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Julia S. H. Pardoe

Excerpt

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BOOK II.

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MARIE DE MEDICIS AS REGENT.

[CONTINUED.]

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## CHAPTER IX.

[1617.]

THE ROYAL FORCES MARCH AGAINST THE INSURGENT PRINCES—INDIGNITIES OFFERED TO THE YOUNG SOVEREIGN—LOUIS XIII. AND HIS FAVOURITE—ARROGANCE OF THE MARÉCHAL D'ANCRE—INDIGNATION OF THE KING—CONFISCATION OF THE PROPERTY OF THE REBEL PRINCES—HOUSEHOLD OF LOUIS XIII.—CABAL OF DE LUYNES—INFATUATION OF THE MARÉCHAL D'ANCRE—AN EVIL COUNSELLOR—MARIE DE MEDICIS RESOLVES TO WITHDRAW FROM THE GOVERNMENT, BUT IS DISSUADED FROM HER PURPOSE—POPULAR DISCONTENT—PRECAUTIONS OF CONCINI—ALARM OF LOUIS XIII.—THE DUKE DE NEVERS IS DECLARED GUILTY OF "L'ÉSE-MAJESTÉ"—FIRMNESS OF THE QUEEN-MOTHER—INSOLENCE OF CONCINI AND RICHELIEU—CONDÉ IS REFUSED PERMISSION TO JUSTIFY HIMSELF—SUCCESS OF THE ROYAL FORCES—LOUIS XIII. CONSENTS TO THE ARREST OF THE MARÉCHAL D'ANCRE—BASSOMPIERRE WARNS MARIE DE MEDICIS OF HER DANGER—SHE DISREGARDS THE WARNING—CONCINI AND LEONORA PREPARE TO LEAVE FRANCE—OLD GRIEVANCES RENEWED—A DIPLOMATIC JANUS—BLINDNESS OF MARIE AND HER MINISTERS—A NEW CONSPIRATOR—HOW TO BE MADE A MARSHAL—INCAUTION OF DE LUYNES—TREACHERY OF RICHELIEU—A NARROW ESCAPE—A MORNING MASS—SINGULAR POSITION OF THE COURT—ASSASSINATION OF CONCINI—PUBLIC REJOICINGS—IMPRISONMENT OF THE QUEEN-MOTHER—BARBIN IS SENT TO THE BASTILLE—THE SEALS ARE RESTORED TO DU VAIR—A ROYAL RECEPTION—ANGUISH OF MARIE DE MEDICIS—SHE DEMANDS TO SEE THE KING, AND IS REFUSED—HER ISOLATION—A QUEEN AND HER FAVOURITE—A MOTHER AND HER SON—ARREST OF MADAME D'ANCRE—THE CROWN JEWELS—POLITICAL PILLAGE—THE MARÉCHALE IN THE BASTILLE.

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IN the month of January the Count d'Auvergne, who had recently been liberated from the Bastille, was dispatched at the head of fourteen thousand men against the insurgent princes; and his departure was made a pretext for depriving the young King of the gentlemen of his household and of his body-guard, an insult which he deeply although silently resented. He had been attacked in the November of the preceding year by an indisposition which for a time had threatened the most serious consequences, and from whose latent effects he had not yet recovered. As time wore on, moreover, he was becoming more and more weary of the insignificance to which he was reduced by the delegated authority of his mother; and had easily suffered himself to be per-

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suaded by de Luynes that her repeated offers to resign it, had merely been designed to make him feel the necessity of her assistance. As we have already shown, Louis XIII. derived little pleasure from the society of his young and lovely wife; he made no friends; and thus he was flung entirely into the power of his wily favourite; who, aware that the King could hate, although he could not love, was unremitting in his endeavours to excite him against Marie de Medicis and her favourite. The infatuated Concini seconded his efforts but too well; for, unable to bear his fortunes meekly, he paraded his riches and his power with an insolence which tended to justify the aversion of his enemies. On one occasion, shortly after the dismemberment of his little court, the monarch of France having refused to join a hunting-party organised by the Queen-mother, found himself entirely deserted save by de Luynes and a single valet; and overcome by mortification and melancholy, he leant his head upon his hand and wept bitterly. For some time not a sound was heard in the Louvre save the sougling of the wind through the tall trees of the palace-garden, and the measured tread of the sentinels, when suddenly a tumult rose in the great court; the trampling of horses, the voices of men, and the clashing of weapons were blent together; and dashing away his tears, Louis desired his favourite to ascertain the cause of the disturbance.

“It is the Maréchal d’Ancre, Sire, who has just alighted;” said de Luynes as he approached the window.

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In a few minutes the Italian was announced, and entered the royal apartment followed by a train of forty gentlemen all magnificently attired. At this spectacle Louis started from his seat; and with a bitter smile inquired of the arrogant marquis his motive for thus parading before his sovereign a state which could only be intended as a satire upon his own privations.

To this question the vain-glorious adventurer replied in a tone of affected sympathy and patronage which festered in the heart of the young King; assuring him that his followers were at his own cost, and not at that of the state; and concluding his explanation by an offer of pecuniary aid, and a company of his regiment of Bussy-Zamet, which he had just brought from Normandy. Justly incensed by such an insult, Louis commanded him instantly to quit his presence; and he had no sooner withdrawn, followed by his glittering retinue, than the young monarch sank back upon his seat, and uttered the most bitter complaints of the affront to which he had been subjected.\*

“And to this, Sire;” said de Luynes, as he stood beside his royal master; “to this insult, which is but the precursor of many others, you have been subjected by the Queen-mother.”

“I will revenge myself!” exclaimed Louis with a sudden assumption of dignity.

“And how?” demanded the favourite emphatically.

\* Richelieu, Unpublished MSS.

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“You are called a King, but where are your great nobles? where are the officers of your household? where are your barons? So many princes, so many powers. France has no longer a King.”

“And my people?” shouted the excited youth.

“You have no people. You are a mere puppet in the hands of an ambitious woman and an unprincipled adventurer.”

“A puppet!” echoed Louis haughtily. “Do I not wear the crown of France?”

“So did Charles IX. ;” was the unmoved reply ; “yet, he died to make way for Henry III. Concini and his wife, Sire, come from the same country as Catherine de Medicis. Isabeau de Bavière was a mother, yet she preferred her lover to her son.”\*

“Enough, enough, Sir ;” said Louis, clutching the hilt of his sword ; “I will hear no more, lest it should make me mad !”

De Luynes bowed in silence ; he knew that the poisonous seed was sown, and he was content to wait until it should germinate.

The pecuniary difficulties of the kingdom exercised no influence over the festivities of the court ; balls, banquets, and comedies took place in rapid succession ; and the young Queen danced in a ballet which was the admiration of all the spectators ; an example which was followed by the nobles of the royal household.† Still, however, it

\* Mezeray, vol. xi, p. 134.

† Bassompierre, *Mém.*, p. 123.

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was necessary to recruit the national treasury ; and, accordingly, on the 10th of March a declaration was published by which the King confiscated all the property of the disaffected princes, and made it forfeit to the crown ; while at the same time three separate bodies of troops attacked the rebels with complete success, and the royal arms were everywhere triumphant, when intelligence was forwarded to their leaders from the capital which induced an immediate cessation of hostilities.\*

We have seen the effect of the insolence of Concini, and the insidious inferences of de Luynes, upon the mind of the young King, who had only six months previously been taught a lesson of dissimulation on the occasion of the arrest of Condé ; and consequently it can scarcely be subject of surprise that, wounded to the heart's core, he was easily persuaded to exert in his own cause the subtlety which he had evinced at the bidding of another. He was now between fifteen and sixteen years of age, and was deeply imbued by the idea that he possessed an unlimited control alike over the properties, the liberty, the honour, and the lives of his subjects ; but he was still utterly incapable of fulfilling his duties as a sovereign. His conceptions of right and wrong were confused and unstable ; and he willingly listened to the advice of those whose counsels flattered his selfishness and his resentment. De Luynes had skilfully availed himself of this weakness ; and as he was all-powerful

\* Bassompierre, *Mém.*, p. 126. D'Estrées, *Mém.*, p. 418.

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with his suspicious and saturnine master, who saw in every one by whom he was approached either an enemy to be opposed, or a spy to be deceived, he was careful to introduce to him none save individuals whose insignificance rendered them incapable of interfering with his own interests, and who might be dismissed without comment or danger whenever he should deem their absence desirable. Against this arrangement neither the Queen-mother nor her ministers entered any protest. Louis truly was, as his favourite had so insolently asserted, a mere puppet in their hands; and the consequence of this undignified neglect was fatal to the intellectual progress of the young sovereign. On the pretext of requiring assistance in training the royal falcons, de Luynes had presented to Louis two young nobles, MM. du Tronçon and de Marcillac, men of good birth, but who had become dishonoured by their own vices; the former being accused of having betrayed his master, and the latter his sisters in order to enrich himself;\* facts of which the favourite was, however, careful that the King should remain ignorant.

In addition to these disreputable adventurers, de Luynes also introduced to the intimacy of his royal patron Déageant,† the principal clerk of Barbin, whom he had won

\* Richelieu, Book VIII, p. 411.

† Déageant was a man of considerable talent, but crafty and ambitious; his whole career was one of deceit and truckling. After numerous vicissitudes he was committed to the Bastille, where he beguiled the weariness of captivity by composing his Memoirs.



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over by promises of aggrandisement should he succeed in effecting the disgrace of Concini, which, as a natural consequence, must also involve that of his master; and, finally, a private soldier, and one of the gardeners of the palace. All these persons were instructed to excite the suspicions of the King against his mother and her ministers, a task in which it was by no means difficult to succeed, particularly when the treacherous Déageant had placed in his hands a number of counterfeited letters, wherein Barbin, at the pretended instigation of Concini, was supposed to entertain a design against his life, in order not only to prolong the authority of the Queen-mother, but also to insure the crown to her second and favourite son, Gaston d'Orleans.\*

Skilfully as de Luynes conducted this affair, and despite the natural dissimulation of Louis XIII., the reiterated assertions and cautions of his familiar associates, did not fail to produce an involuntary effect upon his manner and deportment which aroused the suspicions of the Italian; who, with an infatuation almost incredible, instead of endeavouring to conciliate the young King, and to render himself less obnoxious to the people, resolved to make all bow before him, and to break the stubborn spirits that he failed to bend. In this desperate and insane policy he was, moreover, seconded by the counsels of Barbin, whose

\* Sismondi, vol. xxii, pp. 391, 392. Le Vassor, vol. i, p. 583. Richelieu, Unpublished MSS.

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impetuous temper, and anxiety to secure his own safety, alike urged him to support any measure which promised to maintain the government in the hands of Marie de Medicis and her favourite, in whose ruin he could not fail to be involved. So intemperately, indeed, did he pursue his purpose, that even Marie herself became alarmed; her most faithful adherents were absent with the army, while she had daily evidence of the activity of her enemies; and more than once at this period she declared her determination to withdraw from all participation in state affairs, and to resign her delegated authority, in order that her son might rule as he saw fit. From this purpose she was, however, constantly dissuaded by Barbin. "Madam;" he said on one occasion when the Queen-mother appeared more than ever resolved to follow out her determination; "if you once abandon the administration of government you will cut the throats of your children. Should you cease to rule they will be utterly lost.\*"

No wonder that her tenderness as a mother, joined to her ambition as a Queen, induced Marie de Medicis to yield to the representations of one of her most trusted counsellors, even while the cloud was deepening around her. As the great nobles murmured at the insolence and tyranny of the audacious Italian, their murmurs were echoed by the curses of the people;

\* Vitt. Siri, *Mém. Recon.*, vol. iv, pp. 29—31. *Mercuré Français*, 1617.