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CATHERINE DE MEDICI

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Catherine De Medici

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Honoré de Balzac

Catherine De Medici

DEDICATION

To Monsieur le Marquis de Pastoret, Member of the Academie des Beaux-Arts.

When we think of the enormous number of volumes that have been published on the question as to where Hannibal crossed the Alps, without our being able to decide to-day whether it was (according to Whittaker and Rivaz) by Lyon, Geneva, the Great Saint-Bernard, and the valley of Aosta; or (according to Letronne, Follard, Saint-Simon and Fortia d'Urbano) by the Isere, Grenoble, Saint-Bonnet, Monte Geneva, Fenestrella, and the Susa passage; or (according to Larauza) by the Mont Cenis and the Susa; or (according to Strabo, Polybius and Lucanus) by the Rhone, Vienne, Yenne, and the Dent du Chat; or (according to some intelligent minds) by Genoa, La Bochetta, and La Scrivia, – an opinion which I share and which Napoleon adopted, – not to speak of the verjuice with which the Alpine rocks have been bespattered by other learned men, – is it surprising, Monsieur le marquis, to see modern history so bemuddled that many important points are still obscure, and the most odious calumnies still rest on names that ought to be respected?

And let me remark, in passing, that Hannibal's crossing has been made almost problematical by these very elucidations. For instance, Pere Menestrier thinks that the Scoras mentioned by Polybius is the Saona; Letronne, Larauza and Schweighauser think it is the Isere; Cochard, a learned Lyonnais, calls it the Drome, and for all who have eyes to see there are between Scoras and Scrivia great geographical and linguistical resemblances, – to say nothing of the probability, amounting almost to certainty, that the Carthaginian fleet was moored in the Gulf of Spezzia or the roadstead of Genoa. I could understand these patient researches if there were any doubt as to the battle of Canna; but inasmuch as the results of that great battle are known, why blacken paper with all these suppositions (which are, as it were, the arabesques of hypothesis) while the history most important to the present day, that of the Reformation, is full of such obscurities that we are ignorant of the real name of the man who navigated a vessel by steam to Barcelona at the period when Luther and Calvin were inaugurating the insurrection of thought.¹

You and I hold, I think, the same opinion, after having made, each in his own way, close researches as to the grand and splendid figure of Catherine de' Medici. Consequently, I have thought that my historical studies upon that queen might properly be dedicated to an author who has written so much on the history of the Reformation; while at the same time I offer to the character and fidelity of a monarchical writer a public homage which may, perhaps, be valuable on account of its rarity.

¹ The name of the man who tried this experiment at Barcelona should be given as Salomon de Caux, not Caus. That great man has always been unfortunate; even after his death his name is mangled. Salomon, whose portrait taken at the age of forty-six was discovered by the author of the "Comedy of Human Life" at Heidelberg, was born at Caux in Normandy. He was the author of a book entitled "The Causes of Moving Forces," in which he gave the theory of the expansion and condensation of steam. He died in 1635.

INTRODUCTION

There is a general cry of paradox when scholars, struck by some historical error, attempt to correct it; but, for whoever studies modern history to its depths, it is plain that historians are privileged liars, who lend their pen to popular beliefs precisely as the newspapers of the day, or most of them, express the opinions of their readers.

Historical independence has shown itself much less among lay writers than among those of the Church. It is from the Benedictines, one of the glories of France, that the purest light has come to us in the matter of history, – so long, of course, as the interests of the order were not involved. About the middle of the eighteenth century great and learned controversialists, struck by the necessity of correcting popular errors endorsed by historians, made and published to the world very remarkable works. Thus Monsieur de Launoy, nicknamed the “Expeller of Saints,” made cruel war upon the saints surreptitiously smuggled into the Church. Thus the emulators of the Benedictines, the members (too little recognized) of the Academie des Inscriptions et Belles-lettres, began on many obscure historical points a series of monographs, which are admirable for patience, erudition, and logical consistency. Thus Voltaire, for a mistaken purpose and with ill-judged passion, frequently cast the light of his mind on historical prejudices. Diderot undertook in this direction a book (much too long) on the era of imperial Rome. If it had not been for the French Revolution, *criticism* applied to history might then have prepared the elements of a good and true history of France, the proofs for which had long been gathered by the Benedictines. Louis XVI., a just mind, himself translated the English work in which Walpole endeavored to explain Richard III., – a work much talked of in the last century.

Why do personages so celebrated as kings and queens, so important as the generals of armies, become objects of horror or derision? Half the world hesitates between the famous song on Marlborough and the history of England, and it also hesitates between history and popular tradition as to Charles IX. At all epochs when great struggles take place between the masses and authority, the populace creates for itself an *ogre-esque* personage – if it is allowable to coin a word to convey a just idea. Thus, to take an example in our own time, if it had not been for the “Memorial of Saint Helena,” and the controversies between the Royalists and the Bonapartists, there was every probability that the character of Napoleon would have been misunderstood. A few more Abbe de Pradits, a few more newspaper articles, and from being an emperor, Napoleon would have turned into an ogre.

How does error propagate itself? The mystery is accomplished under our very eyes without our perceiving it. No one suspects how much solidity the art of printing has given both to the envy which pursues greatness, and to the popular ridicule which fastens a contrary sense on a grand historical act. Thus, the name of the Prince de Polignac is given throughout the length and breadth of France to all bad horses that require whipping; and who knows how that will affect the opinion of the future as to the *coup d'Etat* of the Prince de Polignac himself? In consequence of a whim of Shakespeare – or perhaps it may have been a revenge, like that of Beaumarchais on Bergasse (Bergearss) – Falstaff is, in England, a type of the ridiculous; his very name provokes laughter; he is the king of clowns. Now, instead of being enormously pot-bellied, absurdly amorous, vain, drunken, old, and corrupted, Falstaff was one of the most distinguished men of his time, a Knight of the Garter, holding a high command in the army. At the accession of Henry V. Sir John Falstaff was only thirty-four years old. This general, who distinguished himself at the battle of Agincourt, and there took prisoner the Duc d'Alencon, captured, in 1420, the town of Montereau, which was vigorously defended. Moreover, under Henry VI. he defeated ten thousand French troops with fifteen hundred weary and famished men.

So much for war. Now let us pass to literature, and see our own Rabelais, a sober man who drank nothing but water, but is held to be, nevertheless, an extravagant lover of good cheer and a resolute drinker. A thousand ridiculous stories are told about the author of one of the finest books

in French literature, – “Pantagruel.” Aretino, the friend of Titian, and the Voltaire of his century, has, in our day, a reputation the exact opposite of his works and of his character; a reputation which he owes to a grossness of wit in keeping with the writings of his age, when broad farce was held in honor, and queens and cardinals wrote tales which would be called, in these days, licentious. One might go on multiplying such instances indefinitely.

In France, and that, too, during the most serious epoch of modern history, no woman, unless it be Brunehaut or Fredegonde, has suffered from popular error so much as Catherine de’ Medici; whereas Marie de’ Medici, all of whose actions were prejudicial to France, has escaped the shame which ought to cover her name. Marie de’ Medici wasted the wealth amassed by Henri IV.; she never purged herself of the charge of having known of the king’s assassination; her *intimate* was d’Epernon, who did not ward off Ravaillac’s blow, and who was proved to have known the murderer personally for a long time. Marie’s conduct was such that she forced her son to banish her from France, where she was encouraging her other son, Gaston, to rebel; and the victory Richelieu at last won over her (on the Day of the Dupes) was due solely to the discovery the cardinal made, and imparted to Louis XIII., of secret documents relating to the death of Henri IV.

Catherine de’ Medici, on the contrary, saved the crown of France; she maintained the royal authority in the midst of circumstances under which more than one great prince would have succumbed. Having to make head against factions and ambitions like those of the Guises and the house of Bourbon, against men such as the two Cardinals of Lorraine, the two Balafres, and the two Condes, against the queen Jeanne d’Albret, Henri IV., the Connetable de Montmorency, Calvin, the three Colignys, Theodore de Beze, she needed to possess and to display the rare qualities and precious gifts of a statesman under the mocking fire of the Calvinist press.

Those facts are incontestable. Therefore, to whosoever burrows into the history of the sixteenth century in France, the figure of Catherine de’ Medici will seem like that of a great king. When calumny is once dissipated by facts, recovered with difficulty from among the contradictions of pamphlets and false anecdotes, all explains itself to the fame of this extraordinary woman, who had none of the weaknesses of her sex, who lived chaste amid the license of the most dissolute court in Europe, and who, in spite of her lack of money, erected noble public buildings, as if to repair the loss caused by the iconoclasms of the Calvinists, who did as much harm to art as to the body politic. Hemmed in between the Guises who claimed to be the heirs of Charlemagne and the factious younger branch who sought to screen the treachery of the Connetable de Bourbon behind the throne, Catherine, forced to combat heresy which was seeking to annihilate the monarchy, without friends, aware of treachery among the leaders of the Catholic party, foreseeing a republic in the Calvinist party, Catherine employed the most dangerous but the surest weapon of public policy, – craft. She resolved to trick and so defeat, successively, the Guises who were seeking the ruin of the house of Valois, the Bourbons who sought the crown, and the Reformers (the Radicals of those days) who dreamed of an impossible republic – like those of our time; who have, however, nothing to reform. Consequently, so long as she lived, the Valois kept the throne of France. The great historian of that time, de Thou, knew well the value of this woman when, on hearing of her death, he exclaimed: “It is not a woman, it is monarchy itself that has died!”

Catherine had, in the highest degree, the sense of royalty, and she defended it with admirable courage and persistency. The reproaches which Calvinist writers have cast upon her are to her glory; she incurred them by reason only of her triumphs. Could she, placed as she was, triumph otherwise than by craft? The whole question lies there.

As for violence, that means is one of the most disputed questions of public policy; in our time it has been answered on the Place Louis XV., where they have now set up an Egyptian stone, as if to obliterate regicide and offer a symbol of the system of materialistic policy which governs us; it was answered at the Carmes and at the Abbaye; answered on the steps of Saint-Roch; answered once more by the people against the king before the Louvre in 1830, as it has since been answered

by Lafayette's best of all possible republics against the republican insurrection at Saint-Merri and the rue Transnonnain. All power, legitimate or illegitimate, must defend itself when attacked; but the strange thing is that where the people are held heroic in their victory over the nobility, power is called murderous in its duel with the people. If it succumbs after its appeal to force, power is then called imbecile. The present government is attempting to save itself by two laws from the same evil Charles X. tried to escape by two ordinances; is it not a bitter derision? Is craft permissible in the hands of power against craft? may it kill those who seek to kill it? The massacres of the Revolution have replied to the massacres of Saint-Bartholomew. The people, become king, have done against the king and the nobility what the king and the nobility did against the insurgents of the sixteenth century. Therefore the popular historians, who know very well that in a like case the people will do the same thing over again, have no excuse for blaming Catherine de' Medici and Charles IX.

"All power," said Casimir Perier, on learning what power ought to be, "is a permanent conspiracy." We admire the anti-social maxims put forth by daring writers; why, then, this disapproval which, in France, attaches to all social truths when boldly proclaimed? This question will explain, in itself alone, historical errors. Apply the answer to the destructive doctrines which flatter popular passions, and to the conservative doctrines which repress the mad efforts of the people, and you will find the reason of the unpopularity and also the popularity of certain personages. Laubardemont and Laffemas were, like some men of to-day, devoted to the defence of power in which they believed. Soldiers or judges, they all obeyed royalty. In these days d'Orthez would be dismissed for having misunderstood the orders of the ministry, but Charles X. left him governor of a province. The power of the many is accountable to no one; the power of one is compelled to render account to its subjects, to the great as well as to the small.

Catherine, like Philip the Second and the Duke of Alba, like the Guises and Cardinal Granvelle, saw plainly the future that the Reformation was bringing upon Europe. She and they saw monarchies, religion, authority shaken. Catherine wrote, from the cabinet of the kings of France, a sentence of death to that spirit of inquiry which then began to threaten modern society; a sentence which Louis XIV. ended by executing. The revocation of the Edict of Nantes was an unfortunate measure only so far as it caused the irritation of all Europe against Louis XIV. At another period England, Holland, and the Holy Roman Empire would not have welcomed banished Frenchmen and encouraged revolt in France.

Why refuse, in these days, to the majestic adversary of the most barren of heresies the grandeur she derived from the struggle itself? Calvinists have written much against the "craftiness" of Charles IX.; but travel through France, see the ruins of noble churches, estimate the fearful wounds given by the religionists to the social body, learn what vengeance they inflicted, and you will ask yourself, as you deplore the evils of individualism (the disease of our present France, the germ of which was in the questions of liberty of conscience then agitated), – you will ask yourself, I say, on which side were the executioners. There are, unfortunately, as Catherine herself says in the third division of this Study of her career, "in all ages hypocritical writers always ready to weep over the fate of two hundred scoundrels killed necessarily." Caesar, who tried to move the senate to pity the attempt of Catiline, might perhaps have got the better of Cicero could he have had an Opposition and its newspapers at his command.

Another consideration explains the historical and popular disfavor in which Catherine is held. The Opposition in France has always been Protestant, because it has had no policy but that of *negation*; it inherits the theories of Lutherans, Calvinists, and Protestants on the terrible words "liberty," "tolerance," "progress," and "philosophy." Two centuries have been employed by the opponents of power in establishing the doubtful doctrine of the *libre arbitre*, – liberty of will. Two other centuries were employed in developing the first corollary of liberty of will, namely, liberty of conscience. Our century is endeavoring to establish the second, namely, political liberty.

Placed between the ground already lost and the ground still to be defended, Catherine and the Church proclaimed the salutary principle of modern societies, *una fides, unus dominus*, using their power of life and death upon the innovators. Though Catherine was vanquished, succeeding centuries have proved her justification. The product of liberty of will, religious liberty, and political liberty (not, observe this, to be confounded with civil liberty) is the France of to-day. What is the France of 1840? A country occupied exclusively with material interests, – without patriotism, without conscience; where power has no vigor; where election, the fruit of liberty of will and political liberty, lifts to the surface none but commonplace men; where brute force has now become a necessity against popular violence; where discussion, spreading into everything, stifles the action of legislative bodies; where money rules all questions; where individualism – the dreadful product of the division of property *ad infinitum* – will suppress the family and devour all, even the nation, which egoism will some day deliver over to invasion. Men will say, “Why not the Czar?” just as they said, “Why not the Duc d’Orleans?” We don’t cling to many things even now; but fifty years hence we shall cling to nothing.

Thus, according to Catherine de’ Medici and according to all those who believe in a well-ordered society, in *social man*, the subject cannot have liberty of will, ought not to *teach* the dogma of liberty of conscience, or demand political liberty. But, as no society can exist without guarantees granted to the subject against the sovereign, there results for the subject *liberties* subject to restriction. Liberty, no; liberties, yes, – precise and well-defined liberties. That is in harmony with the nature of things.

It is, assuredly, beyond the reach of human power to prevent the liberty of thought; and no sovereign can interfere with money. The great statesmen who were vanquished in the long struggle (it lasted five centuries) recognized the right of subjects to great liberties; but they did not admit their right to publish anti-social thoughts, nor did they admit the indefinite liberty of the subject. To them the words “subject” and “liberty” were terms that contradicted each other; just as the theory of citizens being all equal constitutes an absurdity which nature contradicts at every moment. To recognize the necessity of a religion, the necessity of authority, and then to leave to subjects the right to deny religion, attack its worship, oppose the exercise of power by public expression communicable and communicated by thought, was an impossibility which the Catholics of the sixteenth century would not hear of.

Alas! the victory of Calvinism will cost France more in the future than it has yet cost her; for religious sects and humanitarian, equality-levelling politics are, to-day, the tail of Calvinism; and, judging by the mistakes of the present power, its contempt for intellect, its love for material interests, in which it seeks the basis of its support (though material interests are the most treacherous of all supports), we may predict that unless some providence intervenes, the genius of destruction will again carry the day over the genius of preservation. The assailants, who have nothing to lose and all to gain, understand each other thoroughly; whereas their rich adversaries will not make any sacrifice either of money or self-love to draw to themselves supporters.

The art of printing came to the aid of the opposition begun by the Vaudois and the Albigenes. As soon as human thought, instead of condensing itself, as it was formerly forced to do to remain in communicable form, took on a multitude of garments and became, as it were, the people itself, instead of remaining a sort of axiomatic divinity, there were two multitudes to combat, – the multitude of ideas, and the multitude of men. The royal power succumbed in that warfare, and we are now assisting, in France, at its last combination with elements which render its existence difficult, not to say impossible. Power is action, and the elective principle is discussion. There is no policy, no statesmanship possible where discussion is permanent.

Therefore we ought to recognize the grandeur of the woman who had the eyes to see this future and fought it bravely. That the house of Bourbon was able to succeed to the house of Valois, that it found a crown preserved to it, was due solely to Catherine de’ Medici. Suppose the second Balafre had lived? No matter how strong the Bearnais was, it is doubtful whether he could have seized the crown,

seeing how dearly the Duc de Mayenne and the remains of the Guise party sold it to him. The means employed by Catherine, who certainly had to reproach herself with the deaths of Francois II. and Charles IX., whose lives might have been saved in time, were never, it is observable, made the subject of accusations by either the Calvinists or modern historians. Though there was no poisoning, as some grave writers have said, there was other conduct almost as criminal; there is no doubt she hindered Pare from saving one, and allowed the other to accomplish his own doom by moral assassination. But the sudden death of Francois II., and that of Charles IX., were no injury to the Calvinists, and therefore the causes of these two events remained in their secret sphere, and were never suspected either by the writers of the people of that day; they were not divined except by de Thou, l'Hopital, and minds of that calibre, or by the leaders of the two parties who were coveting or defending the throne, and believed such means necessary to their end.

Popular songs attacked, strangely enough, Catherine's morals. Every one knows the anecdote of the soldier who was roasting a goose in the courtyard of the chateau de Tours during the conference between Catherine and Henri IV., singing, as he did so, a song in which the queen was grossly insulted. Henri IV. drew his sword to go out and kill the man; but Catherine stopped him and contented herself with calling from the window to her insulter: —

“Eh! but it was Catherine who gave you the goose.”

Though the executions at Amboise were attributed to Catherine, and though the Calvinists made her responsible for all the inevitable evils of that struggle, it was with her as it was, later, with Robespierre, who is still waiting to be justly judged. Catherine was, moreover, rightly punished for her preference for the Duc d'Anjou, to whose interests the two elder brothers were sacrificed. Henri III., like all spoilt children, ended in becoming absolutely indifferent to his mother, and he plunged voluntarily into the life of debauchery which made of him what his mother had made of Charles IX., a husband without sons, a king without heirs. Unhappily the Duc d'Alencon, Catherine's last male child, had already died, a natural death.

The last words of the great queen were like a summing up of her lifelong policy, which was, moreover, so plain in its common-sense that all cabinets are seen under similar circumstances to put it in practice.

“Enough cut off, my son,” she said when Henri III. came to her death-bed to tell her that the great enemy of the crown was dead, “*now piece together.*”

By which she meant that the throne should at once reconcile itself with the house of Lorraine and make use of it, as the only means of preventing evil results from the hatred of the Guises, — by holding out to them the hope of surrounding the king. But the persistent craft and dissimulation of the woman and the Italian, which she had never failed to employ, was incompatible with the debauched life of her son. Catherine de' Medici once dead, the policy of the Valois died also.

Before undertaking to write the history of the manners and morals of this period in action, the author of this Study has patiently and minutely examined the principal reigns in the history of France, the quarrel of the Burgundians and the Armagnacs, that of the Guises and the Valois, each of which covers a century. His first intention was to write a picturesque history of France. Three women — Isabella of Bavaria, Catharine and Marie de' Medici — hold an enormous place in it, their sway reaching from the fourteenth to the seventeenth century, ending in Louis XIV. Of these three queens, Catherine is the finer and more interesting. Hers was virile power, dishonored neither by the terrible amours of Isabella nor by those, even more terrible, though less known, of Marie de' Medici. Isabella summoned the English into France against her son, and loved her brother-in-law, the Duc d'Orleans. The record of Marie de' Medici is heavier still. Neither had political genius.

It was in the course of these studies that the writer acquired the conviction of Catherine's greatness; as he became initiated into the constantly renewed difficulties of her position, he saw with what injustice historians — all influenced by Protestants — had treated this queen. Out of this conviction grew the three sketches which here follow; in which some erroneous opinions formed upon

Catherine, also upon the persons who surrounded her, and on the events of her time, are refuted. If this book is placed among the Philosophical Studies, it is because it shows the Spirit of a Time, and because we may clearly see in it the influence of thought.

But before entering the political arena, where Catherine will be seen facing the two great difficulties of her career, it is necessary to give a succinct account of her preceding life, from the point of view of impartial criticism, in order to take in as much as possible of this vast and regal existence up to the moment when the first part of the present Study begins.

Never was there any period, in any land, in any sovereign family, a greater contempt for legitimacy than in the famous house of the Medici. On the subject of power they held the same doctrine now professed by Russia, namely: to whichever head the crown goes, he is the true, the legitimate sovereign. Mirabeau had reason to say: "There has been but one mesalliance in my family, – that of the Medici"; for in spite of the paid efforts of genealogists, it is certain that the Medici, before Everardo de' Medici, *gonfaloniero* of Florence in 1314, were simple Florentine merchants who became very rich. The first personage in this family who occupies an important place in the history of the famous Tuscan republic is Silvestro de' Medici, *gonfaloniero* in 1378. This Silvestro had two sons, Cosmo and Lorenzo de' Medici.

From Cosmo are descended Lorenzo the Magnificent, the Duc de Nemours, the Duc d'Urbino, father of Catherine, Pope Leo X., Pope Clement VII., and Alessandro, not Duke of Florence, as historians call him, but Duke *della citta di Penna*, a title given by Pope Clement VII., as a half-way station to that of Grand-duke of Tuscany.

From Lorenzo are descended the Florentine Brutus Lorenzino, who killed Alessandro, Cosmo, the first grand-duke, and all the sovereigns of Tuscany till 1737, at which period the house became extinct.

But neither of the two branches – the branch Cosmo and the branch Lorenzo – reigned through their direct and legitimate lines until the close of the sixteenth century, when the grand-dukes of Tuscany began to succeed each other peacefully. Alessandro de' Medici, he to whom the title of Duke *della citta di Penna* was given, was the son of the Duke d'Urbino, Catherine's father, by a Moorish slave. For this reason Lorenzino claimed a double right to kill Alessandro, – as a usurper in his house, as well as an oppressor of the city. Some historians believe that Alessandro was the son of Clement VII. The fact that led to the recognition of this bastard as chief of the republic and head of the house of the Medici was his marriage with Margaret of Austria, natural daughter of Charles V.

Francesco de' Medici, husband of Bianca Capello, accepted as his son a child of poor parents bought by the celebrated Venetian; and, strange to say, Ferdinando, on succeeding Francesco, maintained the substituted child in all his rights. That child, called Antonio de' Medici, was considered during four reigns as belonging to the family; he won the affection of everybody, rendered important services to the family, and died universally regretted.

Nearly all the first Medici had natural children, whose careers were invariably brilliant. For instance, the Cardinal Giulio de' Medici, afterwards Pope under the name of Clement VII., was the illegitimate son of Giuliano I. Cardinal Ippolito de' Medici was also a bastard, and came very near being Pope and the head of the family.

Lorenzo II., the father of Catherine, married in 1518, for his second wife, Madeleine de la Tour de Boulogne, in Auvergne, and died April 25, 1519, a few days after his wife, who died in giving birth to Catherine. Catherine was therefore orphaned of father and mother as soon as she drew breath. Hence the strange adventures of her childhood, mixed up as they were with the bloody efforts of the Florentines, then seeking to recover their liberty from the Medici. The latter, desirous of continuing to reign in Florence, behaved with such circumspection that Lorenzo, Catherine's father, had taken the name of Duke d'Urbino.

At Lorenzo's death, the head of the house of the Medici was Pope Leo X., who sent the illegitimate son of Giuliano, Giulio de' Medici, then cardinal, to govern Florence. Leo X. was great-uncle to Catherine, and this Cardinal Giulio, afterward Clement VII., was her uncle by the left hand.

It was during the siege of Florence, undertaken by the Medici to force their return there, that the Republican party, not content with having shut Catherine, then nine years old, into a convent, after robbing her of all her property, actually proposed, on the suggestion of one named Batista Cei, to expose her between two battlements on the walls to the artillery of the Medici. Bernardo Castiglione went further in a council held to determine how matters should be ended: he was of opinion that, so far from returning her to the Pope as the latter requested, she ought to be given to the soldiers for dishonor. This will show how all popular revolutions resemble each other. Catherine's subsequent policy, which upheld so firmly the royal power, may well have been instigated in part by such scenes, of which an Italian girl of nine years of age was assuredly not ignorant.

The rise of Alessandro de' Medici, to which the bastard Pope Clement VII. powerfully contributed, was no doubt chiefly caused by the affection of Charles V. for his famous illegitimate daughter Margaret. Thus Pope and emperor were prompted by the same sentiment. At this epoch Venice had the commerce of the world; Rome had its moral government; Italy still reigned supreme through the poets, the generals, the statesmen born to her. At no period of the world's history, in any land, was there ever seen so remarkable, so abundant a collection of men of genius. There were so many, in fact, that even the lesser princes were superior men. Italy was crammed with talent, enterprise, knowledge, science, poesy, wealth, and gallantry, all the while torn by intestinal warfare and overrun with conquerors struggling for possession of her finest provinces. When men are so strong, they do not fear to admit their weaknesses. Hence, no doubt, this golden age for bastards. We must, moreover, do the illegitimate children of the house of the Medici the justice to say that they were ardently devoted to the glory, power, and increase of wealth of that famous family. Thus as soon as the *Duca della citta di Penna*, son of the Moorish woman, was installed as tyrant of Florence, he espoused the interest of Pope Clement VII., and gave a home to the daughter of Lorenzo II., then eleven years of age.

When we study the march of events and that of men in this curious sixteenth century, we ought never to forget that public policy had for its element a perpetual craftiness and a dissimulation which destroyed, in all characters, the straightforward, upright bearing our imaginations demand of eminent personages. In this, above all, is Catherine's absolution. It disposes of the vulgar and foolish accusations of treachery launched against her by the writers of the Reformation. This was the great age of that statesmanship the code of which was written by Macchiavelli as well as by Spinoza, by Hobbes as well as by Montesquieu, – for the dialogue between Sylla and Eucrates contains Montesquieu's true thought, which his connection with the Encyclopedists did not permit him to develop otherwise than as he did.

These principles are to-day the secret law of all cabinets in which plans for the conquest and maintenance of great power are laid. In France we blamed Napoleon when he made use of that Italian genius for craft which was bred in his bone, – though in his case it did not always succeed. But Charles V., Catherine, Philip II., and Pope Julius would not have acted otherwise than as he did in the affair of Spain. History, in the days when Catherine was born, if judged from the point of view of honesty, would seem an impossible tale. Charles V., obliged to sustain Catholicism against the attacks of Luther, who threatened the Throne in threatening the Tiara, allowed the siege of Rome and held Pope Clement VII. in prison! This same Clement, who had no bitterer enemy than Charles V., courted him in order to make Alessandro de' Medici ruler of Florence, and obtained his favorite daughter for that bastard. No sooner was Alessandro established than he, conjointly with Clement VII., endeavored to injure Charles V. by allying himself with Francois I., king of France, by means of Catherine de' Medici; and both of them promised to assist Francois in reconquering Italy. Lorenzino de' Medici made himself the companion of Alessandro's debaucheries for the express purpose of

finding an opportunity to kill him. Filippo Strozzi, one of the great minds of that day, held this murder in such respect that he swore that his sons should each marry a daughter of the murderer; and each son religiously fulfilled his father's oath when they might all have made, under Catherine's protection, brilliant marriages; for one was the rival of Doria, the other a marshal of France. Cosmo de' Medici, successor of Alessandro, with whom he had no relationship, avenged the death of that tyrant in the cruellest manner, with a persistency lasting twelve years; during which time his hatred continued keen against the persons who had, as a matter of fact, given him the power. He was eighteen years old when called to the sovereignty; his first act was to declare the rights of Alessandro's legitimate sons null and void, – all the while avenging their father's death! Charles V. confirmed the disinheriting of his grandsons, and recognized Cosmo instead of the son of Alessandro and his daughter Margaret. Cosmo, placed on the throne by Cardinal Cibo, instantly exiled the latter; and the cardinal revenged himself by accusing Cosmo (who was the first grand-duke) of murdering Alessandro's son. Cosmo, as jealous of his power as Charles V. was of his, abdicated in favor of his son Francesco, after causing the death of his other son, Garcia, to avenge the death of Cardinal Giovanni de' Medici, whom Garcia had assassinated. Cosmo the First and his son Francesco, who ought to have been devoted, body and soul, to the house of France, the only power on which they might really have relied, made themselves the lacqueys of Charles V. and Philip II., and were consequently the secret, base, and perfidious enemies of Catherine de' Medici, one of the glories of their house.

Such were the leading contradictory and illogical traits, the treachery, knavery, and black intrigues of a single house, that of the Medici. From this sketch, we may judge of the other princes of Italy and Europe. All the envoys of Cosmos I. to the court of France had, in their secret instructions, an order to poison Strozzi, Catherine's relation, when he arrived. Charles V. had already assassinated three of the ambassadors of Francois I.

It was early in the month of October, 1533, that the *Duca della citta di Penna* started from Florence for Livorno, accompanied by the sole heiress of Lorenzo II., namely, Catherine de' Medici. The duke and the Princess of Florence, for that was the title by which the young girl, then fourteen years of age, was known, left the city surrounded by a large retinue of servants, officers, and secretaries, preceded by armed men, and followed by an escort of cavalry. The young princess knew nothing as yet of what her fate was to be, except that the Pope was to have an interview at Livorno with the Duke Alessandro; but her uncle, Filippo Strozzi, very soon informed her of the future before her.

Filippo Strozzi had married Clarice de' Medici, half-sister on the father's side of Lorenzo de' Medici, Duke of Urbino, father of Catherine; but this marriage, which was brought about as much to convert one of the firmest supporters of the popular party to the cause of the Medici as to facilitate the recall of that family, then banished from Florence, never shook the stern champion from his course, though he was persecuted by his own party for making it. In spite of all apparent changes in his conduct (for this alliance naturally affected it somewhat) he remained faithful to the popular party, and declared himself openly against the Medici as soon as he foresaw their intention to enslave Florence. This great man even refused the offer of a principality made to him by Leo X.

At the time of which we are now writing Filippo Strozzi was a victim to the policy of the Medici, so vacillating in its means, so fixed and inflexible in its object. After sharing the misfortunes and the captivity of Clement VII. when the latter, surprised by the Colonna, took refuge in the Castle of Saint-Angelo, Strozzi was delivered up by Clement as a hostage and taken to Naples. As the Pope, when he got his liberty, turned savagely on his enemies, Strozzi came very near losing his life, and was forced to pay an enormous sum to be released from a prison where he was closely confined. When he found himself at liberty he had, with an instinct of kindness natural to an honest man, the simplicity to present himself before Clement VII., who had perhaps congratulated himself on being well rid of him. The Pope had such good cause to blush for his own conduct that he received Strozzi extremely ill.

Strozzi thus began, early in life, his apprenticeship in the misfortunes of an honest man in politics, – a man whose conscience cannot lend itself to the capriciousness of events; whose actions

are acceptable only to the virtuous; and who is therefore persecuted by the world, – by the people, for opposing their blind passions; by power for opposing its usurpations. The life of such great citizens is a martyrdom, in which they are sustained only by the voice of their conscience and an heroic sense of social duty, which dictates their course in all things. There were many such men in the republic of Florence, all as great as Strozzi, and as able as their adversaries the Medici, though vanquished by the superior craft and wiliness of the latter. What could be more worthy of admiration than the conduct of the chief of the Pazzi at the time of the conspiracy of his house, when, his commerce being at that time enormous, he settled all his accounts with Asia, the Levant, and Europe before beginning that great attempt; so that, if it failed, his correspondents should lose nothing.

The history of the establishment of the house of the Medici in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries is a magnificent tale which still remains to be written, though men of genius have already put their hands to it. It is not the history of a republic, nor of a society, nor of any special civilization; it is the history of *statesmen*, the eternal history of Politics, – that of usurpers, that of conquerors.

As soon as Filippo Strozzi returned to Florence he re-established the preceding form of government and ousted Ippolito de' Medici, another bastard, and the very Alessandro with whom, at the later period of which we are now writing, he was travelling to Livorno. Having completed this change of government, he became alarmed at the evident inconstancy of the people of Florence, and, fearing the vengeance of Clement VII., he went to Lyon to superintend a vast house of business he owned there, which corresponded with other banking-houses of his own in Venice, Rome, France, and Spain. Here we find a strange thing. These men who bore the weight of public affairs and of such a struggle as that with the Medici (not to speak of contentions with their own party) found time and strength to bear the burden of a vast business and all its speculations, also of banks and their complications, which the multiplicity of coinages and their falsification rendered even more difficult than it is in our day. The name “banker” comes from the *banc* (Anglice, *bench*) upon which the banker sat, and on which he rang the gold and silver pieces to try their quality. After a time Filippo found in the death of his wife, whom he adored, a pretext for renewing his relations with the Republican party, whose secret police becomes the more terrible in all republics, because every one makes himself a spy in the name of a liberty which justifies everything.

Filippo returned to Florence at the very moment when that city was compelled to adopt the yoke of Alessandro; but he had previously gone to Rome and seen Pope Clement VII., whose affairs were now so prosperous that his disposition toward Strozzi was much changed. In the hour of triumph the Medici were so much in need of a man like Filippo – were it only to smooth the return of Alessandro – that Clement urged him to take a seat at the Council of the bastard who was about to oppress the city; and Strozzi consented to accept the diploma of a senator.

But, for the last two years and more, he had seen, like Seneca and Burrhus, the beginnings of tyranny in his Nero. He felt himself, at the moment of which we write, an object of so much distrust on the part of the people and so suspected by the Medici whom he was constantly resisting, that he was confident of some impending catastrophe. Consequently, as soon as he heard from Alessandro of the negotiation for Catherine's marriage with the son of Francois I., the final arrangements for which were to be made at Livorno, where the negotiators had appointed to meet, he formed the plan of going to France, and attaching himself to the fortunes of his niece, who needed a guardian.

Alessandro, delighted to rid himself of a man so unaccommodating in the affairs of Florence, furthered a plan which relieved him of one murder at least, and advised Strozzi to put himself at the head of Catherine's household. In order to dazzle the eyes of France the Medici had selected a brilliant suite for her whom they styled, very unwarrantably, the Princess of Florence, and who also went by the name of the little Duchess d'Urbino. The cortege, at the head of which rode Alessandro, Catherine, and Strozzi, was composed of more than a thousand persons, not including the escort and servants. When the last of it issued from the gates of Florence the head had passed that first village beyond the city where they now braid the Tuscan straw hats. It was beginning to be rumored among

the people that Catherine was to marry a son of Francois I.; but the rumor did not obtain much belief until the Tuscans beheld with their own eyes this triumphal procession from Florence to Livorno.

Catherine herself, judging by all the preparations she beheld, began to suspect that her marriage was in question, and her uncle then revealed to her the fact that the first ambitious project of his house had aborted, and that the hand of the dauphin had been refused to her. Alessandro still hoped that the Duke of Albany would succeed in changing this decision of the king of France who, willing as he was to buy the support of the Medici in Italy, would only grant them his second son, the Duc d'Orleans. This petty blunder lost Italy to France, and did not prevent Catherine from becoming queen.

The Duke of Albany, son of Alexander Stuart, brother of James III., king of Scotland, had married Anne de la Tour de Boulogne, sister of Madeleine de la Tour de Boulogne, Catherine's mother; he was therefore her maternal uncle. It was through her mother that Catherine was so rich and allied to so many great families; for, strangely enough, her rival, Diane de Poitiers, was also her cousin. Jean de Poitiers, father of Diane, was son of Jeanne de Boulogne, aunt of the Duchess d'Urbino. Catherine was also a cousin of Mary Stuart, her daughter-in-law.

Catherine now learned that her dowry in money was a hundred thousand ducats. A ducat was a gold piece of the size of an old French louis, though less thick. (The old louis was worth twenty-four francs – the present one is worth twenty). The Comtes of Auvergne and Lauraguais were also made a part of the dowry, and Pope Clement added one hundred thousand ducats in jewels, precious stones, and other wedding gifts; to which Alessandro likewise contributed his share.

On arriving at Livorno, Catherine, still so young, must have been flattered by the extreme magnificence displayed by Pope Clement ("her uncle in Notre-Dame," then head of the house of the Medici), in order to outdo the court of France. He had already arrived at Livorno in one of his galleys, which was lined with crimson satin fringed with gold, and covered with a tent-like awning in cloth of gold. This galley, the decoration of which cost twenty thousand ducats, contained several apartments destined for the bride of Henri of France, all of which were furnished with the richest treasures of art the Medici could collect. The rowers, magnificently appressed, and the crew were under the command of a prior of the order of the Knights of Rhodes. The household of the Pope were in three other galleys. The galleys of the Duke of Albany, anchored near those of Clement VII., added to the size and dignity of the flotilla.

Duke Alessandro presented the officers of Catherine's household to the Pope, with whom he had a secret conference, in which, it would appear, he presented to his Holiness Count Sebastiano Montecuculi, who had just left, somewhat abruptly, the service of Charles V. and that of his two generals, Antonio di Leyva and Ferdinando di Gonzago. Was there between the two bastards, Giulio and Alessandro, a premeditated intention of making the Duc d'Orleans dauphin? What reward was promised to Sebastiano Montecuculi, who, before entering the service of Charles V. had studied medicine? History is silent on that point. We shall see presently what clouds hang round that fact. The obscurity is so great that, quite recently, grave and conscientious historians have admitted Montecuculi's innocence.

Catherine then heard officially from the Pope's own lips of the alliance reserved for her. The Duke of Albany had been able to do no more than hold the king of France, and that with difficulty, to his promise of giving Catherine the hand of his second son, the Duc d'Orleans. The Pope's impatience was so great, and he was so afraid that his plans would be thwarted either by some intrigue of the emperor, or by the refusal of France, or by the grandees of the kingdom looking with evil eye upon the marriage, that he gave orders to embark at once, and sailed for Marseille, where he arrived toward the end of October, 1533.

Notwithstanding its wealth, the house of the Medici was eclipsed on this occasion by the court of France. To show the lengths to which the Medici pushed their magnificence, it is enough to say that the "dozen" put into the bride's purse by the Pope were twelve gold medals of priceless historical value, which were then unique. But Francois I., who loved the display of festivals, distinguished

himself on this occasion. The wedding festivities of Henri de Valois and Catherine de' Medici lasted thirty-four days.

It is useless to repeat the details, which have been given in all the histories of Provence and Marseille, as to this celebrated interview between the Pope and the king of France, which was opened by a jest of the Duke of Albany as to the duty of keeping fasts, – a jest mentioned by Brantome and much enjoyed by the court, which shows the tone of the manners of that day.

Many conjectures have been made as to Catherine's barrenness, which lasted ten years. Strange calumnies still rest upon this queen, all of whose actions were fated to be misjudged. It is sufficient to say that the cause was solely in Henri II. After the difficulty was removed, Catherine had ten children. The delay was, in one respect, fortunate for France. If Henri II. had had children by Diane de Poitiers the politics of the kingdom would have been dangerously complicated. When the difficulty was removed the Duchesse de Valentinois had reached the period of a woman's second youth. This matter alone will show that the true life of Catherine de' Medici is still to be written, and also – as Napoleon said with profound wisdom – that the history of France should be either in one volume only, or one thousand.

Here is a contemporaneous and succinct account of the meeting of Clement VII. and the king of France:

“His Holiness the Pope, having been conducted to the palace, which was, as I have said, prepared beyond the port, every one retired to their own quarters till the morrow, when his Holiness was to make his entry; the which was made with great sumptuousness and magnificence, he being seated in a chair carried on the shoulders of two men and wearing his pontifical robes, but not the tiara. Pacing before him was a white hackney, bearing the sacrament of the altar, – the said hackney being led by reins of white silk held by two footmen finely equipped. Next came all the cardinals in their robes, on pontifical mules, and Madame la Duchesse d'Urbino in great magnificence, accompanied by a vast number of ladies and gentlemen, both French and Italian.

“The Holy Father having arrived in the midst of this company at the place appointed for his lodging, every one retired; and all this, being well-ordered, took place without disorder or tumult. While the Pope was thus making his entry, the king crossed the water in a frigate and went to the lodging the Pope had just quitted, in order to go the next day and make obeisance to the Holy Father as a Most Christian king.

“The next day the king being prepared set forth for the palace where was the Pope, accompanied by the princes of the blood, such as Monseigneur le Duc de Vendomois (father of the Vidame de Chartres), the Comte de Saint-Pol, Messieurs de Montpensier and la Roche-sur-Yon, the Duc de Nemours (brother of the Duc de Savoie) who died in this said place, the Duke of Albany, and many others, whether counts, barons, or seigneurs; nearest to the king was the Seigneur de Montmorency, his Grand-master.

“The king, being arrived at the palace, was received by the Pope and all the college of cardinals, assembled in consistory, most civilly. This done, each retired to the place ordained for him, the king taking with him several cardinals to feast them, – among them Cardinal de' Medici, nephew of the Pope, a very splendid man with a fine retinue.

“On the morrow those persons chosen by his Holiness and by the king began to assemble to discuss the matters for which the meeting was made. First, the matter of the Faith was treated of, and a bull was put forth repressing heresy and preventing that things come to greater combustion than they now are.

“After this was concluded the marriage of the Duc d’Orleans, second son of the king, with Catherine de’ Medici, Duchesse d’Urbino, niece of his Holiness, under the conditions such, or like to those, as were proposed formerly by the Duke of Albany. The said espousals were celebrated with great magnificence, and our Holy Father himself wedded the pair. The marriage thus consummated, the Holy Father held a consistory at which he created four cardinals and devoted them to the king, – to wit: Cardinal Le Veneur, formerly bishop of Lisieux and grand almoner; the Cardinal de Boulogne of the family of la Chambre, brother on the mother’s side of the Duke of Albany; the Cardinal de Chatillon of the house of Coligny, nephew of the Sire de Montmorency, and the Cardinal de Givry.”

When Strozzi delivered the dowry in presence of the court he noticed some surprise on the part of the French seigneurs; they even said aloud that it was little enough for such a mesalliance (what would they have said in these days?). Cardinal Ippolito replied, saying: —

“You must be ill-informed as to the secrets of your king. His Holiness has bound himself to give to France three pearls of inestimable value, namely: Genoa, Milan, and Naples.”

The Pope left Sebastiano Montecuculi to present himself to the court of France, to which the count offered his services, complaining of his treatment by Antonio di Leyva and Ferdinando di Gonzago, for which reason his services were accepted. Montecuculi was not made a part of Catherine’s household, which was wholly composed of French men and women, for, by a law of the monarchy, the execution of which the Pope saw with great satisfaction, Catherine was naturalized by letters-patent as a Frenchwoman before the marriage. Montecuculi was appointed in the first instance to the household of the queen, the sister of Charles V. After a while he passed into the service of the dauphin as cup-bearer.

The new Duchesse d’Orleans soon found herself a nullity at the court of Francois I. Her young husband was in love with Diane de Poitiers, who certainly, in the matter of birth, could rival Catherine, and was far more of a great lady than the little Florentine. The daughter of the Medici was also outdone by Queen Eleonore, sister of Charles V., and by Madame d’Etampes, whose marriage with the head of the house of Brosse made her one of the most powerful and best titled women in France. Catherine’s aunt the Duchess of Albany, the Queen of Navarre, the Duchesse de Guise, the Duchesse de Vendome, Madame la Connetable de Montmorency, and other women of like importance, eclipsed by birth and by their rights, as well as by their power at the most sumptuous court of France (not excepting that of Louis XIV.), the daughter of the Florentine grocers, who was richer and more illustrious through the house of the Tour de Boulogne than by her own family of Medici.

The position of his niece was so bad and difficult that the republican Filippo Strozzi, wholly incapable of guiding her in the midst of such conflicting interests, left her after the first year, being recalled to Italy by the death of Clement VII. Catherine’s conduct, when we remember that she was scarcely fifteen years old, was a model of prudence. She attached herself closely to the king, her father-in-law; she left him as little as she could, following him on horseback both in hunting and in war. Her idolatry for Francois I. saved the house of the Medici from all suspicion when the dauphin was poisoned. Catherine was then, and so was her husband, at the headquarters of the king in Provence; for Charles V. had speedily invaded France and the late scene of the marriage festivities had become the theatre of a cruel war.

At the moment when Charles V. was put to flight, leaving the bones of his army in Provence, the dauphin was returning to Lyon by the Rhone. He stopped to sleep at Tournon, and, by way of pastime, practised some violent physical exercises, – which were nearly all the education his brother and he, in consequence of their detention as hostages, had ever received. The prince had the imprudence – it being the month of August, and the weather very hot – to ask for a glass of water, which Montecuculi, as his cup-bearer, gave to him, with ice in it. The dauphin died almost immediately. Francois I. adored his son. The dauphin was, according to all accounts, a charming young man. His father, in despair,

gave the utmost publicity to the proceedings against Montecuculi, which he placed in the hands of the most able magistrates of that day. The count, after heroically enduring the first tortures without confessing anything, finally made admissions by which he implicated Charles V. and his two generals, Antonio di Leyva and Ferdinando di Gonzago. No affair was ever more solemnly debated. Here is what the king did, in the words of an ocular witness: —

“The king called an assembly at Lyon of all the princes of his blood, all the knights of his order, and other great personages of the kingdom; also the legal and papal nuncio, the cardinals who were at his court, together with the ambassadors of England, Scotland, Portugal, Venice, Ferrara, and others; also all the princes and noble strangers, both Italian and German, who were then residing at his court in great numbers. These all being assembled, he caused to be read to them, in presence of each other, from beginning to end, the trial of the unhappy man who poisoned Monseigneur the late dauphin, — with all the interrogatories, confessions, confrontings, and other ceremonies usual in criminal trials; he, the king, not being willing that the sentence should be executed until all present had given their opinion on this heinous and miserable case.”

The fidelity, devotion, and cautious skill of the Comte de Montecuculi may seem extraordinary in our time, when all the world, even ministers of State, tell everything about the least little event with which they have to do; but in those days princes could find devoted servants, or knew how to choose them. Monarchical Moreys existed because in those days there was *faith*. Never ask devotion of *self-interest*, because such interest may change; but expect all from sentiments, religious faith, monarchical faith, patriotic faith. Those three beliefs produced such men as the Berthereaus of Geneva, the Sydneys and Straffords of England, the murderers of Thomas a Becket, the Jacques Coeurs, the Jeanne d’Arcs, the Richelieus, Dantons, Bonchamps, Talmonts, and also the Clements, Chabots, and others.

The dauphin was poisoned in the same manner, and possibly by the same drug which afterwards served MADAME under Louis XIV. Pope Clement VII. had been dead two years; Duke Alessandro, plunged in debauchery, seemed to have no interest in the elevation of the Duc d’Orleans; Catherine, then seventeen, and full of admiration for her father-in-law, was with him at the time; Charles V. alone appeared to have an interest in his death, for Francois I. was negotiating for his son an alliance which would assuredly have aggrandized France. The count’s confession was therefore very skilfully based on the passions and politics of the moment; Charles V. was then flying from France, leaving his armies buried in Provence with his happiness, his reputation, and his hopes of dominion. It is to be remarked that if torture had forced admissions from an innocent man, Francois I. gave Montecuculi full liberty to speak in presence of an imposing assembly, and before persons in whose eyes innocence had some chance to triumph. The king, who wanted the truth, sought it in good faith.

In spite of her now brilliant future, Catherine’s situation at court was not changed by the death of the dauphin. Her barrenness gave reason to fear a divorce in case her husband should ascend the throne. The dauphin was under the spell of Diane de Poitiers, who assumed to rival Madame d’Etampes, the king’s mistress. Catherine redoubled in care and cajolery of her father-in-law, being well aware that her sole support was in him. The first ten years of Catherine’s married life were years of ever-renewed grief, caused by the failure, one by one, of her hopes of pregnancy, and the vexations of her rivalry with Diane. Imagine what must have been the life of a young princess, watched by a jealous mistress who was supported by a powerful party, — the Catholic party, — and by the two powerful alliances Diane had made in marrying one daughter to Robert de la Mark, Duc de Bouillon, Prince of Sedan, and the other to Claude de Lorraine, Duc d’Aumale.

Catherine, helpless between the party of Madame d’Etampes and the party of the Senechale (such was Diane’s title during the reign of Francois I.), which divided the court and politics into

factions for these mortal enemies, endeavored to make herself the friend of both Diane de Poitiers and Madame d'Etampes. She, who was destined to become so great a queen, played the part of a servant. Thus she served her apprenticeship in that double-faced policy which was ever the secret motor of her life. Later, the *queen* was to stand between Catholics and Calvinists, just as the *woman* had stood for ten years between Madame d'Etampes and Madame de Poitiers. She studied the contradictions of French politics; she saw Francois I. sustaining Calvin and the Lutherans in order to embarrass Charles V., and then, after secretly and patiently protecting the Reformation in Germany, and tolerating the residence of Calvin at the court of Navarre, he suddenly turned against it with excessive rigor. Catherine beheld on the one hand the court, and the women of the court, playing with the fire of heresy, and on the other, Diane at the head of the Catholic party with the Guises, solely because the Duchesse d'Etampes supported Calvin and the Protestants.

Such was the political education of this queen, who saw in the cabinet of the king of France the same errors committed as in the house of the Medici. The dauphin opposed his father in everything; he was a bad son. He forgot the cruel but most vital maxim of royalty, namely, that thrones need solidarity; and that a son who creates opposition during the lifetime of his father must follow that father's policy when he mounts the throne. Spinosa, who was as great a statesman as he was a philosopher, said – in the case of one king succeeding another by insurrection or crime, —

“If the new king desires to secure the safety of his throne and of his own life he must show such ardor in avenging the death of his predecessor that no one shall feel a desire to commit the same crime. But to avenge it *worthily* it is not enough to shed the blood of his subjects, he must approve the axioms of the king he replaces, and take the same course in governing.”

It was the application of this maxim which gave Florence to the Medici. Cosmo I. caused to be assassinated at Venice, after eleven years' sway, the Florentine Brutus, and, as we have already said, persecuted the Strozzi. It was forgetfulness of this maxim which ruined Louis XVI. That king was false to every principle of royal government when he re-established the parliaments suppressed by his grandfather. Louis XV. saw the matter clearly. The parliaments, and notably that of Paris, counted for fully half in the troubles which necessitated the convocation of the States-general. The fault of Louis XV. was, that in breaking down that barrier which separated the throne from the people he did not erect a stronger; in other words, that he did not substitute for parliament a strong constitution of the provinces. There lay the remedy for the evils of the monarchy; thence should have come the voting on taxes, the regulation of them, and a slow approval of reforms that were necessary to the system of monarchy.

The first act of Henri II. was to give his confidence to the Connetable de Montmorency, whom his father had enjoined him to leave in disgrace. The Connetable de Montmorency was, with Diane de Poitiers, to whom he was closely bound, the master of the State. Catherine was therefore less happy and less powerful after she became queen of France than while she was dauphiness. From 1543 she had a child every year for ten years, and was occupied with maternal cares during the period covered by the last three years of the reign of Francois I. and nearly the whole of the reign of Henri II. We may see in this recurring fecundity the influence of a rival, who was able thus to rid herself of the legitimate wife, — a barbarity of feminine policy which must have been one of Catherine's grievances against Diane.

Thus set aside from public life, this superior woman passed her time in observing the self-interests of the court people and of the various parties which were formed about her. All the Italians who had followed her were objects of violent suspicion. After the execution of Montecuculi the Connetable de Montmorency, Diane, and many of the keenest politicians of the court were filled with suspicion of the Medici; though Francois I. always repelled it. Consequently, the Gondi, Strozzi, Ruggieri, Sardini, etc., — in short, all those who were called distinctively “the Italians,” — were

compelled to employ greater resources of mind, shrewd policy, and courage, to maintain themselves at court against the weight of disfavor which pressed upon them.

During her husband's reign Catherine's amiability to Diane de Poitiers went to such great lengths that intelligent persons must regard it as proof of that profound dissimulation which men, events, and the conduct of Henri II. compelled Catherine de' Medici to employ. But they go too far when they declare that she never claimed her rights as wife and queen. In the first place, the sense of dignity which Catherine possessed in the highest degree forbade her claiming what historians call her rights as a wife. The ten children of the marriage explain Henri's conduct; and his wife's maternal occupations left him free to pass his time with Diane de Poitiers. But the king was never lacking in anything that was due to himself; and he gave Catherine an "entry" into Paris, to be crowned as queen, which was worthy of all such pageants that had ever taken place. The archives of the Parliament, and those of the Cour des Comptes, show that those two great bodies went to meet her outside of Paris as far as Saint Lazare. Here is an extract from du Tillet's account of it: —

"A platform had been erected at Saint-Lazare, on which was a throne (du Tillet calls it a *chair de parement*). Catherine took her seat upon it, wearing a surcoat, or species of ermine short-cloak covered with precious stones, a bodice beneath it with the royal mantle, and on her head a crown enriched with pearls and diamonds, and held in place by the Marechale de la Mark, her lady of honor. Around her *stood* the princes of the blood, and other princes and seigneurs, richly apparelled, also the chancellor of France in a robe of gold damask on a background of crimson-red. Before the queen, and on the same platform, were seated, in two rows, twelve duchesses or countesses, wearing ermine surcoats, bodices, robes, and circlets, — that is to say, the coronets of duchesses and countesses. These were the Duchesses d'Estouteville, Montpensier (elder and younger); the Princesses de la Roche-sur-Yon; the Duchesses de Guise, de Nivernois, d'Aumale, de Valentinois (Diane de Poitiers), Mademoiselle la batarde legitimee de France (the title of the king's daughter, Diane, who was Duchesse de Castro-Farnese and afterwards Duchesse de Montmorency-Damville), Madame la Connetable, and Mademoiselle de Nemours; without mentioning other demoiselles who were not seated. The four presidents of the courts of justice, wearing their caps, several other members of the court, and the clerk du Tillet, mounted the platform, made reverent bows, and the chief judge, Lizet, kneeling down, harangued the queen. The chancellor then knelt down and answered. The queen made her entry at half-past three o'clock in an open litter, having Madame Marguerite de France sitting opposite to her, and on either side of the litter the Cardinals of Amboise, Chatillon, Boulogne, and de Lenoncourt in their episcopal robes. She left her litter at the church of Notre-Dame, where she was received by the clergy. After offering her prayer, she was conducted by the rue de la Calandre to the palace, where the royal supper was served in the great hall. She there appeared, seated at the middle of the marble table, beneath a velvet dais strewn with golden fleur-de-lis."

We may here put an end to one of those popular beliefs which are repeated in many writers from Sauval down. It has been said that Henri II. pushed his neglect of the proprieties so far as to put the initials of his mistress on the buildings which Catherine advised him to continue or to begin with so much magnificence. But the double monogram which can be seen at the Louvre offers a daily denial to those who are so little clear-sighted as to believe in silly nonsense which gratuitously insults our kings and queens. The H or Henri and the two C's of Catherine which back it, appear to represent the two D's of Diane. The coincidence may have pleased Henri II., but it is none the less true that the royal monogram contained officially the initial of the king and that of the queen. This

is so true that the monogram can still be seen on the column of the Halle au Ble, which was built by Catherine alone. It can also be seen in the crypt of Saint-Denis, on the tomb which Catherine erected for herself in her lifetime beside that of Henri II., where her figure is modelled from nature by the sculptor to whom she sat for it.

On a solemn occasion, when he was starting, March 25, 1552, for his expedition into Germany, Henri II. declared Catherine regent during his absence, and also in case of his death. Catherine's most cruel enemy, the author of "Marvellous Discourses on Catherine the Second's Behavior" admits that she carried on the government with universal approval and that the king was satisfied with her administration. Henri received both money and men at the time he wanted them; and finally, after the fatal day of Saint-Quentin, Catherine obtained considerable sums of money from the people of Paris, which she sent to Compiegne, where the king then was.

In politics, Catherine made immense efforts to obtain a little influence. She was clever enough to bring the Connetable de Montmorency, all-powerful under Henri II., to her interests. We all know the terrible answer that the king made, on being harassed by Montmorency in her favor. This answer was the result of an attempt by Catherine to give the king good advice, in the few moments she was ever alone with him, when she explained the Florentine policy of pitting the grandees of the kingdom one against another and establishing the royal authority on their ruins. But Henri II., who saw things only through the eyes of Diane and the Connetable, was a truly feudal king and the friend of all the great families of his kingdom.

After the futile attempt of the Connetable in her favor, which must have been made in the year 1556, Catherine began to cajole the Guises for the purpose of detaching them from Diane and opposing them to the Connetable. Unfortunately, Diane and Montmorency were as vehement against the Protestants as the Guises. There was therefore not the same animosity in their struggle as there might have been had the religious question entered it. Moreover, Diane boldly entered the lists against the queen's project by coquetting with the Guises and giving her daughter to the Duc d'Aumale. She even went so far that certain authors declared she gave more than mere good-will to the gallant Cardinal de Lorraine; and the lampooners of the time made the following quatrain on Henri II:

"Sire, if you're weak and let your will relax
Till Diane and Lorraine do govern you,
Pound, knead and mould, re-melt and model you,
Sire, you are nothing – nothing else than wax."

It is impossible to regard as sincere the signs of grief and the ostentation of mourning which Catherine showed on the death of Henri II. The fact that the king was attached by an unalterable passion to Diane de Poitiers naturally made Catherine play the part of a neglected wife who adores her husband; but, like all women who act by their head, she persisted in this dissimulation and never ceased to speak tenderly of Henri II. In like manner Diane, as we know, wore mourning all her life for her husband the Senechal de Breze. Her colors were black and white, and the king was wearing them at the tournament when he was killed. Catherine, no doubt in imitation of her rival, wore mourning for Henri II. for the rest of her life. She showed a consummate perfidy toward Diane de Poitiers, to which historians have not given due attention. At the king's death the Duchesse de Valentinois was completely disgraced and shamefully abandoned by the Connetable, a man who was always below his reputation. Diane offered her estate and chateau of Chenonceaux to the queen. Catherine then said, in presence of witnesses: —

"I can never forget that she made the happiness of my dear Henri. I am ashamed to accept her gift; I wish to give her a domain in place of it, and I shall offer her that of Chaumont-sur-Loire."

Accordingly, the deed of exchange was signed at Blois in 1559. Diane, whose sons-in-law were the Duc d'Aumale and the Duc de Bouillon (then a sovereign prince), kept her wealth, and died in

1566 aged sixty-six. She was therefore nineteen years older than Henri II. These dates, taken from her epitaph which was copied from her tomb by the historian who concerned himself so much about her at the close of the last century, clear up quite a number of historical difficulties. Some historians have declared she was forty, others that she was sixteen at the time of her father's condemnation in 1523; in point of fact she was then twenty-four. After reading everything for and against her conduct towards Francois I. we are unable to affirm or to deny anything. This is one of the passages of history that will ever remain obscure. We may see by what happens in our own day how history is falsified at the very moment when events happen.

Catherine, who had founded great hopes on the age of her rival, tried more than once to overthrow her. It was a dumb, underhand, terrible struggle. The day came when Catherine believed herself for a moment on the verge of success. In 1554, Diane, who was ill, begged the king to go to Saint-Germain and leave her for a short time until she recovered. This stately coquette did not choose to be seen in the midst of medical appliances and without the splendors of apparel. Catherine arranged, as a welcome to her husband, a magnificent ballet, in which six beautiful young girls were to recite a poem in his honor. She chose for this function Miss Fleming, a relation of her uncle the Duke of Albany, the handsomest young woman, some say, that was ever seen, white and very fair; also one of her own relations, Clarice Strozzi, a magnificent Italian with superb black hair, and hands that were of rare beauty; Miss Lewiston, maid of honor to Mary Stuart; Mary Stuart herself; Madame Elizabeth of France (who was afterwards that unfortunate Queen of Spain); and Madame Claude. Elizabeth and Claude were eight and nine years old, Mary Stuart twelve; evidently the queen intended to bring forward Miss Fleming and Clarice Strozzi and present them without rivals to the king. The king fell in love with Miss Fleming, by whom he had a natural son, Henri de Valois, Comte d'Angouleme, grand-prior of France. But the power and influence of Diane were not shaken. Like Madame de Pompadour with Louis XV., the Duchesse de Valentinois forgave all. But what sort of love did this attempt show in Catherine? Was it love to her husband or love of power? Women may decide.

A great deal is said in these days of the license of the press; but it is difficult to imagine the lengths to which it went when printing was first invented. We know that Aretino, the Voltaire of his time, made kings and emperors tremble, more especially Charles V.; but the world does not know so well the audacity and license of pamphlets. The chateau de Chenonceaux, which we have just mentioned, was given to Diane, or rather not given, she was implored to accept it to make her forget one of the most horrible publications ever levelled against a woman, and which shows the violence of the warfare between herself and Madame d'Etampes. In 1537, when she was thirty-eight years of age, a rhymester of Champagne named Jean Voute, published a collection of Latin verses in which were three epigrams upon her. It is to be supposed that the poet was sure of protection in high places, for the pamphlet has a preface in praise of itself, signed by Salmon Macrin, first valet-de-chambre to the king. Only one passage is quotable from these epigrams, which are entitled: IN PICTAVIAM, ANAM AULIGAM.

"A painted trap catches no game," says the poet, after telling Diane that she painted her face and bought her teeth and hair. "You may buy all that superficially makes a woman, but you can't buy that your lover wants; for he wants life, and you are dead."

This collection, printed by Simon de Colines, is dedicated to a bishop! – to Francois Bohier, the brother of the man who, to save his credit at court and redeem his offence, offered to Diane, on the accession of Henri II., the chateau de Chenonceaux, built by his father, Thomas Bohier, a councillor of state under four kings: Louis XI., Charles VIII., Louis XII., and Francois I. What were the pamphlets published against Madame de Pompadour and against Marie-Antoinette compared to these verses, which might have been written by Martial? Voute must have made a bad end. The estate and chateau cost Diane nothing more than the forgiveness enjoined by the gospel. After all, the penalties inflicted on the press, though not decreed by juries, were somewhat more severe than those of to-day.

The queens of France, on becoming widows, were required to remain in the king's chamber forty days without other light than that of wax tapers; they did not leave the room until after the burial of the king. This inviolable custom was a great annoyance to Catherine, who feared cabals; and, by chance, she found a means to evade it, thus: Cardinal de Lorraine, leaving, very early in the morning, the house of the *belle Romaine*, a celebrated courtesan of the period, who lived in the rue Culture-Sainte-Catherine, was set upon and maltreated by a party of libertines. "On which his holiness, being much astonished" (says Henri Estienne), "gave out that the heretics were preparing ambushes against him." The court at once removed from Paris to Saint-Germain, and the queen-mother, declaring that she would not abandon the king her son, went with him.

The accession of Francois II., the period at which Catherine confidently believed she could get possession of the regal power, was a moment of cruel disappointment, after the twenty-six years of misery she had lived through at the court of France. The Guises laid hands on power with incredible audacity. The Duc de Guise was placed in command of the army; the Connetable was dismissed; the cardinal took charge of the treasury and the clergy.

Catherine now began her political career by a drama which, though it did not have the dreadful fame of those of later years, was, nevertheless, most horrible; and it must, undoubtedly, have accustomed her to the terrible after emotions of her life. While appearing to be in harmony with the Guises, she endeavored to pave the way for her ultimate triumph by seeking a support in the house of Bourbon, and the means she took were as follows: Whether it was that (before the death of Henri II.), and after fruitlessly attempting violent measures, she wished to awaken jealousy in order to bring the king back to her; or whether as she approached middle-age it seemed to her cruel that she had never known love, certain it is that she showed a strong interest in a seigneur of the royal blood, Francois de Vendome, son of Louis de Vendome (the house from which that of the Bourbons sprang), and Vidame de Chartres, the name under which he is known in history. The secret hatred which Catherine bore to Diane was revealed in many ways, to which historians, preoccupied by political interests, have paid no attention. Catherine's attachment to the vidame proceeded from the fact that the young man had offered an insult to the favorite. Diane's greatest ambition was for the honor of an alliance with the royal family of France. The hand of her second daughter (afterwards Duchesse d'Aumale) was offered on her behalf to the Vidame de Chartres, who was kept poor by the far-sighted policy of Francois I. In fact, when the Vidame de Chartres and the Prince de Conde first came to court, Francois I. gave them – what? The office of chamberlain, with a paltry salary of twelve hundred crowns a year, the same that he gave to the simplest gentlemen. Though Diane de Poitiers offered an immense dowry, a fine office under the crown, and the favor of the king, the vidame refused. After which, this Bourbon, already factious, married Jeanne, daughter of the Baron d'Estissac, by whom he had no children. This act of pride naturally commended him to Catherine, who greeted him after that with marked favor and made a devoted friend of him.

Historians have compared the last Duc de Montmorency, beheaded at Toulouse, to the Vidame de Chartres, in the art of pleasing, in attainments, accomplishments, and talent. Henri II. showed no jealousy; he seemed not even to suppose that a queen of France could fail in her duty, or a Medici forget the honor done to her by a Valois. But during this time when the queen was, it is said, coquetting with the Vidame de Chartres, the king, after the birth of her last child, had virtually abandoned her. This attempt at making him jealous was to no purpose, for Henri died wearing the colors of Diane de Poitiers.

At the time of the king's death Catherine was, therefore, on terms of gallantry with the vidame, – a situation which was quite in conformity with the manners and morals of a time when love was both so chivalrous and so licentious that the noblest actions were as natural as the most blamable; although historians, as usual, have committed the mistake in this case of taking the exception for the rule.

The four sons of Henri II. of course rendered null the position of the Bourbons, who were all extremely poor and were now crushed down by the contempt which the Connetable de Montmorency's treachery brought upon them, in spite of the fact that the latter had thought best to fly the kingdom.

The Vidame de Chartres – who was to the first Prince de Conde what Richelieu was to Mazarin, his father in policy, his model, and, above all, his master in gallantry – concealed the excessive ambition of his house beneath an external appearance of light-hearted gaiety. Unable during the reign of Henri II. to make head against the Guises, the Montmorencys, the Scottish princes, the cardinals, and the Bouillons, he distinguished himself by his graceful bearing, his manners, his wit, which won him the favor of many charming women and the heart of some for whom he cared nothing. He was one of those privileged beings whose seductions are irresistible, and who owe to love the power of maintaining themselves according to their rank. The Bourbons would not have resented, as did Jarnac, the slander of la Chataigneraie; they were willing enough to accept the lands and castles of their mistresses, – witness the Prince de Conde, who accepted the estate of Saint-Valery from Madame la Marechale de Saint-Andre.

During the first twenty days of mourning after the death of Henri II. the situation of the vidame suddenly changed. As the object of the queen mother's regard, and permitted to pay his court to her as court is paid to a queen, very secretly, he seemed destined to play an important role, and Catherine did, in fact, resolve to use him. The vidame received letters from her for the Prince de Conde, in which she pointed out to the latter the necessity of an alliance against the Guises. Informed of this intrigue, the Guises entered the queen's chamber for the purpose of compelling her to issue an order consigning the vidame to the Bastille, and Catherine, to save herself, was under the hard necessity of obeying them. After a captivity of some months, the vidame died on the very day he left prison, which was shortly before the conspiracy of Amboise. Such was the conclusion of the first and only amour of Catherine de' Medici. Protestant historians have said that the queen caused the vidame to be poisoned, to lay the secret of her gallantries in a tomb!

We have now shown what was the apprenticeship of this woman for the exercise of her royal power.

PART I. THE CALVINIST MARTYR

I. A HOUSE WHICH NO LONGER EXISTS

AT THE CORNER OF A STREET WHICH NO LONGER EXISTS IN A PARIS WHICH NO LONGER EXISTS

Few persons in the present day know how plain and unpretentious were the dwellings of the burghers of Paris in the sixteenth century, and how simple their lives. Perhaps this simplicity of habits and of thought was the cause of the grandeur of that old bourgeoisie which was certainly grand, free, and noble, – more so, perhaps, than the bourgeoisie of the present day. Its history is still to be written; it requires and it awaits a man of genius. This reflection will doubtless rise to the lips of every one after reading the almost unknown incident which forms the basis of this Study and is one of the most remarkable facts in the history of that bourgeoisie. It will not be the first time in history that conclusion has preceded facts.

In 1560, the houses of the rue de la Vieille-Pelleterie skirted the left bank of the Seine, between the pont Notre-Dame and the pont au Change. A public footpath and the houses then occupied the space covered by the present roadway. Each house, standing almost in the river, allowed its dwellers to get down to the water by stone or wooden stairways, closed and protected by strong iron railings or wooden gates, clamped with iron. The houses, like those in Venice, had an entrance on *terra firma* and a water entrance. At the moment when the present sketch is published, only one of these houses remains to recall the old Paris of which we speak, and that is soon to disappear; it stands at the corner of the Petit-Pont, directly opposite to the guard-house of the Hotel-Dieu.

Formerly each dwelling presented on the river-side the fantastic appearance given either by the trade of its occupant and his habits, or by the originality of the exterior constructions invented by the proprietors to use or abuse the Seine. The bridges being encumbered with more mills than the necessities of navigation could allow, the Seine formed as many enclosed basins as there were bridges. Some of these basins in the heart of old Paris would have offered precious scenes and tones of color to painters. What a forest of crossbeams supported the mills with their huge sails and their wheels! What strange effects were produced by the piles or props driven into the water to project the upper floors of the houses above the stream! Unfortunately, the art of genre painting did not exist in those days, and that of engraving was in its infancy. We have therefore lost that curious spectacle, still offered, though in miniature, by certain provincial towns, where the rivers are overhung with wooden houses, and where, as at Vendome, the basins, full of water grasses, are enclosed by immense iron railings, to isolate each proprietor's share of the stream, which extends from bank to bank.

The name of this street, which has now disappeared from the map, sufficiently indicates the trade that was carried on in it. In those days the merchants of each class of commerce, instead of dispersing themselves about the city, kept together in the same neighborhood and protected themselves mutually. Associated in corporations which limited their number, they were still further united into guilds by the Church. In this way prices were maintained. Also, the masters were not at the mercy of their workmen, and did not obey their whims as they do to-day; on the contrary, they made them their children, their apprentices, took care of them, and taught them the intricacies of the trade. In order to become a master, a workman had to produce a masterpiece, which was always dedicated to the saint of his guild. Will any one dare to say that the absence of competition destroyed

the desire for perfection, or lessened the beauty of products? What say you, you whose admiration for the masterpieces of past ages has created the modern trade of the sellers of bric-a-brac?

In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries the trade of the furrier was one of the most flourishing industries. The difficulty of obtaining furs, which, being all brought from the north, required long and perilous journeys, gave a very high price and value to those products. Then, as now, high prices led to consumption; for vanity likes to override obstacles. In France, as in other kingdoms, not only did royal ordinances restrict the use of furs to the nobility (proved by the part which ermine plays in the old blazons), but also certain rare furs, such as *vair* (which was undoubtedly Siberian sable), could not be worn by any but kings, dukes, and certain lords clothed with official powers. A distinction was made between the greater and lesser *vair*. The very name has been so long disused, that in a vast number of editions of Perrault's famous tale, Cinderella's slipper, which was no doubt of *vair* (the fur), is said to have been made of *verre* (glass). Lately one of our most distinguished poets was obliged to establish the true orthography of the word for the instruction of his brother-feuilletonists in giving an account of the opera of the "Cenerentola," where the symbolic slipper has been replaced by a ring, which symbolizes nothing at all.

Naturally the sumptuary laws about the wearing of fur were perpetually infringed upon, to the great satisfaction of the furriers. The costliness of stuffs and furs made a garment in those days a durable thing, – as lasting as the furniture, the armor, and other items of that strong life of the fifteenth century. A woman of rank, a seigneur, all rich men, also all the burghers, possessed at the most two garments for each season, which lasted their lifetime and beyond it. These garments were bequeathed to their children. Consequently the clause in the marriage-contract relating to arms and clothes, which in these days is almost a dead letter because of the small value of wardrobes that need constant renewing, was then of much importance. Great costs brought with them solidity. The toilet of a woman constituted a large capital; it was reckoned among the family possessions, and was kept in those enormous chests which threaten to break through the floors of our modern houses. The jewels of a woman of 1840 would have been the *undress* ornaments of a great lady in 1540.

To-day, the discovery of America, the facilities of transportation, the ruin of social distinctions which has paved the way for the ruin of apparent distinctions, has reduced the trade of the furrier to what it now is, – next to nothing. The article which a furrier sells to-day, as in former days, for twenty *livres* has followed the depreciation of money: formerly the *livre*, which is now worth one franc and is usually so called, was worth twenty francs. To-day, the lesser bourgeoisie and the courtesans who edge their capes with sable, are ignorant than in 1440 an ill-disposed police-officer would have incontinently arrested them and marched them before the justice at the Chatelet. Englishwomen, who are so fond of ermine, do not know that in former times none but queens, duchesses, and chancellors were allowed to wear that royal fur. There are to-day in France several ennobled families whose true name is Pelletier or Lepelletier, the origin of which is evidently derived from some rich furrier's counter, for most of our burgher's names began in some such way.

This digression will explain, not only the long feud as to precedence which the guild of drapers maintained for two centuries against the guild of furriers and also of mercers (each claiming the right to walk first, as being the most important guild in Paris), but it will also serve to explain the importance of the Sieur Lecamus, a furrier honored with the custom of two queens, Catherine de' Medici and Mary Stuart, also the custom of the parliament, – a man who for twenty years was the syndic of his corporation, and who lived in the street we have just described.

The house of Lecamus was one of three which formed the three angles of the open space at the end of the pont au Change, where nothing now remains but the tower of the Palais de Justice, which made the fourth angle. On the corner of this house, which stood at the angle of the pont au Change and the quai now called the quai aux Fleurs, the architect had constructed a little shrine for a Madonna, which was always lighted by wax-tapers and decked with real flowers in summer and artificial ones in winter. On the side of the house toward the rue du Pont, as on the side toward the rue

de la Vieille-Pelleterie, the upper story of the house was supported by wooden pillars. All the houses in this mercantile quarter had an arcade behind these pillars, where the passers in the street walked under cover on a ground of trodden mud which kept the place always dirty. In all French towns these arcades or galleries are called *les piliers*, a general term to which was added the name of the business transacted under them, – as “*piliers des Halles*” (markets), “*piliers de la Boucherie*” (butchers).

These galleries, a necessity in the Parisian climate, which is so changeable and so rainy, gave this part of the city a peculiar character of its own; but they have now disappeared. Not a single house in the river bank remains, and not more than about a hundred feet of the old “*piliers des Halles*,” the last that have resisted the action of time, are left; and before long even that relic of the sombre labyrinth of old Paris will be demolished. Certainly, the existence of such old ruins of the middle-ages is incompatible with the grandeurs of modern Paris. These observations are meant not so much to regret the destruction of the old town, as to preserve in words, and by the history of those who lived there, the memory of a place now turned to dust, and to excuse the following description, which may be precious to a future age now treading on the heels of our own.

The walls of this house were of wood covered with slate. The spaces between the uprights had been filled in, as we may still see in some provincial towns, with brick, so placed, by reversing their thickness, as to make a pattern called “Hungarian point.” The window-casings and lintels, also in wood, were richly carved, and so was the corner pillar where it rose above the shrine of the Madonna, and all the other pillars in front of the house. Each window, and each main beam which separated the different storeys, was covered with arabesques of fantastic personages and animals wreathed with conventional foliage. On the street side, as on the river side, the house was capped with a roof looking as if two cards were set up one against the other, – thus presenting a gable to the street and a gable to the water. This roof, like the roof of a Swiss chalet, overhung the building so far that on the second floor there was an outside gallery with a balustrade, on which the owners of the house could walk under cover and survey the street, also the river basin between the bridges and the two lines of houses.

These houses on the river bank were very valuable. In those days a system of drains and fountains was still to be invented; nothing of the kind as yet existed except the circuit sewer, constructed by Aubriot, provost of Paris under Charles the Wise, who also built the Bastille, the pont Saint-Michel and other bridges, and was the first man of genius who ever thought of the sanitary improvement of Paris. The houses situated like that of Lecamus took from the river the water necessary for the purposes of life, and also made the river serve as a natural drain for rain-water and household refuse. The great works that the “merchants’ provosts” did in this direction are fast disappearing. Middle-aged persons alone can remember to have seen the great holes in the rue Montmartre, rue du Temple, etc., down which the waters poured. Those terrible open jaws were in the olden time of immense benefit to Paris. Their place will probably be forever marked by the sudden rise of the paved roadways at the spots where they opened, – another archaeological detail which will be quite inexplicable to the historian two centuries hence. One day, about 1816, a little girl who was carrying a case of diamonds to an actress at the Ambigu, for her part as queen, was overtaken by a shower and so nearly washed down the great drainhole in the rue du Temple that she would have disappeared had it not been for a passer who heard her cries. Unluckily, she had let go the diamonds, which were, however, recovered later at a man-hole. This event made a great noise, and gave rise to many petitions against these engulfers of water and little girls. They were singular constructions about five feet high, furnished with iron railings, more or less movable, which often caused the inundation of the neighboring cellars, whenever the artificial river produced by sudden rains was arrested in its course by the filth and refuse collected about these railings, which the owners of the abutting houses sometimes forgot to open.

The front of this shop of the Sieur Lecamus was all window, formed of sashes of leaded panes, which made the interior very dark. The furs were taken for selection to the houses of rich customers. As for those who came to the shop to buy, the goods were shown to them outside, between the

pillars, – the arcade being, let us remark, encumbered during the day-time with tables, and clerks sitting on stools, such as we all remember seeing some fifteen years ago under the “piliers des Halles.” From these outposts, the clerks and apprentices talked, questioned, answered each other, and called to the passers, – customs which the great Walter Scott has made use of in his “Fortunes of Nigel.”

The sign, which represented an ermine, hung outside, as we still see in some village hostelryes, from a rich bracket of gilded iron filagree. Above the ermine, on one side of the sign, were the words:

—

LECAMVS
FURRIER

TO MADAME LA ROYNE ET DU ROY NOSTRE SIRE

On the other side of the sign were the words: —

TO MADAME LA ROYNE-MERE
AND MESSIEURS DV PARLEMENT.

The words “Madame la Royne-mere” had been lately added. The gilding was fresh. This addition showed the recent changes produced by the sudden and violent death of Henri II., which overturned many fortunes at court and began that of the Guises.

The back-shop opened on the river. In this room usually sat the respectable proprietor himself and Mademoiselle Lecamus. In those days the wife of a man who was not noble had no right to the title of dame, “madame”; but the wives of the burghers of Paris were allowed to use that of “mademoiselle,” in virtue of privileges granted and confirmed to their husbands by the several kings to whom they had done service. Between this back-shop and the main shop was the well of a corkscrew-staircase which gave access to the upper story, where were the great ware-room and the dwelling-rooms of the old couple, and the garrets lighted by skylights, where slept the children, the servant-woman, the apprentices, and the clerks.

This crowding of families, servants, and apprentices, the little space which each took up in the building where the apprentices all slept in one large chamber under the roof, explains the enormous population of Paris then agglomerated on one-tenth of the surface of the present city; also the queer details of private life in the middle ages; also, the contrivances of love which, with all due deference to historians, are found only in the pages of the romance-writers, without whom they would be lost to the world. At this period very great *seigneurs*, such, for instance, as Admiral de Coligny, occupied three rooms, and their suites lived at some neighboring inn. There were not, in those days, more than fifty private mansions in Paris, and those were fifty palaces belonging to sovereign princes, or to great vassals, whose way of living was superior to that of the greatest German rulers, such as the Duke of Bavaria and the Elector of Saxony.

The kitchen of the Lecamus family was beneath the back-shop and looked out upon the river. It had a glass door opening upon a sort of iron balcony, from which the cook drew up water in a bucket, and where the household washing was done. The back-shop was made the dining-room, office, and salon of the merchant. In this important room (in all such houses richly panelled and adorned with some special work of art, and also a carved chest) the life of the merchant was passed; there the joyous suppers after the work of the day was over, there the secret conferences on the political interests of the burghers and of royalty took place. The formidable corporations of Paris were at that time able to arm a hundred thousand men. Therefore the opinions of the merchants were backed by their servants, their clerks, their apprentices, their workmen. The burghers had a chief in the “provost of the merchants” who commanded them, and in the Hotel de Ville, a palace where they possessed the right to assemble. In the famous “burghers’ parlor” their solemn deliberations took place. Had it not

been for the continual sacrifices which by that time made war intolerable to the corporations, who were weary of their losses and of the famine, Henri IV., that factionist who became king, might never perhaps have entered Paris.

Every one can now picture to himself the appearance of this corner of old Paris, where the bridge and quai still are, where the trees of the quai aux Fleurs now stand, but where no trace remains of the period of which we write except the tall and famous tower of the Palais de Justice, from which the signal was given for the Saint Bartholomew. Strange circumstance! one of the houses standing at the foot of that tower then surrounded by wooden shops, that, namely, of Lecamus, was about to witness the birth of facts which were destined to prepare for that night of massacre, which was, unhappily, more favorable than fatal to Calvinism.

At the moment when our history begins, the audacity of the new religious doctrines was putting all Paris in a ferment. A Scotchman named Stuart had just assassinated President Minard, the member of the Parliament to whom public opinion attributed the largest share in the execution of Councillor Anne du Bourg; who was burned on the place de Greve after the king's tailor – to whom Henri II. and Diane de Poitiers had caused the torture of the “question” to be applied in their very presence. Paris was so closely watched that the archers compelled all passers along the street to pray before the shrines of the Madonna so as to discover heretics by their unwillingness or even refusal to do an act contrary to their beliefs.

The two archers who were stationed at the corner of the Lecamus house had departed, and Christophe, son of the furrier, vehemently suspected of deserting Catholicism, was able to leave the shop without fear of being made to adore the Virgin. By seven in the evening, in April, 1560, darkness was already falling, and the apprentices, seeing no signs of customers on either side of the arcade, were beginning to take in the merchandise exposed as samples beneath the pillars, in order to close the shop. Christophe Lecamus, an ardent young man about twenty-two years old, was standing on the sill of the shop-door, apparently watching the apprentices.

“Monsieur,” said one of them, addressing Christophe and pointing to a man who was walking to and fro under the gallery with an air of indecision, “perhaps that’s a thief or a spy; anyhow, the shabby wretch can’t be an honest man; if he wanted to speak to us he would come over frankly, instead of sidling along as he does – and what a face!” continued the apprentice, mimicking the man, “with his nose in his cloak, his yellow eyes, and that famished look!”

When the stranger thus described caught sight of Christophe alone on the door-sill, he suddenly left the opposite gallery where he was then walking, crossed the street rapidly, and came under the arcade in front of the Lecamus house. There he passed slowly along in front of the shop, and before the apprentices returned to close the outer shutters he said to Christophe in a low voice: —

“I am Chaudieu.”

Hearing the name of one of the most illustrious ministers and devoted actors in the terrible drama called “The Reformation,” Christophe quivered as a faithful peasant might have quivered on recognizing his disguised king.

“Perhaps you would like to see some furs? Though it is almost dark I will show you some myself,” said Christophe, wishing to throw the apprentices, whom he heard behind him, off the scent.

With a wave of his hand he invited the minister to enter the shop, but the latter replied that he preferred to converse outside. Christophe then fetched his cap and followed the disciple of Calvin.

Though banished by an edict, Chaudieu, the secret envoy of Theodore de Beze and Calvin (who were directing the French Reformation from Geneva), went and came, risking the cruel punishment to which the Parliament, in unison with the Church and Royalty, had condemned one of their number, the celebrated Anne du Bourg, in order to make a terrible example. Chaudieu, whose brother was a captain and one of Admiral Coligny’s best soldiers, was a powerful auxiliary by whose arm Calvin shook France at the beginning of the twenty two years of religious warfare now on the point of

breaking out. This minister was one of the hidden wheels whose movements can best exhibit the wide-spread action of the Reform.

Chaudieu led Christophe to the water's edge through an underground passage, which was like that of the Marion tunnel filled up by the authorities about ten years ago. This passage, which was situated between the Lecamus house and the one adjoining it, ran under the rue de la Vieille-Pelleterie, and was called the Pont-aux-Fourreurs. It was used by the dyers of the City to go to the river and wash their flax and silks, and other stuffs. A little boat was at the entrance of it, rowed by a single sailor. In the bow was a man unknown to Christophe, a man of low stature and very simply dressed. Chaudieu and Christophe entered the boat, which in a moment was in the middle of the Seine; the sailor then directed its course beneath one of the wooden arches of the pont au Change, where he tied up quickly to an iron ring. As yet, no one had said a word.

"Here we can speak without fear; there are no traitors or spies here," said Chaudieu, looking at the two as yet unnamed men. Then, turning an ardent face to Christophe, "Are you," he said, "full of that devotion that should animate a martyr? Are you ready to endure all for our sacred cause? Do you fear the tortures applied to the Councillor du Bourg, to the king's tailor, – tortures which await the majority of us?"

"I shall confess the gospel," replied Lecamus, simply, looking at the windows of his father's back-shop.

The family lamp, standing on the table where his father was making up his books for the day, spoke to him, no doubt, of the joys of family and the peaceful existence which he now renounced. The vision was rapid, but complete. His mind took in, at a glance, the burgher quarter full of its own harmonies, where his happy childhood had been spent, where lived his promised bride, Babette Lallier, where all things promised him a sweet and full existence; he saw the past; he saw the future, and he sacrificed it, or, at any rate, he staked it all. Such were the men of that day.

"We need ask no more," said the impetuous sailor; "we know him for one of our *saints*. If the Scotchman had not done the deed he would kill us that infamous Minard."

"Yes," said Lecamus, "my life belongs to the church; I shall give it with joy for the triumph of the Reformation, on which I have seriously reflected. I know that what we do is for the happiness of the peoples. In two words: Popery drives to celibacy, the Reformation establishes the family. It is time to rid France of her monks, to restore their lands to the Crown, who will, sooner or later, sell them to the burghers. Let us learn to die for our children, and make our families some day free and prosperous."

The face of the young enthusiast, that of Chaudieu, that of the sailor, that of the stranger seated in the bow, lighted by the last gleams of the twilight, formed a picture which ought the more to be described because the description contains in itself the whole history of the times – if it is, indeed, true that to certain men it is given to sum up in their own persons the spirit of their age.

The religious reform undertaken by Luther in Germany, John Knox in Scotland, Calvin in France, took hold especially of those minds in the lower classes into which thought had penetrated. The great lords sustained the movement only to serve interests that were foreign to the religious cause. To these two classes were added adventurers, ruined noblemen, younger sons, to whom all troubles were equally acceptable. But among the artisan and merchant classes the new faith was sincere and based on calculation. The masses of the poorer people adhered at once to a religion which gave the ecclesiastical property to the State, and deprived the dignitaries of the Church of their enormous revenues. Commerce everywhere reckoned up the profits of this religious operation, and devoted itself body, soul, and purse, to the cause.

But among the young men of the French bourgeoisie the Protestant movement found that noble inclination to sacrifices of all kinds which inspires youth, to which selfishness is, as yet, unknown. Eminent men, sagacious minds, discerned the Republic in the Reformation; they desired to establish throughout Europe the government of the United Provinces, which ended by triumphing over the

greatest Power of those times, – Spain, under Philip the Second, represented in the Low Countries by the Duke of Alba. Jean Hotoman was then meditating his famous book, in which this project is put forth, – a book which spread throughout France the leaven of these ideas, which were stirred up anew by the Ligue, repressed by Richelieu, then by Louis XIV., always protected by the younger branches, by the house of Orleans in 1789, as by the house of Bourbon in 1589. Whoso says “Investigate” says “Revolt.” All revolt is either the cloak that hides a prince, or the swaddling-clothes of a new mastery. The house of Bourbon, the younger sons of the Valois, were at work beneath the surface of the Reformation.

At the moment when the little boat floated beneath the arch of the pont au Change the question was strangely complicated by the ambitions of the Guises, who were rivalling the Bourbons. Thus the Crown, represented by Catherine de’ Medici, was able to sustain the struggle for thirty years by pitting the one house against the other house; whereas later, the Crown, instead of standing between various jealous ambitions, found itself without a barrier, face to face with the people: Richelieu and Louis XIV. had broken down the barrier of the Nobility; Louis XV. had broken down that of the Parliaments. Alone before the people, as Louis XVI. was, a king must inevitably succumb.

Christophe Lecamus was a fine representative of the ardent and devoted portion of the people. His wan face had the sharp hectic tones which distinguish certain fair complexions; his hair was yellow, of a coppery shade; his gray-blue eyes were sparkling. In them alone was his fine soul visible; for his ill-proportioned face did not atone for its triangular shape by the noble mien of an elevated mind, and his low forehead indicated only extreme energy. Life seemed to centre in his chest, which was rather hollow. More nervous than sanguine, Christophe’s bodily appearance was thin and threadlike, but wiry. His pointed nose expressed the shrewdness of the people, and his countenance revealed an intelligence capable of conducting itself well on a single point of the circumference, without having the faculty of seeing all around it. His eyes, the arching brows of which, scarcely covered with a whitish down, projected like an awning, were strongly circled by a pale-blue band, the skin being white and shining at the spring of the nose, – a sign which almost always denotes excessive enthusiasm. Christophe was of the people, – the people who devote themselves, who fight for their devotions, who let themselves be inveigled and betrayed; intelligent enough to comprehend and serve an idea, too upright to turn it to his own account, too noble to sell himself.

Contrasting with this son of Lecamus, Chaudieu, the ardent minister, with brown hair thinned by vigils, a yellow skin, an eloquent mouth, a militant brow, with flaming brown eyes, and a short and prominent chin, embodied well the Christian faith which brought to the Reformation so many sincere and fanatical pastors, whose courage and spirit aroused the populations. The aide-de-camp of Calvin and Theodore de Beze contrasted admirably with the son of the furrier. He represented the fiery cause of which the effect was seen in Christophe.

The sailor, an impetuous being, tanned by the open air, accustomed to dewy nights and burning days, with closed lips, hasty gestures, orange eyes, ravenous as those of a vulture, and black, frizzled hair, was the embodiment of an adventurer who risks all in a venture, as a gambler stakes all on a card. His whole appearance revealed terrific passions, and an audacity that flinched at nothing. His vigorous muscles were made to be quiescent as well as to act. His manner was more audacious than noble. His nose, though thin, turned up and snuffed battle. He seemed agile and capable. You would have known him in all ages for the leader of a party. If he were not of the Reformation, he might have been Pizarro, Fernando Cortez, or Morgan the Exterminator, – a man of violent action of some kind.

The fourth man, sitting on a thwart wrapped in his cloak, belonged, evidently, to the highest portion of society. The fineness of his linen, its cut, the material and scent of his clothing, the style and skin of his gloves, showed him to be a man of courts, just as his bearing, his haughtiness, his composure and his all-embracing glance proved him to be a man of war. The aspect of this personage made a spectator uneasy in the first place, and then inclined him to respect. We respect a man who respects himself. Though short and deformed, his manners instantly redeemed the disadvantages of

his figure. The ice once broken, he showed a lively rapidity of decision, with an indefinable dash and fire which made him seem affable and winning. He had the blue eyes and the curved nose of the house of Navarre, and the Spanish cut of the marked features which were in after days the type of the Bourbon kings.

In a word, the scene now assumed a startling interest.

“Well,” said Chaudieu, as young Lecamus ended his speech, “this boatman is La Renaudie. And here is Monsiegnieur the Prince de Conde,” he added, motioning to the deformed little man.

Thus these four men represented the faith of the people, the spirit of the Scriptures, the mailed hand of the soldier, and royalty itself hidden in that dark shadow of the bridge.

“You shall now know what we expect of you,” resumed the minister, after allowing a short pause for Christophe’s astonishment. “In order that you may make no mistake, we feel obliged to initiate you into the most important secrets of the Reformation.”

The prince and La Renaudie emphasized the minister’s speech by a gesture, the latter having paused to allow the prince to speak, if he so wished. Like all great men engaged in plotting, whose system it is to conceal their hand until the decisive moment, the prince kept silence – but not from cowardice. In these crises he was always the soul of the conspiracy; recoiling from no danger and ready to risk his own head; but from a sort of royal dignity he left the explanation of the enterprise to his minister, and contented himself with studying the new instrument he was about to use.

“My child,” said Chaudieu, in the Huguenot style of address, “we are about to do battle for the first time with the Roman prostitute. In a few days either our legions will be dying on the scaffold, or the Guises will be dead. This is the first call to arms on behalf of our religion in France, and France will not lay down those arms till they have conquered. The question, mark you this, concerns the nation, not the kingdom. The majority of the nobles of the kingdom see plainly what the Cardinal de Lorraine and his brother are seeking. Under pretext of defending the Catholic religion, the house of Lorraine means to claim the crown of France as its patrimony. Relying on the Church, it has made the Church a formidable ally; the monks are its support, its acolytes, its spies. It has assumed the post of guardian to the throne it is seeking to usurp; it protects the house of Valois which it means to destroy. We have decided to take up arms because the liberties of the people and the interests of the nobles are equally threatened. Let us smother at its birth a faction as odious as that of the Burgundians who formerly put Paris and all France to fire and sword. It required a Louis XI. to put a stop to the quarrel between the Burgundians and the Crown; and to-day a prince de Conde is needed to prevent the house of Lorraine from re-attempting that struggle. This is not a civil war; it is a duel between the Guises and the Reformation, – a duel to the death! We will make their heads fall, or they shall have ours.”

“Well said!” cried the prince.

“In this crisis, Christophe,” said La Renaudie, “we mean to neglect nothing which shall strengthen our party, – for there is a party in the Reformation, the party of thwarted interests, of nobles sacrificed to the Lorrains, of old captains shamefully treated at Fontainebleau, from which the cardinal has banished them by setting up gibbets on which to hang those who ask the king for the cost of their equipment and their back-pay.”

“This, my child,” resumed Chaudieu, observing a sort of terror in Christophe, “this it is which compels us to conquer by arms instead of conquering by conviction and by martyrdom. The queen-mother is on the point of entering into our views. Not that she means to abjure; she has not reached that decision as yet; but she may be forced to it by our triumph. However that may be, Queen Catherine, humiliated and in despair at seeing the power she expected to wield on the death of the king passing into the hands of the Guises, alarmed at the empire of the young queen, Mary, niece of the Lorrains and their auxiliary, Queen Catherine is doubtless inclined to lend her support to the princes and lords who are now about to make an attempt which will deliver her from the Guises. At this moment, devoted as she may seem to them, she hates them; she desires their overthrow, and will try to make use of us against them; but Monseigneur the Prince de Conde intends to make use of her against all.

The queen-mother will, undoubtedly, consent to all our plans. We shall have the Connetable on our side; Monseigneur has just been to see him at Chantilly; but he does not wish to move without an order from his masters. Being the uncle of Monseigneur, he will not leave him in the lurch; and this generous prince does not hesitate to fling himself into danger to force Anne de Montmorency to a decision. All is prepared, and we have cast our eyes on you as the means of communicating to Queen Catherine our treaty of alliance, the drafts of edicts, and the bases of the new government. The court is at Blois. Many of our friends are with it; but they are to be our future chiefs, and, like Monseigneur," he added, motioning to the prince, "they must not be suspected. The queen-mother and our friends are so closely watched that it is impossible to employ as intermediary any known person of importance; they would instantly be suspected and kept from communicating with Madame Catherine. God sends us at this crisis the shepherd David and his sling to do battle with Goliath of Guise. Your father, unfortunately for him a good Catholic, is furrier to the two queens. He is constantly supplying them with garments. Get him to send you on some errand to the court. You will excite no suspicion, and you cannot compromise Queen Catherine in any way. All our leaders would lose their heads if a single imprudent act allowed their connivance with the queen-mother to be seen. Where a great lord, if discovered, would give the alarm and destroy our chances, an insignificant man like you will pass unnoticed. See! The Guises keep the town so full of spies that we have only the river where we can talk without fear. You are now, my son, like a sentinel who must die at his post. Remember this: if you are discovered, we shall all abandon you; we shall even cast, if necessary, opprobrium and infamy upon you. We shall say that you are a creature of the Guises, made to play this part to ruin us. You see therefore that we ask of you a total sacrifice."

"If you perish," said the Prince de Conde, "I pledge my honor as a noble that your family shall be sacred for the house of Navarre; I will bear it on my heart and serve it in all things."

"Those words, my prince, suffice," replied Christophe, without reflecting that the conspirator was a Gascon. "We live in times when each man, prince or burgher, must do his duty."

"There speaks the true Huguenot. If all our men were like that," said La Renaudie, laying his hand on Christophe's shoulder, "we should be conquerors to-morrow."

"Young man," resumed the prince, "I desire to show you that if Chaudieu preaches, if the nobleman goes armed, the prince fights. Therefore, in this hot game all stakes are played."

"Now listen to me," said La Renaudie. "I will not give you the papers until you reach Beaugency; for they must not be risked during the whole of your journey. You will find me waiting for you there on the wharf; my face, voice, and clothes will be so changed you cannot recognize me, but I shall say to you, 'Are you a *guepin*?' and you will answer, 'Ready to serve.' As to the performance of your mission, these are the means: You will find a horse at the 'Pinte Fleurie,' close to Saint-Germain l'Auxerrois. You will there ask for Jean le Breton, who will take you to the stable and give you one of my ponies which is known to do thirty leagues in eight hours. Leave by the gate of Bussy. Breton has a pass for me; use it yourself, and make your way by skirting the towns. You can thus reach Orleans by daybreak."

"But the horse?" said young Lecamus.

"He will not give out till you reach Orleans," replied La Renaudie. "Leave him at the entrance of the faubourg Bannier; for the gates are well guarded, and you must not excite suspicion. It is for you, friend, to play your part intelligently. You must invent whatever fable seems to you best to reach the third house to the left on entering Orleans; it belongs to a certain Tourillon, glove-maker. Strike three blows on the door, and call out: 'On service from Messieurs de Guise!' The man will appear to be a rabid Guisist; no one knows but our four selves that he is one of us. He will give you a faithful boatman, – another Guisist of his own cut. Go down at once to the wharf, and embark in a boat painted green and edged with white. You will doubtless land at Beaugency to-morrow about mid-day. There I will arrange to find you a boat which will take you to Blois without running any risk."

Our enemies the Guises do not watch the rivers, only the landings. Thus you will be able to see the queen-mother to-morrow or the day after.”

“Your words are written there,” said Christophe, touching his forehead.

Chaudieu embraced his child with singular religious effusion; he was proud of him.

“God keep thee!” he said, pointing to the ruddy light of the sinking sun, which was touching the old roofs covered with shingles and sending its gleams slantwise through the forest of piles among which the water was rippling.

“You belong to the race of the Jacques Bonhomme,” said La Renaudie, pressing Christophe’s hand.

“We shall meet again, *monsieur*,” said the prince, with a gesture of infinite grace, in which there was something that seemed almost friendship.

With a stroke of his oars La Renaudie put the boat at the lower step of the stairway which led to the house. Christophe landed, and the boat disappeared instantly beneath the arches of the pont au Change.

II. THE BURGHERS

Christophe shook the iron railing which closed the stairway on the river, and called. His mother heard him, opened one of the windows of the back shop, and asked what he was doing there. Christophe answered that he was cold and wanted to get in.

“Ha! my master,” said the Burgundian maid, “you went out by the street-door, and you return by the water-gate. Your father will be fine and angry.”

Christophe, bewildered by a confidence which had just brought him into communication with the Prince de Conde, La Renaudie, and Chaudieu, and still more moved at the prospect of impending civil war, made no answer; he ran hastily up from the kitchen to the back shop; but his mother, a rabid Catholic, could not control her anger.

“I’ll wager those three men I saw you talking with are Ref – ”

“Hold your tongue, wife!” said the cautious old man with white hair who was turning over a thick ledger. “You dawdling fellows,” he went on, addressing three journeymen, who had long finished their suppers, “why don’t you go to bed? It is eight o’clock, and you have to be up at five; besides, you must carry home to-night President de Thou’s cap and mantle. All three of you had better go, and take your sticks and rapiers; and then, if you meet scamps like yourselves, at least you’ll be in force.”

“Are we going to take the ermine surcoat the young queen has ordered to be sent to the hotel des Soissons? there’s an express going from there to Blois for the queen-mother,” said one of the clerks.

“No,” said his master, “the queen-mother’s bill amounts to three thousand crowns; it is time to get the money, and I am going to Blois myself very soon.”

“Father, I do not think it right at your age and in these dangerous times to expose yourself on the high-roads. I am twenty-two years old, and you ought to employ me on such errands,” said Christophe, eyeing the box which he supposed contained the surcoat.

“Are you glued to your seats?” cried the old man to his apprentices, who at once jumped up and seized their rapiers, cloaks, and Monsieur de Thou’s furs.

The next day the Parliament was to receive in state, as its president, this illustrious judge, who, after signing the death warrant of Councillor du Bourg, was destined before the close of the year to sit in judgment on the Prince de Conde!

“Here!” said the old man, calling to the maid, “go and ask friend Lallier if he will come and sup with us and bring the wine; we’ll furnish the victuals. Tell him, above all, to bring his daughter.”

Lecamus, the syndic of the guild of furriers, was a handsome old man of sixty, with white hair, and a broad, open brow. As court furrier for the last forty years, he had witnessed all the revolutions of the reign of Francois I. He had seen the arrival at the French court of the young girl Catherine de’ Medici, then scarcely fifteen years of age. He had observed her giving way before the Duchesse d’Etampes, her father-in-law’s mistress; giving way before the Duchesse de Valentinois, the mistress of her husband the late king. But the furrier had brought himself safely through all the chances and changes by which court merchants were often involved in the disgrace and overthrow of mistresses. His caution led to his good luck. He maintained an attitude of extreme humility. Pride had never caught him in its toils. He made himself so small, so gentle, so compliant, of so little account at court and before the queens and princesses and favorites, that this modesty, combined with good-humor, had kept the royal sign above his door.

Such a policy was, of course, indicative of a shrewd and perspicacious mind. Humble as Lecamus seemed to the outer world, he was despotic in his own home; there he was an autocrat. Most respected and honored by his brother craftsmen, he owed to his long possession of the first place in the trade much of the consideration that was shown to him. He was, besides, very willing to do kindnesses to others, and among the many services he had rendered, none was more striking than the assistance he had long given to the greatest surgeon of the sixteenth century, Ambroise Pare, who

owed to him the possibility of studying for his profession. In all the difficulties which came up among the merchants Lecamus was always conciliating. Thus a general good opinion of him consolidated his position among his equals; while his borrowed characteristics kept him steadily in favor with the court.

Not only this, but having intrigued for the honor of being on the vestry of his parish church, he did what was necessary to bring him into the odor of sanctity with the rector of Saint-Pierre aux Boeufs, who looked upon him as one of the men most devoted to the Catholic religion in Paris. Consequently, at the time of the convocation of the States-General he was unanimously elected to represent the *tiers etat* through the influence of the clergy of Paris, – an influence which at that period was immense. This old man was, in short, one of those secretly ambitious souls who will bend for fifty years before all the world, gliding from office to office, no one exactly knowing how it came about that he was found securely and peacefully seated at last where no man, even the boldest, would have had the ambition at the beginning of life to fancy himself; so great was the distance, so many the gulfs and the precipices to cross! Lecamus, who had immense concealed wealth, would not run any risks, and was silently preparing a brilliant future for his son. Instead of having the personal ambition which sacrifices the future to the present, he had family ambition, – a lost sentiment in our time, a sentiment suppressed by the folly of our laws of inheritance. Lecamus saw himself first president of the Parliament of Paris in the person of his grandson.

Christophe, godson of the famous historian de Thou, was given a most solid education; but it had led him to doubt and to the spirit of examination which was then affecting both the Faculties and the students of the universities. Christophe was, at the period of which we are now writing, pursuing his studies for the bar, that first step toward the magistracy. The old furrier was pretending to some hesitation as to his son. Sometimes he seemed to wish to make Christophe his successor; then again he spoke of him as a lawyer; but in his heart he was ambitious of a place for this son as Councillor of the Parliament. He wanted to put the Lecamus family on a level with those old and celebrated burgher families from which came the Pasquiers, the Moles, the Mirones, the Seguiers, Lamoignon, du Tillet, Lecoigneux, Lescalopier, Goix, Arnould, those famous sheriffs and grand-provosts of the merchants, among whom the throne found such strong defenders.

Therefore, in order that Christophe might in due course of time maintain his rank, he wished to marry him to the daughter of the richest jeweller in the city, his friend Lallier, whose nephew was destined to present to Henri IV. the keys of Paris. The strongest desire rooted in the heart of the worthy burgher was to use half of his fortune and half of that of the jeweller in the purchase of a large and beautiful seignorial estate, which, in those days, was a long and very difficult affair. But his shrewd mind knew the age in which he lived too well to be ignorant of the great movements which were now in preparation. He saw clearly, and he saw justly, and knew that the kingdom was about to be divided into two camps. The useless executions in the Place de l'Estrapade, that of the king's tailor and the more recent one of the Councillor Anne du Bourg, the actual connivance of the great lords, and that of the favorite of Francois I. with the Reformers, were terrible indications. The furrier resolved to remain, whatever happened, Catholic, royalist, and parliamentarian; but it suited him, privately, that Christophe should belong to the Reformation. He knew he was rich enough to ransom his son if Christophe was too much compromised; and on the other hand if France became Calvinist his son could save the family in the event of one of those furious Parisian riots, the memory of which was ever-living with the bourgeoisie, – riots they were destined to see renewed through four reigns.

But these thoughts the old furrier, like Louis XI., did not even say to himself; his wariness went so far as to deceive his wife and son. This grave personage had long been the chief man of the richest and most populous quarter of Paris, that of the centre, under the title of *quartenier*, – the title and office which became so celebrated some fifteen months later. Clothed in cloth like all the prudent burghers who obeyed the sumptuary laws, Sieur Lecamus (he was tenacious of that title which Charles V. granted to the burghers of Paris, permitting them also to buy baronial estates and call their wives by the fine name of *demoiselle*, but not by that of madame) wore neither gold chains

nor silk, but always a good doublet with large tarnished silver buttons, cloth gaiters mounting to the knee, and leather shoes with clasps. His shirt, of fine linen, showed, according to the fashion of the time, in great puffs between his half-opened jacket and his breeches. Though his large and handsome face received the full light of the lamp standing on the table, Christophe had no conception of the thoughts which lay buried beneath the rich and florid Dutch skin of the old man; but he understood well enough the advantage he himself had expected to obtain from his affection for pretty Babette Lallier. So Christophe, with the air of a man who had come to a decision, smiled bitterly as he heard of the invitation to his promised bride.

When the Burgundian cook and the apprentices had departed on their several errands, old Lecamus looked at his wife with a glance which showed the firmness and resolution of his character.

"You will not be satisfied till you have got that boy hanged with your damned tongue," he said, in a stern voice.

"I would rather see him hanged and saved than living and a Huguenot," she answered, gloomily. "To think that a child whom I carried nine months in my womb should be a bad Catholic, and be doomed to hell for all eternity!"

She began to weep.

"Old silly," said the furrier; "let him live, if only to convert him. You said, before the apprentices, a word which may set fire to our house, and roast us all, like fleas in a straw bed."

The mother crossed herself, and sat down silently.

"Now, then, you," said the old man, with a judicial glance at his son, "explain to me what you were doing on the river with – come closer, that I may speak to you," he added, grasping his son by the arm, and drawing him to him – "with the Prince de Conde," he whispered. Christophe trembled. "Do you suppose the court furrier does not know every face that frequents the palace? Think you I am ignorant of what is going on? Monseigneur the Grand Master has been giving orders to send troops to Amboise. Withdrawing troops from Paris to send them to Amboise when the king is at Blois, and making them march through Chartres and Vendome, instead of going by Orleans – isn't the meaning of that clear enough? There'll be troubles. If the queens want their surcoats, they must send for them. The Prince de Conde has perhaps made up his mind to kill Messieurs de Guise; who, on their side, expect to rid themselves of him. The prince will use the Huguenots to protect himself. Why should the son of a furrier get himself into that fray? When you are married, and when you are councillor to the Parliament, you will be as prudent as your father. Before belonging to the new religion, the son of a furrier ought to wait until the rest of the world belongs to it. I don't condemn the Reformers; it is not my business to do so; but the court is Catholic, the two queens are Catholic, the Parliament is Catholic; we must supply them with furs, and therefore we must be Catholic ourselves. You shall not go out from here, Christophe; if you do, I will send you to your godfather, President de Thou, who will keep you night and day blackening paper, instead of blackening your soul in company with those damned Genevese."

"Father," said Christophe, leaning upon the back of the old man's chair, "send me to Blois to carry that surcoat to Queen Mary and get our money from the queen-mother. If you do not, I am lost; and you care for your son."

"Lost?" repeated the old man, without showing the least surprise. "If you stay here you can't be lost; I shall have my eye on you all the time."

"They will kill me here."

"Why?"

"The most powerful among the Huguenots have cast their eyes on me to serve them in a certain matter; if I fail to do what I have just promised to do, they will kill me in open day, here in the street, as they killed Minard. But if you send me to court on your affairs, perhaps I can justify myself equally well to both sides. Either I shall succeed without having run any danger at all, and shall then win a fine position in the party; or, if the danger turns out very great, I shall be there simply on your business."

The father rose as if his chair was of red-hot iron.

"Wife," he said, "leave us; and watch that we are left quite alone, Christophe and I."

When Mademoiselle Lecamus had left them the furrier took his son by a button and led him to the corner of the room which made the angle of the bridge.

"Christophe," he said, whispering in his ear as he had done when he mentioned the name of the Prince of Conde, "be a Huguenot, if you have that vice; but be so cautiously, in the depths of your soul, and not in a way to be pointed at as a heretic throughout the quarter. What you have just confessed to me shows that the leaders have confidence in you. What are you going to do for them at court?"

"I cannot tell you that," replied Christophe; "for I do not know myself."

"Hum! hum!" muttered the old man, looking at his son, "the scamp means to hoodwink his father; he'll go far. You are not going to court," he went on in a low tone, "to carry remittances to Messieurs de Guise or to the little king our master, or to the little Queen Marie. All those hearts are Catholic; but I would take my oath the Italian woman has some spite against the Scotch girl and against the Lorrains. I know her. She has a desperate desire to put her hand into the dough. The late king was so afraid of her that he did as the jewellers do, he cut diamond by diamond, he pitted one woman against another. That caused Queen Catherine's hatred to the poor Duchesse de Valentinois, from whom she took the beautiful chateau of Chenonceaux. If it hadn't been for the Connetable, the duchess might have been strangled. Back, back, my son; don't put yourself in the hands of that Italian, who has no passion except in her brain; and that's a bad kind of woman! Yes, what they are sending you to do at court may give you a very bad headache," cried the father, seeing that Christophe was about to reply. "My son, I have plans for your future which you will not upset by making yourself useful to Queen Catherine; but, heavens and earth! don't risk your head. Messieurs de Guise would cut it off as easily as the Burgundian cuts a turnip, and then those persons who are now employing you will disown you utterly."

"I know that, father," said Christophe.

"What! are you really so strong, my son? You know it, and are willing to risk all?"

"Yes, father."

"By the powers above us!" cried the father, pressing his son in his arms, "we can understand each other; you are worthy of your father. My child, you'll be the honor of the family, and I see that your old father can speak plainly with you. But do not be more Huguenot than Messieurs de Coligny. Never draw your sword; be a pen man; keep to your future role of lawyer. Now, then, tell me nothing until after you have succeeded. If I do not hear from you by the fourth day after you reach Blois, that silence will tell me that you are in some danger. The old man will go to save the young one. I have not sold furs for thirty-two years without a good knowledge of the wrong side of court robes. I have the means of making my way through many doors."

Christophe opened his eyes very wide as he heard his father talking thus; but he thought there might be some parental trap in it, and he made no reply further than to say: —

"Well, make out the bill, and write a letter to the queen; I must start at once, or the greatest misfortunes may happen."

"Start? How?"

"I shall buy a horse. Write at once, in God's name."

"Hey! mother! give your son some money," cried the furrier to his wife.

The mother returned, went to her chest, took out a purse of gold, and gave it to Christophe, who kissed her with emotion.

"The bill was all ready," said his father; "here it is. I will write the letter at once."

Christophe took the bill and put it in his pocket.

"But you will sup with us, at any rate," said the old man. "In such a crisis you ought to exchange rings with Lallier's daughter."

"Very well, I will go and fetch her," said Christophe.

The young man was distrustful of his father's stability in the matter. The old man's character was not yet fully known to him. He ran up to his room, dressed himself, took a valise, came downstairs softly and laid it on a counter in the shop, together with his rapier and cloak.

"What the devil are you doing?" asked his father, hearing him.

Christophe came up to the old man and kissed him on both cheeks.

"I don't want any one to see my preparations for departure, and I have put them on a counter in the shop," he whispered.

"Here is the letter," said his father.

Christophe took the paper and went out as if to fetch his young neighbor.

A few moments after his departure the goodman Lallier and his daughter arrived, preceded by a servant-woman, bearing three bottles of old wine.

"Well, where is Christophe?" said old Lecamus.

"Christophe!" exclaimed Babette. "We have not seen him."

"Ha! ha! my son is a bold scamp! He tricks me as if I had no beard. My dear crony, what think you he will turn out to be? We live in days when the children have more sense than their fathers."

"Why, the quarter has long been saying he is in some mischief," said Lallier.

"Excuse him on that point, crony," said the furrier. "Youth is foolish; it runs after new things; but Babette will keep him quiet; she is newer than Calvin."

Babette smiled; she loved Christophe, and was angry when anything was said against him. She was one of those daughters of the old bourgeoisie brought up under the eyes of a mother who never left her. Her bearing was gentle and correct as her face; she always wore woollen stuffs of gray, harmonious in tone; her chemisette, simply pleated, contrasted its whiteness against the gown. Her cap of brown velvet was like an infant's coif, but it was trimmed with a ruche and lappets of tanned gauze, that is, of a tan color, which came down on each side of her face. Though fair and white as a true blonde, she seemed to be shrewd and roguish, all the while trying to hide her roguishness under the air and manner of a well-trained girl. While the two servant-women went and came, laying the cloth and placing the jugs, the great pewter dishes, and the knives and forks, the jeweller and his daughter, the furrier and his wife, sat before the tall chimney-piece draped with lambrequins of red serge and black fringes, and were talking of trifles. Babette asked once or twice where Christophe could be, and the father and mother of the young Huguenot gave evasive answers; but when the two families were seated at table, and the two servants had retired to the kitchen, Lecamus said to his future daughter-in-law: —

"Christophe has gone to court."

"To Blois! Such a journey as that without bidding me good-bye!" she said.

"The matter was pressing," said the old mother.

"Crony," said the furrier, resuming a suspended conversation. "We are going to have troublous times in France. The Reformers are bestirring themselves."

"If they triumph, it will only be after a long war, during which business will be at a standstill," said Lallier, incapable of rising higher than the commercial sphere.

"My father, who saw the wars between the Burgundians and the Armagnacs told me that our family would never have come out safely if one of his grandfathers — his mother's father — had not been a Goix, one of those famous butchers in the Market who stood by the Burgundians; whereas the other, the Lecamus, was for the Armagnacs; they seemed ready to flay each other alive before the world, but they were excellent friends in the family. So, let us both try to save Christophe; perhaps the time may come when he will save us."

"You are a shrewd one," said the jeweller.

"No," replied Lecamus. "The burghers ought to think of themselves; the populace and the nobility are both against them. The Parisian bourgeoisie alarms everybody except the king, who knows it is his friend."

“You who are so wise and have seen so many things,” said Babette, timidly, “explain to me what the Reformers really want.”

“Yes, tell us that, crony,” cried the jeweller. “I knew the late king’s tailor, and I held him to be a man of simple life, without great talent; he was something like you; a man to whom they’d give the sacrament without confession; and behold! he plunged to the depths of this new religion, – he! a man whose two ears were worth all of a hundred thousand crowns apiece. He must have had secrets to reveal to induce the king and the Duchesse de Valentinois to be present at his torture.”

“And terrible secrets, too!” said the furrier. “The Reformation, my friends,” he continued in a low voice, “will give back to the bourgeoisie the estates of the Church. When the ecclesiastical privileges are suppressed the Reformers intend to ask that the *vilain* shall be imposed on nobles as well as on burghers, and they mean to insist that the king alone shall be above others – if indeed, they allow the State to have a king.”

“Suppress the Throne!” ejaculated Lallier.

“Hey! crony,” said Lecamus, “in the Low Countries the burghers govern themselves with burgomasters of their own, who elect their own temporary head.”

“God bless me, crony; we ought to do these fine things and yet stay Catholics,” cried the jeweller.

“We are too old, you and I, to see the triumph of the Parisian bourgeoisie, but it will triumph, I tell you, in times to come as it did of yore. Ha! the king must rest upon it in order to resist, and we have always sold him our help dear. The last time, all the burghers were ennobled, and he gave them permission to buy seignorial estates and take titles from the land without special letters from the king. You and I, grandsons of the Goix through our mothers, are not we as good as any lord?”

These words were so alarming to the jeweller and the two women that they were followed by a dead silence. The ferments of 1789 were already tingling in the veins of Lecamus, who was not yet so old but what he could live to see the bold burghers of the Ligue.

“Are you selling well in spite of these troubles?” said Lallier to Mademoiselle Lecamus.

“Troubles always do harm,” she replied.

“That’s one reason why I am so set on making my son a lawyer,” said Lecamus; “for squabbles and law go on forever.”

The conversation then turned to commonplace topics, to the great satisfaction of the jeweller, who was not fond of either political troubles or audacity of thought.

III. THE CHATEAU DE BLOIS

The banks of the Loire, from Blois to Angers, were the favorite resort of the last two branches of the royal race which occupied the throne before the house of Bourbon. That beautiful valley plain so well deserves the honor bestowed upon it by kings that we must here repeat what was said of it by one of our most eloquent writers: —

“There is one province in France which is never sufficiently admired. Fragrant as Italy, flowery as the banks of the Guadalquivir, beautiful especially in its own characteristics, wholly French, having always been French, — unlike in that respect to our northern provinces, which have degenerated by contact with Germany, and to our southern provinces, which have lived in concubinage with Moors, Spaniards, and all other nationalities that adjoined them. This pure, chaste, brave, and loyal province is Touraine. Historic France is there! Auvergne is Auvergne, Languedoc is only Languedoc; but Touraine is France; the most national river for Frenchmen is the Loire, which waters Touraine. For this reason we ought not to be surprised at the great number of historically noble buildings possessed by those departments which have taken the name, or derivations of the name, of the Loire. At every step we take in this land of enchantment we discover a new picture, bordered, it may be, by a river, or a tranquil lake reflecting in its liquid depths a castle with towers, and woods and sparkling waterfalls. It is quite natural that in a region chosen by Royalty for its sojourn, where the court was long established, great families and fortunes and distinguished men should have settled and built palaces as grand as themselves.”

But is it not incomprehensible that Royalty did not follow the advice indirectly given by Louis XI. to place the capital of the kingdom at Tours? There, without great expense, the Loire might have been made accessible for the merchant service, and also for vessels-of-war of light draught. There, too, the seat of government would have been safe from the dangers of invasion. Had this been done, the northern cities would not have required such vast sums of money spent to fortify them, — sums as vast as were those expended on the sumptuous glories of Versailles. If Louis XIV. had listened to Vauban, who wished to build his great palace at Mont Louis, between the Loire and the Cher, perhaps the revolution of 1789 might never have taken place.

These beautiful shores still bear the marks of royal tenderness. The chateaus of Chambord, Amboise, Blois, Chenonceaux, Chaumont, Plessis-les-Tours, all those which the mistresses of kings, financiers, and nobles built at Veretz, Azay-le-Rideau, Usse, Villandri, Valencay, Chanteloup, Duretal, some of which have disappeared, though most of them still remain, are admirable relics which remind us of the marvels of a period that is little understood by the literary sect of the Middle-agists.

Among all these chateaus, that of Blois, where the court was then staying, is one on which the magnificence of the houses of Orleans and of Valois has placed its brilliant sign-manual, — making it the most interesting of all for historians, archaeologists, and Catholics. It was at the time of which we write completely isolated. The town, enclosed by massive walls supported by towers, lay below the fortress, — for the chateau served, in fact, as fort and pleasure-house. Above the town, with its blue-tiled, crowded roofs extending then, as now, from the river to the crest of the hill which commands the right bank, lies a triangular plateau, bounded to the west by a streamlet, which in these days is of no importance, for it flows beneath the town; but in the fifteenth century, so say historians, it formed quite a deep ravine, of which there still remains a sunken road, almost an abyss, between the suburbs of the town and the chateau.

It was on this plateau, with a double exposure to the north and south, that the counts of Blois built, in the architecture of the twelfth century, a castle where the famous Thibault de Tircœur, Thibault le Vieux, and others held a celebrated court. In those days of pure fuedality, in which the king was merely *primus inter pares* (to use the fine expression of a king of Poland), the counts of Champagne, the counts of Blois, those of Anjou, the simple barons of Normandie, the dukes of Bretagne, lived with the splendor of sovereign princes and gave kings to the proudest kingdoms. The Plantagenets of Anjou, the Lusignans of Poitou, the Roberts of Normandie, maintained with a bold hand the royal races, and sometimes simple knights like du Glaicquin refused the purple, preferring the sword of a connetable.

When the Crown annexed the county of Blois to its domain, Louis XII., who had a liking for this residence (perhaps to escape Plessis of sinister memory), built at the back of the first building another building, facing east and west, which connected the chateau of the counts of Blois with the rest of the old structures, of which nothing now remains but the vast hall in which the States-general were held under Henri III.

Before he became enamoured of Chambord, Francois I. wished to complete the chateau of Blois by adding two other wings, which would have made the structure a perfect square. But Chambord weaned him from Blois, where he built only one wing, which in his time and that of his grandchildren was the only inhabited part of the chateau. This third building erected by Francois I. is more vast and far more decorated than the Louvre, the chateau of Henri II. It is in the style of architecture now called Renaissance, and presents the most fantastic features of that style. Therefore, at a period when a strict and jealous architecture ruled construction, when the Middle Ages were not even considered, at a time when literature was not as clearly welded to art as it is now, La Fontaine said of the chateau de Blois, in his hearty, good-humored way: "The part that Francois I. built, if looked at from the outside, pleased me better than all the rest; there I saw numbers of little galleries, little windows, little balconies, little ornamentations without order or regularity, and they make up a grand whole which I like."

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