

Queen Elizabeth and the Valois Princes

I

IN the year 1559 a new page was turned over in all the histories of Europe. Within the year the kingdoms of England, France, Denmark, and Portugal had lost their sovereigns. There was a new pope. The doge of Venice and the duke of Ferrara both were dead; and Charles V, who from his monastery at Yuste had still inspired the actions of Spain and the counsels of the empire—Charles V had died in September 1558.

Philip II at thirty-three is the oldest king in Europe; but these young kings and queens are subtle, temporising, full of compromises, at once audacious and irresolute. The warrior had already given place to the *diplomat*; the man now gives place to the woman. Elizabeth of England, Catherine of France, Mary of Scotland fill the stage of Europe.

Everywhere the politics of Europe changed. Spain, by the death of Mary Tudor, was divorced from England, by the death of Paul IV was reconciled to Rome. France, by the death of Henri II, was left in the hands of a neglected woman, timid, irresolute, and little used to rule. The kingdom swung between two opposite policies—the hope of the Low Countries inclining it to England, the dread of heresy persuading it to Spain. And England, six months ago almost a Spanish province, had now become the head and front of liberal reform.

So much for the purely diplomatic side. But the inner life of nations was also changing, quickened by the spirit of the Reformation. There was a new and dangerous independence of authority; the people, submissive for nearly two centuries, spoke again of their rights and of their privileges. The burghers of Seville seized the ingots of the Indies shipped to Philip II in order to repay themselves for the money they had lent the king.¹ The bankers of Antwerp refused to advance their gold either to Philip or Elizabeth. The members of the French parliament refused to vote *save ac-*

¹ Forneron, *Histoire de Philippe II.*

cording to their conscience. 'Heresy is encouraging ideas of liberty,' wrote Charles V to his daughter Juana, a few months before his death.² And when, in the last illness of Mary Tudor, the Spanish ambassador offered Elizabeth the protection of Philip, she haughtily declared that she 'was confident in the People who all were of her party (and this is true); it is only by the People that she occupies her present position; all that she has she owes to the People, and nothing to your Majesty, and nothing to the nobility of England.'³

This new authority of the people, strong enough in Spain to seize the royal treasure, in England to support a queen declared illegitimate and heretical by the pope, was in France more audacious still. For the Huguenots were no longer merely heretics to heaven and to Rome. Out of their midst had grown two new parties, the *politiques* and the *malcontents*, heretics to the royal government, freethinkers not only in religion but in affairs of state. They asked not only a free church, but a free parliament, clamouring for the assembly of the states-general.⁴ And this new party, with a home policy and a foreign policy to suggest, and other than church reforms in their petitions, these Huguenots by policy as well as by conviction, had become so great a power in France that both Catherine dei Medici and Elizabeth of England were fain, at different moments, to use them as a crutch to sustain their own trembling authority. For both Catherine and Elizabeth, the two great figures of their age, were placed in a difficult and dangerous position. In France Catherine had only the name of power. The people were divided by faction; the house of Guise and the house of Condé contended in Paris for the sovereign power. She complained bitterly *combien il est malaysé que ceste farce se joue à tant de personnages*. Only, by supporting the Huguenots, by using every influence that weakened the Guises, could Catherine preserve a semblance of royalty. *Car Dyeu m'a laisséé*, she writes to her daughter in Spain, *aveque troys enfans petys, et en heun royaume tout dytysé, n'y ayant heun seul à qui je me puise du tout fyer, qui n'aye quelque pasion particoulyère*.⁵

In England the position of Elizabeth was glorious but full of dangers. She was still at war with France and Scotland; the treasury was empty. The catholics might be tempted to proclaim Mary Stuart. Elizabeth's legitimacy was questioned by every catholic power; and though it was the interest of Spain⁶ to sup-

² Dossier de Yuste, 3 May 1558, quoted by Forneron. See also speech of duke of Alva, 20 July 1562, *Foreign State Papers*.

³ 1832, *Mém. de la Real Acad.* vii. 254.

⁴ Armand Baschet, *Diplomatie Vénitienne*; also De la Ferrière and Baumgarten.

⁵ Armand Baschet, *Diplomatie Vénitienne*, i. December 1560.

⁶ 'We must defend England against Scotland and France, even as we should defend Brussels.' Granvillé, 5 Dec. 1559; also Margaret of Austria's letter, Tenlet

port Elizabeth against Mary Stuart, still to accept the proffered hand of Philip would be to stultify the bold and liberal policy on which Elizabeth had determined. She temporised with Spain ; she temporised with France. She accepted no definite policy. And yet, with Mary of Scotland queen at Paris, Elizabeth was scarcely safe upon her throne in London. Mary Stuart did not hesitate to assume the arms and titles of queen of England and queen of Ireland in addition to her queenship of Scotland and of France.⁷ But Elizabeth trusted in her own popularity, her personal ascendancy, and in the divided and harassed state of her neighbours. Aware that so long as their intestine troubles lasted the French could never attempt invasion, Elizabeth extended a friendly hand to the French court and spared no effort secretly to fan the civil war.

Then rather suddenly, in the December of 1560, Francis II died. Mary Stuart was no longer reigning queen of France. Almost at the same moment the civil war broke out in open ferment. The gain of Calais became probable for England, the friendship of England became necessary for France. Elizabeth, however, felt nowise bound to the house of Valois, which had nursed and abetted the pretensions of Mary Stuart. She made no secret of her communication with the Huguenot rebels ; nor of the fact that by their aid she hoped to regain the town of Calais. Under the prince of Condé they were powerful in the north. On 15 April 1562, when the Huguenot Vidame de Chartres took the town of Havre,⁸ Calais seemed almost within the grasp of England ; for on 25 Sept. an English army under Lord Warwick entered Normandy and occupied Havre.

Elizabeth was now in a very singular position.⁹ Her soldiers occupied Havre, and fought for the rebels of a Throne with which she was nominally at peace, at whose court her ambassador, Sir Thomas Smith, represented her still, and discharged his ordinary duties ; while a second English ambassador, Sir Nicholas Throckmorton, had let himself be captured by the rebels, and represented Elizabeth in the Huguenot camp at Orléans. Complicated as the situation was, it seemed most advantageous to Elizabeth. Occupying Havre with her armed men, and subsidising rebellion with her money, she would refuse to make peace unless Calais were restored. Yet Catherine was determined on retaining Calais. The civil war became less a crusade from that moment, and more of a duel between two clever women. It was the interest of Catherine to make peace

ii. 54 (7 Dec. 1559). 'This would unite the three crowns of France, England, and Scotland on the head of François II. The loss of Brussels were not so bad.'

⁷ Murdin, 749. Ellis, *Notes of Burghley*.

⁸ Paul de Foix to Catherine de Medicis. *Foreign State Papers*.

⁹ *Le XVI Siècle et les Valois*, De la Ferrière.

—of Elizabeth to fan the flame of battle. 'For,' writes Throckmorton from the Huguenot camp,¹⁰ 'although Condé and his party do not deserve your aid, yet for recovering Calais, and maintaining a faction at your majesty's devotion in this realm, it is necessary to succour them.' So wrote Throckmorton from the rebel camp; but Smith, at court, was of a contrary opinion. Again and again he informed Elizabeth that the French would never yield her Calais, and that her aid to Condé only served to threaten England with French reprisals later on. He assures her¹¹ that could they get the aid of Spain the French would make a strong army, seize an English fort, cause sedition in England and rebellion in Scotland. Smith fully understood the danger of provoking France to raise the claims of Mary Stuart; but he also appreciated the vacillation of Philip.¹² In the hesitation of Spain lay the opportunity of England, and Philip would not yet offend his heretic sister-in-law: 'England and traffic are too much joined.'¹³

Elizabeth laid to heart so much of the warning of Smith as caused her a continual suspicion that Condé and Queen Catherine would make their terms without her. She was right. On 19 March 1563, Condé and Queen Catherine signed the peace of Amboise in the absence of Coligny.

The terms were disastrous to England. So far from recovering Calais, the English were at once expelled the realm. *L'on déchassera tous estrangers hors du royaume de France*, ran the treaty.¹⁴ 'Of course,' wrote Coligny, hearing of it, 'this word strangers cannot possibly apply to the English.' It was precisely to them it did apply. The united French armies, forgetting differences of politics and religion, attacked the English in Havre. By the end of July, ignominiously cast out by force and hunger, Warwick had to withdraw, defeated. France was dangerously at peace again, and not only at peace, but inspired by a national success. To one Frenchman at least, to Coligny, the brilliant siege of Havre suggested¹⁵ a great foreign enterprise as the cure for civil war, an enterprise that had become possible since, for a few weeks, Catholics and Huguenots alike had been able to forget their dissensions, and to remember that, first of all, they were Frenchmen.

Catherine was mistress of the situation. Elizabeth appeared to have gained only humiliation and defeat in their encounter. But in reality she had impressed Catherine with her force, with her

¹⁰ Throckmorton to Elizabeth, 15 Dec. 1562. *Foreign*.

¹¹ Smith to Elizabeth, 8 Nov. 1562. *Foreign*.

¹² 22 Dec. 1562. Smith to Council. *Foreign*.

¹³ Sèvres.

¹⁴ Note for the treaty of Amboise. *Foreign State Papers*.

¹⁵ See Forneron, *Philippe II*, and also the Spanish despatches of Chantonay, K 1,500, *Archives Nationales*, for the chagrin and dismay of Philip at the success of France in taking Havre: 'Elizabeth had assured him she could stand a siege of at least a year's duration,' writes Saint-Sulpice to Catherine.

astuteness. Catherine beheld in her a terrible neighbour, a perpetual scourge to her enemies. The marvellous audacity of Elizabeth in outraging the champions of Mary Stuart, impressed Catherine as energy and strength. She would be as effective in alliance as in enmity. In November 1564, Catherine sent for Smith,¹⁶ and asked him in the presence of the king why his queen had never married. Before the astonished ambassador could answer, she asked again, 'Why does the queen not marry Lord Robert Dudley?' There were in France, as in England, many scandals about Queen Elizabeth, and Smith was not ignorant of them when he replied that, should the queen desire it, she was free to marry Dudley, for her parliament had continually pressed marriage upon her, leaving the absolute choice of a husband to herself. 'Why, then,' rejoined Queen Catherine again, 'why does your queen not marry Robert Dudley?' Smith made no answer at the time; but early in the February of 1565, Queen Catherine sent again for Smith,¹⁷ and proposed to him a marriage between Charles IX, her son, the king of France, and Elizabeth, the queen of England.

The project was singular and audacious. To marry the protestant queen of England, a reigning and powerful sovereign, to the reigning king of France, a catholic, and the open enemy of reform, would indeed be in some sort a gage of religious quiet. Catherine, perhaps, divined that such a peace would be a balm for the many wounds of France. But in the way of this improbable and almost unnatural marriage the difficulties were immense, and seemed impossible to conquer. Nevertheless Cecil *seemed* at least to take the project seriously to heart. It was certainly against the chance of happiness that the queen was thirty and the king only fifteen years of age. But, even if they married, Charles and Elizabeth would see little of each other. She would reign in England, he in France, 'whither,' said Catherine, 'if your queen marry the king, she must occasionally let herself be constrained to come.'¹⁸ The real difficulty was, firstly, the question of religion, and secondly, the question of inheritance. For if one child alone were born to inherit both kingdoms, it was arranged that the seat of rule must be in France, and England governed by a viceroy.¹⁹ This was a hard prospect for English pride to face. Yet so difficult was the question of succession, so great the immediate fear of Mary Stuart and the catholics, that Cecil merely asked a little delay in which to consider the prospects of the match.

But delay was precisely that which Queen Catherine could not grant. Her authority needed immediate support, and she must have it, from England or from Spain. She was willing to forgive past

¹⁶ Smith, 8 Nov. 1564. *Foreign State Papers*.

¹⁷ 9 Feb.: Smith to Cecil. 15 Feb.: Speech of Cecil to Paul de Foix.

¹⁸ *Foreign*: Smith to Elizabeth, 15 April. ¹⁹ *Foreign*: Notes by Cecil, 15 Feb.

injuries, to marry her child to Elizabeth, but it must be at once. Catherine had always in her mind's eye two opposite goals of success, and her tortuous course now made for one and now for the other. There were two mighty futures open to France. As the ally of Spain, as the second catholic power, France might remain great in the safe and sacred highways of tradition. But there was always that other possibility, that audacious liberal dream, which haunted at some moment all the keener minds of France from the time when Francis I lay a captive at Pavia to the days of the project of Spire in 1573. This second policy would have made France the antagonist of the empire, would have made her the great latitudinarian power, the foe of the Inquisition, sheltering under her broad ægis the protestants of Germany and Denmark, accepting the fellowship of England and Venice, admitting, if needs be, the Grand Seigneur himself.

Catherine at this juncture was attempting to decide between these different ideals. On the one hand, she might marry France to England and inaugurate a liberal policy. On the other hand, she believed that at Bayonne, in June, she would meet the king of Spain, who would offer her the emperor's daughter for her son.²⁰ She must be in a position to accept or decline, and therefore Elizabeth must decide without delay.

Catherine had said to Somers in 1564, 'My son is sought after upon all sides,' and among the princesses whom rumour selected as the future queen of France were the emperor's daughter, the infanta of Portugal, the queen of England, and, lastly, the only daughter of the Grand Turk, born in marriage, willing for baptism, and enriched with 'a dowry of five millions, and he cannot tell what realms.'²¹ Here was a dazzling choice, and among the daughters of the four great antagonists of the earth.

The emperor's daughter was a pretty, amiable, and pious child; the infanta of Portugal a young girl of sixteen; the Turkish sultana had her sacks of treasure, and her charms and veils of mystery; Elizabeth was thirty, a heretic, an irascible woman, vain, astute, extravagant, and though not devoid of a certain wit and good bearing, a certain grace and attraction of manner,²² yet neither young nor lovely, for, says Queen Catherine, 'every one tells me of her beauty, but from what I see of her portrait, I must confess she has no good painters at court.'²³ Charles, however, declared himself the lover of this least favoured lady. 'Madam,' he cried to his mother in the presence of Smith, 'I would have the queen of England an

²⁰ *Foreign*: Note by Cecil, 26 March. Smith to Elizabeth, 7 June. Journal of affairs in France, July 2.

²¹ Smith to Leicester, July 1565.

²² Tommaseo, Michiel, 1567.

²³ *Foreign*. Smith, Notes, April.

I could,'²⁴ and again he declared that he found no fault in her age. It is possible that the young king, a tall slender long-faced boy, pallid and amiable,²⁵ was glad to think of an escape from that inevitable surveillance of his mother's, which, as we learn from the Venetian ambassadors, gradually sucked the spirit out of a naturally chivalric and valorous disposition. From some cause, from the hope of liberty, from ambition, or from obedience, the young king was willing and eager to marry the queen of England. And Queen Catherine also was anxious for the match. She probably disliked Elizabeth, but for the moment she was really desirous of a placable national anti-crusader policy. She wished for no extravagance of the Inquisition, no interference of the popes. She wished to subdue the Guises, dangerously popular in Paris. She spared no pains to conciliate the Huguenots.²⁶ France was willing to ally herself with England; it was Elizabeth that could not decide.

To imperil the independence of her kingdom; to put herself in the power of a catholic, who would murder her perhaps, and then marry Mary Stuart; to become the unloved and elderly wife of a child of fifteen; this was a melancholy prospect for Elizabeth. Probably she never intended to consent. But she pretended to deliberate, partly to secure a *rapprochement* with France, and partly to conciliate her own parliament, never weary of insisting on her marriage. It was not the first time that she had smiled on some advancing prince, had appeared to soften, meditating all the while some task for him as impossible as that which any fabled princess ever set her fairy lover.

Meanwhile there was a great come-and-go of ambassadors and secretaries, an air of secret business in either court, a stir of rumour in Europe. 'It is whispered here that marriage is intended between France and England,' writes Randolph from Scotland on 30 March; and so late as June he writes again that 'the queen of Scots declares herself undone if England mate with France.' But by this time Elizabeth had refused the alliance. Brave as she was, she could not endure to wed a lad of fifteen. By 7 June²⁷ the affair was virtually at an end. By the end of the month the queen of France had met her child, the queen of Spain, with Alva at Bayonne.

II

The conference of Bayonne was one of those surprising blunders which ever and anon interrupt and paralyse the versatile policy of

²⁴ Smith to Queen.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ Tommaseo, Suriano, 1561; *ibid.* Barbero, 1563; De la Ferrière, p. 189.

²⁷ Smith to Elizabeth, 7 June. *Foreign State Papers.*

Catherine. It was surely strange that at the very moment chosen to conciliate the Huguenots and the powers of the north, Catherine should let herself be seen upon the Spanish frontier holding counsel with the duke of Alva. The contemporary impression was profound. For several years Catherine had done her utmost to reconcile the protestants. She had openly protected the queen of Navarre against the schemes of Spain. She had made Dandelot a colonel. She allowed Condé to preach in the palace. In January 1564 Chantonnay wrote to the king of Spain: 'The king here favours the admiral and makes very good cheer for him and Andelot.' And Philip had replied that he was deeply grieved to find his brother of France familiar with persons who might lead him to damnation (*le podrian dañar*).²⁸ Saint-Sulpice, writing from Madrid, tells Catherine of the horror which her laxity has created in the Spanish court. The king fears that France is *endemoniada*. In the reports of the Venetian envoys we read a similar tale. For the last three years Catherine had spared no pains to secure civil peace by royal toleration, and now quite suddenly she deserted her accustomed policy, and went to concert her measures with Alva at Bayonne. 'She has thrown off the mask,' cried the Huguenots, who from that moment never wholly trusted in her mediations. And when next year the Inquisition entered Flanders, all the protestants of Europe were convinced that a great scheme to exterminate reform was the real object of the conference of Bayonne.

We know that it was not so. In the ninth volume of the 'Granville State Papers,' and in the minutes sent by Alva at Bayonne to Philip II, preserved in the French national archives, and abundantly quoted by M. Forneron in his 'Histoire de Philippe II,' enough remains to show us how little intention had Catherine of submitting to the dictates of Philip. She was perfectly informed, through her correspondence with Saint-Sulpice,²⁹ of the fact that Spain was at least as eager as England that civil war should ravage and weaken her kingdom. 'And the more your majesty is aware of their longing to hinder any peace, the more anxious I am sure she will be to conclude one.' Catherine was quite persuaded to concede nothing to Alva without very mature deliberation.

In fact the conference of Bayonne resulted in pure exasperation to the Spaniards. Alva had come armed with a double purpose: firstly, while Catherine was occupied with her daughter, he had determined to conclude behind her back a secret league with Montluc, the chief of the French infantry; ³⁰ secondly, he came to demand of Catherine herself a second and open Holy League with Spain.

²⁸ K 1,501, *Arch. Nat.* See *Chantonnay's Despatches*, quoted by Forneron.

²⁹ MS. *Bibl. Nat.* No. 3,161, fol. 96.

³⁰ Montluc was the head of a party in France which really feared the apparent Huguenotism of Catherine. For the details of his conspiracies (1563-5) with Alva

In reality Alva gained nothing: Catherine outwitted him at every point. 'Will you join the Holy League?' asked the duke. 'Certainly,' replies Catherine, 'if you include the emperor.' Alva was disconcerted, for the emperor, pledged to tolerance by fear of a German rebellion, could not possibly be included in the league. To add to his exasperation, no sooner had the queen of France arrived at Bayonne, than a Turkish ambassador landed at Marseilles to demand security for Ottoman ships in the ports of France. 'She will do nothing for us,' cries Granville, 'she only wishes to cover her secret alliance with the Turk.'³¹ 'It is impossible to entrap the queen,' writes Alva. 'Please God, her real intention be not liberty of conscience!' And Philip scribbles on the margin of Alva's despatches, *la. reyna per estos platricos gosise* (bansters) *al Duque*. Catherine dei Medici was at least a match for Alva.

It is a pity that so much ability, so much address, were wasted on elaborating a signal mistake. While the queen was fencing adroitly with Alva, the Huguenots were convinced that she was plotting with their enemies to destroy them. In the eyes of the protestants the conference was a sign of catholic and conservative consolidation. It meant the unity of France and Spain. A little later they said it meant the Inquisition. And while the two catholic courts still were at Bayonne the news came from Scotland that Mary Stuart had married the catholic Lord Darnley. On the last day of June, Charles IX wrote to Elizabeth expressing his approval of the marriage.³²

Elizabeth was furious. She had hoped against hope that Mary would marry Robert Dudley, and thus gain Scotland to the interests of England. And Mary had married a catholic, French at heart. Elizabeth saw herself surrounded by enemies upon all sides: a catholic king and queen at her very gates in Scotland, and a rejected France conversing with the enemy of heresy at Bayonne.

It was necessary to make reprisals. All over protestant Europe there spread a spirit of suspicion and antagonism, a desire to frustrate the supposed machinations of Catherine and Alva. Heresy had determined to sell its life dearly. In 1567 the people of the Netherlands rose in arms against the Inquisition of the

and Philip II, see M. Forneron's excellent (and abundantly *documentée*) *Histoire de Philippe II*.

³¹ All through the Spanish state papers of this time we find the old fear of a league between France and the Porte. In August 1570 Don Francis de Alava writes he would not wonder if next year France should give Toulon to the Turks! And in October he warns Philip II that the Huguenots are negotiating with the Grand Seigneur. But the evidence is abundant. See Charrière, and also Baumgarten's interesting and scholarly little work *Vor der Bartholomäus-Nacht*. For the influence of the Turks in Flanders, see Forneron.

³² Charles IX to Elizabeth, 30 June. *Foreign State Papers*.

Spaniards, and the presence of Alva with 14,000 men was necessary to subdue them. In the same year (9 Feb.) the Scottish nobles murdered their catholic sovereign, Henry Darnley, and in June they made a captive of their catholic queen. In France, the same year, in September, the court, being at Monceaux, suddenly found the protestant army between itself and Paris. The court escaped with difficulty, and the king was besieged in his capital by the Huguenots.

There was mutiny in Scotland, rebellion in the Netherlands, civil war in France; and Elizabeth had her hand in all these undertakings. Preserving a show of amity with Philip, she sent secret help to the Prince of Orange.³³ Her ministers and her ambassadors corresponded with Condé and Coligny,³⁴ while she pretended peace with France. Her intrigues in Scotland were inspired by yet greater hesitancy and dissimulation. Catherine was aware how dangerous an enemy she had to conciliate, and the fear and respect of the queen-mother were increased when in the spring of 1567 Elizabeth formally demanded³⁵ the restoration of Calais. From that moment Catherine continually feared lest, taking advantage of the miserable confusion in France, Elizabeth should seize both Havre and Calais by force of arms. This redoubtable Elizabeth made herself yet more evidently predominate in the next year. The imprisonment of Mary Stuart was a direct insult to the Valois, for Mary was a married queen of France. Charles IX was justly incensed; but Catherine, impervious to insult, respected the success of Elizabeth.

For, as England grew noticeable and strong, France, bled by civil war, dwindled day by day. Affairs were at their blackest in that divided country; catholics and Huguenots were no longer religious but political parties, fighting not merely for a different creed, but for different ideals of government, for a different policy. The Huguenots fought for civic rights, for liberty, for calm. 'There are many catholics among them,' writes Monluc, bishop of Valence,³⁶ 'and the greater part have revolted, hoping to set their country in the end at rest.' The whole of France was fighting desperately for the sake of peace.

Supported by continual recruits at home, and by the secret supplies of Elizabeth abroad,³⁷ the Huguenot party appeared day

³³ Lingard, vi. 114.

³⁴ 143 *Cabala*. Coligny to Cecil, 7 Jan. 1568. *Foreign State Papers*. Chatillon to Cecil, 23 Sept. 1568. *Foreign State Papers*.

³⁵ Note, 7 May 1567, *Foreign State Papers*; also Forneron ii. 271. *La réponse du Roi fust qu'il s'establissoit grandement de ceste demande, et luy sembloit qu'il n'en falloit plus parler, mais seulement de l'entretènement de la bonne paix et amytie qui estoit en eulx.*

³⁶ Monluc to Catherine. *Foreign State Papers*.

³⁷ La Mothe-Fénelon, December 1568. *F.S.P.* Jeanne d'Albret to Cecil, 16 Jan. 1569. *F.S.P.*

by day more likely to gain the upper hand. But fortune turned; on 13 March 1569, Condé was killed in the battle of Jarnac; on October 3, Coligny was utterly routed at Moncontour. The nominal conqueror of these great generals was a girl-faced stripling of sixteen, Anjou, Catherine's second and favourite son, for the moment the hero of his country.

The catholic victories brought peace, a difficult peace, not actually signed and sealed till August 1570. The catholic party had won the battle after all; but Catherine was too shrewd a politician not to perceive how strong the minority had grown. Again she resolved to balance, to inquire, to favour a Huguenot policy while keeping the catholic standard still afloat. Coligny was again received at court with every mark of respect. The queen, prejudiced against Spain by the sudden and mysterious death of Elizabeth, her daughter, allowed some talk of the favourite Huguenot project, the winning of the Netherlands by France and England from the grasp of Philip. A distrust had gradually grown deep and wide between the queen-mother and her son-in-law of Spain.³⁸ Catherine began to trim her course for the anti-Spanish party. 'The catholics seem exhausted,' writes Correr in 1569; ³⁹ 'the queen does not dare to offend the Huguenots in never so little, and day by day they gain in audacity and insolence. . . . There is a talk of marrying Anjou to Elizabeth, to settle the question of Calais.'

This was the dearest dream of Coligny, the match between England and France. It would prove a solid bond more durable than league or amity. Thus united, the two countries would perceive their interests to be the same; and the Netherlands, divided among England, France, and Nassau, would exclude Spain from northern Europe. It is a sign how great already the influence of Coligny had become, even in the court,⁴⁰ that no sooner was the peace signed and sealed in August than he and Chatillon were permitted to offer the hand of Anjou to the heretic and hostile queen of England.

It was the second time that Catherine solicited the hand of England, and though no longer she could offer the very king of France, Anjou at this moment was scarcely less remarkable, handsome, heroic as it seemed, his melancholy head encircled with the aureole of victory. All the more that she had just married the king of France to the emperor's daughter,⁴¹ was Catherine anxious

³⁸ Norris to Cecil, 8 April 1568. *F.S.P.*

³⁹ Tommaseo.

⁴⁰ See Baumgarten, 87-98, for the reception of Coligny at court. At first coldly but kindly received (*con certa ragionevole ma non di troppo apparenza*, wrote Petrucci), he soon gained an extraordinary influence over Charles. 'The king opens both his ears to listen to his stories,' declared Don Francis de Alava, who seriously began to fear a league of France, Turkey, England, and Germany. In the spring of 1571 Kaspar von Schomberg writes to Augustus of Saxony that there is great hope of a league between the German protestants and France.

⁴¹ The young queen Elizabeth of Austria was a new hope for Spain, which expected

that the marriage of Anjou should conciliate the powerful minority of the Huguenots.

There were reasons also why England should desire the match. Elizabeth was at that moment more earnest than she had been with any suitor saving the archduke of Austria. For marriage became a necessity to her. So long as her death assured the accession of a catholic queen, her life was not safe from the assassin's dagger. 'I am not able to discern what is best,' writes Burghley; ⁴² 'but surely I see no continuance of her quietness without a marriage.' The conspiracy of Ridolfi, the conspiracy of the duke of Norfolk, had very lately shown how unscrupulous was the catholic intention to win the English crown for a catholic. The duke of Alva, writing to King Philip, ⁴³ warns him that in case of the *natural or violent death* of Elizabeth, the king of Spain must not let slip this opportunity of re-establishing the Roman church in Britain. In the hope of a child, Elizabeth saw her best defence from Mary Stuart; in becoming the wife of the catholic Anjou, her safest protection against a catholic assassin.

For the moment, Coligny and Catherine, La Mothe-Fénelon and Burghley, Elizabeth and Condé, all appeared to be in earnest for the match. The opposition did not come from these; but King Charles was furious with Elizabeth for her detention of Mary Stuart; but the Guises got hold of Anjou, and assured him that if he would marry the rightful queen of England, she was not Elizabeth, but their enchanting kinswoman, the queen of Scots.

Anjou was fired by the mere description of her. In November it was reported that the marriage with Bothwell (now in prison for piracy in a Danish dungeon) could be dissolved as extorted by violence. The Guises filled the ears of Anjou with this report; and Lignerolles, a gentleman of his suite, coming back from Scotland, gave so eloquent a report of Mary's beauty that Anjou would no more consent to play the suitor of Elizabeth. Early in 1571 he outright refused the marriage. 'He will never marry her,' confessed the queen-mother to La Mothe-Fénelon, 'even should she herself desire it, for he has heard her honour called in question. And in this I cannot win him over, although he is an obedient son.' ⁴⁴

But Catherine was not the woman to let her plans fall through to suit a young man's fancy. By March, Anjou was won, and Catherine wrote ⁴⁵ again: 'He infinitely desires the match.' For

much from her influence on Charles IX. (For Alava's despatches see Baumgarten, 84.) She had none. On the other hand, the marriage of the king aroused the ambition of Anjou, who foresaw that the birth of royal princes would reduce him to the level of M. de Montpensier. (See Contarini's relation in Baschet's *Diplomatie Vénitienne* for the year 1571.) It became imperative to provide Anjou with a kingdom out of France.

⁴² Digges. Burghley to Walsingham, 3 March 1570.

⁴³ Teulet, 1571.

⁴⁴ De la Ferrière, 272.

⁴⁵ 2 March 1571. F.S.P.

the moment there seemed no other course open. France had neither men nor money to espouse the queen of Scotland's cause. Better to frankly let fly the Huguenot colours, and conquer Flanders with the help of England. Yet Catherine, never wholly of one opinion, appears to have doubted and harked back, suffering dim misgivings. In the early summer, May or June, of 1571, she did the strangest thing. She wrote to her daughter-in-law, Mary of Scotland; since on his marriage with Elizabeth there would be no security for the person of Anjou, she suggested that Mary should lend him for three years the town and castle of Edinburgh, to be occupied by a French garrison.⁴⁶ Mary indignantly rejected the proposal, which indeed could only serve to show in what a coil of perplexity and fear the queen-mother of France was helping to weave the destiny of nations.

But, safe for Anjou or perilous for Anjou, she nerved herself to desire the match. 'How soon, do you suppose, Carnavalet,' said Anjou to his tutor, 'that we shall all be Huguenots again?' (For Carnavalet had once had that reputation.) Indeed, the Huguenots were daily increasing at the court. The king himself had been won over; and though no Huguenot, he held Coligny for his chief friend and counsellor, the man of men at court. '*Quasi governava tutto*,'⁴⁷ wrote the nuncio Salviati. And a year ago Correr had reported to the signory of Venice,⁴⁸ 'I can give you no idea of the extent of this Huguenot conspiracy.' Catherine perceived that she must reckon with heresy, and saw no policy between extermination and adhesion. For affairs had taken a turn that she had not expected. Coligny had acquired so great an influence over Charles IX, that, instead of the Guises, the Huguenots were becoming the predominant and dangerous party in France. Catherine's policy had ever been to check the catholics by the protestants, and the house of Condé, in its turn, by the house of Guise. Let either party become sovereignly powerful, and its rival was no longer Guise or Condé, but the crown. Therefore she sought to engross each party with the other, while she, left disengaged, dispensed the sovereign arbitration. At this moment the Guises, lately too potent, were effectively restrained. Were the Huguenots too powerful yet? What could the Huguenots promise?

Coligny, in fact, promised great things, but he demanded a daring policy in return. He required that Catherine should not only marry her son to Elizabeth, but her daughter to the chief of the reform, Henry of Navarre.⁴⁹ He suggested that France, with

⁴⁶ Alva to Philip, Paris, August 1571. Teulet.

⁴⁷ Secret despatches of Salviati. Theiner, *Annales Ecclesiastici*.

⁴⁸ Tommaseo.

⁴⁹ Coligny at first would have preferred to marry Henry of Navarre to Elizabeth, but this did not sufficiently guarantee the policy of France.

the help of England, should declare a righteous war against Spain, and divide the tormented provinces of the Netherlands among England, France, and Nassau. He proposed a great latitudinarian league of Germany, Denmark, the Netherlands, England, Scotland, Switzerland, and France. He suggested a bold and forceful counterblast to Spain.

Already on May 25⁵⁰ De Foix had hinted to Walsingham that his real opponent was the queen-mother. For Catherine, though incensed against Spain and allured by the audacity of Coligny's policy, was ever timid, and, in this case, ill assured of the co-operation of Elizabeth. Also she feared lest, growing to such unreckoned-upon strength, the influence of Coligny might supersede her with the king. And Anjou, her favourite son, was intractable—was already plotting with the Guises for Mary Stuart. Anjou refused Elizabeth; and though the king swore that he would make him the shorter by a head, and though, says Walsingham, 'his mother never wept so much since the time her husband died,'⁵¹ Anjou again refused to continue in his suit.

Early in the autumn (July 30) Anjou wrote to Elizabeth⁵² saying the difficulties were too great, but he remained devoted. The match with Anjou was now virtually given over. Catherine with every day receded further from the party of Charles and Coligny into the ambushes of Guise. 'The queen-mother seems more affected to the queen of Scots,' writes Walsingham;⁵³ and Aguilon writes home to Spain⁵⁴ a little later: 'The queen-mother, who governs all, offers to marry her son Anjou, who is her idol, to the Scotch-woman, and make her queen of England.' Towards this different ideal Catherine set her course. Rumours of the English marriage grew confused and died away. 'If neither marriage nor amity take place,' writes Walsingham from Paris,⁵⁵ 'then the poor protestants here do think their cause desperate. They tell me so with tears, and therefore I do believe them.'

But the king was still for the Huguenots. On 19 April 1572 a defensive league between France and England was signed and ratified at Blois.

III

The treaty of Blois was signed in April 1572, and at the same date (4 April) the match with Navarre⁵⁶ was solemnly announced.

⁵⁰ *Foreign State Papers.*

⁵¹ *F.S.P.* 30 July.

⁵² *F.S.P.*

⁵³ Walsingham to Burghley, 8 Oct. *F.S.P.*

⁵⁴ Teulet, 6 Nov. 1572.

⁵⁵ Digges, August 1571.

⁵⁶ The match with Navarre was a direct insult to Philip, who for some time past had been arranging a marriage between Marguerite de Valois and the king of Portugal. (See Baumgarten.) Philip when he heard the news sent a messenger to Saint-Gouard, the French ambassador in Madrid, *le blasmant infiniment, et se esbahissant comment*

Smith was sent from England to negotiate with Walsingham for Queen Elizabeth. He had in reality a second, and a secret, mission besides this ostensible business. He was sent to arrange a league of France, England, the Netherlands, Germany, Switzerland, Florence, and Sweden; a great latitudinarian alliance which should counterbalance the league formed by Spain, the pope, and Venice. 'In this embassy,' says Aguilon to Philip II, 'there is more than meets the eye.'⁵⁷

This league was in most of its essentials the same that so long had haunted the audacious fancy of Francis I. It was to embrace alike the old religion and the new; its object was to defend the peace of Christendom; its terms proclaimed the author of any massacre as *de facto* atheist. Sir Thomas Smith on the one hand, and Admiral Coligny on the other, were eager to negotiate the league. But it was deemed at that moment impracticable; and a few months afterwards it was shown how strangely France would have construed the provisions of its terms.

The treaty of Blois was a makeshift, a substitute. But Smith and Coligny hoped to supplant it by a marriage—a third project for wedding France to England, a wedding proposed between Elizabeth and Alençon, the youngest of the sons of Catherine. Alençon was no taller than a woman, seamed by confluent small-pox, and disfigured by an extraordinary enlargement of the nose; but he was open and frank, valiant, and manly. The English, as a rule, preferred him to the beautiful Anjou.

'Anjou and Alençon,'⁵⁸ writes Sir Thomas Smith, 'are become the *capi Guelfi e Gibellini*, for that all Huguenot retainers are dismissed of Anjou and welcomed of Alençon. The last is the refuge and succour of all the Huguenots; a good fellow and a lusty prince. The queen-mother offered to send him over on a visit to Elizabeth. It was still a chance of the English alliance, and at least it disembarrassed her of this too eager, too independent youth, the least loved of her children. But Elizabeth, indignant at the defection of Anjou, was in no humour to receive him.

If the currents of France and England still flowed together, it was owing to the influence of Coligny. The admiral was still in favour—the king still called him his father. But Coligny could not be satisfied with barren influence. His aim was to deliver Flanders, to set France and England on the battle-field together. The feeling throughout the country was very strong. In November 1571 the Huguenots of France besought the king to let them carry arms against Alva; and a letter of Lisle, the English agent, sends word:

une si sage princesse n'avoist plus tost eslu un roy tel que estoit celui de Portugal, se eschauffant extremement de ceste matiere. See Despatches, quoted by Farneron.

⁵⁷ Teulet, *Spanish Despatches*, 1 Jan. 1572 until 16 Oct. 1573.

⁵⁸ 9 Jan. 1572. *F.S.P.*

'There is a great likelihood the king will go to war with the Spaniards, both in Spain and in Flanders.'

The aim of Coligny was to defeat Spain by the aid of England; the aim of Elizabeth was to let France engage the anger of Spain alone. Therefore she would give no definite answer when Catherine again proposed a Valois marriage; still according a vague hope to France, but no special encouragement to Alençon. The treaty of Blois was better to her mind than a more explicit engagement. But France was eager for a closer tie—to the protestants and liberals of France, it was the very question of existence. Montmorency went to England in the summer. He was followed by the dear friend of Alençon, the Huguenot De la Mole. Lastly, Coligny himself wrote to Elizabeth in July. And while Elizabeth played fast and loose, professing amity and willingness to Charles, assuring Walsingham she never could marry Alençon, 'specially for the blemishes the small-pox hath wrought in his visage'—while Elizabeth deliberated, the summer of 1572 crept on, and still the patient Huguenots of France looked towards England for salvation.

Still the protestants seemed to have cause for hope. The Turks and the Venetians proposed to Charles IX an anti-Spanish league.⁵⁹ Orange was most successful in his march on Holland, and held Buremond and Vanloo at his devotion. The marriages with England and Navarre held out a chance of civil peace in France. And at court Coligny was in the counsels of the king, conferring with the ambassadors of England,⁶⁰ drawing up the project of the Flemish war, 'governing the kingdom' in Salviati's phrase. And Middlemore, writing to Burleigh, relates:⁶¹ 'The admiral goes to court every day and is always well received, only the duke of Guise will never speak a word to him.'

The duke and the admiral were playing a dangerous game, and the lives of the Huguenots and the fate of the Netherlands were the stake. Coligny worked hard for a policy of moderation; he strove to bring about the Anglo-French marriage; he laboured night and day for the expedition to the Low Countries, persuading France and England alike how much this effort would be to their advancement. Coligny had his party at the court, and his party included alike Alençon and the king. But the Guises were a stronger faction still.

For the Guises were secretly supported by Catherine and by Anjou. Under the influence of these statesmen ('who do in-

⁵⁹ Digges: Walsingham to Burghley, Leicester, 18 July 1572. See also Forneron. Philip was very early informed of the anti-Spanish current in France and of the design of Flanders. He affected ignorance. *Entretanto que no se quitan la mascara, conviene que no se la quitamos, sino dar les a entender que lo creemos.* Arch. Nat. K 1,529, dossier 110.

⁶⁰ De la Ferrière, 815.

⁶¹ *Ib.* 816: MSS. Cott. Vespas. British Museum.

cline to Spain,' as Catherine herself admitted) the queen-mother had forgotten her grievance against Philip. She was now persuaded that the English would have no hand in the Netherlands. She had become timid of the enormous risk involved in the struggle against Spain. She perceived moreover the vacillation of Elizabeth, and this increased her fear.

Had Elizabeth been firm, had she given a resolute answer to Alençon, had she determined what part to take in the Netherlands, all might yet have gone well; but she played her old game, anxiously trifling with Coligny and with Alva, not knowing yet in which to sheathe her claws.⁶² Every day rumours came to Paris that, so far from persisting in the enterprise, the English queen had recalled the few of her soldiers who were already in the Netherlands. And in truth England was afraid lest in abating the claims of Spain she should too much increase the power of France.⁶³ Thus for many months England also hesitated, while a tremor seized the whole protestant world. The queen-mother evidently attempted to withdraw the king, and on 22 July Walsingham wrote home to Leicester⁶⁴ assuring him how necessary it was that the enterprise of Flanders should not be slackened. This was on 22 July. At that moment the king and the queen-mother were apart; he was hunting for a week not far from Paris, and she had gone in great haste to nurse her daughter of Lorraine, who had fallen ill at Monceaux on the way to Paris. Meanwhile, on 21 July, an envoy extraordinary reached Paris from Venice. This was Giovanni Michiel; he had done the journey in eleven days, for the signiory of Venice, anxious for prosperous quiet, could not make too much haste to interrupt a French war with Spain.

Michiel found the queen-mother absent,⁶⁵ the people eager for war, the king (a bent, thin, melancholy young man, extremely pale) subjugated to the influence of Coligny in the absence of Catherine. For the first week of his stay in Paris the war was considered as good as declared; ⁶⁶ the people publicly spoke of it; hour after hour different gentlemen kept coming to the palace offering, one five hundred horse, the next a thousand horse, according to their means and at their own expense. The war was popular. Men remembered how in a few days the catholics and Huguenots together had seized Havre from the English. A first detachment of French soldiers, under Genlis, already was in Flanders and had been cruelly defeated. The French desired to avenge their

⁶² Tavannes: *Las des irrésolutions de la Roynne . . . Elle veut et ne veut pas, change d'avis et rechange en un instant. Elle fluctue. . .*

⁶³ Digges: Walsingham to Burghley, 12 Aug. 1571.

⁶⁴ Digges.

⁶⁵ The king came back to Paris 30 July; his mother five or six days after. See Desjardins, tom. iii. 31 July; see also Baumgarten, 207.

⁶⁶ See Michiel's relation, Alberi; and also Armand Baschet, *Diplomatie Vénitienne*.

comrades. Among the French captives many under torture had avowed to Alva the complicity of the king of France. '*Savez-vous que le duc d'Albe me fait mon procès ?*' cried Charles IX,⁶⁷ and he also longed for open warfare. But the queen at Monceaux, hearing that public spirit ran so high, quickly left her daughter and hurried back to Paris with Anjou. She immediately had an audience with Michiel, in which, despite the aspect of affairs, she assured him there should be no war with Spain; letting fall the remarkable statement that not only with words but with deeds (*non solo con le parole ma con gli effetti*) she would prove her resolutions. These words Michiel, a month later, naturally construed into a prophecy of the St. Bartholomew massacre.

Michiel affirms premeditation on the part of Catherine. On the other hand the nuncio Salviati insists to the papal court at Rome that the queen only at the last moment conceived the idea of the massacre, which would never have taken place had Coligny died at once. This view is very consonant with the vacillating character of Catherine, always inclined to change the course of fate by a lucky accident, a sudden inspiration. She would think little of the removal of a man who supplanted her in the counsels of the king (she was, says Salviati, *sospettosissima et gelosissima dove si tratta di scemargli l'autorità*) and who was about to ruin the country by plunging it unaided into a desperate war with Spain. Catherine had the Italian susceptibility to imaginative panic. She felt that at all costs the invasion of the Netherlands must be averted. It had at all times been a dangerous game to play. Without the co-operation of England it became impossible. When the news came to Paris that Elizabeth meant to recall her troops from the Netherlands, Catherine was in absolute dejection.

The King (says Walsingham) had proceeded to an open dealing had he not received advertisement out of England that her Majestie meant to revoke such of her subjects as are presently in Flanders. Whereupon such of the Council here as incline to Spain have put the Queen-Mother in such a fear that the enterprise cannot but miscarry without the assistance of England, as she, with tears, has dissuaded the King for the time, who otherwise was very resolute.

Thus your Lordship seeth how the bruit of your fear there hath bred fear here; *whereof I fear there will follow fearful effects unless God put to His helping hand.*

Queen Elizabeth, in reality, was responsible for the St. Bartholomew massacre. Yet no one but Walsingham among the English appears to have realised the gravity of the situation. The queen apparently enjoyed the game, and Smith replied to Walsingham in a letter stuffed with Latin, written from Kenilworth upon

⁶⁷ Baschet, *Dipl. Vénit.*

22 Aug., saying that no order had been given *yet* to withdraw the troops from Flanders, but that Alva had been ⁶⁸ 'gently answered with a dilatory and a doubtful answer.' Meanwhile Coligny stood literally upon the very brink of death, relying for his only hope upon these dilatory and doubtful friends.

The King is grown very cold (writes Walsingham). The Admiral in this brunt, whose mind is invincible, and foreseeth what is like to ensue, does not now give over, but layeth before the King his peril if the Prince of Orange fail; and though he cannot obtain what were requisite and necessary for the advancement of the cause, yet doth he obtain somewhat in conference with him. He desireth for himself nothing more—after long troubles. Nor would he now expose himself to new perils. But the case now standing as it doth, he saith he should be a traitor to God and to his country, and unthankful to Her Majestie, if he should forbear to do what lieth in him to prevent the same.

But Coligny could do little. The commissions which were granted and ready to be sealed for the levying of the troops were all revoked. The king was cold, and declared that without the army of England he could do nothing. Catherine went weeping through the court, shedding her ominous and irresistible tears, 'and nothing,' says Walsingham, 'herein has prevented the king so much as the tears of his mother.' Catherine wept. Elizabeth smiled her dubious smile and played her waiting game; '*tam timide*,' as Smith explains, 'and with continual dalliance.' 'How perplexed the admiral is,' writes Walsingham to Leicester, 'who foreseeth what is like to follow, your lordship may easily guess.'

All this while the negotiations for the double marriage still went on. The court had removed to Paris for the wedding of Princess Marguerite with the young prince of Navarre (18 Aug.) And still, by friendship or by force, it was hoped the queen of England would be won. Coligny in his desperate peril looked to the consent of Elizabeth as his sole earthly safety. But England, as Walsingham complained, ⁶⁹ 'England will only act underhand without heart or spirit.' In fact, if the correspondence of Alva and De Guaras may be trusted, Elizabeth was all this while engaged in secret overtures to Spain. Probably with no more intention than she put in other of her promises, she even offered to betray the town of Flushing to Alva, as a guarantee of her good faith.⁷⁰ Alva, as Mr. Froude remarks, was not likely to let such a weapon lie idle in his writing-desk, and the effect of her suggested treachery was disastrous in France. Elizabeth, however, was careful not openly to offend. She suggested an interview between herself and the young brother of Charles, and on 22 Aug. matters appeared to have taken a more hopeful turn. 'The queen,' says Smith, 'has come nearer

⁶⁸ Digges.

⁶⁹ Digges, 26 July.

⁷⁰ Anton de Guaras to Alva, 30 June. Froude's *History*.

to the matter of the marriage than I hoped.' ⁷¹ Indeed, she then instructed Walsingham in a more consenting mood about the negotiations; and on the very day when she and Smith wrote to Paris, Burghley sent a line of kindness and good wishes to Alençon, and another to Coligny.⁷²

But if Elizabeth at last meant to encourage the hearts of the Huguenots in Flanders and in France, hers was indeed too tardy a return. Before the letters from Kenilworth could be delivered in Paris, a scene had taken place which no clever tortuous policy, no delicate doublemindedness, could evermore undo.

For some while there had been violent division in the court of France, where the two great factions were now of nearly equal strength. No man's life was safe, and during that time of vehement tension the law did not dare to interfere. In the summer time of 1572 no less than fourteen murders were committed at court and all unpunished.⁷³ Catherine herself had a hand in at least one of these.⁷⁴ Neither party could afford to recoil from any means of attaining their end. If the army did not soon go off to Flanders, the cause of the liberals was lost; if it did, the cause of the Spanish party.

'When I wrote to you last,' writes the nuncio to the cardinal of Como, 'I told you the admiral was coming on too far, and that he would get a rap over the knuckles (*gli darebbero sull' ungue*). . . . I saw even then that they could not tolerate him any longer.' The king, in fact, gained over by his mother, had invented a ridiculous pretext to withdraw Coligny from the Flanders invasion. 'He had so much consideration for the admiral,' writes Michiel, 'he would not plainly speak out his mind.' He, therefore, induced Coligny to submit his project to a final council, not of statesmen, but of soldiers. The admiral easily agreed, and on the appointed day he entered the royal cabinet and found there four or five famous generals and marshals with the king, but also the queen-mother and Anjou. The admiral, however, did not yet suspect the trap; he harangued his fellow-soldiers with sense, brilliance, and eloquence. To his surprise every one of them firmly negatived his proposals, nor would they listen to any of his arguments; 'and the stupidest,' says Michiel, 'were the firmest.' Coligny at last saw the plot. These men had all got their lesson by rote. Turning to the king, he gave in his submission; 'but your majesty must not find it ill if I, my friends and servitors, keep your promise for you to the prince of Orange.' And then he turned to Catherine.⁷⁵ 'Madame,' he said, 'this war the king renounces. God grant he may not find himself involved in another less easy to renounce.'

⁷¹ Digges, 22 Aug.

⁷² *Foreign*, 22 Aug.

⁷³ *Relation of the Savoyard ambassador*. De la Ferrière, 318.

⁷⁴ Theiner, *Annales Ecclesiastici*.

⁷⁵ Armand Baschet, *Diplomatie Vénitienne*.

Catherine, ever easily alarmed, took these words as a threat of civil war. She found that the admiral *s'avançava troppo*. It was necessary to rid her council of this troublesome invader, who might yet gain the king again as he had done during her absence at Monceaux. She arranged a plan with Anjou, Guise, and his mother, Madame de Nemours.

After dinner on Friday, 22 Aug., the admiral was walking along the rue aux Fossés de St. Germain l'Auxerrois reading a letter. Suddenly from the empty hotel of Madame de Nemours an unseen assassin took aim at him with an arquebuss, and shot him in the right hand and the left shoulder.⁷⁶ The bullet had been meant to reach the heart; but the admiral, reading as he walked, was holding the paper close to his eyes, and the position of his arms determined the St. Bartholomew.

Had the *archibugiata* succeeded, Salviati assures us⁷⁷ that no one else would have perished. Catherine, jealous of his ascendancy, meant no more than to remove the admiral. It was to have been no more than the murder of Lignerolles, only the fifteenth of the summer murders at the court. But the admiral did not die: he was not even dangerously wounded. And yet, among the crowd of Huguenots who had come to court, there spread a panic of fury and suspicion. They stood about the staircase in knots—these suspicious and irascible provincials, angry to feel themselves entrapped, and swearing loudly that more than forty thousand arms should avenge the arm of the admiral.⁷⁸ And the king, who had not been privy to the attempt,⁷⁹ was furious against the Guises. He made every effort to discover who had fired the shot;⁸⁰ he went to exhibit his devoted friendship at the bedside of Coligny. It was clear now that the party of the admiral must triumph. It was probable that the Huguenots, who were lodged in numbers in the royal palace, might rise and wash the insult out in blood. Catherine was in tears and beside herself with terror. For the Huguenots talked loudly of vengeance.⁸¹ Condé and Rochefoucault and Piles swore to find

⁷⁶ Relation of the Mantuan ambassador: De la Ferrière, 320. Michiel's relation: Alberi. Baschet.

⁷⁷ *Salviati's Despatches*. Theiner, *Annales Ecclesiastici*.

⁷⁸ *Non lasciavano però di gridare e di bravare che quel braccio dell' ammiraglio costeria più di quaranta altre mila braccia.* (Michiel: Alberi.)

⁷⁹ See Salviati, 22 Aug.: 'without knowledge of the king,' and 2 Sept.: 'Anjou knew, but not the king.' See also Walsingham's note on the massacre, *F.S.P.*: 'The inventors of this monstrous bloodshedding were the queen-mother, duke of Nevers, Monsieur de Tavannes.' See also Alberi for Michiel's report.

⁸⁰ De la Ferrière.

⁸¹ It must be remembered that massacres were not entirely unknown upon the other side; and Catherine, as an excuse for her panic, had not only the Michelades of Nantes with their murdered catholics, but a somewhat mysterious letter from Coligny to Orange, which she had intercepted on the way. It is probable that Catherine considered a new and greater Michelade at Paris was referred to here, but the phrase, *nous serons prêts pour septembre*, refers almost certainly to a Huguenot invasion

numbers to avenge the admiral if he died. About the stairs and courtyard of the palace the Huguenot gentlemen strode and swaggered,⁸² 'loudly menacing with their bravado the house of Guise,' and insolently threatening and braving the queen-mother.

Catherine heard and trembled. That night she went to the king in tears, and confessed that it was she and Anjou who had planned the deed, and revealed that she feared the Huguenots would rise, would murder them and take possession of the person of the king. For his own safety, for hers, for Anjou's, Catherine besought her son to throw shame away, and slay not only the admiral, but all the heretics at once.⁸³ These heretics were the king's friends and the king's guests. But the king could not resist the tears of his mother. A little after midnight he consented (*in sul far dell'alba*). By morning he had become more bloody than the others; for his lurid half-mad imagination took a fiercer tone than his mother's perfidy. For to Catherine's Italian nature, incapable of fanaticism, even the St. Bartholomew was merely a *coup d'état*.

The streets ran with blood in Paris, then in Rouen, Meaux—throughout the country. Spain and the pope sent empty compliments to Charles, and sang *Te Deums* in their churches.⁸⁴ But in Madrid the thing was not liked, says St.-Gouard, but condemned as *chose furieuse légère et non pensée*,⁸⁵ and Vulcob, the French ambassador at Vienna, writes to Charles IX of the open disapproval of the emperor. Meanwhile, England, Venice, Germany, Flanders, turned from the French, shuddering, as from an accursed thing. 'It is on you, madam,' wrote Ferrier from Venice to Catherine, 'on you and on M. d'Anjou, that all the blame is laid.'

There was horror abroad, and horror too in France. From that day the queen-mother was not safe without a guard in the streets of Paris. Catholics, no less than Huguenots, reproached her deed. And in the court there was melancholy and suspicion. Michiel, the Venetian ambassador, gives a terrible portrait of the king.⁸⁶ 'He is a *mal garzon*, rather mad, melancholy. He sits all day long, his head sunk in his hunched shoulders, then shoots up for a second, wide-eyed and terrible and straight. He has callows, rough horny hands with swollen veins. He speaks of nothing but war and of

of Flanders. M. Baschet speaks of this letter as existing in the possession of M. Crétineau-Joly.

⁸² Relation of Michiel and Cavalli: De la Ferrière, 320. See also Çuñiga's report, Baumgarten, 231: 'The Huguenots . . . as threatening as possible.' Salviati says: 'They speak insolently to the queen-mother.'

⁸³ Salviati.

⁸⁴ Forneron.

⁸⁵ Çuñiga, writing to Alva, 31 Aug., uses nearly the same words: 'This murder of the Huguenots was no deliberated event, but sudden, *no fue caso pensado, sino repentino*.'

⁸⁶ Alberi, 172.

dying in battle. They used to love him; since August they fear him; a little more, and they will hate him.'

This was the end of the friend of Coligny, dying now of the terrible fascination of his crime—a fascination which had made him ride to see the admiral hanging dead, by his heels, in Paris.⁸⁷ But Catherine, the detested Catherine, sure at last of her own supremacy, endured easily the hatred of her people. 'She appears indeed,' writes the Savoyard envoy,⁸⁸ 'twenty years younger than before, and as one who has come out of a grievous illness and is suddenly disembarassed of all danger.' But Cavalli, the Venetian, gives us the key of her enigma. 'All of her momentous actions,' he writes in 1574, 'have ever been guided and regulated by one most potent passion—and that is the passion for sovereignty (*l'affetto di signoreggiare*).' From this point of view Catherine had succeeded. She was left without a rival. The St. Bartholomew had been a political failure; it was none the less a personal triumph.

IV

Catherine had hoped that the massacre of St. Bartholomew would prove to Spain the religious and political sincerity of France,⁸⁹ while to England it might be explained as a *coup d'état* which crushed an incipient insurrection. But though Spain did not openly condemn the deed, she was none the more persuaded of the innocence of France with regard to Flanders; and England shrank in horror from her old ally.

The great *coup d'état*, then, had proved barren or disastrous. The attitude of Spain remained unchanged; the attitude of England was hostile; the attitude of Flanders one of horror-struck repulsion. Catherine could not afford to lose the second string to her bow. It was necessary to regain the confidence of England and Flanders—it was necessary, but neither she nor Anjou nor the king was capable in this matter. Catherine remembered her Huguenot son, the least loved. While imagining himself quite free and even hostile to his mother, Alençon at this juncture became the most useful of her tools.

Hercules de Valois, or François d'Alençon as he was always

⁸⁷ Charles IX was terribly afraid lest people should remember his own liberalism of a month before. He had the supreme baseness to implore Alva to destroy every man of the small army of Genlis, the first instalment of the expedition to Flanders. Alva refused, and let off his captives with the honours of war.

⁸⁸ *Relation de M. d'Elbène*: De la Ferrière.

⁸⁹ Spain really triumphed over the St. Bartholomew, which rendered an anti-Spanish foreign policy impossible for France. Çuñiga writes: 'There is no danger now of forming alliances in England or in Germany, *las quales jamas se fiaron d'estos*. Arch. Nat. K 1530.

called, was a neglected youth, eighteen years of age. 'The duke of Alençon is very young,' wrote Michiel in this year, 'but he has more grace and style (*grazia e garbo*) than the others, and a very good understanding.' 'He is,' adds Cavalli,⁹⁰ 'a very silent person, nor is it easy to know what he thinks. It is said he dissimulates an immeasurable ambition, and has in his mind some daring enterprise.' The position of Alençon was singular; to any who had not sounded the complicated policy of Catherine, it must have appeared not only singular but dangerous. Living at home with the authors of the 'late execution,' Alençon was none the less, next to Navarre, the chief hope of the Huguenots everywhere. At court his position was a most unhappy one. The king hated him, Anjou derided him, his mother used and ill-used him. 'They made him a laughing-stock,' wrote Michiel later, in 1575; 'they used to slight him for days together. They held him too tight at home.'

Alençon had many of the lovable qualities which had come to so strange a ruin in his brother Charles IX. He was, it is true, a feather-brained young fellow,⁹¹ enthusiastic, romantic, his imagination ever lighting some straw bonfire, which, blazing bravely for a moment, soon fired. He had also his brother's chivalrous instinct: 'he is ever,' writes Michiel, 'upon the losing side.' But he had solid qualities as well. Lippomano, who did not like him, and Michiel, who liked him well, both describe him as a man of his word, and both assure us⁹² he was generous, humane, pleasing, domestic, and tractable to his friends but a good hater to his enemies, beneficent and liberal, sober in his life yet never melancholy save with those whom he distrusted. In the words of Smith we find him, for all his ugliness, for all his evil parentage, for all his unscrupulous ambition, none the less 'a good fellow and a lusty prince.'

To Alençon, thwarted and ill-treated at home, the idea of the English match appeared embellished with hope, escape, power, liberty, and safety. To him it did not matter that Elizabeth was already an aging woman. She could open for him a glorious career. But England was in an indignant panic since the massacres of August; and Elizabeth had refused to send Leicester to France, to the christening of the royal infant, lest he should be murdered while at court.

One way remained, and that Alençon took. Not approaching the queen of England with embassies and messengers of state, he sent her a secret envoy, appealed to her as a desperate fugitive, a Huguenot in danger of his life—entreating her protection, aid, and

⁹⁰ Alberi. Michiel, 1572. Cavalli, 1574.

⁹¹ Smith. Michiel. Brantôme. Catherine de Medici said of him, *Il faisait toujours le fol*.

⁹² Alberi. Michiel, 1572, 1575, 1578. Lippomano, 1579.

refuge. In the mid-winter of 1572 Alençon despatched to Elizabeth a singular agent—a Protestant gentleman, Monsieur de Maisonneuve. Thanks to Mr. Froude, who discovered at Hatfield the first of a series of letters between Maisonneuve, Alençon, La Mole, and Elizabeth, and thanks to Count Hector de la Ferrière, who since then has brought to light the rest of the correspondence in the Record Office, we can follow step by step the embassy of this unusual messenger.

Maisonneuve was a gentleman about the court, an acquaintance of La Mole's, who until August had lived scarcely a more reputable life than others at the court, but who, converted to real feeling by his near escape on the eve of St. Bartholomew, had since developed into little less than fanaticism. To Maisonneuve it seemed that Alençon, while he stayed at court, risked not merely his own bodily safety, but the eternal anger of God. He earnestly desired that Alençon should 'leave the tyrants and avoid the judgment of the Lord.'³³ La Mole, who was also in the plot, hoped to gain a crown for his master; but to Maisonneuve it was not only an earthly kingdom that Alençon might obtain, he hoped to see him chief in the house of Israel.

Maisonneuve arrived in England about the middle of December, and made at first little secret of his embassy. Yet, following the odd romantic taste of the French court, his official letters read like pages torn from a romance of chivalry. Every character has a disguise: Alençon is Don Lucidor; Elizabeth, Madame de Lisle; and Catherine appears as Madame or Mademoiselle de la Serpente. The letters are a strange farrago of religion and of faded chivalry, flavoured with texts and with quaint disguises, with Amadis and with St. Paul. It is odd to find the serious Burghley mixed up with all this talk of masquerade and countersignals. But it would seem that Burghley showed his shrewdness in not wholly disregarding the mission of this fanatic Huguenot gallant. Maisonneuve was certainly in earnest; and whereas Alençon and La Mole seem to have cared merely to persuade Elizabeth to marriage, Maisonneuve was equally resolved that she should help the Huguenots of La Rochelle. Alençon was to him less a beloved master than the possible instrument of heaven.

Maisonneuve made no secret of Alençon's danger and unhappiness at home. His master, he declared, wished to flee for safety to the court of England, could he be sure of finding there the loving support of Elizabeth. The plan was for Alençon by some means to escape from Paris to Havre, where he should find an armed English vessel waiting to carry him at once to London. Alençon was, if possible, to bring with him Henry of Navarre, who, with La Mole, appears to have had a hand in all of his conspiracies.

³³ De la Ferrière, *Correspondance de Maisonneuve*, 344.

At last all appeared ready. At the end of January Maisonneuve wrote to his master bidding him hasten over at once: 'I prayed, I counselled, I exhorted, I solicited, I adjured him by all he held most dear on earth, that, no sooner my letter read, he should mount his horse and set out for Havre, where the vessel waits.'

But, at the last moment, Alençon hesitated. He had yet received no definite promise from Elizabeth. If he fled to England only to be rejected, he would be disgraced and ridiculous alike in England and at home. He fears, says Maisonneuve: *il craindrait de se voir toute sa vie un petit cadet de France, fort mal appointé*. Alençon was indeed experienced in the vacillations of Elizabeth, but perhaps a second and darker thought bade him pause and give heed. He may have remembered how, five years ago, another royal fugitive, his sister-in-law of Scotland, had fled from her home to the protection of Elizabeth. Alençon may have feared an English dungeon. At least he wrote to Maisonneuve, and refused to budge without a promise in writing from Elizabeth that upon his arrival in London she would marry him.

Matters now became difficult for Maisonneuve. In January and again in March Castelnau de Mauvissière, a gentleman of the moderate party, had arrived in England upon the open negotiation for the royal match. Maisonneuve was terrified, both for his own sake and for Alençon's, lest Catherine should hear from Mauvissière of his secret mission. To Catherine, who knew everything, this also was probably known, and she may have smiled upon the ridiculous mystery which surrounded a matter debated in every court in Europe. If Maisonneuve persuaded Elizabeth to Alençon, he served the purposes of Catherine: but the French court cannot have approved the second mission of this man, the brief that he held for La Rochelle. Therefore from the time of the second visit of Mauvissière innumerable damaging reports were spread about the agent of Alençon; reports which Maisonneuve disproves at some length in his letters, but which no less hindered the progress of his embassy. Besides this personal trouble there was the prudence of Alençon, the hesitation of Elizabeth, to conquer. 'If Elizabeth will write a line I will come,' wrote the young prince. But the English queen would not write that line, for she declared that until she had seen him she could not say but that the blemish of his visage might prove too great for her affection. The aim of the conspirators was to marry Elizabeth to Alençon, and to constitute them chief of all the protestants by means of an Anglo-German league. It seemed incredible to Maisonneuve that so righteous a scheme should fail for the vanity and fastidiousness of a woman. He wrote in no sparing terms to Elizabeth: 'It were expedient, madam, that you thought less of this mere corporal beauty, provided that the service of God be done;' and again he warns her to beware 'lest the living God

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demand one day at your hands the loss that may happen to his church.' Every man, he goes on to say, that is neither lame nor hunchback is accounted handsome at the court of France; and he assures Elizabeth of the natural goodness of Alençon. But all this did little to advance the cause of the prince. Only on 28 March, after three months of the secret mission of Maisonneuve besides the open treaties of Mauvissière, Elizabeth at last consented to return to the *status quo ante* the recent events in Paris.

The interview was still the question, and Elizabeth sent Randolph on a feigned mission into France in order to observe the person and manners of her suitor. But the matter still halted there. The situation had become singular. Alençon, with the protestant Henry of Navarre, was in the camp of Anjou, laying siege to the protestant city of La Rochelle. Notwithstanding his position in the catholic camp, Alençon posed as the chief of the Huguenot party, grouping round him the new converts, and La Noue could hardly keep him from joining the ill-omened fleet of Montgomery. Indeed, from the letters of Charles IX to Anjou, which M. de la Ferrière has printed from the Russian archives, it would appear that the whole siege of La Rochelle, in which over twenty thousand lives were lost, was but a bloody tragi-comedy to draw on the hesitating Elizabeth. On 13 May Charles wrote to Anjou concerning the marriage with Alençon: 'The thing to be done is to get on with the affair of La Rochelle, to study it well, for that is really the knot of the whole situation.' And next month Elizabeth had swallowed the bait. She wrote that she would not see Alençon 'unless the king make peace with La Rochelle.' This was of course a consent, should those conditions be granted. Charles and Catherine wished for nothing better. They were even eager for an excuse to make peace with the protestants. For affairs had changed; they perceived that St. Bartholomew had brought them no nearer to Spain (still jealous of the Netherlands), and had infinitely alienated the north and the great Italian cities. Meanwhile the throne of Poland had fallen vacant, and Catherine was willing to run all hazards to secure the election of Anjou.⁹⁴ For this it would be necessary to conciliate the prince of Orange and Count Louis. Therefore the peace with La Rochelle, which seemed a concession to Elizabeth, was the skilfullest policy of Catherine. Peace was declared on 24 June; and through the influence of Orange, Anjou was soon elected king of Poland. He immediately repaired to his new kingdom, where he immensely astonished his subjects, who, imagining themselves to have elected a warrior and a hero, were (as Michiel informs us) bewildered by the earrings of their king.

⁹⁴ In order to avert civil war, it was necessary to find a throne for Anjou out of France.

All was now clear for the English match. Nothing prevented the escape of Alençon (willingly connived at by his mother) and the consequent interview at Dover. Alençon might flee to England as a hunted man, or he might go with the state of a prince. He did neither. In December Maisonneuve, who was about to leave London to fight for the prince of Orange, sent him one last despairing letter :

It is impossible, the letter ran, to tell you the extreme distrust of M^{me} de Lisle in this matter. She has been so persuaded that the whole affair is a manoeuvre of Mademoiselle de la Serpente that it is almost impossible to make her lose this apprehension ; for she says she has so often been deceived by all the race that she can no more put faith in aught that cometh from that quarter. . . . Come, then, Seigneur Lucidor ! For if you still hold out it will seem you say : ' Make me king of England, or else I will not come ; ' whereas you have assured me often that it was not for honours nor a kingdom that you sought this lady, but for her perfection and the danger you were in.

This letter must have reached Alençon at the new year, almost the anniversary of the despatch of Maisonneuve. He had been eager then : now he showed no haste to obey the summons. He was, in fact, engaged with a greater matter nearer home ; and though it was more than ever necessary to have at hand a place of refuge, it was not in the eventful spring of 1574 that Alençon could desert his post and escape as a fugitive to the court of Elizabeth.

V

Meanwhile, despite the triumphant tactics of Madame la Serpente, the kingdom of France was hurrying down the road to ruin. Civil war, taxation, a bare exchequer, an extravagant court, bore witness to the incapacity of Catherine in home affairs, and to the impotence of the dying and melancholy king. Charles was nearing the end of a consumption. The country soon would fall into the hands of the voluptuous, indolent, effeminate Anjou, the real instigator of the Paris massacre. Catholics and Huguenots shared alike the general misgiving. Finally the moderate party, or *politiques*, joined with the Huguenots in a secret negotiation to transfer the succession to Alençon.

' Monsieur d'Alençon,' says a tract of the time, ' Monsieur d'Alençon is the hero who will deliver the kingdom from all these miseries ; ' and Lippomano³⁵ speaks of his popularity in the country, and of his desire to regulate affairs, to diminish the imposts and settle the questions of finance. It was, moreover, in Alençon's favour that he was harshly treated and mistrusted by his mother and his brothers. Since 1572 the queen-mother and Anjou had

³⁵ Tommaseo, Lippomano, 1577.

been detested in France,⁹⁶ 'for all impute the whole affair to you only, madame,' wrote Ferrier, 'and to Monsieur d'Anjou.' The odium of the people was heaped on Catherine. 'She is hated since August, and has lost all her prestige,' wrote Michiel in 1572. And before August, in 1568,⁹⁷ she had not dared to ride through the streets of Paris without an armed escort, lest the people should destroy her. The people wrote lampoons upon her, and sold under the palace windows an infamous 'Vie de Sainte Catherine.' 'It hits the mark,' cried the cardinal of Lorraine, for the Guises no less than the Chatillons, the catholics no less than the Huguenots,⁹⁸ complained that this woman had betrayed them. But most of all the *politiques* detested her, for the moderate party was aware that no wise and steady course could be taken while Catherine, with her unreasonable ambition and her unreasonable terror, still held the helm of state.

Alençon was at court, a sort of honourable prisoner. In him centred the hopes of the Huguenot party and of the moderates. Anjou was at a safe distance in Poland. The conspirators determined that he should remain there. On the death of Charles, three-fourths of the country would rise and acclaim Alençon king. Anjou should reign in his foreign kingdom; the queen-mother might go to him or remain in safe seclusion in some castle on the Loire. So the country might be saved. But Charles was long a-dying, and a rumour flew abroad that Alençon was unsafe at court. His presence was entreated by the conspirators. La Noue, who was now at the head of a great army, openly declared himself the mere *locum tenens* of a greater chief, and the country divined he meant Alençon. The Huguenots grew bold, and the moderates, for success seemed easy. Damville held Languedoc; Montgomery, Carentan; and the prince of Orange was prepared to enter France at any moment. Let Alençon escape from court to the armies of his friends. It was arranged that Alençon, Navarre, and some Huguenot gentleman should flee the court one night together.

The king was now very ill; it was evident the end was near. The young brother, who was to steal away and seize his kingdom from him, would be taking the possessions of a dying man. It would be a last farewell, that ordinary reverence on the night before the flight. Alençon was young. A sudden tenderness, a superstition overcame him. He forgot his ambition, his country, his promise. At the last moment, all being ready, his heart failed him, and he did not go. La Mole, who was to have shared his flight with Coconnas, confessed the whole truth to Catherine. Thus, on the eve of what seemed infallible success, the great conspiracy of the moderates ended in smoke and nothing.

⁹⁶ De la Ferrière, from the St. Petersburg archives.

⁹⁷ F.S.P. 24 Feb. and 1 March 1568.

⁹⁸ Correr's relation, 1569: Alberi.

The royal leaders of the plot were now in imminent danger. It was observed that on 16 March Alençon had obtained a safe-conduct into England, and this made it more evident that he was resolved to do and dare, and made it doubtful whether the queen of England were not his accomplice. The anger at court was great. Dangerous and passionate words were uttered by the king; and though Catherine concealed her fury, she was not less resentful against a scheme which would have reduced her to a private estate. At first the life of Alençon was threatened.⁹⁹ Navarre, who was also in the plot, was scarcely safer. Both princes were kept in prison. But Charles spent his fury upon La Mole and Coconnas.¹⁰⁰ Despite the prayers, the tears, the anguish of Alençon, on 30 April his fellow-conspirators were beheaded together. Alençon fell sick of grief and kept his bed,¹⁰¹ seeing scarcely any one, and never ceasing to sigh and weep in torment for his friends.¹⁰² He could not take the death of La Mole as Charles had taken the death of Coligny. Yet might he have wept a little also for himself and for Navarre. They were in great danger—not from Charles, who to the last preserved in his thwarted bloodshot temperament a strain of the magnanimous chivalry that had distinguished his charming youth. If Charles lived, the princes were safe. But the king's illness grew worse with every day, and 'if he die,' says Dale, 'the duke and Navarre do think there is no mean for them but to corrupt the guard.' So little trust could they place in Catherine. But the two young men had no money. England as usual seems to have supplied it; for however much or however little the cabinet of Elizabeth may have been implicated in the previous conspiracy, they certainly wished the preservation of Alençon, both as a possible husband for the queen and, says Burghley, 'as a counterpoise to the tyrant that shall come from Poland.'

On 30 May, in the afternoon, the French king died.¹⁰³ But Henry and Alençon had no chance to escape; their prison guards and sentinels were put in every corner; their windows were grated and their persons watched. Catherine was determined that Anjou should succeed in peace, although, says Dale, 'there is marvellous misliking of this doing among all men.' Meanwhile, on his side, the king of Poland escaped from his kingdom, not without risk, and arrived in France in the autumn. But even on his coming the two princes

⁹⁹ *Foreign State Papers*: Dale to Burghley, April 12 and 16.

¹⁰⁰ Coconnas richly deserved his fate. A manuscript in the Archives Nationales (K 1530), quoted by Forneron, proves him to have been already, in 1572, a spy in the pay of Spain. The Spanish ambassador speaks of him as 'perfectly well-informed; he must, however, be treated as a gentleman and not as a spy.'

¹⁰¹ Dale to Burghley, 30 April.

¹⁰² Secret note, *State Papers*.

¹⁰³ The death of Charles IX seems to have plunged Catherine for a moment into real despair. She wrote: *Piteuse nouvelle pour moi pour avoir vu tant mourir de mes enfants. Il me dit adieu et me pria de l'embrasser qui me cuyda faire crester, et la dernière parole qui dit, fust, 'Eh, ma mère.'* (Forneron.)

were not set free. The queen-mother knew too well that all the provinces were on their side, and that Paris had a point of personal hate in its disregard for her and for Henry III, 'by the grace of his mother, the inert king of France, imaginary king of Poland, gaufferer of his wife's collars and hairdresser to the queen,' as the indignant Parisians proclaimed him in their lampoons.¹⁰⁴ In December a political discourse¹⁰⁵ was sold in Paris, pointing out that Alençon was the man to save France from the 'disastrous government of foreigners' (the French had never forgiven Catherine her Tuscan birth), and many and frequent were the signs of the times. Still Alençon, as a means of peace with England, was too valuable to murder; Catherine kept him safe in prison eighteen months.

But on 15 Sept. 1575, cardinal de Guise being closeted with the queen, Alençon escaped in disguise, and in a few days was on the Loire at the head of the protestant army of La Noue. All had now taken place as it should, but eighteen months too late. Still the hopes of the protestants ran high. Elizabeth at once sent Alençon a large loan in money, and it was evident, or it appeared so, that she still would grant him her affection and support.

But during those wasted eighteen months Elizabeth had changed. The cause of the protestants appeared to her now as a forlorn hope, lost beyond remedy.¹⁰⁶ Her consequent veering round to Spain was rendered more easy by the fact that since the Paris massacre she had profoundly distrusted the promises of France. Spain and England were gradually forsaking France for each other. In the autumn of 1572 trade had reopened between England and Flanders. In 1574 Alva offered to renew with Elizabeth the old treaty of Charles V. In May 1575 two anabaptists were burned in London as a concession to the spirit of Spain. In March 1576 Elizabeth turned away from London with every show of insult and opprobrium the messengers of the prince of Orange. She refused help to the States and threatened to take the fort of Flushing. In fact, in the words of Mr. Froude, 'she meditated a complete reversal of policy, which, if begun, could hardly stop short of reunion with Rome.'

Alençon had missed his opportunity. When in April 1576 he made peace with his brother, a peace that granted the Huguenots eight large towns in France, he found in Elizabeth no sympathy for his success. She demanded the immediate restitution of her money. She refused to help him in the Netherlands. Nay, she sent Sir Thomas Randolph to the French king with a message that she would rather see Spain¹⁰⁷ in the Netherlands than France; so completely in the last four years had the policy of England changed.

¹⁰⁴ Estolle.

¹⁰⁵ *State Papers*, December 1574.

¹⁰⁶ Froude, *Hist.* vol. ii.

¹⁰⁷ Instructions to Sir Thomas Randolph. *State Papers*.

VI

As before, the Netherlands held the key to the situation. The cruelty of Alva, the Inquisition, the sack of Antwerp with its 8,000 slain, had raised in England an ardent sympathy for Orange. But the policy of Elizabeth required that she should continue friends with Spain. She therefore refused to help the Flemings against Philip, as she had helped the Huguenots against the catholics of France; and, indeed, so far had her policy changed that in all her relations with Spain Elizabeth describes herself as a catholic at heart, estranged from Rome by a mere political difference. There was no help for Flanders in her hands.

She would not aid the Flemings herself, and her great fear was lest France should come to the rescue. A French protectorate in Flanders was the thing she dreaded most. Her fear of this had been the real cause of the massacre of St. Bartholomew. And now that old dream of Coligny's had revived again in the soul of Alençon.

The Flemish patriots invoked the aid of France, and France was not blind to her own advantage. In 1576 Çuñiga writes ¹⁰⁸ to Philip II on 9 Sept.: 'I know that the king and his mother have sent the duke of Alençon to Namur, representing to him the manner in which he must deal with Flanders.' And the next year, in July 1577, Marguerite de Valois went to Spa to drink the waters. *Le vrai médecin qui m'avoit ordonné ces eaux, c'estoit mon frère, François de Valois*, she frankly avows in her memoirs. While the charming Marguerite was canvassing the nobility of Flanders in her brother's interest, Alençon sent Simier to London to try to induce Elizabeth to aid his cause. The ridiculous fiction of his betrothal was still kept up, because, says D'Aubigné, the young prince hoped by means of this *amourette* to persuade the queen of England to have him elected duke of Brabant. Elizabeth on her side feigned to regard him as a lover in order to keep a mistress's right of control over his actions. But Elizabeth now was pledged to Spanish interests. She put off Simier with vain promises. And Catherine dei Medici began to revolve a second plan in her subtle mind unknown to Alençon. Would it not be well to veer again, go over to the Spanish side, and induce Philip to give the Netherlands to Alençon with a Spanish princess; or should she suggest her kinsman, Don Antonio of Portugal, as their governor? ¹⁰⁹ Philip might be led, or frightened, into settling all difficulties—Flanders, Portugal, everything—by a Spanish dowry and a Spanish marriage.

Meanwhile Elizabeth refused to help Alençon. But the young

¹⁰⁸ Forneron.

¹⁰⁹ Priuli. For the question of Portugal see also Forneron and Baumgarten.

prince was no less alive than she to the influence which, at such a moment, a French deliverer might gain in Flanders. Over and over again he had declared that if Elizabeth would not give him a lawful place in England, he must win one for himself abroad. Flanders and Elizabeth were his two alternatives; yet, by her tactics, the queen of England hoped to refuse him either boon.

Early in 1577 the Spanish army had retired from the States, leaving Don John of Austria their governor. But Don John discovered that, without an army at his back, a Spanish governor was far inferior in influence to the prince of Orange. His authority was but a name. Before the year was out he recalled his troops from Italy. And now the States lost patience. They were too well acquainted with this terrible army of Spain. Those ragged, unpaid, hungry soldiers had too often glutted their cruelty and lust upon the Flemish cities. The States wrote in despair to Germany, to England, to Alençon.¹¹⁰ England procrastinated, Germany sent an army little less tyrannic than that of Spain. Finally Alençon agreed to give his service for two months to the States, and in the summer of 1578 he crossed the frontier with an army of 10,000 men, taking Binche by assault and entering Maubeuge. At this moment, successful in the Netherlands, Alençon renewed his offer to the queen of England.

Both Spain and England were dismayed at his success. The Spanish ambassador remonstrated with the king of France; but Henry declared that Alençon went upon a private enterprise, that he had no control, and that he would prefer war with Spain to civil war at home. On 9 Aug.¹¹¹ Elizabeth sent word to the States that would they only break off their dealings with Monsieur, she would send them Leicester and 12,000 men. But the States were experienced in the promises of England, and Alençon remained. He would have been better advised to have abandoned his courtship;¹¹² for the queen in desperation sent him a message by De Bacqueville, saying that she would willingly see him, and, it might be, having seen him she would accept him. 'I would be very loath,' writes Burghley to Walsingham upon 8 Sept., 'were I De Bacqueville, I would be very loath to provoke my master to come over upon such an uncertain answer.' But Alençon was in a difficult position. His army was too small to hold the Netherlands against the forces of Philip, and it was enlisted for only two months. He did not, how-

¹¹⁰ Alençon had now succeeded to the dukedom of Anjou, but to avoid confusion I shall continue to distinguish him as Alençon.

¹¹¹ *State Papers*.

¹¹² Henry III earnestly implored his brother to give over all designs upon Elizabeth, 'who reassures you as she reassured the queen of Scots;' but Alençon declared himself absolutely persuaded of the honourable intentions of Elizabeth, and taunted the king with being jealous lest his younger brother should be king of England. See relation of Venetian Amb. 1579 in Baschet's *Dip. Vénit.*

ever, at once accept the invitation of Elizabeth. That was a second course to be taken if a better failed.

On the 17th March, 1579, wrote the Venetian ambassador, Lippomano,¹¹³ the Duke of Alençon suddenly appeared at Court, touched at heart by some unkindness he had said against his brother. And as he had clandestinely fled from Court, so by night and secretly would he return, with few to follow him, even as one who escapes to a place of safety. He reached the Louvre an hour after midnight, at the moment when the King was undressing, and his coming was so unexpected the King could scarce believe it. He greeted his brother with tender behaviour, and embraced with affection; they wept together and they slept in the same bed together all the night.

They say that the whole night long M. d'Alençon sought to induce the King to support the Flemish enterprise. He urged that it would be easy to win the Flemings since they so hate the Spaniards, that a war abroad would make the French forget their grievances at home, that by sending the Huguenots to Flanders, Henry would diminish the risk of civil war, that Italy would be delighted at the check to Spain, that England and Germany would help, that for fear of the Turks the king of Spain could spare but a portion of his troops, and that it were an honourable enterprise against tyranny. But the King showed him strong reasons why he could not do so; and after a stay of four days Monsieur returned to Antwerp.

Since Henry would not help him, and his forces were so small, Alençon could do little else than gracefully accede to the wishes of Elizabeth. He disbanded his troops, and at Easter time returned to Paris, while Simier, in London, continued the negotiations for the marriage. Elizabeth varied in mood every day, and the general opinion was that she had no mind to marry. 'She makes her sport of Alençon,' wrote Mary Stuart,¹¹⁴ and Elizabeth herself told Mendoza that she had only raised her lover's hopes to draw him out of Flanders.¹¹⁵ Yet so skilfully did Simier manage his master's affairs, so artfully he betrayed the secret marriages of Leicester and of Hatton, that in August again the queen desired to see Alençon. At once, privily, and without ostentation, Alençon came. Elizabeth did not keep her ungainly lover long. Perhaps she divined that all would not run smooth between Alençon and his new subjects. She sent him away, reserving her answer. But she sent him away with a hundred thousand crowns, and declared her willingness to proceed with the treaty of marriage. Meanwhile Alençon gained new laurels in the States. He had levied an army of sixteen thousand men, and had driven the Spaniards from Cambray, when Elizabeth wrote to accept him for her husband. Immediately the young prince again left his army¹¹⁶ and his career of triumph, and hurried to

¹¹³ Tommaseo.

¹¹⁴ Teulet, 15 Oct. 1578.

¹¹⁵ Froude: note, Decifrado de Don Bernardino. MSS. *Simancas*.

¹¹⁶ In order to show his absolute confidence in Elizabeth, Alençon came to England

Greenwich, eager to catch the fortunate moment before it slipped away. Elizabeth received him with a great show of affection. For a moment it seemed that she would actually marry him; she gave him a written promise to regard his enemies as her own, and in the presence of the assembled court she placed her betrothal ring upon his finger.

At this moment Alençon, and indeed the whole court of England, considered that the many hesitations of Elizabeth had reached their term. It was not so. The next morning the queen informed Alençon that, though she loved him dearly, their marriage was impossible. The poor youth was utterly bewildered, and probably Elizabeth herself was little easier, for indeed her course of action was not clear. For months back¹¹⁷ she had been secretly endeavouring to bind the king of France in a league with her; but Henry would promise nothing until he saw his brother married. If she married Alençon without securing the help of France, would she and he alone be strong enough to oust Philip from the Netherlands? If she let him go, and he conquered the Netherlands for himself, how perilous for England to make the French so great unless she married Alençon. On either side there was a risk, to marry or not to marry. There was also the personal risk of marriage at her age. Thus Elizabeth waited and dallied, half resolved that it was better for England to have in the Netherlands the distant Spaniards than the neighbouring French. In this case, it was always an advantage to keep Alençon at her court while his impatient armies clamoured for him in Brabant; thus in the infinite fluctuations of her policy the queen of England hesitated and waited. For three months she kept her unhappy lover dangling near her, then in October reluctantly she let him go.¹¹⁸ He went back to France no more forward in his marriage than he had been when he came.

with no escort and only seven servants, thus placing his person completely in her power. See Baschet.

¹¹⁷ Digges.

¹¹⁸ The Venetian ambassador's despatch for 18 Oct. 1579 (see Armand Baschet, *Diplomatie Vénitienne*) contains the Italian translation of a letter in French from Elizabeth to Alençon, dated 12 Oct. The letter was sent with a jewelled cap-band worth 4,000 crowns and a magnificent watch. It runs as follows: 'I send this little letter written with my own hand to your highness to assure you of my good health. My Lord Cobet will give you a full account of our private matters and will tell you I still live in the wish to make you happy. I pray then you will grant him, for all things you would have me know, as great a confidence as you would accord myself. Since he is my good and faithful servant he owes no less allegiance to your highness, to whom I send two little gifts. I would that in wearing the one round your neck you should so wear your memory of me the whole day long. And in the other I would have you see an image of the crown of this kingdom, which quickly I would set upon your head with my own hand were I capable to do as much. And should you doubt of this, as I am sure you do not, M. Simier, your ambassador here, right quickly could convince you. And in conclusion I pray God to grant you all the felicity and glory for the which sovereigns are put into this world. Elizabeth.'

This delay had, in fact, ruined the cause of Alençon. He departed ridiculous, stale and out of date; he set out one Thursday, 8 Feb. 1582, for Antwerp, where Orange and his army had long been awaiting him. As we know, the luckless Alençon brought with him no kingdom, no glorious certainties to compensate the loss of those critical three months. The queen of England promised some money, underhand, and perhaps three men-of-war. Alençon, poor, unlucky, disappointed, was no longer the protestant hero. He beheld his own chagrin in the faces of his followers. Soon he was, relates Pierre d'Estoile, *méprisé et délaissé d'un chacun*.

VII

It was the ill fortune of the Flemings to be continually betrayed. Betrayed by Elizabeth, by Charles IX, by the Spaniards, they were now betrayed by their last protector. Alençon, intolerably placed between the advancing Spaniards and the suspicious Flemings, determined to seize the towns of Flanders with his French soldiers, and fight to the death to keep his governorship. Between Jan. 5 and 15, 1583, the French garrisons in Dunkirk, Ostend, Dixmuyde, Dendermond, Alost, and Vilvoorde, overpowered the burgher guards, and without the losing of a single life secured these towns for Alençon. In view of the exceptional situation, the *coup d'état* up to this point deserved no especial blame. The French were there by consent of the Flemings to defend Flanders from the Spaniards. They defended Flanders by annexing it. But in Ghent, Antwerp, and Bruges, the French plot worked less smoothly. Ghent and Bruges were too strong to be attempted. At Antwerp, the 4,000 French outside rushed into the city, and forgetting that they served the semi-Huguenot Alençon, the betrothed of Elizabeth, they streamed through the streets shouting, *Vive la messe! Tuez! tuez!* Nothing could have been more immediately fatal to their hapless master. The patriots of Antwerp remembered the massacre of Paris, and with superhuman energy drove the French beyond their walls again. By morning Alençon was in full flight for Dendermond, pitifully ruined by the madness of his own soldiers.¹¹⁹ With his flight from the Netherlands the career of Alençon virtually concludes. For six months he continued in the towns still garrisoned by his troops, while Elizabeth vainly commanded the States to reinstate him in his protectorate. For months the hopeless negotiations dragged away; but the indignant Flemings would no more

¹¹⁹ Still even as late as March 1584 (see Groen van Prinsterer) Orange wrote: *Le nombre de peuple qui favoure François de Valois surpasse infiniment quasi partout*; but Alençon had lost the favour of Orange himself, who mistrusted his influence in the States. Champagny in his *Mémoires* declares that Orange was the secret enemy of Alençon: *il craignait que le prince n'acquît trop de crédit auprès des états*.

of so ambitious an intriguer. The help of Elizabeth came too officiously, too late, and Alençon bitterly declared that were it not for the English he could yet succeed in the Netherlands. Towards the end of June he retired, with his defeated army, into France. The cause of the valiant States was lost. France had betrayed them; England had deserted them. Elizabeth recalled her troops from Antwerp and seized such Flemish ships as were in the Channel 'as a punishment for the States' ingratitude.' Meanwhile Spain easily reconquered the revolted provinces.

Elizabeth had now no safe line of rebels, no convenient Alençon between herself and Spain. Her practices of many years, her advances and desertions, had all come to nothing. Spain was again the master of a great part of the Netherlands. Meanwhile Alençon buried his disgrace in his castle of Château-Thierry. Not till six months after his expulsion from Flanders did he summon spirit enough to enter Paris. There his mother and the king greeted him with singular affection. They feasted him and honoured him, and scarcely let him go an instant from their sight. This was in the middle of February.

A month later Queen Catherine was suddenly summoned to Château-Thierry. Alençon lay dying of the same strange illness as his brother Charles—a continual hæmorrhage, a slow fever, that reduced him to the mere attenuated phantom of a man. She did not stay long, for the dying man had a sick fancy that she and the king had poisoned him. 'Ah,' he would say, 'I have paid dear for the good cheer they gave me in Paris!' ¹²⁰ So, tortured by suspicion, humiliated by defeat, consumed by fever, the youngest of the Valois slowly perished.

At the end of May Queen Catherine went again to Château-Thierry. Alençon was now given over by the physicians. The queen-mother left him on 2 June, taking with her ¹²¹ the most precious of his jewels and his furniture; assuming already the position of his heir. In fact the death of Alençon would bequeath an income of 400,000 crowns to his mother and to Henry. But when she left him he was not dead.

He lingered for another week, tended in his half-dismantled castle by servants and physicians. On 10 June he died. 'He was,' says Estoire, 'but thirty years of age, a warrior, French in name and nature, and an enemy of the Spaniards and of Guise. As to his death there were many discourses and apprehensions.'

His death meant the subjection of the Netherlands to Spain, the impossibility of any real alliance between France and England, the triumph of the Guises. Perhaps when he was dead Elizabeth realised that she had lost an instrument of her security. At least she thought it well to display an excessive grief. She put her

¹²⁰ Estoire.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*

court in mourning, and shut herself in her palace. 'Monsieur is dead,' writes Walsingham. 'Melancholy doth so possess us as both public and private causes are at a stay for a season.'

As for the Queen, writes Castelnau de la Mauvissière,¹²³ she is still, in appearance, full of tears and regrets, telling me that she is as a widow woman who has lost her husband, and how I know that the late Monsieur was as much to her, and how she ever held him hers, although they had not lived together, and many other such speeches, for she is a princess who knows how to compose and how to transform herself as suits her best. And lastly she asked of me what I could do to augment her alliance and amity with France.

But for this it was too late. The moment for a sincere and profitable league with France had passed away. Elizabeth had let the moment slip. Four years thence, unsupported save by the States she had deserted, only the accident of a storm, the singular chance of victory, interposed to save the kingdom of England from the condition of a Spanish province.

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¹²³ Tenlet, *MSS. Esméral*. Castelnau, 28 July 1884.