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978-1-108-02037-4 - The Life of Marie de Medicis, Queen of France, Volume 1

Julia S. H. Pardoe

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### The Life of Marie de Medicis, Queen of France

This three-volume work by Julia Pardoe, the author of other books on French royalty, was originally published in 1852. In remarkable detail the books describe the colourful and controversial life of Marie de Medicis, who in 1600 married Henry IV of France after his previous marriage to Marguerite de Valois had been annulled to make way for this dynastic alliance. The consort's life both before and after her marriage was one of flamboyant living, political intrigue and gossip. The work is a gripping and complex biography, full of information on a redoubtable woman's life at the centre of European politics. Each volume is illustrated and annotated with biographical notes and references to original documents. This first volume examines Marie de Medicis' early life, Henry IV's marriage to Marguerite de Valois, and the period of history from 1572 until 1607. For more information on this author, see [http://orlando.cambridge.org/public/svPeople?person\\_id=pardju](http://orlando.cambridge.org/public/svPeople?person_id=pardju)

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# The Life of Marie de Medicis, Queen of France

VOLUME 1

JULIA S.H. PARDOE



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MARIE DE MEDICIS.

*Second Queen of Henry 4<sup>th</sup> of France*

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THE LIFE  
OF  
MARIE DE MEDICIS,  
QUEEN OF FRANCE,  
CONSORT OF HENRY IV., AND REGENT OF THE KINGDOM  
UNDER LOUIS XIII.  
BY MISS PARDOE,  
AUTHOR OF  
"LOUIS XIV. AND THE COURT OF FRANCE IN THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY,"  
"THE CITY OF THE SULTAN," &c.  
IN THREE VOLUMES.  
VOL. I.

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TO

MR. AND MRS. CHARLES BECKET,

(OF HEVER COURT, KENT,)

THESE VOLUMES

ARE VERY AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED,

BY

THE AUTHOR.

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## P R E F A C E.

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ALL the existing records of European royalty do not, probably, comprise the annals of a life of greater vicissitude than that which has been chosen as the subject of the present work. We find numerous examples in History of queens who have suffered exile, imprisonment, and death; but we believe that the unfortunate Marie de Medicis is the only authenticated instance of a total abandonment on the part alike of her family and friends, which terminated almost in starvation. Certain it is that after having occupied the throne of France, presided over its councils, and given birth to the ancestor of a long line of princes, she was ultimately indebted to the sympathy and attachment of a foreign artist, of whom she had once been the zealous patron, for a roof under which to terminate her miserable existence! The whole life of this ill-fated Queen is, indeed, full of startling contrasts from which the mind shrinks back appalled; and her entire career is so freighted with

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alternate grandeur and privation that it is difficult to reconcile the possibility of their having fallen to the share of the same individual ; and this too in an age when France, above all other nations, boasted of its chivalry, and when some of the greatest names that have ever figured in its annals gave grace and glory to its history.

The times were, moreover, as remarkable as the men by whom they were illustrated ; for despite the civil and foreign wars by which they were so unhappily distinguished, the arts flourished, and the spread of political liberty became apparent ; although it is equally certain that they were at the same time fatal alike to the aristocracy and to the magistrature ; and that they rapidly paved the way to the absolutism of Louis XIV., to the shameless saturnalia of the Regency, and to the dishonouring and degrading excesses of Louis XV., who may justly be said to have prepared by his licentiousness the scaffold of his successor.

During several centuries the French monarchs had indulged in a blind egotism, which rendered them unable to appreciate the effects of their own errors upon their subjects. *L'ÉTAT C'EST MOI* had unfortunately been practically their ruling principle long ere Louis XIV. ventured to put it into words. To them the court was the universe, the aristocracy the nation, and the church the corner-stone of the proud altar upon which they had enthroned themselves, and beyond which they cared not either to look or listen. A fatal mistake fatally

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expiated ! Yet, as we have already remarked, the system, dangerous and hollow as it was, endured for centuries—endured until crime was heaped on crime, and the fearful holocaust towered towards Heaven as if to appeal for vengeance. And that vengeance came ! It had been long delayed ; so long indeed that when the brilliant courtiers of Versailles were told of disaffection among the masses, and warned to conciliate ere it was too late the good-will of their inferiors, they listened with contemptuous carelessness to the tardy caution, and scorned to place themselves in competition with those untitled classes whom they had long ceased to regard as their fellow-men. But the voice of the people is like the stroke of the hammer upon the anvil ; it not only makes itself heard, but, however great may be the original resistance, finishes by fashioning the metal upon which it falls, after its own will.

During the reign of Louis XIII. this great and fatal truth had not yet been impressed upon the French nation, for the popular voice was stifled beneath the dicta of despotism ; and even the *tiers-état*—important as the loyalty of that portion of a kingdom must ever be to its rulers — were treated with disdain and contumely ; but throughout all the workings of his government, or rather the government of his minister, for the son of Marie de Medicis was a monarch only in name, may be traced the undercurrent of popular indignation and discontent, which gradually swelling and heaving into power during the two suc-

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ceeding reigns, finally overthrew with its giant waves the last frail barrier which still up-reared itself before a time-honoured throne; and built upon the ruins of an ancient monarchy the tinsel temple and the false shrine, whose idol was born in groans, and baptized in blood.

The incapacity of the King, the venality of the princes, the arrogance of the hierarchy, the insubordination of the nobles, the licentiousness of the court, the despotism of the government; all the errors and all the vices of their rulers, were jealously noted and bitterly registered by an oppressed and indignant people; but it required time to shake off a yoke which had been so long borne that it had eaten into the flesh; nor, moreover, were the minds of the masses in that age sufficiently awakened to a sense of their own collective power to enable them, as they did in the following century, to measure their strength with those upon whom they had been so long accustomed to look with fear and awe.

There cannot, moreover, exist the slightest doubt that the wantonness with which Richelieu, in furtherance of his own private interests, poured out so freely on the scaffold some of the proudest blood of France, did much towards destroying that *prestige* which had hitherto environed the high nobility. When Biron perished upon the block, although his death was decreed by the sovereign, and that sovereign, moreover, was their own idolized Henry IV., the people marvelled and even murmured; but in after-years, they learned

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through the teaching of the Cardinal that nobles were merely men; while the exile of the persecuted Marie de Medicis, and the privations to which she was exposed through his agency, taught them that even royalty itself was not invulnerable to the malice or vengeance of its opponents; and unhappily for those by whom he was succeeded in power, the lesson brought forth its fruits in due season.

Thus much premised, I shall confine myself to a brief explanation of the manner in which I have endeavoured to perform my self-imposed task. For one wilful, but as I trust excusable, inaccuracy, I throw myself on the indulgence of my critics. Finding my pages already overladen with names, and that they must consequently induce a considerable strain upon the memory of such individuals as might not chance to be intimately acquainted with the domestic history of the period under consideration, I have, from the commencement of the work, designated the Duke de Sully by the title which he ultimately attained, and by which he is universally known, rather than confuse the mind of my reader by allusions to M. de Béthune, M. de Rosny, and finally M. de Sully, when each and all merely signified the same individual; and I feel persuaded that this arrangement will be generally regarded as a judicious one, inasmuch as it tends to lessen a difficulty already sufficiently great; a fact which will be at once apparent on reference to the biographical table at the head of each volume.

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On the other hand I have, contrary to my previous system, but in justice to myself, carefully, and even perhaps somewhat elaborately, multiplied the foot-notes, in order to give with precision the several authorities whence I deduced my facts; and I must be excused should this caution appear uselessly tedious or pedantic to the general reader, as I am anxious on this occasion to escape the accusation which was once brought against me when it was equally undeserved, of having “quoted at second-hand,” and even drawn my materials from “historical romances of the time.” It is, of course, easy to make assertions of this nature at random; but when a writer feels that he or she has conscientiously performed a duty voluntarily undertaken, it is painful to be misjudged; especially when, as in the present instance, nearly three years have been devoted to the work.

For the *fac-simile* letters by which my volumes are enriched, I am indebted to the kindness of M. de la Plane, a member of the Institut Royal de France, of whose extensive and valuable cabinet of ancient records they now form a part; and by whom their publication was obligingly authorised. The authenticity of these letters admits of no doubt, as it is known that they originally formed a portion of the rich collection of autographs in the possession of the Marshal de Bassompierre, to whom they were severally addressed; and that at his death they were transferred to the library of the Fathers of the Oratory at St. Magloire in Paris; whence (it is believed

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at the Revolution) they fell into the hands of a member of that celebrated society, Le Père de Mevolhon, formerly Canon and Vicar-General of the diocese of St. Omer, by whom they were presented to M. de la Plane.

The *fac-simile* page of Memoirs will require a more detailed explanation. At the time when he so kindly intrusted to me the letters above-named, the same obliging friend also confided to my care, with full permission to make whatever use of it I should see fit, an unpublished MS. consisting of nearly twelve thousand pages closely written, and divided into twenty-four volumes small quarto, all undeniably the work of one hand. This elaborate MS. was entitled “Memoirs of M. le Commandeur de Rambure, Captain of the regiment of French Guards, Gentleman of the Bed-chamber under the Kings Henry IV., Louis XIII., and Louis XIV. surnamed the Great, with all the most memorable events which took place during the reigns of those three Majesties, from the year 1594 to that of 1660.”

The author of this voluminous MS., who, at the age of eighty-one, inscribes his work to his *uncle*, Monseigneur de Rambure, Bishop of Vannes, and who professes to have ventured thus tardily upon his Herculean undertaking at the request, and for the instruction, of his nephew the Marquis de Rambure, lays strict injunctions upon his successors to keep the record of his life to themselves; alleging as his reason a dread of injuring by his revelations the interests of the young



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courtier, who had succeeded to his own post of Gentleman of the Bedchamber; “and that,” as he proceeds to say; “to the greatest King in the world, by whom he has the honour to be loved and esteemed; therefore I pray you that this writing may never be printed, in order not to make him enemies, who are too ready to come without being sought by our imprudence; and because I have only composed these Memoirs for myself and my kindred.”

This curious work is at present the property of the Count d’Inguibert of Avignon; who, having lost his father at an early age, is not aware of the precise manner in which it fell into the possession of his family. Thus much, however, is certain, that it has for a considerable length of time been religiously preserved by his ancestors; and that the Countess his mother (sister of the last Count de Bruges, aide-de-camp to Charles X.), who died a few years ago at an advanced age, had never ventured, in obedience to the injunction above-mentioned, to intrust it to any one.

The author states that the work is not in his own autograph, but in that of his secretary, to whom he dictated during eleven years four hours each day, two in the morning, and two in the afternoon—and that he commenced his formidable task in the year 1664, when he was living in retirement in his Commanderie of St. Eugène in Limousin and, despite his advanced age, “in possession of all his

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faculties as perfectly as when he had only reached his twenty-fifth year."

It is but very recently that the present proprietor of the Memoirs, rightly judging that the time has long elapsed in which the disclosures of the chronicler in question could conduce to the injury of any one connected with him (should such individuals indeed now exist), has consented to permit of their perusal; and that only by a limited number of literary friends, all of whom have been astonished by their extraordinary variety of information, marvellous detail, and intimate acquaintance, not only with the principal events of the seventeenth century (the writer having lived to the patriarchal age of ninety-six years), but also with the leading actors in each and all of them. As a literary curiosity I have thought a *fac-simile* of one of the pages of this elaborate chronicle a desirable addition to my own volumes; which are, moreover, through the kindness of MM. d'Inguibert and de la Plane, enriched by numerous curious extracts from these unpublished Memoirs, no part of which has previously appeared in print.

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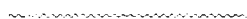
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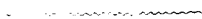
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