request each to stay at home until the quarrel was submitted to arbitration.

It was perfectly natural that the Regent should select an umpire among her own friends, and her choice fell on the Duc de Guise, who was Conti's brother-in-law, and therefore likely to have a greater influence on him. The Duke, who was at his wife's house in the rue de Grenelle, had some misgivings about executing the Queen's orders. "You will see," he said to the Duchess as he mounted his horse, "that great trouble will

come out of this." His words were prophetic, for the Comte de Soissons, hearing the noise of the cavalcade as it passed his house, flew into a towering passion, and swore that Guise and his suite had passed on purpose to brave him. The misunderstanding with the Prince de Conti at once lost all significance.

The partisans of each house sprang to arms, and their battle cries began to echo once more throughout the city. The burghers were called out; chains were stretched across the narrow streets, the guard was tripled at the Louvre, and the Queen assembled the Council. The Prince de Condé sided with his uncle, while the Guises, by a strange trick of fortune, had with them, besides the members of their own family, the Protestant leaders Rohan, Chatillon, *and the Duc de Sully*.

The pride of both parties made a solution extremely difficult. The Princes saw an opportunity of humbling the rivals who had dared to consider themselves the equals of the House of Bourbon, and demanded an apology. The Guises declared that they had acted under orders

from the Regent, and, considering that the Hôtel de Soissons was on the Duke's road to the Palais de Conti, they had no quarrel with the Princes. An apology was out of the question, and they threatened to withdraw from the court if the Queen compelled them to make excuses.

Marie de Médicis was in a difficult situation. She was obliged to consider the temper of her friends or else her carefully laid plans would fail; she knew she could lure Soissons and Condé, and therefore she decided to give the House of Lorraine satisfaction. The old Duc de Mayenne, whose age and experience rendered him the spokesman of his family, presented himself before the Queen. He declared in the name of his nephew that no harm had been intended; on the contrary, had the Duke met the Count he would not have failed to render him the honours due his quality.*

* *Pontchartrain's Mémoires*, ed. Michaud et Poujoulat, 307-310. *Richelieu Mémoires*, p. 36—Fontenay-Mareuil, 42—*D'Estrées' Mémoires*, 384-385—*Mercure François*, T. II. 2-5, *Beaulieu to Trumbull*, January, 1611, found in Memorials of Affairs of State in the reigns of Queen Elizabeth and King James, collected chiefly from original papers of the Rt. Hon. Sir Ralph Winwood, II. pp. 247-248.

The Regent pronounced herself satisfied, and the Princes saw immediately that the victory had been given to their foes. Condé turned on his heel and left the council chamber. The Queen did not lose a second, but despatched a messenger to the Count. What was the argument which Concini was charged to bring to bear upon the angry Prince? If we knew the answer to this question, what is now more or less well founded conjecture would become certainty. But, as all treaties between the Feudal leaders and the crown savoured of sacrifice, and the royal power must appear to bend before its great vassals, was there any concession which Marie de Médicis might appear to make which would suggest a triumph or a gratification?

To answer these questions we turn our eyes to the figure of the Duc de Sully, whom Soissons hated intensely because he checked his arrogance and his avarice. His official head was probably in the trencher which Concini presented.

All there remained to do was to gain Condé. On the 17th of December, 1610, the Prince had presented a list of grievances to the council. He

claimed that the Queen could not deliberate upon important questions unless he was present. He demanded the first place in the council as well as in the management of the war department. At the death of the Constable de Montmorency he claimed the sword of office. He desired that the money which his father had spent in the service of the late King should be returned, that the government of Blaye and Château Trompette in Guyenne should be given him, and that Monsieur de Thou should be made president of the Parliament.*

Bribes were always the best means of dealing with Condé, and when the Regent needed his support money was no object; so "the Queen, acting by the advice of her ministers," says Pontchartrain, "gave the Prince 900,000 livres to pay the debts contracted by his father, and 300,000 livres to buy the county of Clermont and the city of Creil." †

All was now ready for the final onslaught; but

* *Beaulieu to Trumbull*, December, 1610, Winwood's Memorials, III. p. 241.

† *Pontchartrain's Mémoires*, p. 310.

Sully had seen the gathering cloud, and when he was attacked in the council by one of his own religion over the expenses for the artillery, there was no doubt in his mind that his hours as Comptroller were numbered.* He had offered to accept his dismissal, once when the Queen deprived him of the power of making drafts without the consent of the cabinet; † equivalent to shearing him of the privilege of making friends. He tendered his resignation a second time on the eve of the young King's coronation, but was recalled,‡ for he alone could hold the Princes at a distance. He knew that there was no longer room for him at court; that his face and figure typified a bygone era; that Villeroy was secretly mining the ground under his feet, and so, disgusted with everything, he resolved to throw down the gauntlet for the supreme struggle.

One day, the following question came up in

* *Matteo Botti*, June 19, 1610, cited by Zeller in La Minorité de Louis XIII., Marie de Médicis et Sully, pp. 67–69—L'Estoile, Journal Registre de Louis XIII., p. 607.

† *Andréa Cioli*, Ibid., p. 72. Sully had made friends with Guise and Condé by paying their arrears in their pensions.

‡ *Oeconomies Royales*, ed. Michaud et Poujoulat, p. 405.

the council; Should d'Alincourt, the Governor of Lyons, place a garrison in the city, and use for the purpose 1,200,000 livres, which had been set aside to purchase the town as crown property? Sully emphasised the point that both Savoy and the Spaniards were now a long way from Lyons; that Bresse formed a bulwark against invasion, and that a garrison would only exasperate the citizens. The Queen admitted the first part of this, but added that she considered the Huguenots more dangerous than strangers. The soldiers would serve to keep Lesdiguières in check. The minister knew that this was not the Queen's personal opinion, and when the council was dismissed he accused Villeroy to the Regent, of wishing to throw suspicion on all the good servants of the crown, including the Huguenots, so as to favour the schemes of his son-in-law, d'Alincourt. "If his words have had power enough over your Majesty's mind," concluded he, "to make you suspect both Spaniards and Huguenots, I think that he and I had better join hands and leave the council together."*

* *Oeconomies Royales*, 408–409.

Here was Villeroy's opportunity to demand the dismissal of his enemy. He retired to his house at Conflans to give the Queen the opportunity to act.* With true Italian dissimulation the Regent waited a few days. The victory appeared to hang in the balance. Then the Princes played their part in the unworthy comedy, and demanded Sully's retirement. A report began to circulate that he was to be controlled in his acts by a council of finance.† The minister promptly resigned, and left Paris loaded with honours, little dreaming that he was bidding farewell forever to his official career. Marie de Médicis had gained her point. She had purged the council of all Huguenot taint without angering the party. The Comptroller had not been dismissed, he had resigned! Don Inigo de Cardenas immediately informed his government of what had happened. The King replied that it

* *Richelieu Mémoires*, p. 34.

† *Foscarini*, January 11, 1611, and January 17, 1611, cited by Zeller in La Minorité de Louis XIII., Marie de Médicis et Sully, 213–215—Ranke, op. cit., German text, II. 122, citing a despatch from Pecquins, Beaulieu to Trumbull, January 13, 1611, and Edmondes to Winwood, January 23, 1611, Winwood's Memorials, III. 247.

would be well to have Sully arrested and tried, but Madrid was far from Paris, and Philip had not calculated what the Huguenot party might do in case his ideas were carried out. Villeroy and the Queen knew perfectly well what they had to expect, and they decided to await developments.

CHAPTER III

March, 1611, to November, 1612—Henry IV.'s treatment of the Huguenots—Their distrust of the Regent—Demand for an assembly—Strained relations between the parties—Sully's influence—Scheme of the ministers to divide the Huguenots—Influence of the Duc de Bouillon—Election of Duplessis-Mornay—Assembly of Saumur—Act of Union—Championship of Sully's cause—Demands of the Protestants—The Queen's policy—The dissolution of the Assembly—Disillusionment of the Duc de Bouillon—His influence on Condé—Story of La Descomans—Coolness between the Queen and the Guises—Rise of Concini's influence—The proposal of marriage between his family and that of Soissons—Influence of the cabinet—Its antagonism to Concini—Alliance between Condé and Soissons at Fontainebleau—Publication of the Spanish marriages—Anger of the Princes—Negotiations—Plot of the Feudal party against the ministers—Quarrel between the Queen and the Guises—The Moisset case—Anger of the Guises.

The Calvinists lost much more by the death of Henry IV. than by his abjuration. The late King had made a plain statement regarding the privileges of the Huguenots in the Edict of Nantes, and, instead of treating them according to the letter of the law, he put an extremely leni-

MAXIMILIEN DE BÉTHUNE, DUC DE SULLY.
From a painting by du Moustier, in the Louvre.

ent construction upon the proclamation, adding new concessions continually until a feeling of security had replaced their uneasiness. But the Protestants regarded the Regent with apprehension, and immediately after the death of her husband demanded an assembly.

Marie de Médicis could not refuse, for considering the proposed revolt of the Feudal party, to anger the Huguenots at such a moment would have been suicidal; and so the parchment authorising the meeting was sent from Reims itself, as an offset to the young King's oath to put down heresy in his dominions. The place selected was Châtellerault, but it was changed to Saumur, for the ministers were afraid of Sully, who governed Poitou.

A feeling of distrust pervaded all parties. Seeing the strong Catholic tendency of the government, the Huguenots feared to be dispossessed of their charges; many fortified themselves as if the religious wars were about to burst forth afresh. The cities in the vicinity of Saumur manned their walls and drew up their drawbridges, for Sully's attitude was far from

reassuring. He had published a letter in which he begged "the gods" not to trouble the peace of France again, hinting darkly that a resort to arms might be possible in the near future.

The ministers saw that unless the Protestants could be divided, a great deal of trouble might arise from the assembly. With consummate address they selected an emissary in the ranks of the Reform itself, and despatched him to Saumur to oppose the influence of Sully. This mission was given to the Duc de Bouillon, who hoped to obtain one of the great state offices by means of the party. As a sower of discord he had no rival; and he was to scatter it broadcast among the Protestants, and to have himself elected president of the assembly.

But Sully and his son-in-law, the Duc de Rohan, came in person to Saumur, and put forward the candidacy of Duplessis-Mornay, upon whom their adversaries chiefly relied. Duplessis was one of those old patriarchs whose ideas of the rights of his party surpassed his desire to enforce them. He could not forget his King, and kept the strength of the Reform in leash.

His election, which was brought about without delay, meant that all the arguments of conciliation would be used before an appeal to arms.

The first step of the assembly was to establish an act of federation which, after citing the necessity of an agreement between the churches, finished with these ominous words: "We are ready to seal the aforesaid union with our blood, and to employ our fortunes, authority, or our lives in its service."*

Sully then hurled the bolt which he had been preparing ever since his disgrace. He made a statement of his grievances, and demanded advice. Should he exact his re-establishment, or should he simply accept the rewards which the court had promised? There had been rumours that the ex-Comptroller was to be arrested and tried for mismanagement, and this speech may have been a measure of personal safety, but if the Queen had any such ideas, the prompt action of the assembly left no room for doubt as

* *Acte de l'Union Générale des Eglises Prétendues Réformées*, 1611, cited by Capefigue in Richelieu-Mazarin, la Fronde et le Règne de Louis XIV., T. I. p. 126.

to its intentions. In spite of the Duc de Bouillon, the deputies united with Sully to demand his safety and honour from the court; requested that he should not resign the offices he still held, especially that of chief of the artillery, and promised to assist him if anything was undertaken to his advantage.*

Then the assembly drew up a list of demands, the last of which was little short of an infringement upon the power of the crown. The choice of governors for their strongholds was henceforth to be made from a list of names submitted by the provinces; all Catholic processions were to be abolished in towns held by the Huguenots; the priests were to be forbidden to speak of the damnation of those who attended the Huguenot meetings for the purpose of hearing exhortations. The Reformers refused to recognise the Catholic festivals, demanded schools, academies, and an increase in the subsidies paid to their pastors, also special burial places. Besides this, they resolved to draw the money for maintaining their fortresses from the royal coffers, de-

* *Rohan Mémoires*, 496. *Mercure François*, II. 77–78.

manded permission to keep the artillery which was in their hands, and completed their exactions by voting to hold an assembly every two years.*

This was almost a declaration of war, but the ministers, who knew the strength of their opponents, preferred to win them by bribery rather than by an open attack. Sully, whose self-esteem was never proof against pecuniary favours, was called to Paris. The Queen brought the whole of her talents for cajolery into play, and the old minister fell a victim to her flattery and to her judicious giving.

The Regent's object was to dissolve the assembly before returning an answer to its exactions. She had very little to fear from the Protestants if they dispersed, even though some of their demands might be refused, and so the government insisted that the deputies should name the five officers who were to reside at court, in accordance with the Edict of Nantes, and separate before the complaints of the Huguenots could be considered. The Regent cunningly

* *MSS. de Béthune*, vol. cot. 8681, fol. 57, Bib. Nat., Paris.

added that she wanted a signal proof of their devotion to her son at the beginning of his reign, and that none more convincing could be expected than that the Huguenots should trust their entire future to his clemency and justice. But the majority of the assembly saw the pitfall which such specious words concealed, and refused to acquiesce.

Then the crafty Bouillon saw his opportunity, and advised the court secretly to authorise the minority to hold the election. The majority was forced to yield on pain of being considered rebels by the King; and the assembly separated, the Duke returning to Paris with the air of a conqueror. He expected to reap the reward he coveted, but the ministers could not make room for such a schemer, and he began to believe that he had been deceived. He resolved to be revenged, and began to influence the Prince de Condé to make all the trouble he could.*

Condé needed no urging. The success of the Queen's intrigue against Sully had invited its own reaction. The instant all the influences

* *Rohan Mémoires*, p. 42.

which had worked the minister's downfall found themselves without further occasion to exist as a coalition they began to fall apart. The two Princes of the Blood thought they could hold the Regent in tutelage, and their arrogance increased to such dimensions that Condé, having found some difficulty in obtaining permission to visit his government of Guyenne, declared openly that she might give it or not, just as she pleased, but that he intended to go nevertheless.*

The fall of Sully had likewise reacted on the power of the Guises, owing to the Marquis d'Ancre, whom the intrigue had thrown into the Bourbon camp. When the object of the rival factions had been attained they were left face to face. Guise and Bellegarde had protested against the Comptroller's retirement,† but received a reprimand for their pains; for Marie de Médicis knew well enough that the Duke was too much her debtor to make trouble, although his conduct annoyed and displeased her. Urged by Concini, who began to look upon Guise as his

* *D'Estrées' Mémoires*, 386. *Pontchartrain Mémoires*, 313.
† *D'Estrées' Mémoires*, 386.

rival, she allowed an increasing coldness for him and his friends to appear in their intercourse.

This disposition was not lost on Concini and his abettors, and it was with the intention of furthering the ruin of their rivals that Condé is supposed to have started the accusation against the Duc de Guise, the Marquise de Verneuil, and the Duc d'Epernon, of having conspired with Ravaillac to kill Henry IV.* This is the famous story of "La Descomans," which made such a stir at the time. The woman was the wife of a soldier, and had served two sentences in the Châtelet, and the Hôtel Dieu, for dissolute living. These facts militated against her consideraably in the eyes of the court which had charge of the affair; her accusation was declared unfounded and she was condemned to perpetual confinement.

Condé then started for Guyenne, where he remained during the assembly of Saumur, inspecting the fortresses with great ostentation and indulging in acts of senseless bravado.†

* *Scipione Ammirato*, cited by B. Zeller in La Minorité de Louis XIII., Marie de Médicis et Sully, 201-202.

† *Venetian Ambassadors*, cited by B. Zeller in La

But his arrogance was by no means alone. A personage of low birth and extraction had appeared who bade fair to carry his head as high as any Prince of the Blood. The Marquis d'Ancre had become a great factor at court. By the liberality of his patron he had built up a vast fortune in the short time which had elapsed since the death of Henry of Navarre. He had drawn enough from the royal coffers to pay for the government of the towns of Roye, Montdidier, and Péronne; he had assumed the title of Marquis, had bought the office of chamberlain from the Duc de Bouillon, possessed the government of the citadel of Amiens, and had already begun to assemble that train of devoted followers which later on he used, in his moments of reckless raillery, to call "les gardes de mon cul."

The growth of Concini's influence had not escaped the Comte de Soissons nor his immediate circle, who thought that the Italian should be definitely attached to them by an alliance, and there was a serious intention between the parties

Minorité de Louis XIII., Marie de Médicis et Sully, p. 298.

of marrying Concini's son to a Princess of the House of Bourbon.*

But another influence had arisen parallel to that of the Marquis, keeping pace with his advancement, but with less ostentation. This was the council of the ministers.

This body of grave men, whom Concini used to call "les Barbons," held great authority over the Regent, for it consisted of the only persons capable of giving advice on affairs of state. Villeroy was its most important member, for, besides being a clever diplomat, he held the precedence over his colleagues from the fact that he was a duke. The others were councillors of the robe; men like Jeannin, who had risen from the upper class of the people. The combination which they brought into play was a strong one. Villeroy's family contained the Marquis d'Alincourt, governor of Lyons, and the Marquis de Villeroy. The Chancellor Sillery, who was likewise a great figure in the cabinet, and his son-in-law, Puysieux, the under-secretary, were dip-

* *D'Estrées' Mémoires*, pp. 385–389. *Richelieu Mémoires*, p. 44.

lomats of the first order. Associated with these two men was the Commandeur de Sillery, the Chancellor's brother, who derived his title from the Knights of Malta. At this time he was Ambassador to Spain, the importance of which post sufficiently proves the worth of the man. These "grey-beards," whom the Italian despised, were so necessary to the Queen that they balanced his authority and, as a matter of course, if Concini was to rise higher still, it must be at the expense of some combination.

The struggle between the cabinet and the Marquis d'Ancre began on the subject of the marriage proposed between the families of Concini and Soissons. The ministers could not allow the powerful favourite and a Prince of the Blood to join forces, so they seized on an imprudence which the Marquis committed at Amiens, as a pretext for stopping his rising fortunes. Concini had replaced the King's soldiers in the citadel with hirelings of his own, and not having money to satisfy the demands of the mercenaries, he had borrowed from the government coffers on his own note.*

* *Richelieu Mémoires*, p. 44.

The Queen, who had not yet reached the point in her infatuation when she could no longer see the faults of her favourites, was extremely angry. She refused to allow the negotiations for the marriage to go on, and the Count, who had had the baseness to listen to the proposal, was obliged to accept the excuses of the Italian.* Concini knew perfectly well whom he had to thank for the Regent's anger and the destruction of his hopes, and resolved to remain united to the Princes and ruin the ministers, if he could.

It was now late in the autumn, and the return of the Prince de Condé was momentarily expected. The Queen thought the time propitious for publishing the agreement between France and Spain, which had been the object of her diplomacy since the time of her accession. She needed the good will of Condé in his quality of First Prince of the Blood, and so she selected her emissaries among his closest friends and sent them to meet the escort not far from Fontainebleau. Her choice was unwise, for she gave the commission to Soissons and Concini, both of

* *D'Estrées' Mémoires*, p. 390.

whom she had just reprimanded, and charged them to obtain Condé's consent;* but the Count thought the occasion for negotiating his own affairs too good to be lost, and, far from executing his instructions, he probably showed Condé the advantage of refusing his approval. The Prince made a short appearance at court and retired almost immediately to Valèry,† while Soissons went into Normandy.

When the council assembled on the 26th of January, 1612, the Chancellor read the agreement between the two crowns. Neither Condé nor his uncle spoke a word; Soissons allowed some vague sign of approval to escape him. The Regent addressed the Prince, and asked for his opinion: "When a thing is already done," answered Condé tartly, "there is no need of giving advice." "You see," exclaimed the Count, addressing his nephew, "that we are treated like slaves." The Queen grew red with anger, but

* *Matteo Botti*, cited by Zeller in La Minorité de Louis XIII., Marie de Médicis et Sully, p. 312. *Richelieu Mémoires*, p. 44.

† *Histoire des Princes de Condé*, Duc d'Aumale, III. p. 17.

checked herself, and the Chancellor changed the subject.*

The Princes immediately left Paris, but neither the Regent nor the ministers were to be daunted by a show of bad temper, and they were allowed to sulk while the capital gave itself up to rejoicing. A tournament was announced for the end of March. Never had such preparations been made. Bassompièrre, the Duc de Guise, Nevers, the Prince de Joinville, and Monsieur de la Châtteignerai held the lists for two days against all comers. The occasion cost them 50,000 crowns each, for equipments alone.†

Immediately after the festival the Regent's anxiety overcame her prudence, and she opened negotiations with the Princes, who, the one at Valèry, the other at Dreux, were showing signs of a very bad temper. Marie de Médicis was more eager for their good will than she was willing to admit. Her choice of envoys shows this,

* *Ubaldini*, January 31, 1612, cited by F. T. Perrens in Les Mariages Espagnols sous le Règne d'Henri IV. et la Régence de Marie de Médicis, 373.

† *Bassompièrre Mémoires*, I. pp. 304–308. *Mercure François*, II. pp. 334–357.

for she sent Villeroy and Concini, men in whom she had implicit confidence.* She had cajoled Soissons once before, and she succeeded again. He was allowed to believe that the only part of Normandy which was not already his, the citadel of Quillebœuf, would soon be placed under his control.

The Count and his nephew agreed to return to Paris, and the era of good feeling seemed to have revived, though the Queen procrastinated continually about the surrender of the fortress.

The Marquis d'Ancre also began to renew the project of an alliance with the Count, and the affair was carried on secretly through the Marquis de Cœuvres. But such a situation could not last long, and the ministers were finally driven into a corner by the Princes. It became at once clear that Soissons was not to have Quillebœuf, nor was the Marquis d'Ancre to be allowed to realise his project.

A plan for overthrowing the ministers was the outcome of this discovery, but this time the plot

* *Edmondes to Winwood*, June 4, 1612. *Winwood's Memorials*, III. 368.

was far more serious than it appeared at the first glance. It involved Lesdiguières, who was dissatisfied because the Queen would not give him his patent of duke; Rohan, who had seized the fortress of St. Jean d'Angely, Concini, Cœuvres, Condé, the Comte de Soissons, and the Duc de Bouillon. Lesdiguières promised to bring 100,000 men to the gates of Paris if necessary, and Rohan offered the resources of the Huguenots.

To make a bad situation worse, the influence of Concini had estranged the Queen from the only people able to give her support. The favour of the Guises was ebbing fast; the Duc de Vendôme had been forbidden to go into Brittany to preside over the meeting of the Estates General of that province. The Duc de Guise took this as a personal affront, and retired to Provence. He was soon called back in all haste by the Duc de Bellegarde.

A charge of the most fantastic kind had been launched against him by a Spanish adventurer whom nobody knew. This man accused a merchant named Moisset of having attempted, in

concert with Bellegarde, to influence the Queen by means of an enchanted mirror.* In those days such an accusation was enough to put any man's life in jeopardy. The Duc de Guise was absolutely certain that the tale was an invention of his enemies, and he complained to the Queen with great passion that it had been started to ruin Monsieur de Bellegarde, simply because he was his friend and relative. He finished by declaring that they should know how to die sword in hand when the time came.† The Duke had guessed correctly. The story was the work of some person of exalted station. Bartolini, the Florentine Ambassador, writing to the Grand Duke, lays the blame at Condé's door. Moisset was rich, and the object of the conspirators was to seize his goods as well as to ruin Bellegarde. It was proved at the trial that the Marquis d'Ancre had applied to the Queen to be

* *Venetian Ambassadors*, January 8, 1613, cited by Zeller in La Minorité de Louis XIII., Marie de Medicis et Villeroy, 92. *Richelieu Mémoires*, 51–52. *D'Estrées' Mémoires*, 397.

† *Edmondes to Winwood*, September 21, 1612. See Winwood's Memorials, III. 396.

allowed to take the man's property in case he should be convicted. Condé was to keep one-half of the culprit's estate, and Concini to hold the remainder. In spite of Marie de Médicis' personal efforts (for some reason or other she hated Moisset) the Parliament dismissed the case,* and Bellegarde was exonerated, but the iron had entered the soul of the Guises, and they resolved to be revenged.

* *Bartolini*, October 26, 1612, cited by Zeller in La Minorité de Louis XIII., Marie de Médicis et Villeroy, p. 71.

CHAPTER IV

November, 1612, to November, 1613—Death of the Comte de Soissons—Murder of the Baron de Luz—Reasons for this act—Anger of the Queen—Preponderant influence of Condé—His exactions—Revulsion of the Regent's sentiments—Rehabilitation of the Guises—Reinstatement of the ministers—Surprise of Condé—He leaves the court—The Villeroy-Concini marriage—Coldness between Villeroy and Sillery—Villeroy's disposition in regard to the marriage—His influence against Concini—The Maignat case—Its settlement—Disillusionment of Villeroy—The signature of the marriage contract—Surprise of the Feudal party—Resolution to try force.

THE moment chosen by the Feudal party for action against the ministers was after the return of the Comte de Soissons from Normandy, whither he had gone to preside at the annual meeting of the Estates General of the province. Concini and his associates were so eager to begin that they could hardly wait, but Soissons delayed, owing to the advice of the Marquis de Cœuvres, and fate willed that he should never return to Paris at all, for the news suddenly burst over the astonished capital that the Count

had died at one of his country places of small-pox.

Condé was left comparatively alone by the death of his uncle, and the Parisians hoped that the troubles to which that turbulent Prince had given rise would be forgotten, now that a less irascible man had taken his place. But the year 1613 had scarcely begun before the House of Guise, which had been more or less eclipsed by the Bourbons, reappeared upon the scene in a tragedy which took place before the very threshold of the palace.

On the 5th of January the Duke's younger brother met the Baron de Luz in the rue St. Honoré, and shouted to him to get out of his carriage for a moment's conversation. It would have been better if the Baron had refused, for his foot was scarcely on the ground before the Chevalier whipped out his sword and plunged it into his body.

Viewed in a dispassionate light this was simply a murder, but historians do not agree on the motive, for some say that the Baron was killed as a sacrifice to the ill-will and power of the Guises,

LOUIS DE BOURBON, COMTE DE SOISSONS.
From a painting by du Moustier, in the Louvre.

while others maintain that the Chevalier was insanely jealous of his victim on account of a love affair.*

The real cause of the crime was political, and not sentimental; the intrigue against Monsieur de Bellegarde did not abate with the settlement of the Moisset case, but Concini attempted to take the government of Burgundy from him and give it to the Duc de Mayenne.† The Baron de Luz was especially active in this affair, and the Guises began to entertain a mortal hatred for him. He had been one of their party, and was regarded as a traitor for siding with Condé and the Marquis d'Ancre. They blamed him for the Queen's coldness and for the position she had taken in regard to Bellegarde, who, having left Paris after the Moisset trial, was forbidden to return.‡ The death of Luz was resolved upon,

* *G. B. Bartolini*, January 17, 1613, cited by Zeller in La Minorité de Louis XIII., Marie de Médicis et Villeroy 91. *Malherbe to Pièresc*, January 5, 1613, found in the works of Boileau Despréaux. Précedés des Oeuvres de Malherbe Suivies des Oeuvres Poétiques de J. B. Rousseau.

† This was the son of the Duc Charles, who had died on October 3, 1611.

‡ *Bassompièrre Mémoires*, I. 312. *Pontchartrain*, 323.

and the execution was given to the Chevalier. This rôle was not new to him, for he had attacked the Marquis de Cœuvres a few months before, when the latter was negotiating the affairs of the Comte de Soissons at the expense of the Chevalier's family.*

If the Guises had been playing the hands of the Bourbons they could not have done anything more to accomplish their own disgrace. The Queen's anger knew no bounds. She talked of having the culprit tried for murder, and to all appearances the party in whose hands the power had rested since her accession was about to fall, involving the ministry in its ruin.

The Prince de Condé might have been master of the situation had he been able to grasp it, but he was not made of the material which is usually found in great leaders. Never were the words of Le Vassor, that "he preferred to enrich himself like an avaricious and quarrelsome country squire" more true than in this instance. The Prince had swept all the Regent's partisans into his own camp, for the Duc de Guise had put

* *D'Estrées' Mémoires*, 391. *Richelieu Mémoires*, p. 44.

himself under Condé's protection. The Duc d'Epernon had likewise joined the cabal, and the Queen stood alone against the Feudal leaders who at once began to demand concessions.

Six days after the death of the Baron de Luz, the Duc de Nevers, the Duc de Mayenne, and the Marquis d'Ancre demanded an interview with Marie de Médicis. Nevers, as spokesman, laid before her, after a long preamble, in which he enlarged upon Condé's services, a demand from the Prince for the government of Château Trompette, the citadel of Bordeaux.*

Henry IV. used to say that *unless* he held the Château he was *not* Duke of Guyenne, and this idea probably suggested itself to the Queen at this moment with double force; her face turned crimson. She answered that she would think about it, and rising at the same time from her seat in the council chamber, she retired to her own apartments, followed by Nevers and his companions. Bassompièrre, who was present, infers that the Regent's anger and annoyance

* *Bassompièrre Mémoires*, I. 318. *Pontchartrain*, 328. *Richelieu*, 56.

were visible, but Marie de Médicis did not bear her name in vain, and by the time she reached her own boudoir her mind was made up.

"I heard a tale about Bassompièrre's love affairs," she said with the utmost nonchalance. "If I should tell it, he would be overwhelmed with confusion."

"You must tell it him, Madam," answered Nevers, falling into the trap. He made a sign to Bassompièrre to approach, but the Regent, acting her part, refused to enlighten them until the Count himself, his curiosity being thoroughly aroused, begged her to tell him what she meant. The Queen took him into the embrasure of a window and said: "I do not wish to speak to you on that subject at all, but I want to ask you if Monsieur de Guise has said anything more about the return of de la Rochefoucauld."*

"Madam," answered the Count, "he spoke of it three days ago, and begged me not to mention the subject again to Your Majesty, adding

* Rochefoucauld had been expelled from the court for not wishing to leave the Hôtel de Guise when ordered to by the Queen's messenger, Châteauvieu, on the day of de Luz's murder.

that he should treat with you by means of Monsieur le Prince, with whom he should henceforth be on such good terms that he (the Prince) would no longer be the rod for you to beat him with when you were angry. He thinks he makes no mistake in attaching himself to the Prince's party because the Marquis d'Ancre, your favourite, belongs to it."

"Ah! Bassompièrre," replied the Regent, "evil councillors got me to forsake the Princes of the House of Guise and scorn them. They also oblige me to abandon and neglect the ministers, and then, seeing me without assistance, they want to attack my authority and ruin me. They have just made a most insolent demand for the Château Trompette, and are not inclined to be satisfied even with that, but if I am able I shall find some means of stopping them."

Bassompièrre, who, notwithstanding his airy manners and apparent lightness, was really a clever man, saw in the determination an occasion to play a part which he enjoyed, and for which he was perfectly calculated. He told the Regent not to despair; she could win back the

Guises and the ministers whenever she saw fit, and that she ought to find the means. The Queen understood the hint and asked him to come to her after dinner, and the better to hide her game she turned to the Prince's followers and showed so much gaiety that Bassompièrre wondered at her marvellous power of dissimulation.*

After dinner she had fully decided how much she would pay the Guises. She instructed her emissary to offer the Duke 100,000 crowns, and the office of lieutenant-general of Provence for his brother the Chevalier, whom only a few days before she wanted to hang; to the Princess de Conti she offered the continuance of the Abbey of Saint-Germain in case the Prince, her husband, died, and besides all this, she held out the olive branch to the Duke, by offering to allow La Rochefoucauld to return to court. The recall of the ministers was Bassompièrre's own suggestion, and he offered to talk to Villeroy himself, adding that the Commandeur de Sillery would be the best person to approach the others.

"You are right," assented the Regent, "and

* *Bassompièrre Mémoires*, I. 319–320.

I shall send for the Chevalier de Sillery at once; see the others and decide what I ought to promise. I, for my part, am brave enough to run any risk to uphold my authority against those who wish to deprive me of it."

Men are always more easily managed by the women of their family than by the friends of the sterner sex. And it was very clever of Bassompièrre to approach the Duc de Guise through his mother and the Princess de Conti on one side, and through his wife on the other. Queen Marguerite, the divorced wife of Henry IV., received the task of managing the Duc d'Epernon, who, to his undying credit, did not require bribes to make him act according to his conscience. It was just as easy to win the Duc de Guise, for the gifts he received and pardon for his brother dissipated all his ill-feelings. The ministers were glad of this apparent victory over the Prince and the Marquis d'Ancre, and only asked to be reinstated. They presented themselves therefore on Sunday the 13th of January, and remained closeted with the Queen three hours. At ten o'clock the Prince came to the Louvre and was

refused an audience because the Queen was talking with the ministers. Bassompièrre, who was in attendance, noticed the Prince's anxiety. His half-smile must have caught Condé's eye, for he said "do you know that those old 'barbons' have been conferring with the Queen for an hour, and that I am not admitted?" The Count appeared surprised, but made the Prince see that his demand for the Château Trompette had worked the marvel. Like a careful diplomat he threw suspicion on the Duc de Bouillon, saying that perhaps he had seen how the Regent took the request for the citadel, and fearing to ruin himself had made overtures to her through Villeroy.*

The Feudal party lingered in Paris a few days after the end of this intrigue, and then they left the court one after another; the Prince went to Berri, and the Duc de Nevers to Italy, whither he escorted Mlle. de Mayenne, who was engaged to the Duca di Sforza. The Marquis d'Ancre retired to Amiens.

The ministers now held the situation in their

* *Bassompièrre Mémoires*, I. pp. 333-339.

hands, but the same reaction which had occurred to disrupt the Catholic party for a time now took place in the cabinet. When there seemed to be no foe to face, and no cabal to overthrow, they began to look askance at each other. Villeroy and the Chancellor quarrelled. The cause for their difference was, say the Mémoires, a marriage which the former tried to arrange between his granddaughter and the son of the Marquis d'Ancre. The Chancellor was hurt because the negotiations were begun without his knowledge.

The authors of this information appear to me to have taken an appearance for a fact, and to have given Villeroy the credit for an affair which was not of his seeking. There is no doubt that such a proposition was made to the Marquis d'Ancre, and that an alliance with an old and noble family, which was the last step towards wiping out the epithet of "étranger," under which he laboured, must have been very agreeable to him. But the proposal came through a third party, and not by the volition of either of the principals, for had it come from Villeroy we should not have seen him making *as a condition*

of the match, that Monsieur de Souvré's charge of gentleman-in-waiting should pass to his son-in-law Courtenvaux.*

It seems to me that the marriage was the idea of the Chancellor, and that Villeroy yielded with a very bad grace to a step which was proposed to him as a political necessity, but which he looked upon as a ruse of the Sillerys to ruin him. He feared to draw down upon himself the ill will which the Princes were beginning to feel for the Italian, and his disposition is sufficiently evident from the exorbitant demands he made in the marriage settlement, and in the term of years he fixed before the realisation of the match. Then also it is worthy of note that some powerful influence must have been at work near the Regent against the Marquis d'Ancre at this very time, for he was never nearer disgrace than during the spring of 1613. A war cloud gathered on the frontier of Savoy, and the Queen decided to send an army into Italy.† Concini wished to

* *Richelieu Mémoires*, p. 61.

† The Duke of Mantua died on the 22d of December, 1612, leaving no male heirs. Mantua, being a masculine fief of the Empire, reverted to the Duke's brother. The

command this force, but his design was thwarted by someone in the cabinet.* Then a scandal arose, of the kind which was often the ruin of people in those days. One night a man named Maignat, a poor deformed wretch, half priest, half spy, was caught putting into the post a packet containing information of the most valuable kind. The letter was addressed to agents of the Duc de Savoie, and named the Marquis d'Ancre, his wife, and Dolé as the people from whom the items were gathered. The accusation we can see was most serious, and had it been levelled at anyone but Concini his head would have paid the penalty. The Marquis d'Ancre did not misjudge the gravity of his peril, but passed many hours of the most poignant anxiety

Duc de Savoie immediately said that his daughter, who was Duchess of Mantua, might be pregnant, and the succession should not be decided until this point was cleared up. The Duchess bore a daughter, and the troops of Savoy crossed the border, under the pretext that the Duke was guardian to his granddaughter, and seized several places in Montferrat. The court of France could not look indifferently on Savoy's act, for the Cardinal Duke was a nephew of Marie de Médicis.

* *G. B. Bartolini*, May 4, 1613, cited by Zeller in La Minorité de Louis XIII., Marie de Médicis et Villeroy, p. 128.

pacing up and down the long gallery at Fontainebleau, tearing his hair and swearing to Bassompièrre, in a mixture of bad French and Italian, that the Ministers had invented the story to ruin him.*

The settlement of the case must have been a terrible revelation to Villeroy. Maignat was put to death, his trial being conducted by two commissioners, one of whom, Claude Mangot, will appear again in this narrative, and nothing transpired to hurt Concini, who received orders to retire to his government. During his absence the contracts for the proposed marriage were drawn up. Their signature, on the 10th of October, took the opposition completely by surprise; one thing appeared which was unmistakable. The Feudal party would have no share in the management of affairs now that the Queen's favourite and the craftiest among the diplomats were allies. One card remained to be played. They resolved to risk everything, and try force at the first opportunity.

* *D'Estrées' Mémoires*, 401. *Richelieu Mémoires*, 61. *Bassompièrre Mémoires*, I. 348–355.

CHAPTER V

November, 1613, to October, 1614—Reckless behaviour of the Queen—Death of de Fervaques—Appointment of Concini to his office—The Marshal d'Ancre—Anger of Condé—Further extravagance of Marie de Médicis—The revolt—Negotiations—Seizure of Mézières—Condé's manifesto—Struggle between Villeroy and Sillery—The Duc de Rohan—Negotiations—Death of Montmorency—Influence on the Duc de Bouillon—Treaty of St. Ménehould—Condé's attempt on Poictiers—His Failure—Louis XIII.'s expedition to Poictiers—His popularity—Results of the journey—Surrender of Condé—The election—Influence of Concini—His party—Influence of Barbin and Richelieu—Resolve to change the ministry.

The truth of the Greek proverb, that those whom the gods wish to destroy they first make mad, was well borne out by the Queen's conduct during the closing days of 1613. The combination between the favourite and Villeroy seemed so powerful that the Regent appears to have thrown caution to the winds; she gave the signal for the impending revolt herself by an act of the purest folly.

The death of Marshal de Fervaques, who commanded Quillebœuf, occurred during the first

week of November. There were many candidates for the vacant dignity, and the military experience of men like the Duc de Sully, or Montbazon, or Souvré, could not be denied, but to the astonishment and chagrin of the postulants, and the anger of the court, the Queen preferred to give the office to a man of no experience, at whom the discontent of her opponents was beginning to be aimed. She chose a stranger for the post, and without more ado gave the baton to the Marquis d'Ancre, who was also made governor of Normandy. The Regent would likewise have given him Quillebœuf, if Montbazon had not shown a patent from the late King which gave him the citadel at the death of the old Marshal.*

The Prince de Condé was profoundly displeased, but the Queen added fuel to the flame by sending the Infanta a bracelet worth 150,000 crowns as a Christmas present, at a time when there was no money in the treasury.†

* *Scipione Ammirato*, November 21, 1613, cited by Zeller in La Minorité de Louis XIII., Marie de Médicis et Villeroy, p. 160.

† *Ubaldini*, December 3, 1613, cited by Perrens in Les

The moment had come to try force, and so during the month of January, 1614, the Feudal leaders disappeared one by one from Paris. Condé, Nevers, Longueville, Mayenne, and the Duc de Bouillon, left in rapid succession; and it was not until Vendôme was ready to follow that the government awoke to a sense of its danger. He was arrested and confined to his apartments in the Louvre, but cleverly deceived his jailers and escaped. When next heard from he was in Brittany.*

The Regent was face to face with a serious crisis. Feudalism held the north-east of France with the towns of Laon, Sedan, Noyon, Soissons, and the castle of Pierrefonds. Vendôme had promised to make a diversion from Brittany, and the Duc de Bouillon was treating with the Protestants.

The leadership of the Huguenot forces had

Mariages Espagnoles sous le Règne d'Henri IV. et la Régence de Marie de Médicis, p. 482. *Scipione Ammirato*, January 16, 1614, cited by Zeller in La Minorité de Louis XIII., Marie de Médicis et Villeroy, 169.

* *Beaulieu to Trumbull*, January 27, 1614, Winwood's Memorials, Vol. III. p. 492. *Malherbe to Pièresc*, February 20, 1614—*Mercure François*, III. pp. 305, 307, 359, 360.

passed entirely into the hands of the Duc de Rohan, whose qualities of statesman and general rendered him especially fit for the post. Profiting by the dissensions at court, he had employed his time in seizing and fortifying St. Jean d'Angely, and in perfecting the organisation of the churches as a political body modelled upon the system of the Austrian Empire. Then he called a meeting of the Circle de la Rochelle at a time when the Regent was in a bad position, and had managed to wring from her the concessions which she had refused to grant to the assembly of Saumur. He was now watching the way events might turn, but his distrust of the Duc de Bouillon made him very unwilling to join hands blindly with the conspirators.* He saw well enough that the war was one of private interests, and this keen insight saved the Regent.

No vigorous measures could be expected from the council, for Villeroy and the Chancellor had begun the struggle for supremacy which was to result so disastrously for both, and each was trying to advise against the other. Villeroy had on

* *Rohan Mémoires*, pp. 501–502.

his side the Duc de Guise, who expected to command the army, but it was not surprising that Sillery's policy carried the day, for he was supported by the newly created Marshal d'Ancre. Concini, who was afraid of the Duc de Guise, kept sending courier after courier from Amiens, to his wife, to bring the affair to a peaceful conclusion.*

But hotheads like Nevers could not brook delay. He moved directly on Mézières, a city which connected Sedan and Soissons, and when the governor, who had shut the gates by order of the Regent, refused to open them, Nevers had cannon brought and acted as if he was going to blow them down.† This action took the Queen completely by surprise. Procrastination was no longer possible. A policy had to be adopted, and that of bribery prevailed; money was sent to Lesdiguières to keep the Huguenots quiet, an officer was despatched to Mézières to take command of the fortress, and Concini received in-

* *Richelieu Mémoires*, p. 67.

† *Mercure François*, III. pp. 313–316. *Pontchartrain Mémoires*, 329. *Fontenay-Mareuil Mémoires*, 73.

structions to keep the Princes apart as much as possible.* Nevers refused to give up Mézières, and the King prepared for war, while Condé so far forgot his nationality that he demanded passage for 6000 mercenaries from the Duc de Lorraine.

Under these ominous conditions the Queen received a letter from the Prince. It was a manifesto in which he pointed out the disorders existing in the state, complaining that the great dignitaries had no share in the government. Affairs were managed by three or four who fomented quarrels among the nobles, scattered the public funds, and gave citadels to strangers who were incapable of guarding them. He finished by demanding the postponement of the Royal Marriages, until the King should be of age, and that the Estates General, the last resort in times of minority and of weakness, should be convoked.† The Queen was willing to treat, and the

* *Venetian Ambassadors*, February 5 and 8, 1614—*Scipione Ammirato*, February 18, 1614, cited by Zeller in La Minorité de Louis XIII., Marie de Médicis et Villeroy, p. 178.

† *Mercure François*, III. 317-327—*Richelieu Mémoires*, 67—*Rohan Mémoires*, 502.

month of April was spent in negotiations. Couriers sped back and forth between Soissons and Paris. The President de Thou, whose friendship for Condé and Bouillon was of the closest, received permission to approach the malcontents; but at this juncture the Constable de Montmorency died, and this event contributed a great deal towards making the Queen's overtures to the Princes acceptable, for it influenced the Duc de Bouillon to second the efforts of de Thou. Bouillon, as a matter of fact, had been the soul of the conspiracy; he flattered Condé and urged him on, promising him an army and the support of the cities, especially of the Huguenot towns, which were full of stores and cannon. He likewise pointed out to the nobles how they were kept out of the government while Concini, "a foreign valet," got all the honours.* But the tune changed when Rohan refused to move and the office of Constable became vacant. The Duke hoped to succeed Montmorency, and not only grew immediately lukewarm in the cause

* *Ubaldini*, February 13, 1614, cited by F. T. Perrens in Les Mariages Espagnoles, p. 492.

of war, but soon became eager for a substantial peace.* Condé's objections were not hard to overcome. Money was poured into his greedy hands, and an important fortress was given him in guarantee of the Regent's good faith.

The treaty was signed at St. Ménehould on the 15th of May. Condé obtained enough to satisfy all his followers, but notwithstanding, he refused to return to Paris. Only the Ducs de Mayenne and de Longueville appeared at the capital. The latter paid a short visit to the Queen.† The Duc de Vendôme refused to lay down his arms. In a word, the Princes thought their battle won at the time when the struggle was only just beginning; they expected to control the Estates General, and were already discounting its support.‡ One of the greatest mysteries of the period is that the Feudal leaders made such a mistake. Neither the Prince nor any of his associates except the Duc de Rohan had penetration enough to read the signs of the time.

* *Richelieu Mémoires*, p. 68. *Hist. des Princes de Condé*, Duc d'Aumale, III. 25–27.

† *Malherbe à Monsieur de Pièresc*, June 1, 1614.

‡ *Rohan Mémoires*, 503.

They did not seem to realise that the disorders of the League, and the period of rest in Henry IV.'s reign, had shown the people the evils of civil strife. The masses were in favour of the King, and when Feudalism sounded the call to arms not a soul had moved hand or foot. A wiser man than Condé would have recognised this and have been warned. But he was lost in the eager pursuit of another scheme. He wished to establish himself firmly in the south-west in order to command the road to Spain, and already he held enough towns to form a strong line of defence. The provinces of Berri and Guyenne were his. Amboise had been placed in his hands, his favourite Rochefort was lieutenant-governor of Poitou, and another devoted follower governed Poictiers. It was on this last stronghold that Condé cast his eye, for it completed his line of communication. The citizens were about to hold an election. The mayor was to be chosen, and the Prince attempted to have him named out of his own party. The plan to gain control of the city was a good one, but Condé was foiled by that feeling mentioned a few lines above.

The Spirit of Loyalty manifested itself in the person of Bishop Chasteigner de la Rocheposay, whose father had fought in the religious wars on the side of Henry of Navarre.

One night, by the instigation of la Rocheposay, Condé's agent de la Trie was attacked, and left for dead in the streets. The tocsin was rung, Poictiers shut her gates, and the citizens manned the walls, the Bishop himself donned a steel cap and breastplate, buckled a sword by his side, and appeared at the gate carrying a pistol in his mailed fist. When Condé rode up to the walls he was told to retire or take the consequences. He beat a hasty retreat and wrote to the Regent, complaining most bitterly. The insult was so great, he said, that unless she would revenge him, he would be obliged to seek reprisals himself.*

This was a semi-official declaration of war. The promptness with which the Regent acted shows the real ugliness of Condé's attitude.

* *Venetian Ambassadors*, July 8, 1614, cited by Zeller in La Minorité de Louis XIII., Marie de Médicis et Villeroy, p. 235.

She could not afford to allow Poictiers to fall into the Feudal leader's hands, so she decided to go in person to the seat of the trouble. She acted by the advice of Villeroy, and no one, not even Concini, was able to turn her from her purpose.* The Marquis d'Ancre thought that he was ruined as well as the rest of his party, and returned to Amiens, having broken definitely with the minister.†

It is needless to go into the particulars of the King's journey if we grasp the full importance of its result. The people were delighted to see their monarch, whom the majority had regarded more as a myth than as a reality. They all knew his father, the man with the great nose and the glance of fire, and the announcement of the progress of the son through the lands was hailed as a millennium. The King was very skilful at all sorts of games, and horse exercise was one of his specialities. The burghers loved to see the sovereign bowing to them from the back of his charger, or mingling with their sport in the market places.

* *Richelieu Mémoires*, p. 71.
† *D'Estrées' Mémoires*, p. 404.

The expedition was a long ovation, the factions disappearing like magic. At Blois the Duc de Mayenne presented the submission of the Prince de Condé, and a few days later Vendôme announced that he surrendered the towns he had seized to the Marquis de Cœuvres. At Tours the Queen saw the Bishop of Poictiers, whom she received, says Fontenay-Mareuil, in a way proportional to the great service he had rendered. The reward was well merited, for he had started the wave of loyalty which swept over France, leaving the Prince de Condé stranded higher and higher by the receding tide of his imaginary popularity. What doubt had hitherto existed about the control of the Estates General disappeared. The court had too much at stake to allow any but its partisans to be elected. The whole influence of the government was thrown into the voting,* and an assembly was obtained in which all the strong supporters of the Bourbon dynasty and the Catholic party were represented. This was a measure of safety on the

* Mémoires de Comte de Brienne, ed. Michaud et Poujoulat, T. XXVII. p. 3.

Queen's part, for the Feudal leaders had made no secret of their intention of substituting another Regent for Marie de Médicis. Another subject which had formed a part of their manifesto was also to receive attention; this was Concini's position as governor of the citadel of Amiens, to say nothing of his charge of Marshal of France.

The Italian had made an enemy in the ranks of the Feudal barons. His position in Amiens had brought him into contact with the young Duc de Longueville, governor of Picardy, and the friction had become greater and greater until in October, 1614, the Duke returned from his province with an immense suite, and proposed to challenge the Marshal d'Ancre. The cause of the quarrel was that certain citizens of Amiens who favoured de Longueville, had shown him that a drawbridge between the city and the citadel was raised at night. This was the only way to reach one of the gates of the town, which was without defence when the bridge was closed.

One Sunday morning the Duke went to hear mass at a church near the bridge, and sent a

squad of smiths to detach the chains. The quarrel of the leaders was always sustained by their men in those days, and in this case Concini's retainers levelled their guns at the governor's people, and ordered them off the bridge. But the citizens espoused the Duke's cause, for one of Concini's Italian mercenaries had killed a soldier of the town guard, and the mob was eager to capture the citadel, hang the murderer, and raze the place to the ground. The personal exertions of de Longueville alone saved the fortress from being stormed by his infuriated sympathisers, but nevertheless he started for Paris determined to have satisfaction.* A duel was prevented, but the Duke never forgave the Italian, and he resolved to have the favourite ejected from Amiens, though the Marshal's fortune was so great, and his influence so preponderant, that the task would have staggered a less resolute man.

Concini's power had outstripped that of Villeroy. We can hardly believe our eyes when we see the man by whose advice the Regent had just

* *Malherbe à Monsieur de Pièresc*, October 5, 1614.

HECTOR D'ORLÉANS, DUC DE LONGUEVILLE.
From a painting by du Moustier, in the Louvre.

made her journey to Poictiers neglected in his country house at Conflans, and our ears appear to fail when we hear the Queen complain bitterly that he delayed the accomplishment of the King's marriage.*

The Regent was now entirely under the influence of Concini and his wife. The Marshal had surrounded her with a select number of his own friends. Rucellai, a churchman from Florence, an adept at intrigue, clever and unprincipled, was one of the circle; another was Henry, Marquis de Richelieu, one of the most accomplished cavaliers of the time; a third was Barbin, a lawyer from Melun, who had been clever enough to win Leonora Galigaï's regard before she became Marquise d'Ancre.† Still another was that Claude Mangot, "maître des requettes," who helped the Marquis in the Maignat affair; and last, and perhaps greatest of all, the Bishop of Luçon, of whom Concini used to say that he knew a stripling who was capable of teaching a thing

* *D'Estrées' Mémoires*, 405.

† *Mémoires de Mme. de Monglat*, ed. Michaud et Poujoulat, p. 10.

or two to the old ministers. The favourite judged his young friend correctly; the young man whose pointed beard and moustache were so strangely at variance with the peaceable purple of his gown, was one day to weld France into a homogeneous mass, and to be known to posterity as the Cardinal de Richelieu.

Concini had learned that it was impossible for him to live and wield the power he coveted without overthrowing the old ministers. It is scarcely credible that he wished to rule, but he loved power for power's sake; the glitter and pomp of his dignities fascinated him; two members of his clique, Barbin and Richelieu, kept urging him to be rid of Villeroy and his colleagues who opposed his advance, and the Marshal had made up his mind to follow their advice. Sillery's official life was lengthened only to allow him to manage the Estates General, and because Concini was allied to him against the Duc de Guise. No favourable occasion for breaking with him had appeared, but the doom of the others became only a question of time.

CHAPTER VI

October, 1614, to February, 1615—Diplomatic victory for the Queen over Condé—Proclamation of the Estates General—The King's majority—The Prince de Condé—Opening ceremonies of the Assembly—Jealousy of the Nobles for the Third Estate—La Paulette—Quarrel between the privileged orders of the lower house—Condé's new rôle—The Gallican party—Its quarrel with the Clergy—Influence of Condé against the Nobles—Settlement of the dispute—Insults to the Parliament—The financial system—Quarrel between the deputies and the court—The Queen appears to yield—Appointment of commissioners—Comedy of auditing the accounts—Desire of the ministers to finish the Assembly—Orders from the King—Effect of the Estates upon the deputies—Closing scenes.

Long before the time appointed for the meeting of the Estates General, the Prince de Condé realised that in diplomacy he was no match for Marie de Médicis. The treaty of St. Ménehould had fixed the date of the assembly for August, and the meeting place at Sens, but when the Queen became sure of her position, she changed the time to the autumn, and called the deputies together in Paris.

Condé feigned a lack of interest which he was far from feeling, and informed the Regent secretly that neither he nor the Feudal leaders cared whether the deputies came together or not. But Marie de Médicis and her advisers were not to be caught in so poor a snare; they judged that, unless the assembly took place, the Princes would be the first to make trouble on the ground that the deputies had not been allowed to meet, though the treaty bound the Queen to summon them. When at length the delegates began to gather, the autumn was well advanced.

The King was declared of age a day or so before the opening of the Estates. He said a few words to the assembled officials of the crown, and implored his mother to continue to govern. The ceremony seemed unimportant to the onlookers, but in reality the assumption of the royal dignity by the Prince meant much, especially to those who were striving to wield his power. The Queen lost her title of Regent, which did much to weaken her authority, since everything henceforth depended on the will of her son.

The Prince de Condé cut a sorry figure at the

King's majority. He said nothing, and kept in the background; in fact he had no reason to speak. Everything had been done according to his desire. The assembly which he had called was about to meet, and he no longer had any ground to stand upon. The Queen's cleverness had made it impossible for him to criticise, yet the deputies were her firmest partisans. He was forced to wait until circumstances should offer him a chance of interfering; meantime he placed Amboise, which had been given him as a pledge until the meeting of the Estates, in the hands of the King.

Then the proclamation of the assembly was made throughout the city. The deputies were to meet on the 20th of October in the Salle de Bourbon at noon. The intervening time was to be employed by each chamber in regulating matters of etiquette which usually involved considerable friction, and it was not until the 26th that the real opening of the assembly took place. The first act of the comedy was in accord with the religious idea of the times. The deputies went in a body to Nôtre Dame to return

thanks for the blessings they hoped to reap. The people, unused to such sights, crowded every point of vantage, wondering at the show, and delighted with the uniforms of the soldiers who lined the streets along which the procession was to pass. The arrangement of the pageant was as follows: According to an ancient usage a motley crowd of beggars and the four orders of the Mendicant Friars preceded the members of the Third Estate. The lawyers wore their long black robes and square bonnets; the clerks appeared in the traditional short cloak and gown opening at the sides, wearing a toque for headgear. The degree of honour conferred on each deputation was shown by its proximity to the Holy Sacrament which was placed in the middle of the procession. The Nobility, glittering with jewels, resplendent sword hilts, and gorgeous clothing, marched next to the Third Estate, their nodding plumes forming a sharp contrast to the sombre garments of the preceding delegation. Then came the Clergy, each wearing the insignia of his degree; the simple clerk with folded hands and downcast eyes, the priors, abbés, bishops,

archbishops, and the three cardinals, de Sourdis, Bonzy, and La Rochefoucauld, gorgeous in their scarlet and gold. Behind them the archbishop of Paris carried the Eucharist, and four of the greatest men in the kingdom bore the daïs under which he walked. The King followed, his white clothing and sprightly bearing throwing into sharp relief the dark figure of the Queen, whose widow's weeds appeared to weigh her down as she moved. Marie de Médicis was followed by the Princes, while the Parliament and the various officials of the courts of justice brought up the rear.* The procession took seats in the nave of Notre Dame by orders; the King and the Queen-Regent sat in the middle of the church, under a daïs of purple velvet sprinkled with fleur-de-lys. Mass was celebrated by the archbishop of Paris, and the Cardinal de Sourdis preached, his theme being "Deum timete, regem honorificate."

The next day all the delegates came together

* Recueil très-exact et curieux de tout ce qui s'est fait et passé de singulier et mémorable en L'Assemblée Genérale des Etats, tenus à Paris en L'Année 1614 et particulièrement en chaque séance du Tiers Ordre par, M. Florimond Rapine, MDCLI, pp. 42–43. *Mercure François*, III., part II. 44–46.

in the vestibule of the Salle de Bourbon at noon; but a delay of three hours ensued before the appearance of the herald, who, standing in the box over the main door of the hall, called off the deputies. Immediately there arose a great confusion, because the names were read without order and each one crowded in to get a seat wherever he could. A great many people were present who had no business in the hall, the lords and ladies filled the boxes "as if they had come to see a comedy," says Rapine, whose lawyer's pride was piqued by this want of respect, but the author of the remark had no notion of how near this stray shaft was to the truth.

The King opened the session with a few words exhorting the deputies to help the poor people, and promising to carry out all the reforms suggested by the assembly;* but he had no idea of what he was undertaking, and the Queen had no intention of his keeping his contract. The Chancellor spoke after the monarch had ceased. He talked for an hour and a half, but no one got a very clear idea of his speech, for his voice was

* *Héroard*, II. 163–164.

lost in his ermine and velvet robes and he delivered his address seated, instead of in a standing posture. Then the archbishop of Lyons spoke for the Clergy, and when he had finished, the Baron de Pont-Saint-Pierre addressed the King on behalf of the Nobles; his speech, though halting and full of mistakes, is an example of the jealousy which the orders felt for each other in general, and which the Nobles especially entertained for the lawyers who represented the people. The Provost of the Merchants, kneeling on a velvet cushion, spoke for the Third Estate. He took up the gauntlet which the Nobles had thrown down; his words became darkly prophetic when he declared that "the people were weary of being the anvil, let others have a care lest they become the hammer." The Revolution of 1789 was still a great way off, but its shadow already lay upon the path of the French Monarchy.

Of the three chambers, the Clergy was most favourable to the crown, and the bishops promptly took the initiative, leaving the honours to their superiors. Among the cardinals and archbishops there were two classes; men like

Bonzy, La Rochefoucauld, and Joyeuse, who cared little about statecraft, while on the other hand du Perron, the Chrysostom of the church of those times, was looked up to as the mouthpiece of the order. His position of Grand Almoner of France gave him the leadership in the chamber.*

A great tension between the Nobles and the Third Estate was evident, as soon as the assembly was fairly under way. The pride of the plebeian was beginning to offend that of the gentleman. The lawyers and rich burghers had made themselves a position through their offices when Henry IV., in need of money, had by the advice of the councillor Paulet, sold the charges of the department of justice. The men who bought them thought that, as long as they paid the government a yearly tax, they had a right to their position, and might pass them on to their families. This system was known as "la Paulette," and we shall refer to it often in these pages. It virtually closed to the Nobility the dignities held by the people, for the Nobles, always poor, had no money to pay out when the

* *Hanotaux, Histoire du Cardinal de Richelieu*, II. 18-19.

offices were put on the market. The Burghers, on the other hand, had the money, and seized the opportunity to rise a step by means of a charge which introduced a new word into the vocabulary of their class.* That word was "*hereditary*," and it annoyed the Nobles beyond expression, for they saw that slowly, but surely, a privileged order was being created whose birthright was cleverness, and education *only*, and which might, therefore, supplant them in the council. The eradication of the system became their first care, and they strove to hide their envy under the phrase "the good of the kingdom." The proposal was made to the Third Estate in a most offensive way. The Nobles and the Clergy signified their intention of asking for the suspension of the "yearly payment," as the tax was called, and hoped that the lower house would concur. But if the chamber would not, they added that the privileged orders would do without its support.† Here was a pretension which the people could not allow, for it set a precedent

* *Hist. de Louis XIII.*, Michel de Vassor, II. p. 30.
† *Rapine*, 103.

for unwarranted interference in their affairs. Cut to the quick, they gave the Nobles threat for threat, by voting the suspension of the pensions, and the reduction of the taxes twenty-five per cent.

The pensions of the Nobility were another invention of the great Henry to compensate those who, having been faithful to him in his struggle for the crown, had lost their possessions in the turmoil of the League. The proposal of the people struck at the very existence of the upper orders, and it created a tempest in the assembly; but the Third Estate refused to recede from its position, and the quarrel grew so bitter that the council had to interfere. Each side maintained its rights before the King, and the misunderstanding began to threaten the success of the assembly. At this juncture Condé reappeared in a new rôle. He championed the cause of the people, and indicated a line of policy to the president of the chamber which brought about a settlement; but the quarrel was scarcely smothered when another broke out between the Third Estate and the Clergy.

This time the point in dispute was a principle, and the controversy had a national, not a selfish character. At the death of Henry IV., a deep feeling pervaded the members of the Sorbonne, and the Parliament of Paris, that the Gallican Church and the Law should speak against the people who had murdered one king of France and instigated the assassination of another. Immediately after the execution of Ravaillac, the Parliament entered the lists, with the entire sympathy of the people, and passed an edict reviving an old decree of the year 1413. This statute, which had been approved by the Council of Constance, condemned as heresy the doctrine that "a tyrant may be slain by one his vassal or subject, by ambuscade, treason or other plots, without waiting for the sentence or command of any judge." The Sorbonne confirmed this decree, adding on its own account, "that it was a seditious, impious and heretical action to lay hands upon the sacred persons of Kings or Princes, no matter what pretext subject, vassal or alien might allege." An oath was exacted from the doctors and bachelors of divinity to

teach the truth of this doctrine in their classes, and to instruct the people by their preaching.* The book of the Spaniard Mariana was immediately seized and burned by the hand of the public executioner, despite the indignation of the Pope's legate. The controversy reached its height when Cardinal Bellarmine published his reply to Barclay,† whose two theses, on "The Power of the Pope" and "The Royal Power," were attracting considerable attention. The Parliament seized the work on the ground that "it contained a false and detestable proposition tending to subvert sovereign powers established by God."‡ The whole Ultramontane party showed its displeasure, and the Papal Nuncio threatened to leave France, but this was not necessary, for the Queen herself annulled the edict, and the power of the crown was brought into direct conflict with the Parliament.

In tabulating the requirements of all the rep-

* *Mercure François*, I. pp. 457–461. *Richelieu Mémoires*, p. 25.

† The book was called "The Power of the Pope over the Temporal."

‡ *L'Estoile, Journal Registre de Henri III.*, etc., p. 642.

resentatives, the Third Estate had resolved to adopt as a basis the list of grievances submitted by Paris and the Isle de France, which contained as its very first article a statement that the King held the kingdom from God alone; and no power on earth, be it spiritual or temporal, had any right to violate his sacred person or dispense or absolve his subjects from their oath of fidelity for any cause or pretext. This was nothing more nor less than a plain statement of the creed of the Gallican party, in the face of all envoys, both ordinary and extraordinary, that the King was a sacred being against whom the Pope should not fulminate, and whom they intended to put out of the reach of the regicide. This was the fruit of the seed which Ravaillac had sown, and the growth of which the invectives and agitation against the Jesuits had foretold; it was the drawing of the sword by the Gallicans, who not only drew their weapons but threw away the scabbards.

The Clergy was much moved at this turn of affairs. To acquiesce would be to desert the Roman Church, while to oppose the article would

mean declaring themselves anti-national, if not altogether Jesuits and regicides. They tried to parry the blow and sent the archbishop of Aix, a distinguished orator, to see if the article was really under consideration by the Third Estate. The archbishop approached the subject warily by intimating to the chamber that, if it had anything to ask which had to do with the church, the Clergy should know before the mass of the nation. Miron replied shortly that if any point came up which bore on faith or doctrine, the Clergy would receive due notice. The archbishop was forced to return to his brethren with this unsatisfactory answer, but the churchmen knew the drift of the article in spite of the reticence of the burghers, and they resolved to send the cardinals to the Regent to beg her to suppress the subject of contention at its birth,* and at the same time the bishop of Montpellier appeared in the chamber of the

* *Procès-verbal* contenant les propositions déliberatives et résolutions prises et reçues en la Chambre Ecclésiastique des Etats Généraux, Recueilli et dressé par M. Pierre de Behety, un des Agents du Clergé et Secrétaire de ladite Chambre, 44–45.

Third Estate to beg the delegates to communicate the exact wording of the article in question. A long, bitter debate ensued among the deputies, who were much moved by the able appeal of the bishop, and the wording was finally copied and borne triumphantly to the Clergy.*

Nothing more was heard from the churchmen for a week, but the order had resolved nevertheless to make the greatest struggle in its power against the schism which threatened it. On the 31st of December the cardinal du Perron appeared before the nobles. He denounced the Third Estate for attempting to place the church of France in the dilemma of breaking away from its creed if it subscribed to the article, or of being guilty of treason if it refused. He went on to show that the resolution itself would not protect the sovereign, and finished by declaring that the Clergy would rather die than subscribe. The Nobles refused to interfere and left the management of the quarrel in the hands of the church. But the dispute suddenly assumed a still more national character by the entry of the

* *Procès-verbal du Clergé*, 188–194. *Rapine*, 267.

Parliament into the lists. Servin, the attorney-general, issued an order condensing the article in question, and the printers immediately began to flood the country with copies of the decree.* The action of the judiciary was bitterly resented by the church, and the clergy construed it as an attempt to interfere with the liberty of the assembly. Remonstrances were sent to the cabinet and the Nobles, but owing to the influence of Condé the majority in the chamber was very small.

The Queen's decision was looked for by the assembly with great anxiety; a decree in council, forbidding all discussion of the question, failed to satisfy the Clergy, who threatened to withdraw from the Estates unless the subject of dispute was so completely wiped out that no mention of it should appear in the records. The chamber then suspended its work. But the Queen was bound to give the Clergy satisfaction; she was the Sovereign Pontiff's debtor already, for having silenced the claims of Condé to the throne. There had been some talk about the

* *Mercure François*, III., part II. pp. 327-328.

validity of divorce in the Roman Church, and the Prince contended that Henry IV.'s children were illegitimate. Spain had offered to help Condé, but the Pope placed his veto on the scheme. Marie de Médicis' advisers showed her that the standard of Gallicanism could not be raised in France, or else the very validity of the papal dispensation, upon which her marriage was grounded, would be jeopardised.* Besides this, the Third Estate had shown a disposition for initiative which worried the court, and the Chancellor had already rebuked the burghers for their headlong zeal;† the Regent was not sorry to check them again. The King's order gave the victory to the church, and the article was not only suppressed but withdrawn; the Queen notified the Third Estate that the subject must be left out of their pamphlet; she thanked them for their solicitude and promised to reply favourably to their demands. This ought to have been sufficient, and had the Queen stopped there she would not have fomented the feeling

* *Ranke, Französiche Geschichte,* French translation, I. p. 39.

† *Rapine,* 224.

among the Gallicans which impelled the party to join the Prince de Condé. Satisfaction such as they required was given the Clergy. It was overwhelming; the Parliament was bowed in the dust before the angry ecclesiastics, their printers were imprisoned, their decree was torn from the register, and a copy of these orders was sent to every township in the kingdom. But the will of the people could not be so easily put down, and had the vote in the chamber been taken by bailiwicks instead of provinces, the result would undoubtedly have been a revolt against the arrogance of the Queen; but the lower house was full of the Regent's tools. The president, Miron, was one, and he managed to take the vote by provinces. The great counties were thus equalised by those of smaller representation, and the minority carried the day amid great excitement.* Those who had voted against the motion rushed to the tables where the secretaries sat, to register their names in order to present a memorial to the court.

The quarrels over the temporal power of the Pope and the reduction of pensions had made

* *Rapine*, 364.

it impossible for any of the orders to agree, and there only remained for the Nobles to quarrel with the court to make the result of the conference completely abortive. To contribute as much as possible towards this result, the Regent used the tactics which had served her so well against the Assembly of Saumur. She refused to answer any demand until after the deputies had ceased to sit. There was one point, however, upon which she was forced to make a show of yielding. One of the curses of the old régime was the secrecy which surrounded the finances. The three orders had agreed, before their quarrels began, to demand a chamber for the supervision of the "tax farmers" and others who managed the money of the kingdom. Again the Queen refused, and the Nobles met her more than half-way by suspending their work until she acquiesced.* The cabinet had too much interest in keeping the deputies from uniting not to make concessions. The temper of the Nobles was too alarming to permit the Regent to hold out; she feared that the Prince de Condé might draw

* *Mercure François*, III., part II. p. 190.

them into an alliance with the lower house, whose champion he had already shown himself. She announced through the president Jeannin, on the 20th of December, that the auditing chamber would be established, and the Third Estate was requested to appoint commissioners to examine the accounts.* They were named on the 16th of January, 1615, but their cold reserve so disconcerted the ministers that the latter began to wish most devoutly that the deputies might hand in their papers and disperse as soon as possible, for they feared that the wholesale waste of Henry the Great's treasure might become generally known. It soon became evident that the court did not intend to have the state of the finances ventilated at any price, for although a great show was made of allowing the deputies to inspect the balance sheets, so much was put in their way that the examination really amounted to nothing. The figures were neither to be copied nor discussed in public.† Itemised accounts were refused, and the commissioners

* *Rapine*, 229–237.

† *Mercure François*, III., part II. p. 200.

were forced to be content with falsified statements.

Then a man named Beaufort suddenly appeared and presented a scheme to the chambers for buying back the offices held by the Third Estate. The Clergy and the Nobles at once saw an opportunity of putting the lawyers in a dilemma between the good of the state and their own selfish interests. We can imagine with what eagerness they accepted the proposal and referred him to the lower house, but, strange to say, he refused to explain his methods, and the Commons rejected the plan to the great delight of the other two orders, who pointed to this action as an indication of sincerity.*

The discord among the deputies was now at its height. Mutual distrust reigned in all the chambers; the court had carried the day, and the only remaining step was to compel the assembly to dissolve. The personal command of Louis XIII. was sent to the deputies; the Estates were finished; they acknowledged their power-

* *Procès-verbal du Clergé*, p. 261. *Mercure François*, III., part II. pp. 100–110. *Rapine*, 377.

lessness and prepared to end their work. The dispositions of the delegates had undergone a great change during the four months of bickering and disappointment which marked their stay in the capital; they had come singing the praises of the Queen, ready to lend their hands to the reforms which they had fondly hoped she would inaugurate; they returned to their homes dissatisfied. The Regent had deceived them as she had deceived everybody. They had given their assent to her rule, but she herself had sown the seeds of revolt in their breasts, and the spark to fire the train of discontent was the only thing necessary to plunge the kingdom into civil war. The last act of the Comedy of the Estates General took place in the Salle de Bourbon, where the deputies, crowded together between the pikes and halberds of the soldiers, listened to the long harangues of their representatives.

Rapine, in the bitterness of his heart, says severely, "it was right that the closing scene should be in the place where, four months before, the Estates had begun with the same noise and disorder."

CHAPTER VII

March, 1615, to June, 1616—Popularity of Condé—Re-establishment of "la Paulette"—The Queen and the Parliament—Its alliance with Condé—Declaration of its position—Condé leaves for St. Maur—Quarrel between the Queen and the Gallicans—Approaching realisation of the King's marriage—Villeroy's change of attitude—Ultimatum to the Prince, and his reply—Arrest of le Jay and departure of the court for Bordeaux—Rupture between the Marquis d'Ancre and the Chancellor—Agreement between the Assembly of Nîmes and Condé—Arrival of the King at Bordeaux—The marriages—Peace negotiations—Condé aspires to the Regency—His demands—Interviews between the Queen and Villeroy—Signature of the Treaty of Loudun—Fall of the old ministers.

The influence of the Prince de Condé increased during the Estates General as the Queen's popularity diminished, and his alliance with the Gallicans rendered him more redoubtable than ever. The court realised this and tried to offset it by a show of alacrity. The commissioners were promptly summoned to discuss the measures suggested by the assembly, but when the means of reimbursing the King

for the suppression of the " yearly revenue tax " was approached, it soon became evident that they would never agree. The privileged orders would not hear of a reduction of the pensions, but proposed an increase of the salt tax. The Third Estate refused this proposition, because it overwhelmed the people, who were already sufficiently burdened. The deputies preferred to demand the continuance of " la Paulette."* This was just what the court wanted, for the re-establishment of the tax left it optional whether the pensions should be reduced, and so the entire labour of the deputies was brought to naught when, on the 19th of May, 1615, the King continued Paulet's pernicious invention, and after months of travail the mountain brought forth nothing.

The edict put an end to the hopes of relief, the drama assumed a new phase. The Parliament, which had been assiduously courted by the Prince de Condé, entered the lists and threw down the gauntlet to the court. This august body, which had been appealed to as sponsor of the

* *Mercure François*, III., part II. pp. 421–425.

Regency, was displeased at the victory of the Catholic party in the assembly, and turned naturally to the Feudal leader as the only person strong enough to vindicate its cause. Condé himself was only too willing to let the Parliament play his hand for him; its dissatisfaction gave him a constitutional pretext for rebellion, and he urged the councillors into an open declaration of their position. Taking as a pretext that the complaints of the orders had had no result, the Parliament issued an edict summoning the princes, dukes, peers, and officers of the crown to meet and deliberate upon the reforms which were necessary.*

The men of law justified this infringement on the rights of the sovereign by saying that the Queen had appealed to them for counsel at the beginning of the Regency, and that this was all they proposed to offer in the present instance. As soon as the Parliament had taken this stand, Condé left Paris and retired to St. Maur, a safe place from which to watch the development of

* *Fontenay-Mareuil Mémoires*, 34—*Mercure François*, T. IV. p. 26.

his plans. He was promptly joined by the Duc de Bouillon, the Comte St. Pol, and the Duc de Longueville, whose hatred for the Marquis d'Ancre had not diminished. The action of the Parliament should have given Marie de Médicis plenty of food for reflection, but the Regent was not apt to ponder long when her pride or authority was in question. The situation was all the more difficult from the fact that she and the councillors were both pursuing an entirely different line of thought. Her entire policy had been to bring the Spanish marriages, as they were called, to a definite conclusion. The affair was fast drawing to its final stage, and, under the circumstances, perhaps she did not give sufficient heed to the signs of discontent which were so evident; nor did she appear to realise that, both in her treatment of the Parliament and in her resolve to accomplish the marriages, she was playing into the hands of Condé. She forbade the meeting of the court, and she summoned the attorney-general, whom she rated soundly, and commanded him to forbid his colleagues to approach a question which was not in

their sphere of action. But Servin might as well have attempted to stop the flow of the sea. The Gallicans were too exasperated, and too much in sympathy with reform, to be checked. They resolved to present a memorial to the King in a body. But, instead of being diplomatic, the Regent took a high hand with the Parliament when they waited on her, chiding them like impertinent children, and working herself into such a fury that anger choked her voice. The Chancellor was obliged to finish her remarks. The presence of the most influential members of the Catholic party at the interview aggravated the situation; the Ducs de Guise and d'Epernon found the Parliament's action insolent, and the councillors received a severe reprimand for their pains; the King ordered their remonstrances to be erased from the registers. To make matters still worse, the Protestants, who had always been hostile to the marriages, were holding a meeting at Grenoble under the direction of the Duc de Rohan, and at the time when an experienced statesman should have had control of affairs, Villeroy's credit had not been proof against the

attacks of his enemies, and the minister received notice to retire to Conflans.* But it soon became necessary to negotiate with the new cabal, and no one knew the tricks of diplomacy better than this old intriguer. He was recalled, much as Sully had been reinstated on the eve of the King's coronation, to treat with the Princes.† This mission marks a point in Villeroy's career when he seems suddenly to have become closely allied with the Feudal party. Did he realise the ruin of his influence and strive to re-establish himself by means of the Prince de Condé?

No one knows the answer to this question exactly, but such a conclusion might be drawn from the reasons which the Feudal leader alleged for his dissatisfaction. He demanded that the remonstrances of the Parliament should be heard, that the marriages should be postponed, and that the Council should be reconstructed. The last

* Villeroy had written a falsehood to the Cabinet of Madrid, saying that the delay in the execution of the marriages was wholly due to the Queen, who was unwilling to start for Guyenne. See *Richelieu Mémoires*. p. 96.

† *Hist. de J. A. de Thou. Lettre de de Thou à Boissise*, T. XV. p. 545.

point was considerably amplified when the Regent summoned Condé to follow the King on the expedition to Guyenne, the object of which was the fulfilment of his marriage. To this ultimatum the Prince replied by an absolute refusal; he judged the journey ought not to be undertaken hastily, nor before the monarch had regulated the affairs of his kingdom. Eight months in Paris had been sufficient to show him the way the country was managed; the Parliament had been insulted for having wished to serve the King; the letter ended by naming the authors of the evil counsels given to His Majesty. They were Concini and his wife, the Chancellor and his brother the Commandeur de Sillery, Dolé, and Bullion;* in other words, the enemies of Villeroy in a body, with the exception of Barbin and Richelieu, who, having no political employment as yet, had escaped notice.

This letter opens a new phase of the struggle between the parties. The Feudal leaders, long at a loss what excuse to make for their rebellious

* Lettres et pièces relatives à la Conférence de Loudun. *Bouchitté*, pp. 179–183.

disposition, at last had hit upon one which would touch a responsive chord in the hearts of the people. Hatred of the foreigner has ever been a French trait, and the Princes seized it as their best weapon against the Queen and Concini.

Military glory was always the greatest foible of the Marquis d'Ancre, and this bait was dangled before him as soon as it became evident that war would result if the Regent insisted on taking the King to Guyenne. Concini always objected to violence, but in this instance he was allowed to believe that he would command the army which was to operate against Condé.* The Duc de Guise, whom he feared, was to accompany the court. The deception which the Chancellor practised on the Marquis d'Ancre in this instance was at the cost of his official life. The Marshal de Bois-Dauphin remained to guard the capital, and Concini retired to Amiens, vowing not to return until Sillery and his brother were *hanged.*†

The court left Paris on the 17th of August,

* *Richelieu Mémoires*, p. 96.

† *Richelieu Mémoires*, pp. 96–99–140. *Bassompièrre Mémoires*, II. 8.

taking the President le Jay, one of Condé's firmest supporters, as a hostage. The revolt had reached such proportions that this step was deemed necessary. The Protestants, who were holding a meeting at Grenoble, under the surveillance of Lesdiguières, suddenly withdrew to Nîmes; the whole party was angered at the advantages gained by the Catholics, and clamoured for war. This disposition was encouraged by Rohan and Sully; delegates were named and sent to treat with Condé. The gravity of the situation was appreciated by the leader of the King's escort; Louis XIII. traversed France by forced marches, and arrived at Bordeaux on the 7th of October. There had been no battles; it seemed as if neither side wanted to strike a blow. Bois-Dauphin, whose army was much the larger, dogged Condé's movements without making an attack. The Princes crossed the Loire without opposition. On both sides the excesses of the soldiery were awful; much of the destruction was of the most wanton kind; in many instances the noses and mouths of the captives were filled with gunpowder, which was then lighted, blowing the

poor wretches into atoms. The King's mercenaries were infinitely better soldiers than those of the Princes, and perhaps this is why Louis was allowed to march the entire length of France unmolested. The marriages took place immediately after the royal party arrived in Guyenne, the Duc de Guise representing the Prince of Spain. The next day, the Princess Anne married the French monarch at Burgos. The Duca da Lerma represented the bridegroom.

The Queen-mother's diplomacy was now realised; the malcontents were deprived of their excuse for rebellion, and the King's proximity to the Protestant strongholds in Béarn and Languedoc must have exercised a calming influence on the bellicose disposition of the party. The war had been a farce. Among the Feudal leaders, Condé and de Longueville were really the only ones who wanted to fight, and the Prince in this, as well as in all the disturbances in which he had a part, aimed at his own advancement, while de Longueville demanded the ejection of his rival, the Marshal d'Ancre, from Amiens. In spite of all he could do, Condé's

money was running low, and the negotiations which he had attempted to open with James I. had failed.* It was now in the autumn; the troops marched and countermarched over the rain-soaked fields, sleeping at night under the inclement sky. Such campaigning did not please the volatile tempers of the cavaliers who had joined the Prince; they shivered, growled, and longed for peace. No thought of punishment was entertained by the government and the time was ripe for treating. Under these circumstances, the Duc de Nevers appeared in Bordeaux. He had not declared for either party, though favouring the Princes secretly, and from his seemingly neutral standpoint he offered his services to open negotiations.† And the real struggle, that of diplomacy, began on the 11th of January, 1616. Villeroy, whose rôle the Regent does not seem to have suspected, was ordered to treat with Condé's representative and choose a place for the conference. Loudun, which later

* *Mercure François*, IV. p. 366.

† *De Thou à Boissise. Hist. de J. A. de Thou*, XV. p. 549. *Bouchitté*, p. 252. *Richelieu Mémoires*, p. 104. *Fontenay-Mareuil Mémoires*, p. 101.

was to witness the martyrdom of Urbain Grandier, was selected. The Huguenots were summoned, and Condé asked that Edmondes, the English Ambassador, should be present also, but Villeroy refused this senseless and humiliating request.

Both sides prepared for the struggle. The Feudal party, preferring to be on the ground, installed itself at Loudun, while the court remained at Tours. From the outset the battle was to decide how far Condé should go in his exactions; he was more formidable than ever before, because the Gallican party and the Protestant leaders had joined his standard, and, on this account, the article of the Third Estate concerning the life of the King came into great prominence and proved a stumbling-block to the speedy conclusion of a treaty. The Queen could not give way now any more than at the time of the Estates. She stood her ground, yielding on points which Condé desired most, until finally her tactics weakened the opposition and the article was referred to the King, as it had been in the assembly.

The Prince appears to have resolved to obtain from the treaty of Loudun what he could not get from the deputies of 1614. He insisted on reforming the council, revising the finances, and hunting down the authors of the death of the late King.* He hoped by these measures to sweep from his path the Chancellor, Dolé, and Bullion; also the Ducs de Guise and d'Epernon, who were popularly believed to be connected in some way with Ravaillac. It is clear, also, that before the meeting of the Estates General, Condé had said that, if the Regency was to be continued, he was the only person fit to exercise the power; perhaps he hoped to involve Marie de Médicis in the net which was to catch the regicides and take the cares of government upon himself. With this object in view he formulated two demands, the first of which practically put the Queen's authority in his hands. He was to sign all the decrees of the council, none of which were to be valid without his seal. Secondly, the Duc de Longueville obtained the ejection of the Marshal d'Ancre from Amiens.† The Regent

* *Bouchitté*, pp. 194–214.
† *Richelieu Mémoires*, 107–108.

yielded on both these points by the advice of Villeroy, and it was natural that her grief and chagrin should recoil upon him. Barbin, the arch plotter, made the most of his opportunity; perhaps he suspected the minister of complicity with the Princes, and we must acknowledge that his conduct had given ample ground for doubt; at all events Barbin was ready and eager to dismiss him and to deal with Condé himself.

Bassompièrre has faithfully reproduced the interview at which the Queen decided to grant the Prince's demands; Villeroy's duplicity is shown in such a strong light that we had better allow the writer to speak to us in his own fashion.

He had gone early one morning to see the Queen, being charged by the cavaliers of her army to complain because she did not admit them to the council, but preferred men of the robe. Bassompièrre found the Regent making her toilet while talking to Barbin. Marie de Médicis had just learned through the secretary, Pontchartrain, that Villeroy had kept back certain articles which might break off the negotiations, until the time for signing the treaty of peace.

" She complained that after she had granted Monsieur le Prince everything, he had introduced two new demands, namely, that when he was at court he should have the *pen* . . . and, secondly, that their Majesties might be pleased to remove the Marshal d'Ancre from Picardy in order to keep the peace (this was impossible otherwise), seeing the incompatibility which existed between him and Monsieur de Longueville.

" The Queen knew perfectly well that this bolt came from the hand of Monsieur de Villeroy, and was intended to harm the Marshal d'Ancre, whom he hated. Barbin confirmed this and said all he could against Villeroy, who, at that very moment, sent in word that he was in the antechamber and desired an audience. Barbin advised the Queen to hear him without any apparent irritation, and then to ask his advice.

" ' If he induces you to grant these two last demands he will show the double dealing (of which he has been guilty), and which he has hidden until now,' said he. ' If, on the other hand, as I think likely, he advises you not to grant

them you can tell the council later on, most emphatically, that you refuse by the counsel of Monsieur de Villeroy. He will not dare to deny it, for Your Majesty will call Monsieur de Bassompièrre and me to witness the truth of what you say. You will thus turn the dart he has shot at you into his own breast and will discredit him with his dear friend Monsieur de Bouillon.'

"The Queen agreed to do as Barbin advised, and when Villeroy was ushered into the room her face gave no clue to what was going on in her heart. 'Poor man,' said she, with the kindly smile she could assume when she chose, 'what trouble you take travelling to and fro so often, and it may be to no purpose in the end.' During this short speech she had drawn gradually nearer the window in which her fellow plotters stood, and signing them not to go, she turned suddenly on her companion and said, 'Well, Monsieur de Villeroy, you have come to bring me my desert. The Prince wishes to become Regent and wield the pen. Monsieur de Longueville desires absolute control in Picardy, and demands the withdrawal of the Marshal d'Ancre. This

is your message. I know it, for Phelipeaux has already warned me.'

"This attack disconcerted the minister, who replied with a few commonplaces, and the Regent, seeing the advantage she had gained, continued:

"'What do you think of the situation yourself? Ought I to grant this for peace sake, or ought I to refuse this impertinent request? Tell me your advice frankly, so that later I may be in a position to speak to the council.'

"Villeroy was very much embarrassed by these searching questions, and at first he refused to express himself, but the Queen was not to be put off by a lot of empty phrases, so she returned to the attack.

"'No, I want your advice immediately,' she cried.

"When he saw that he could not retreat any farther he suddenly threw off the mask and promised to speak frankly, if the Queen would allow him to go on uninterrupted to the end.

"'I always believed, Madam,' he began, 'that the Prince and his associates were keeping

back something which they meant to propose only after all the rest had been agreed upon, to place Your Majesty in the dilemma of yielding, or, if you refused, of making the people believe that you considered your own interests more than the good of the state; but I did not suppose that you would get off for so little as these last two articles, which you already know have been proposed to your commissioners, and which I bring for your approval. God willing, they will not keep us from making a treaty beneficial to the country and the King. The first (demand) is the pen, which concerns the Prince and appears to infringe your authority. The other is prejudicial to the Marshal d'Ancre . . . and is to Monsieur de Longueville's advantage. I counsel Your Majesty to accept this, for you can establish (the Marshal d'Ancre) in some other province as well, or better, than in Picardy, and you will be able to remove those who are not devoted to your interests, and at the same time you can give his charge to some other good servant who will check Monsieur de Longueville as completely as he. The Marshal will be praised

for having sacrificed his own interests to those of peace, and Your Majesty will have shown, at very little cost, that your servants and favourites are not as dear to you as the repose of the state. This is my advice upon this matter. As to the right of signing the decrees and the financial reports which the Prince demands, I advise you, Madam, to grant this also, without regret or feeling. (I do not think) it can touch you, or, if it does, only to your advantage, and this is what I base my opinion upon. The Prince will either come to court or stay away; if he remains away, he will demand nothing and you will grant nothing; if he comes, and I am prepared to consider this other dilemma likewise, he will either depend entirely upon you and strive to obey and carry out all your commands, in which case you will gain the advantage of having the First Prince of the Blood, a clever man used to business, at your orders as a good friend, not as an enemy; *or else* he will persist in his bad intentions, will continue his schemes, and will try to assail and monopolise your authority. *In that case you ought not to be afraid to put the pen*

in the hand of a man whose arm you might control.' "

As Villeroy finished speaking, Bassompièrre was astonished to see Barbin stride forward and seize the Queen's arm, exclaiming, "Madam, this is the greatest piece of advice you could get, and it is given by the greatest personage you could find. Act upon it and seek no other." His quick mind and energetic nature had seized upon the minister's meaning and had resolved to follow it out to the letter. If Condé could not be wheedled and cajoled, the restraining hand might become the bars and fetters of a dungeon. The Queen herself was very much surprised at Villeroy's duplicity; '*Veramente*, Monsieur de Villeroy,' she said, 'you have given me a very good piece of advice, like a good servant of the King and state. I thank you, and will follow it.' "*

All was now ready for the treaty of peace, but during the negotiations Condé had fallen dangerously ill, and the commissioners suspended their sittings until his recovery; this was de-

* *Bassompièrre Mémoires*, II. pp. 67–71.

layed until the spring was nearly over. When finally he recovered sufficiently to resume business, the signature of the treaty followed almost immediately. On the 3d day of May, 1616, a gathering of all parties took place in the Prince's apartments. The treaty was read, and Condé, who was lying in bed, took the pen to write his signature. "Those who love me will follow my example," he said; "those who do not will be forced to." He meant by this to impose silence upon the murmurs rising on every side; having become Regent, he cared little whose interests he sacrificed. It was ever thus with Condé! Catching sight of the huguenot d'Aubigné, whose dissatisfied mien attracted his eye, he called out, "Adieu, d'Aubigné, go to Dognon,"—a small fortress in the marshes of the Charente which d'Aubigné commanded.—"And *you* to the Bastille," replied the latter, making his way out.* The Prince laughed, but he might have done so less heartily had he heard Villeroy's advice to the Queen.

* *Histoire des Princes de Condé*, Duc d'Aumale, III. pp. 66–67.

The court moved to Blois immediately after the signature of the treaty, and it was there that the first act in the change of the ministry, which Concini and his party had contemplated so long, took place. The Chancellor yielded his place to Du Vair,* the president of the Parliament of Provence. The reason why Barbin and his associates chose this man was soon apparent. Du Vair had a nephew whom he was trying to push into office, and the new Chancellor could be counted upon, when the time came, to dismiss Villeroy. As soon as the court returned to Paris the members of the old cabinet fell, one after the other. First Puysieux, then Jeannin, was superseded by Barbin in the control of the finances. At this appointment Villeroy appears to have had the first inkling of what fate was in store for him, and retired to his house at Conflans; Claude Mangot, who had done so much for the Marquis d'Ancre in the Maignat case, assumed the portfolio which Puysieux had surrendered.

* *D'Estrées' Mémoires*, 411. *Mercure François*, IV., part II. p. 79.

The time was now ripe for Villeroy's fall. Du Vair, as Barbin had calculated, lent himself readily to the task of urging the Queen to dismiss her old servant. The minister retired from court, though his enemy allowed him to keep his place at the council board.

CHAPTER VIII

June to September, 1616—Delay of the Prince in returning to Paris—The Queen's desire to have him come back—Richelieu's mission—Condé's decision—His interview with Sully—His arrival—Arrogance of Concini—Barbin and the Prince—Plot against the Marshal d'Ancre—Arrival of the English Ambassador—Condé's power—Desire of the Princes to kill Concini—Condé advises him to leave Paris—Seizure of Péronne—Anger of the Queen—Influence of Richelieu—Interview between the Regent and Sully—Resolution to arrest Condé—The coup d'état.

The signature of the Treaty of Loudun made the line of demarcation between the opposing forces still more distinct. Condé's position was something like that held by the Duc de Guise at the time of the Estates General of Blois. He had succeeded in wresting the power from the Queen, and perhaps he might have met the same fate as his predecessor, had he been living under the rule of the other Médicis. He seems to have had an idea that his position was not particularly safe, for he delayed his reappearance in Paris week after week. It was impossible for the

new cabinet to judge of its power, or to carry out the changes required by the treaty, unless the Prince returned to the capital. Du Vair, the new Chancellor, was entirely under the control of the Duc de Bouillon, and kept insisting upon the reform of the council, proposing the names of many persons whom the Regent could not have near her as advisers. The Prince alone could stop these intrigues, and the Queen resolved to persuade him to return. If his presumption forced her to show strength, the ministers were entirely prepared to act. The bishop of Luçon was sent to Condé. He made short work of the Prince's hesitation. The customary bribe was bargained for and granted; the Marshal de la Châtre, whose presence in Berry seemed to belittle Condé's authority, was removed. Luçon promised that the Marshal d'Ancre and his wife would do all in their power to maintain an understanding with the Queen, and Condé on his side approved the choice of Barbin and Mangot, on condition that if Villeroy had suffered any pecuniary prejudice he should be compensated.*

* *Richelieu Mémoires*, p. 112.

The new government thus secured the recognition of its validity, and at the same time the Prince announced his satisfaction, but an event which is coincident with the bishop's visit seems to show that the cabinet did not propose to rely absolutely on the Prince's word; the Comte d'Auvergne, Montmorency's son-in-law, in whose veins the blood of the Valois flowed, was set at liberty after twelve years of incarceration.* The addition of this person to the ranks of Marie de Médicis' supporters was important.

Condé passed through Sully's province on his way. The old Huguenot, whose political eye had lost none of its penetration, saw the risk the Prince was running, and gave him so dark a picture of his future that he nearly lost heart, but nevertheless he pressed on and arrived in Paris on July 27. The Queen received him well, and the people, who hated Concini, were overjoyed to see the person upon whom they looked as the master of the situation.

We have now come to the opening of the last stage in the remarkable career of the Marshal d'Ancre, to the moment when the Feudal lead-

* *Héroard*, II. 199.

ers, seeing in him the true instigator of the changes which had taken place in the cabinet, and the person who appeared to resist their designs, resolved to get rid of him. Concini's opportune arrival at the capital on the 26th of June had overthrown a scheme proposed by the Ducs de Bouillon and Mayenne to attack him in his stronghold of Lesigny; but even this stroke would not have done him so much harm perhaps as a broil which followed his arrival. One night, the Marshal attempted to enter the Porte de Bussy without a passport. A shoemaker named Picard, who was captain of the watch, refused to open the gate, and the Italian caused him to be nearly beaten to death by his lackeys. A tremendous uproar arose over this affair, and the Marshal begot the undying hatred of the populace.*

Concini's alliance with Condé appears to have turned his head. He adopted more and more the habits of one to the manner born, and showed so much contempt for the peers who composed the

* *Richelieu Mémoires*, p. 119. *D'Estrées' Memoires*, 412. *Mercure François*, T. IV., part II. pp. 137–139.

Prince's party, that the Duc de Bouillon complained to Barbin, who warned the Marshal in vain. The cold, impassive Richelieu, who was recording the course of events, says that the Florentines were so blinded by success that they could not see the plainest facts. They drove everybody to despair by refusing to reward the good servants of the kingdom, and by recompensing those who did not deserve gratifications. They were wrong in thinking that Condé's devotion could last, and wrong in putting themselves in his power. The struggle would soon narrow down to a duel between the Prince and the Marshal, and in that case it was clear on whose side the victory would be, unless Concini and his friends could persuade the Queen to commit her fortune entirely to them and remove Condé either by crime or by arrest.

The first of the two concessions which the Queen had granted, to induce the Prince to sign the treaty of Loudun, brought events rapidly to a climax. The management of affairs fell almost entirely to Condé. The Louvre was deserted, and his house besieged at all hours by people who

came with decrees for him to sign. His natural arrogance asserted itself, and he carried things with a high hand, "paying very little attention to the advice I had given him, to use moderation with the Queen," says the bishop of Luçon.* The Prince was entirely under the control of the Ducs de Guise, de Mayenne, and de Bouillon, who kept urging him to demand annoying and perplexing things, and among others to insist upon the reconstruction of the council. The clever Barbin, morally certain that the Feudal leaders would never agree, acquiesced readily in allowing them to manage this affair themselves. The Princes were amazed. "That man," said Bouillon, when Barbin left the council, "will always give us thirty in three cards, but will keep thirty-one for himself." Recognising that they were overmatched, they resolved to overthrow the new cabinet as they had ruined the former one. Feudalism has always been brutal, and the quickest way to cut the Gordian knot was to kill Concini, whose creatures the ministers were supposed to be. Secret meetings at the Hôtel de Mayenne

* *Richelieu Mémoires*, p. 115.

and at the Duc de Bouillon's house marked the progress of the conspiracy, but the gatherings were not concealed carefully enough to escape the keen eyes of Richelieu and his colleagues, who began to approach the Duc de Guise and detach him from the cabal.*

On the 1st of August, James Hay, who became afterwards the Earl of Carlisle, arrived in Paris. His mission was to ask the hand of a French princess for the Prince of Wales.† Though a diplomat, he entered into all the intrigues of the court, and his house became the centre of the plots against the Marshal d'Ancre. One night, Concini and thirty followers appeared at the Hôtel de Condé. A banquet was being given to the English ambassador, and all the Feudal party was assembled. The guests were eager to kill the Italian there and then, but were restrained by the Prince, who was loath to commit such an act in his own house, and contrary to his pledged word.‡

* *Richelieu Mémoires*, p. 119.

† *Matteo Bartolini*, August 12, 1616, cited by Zeller in Louis XIII., Marie de Médicis, chef du Conseil, pp. 295–296.

‡ *Bassompièrre Mémoires*, II. 75. *D'Estrées' Mémoires*, 413.

The next day the Marshal d'Ancre sent word to Condé to ask him whether he could still count on his protection. The message was carried by the archbishop of Bourges, who, working hand in glove with Barbin and Richelieu, brought back an answer so ambiguous that Concini, terror-stricken, began to make preparations to leave Paris.* Scarcely had he turned his back on the capital when the Duc de Longueville seized Péronne, the only stronghold which the Marshal had left in Picardy.

This was the last straw. The Queen was beside herself; never had her authority received such a blow; her servant was dismissed, and the Feudal party seemed to triumph. The report that the Princes were about to place Condé on the throne began to be whispered in the city. The Duc d'Aumale traces this to an incident which occurred at one of the dinners given to Lord Hay. The President Le Coigneux, one of the most talkative of the Prince's guests, in a moment of exaltation stood up and read a parody

* *Bassompièrre Mémoires*, II. 75–76. *Richelieu Mémoires*, pp. 115–116. *Hist. des Princes de Condé*, Duc d'Aumale, III. 76–77.

on some decree which had been signed that morning substituting at the end the word "Barrabas," for Barbin. "*Errat autem Barrabas latro!*" shouted Condé. The guests greeted this sally with a shout of laughter, and the next day the report was current in Paris that they had shouted "Barre-à-bas"; seeing that the coat of arms of Condé were the lilies of France surmounted by a bar, this was readily misinterpreted.*

The illustrious author of the "History of the Condés" implies that this futile excuse was used by the government to lay hands on the Prince's person, and that the conspiracy was grounded more in the fears of the Queen's servants than in actual fact, but the despatches of the Florentine ambassador give us a picture of the situation, and leave no room to doubt the intentions of Condé's supporters.† The Prince's indecision saved the situation; he spent his time shedding tears, and seeking the advice of Barbin, the man

* *Hist. des Princes de Condé*, Duc d'Aumale, III. 78–79.

† *Matteo Bartolini*, September 10, 1616, cited by Zeller in Louis XIII., Marie de Médicis, chef du Conseil. Appendix, for account of the conspiracy.

of all persons whom he ought to have trusted least.

The Queen had to choose her line of action, and she hearkened to Richelieu, who kept urging her to arrest her opponent.* The decision was reached at the suggestion of the Duc de Sully. On the 26th of August he demanded an audience, to confer upon subjects important to the lives of Their Majesties. The ministers, Barbin, Mangot, and Richelieu himself, were present. The Duke showed Marie de Médicis that it was not possible for affairs to remain a week longer in their present position. Either the Queen must fall or preserve her authority, *if she knew how.* Two such powerful combinations could no longer exist, face to face. The nobles and the people were favouring the Prince more and more every day. The Duc de Longueville's seizure of Péronne had weakened her authority, which the departure of the Marshal d'Ancre had reduced to the lowest level. The Prince was all-powerful in the council. Sully thought it was his duty to

* *La Vie d'Armand*-Jean, Cardinal Duc de Richelieu. Le Clerc, I. 16.

warn her, and offered to sacrifice his life if, by so doing, he could save her and the state.* He then took his leave, but hardly had he crossed the door sill when, turning with one foot and half his body thrust into the room, he said, "Sire, and you, Madam, I implore Your Majesties to think well about what I have just said. I have cleared my conscience. Would to God that you were in the open country, in the middle of twelve hundred horsemen. I can see no other way."

The Queen made up her mind to arrest Condé. When once the decision had been reached, Barbin was not long in finding the instrument. Thémines, a Gascon, undertook the responsibility. The Prince, Mayenne, Vendôme, and Bouillon were nearly caught in the Louvre on the 30th of August. Barbin saw the four enter, followed only by their valets, and judged the opportunity a good one to arrest them all at one stroke, but the Queen lacked the courage, and they went away unmolested.† Everything was ready for the next day, however; arms had

* *Richelieu Mémoires*, p. 119. *Bassompièrre Mémoires*, II. 78–79.

† *Bassompièrre Mémoires*, II. 84–85.

been bought and introduced into the Louvre in packages of stuffs for the Queen-mother.* The men of the Royal Household had renewed their oath of fidelity. Bassompièrre, who had been making a night of it with Créquy, was waked early on the morning of September 1, by an officer from the Queen, who called him to the Louvre. There he found Marie de Médicis sitting with Mangot and Barbin. When the Count entered the Regent rose and began to walk up and down as if she were labouring under great excitement. After a few moments she told Bassompièrre that her plan was to arrest the Prince and his friends when they came to the council. Everything had been prepared for flight in case of failure, and she desired the Swiss to be ready to escort her to Nantes.

The Prince came at eight, in spite of all the warnings he had received. Mayenne sent to beg him not to go to the council that day, but Thianges, the messenger, did not see him until after the meeting broke up. He warned Condé as he came out; the Prince turned pale, but real-

* *Richelieu Mémoires*, p. 122.

ising that it was too late, kept on to the Queen's apartment, where the Council of State was generally held. He found two guards at the door, but entered, and asked for the King and Queen. The King, who was in the room, advanced and said: "You won't hunt with me, then?" Condé apologised for refusing, and Louis, saying his mother was coming, retired by one door as Thémines and his assistants entered by the other. "Monseigneur, the King has ordered me to seize your person;" those words close Condé's political career during eight long years. He offered no resistance and was led to the quarters of the Swiss guard, where he asked for a priest, so thoroughly sure was he that his last hour was at hand.

The populace stood unmoved, although the Prince's mother rode around Paris crying: "To arms, good people! The Marshal d'Ancre has assassinated Monsieur le Prince." She succeeded in raising a small mob which sacked Concini's hotel in the faubourg St. Germain.

CHAPTER IX

September, 1616, to April, 1617—The Feudal party leaves the Court—Negotiations—Revolt of Nevers—Resignation of Du Vair—Appointment of Richelieu—Energetic measures of the Cabinet—Albert de Luynes—His influence on the King—Arrogance of Concini—His imprudence—His presentiment of death—His recklessness—Luynes' duplicity—Concini's ambition to become Constable—He raises troops—His letter to the King—Louis' anger—He is persuaded that a plot exists against his life—His resolve to kill Concini—The plot—The murder—The end of the Regency.

The arrest of the Feudal chief was followed by the flight of his party. Mayenne and Bouillon started immediately for Soissons, whither they were followed by the Duc de Guise. His support of their cause was only lukewarm, for he lost much more in leaving the court than he could gain in serving the Princes; among other things he lamented that his prestige as commander of the royal army was gone.

The ministers saw in the Duke the probable agent of accommodation, and his subsequent ac-

tion shows how keenly they judged the man. Three weeks later he reappeared charged with the demands of his party; they were a recapitulation of the Treaty of Loudun. Mayenne, who now assumed the post of leader, demanded that two hundred men should be added to each of his garrisons, and that the King should pay for his soldiers. Vendôme requested permission to hold the Estates of Brittany. This accommodation had been proposed by the Duca da Monteleone, and the court made no objection. All seemed to be tending smoothly towards an amicable settlement when the Duc de Nevers suddenly assumed an offensive attitude. The news of Condé's arrest reached him on the frontier of his duchy, and he sent the King letters on the subject, which were tantamount to a declaration of war. The Queen replied by forbidding him to enter any of the fortresses in his province, and the Duke sent a courier to Soissons with his adhesion to the coalition.

The Queen did everything in her power to calm Nevers' bad temper. The bishop of Luçon tried to soothe him with specious words, and the

CONCINO CONCINI, MARÉCHAL D'ANCRE.
From a painting by du Moustier, in the Louvre.

ministers seized the opportunity which these negotiations gave them to raise troops. The Comte d'Auvergne received the command of the army which was to operate in Champagne, and other soldiers were enrolled, who, under the guidance of Praslin, Schomberg, Montigny, and Bassompièrre, were to march against Soissons.

During the second week in November the Duchess de Nevers appeared before Reims. The governor, fearing that she came to carry out a plot to seize the town, refused her admittance. The Duke retaliated by seizing Siz, a country house belonging to La Vieuville,* which he pretended to confiscate as feudal lord in default for men and arms due him since the death of the governor's father.† When this subject came before the council, the Chancellor thought the Parliament should look into it, but Barbin, on the contrary, said that, since the feudal seizure had been made several days after the occupation of Siz, Nevers was entirely wrong, and the affair

* Charles de la Vieuville, governor of Reims, afterward Prime Minister.

† *Mercure François*, T., IV., part II. pp. 305–309. *Richelieu Mémoires*, 130.

was not in the Parliament's jurisdiction, but ought to be treated by the council. The Duke was a rebel, and the minister wished to treat him as such. Du Vair refused to coincide with Barbin's views, and the Queen promptly demanded his resignation.* Mangot became Chancellor, and Richelieu, bishop of Luçon, assumed the portfolio of war and of foreign affairs.*

The Regent was now surrounded by men of the firmest character; the resignation of Du Vair had removed the last weak spot, and the cabinet faced the Princes with a new strength. They resolved to crush the rebels absolutely, and began to equip the King's troops with the grim determination to overthrow Feudalism once for all. Had they been allowed to carry out their programme, France, as Villeroy often said later, would have been at peace for one hundred years.†

But the force which was once more to alter the government had already been long at work, in

* *Richelieu Mémoires*, p. 131. *Bassompièrre Mémoires*, II. 105. *D'Estrées' Mémoires*, 418. *Pontchartrain Mémoires*, 377. *Mercure François*, T. IV., part II. p. 309. *Brienne Mémoires*, pp. 10–11.

† *Richelieu Mémoires*, p. 161.

the person of a young man whose father had come to court as an archer in the guards. Albert de Luynes had been placed near Louis XIII. as royal falconer, by the Marshal d'Ancre, who thought that the great difference in their ages would render any intimacy unlikely, and that he was creating an ally for himself in the King's suite. But Concini was patronising his most subtle enemy and literally signing his own death-warrant. The young King had grown from an obedient, unobstrusive little boy, into a silent, melancholy young man, capable of great dissimulation and of greater hatred. He saw Concini assuming more and more every day the manners of a tyrant, and he felt neglected, a fact out of which Luynes, who had all the instincts of a courtier, immediately made capital. Their intercourse, which had begun with the ordinary relations of master and servant, ripened gradually into a great friendship.

As early as 1611 Louis, in his dreams, pronounced the name of de Luynes. In November, 1614, he had a quarrel with Souvré because the latter had forbidden the falconer to enter the

King's bedroom. A lively explanation took place in the Queen's apartments, and Luynes remained master of the situation. Shortly after, he was appointed governor of Amboise, and in September, 1615, he entertained the King there. This was at the time of the expedition to Guyenne; Luynes accompanied the King from Amboise to Bordeaux, and was the bearer of the letter which Louis wrote his wife upon her arrival in France. From that time on their intercourse became more intimate. The King was either with his favourite, or Luynes with his sovereign, and in this increasing familiarity, the falconer began to see that great things were not impossible for him, so completely was he master of the King's spirit. He began by undermining the authority of the Queen, dexterously showing the son the weak points in his mother's administration.

The Queen, who already feared her son's companion, tried to ward off these strokes by taking the situation by storm. She offered to resign her authority, though she knew that the King would not take her at her word. She was not

mistaken, for neither Louis nor his falconer was yet prepared to assume control. Luynes made all sorts of protestations, and the Queen appeared satisfied. At the time of Condé's arrest she tried to give the King another chance to assume the government, but the situation was too embarrassed. The Princes had withdrawn from Paris, and Luynes was not bold enough to face the coming storm. He begged her to keep her place, and followed his prayer with so many protestations that the Queen yielded again, but to be sure of her ground she boldly reproached him with what he had told the King about her administration. She said that she was willing to bear the brunt of business if the King would only take the glory. She was anxious to share her authority with her son, and begged him in future to make appointments to charges which might fall vacant. If he wished to reward Luynes for his zeal he had only to command, and the more frank he was the more she should believe in his satisfaction. Luynes, of whose subtle ability no one ever dreamed, appeared to be won by these expressions of good will,* but in reality his object

* *Richelieu Mémoires*, p. 111.

was to lull suspicion until he was ready to mount to power upon the ruin of the Queen's authority.

The fate of the Marquis d'Ancre seems to have willed that he should be charged for crimes of which he was not guilty. If the firmness of the new cabinet can be called a crime he certainly assumed the responsibility; he became the figure-head of the party whose policy was the concentration of the royal power. Luynes' antagonism placed the King on the side of the Feudal leaders, in arms around Soissons, but the monarch and his vassals had the same object in view, though they took different means of obtaining their ends. The Queen and Concini, on their side, had resolved to get rid of the falconer, but the King protected his friend and Luynes maintained his place.*

Aware of the desperate game he was playing, Albert showed the monarch that the kingdom was really in the hands of the Marshal d'Ancre and his creatures; that they exercised the royal

* Monteleone to Cirica Archives de Simancas cot A 74[36], cited by Capefigue in Richelieu-Mazarin, la Fronde, etc., II. 288.

power, only the smallest shadow of which remained to its legitimate possessor. An illness which the King had near the 1st of November, 1616, proved a great help to the favourite's malicious schemes. Louis, to all appearances, had an epileptic fit and lost consciousness.* All sorts of conjectures were formed about this incident. Some said that the hardships of the journey to Guyenne had been too much for him, others attributed it to melancholy and annoyance. Many were moved by graver doubts, and among them was Du Vair, who, speaking to the Queen one day, said significantly that he was afraid the fit might return in the spring, and from this it came about that Marie de Médicis, in her conversation with Héroard, the King's doctor, referred several times to the subject. Luynes seized this opening, and began to suggest to the King that there might be a plot against his life, which was to be carried out in the spring.† Louis, whose melancholy always led him to look on the dark side of life, was readily

* *Héroard*, II. 203. *Pontchartrain Mémoires*, 373. *Fontenay-Mareuil Mémoires*, 112.

† *Richelieu Mémoires*, p. 133.

persuaded that Concini and Marie de Médicis, in order to have the weakness of another minority to direct, would not scruple to put him out of the way. His imagination was plied with all sorts of fears, and the suspicion that Charles IX. was poisoned by his own mother added to his nightly horrors.* He was shown daily how the Princes were persecuted on account of the Marquis d'Ancre, who, it was generally believed, was making war to enrich himself and keep his hold on the government. Every report calculated to excite Louis was carefully repeated to him; one day it was that Thémines had been removed from the command of the Bastille and had been replaced by one of Concini's creatures; another time the report that the Marshal had carried off the King was current. Things were gradually going from bad to worse, and the Marquis d'Ancre seemed to invite the attacks of his enemies. In spite of his unpopularity he continually committed acts of imprudence. In Paris no one spoke to the Queen except through him, the citizens were closely watched, and no one

* *Bassompièrre Mémoires*, II. 138–139.

went in or out unnoticed. The suspects were clapped into prison without trial.* This savours of Richelieu, but Concini shouldered the blame.

One day in December the King was in the long gallery of the Louvre, standing in one of the windows overlooking the river. Three attendants only were with him. Suddenly the Marshal d'Ancre entered, followed by over a hundred persons, and without going near the King, placed himself in another window; he knew perfectly well that Louis was there, for he had enquired for him in the antechamber.† The King's heart was filled with displeasure, and he went to the Tuileries brooding deeply over the insult. Nevertheless his dissimulation was so perfect that no one suspected what was going on, and even the keen penetration of Richelieu was at fault when the young monarch, a few days later, with seeming eagerness, signed the declaration against the rebel dukes.‡

The Marshal d'Ancre also aspired to the

* *Pontchartrain Mémoires*, p. 380.

† *Héroard*, II. 204.

‡ *Correspondance et papiers d'état du Cardinal de Richelieu*, d'Avenel, I. 317.

Constable's sword, and to show how well qualified he was for the office, he offered to serve the King for three months with three thousand Liégois, as many French troops, and seven hundred horse at his own expense.* He went to Normandy to oversee the equipment of this force, and one day he wrote the King a letter offering to lend the soldiers to the monarch, adding that, if everybody acted as well as he, the King would be very well served. Not content with this piece of bravado, he had the letter printed and sent to all parts of the Kingdom.†

When next the Marshal saw the King the royal displeasure could no longer be concealed. Louis glowered at Concini whenever they met. "Alberti, Alberti, my friend," the Italian used to say to Luynes, "the King looks at me with a furious eye. You will answer to me for it." And the falconer remembered his words.‡

The Marshal seems to have had a feeling that his ruin was only a question of time, and the

* *Pontchartrain Mémoires*, p. 382.

† *Mercure François*, T. IV., part III. pp. 155–156.

‡ *Mémoires de Castelnau*, cited by Capefigue in Richelieu-Mazarin, la Fronde, etc., II. 311.

death of one of his children awoke all his superstition. He regarded this misfortune as an omen, and one day he had a long conversation with Bassompièrre about the advisability of retiring while there was still time. He said that he himself was only too willing to leave France, but that his wife could not be persuaded. A long list of portents pointed clearly to his death, but the Marquise would not go, in spite of prayers and entreaties.* Absolutely convinced of the uselessness of trying to retreat, the Marquis threw caution to the winds and, risking everything, began to act with greater arrogance than ever. He quartered his troops on the lands of his friends, seized the passports which the King had given to the Dutch ambassador, and acted as if France was his by right instead of by chance.†

One day the King asked for six thousand livres to defray some paltry expense. The money was refused, owing to the exigencies of the times and the cost of the war. While the King, with

* *Bassompièrre Mémoires*, II. 105–110.
† *Avenel Correspondance*, I. 361.

tears in his eyes, was brooding over this new insult, the Marshal d'Ancre, surrounded by his usual escort, came to find him. Hat in hand he apologised because the money could not be got, and offered to give it to the King out of his own pocket.* Louis's entire nature revolted at the insult.

Concini had likewise begun to quarrel with the ministers because Richelieu had refused to be his tool.† At another time the favourite sued the Duc de Montbazon for 50,000 crowns, which the latter owed him for the arms and accoutrements in the citadel of Amiens. At the instigation of the ministers the Queen wrote to forbid the suit. The Marshal, who was at Caen, in Normandy, came post-haste to Paris on receipt of the letter, breathing nothing but vengeance against the cabinet and particularly against Barbin, whom he thought responsible. "By God, sir," he wrote to Richelieu, "I complain of you, you use me too badly; you treat for peace without my

* *Pontchartrain Mémoires*, 383. *Richelieu Mémoires*, p. 153.

† *Richelieu Mémoires*, 151.

knowledge, you influence the Queen to write me to drop the suit I have begun against Monsieur de Montbazon for her sake. What do all the devils, or you, or the Queen think I am going to do! Anger gnaws at my bones."* Such insolent behaviour gave Luynes every pretext for inciting the King to hate the foreigner who was usurping the royal power. Louis was easily persuaded that a plot existed against his life. Forged letters from Barbin were shown him, which spoke of seizing the royal person. The Marshal d'Ancre's sudden return from Normandy on account of the Queen's letter seemed to him the most ominous occurrence, but when the Regent one day gave orders that her light horse regiment, which was about to go to Soissons, was to be kept in Paris, Louis became certain that Concini intended to seize him, and he resolved to get rid of his enemy.

It was no easy matter to find a man bold enough to undertake the arrest, for Concini never moved abroad without a strong following. Spies surrounded the King, and his most faithful ser-

* *Richelieu Mémoires*, p. 152.

vants had long since been removed. In this uncertainty Luynes selected the Baron de Vitry, who hated Concini, and boasted that he was the only person who did not bow to him in the palace. He was approached by hints and innuendoes, hypothetical cases were put to him: "If the King desired your services in a very difficult enterprise, would you obey?" asked Luynes, cautiously feeling his ground. Vitry could not imagine a task he would not undertake for his sovereign. A meeting was arranged between the conspirators. Vitry was astonished to find himself allied to five men, three of whom were nobles of Luynes's calibre, and the other two, Deagent, Barbin's secretary, and the gardener of the Tuileries. If the Baron was surprised he soon saw that he was dealing with persons in authority, when the baton of Marshal of France was offered him if he took Concini, dead or alive.* From the conversation which ensued Vitry gathered that death was the alternative preferred, and he made up his mind to it; he took

* Relation de la mort du Maréchal d'Ancre. M. et P., 2e Série, T. V. p. 452. *Pontchartrain Mémoires*, II. 386.

into his confidence men of his own family, who, desperate like himself, did not flinch at murder, and whose relationship secured their good faith.

The 20th of April was fixed for the execution of the plot, but no opportunity offered and the King was unwilling to have his enemy killed in his presence. At ten in the morning of the 24th, the Marshal left his rooms, which were situated on the battlements of the Louvre near the river, and came on foot towards the main entrance. The doors were thrown open and shut again as soon as he had entered, while Vitry, who had been warned, advanced to meet him, followed by his men, each carrying a loaded pistol under his cloak.

The conspirators passed their man, and Vitry was obliged to ask for him. He then walked up to the Marshal and, pointing at him with his stick, said: "The King has ordered me to seize your person."

"Arrest *me?*" cried Concini, laying his hand on his sword. "Yes, *you!*" answered Vitry; but his reply was lost in the report of firearms. When the smoke cleared away the Marquis d'Ancre lay

on his left side a corpse.* With him ended the reign of Marie de Médicis. Louis XIII., nearly wild with excitement, shouted: "Now I *am* King," when he knew that his enemy was no more. This exclamation sounded the knell of the Regent and her supporters.

All the old ministers were recalled. Villeroy, Sillery, and Jeannin reappeared as if by magic, while Barbin, Mangot, and Richelieu were blotted out. Peace was made with the Feudal lords, who came crowding to Paris to hail Luynes as their deliverer. But they found that they had a new master. The Duc d'Epernon summed up the situation in one of those sayings for which Frenchmen are famous: "It is still the same bottle," he said; "the cork is the only thing which has been changed."

* *Richelieu Mémoires*, p. 156. *Pontchartrain Mémoires*, 387. *Mercure François*, T. IV., part III. pp. 196–199.

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THE END