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978-1-108-05456-0 - The Life and Letters of Ogier Ghiselin de Busbecq; Seigneur of Bousbecque, Knight, Imperial Ambassador: Volume 2

Edited by Charles Thornton Foster and F.H. Blackburne Daniell

Excerpt

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LETTERS FROM FRANCE.

BOOK I.

LETTERS TO MAXIMILIAN.

VOL. II.

B

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In illustrating Busbecq's letters from France reference is frequently made to contemporary writers, and it may be useful to the reader to have some idea of their different characters, and positions, and of the historical value of their statements.

(1). J. A. de Thou, the historian, son of Christopher de Thou, President of the Parliament of Paris. Jurist and statesman. Busbecq's intimate friend and warm admirer. Quoted as *Thuanus*. Edition, Geneva, 1620, &c.

(2). Pierre de l'Estoile. Audiencier de la Chancellerie de Paris. A quiet man, who took no part in politics. He kept a diary which is generally known as *Journal de Henri III.* and *Henri IV.*, but is really *his own private diary* during the reigns of those monarchs. Quoted as *De l'Estoile*. Edition, Paris, 1875, &c.

(3). Pierre de Bourdeille, Abbé and Seigneur of Brantôme. Soldier and courtier. Gentleman of the Chamber to Charles IX. and Henri III. His ideas are those of the French Court of that period, and consequently his standard of morality is very low. He was a friend of Alençon, du Guast, Bussy, de Viteaux, La Noue, &c., and a great admirer of Marguerite, to whom he dedicated several of his works. Having been disabled by a fall from his horse, he devoted his last years to writing memoirs of the celebrated men and women he had known, a treatise on duelling, &c. Quoted as *Brantôme*. Edition, Paris, 1822.

(4). Marguerite de Valois, wife of Henry of Navarre, sister of Charles IX., Henri III., and Alençon, wrote an autobiography which she addressed to Brantôme. Quoted as *Mémoires de Marguerite*. Edition, Paris, 1842.

(5). Theodore Agrippa d'Aubigné. Friend and adherent of Henry of Navarre. He wrote a *Histoire universelle* and *Mémoires*. Quoted as *Aubigné, Histoire*. Edition S. Jean d'Angely, 1616, &c. The *Mémoires* are quoted from the Panthéon Littéraire. Paris, 1836.

(6). Louis Gonzaga, Duc de Nevers. Soldier and statesman. The compilation known as his Memoirs is quoted as *Mémoires de Nevers*. Edition, Paris, 1665.

(7). Venetian ambassadors :—John Michel, sent in 1575 to congratulate Henri III. on his coronation and marriage. Jerome Lippomano, ambassador in 1577–1579. Their reports are contained in *Collection de Documents inédits sur l'Histoire de France, Première Série, Relations des Ambassadeurs Vénitiens*. Quoted as *Ambassadeurs Vénitiens*.

(8). Guillaume and Michel Le Riche. Avocats du Roi at Saint-Maixent in Poitou. Their Journal is quoted as *Le Riche*. Edition, Saint-Maixent, 1846.

(9). Famianus Strada. A Jesuit priest who wrote the history of the wars in the Netherlands. Motley has drawn largely from his work. Quoted as *Strada*. Edition, Rome, 1648.

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LETTER I.

YESTERDAY, August 21, I arrived at Speyer. I stayed a day at Salzburg and another at Augsburg, on account of my health. For at my third stage from Vienna an attack of hæmorrhage came on, unaccompanied, however, by pain, or any great derangement of the system. The physicians I consulted at Salzburg and Augsburg told me that, if I neglected it, the consequences might be serious, and ordered me to rest for some days. For my own part, till now I saw no reason for interrupting my journey for any length of time, but, as I observe that this trouble, whatever it may be, is aggravated by heat and motion, I intend to stay here over to-morrow, for fear of more haste perhaps proving to be worse speed. In order to save time, I have abandoned my project of passing through the Netherlands, and intend to go directly to Metz by easy stages, as my health will not admit of rapid travelling. As to the King of France, I can learn nothing here; no one knows where he is, but he is said to be going straight to Rheims, which lies, I imagine, on my road, and I hope to get there before him.

When I passed through Munich, the Duchess, the sister of your Majesty,¹ who had lately returned from a visit, sent to me, and made particular inquiries about the health of your Majesty, of the Empress, and your children. She also gave me messages for the Queen

¹ Albert III., Duke of Bavaria, married in 1546 Anne, daughter of Ferdinand, and had by her two sons, William, the hereditary Prince, his successor, and Ferdinand.

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of France, and sent letters to Augsburg next day for me to take to her.

I was speaking to someone to-day who had come but lately from the Prince of Orange, and he said that negotiations¹ for peace had been opened with him through St. Aldegonde, who was a prisoner in the hands of the Royalists. He represented the Prince as strongly inclined for peace, but said that the cities, which had called him in, were no less strongly opposed to it, and would rather suffer the worst extremity than trust themselves to the Spaniards, or send Orange away. The same person told me that Leyden was starving, and must soon surrender.² The Prince, he said, was not to blame for it, but the inhabitants, who, having been repeatedly warned to lay in stores in time, had obstinately neglected to do so. He also informed me that the Spanish fleet, if it was really coming, was to sail round Scotland, and that Orange had set up false beacons and lights on the coast to draw it among the shoals and sandbanks.

Perhaps the information I have sent your Majesty is not of much importance, still I feel sure that it will at least do no harm, and that with your accustomed graciousness you will not take my sending it amiss. I pray God to preserve your Majesty, and remain, &c.

Speyer,³ August 22, 1574.⁴

¹ For details of these negotiations, see Motley, *Rise of the Dutch Republic* Part IV., ch. iii.

² See Motley, *Dutch Republic*, Part IV. ch. ii. The siege was eventually raised on October 3rd.

³ In the original the place is given as 'Augustæ' = Augsburg; but from the first line of the letter it appears it was written at Speyer. 'Augustæ' is probably a mistake caused by 'Augusti' following immediately.

⁴ Nearly twelve years have elapsed since we parted company with Busbecq on his return from Turkey. A sketch of his life during this interval will be found in vol. i. pp. 59-64. We there expressed some doubt

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[More information](#)*ARRIVAL AT PARIS.*

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LETTER II.

ON September 2 I arrived at Meaux, fourteen¹ miles from Paris. My journey was delayed by want of post-horses, for, as the King had just gone to Lyons, they had almost all been transferred to that road from their proper stations, and so for two days and nights I sailed down the Marne, but, as it winds very much before its confluence with the Seine, near Paris, I had to change my mode of travelling, and return to land. As no horses or carriages were to be had, I sent people to Paris to get some, and also to look for lodgings against our arrival. When the Queen, your Majesty's daughter, knew of this, she sent two of her own carriages, which brought me and my suite to Paris on the 4th.

On that day the Queen² wished me to rest, and did not send for me till the next day. I found her in excellent health, but her face was melancholy, and still showed traces of her recent loss. As I was going through the points mentioned in my instructions, she spoke gratefully of your Majesty's thinking of her and sending to console and visit her in her bereavement. She was not surprised, she added, at the deep regret

as to whether there was any trustworthy authority for his visit to Spain in attendance on the younger Archdukes; we have, however, since obtained evidence of it in the Archduke Albert's decree, creating the Barony of Bousbecque. In it are recited Busbecq's services, and amongst them this visit is mentioned. The date of the decree is September 30, 1600, and it states that the visit took place twenty-five years before. This is obviously an error, as we can account for his time from August 1574 to February 1576; in all probability the true date of the visit lies between the years 1570, when Albert and Wenceslaus went to Spain with their sister Anne on her marriage to Philip II., and 1572, when we find Busbecq residing at Vienna. See vol. i. p. 62.

¹ That is, about thirty-five English miles. See note, vol. i. p. 80.

² For an account of this interesting lady, who was at this time barely twenty years of age, see note to Letter XXXVI.

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expressed by your Majesty, for, indeed, her late Consort had always felt the warmest affection for you, and had always been most anxious to meet your wishes. She then made very minute inquiries about your Majesty's health. But, when I said that she must wait patiently till your Majesty should be able to decide, according to the turn events might take, whether she was to leave or stay, she gently replied, that all she asked was to be allowed to do that which was most useful and pleasing to her father. Our conversation then ended, and I received permission to retire.

The next day the Queen again ordered me to be summoned, and during the interview I contrived to introduce the question of her marriage to the new King (Henry III.) by alluding to the reports now current; many people set her down as his future bride, I remarked, and if the union were to take place, it would, in my opinion, harmonise with your Majesty's views and policy. Her reply was such as to make it perfectly plain the suggestion was by no means to her liking; and yet I could see that she did not intend to be obstinate; she will, I am sure, place herself in her father's hands, and further his interests and wishes by every means in her power.¹

¹ After Henry III.'s flight from Poland, he stayed some time at Vienna, where Maximilian, through Pibrac, made overtures to him, offering the hand of his daughter, the widowed Queen. Henry was under such great obligations to Maximilian, that he was disinclined to give a downright refusal. *Thuanus*, iii. p. 8. The following quotation from an account of Busbecq's Queen will show what these obligations were. 'Or, estant veufve, plusieurs personnes d'hommes et dames de la Court, des plus clair voyans que je sçay, eurent opinion que le Roy, à son retour de Pologne, l'espouseroit, encore qu'elle fust sa belle sœur; car il le pouvoit par la dispense du Pape, qui peut beaucoup en telles matieres, et sur tout à l'endroit des grands, à cause du bien public qui en sort. Et y avoit beaucoup de raisons que ce mariage se fist, lesquelles je laisse à deduire aux plus hauts discoureurs, sans que je les allegue. Mais, entre autres, l'une estoit pour recognoistre par ce mariage les obligations grandes que le Roy avoit reçues de l'Empereur à son retour et depart de

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INTERVIEW WITH THE QUEEN.

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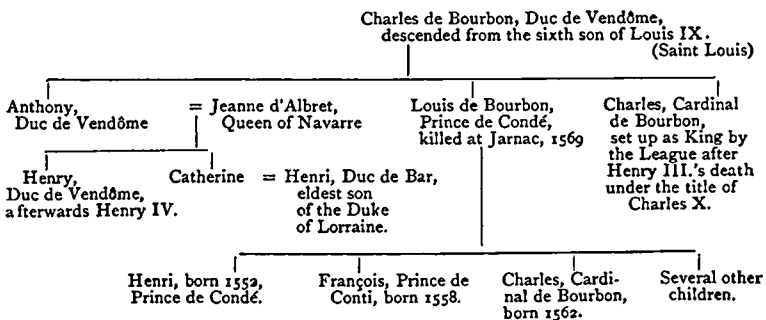
I also touched on the Constantinople matter, as your Majesty directed. She promised to bear it in mind when the Queen Mother returned. I will then make it my business to remind her of it.

I went to her a third time to ask that, as your Majesty's principal reason for sending me here was that I might look after her interests, she would kindly give orders to the *maréchaux de logis* to provide me with proper quarters in the neighbourhood, and she at once complied with my request.

As to other matters, there is no news of any importance. The King is expected to arrive at Lyons to-day, where the Queen Mother, Alençon, and Vendôme¹

Pologne ; car il ne faut point douter que, si l'Empereur eust voulu luy donner le moindre obstacle du monde, il n'eust jamais peu partir ny passer ny se conduire seurement en France. Les Polonnois le vouloient retenir s'il ne fust party sans leur dire adieu ; car les Allemans le guettoient de toutes parts pour l'attrapper (comme fut ce brave roy Richard d'Angleterre, retournant de la Terre Sainte, ainsi que nous lisons en nos chroniques), et l'eussent tout de mesme arresté prisonnier et fait payer rançon, ou possible pis ; car ils luy en vouloient fort, à cause de la feste de la Saint Barthelemy, au moins les princes protestans.'—*Bran-tôme*, v. 298–299.

¹ Henry of Navarre is generally spoken of in these letters as the Duke of Vendôme, or at most, the titular King of Navarre. The greater part of the kingdom had been seized by Ferdinand the Catholic in 1515, and has ever since been held by the Kings of Spain. Henry's power was derived from his position as a great French noble, the first Prince of the blood after the King's brother, and from his vast possessions in France, and not from the fragment of Navarre from which he derived his title. Subjoined is a short sketch of his family :—



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have been for some time awaiting him. Disturbances are still going on in Poitou and the neighbouring provinces. The King, they say, is preparing to exert his influence, and, if need be, to put them down with a strong hand. He has hired 5,000 Swiss, besides reiters from Germany, and some thousands of Italian musketeers.

With regard to our business, not much, I see, can be done here while the King is away, and so, if I was not afraid I might transgress the rules of etiquette, I should like to run home for a few days. But I cannot make up my mind, as I hardly know what people here might think; otherwise I see no objection, as I had your Majesty's permission.

Montmorency and Cossé¹ are still confined in the Bastille, and both are so strictly guarded by the people,²

¹ Montmorency, the eldest son of the famous Constable Anne de Montmorency, and himself Duc de Montmorency and Marshal of France. He was born in 1530, and fought at St. Quentin, and at the taking of Calais. He and Cossé were suspected of being implicated in the rising of Shrove-Tuesday, 1574, concerted between Alençon and the Huguenots, and were imprisoned in the Bastille. His wife was a natural daughter of Henry II. by Diane de Poitiers, who had been legitimated. He died without issue in 1579. His four brothers were, Damville, Monsieur de Montbéron, killed at the battle of Dreux in 1562, Monsieur de Méru, and Monsieur de Thoré. See note page 11, and also note page 16.

Cossé took part in Guise's famous defence of Metz in 1552, was appointed *surintendant des finances* in 1563, and Marshal in 1567. He fought at St. Denis and Moncontour, but was defeated by Coligny at Arny-le-Duc in 1570. He died in 1582, aged 70. According to Brantôme (ii. 434), he remarked on his imprisonment: 'Je ne sçay pas ce que M. de Montmorency peut avoir faict, mais quant à moy, je sçay bien que je n'ay rien faict pour estre prisonnier avec luy, sinon pour luy tenir compagnie quand on le fera mourir, et moy avec luy; que l'on me fera de mesmes que l'on faict bien souvent à de pauvres diables, que l'on pend pour tenir compagnie seulement à leurs compagnons, encor qu'ilz n'ayent rien meffaict.'

² 'Le peuple de la ville, n'agueres partisan de cette famille, les reçeut avec injures et contribua 800 harquebusiers de garde tant que leur prison dura.'—*Aubigné, Histoire*, vol. ii. bk. ii. ch. vi.

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ARRIVAL OF THE KING AT LYONS. 9

that passers-by cannot so much as bow to them without danger.

Yesterday there arrived here Master John Koch, whose misfortune has been a great grief to me. To-day I took the letters he brought to the Queen, and she immediately answered them.

Paris, September 10, 1574.

LETTER III.

A FEW days ago I sent such news as I had by way of Brussels; I now write, more because I have a convenient opportunity of forwarding a letter, than because I have anything particular to tell.

The King arrived at Lyons on the 6th. His army is besieging the town of Nove,¹ twelve miles from Lyons, which they think will not be hard to take, as it is commanded on every side by the adjoining hills. Still, they are not quite confident, as they know how obstinate the King's opponents have hitherto been in defending the places they have occupied. Montpensier²

¹ By *Nove* Busbecq probably means the town which d'Aubigné (*Histoire*, vol. ii. bk. ii. ch. ix.) calls Nonnai, now Annonay, 24 French miles from Lyons. D'Aubigné says the distance is nine leagues, which roughly corresponds with Busbecq's twelve miles. See note, vol. i. page 80. Annonay was a town in the Vivarais, one of the districts which were the strongholds of the Protestant cause, and was itself a Protestant town. For an account of the sieges it underwent, and of the civil war in the Vivarais, see Poncer, *Mémoires sur Annonay*. On this occasion the town was summoned on October 22nd, and blockaded till December 8th, so the news in the text was premature. Dr. Dale, the English representative at the French Court, mentions the raising of the siege of 'Noue,' in a letter dated December 23rd.—*Calendar of State Papers, Foreign Series, 1572-74*, p. 583.

² Louis de Bourbon, Duc de Montpensier, born in 1513, was descended from a branch of the Bourbon-Vendôme family, and on his mother's side

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is besieging the town of Fontenay ; a capitulation, they say, was agreed on, but his men refused to accept it, preferring to risk their lives in storming the place, rather than forego their plunder, so the result is still uncertain. Great is the strength of despair, and however things may turn out, their spoils, I warrant, will be blood-stained.

They say that the King, before he reached Lyons, asked his Council's advice, as to whether he should send back the Italian troops he had brought with him as a body guard, and that Pibrac,¹ whom your Majesty saw at Vienna, was for dismissing them. This gave offence to the Queen Mother, and on his arrival at Lyons she ordered him to return to Paris, and resume his duties as Advocate of the Kingdom. The Queen

was nephew to the Constable de Bourbon. He served as a volunteer at St. Quentin, where he was made prisoner. He was a bitter enemy to the Huguenots. 'Quand il prenait les heretiques par composition,' says Brantôme (iii. 364), 'il ne la leur tenait nullement, disant qu'à un heretique, on n'estoit nullement obligé de garder sa foy.' He distinguished himself at Jarnac and Moncontour. He took a prominent part in the Massacre of Saint Bartholomew. From 1574 to 1576 he commanded in Poitou and Saintonge, and died in 1582. By his first wife, Jacqueline de Longwy, who was a Protestant, he had a son and four daughters, one of whom, Charlotte, married the Prince of Orange. See Letter XIX. and note. His son—who, till he succeeded to the title of Montpensier, on his father's death, was known as the Prince Dauphin d'Auvergne—is frequently mentioned in Busbecq's letters to Rodolph. Fontenay is a town, nearly due west of Poitiers, and about fifty-five English miles from it.

¹ Guy du Faur, Seigneur de Pibrac, was born at Toulouse, in 1529. He became member of the Parliament there, and was one of the French ambassadors at the Council of Trent in 1562. In 1565, at the recommendation of the Chancellor l'Hôpital, he was appointed Avocat-Général to the Parliament of Paris. He accompanied Henry to Poland as Chancellor, and was in great danger during the precipitate flight of the King. After his return to Paris he sold his office of Advocate. He was again despatched to Poland, to persuade the Diet to allow Henry to retain the crown, but his mission proved unsuccessful. He was afterwards Chancellor of the Queen of Navarre, with whom he was supposed to be in love. He went with Alençon to Flanders, as his Chancellor, and died in 1584. He was celebrated for his eloquence.