Title: King René d'Anjou and His Seven Queens

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Release date: September 24, 2015 [EBook #50049]

Language: English



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# KING RENÉ D'ANJOU AND HIS SEVEN QUEENS

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THE CEREMONIOUS ENTRY OF THE "LADY OF THE CREST" SAUMUR TOURNAMENT 1446

From "Le Livre des Tournois" Painted by King René

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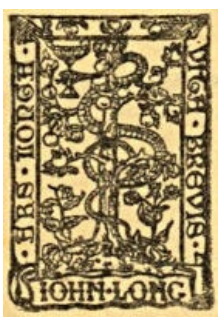
# KING RENÉ D'ANJOU AND HIS SEVEN QUEENS

BY
EDGCUMBE STALEY

AUTHOR OF
"LORDS AND LADIES OF THE ITALIAN LAKES," "GUILDS OF FLORENCE," "FAIR WOMEN OF FLORENCE," "TRAGEDIES OF THE MEDICI," "DOGARESSAS OF VENICE," "HEROINES OF GENOA AND THE RIVIERAS," ETC.

WITH COLOURED FRONTISPIECE AND THIRTY-FIVE OTHER ILLUSTRATIONS

"FIDES VITAT SERVATA"
*King René's Motto*

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NORRIS STREET, HAYMARKET
MCMXII

[iv]
[v]

TO
MY BROTHER VERNON
AND
HIS WIFE ETHEL

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# PREFACE

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King René d'Anjou and his Seven Queens—yes, I stand by my title, and offer no apology to the captious and the curious.

René was the most remarkable personality in the French Renaissance. How many English readers of the romance of history, I wonder, know anything about him but his name? Of his "seven Queens," two only are at all familiar to the English public,—Marguerite d'Anjou and Jeanne d'Arc,—and their stories as commonly told are unconvincing. The other five are not known even by name to the majority of people; therefore I have immense pleasure in introducing them to any clientèle: Yolanda d'Arragona, Isabelle de Lorraine, Jehanne de Laval, Giovanna II. da Napoli, Jeanne d'Arc and Marguerite d'Anjou. This galaxy of Queens, fair and frail, will appeal as something entirely new in sentimental biography to those in search of novelty.

Turgid facts of history and dryasdust statistics of the past are, of course, within everybody's ken, or they are supposed to be—this is an age of snobbery! Piquant stories of the persons and foibles of famous men and women are my measure, and such you will have in plenty in my narratives. To get at my facts and fictions I have dug deep into the records of Court chroniclers, and I think I have blended very successfully the spirit of the troubadours and the spirit of the age of chivalry. At the end of the volume I have added a Bibliography, for the benefit of sententious students, and my Index is as full as possible, to assist the casual reader.

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The illustrations which adorn my pages have been gathered from many sources. I think they will greatly assist the appreciation of my work. With respect to portraits of my "Queens," there are no extant likenesses of Yolanda and Jeanne: for the latter I have chosen to reproduce the historical imaginative fresco of M. Lepenveu, at the Pantheon in Paris; for the former the stained-glass window effigy at Le Mans Cathedral must do duty. Queen Isabelle is an enlargement of a miniature by René; Queen Marie is after a French picture of the School of Jean Focquet, now at the National Gallery, London, but wrongly entitled. Queen Giovanna II. is from an altar-piece in the National Museum at Naples. Queen Marguerite is from a miniature by her father,—her portraits in England are eminently unsatisfactory and non-contemporary,—Queen Jehanne is from the right wing of the Aix triptych, by Nicholas Froment.

There is, I think, nothing more to add to my preface, so I leave "King René and his Seven Queens" *tête-à-tête* with my discerning public. If they are found to be entertaining company I am repaid.

EDGCUMBE STALEY.

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# CHRONOLOGY

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1399. Marriage of Louis II. d’Anjou and Yolanda d’Arragona.
1408. Birth of René d’Anjou.
1411. Giovanna II. succeeds to throne of Naples.
1417. René adopted by Cardinal de Bar.
1420. Marriage of René and Isabelle de Lorraine.
1422. Marie d’Anjou marries Charles VII.
1424. René, Duke of Barrois.
1429. Jeanne d’Arc and René at Siege of Orléans.
1431. René, Duke of Lorraine; prisoner at Bulgneville.
1433. René’s campaign in Italy.
1434. René, King of Sicily, etc.
1435. Giovanna II. dies; René, King of Naples.
1437. René released finally from Tour de Bar.
1441. René retires from Italy.
1442. Queen Yolanda dies.
1445. Marriage of Marguerite d’Anjou and Henry VI.
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1453. Queen Isabelle dies.
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1463. Queen Marie dies.
1465. René proclaimed King of Catalonia.
1470. Jean, Duke of Calabria, King of Catalonia, dies.
1473. René retires from Anjou, which is seized by Louis XI.
1480. René dies.
1482. Queen Marguerite dies.
1498. Queen Jehanne dies.

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# KING RENÉ D’ANJOU AND HIS SEVEN QUEENS

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## CHAPTER I
### INTRODUCTORY

“René, King of Jerusalem, the Two Sicilies, Aragon, Valencia, Majorca, Sardinia and Corsica; Duke of Anjou, Barrois, and Lorraine; Count of Provence, Forcalquier and Piemont,” so runs the preamble of his Will. To these titles he might have added Prince of Gerona, Duke of Calabria, Lord of Genoa, Count of Guise, Maine, Chailly, and Longjumeau, and Marquis of Pont-à-Mousson!

He was famous as a Sovereign, a soldier, a legislator, a traveller, a linguist, a scholar, a poet, a musician, a craftsman, a painter, an architect, a sculptor, a collector, a sportsman, an agriculturist, and incidentally a chivalrous lover. About such a many-sided character there is much to tell and much to learn. His times were spacious; the clouds of Mediævalism had rolled away, and the Sun of Progress illuminated the heyday of the Renaissance; art and craft had come into their own. Venus disarmed Mars, Diana entranced Apollo, and Minerva restrained Mercury, and all the hierarchy of heaven was captive to the Liberal Arts. René d’Anjou, figuratively, seems to have gathered up in his cunning hand the powers of all the spiritual intelligences alongwith the life-lines of practical manifestations. He has come down to us as the beau-ideal Prince of the fifteenth century.

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“A Prince who had great and pre-eminent qualities, worthy of a better future. He was a great Justicier and an enemy to long despatches. He said sometimes, when they presented anything to signe, being a-hunting or at the warre, that the Pen was a kinde of Armes, which a person should use at all times”—so wrote the historian Pierre Mathieu, in his “History of Louis XI.,” in 1614. He goes on to say: “The reign of so good a Prince was much lamented, for he intreated his subjects like a Pastor and a Father. They say that when his Treasurer brought unto him the Royale Taxe,—which was sixteen florins for every kindled fire, whereof Provence might have about three thousand five hundred,—hee enformed himselfe of the aboundance or barenesse of the season; and when they told him, that a mistrall winde had reigned long, hee remitted the moiety and sometimes the whole taxe. Hee contented himself with his revenues, and did not charge his people with new tributes. Hee spent his time in paintings, the which were excellent, as they are yet to be seen in the city of Aix. Hee was drawing of a partridge when as they brought him newes of the loose of the Realme of Naples, yet hee could not draw his hande from the work and the pleasure hee took here in.... They relate that he dranke not wine, and when as the noble men of Naples demanded the reasons, he affirmed that it had made Titus Livius to lie, who had said that

the good wine caused the French to passe the Alps.... He was perhaps better suited to make a quiet State happy than to reduce a rebellious one."

King René's career and work as a Sovereign, a soldier, a legislator, a traveller, a poet, and a lover, are treated in full in the letterpress of this volume. His work as an artist, a craftsman, an agriculturist, and a collector, is here given under different headings, as introductory to the expression of his personal talents. [19]

## I. Artistic Works of King René.

René's first efforts as a designer and painter were exhibited upon the walls of his prison-chamber at Tour de Bar, near Dijon, 1431-1435. Thence forward he decorated the walls and stain-glazed the windows of his various castles and palaces—Bar-le-Duc, Nancy, Angers, Saumur, Reculée, Tarascon, Marseilles, and Aix. Every *bastide* and *maison* inhabited by his Queens and himself was also similarly adorned, and many coloured church windows were due to his gentle art. Alas that so few vestiges of these admirable labours remain! French mobs are proverbial for iconoclastic propensities, and no land has suffered more than France from the suicidal mania of her *sans-culottes*.

To fresco-painting, portraits, and glass-staining, the Royal artist added miniatures and penmanship. His "style" was formed and developed successively under such personal tuition as that of the brothers Van Eyck and Maistre Jehannot le Flament. Later on Jean Focquet of Tours and Nicholas Froment influenced him. A letter is extant of King René, addressed in 1448 to Jan Van Eyck, in which he asks for two good painters to be sent to Barrois.

Visits to Rome, Florence, Naples, Milan, and other art cities of Italy, very greatly enlarged René's *métier*. Intercourse with Fra Angelico da Fiesole, Fra Filippo Lippi, Paolo Ucello, the Della Robbia, and many other Tuscan artists, quickened his natural talent and guided his eye and hand. Leon Battista Alberti, Francesco Brunellesco, and Cennino Cennini, and their works in *materia* and literature, produced great results in the receptive faculties of the King-artist. At Naples he came in contact with Colantonio del Fiore, Antonio Solario—*Il Zingaro*—and Angiolo Franco, and gathered up what they taught. [20]

Besides these immense advantages as a personal friend of great ruling Italian families, the Medici, the Pazzi, the Tornabuoni, the Visconti, the Sforza, the Orsini, and many others, René had opportunities enjoyed by very few. His own amiable individuality and his ample knowledge were the highest credentials in the pursuit of art and craft. René witnessed the consecration of the Duomo of Florence and the completion of the guild shrine of Or San Michele, and he was enrolled as an honorary member thereof. At Florence also he was thrown in contact with world famous *scrivani*—writers and illustrators of manuscript. The subsequent excellence of French miniaturists was largely due to King René's example and encouragement.

René's more considerable paintings, which have been preserved, are as follows:

1. *The Burning Bush*, part of an altar triptych, at the Cathedral of Aix. Projected and begun by the King, it was finished by Nicholas Froment, 1475-76, and for it the artist received no more than 70 gulden (see illustration).

2. *Souls in Purgatory*, an altar-piece (7 × 5½), originally in hospital chapel at the Chartreuse of Villeneuve les Avignon. It is really a "Judgment," with Christ and saints above the clouds, and twenty-four little figures in and out torment. The building was destroyed in 1793. [21]

3. *La Divina Commedia*, an altar-piece (8 × 6), in the church of the Célestins at Avignon in distemper. It was due to René's vision of his mistress, Dame Chapelle, upon the day of her death, which shocked him so greatly that he painted this composition to remove the painful impression he thus experienced.

4. *Saint Madeleine preaching*, now in the Hôtel Cluny. It was a whimsical conceit connecting the story of the sisters of Lazarus with René and his Queen Jehanne. It is conventional in treatment but finished most beautifully (see illustration).

King René's artistic speciality was miniatures. He illuminated many manuscripts.

1. *Preces Præ*. The Latin "Hours" of King René, a manuscript of 150 sheets of fine vellum, written very beautifully in small lettering, with superb capitals in gold and colours. The borders and miniatures are exquisitely painted. It is bound in red morocco. This precious volume was dedicated to Queen Isabelle, whose portrait is painted as a frontispiece (see illustration). It was one of the King's wedding presents to his second Queen, Jehanne de Laval. The value of the *Preces Præ* is enhanced by numerous marginal notes of dates and details written by René's hand. At the end by way of *Finis* is a clock-face, upon which is painted "R et J," under the words "En Un," all in a circle of gold. This treasure is now in the National Library in Paris, and there is a copy almost exactly in duplicate in the Imperial Library in Vienna. The date is 1454.

2. *Pas d'Armes de la Bergère.* A poem of Louis de Beauvau, Seigneur de la Roche et Champigny, Grand Seneschal of Angers, Ambassador to Pope Pius II., and a famous Champion in the "Lists." It is a pastoral allegory, and extols the courage and chivalry of many famous knights —Ferri de Vaudémont, Philippe Lenoncourt, Tanneguy de Chastel, Jean de Cossa, Guy de Laval, and others. It was put forth in 1448 after the celebrated tournaments in Anjou, Lorraine, and Provence. King René illuminated it with portraits and miniature paintings at Tarascon, where he and Jehanne de Laval spent so many happy days ruralizing in 1457. [22]

At Aix, in the Library, is a manuscript *Livres des Heures*, dated 1458; at Avignon, in the Church

of the Cordeliers, is another of the following year; at Poitiers, in the Library, is a “Psalter”; in the Musée de l’Arsenal of Paris, a Breviary (see illustration)—all exquisitely written and illuminated by the master-hand of the King.

## II. Literary Works of King René.

The earlier works of the King are sufficiently remarkable as exhibiting his serenity in adversity and his uprightness as a legislator; his later poems are notable in revealing his chivalry as a knight-adventurer, and his tenderness as a dainty troubadour. René, whether as Sovereign, knight, or lover, led the taste of his age. His personality attracted everybody, and his character elevated all in fruitful emulation. His utterances and his writings, in spite of the freedom of manners and the piquancy of speech, were conspicuous for chastity of thought and delicacy of [23] expression. Not a single dubious word or doubtful reference disfigures his pages: a man and King was he without reproach.

The works which René composed as well as decorated place him in the forefront of poets. The principal are as follows:

1. *Regnault et Jehanneton*, or *Les Amours du Bergier et de la Bergeronne*. It is an idyllic pastoral. The manuscript occupies seventy sheets of fine vellum, written in black and crimson, very carefully and finely. The miniatures and capitals are very numerous, and display the greatest skill and taste in design and finish. This manuscript was written at Tarascon, after René and Jehanne’s romantic sojourn at his *bastide* on the Durance.

2. *Mortifiement de Vaine Plaisance*, or *Tracte entre l’Ame devote et le Cœur*. In manuscript, written very carefully in black and scarlet, with many exquisitely-painted miniatures and capital letters. This “Morality” covers fifty-five sheets of the finest vellum. The Royal writer was assisted by Jehan Coppre, a priest of Varronsgues. The frontispiece by René represents the King, fully robed, seated in his studio labouring with his pen and brush (see illustration).

3. *La Conquête de la Doulce Mercy*, or *La Conquête par le Cuer d’Amour Espris*. This is a manuscript with 138 sheets of very smooth vellum written in red, black, and purple, with sixty-two miniatures and many capitals superbly painted. It is bound in red morocco, and is in the National Library in Paris. It bears the date 1457. René both wrote and illuminated it shortly before the death of Queen Isabelle.

4. *L’Abuzé en Court.* A manuscript covering fifty-seven sheets of very fine vellum. Where and [24] how King René got his “skins” we do not know, but they are the finest and most perfect of any French or Italian manuscripts of the period. The colour and grain of the skin are very fine; only an artist-writer could have chosen such splendid folios. This manuscript is bound in walnut-wood boards covered with crimson velvet and embroidered. It contains fifty lovely miniatures and has rich capitals. René has in this case recorded the exact date of completion—July 12, 1473.

5. Very superb—perhaps King René’s *chef d’œuvre*—is *Le Tracte des Tournois*, a full description of his splendid tournament at Saumur, with the richest possible illustration. It is dedicated to Charles d’Anjou, his brother, who died in 1470; he was Count of Maine and Guise, and Governor of Lorraine. The frontispiece and two other illustrations are reproductions of the Royal artist’s designs.

One of the most charming incidents in René’s long, useful, and moving life was his intercourse with Charles d’Anjou, son of the first Duke of Orléans, brother of Charles VI. of France. The young Prince was made a prisoner at the Battle of Agincourt in 1415, and remained in captivity in the Tower of London for twenty-five years. His constant complaint was: “I mourn with chagrin that no one does anything to release me!” This piteous appeal at length gained the heart of Duke Philippe of Burgundy, who effected his deliverance in 1440. Between King René and Duke Charles there passed, through spiritual affinity, a constant succession of delightful poetic souvenirs—the prisoner of La Tour de Bar and the prisoner of the Tower of London—comrades in sorrow, companions in joy! The form these missives took was that of *rondeaux*, or valentines, and [25] in this category nothing could be more delicate and sensuous. A very favourite ending of the poems was—

“Après une seule excepter,
Je vous servirai cette conte,
Ma douce Valentine gente,
Puis qu’amour veuilt que on’y contente.”

“With one only reservation,
I will send you this narration,
My gentle, natty Valentine,
Since your love so well content is mine.”

Charles d’Anjou died in 1465, greatly lamented by his poet-confidant.

King René composed and wrote, and also set to music, very many *motets* and *caroles* (dance-songs). The former are still sung in village churches in Provence, and the latter danced at village fêtes.

René was famous, too, as a polite letter-writer. Between 1468 and 1474 he despatched thirty-seven missives to Pope Sixtus IV. and others, chiefly relating to affairs in the kingdom of Catalonia.

At the Château d'Angers, as well as at those of Nancy and Aix, King René had splendid collections of manuscripts and books. Rare works in Hebrew, Greek, Arabic, Turkish, and Latin, he collected in the several departments of Scripture, Philosophy, History, Geography, Natural History, and Physics. Writers and students naturally were attracted to such a sapient Prince. Three of the former in particular attached themselves to his patronage: Pierre de Hurion, Jehan de Perin, and Louis de Beauvau; and with them was René's chief collaborator—Hervé Grellin.

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## III. Craftman's Works of King René.

René was a great advocate for the combination and co-operation of the arts and crafts. In no sense was he a free-trader: his policy was to encourage native enterprise and to check destructive intrusion of aliens. To consolidate commercial interests and to safeguard industries, he established "Orders" or "Guilds" for workers. For example, at Tarascon he instituted "The Order of the Sturgeon," for fisherfolk, which held an annual festival in July, called *La Charibande*, specially in honour of *Le Roy des Gardons*—"King of Roaches." At Aix the King established "The Order of the Plough," for agriculturists, and their fête-day was the Festival of the Assumption. He could hold the coulter with any of his farm labourers, and greatly delighted in matches of strength and speed. René's interest in agriculture and stock-rearing did very much to make Anjou and Provence fruitful States. He naturalized the sugar-cane, and introduced many new trees and plants: the rose de Provence; the *Œillet de Poëte*—our Sweet William; the mulberry; and the Muscat grape.

As patron of crafts, René especially encouraged workers in tapestry, vestments, costumes and tournament decorations, goldsmiths, jewellers, medalists, armourers, and masters of wood, stone, and metal, with operatives in textiles. In Provence, at Aix and Marseilles, he had workshops which he himself superintended, and where such instructors were employed as Jehan de Nicholas, Guillaume le Pelletier, Juan d'Arragona, Jehan le Gracieux, Luigi Rubbotino, Henri Henniquin, and Jehanne Despert. These may be names only, but their fame may be learnt by the [27]
study of useful industries in France. The *Comptes de Roy René*,—René's business-books,—at Angers are full of orders, instructions, payments, etc., to work-people of all sorts and kinds.

At each of King René's residences, and more especially at Aix, he designed and erected a raised architectural loggia, or terrace, which at once gained the name of *La Cheminée du Roy*. Here he was wont to spend a good deal of his time in the enjoyment of the fresh air and the contemplation of the persons and avocations of his subjects within range. Here, too, he gave audience to all sorts and conditions of his subjects, passing the time of the day merely to many, but with some of them entering fully into matters proposed for his consideration. Craftsmen, tradesmen, and merchants, were accustomed to pass that way to expose commodities, and exhibit novelties which might tempt the Royal patronage. One salient object of this amiable habit was that, as he put it, "my children may see their father, and take cognizance of my state of health and my pursuits." René lived and worked among and for his people, and none who approached him ever went away empty or dissatisfied. Nothing pleased him better than a morning salutation or an evening serenade by troubadour-jongleurs and other makers of music and of fun. Sometimes the municipal authorities made courteous protests to their liege Lord for the creation of crowds and obstruction to the free circulation of the traffic. To all such representations the King turned a ready ear, but also turned their pleas into subjects for good-humoured merriment.

"You see," he used to say, "I am something of a troubadour myself, and life's serious moods [28]
require joyous elevation."

René was great in loving-cups, or, more correctly, their contents. Nothing pleased him more than to hand to anyone who had interested or amused him a delicious beverage, and often enough in the utmost good-humour he bade the recipient keep the cup as a memento of his interview—and "mind," he added, "you drink my health and Queen Jehanne's sometimes."

René's consideration of and generosity to his servants and attendants was proverbial. The *Comptes* are full of instructions to his Treasurers to pay such and such sums of money or other benefactions. To Jehan de Sérancourt, an equerry, for example, he gave a purse of 200 ducats, "for thy skilful care of my favourite charger." To Alain le Hérault, a valet and barber "a gold snuffbox and fifty ducats for his daughter's confinement." He was very fond of quoting the example of Marie d'Harcourt, mother of his son-in-law Ferri de Vaudémont, who died in 1476. She was affectionately called "the Mother of the Poor." "She was rightly called; am not I, then, father too?"

René was a great collector of works of art and curios, although, by the way, he was obliged very frequently to distribute his treasures in order to raise money for his warlike enterprises and philanthropic pursuits. A speciality was the acquisition of relics of saints and other venerable objects. In 1470 he and Queen Jehanne assisted at the translation of a piece of the True Cross, which he had obtained in Italy, to the Church of St. Croix at Angers. Lists of such treasures, and, indeed, of the treasures in general of his house, may be read in *Les Comptes de Roy René*. Many [29]
originally came from King John the "Good" of France, René's great-grandfather, handed down by Louis I. and Louis II. of Sicily-Anjou.

René had a penchant for rock-crystal objects and miniature carvings in wood. Among the former he possessed a very famous winecup, upon which he engraved the following quaint conceit:

“Qui bien beurra
Dieu voira.
Qui beurra tout d’une baleine
Voira Dieu et la Madeleine!”

“Whoso drinks me
God shall see.
Whoso at one good breath drains me
Shall God and the Magdalen see!”

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# CHAPTER II

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## YOLANDA D’ARRAGONA—“A GOOD MOTHER AND A GREAT QUEEN.”

### I.

The Queen was in labour, and shivering groups of robust citizens and sturdy peasants were gathered in front of the royal castle of Zaragoza, eagerly awaiting the signal of a happy deliverance. The fervent wish of King Juan for a male heir was shared by his subjects, for his brother Martino, next in succession, was in delicate health; moreover, he had only one son, and he was a cripple. The succession to the throne was a source of anxiety to all good Aragonese. To be sure, there was a baby Princess already in the royal nursery, but whether her mother had been a lawful wedded wife, or no more than a *barragana* of the Sovereign, few knew outside the charmed circle of the Court. In the opinion of the men and women of the triple kingdom generally, this mattered little, for natural children were looked upon as strengthening the family; *hijos de ganancia* they were called. The Salic Law, however, barred the female heirs of the royal house, so little Juanita was of no importance.

YOLANDA D’ARRAGONA

(KING RENÉ’S MOTHER)

From Coloured Glass Window, Le Mans Cathedral

*To face page 30*

Within the courtyard, about the royal apartments, and all through the precincts of the Presence, minstrels and poets thronged, as well as Ministers and officials; Queen Yolanda was the Queen of Troubadours, and the courtiers she loved best to have about her were merry maids and men—graduates of the “*Gaya Ciencia*.” The livelong night they had danced and postured, they had piped and sung. Each poet of the hilarious company had in turn taken up his recitative, [31] printed by staccato notes, to be repeated in chorus and in step, until the *fandangoes* and *boleros* of the South were turned into the boisterous whirling *jotas* of Aragon. The first dawn of day

brought into play lutes and harps, restrung, retuned cellos and hurdy-gurdies, and *vihuelas de peñola*, guitars with metal wires and struck with strong herons' plumes, and so awoke the phlegmatic guardians of the castle. Sweet and harmonious Provençal voices blended with soft notes of melodious singers from Languedoc to the running accompaniment of the weird Basque music of the mountaineers.

The Queen, upon her massive curtained bed of state, heard the refrains and felt the vibration of the lilting measures, and smiled pleasantly as she laid awake expectantly. At length the great tenor bell up in the chapel turret gave out the hour of six. The last note seemed to hang, and many a devout listener bent a reverent knee and bared his head, whilst the women-folk uttered fervent *Aves*. One single stroke of the metal clapper was followed, alas! immediately by another. "Two for a Princess!" resounded from lusty throats, but there was a tone of disappointment in the cry. The glaring morning sun, however, made no mistake, impartial in his love of sex. Dancing upon the phosphorescent ripples of the rolling Mediterranean, he shot golden beams within the royal chamber, and crimson flushed the cheeks of the royal mother and her child. It was the red-hot sun of Spain, and the day was red, too—the feast of San Marco, April 25, 1380.

Christened within eight hours of birth—the custom in Aragon—and "Yolanda" named, the little [32]
Princess's advent was speeded right away to distant Barrois, her mother's home, by the Queen's Chamberlain, trusty Cavalier Hugues de Pulligny. He had been summoned at once to the accouchement couch, and given to hold and identify the babe. With him he took the Queen's mothering scarf—the token of a happy birth—and hied post-haste to lay it and his news at the feet of the anxious Duke and Duchess at Bar-le-Duc. His reward was a patent of nobility and 500 good golden livres.

Yolanda, Queen-consort of Juan I., King of the triple kingdom of Aragon, Catalonia, and Valencia—Violante de Bar—was the elder of the two daughters of Robert I., Duke of Bar, and his wife, Marie of France, daughter of King John II., "the Good." Their Court was one of the chief resorts of the Troubadours and Jongleurs, who looked to the Duke's famous mother, Princess Iolande of Flanders, as their queen and patroness. Bar, or Barrois, first gained royal honours when the Emperor Otto III., in 958, created his son and successor, Frederic, Count of Bar and Prince of the Holy Roman Empire. The succession was handed down for hundreds of years, and in 1321 Count Henry IV. married the Flemish Princess. Her jewels and her trousseau were the talk of half a century. Her gaiety, her erudition, and her skill in handicraft, were remarkable; her Court the most splendid in Europe.

Bar was, so to speak, the golden hub of the great humming wheel of Franco-Flemish arts and
crafts. Bordered by Luxembourg, Lorraine, Champagne, and Burgundy, the fountain-heads of rich [33]
and generous vintages, she took toll of all, and the Barroisiens were the healthiest, wealthiest, and the merriest folk in the French borderland.

The influence of the bewitching and accomplished Princess-Countess Iolande was paramount, and she was ever adding to her fame by making royal progresses throughout her husband's domains. Wherever she went, music and the fine arts, and every artistic cult and useful craft, prospered amazingly. Borne in a great swaying chariot, drawn by four strong white Flemish horses, the magnificence of her cortège led on one occasion, if not on more, nearly to her undoing. Travelling in the summer-time of the year 1361 to Clermont en Argonne, one of the ducal castles, she was, when not very far away from storied Laon, beset by an armed company of outlaws, who, however, treated her with charming courtesy. They caused the Princess and her ladies to descend from their equipage and step it with them as *vis-à-vis* under the greenwood tree. Then, not very gallantly, to be sure, they stripped their fair partners of their ornaments and despoiled the princely treasure, causing the Princess to sign a pardon for their onslaught. The adventure, however, did not end here, for Iolande was a match for any man, and on the spot she enrolled her highwaymen as recruits for Count Henry's army!

The almost fairy Princess-Countess survived her consort many years, and lived to see the county of Bar raised to a dukedom, and to dance upon her knee a little namesake granddaughter, Violante de Bar. Nothing gave her greater pleasure than the floral games of the troubadours, and
one of these *fêtes galants* was enacted in 1363 at the Ducal Castle of Val de Cassel, where [34]
Duchess Marie had just brought into the world this very baby girl. The poets chose their laureate —one Eustache Deschamps-Morel, and Princess Iolande crowned him with bays. The *ballade* he composed for those auspicious revels is still extant—*Du Métier Profitable*—wherein he maintains that only two careers are open to happy mortals.

"Ces deux ont partout l'avantage,
L'un en junglant, l'autre à corner."

The sights and sounds, then, which first greeted the pretty child were merry and tuneful. She was reared on troubadour fare, on troubadour lore. Violante had three brothers, Édouard, Jehan, and Louis, and a younger sister Bonne, married to Nicholas, Comte de Ligny, but alas! buried with her first-born before the high-altar of St. Étienne at Bar-le-Duc.

When Violante was in her seventeenth year, there came a royal traveller, disguised as a troubadour of Languedoc, to the Court of Love at Bar-le-Duc. His quest was for a bride. He was of ancient lineage; his forbears came from Ria, in a southern upland valley of the Eastern Pyrenees, and had ruled the land 'twixt barren mountain and wild seacoast for no end of years—Juan I., King of Aragon, Catalonia, and Valencia. He had just buried Mahaud d'Armagnac, the young mother of his little daughter Juanita, and there was a gaping wound in his amorous heart which yearned for healing. The royal Benedict looked for a Venus with a dash of Diana and a measure of

Minerva, and chroniclers say he had drawn blank the Courts of Spain and Southern France. Moreover, they tell a pretty tale of him which must now again be told. [35]

After wanderings manifold, the royal knight-errant found himself within the pageant-ground of Bar-le-Duc and at a “Court of Love.” There he broke shield and lance at tilt, and Prince Cupid pierced his heart. Mingling in the merry throng, King Juan found himself partnered by the most beauteous damsel his eyes had ever seen. She was the Princess Violante, daughter of the Duke. Before she realized what her gay *vis-à-vis* had said and done, he vanished. But upon her maiden finger glittered a royal signet-ring. Back to Zaragoza sped the gay troubadour, and in a trice a noble embassy was on its way to the Barrois Court to claim the hand of the fascinating Princess and to exchange the heavy ring of State for the lighter jewelled hoop of espousal.

The entry of Queen Yolanda (Violante) into Zaragoza was a resplendent function, and, despite their habitual taciturnity, the citizens hailed the lovely consort of their King with heartiest acclamations. In her train came minstrels and glee-maidens from Champagne and Burgundy, from Provence and the Valley of the Rhine and Languedoc. Such merry folk were unknown in phlegmatic Aragon. To be sure, they had their poets, their dances and their songs, but they were the semi-serious pastimes of the sturdy Basque mountaineers.

The *Académie des Jeux Floraux* of Toulouse,—newly founded in 1323, and better known there as the *Collège du Gaye Sçavoir*,—sent an imposing company of minstrels to greet the new Queen of Aragon at Narbonne—the city of romance and song—and to offer her a spectacular serenade beneath the balconies of the Archiepiscopal Palace, where she and her suite were [36] accommodated. With them they bore golden flowers and silver with which Royal Violante should crown the laureates, and to Her Majesty they offered a great amaranth of gold, together with the diploma of a *Mainteneuse*. Acclaimed “Queen of Troubadours,” her motley train swept through the cities of the coast and crossed the Spanish frontier. One and all offered her their true allegiance—to live and dance and sing and die for Yolanda d’Arragona.

If the Aragonese were noted for stubbornness,—and of them was curtly said: “The men of Aragon will drive nails in their heads rather than use hammers,”—they have a sound reputation for chivalry. King Iago II. established this characteristic in an edict in 1327. “We will,” ran the royal rescript, “that every man, whether armed or not, who shall be in company with a lady, pass safely and unmolested unless he be guilty of murder.” Courting an *alegra señorita*, whether of Aragon, Catalonia, or Valencia, was the duty of every lad, albeit the fair one jokingly called it “*pelando la pava*” (plucking the turkey). The royal romance was a charming example for all and sundry, and many an amorous French troubadour had his wings cut by Prince Cupid and never went home again at all, and many a glee-maiden, to boot, plucked a “turkey” of Aragon!

King Juan threw himself unreservedly into the arms of his merry Minerva-Venus Queen: no doubt she “plucked” him thoroughly! A “Court of Love” was established at Zaragoza. All day long they danced, and all night through they sang, and at all times played their floral games, whilst dour señors scowled and proud dueñas grimaced. The revels of the “*Gaya Ciencia*” shocked their [37] susceptibilities, until a crisis was reached in 1340, when the King sent embassies to all the French Courts to enlist the services of their best troubadours. A solemn session of the Cortes, wherein resided the actual power of the State,—the King was King only by their pleasure,—was called, “*Podemos mas que vos*”—“We are quite as good as you, or even better”—that was the moving spirit of Aragon. A resolution was passed demanding the suppression of “the feast of folly,” as the gay doings at Court were called, and the immediate expulsion of the foreign minstrels and their hilarious company.

Here was a fix for the easy-going King,—dubbed by many “*l’Indolente*,” the Indolent,—between the devil and the deep sea. The Queen point-blank refused to say good-bye to her *devotés*, and her wiles prevailed to retain many a merry lover at her Court, for the stoutest will of man yields to the witchery of beauty in every rank of life!

If Queen Yolanda was a “gay woman,” as historians have called her,—and no class of men are anything like so mendacious,—she was not the “fast” woman some of them have maliciously styled her. No, she was a loving spouse and a devoted mother. Perhaps, could she have chosen, she would have brought forth a boy; but, still, every mother loves her child regardless of sex or other considerations. She addressed herself zealously to the rearing of the little princess. No sour-visaged *hidalgo* and no censorious citizen was allowed the entrée to the nursery. Minstrels rejoiced at the nativity, and minstrels shared the rocking of the cradle. She was baptized at the old mosque-like cathedral of Sa Zeo, or San Salvador,—where the Kings her forbears were all [38] anointed and crowned,—with the courtly ceremonial of Holy Church, whilst outside the people sang their well-loved ditties. Quite the favourite was “*Nocte Buena*”—

“La Vergin se fui’ in lavar
Sui manos blancas al rio;
El Sol sequedó parado,
La Mar perdio su ruido,” etc.

“To the rivulet the Virgin sped,
Her fair white hands to wash;
The wandering Sun stood still o’erhead,
The Sea cast up no splash,” etc.

and many, many other verses. Zaragoza was famous for the splendour of her mystery plays, as many quaint entries in the archives of the archdiocese prove: “Seven *sueldos* for making up the

heads of the ass and the ox for the stable at Bethlehem; six *sueldos* for wigs for the prophets; ten *sueldos* for gloves for the angels."

The little Princess was not the only occupant of the royal nursery in Zaragoza; King Juan's child Juanita greeted her baby companion with glee, but the Queen was not too well pleased that she should be allowed to remain there. Indeed, an arrangement was come to whereby Mahaud's child was delivered over to a *governante*, and Princess Yolanda was queen of all she saw. Very carefully her training was taken in hand, with due respect to the peccadilloes of the Court; but her mother saw to it that her environment should be youthful, bright, and intelligent. Hardly before the child was out of leading-strings her future was under serious consideration, for the King had no son nor the promise of one by his consort, and Queen Yolanda determined to do all that lay in her power to circumvent the obnoxious clauses of the Salic Law. [39]

The Princess grew up handsome like her father and bewitching like her mother. She was the pet of the palace and the pride of the people, and everybody prophesied great things for her and Aragon. The most important question was, naturally, betrothal and marriage. The King, easy-going in everything, left this delicate matter to his ambitious, clever Queen, and very soon half the crowns *in posse* in Europe were laid at her daughter's feet.

The survey of eligible lads of royal birth was far and wide, but, with the tactful instinct of a ruling native, Queen Yolanda made a very happy choice. At Toulouse, three years before the birth of her little daughter, had been born a royal Prince, the eldest son of her uncle Louis of France, her mother's brother, titular King of Naples, Sicily, and Jerusalem, Duke of Anjou, and Count of Provence. The boy's mother was Countess Marie de Châtillon, the wealthy heiress of the ducal line of Blois-Bretagne. He was the husband-to-be of Princess Yolanda d'Arragona, Louis d'Anjou. King Juan cordially approved the selection of the young Prince: French royal marriages were popular in Aragon. An imposing embassy was despatched at once to Angers, with an invitation for the boy to visit the Court of Zaragoza under the charge of his aunt, Queen Yolanda. The King and Queen made the most they could of their interesting little visitor. With a view to contingencies, Louis was introduced at the session of the Cortes, and the King gave splendid entertainments to the *ricoshombres* and other members of the Estates in honour of his future son-in-law, the royal fiancé of the *soi-disante* heiress to the throne.

This notable visit came to an abrupt and unexpected end upon receipt of the news of the [40] sudden death of King-Duke Louis at the Castle of Bisclin, in La Pouille, on September 20, 1389. His young son, now Louis II., was called home at once. Met at the Languedoc frontier by a kingly escort, the young Sovereign passed on to Arles, and thence to Avignon, where, on October 25, 1389, he was solemnly crowned in the basilica of Nôtre Dame des Dons by Pope Clement VII. A stately progress was made to the Court of Charles VI. in Paris, and the youthful King was presented to imperious Queen Isabeau,—his aunt by marriage,—the proud daughter of Stephen II., Duke of Bavaria, and Princess Thadée Visconti of Milan.

The chief object of this visit was the formal betrothal of the young King and the Princess Yolanda d'Arragona—a ceremony deemed too important for celebration either at Angers or at Aix, in the King's domains. A notable function, in the grand metropolitan cathedral of Nôtre Dame, was held on, of all days the most suitable, the Feast of the Three Holy Kings, January 6, 1390, whereat assisted all the Princes and Princesses of the House of France, with Prince Ferdinand of Castile and Aragon as proxy for the bride-Princess, and an imposing embassy from King Juan and Queen Yolanda.

SOLEMN ENTRY OF A QUEEN INTO THE CAPITAL OF HER SPOUSE, FIFTEENTH CENTURY

See Froissart's Chronicles and "L'Album Historique de France"

*To face page 40*

Back to Angers went, with his mother, Queen-Duchess Marie, the youthful bridegroom-elect, to be safeguarded and trained for his brilliant career. Everybody in Anjou and Provence loved their Duchess. She had won all hearts. Those were prosperous, happy days—the days of the gracious Regent's kindly government. [41]

Early in 1393 King Juan met with a serious accident whilst hunting in the mountains around Tacca, the ancient capital of Aragon. He was, by the way, a famous huntsman, and had gained by his keenness in pursuit of game the title of "*El Cazador*"—"The Sportsman." Mauled by a wolf he had wounded in the chase, he never recovered from the loss of blood and the poison of those unclean fangs. Feeling his end approaching, and anxious about the future of his darling child, he proposed to Queen Marie and the Anjou-Provence Court of Regency that the nuptials of Louis and Yolanda should be celebrated without delay. This he did because he had determined to evade the restrictions of the Salic Law by proclaiming Louis and Yolanda heir and heiress together of Aragon, Catalonia, and Valencia.

Queen Yolanda most heartily seconded her consort's project,—indeed, she it was who had first suggested that line of action,—and when, on May 15, the King breathed his last in the castle of his fathers in Zaragoza, she claimed the succession for her son-in-law and daughter. On the day following the King's death she took the young Princess,—barely thirteen years of age,—accompanied by the whole Court and a crowd of sympathetic citizens, into the basilica of Sa Zeo, and placed her upon the magnificent and historic silver throne of the Kings of Aragon. Bending her knees before her, she kissed the child's hand in homage to her sovereignty, and caused heralds to proclaim her "*Yolanda Reina d'Arragona*." It was a bold step, but quite in accord with the ruling instinct of the royal house; moreover, it commanded the suffrages of very many members of the Cortes. [42]

The Estates of the three realms met in plenary session, and before the deliberations were opened the little "Queen" was presented by her mother, who demanded a unanimous vote in favour of Louis and Yolanda. There were, however, other claimants for the crown, and the Cortes decided to offer it to Dom Martino, the late King's only surviving brother, a next heir-male of the blood, whose consort was Queen Maria of Sicily. The new King treated his widowed sister-in-law and his little niece with the utmost consideration. He prevailed upon Queen Yolanda to retain the royal apartments at the castle, for he did not propose to reside there. He only stayed at Zaragoza for his coronation, and returned at once to Palermo.

The whole energy of the widowed Queen was now devoted to the education of her only child. Her widowhood weighed lightly upon her; her buoyant, happy nature soon shook off her grief and mourning. She was now perfectly free to cultivate her tastes. If the "little Queen" was not to be Queen of Aragon, she should succeed herself as "Queen of Hearts and Troubadours." Accordingly she moved her residence to Barcelona, the sunny and the gay, and there at once set up a "Court of Love." Catalonia was times out of mind the rival of Provence in romance and minstrelsy; her marts had quite as many merry troubadours as serious merchants. The *corridas de toros*—bullfights—of Barcelona were the most brilliant in Spain, whilst the people were as independent and as unconventional as they were cultured and industrious. The two Queens very soon became expert *aficionadas* of the royal sport. [43]

Queen Yolanda never for a moment lost sight of the future of her daughter, and preparations for her marriage to Louis d'Anjou occupied very much of her busy, merry, useful life. Queens' trousseaux were something more than nine days' wonders; besides, the ambition of the mother-Queen knew no bounds to her daughter's horizon. She must go forth at least as richly clothed and dowered as any of her predecessors. Goldsmiths, glass-blowers, cabinet-makers, saddlers, silk-weavers, and potters,—none more accomplished and famous in Europe than the artificers of Barcelona and Valencia,—were set to work to fill the immense walnut marriage-chests of the bride-to-be. Her jewels were superb,—no richer gold was known than the red gold of Aragon,—the royal gems were unique, of Moorish origin, uncut. Years passed quickly along, and Princess Yolanda kept her eighteenth birthday with her mother in Barcelona. She was on the threshold of a new life.

## II.

One glorious autumn morning in the good year 1399,—"good" because "the next before a brand-new century," as said the gossips of the time,—a gallant cavalcade deployed down the battlemented approach to the grim old castle of Angers. At its head, mounted upon a prancing white Anjou charger, rode as comely a young knight as ever hoisted pennoned lance to stirrup-lock. He was dressed in semi-armour,—the armour of the "Lists." His errand was not warlike, for knotted in his harness were Cupid's love-ribbons: he was a royal bridegroom-elect speeding off to bring gaily home from distant Aragon his fair betrothed. He had been knighted ten years before by his uncle, Charles VI., at his coronation in Nôtre Dame in Paris, at which solemnity he had,—a slim lad of twelve,—held proudly the stirrup of the Sovereign. [44]

Louis II. d'Anjou, born at the Castle of Toulouse on October 7, 1377, succeeded his father, Louis I., in 1389, and, like him, bore many titles of sovereignty: King of Naples, Sicily, and Jerusalem; Duke of Anjou, Calabria, Touraine, and Pouille; Grand Peer of France; Prince of Capua; Count of Provence, Maine, Forcalquier, and Piemont; Lord of Montpellier; and Governor of Languedoc and Guienne. His grandfather was the brave but unfortunate King John "the Good" of France; his grandmother, the beautiful but sorrowful Queen Bonne of Luxembourg and Bohemia.

The boy-King carrouselled through the lumbering gates of Angers that brilliant October morning between two trusty knights of his household,—loyal lieges of their late King now devoted to the service of the son. As valiant in deeds of war as discreet in affairs of State were Raymond d'Agout and Jehan de Morien. All three bore the proud cognizance of Sicily-Anjou,—the golden flying eagle,—and their silken bannerets were sewn with the white lilies of the royal house of France. A goodly retinue of mounted men followed the young King, guarding the person and the costly bridal gifts which accompanied the royal lover's cortège.

Queen-Duchess Marie, his mother, had kept as Regent unweariedly her long ten years' watch, not only over the business of the State, but also over the passions and the actions of her lusty, [45] well-grown son. Many a maid,—royal, noble, and simple,—had attracted the comely youth's regard, and had flushed her face and his. Women and girls of his time were, as an appreciative chronicler has noted, "*franches, désintéressés, capable d'amours, épidémentés, elles restent naïve très longtemps, parceque les vices étrangères n'ont point pénetrés dans les familles.*"[A] Louis had responded affectionately and loyally to his mother's solicitude; he was famed as the St. Sebastian of his time, whose chastity and good report had no sharp shaft of scandal pierced.

[A] "Natural, open-hearted, amorous, and accessible, they are always unspoiled because odious foreign manners have never marred their home."

The royal cavalcade pranced its way warily over the wide-rolling plains and across the gently cresting hill-country of Central France, making for the Spanish frontier. The whole of that smiling land was ravaged by foreign foes and overrun by native ne'er-do-wells, but, happily, no thrilling adventures have been recorded of that lengthy progress. Near upon the eve of St. Luke, King Louis II. and his suite were cordially welcomed in his royal castle of Montpellier, which the two mother-Queens, Marie and Yolanda, had indicated as the trysting-place. There the royal Court was established, whilst d'Agout and de Morien were despatched, with a lordly following, to Perpignan and across the frontier of Aragon to greet, at the Castle of Gerona, the two Yolandas—who were already on their way from Barcelona—and thence escort them to their Sovereign's presence.

The young "Queen" was quite as anxious to meet her affianced husband as he was to embrace [46] her, and no undue delay hindered the resumption of the queenly progress. It was a notable cortège, for Queen Yolanda, holding as she did tenaciously that her daughter was, at least, titular Queen of Aragon, Catalonia, and Valencia, travelled in extravagant royal state. Besides the great chariot, with its tapestries and furniture of richest Hispano-Moorish origin, were others almost as sumptuous for the lords and ladies of the suite. All these had their guards of honour—trusty veterans of King Juan's time, and devoted to their "Queen." Great tumbrils, laden with costly products of Zaragoza, Barcelona, and Valencia,—the royal trousseau and magnificent offerings for King Louis and his widowed mother,—accompanied by well-mounted cavalry, rolled heavily along the ancient Roman road to France.

The whole of Languedoc agreed to pay honour to the royal travellers, and they revelled in the floral games and *fêtes galants* offered by every town and castle by the way. From Toulouse, the birthplace of the bridegroom-elect, came quite appropriately a phalanx of *maintaineurs* to Montpellier to recite and sing poems and melodies of the "*Gaya Ciencia*." The green rolling hills of Languedoc gave back in sweetly echoing refrains the tuneful music of the shell-sown shores of the rolling sea, the sun-kissed Mediterranean: all sang the "Loves of Louis and Yolanda."

There is a quaint and suggestive story anent the meeting of the august young couple which calls to mind the adventures of King Juan at the Court of Bar-le-Duc. The young King had timely warning of the approach of his royal bride-elect, and, hastily donning the guise of a simple knight, he mingled in the throng of enthusiastic citizens, unrecognized, at the entrance of the town. Both Queens leaned forward in their chariot to acknowledge the loyal greetings; and the [47] bride,—arrayed in golden tissue of Zaragoza, and wearing Anjou lilies in her hair,—smiled and laughed and clapped her hands in ecstasy, the animation adding immensely to her charms of face and figure. King Louis was enraptured, and, falling head over ears in love, approached the royal carriage; and kneeling on his *berretta*, he seized the youthful Queen's white, shapely hand, and implanted thereupon one ardent kiss. The impact sent the hot blood coursing through his veins, and it was as much as his esquire could do to drag his master back and hurry him to the palace in time to change his costume and receive his royal guests with courtly etiquette. The young Queen was conscious of this outburst of love; she, too, coloured, and tried in vain to penetrate the disguise of her impassioned lover. The mother-Queen instinctively guessed who he was, and quietly remarked: "You will meet your gallant knight again, and soon—and no mistake."

Montpellier was all too small to accommodate such a numerous and such a distinguished company, so King Louis gave his royal visitors barely time to recover from the fatigues of the long coach-ride out of Spain when he hurried on the royal train to Arles, in Provence. Queen-Duchess Marie was already waiting at the great Archiepiscopal Palace to give the royal visitors a cordial greeting. After having waved her son adieu from the boudoir-balcony of the Castle of Angers, she, too, set out for the south. She had chosen Arles for the royal nuptials, as being the capital of the third great kingdom of Europe and the most considerable city in her son's dominions.

No better choice could have been made from a psychological point of view, for have not the [48] Arlésiennes been noted for all time for their perfect figures,—Venus di Milo was one of them,—their graceful carriage, and surpassingly good looks? They, with their menfolk, animated and merry, have always eaten well and well drunk. The delicious pink St. Peray is a more generous wine than all the vintages of Champagne. Physical charms and *fin bouquets* were ever incentives to love and pleasure, and Mars of Aragon yielded up his arms to Venus of Arles. *Arles—la belle*

*Grecque aux yeux Sarrazines!* Perhaps the becoming, close-fitting black velvet *chapelles*, or bonnets, and the diaphanous white gauze veils, did much to express *la grâce fière aux femmes*!

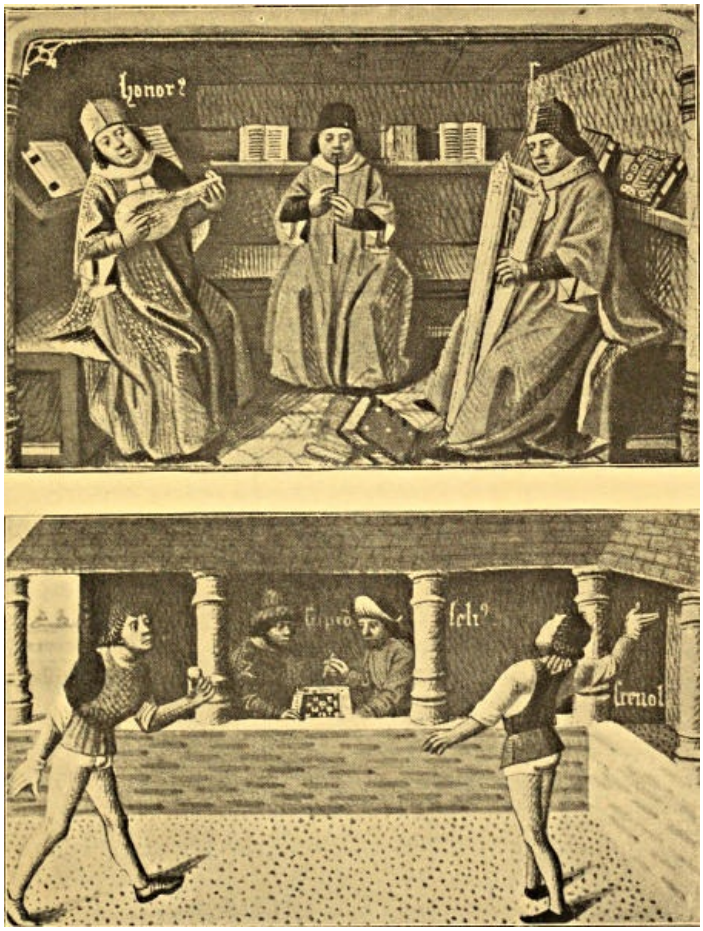
It was indeed a gorgeous function at which the royal couple were united in the bonds of matrimony, that morrow of All Saints, 1399. The ancient basilica of St. Trophimus was one vast nave, no choir,—that the royal brothers Louis and René built a generation later,—but it was too circumscribed for the marriage ritual; consequently, under a gold and crimson awning, slung on ships' masts beyond the deeply recessed chief portal, with its weird sculptures, the clergy took up their station to await the bridal pageant. The Cardinal-Archbishop, Nicholas de Brancas, joined the two young hands in wedlock, and Cardinal Adreano Savernelli, the Papal Legate, gave the blessing of Peter, whilst the two mother-Queens looked on approvingly.

The royal bride,—in white, of course,—had an over-kirtle, or train, of gemmed silver tissue—a thing of wonderment and beauty worn by her royal mother, and her mother, Marie de France, [49] before her, and coming from the Greco-Flemish trousseau of the famous Countess Iolande. Her abundant brown-black hair was plaited in two thick ropes, with pearls and silver lace reaching far below the jewelled golden cincture that encompassed her well-formed bust. Upon her thinly covered bosom reposed the kingly medallion of her father, King Juan, with its massive golden chain of Estate, the emblem of her sovereign rank. Upon her finger she wore the simple ruby ring of betrothal, now to be exchanged for the plain golden hoop of marriage.

"Yolande is one of the most lovely creatures anybody could imagine." So wrote grim old Juvenal des Ursins, the chatty chronicler of Courts. She brought to her royal spouse a rich dowry—much of the private wealth of her father and many art treasures, among them great lustred dishes and vases of Hispano-Moorish potters' work, with the royal arms and cipher thereon. Four baronies, too, passed to the Sicily-Anjou crown: Lunel in Languedoc—famed for vintages of sweet muscatel wines—Berre, Martignes, and Istres, all bordering the salt Étang de Berre, in Provence, each a Venice in miniature, and rich in salt, salt-dues, and works. The royal bride's splendid marriage-chests were packed full of costly products of King Juan's kingdoms: table services in gold from Zaragoza and finely-cut gems; delicate glass *arruxiados*, or scent-sprinklers, and crystal tazzas from Barcelona—more famous than Murano; great brazen vessels from Valencia and richly-woven textiles.

The same veracious historian has painted a picture in words of the youthful Yolande. "Tall," he says, "slim, erect, well proportioned in her frame, her features of a Spanish cast, dark lustrous [50] hair, the Queen-Duchess has an intrepid heart and an elevated spirit, which give animation and distinction to her charming personality. She is remarkable for decision, and commands obedience by her authoritative manner."

The Court did not tarry long at Arles, for, in spite of the beauty of the women and the gallantry of the men and its other notable attractions, it was, after all, somewhat of a dull, unhealthy place. A move was accordingly made,—before, indeed, the festivities were quite exhausted,—to the comfortable and roomy *manoir* of Tarascon, a very favourite country residence of all the Provence Princes. The gardens were famous, and laid out in the Italian manner, and the extensive park and fresh-water lakes were well stocked with game and fish. The *fêtes galants* of Louis XV. and "La Pompadour" here had their model. The bridal couple, with their guests and retainers,—often as not in the guise of shepherds and shepherdesses,—thus kept there state for three merry months, until the warmer spring weather hurried them off to Angers, in the north.



FAVOURITE RECREATIONS

1. A DIGNIFIED MUSIC PARTY.

2. HAND-BALL AND CHESS

Both from Miniatures in MS., Fourteenth Century, “Valeur Maxime”

British Museum

*To face page 50*

The pretty legend of St. Martha of Bethany appealed to the young Queen-Duchess. In the crypt of the principal church of Tarascon is the tomb of the saint, and on the walls is her story sculptured. Once upon a time a deadly dragon,—called by the fearful country-folk “Tarasque,”—dwelt in a hollow cave by the Rhone shore, and fed on human flesh. News of the devastation wrought by the monster reached the ears of Lazarus and his sisters at Marseilles, and St. Martha took upon herself to subdue the beast. With nothing in her hand but a piece of the true Cross of [51] Christ and her silken girdle of many ells in length, she sought out the deadly dragon in his lair. Casting around his loathsome body her light cincture, she enabled her companions to slay him. The girdle of St. Martha became the mascot of all the Tarasconnais, and everybody wore a goodly belt or bodice *à la Marthe*. Such a girdle, in cloth of gold and tasselled, was offered to the young bride by the loyal townsfolk.

The state entry of the Sovereigns into Angers,—the major capital of the King-Duke’s dominions,—was just such another pageant as that which greeted Queen Isabeau of Bavaria in Paris in the summer of 1385. From ancient days Angers had been a place of note—the Andegavi of Gallo-Roman times, a *municipium* and a *castrum* combined. In the Carlovingian era the Counts—then Dukes—of the Angevines,—founders of the great Capet family,—and their vigorous consorts nursed stalwart sons, who were the superiors of their neighbour rulers in Frankland. From Geoffrey Plantagenet, titular King of Jerusalem, sprang our English Kings. Louis IX.,—St. Louis of blessed memory,—bestowed the duchy of Anjou upon his brother John with the title of King of the Two Sicilies; hence came the sovereign titles of Louis II. and Yolande.

The Castle of Angers in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries was one of the most imposing in France. Flanked by eighteen great donjon towers, shaped like dice-boxes, it had the aspect of a prison rather than of a palace. The royal apartments were between two great bastions, *Le Tour du Moulin* and *Le Tour du Diable*. The drawbridge spanned the deep, wide moat to the esplanade called *Le Pont du Monde*; beneath were dark dungeons and odious oubliettes. To honour their [52] King and Queen, the castle household hung great swaying lengths of scarlet “noble cloth,”—newly purchased from the Florentine merchants of the “*Calimala*,”—to cover up the black slate-stone courses of the masonry of *Le Diable*, whilst they concealed the rough masonry of *Le Moulin* by strips of gorgeous yellow canvas of Cholet d’Anjou. These were the heraldic colours of Aragon. All the gloomy slate-fronted houses of the city,—“Black Angers” it was called,—were decorated similarly, and gay Flemish carpets and showy skins of beasts were flaunted from the windows. The citizens kept holiday with bunches of greenery and early spring flowers in their hands to cast at their new liege Lady.

Queen Yolande waved her gloved hand,—a novelty in demure Angers,—in friendly response to the plaudits of the throngs, and refused no kiss of bearded mouth or cherry lips thereon as she rode on happily by the side of her royal spouse. At St. Maurice,—the noble cathedral, with its new and glorious coloured windows,—the royal cortège halted whilst *Te Deum* was sung, and the bridal pair were sprinkled with holy water and censed. Another "Station" was made where the ascent to the castle began, for there pious loyal folk had prepared the mystery-spectacles of the "Resurrection of Christ" with "His Appearance to His Virgin Mother." The Saviour's features, by a typical but strange conceit, were those of the King-Duke, St. Mary's those of the royal bride!

The banquetings and junketings were scenes of deep amazement to the new Queen. In Aragon and Barcelona people ate and drank delicately,—their menus were *à la Grecque*,—but in cold and [53] phlegmatic Anjou great hunks of beef and great mugs of sack,—quite *à la Romain*,—were *de rigueur*. An old kitchen reporter of Angers records the daily fare at the castle: "One whole ox, two calves, three sheep, three pigs, twelve fowls." The only artistic confection was "hippocras, seasoned with cloves and cinnamon." Pepper, ginger, rosemary, mint, and thyme, were served as "delicacies." Another harsh note on the fitness of things which struck the royal bride as extraordinary was the loud laughter indulged in by the gentlemen of the Court and their coarse jests; *le rire français* had nothing of the mellowed merriment of the "*Gaya Ciencia*."

Alas! the rejoicings and the feastings of the Angevines and their guests were suddenly arrested, and the enthusiastic shouts of welcome were drowned by harsh hammerings of armourers and raucous military commands. The King-Duke was summoned to take his position among the captains of France, in battle order, in face of the foreign foe, and the Queen-Duchess, young and inexperienced as she was, assumed the government of Angers and the care of the citizens. All France was ravaged by the English, and State after State fell before their onslaught. Yolande addressed herself to the strengthening of the defences of the castle and the city. Imitating the tact and prudence of Silvestro and Giovanni de' Medici at Florence, she ordered the levying of a poll-tax, rated upon the variations of land-tenure and the varying incomes of the craftsmen: a tenth of all rateable property,—shrewdly spread over three years, with a credit for immediate needs,—was cordially yielded by the Angevines.

Probably this impost was made upon the advice of worthy councillors, but, all the same, the [54] manner in which the young *châtelaine* Lieutenant-General in person superintended its operation was an eloquent testimony to her force of character and her true patriotism. She disposed of many personal belongings, and submitted to many acts of self-denial, an example quickly followed by great and small. She sent also to Zaragoza for master-armourers to refurbish old and temper new weapons of various sorts. Some of these craftsmen she ordered to give instruction to native workers; so very shortly her armoury was efficient, not alone for home defence, but for the rearming of the King's forces in the field.

Not content with these warlike preparations, Queen Yolande gave time and money for the distraction and amusement of her people in their time of stress. Castle fêtes, town sports, and church mystery plays, were bravely carried through. The Queen herself was everywhere—now mounted for the chase, now tending sick folks, now at public prayers. Born daughter of a grand race, and full of dignity, she had inherited her mother's happy disposition. She charmed everyone in town and country, and endeared herself to her loving subjects by many a homely trait.

A pretty tale has been preserved about her whilst King Louis was standing shoulder to shoulder with Charles VI. and his other peers of France. One afternoon,—according to her wont when not hindered by affairs of State or claims of charity,—she sallied forth to the royal park of L'Vien, her dogs in leash. Let loose, they put up a rabbit, which made directly for their royal mistress, and sought refuge in the skirt of her green velvet hunting-kirtle. Reaching down her hand, she [55] fondled the little trembling creature, when, to her immense surprise, she discovered upon its neck a faded ribbon, with a medallion bearing an image of the Virgin. The incident occurred in a woody dell within the ruins of a half-buried hermit's cell. Yolande did not for a moment hesitate in her interpretation of the incident. She noted the date,—February 2, the Feast of the Purification,—and she set to work to restore the holy house in honour of St. Mary. Upon the portal, by her command, was sculptured the charming episode, with the legend: "*Nôtre Dame de Sousterre, l'amie et la protectrice des âmes en danger.*"[A]

[A] "Our Lady of the Deep Cell, the friend and protectress of souls in danger."

The same year, 1401, found Louis d'Anjou and Yolande upon their way to Paris, where she, as Queen of Jerusalem, Naples, Sicily, and Aragon, made her state entry at the Court of Charles VI. and Isabeau. Doubtless the young Queen was struck with Isabeau's extraordinary freedom of manner. Her own training, both at Zaragoza and Barcelona, in the rigid conventions of a semi-Moorish Court, had taught her restraint and aloofness. The dress of the French Queen astonished her, for in Aragon and Catalonia physical charms were enhanced by semi-concealment, whereas Isabeau exposed her painted arms, shoulders, and her breast, right down to her cincture; whilst her low waist at the back was pinched by a *cotte hardie*, so that the bust was enlarged to the degree of distortion: *une taille de guêpe*—"wasp-like" indeed! The etiquette of the Court of her father, as well as that of Anjou, kept men out of the bedchambers of the fair, but Isabeau, [56] *décolletée* and *en déshabillée*, was the centre of a crowd of flatterers and fawners at her daily *se lever*. The dressing-room of Isabeau was the factory of gossip and intrigue. Perhaps she gave utterance to the aphorism:

"Ostez le fard et le vice,
Vous luy ostez l'âme et le corps."

"Take away fashion and vice,
And you expose both soul and body."

On her side Queen Yolande caused a sensation among the French courtiers. No one had ever seen such a wealth of gold and jewels as that which adorned the winsome Spanish Queen. In spite of their great dissimilarity in age, appearance, character, and manner, the two Queens became fast friends, and Yolande was permitted to weld the intimacy into a permanent relationship at the fortunate accouchement of Isabeau. With admirable simplicity and charm she assumed the charge of the royal infant, sponsored it, and gave it her own name added to Catherine. Born to be the consort of Henry V. of England, the victor of Azincourt, Catherine de Valois served as the gracious hostage and pledge of a greatly-longed-for peace.

Queen Yolande was, however, approaching her own accouchement, and Louis, judging that a fortified castle was not a desirable locality for such an auspicious event, hurried his consort and her boudoir entourage off to Toulouse, the gay capital of Languedoc—Toulouse of the Troubadours. There, upon September 25, 1403, within the palace, Yolande brought forth her first-born, her royal husband's son and heir. Louis the bonny boy was named by the Archbishop at [57]
the font of St. Étienne's Cathedral. Great was the joy over all the harvest-fields and vineyards of Provence and Languedoc. Perhaps the good folk of Aix felt themselves a little slighted. Why was not the happy birth planned for their capital? they asked. Nevertheless, they sent a goodly tribute of 100,000 gold florins to the cradle of the little Prince, and saluted him as "Vicomte d'Aix."

The year 1404 had seasons of peculiar sorrow for the Angevine Court, followed, happily, by joyous days. On May 19 the King-Duke's brother, Charles, Duke of Maine and Count of Guise, died suddenly at Angers,—the "Black Death" they called his malady,—amid universal regret. He had been content to play a subordinate rôle in the affairs of State—a man more addicted to scholarly pursuits than political activities. He had, however, proved himself the son of a good mother and the stay of his young sister-in-law from Aragon during her spouse's absence from his own dominions. The Duke left one only child—a boy—who succeeded him as Charles II. of Maine. Queen-Duchess Marie felt her dear son's untimely death acutely, and, notwithstanding the loving care of her devoted daughter-in-law, she never recovered from the prostration of her grief. Within a fortnight of the obsequies of her son, the feet of those who had so sorrowfully borne his body forth to burial were treading the same mournful path, tenderly bearing her own funeral casket.

Ever since her happy marriage to Louis I. in 1360, Marie de Châtillon-Blois had borne nobly her part as the worthy helpmeet of her spouse and the devoted mother of his children. For ten years [58]
after his death her gentle presence and wise counsels had directed the affairs of the House of Sicily-Anjou, and smoothed away all difficulties from the path of her son. She left immense wealth, which, added to the goodly fortune of Louis I., made her son the richest Sovereign in all France. It was said at the time that she was worth "more than twenty-two millions of livres." "In spite of reputed avarice and hoarding," said a not too friendly historian, "she was a sapient ruler, moderate and firm, and she left Anjou the better for a good example." "*Sachiez*," wrote Bourdigne of her, "*que c'estoit une dame de goût faiet, et de moult grant ponchas, car point ne dormoit en poursuivant ses besoignes*."

These dark clouds hung heavily over Louis II. and Yolande, but the cause of their passing was a signal of enthusiastic joy. On October 14 a little baby-girl was born. Mary, the "Mother of Sorrows," heard the prayer of the stricken Royal Family, and sent a new Mary to fill the place of the lamented Duchess; for the child was named Marie simply, and was offered to St. Mary for her own.

Troubles, however, were gathering thickly all over the devoted land of France. The enemy in the gate, ever victorious, plundered and pauperized every State in turn, so that the country was "like a sheep bleating helplessly before her shearers." Tax-gatherers and oppressors of mankind beggared the poor and feeble, and spoiled the rich and brave. "*Sà de l'argent? Sà de l'argent?*"—"Where's your money?"—was the desolating cry which the rough *cailloux* of the village *pavé* tossed through the draughty doorways of peasant cottages, and the smooth courtyards echoed through the mullioned windows of seigneurs' castles. The gatherings, in spite [59]
of rape and rapine, fell far short of the requirements of these times of stress, and a general appeal was made to Queens and *châtelaines* to exercise their charms in staying the hands of ravishers. The famous answer of Queen Isabeau was that, alas! of Queen Yolande, though more sympathetically expressed: "*Je suis une povre voix criant dans ce royaume, désireuse de paix et du bien de tous!*"[A]

[A] "I am a poor voice crying helplessly in this wretched kingdom, seeking only peace and the good of all."

This aptly expressed the weary sense of disaster which saw that fateful year expire, but for the King and Queen of Sicily-Anjou-Provence a gleam of the brightness of Epiphany fell athwart their marital couch. Yolande was for the third time a mother, and her child was a boy. Born on January 6, 1408, in a crenellated tower of the castle gateway of Angers, his mother had to bear the anxiety and the vigil all alone, for Louis II. was in Italy fighting for his own.

As before the birth of the Princess Marie devotions had been addressed to the Mother of God and to the saints for a favourable carriage, now, in view of the troubles of the land, special petitions were addressed to the most popular saint of Anjou, St. Renatus, that the new

deliverance might presage a new birth of hope for France, and that the holy one,—the patron of child-bearing mothers who sought male heirs,—might supplicate at the throne of heaven for a baby-boy.

Baptized in the Cathedral of St. Maurice eight days after birth, the little Prince had for sponsors no foreign potentates, but men of good renown and substance in Anjou: Pierre, Abbé de [60] St. Aubin; Jean, Seigneur de l'Aigle; Guillaume, Chevalier des Roches; and Mathilde, Abbée de Nôtre Dame d'Angers. The Queen by proxy named her child "René—*reconnaissance à Messire St. Renatus*."

The Queen folded her little infant to her breast, but after weaning him she gave him over to the care of a faithful nurse, one Théophaine la Magine of Saumur, who came to love him, and he her, most tenderly.

Among the *documens historiques* of Anjou are *Les Comptes de Roi René*—notices of public works carried out in various parts of the royal-ducal dominions. Many of these enterprises were undertaken at the direct instance of Queen Yolande, and they throw a strong light upon her character as a loyal spouse and sapient ruler. For example, on July 26, 1408, a *marché*, or contract, was made between the Queen's Council and one Julien Guillot, a master-builder, for reslating the roof of the living apartments and the towers of the Castle of Angers, and also of various public buildings in the city, and the manor-houses of Diex-Aye and de la Roche au Due, at an upset price of fifty-five *livres tournois* (standard gold coins), "to be paid when the work is complete, with twenty more as deposit."

A MYSTERY OR MIRACLE PLAY, FIFTEENTH CENTURY

From "L'Album Historique de France"

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Again, under date October 25, 1410, another *marché* was signed, whereby "Jean Dueceux and Jean Butort, master-carpenters of Angers, agree to strengthen the woodwork of the castle chapel and replace worn-out corbels. All to be finished against the Feast of the Magdalen, at a total cost of two hundred *livres tournois*, according to the order of Queen Yolande and her Council." King Louis had in 1403 assigned a benefaction of twenty-five gold livres to the ancient chapel of St. [61] John Baptist, to be paid yearly for ever, as a thank-offering for the birth of Princess Marie.

These *documens* are full of such notices, and they also record events of festive interest. One such incident had a most ludicrous dénouement: "On the twenty-seventh of June, 1409, Messire Yovunet Coyrant, Superintendent of the Castle of Angers, paid a visit of inspection, and he complained that on Sunday, June 23rd of this month, being within the said castle, where a merry company was occupied with games and drolleries before Queen Yolande and the Court, he stood for a time to watch the fun. Quite unknown to him, the tails of his new long coat, which had cost him ten solz [half a livre], were cut off by some miscreant or other, whereby he became an object of derision! For this insult he claimed satisfaction, and named as his go-betweens Guye Buyneart and Jehan Guoynie." Whether these practical jokers were inspired by the Queen we know not, but this trifling record shows that she was not entirely absorbed by the heavy responsibilities of her rank as Lieutenant-General of her consort, but found time to indulge in some of the gaieties which had been the joy of her mother and herself in Aragon, and which had graced her own nuptials and entry into Anjou and Provence.

Again the mirthful pursuits of the Court and country were stayed by the stringency of the times. Sedition spread its baneful influence all over Provence and Languedoc what time King Louis was still far away fighting in Italy. With courage, fraught with love and assurance, she set off to the distant province, taking with her, not only an escort of doughty war-lords, but also her [62] own tender nurslings—Louis, Marie, and René. With her children was also the young Princess Catherine, daughter of Jean "sans Peur," the Duke of Burgundy, whose betrothal to her eldest son Louis was imminent. Through his children her appeal would first be made to her husband's

disaffected subjects. Should that fail, then she could don cuirass and casque and head her royal troops to worst them. With little Vicomte d'Aix upon her saddle-lap, she passed through village, town, and city, receiving enthusiastic plaudits everywhere; she was "*Madame la Nostre Royne*!" The head of the rebellion was scotched, and from Aix the intrepid Queen despatched messengers to the King to tell of her success, and to say that she was ready to embark at once to his assistance.

This heroic offer was made possible by the death of King Martin of Aragon in 1410, who bequeathed to his niece the whole of his private fortune. This event, however, added to the Queen's anxieties, for she was not the sort of woman to allow the royal succession to pass for ever unchallenged. *La Justicia Mayor* of the State of Aragon assembled at the ancient royal castle of Alcañiz to receive the names and to adjudicate the claims of candidates for the vacant throne. Yolande, still styling herself "Queen of Aragon," was represented by Louis, Duke of Bourbon, and Antoine, Count of Vendôme. Her claim was not immediately for herself, but for her son Louis. Two years were spent in acrimonious deliberations, but the provisions of the Salic Law penalized the female descent, and consequently the next male heir, Prince Ferdinand of Castile, placed the crown of Aragon upon his head as well as that of Castile. Queen Yolande had to be content with [63] her protest and her titular sovereignty.

Back at Angers in 1413, the Queen conceived a notable future for her nine-years-old daughter, Marie. Of the six sons of Charles VI. of France and Isabeau, only one survived, the fifth-born, Charles. The imperious Bavarian Queen had little or none of Queen Yolande's fondness for her offspring; they were born, alas! put out to nurse, forgotten, and neglected—so they died. Upon the little Prince—the cherished jewel of his father—Queen Yolande fixed her motherly regard. He was a year older than her Marie, and a piteous little object bereft of a mother's love and solicitude. Yolande's warm heart yearned towards the lonely child; she would mother him, she would train him, and then she would marry him to Marie—this was the Queen's dream.

With that promptitude which marked all her well-considered actions, Queen Yolande set about the realization of her castle in the air. She again packed up herself, her children, and her Court, and took up her abode in the Château de Mehun-sur-Yèvre, near Bourges, a favourite residence of the French Court. Among her little ones was a baby-girl, no more than six months old—Yolande, her own name-child. She gave as her reason for so strange a line of conduct her wish for greater facilities in the education of her children. Charles VI. offered no objection to the residence of such a worthy mother and heroine wife in his own neighbourhood; indeed, he regarded her advent with considerable pleasure and satisfaction. Yolande's influence for good would outweigh Isabeau's for evil; besides, she would be a trusty counsellor. [64]

Queen Yolande had not been very long established at Mehun before she put in a plea on behalf of the poor little heir to the throne of France. Charles was thankful, he was delighted, and at once gave into her sole charge, untrammelled in any way, his dear little son, to share the home care and the studies of his two young cousins, Louis and René d'Anjou. Having obtained the charge of the little Count de Ponthieu, Queen Yolande once more went home to Angers, by no means embarrassed by the fact that she had assumed the training of two Kings, Louis and Charles, with René a possible King of Aragon besides.

For two years Charles passed for Yolande's son, the playmate and boy-lover of her sweet Marie. All his inspirations and his examples he took from her and them—at last a happy boy, with a hopeful future. The Queen allowed that future no halting steps; Charles and Marie should be betrothed, and Mary should be Queen of France! Yolande broached the subject to King Charles, and at once gained his cordial consent, but tactfully she left to him the furthering of the project. Upon December 18, 1415, Charles of France and Marie of Sicily-Anjou were privately affianced in the Royal Chapel of the Castle of Bourges. France was in the throes of revolution and dissolution; the terrible defeat at Azincourt, on October 24 that same year, had paralyzed the military power of the French States, and was the ultimate cause of King Charles's insanity. For seven years he became a fugitive, not only bereft of reason, but of all resources. Queen Isabeau did nothing to relieve the tension, but maintained her irreconcilable position, and continued her ill-living. The [65] King's only brother, the lamented Duke of Orléans, had been assassinated eight years before, and there appeared to be no one capable of steering the ship of State into a calm haven.

This was Queen Yolande's opportunity, and she rose to its height majestically. She was already guardian of the Dauphin, who after his espousal returned with his child-bride to Angers. Now she assumed the general direction of affairs, and became virtually Regent of France and the arbiter of her destiny. She personally approached the English King, and obtained from him favourable terms of peace, which assured tranquillity and regeneration for France. She it was who proposed to Henry his alliance with her young goddaughter, Catherine, the youngest child of Charles VI. and Isabeau, then fourteen years of age. He was twenty-eight, and the marriage was consummated five years later, although Henry's terms included the payment of the arrears of the ransom of King John the "Good," the prisoner of Poitiers, a sum of 2,000,000 crowns.

The Queen's judgment and resourcefulness eminently merited the grudging encomium of the wife of her husband's fiercest rival, the Duchess of Burgundy. "I am always glad," she said, "when it is a good woman who governs, for then all good men follow her!"

All this time,—a time fraught with infinite issues,—King Louis II. of Sicily-Anjou was in Italy, meeting in his campaign with varied fortune. He had all he could do to hold his own, but his presence at the head of his army was essential to ultimate success. Three times he entered [66] Naples acclaimed as King, for Queen Giovanna II. had named him so. Three times he fled discomfited after victory, which he failed to follow up. He rarely returned to his French

dominions, and really he had no necessity so to do on the score of administration, for his beloved and capable Lieutenant-General was perfectly able to keep everything in order and uphold his authority. At last the King of Sicily-Anjou and Naples returned to Angers a broken and an ailing man, to spend what time Providence would still grant him with his devoted noble wife.

Queen Yolande's first great grief came to her in 1417, when her faithful husband was taken from her. Happily for them both, they were united at the deathbed—consoling and consoled. He was young to die—barely forty years of age—but ripe enough for the greedy grasp of Death. Louis II.'s fame was that of a "loyal Sovereign, a righteous man, a true spouse, and an affectionate father."

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# CHAPTER III

[67]

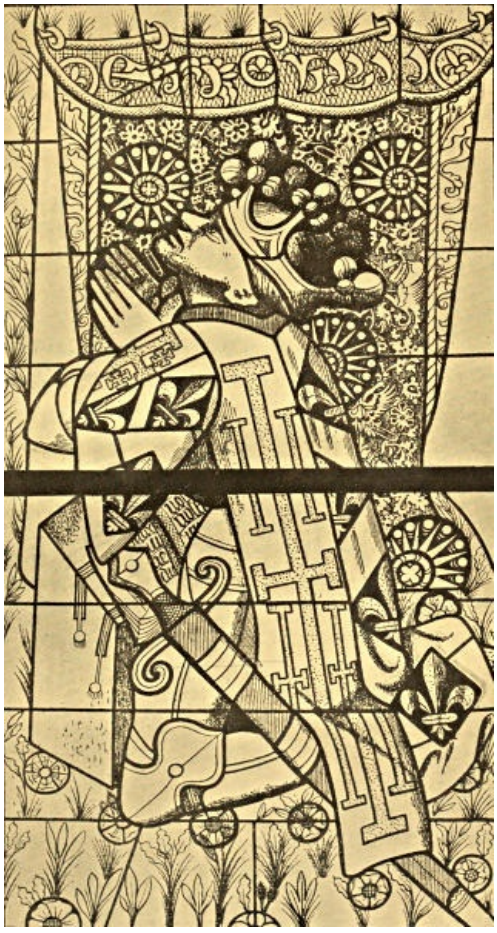
## YOLANDA D'ARRAGONA—"A GOOD MOTHER AND A GREAT QUEEN"—*continued*

### I.

A royal corpse reposed upon the state tester bedstead within the great Hall of Audiences in the enceinte of the Castle of Angers, and a royal widow knelt humbly at a prie-dieu at his feet. It was late in the evening of that sweet April day,—half sun, half shower,—that the body of Louis II., King of Sicily, Naples, Jerusalem, and Anjou, was ceremonially displayed, flanked by huge yellow wax candles in chiselled sticks of Gerona brasswork. The tapestried walls of this *chapelle ardente* were covered with sable cloth sewn with silver lilies and hung with great garlands of yew. The head of the lamented Sovereign reposed upon a soft cushion of blue velvet, put there by the widow herself. Upon his breast, with its pectoral cross, was his favourite "*Livre des Heures*," one of the famous treasures of the collection of King John the "Good," his grandfather.

In her black velvet *chapelle*, with its close gauze veil concealing her beautiful hair, and attired in sombre black, unrelieved, the devotional figure, sorrowful and brave, was none other than "Good" Queen Yolande. Her right hand rested consolingly upon the shoulder of her eldest son, now Louis III., a well-grown stripling of fourteen. Around his neck his mother had but just hung the chain and medallion of sovereignty, taken tenderly from her dead spouse. Behind them knelt Prince René and Princess Marie, the fondest of playmates, weeping bitterly, poor children! The [68]
vast hall was filled with courtiers, soldiers, citizens, all manifesting signs of woe and regret. The royal obsequies were conducted magnificently, under the personal direction of the Queen, within the choir of the Cathedral of St. Maurice. Feuds of rival Sovereigns, operations against the foreign foe, quarrels of fault-finders, and the like, were all hushed in the presence of the King of Terrors. To Angers thronged royal guests and simple folk to pay their last tributes of respect and devotion. In state, King Charles VI. started to tender his homage to the dead, but, struck down with sudden illness at Orléans, he requested Queen Isabeau to take his place. Burial rites were not much in that giddy woman's way, and her hard heart had no room for sympathy and condolence; so the "Scourge of France," as she was called, gave Angers a wide berth.

The Angevine royal children were five in number, and Louis left besides a natural son,—Louis de Maine, Seigneur de Mezières,—and a natural daughter,—Blanche,—whom René, when he attained his father's throne in 1434, married to the Sieur Pierre de Biège. The defunct King's will appointed four simple knights,—his henchmen true,—executors: Pierre de Beauvais and Guy de Laval for Anjou, and Barthélèmy and Gabriel de Valorey for Provence, with Hardoyn de Bueil, Bishop of Angers, as moderator. The Queen-mother was constituted Regent of the kingdoms and dominions and guardian of the young King, whilst Prince René was commended, under his father's will, to the charge of his great-uncle Louis, Cardinal and Duke de Bar, with the family [69]
title of Comte de Guise.



KING LOUIS OF SICILY-ANJOU

(KING RENÉ'S FATHER)

From Coloured Glass Window, Le Mans Cathedral

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The loss of her second son and the parting of the brothers was a sore trial to the whole family. The Cardinal, however, insisted upon his young nephew being sent to him at Bar-le-Duc, to be educated under his eye and prepared for his destiny as future Duke of Bar, which the Cardinal caused to be announced both in Anjou and Barrois. Louis de Bar was a very distinguished ecclesiastic; he had passed through every grade of Holy Order with rare distinction. In 1391 the Pope conferred upon him the bishopric of Poitiers, and two years later translated him to Langres, with the Sees also of Châlons and Verdun. The latter dignity carried with it the degree of Grand Peer of France, and in those days Bishops were regarded as temporal Sovereigns within the jurisdiction of their Sees. Benedict XIII. in 1397 preconized Louis de Bar Cardinal-Bishop, and named him Papal Legate in France and Germany. His temporal honours as Duke of Bar came to him in 1415, after the calamitous battle of Azincourt, in which his two elder brothers, Édouard and Jehan, fell gloriously. Their untimely deaths and disasters keen and sad brought about, too, the death of good Duke Robert, their father. He died of a broken heart, whilst Duchess Marie shut herself up in a convent, and was never known again to smile. Her death has not been recorded.

After bidding adieu to her dearly loved son,—perhaps her favourite child, and most like herself in temperament and character,—Queen Yolande, with the young King, was fully occupied in receiving addresses of condolence and assurances of loyalty both at Angers and at Aix, to which [70] they made a progress in full state. She assumed the personal direction of affairs, appointing tactfully as assessors the most prominent men of all classes in both domains. In a very distinct sense she was a democratic Sovereign, and under her régime the Estates were allowed a good deal of independent action in matters, at least, of local policy. Thus, by maintaining the dignity of the crown of Sicily-Anjou-Provence and encouraging popular government, Queen Yolande initiated the first free constitution in the history of all France.

The stability of the throne and the welfare of its subjects having been secured, the Queen turned her attention to the matrimonial prospect of her eldest son. Some years before King Louis's death, Jean "sans Peur," Duke of Burgundy,—in days when the Courts of Angers and Dijon saw eye to eye, and the States were not rivals in the direction of the general policy of the French Sovereigns,—had confided his little daughter Catherine to the charge of the eminent Queen of Sicily-Anjou, to be brought up with her own girls, the Princesses Marie and Yolande. Then the idea of the betrothal of Louis d'Anjou and Catherine de Bourgogne was accepted as a very excellent mutual arrangement; indeed, the Duke had named his intention of dowering the Princess with 50,000 *livres tournois* (= *circa* £30,000), besides placing the castle at the disposal of the young couple upon the consummation of the marriage.

There had arisen coolness and suspicion between the Sovereigns of France and the Duke of

Burgundy, whose connection with the assassination of the Duke of Orléans, in 1407, had never been cleared up. The Duke, moreover, had seen good,—in view of his professed claims to the [71] crown of France,—to make terms with the King of England which would, under certain circumstances, gain territorial aggrandizement for Burgundy, and ultimately the reversion to his family of the royal title. This *rapprochement* with the hated invader of Northern France,—the foe at the gates of Anjou,—lead summarily to the renunciation by the Angevine Sovereigns of all matrimonial affinities between the Houses of Anjou and Burgundy. Little Princess Catherine was sent home to Dijon, and the Duke scouted the Anjou alliance, and made terms with Lorraine, a step which in another decade told disastrously against the son of Queen Yolande.

She, on the other hand, cared very little for the change of front of Duke Jean “sans Peur.” Her mind had all along been made up in the matter of her son’s betrothal, and her eyes were turned to Brittany, whose Sovereigns were the most stable and the most powerful in France. The dual crown of Sicily-Anjou was rich, and the prospects of the new occupant of that throne with respect to Naples, and possibly to Aragon, were of the highest; consequently the matrimonial market was absolutely at her command. Politically it was clear that an alliance of Anjou and Brittany would more than balance that of Burgundy and Lorraine. Very tactfully the Angevine Queen-mother caused her “cousin” at Nantes to know that a nuptial arrangement between her son and a daughter of Duke Jean VI. would be favourably considered at Angers. To pave the way more auspiciously, splendid fêtes were organized at the castle, to which the ducal family of Brittany were invited as principal guests of honour. The Duke and Duchess were accompanied by their young daughter, Princess Isabelle, and were greatly affected by their reception. In the [72] tournaments, pageants, and floral games, the young Bretagne Princes gained all the laurels, whilst the blushing Princess, as the “Queen of Beauty,” bestowed the prizes upon the victors.

On July 3 a royal function in the Cathedral of Angers brought the fêtes to an auspicious finish, for there Louis d’Anjou and Isabelle de Bretagne were formally espoused, the young couple being of the same age. Alas for the hopes of all concerned! the Princess,—a very beautiful and an accomplished girl,—was not destined to wear the Queen-consort’s crown of Sicily-Anjou. Before the year was out she sickened of plague,—as captious critics said, caught in “Black Angers,”—and died. This was a serious blow to Queen Yolande’s diplomacy, but she was not the sort of woman to waste time in unprofitable lamentations.

By the force of circumstances, seen and unseen, the Queen-mother’s search for favourable alliances and an eligible consort for her son was greatly aided by the fresh aggression of the English under Henry V. In face of the common danger, which threatened alike the western and the eastern States of France, Queen Yolande found her opportunity of immensely strengthening the position of her son’s dominions by detaching Burgundy and Lorraine from the English alliance. At Saumur she signed the articles of a defensive and offensive treaty between the four great duchies,—Bretagne, of course, being one,—*La Ligue de Quatre*, it was called.

Next to the assurance of political security at home, this instrument set the astute Queen free to [73] turn her attention to the support of her son’s claims to the throne of Naples. First appertaining to the older line of Anjou in the person and descendants of Jehan, brother of St. Louis, they had lapsed until King Louis I. of Sicily-Anjou asserted his right as head of the younger line of Anjou in virtue of the grant by his father, King John the “Good.” These prerogatives, alas! Louis II. had lost the year he died, and their reacquisition was the destiny of his son. In furtherance of these duties, Queen Yolande conceived that an Italian alliance, with the corollary of a matrimonial contract for the young King, were indicated, and she set to work to elaborate a scheme which should achieve the ends in view.

In September, 1418, Queen Yolande opened negotiations directly with Amadeo VIII., Duke of Savoy, first for his assistance in the field of battle, and next for the betrothal of his daughter Margherita, then an infant of three years old. A treaty was signed on October 18, wherein the Duke agreed to receive young King Louis in Savoy, and either personally to accompany him through the proposed campaign, or at least to see his embarkation at Genoa at the head of a Savoyard contingent of ten thousand men-at-arms, for the recovery of the crown of Naples. One clause ceded the county of Nice to Savoy in lieu of moneys borrowed by Louis II. for his Naples expedition. Appended to this treaty was the marriage contract, which appointed Chambéry,—the capital of Savoy,—as the place, and Lady Day the following year as the date, for the formal espousal of Louis and Margherita.

Steps were at once taken for the young King to enter upon his expedition in a manner suited to his rank and commensurate with the military movements of the time. Angers once more [74] resounded to the metallic music of armourers. A Guild of Sword-Cutlers was incorporated, and skilled craftsmen from Aragon were again welcomed by the Queen. Masters of Arms, too, were invited to give Louis the best instruction in warlike exercises, Yolande herself meanwhile inculcating lessons of hardihood, chivalry, and patriotism. Hers, happily, was the satisfaction of knowing that these efforts were productive of the best results, for the youthful Sovereign quickly became an expert and an enthusiast.

It does not appear that the young King took much interest in the matrimonial part of the negotiations. An unripe boy of sixteen would naturally be very much more affected by military prowess than by uxorious daintiness. The service of Mars was very much more to his liking than that of Venus, and he addressed himself zealously to the task of winning back his grandfather’s crown and sceptre, which his father had failed to retain. It was doubtless a daring enterprise for a youth to undertake, but we may be quite sure that he inherited not a little of his family’s well known fearlessness. Province was denuded of her garrisons, and Languedoc also; but no men could be spared from Anjou and Bar, and it was but the nucleus of an army which Queen Yolande

reviewed at Marseilles, whither she went to bid adieu to her dearly loved son upon his adventurous career.

COMMUNION OF A KNIGHT

Sculpture from Interior, Western Façade, Reims Cathedral [75]

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Louis sailed for Genoa, where he met the Duke of Savoy and took command of his contingent. He anchored in the Bay of Naples on August 15, 1420, a day full of favourable omens. On the voyage he fell in with the fleet of the King of Aragon, his rival for the crown of Naples, and worsted it. At once he went off to Aversa, where the Queen of Naples, Giovanna II., received him with open arms. His *naïveté* delighted her, jaded as she was with the attentions of willing and unwilling aspirants for her favours. She created him Duke of Calabria, and proclaimed him her heir in lieu of the defeated and discredited Alfonso.

It was a perilous position for the vigorous and gallant stripling Prince, but the counsels of his virtuous mother were not thrown away. The young King refused the amorous royal overtures successfully, and having kissed the Queen’s hand, he offered a plausible excuse, and speedily took his departure for Rome. The Supreme Pontiff extended to the youthful hero his paternal benediction, and detained him at the Vatican just long enough to invest him with the title of King of Naples, in place, as His Holiness wished, of the worthless and abandoned Queen. Thence Louis travelled on to Florence and Milan, and obtained promises of substantial assistance from their rulers against the pretensions of the King of Aragon.

But to return to Anjou and the “good mother” there, the anxious and busy Queen Yolande.

The *Revue Numismatique du Maine* contains many paragraphs recounting the Queen’s prudence and activity in military matters. Under date June 10, 1418, for example, she issued an order to the Seneschal and Treasurer of Provence “to reimburse one Jehan Crepin, keeper of the Castle of Forcalquier, whence one of the sovereign titles are taken, the advance made by him for the reparation of the said castle.” On February 18, 1419, the States of Provence assembled at Aix [76] besought the Queen, as head of the State, “to suppress the tax which had been levied upon the circulation of foreign money, with a view to greater facilities being accorded for the payment of sums required for the defence of the country.” A few years later,—in 1427,—the authorities of the city of Marseilles prayed the Queen, then at Tarascon, to authorize them to impose a poll-tax upon all foreign merchants in the port, “so that the funds at their command might be enlarged, for the express purpose of fitting out vessels of war.” The inhabitants of Martignes, which county Yolande had brought, on her marriage, to the possessions of her husband,—on December 20, 1419,—sought for their Queen-Countess, as ruler and administrator, the right to retain certain dues on the production of salt for the defence of their coast-line. There are very many such entries in the State papers of the reign; indeed, both before and after the departure of Louis III. for Naples, Queen Yolande was recognized as responsible ruler for her son.

## II.

If Louis's matrimonial prospects were somewhat clouded by the extreme youth of his child-bride, the Queen was by no means discouraged in her policy of influential alliances. Her second son, René, who had won all hearts in Barrois, was actually married to Princess Isabelle of Lorraine in 1420, although she was no more than nine years old, and he but twelve. This match was, however, not wholly the work of Queen Yolande; her ideas, however, were those which impelled her uncle, Cardinal Louis de Bar, directly to ask the hand of the juvenile Princess. [77]

The year before this precocious marriage the Cardinal had formally proclaimed René his heir to the duchy of Bar, and created him Marquis of Pont-à-Mousson. This action greatly displeased Arnould, Duke of Berg, whose wife was Marie de Bar, a sister of the Cardinal. She preferred claims to the succession as next of kin to her brother, and when she was refused, the Duke took up arms and advanced upon Bar-le-Duc. The movement failed, and young René saw the Duke's dead body taken away for burial without emotion. The young Prince had been for nearly two years residing at his great-uncle's castle, under his immediate care and instruction. Among the tutors chosen for his training were Maestre Jehan de Proviesey, a grammarian and Latinist, and Maestre Antoine de la Salle, poet and musician. Such instructors were *de rigueur*, of course, for the true development of a perfect gentleman and courtier. The latter master wrote a treatise entitled "*Les quinze joyes de la mariage: instructions addressés aux jeunes hommes*." This he dedicated to his pupil, Prince René. Among the quaint aphorisms it contains, this must have caused more than a smile on the part of the young knight:

"Bon cheval, mauvais cheval, veut l'esperon;
Bonne femme, mauvaise femme, veut le baston!"

Perhaps the pith of the treatise is expressed in the neat quintet:

"Quattuor sunt que mulieres summe cupiunt,
A formis amari juvenibus, [78]
Pottere fillis pluribus
Ornari preciosis vestibus
Et dominari pre ceteris in domibus."

René's time was, however, not wholly absorbed by his studies in school and Court, for he bestrode his warhorse like a man, and rode forth by his great-uncle's side on punitive expeditions against recalcitrant vassals and against the incursions of freebooters, who under the designation of "*Soudoyers*" were devastating the duchy. It was said of the Cardinal: "*Il savait au besoin porter ung bassinet pour mitre et pour croix d'or un tache d'acier*!"

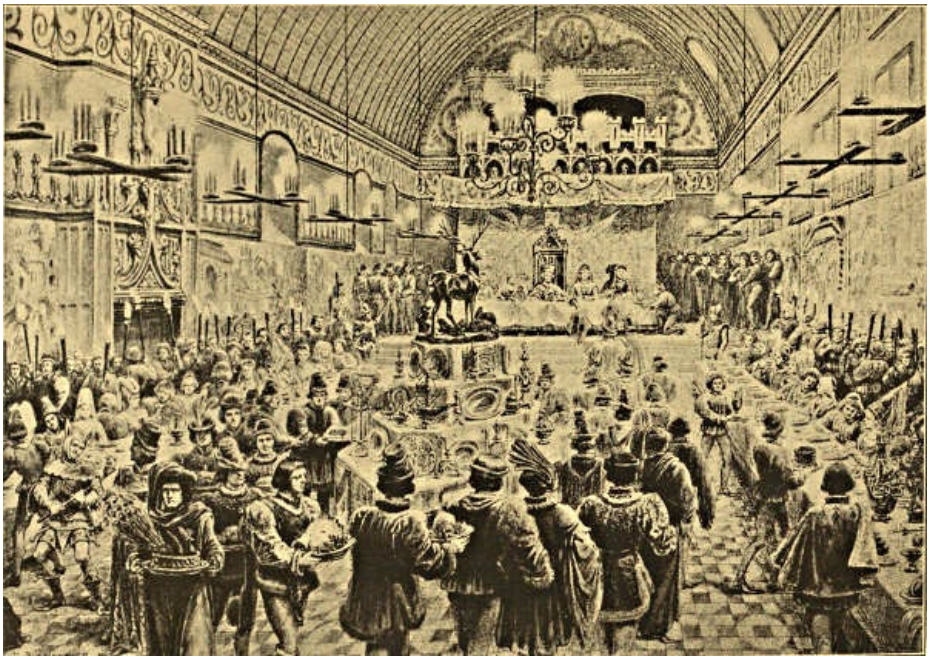
Directly Duke Robert died, and the succession fell to an ecclesiastic, the dissatisfied subjects of the Barrois crown considered it a favourable opportunity for throwing off their allegiance. Jean de Luxembourg, a cousin of the widowed Duchess Marie, and Robert de Sarrebouche,—at the extreme limits of the territories of the duchy,—were perhaps the most conspicuous for their infidelity. The Cardinal-Duke struck home at once, and both rebels surrendered. In the case of the latter, Prince René was put forward to receive his submission, on his great-uncle's behalf. The "proud Sieur de Commercy," as he was called, was compelled to kneel in the market-place of Commercy before the boy-knight, and, putting his great hands between the tender palms of his Prince, obliged to swear as *vostre homme et vostre vassail*! The Prince's bearing in this his first military campaign was beyond all praise, and the Cardinal was delighted with his chivalry. The Duke of Lorraine sent to compliment him upon his courage, and his doting mother, Queen Yolande, held a ten-days festival at Angers, and rang all the church bells in honour of her son's baptism of blood.

These exploits caused the youthful hero to carry himself proudly, and greatly increased his self- [79]
conceit. This latter development had an amusing and yet a very natural sequel. The Prince with his own hand, under the instruction of Maestre Jehan de Proviesey, wrote letters to all the leading men of Angers, Provence, Barrois, and Lorraine, in which he enlarged upon the boldness of his conduct; and inditing sententious maxims, he sought their approbation and good-will. The Cardinal-Duke doubtless smiled good-humouredly at these juvenile effusions, but at the same time he reconstituted the Barrois knightly "*Ordre de la Fidélité*," which embraced as members all the young French Princes, and created René de Bar, as he was now called, first and principal Knight. The Prince henceforward wore the motto of his Order embroidered upon his *berretta* and chimere—"*Tout Ung*"—and chose it as his *gage de guerre*.

Louis de Bar had, however, other duties and pursuits to place before his favourite nephew. At the Court of Dijon resided two famous Flemish painters, brothers—Hubert and Jehan Van Eyck, pensioners of the enlightened Duke of Burgundy. By means of bribes and other influences brought to bear, they were induced to remove to Bar-le-Duc, and with them came Petrus Christus and other pupils. Keen patron of the arts and crafts, the Cardinal-Duke encouraged his principal courtiers and vassals to send their sons to them for instruction in the art of painting. The first pupil enrolled in Barrois upon the books of the Van Eycks was none other than Prince René, and no pupil showed greater talent and greater perseverance. His uncle once said to him: "René, if thou wast not destined to succeed me as Duke of Bar and leader of her armies, I would make of [80]
thee an artist." In his veins, we must remember, ran Flemish blood,—his famous and talented ancestress, the Countess-Princess Iolande, came from Flanders,—and these excellent pigment masters appear to have stirred qualities in the young Prince which eventually proclaimed him the foremost royal artist in Europe.

The Cardinal also inculcated in his nephew the love and taste for objects of beauty. He was

himself a proficient in the craft of goldsmithery, and, moreover, possessed a very magnificent collection of gold and silver work. Part of this had come to him from his mother, Duchess Marie of France, who took to Bar her share of her father's treasures, the good King John. Of these, the Cardinal presented to Pope John XXIII. in 1414 a writing-table made of cedar, covered with plates of solid gold, and the superb gold chalice and paten which are still used in the Papal chapel at Rome at special Masses by His Holiness himself. Another precious goblet, mounted with sapphires and rubies, was bequeathed to the Cardinal's sister, the Princess Bonne, Countess of Ligny.



A ROYAL REPAST, FIFTEENTH CENTURY
PROCESSION OF THE KNIGHTS OF THE TABLE
From "L'Album Historique de France"

*To face page 80.*

The ducal gardens at Bar-le-Duc were famous. The Cardinal sent to Italy for skilled gardeners, who reproduced something of the terrestrial glories of that favoured land. Tuscan sculptors and Venetian decorative painters followed in the wake of the gardeners, who not only designed architectural terraces with marble statues and garden-pavilions with painted ceilings, but also designed and minted medals and plaques of the Cardinal, Prince René, and other members of the family. Naturally, the young Hereditary Duke revelled in these graceful settings for the floral games and festive pastimes which made the Barrois Court, even in the absence of a reigning [81] Duchess, the rendezvous of poets, gallants, and beauties. Here, too, the Prince's natural love for music had full play; he became a poet and a troubadour "in little," if not in "great." In a very real kind of way René's training in the arts of war and in the arts of peace was the very same which made a Lorenzo de' Medici at Florence and a Francesco Sforza at Milan.

Amid all these occupations, the Prince had few opportunities for visiting his birthplace, Angers, and his devoted mother there. Travelling was very insecure, and the Cardinal disparaged any expedition beyond the bounds of the duchy. Only one such visit is recorded, and that in 1422, when René took his absent brother's place to give away his favourite sister Marie to Charles VII. of France, and then Queen Yolande once more embraced her son. On the other hand, the Prince was permitted by his uncle to vigorously assist King Charles against Louis de Châlons, Prince of Orange, who was devastating Dauphiné. In another direction the young warrior gained laurels also. Named protector of the city of Verdun, he destroyed the rebel castle of Renancourt and the fortresses of La Ferté, and hastened to the assistance of his kinsman, the Count of Ligny, at Baumont en Argonne. Guillaume de Flavy and Jehan de Mattaincourt surrendered, and René cleared the country of disaffected marauders and adventurers.

Charles V.'s speech at the siege of Metz one hundred years later might very well have fitted the youthful conqueror in Barrois: "Fortune is a woman: she favours only the young."

Queen Yolande's eldest son, Louis III., was meanwhile meeting with varying fortunes in Italy, [82] but the slow progress of his campaign greatly chagrined his dauntless mother. She actually made up her mind to set out for Naples in person to try and turn the slow tide of victory into an overpowering flood; but Anjou was too closely invested by the English for the realization of her project. Here, however, the Queen had her militant opportunity, for at the bloody battle of Baugé, —between La Flèche and Saumur,—in 1421, the English were routed and so greatly disheartened that they evacuated all their strategic points within and around the duchy. That victory was gained directly by Queen Yolande, who commanded in person, sitting astride a great white charger, clothed in steel and silver mail. Some years later King René built an imposing castle upon the heights overlooking the field of battle in memory of his mother's valour.

The Queen's warlike ardour, however, received a check, for Queen Marie, driven with King Charles before the all-conquering English, escaped to Bourges, and there begged her mother to

hasten to her side. She needed, not a mailed woman's fist, but the gentle hand of her good mother at her accouchement. Louis le Dauphin, her first-born, saw the light in the Archbishop's Palace on July 3, 1423. Those days were dark indeed for France, but a brilliant star was about to rise above her eastern horizon. Towards the end of 1428 strange reports began to spread all over the stricken country concerning a simple village maiden in far-off Champagne, to whom, in the obscure village of Domremy, Divine visions had been vouchsafed. Her mission, it was stated, was nothing less than the deliverance of France and the coronation of King Charles at Reims. [83]

Nowhere did the mysterious tidings create greater interest than among the members of the Royal Families and Courts of Sicily-Anjou and France. When the news of Jeanne d'Arc's arrival with Duke René reached Angers, Queen Yolande set out at once for Chinon, that she might judge for herself of the girl and her mission. Very greatly struck was the Queen by the maid's youth, comeliness, and innocence. Her simple manners and unaffected devotion convinced Yolande that she had no adventuress to deal with. She conversed freely with her, and her simple narrative and fearless courage determined her to take the maid under her direct patronage. When it was proposed to inquire formally into Jeanne's character and mental bias, the Queen promptly allocated to herself that duty. She called to her assistance three ladies of her Court of good repute. Jehan Pasquerelle has quaintly recorded this plenary council of matrons: "*Fust icelle Pucelle baillée à la Royne de Cecile, mère de la Royne, nostre souveraine, et à certaines dames d'estant avec elle, dont estoient les Dames de Gaucourt, de Fiennes, et de Trèves*." Another chronicler adds the name of Jeanne de Mortèmar, wife of the Chancellor, Robert le Maçon. Their verdict was a complete vindication of Jeanne's honour and sincerity.

The tongue of slander had associated René and Jeanne in a liaison. The Court of Chinon was full of evil gossip, and the more ill-conditioned courtiers and hirelings, both men and women, revelled in compromising insinuations and coarse jests. Queen Yolande determined once and for [84] all to put an end to these baseless and foul rumours. She knew her son too well to doubt his honour, and now she pledged herself to defend that of the village maid. Several of the offenders were dismissed the service of the King, and warned to hold their tongue, unless they wished for condign punishment.

History has done scant justice to Queen Yolande for the part she bore in the drama of Jeanne d'Arc. It was in a very great measure due to her that the maid's mission was carried out. Whilst Charles was dallying with his idle associates and procrastinating in his military measures, Yolande played the man. Her intrepid counsels and fearless insistence were the levers which moved her son-in-law's inertness. There is a story told that, when Queen Marie's gentle chiding had failed to rouse her desponding consort, Queen Yolande appeared before him clothed in full armour, and demanded why the King of France skulked in his castle!

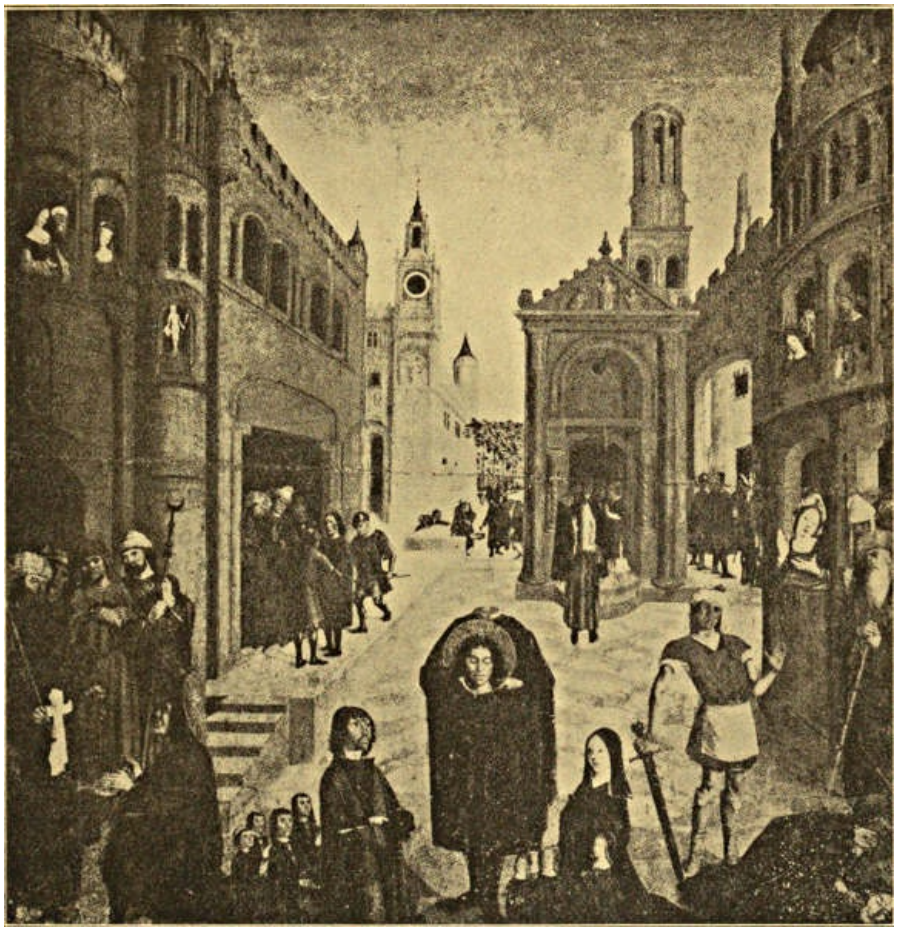
"See, Charles," she said, "if you refuse to follow *La Pucelle* at once and do your duty to God and to your country, I will go forth as your lieutenant, and in person lead your army against the English. But shame to you to trust in a woman's arm rather than your own! Rouse you like a man, and begone!"

This emphatic order fairly called out Charles's manhood, roused, to be sure, by the mission of Jeanne d'Arc. Nothing excites a man more than a woman's threats to take his place and do his work; and many women can be as good as their word, and one of these was Yolande of Sicily-Anjou-Aragon.

The noble patriotic Queen-mother, moreover, backed her stout words by actions firm. With that [85] splendid unselfishness which marked her character, she raised a considerable sum of money by the sale of her jewellery and other precious possessions, and applied it, together with the substantial offerings of her devoted subjects, to the fitting out of a convoy of provisions and necessaries for the besieged garrison of Orléans. She also persuaded the University of Angers, which her late consort, Louis II., had founded in 1398, to vote a goodly sum of money towards the King's expenses. Charles, stirred by the gentleness of Jeanne and the vigour of Yolande, was no longer despondent. The Queen thankfully noted his confidence in his mysterious guide from Domremy, but she remained at Chinon until she had seen him and his equipage take boat upon the Loire. His last words to his mother-in-law were: "Yes, now I am on my way to Reims with Jeanne, my oracle, my Queen—*ma Royne blanche: tous pour Dieu et la France!*" Yolande then quietly returned to her castle at Angers, and Anjou once more greeted the King's guardian and the Lieutenant-General of his dominions.

The decade had its consolations as well as its troubles, and among them Queen Yolande rejoiced at the births of vigorous grandchildren. To Queen Marie were born Princesses Jeanne and Yolande, as well as the Dauphin Louis; and to Duke René, Jean, Louis, Nicholas, Yolande, and Marguerite, in lawful wedlock. The Queen-mother, too, had satisfaction in the less disturbed state of Barrois and Lorraine, of receiving at Angers her son René and his fair young wife Isabelle. He had added to the bays of victory the palms of peace, and his fame as an administrator of justice and charity was already spread abroad.

The Cardinal-Duke Louis was ageing rapidly, and he executed his final testament whilst his [86] nephew and niece were in Anjou. Everything was left to René, who had as much as he could do to get back to Bar-le-Duc in time to receive his uncle's last blessing and close his eyes in death. The dying Prince was at the Abbey of Varennes when he breathed his last, on February 15, 1431. Duke René was at once proclaimed his successor, and the Estates of Barrois did their homage heartily. The career of the young Duke had been developed under the approving eyes of his uncle's subjects, and his marriage with Isabelle de Lorraine had been immensely popular. The new reign opened, then, under the happiest auspices.



STREET SCENE IN AIX OF PROVENCE

FOREGROUND: MIRACLE OF ST. MAXIME

From a Painting by Nicholas Froment (1475-76). Aix Cathedral

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René's future being thus amply provided for,—his hand was also on the throne of Lorraine,—Queen Yolande turned her attention to the settlement in life of her younger children—Yolande, just eighteen, and Charles, two years younger. For her daughter, whose espousal three years before to Jehan, Comte d'Alençon, had not led to marriage, the Queen sought once more an alliance with the House of Bretagne. The Duke's eldest son, François, Comte de Montfort, who had been first champion at the Angers tournament in 1417, was the chosen bridegroom. He, indeed, had seen and played with the Princess then, but she was a little child of five; their betrothal, however, had been considered, and only hindered by the military exigencies of the time. The Prince was in person as handsome as could be, and talented, but his character was not one that Queen Yolande looked for in a son-in-law. More addicted to warlike deeds and the free licence of a soldier's calling, he had little taste for peaceful pursuits, and still less for the [87] restrictions of family life. He was, like most Princes at the time, more or less of a *débauché*, and his fair fame was besmirched by sordid and licentious habits. Still, the Comte de Montfort stood for political advantages, and questions of character were counted of less importance. The royal nuptials were celebrated in due course at the Cathedral of St. Pierre at Nantes, the capital of Brittany, on July 1, 1431, in the presence of Queen Yolande and the Duke and Duchess of Barrois. Alas! once more marriage proved a failure, for the year following the home-coming of the Count and Countess he was slain in a foray with the English, leaving his childless young widow to bewail her ill-luck alone.

The marriage of Prince Charles d'Anjou was delayed many years, and his experience of the vicissitudes of Cupid's thraldom was almost identical with that of King Louis III., his elder brother. Affianced in 1431, at the same time as his sister Yolande, to a daughter of Guy, Count of Laval, his brother René's bosom friend, and one of Jeanne d'Arc's *preux cavaliers*, another Yolande, he broke off the match because the infant Princess,—she but three years old,—was "so plain and weak." "Besides, I will not wait twelve years for her." He was himself just seventeen. The baby-fiancée's mother was a Bretagne princess, Isabelle, a daughter of Queen Yolande's great ally, Duke Jehan VI. The young Prince had in his mind another amour, perhaps hardly in his heart; but he had seen and admired, when assisting at the *sacre* of King Charles VII., his brother-in-law, at Reims, a Princess of Champagne, and, much against his mother's wish, he bespoke her [88] for his own. They were betrothed at the ancient castle of Coucy, near Soissons, in 1435. This match, too, came to nothing, for the fair fiancée, Catherine, perished in the flames of her boudoir curtains, set on fire by accident, and left her young Prince of twenty-one free to step along the uncertain path of courtship once more. Such were some of the ups and downs of the Queen of Sicily-Anjou and of her family.

The death of Charles II., Duke of Lorraine, on January 25, 1431, saw the reunion,—after a century or more apart,—of Bar and Lorraine under one Sovereign. Duke René and his Duchess

Isabelle had resided more or less quietly for ten years at the Castle of Bar-le-Duc, and there the greater part of their family was born. Now they prepared to move to Nancy, but their way, which Duke Charles had, as he thought, secured, was barred, and René was called out to fight for his throne. Antoine, Comte de Vaudémont, Duke Charles's eldest nephew, thrust the provisions of the Salic Law in the new Duke's face, and drew his sword to enforce his action. Varied were the fortunes of the civil war, but at the Battle of Bulgneville Duke René was taken prisoner by Philippe, Duke of Burgundy, who supported his kinsman Vaudémont, and was kept in captivity for nearly three years. In vain Queen Yolande tried every expedient to set her son free. His captors required his absolute renunciation of the duchy of Lorraine, and would accept no compromise. Then came another crushing blow. Louis III., King of Sicily, Naples, and Jerusalem, Duke of Anjou, and Count of Provence, died of fever at Cosenza, the capital of Calabria, on November 15, 1434, lamented alike by friend and foe. Queen Giovanna had in 1424 created him Duke of [89] Calabria, but many attributed his death, indeed, to poison administered by order of the Queen. Never was there a more gentle nor a braver Prince—"*l'escarboucle de gentilesse*," he was styled in the annals of chivalry. His devoted mother, of course, was not with him; she was broken-hearted at Marseilles. Cast down by grief unspeakable, the young Queen of Sicily-Anjou and Naples, Margherita, still a bride, was by his side to console his last hours. They had been married by proxy at Geneva,—not at Chambéry, as arranged,—years before, but had sworn to each other recently in the Cathedral of Cosenza. Alas! no son was left to succeed his father and cheer his mother's heart; their only child, a little daughter, had survived her birth a short six weeks.

Queen Giovanna, in spite of her iniquity in seeking to foist upon René d'Anjou and Bar a child not his nor hers, in all probability, but so acknowledged, made no opposition to his proclamation as King of Naples or the Two Sicilies. What an exquisite piece of irony it was, to be sure—a King proclaimed when fast bound in prison, a crayon for a sceptre in his hand, his crown a drab *berretta*! Three devoted women, good and bad, supported the royal captive's prerogatives—three Queens indeed: Yolande was for Anjou and Provence, Isabelle for Barrois and Lorraine, and Giovanna for Naples and Sicily; whilst a fourth, Queen Margherita, looked to the donjon of Dijon for clemency. It was said that a copy of King René's proclamation was fixed upon the portal of his prison in insolent derision. "*Sic transit gloria mundi*" might well have been penned beneath it.

Upon King René's succession to the throne of Sicily-Anjou, Queen Yolande continued to act as [90] his Lieutenant-General for Anjou and Provence, and left negotiations for his release to the young Queen-Duchess Isabelle, who was very much more favourably placed, and near at hand to serve the royal prisoner's interests. She spent most of her time in Anjou, but paid many visits to Marseilles, her favourite residence in Provence. She never crossed the Aragonese frontier; she could have done so only as Queen-regnant, which of course was impossible. However, she named her grandson Jean, Duke of Calabria, King René's eldest son, as the heir to her ancestral claims.

The Queen-mother's presence in Anjou was necessary in the interests of her daughter, Queen Marie of France, and she never relaxed her control of the policy of her royal son-in-law. At each accouchement of the French Queen her devoted mother assisted, and it was a long family of grandchildren she nursed upon her knee. Her succour in sickness, her stay in trouble, and her help in poverty, were immeasurably precious to the fugitive Sovereigns. In 1437 Queen Yolande had the felicity also of receiving her son René, after his release from durance vile, in the Castle of Tine, near Saumur, and with him came Queen Isabelle and her children,—Prince Jean, the eldest, being a fine lad of eleven. It was a season of universal rejoicing in Anjou, and the Queen-mother, laying aside her widow's *chapelle* and veil, entered whole-heartedly into the festivities. The most cheering feature of the gaiety was due to the magnanimity of the Duke of Burgundy, who quite unexpectedly and unreservedly offered the crown of peace by proposing that Princess Marie, [91] daughter of Charles I., Duke of Bourbon, his niece, should be affianced to the young Duke of Calabria. The ceremony of betrothal was duly celebrated in Angers Cathedral, the little bride being no more than seven years old. This was a great joy to the Queen-mother, and René and Isabelle were very happy, too.

Again in 1440 the splendours of the Angevine Court were once more revived by the Queen-mother, when she welcomed right royally King Charles VII. and Queen Marie. It was by way of being a family gathering also, for King René and Queen Isabelle were of the party. It was a reunion remarkable in one way, as the introduction at Angers of the most lovely girl in France, in the suite of Queen Isabelle,—a girl destined to play a very important part in the private life of King Charles VII.,—Agnes Sorel. The Queen-mother was charmed with her lovely young visitor, and never made any opposition to her appointment as Maid of Honour to Queen Marie. These festivities, however, were the last in which Queen Yolande took part. The sorrows she was called upon to bear and the anxieties of the life she lived had their natural effect even upon such an ardent and vigorous constitution as hers. Gradually she retired altogether from public life, and in 1441 she took up her residence at Saumur. The castle was one of the strongest fortresses in France, and was one of the very few which held out successfully all through the Hundred Years' War. Originally called *La Tour du Tronc*, Count Foulques Nerra, Count of Anjou, in the tenth century gave it the appearance and stability which it subsequently retained. Queen Yolande placed her suite within the castle precincts, but she herself, putting on an oblate's habit, [92] occupied for some time a house in the Faubourg des Ponts, where her privacy could be less easily disturbed. What remains,—and that, alas! is very little, of this habitation,—is still called *La Maison de la Reine Cicile* (Sicily). In this humble abode Yolanda d'Arragona, "the great Queen," died quietly on December 14, 1443.

Whether King René was present to close his beloved mother's eyes we know not, but it is significant of absence that the expense,—500 livres,—of the Queen's obsequies was borne by her

youngest son, Charles, Duke of Maine; indeed, it is almost certain that René was at Marseilles when he heard of his mother's death. In one of his "*Livres des Heures*" he inscribed: "*Le 14 Decembre de l'an 1443 trespassa au Château de Saumur Madame Yolande, fille de Roy d'Aragon et depuis mère de Roy René.*" The funeral ceremonies were celebrated by the Archbishop of Tours, her private chaplain, not at Saumur, but at Angers, in the Cathedral of St. Maurice, to which her remains were conveyed by night two days after her death. Her grave was that of her consort's, twenty-five years before,—in front of the high-altar,—but all trace of it has disappeared, and explorations have failed to reveal her burial casket.

It is eloquent of the irony of human affairs, that whereas no memorial, or even inscription, is left to record the virtues of the royal mother of Anjou, in the Church of Nôtre Dame de Nantilly at Saumur there is a memorial to Mère Théophaine la Magine, the devoted nurse of King René and Queen Marie, who died March 13, 1458. The original monument, erected by the King, presented his faithful domestic holding him and Marie in her arms. This has been destroyed, but an epitaph [93] still remains:

"Cy gist la nourrice Théophaine
La Magine, qui ot grant paine
A nourrie de let en enfance
Marie d'Anjou, Royne de France,
Et après, son frère René, Duc d'Anjou."

"Here lies good nurse Théophaine
La Magine, who at great pain
Foster-mother'd in infancy
Marie d'Anjou, Queen of France,
And then René, Duke of Anjou."

The only existent memorials to King Louis II. and Queen Yolande are to be seen in a stained-glass window in the Cathedral of St. Julien at Le Mans, the capital of Maine, one of the richest and most beautiful specimens of fifteenth-century glass in Europe. The royal couple are upon their knees, attired in conventional costumes, and bare-headed. Their youngest son, Charles of Anjou and Maine, is buried near that splendid window, an interesting and curious circumstance in the happenings of Providence. He died in 1474. All Anjou and Provence bewailed their Queen, her virtues, her benevolence, her piety, her loyalty.

Yolande's claim to the title with which she has been honoured, "a good mother and a great Queen," needs no vindication. She was, in short, the most noble woman in all France during the first half of the fifteenth century.

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# CHAPTER IV [94]

## ISABELLE DE LORRAINE—"THE PRIDE OF LORRAINE"

### I.

Child-marriage was a distinguishing mark of the Renaissance, but its fashion in the Sovereign States of France was very much more commendable than its prototype in Italy. In the Italian republics it became a holocaust of immature maidens, condemned to untimely death through the perverted passions of worn-out men of middle age. In France the girl brides were mated with boy husbands, but cohabitation was regulated by the watch and will of guardians. In both countries, doubtless, the marriage contract was essentially a commercial undertaking, but in France it marked the attainment of political and dynastic aims. Sovereign families rarely allied their offspring out of the ruling class. At the same time the danger of conjugal union between individuals nearly related was immeasurably increased. Indeed, such relationships were those most zealously cultivated by ambitious and exclusive rulers. The marriage of René d'Anjou and Isabelle de Lorraine was a striking and typical instance of this precocious marital custom.

ISABELLE DE LORRAINE

From a Miniature by King René, in “Le Livre des Heures”

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Isabelle, “the Pride of Lorraine,”—as she was acclaimed by her devoted subjects at the time of her betrothal,—was born at the Castle of Nancy, March 20, 1410. Her parents were Charles II., Duke of Lorraine, and his consort, Margaret of Bavaria. Charles himself was the eldest son of Jehan, Duke and Count of Lorraine, and Sophie, Princess of Würtemberg. Born in 1364, at Toul,— [95]
a free city of the German Empire and an ecclesiastical sovereign see,—Charles succeeded his father in 1392. Originally a fief of the Holy Roman Empire, Lorraine was erected a kingdom by the Emperor Lothair, who styled himself “King and Baron of Lothairland.” The first Prince to bear the ducal title was Adelebert, in 979, and that style descended unbroken through 500 years.

The Duchess Margaret was the second daughter of the Emperor Robert III., Duke and Baron of Bavaria. She married Charles II. in 1393. To them were born eight children, but, alas! Louis and Rodolphe died in infancy, Charles and Ferri before their majority, and Robert in 1419, unmarried, at twenty-two. Of their three daughters, Isabelle was the eldest. Marie became the wife of Enguerrand de Coucy, Baron of Champagne and Lord of Soissons, a lineal descendant of the founder, in the thirteenth century, of the famous Château de Coucy, the most complete feudal fortress ever built, whose proud motto may still be seen on the donjon wall:

“Roi je ne suis
Prince ni Comte aussi:
Je suis le Sire de Coucy.”

This union was childless. Catherine, the third daughter, in 1426 married James, Marquis of Baden, Count Palatine of the Rhine and Elector. She renounced all claims to Lorraine. Their only child was a daughter.

At the time of their marriage, Charles II. of Lorraine and Margaret of Bavaria were a model [96]
couple upon the principles of dissimilarity and contrast. The Duke, a soldier born, had made good his degree of knighthood ten years before, when, a mere stripling, he won his spurs fighting daringly by the side of his cousin, Philippe “le Hardi,” Duke of Burgundy. With him he went on a punitive expedition against the pirates of the Barbary coast. At Rosebach, and especially at the tremendous battle of Azincourt, he did prodigies of valour. In Flanders and in Germany his ensign led on victorious troops. Charles’s last military achievement was the rout of the Emperor Wenceslas under the very walls of Nancy. No warrior loved fighting more than the Duke of Lorraine. Slightly to alter the text, he was one of those war-lords whom Shakespeare, in his “seven ages of man,” says “sought reputation at the cannon’s mouth.” He yearned for the applause of gallant knights, both friends and foes; he yielded himself amorously to the smiles and embraces of the fair sex, and he revelled in the praise and adulation of poets and minstrels. His mailed fist was ever toying with his trusty sword and grappling the chafing-reins of his charger; his mailed foot was ever ready for the stirrup and to trample upon the head of a fallen foe.

At the same time he was a gay and polished courtier, one of the most accomplished Princes in Europe. Fond of literature and poetry, he studied daily his Latin copy of the “Commentaries of Julius Cæsar” and similar treatises. He had besides a taste for music, and was no mean exponent of the lute and guitar, and a friend of troubadours.

On the other hand, the gentle, lovable Duchess was born for the cloister and for the worship of [97]
the Mass. Her bare feet were ever moving in penitential pilgrimages and religious processions, and her shapely hands were ever joined in prayer or divided in charity. Her passion was the submissive rule of Christ, her will the conquest of herself.

Daring and devotion thus harnessed together rocked the family cradle, and insured for their offspring the best of two worlds. Such a union was bound to be productive of genius and corrective of faults of heredity. What a bitter disappointment, then, it must have been for both the Duke and the Duchess when one after another their beauteous babes and adolescent sons dropped like blighted rosebuds from their young love’s rosebush prematurely into the cold, dark grave, leaving only the aroma of their sweet young lives to soothe their sorrowing parents!

Isabelle was the fairest daughter of the three. She inherited the force of character of her father and the pious disposition of her mother, and to these precious traits she joined a spirit of intelligence much in advance of her years as a growing girl. In short, she was remarkable “*pour ses qualités de l’esprit et du cœur*,” a description difficult to render into good English; perhaps we may say she had her father’s will and her mother’s love.

Many were the suitors for her hand, some for the pure love of beauty, grace, and spirit, but most with a view to the Duke-consortship in the future of rich Lorraine. The “Pride of Lorraine,” indeed, served as an ever-reinforced magnet. She became remarkable for her loveliness of person, her animation of manner, and her distinguished carriage. The natural sweetness of her voice lent a gracious persuasiveness to her eloquence, which in later life proved invaluable in the [98]
recruiting of adherents to her husband’s cause. High-souled and condescending, she brought her enemies to her feet, only to raise them her warmest friends. Talented beyond the average of Princesses, she had also the charm of winsome gaiety, and proved herself a worthy spouse and companion for her gallant and clever consort René. Tall, slim, fair-haired, blue-eyed, with a skin of satin softness, the “Pride of Lorraine” won all hearts and turned many a head.

To Louis, Cardinal de Bar, was due the accomplishment of an idea suggested by Queen Yolande with respect to the future of her second son, René d’Anjou. He had for ever so long been considering what steps he should take with respect to the succession to the duchy. He of course, as an ecclesiastic, could have no legitimate offspring. His brothers had died childless, and only one of his sisters had male descendants, the grandsons of Violante de Bar, his own grand-nephews. In His Eminence’s mind, too, was a project to reconstitute the ancient kingdom of Lothair by merging Barrois and Lorraine proper. Whilst Duke Charles II.’s young sons were living, the Cardinal looked to one of them as his heir; and when they all drooped and died, he reflected whether or not he should name Charles as his successor. At this juncture his niece, the Queen of Sicily-Anjou, was busy looking out for brides for her two elder sons, Louis and René. For the former a Bretagne alliance was indicated; for the latter a union with Lorraine—Burgundy for the time being out of the question—or Champagne seemed desirable.

The Cardinal clinched the matter, and paid a visit to the Duke of Lorraine in furtherance of his [99]
project, which was the very natural and sensible one of marrying his nephew René with the Duke’s eldest daughter Isabelle. Whether Charles had any inklings of the Cardinal’s cogitations with relation to his own position with respect to Bar we know not; but possibly he had, for he met the proposition with a direct refusal. He read to his relative two clauses of a will he had recently executed, which forbade his daughter Isabelle to marry a Prince of French origin, and especially barred the House of Anjou. This latter prohibition was inserted with reference to the rupture between Jean “sans Peur,” the Duke of Burgundy, and Louis II., King of Sicily and Duke of Anjou, which resulted from the part the former had played in the assassination of the Duke of Orléans in 1407, and the consequent repudiation of the betrothal of Catherine de Bourgogne and Louis d’Anjou. Lorraine and Burgundy were in close alliance.

The Cardinal, however, was not to be diverted from the course he had taken. He placed ten considerations before the Duke and his advisers:—(1) The advisability of reuniting the two portions of Lorraine; (2) Charles’s lack of male heirs; (3) his own incompetence in the same direction; (4) his choice of his grand-nephew, René d’Anjou, as his successor at Bar-le-Duc; (5) the attractive personality, mental attainments, and high courage of the young Prince; (6) his descent from a Barrois-Lorraine Princess, Violante, his sister; (7) the risks of the application of the power of the Salic Law over his daughters; (8) the equality of age of René and Isabelle; (9) the wish of the late King and of the Queen of Sicily-Anjou for an alliance with Lorraine and a better understanding politically; (10) the welfare of the peoples of the two duchies and the love of [100]
the Lorrainers for their princely house.

Charles asked time to consider these points, but meanwhile he summoned the Estates, and laid before them a proposition concerning the succession to Lorraine at his death. He named his eldest daughter as Hereditary Duchess, and proposed that her consort should bear the title, and with her exercise the prerogatives, of Duke of Lorraine. A concordat was agreed to whereby the Estates were pledged to support the Duchess Isabelle, and to carry out Charles’s wishes.

Queen Yolande had seconded her uncle’s negotiations in a very womanly and sensible way. She communicated directly with good Duchess Margaret. She pointed out to her the mutual advantages of the marriage of the two children, and declared that such a union would heal the breach between the eastern and the western Sovereigns of France. Margaret, loving peace and

holy things, was easily persuaded to reason with her husband; she submitted absolutely to the overpowering personality of the Queen. With Charles, Yolande had a stiffer fight, but she gathered up her strength, and in the end, lusty warrior that he was, he yielded up his defence to the tactful diplomacy of the good mother of Anjou. Woman's wit once more, as it generally does, triumphed over man's obstinacy.

Charles agreed to receive the young Prince, and judge for himself of his prepositions and qualifications. The result was beyond the Cardinal's expectation, for the Duke declared himself charmed with the boy. He was, he said, ready to rescind the prohibitory clauses of his will, but he [101] made it a condition that he should have the personal and unrestricted guardianship of the boy until he reached the age of fifteen. He desired René to proceed at once to Angers to obtain Queen Yolande's consent to the matrimonial contract between himself and Princess Isabelle. Everything went merrily, like the marriage-bells which soon enough pealed forth all over Lorraine, Barrois, and Anjou, at the auspicious nuptials. The final arrangements were completed, and René and Isabelle were betrothed at the Castle of St. Mihiel, and on October 20, 1420, married at the Cathedral of Nancy by the Bishop of Toul, Henri de Ville, Duke Charles's cousin. Immediately before the wedding, Cardinal-Duke Louis caused a herald to proclaim publicly, in the market-place of Nancy, René d'Anjou, Comte de Guise, Hereditary Duke of Bar, with the *ad interim* title of Marquis of Pont-à-Mousson.

The record of the marriage is thus entered in "*Les Chroniques de Lorraine*": "*Les nopces furent faictes en grant triomphe, et la dicte fille menée à Bar moult honorablement. Le Cardinal fust moult joyeulx.*"[A] The contract had been signed on March 20, 1420, by the Duke and the Cardinal at the Château de Tourg, near Toul, Queen Yolande's signature being provided by her proxy. She granted to her son the right to quarter the arms of Bar and Lorraine with those of Anjou and Guise.

[A] "The nuptials were celebrated with great ceremony, and the said Princess was conducted to Bar very honourably. The Cardinal was full of joy." [102]

On November 10 formal proclamation was made in every important town in Lorraine, to the effect that Duke Charles II. constituted his eldest daughter, now Duchess of Barrois and Countess of Guise, heiress to the duchy of Lorraine, and confirmed to her, and to her issue by René d'Anjou and Bar, full rights of succession and government. The proclamation named Queen Yolande of Sicily-Anjou, Louis, Cardinal de Bar, and the Duke himself, Charles's guardians during the minority of the young couple.

"René," wrote a chronicler, "is well-grown, well-bred, and well-looking. He is greatly admired by all the fair sex, and loves them in return. He will make a good husband, and has the making of a great Sovereign." The bride's praises were sung by poets and minstrels the length and breadth of Lorraine and Bar.

Among the earliest to congratulate the young people and their parents was the redoubtable Duke of Burgundy! He sent a special embassy to Nancy with this striking message: "*Tous estoient si joyeulx de veoir la fervente et cordiale amour qui estoit entre ces deulx jeuns gens, que je me trouve capable des sentiments les plus amiables pour tous mes cousins royales. Je salue mes bons frères les Souverains Ducs de Lorraine et Barrois avec Madame la Duchesse Marguerite, et sans autre choses la bonne Rogne de Cecile, son épous le Roy Louis, pour jamais.*"[A]

[A] "Everybody was delighted to behold the fervent and cordial love which exists between the two young people, whilst I found myself filled with the most amiable sentiments for all my royal cousins. I salute my good brothers the Sovereign Dukes of Lorraine and Barrois, and also the Duchess Margaret, and equally the good Queen of Sicily and her consort King Louis."

This was as a jewel in the hair of Queen Yolande, and as nectar in the cup of Cardinal Louis. Their plans had succeeded splendidly.

Shortly after his marriage, René returned to Bar-le-Duc with his child-bride, and they were [103] received in royal state by the Cardinal, who had renovated and decorated the castle specially in their honour and for their use. The town of Ligny was causing trouble in Barrois by refusing to pay the accustomed tribute. The Prince de Ligny claimed that portion of the duchy of Bar as his, by the marriage contract of his wife, the Cardinal's sister. He attacked the Castle of Pierrepoint and the town of Briey, whose garrison he caused to be put to the sword. The Cardinal took arms, and, accompanied by René and companies of Lorraine soldiers from Longwy, defeated his relative and took him prisoner. The young Prince received the rebel's sword and personally conducted him to Nancy, where, after two years' confinement in the fortress, he signed an act of renunciation of his pretensions in Barrois.

René, only twelve years old, the following year accompanied Charles II. of Lorraine to the siege of Toul,—for many years a turbulent element in his dominions,—where there was a hot dispute concerning certain laws and customs oppositive to the claims of the crown of Lorraine. Toul was captured, and mulcted in an annual tribute of a thousand livres.

Directly the proclamation of Isabelle of Lorraine with René as the sharer of her throne was made, Antoine de Vaudémont, Duke Charles's eldest nephew, entered a protest and claimed the succession. He based his action upon the three conditions—(1) The Salic Law ruled the succession of Lorraine; (2) the male line had not been broken since the creation of the duchy; and (3) the realm had never gone out of the family. Charles scouted all these positions, affirmed his [104] own sovereign right to name his successor, and refused to alter the terms of the proclamation so

far as regarded the succession of his daughter and Duke René.

All the church-bells in Barrois and Lorraine were again set jingling joyously when, in the ducal castle of Toul, on the morning of January 17, 1437, a young mother,—very young indeed, barely seventeen,—brought forth her first-born—a beauteous boy, the image, as the midwives said, of the boy-father, not yet nineteen. Church-bells, too, rang merrily all over Anjou and Provence when the glad tidings reached their borders that a male heir was born to the honours of Sicily-Anjou-Provence. Perhaps René and Isabelle were too young to realize what it all meant for France at large, but Queen Yolande understood well enough its tenor, and with her congratulations she greeted her first son's grandchild with the title of "Prince of Gerona," linking him ostentatiously with her hereditary rights in Aragon. Duke Charles, too, and Duchess Margaret were the happiest of grandparents, and baby Jean was created Comte de Nancy as future Duke.

Charles's death was somewhat sudden and quite unexpected. Strong man that he was, King Death seemed to be a power not immediately to be feared. René was not at Nancy when the death-knell sounded, but news swiftly reached him, and he returned at once to the capital. Duchess Margaret,—despite her lamentations and her natural dislike to public appearance,—attired herself in full Court dress, the crown she rarely wore upon her head, and all the officials of the Court, the Government, and city, in her retinue, and hastened to the gate to welcome the [105]
new Duke of Lorraine. Before her carriage rode a number of lords and knights, who dismounted on the approach of René, and, saluting him deferentially, greeted him as "*Vous estoit le nostre duc!*" The cry was taken up by all the gallant company, whilst René, having dismounted at the portal of St. George, took the sacred missal offered by the Dean into his hands, and swore then and there to respect and safeguard the ancient liberties of the State and city.

One of the quaintest of quaint observances followed, a custom peculiar to Lorraine. After receiving the ecclesiastical blessing, the new Duke remounted his horse, and into his hand was placed the ancient altar cross called "Polluyon." He rode slowly through the city to St. Nicholas Gate, where he again dismounted, and gave his charger into the care of one of the canons, who took his place in the saddle and rode out of sight. This strange custom had been observed at all the public recognitions of new Dukes of Lorraine ever since its inception by Duke Raoul, in 1339. The Duke then returned on foot to St. George's, bearing still the jewelled cross. At the entrance the Bishop stood ready to administer the customary oaths and to accord the Papal benediction. This ceremony also was unique. The Bishop told him to face the assembly of his subjects at the four points of the compass, and to repeat at each the formula: "I take this oath before God and you willingly, and look to God for assistance, and to you for service."

Then conducted to the castle in great circumstance, amid the vociferous plaudits of the
populace,—"*Noël! Noël!*" they cried,—the Duke knelt and kissed the hand of Duchess Isabelle, *[106]*
who was waiting there, and presented her to the delirious citizens. "*Vive le nostre Duc! Vive la nostre Duchesse!*" rang through the city, and, caught up by the sculptured pinnacles and turrets of the cathedral, mingled harmoniously with the musical cadences of the bells, and so was wafted over all that fair and smiling land.

René, although but two-and-twenty, gave immediate evidence of wisdom beyond his years. His power to grasp and handle complex affairs of State, and his discrimination in matters of moment, proved the excellence of his grand-uncle's training. His personal appearance was all in his favour, and his graceful, well-set-up figure, his open countenance, his majestic manner,—ever ready to bend to circumstances,—gained general admiration and confidence. His gracious, patient, and conciliatory bearing was remarkable. His modesty and absolute lack of presumption attracted the best men of all parties. His readiness to appoint a Council of State, with unusual freedom of deliberation and action, was only, perhaps, what might have been looked for from the son of the founder of the free Parliament of Provence in 1415. The new Duke set on foot movements for the amelioration of the condition of the poor, for the improvement of education, and for the rectification of the morals of the Court and city. One of his earliest edicts was for the suppression of blasphemy; a first charge was punishable by the judge in the ordinary way, a second involved a heavy fine, a third obtained correction in the public pillory, and a fourth offence was purged only by the splitting of the tongue and rigorous imprisonment.

[107]

RENÉ D'ANJOU

(*Circa 1440*)

Painted by himself "Le Livre des Heures"

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In all these, and many similar acts of sapient policy, Duchess Isabelle bore her part in counsel and example; her conduct was beyond all praise. The next move was a progress through every part of the two duchies. At each considerable town the royal cortège halted first of all that the Duke and Duchess might make their devotions in the principal church, and endow Masses and ecclesiastical grants. Then, assembling the officials and chief citizens, they inquired into the hardships of the people and encouraged local institutions, at each place leaving largesse for distribution. In strong places with garrisons, the Duke interested himself in redressing injuries and inequalities among the veterans. He offered to pay all the losses of officers in the wars; he allowed eighteen sols for each horse killed in battle or on march; he bestowed on each soldier a surcoat and steel helmet with his royal cognizance, and created many knights. Meanwhile Duchess Isabelle endeared herself to the women-folk by consoling words of sympathy and gracious doles of charity. Widows and orphans she took under her personal patronage, and no worthy claimant for her benevolence lacked favour and assistance.

Thus René and Isabelle won, not only golden opinions, but the sincerest affection of their subjects, rich and poor. But a climax was put to the noble works of the kindly Sovereigns, and never came truer the saying; "Providence ever destroys the good that men do." An evil genius appeared upon the peaceful scene when Antoine de Vaudémont refused to pay allegiance to the new Duke and Duchess. The moment of his declaration of hostility was as unfortunate as it was cruel. At the public baptism of Prince Jean, the Duke's eldest son, who had been privately [108] baptized at his birth, in 1426-27, the Count entered the Cathedral of Nancy in full armour, and objected to the Duke of Calabria,—the title of the young boy,—being received by the Church as heir to the throne of Lorraine.

The Duke immediately summoned him to appear before the Council of State, and also before a meeting of principal citizens, and there repeat his protest. By both assembles his pretensions were scouted unanimously. Sieur Jehan d'Haussonville, the Mayor, addressed the Count, and said: "Your uncle has left daughters; the eldest, Isabelle, is Duchess of Lorraine. I salute you. You may go." Vaudémont left Nancy in a violent rage, crying out as he passed through the gateway of St. George: "I shall be Duke of Lorraine all the same, and soon, and then will I reckon with you dogs!" He posted off to Dijon, and there took counsel with the Duke of Burgundy.

The body of Charles II. had scarcely been consigned to its monumental tomb in the choir of St. Georges de Port at Nancy, when the Comte de Vaudémont revealed himself in his true colours. After his protest against the edict of the Duke which named Duke René of Barrois, the consort of the heiress to the throne, as his successor to the title of Duke of Lorraine, he had remained skulking in his castle, where he welcomed as many malcontents and disturbers of the peace as accepted his pretensions to the crown. The coronation of Duchess Isabelle was the signal for Vaudémont's attempt to vindicate his claim. He had hardly a sympathizer at Court, for Charles

had caused all the principal nobles and citizens to swear allegiance to his daughter and her husband before he died. The Count appeared suddenly before Nancy, and demanded the keys and the custody of the Duchess. Duke René was away besieging Metz, but he at once posted off to Nancy, and assisted with men-at-arms by Charles VII., and aided by the generalship of Barbazan, he defeated Vaudémont in eight battles great and small. [109]

Vaudémont rallied his forces from Burgundy under Antoine de Toulongeon, Duke Philippe's favourite general, and enlisted foreign mercenaries from Flanders and Germany. René had at his back all the armed men of Lorraine and Bar, and contingents from Anjou and Provence. James, Marquis of Baden, and Louis of Bavaria, joined him with squadrons of cavalry, and his army numbered nearly 20,000 men. Perhaps he was over-confident of his strength, his right, and his intrepidity; and having a very much more numerous following, he advanced upon his enemy disregarding sundry cautions and wise counsels. The two armies met upon the plain of Bulgneville, near Neufchâteau, on July 2. Vaudémont played a waiting game; besides, he had in reserve heavier artillery than his royal foeman. Early in the encounter Barbazan fell mortally wounded, and then René himself received a wound which incapacitated him for a time. The fall of their leaders demoralized the Lorraine army, and Vaudémont, seeing his advantage, made a dash with a column of heavy cavalry. René was smitten to the ground and surrounded. He refused to surrender until an officer of sufficient rank should be allowed to receive his sword. Then Toulongeon galloped up, and the Duke, covered with blood and dust, was lead away to the Burgundian camp. [110]

Taken the same evening to the Château de Talant, near Dijon, the royal prisoner was treated with the deference due to his rank, but, alas! he had fallen into the hands of the enemy of his house—the hated Duke of Burgundy. That evening the curfew sounded not in Nancy, but the gates were shut and barred, and two weeping women, powerless in their woe, never sought their couches in the castle. Mother and daughter, Margaret and Isabelle, were nigh death themselves. No tidings could they gain of the whereabouts or of the condition of the man they loved. Duchess Isabelle cried out: "Alas! I do not know whether my husband is dead or alive or wounded, nor where they have taken him." None had a consoling answer, for all Nancy was in mourning. Two thousand good men and true lay dead upon the stricken field, and three thousand more shared the imprisonment of their Duke. The wounded in hundreds crawled into city, village, and mansion; not a house in Lorraine but was flooded with women's tears and men's blood that desperate day and night. At last splashed and bedraggled heralds brought news of the Duke's captivity, and that his wounds were not serious: "*M'sieur le Duc, madame, estoit en bon santé; les Bourguignons l'avoient pris: il se trouv at Dijon demain*."

Thus assured of her husband's safety, Isabelle brushed away her tears and roused herself to action. Promptly she called together the Council of State, where she presided in person, and eloquently demanded that strong measures should at once be taken to carry on the war against Vaudémont and Philippe de Bourgogne, raise sufficient funds to make good losses, and secure the liberty of the Duke. The Council responded nobly and patriotically to the call of their Duchess; as the "*Chroniques de Lorraine*" has it: "They had pity upon her, for she had borne four sturdy children as comely as you might wish to see." "*Elle fust allegrée!*" was the universal testimony to Isabelle's worth as a wife and mother. Duchess Margaret, too, perhaps for the first time in her life of devotion, raised her voice, and called for the temporal sword to be reground to avenge the disaster. She accompanied her daughter, both mounted, to Vézelise, which Isabelle had appointed as the rendezvous of the new army, and personally enrolled companies and squadrons, fastening to each man's helm a thistle—the cognizance of Lorraine. Then she addressed a protest to the victor of Bulgneville, in which she warned him not to approach Nancy, but to regard herself as his implacable foe until he should deliver up the Duke. Étienne Pasquier, the chronicler, sums up in ten words the courageous character of Duchess Isabelle. "Within the body of a woman," he says, "the Duchess carries the heart of a man." After warning Vaudémont, she concluded with him a truce of three months, during which period she went in person to Charles VII., who was then in Dauphiné, and implored his intervention and assistance. In her train was a young Maid of Honour, Agnes Sorel, whose beauty and *naïveté* rightly affected that unstable monarch; it was an introduction which ripened later on into something more intimate than mere admiration. [111]

Duchess Margaret also greatly bestirred herself. Hearing that her uncle, the Duke of Savoy, and her brother-in-law, the Duke of Berry, were at Lyons awaiting the coming of King Charles, she posted off there, taking with her as advisers the Bishops of Toul and Metz. In company with the King of France was no less a person than Queen Yolande, his mother-in-law— [112]

"Aussi vient en icelle ville,
Accompaignée de demoiselles,
La noble Royne de Cecile."

"There also came to the same town,
accompanied by Maids of Honour,
the noble Queen of Sicily."

as we read in the "*Heures de Charles VII.*"

René was not kept long at Talant, but transferred to the fortress of Bracon, near Salines. His imprisonment varied in severity; at times he was treated roughly, half starved and unclothed, with no resources or intercourse with friends outside. Then he was served with dignity befitting his rank, and granted facilities for the better occupation of his time. But what a staggering blow

was his misfortune to all his dreams and aims of honour, glory, and sovereignty!

Lorraine was in a terrible state, and so was Barrois; men knew not what to do nor whom to trust. Overrun with soldiers of fortune and the riff-raff of foreign camp-followers, security for person and for property was no more. Vaudémont made, however, no use of his victory—at least, so far as pressing his claims to the duchy. Everywhere his cause was unpopular; indeed, he found himself in the very unusual and humiliating position of a victor denied the fruits of his victory. He disbanded his army and retired from Lorraine, and took up his abode with his ally, Philippe of Burgundy, and there awaited developments. René found means to communicate with his desolated wife, and forwarded instructions to the Estates of Lorraine and Barrois to acknowledge [113] and serve Duchess Isabelle as Lieutenant-General during his captivity. She entered upon her responsible duties with the utmost fortitude and courage. All historians testify to her indefatigable zeal and administrative ability.

Whilst the two Duchesses were doing all they could to effect the Duke's release and maintain the rights of Lorraine and Barrois, René himself made a direct appeal to Philippe of Burgundy, and on March 1, 1432, he proposed certain terms to his royal gaoler. They were as follows: (1) The acceptance by the Duke of Burgundy of Duke René's two young sons, Jean and Louis, as hostages for their father; (2) the cession of the castles of Clermont en Argonne, Châtille, Bourmont, and Charmes; and (3) the payment of the Burgundian troops in full for all arrears. Philippe accepted these hard conditions, and added to their harshness by fixing a ransom of 20,000 *saluts d'or*. At the same time thirty nobles of Lorraine and Barrois offered themselves in lieu of the two young Princes.

This contract Philippe submitted to the Comte de Vaudémont for his approval, which he gave after much consideration, but required the insertion of a clause to the effect that his son Ferri should be betrothed to Yolande, Duke René's eldest daughter, then not quite three years old, and that she should receive a dowry of 18,000 *florins de Rhin* for the purchase of an estate in Lorraine, and he added very cunningly a proviso that residuary rights to the duchy should be settled upon the issue of the marriage. This was with grim vengeance the hoisting both of the Duke and the Count upon their own petards. Such an extraordinary arrangement was, perhaps, [114] never before contrived by the craft of man.

At Nancy in the Queen's apartments there was sorrow keen. Isabelle's heart was stabbed to the core. Could she part with her dear children? That was the question she had to answer. The other clauses of René's charter of freedom were serious enough, to be sure, but none of them weighed upon a mother's heart as did this. As she looked out upon the pleasaunce whence came echoes of childish laughter, her will failed her. No, there they were, Jean and Louis, lovely boys of six and four, too tender much to leave her fostering care, too young to face the rigours of captivity. And yet her dearly loved husband, René, could not be left in durance vile; his liberty was of the first importance, and no sacrifice would be too great to bring him home to her again. What should she do? First of all she knelt in prayer to God, and implored the aid of St. Mary and the saints. St. George was for Lorraine. Then she hied her to the boudoir of her mother, Duchess Margaret, and fell upon her bosom, sobbing violently, the woman with the courage of a man! Those tears, however, washed away her momentary want of resolution, and when she had laid bare her troubles before her sympathetic parent, the answer to her prayers came through the same devoted channel.

"Isabelle, my child," the old Duchess said, "dry your tears, and thank God in any case, for this trouble will pass. St. Mary, the Mother of Jesus, feels for you, the mother of her boys. She inspires me, too, and I am ready to take the dear children myself to Dijon or wherever our René may be, and to remain with them till Philippe of Burgundy plays the man and the Christian and [115] releases them, and then our René shall fold thee to his heart ere many suns have set."

This pious and heroic resolution of the good-living Duchess-Dowager was, perhaps, no more than Isabelle expected. She, of course, could not take her hand off the helm of State, but her mother was a *persona grata* at the Burgundian Court; at least, she had been so when she came as a bride to Nancy many years before. The long and the short of the matter was that Duke René was released from his prison on March 1, 1432. He gave his parole to return there within a twelvemonth if the conditions of his freedom were not complied with.

By a curious concatenation of circumstances the arrival of Duchess Margaret and her two little grandsons at Dijon synchronized with that of the Duke of Burgundy. He had been away in Flanders and in the English camp on political business, and had postponed the bestowal of rewards and honours upon his adherents at Bulgneville. Now he called a Chapter of the "Order of the Toison d'Or" at Bracon, of all places in the duchy, apparently forgetful of the fact that his royal prisoner was there. The fortress possessed two towers; in one of these René was confined, —henceforward known as *La Tour de Bar*. There were three floors; on the topmost were the Duke's two chambers, below certain Lorraine prisoners of distinction were accommodated, and the guard occupied the ground-floor. The other tower contained the regalia and the archives of the Order. A very pleasant story is told of a meeting of the two Dukes at Tour de Bar, and it delightfully illustrates the French proverb, "*Noblesse oblige*." On the day of the Chapter the Duke of Burgundy, passing the portal of René's tower, cast up his eyes, and beheld his prisoner [116] looking out of a window. He tossed up his bare hand in token of recognition, and sent an officer up to René's chamber with a request that he would permit him to enter and hold converse there. Such a demand appealed, of course, instantly to the chivalrous instinct of the Duke of Lorraine and Bar, and the two Sovereigns clasped each other's hand in silence. Philippe's heart failed him at the greeting of his captive, and he shed tears. Whilst the Princes were so engaged, a noble of the Court of Dijon approached his liege and delivered him a despatch, the perusal of which

greatly affected him. It was, indeed, the intimation that Duchess Margaret of Lorraine was in attendance with René's two young boys at the palace in Dijon, awaiting Duke Philippe's pleasure. He communicated the intelligence to Duke René, who covered his face with his hands and sank to his seat in a conflict of emotions.

Duke Philippe, laying his hand on his prisoner's shoulder, said: "*La parole du Duc du Bar est plus forte que les ôtages!*" Then he added: "Pray, Monseigneur, consider the portals of the Tour de Bar open to your orders. Let us go together and greet the good Duchess Margaret. You and she and your children shall be set forth this day to Nancy. May the good God cheer your way!" This was magnanimity incarnate—a choice trait of the days of *la vraie chivalrie*! To describe the joy of René as he once more caressed his sons and kissed the hand of his mother-in-law, and to set forth the rejoicings at Nancy, and, indeed, all along that joyous march from Dijon, with the blessedness of reunion between Isabelle and her spouse, would tax the pen of any ready writer. [117]
René was free, and Philippe had attained his apogee. Joy-bells rang, voices cheered, and Lorraine and Barrois gave themselves over to unbridled festivity; whilst the Duke and Duchess and their two brave boys made a royal progress, whereon they were nearly torn to pieces by their enthusiastic subjects. René and Isabelle once more visited every town, and personally thanked all and sundry for their loyalty and affection.

But business is business even in royal circles, and the Estates of Lorraine and Bar were assembled by the Sovereigns to consider and fulfil the terms of René's charter of liberty. The crux was the amount of the money ransom, and how to raise it. Both duchies were stripped bare of resources, prolonged wars had impoverished the nobles, and had brought upon all classes great privations. In Anjou and Provence much the same conditions existed, and Queen Yolande had as much as she could do to make all ends meet. King Charles VII. was a fugitive or little better, he had no money, and the Duke of Brittany had his own responsibilities and cares. The only wealthy member of the Sicily-Anjou family was the Queen of Naples, and she was financing King Louis III. and his conflict with the King of Aragon. Nevertheless something had to be done, and René and Isabelle together put their pride into their pocket and made approaches to their unlovely relative. Queen Yolande and Duchess Margaret also backed up the appeal.

René embarked at Marseilles directly Queen Giovanna's reply reached him, for she demanded that his request for assistance should be made in person at Aversa. It was not a very pleasant [118]
prospect that presented itself to the Duke of Bar-Lorraine. The ill-fame of the Queen of Naples had by no means been lessened by her attempted liaison with his elder brother, King Louis. Nevertheless, René was prepared to pay a high price for the 20,000 *saluts d'or*, but Isabelle had no fear for his honour. The mission was a failure. The Queen's price was impossible; and although René remained in dalliance upon her, and played the part of a complete courtier, so far as was possible for him to do, she dismissed her relative with a sneer and a refusal.

News of René's failure reached Nancy before his own arrival, and resourceful Duchess Isabelle immediately set to work upon an alternative plan for securing the liberty of her consort. The city of Basel was then preparing to receive the Fathers of the Ecumenical Council of the Roman Church, and with them the citizens were required to welcome the Emperor of Germany, under whose protection they were. Sigismund was the son of Marie de France, sister of Louis I. of Sicily-Anjou. Moreover, he had married the Princess Elizabeth of Bavaria, a sister of Duchess Margaret.

A ROYAL PATRONESS AND WOMEN-WORKERS IN WOOL

From a Miniature, MS. Fifteenth Century, "Des Clercs et Nobles Femmes." British Museum

A ROYAL PATRONESS OF HANDICRAFTS

From a Miniature, MS. Fifteenth Century, "Des Clercs et Nobles Femmes." British Museum

Isabelle despatched a notable embassy to greet her uncle the Emperor, and at the same time to crave his sympathy and help. A very favourable reply came quickly back to Nancy, and with the returning Lorraine envoys travelled two Chamberlains of the Imperial Court, sent by the Emperor

to escort René to Basel. Sigismund furthermore cited the Comte de Vaudémont to appear before him and state his case. A most patient hearing was granted by His Majesty to the arguments of the victorious Count, but on April 24 Sigismund ascended the imperial throne in the Cathedral of Basel, and there solemnly gave his judgment. He decreed that René was lawful Duke of Lorraine, [119] that he should not be required to return to prison, and that further grace should be allowed for the payment of the ransom.

With scant reverence for the sacred edifice, and with much discourtesy to the Emperor and the dignitaries who sat with him as assessors,—the Papal Legate and the Patriarch of Constantinople,—Vaudémont indignantly refused to accept the imperial ruling, and demanded the immediate payment of the 20,000 *saluts d'or* or the prompt return of Duke René to Bracon. Duchess Isabelle, who had courageously accompanied her husband, fell upon her knees before their stern, irreconcilable enemy, and pleaded with him to extend knightly magnanimity towards his prisoner. No! Vaudémont would have the duchy or René's money or his person. René, gently raising his loving spouse, led her from the scene, and then, tenderly embracing her, he returned to where he had left Vaudémont scowling. "See," said he, "here I am: take me at once to Dijon." Before leaving the Imperial Court the Emperor beckoned to him, and, directing him to kneel, formally invested him with the temporalities of the duchy of Lorraine, and upon Isabelle he bestowed with the Papal benediction the honour of the "Golden Rose."

Torn from the bosom of his family once more, René bore his misfortune like a man, and Isabelle rose superior to her trouble. Their noble bearing gained further the respect and good-will of all the Sovereigns and peoples of Europe, whilst the spleen and meanness of Vaudémont rendered him odious everywhere. René submitted obediently to the newly-imposed discipline. He beguiled his time by adorning the walls and windows of his chamber with sketches and paintings. What a [120] thousand pities it is that none of those treasures have been preserved! Alas! France has suffered more than any other land from the suicidal tendencies of her people. Over and over again national passion has swept away works of art and historical memorials. King René's frescoes have, with the fortress of Bracon, wholly disappeared. Music, too, and poetry, formed for him consolations. He composed *ballades*, he sang songs, sacred and profane. He played the viol and zither, and so whiled away some of the tedium of his captivity. "*Les Chroniques de Lorraine*," note that "*il a sçu la musique, et marier la voix aulx doulx accents d'un luth, gémissant sous ses doigts*."[A]

[A] "He knew music, and how to modulate his voice to the notes of a lute, striking it with his fingers."

At Bracon was the Duke of Burgundy's splendid library, to which René was freely admitted. There he studied painstakingly classical works in Greek, Latin, and Hebrew.

Cut off as he was entirely from intercourse with his family, friends, and subjects, at times he gave way to melancholy, and regarded himself as unjustly treated by Providence. He craved to behold his children, and this longing was assuaged by the chivalrous consideration of the Duke of Burgundy, who permitted the little Princes Jean and Louis to visit their unhappy father in his prison.

## II.

The years 1434 and 1435 were full of tragic happenings for René and Isabelle. Death claimed three important personages near of kin. All Lorraine mourned the saintly Duchess Margaret. She [121] died in her devoted daughter's arms during the feast of Pentecost, and they buried her beside her consort, Charles II., in the ducal tomb at St. George-by-the-Gate. Her quiet influence had been all for good, both upon her children's account and upon the morals of the Court and nation. She could, as we have seen, act the heroine as well as the devotee. Isabelle missed her mother's goodly counsels more than she could express in words. René's greatest loss was undoubtedly his brother, Louis III., King of Sicily-Anjou and Naples. This bereavement wholly changed the position and prospects of the Bar-Lorraine ducal family; for Louis dying without surviving issue, all his honours, titles, and dominions, were inherited by his next brother, René.

This event, and what it meant for René, were the climax of his career. The proclamation of the new King was a tragedy and a travesty combined. The pathos of his position was emphatic. The news stunned him—powerless and wellnigh nerveless, hopeless and wellnigh demented. He had not regained his equanimity, when the mockery of his fate was borne still more cruelly upon him in the intelligence that reached him on February 2, 1435, in the Tour de Bar, of the demise of Queen Giovanna II., whose will named him her successor as King of Naples.

Louis died of fever at Cosenza, the capital of Calabria, on November 15, 1434, lamented by his enemies as well as by his friends. His devoted mother was not with him. She was broken-hearted at the news which reached her at Angers. Alas that so gallant a soldier-King should be cut off so suddenly and so prematurely in the first bloom of his manhood! Cast down with grief unspeakable and mute, his girl-wife—still a bride—Marguerite, consoled his last hours. No child [122] had come to bless their union, and the palpitating passion of the honeymoon was naturally cooling. The stress, too, of martial movements separated all too soon and too frequently the bridal couple. Still, Queen Marguerite ministered tenderly to her sick spouse, and her love burst forth in undiminished fervency as she realized that death would so cruelly part them. Very nobly and unselfishly, Louis in his will,—very strangely, made exactly to the day a year before,—required all honour to be paid to his widow, for his sake as well as for her own, and left her the bulk of his private property—alas! greatly diminished by the expenses of his military campaigns.

Moreover, he expressly directed that she should be free to go where she would,—if not to Anjou, then to her home again in Savoy,—and he besought her, “for the love she bore him, not to pine away in sadness, but to choose some good man and marry him, for the relief of nature and for the love of God.”

Marguerite buried Louis with the burial of a King, and built a monument to his memory in the cathedral, and she directed that the sword of Lancelot, the British knight whom Louis had unhorsed at tilt and slain, should be suspended over the royal burying-place. Then she speeded back to her father’s Court, not adventuring herself at Naples, where Queen Giovanna lay a-dying. Good and true wife that she was, she kept her sorrow silently and unaffectedly for twelve long years, and then she married another Louis—Louis IV., Duke of Bavaria. Short was again this second union, for after another two years’ widowhood she married, for a third time, Ulric VII., Count of Würtemberg, in 1452. At Stuttgart, after so many tragic changes, Queen-Duchess-Countess Marguerite settled down, and lived seventeen years in peace and happiness, drawing her last breath upon the very day of November, the 15th, which had witnessed the marriage vows of Louis III. and herself just thirty-six years before. [123]

Duchess Isabelle de Lorraine, now Queen of Sicily-Anjou and Naples, with her accustomed promptitude, despatched a messenger to the King in prison, announcing her instant departure for Naples. She sapiently understood that her presence in Italy was essential if the crown of Naples was to rest securely upon her husband’s head. She would receive the allegiance of the Neapolitans in his name, and administer the government as his Lieutenant-General. On November 28 she left Nancy with her second son, Louis, Marquis of Pont-à-Mousson, and travelled post-haste into Provence. Again her presence kindled the most enthusiastic expressions of commiseration for the lot of the King and Count, and of devotion to his person and to herself. Men and money poured in upon her. She welcomed all, and accepted gratefully everybody’s contribution.

From Marseilles the Queen and her following sailed to Genoa, where the Doge and the nobles gave her a right royal reception, and volunteered help and amity. Thence to Milan the intrepid traveller took her way, where she gained over the Duke, and he made René’s cause his own. In Rome, Pope Eugenius IV. blessed her and her son, and conjured all the Italian States to lend their aid. Her arrival at Naples was so entirely unexpected by the Alfonsists that they were not only checkmated in their attempt on King René’s inheritance, but were thrown into a panic, from which they were unable to rally. [124]

The Neapolitans of every grade and class welcomed their new Queen and her five great galleys, filled with the flower of Provence, Milan, and Genoa, with every manifestation of joy and loyalty. Her charms of person transported them, her intrepidity roused them, and her gracious words delighted them. The old love of Naples for the House of Anjou returned, and every adherent of the Spanish King was cast out. Queen Isabelle had very soon more serious work in hand than graciously acknowledging the salutations of the enthusiastic citizens. King Alfonso was at the gates of Naples with a strong force on land and sea. She in person assumed command of the loyal troops in the capital, appointed trusty commanders, and placed Naples in a good state of defence. Besieged rigorously by the Spanish army, the Queen directed sorties which were perfectly successful, and the enemy retreated to a more respectful distance. In one of these affrays, Dom Pedro, brother of the King of Aragon, was slain, and Queen Isabelle, with a spirit of chivalry worthy of a noble knight and a magnanimous Sovereign, offered his dead body royal sepulchral rites in the cathedral.

During Queen Isabelle’s absence from Lorraine, King René named their eldest son, Jean, now Duke of Calabria,—the traditional title of the heir to the throne of Naples,—as his Lieutenant-General in Barrois and Lorraine, child though he was, not yet ten years old. Nominally he was placed under the tutelage and guardianship of Queen Yolande, who made a progress to Nancy to assist in carrying out her son’s command, and to look after the two little “orphaned” girls, Yolande and Marguerite, her granddaughters. Most prudently she abstained, as might have been expected from her high-toned character, from interfering in any affairs of State in these two eastern duchies of her son’s dominions. Four high officials she selected to direct the policy of the palace and safeguard the crown, all men of proven probity and loyal disinterestedness, and to them she, by René’s wish, delegated the actual charge of the young Duke: Jehan de Fenestranger, Grand Marshal; Gerard de Harancourt, Seneschal; Jacques de Harancourt, Bailli or Mayor of Nancy; and Philippe de Lenoncourt, tutor to the young Princes. [125]

Queen Yolande having seen all these matters settled, and having named Anne, Countess of Vaudémont, *governante* of the two young Princesses, she took her departure to Provence and Marseilles, there to await the course of events in Naples. The appointment of a Vaudémont must have struck most people as extraordinary. The Countess was mother of the implacable Count Antoine, and it was due to Queen Yolande’s remarkable foresightedness that she was chosen. She saw the perils ahead caused by the number and dispersion of the dominions of the crowns unfortunate King René had not yet put upon his head. It appeared to her that Naples and Sicily would be the chief appanage, and require the presence of the Sovereign almost continuously. Anjou and Provence might fall to the government of René’s second son, and then Bar and Lorraine would go to his daughters, perhaps upon their marriage. Vaudémont would never relax his efforts to gain Lorraine. Might not a matrimonial alliance between a son of his and a granddaughter of her own, thought the Queen, solve amicably and profitably a very vexed question?

All the while that Queen Isabelle was holding Naples for her consort and keeping Alfonso of Aragon in check, nothing was neglected which might hasten the release of the royal captive. With [126]

commendable astuteness Isabelle made overtures to her namesake Isabelle, Duchess of Burgundy, and her efforts were seconded on the spot by Queen Yolande. Isabelle of Portugal was in disposition and tastes very much like the late lamented Duchess of Lorraine—much affected by religion, by charity, by pity. The separation of the King of Sicily-Anjou and Naples from his family, and the sorrows of his Queen, appealed to her womanly sympathy. She talked long and well to Duke Philippe, and at last succeeded in gaining his signature to a decree of pardon and an order of release for the distinguished captive. Under her persuasion the amount of the ransom was halved, and René's liberty was unlimited.

King René of Sicily-Anjou and Naples was set free from durance vile at Bracon on November 25, 1436. No doubt this achievement was greatly due to the urgent pressure of all the Sovereigns of France, headed by King Charles VII.; indeed, the Duke of Burgundy had hardly any choice in the matter, for Arthur de Richemont, brother of the Duke of Brittany and Constable of France, who was the bearer of the united royal protest, gave him plainly to understand that the retention of René at Bracon would mean the immediate invasion and devastation of the duchy.

René went off at once to Nancy and Bar-le-Duc, there to be welcomed by his subjects and to thank personally his many warm friends and helpers. After embracing his children, he hurried on [127] to Angers, where Queen Yolande greeted him tenderly and made him rest and refresh himself. She had been busy, as was her wont, in more matrimonial adventures, and now she broached the subject of the betrothal of the young Duke of Calabria, her eldest grandson. The bride she had chosen for him, with Queen Isabelle's approval, was the Princess Marie, a daughter of the Duke of Bourbon, a little motherless girl who had been under her care for some time. She was a granddaughter of King John II. the Good, and niece and ward of the Duke of Burgundy, who dowered her with 50,000 *écus d'or*.

There was, however, not much time for King René to waste in festivities. He set off to thank King Charles, the Duke of Brittany, and all the other friendly Princes who had so greatly aided his deliverance. Then he hastened by water,—the usual method of quick transit,—down to his favourite Provence, where the transports of delight with which he was welcomed surpassed all former demonstrations. He wanted men and money,—and Provence was never backward in contributions for her Count,—for his next move was to be to Naples, to embrace his noble Queen and relieve her of her heavy responsibilities.

The usual course was taken by the royal galley. Genoa was the rendezvous, as of old. The Genoese gave their visitor a splendid reception. His romantic career had greatly affected them, and now that they beheld his gracious person their delight knew no bounds. Never had a royal visitor such an ovation in Liguria. The famous Tommaso Fregoso, the Doge, lodged him in the Ducal Palace, the streets were wreathed in spring greenery, and all the maids and matrons of the proud city combed out their rich brown, lustrous locks of hair, jauntily fixed their white lace veils [128] with jewelled pins, and put on their best attire and massive chains of gold. At the entrance of the Piazza di San Lorenzo one hundred of the fairest of the fair scattered flowers before King René's white steed of state, and six of the prettiest and the noblest were dedicated to his personal wish and disposition. This indeed was a Scriptural and a patriarchal custom, but always duly observed in decorous and sensuous Genoa. But again pleasure had to give way to business, and King René had the satisfaction of sailing out of that famous harbour followed by a goodly flotilla of fighting ships well found.

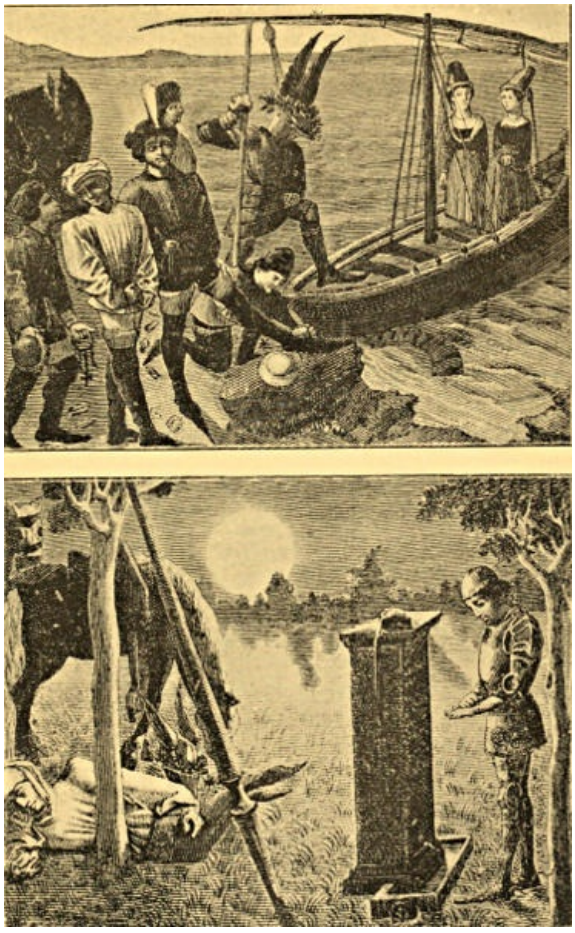
René was received at Naples tumultuously as lawful King and Sovereign. Mounted on a great black charger, crowned and habited in cloth of gold and covered with the royal mantle of state of crimson velvet and ermine, the sword of St. Januarius in his hand, he rode through people, flowers, banners, and huzzahs, right into the nave of the cathedral; there Queen Isabelle received her consort exultingly, and with him knelt lowly for the benediction of the Mass. That day marked an amazing contrast in the fortunes of two men—King René, the prisoner of Bracon, seated upon the ancient throne of Naples, and King Alfonso, the conqueror of Aragon, pacing uneasily his prison chamber at Milan!

The reunion of the royal couple was a happy thing indeed, so often parted had they been and so sadly. Isabelle had acted the part of a good woman and a faithful spouse despite splenetic insinuations to the contrary. Her position had been most trying in anxious times, and among ill-disposed aspirants for her favour. She knew intuitively who to trust of those that expressed [129] themselves most devoted to her service, and no one ever was more zealously preoccupied with the interest of her friends than she. Now came the time to award honours to the faithful and the true, and King René deputed his Queen to bestow the royal favours. The first to profit by the new dispensation was, naturally, the widowed Queen Margaret, who after the burial of her consort, King Louis III., had sought refuge in Naples, under the sheltering wing of her royal sister-in-law. Still resplendent in her beauty and possessed of every youthful grace, the young Queen was the object of deep solicitude and affection.

The condition of the Two Sicilies was parlous; almost every commune was divided against itself on the subject of the succession to the throne, and almost daily were recorded deeds of cruelty and aggression, pointing to the outbreak of serious hostilities all over the dual kingdom. The blue and white ensign of Anjou and the red and yellow banner of Aragon were reared, not in friendly contest, but in deadly feud. Under these circumstances René judged it expedient for the Queen and their little son Louis to go back to France, and Queen Margaret refused to be separated from her sympathetic sister-in-law. It was a pang to both again so soon to part, but rulers of States are not like ordinary mortals; for public duties must take precedence of private interests. Isabelle's brief rule at Naples had done wonders in the way of conciliation, and Étienne Pasquier did not exaggerate her virtues when he wrote: "*Cette vraye Amazone, que dans un corps de femme*

*portoit un cœur d'homme, fist tant d'actes généraux pendant la prisonment de son mari, que ceste pièce este enchassée en lettres d'or dedans les annales de Lorraine*." All Naples shed tears at their beloved Queen's departure. Margaret they hardly knew, but the last Queen they had known, Giovanna, was hated quite as thoroughly as Isabelle was adored. [130]

The galley bearing back to Marseilles those whom he most loved had hardly passed beyond the horizon of the Bay of Naples when René took action. On September 22 an Anjou herald appeared in the camp of King Alfonso, and threw down King René's bloodstained glove as a challenge, first to a personal encounter between the two Kings, and then to a combat *à l'outrance* between the two armies. On the part of Alfonso, who was on his way from his Milan prison, the challenge was accepted by his chief of the staff, who indicated the locality for the trials of chivalry and force,—the level country between Nola and Arienzo, at the foot of Vesuvius. Single combat was denied by Alfonso, and then René attacked his rival with all the forces at his command. Numerically again, as at the stricken field of Bulgneville, the Angevine army was much the stronger, for under René's banner marched the Milan-Genoese contingent, with Francesco Sforza, Duke of Milan, at its head. René's fleet, too, was at anchor in the bay, commanded by the intrepid Admiral Jehan de Beaufort, to act in conjunction with the land forces of his King. The Spanish army was better disciplined and better furnished with artillery, and King René once more had to bow to circumstances, and to look in vain for Fortune's smile. His forces were cut in two and slaughtered right and left, and he himself wounded and all but captured, for he was not a leader to skulk behind his men: he led the van, and was ever in the thick of the fight. His appeal, "*Anjou-Cecile! Amor Chevaliers!*" was of no avail. He was beaten, and fled with only two knights, and shut himself in Castel Nuovo. A truce was signed, and the King of Naples went off to report his defeat at Rome, Florence, and Genoa. [131]



1. "EMBARKMENT OF 'CUER' FOR THE 'ISLAND OF LOVE'"

2. "'CUER' READING THE INSCRIPTION ON THE ENCHANTED FOUNTAIN"

From "La Conqueste de Doulce Mercy." Written and illuminated by King René. National Library, Paris

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Pope Eugenius IV. and the Emperor Joannes Paleologos, who were both at Florence, received the royal fugitive ardently, blessed him, and awarded him and his heirs, disregarding the victory of King Alfonso, the right to govern the Two Sicilies in perpetuity. The Medici and other Florentines of mark and wealth offered subsidies for the recovery of the Neapolitan throne, and at Genoa and Milan men and supplies were to be had for the asking; but René had had his fill of war, and bloodshed was now to him abhorrent. "Too much blood," he remarked, "has been shed already. We will rest awhile, and ask God to pardon our sins." René returned to Marseilles in 1442 a sadder and a wiser man. There he met once more his Queen, to rejoice his stricken heart; but that heart, and hers too, tenderly bled again and again, for not only did the melancholy news of his good mother's death in Anjou shatter him, but Isabelle and he had the terrible grief of

parting with their dearly-loved second son, the Marquis of Pont-à-Mousson. Prince Louis, so promising, so handsome, and so loyal, they buried sadly: he was his mother's favourite child, the companion of her triumphs and her trials.

King René was called from his grief over the tomb of his young son to Tours by Charles of [132] France. To the French Court had come Ambassadors, with the Earl of Suffolk at their head, to treat for peace between the two conflicting kingdoms. The French King, with his usual lassitude, deputed to King René the conduct of the deliberations, which ended honourably for all parties concerned, in the guarantee of two years' cessation of hostilities, with the acknowledgment of in *statu quo*. Nearer home, however, matters were not so stable; the state of the allied duchies was deplorable. So insecure were the roads in Lorraine,—infested by wandering bands of discontented peasantry and ill-affected townspeople,—that travelling was attended with the utmost danger. The higher the dignity of a wayfarer, the greater the eagerness to attack and pilfer. Queen Isabelle was herself the victim of a dastardly outrage. Journeying forth soon after her dear son Louis's death, to pray at his grave at Pont-à-Mousson, her cortège was attacked by a party of marauders from Metz. They compelled her to leave her litter, with its cloth of gold curtains and luxurious cushions, and subjected her to rough treatment in spite of her protestations.

"You villains!" she cried, "you know perfectly who I am. How dare you offer this gross insult to your Sovereign! Begone, and let me pass. You shall richly pay for your temerity." Jeers and offensive remarks greeted this haughty command. They cared nothing for Isabelle nor her consort; indeed, they were unrighteous allies of the Count of Vaudémont. The Duchess was stripped of her jewellery, her *coffrets* were rifled, and her servants beaten, and then the miscreants made off.

The Queen hastily returned to Nancy, and laid the matter before the Council, demanding satisfaction. "Unless you, my lords," she said, "at once make a strong representation to the [133] Governor of Metz, I will set off to Anjou, and bring the King back to recompense the miscreants." All the chivalry of France was shocked at this amazing outrage, and King Charles, with Arthur de Richemont and a strong force, hurried into Lorraine from Dauphiné, determined to make an example of the gross behaviour of the Messins. The city barricaded her gates, sounded the tocsin, and prepared to resist, if might be, the united forces of France. The besieged held out for six months, flinging taunt on taunt against the King and Queen. At last it fell, and the price the rebels had to pay was onerous, besides the forfeiture of all their charters and privileges. A general amnesty was granted on February 27, 1445, in Barrois as well as in Lorraine. The Messins signalized their deliverance by offering to their liege Lord complete allegiance, together with 25,000 *écus d'or* enclosed in a splendid gold and enamelled vase.

René now for the first time in his thirty years of public service and command found himself in the possession of that rare blessing, Peace, and he prepared to celebrate it adequately. Isabelle, too, was only too thankful for the respite; her sorrows and anxieties had wellnigh broken her courageous heart. After she parted with her husband in the Bay of Naples, she landed at Marseilles, and made all haste to Angers, too late, indeed, to soothe the last moments of her noble mother-in-law, but drawn there by the tranquillity of Anjou. There she gave herself to the education of her two young daughters, to whom she was happily reunited—Marguerite just thirteen, and Yolande a year younger. René again joined his spouse, whom he loved so fondly, and in whose honour he had adopted a new royal motto and cipher, "*Ardent Désir*," below a [134] burning brasier. They gave themselves up to religious exercises, and led a calm and retired life—precious to them both after the alarums of the past. The world was still very young for them both —René no more than thirty-seven, and Isabelle two years his junior.

The most delightful ingredient in their full cup of joy was the home-coming of their son and heir, Prince Jean, Duke of Calabria and Lieutenant-General of Barrois-Lorraine. During eleven strenuous years he and his devoted parents had rarely met. He had zealously, after their brave example, addressed himself to his public duties, and had won golden opinions from the loyal subjects of the throne. He was nearing his majority, and with him came his young wife Marie, whose marriage had been but lately accomplished. They were stepping bravely together along the marital way, which their grandparents and their parents had traversed, unscathed by scandal and beloved by all.

Great festivities were organized at Angers, Tarascon, and Nancy, to celebrate the general peace, and in particular the betrothal of Princess Marguerite d'Anjou. A magnificent tournament was held between Razilly and Chinon in the summer of 1446, which attracted all the most famous knights in France and beyond the frontiers and an immense crowd of spectators. One there was, and she one of the fairest of the fair, came riding beside her father, one of King René's dearest friends, Count Guy de Laval; and the King for the first time set eyes upon lovely Jehanne, who was destined to mingle her destiny with his right on to his dying day. René caused "*Le Châtel de Joyeuse Garde*" to be built of wood richly adorned with paintings, tapestries, and garlands, and *[135]* for forty days jousts and floral games engaged the attention of the gallant and beauteous company. A very singular and popular custom was inaugurated at the King's suggestion. Four knights of proved probity crossed their lances in the roadway beyond the Castle of Chinon. Cavaliers, accompanied by their ladies fair, were made to fight their way through and carry safe their sweethearts. A faint heart lost his lady, a knight unhorsed his horse, and a victorious competitor his sash of knighthood, which was immediately tied to the crupper of his fair one's palfrey. The King himself took his place in the "Lists" in black armour; his mantle was of black velvet sewn with silver lilies of Anjou, and his well-trained charger was black also. Queen Isabelle and her ladies occupied a flower-decked tribune, and with her was poor young Queen Marguerite

and her son's child-wife, Marie. They were the Queens of the Tournament, but the damosel Jehanne de Laval was "Queen of Beauty," scarce thirteen years old.

Alas! a deadly "bolt shot out of the blue." The Duchess of Calabria had but just risen from childbed; she was not strong enough to bear the excitement and the toil of such tumultuous gaiety, and upon the last day of the tournament she fainted in the royal tribune, and breathed out her brief life before she could be borne to couch. Thus into life's sweetest joys comes sadly too often the relentless bitterness of sorrow. Faces which only a few short hours before were wreathed in smiles were furrowed with the ravages of grief ere the curfew sounded. The tournament ended in a "Triumph of the Black Buffaloes." Happily, perhaps, the child died too, [136] and both sweet bodies were consigned to one flower-decked grave in the chapel garden of the Castle of Saumur,—"*la gentille et la bien assise*,"—a paradise of fragrant trees and pleasant prospects.

Dire news, too, reached Angers from Provence. A winter of unparalleled inclemency was followed by a famine and a pest, which decimated people and domestic animals, and wrought havoc with the crops. René and Isabelle took boat once more for their southern province, and their "*le bon roy*," as he was now called affectionately by his subjects, laid himself out to alleviate his people's sufferings. Taxes were remitted, the poor fed and clothed, and farms restocked. "*La bonté*," he said, "*est la première grandeur des roys*." People noted the King's grey hair—hair "white less by time than white through trouble," as chroniclers have written. Trouble makes all the world akin: the King and Queen bore their people's, and they humbly shared their rulers' griefs.

The clouds cleared off that sunny land, and birds once more sang in the meadows, and men and maids were gay. Then it was Tarascon's turn to celebrate the virtues of the Count and Countess of Provence. A Provençal tournament was a celebration *ne plus ultra*, and René made that of 1448 famous and unique by his institution of the knightly "*Ordre du Croissant*." To be sure, it was established at Angers, whose warrior-patron, St. Maurice, was honoured as guardian and exemplar of chivalry, and in whose cathedral church the banners of the knights were hung. The King himself drew up the statutes of the Order. With characteristic and chivalrous modesty, he named, not himself First Master, but chose Guy de Laval for that honourable post. Conditions of [137] membership were dictated by religion, courtesy, and charity, in harmony; only knights of goodly birth and unblemished reputation were eligible. They were enjoined to hear Mass daily and to recite the daily "Hours." Fraternal love was to be exemplified in all dealings with their fellow-men at large. An impious oath or an indecent jest was never to pass their lips. Women and children were in a special sense committed to their care. The poor and ailing were to engage their best offices. Debts of every sort and gambling under every guise were absolutely forbidden. With respect to the fair sex, the code of rules had in golden letters the following order: "*De ne mesdire des femmes de quelques estats quelles soient pour chose qui doibue d'advenir*." The knights first impanelled, having taken their oaths of obedience and accepted service, departed from Anjou, and made their rendezvous at the King's Castle of Tarascon on August 11. René himself again entered the "Lists," but champion honours were carried off by his son-in-law, Ferri de Vaudémont, and Louis de Beauvais; and the Queen-Countess Isabelle placed floral crowns upon their brows, a golden ring upon their right hands, and received a kiss of homage upon her still smooth and comely cheek.

Nancy was the scene of the most magnificent gaieties Lorraine had ever beheld. The espousals of the Princess Marguerite and King Henry VI. were solemnized in the ancient Gothic church of St. Martin at Pont-à-Mousson by Louis d'Harcourt, Bishop of Toul. The King was represented by the gallant Earl of Suffolk, one of the most famous Knights in Europe. The ecclesiastical ceremony was rendered all the more auspicious by the joint nuptials of the Princess Yolande and [138] Count Ferri de Vaudémont. All France,—Sovereigns, ladies, nobles, citizens,—thronged around the King and Queen; their congratulations were, however, restrained until the actualities of the Vaudémont marriage were revealed. To marry a dear child to the son of a man's worst enemy appeared quixotic at the least, and few called to mind that strange clause in René's charter of release from Bracon. The King was, as Duke Philippe of Burgundy had styled him, a man of his word; and if proof were wanted, then the appointment of the young bridegroom's mother, the Countess, as *governante* of René's daughters furnished it. Besides this, the presence of the Count himself at the marriage of his son exhibited not only the reconciliation of the two rivals for the throne of Lorraine, but emphasized the innate chivalry of both. To be sure, Antoine de Vaudémont was in ill-health, his fighting days were over, and he was searching for comfort and absolution before he faced his end; and, in truth, that end was nearer than he thought, for he died six months after he had given his blessing to Ferri and Yolande.

A pretty and characteristic story is told of the loves of Ferri and Yolande. King René was wishful that his daughter and future son-in-law should attain more mature age before the consummation of Count Antoine's wishes concerning them. The young knight, "who was," wrote Martial, "regarded among men and youths much as Helen of Troy was among her companions,"—a very handsome fellow,—chafed at delay, and, emboldened by the vows of his fiancée, one dark, [139] windy night he with two trusty comrades broke into her boudoir, where she, ready for the signal, awaited her lover. Romeo carried his Juliet away to Clermont in Argonne, and held her till her father consented to their marriage. This story is contained in an old manuscript, the handiwork of Louis de Grasse, the Sire of Mas.

Splendid fêtes covering eight full days followed the Church ceremonies. The "Lists" were held in the Grande Place of Nancy, in the presence of the right worshipful company, headed by Kings Charles and René and Queens Isabelle, Marie, and Margaret. Quaintly Martial d'Auvergne wrote

in "*Les Vigiles de Charles VII.*":

"Les Roynes de France, Sécille,
La Fiancée et la Dauphine,
Et d'autres dames, belles filles,
Si en firent devoir condigne."

"The Queens of France and Sicily,
The Bride and the Dauphine,
And many other dames of honour,
Compelled the homage of the men."

All the *châtelaines* forsook their *manoirs* and took the field-marital in force. Mars had come in strength, Venus would join the fray, and victory was never doubtful. If comely, gallant, doughty knights fell not in deathly conflict in those "Lists" of love, their hearts were captured by fair vanquishers all the same.

"En gagea sans retour
Son cœur et sa liberté,"

describes those battle-fields of Cupid's warfare! [140]

The pageantry of the tournament over, the panoply of the encampment claimed the knightly company of Nancy, and a mighty cavalcade—ladies, too, in litter and on palfrey—ambled off serenely to the great wide plains of Champagne, where René and Charles reviewed at Châlons-sur-Marne the united armies of all the crowns. It was a sight which stirred all the best blood in France, and spoke to her Sovereigns and her statesmen of a new age, when the artifices of war should give place to the arts of peace. Alas! when human things appear to promise peace and joy, there ever comes over the scene the pall of Providence. War again broke out between France and England, but now the French held their own and more; and King René, revived in military ardour, led the victorious vanguard, and crowned his bays of triumph by new palms of peace.

Sad news came to him, however, when in Normandy, from his ancestral Angers. His devoted and dearly loved Queen, Isabelle, was laid low with illness. Stalking fever had crossed the castle moat and fixed its baneful touch upon the royal *châtelaine*. Do what she would,—and her will to the end was vigorous enough,—she could not shake off the deadly visitant. She felt that her end was approaching unrelentlessly, and with admirable piety the noble, high-toned Queen controlled her pains, and patiently prepared herself to face her last foe with courageous resignation. Her children were gathered by her bedside—Jean and Yolande in person, Marguerite in spirit, and perhaps Louis, too, from his tomb at Pont-à-Mousson. Quietly and prayerfully on February 28, 1453, she passed away to join her babes in Paradise, and "Black Angers" was plunged in deepest mourning.

The death of a great Queen deeply affects men and women everywhere. Isabelle's name, like that of "good Queen Yolande," had become a household word in Europe far and wide. Everywhere tokens of bereavement were displayed, and King René, the royal widower, hastening home too late to close his fond wife's eyes in death, wrote in his tablets: "Since the life of my dear, dear wife has been cut off by death, my heart has lost its love, for she was the mainspring of my consolations." In every one of his "*Livres des Heures*," and in other books and places, the artist in the Sovereign painted and drew the features and the figure of his Queen. [141]

Their married life,—chequered as it had been,—had been as happy as could be. Devoted to one another with a rare force of faithfulness which knew no flaw, René and Isabelle were examples for their generation. No stone has ever been cast at either of them. Nine children were born to them: four, Charles, René, Anne, and Isabelle, died in infancy; Nicholas, their third son, was a twin with Yolande, born in 1428; he had the title of Duke of Bar, but died before his majority. Good Queen Isabelle was buried in the Cathedral of Angers, where nearly forty years later René's bones were laid beside her ashes, to mingle in the common decay till the last trump shall sound to wake the dead.

There cannot be a better summing up of her gifts, her graces and her virtues than in the words of the sententious life's motto she herself composed, and wrote in golden letters upon parchment, and gave to each of her dear children:

"Si l'Amour fault, la Foy n'est plus chérie;
Si Foy périt, l'Amour s'en va périe; [142]
Pour ce, les ay en devise liez
Amour et Foy."

"If Love fails, Faith becomes more precious;
If Faith perishes, Love dies too;
Whence Love and Faith together are my device."

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# CHAPTER V [143]

## JEANNE D'ARC—"LA PUCELLE," "LA BLANCHE REINE DE FRANCE"

# I.

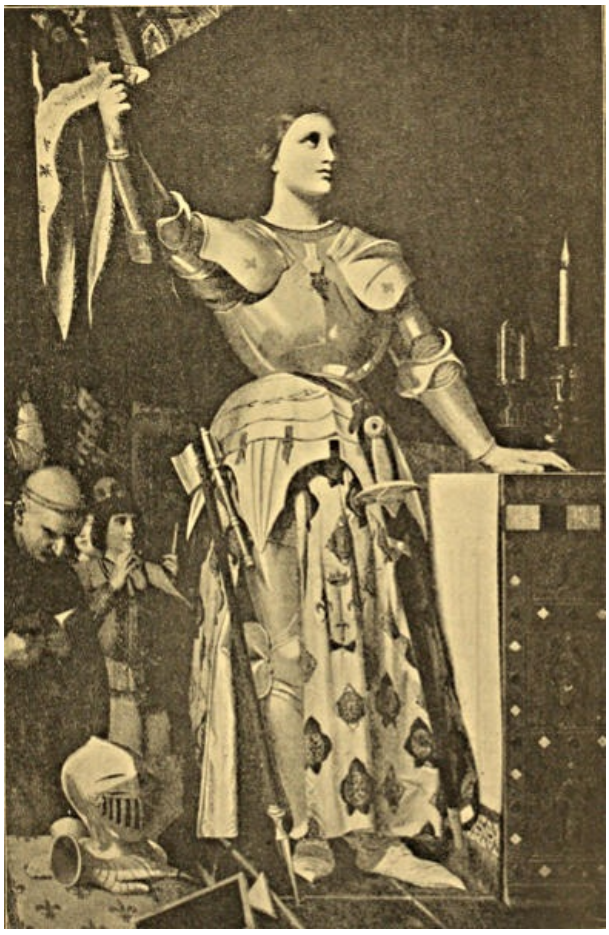
"Give me Duke René de Barrois, the noble son of good Queen Yolande, to guide me into France." The request was made by a simple village maiden aged not more than seventeen years, and the personage she addressed was Charles II., Duke of Lorraine. It was an extraordinary request; the occasion, too, was extraordinary.

Born on the Feast of the Epiphany in the year 1412, of worthy peasants, at Domremy, in Alsace,—Jacques d'Arc and Isabelle Romée, his wife,—Jeanne was the younger of their two daughters; she had three brothers older than herself. Domremy was a squalid little hamlet, like many another upon the Meuse, boasting of the mother-church of the commune—a grim old building, but glorified by many figures of holy saints in its coloured windows. The nearest village was Maxey, upon the borders of Lorraine. The villagers were in constant feud—Domremy for the King of France and her own Duke at Nancy, Maxey for the Duke of Burgundy and the hated English. Sieur Jacques d'Arc and his three stalwart, hard-working sons were as ready with the pike as they were handy with the plough. Mère Isabelle and her two daughters were zealous backers of their menfolk.

Sieur Jacques was, as peasant farmers went, a man of substance and well connected. He had saved a goodly sum of money, and owned, perhaps, the biggest flock of sheep in the country-side. [144] Milch cows and fattening oxen grazed his wide meadows. He was a man of probity, and had served the ancestral office of Maire of Domremy for many a year. Mère Isabelle excelled in stitchery as well as in the rearing of poultry and the cultivation of her fair garden plot. When about to be delivered of her youngest child, she dreamed three times that she should bear a girl, and that she should become famous in her country's history. The narrative goes on to say that many unusual circumstances attended her child's nativity: a fierce thunderstorm shook the dwelling, and mysterious voices uttered the strange cry: "*Aux secours! aux secours de la France!*"

Jeanne, the little daughter, was duly christened by the curé, and from her mother's womb she was a child of dedication—St. Catherine and St. Margaret were her spiritual sponsors. Precocious from her weaning, both in physical growth and mental development, she grew up a devotee at Mass and shrine. She sought solitude and silence, and declined to share her playmates' games. Other children thought her odd, and old crones shook their heads and pitied Sieur Jacques and his worthy spouse. Jeanne's favourite resort was a thicket near her parents' home,—Le Bois Chènus it was called,—an oak-wood grove where her father's pigs greedily sought for acorns. The Bois had, however, a weird repute; it had been, centuries before, a sacrificial site of heathen worship, and the village folk avoided it at night, for they said they saw strange figures under the trees and heard strange sounds,—in fact, the wood was haunted.

[145]



JEANNE D'ARC

From a Fresco by E. Lepenveu. Pantheon, Paris

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One summer's day in July, 1424, Jeanne d'Arc was seated, as was her wont, upon an ancient

fallen menhir at the verge of the coppice. She was shelling peas, and she also had her knitting by her. The hour of the day was nearly that of the "Angelus," when the frightened damsel heard an unusual rustling of the oaken branches overhead, and somewhere out of the tree or out of the sky voices sounded faintly upon her ear. At the same time a strange lurid light gleamed between her and the church-tower across the meadow. Laying aside her occupation, she listened breathlessly, almost in a trance, to what the "Voices" said; they were pitched in soothing female treble accents.

"*Jeanne soit bonne et sage enfant*," said one; and another went on: "*Va souvent à l'église*." Surely the heavenly speakers were Jeanne's holy guardians, St. Catherine and St. Margaret. Jeanne was riveted to the spot, and moved not till the twilight brought her sister looking for her. Jeanne said nothing, but for seven days in succession she sat as at the first, and heard the same solemn words repeated; then on the seventh,—it was Saturday,—another wonder appeared to her: a very glorious holy one and a watcher,—the great St. Michael, God's warring archangel, in shining armour,—stood before her under the great oak-tree, and bade her give heed to what he said. He told her eloquently and convincingly the story of the sad state of France—devoured by enemies, torn by factions, her King a fugitive uncrowned. When the heavenly visitant had finished his impassioned narrative, he bade Jeanne kneel, and, touching her shoulder with his flashing sword, said: "*Jeanne va toy aux secours du roy de France*."

The girl swooned as soon as her ghostly visitor had vanished, and so was found, and borne to [146] her couch by her brothers in alarm. In delirium for days and nights, she kept on repeating what the archangel had said, until, amid broken-hearted sobs, her grieving parents counted her as mad. All the gossips of the village and those from more distant homes shook their heads sadly, and said more fervently their *Ave Marias*. Jeanne was not mad, and after she had recovered her usual demeanour she related to her doubting father and mother and the good curé her mysterious story. The good priest proposed to exorcise the evil spirit which he was convinced was in her. Her father,—a matter-of-fact sort of man, and serious-minded, like all the peasant-folk of France,—thought a good thrashing was her deserts; her mother sided with her: she remembered the strange cry at her Jeanne's birth. Jeanne heard all they had to say, and kept silence, her protestations only adding fuel to the fire of denunciation. She resumed her usual avocations, but daily sat to hear the "Voices," as she called her ghostly visitants, and daily they repeated their strange instructions. She spent much time upon her knees in the church, and at last the curé, good man, gave heed to her infatuation. "If this be from God," he said to himself, "no man may stay her." He wondered, naturally, how this quiet and devout village girl could ever be the Divine instrument for the deliverance of France.

Jeanne's simplicity and sincerity, her earnestness and good behaviour, however, gradually silenced unfriendly critics; and although most folk regarded her as mad, many believed her story and watched developments. The strange revelation of the maid of Domremy travelled far and [147] wide, and brought many a neighbour and many a stranger to question her. Among the rest came Sieur Durand Laxaert, her mother's uncle by marriage—a man of means, too, and well known the country round. He questioned Jeanne, he questioned her parents, he questioned the village curé, and then he went off and told the amazing story to his friend, Chevalier Robert de Baudricourt, the Captain of Vaucouleurs, a market-town in Champagne, not far from Domremy. The gallant Captain listened attentively, but when the story was completed he burst out laughing. "Why, man," said he, "you and all of them are crazy! Just go back and box the child's ears soundly; that's the way to treat this sort of nonsense."

The matter dropped so far as the Chevalier was concerned, but again, in the following January, Sieur Laxaert approached Baudricourt, and asked him to see his young niece. He consented, and Jeanne, wearing her coarse red homespun kirtle and heavy wooden shoes and her village girl's coif, was introduced to the unbelieving Captain. He was dumbfounded by her appearance, for the lass was no village hoyden. Her figure was slender, her features refined; her great brown eyes,—staring into his face,—told only of simple faith and untarnished honour. Her voice was low and sweet, and there was a something eerie and incomprehensible about her which struck the good man, and made him feel uncomfortable. When he asked her what she wanted, she promptly replied: "I want to be led to the King of France."

"My child," de Baudricourt replied, "that I cannot do; but, if you wish, I will willingly take you to Nancy, and lead you to the Duke, your sovereign lord and mine. Prepare yourself at once for [148] the journey."

Amid the tears and protests of her parents and her friends Jeanne started, as she was, upon her eventful pilgrimage. At St. Nicholas de Pont,—a little town two leagues from Nancy,—she asked to be allowed to spend three hours in devotions in the church. When she reappeared, her face was wet with tears, and her long brown hair hung dishevelled over her shoulders. She did not seem to care. Her gaze was heavenward, and the only words she uttered were: "*En avant!*" With Sieur Laxaert was a comrade, a young man, Jehan de Novelonpont, better known as Jehan de Metz, of good birth and knightly carriage. He offered Jeanne his sword. She touched the hilt, and, smiling sadly, said: "Alas! young sir, that blade will be required erelong to slay thy country's foes and God's." Thus they entered the capital of Lorraine.

Duke Charles received his strange visitor somewhat reluctantly. He was a man of shrewd common-sense, intolerant of superstition, and impatient of feminine assumptions—as his consort, Duchess Marguerite, learnt to her undoing. He asked curtly about her home and her occult powers, and jokingly invoked her aid in the cure of gout, to which he was martyr, and from which he was then suffering acutely. "This," said he, "shall be the test of your pretensions to save France. Remove my pain, and I will take you to the King." Jeanne shed tears, and, straightening

out her rough woolsey skirt, she looked sadly up to heaven. At last she spoke: “Take me not, noble Duke, for a common jongleuse. First of all, noble Duke, I implore you to become reconciled to the Duchess, your wife; as for me, I am the unworthy instrument of God to set King Charles of [149] France upon his throne and to scatter his enemies.” The Duke dismissed the maid with a wave of his hand. “Take her away,” he said; “be kind to her; maybe I will see her again shortly.” “Jeanne,” he added, “in a day or two you shall tell your tale before some noble lords.”

All over Lorraine and Barrois internecine war was rife; noble rose against noble, and yeoman and peasant joined the fray. The most serious was the rivalry of René, the young Duke of Bar, and Antoine, Count of Vaudémont, concerning the rights of succession to the dukedom of Lorraine. Metz, into which de Vaudémont had thrown himself, was invested by the Barrois troops, splendidly led by the boy-warrior—he was but twenty years of age. A messenger from Charles requested a truce, and invited both commanders to join him at Nancy to take counsel with their peers upon the strange claims of a shepherd-girl from Domremy. With Duke René rode a score of knights and nobles; Count Antoine was accompanied by a like company. Upon the morrow of their arrival at the capital, Duke Charles assembled them and others in the great courtyard of the castle, and sent for Jeanne, who, still attired in her peasant garb, knelt at his feet and kissed his hand. Then she surveyed the assembly furtively, as though prepared for insult or worse, and quietly repeated her strange story amid general scoffs and impatience. One noble knight alone gave serious heed,—René, Duke of Bar. Duke Charles taunted her with her inability to mount a horse, much more to lead an army.

“Jeanne,” said he, “thou hast never bestridden a charger, thou canst not bear a lance!” [150]

“Sire,” she replied, “mount me, and see if I cannot both ride and hold my own.”

A quiet palfrey,—the property of Duchess Marguerite,—was led into the courtyard by its groom, but Jeanne refused to mount. “Give me,” she demanded, “the charger of that Prince yonder,” pointing to René of Sicily-Anjou and Bar. The Prince lifted her into the saddle, and his gentleness, reverence, and good looks, differentiated him from the rest of that knightly assemblage.

“What is thy name, brave Prince?” she asked.

“René de Bar,” he said.

“What!” the Maid replied, “the noble Duke of Bar, the gallant son of good Queen Yolande of Anjou. You shall be my escort into France.”

With that she laid firm hold of the heavy lance, offered by a young esquire, placed it correctly in stay, and smartly gathered up the reins. Saluting Dukes Charles and René, she drove the heels of her wooden shoes into the horse’s sides, and dashed round and round the courtyard, the lance in position, and then out into the open. Astonishment marked each noble countenance, and then loud applause greeted this quite unexpected display; it enlisted to her cause most of the spectators, who had meant to cry down the girl’s ineptitude, but now were perfectly ready to follow her. With difficulty Jeanne reined in her mount, and slowly cantered into the courtyard again. Saluting in correct knightly fashion the Duke, her Sovereign, and beckoning René once more to her side, she dismounted with his help, rendered up her lance, and fell at Charles’s feet.

The Duke gently raised the palpitating, girlish form, and aloud exclaimed: “May God grant the [151] accomplishment of thy desires! I see thou hast both courage and intelligence.” Jeanne then turned to René, and, laying her trembling hand upon his arm, looked up innocently but intently with her great brown eyes, into his open, truthful face, and said: “You, my Prince, will help me, I am sure. There is none other here in whom I know I can put my whole trust. You are like the blessed Michael who speaks to me and strengthens me. You are a Christian knight; you will lead me into France.” The Maid’s partiality for René de Bar gave rise, unworthily, to evil gossip with respect to their mutual relations. She was attracted to him by the tales of the country-side. Domremy was so near to the scenes of his military achievements in Lorraine that news of him and his prowess affected greatly the younger folk. The fact that he was the husband of their Princess Isabelle, “the Pride of Lorraine,” greatly added to his local fame.

The noble company at the castle moved into the hall of audience, and there Jeanne laid before them fully all her loyal aims—heaven-directed, as she said. She told them, too, the story of the “Voices,” and craved their assistance in her enterprise. “We will traverse France together,” she exclaimed, “until we find King Charles. We will crown him at Reims, and we will then cast out our country’s enemies. Saints Michael, Catherine, and Margaret, will protect us and our homes!”

This amazing speech by a young country girl roused general enthusiasm, and the mysterious magic of her voice and manner disarmed all opposition. Each belted knight drew forth his steely [152] blade, and, tossing it on high, swore to be her henchman. “*Vive la nostre Royne! à bas les Anglois!*” they cried aloud together. These acclamations hurtled stridently through gallery, wayward, and postern, and away they flew in increased volume past the portcullis, till every citizen in Nancy and the labourers in the fields around joined in the ecstatic chorus: “*Vive la nostre Royne Jeanne!*” Rich and poor, noble and simple, and the children, too, pressed into the castle precincts to catch a sight of the humble yet brave messenger of God, and perchance to touch her person or her dress, seeking infection from the virtue and valour which possessed her. Jeanne’s reception and recognition at Nancy Castle attained the proportions of a Bretagne *pardon*. Church-bells clanged for her, priests blessed her, and relics of saints were exposed with the Blessed Sacrament on her behalf.


JEANNE D’ARC EXPELLING GAY WOMEN FROM HER CAMP

From an Illuminated MS. National Library of Paris

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Duke René, on his part, showed no hesitation in accepting the high honour the inspired Maid had paid him. He kissed her hand, a peasant’s hand,—strange act for a royal knight!—smitten with the girl’s piety and devotion; he, too, was religiously affected. Jeanne became an heroic figure in his estimation. What clean-minded lad is there, or has ever been, who is not marvellously affected by a handsome, dashing girl, irrespective of her rank in life? What traces some have seen of a tenderer passion still than youthful admiration were surely hard to diagnose in that first burst of emotional romance: it may have bloomed later, but René’s heart was in the safe-keeping of Isabelle. Times and manners then lent colour to the insinuation, possibly, for love and lovers were freer then than now from social conventions. René departed for Bar-le-Duc, to [153] prepare for the expedition. He gave immediate orders to raise the siege of three fortresses, Metz, Vézelise, and Vaudémont, and, calling off the troops encamped there, he returned quickly to Nancy, to escort Jeanne to the King of France. He found her arrayed in quasi-armour, with spurs on her mailed boots; her head alone was uncovered, save for the glory of her abundant hair. She wore a sash of white silk, the gift of Duchess Marguerite; her horse, too, had white silken favours. The cavalcade started from the castle, René and Jeanne riding side by side in front. Through byways they went,—an ever-increasing host of armed men and camp-followers,—avoiding notice as best they could, marching by night, resting by day, to avoid the scattered bands of English foemen.

The pilgrimage,—for such it really was,—partook not only of a religious and a warlike character,—for Jeanne insisted on attending Mass *en route*, and prevailed upon her escort to say their daily prayers,—but it exhibited elements of gaiety; with Duke René rode a company of minstrels, with Jehan Durant of Bar as their leader. To him René paid 30 gold florins a month —“to make warlike melody for keeping up my men’s brave hearts,” he said. At Troyes, Jeanne and her escort were received rapturously; the Bishop placed in her hand a white silken oriflamme, a banner made by ladies of the city, and censed and blessed her, and so they won their way to Tours.

Before entering that ancient loyal city,—under the special charge of the holy warrior St. Martin,—Jeanne requested René to send to the neighbouring village of Fierbois, and “ask the [154] curé of the Church of St. Catherine for a sword which hangs,” she said, “over the high-altar.” It was a famous weapon, although the doughty knight whose it had been was unremembered. The blade was of finely tempered steel, and richly damascened with golden crosses and silver lilies—the emblems of Jeanne’s spiritual sponsors. The sword itself, in size and shape, was like St. Michael’s own. She told René that the “Voices” had revealed this relic to her, and had bidden her hang it on her hip. At Tours, also, René had news of the whereabouts of the King, who, sad to say, was a fugitive in and out of his own dominions and those of his neighbours. Charles VII. was at Chinon, safe in its majestic castle—much like that of Windsor in extent, position, and distinction.

It came certainly as a grievous shock to all that enthusiastic expedition to find the King,—"poor as a church mouse and defenceless as a rabbit,"—engaged in frivolities and excesses. The Court at Chinon was the maddest and the merriest in France. Duke René, true to his promise, at once sought out the King, and arranged an interview with the Maid of Domremy, although His Majesty at first refused "to be troubled with a country wench." The meeting was held in the Grand Logis of the enceinte of the Château du Milieu. Chinon, indeed, had three castles connected with one another: The Château de St. Georges was a sort of advanced fortress, built by Henri Plantagenet (Henry II. of England) in the twelfth century, but greatly dilapidated 300 years later; the Château du Milieu, the most important part of Chinon, contained the royal apartments; and the Château de Couldray, the most ancient, dating from the time of the heroic Thibaut le Tricheur, early in the [155] tenth century. Henry II. died in the Grand Logis, where King Charles VII. had his temporary residence. In the Salle du Trône, with its vast chimney-piece of sculptured stone and its famous painted windows, the King summoned his courtiers, and, disguised as an ordinary noble of the Court, he mingled with them, giving out as his reason that he should "test the wench's power of divination. If she picks me out at once, then I will hear what she has to say; if not, I won't have anything to do with her."

Jeanne was brought into the splendid apartment, filled with the pageantry of France, and dazzling enough to have disturbed any ordinary girl's equanimity. She made, taught by René, an obeisance to the empty throne, and then he told her she must find the King among the company. Without a moment's hesitation she went straight up to the Sovereign incognito, bowed low, and said softly: "Sire, you are Charles the Dauphin." Very much astonished by Jeanne's appearance and demeanour, and still more by her certainty as to his identity, Charles acknowledged himself, and, leading the unabashed damsel with René aside into the embrasure of a window, he asked her to give him her message. This Jeanne did with candour and emphasis, and furthermore astounded "the Dauphin," as she persisted in calling him,—he had not been crowned King, of course,—by "revealing," as he told René afterwards, "certain secrets known only to myself and God." What these "secrets" were has puzzled curious inquirers. Probably they concerned happenings during the King's youth, and affected the question of his legitimacy. He, too, was at one time proposed as the husband of the "Pride of Lorraine," the heiress Isabelle. Anyhow, as [156] known to Jeanne d'Arc, they were the usual exaggerations of Court and country gossip. Kings, knights, and ladies, and their doings, ever cause peasants topics for discussion.

"Gentle Dauphin," the Maid said, "I am sent to you to tell you that you shall be crowned at Reims." The Court was divided; part held with la Trémouille, the Chancellor, against Jeanne's pretensions, some of the baser sort attempted to make sport of her rusticity, but the majority sided with Duke René, who was now more than ever impressed with the bearing of his "Queen."

## II.

All sorts of plans were propounded to test the virtue and the devotion of the young Domremy shepherdess. René and those of his following denounced most of them as indecent and preposterous, but he allowed two inquiries to be instituted: one with reference to Jeanne's orthodoxy in religion, and the other with respect to her personal chastity. The King approved both these expedients, and confided to René,—youth though he was,—their superintendence and execution.

Still acting as Jeanne's escort, René took her and a number of Court chaplains, together with the worthy Curé of Domremy and Sieur Laxaert,—both of whom had been sent for from Lorraine,—to Poitiers, for examination by a special conclave of Bishops and theologians. Poitiers was famous for its divinity schools and its *École de Droit*, wherein thousands of students were [157] instructed in doctrinal matters and subjects of metaphysical science. The Holy See had there an office of the Congregation of Rites and a permanent secretariate of hagiology. The quaint old capital of Poitou was also renowned for the shrine of St. Radegonde, which attracted annually vast numbers of pilgrims to kiss *Le Pas de Dieu*, Christ's footprints, where he stood communing with his gentle servant. Radegonde and Jeanne had ground for mutual sympathy. Perhaps Jeanne knew the story of her prototype.

Do what they would, the holy men of Poitiers could not make Jeanne deviate ever so little from the thread of her story. "The Voices," she said, "speak to me daily, and I feel that my three saints are with me constantly." She answered all their questions fearlessly, and very greatly were they impressed by her sincerity and amazed at her knowledge of divinity. No flaw was to be discovered in her orthodoxy, nor did she yield at all to insinuations of witchcraft. Indeed, the whole assembly was affected by her religious enthusiasm, and a careful précis was preserved of all that transpired during the examination. This was, in truth, the first step to the beatification of St. Jeanne d'Arc.

Returning to Chinon, the Maid awaited her second ordeal—the inquisition by a panel of matrons. This delicate business was taken in hand by Queen Yolande and certain ladies well known for probity and prudence. Jeanne submitted herself gladly enough to the "good mother" of her true knight, René d'Anjou and Bar. They speedily reached a decision respecting the character of the Maid of Domremy. Emphatically they repudiated all suggestions of immorality, and [158] declared that Jeanne d'Arc was a *virgo intacta*, "as chaste in mind and body as the Holy Virgin herself." "*La Pucelle*," as they styled her, "is," they affirmed, "a child of God, the peculiar charge of St. Catherine and St. Margaret, whose saintly virtues she desires to cultivate. She is no witch, nor in the pay of any evil-minded persons. She is directly inspired by God, and St. Michael is her protector."

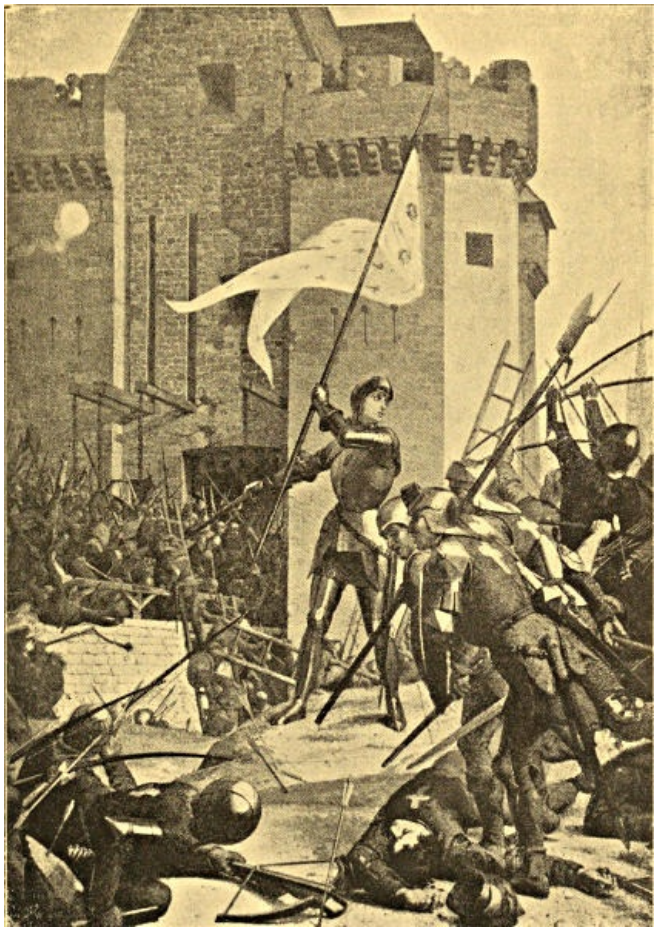
This testimony Queen Yolande delivered personally to King Charles, and persuaded him to see the Maid once more and converse more fully with her. The result of this intercourse was amazing: Charles became another man. The persuasions of his faithful and devout consort, Queen Marie, had completely failed to rouse him, and the exhortations of Queen Yolande had no more than excited his curiosity, but the village maid from Lorraine succeeded in inspiring the trifling, inept Sovereign with new life and energy. He sent for René, and named him his lieutenant, and recommitted "*La Pucelle*" to his care. With the young Duke was his trusty friend and Mentor, Armand Barbazan, one of the most perfect soldiers and gentlemen in France, the precursor of another knight "*sans peur et sans reproche*"—Bayart. Together they elaborated a plan of campaign which would be in obedience to the mysterious "Voices" of "*La Pucelle*." This they submitted to la Trémouille, Dunois, "le Bâtard," and La Hire, Charles's trusted counsellors. It was the latter, probably, who uttered that veiled rebuke to the King: "Sire, I never knew any Prince so happy in his losses as you!"

These sapient commanders agreed that the first move in the new operations was the raising of [159] the siege of Orléans. The King acquiesced; he, too, had done his part, for he had, upon his own initiative, detached the Duke of Burgundy from his alliance with the English, and had thus very materially prepared the way to Reims and his coronation. Jeanne d'Arc was, of course, apprised of this decision, and she was asked what part she proposed to take. After a night-long vigil in the grand old church of St. Maurice, where she held communion with the "Voices," she told René that she should be by his side "as leader of the vanguard."

The Maid had done very much upon the forced march from Nancy to Chinon to reform the discipline and the freedom of the soldiers. She forbade swearing and the use of strong drink. Gambling of every kind, and resort to fortune-telling mummers, she penalized, as well as every other illicit distraction. She expelled in person *les filles de joie*—the gay women who hung upon the fringe of the army and demoralized both officers and men. Daily she insisted upon Mass being celebrated on the field of march, and moved each man to offer his own orisons upon his bended knee. Among her immediate attendants were priests and acolytes—strange comrades, perhaps, for Duke René's minstrels; but, then, the two cults,—Religion and Chivalry,—were ever in intimate affinity: all-honoured Blessed Mary first, and the saints of God, and all respected the persons of the weaker sex around them.

It was a well-found, well-disciplined, and well-led army that left the sheltering battlements of Chinon on April 29, 1429—it was a momentous move. Some in river barges, some in saddle, some [160] afoot, traversed the lovely spring-smiling valley of the Loire. Forest echoes were awakened and church-bells set chiming in response to holy litanies of Church and lilting songs of chivalry. Peasants put lighted candles on the lintels of doors and windows of their rude hovels; every castle and *manoir* displayed their banners and boomed their guns *en route*. In the churches the Host was exposed on decorated altars, and *Miserere* sung.

Before bidding farewell to King Charles, La Pucelle,—fully armed, cap-à-pie, in burnished steel armour of Zaragoza damascened with gold, wherein she had been clothed by Queen Yolande's royal hands,—took her place upon the foot-pace of the high-altar of St. Maurice. She placed her white oriflamme and her crimson-sheathed sword of Fierbois upon the sacred stone for episcopal benediction, and then, dedicating her mission and herself once more solemnly to the God of battles, assumed her trophy and her weapon. Led by René, she slowly passed down the nave of the grand old church, and out by the great portal, whence, mounting her strong white charger, she rode off amid enthusiastic plaudits and many hearty prayers, to put herself at the head of the French host, and thus awaited the signal to advance.



JEANNE D’ARC AT THE SIEGE OF ORLÉANS

From a Fresco by E. Lepenveu. Pantheon, Paris

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What a thrilling scene it must have been! Nothing in modern warfare could ever equal in circumstance and emotion that pageant pilgrimage. It was the last hope of France going forth to conquer or to die, led by a young shepherd-girl and a youthful royal knight. La Pucelle’s absolute reliance on the help of God, her remarkable courage, and the spell she had cast over the King, his [161] army, and his Court, were all rendered more convincing to the common mind by the magic of her personal appearance. She was hailed as “*Nostre Royne en blanche!*” The bright sun shone upon her resplendent white armour, and the sharp breeze unfurled her snow-white banner; her white charger, too, enhanced the *tout ensemble*. She rode the most conspicuous object in that dazzling cavalcade, and no wonder her followers regarded her as almost supernatural.

At Tours and at Blois “Stations” were made for absolution, and from the latter place Jeanne caused René, in her name, to write an ultimatum to the Duke of Bedford, the English Regent of France and Generalissimo of the English army. She ordered him and his co-commanders to cease devastating fair France, sorely stricken as she was, and to avoid the clash of arms by retiring before her Heaven-directed forces. “Thou hast had,” she said, “noble Duke, thy fill of human bleed. Seek now the Divine pardon, for nothing shall stay me till I have planted my banner upon the walls of Orléans. Give back to me the keys of all the towns you have seized, destroy no more property, repent and retire.”

Alas for human foresight! human quarrels mar heroic achievements: la Trémouille, Dunois, and La Hire were not at one with one another—each sought his own; but that being impossible, all three determined that they would master René, Barbazan, and Jeanne. La Pucelle had made up her mind to approach Orléans from the right bank of the Loire; but her rivals led their troops to the other side, whence the fortifications could only be reached by crossing the impregnable bridge or by boat. Jeanne, however, was not to be denied, and she determined to make an assault [162] at once and at all costs. Seeing herself misled, she summoned René once more for council, and Guy de Laval, a young knight,—second only to René in devotion to La Pucelle,—joined the deliberations. A storming-party was chosen,—regardless of the opposition of the three churlish commanders,—and Jeanne put herself at its head without any hesitation. Confidence and enthusiasm prevailed: Jeanne stood upon the broken bridge whilst René and Guy hammered at the portcullis; and thus upon May 8 Orléans was captured. Among the wounded was the Maid herself, not severely, to be sure, but the sight of her blood lent frenzied prowess to her soldiery. With her escort she rode through the streets crowded with famished, suffering people, who blessed,—nay, almost worshipped,—her. She halted at the cathedral of Sainte Croix, and held communion with the “Voices,” and then she went to rest awhile in the humble abode of Sieur Jacques Bouchier, an honest citizen attached to the suite of the Duke of Orléans. René lodged at the ducal palace.

The English withdrew to Paris, where a truce was agreed to by Louis, Cardinal de Bar, in the name of his nephew, Duke René—a very singular arrangement, but it was the efficient cause of a

general suspension of hostilities. Charles VII. called a council of war at Blois, which decided that, as the way was now absolutely open, La Pucelle should fulfil her mysterious but triumphant mission by conducting “the Dauphin” to his coronation.

A great wave of patriotism swept over France. Men asked one another whether this was not the [163]
prelude to deliverance from 300 years of foreign aggression, and the first step towards the reformation of civil disorder. Charles rose to his magnificent opportunity, and rallied all the French Sovereigns in a league of peace and stability. Even the implacable Duke of Burgundy, who hated René de Bar and Charles de Lorraine irreconcilably, was minded to join in the general *rapprochement*. La Pucelle dictated a letter to him, conjuring him to renounce his petty jealousies for the love of Christ and St. Mary, to make his peace complete with King Charles of France, and to turn his hand against the common enemy. “Come,” she said, “with us to Reims, there to cement the good-will of all good men in France.” The Duke actually made some preparations for the journey, but at the eleventh hour pride got the better of his reason, and his hand never grasped those of his brother Sovereigns nor that of La Pucelle. Notwithstanding all France was *en route* to Reims that July, attracted magnet-like by the Maid’s white steel mail and oriflamme.

The Cathedral of Reims,—whose marvellous “Glory of Mary” over the great western portal Viollet le Duc called “the most splendid piece of Gothic architecture in the world,”—had been the coronation theatre of all the Kings of France since Henry I. in 1027; but no such ceremony had equalled in interest and in grandeur that of July 17, 1429. The summer sun awoke betimes the loyal citizens and the thousands of strangers within their gates; the genial morning breeze ruffled out gay banners and pageant garlands which decorated lavishly each house and street, and soon the world and his wife were on foot to the cathedral.

There was certainly very much more than a mere suspicion of *fin bouquet* in that fresh morning [164]
air; each worthy had filled his flask with generous *vin de la montaigne*, with which to quaff jovially the good healths of Charles and Jeanne and René, inseparable in the popular mind. “*Le Roy, La Pucelle, et le preux Cavalier*”—that was the toast.

What a motley crowd it was! Some, too, of the hated English were there, courageously incognito; but, then, Reims was quite as cosmopolitan in the fifteenth century as she is in the twentieth, with her 30,000 Yorkshire and Worcestershire wool-weavers. Probably, however, no forced Yorkshire rhubarb found its way then, as now, into the vats of the vintners!

It was a well-dressed crowd, for St. Frisette,—one of the patrons of the city,—has all along had her devotees, and no coiffeurs are so famous as those of her romantic cult. Indeed, her influence in fashion is for ever memoralized by the costumes and headgear, correctly chiselled, of the statues of the cathedral.

Saints, prophets, kings, and queens, in stone, high up in the galleries of the exterior of the cathedral, looked down approvingly, or the reverse, upon the rare show and its spectators. The gargoyles of Reims were ever famous for their unusual benignity. They were all animation and sparkled in the sunshine; merriment became emphatic within the floriated arches of the buttresses. In each a laughing angel in stone was exercising her witchery and adding heavenly hilarity to the general good-humour. The whole sacred building was *en fête*; it is still the merriest building in Christendom; its sculptured stones have imbibed the effervescence of rare [165]
champagne for centuries!

Within the sacred building all was solemn and restrained. Resplendent gem-like glass of the thirteenth century, skilfully leaded in the clerestory windows of the nave, produced a chiaroscuro of scintillating coloured light, wherein the spirits of the mighty and the beauteous dead were mustering to take, unseen, their sympathetic parts in the gorgeous functions of the day. Freshly-worked tapestries, covering the aisle walls, shared with the vitreous glories the telling of pageant stories of religion and romance.

The “*Sacré*,” or coronation, of King Charles was an unique ceremonial. Supported upon either hand by the most distinguished Sovereign Princes of France,—Louis III., King of Sicily and Duke of Anjou, and his brother René, Duke of Barrois and heir-consort of Lorraine,—he passed majestically up the nave under the heavy golden canopy of state. Another Anjou Prince, Charles, Duke of Maine, nephew of Louis and René, bore the monarch’s train—his cousins all. The Grand Peers, with one exception, Burgundy, marched alongside in sovereign dignity and pride. Strange it was that no royal ladies graced the auspicious sacring. Queen Marie bore no part; she, indeed, remained at Bourges, and recited her “Hours” in solitude. Neither Queen Yolande of Sicily-Anjou nor Duchess Isabelle of Bar-Lorraine was present, but the place of First Lady was, for all that, occupied by a “Queen,” *the* Queen of the coronation—“*la Royne blanche—Jeanne*.” Such a “Queen” had never stood beside a Sovereign kneeling for his crown before the high-altar of [166]
Reims. The fabled fame of saintly Queen Clotilde paled before the brilliant triumph of plain Jeanne d’Arc. How she bore herself in this her hour of miraculous victory, and what part she took in the stately ceremonial, historians have scantily related, and painters only imaginatively recorded: no précis has come down to us, no artist made a sketch upon the spot.

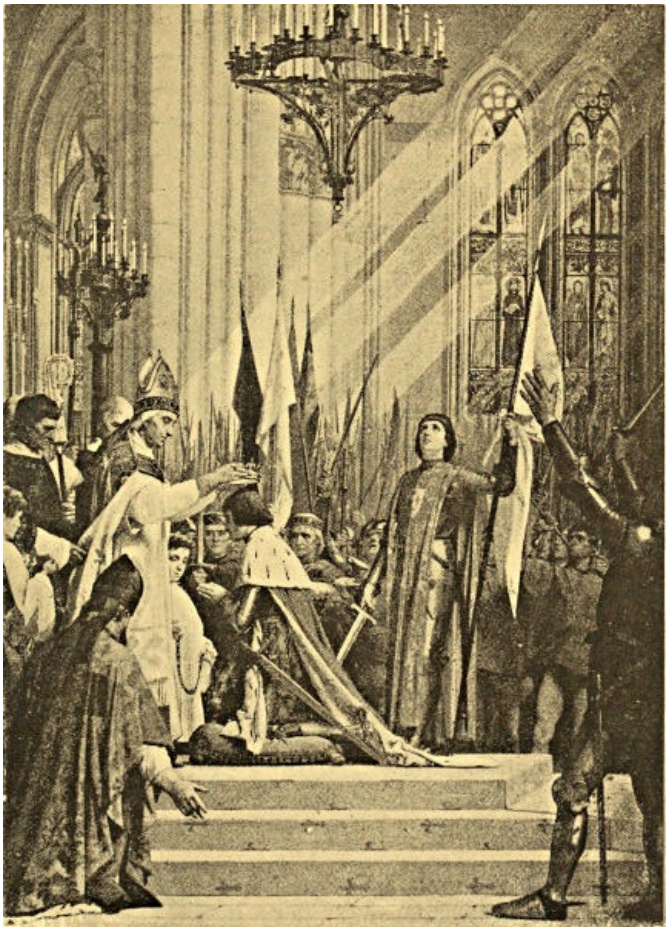
Immediately after the King and his royal supporters walked with dignity La Pucelle, in her flashing white armour. In her right hand she bore, at the salute, the crimson-sheathed sword of St. Catherine of Fierbois. Her head was bare, save for her lustrous locks of hair; but some pious souls thought they saw a saint’s nimbus around her brow; it was, perhaps, a ring of sunny halo—a reflection from her mail of steel, or a coronal of coloured glories shot through the stained-glass windows. By the Maid’s side marched her young and true esquire, Louis de Contes, bearing unfurled her magic oriflamme.

It was said that Jeanne had not intended to take any part in the actual coronation of her Sovereign; it was quite enough for her that Charles and she had entered Reims together. She was resting quietly and prayerfully, communing with her patron saints, and listening, as was her daily wont, of course, to the “Voices,” within her modest chamber in the humble hostelry,—now the Maison Rouge,—where her parents from Domremy had put up, when René and a Sovereign’s escort clattered up to the door and commanded in the King’s name the Maid’s presence within the cathedral. At once she donned her armour, and, giving René her hand, she walked with him [167] across the cathedral place to where the King was awaiting her.

“The people,” it is recorded, “looked on with awe and wonder. Thus had actually come to pass the fantastic vision that floated before the eyes of the young village girl of Domremy, and had thrilled all France.” When La Pucelle had taken up her station on the royal daïs, she grasped her white silken banner in her right hand, saying to those around her: “This oriflamme hath shared the dangers: it has a right to the glories!” That ensign of victory still towers up aloft in the nave of Reims Cathedral, above the very spot where Jeanne stood and Charles was crowned—an abiding mascot of faith and chivalry. We may well imagine the heroine casting her eyes over that splendid temple of God and its occupants, and resting at last mesmerically upon the glorified figures of her three beloved holy ones beaming down upon her from the choirs of saints in the clerestory windows. St. Michael, St. Catherine, and St. Margaret, were all there, and their Master, too, for out and away from the empyreal realm, and beyond the burning sun of heaven, for the coronation of Charles VII. of France at Reims was the apotheosis of Jeanne d’Arc of Domremy. “The glory of God,” as some said who saw her, “there transformed the village maid into a bride of Christ”—a substantial Queen of Heaven.

Immediately after the anointing, the coronation, and the other ritual acts, were complete, Jeanne knelt down before her King, her eyes brimful of tears, and said softly to him: “Gentle King, now is fulfilled the pleasure of God. I pray you thank Him humbly with me, and let us thank, [168] too, the good saints Michael, Catherine, and Margaret, who have so wonderfully aided us. Now my mission to you, my King, is fulfilled, I pray you release me, that I may depart with my parents to my simple home. One thing only I crave: it is that my beloved village shall be free for ever from taxation, and that their land and tenements shall be retained by my people. Sire, I bid you farewell.”

A few days subsequent to the coronation, Charles held a council of war at Reims to decide the plan of operations against the enemies of France, and he again sent René to the Maid’s lodging to bid her attend. “You have,” said the King to Jeanne, “not yet quite fulfilled the task you set yourself. The English still possess our gates. I need your presence and your services to rid France of her foes.” The Maid, sad at heart that more bloodshed had to deluge the soil of the devastated land, had no choice but to resume her martial garb, and once more to mount her war-steed. The council was divided in opinion: some agreed with la Trémouille, Dunois, and La Hire, and others sided with René and Barbazan,—with them was Jeanne,—and they prevailed. An advance in force on Paris was the order of the day. Upon August 13 René, with Jeanne, led the vanguard of the King’s forces across the Marne. At Montpiloir a pitched battle was fought, wherein Jeanne wrought terror in the breast of superstitious foemen, and René covered himself with glory. The pick of the English army, under the Regent himself, the Duke of Bedford, was worsted, after knightly encounters of noble champions and prodigies of valour on both sides had been keenly scored. Wherever the white oriflamme of La Pucelle chanced to be advanced, there was panic; [169] the English regarded her as a supernatural being whom no human bravery could withstand. Defeat became a rout, and ten days after leaving Reims the victorious French army followed Jeanne and René into St. Denis and recovered the royal sepulchres.



THE CORONATION OF KING CHARLES VII. AT REIMS CATHEDRAL

From a Fresco by E. Lepenveu. Pantheon, Paris

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Next to popular and soldierly estimation of the heroism of La Pucelle, was universal admiration for the courage and resourcefulness of the young Duke de Barrois. He with his brother, King Louis of Sicily, were also the champions of the knightly “Lists,” although Jeanne had prayed *her* warrior not to risk his neck in such encounters. René, indeed, was the hero, as Jeanne was the heroine, of that wonderful campaign. Only half the truth was told of his abilities in that saying of the Maid: “René de Bar is worth more than a squadron of cavalry!”

During these sanguinary operations two royal ladies, each in her castle boudoir,—at Angers and at Nancy,—were devoured with anxiety and apprehension: the mother and the wife of René —“good” Queen Yolande and “fair” Duchess Isabelle. Their part was to watch and pray, for each was exercising a lieutenant-generalcy for her absent hero. Very well could they each have donned their coats of mail, like Jeanne d’Arc, for each was to the manner born; but the closer ties and dearer of motherhood could not be renounced. Queen Marie also played nobly the woman’s part; she had her family cares also, and, now that her consort was like a lion roused, her tact and love had much to do to restrain his ardour. Charles was not a soldier born, nor had he been trained in military command, so his presence in the field was fraught with risk and danger; his forte was in [170] reserve. Whilst Marie grasped the bridle of his charger, Agnes Sorel loosened the girdle of his mail, and he quietly reposed at Loches.

La Pucelle now assumed another rôle. By heavenly advice she had been content to guide the destiny of Charles; now her “Voices” bade her command in person the army of France against the foe. The experienced military leaders, one and all, were discounted, and on September 8 she took actual command-in-chief, and opened the attack on Paris. It was on the waning of that fête-day of the Virgin that Jeanne, in all her flashing panoply of war, scaled the first ladder raised against the Port St. Denis; but, alas! before she could place her foot upon the battlement her thigh was pierced by an arrow, and she fell. Shades, too, of night were falling, and René sounded the retreat, whilst many a gallant heart trembled more for La Pucelle than for the temporary check. Helped by Guy de Laval and Jean de Clermont, as constant as himself, the young chief of the staff placed tenderly the wounded Maid upon a sumpter-horse, and himself led her to the nuns’ quarters at the Chapelle de St. Denis hard by, and assisted to dress her wound.

René rallied the flower of the French forces, and many a grizzled warrior and many a beardless recruit felt the influence of his enthusiasm—whilst all were ready to lay down their lives for La Pucelle, and mingle their blood with hers. A quaint couplet says:

“La dit il mante la fière bande
Que le fier Prince René commande!”

[171]

Paris fell, and Charles came to his own, whilst René bade farewell to La Pucelle, and hurried off to Bar-le-Duc, where brave and fair Isabelle was holding her own and his with difficulty against

unscrupulous and unpatriotic factions. Jeanne felt the absence of her most trusty ally keenly, and missed his energetic counsels; but she bravely resumed the conduct of the war, instructed by her heavenly patrons. A crisis, however, was approaching—a crisis which was momentous in its consequence for herself. Called to give siege to Compiègne on May 24, 1430, she was taken prisoner, and the hopes of France were wrecked. Without La Pucelle the fight was impossible, and René had gone too!

The rest of the story of La Pucelle is, alas! soon told. What she said to Charles, Duke of Lorraine, at the outset of her mission might well be said of her now that she was *hors de combat*: "*La lutte sera vive, mais j'ai le plan précis pour triompher!*" (The struggle will be fierce, but I have a plan of certain victory!). It was said that Jeanne was captured by some archers from Picardy, who crept unseen between the legs of her escort. By them handed over to John, Duke of Luxembourg, she was sold to the English. The *Tour de la Pucelle* still marks the spot. Not a hand in France was raised to rescue the holy maiden. Charles himself, who owed all to her, seems to have forgotten her very soon after his return to Loches and to the arms of his "*belle des belles*," Agnes Sorel. René was fighting for his own in Lorraine and Bar, and could do nothing for his heroine. La Pucelle was taken from fortress to fortress, each prison being more fearsome than the last. She was subjected to insult and injury, treachery and outrage, and, deserted by everyone, she remained reliant only upon God. Her trial as an enemy and a sorceress was a [172] mockery; even her own people turned against her; her straightforward answers and her superhuman fortitude baffled her judges. At last she was condemned and shut up in a cage of iron, her feet fettered with irons, and her body stripped almost to nakedness. Alas that God, whose devoted servant she was, should have destined her to this last stage of despair! Through all her bitter trials and sufferings she maintained an undaunted demeanour. Were her "Voices" hushed now that she prayed for death? When some English bigots approached to taunt her, she answered meekly: "*Je sais bien que les Anglois me feront mourir*" (I know perfectly well that the English will put me to death).

A year's captivity and cruelty, harsh and revolting, found the spotless, unselfish, and pious "Maid of Orléans" in her twentieth year—alas! so young to die—a human wreck; but, mercifully, an end was put to her sufferings at Rouen on May 30, 1431. Burnt to death in the market-place,—calling upon Jesus, Mary, Michael, Catherine, and Margaret,—her fiendish murderers hardly allowed the fire to cool before they raked up her poor grey ashes, and then cast them with maledictions into the swirling Seine. So perished Jeanne d'Arc, the child of God, the deliverer of her country. Now her place is among the saints: she is St. Jeanne d'Arc.

It was said that her heart was found intact after the fire had burnt itself out, and that as one stooped to pick it up a white dove fluttered before his face!

Ill news travels apace. René de Bar et Lorraine heard of the tragedy at Rouen, and was broken- [173] hearted. He dismissed his captains, his courtiers, and his minstrels, and shut himself up in his castle at Clermont, where he chided his soul with tears and fastings. His was the bitter cry: "*Ma Royne blanche, Jeanne, est mort—helas! ma Royne est mort!*"

The heart, too, of Charles, the King, reproached him before he died; he could never really have forgotten La Pucelle. A little girl was born to him and Queen Marie six months after Jeanne's martyrdom; her name was "*Jeanne*," as he said, "*en reconnaissance et pour mes péchés*."

In the Register of Taxes the space against Domremy was left vacant until the great revolution, except for the entry: "*Néant, à cause de la Pucelle*." Her parents' cottage is still preserved, although the Bois Chènus is no more. The memory of Jeanne d'Arc will never die.

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# CHAPTER VI [174]

## MARIE D'ANJOU—"LA PETITE REINE DE BOURGES"

### I.

"The little Queen of Bourges,"—so called partly in derision, partly in pity,—but all the same one of the noblest and best Queens who ever shared the sovereign throne of France: "noble," not so much in gradation of rank as in distinction of character; "best," or "good," not in the sense of mock righteousness, but in the interpretation of whole-heartedness.

Marie d'Anjou was the eldest daughter of King Louis II. and Queen Yolande of Sicily-Anjou-Naples-Provence. Born at Angers, October 14, 1404, she and her younger brother, René, four years her junior, grew up to love one another almost distractedly. So intense was this fraternal affection that their solicitous and resourceful mother viewed it with apprehension, fearing its consequences,—if left unchecked or undiverted into a more natural channel,—the cloister. It was no part of the excellent training the Queen provided for her offspring to hide their futures under the garb of religion; she had lofty ambitions for all her children, and those ambitions she lived to see realized.

MARIE D'ANJOU

From a Painting of the School of Jean Fouquet (1460). National Gallery, London

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Marie d'Anjou's betrothal and marriage to Charles de Ponthieu, Dauphin of France, in 1422, was a supreme master-stroke of statecraft which only such a remarkable mother and Queen as Yolande of Sicily-Anjou could effect. She, with all her prescience, could not have forecast the future of France proper and her many sovereign sister States, which was, in its happy fruition, [175] due to that far-seeing nuptial contract. Marie's son, Louis XI., made France one nation much as she is to-day.

When Queen Yolande so anxiously took charge of the young Dauphin, and had him educated with her own children, she was quite prepared for any mental and physical development in her son-in-law which might be expected to result from his unhappy parentage. No doubt she did what was possible to correct faults of heredity and to develop such latent excellencies as had not been wholly vitiated in the child's infancy. Still, we may be sure she had a heart full of trouble as she witnessed the degeneration of her son-in-law from paths of probity and virtue.

In truth, the marriage of Princess Marie was, in a strict sense, a sacrifice and an oblation. The mating of her dearly loved daughter, a girl of unusual promise, with a youth of evil ancestry and unworthy predispositions must have cost the devoted mother much.

Marie was remarkable for rare beauty of person—pale, with perfect features; tall, with a graceful figure, and distinguished by her regal carriage.

In personal appearance Charles was unattractive: his figure was insignificant and ill-formed; his head was unduly large; he had large feet and hands, whilst his legs were short and bowed, and this caused an ungraceful gait; his face was sickly-looking and pock-marked, with a prominent nose, a wide and sensual mouth, and a heavy jaw; his eyes were small and somewhat crisscross; he had coarse dark hair and heavy eyebrows. If his destiny had not been a throne, he might just as well have found his career in a stable. With all these personal disadvantages, [176] Charles was naturally warm-hearted and affectionate; he was possessed of a cool judgment, very affable and considerate, and, when roused, a very lion in the way. The marks of his evil mother's influence never left him; the crushing of his natural inclinations and opportunities in childhood warped and unbalanced his mental calibre.

It was said scoffingly of him by those who were bereft of feeling: "*Le Dauphin est un fou, fils d'un insensé et d'une prostituée.*"[A] Jean Juvenal des Ursins perhaps went too far in the opposite direction, for in 1433 he wrote in his "Chronicle" concerning the King: "*Sa vie est plaisante à Dieu; il n'y-a-en aucun vice.*"[B]

[A] "The Dauphin is a poor fool, the son of a madman and a prostitute."

[B] "His manner of life is pleasant to God; he has no vice."

The first notice we find of the life of Marie d'Anjou, however, does not refer to her union with

Charles VII., but her betrothal, when only five years old, to Jehan de Beaux, Prince of Taranto, her kinsman. He was the son of the Prince of Taranto who accompanied King Louis II., Marie's father, on his romantic journey to Perpignan, in 1399, to welcome Princess Yolanda d'Arragona. Descended in direct line from Charles, first Duke of Anjou, younger brother of St. Louis IX., his grandfather was Philippe, second son of Charles III. and Marguerite of France. Through the last-named Princess a sad stain besmirched the shield of the silver lilies. Jehanne and Blanche de Luxembourg, daughters of Otto IV., Count of Burgundy, married respectively King Philippe the "Tall" and King Charles the "Fair" of France. Charged with witchcraft, they were imprisoned for [177]
life in the Château de Dourdan, where they were tonsured, scourged, and tortured—although they were the most beautiful and most highly cultured women of their day—together with their sister-in-law Marguerite, but she returned to her husband in 1314. Their terrible experiences were made traditional in the family, and, naturally, did not conduce to success in courtship.

No doubt the idea which fixed itself in the minds of Louis II. and Yolande with respect to this betrothal was the strengthening of the claims of Anjou, of the younger line, upon the crown of Naples, by the alliance of the two branches of the house. Why this arrangement was set aside, or when, it is hard to say. Some chroniclers aver that the young Prince was drowned at sea off Taranto; others, that he had different views; and, more likely than all, others attribute the renunciation to the action of Queen Yolande, who, directly she had obtained charge of the person of the young Dauphin Charles, determined a more brilliant match politically, if a less attractive one psychologically.

Possibly Queen Yolande hardly realized, at the date of that auspicious marriage, how its consummation would affect herself. High-toned as she was, and assertive of Anjou's prestige, she could not know that Queen Isabeau's absolute declension from rectitude would, by force of contrast alone, throw her own worthy aims into emphatic prominence. That marriage was the opening of the portals of imperial interest to the personal guidance of the strongest mind and will in France. She became actually the power on the throne, not behind it. Her hand directed the issues of life and death between the rival Powers—France and England. Yolande became at once [178]
the ruler of France and the dictator of her foreign policy. What has history to say about all this? Nothing, or next to nothing. Historians,—the most narrow-minded and most easily biassed of writers,—have not cared to trace and teach the ethics of the personality of this ruler of men and States.

The genesis of the paramount influence of women in the public and private life of France was undoubtedly in the reign of Charles VII. He was successively in the hands of Isabeau, his unworthy mother; of Yolande, his noble mother-in-law; of Marie, his much-enduring wife; and of Agnes Sorel, his inspiring mistress. Happily for him, he was withdrawn early from the immediate care of Queen Isabeau, but her intrigues later on brought out the latent bad elements of his character. What saving grace was his, was his through Yolande of Sicily-Anjou. His wife and his chief mistress were given him for two distinct purposes: Marie kept the wolf from the door and emboldened her faint-hearted spouse, whilst Agnes cheered his troubled spirit and impelled his motive-power. There is a quatrain of Francis I. which is interesting from the fact that his versification leaves it doubtful whether Marie or Agnes was actually his good genius: he names *both* in the first line:

"Gentille Marie (Agnès), plus d'honneur tu mérite,
La cause étant de France recouvrer;
Que ce que peut dedans un cloître ouvrer—
Close nonain ou bien dévot hermite." [179]

"Gentle Marie (Agnes), thou hast gained all honour,
Of France the new life thou wast inspirer;
But thou wast born to adorn the cloister,
Encloséd nun or dedicated sister."

Marie and René d'Anjou and Charles de Ponthieu were educated together, and for four years or more were inseparable companions. The betrothal of Charles and Marie was effected at the Palace of the Louvre, December 18, 1413, in the presence of the King and Queen of France and of the King and Queen of Sicily-Anjou. Charles VI. was then still King of France, and fully in possession of his senses. His troubles, political and mental, ranged from 1417 to 1422, when he had become no more than nominal Sovereign, driven from place to place, crushed, depressed, and suffering. Until his malady became hopeless, he was noted for his nobility of endurance, his chivalry of deportment, and his unselfish devotion to his duty. His Don Quixotic sort of life, however, was a mixture of smiles and frowns—joys and sorrows. Such a wife and mother as Queen Isabeau proved herself to be was quite enough to shatter the patience and the peace of the most stolid of men. There was not a more unhappy family in all France than that of its principal Sovereign, nor a more miserable home than that of its King.

Still, there were not wanting human touches which paint the character of King Charles VI. in sympathetic colours. In the King's room at the Castle of Blois is a superb piece of tapestry, among many others, embroidered with the "Story of the Seigneur and Châtelaine de Courrages." The "*Annales Français*" recount the following narrative: "The Seigneur de Courrages was called upon by the Parliament of Paris to fight in the 'Lists' with a certain Knight, Jehan Le Gris, for the honour of his wife, the Dame de Courrages. During the absence of her spouse in the Holy Land, [180]
the fair châtelaine gave her favours to an urgent lover, the Seigneur Le Gris, and he made love to her, quite naturally, in return. King Charles VI. was presiding at a tournament, and he noted the presence of the lady in question, but was amazed at her effrontery; for she was seated, superbly

attired, in her state chariot, in view of the whole assemblage, whereas the custom of the time should have found her upon her knees in her closet, praying for her good man. The King despatched a herald to the impudent hussy, with a message that 'it is inconceivable that anyone lying under so grievous a reproach should assume herself to be innocent till such time as that innocence shall have been made apparent.' The brazen dame was ordered at once to dismount from her carriage and retire to her *manoir*. She was unwilling to bow to the royal command, and, hearing of this, the King sent another messenger, who was instructed to conduct the fair and frail delinquent beneath a scaffold, where she was ordered to cry aloud to God for mercy, and to the King for clemency. In the issue of arms, luckily for her, fortune favoured her husband, who unhorsed his adversary, and, after pinning him to the ground with his sword, compelled him to confess the villainies he had committed with his wife. Then the unfortunate man was hurried off to the scaffold,—beneath which Dame de Courrages was humbly kneeling,—and there and then hung up by the neck by way of justification of his miserable sweetheart." What happened to the frail woman the chronicler has failed to tell; probably the Seigneur de Courrages took his erring wife home and administered a well-deserved flagellation in the privacy of his bedchamber, and [181] condemned her to a period of imprisonment in the family dungeon upon a spare diet of bread and water! Such was the wholesome discipline for marital infidelity in the days of chivalry!

The marriage of Charles, Count of Ponthieu, and Marie, Princess of Sicily-Anjou, was solemnized at St. Martin at Tours, January 15, 1422. It was a year of rejoicing in France, for on May Day her King by descent, Charles VI., and her King by conquest, Henry V., entered Paris riding side by side in a splendid triumph of peace. Charles's reason had returned to him with the return of happier days, and although the spectre of Isabeau was beside him, he managed to retain his senses and his vigour until October 21, when death mercifully heralded a new reign and a new régime in Paris.

The Dauphin and Dauphine spent their short honeymoon at Loches and Bourges, whence they were called to attend the Kings in Paris, and there they remained till Charles VI. died. Thereafter troubles once more devastated fair suffering France: the peace was broken, and a broken band of fugitives fled the capital. The Court sought refuge at Bourges.

"The King by misfortune in the warres grew so behindhand, both in fame and estate, that amongst other afflictions hee was subject to reproach and poverty, so that he dined in his small chamber attended only by his household servants. Pothou and La Hire, coming to Châteaudun to ask for succour, found him at table with no more than a rump of mutton and two chickens. He had neither wine nor dessert, and only two attendants, whilst his carriage had no relay of horses and only two grooms. He was reproached for his love of fair Agnes (Sorel), but the Bishop of St. [182] Denis reported that hee loved her onely for her pleasing behaviour, eloquent speech, and beauty; and that he never used any lascivious action unto her, nor never touched her beneath the chin."

The *Comptes de la Royne Marie* record that the King and Queen were reduced to eat their meals off common pewter dishes, that they had little or no change of linen, and that the Queen sold all her jewels to purchase food and other necessaries. The townsfolk of the neighbourhood as well as the nobility contributed liberally to their Sovereigns' wants. Jacques Cœur of Bourges in particular rendered them hospitality, for he was accustomed to send in daily the royal supper at his own expense. Cœur was a merchant, a jeweller, and a wine-grower, and waxed rich in trade, but never wavered in his loyalty. He became Charles's treasurer, but after advancing him nearly 300,000 gold crowns, he was for some unknown reason cast into prison and condemned to execution and the confiscation of his goods. Queen Marie pleaded for their faithful subject, and gained his reprieve, but Jacques Cœur never recovered his liberty nor his property.

A gory stain was dashed upon the lily shield of France when the Duke of Burgundy was basely slain by Tanneguy de Châtel in the King's presence. He had been one of Charles's most devoted adherents, for he it was who, in 1418, carried off the youthful Dauphin, wrapped in a piece of arras, for safety to the Bastile, and whence he was allowed to escape to Poitiers. It was a time of terrible disaster. Paris was in open revolution, and all the possessions of the Crown were [183] threatened with destruction. The English were marching all over France unopposed, for the French Court and Government were divided by the feuds of rival leaders. On June 12 the starving populace of the capital burnt the Hôtel de Ville, the Temple, and prison. Women were seized, outraged, and killed, and 1,600 murdered bodies were scattered in the streets and squares. The Count of Armagnac was the chief supporter of the Dauphin's party, but Queen Isabeau joined hands with Jean "sans Peur," Duke of Burgundy, against her husband,—alas! now quite imbecile,—and her only son.

A peace was patched up, and it was arranged that the Dauphin and the Duke should meet for mutual satisfaction at Montereau. The latter had no suspicion of foul-play, and Charles had no inkling of what was in de Châtel's mind. The meeting was arranged upon the stone bridge crossing the Seine, on September 10, 1419. There the Dauphin, in full armour, awaited his rival's approach. The Duke passed the two barriers on the bridge assured by the words: "Come if you please, Monseigneur. Fear not; the Dauphin is awaiting you." At the young Prince's feet the proud Jean knelt and did homage, but Charles put out no hand to raise him graciously nor paid him any compliment, but brusquely exclaimed: "Monseigneur, you and the Queen have disgraced France and me. I command you to leave that wicked woman alone and go back in peace to your dominions."

The Duke, astounded, rose, and was about to offer some uncomplimentary reply, when he was [184] struck down by Tanneguy de Châtel with his battle-axe, as he hissed out: "Thou art a traitor! Go thy way, base Burgundy!" Twenty swords leaped from their scabbards and finished the dastardly deed, and Charles, shocked beyond expression, mounted his horse and galloped off. Queen

Isabeau was at Troyes, where she had been exiled by her son's advisers, and the tragic death of her confederate roused the whole fury of her nature. She assembled the chief citizens, and made them an impassioned harangue:—

"Consider the horrors, faults, and crimes, perpetrated in this kingdom of France by Charles, soi-disant Dauphin of Vienne. It is here and now agreed that our son Henry, King of England, and our dear nephew, Philippe, Duke of Burgundy, shall not enter into relations with the said Charles."

The assassination of the Duke of Burgundy weighed heavily upon the conscience of Charles; he never concealed his wish that his mother's colleague should come by his end, but he never put his desire into exact words.

The year 1422 saw Marie d'Anjou seated, at least metaphorically, upon the throne of France. Both Kings of France died soon after her marriage,—Henry V. on August 31, and Charles VI. on October 21,—and Charles VII. and Marie were proclaimed King and Queen of France at Mehun-sur-Yèvre in Berry on November 10 following. They were crowned in Poitiers Cathedral on Christmas Day, where the new King had established his Parliament.

A BESIEGED CASTLE IN FRANCE

From a Miniature, MS. Fourteenth Century, "Valeur Maxime" [185]
British Museum

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The King and Queen made many progresses through their circumscribed dominions. The first was in the summer of 1423, when they made a state entry also into Angers, and heard Mass at the Cathedral of St. Maurice. They presented to the Chapter two superb pieces of tapestry, depicting the Old and New Testaments. The Queen's brother, Louis III., was of course in Italy, but the Duke of Bar-Lorraine and the Duchess Isabelle were there supporting the Queen-mother Yolande in rendering gracious hospitalities; the citizens provided a mystery-play, and the Court a tournament. The royal couple were lodged in the castle, from the gateway of which Queen Marie addressed the assemblage of people: "*Vos citoyens et habitans de la ville d'Angiers soyeant toujours loyaux et fidèles à vostre sovereyns, et aussi des beaulx amis vers la couronne de France, laquelle je porte moi même.*"[A] Vociferous plaudits hailed this declamation, and both Queen Yolande and Duke René made patriotic addresses.

[A] "You noble citizens and good inhabitants of this worthy city of Angers were ever famous for loyalty and fidelity to your Sovereigns, and, moreover, the best of friends to the Crown of France, which you see I wear."

Five years later Charles and Marie entered Anjou and took up their residence at Saumur, where the King received the homage of no less a fellow-Sovereign than the Duke of Brittany, this being due to the tactful policy of the Queen-mother. Charles also had a request to place before the loyal Angevines: he wanted money and men to carry on the ceaseless warfare against the English. In this he admirably succeeded, and through Duke René he gained help from Lorraine and Bar besides.

Marie, though the consort of a fugitive penniless King, had a suite worthy of herself and of her parentage and rank; the Queen-mother saw to that. Her Controller was Hardoin de Mailly, and [186] her Master of Horse Jacques Odon de Maulevrier, a devoted friend of her brother, Duke René. The Queen's four *Dames d'Honneur* were Catherine Bourgoing, Aimée de Beauvais, Philippe de la Rochefoucault, and Jeanne Sorel. Her Maids of Honour were Marie du Couldray, Jeanne de la Grosse, Catherine de Beauvais, Jeannett la Garrelle, Hervée Catherine de Montplaie, and Jehanne Biardelle, with three quite young girls whose Christian names alone have been preserved—Felize, Geffeline, and Jacquette—perhaps pet names.

Duke René, ever a liberal-minded and open-handed Prince, gave each of his sister's ladies a robe of richest *aigneaulx* fur, with crimson satin lining, and twenty skins of martens for bordering their kirtle bodices. Each robe cost 16 florins (= £12), and was supplied by the Queen-mother's furrier at Angers, one Martin Chebiton.

The immodest fashions set by Queen Isabeau and the ladies of her Court, and their outrageous modes of headgear, did not go unrebuked by the better sort of clergy. A very famous preaching friar, one Thomas Correcte, a Carmelite monk from Brittany, in particular inaugurated a crusade against feminine extravagances through the North of France and in Flanders during the second decade of the fifteenth century. He further strenuously denounced the dignified clergy who kept fashionable mistresses. He was welcomed heartily by the burghers of the towns through which he passed, and conducted to a special pulpit erected in the market-place, adorned with rich hangings and a gigantic crucifix. Guards of honour and musicians were at his service, and, in spite of opposition and natural predilections, the clergy fell into line with the popular fancy, and [187] rang their bells on his arrival. His denunciations were quite in accord with the feelings of the people, but they incited the rougher element to take the law into their own hands. Squads of youths paraded the public thoroughfares in search of errant dames, and no sooner had their gaze alighted upon a lady of degree, coiffured *à l'outrance*, than a flight of stones, deftly aimed, quickly made havoc of her headgear. The popular cry, "*Un hennin! un hennin! à bas les hennins!*" produced a panic, so that the women dared hardly sally forth from their own doors. It was said that the friar personally organized these demonstrations, and even paid the lads to disenchant the fair sex by forcibly pulling down their hideous superstructures. At all events, women with dishevelled heads and disordered attire ran hither and thither helpless and defenceless. The worthy and enthusiastic evangelist had, however, an alternative fashion with which modest women might cover their heads and breasts. He prescribed the universal habit of wearing plain *chapelles*, the ordinary caps of peasant women. The raid, however, ceased to terrify the determined votaries of eccentricity in dress, and, as Monstrelet, the historian, pithily puts it, "Snails, when anybody passes near them, draw in their horns; but when the danger is past they put them forth again." The *hennin*, so called by Friar Correcte, became still more gigantic and grotesque, although Queen Marie, backed by her good mother, Queen Yolande, made loud protests and refused their favours to transgressors.

With respect to indecency in dress, the preacher insisted upon running a thick cord between [188] the men and women of his audiences. The mixing of the sexes in public he gravely denounced, and the bareness of women's breasts and the tightness of men's hose excited his most eloquent tirades. The reason of the cord he quaintly phrased: "I perceive that sly doings will be going on!" The King of Sicily, Louis III., and Duke René, were quite in accord with the friar's philippics; but the "King of Bourges" was another sort of man, and much of the coolness which existed between himself and Queen Marie was due to her moderation in dress and quietness of manner. Charles, it was said, chanced to hear the friar one day at Ponthieu, where he was in residence, and ordered him to keep silence and depart. The friar retired to his monastery after a year of eloquence and exertions, but his animadversions upon the lives of the higher clergy led to his being summoned to Rome, to answer to certain charges of breach of monkish discipline and errors of doctrine. The poor man seems to have felt his position keenly, so keenly, indeed, that to escape judgment he jumped out of the window of his cell and decamped. Being quickly captured, he was arraigned before the Holy Office of the Inquisition, and condemned to be burnt as a heretic. Perhaps he deserved punishment for his unguarded language, but he paid dearly indeed as a reformer of gay women's fashions and gross parsons' passions!

The years 1427 and 1428 saw France plunged in warfare. King Charles shook himself, metaphorically, and registered a vow that he would drive out every "desecrating English dog." He bestirred himself, and led forlorn hopes here and there, only to meet with disaster; and then [189] he gave way to despair, and declared that he would do no more for France or for himself. Queen Marie, with true Anjou-Aragon grit, chided him with his faint-heartedness, and one day she surprised him greatly by appearing in a full suit of armour and armed, and declared that "If you, Charles of France, will not lead your troops, I will!" Her example was contagious, for within a week scores of loyal, devoted women assumed mail and stood for the weal or woe of France. These heroic doings were noised abroad, and possibly they had effect in a very unexpected quarter, for in 1429 another heroine appeared in armour from the eastern frontier of France, and made good woman's claim to military prowess. Thus quaintly wrote Monstrelet of her:

"In the course of this year (1429) a young girl called Jehanne, about twenty years of age, and dressed like a man, came to Charles, King of France, at Chinon. She was born in the village of Droimy, on the borders of Burgundy and Lorraine, not far from Vaucouleurs. She had been for some time an ostler and chambermaid at an inn, and had shown much courage in riding horses to water and in other feats unusual for young women to do. She called herself a 'Maiden inspired by the Divine Grace,' and said that she was sent to restore Charles to his kingdom."

Very little has been recorded of what Queen Marie felt and said concerning that strange visitor.

Nobody in all that recklessly gay Court at Chinon viewed the coming of the maid of Domremy more eagerly or more hopefully than did she. She had failed to rouse the King to strike a new blow for his throne, it is true, but she anxiously prayed that this heaven-sent village girl might be the means of doing so. The Queen gave La Pucelle a most sympathetic welcome. The mysteries of [190] devotion and the dictates of religion had in her a very reverent disciple. Apartments were prepared for Jeanne's reception quite near her own boudoir and private oratory, and its priest was placed at her disposal.

If Jeanne was dumbfounded at the spectacle of a King wholly apathetic to the duties of his high station, and of a Court abandoned, in the midst of dire disaster, to all the frivolities of the idle and the dissolute, she had at least one solace. The beautiful and serious face of the young Queen was to her a comfort and a stay. Looking from one bedizened beauty to another in that fatuous assembly, her eyes fastened themselves upon the one figure that was dissimilar to the rest,—the figure of a good woman, the daughter of the good Queen Yolande. She looked to her like what she conceived of her own saintly Margaret, of the Bois de Chènus. Marie received her unsophisticated visitor with emotion. She entered fully into her story, and conversed daily with her in private about herself, her home, her mission, and her "voices," and thus she gained the girl's confidence and her love. If Jeanne had conceived profound veneration for Queen Yolande,—she even called her "my St. Catherine,"—her sentiments towards Queen Marie were those of the most tender affection. Marie, so near her own age, so modest, so simple, and so true, became Jeanne's confidant and loving patroness. To Marie the mere sight of the girl and her frank, girlish ways was quite sufficient, had she sought for proof positive, to dispel from her mind any suspicions which may have been forced upon her about Jeanne's relations with her dear brother, René de Bar. Of course, she knew him far too well to credit any tales of faithlessness or [191] dishonour on his part. He and she had been, till he was carried off to Bar-le-Duc by the good Cardinal Louis de Bar, the very dearest and most intimate of playmates in and out of school. Their intercourse had never ceased; such never fails between kindred souls, though parted by hemispheres. René was a just man still, and a true knight. Jeanne likened him to her own St. Michael.

All through Jeanne's ordeals,—first the open scoffs of the courtiers and servitors at Chinon, then the covert jeers of the divines and busybodies at Poitiers, and lastly the base insinuations of libertines and adventurers,—the Queen stood by La Pucelle. Queen Yolande's panel of matrons found Marie's tribute of the utmost value; she staked her royal prerogative upon the girl's absolute chastity, and the prying, posturing Court bowed to her decision.

If Queen Yolande clothed the maid in shining armour within the great Hall of Audience of Angers Castle, on the eve of the advance upon Orléans, Queen Marie knelt with her in prayer in the solemn choir of Angers Cathedral from Vespers to Compline. How much of her strength of will and the promptness of her action Jeanne d'Arc gained from the whole-hearted favour of these two good Queens the world may never know, but this much we all can apprehend: that unselfish human sympathy is a more mobile force than the uncertainties of Providence.

We can never know why Queen Marie was denied the satisfaction of witnessing and sharing in the coronation of Charles at Reims. She was living quietly at Bourges when the King set off for the metropolitical cathedral under the conduct of La Pucelle and of her brother René. She was [192] prepared for the expedition, and her robes of state were ready for the ceremony, when suddenly Charles commanded her to remain where she was, saying that the march was full of dangers and quite impossible for the Queen and her ladies. La Pucelle begged the King to recall his prohibitions, saying that Queen Marie was quite as worthy as was he to receive a crown. The poor Queen put by her finery,—perhaps not altogether sorrowfully,—and went to reflect awhile at Gien upon the untowardness of human affairs in general and the inconsequences of Charles in particular. Her parting with Jeanne was affecting; Queen and peasant embraced each other affectionately—and never more they met.

## II.

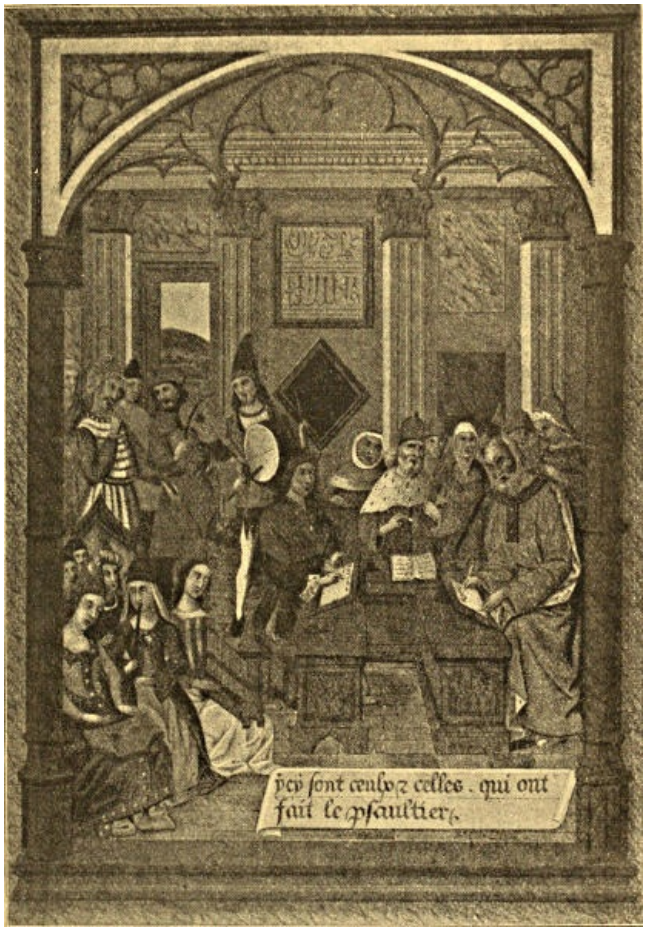
After the disastrous battle of Bulgneville, Duchess Isabelle of Lorraine set off to Vienne in Dauphiné, a province which ever remained faithful to the royal house of France, where the Court of Charles VII. was established, to claim his aid for her captive husband languishing at Bracon. In her train went her fairest Maid of Honour, Agnes Sorel, just twenty years of age; she was Mistress of the Robes to the Duchess. She made an immediate impression upon the jejune King, who urged Isabelle to allow her to be transferred to the suite of his consort—perhaps by way of *quid pro quo*. Queen Marie added her entreaties to the monarch's suit. She had failed completely to rouse her husband; perhaps she thought Agnes would be more successful. The Duchess would not hear of the arrangement, and the beauteous Maid of Honour was anything but eager to be the creature of so unattractive a master.

Happier days, however, dawned both for King René and for King Charles, and jousts, pageants, [193] and mystery-plays, were in full fling everywhere. At Angers, in particular, everything was gay and merry for the welcome of King René to his ancestral home,—after his duress at Tour de Bar,—and of Queen Isabelle. Agnes Sorel was still attached to her royal mistress, and, although unmarried, she numbered her lovers by the score.

Agnes Sorel, or Soreau, was born at Fromenteau, on the verge of the forest of Fontainebleau, on May 17, 1409. Her father was the Sieur Jehan Soreau, and her mother Catherine de Maignelais, who were quiet country people and occupied in agricultural pursuits. She had a younger sister, Jehanne, to whom she was devoted, and mothered her when Dame Catherine

died. Her uncle, Raoul de Maignelais, followed the profession of arms, and made himself a name as a dauntless warrior in the service of King Charles VI. He had an only daughter, Antoinette, born 1420, who, her mother dying when she was very young, was confided to the care of her aunt, Catherine Soreau, and was brought up by her with her own little daughters. Nothing is positively known about Agnes's girlhood, but in 1423 the two cousins entered the service of Isabelle, the Duchess of Bar-Lorraine. Bar-le-Duc, ever since the advent of the famous Countess Iolande, had been remarkable for the number of lovely damsels and comely youths from all parts of France attached to the "Court of Love," under the patronage and maintenance of the Dukes and Duchesses. The young Duchess appears to have taken a particular fancy to fair Agnes, due no doubt to the girl's physical beauty and mental brilliance. Few maidens at that merry Court [194] excelled her in good looks, grace of figure, and distinction of deportment. Bourdigne, the Court chronicler, says "she was the most lovely girl in France." She sang divinely,—a natural gift,—and danced bewitchingly, and gave promise of a splendid career. She was welcomed at Chinon with delight both by the King and Queen.

Perhaps one reason why Agnes's presence was so grateful to the taciturn and indolent monarch was that she dressed so superbly, and yet so tastefully. The Queen and her ladies were subject to strict Court sartorial conventions, but the Demoiselle de Fromenteau knew no such restrictions. One day "*la Belle des Belles*," as everybody called her, appeared as "Cleopatra," another as "Diana," and a third as "Venus," and so on. Her costumes were of the richest and the thinnest. Her abundant beautiful brown hair, too, she dressed not only for the *hennin à la mode*,—bunched over the ears or gathered into a chignon,—but *à la calotte galonnée*: frizzed out, or *en simple résille*—in a net, or *à tours*, thrown round and round her head in massive coils. Agnes was short of stature, but she made up for this by wearing Venetian *zilve*, or high pattens, beautifully embroidered with silk and pearls. Her *decollétage* was never vulgar or immodest, like that of the King's mother, but her well-formed bust was covered lightly by white lace or thinnest gauze. A string of pearls usually embraced her well-shaped throat. One article of clothing was peculiarly her own invention. Whilst the ladies of the Court, and even Queen Marie herself, wore serge chemises, hers were of fine Flemish linen. Very many of her tasteful fancies were taken up by the [195] ladies about her, and Queen Marie herself followed suit by discarding the daily use of the *hennin* and the stiff and heavy fur borders of her kirtle. She, too, had hair as fair as that of Agnes, and she was privately quite as proud of it as was her *Dame d'Honneur*, for so "*la Belle des Belles*" had become.




KING RENÉ AND HIS COURT

From a Miniature by King René in his "Breviary." Musée de l'Arsenal. Paris

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A pretty story is told of "*la Belle des Belles*" with respect to the melancholy moods of King Charles. One day Charles was more than usually depressed, and, try how she would, Queen Marie could not cheer him; so she sent for Agnes, who at once ran to her mistress, and, then entering the King's presence, knelt at his feet and fondled his knees. "Sire," she said, "when I was a very little girl a soothsayer told my mother that I should be the plaything of a King who

would be the most valiant in Europe. I thought that your Majesty was such an one, but I find that I am mistaken. Perhaps I ought to have sought the Court of Henry rather than that of Charles!" The King frowned, but the bantering words had struck home, and he raised himself and Agnes, and, kissing her affectionately, replied: "No, my sweet, you have no need to seek Henry. I am your valiant King!"

Agnes held Charles under a spell. She was his "Queen of Hearts"; he denied her nothing, her will was his. Her influence was complete, and if the poor neglected Queen had thrown upon her frail shoulders the heavy weight of sovereignty, it was fond Agnes's fair hair that wore the light crown of gaiety. Her tact and unselfishness were remarkable; every domestic squabble and every State imbroglio were quietly and swiftly settled when she joined the fray. Charles could not do [196] enough for his sweetheart. Besides costly presents of jewellery and clothes, he bestowed upon her the county of Penthièvre, the lordships of Roquecesière, Issoudon, and Vernon, with the Castle of Breauté and its great woods of pine-trees.

Agnes had by Charles four daughters; the youngest died in infancy, but the rest grew up, like their mother, famed for good looks and attractive manners, and were legitimatized and married well. Catherine de France, the eldest, wedded, in 1464, Jacques de Brézé, Comte de Maulevrier, and became the accomplished châtelaine of his splendid castle near Saumur. Alas for the joys of married life! the Count, himself unfaithful and intolerant, grew suspicious of his wife's conduct,—she had attracted the attention of King René, among others,—accused her of adultery, and stabbed her as she was sallying forth one dark November day, 1477, bent upon an errand of charity. Their son, Louis de Brézé became the husband of the celebrated Diane de Poitiers, in 1515, before her liaison with King Henry II. Marguerite de France married, in 1458, Seigneur Olivier de Coëtivi, and died in 1473; and Jeanne de France became the wife of Antoine de Benil, Comte de Sancerre, and received from the King, her father, a *dot* of 40,000 *écus d'or*.

These three daughters were born and educated as Princesses of the Royal House, in conformity with the existent code of morals. Queen Marie not only made no demur at their status, but, acting upon the advice of good Queen Yolande, her mother, treated them in every respect as she did her own offspring. When Agnes's second daughter was married, the Queen stood by her and gave her [197] rich wedding presents. Certainly she was not subjected to the indignity of sharing hearth and home with her husband's mistress. Dame Agnes Sorel resided at her own Castle de Breauté-sur-Marne, and there she bore him her family. The castle was a bijou residence,—a great favourite of Charles,—and Agnes made it a habitation of beauty, adorned not alone by her own gracious presence, but by the attendance of a brilliant Court, quite outrivalling that of the modest Queen, and filled her rooms and galleries with the countless beautiful and costly gifts of her former devoted mistress, Duchess Isabelle.

Agnes's ascendancy over Charles VII. was purely erotic. She exercised no influence whatever upon the affairs of state, or, indeed, upon anything but what ministered to his personal pleasure and amusement. However, she was useful, and indeed invaluable, on more than one occasion of danger and suspicion. Unreservedly devoted to her paramour, she was sensitive of any dereliction of duty and of any appearance of intrigue. To her was solely due the detection of the conspiracy of 1449, which, fomented by the Dauphin, threatened the life of the King.

Marie inspired the fervent love of her son, Louis the Dauphin, as she did, in truth, the devotion of all her children. When a stripling of fourteen, he championed his mother against his father's mistress; and when Agnes made a disparaging remark affecting the Queen, the lad immediately boxed her ears, and warned her never to repeat the offence in his hearing! From that day Louis hated "*la Belle des Belles*," and never tired of checking her assumptions. He even dared to protest personally before his father against the King's neglect of the Queen and his partiality for [198] her Lady of Honour. Charles on one occasion took his son's strictures seriously to heart, sent for Marie, bewailed his infidelity, and craved her pardon. But the wanton monarch's day of righteousness was short, for he very soon forgot his son's vehemence, and went on fondling his favourite.

"*La Belle des Belles*" died in childbed on February 18, 1450. Her end was quite unexpected, for she had gone on a visit of pleasure to her cousin, Antoinette de Maignelais, the Baroness of Villerequier, at the Castle of Mesnil la Belle, near the far-famed Abbey of Jumièges in Normandy. Her husband, André de Villerequier, was Chamberlain to Charles VII., who presented her at her bridal, as a wedding gift, the three islands, Oléron, Marennes, and Auvert, at the mouth of the River Charente. Floral games and spectacles were engaging the attention of the merry party assembled at the castle, and Agnes Sorel was the gayest of the gay, but unfortunately, tripping upon the sash of her gown, she fell heavily to the ground. She was carried tenderly to her chamber, and at once her life was despaired of. She had barely time to make her confession, and then, calling to mind the example of St. Mary Magdalen, she called aloud to Heaven for pardon of her sins and for the prayers of those standing by. She heard Mass and received the Last Sacraments, and painfully passed away in her cousin's arms. The distracted Baroness laid the dead head of the lovely Agnes gently upon the pillow, closed the eyes which had spell-bound King Charles and many more besides, and, weeping bitterly, exclaimed: "The good God has taken away my Agnes because He feared she would never lose her beauty." [199]

King Charles was not with his sweetheart in her death, but he grieved and rocked himself in woe. "Because she was what she was," he sobbed, "for that I mourn." He hastened to Jumièges, and with every mark of sincere affection he assisted in placing his Agnes in her coffin. Her heart he had enclosed in a costly gold vase, which he carried about with him wherever he went, and when he died it was deposited by his command beneath a black marble slab in front of the high-altar of Jumièges, with the simple epitaph: "Agnes Seurelle—Dame de Breauté." Fair Agnes's

body, still comely in death, was ultimately translated by Charles to Loches, and interred in the basement of the King's Apartments. Her tomb, surmounted by a statue, was erected by her royal lover. Upon a block marble bed reclines a white marble effigy of "*la Belle des Belles*," evidently sculptured after life. The fascinating features with her sweet smile are beautifully chiselled, and the graceful figure lightly covered by a long chemise admirably exhibits her exquisitely-proportioned form.

Agnes, in a will she made a year before her death, directed that her body should rest at Jumièges, and she bequeathed 1,000 *écus d'or* (= £500) to the monastery for Masses for the rest of her soul. She had for years been a munificent benefactress to the clergy of the abbey. When Charles had joined his sweetheart in the Paradise of Love, the ungrateful monks were desirous of removing Agnes's heart and its memorial tablet, on the score that she had led an immoral life; but Louis XI., in spite of his fierce hatred of his father's mistress, reproved the religious, and [200] warned them that, if they determined to cast out her remains, they must also divest themselves of the gifts and legacies of their patroness. "If you," the new King said, "disturb her ashes, I shall expect you to hand over to me the gold *écus*." Needless perhaps to say, the worldly-wise Canons kept the money and the heart.

The death of Agnes Sorel had a terrible effect upon the subsequent life of Charles the King. She and Queen Marie between them had managed to keep him free from amorous imbroglios, but now, with only his wife's protestations to guard him, he gave way to immoderate indulgences, and he, to quote the French,—"*enlardit sa vie de tenir males femmes en son hostel!*"

## III.

"Everything must be sacrificed for the glory of France!" was no empty, echoing cry in a desert; it was the pleading and persistent cry of a devoted wife and a patriotic Queen. Into the ears of the King of France and into the ears of everybody who was even in the smallest degree likely to be able to do anything at all for her beloved country, the admirable Queen Marie poured her complaint. She stood for the expulsion of the English invaders of her native soil, and for the composure of the feuds and jealousies of the French Sovereigns and nobles. "God and reason," she went on to exclaim, "are on my side; rouse you like men and fight!" Surely he is a coward or a simpleton in whose heart a woman's voice and a woman's taunts fail to enkindle enthusiasm. All France flocked to do homage to the "little Queen of Bourges," to kiss her hand, and to lay their [201] swords at the feet of the King. From Loches to Chinon and Tours, right down the river valley of the Rhone, and throughout Dauphiné, that voice went echoing. The new campaign was hers, hers the credit, hers the glory, for great deeds were done that shamed men's apathy.

Alas! her enthusiasm found faint response in Charles. A skit of the time denounced him thus: "*Nouvelle du Roy nullement; ne que se il fust à Romme oue Jherusalemme!*"—"The King is of no use whatever; he might as well be at Rome or at Jerusalem!" Still, the Queen did not fail for loyal soldiers nor for consummate captains; first and foremost was her beloved brother René, now King of Sicily-Anjou.

But now enemies more terrible than the hated English, more insidious than the squabbling Princes, stalked the broad plains of suffering France—the three fell sisters, famine, flood, and fever. The price of foodstuffs rose portentously; wheat, butter, oil, and cheese, were a hundred times dearer than their usual cost. Men grovelled like pigs for offal, and women and children laid themselves down to die just where they were. Queen Marie's tender heart grieved sorely for her people's misery. She sold what jewellery she had left, and pawned her available property to minister to the prevailing want. And then a new terror seized the land—the rivers were in flood, and what stocks and crops the famine had left were washed away, and beggary stared the nation in the face. The Queen instituted pilgrimages of women to celebrated shrines, and she herself put on the deepest mourning and spent her time in prayer. All seemed to be of no avail to stay the [202] afflicting hand of Heaven, for no sooner were the waters abated than the scourge of fever was let loose on the devoted land of France, and corpses were flung out of echoing doorways and left for chance burial, or to be the prey of scavaging dogs. Had the Day of Judgment dawned? men asked each other, whilst they promptly covered their mouths against the infection. Delirium would have seized all the remnants of the population had not the intrepid Queen ridden up and down, risking her own precious life and appealing to one and all to be courageous, bear all, and hope for better days.

Marie had happy days and proud to cancel days of gloom and penury. Toulouse was *en fête*; it was the month of May, 1435, best loved of all the children of Mary; and she made a stately entry into that ancient, loyal city with the King by her side. Oddly enough, she was mounted on pillion behind her young son, the Dauphin Louis, then a lad of twelve. Her vesture was superb—a blue brocaded satin robe, bordered heavily with royal ermine. She was *décolletée*, her bosom covered with jewels and chains of gold. Upon her head, rising out of a regal diadem of flashing gems, she wore a *chaperon*, a hood of fine white cambric shaped like a crescent, raised at the points, and lightly covered with a thin white gauze veil. Her hair was bunched over her ears, and carried in a golden jewelled net. Her feet were shod in white, gold-embroidered kid, and she wore, after her mother's fashion, jewelled white kid gloves. Four Chamberlains, also mounted, held a state canopy of cloth of gold and white plumes over their royal mistress and her white charger.

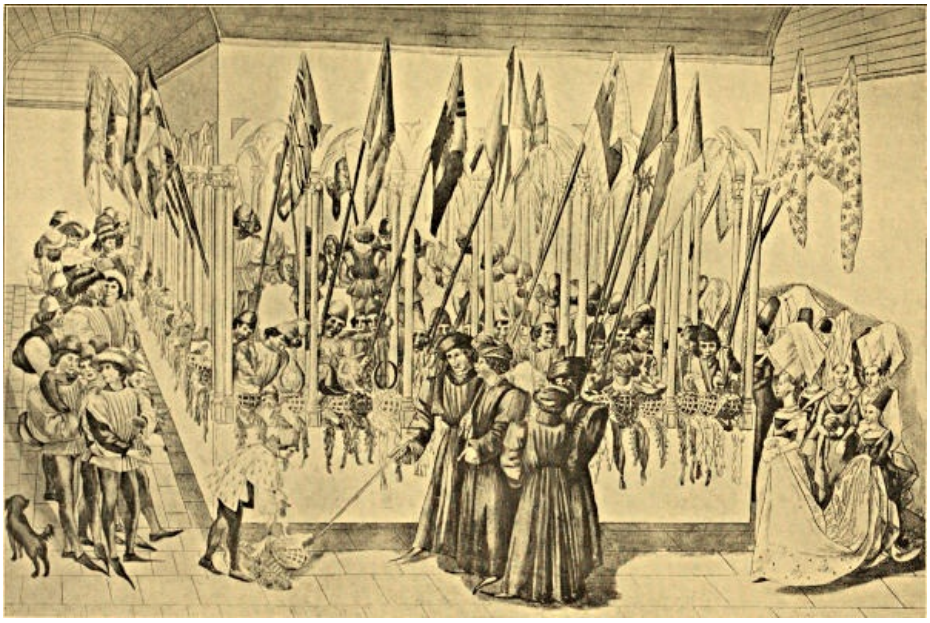
A bright day dawned for Queen Marie. It was the Festival of the Forerunner, June 24, 1436, and [203] the ancient and loyal city of Tours was decked for the royal nuptials of the Dauphin. The King and Queen of France with the good Queen Yolande and their suite awaited at the Château du Plessis-lès-Tours the arrival of the young bridal couple. Louis had gone to meet his bride at Saumur; he

was but a boy of thirteen, small, ill-looking, and not too clever. Princess Margaret, daughter of James I. of Scotland, with a following of Scottish nobles and Maids of Honour, a tall, sprightly girl of twelve, vastly enjoyed her voyage, and clapped her hands delightedly at the flowers and fruits of Anjou. She embraced her little husband-to-be, and took him by the hand as they stepped on board the state barge in waiting at the river quay.

Among the bevy of fair maidens who welcomed the royal bride was Jehanne de Laval, who was attached to the suite of the Dauphiness. The grand hall of the castle and state-rooms were hung with tapestry and lengths of cloth of gold. There the Sovereigns were seated on a canopied daïs, wearing their crowns and robes of state. The little Princess entered the Presence somewhat nervously, still holding the hand of the young Dauphin, and chaperoned by her Scottish Mistress of the Robes. Making a graceful obeisance, Margaret advanced with childlike confidence, and Queen Marie, rising, went to greet her young daughter-in-law; she embraced her tenderly, and introduced her to the King and to Queen Yolande. The courtiers pressed forward to kiss the Princess's hand, and many costly gifts were laid at her feet. Wearied at length with the ceremonies, Queen Marie conducted her interesting visitor to her own apartments, where dinner was served. [204]

The bells of all the churches in Tours set up merry janglings at dawn next day, and the cathedral was crowded by a goodly company of wedding guests. The King and the two Queens were seated on their thrones. Charles wore a black velvet doublet and hose, his *berretta* was of red, and he bore round his neck a decoration sent from the King of Scotland. The Queen was arrayed in crimson velvet and ermine. She wore an abbreviated *hennin* with a fine lace fall; her hair was embroidered with gold. The young Prince was in blue and silver, his bride in bridal white. Everybody bore wedding favours—Scottish heather and French lilies entwined with white satin ribbons. The Archbishop of Reims performed the ceremony, accompanied by a number of Bishops and dignified clergy.

Margaret at once became a great favourite with the King and Queen. Her Northern vigour and sweet manners were good credentials; but, unhappily, the young bridegroom from the first took a dislike to his consort. She was never happy when he was present, and her furtive eyes searched in vain for tokens of affection and *camaraderie*. "There was no one," wrote Philippe de Commines a few years later, "in all the world whom she dreaded more than the Dauphin." Her life was indeed a sad one; neglected by her husband, misunderstood and disesteemed at Court, the poor young Dauphiness passed her time mostly with Queen Marie and in futile regrets for her dear, dear home in Scotland. [205]



QUEENS AND JUDGES INSPECT KNIGHTS BEFORE THE "LISTS," SAUMUR TOURNAMENT, 1446

Painted by King René. From "Le Livre des Tournois"

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Her death came about most unexpectedly, for she was discovered poisoned,—rumour had it by her spouse,—in her boudoir at Sarry-le-Château, on August 16, 1444, an ill-used wife of no more than twenty years of age. Princess Margaret's fate was as sad as sad could be—too young to die. Her last words,—the most pathetic ever uttered by an unhappy woman,—were addressed to her faithful chaperon: "A curse on life! don't speak to me about it!" No child, perhaps happily, was born of that ill-starred marriage.

No one wept more bitterly at this mischance than tender-hearted Queen Marie. She loved her son to distraction, and he loved her as greatly in return; and she had learned to love Margaret too, but nothing that she could say moved Louis to love, honour, and comfort, his young wife. Calm, crafty, and selfish, like his father, and vindictive, Louis's character may be succinctly stated as he himself wrote it: "The King knows not how to rule who knows not how to dissemble.... If my cap should know my thoughts, I would burn it!"

Queen Marie's other son, Charles, Duc de Berry, the last of all her surviving children, born

December 28, 1446, was a Prince of no strength of character. Easily led by others, he became involved in endless imbroglios, and aided and abetted his elder brother the Dauphin, in his unfilial conduct towards their father. Created Duke of Guienne and Duke of Normandy in 1469,—after the expulsion of the English,—he was a source of constant anxiety and trouble to his mother. The Queen of Sicily-Anjou, Isabelle de Lorraine, his godmother, with King René, took the young Prince in hand, but he did not well repay their solicitude. Immoral, dissipated, and in debt, Charles de Berry spent his time in debauches and intrigues; he was own grandson of Isabeau the [206] Infamous. Among his many mistresses, Derouillée de Montereau, widow of Louis d'Amboise, exercised the greatest influence. She, too, was the cause of his death, for at lunch one day she placed a peach in his wineglass, and she challenged Charles to bite the fruit with her. Her half she swallowed, and she fell dead in a few minutes, whilst her royal paramour lingered in acute suffering for three whole days, and at last succumbed to the poison on May 28, 1472. Whether she caused the fruit to be poisoned we know not; most likely she knew all about it, and only followed in the steps of those whose immorality turns love to hate and sanctity to madness. This was a characteristic of society in the Renaissance, the cloven hoof of the old Adam showing beneath the sumptuous garments of the new man.

As might very well have been expected at a Court of self-seekers and sycophants, the integrity and unselfishness of the Queen were goads to slander and aids to hypocrisy. She was assailed on account of her absolute faithfulness to the marriage bond and for her want of personal ambition. Roués could not understand her; mondaines would not tolerate her; the King's favourites and mistresses,—not Agnes Sorel, be it said,—strove all they could to poison his mind against his consort. The names of many prominent Princes and courtiers were linked scandalously with the Queen's. Arthur de Richemont, son of Duke Jehan VI. of Brittany, the Constable of France; Pierre de Giac de la Trémouille, Captain of the King's Guards; Étienne Louvet, President of the Privy Council; and the Count of Dunois, better known as the "Bastard of Orléans," were all said to have [207] shared the Queen's confidences and her favours. The latter was thrown, indeed, very much with Her Majesty, and ranked among the Princes of the Royal House. Son of the assassinated Duke of Orléans by an unknown mother, the Duchess brought him up along with her own children, and she hoped he would live to avenge his father's death. The "Bastard" was the playmate of the children of King Louis II. of Sicily-Anjou and Queen Yolande, and he and the Princess Marie were much drawn to one another.

The two young people were one day in the gardens of the Hôtel de St. Pol along with the Comte de Ponthieu,—Charles VII.,—and the Princes and Princesses of Sicily-Anjou, when the Count, wearied of his forced attentions to the Princess Marie, sauntered away by himself. Xaintrailles followed him and remonstrated with him for his coolness to his fiancée. Charles replied that they were not fully betrothed, and that he did not admire and did not love Marie. Xaintrailles told Dunois what the Count had said, and Dunois, with a scornful laugh, exclaimed: "One must be dull and blind indeed not to be smitten by her eyes—the most beautiful eyes in the whole world, and quite incapable of seeing the faults of others." Dunois was very much in love with the Princess, and did not conceal his passion, so much so that when he kissed her hand, as he often did, he also lifted the hem of her skirt and implanted a kiss there, as a lover's token of humility.

Dunois contrived *têtes-à-tête* as often as he could with his sweetheart, as he called Marie d'Anjou. One day, it is said, Charles passed down a sheltered path in the gardens, and his [208] companion pointed out to him a couple love-making in a secluded arbour. They chided him with the feebleness of his suit, and told him it would serve him right if Marie married Dunois. He said he did not care a bit if she did or if she did not. They were all mere children—the Count sixteen, Marie fifteen, and Dunois of a like age. The intimacy between the Princess and her lover became embarrassing to the whole Court, but time went on, and developments were awaited by the curious and intriguing. A summer's day came when some ladies of the Court went wandering about searching for shady shelters. Right away from the palace, near a springing fountain, they came upon a crossing in the path, and there in the sandy dust they read, written by a stick or something:

"Destin qui va m'unir d'une éternelle chaîne
A l'object de ma haîne—
Cruel destin, arrache de mon cœur
Une trop vive ardeur."

"Fate which would rivet me with a perpetual chain
To the object of my deep disdain—
O, cruel fate! which would snatch from my poor worn heart
A passion full of ardour on my part."

Puzzling over the meaning of this strange verse, the ladies beheld the Princess hastening to where they stood. With heightened colour she asked them: "What are you doing here? Why are you not with the Queen of Sicily?" Then effacing the writing with her foot, she added: "I cannot think why I did not efface those words; I have committed an indiscretion. But take note I did not name the unhappy person who wrote them." The romance went on unchecked. Dunois, still under age, very adroitly contrived to remove the suspicions his conduct had aroused in the mind of [209] Queen Yolande, and Marie took dutifully and silently the maternal reproofs. Then came the death of Charles VI., and Princess Marie was proclaimed Queen of France. With more than a sigh,—almost a broken heart,—she set herself to play her part as a virtuous woman and as a loyal spouse. Dunois did not renounce his devotion to the Queen, and she never forgot the love she had borne him—a Prince the very antithesis of her husband, remarkable for personal beauty and

mental accomplishment, just the sort of man all women love. Daily she poured out her soul before the altar of her private chapel for strength to be true and faithful, and victory was hers; but it cost her dear.

"Car en vertueuse souffrance,
Au temps du commun desarroy,
Elle a monstre plus de vaillance
Que sage prince ou fier roy."

"In point of virtuous suffering,
At times of deep alarms,
She exhibited more daring
Than wise prince or king in arms."

This fascinating story of the loves of Count Dunois d'Orléans and Princess Marie d'Anjou was worked up by fanatics into a culpable liaison of the Queen. It grew in vile misrepresentation, and swelled in garbled facts until it became abhorrent in the ears of all decent-minded people. Some of Charles's legitimate children were said to have been fathered by the Count. The Queen very wisely refrained from making replies to the evil stories, the only sensible way of dealing with them. "Exempt," as wrote Varillas, "not only from the faults of the Court, but still more from suspicion that she had any part therein, she had all the same to suffer from the poison of [210] calumny." On the other hand, Marie suffered in patience the disdain and unfaithfulness of the King, and returned his evil with her good. Her entire life was a scene of sacrifice and an arena of benevolence.

Marie, in her quiet, unobtrusive way, did very much for the correction of morals in Court and country. Due to her representation, Charles at Toul abolished the obscene *Fête des Fous*, which was observed through his dominions. It was a scandalous exhibition, an indecent orgy, shared in alike by laity and clergy. The latter chose a local Pope or Bishop, to whom for the time the actual Bishop of the diocese rendered up the attributes of his office. The mock prelate was enthroned in the cathedral, and then a wild scene of profanity was witnessed. Men and women dressed as buffoons, many exposing their nakedness without shame, joined in licentious dances and blasphemous songs, and gorged themselves with roast pork and other coarse viands and intoxicating beverages served upon the altars. In the holy censers were burnt common corks and bits of leather; the holy-water stoups were used for nameless indecencies; and promiscuous prostitution made each sacred edifice a brothel and a Gehenna.

Early in the year 1457 Ambassadors from Duke Ladislaus of Austria came to France to ask from Charles VII. the hand of his youngest daughter, Madeleine, a girl of fourteen, and dowered with beauty if not with wealth. Passing through Lorraine and Bar, King René greeted them, entertained them handsomely, and accompanied them to Tours. The King and Queen of France were at the castle with their three daughters,—Jeanne; Yolande, the wife of Amadeo IX., Duke of [211] Savoy; and Madeleine,—and a numerous and distinguished suite. In the Grand Salle twelve long tables were placed, each seating seven guests. At the first were the two Kings and the Queens with the three Princesses and the Duke of Savoy. The Masters of Ceremonies were the Counts Gaston de Foix, Dunois, and de la Marche, with the Grand Seneschal of France. It was a typical entertainment—lavish, long, and laborious. The first course consisted of white hypocras and "*rosties*"—*hors d'œuvres*(?)—served in crystal vessels. The second course offered *grands pâtes de chapons à haute grasse*, with boars' tongues, and accompanied by seven kinds of soup—all served on plates of silver. The third course presented all kinds of game-birds with venison and boars' heads served on silver dishes. The fourth course was *des petites oyseaux* on toast and spit, with prunes and salads, set forth on dishes of silver gilt. The fifth course consisted of tarts, orange trifles, candied lemons, and many sorts of sweetmeats, beautifully arranged on plates and stands of coloured jewelled glass. The sixth and last course was hypocras again, but red, served with *oublies*—perhaps macaroons and wafers.

The wines which accompanied this regal menu, unhappily, are not mentioned by the chronicler, but the name of Tours in connection with delicacies of the palate has always been a *cachet* of excellence; its cuisine and its cellars are still unsurpassed in France. The banquet was accompanied by minstrelsy and masque. King René himself arranged the musical programme; indeed, he brought with him some of his famous troubadours. After dinner the august company [212] disposed themselves, some to the merry dance, some to the quiet *têtes-à-tête*, and some to cards —then so fashionable and so much beloved by the King and Queen of France. A very famous pack was used, the Queens of the suit being Isabeau for "Hearts," Marie for "Clubs," Agnes Sorel for "Diamonds," and Jeanne d'Arc for "Spades," Kinged respectively by Charles VI., Louis III., Charles VII., and René; and the Knaves, Xaintrailles, La Hire, Dunois, and Barbazan—a quaint conceit!

Upon the death of Louis III., his sister, Queen Marie, came in for a considerable fortune—renounced, be it said, by that most loving of all brothers, René, in her behalf. It was said that the new Duke assigned the whole of his revenues from Anjou to the use of his sister. He settled certain estates upon her which she very quickly and cleverly turned to good account. In person the Queen visited her new properties, dressed plainly in black and without ceremony, inquired into the condition of the labourers and the promise of the harvest, and then, calling to her assistance the well-known financier of Bourges, Jacques Cœur, opened out business relations with England. The vineyards of Anjou—at least, those bordering the Loire—were among the most fruitful in France. These the Ministers of the Queen exploited, and opened out a very profitable export trade from the port of La Rochelle. The sweet white vinous brandies of Annis became

established favourites of English palates. Anjou cheese, too, was excellent; it still is made from milk of Anjou cows and goats. *Crême de Blois* was famous long before Roquefort, Cantal, or Brie, came into request, and with fresh butter was exported largely to Southampton, much to the profit of Queen Marie's exchequer. [213]

These homely touches introduce the student of "*La Vie Privée des Français*" to a charming hobby of the good Queen Marie—her love of animals and birds. In the *Comptes de Roy René* is a letter to the Agents of the Audit; it is dated July 16, 1458, and is as follows:

"By Command of the Queen.

"Well-beloved and Right Trusty,

"We have noted that our brother the King of Sicily (René) has in his house at Rivetes, of which you, Guillaume Bernart, have the superintendence, some cocks and hens of good strain, and that they are very fine, as we have seen. If you are well disposed, then, the messenger can bring us a cock and a hen, with a broody hen and her chicks. You will see that they are in good condition. Do not be at all fearful of displeasing our royal brother, for we shall make him both pleased and happy.

"Dearly beloved, may Our Lord protect you. Written at our Castle of Chinon, XVI. day of July, 1458.

"Marie."

King René had a farm at Rivetes, and from an inventory dated November 12, 1458, we learn that he had—"69 *chés d'animaille* (heads of stock), 1 *jument* (mare), 1 *poulain* (colt), 42 *chés de pourceaux* (pigs), and much poultry." Rivetes, with its forest of chestnuts, was situated between the rivers Loire and Anthion, at no great distance from Angers. René had also wild beasts and birds—a vast menagerie at Rivetes and Reculée. His keeper of lions and leopards in 1476 was Benoist Bagonet, and of his eagles and peacocks, Vissuel Gosmes. He had also at Reculée a Court fool, Triboullet. They were all very pleasant fellows, and helped to amuse the King and Queen and their guests. [214]

King Charles VII. died at his favourite castle of Mehun-sur-Yèvre, July 22, 1461. He had suffered for a considerable time from an incurable ulcer in his mouth, which denied him the pleasure and necessity of eating. In his last illness Marie was at Chinon; he cried piteously for her to come to him: "*Marie, ma Marie!*" She hastened to Mehun, and was in time to hold his hand and moisten his heated brow, and quietly he died in her arms—the arms of the truest of wives and noblest of queens. Charles was buried in the royal vaults at St. Denis, and Louis XI., his son, reigned in his stead. Devoted to his mother, her widowhood was lightened by his affectionate regard. His father's death made no difference in her royal state; the King placed his mother before his wife—Charlotte of Savoy.

Queen Marie bore her consort twelve children; six died in infancy. Her two sons were Louis and Charles; her daughters, who survived, Catherine, Jeanne, Yolande, and Madeleine. She survived Charles but two short years. Enguerrand de Monstrelet speaks thus of her death, which occurred near Poitiers, November 23, 1463: "There passed away from this world Marie of Anjou and France.... She bore all through her life the character of a good and devout woman, ever generous and patient." Her death was not unexpected, for through trouble, sorrow, and fasting, her frame had become emaciated and her pulse beat slow; she died actually from prostration. Her end was very peaceful in the silent cloisters of the Abbey of Chastilliers in Poitou. She had but just returned from a pilgrimage to the Gallician shrine of Santiago da Compostella. Her body was embalmed and translated in solemn guise to St. Denis, and laid beside that of her husband. Her devotion to him had not ceased at his death, for she had endowed twelve altars in the chief cities of France proper for the offering of Masses for the repose of his soul. Every month she made the practice of visiting the royal tomb at St. Denis to hear Mass and pray for him. At Bourges, of sad and chastened memory, the widowed Queen founded in honour of her consort three considerable benevolent institutions—a hospital for the sick poor, a refuge for poor pilgrims, and an orphanage for illegitimate children. [215]

Queen Marie's transparent faithfulness and absolute unselfishness is outlined in a famous saying of hers with respect to her relations with King Charles: "He is my lord and master; he has entire power over all my actions, and I have none over his." Her whole-hearted devotion and her heroic courage have raised Marie d'Anjou far above the ordinary level of her sex, and have elevated her to the very highest throne among the Queens of France.

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# CHAPTER VII [216]

## GIOVANNA II. DA NAPOLI—"SI COMME A REGINA GIOVANNA!"

### I.

"Like Queen Giovanna" was, alas! a common saying in the Two Sicilies what time Giovanna II. was Queen of Naples. A term of immeasurable reprobation, it implied the stripping of the woman of every shred of moral character, the baring of the Queen of every claim to honour. If Isabeau of Bavaria was the worst Queen-consort, then Giovanna II. was the worst Queen-regnant, perhaps,

the world has ever seen. Her story needs telling truthfully with care.

Giovanna II., Queen of Naples, was the only surviving daughter of Charles III., "*Carlo della Pace*," King of Naples and Count of Provence. Her mother was Margaret, daughter of her great-uncle Charles, Duke of Durazzo; hence her parents were cousins, and were both in the direct line of succession from Charles I., Count of Anjou, the fourth son of King Louis IX.,—St. Louis of France,—who had married Beatrix, Countess of Provence in her own right. Giovanna had seven brothers and sisters, all of whom died in infancy except Ladislaus, born in 1376; she was his senior by five years, having first seen the light of day on April 27, 1371.

GIOVANNA II. DA NAPOLI AS THE VIRGIN MARY

From a Painting by Antonio Solario ("Lo Zingaro"). (*Circa 1420.*)

National Museum, Naples

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The Queen's father's predecessor as occupant of the throne of Naples had been his second cousin, Giovanna I., the eldest surviving grandchild of King Robert, "*Roberto il Buono e Saggio*." She died childless in 1382, although twice married, first to Andrew, King of Hungary, and [217] secondly to Lodovico, Prince of Taranto. By her will she purposely passed over the Princes of the Durazzo family, and named as her successor Louis II. d'Anjou, King of Sicily and Jerusalem and Count of Provence. The Queen's first marriage was celebrated September 24, 1333, when she was only seven years old, her boy-husband being fifteen. The Pope created Prince Andrew King of Naples six years later, upon his succession to the throne of Hungary. Without the slightest compunction, Charles, son of Lodovico, Count of Gravina, seized his cousin's empty throne, and maintained himself thereupon for five years, his little daughter Giovanna being just ten years of age. The death of Queen Giovanna I. was due to the instigation of Charles. He entered Naples at the head of a strong force of cavalry, seized the palace, and took the Queen prisoner. She was conducted to the Castle of Muro, overlooking the road from Naples to Melfi, and there, with her lover, Otto of Brunswick, suffocated under a feather bed by two Hungarian soldiers. This outrage was committed in revenge for the death of King Andrew, which was ordered by Giovanna I., his consort.

Charles III., King of Naples, died in 1386, leaving to his son Ladislaus the royal succession, with his widow, Queen Margaret, as Regent. They with the Princess Giovanna, sixteen years of age, were fugitives from castle to castle, pursued by the troops of Louis d'Anjou. Nevertheless, Margaret was an astute mother, for when Ladislaus was eighteen years old she espoused him to Constance, daughter of the Count of Clermont in Sicily, a very wealthy heiress. What matrimonial projects were hatched or addled on behalf of Princess Giovanna during her father's lifetime we [218] know not, but almost the first matter taken in hand by King Ladislaus was an advantageous marriage for his sister. This was a very complicated business. First of all, neither he nor she cared very much for matrimony; he was a libertine, and she shared his freedom and his depravity. Next, each suitor for the hand of Giovanna retired disgusted by the loose morals of the Neapolitan Court and by the avarice of the King and his sister. However, at length a match was

arranged between the Princess and Prince William, son of Leopold III., Duke of Austria. The actual nuptials, however, were postponed for one reason or another until 1403, when Giovanna had reached the considerable age of thirty-two. The princely couple went off to Austria, where they remained more or less unhappy until 1406, when the Prince died suddenly and suspiciously, many said by the hand or direction of his ill-conditioned wife.

The widow returned at once to Naples to fill the place of honour vacated by her brother's wife, his second consort, Maria di Lusignan. Queen Constance he had divorced in 1391, and married the daughter of the King of Cyprus the same year. The ostensible reason for rejecting Constance was the failure of her father to pay her dowry. She was a lovely girl and virtuous,—a rare quality at that time,—and became the idol of the Court. Queen Maria had scarcely been seated on the throne, when she also fell from her high station. Ladislaus said she was delicate and in consumption, and no wife for him. One day, when she and the King were assisting at Mass in the cathedral, she heard with the utmost astonishment and dismay the Archbishop read a Bull of Pope Boniface IX. annulling her marriage with Ladislaus. At the conclusion of the citation the [219] prelate advanced to the Queen's throne and demanded her wedding-ring. Too stupefied to resist, the pledge of her married state was torn from her finger, and she was carried away to a remote convent under the care of two aged nuns. Three years after this outrage the King relented of his cruelty, and married her to one Andrea di Capua, one of his favourites. He took a third wife in 1406, Marie d'Enghien, the widow of Raimondo d'Orsini, some six months after the return of his sister from Austria. She is said to have survived Ladislaus. Some letters of hers are preserved at Conversano, near Bari, in the Benedictine convent.

The advance of Louis d'Anjou upon the capital roused Ladislaus to action, and he hastily gathered together an undisciplined army, and set forth to withstand his rival to the throne. A decisive battle was fought at Rocca Secca, May 19, 1411, wherein Ladislaus's troops were routed, but Louis failed to follow up his advantage, and Ladislaus retained his throne and continued his debauches.

Early in 1412 Queen Margaret, mother of the King and of Giovanna, died somewhat suddenly. She and her entourage had taken refuge from a visitation of plague, which spared neither prince nor peasant, at her villa at Acquamela, six miles from Salerno. She was buried privately in the Cathedral of Salerno, in the crypt over against the marble sarcophagus which contained the ashes of St. Matthew. Whatever influence she may have exerted during the youth of her son and daughter for their good was speedily dissipated, and as soon as Ladislaus had obtained the crown he took steps to circumscribe the liberty of his mother. She appealed to her daughter Giovanna [220] for sympathy, but found none, and the poor old Queen, who had survived her consort, Charles, for six-and-twenty years, was consigned to the Convent of the Annunciation, "so as to be out of the way of mischief," as her daughter phrased it. The natural rôle of mother was entirely out of place in a palace or at a Court ruled by a libertine and a prostitute.

Ladislaus died sadly and alone. His unnatural sister refused to be with him, and all his butterfly courtesans gave to themselves wing when sickness and death entered the royal palace. He died August 6, 1414, leaving no lawful offspring by his three wives, but a numerous family of natural children. No Salic Law governed the succession to the throne in the kingdom of Naples, consequently Giovanna became Queen.

The widowed Queen Giovanna had not married again, although she counted lovers by the score; but within a few months of her accession she took steps to ally herself with a Prince who should be the handsomest and wittiest of the time. This determination of Giovanna was noised abroad all over the capitals and Courts of Europe, and forthwith a troop of eligible suitors passed through the ports of Marseilles and Genoa, each bent on taking the ribald Queen at her word. The romance reads like a fairy tale, for each princeling and prince was put through his paces to show his qualifications in person and in purse; for, desperately wicked as she was, the Queen had a commercial sense, and her exchequer stood sorely in need of replenishment. Taken for all in all, Juan d'Arragona, son of King Ferdinand, was the champion of physical beauty, knightly courtesy, [221] and financial competence; but he was no more than a precocious lad of seventeen, whilst the Queen was forty-five. A matrimonial union was ruled to be impossible, and the pride of Aragon would not suffer a scion of her royal house to become the plaything of a lewd Queen.

Giovanna very unwillingly transferred her affections to an older suitor,—the champion, if we may so write, of the heavy weights,—Jacques de Bourbon, Comte de la Marche, of the Royal House of France, and their nuptials were celebrated in the Cathedral of Naples on August 10, 1415. He very soon discovered that, strong man as he was, he had a wily woman to contend with. He began to assert his marital rights, and required Giovanna to accord him equal honours with herself; at the same time he utterly failed in the reformation of the conduct of his wife. She served herself upon him as she willed, but she mostly willed to serve him not at all, and to transfer her favours, as before their marriage, indiscriminately to whilom paramours. Like a lion wounded in his den, Roy Jacques,—for so he called himself,—struck out at his supplanters, and, with his past-master knowledge of the rapier and its uses, he pricked to death not one but many lovers of the Queen. The Neapolitans were man for man with Giovanna, and indignant with her consort. Strange to say, perhaps, for us who read the story of the time, evil royal communications had wholly corrupted the morals and the manners of all classes in the realm.

Incited by toadies and sycophants, Giovanna at last took the upper hand against her spouse, and on September 13, 1416,—little more than a year after their marriage,—she ordered his [222] imprisonment in the Castella dell' Ovo, a fortress of such strength that Froissart said: "None but the devil can take it!" Thence, however, he escaped, but with a price upon his head,—fixed by his inconstant mistress,—and took up his residence at Besançon, with the white cord of St. Francis

d'Assisi round his loins. There he died, having renounced the world, the flesh, and the devil, a wiser and a disillusioned man, in 1436.

Giovanna, released from the bonds of matrimony, greatly to her relief, gave herself unreservedly into the arms of every man dare-devil enough to risk the consequences. Of these, perhaps the first whose name and maldoings chroniclers have preserved was Pandolfo Alopo, a base-born athlete, a very handsome fellow, and a seductive guitarist to boot. He responded to his royal mistress's amours, and she appointed him Seneschal of the kingdom, with authority to use her signet-ring. Very soon, mentally and morally undisciplined as he was, he exceeded the length of Giovanna's tether, by exciting her jealousy with respect to her Maids of Honour. Short was his shrift. Seized, bound, and tortured with nameless indignity and cruelty, his mutilated body was cast into the sea off the fair island of Nisida, where the vicious vixen held orgies equal in atrocity and bestiality to those of Tiberius in Capri.

Sforza da Colignola stepped gaily in the bloody footmarks of Alopo. He was the chief of the Queen's pages, and had been reared under her eye and at her will; he had, moreover, a fell influence over his mistress, as witness time out of mind, ever since his teens, of her enormities. He, indeed, gained the upper hand of Giovanna, and, being an adept in martial exercises, held his [223] own against all comers. For a time he left the intimate service of the Queen, and became a soldier of fortune, winning laurels and prizes all along his way. Secretly he sympathized with the claims of the House of Anjou, judging shrewdly enough that under the white lilies of Louis he would have a better hold upon his position at the Court of Naples than he would under the red bars of Alfonso of Aragon.

Giovanna felt the thraldom of Sforza's strength of character and his knowledge of her past, and because no one seemed willing to take her at her word, and rid her of his presence, she turned herself about and fixed her confidence on Sergianni Caracciolo. Upon him she showered riches and honours, but in return he made himself her master.

The Queen's choice of favourites was not, however, confined to men of merit or of high degree. Every good-looking youth or well-favoured man upon whom her eyes chanced to rest was enrolled in her household. She frequented athletic meetings incognita to view the personal qualifications of vigorous youths, and spent her evenings in surreptitious visits to her stables and her kennels. The men of her choice were offered no alternative, but when the guilty intercourse was consummated the lucky-luckless companion of her couch was expected to commit suicide or for ever leave his home on pain of imprisonment and torture if he tarried four-and-twenty hours.

Perhaps no figure of a man fascinated Queen Giovanna more completely than did the handsome person of Bartolommeo Colleone of Bergamo. His family had become impoverished by the bitter [224] feuds of the Guelphs and Ghibellines, so at eighteen the young lad bid his parents farewell and started off to win his way in military adventures. He travelled south to Naples, and at twenty was as lusty and as strong as any man he met. Of a strict habit of body, he performed feats none others dared. Giovanna sent for the good-looking stranger, and pitted him against the ablest youths of Naples. In leaping, running, and casting of heavy weights, no one could surpass him. Instantly the Queen fell in love with him, and appointed him her esquire, with ready access to her boudoir, where she denied him nothing. His final reward was the cloister of St. Francis d'Assisi, which became his prison, and his mouth was sealed. How he escaped torture no one has recorded.

It would be long, and certainly distasteful, to give a full list of all those who shared the vampire caresses of the peccant Queen; but brief is her story of how Giovanna destroyed the fair fame of her house and the honour of her country. Of her it was written: "*Ultima Durazza fiet destructio regnum*" ("The last Durazzo shall destroy the kingdom").

## II.

Whilst Giovanna was thus prostituting herself and her kingdom, and Alfonso of Aragon was biding his time, a movement was on foot in Anjou and Provence, under the strong hand of Queen Yolande, to win back the rights her husband had abandoned to the succession of the Neapolitan crown. Her eldest son,—a boy not yet out of school,—should place that crown once more upon the head of an Angevine Sovereign or perish in the attempt. Men and arms and allies were all [225] requisitioned, and elaborate preparations were made at Marseilles and Genoa for the embarkation of the "army of Naples."

The expedition of Louis III. to Naples was hurried forward in consequence of the breach between Queen Giovanna and the nobles of Naples. Her disregard of their allegiance, and her appointment to all the more important posts under the Crown of men of obscure origin who had commended themselves to her by their physical charms and coarse obscenities, caused a disruption in the political economy of the kingdom. The Queen was deaf to the expostulations of her Barons, and ordered them severally to their estates, where, fuming with indignation, they armed their retainers and stood ready for any emergency. The arrogance of King Alfonso drove many would-be adherents into the camp of his Angevine rival, and an influential deputation of aggrieved dignitaries made its way to Marseilles to tender to Yolande, the Queen of Sicily and the mother of Anjou, their homage, and to assure her of their cordial support for the youthful King if only she would permit him to show himself at the head of an overawing force before the capital.

There is a romantic story concerning King Louis's journey to Naples told by Jehan Charantais, esquire to the King, in a letter to Queen Yolande. The fleet of Genoese and Provençal galleons was driven by adverse winds, it is related, and sought refuge under the high cliffs of Sicily. Whilst

weather-bound, the young Prince landed with a company of knights in search of adventures. As they came ashore a number of girls greeted them with showers of roses, and tossed them handfuls of kisses. One, more daring than the rest, ran up to the youthful Sovereign, wholly ignorant of his identity, and gave him a nosegay of crimson blooms tied with a lovers' knot of blue [226] ribbon. Accepting the good-omened offering, Louis loosened his surcoat to insert the fragrant spray, when his kingly medallion fell out at the foot of the damsel. She at once picked it up and ran away, laughing provokingly. The Prince followed her, caught her, recovered his badge of sovereignty, and gave his captive in exchange a sounding kiss. But Leonora,—such was her name,—had discovered who he was.

That same day a missive was brought aboard the flagship by a Sicilian fisherman. It was in Leonora's handwriting, and bore her signature. She told him she was about to be sent to Naples by her parents as a Maid of Honour to the Queen. She had very much disliked the idea, and had refused to go, because Giovanna was the daughter of a usurper, as was reported, and because she bore so evil a character. "Now," she added, "that I have seen and spoken to *my* King, and have received his embraces, I am ready to go at all hazards and do my utmost in his cause."

Louis dillydallied with his Sicilian mermaid, and their loves continued for wellnigh a fortnight before his fleet was ready to put to sea again. Fair Leonora, too, took her departure, saying, as she bid adieu to her lover: "We shall meet, dear Prince, again in the Queen's boudoir."

KING RENÉ RECEIVING THE HOMAGE OF A VASSAL, 1469

From a Miniature, MS. Fifteenth Century. National Library, Paris

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Louis III., a well-grown lad of seventeen, and as manly as he was fit mentally, arrived off the city of Naples on August 15, 1420, to maintain his right to the throne more bravely and more successfully than either his father or his grandfather had done. He had just fallen in with the fleet of the King of Aragon, but in defeating his hereditary enemy his own flotilla was so greatly [227] worsted that he was unable to take the city by storm. He landed, however, and betook himself to Aversa to present his homage to Queen Giovanna. Shocked by her lustful overtures, he departed precipitately to Rome, and there bided his time. The Queen's failure to seduce the young Sovereign threw her once more into the arms of King Alfonso, whom she formally proclaimed her heir on September 24 the same year. Three years passed whilst the adherents of the House of Anjou suffered forfeiture of goods, liberty of person, and many cruel punishments and tortures.

Alfonso, a natural son of King Ferdinand the Just, King of Aragon and Sicily, was forty years of age, remarkably handsome, talented and capable, ambitious, but generous and devoted to the fair sex. He was, however, entirely unresponsive to the amorous approaches of the Queen. His rejection, his scorn, and his independence of action, roused in Giovanna keen feelings of resentment. She had named him heir to Naples; she could just as easily disinherit and discard him. On June 24, 1423,—good St. John the Baptist's Day, a festival of major obligation in the Church,—the Queen caused proclamation to be made at Mass and in the markets that, "owing to the incompetence and pretensions of the King of Aragon, he is thereby disinherited, and is no longer to be recognized as successor to the throne of Naples." A plot, indeed, or more correctly

plots, were revealed to Giovanna whereby Alfonso was implicated in a conspiracy to seize the Queen's person, imprison her, and ultimately to poison her. On May 22 of the same year he had taken the bold step of arresting Gianni Caracciolo, the Queen's chief favourite. This roused [228] Giovanna to action. She ordered Caracciolo's immediate release, and bade Alfonso quit Naples at once, or remain at his peril. Greatly to her surprise and relief, he took his departure, and left the field open to his youthful rival.

The Queen's next step was to send to Rome, and invite her "beloved cousin," as she called Louis, to return to her assistance in driving the Aragonese out of Naples, and to accept the succession to her throne. She bade him to have no fear of misunderstandings of the past, but to regard herself as nothing more than a well-intentioned relative.

Louis, now grown to manhood, with ripened experience of warlike tactics and political strife, and, be it said, of women and their ways, entered Naples in state on April 10, 1424. His arrival in Southern Italy cheered the desponding spirits of the Angevine party and roused their zeal. Adherents flocked to the banner he set up, and men and arms were ready at his beck and call. A very important personage allied himself with the young King-adventurer—none other than Sforza, the famous *condottiere*. He gathered around him a considerable number of distinguished malcontents and disappointed favourites of the Queen, who in no way concealed their intention of revenging the insults she had heaped upon them, as soon as they gained a promising opportunity. News of this determination very soon reached Giovanna's ears, and she shut herself up in her palace with her maidens and her toadies, and declined to receive King Louis or his envoys. At the same time she summoned to her presence Braccio Fortebraccio di Mantova, another of her renowned *condottieri*, and Constable of Sicily, the avowed rival and enemy of Sforza, and [229] suffering under a decree of excommunication of Pope Martin V.

Leonora, immediately in attendance on the Queen, managed very skilfully to convey intelligence of all that passed in Giovanna's secret councils to her royal lover. She told him that, in spite of her recent proclamation, the Queen had sent her favourite Court Seneschal, Gianni Caracciolo, to the King of Aragon to implore him to come and rescue her, and put the coalition to flight. She asked Alfonso to accept the title and estates of Duke of Calabria, as appertaining to the heir-presumptive to the Neapolitan throne. This daring courtier pressed his attentions upon the Queen, demanding not only a share of her bed, but a share of her throne. Leonora told Louis all the ins and outs of this intrigue, and warned him to be on the alert; for should Caracciolo's presumption become known in Naples, there would be a general revolution. Sforza, on his side, was not prepared to allow his rival Hercules an unquestioned victory at Court. He demanded admission to the palace, and an interview with the Queen, before whom he challenged Caracciolo to mortal combat.

Giovanna was delighted that such redoubtable champions should worst each other on her account. Her vanity was flattered—and that is a happy condition for a scheming woman. Undoubtedly she most favoured Caracciolo, but Sforza's fine physique appealed to her irresistibly, and she fanned his passion. If Caracciolo was for the moment master of her heart, Sforza was master of her future, and she was happy. One day she invited the rivals to join her in the chase, and she rode between them. She cared little for hunting save as an incentive to [230] amorous relations. Tiring soon of the exercise, she expressed a wish to dismount and saunter in the forest glades, but her mood lead to an extraordinary contest. Caracciolo threw himself at once off his mount, and gave the Queen his hand to rid her of her pommel. Sforza, seeing his advantage, pressed his horse against the Queen's and seized her other hand. Each hero pulled his hardest, until Giovanna was compelled to cry aloud for pain! Then, slipping quietly down, she ordered Sforza to release her. This token of non-preference excited the *condottiere's* passion. "If Caracciolo," he hissed out, "had not been so clumsy, your Majesty would not have been so greatly disarranged!"

"It is not you," replied the Queen, "that should dare to regulate my conduct, or, for the matter of that, your rival's. Hold your tongue and leave me; your presence is not grateful just now!"

"As you will, madam," said Sforza fiercely. "Yes, I will leave you with the favourite of your heart, but you ought to know that you cannot treat thus a man like me!" Then he turned to Caracciolo, and exclaimed in a tone of scornful disdain: "As for you, I advise you to use all your wits and all your resources, for you will stand in need of them!"

Giovanna was on that day absolutely overcome by her physical passions. She cared for nothing, and the last sight the enraged Sforza had of her was locked in her lover's arms and reclining on a mossy bed, lost to the world around. The erring Queen speedily came to her senses with respect to the position Sforza had taken up; and when she learnt that he had thrown in his lot for better or for worse with Louis III., under a pretext, she despatched Caracciolo to Rome to claim the [231] Papal reversal of his excommunication, and to assure the Pope of her filial devotion to the Holy See. Before he departed, Giovanna required him to deliver up his sword as Seneschal of the kingdom, which she promptly offered as a bribe to Sforza.

Meanwhile Leonora had not been idle. She had spoken to the Queen often and passionately about the comeliness and the gallantry of her hero, contrasting his buoyant physical excellences with the blazé proportions of Alfonso,—not knowing that he had rejected Giovanna's lustful overtures,—until she expressed herself desirous of confirming his appointment as her heir. Leonora wrote thus to King Louis: "Come not yet to the palace; but arm your fleet, and recruit what troops you can. Sforza is loyal, but Caracciolo is your enemy, and he is powerful. Besides him you have to reckon with Braccio and with King Alfonso. You have need of prudence and daring."

The position of affairs, so far as the Queen was personally concerned, was perilous in the extreme. On one hand, the King of Aragon did not hide his intention of capturing her, and consigning her and her maidens and men to a castle in Catalonia, and then he would be absolute master of the kingdom of Naples. On the other hand, Louis, aided by Sforza, whom she had so grievously outraged, was determined to win back his ancestral inheritance, Queen or no Queen, but he in no way threatened her life or liberty. The Queen fled with her Court to the Castle of Capua, and there established herself. Sforza followed her, and, whilst avowedly protecting his Queen, made her his prisoner, and then, with the assistance of the fleet of King Louis, caused [232] Alfonso, who with Braccio was investing the city of Naples, to seek refuge in Castel Nuovo, whence he set sail to Aragon for reinforcements and supplies.

Leonora,—still with the Queen and still devoted to the cause of King Louis,—wrote to him again, bidding him adventure himself to Aversa, whither Giovanna retired after the departure of King Alfonso. There Louis found her, and, in spite of advancing years and the disordered life she had led, noted her good looks, her grace of manner and of speech, and her general attractiveness. “Her eyes,” wrote Leonora, “flashed wonderfully, and her cheeks reddened passionately directly she beheld again her good-looking young cousin.” Giovanna greeted him at the top of the grand staircase of the palace, and addressed him in gushing terms: “The brave deeds you have accomplished, gallant Prince,” she said, “have added greatly to your renown. Enter, victorious King, my peaceful abode, take a well-merited repose, and receive from me, your devoted admirer, the homage of a thankful Princess, who is greatly charmed at beholding you in full possession of your lawful estate.” Extending her hand, she led the young King to the apartments which had been prepared for him.

Louis, bowing profoundly, deprecated the services which had gained such honours as the Queen had bestowed upon him. “I have achieved success in your name, Madam, and for your pleasure,” he replied. They supped together, and then, bidding all the company and the servants to withdraw, she conversed with her visitor upon every subject that came uppermost in her mind, but eventually laid herself open to receive the supreme pleasure she had in contemplation. Louis [233] was inflexible, and all her tenderness and affection found no response. At last she said: “I do not know what more I can do. You, Sire, accept gladly the rights your arms have won, but what is more precious still you refuse—these arms of mine which are ready to do your will and pleasure.”

Giovanna then lowered her gaze and sat mute, awaiting Louis’s reply with palpitating breast. She might very well have hummed the kissing song of Ronsard:

> “On soit d’un baiser sec, ou d’un baiser humide,
> D’un baiser court, ou d’un baiser qui guide
> L’âme dessuz la bouche, et laisse tréspasser
> Le baiseur.”

> “Maybe the kiss is cold, maybe it’s warm;
> A kiss and off, or a kiss that clings,
> And guides the ardent lover ’neath the lips
> Till he finds no way to escape.”

“No, madam,” at last spoke the young Prince, greatly embarrassed by the Queen’s words and looks, “it shall never be said that I seek the means for impairing your royal prerogative; you shall retain that, I pray, in its entirety so long as Providence sees good to preserve you to your people.” Then he politely withdrew from the chamber and sought his own lodging. Again on the morrow the King and Queen dined together privately. Giovanna was dressed superbly in royal robes and wore priceless jewels, but her manner was strangely marked by languor and vexation. Their conversation was forced and restrained in turn. After the repast they adjourned together to the lovely gardens of the palace, which were brilliantly illuminated and filled with a numerous and festive company. The best musicians, of the capital and the most excellent jongleurs of foreign [234] and native fame forgathered to do honour to the royal guest. Dances and flirtations were the order of the evening, and among the Queen’s maidens was the lovely girl from Sicily, Leonora. Louis saw her immediately, and it was not very long before they were *tête-à-tête* in a grotto hidden from public gaze.

The royal romance reached a climax when Louis avowed himself the devoted admirer and lover of the girl. He even proposed a clandestine marriage, but Leonora begged him with tears not to press his suit. She revealed to him the real character of her mistress, and warned him that if Giovanna became conversant with the liaison, then she herself would be done to death, and he, Louis, would probably be assassinated. “You may,” she said, “refuse to marry the Queen, but she will never pardon you if you marry anybody else.”

Again, the third day of Louis’s visit to Aversa, the Queen arranged meals and meetings alone with the Prince, whose morals and whose manhood she was striving so consumedly to seduce. The Queen’s eyes had in them not alone the lure of lust, but the flash of passion and the flame of resentment. Louis again excused himself her presence, and, making his way to his tryst with Leonora, heard as he approached the grotto the high-toned voice of Giovanna beating down the frightened protests of his *innamorata*—they were together in the grotto! The Prince revealed himself, only to meet the scornful invectives of the jealous Queen. She demanded to know the nature of Louis’s relations with her serving-maid, and when she had heard the story she turned upon Leonora like a tiger. Louis stepped before the terrified girl, and bade Giovanna abate her [235] fury and not lay hands upon a woman whom he loved. “Leonora has done more than you, madam,” he exclaimed, “to mount me on the throne of Naples, and you shall not cause me to

descend therefrom!”

The Queen, at last realizing the manner of man with whom she had to deal, was intimidated by his boldness, and presently she left the grotto. Leonora still refused Louis’s proposition, and before the day dawned she had taken her flight from Aversa, and was well on her way to Rome, to claim sanctuary. She wrote a farewell letter to her royal lover, which a faithful dependent of her father safely conveyed to Naples. King Louis offered the old man every possible inducement to reveal the hiding-place of his young mistress, but he never broke the seal of secrecy which Leonora placed upon him, and Louis and Leonora never met again.

Louis managed to evade the embraces and the advances of the Queen. He had been espoused to the Princess Margaret of Savoy, and although he used the liberty of a vigorous and a level-headed young manhood under the silver-feathered ægis of Prince Cupid, he was not forgetful of his troth. Having broken the back of the opposition of Alfonso of Aragon, and being confident of the support of Genoa and Milan, he lived in comparative comfort and peace; but he withdrew into Calabria, where he was for a time, at all events, safe from the intrigues of Giovanna. During this interval the young King made repeated visits both to Angers and Chambéry, to greet his devoted mother, revive the sweet memories of his boyhood, and to cultivate the love of his fiancée [236] Margaret, now growing rapidly to womanhood.

The whole of France was once again in a ferment. The English, driving all before them, captured almost all the possessions of the Crown. Charles VII. was a fugitive, and his consort Marie, Louis’s beloved sister, broken-hearted. René, his younger brother, was fighting for his own in Bar and Lorraine. With the chivalry and self-sacrifice which distinguished all the children of Louis II. and Yolande, he placed his sword at the disposal of his brother-in-law, and fell into line with the defenders of his native soil. None of the French King’s allies held themselves more stoutly, nor were anything like so dependable, as was the young King of Sicily and Naples. His royal person and his coroneted helmet were ever foremost in the battle; his bravery was inspiring. When matters seemed to be hopeless and the flame of France’s honour appeared to be extinguished, the miraculous mission of the Maid of Domremy cheered the hearts of all true patriots. She chose René as her *preux chevalier*, and her place was at the head of the troops under his orders. Louis III. had another post of danger to fill; he and his command were told off to keep watchful eyes upon the movements of the Duke of Burgundy. By his excellent strategy he kept the English apart from their allies, and rendered the co-operation of the Burgundians impossible.

KING LADISLAUS AND QUEEN GIOVANNA II.

From a Monument by A. Ciccione. Church of San Giovanni a Carbonara, Naples

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The relief of Orléans was followed by the amalgamation of the two French armies, led so brilliantly by the Angevine royal brothers, and the victorious hosts of France swept Charles and his Court along with them triumphantly to his *Sacré* at Reims. Released from his duties as coadjutor to the King of France, Louis returned south again, and at Geneva he and Margherita di

Savoia were united in the bonds of matrimony. The royal couple left immediately for Marseilles, and sailed away to Naples, accompanied by a strong squadron of war-galleys of Venice and Genoa; for the Venetians, recognizing the courage and the ability of the young King, and desirous of gaining some of the commercial profits of Neapolitan trade, joined their forces to the banner of the Angevine King of Naples.

Once more in his capital he discovered Queen Giovanna wholly under the influence of Gianni Caracciolo, who had assumed regal attributes, and was personally carrying on an intrigue to supplant his authority. Louis immediately sent for the usurper, asked him about his pretensions, and warned him that if the Queen, as he said, had named him her Lieutenant-General, he (Louis) was his undoubted Sovereign. Caracciolo took the King's assumption of his kingly rights quite nonchalantly, and replied insolently that as long as Giovanna lived he was the mouthpiece of her Government.

The favourite of the Queen was not a *persona grata* at her Court. His arrogance and presumption raised up enemies on every side; in particular, the old nobility looked askance upon a courtier of his low origin. Sergianni was by name a Caracciolo, by birth the son of a common woman—so it was said. The Queen's Mistress of the Robes was Covella Ruffo, Duchess of Sessa, —her husband was a pretender to the crown,—and she voiced the palace discontent. She boldly demanded of Giovanna the immediate disgrace of her Seneschal, and proclaimed the Court [238] preference for King Louis and his fascinating consort Margherita. The Queen indignantly stood by Caracciolo, and forbade the Duchess to name the matter again. Within ten days,—it was August 25, 1432,—the body of the favourite was picked up by brethren of the Misericordia and given decent burial. In the dead man's heart, plunged up to the hilt, was the jewelled poniard of the Duchess of Sessa! The incident passed, for the Queen deemed it inexpedient to ask for explanations; besides, she had become wearied by the obsequiousness of her Minister, and she had other fish to fry! With rare commercial acumen, she seized all Caracciolo's belongings,—most of them he had received from herself,—and actually, with feminine inconsequence, shared them with the Duchess!

## III.

Whilst Louis was strengthening his position at Naples, Duke René of Bar and Lorraine was languishing in the Tour de Bar at Bracon, vanquished at Bulgneville and crushed by the Duke of Burgundy. Louis added his protest against his brother's retention in captivity to that of all the Sovereigns and peers of France, and his appeal was carried by Queen Margherita to her father, the Duke of Savoy, whose influence was great with the Court of Burgundy. René's release on parole for a year was largely due to the intercession of his brother. Giovanna expressed a wish to see "my other cousin of Anjou," as she put it, and Louis pressed his brother to bend his steps to Naples and recruit his health and spirits in the sunny, merry South. The Duke's first step, [239] however, was to hurry off to Nancy to fold his heroic wife Isabelle and darling children to his breast; here, too, to regulate many affairs of State awaiting his decision. To Angers next he boated, to pay his filial homage to his courageous, resourceful mother, Queen Yolande, and to relieve her of some of the worry of government. René, too, had much business to do at the Court of King Charles of France, and his loyal, devoted subjects in Provence demanded his presence. So passed nearly the whole of his twelvemonth's grace.

Giovanna's reception of her "cousin" was affectionate in the extreme, and she was warm in her admiration of "another handsome Prince of Anjou."

Nothing, however, would suit her until René became her guest, and as such he went through all the weird experience of his elder brother. It mattered not to the Queen that he was a married man with a loving wife and dear children; what mattered to her was that he was good-looking, brave, and gallant. To be sure, René's serious manner disconcerted her, and his artistic tastes bored her, but under his studious courtesy she tried to believe that he was hiding a lively response to her amorous advances. In the presence of "*il galantuomo Re*,"—by which term she always saluted Louis,—Giovanna named René second heir to her kingdom, and successor to the title and estates of the duchy of Calabria. She carefully refrained from inquiries about Duchess Isabelle; indeed, she ignored her existence altogether, and in this line of conduct she was quite consistent, for she had declined to receive the young Queen Margherita when Louis entered Naples with her in state.

René, however, was instrumental, whilst under the fascination of Queen Giovanna, in effecting [240] two matters of importance for the kingdom of Naples and its people. She had instructed Giovanni Capistrani, a perfervid son of Rome, and at the same time an admirer of the Queen, whom she had appointed Court Chamberlain, to persecute the Jews and drive them away from Naples; all such as refused exile he was ordered to put to death. René interposed in the interpretation of these decrees, and gained the Queen's consent to allow the persecuted race to remain on two conditions: (1) That they should not exact unjust usury; and (2) that they should be marked by a yellow cross to differentiate them from the Christian subjects of the Crown. René further suggested to Giovanna that the Church needed her patronage, that she herself would go the way of all flesh, and that some accommodation with Heaven was very desirable. The Queen laughed his counsel to scorn, and badgered him for a crusader and a churchling, but his words went home even to her hardened, sensuous heart. Capistrani's unexpected action, moreover, greatly moved her; he resigned his Court offices and emoluments, and meekly entered a monastery of St. Francis d'Assisi.

Duke René returned to his prison at Dijon, and King Louis took his bride off to Cosenza, the

capital of Calabria, where a second marriage was celebrated on August 15, 1433, to allay the scruples of prejudiced adherents of the Neapolitan throne. A rumour had been spread,—originating, it was said, with the Queen herself,—which affirmed that Margherita was not the wife, but the mistress, of the royal Duke! Eighteen short months of marital bliss were enjoyed by [241] Louis and Margherita, broken, alas! by a fresh attack by Alfonso in force on Naples. A naval battle off Gaeta, 1434, ended disastrously for the fleet of Aragon. Arrayed against it were the allied forces of Genoa, Venice, Florence, and Milan. Alfonso and his brother Juan were taken prisoners, and carried off to Milan by Duke Filippo Maria. Then a blow fell on the young Queen and upon the whole kingdom of Naples, which made itself felt even in the morbid heart of Queen Giovanna. King Louis caught fever besieging the city of Taranto, and was borne swiftly off to Cosenza, where he died, in his own fond Queen's arms, on November 15, 1434. Few Princes have made themselves so universally loved as Louis III. of Sicily and Naples, and never were there so many sad hearts and tearful eyes in the kingdom of Naples as when his beloved body was laid out for burial in the Cathedral of Cosenza.

Giovanna never again recovered her spirits; to be sure, she did not renounce her evil ways, but she set about in a hurry to put into execution Duke René's suggestions. Among belated pious deeds, she rebuilt and refounded the Church of Santa Maria dell' Annunziata by way of penance for her bad life, and there she was buried in front of the high-altar. A simple slab of marble points out, in the absence of a grandiose monument, the place of her sepulture. She died February 2, 1435, and no woman wept for her, and no man felt grieved. If it is true that "the evil which men do dies with them," then we must not rake up the tainting memories of an evil past. Giovanna II., Queen of Naples, has passed to her last account, and before Heaven's tribunal will she stand, [242] alongside with the victims of her vampire-love. Faraglia, in his "*Storia della Regina Giovanna II. d'Angio*," makes a brave attempt to whitewash the character of the Queen, and he records many interesting details in her daily life. "Every morning," he says, "she rose with the sun, spent one hour at Mass and private devotions; then she applied herself to the study of music and literature; at noon she breakfasted, generally alone, the afternoon she gave to exercise, and before dinner she bathed in a bath supplied with the milk of one hundred asses." Apparently the Queen gave no time to affairs of State, and she had not much leisure for company. Undoubtedly Queen Giovanna was the friend of art and craft, but only so far as their exponents helped to enhance her own attractions and luxuries. Antonio Solario—"Il Zingaro"—was her favourite painter, and, by the oddest of irrational conventions, he has represented her in an altar-piece as the Virgin Mary with the Infant Christ, and surrounded by a court of saints!

With what feelings the news of the death of Louis III. at Cosenza was received by René in his prison chamber at Tour de Bar we may well imagine. The hold of his house upon the kingdom of Naples was, of course, of the weakest; and if the late King upon the spot, free to move what troops and stores he had at will, was unable to retain command of Naples, how could a captive Prince away in Burgundy hope to enforce successfully his claim as his brother's heir?

In Provence and Anjou and beyond the borders of his dominions, with Bar and Lorraine, and with the sympathy and assistance of friendly Sovereigns and Princes at home and abroad, he had, [243] of course, numberless loyal subjects, friends, and allies, but among them all not one could enthuse his cause as he could himself in person. Three devoted Princesses,—Yolande, Isabelle, and Marguerite,—were doing all they could to free him from his captivity. Their efforts were in the schools of sympathy and politics, but they could not lead troops or command a victorious army. No doubt René was depressed and in despair at the apparent paralysis of all effective assistance. Then came the crushing intelligence that Giovanna, the Queen of Naples, was dead, and that he (René) was *de facto* King. This must have made him desperate. He had no resources, and there appeared no possibility of his obtaining possession of his rights. How he chafed and fumed as he paced his spacious chamber, and how defiantly he must have gazed through its barred windows and at its closed door! Duke René's brain must have reeled.

Relief, however, came in quite an unexpected sort of way. One morning the bolts of his door were noisily shot back, and upon the threshold he beheld two foreign gentlemen unknown to him. They knelt and kissed his hand; then they offered him a permit from the Duke of Burgundy, a sealed letter from Duchess (now Queen) Isabelle, and a great official despatch from the lately deceased Queen Giovanna. The two emissaries were devoted adherents to the House of Anjou-Provence—Baron Charles de Montelar and Signore Vidal di Cabarus. They came, as their credentials ordered, directly from the deathbed of the Queen, to tell him from her that, "for the sake of the love I had for King Louis,—now, alas! departed,—I chose his noble brother René as my heir and successor. Long live King René!" Into his hand the two gentlemen delivered the [244] Sovereign's medallion and its royal chain of gold, and again they did obeisance to their new Sovereign.

René accepted their homage chivalrously, if sorrowfully, but his eye wandered to the smaller packet held by di Cabarus, for he saw it was addressed to him in his dear wife's handwriting. Tearing open the cover, he read with tears in his eyes the startling news that—

> "Even whilst thou, my fond spouse, readest these presents, I, thy loyal wife and royal consort, am setting off at once, well mounted and numerously attended, to Marseilles to take shipping for Naples, there to receive in thy name the homage of the Estates and to assume the government. I am taking with me our second boy, Louis, with Yolande and Marguerite, to show them to thy Neapolitan subjects, but Jean I shall send to thee to comfort thee, by the grace of the Duke of Burgundy. My sweet mother will accompany him to cheer thee and to tell thee of my good estate. Fare thee well, beloved.

“Your Isabelle.

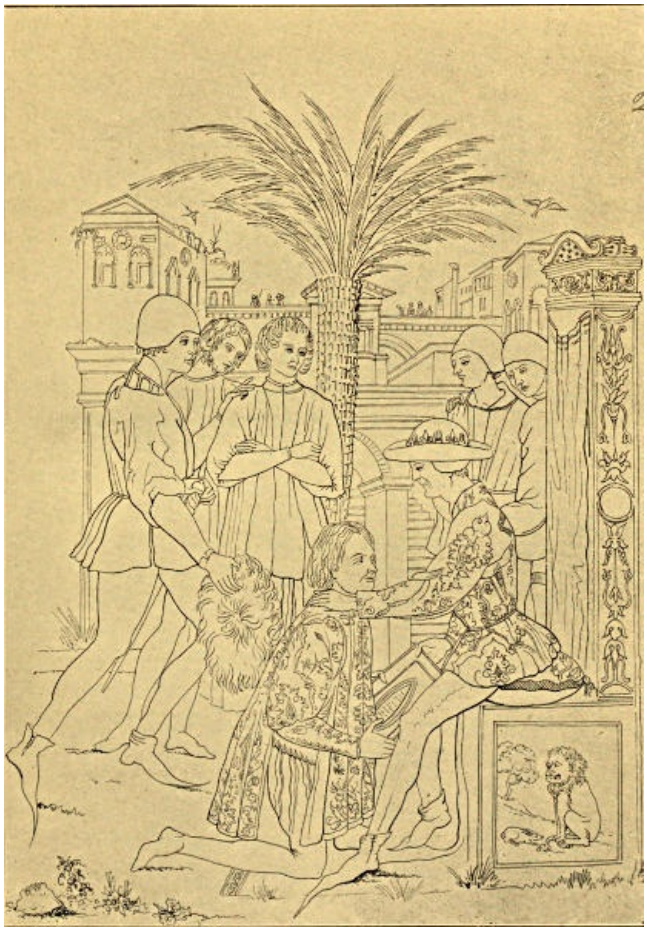
“At Nancy, 1434.”

Isabelle had learned promptness and wisdom from her good mother-in-law, Queen Yolande, as well as decision and courage from her father, Duke Charles, and all these royal virtues she exhibited magnificently at this extraordinary juncture. The two Neapolitan envoys had, it appeared, gone direct to Nancy to learn their new Queen’s pleasure, and had thus become the bearers of her exhilarating mandate. René received the intelligence of the masterful action of his spouse with mixed feelings. He knelt at his prie-dieu, and thanked God and the saints for the [245] noble self-sacrifice of his wife; then, rising proudly from his knees, he embraced his two visitors, bestowed upon each a ring from his own fingers, and gave them instructions to carry his duty to the Duke of Burgundy, praying for his instant release, and then to proceed to Marseilles to convey to Queen Isabelle his blessing and his approval of her splendid enterprise. No sooner was he left to himself once more than he collapsed, weeping like a child and chiding his Maker and his captor in language lurid and forcible. The irony of his position nearly drove him mad.

Queen Isabelle landed at Naples in due course, and became the object of an extraordinary outburst of enthusiasm. Hailed as Queen, and with King René’s name ever reverberating from loyal lip to loyal lip, she made no mistake, she had no illusions, for she faced the fact at once that there were other claimants for the vacant throne and the uneasy crown. The King of Aragon she knew as a traditional rival, and with him she had to deal most seriously and methodically. He, indeed, directly news of the Queen’s death reached him, had seized the Castle of Gaeta, and thence had issued a proclamation claiming the vacant throne. The Duke of Sessa, the husband of Queen Giovanna’s favourite confidante, Duchess Sancia, claimed the throne as representing,—in descent from Robert, Count of Avellino, her second husband,—Maria of Calabria-Durazzo, sister of Queen Giovanna I. The Prince of Taranto, grand-nephew of Giovanna I.’s third husband and of her sister Maria’s third spouse, the Emperor of Constantinople, entered his claims to the whole kingdom. He pretended also that King Louis III., René’s brother, had before his death at Cosenza [246] made him his heir of all Calabria. From a distant kingdom came still another claimant. The King of Hungary, Andrew, first consort of Giovanna I., had by her a son, it was affirmed, but who it was alleged had died in infancy. This child, it was maintained, was living, now grown to man’s estate. The child who died, and was buried as the Queen’s son, was the son of a servant in the royal suite, whilst the young Prince was removed from his mother’s care and carried off to Hungary, and thus reared.

Isabelle brushed all these claims aside,—save that of Alfonso, who alone of the pretenders to the crown was prepared to take up, as he had done for years, the rights of Aragon in Naples, by force of arms. Everywhere throughout the kingdom the Anjou dynasty was popular; the country people swore by Louis III., and acclaimed the proclamation of René. The army alone was disaffected, and was corrupted by Spanish gold. The royal treasury at Naples was empty, the pay of the loyal troops was in arrears; corruption and fraud filled every department of State. The country gentry and peasantry were ruined; they had been taxed and supertaxed by the minions of Queen Giovanna II. From Provence and Anjou not much monetary help could be expected, and Lorraine and Bar were impoverished. All France was suffering from the wreck of the Hundred Years’ War. René’s ransom required almost every penny Yolande, Isabelle, and Marguerite, could raise by love and threat. What could be done?

[247]



GUARINI DA VERONA PRESENTING HIS TRANSLATION
OF STRABO'S WORK ON GEOGRAPHY TO KING RENÉ

From a Miniature by King René. Albi Library

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The new Queen had come to Naples to claim and hold the kingdom for her husband, and she made up her mind that she would try every expedient to that end, cost what it might. To steal and to borrow were not lines of conduct that appealed to her, but she could beg, and beg she did. Upon this circumstance historians have fastened, and have written more or less eloquently in praise of a dauntless Queen. After making up her mind to this course of action, Isabelle at once put it into operation, and an immense sensation was created in the city when their beautiful and virtuous Queen, clothed simply in native Neapolitan garb, without jewels or marks of royalty, took her place morning by morning outside the palace, in the open square, a macaroni basket in her fair, white, ringless hands, and there pleaded eloquently, in her sweet and musical voice, for contributions for the honour of the King and for the defence of the city. By her side, clad in Neapolitan costumes, were her three little children—innocent, fresh, and comely. "It was," wrote a chronicler, "a spectacle to move the heart and soul of a marble statue—if such it hath. A Queen of high degree and impeccability humbling herself for her new country's good. Looking upon her and her children, one conjured up the base contrast offered to our outraged nature by the late Queen, of infamous memory."

Money flowed in fast and full, and the wicker cash-box daily carried almost more weight of copper and silver, and of articles of jewellery, than the fine strength of the virago Queen could support. Isabelle set about a thorough overhauling of the resources of the national exchequer. She personally rallied troops, and inspected militarily her recruits; arrears of pay were forthcoming, and the better-disposed men of affairs she intuitively selected, and thus purged the [248]
seats of government. The King of Aragon, amazed at Isabelle's courage and ability, refrained from attacking Naples. "I'll fight with men," he said, "not with a woman!" he exclaimed. "Let us see what she will do."

The state of Naples in general, and of the Court in particular, was worse than that of any Augean stable. Indeed, of Court, strictly speaking, there was none, for the less disreputable nobles had long ago gone away to their country estates, taking the seeds of corruption with them to sow among their tenantry. The coteries which gathered around the abandoned Queen like eagles round a carcass were split up into murderous, lustful parties, and divided among evil-conditioned brothels. Every man was every woman's prey, and every woman at the mercy of a libertine. The whole city was a colossal orgie, and its inhabitants sunk in the slough of unmitigated filth. The turpitude of Pompeii found a parallel in the unrighteousness of Naples. To pull aside the veil which merciful Time has placed over those years of banality and crime would be a sacrilege.

"Down among the dead men let them lie!"

Queen Isabelle, aghast, pulled her veil more closely over her fair features, fixed her teeth, and

clenched her hands. Giovanna and all her doings were taboo to her, and by the example and precept of a good woman she gradually accomplished what appeared to be a Herculean task—she brought the Neapolitans to their senses. Mind, in those rapidly pulsating Southern natures, quickly controls action, and the human animal is not all bad even when so predestined by Providence. Isabelle's administration of the kingdom of Naples during the three years of her sole [249] government was by way of being a moral renascence of humanity, and, when René joined his noble consort, the roses which decorated his triumphal entry were richly perfumed by his wife's sweet culture.

The prisoner of Bracon was set unconditionally free in 1437, and he hurried away to Marseilles, passing through his beloved country of Provence, hailed everywhere and by everyone with ecstatic devotion. At his port of departure for Naples he was met by Queen Yolande. Never was there a more affecting scene: the mother,—still bearing traces of her early beauty and grace,—bowed down with grief and aged prematurely; the son grown older than his age under the rigours, mental and physical, of his long imprisonment, but still devoted, grateful, and chivalrous. Yolande had fain pressed René to remain in France and comfort her declining years, for, were they parted, she felt that she never more should fold him to her heart—a heart pierced deeply by the premature death of Louis. Yet she played the Spartan mother, not spectacularly but sincerely, and, hushing the sobs of parting, she bravely waved the King of Naples her last farewell. His father and his brother had both traversed the way René was taking; their experience would doubtless be his.

René had a great reception at Naples, and his joy was unclouded when he embraced his noble wife and his four young children, with tears coursing down his cheeks. His recognition as Sovereign was celebrated in the cathedral. There he and Isabelle knelt hand in hand in thankful [250] confidence. Not long did the new King remain in the bosom of his family. Alfonso broke his parole, and prepared a fresh expedition to attack Naples. René went off at once to Rome, Florence, Venice, Genoa, and Milan, to rally help in his emergency. During his captivity the King of Aragon had played the cards so adroitly that he had succeeded in detaching the Duke, his captor, from the triple alliance. Moreover, he gained over to his side Pope Eugenius IV. by promising to make Sicily a fief of the Church. The Aragonese attack failed, though the forces at King René's command suffered terribly.

At this juncture Queen Isabelle and her children, except the heir to the throne, returned to France, much against her will, but obedient to her royal consort's wishes. Jean, Duke of Calabria, now a promising lad of nearly thirteen, remained with his father at the post of danger. Alfonso was by no means discouraged; he intended to be master of Naples cost him what it might. In 1440 and 1441 he made fresh assaults on Naples and other seaports of the Calabrian peninsula. All of these René resisted triumphantly, but at Troia, on October 21 in the latter year, Alfonso in person defeated René's army under the command of Sforza and Sanseverino, and made good his footing in the kingdom of Naples. He further pressed home his attack upon the capital by seizing the island of Ischia, where he compelled the women, whether married or not, to wed his victorious soldiers. René wearied of the contest; he had been warring for twenty years, and he yearned for repose. The Neapolitans quickly took his measure, and his indecision and slackness of energy disheartened his principal supporters. His troops fell away from him, and when, in [251] May, 1442, the King of Aragon once more summoned the capital to surrender, René meekly handed over the keys to his enemy, and made his escape to Marseilles. Alfonso on June 2 entered Naples in triumph, and put an end to the rule of the Angevine Kings.

Alfonso has been styled "the Magnanimous"; perhaps "the Philosopher" would fit his character better. He was a student of metaphysics and a classicist to boot, and, moreover, he had a ready wit. He hated dancing and frivolity, and once remarked that "a man who danced only differed from a fool because his folly was shorter!" An ideal domestic menage appeared to him to be "a blind wife and a deaf husband." His treasurer was one day giving out scrip for 20,000 ducats, when an officer standing by exclaimed: "Alack, if I only had that amount I should be a happy man!" "Take it," replied the King!

Nevertheless, Alfonso was hated by his new subjects quite as thoroughly as René had been beloved. The war dragged on; in Calabria the Prince of Taranto raised once more the banner of Anjou, and Giovanni Toreglia, a cousin of Lucrezia d'Alagni, Alfonso's last mistress, seized Ischia for Jean, Duke of Calabria, René's eldest son. René himself made two more attempts to regain Giovanna's inheritance: in 1458 and 1461; but Charles VII. and Louis XI. each failed him in turn with reinforcements. Last of all, Jean, Duke of Calabria, was decisively defeated at Troia in 1462 by Ferdinand I., Alfonso's bastard son, who succeeded to the throne of Naples after his father's death in 1458, a man treacherous and vindictive, and a libertine. "*Sic transit gloria mundi*" may *[252]* be written as a footnote to the story of Naples in the fifteenth century.

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# CHAPTER VIII [253]

## MARGUERITE D'ANJOU—"THE MOST INTREPID OF QUEENS"

### I.

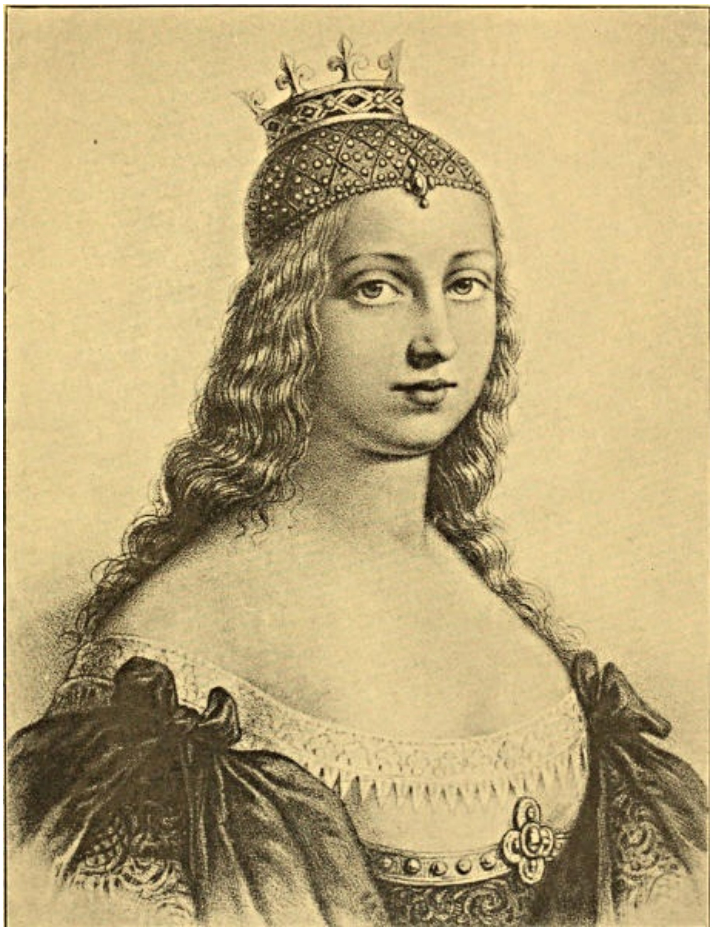
"Margaret of Anjou was the loveliest, the best-educated, and the most fearless Princess in Christendom!" High praise indeed, but not more than her due, and universally accorded her by

every historian who has undertaken to chronicle her character and career.

Born at the Castle of Pont-à-Mousson,—one of the finest in all Lorraine, and a favourite residence of her father and mother,—on March 23, 1429, Margaret was the youngest child of René, Duke of Bar, and Isabelle of Lorraine his wife. Her father was far away from his home when this pretty babe first smiled upon her sweet mother. He was escorting *La Pucelle* to Chinon, and leading the troops of Charles VII. to victory. Her mother was Lieutenant-General of the duchies—a devoted and heroic spouse. The little girl's cradle was rocked amid the rivalries and hostilities of the Houses of Lorraine and Vaudémont. She was the child of Mars. She was baptized by Henri de Ville, Bishop of Toul, who had just been created, by the Emperor Sigismund, Prince of the Holy Roman Empire. The Bishop was a trusty friend of Duke René in shower and shine.

That ducal nursery, where faithful Théophaine la Magine bore maternal nursing sway, was a merry one; for Margaret's brothers Jean, Louis, and little Nicholas,—twin with her only sister [254] Yolande,—were all vigorous youngsters. Then, besides these legitimate children, the Castle of Bar-le-Duc sheltered another Jean and Blanche and Madeleine, born to their father out of wedlock. The ducal sepulchre had given rest to two other baby boys, Charles and René, own brothers to little Margaret.

Margaret's experience of the joys and sorrows of the world began at a very early age. Her doting father was a captive away at Dijon under the rigorous hand of the Duke of Burgundy, and Duchess Isabelle was up and about seeking his deliverance. René and she had succeeded Charles II. as Duke and Duchess of Lorraine the same year that saw the Tour de Bar receive its distinguished prisoner, and upon Isabelle fell all the complications and difficulties attending the succession. To be sure, she had the very able help of the Dowager Duchess, her own dear mother Marguerite, godmother of her little girl, but the first consideration in her mind was her husband's liberty. Handing over the reins of government to Duchess Marguerite and the Council of State, Isabelle betook herself to the Court of Charles VII. to claim his assistance and interference. With her she took her two little daughters—Yolande, only three years old, and Margaret, but two. Her sons were sent to Burgundy to stand as hostages at the Duke's orders, and little Nicholas remained with his grandmother at Nancy.



MARGUERITE D'ANJOU

From a Miniature by King René, in "Le Livre des Heures"

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At Vienne, where the French Court was at the time, having gone south from Reims and the coronation, the King gave his brother-in-law's consort a very hearty greeting, but he hesitated to commit himself to action which might ferment once more evil blood between his people and the [255] Burgundians. Isabelle held by their hands, as she pleaded for her dear husband, her two baby girls, and Charles's indecision was overcome by little Margaret, then a dauntless infant, who ran up to him and insisted upon being nursed upon his knee and kissed. A child's instinctive disingenuousness is affected by magnetic natures regardless of conventions and proprieties; how often and often again is this proved to be axiomatic! That interview was memorable for the

meeting of Charles with a woman—to be sure, then a girl—who would in after-years affect him and his considerably. Agnes Sorel was in attendance upon the Duchess Isabelle. Charles beheld her for the first time, and her face and figure haunted him for good and ill many a long day.

Not content with winning over the King of France to intercede for the liberation of her consort, the Duchess returned to Lorraine, and went off at once to Vaudémont to plead with Count Antoine, the Duke of Burgundy's brother, in the same cause. Vaudémont agreed to assist his kinswoman, but upon one chief condition, among others—that she would consent to Yolande, her eldest daughter, being betrothed to his eldest son Ferri. There was, of course, method in this extraordinary proposal,—for the child was only three years of age,—and it was this: He, the Count, claimed Lorraine, by the Salic Law, as first heir male against Isabelle. Whatever might eventuate, his son married to René's daughter would be an additional lien upon the duchy. This policy also commended itself to Isabelle's prudential mind, and she gave a qualitative consent dependent upon confirmation by Duke René later on. The Count added a rider to the stipulation, [256] and that was the committal of the girl to the care of his wife, the Countess, for education and training. This, too, the Duchess accepted, although it cost her sore to part with her dear child. Margaret and Nicholas alone remained to solace her; but Isabelle was far too strong a character to spend much time in comforting or being comforted. Whilst René was in durance vile she could not remain idle; so off she went, taking Margaret and Nicholas with her, to the Castle of Tarascon, in order to enlist the sympathies and services of René's devoted Provençals.

Isabelle's coming into Provence provoked remarkable demonstrations on the part of the warm-hearted and loyal subjects of the county. Troubadours and glee maidens flocked to the Rhone shore; they sang, they danced, they ate, they drank, and laid floral offerings and votive crowns at the feet of their Countess and her tender children. Bonfires blazed from shore to shore, and echoes of the rejoicings might have been carried by the warm south wind right into the dungeoned ears of their beloved Count. Whilst Duchess Isabelle was in residence at Tarascon negotiations were already on foot for the betrothal of little Margaret. An eligible suitor arrived, the young Pierre de Luxembourg, eldest son of the Count of St. Pol, whose esquire, by a singular coincidence, happened to be the recipient at Bulgneville of Duke René's sword. Arrangements for the ceremony of espousal were, however, rudely interrupted by a serious outbreak of plague, and Isabelle and her children fled to Marseilles, where they remained till René joined them, released upon a year's parole.

When René was proclaimed King of Sicily, Naples, and Jerusalem, Duke of Anjou, and Count of [257] Provence, upon the premature death of his elder brother, Louis III., at Cosenza, Isabelle was again at Marseilles, on her way to take possession of her husband's rights in Naples. Such pageants and spectacles at those exhibited in her honour by the exuberant Marseillais that city had never seen. She rode through ranks on ranks of cheering citizens, in a great state chariot covered with crimson and gold, and wearing a queenly crown upon her head, and with her were Jean, her eldest son, and Margaret and Nicholas. The little Princess captivated everybody by her *naïveté* and the graceful kissing of her little hand. Margaret sent kisses flying through every street, winning all men's loyalty and the love of all the boys.

Queen Isabelle and her children took up their residence at the Palace of Capua. Queen Giovanna offered her the new royal palace in Naples, but Isabelle's instinct was not in error when she chose to dwell a little distance from the royal hussy. There King René joined his family, bringing with him both Louis, his second son, and Yolande. The reunion was the happiest that could be. Upon the King devolved, of course, the onus of government, with the co-operation of Queen Giovanna. Queen Isabelle, relieved from the trammels of the executive, had now a much-longed-for respite in which to give attention to the neglected education of her children. She constituted herself their teacher-in-chief, but called to her assistance the very noted writer of French romance, Antoine de Salle. Alas! it was a brief interlude indeed, for the studies had hardly had time to affect the young pupils when the King of Aragon resumed his hostile demonstration [258] against the Angevine dynasty, and René and his were locked in the grip of war. Very unwillingly Queen Isabelle agreed to return to France with her children, Naples being an armed camp and the whole country in a turmoil. They wended their way leisurely to Anjou, and not to Lorraine. Two reasons dictated this course. Angers was the capital *par excellence* of the dominions of the King of Sicily-Anjou, the ancestral seat of his house, and Anjou was more favourably conditioned than Lorraine or Bar for the completion of the training of the royal children. Queen Yolande was only too delighted to welcome her brave daughter-in-law and to caress her beloved grandchildren. She went off to the Castle of Saumur, her favourite residence, and the walls of the grim Castle of Angers once more resounded to the merry laughter of childish games. Sadly enough those joyous sounds yielded place to saddest dirges when Prince Nicholas, not yet ten years old, died suddenly of poison. This was the first break by Death into that home circle.

The King and Queen were again in residence at the Castle of Tarascon in 1443, and there, on February 2, they received an imposing mission from the Duke of Burgundy, headed by Guillaume Harancourt, Bishop of Verdun, the Seigneurs Pierre de Beauprémont and Adolphe de Charny, with Antoine de Gaudel, the Duke's principal secretary. They came to Tarascon to negotiate a marriage between the Duke's nephew, Charles de Borugges, son of Philippe, Count of Nevers, and the Princess Margaret. This bridegroom expectant had been very much in the matrimonial market before accepting the choice of his uncle. His first fiancée was Jeanne, daughter of Robert, [259] Count de la Marche; she gave place to Anne, Duchess of Austria; and she in turn was passed over before the greater charms of the Angevine Princess. The contract of betrothal with Pierre de Luxembourg was cancelled, and Charles de Nevers was the choice of René and Isabelle.

The date for signing the marriage contract was fixed, February 4, and to all the articles the

King and Queen readily assented. The dowry was 50,000 *livres*, but how that large sum was to be raised neither René nor Isabelle had the slightest idea; they had exhausted their exchequer in the fruitless fight for Naples. The Duke of Burgundy, acting as next of kin to the bridegroom-elect, promised to settle a jointure of 40,000 *livres* on Margaret. René had put forward a plea that the Duke should forego 80,000 *écus d'or*, which was due on loans, and Philippe agreed, receiving as further security and indemnity to the towns of Neufchâteau, Preny, and Longwy,—already in pawn to him,—the Castles of Clermont, Varennes, and Renne, all in Argonne. A secret clause was, however, at the eleventh hour foisted upon the Angevine Sovereigns—a proceeding quite in accordance with the proverbial cunning of the Court of Burgundy. It stipulated that the children of Charles and Margaret should be heirs-presumptive of Sicily-Anjou-Provence, Lorraine, and Bar, to the exclusion of the issue of Ferri and Yolande de Vaudémont.

The judicial mind of King René would not let his consent to this article be recorded until he had consulted both the Count de Vaudémont and King Charles of France. The former indignantly [260] interviewed the Duke of Burgundy, and stated his determination to oppose the proposed marriage. Charles resented the stipulation upon the ground of its injustice, and warned his brother-in-law not to agree to any such proposals. The marriage contract was not signed, and, whilst acrimonious negotiations were carried on both at Dijon and Vienne, another and a very much more illustrious suitor of the hand of Princess Margaret appeared upon the scene, no less a person than Henry VI., King of England and France.

When the matter was first mooted, it was thought nothing of by the King and Queen of Sicily, because Henry had been all but betrothed to Isabelle, the daughter of the Count of Armagnac, to whom he owed so very much in earlier days. Indeed, the gossip went so far as to link the English King's name in turn with all three daughters of the Count—the loveliest girls in France: "Three Graces of Armagnac" they were called. Henry had sent his favourite painter, Hans of Antwerp, to paint the three comely sisters, and his handiwork was so acceptable to the royal young bachelor that he sat and gazed at them for long, changing the order of their arrangement to see which face of the beauteous three made the most passionate appeal. The Armagnac marriage was backed by all the influence of the Duke of Gloucester, the younger of the King's uncles, and lately Lord Protector of England.

What drew Margaret of Anjou into the orbit of Henry of England was that she had gone on a visit to her aunt, Queen Marie of France, and had at the French Court created quite a sensation. She was nearly fourteen years of age, and gave fascinating indications of those charms of mind [261] and person which made her "the most lovely, the best-educated, and the most fearless Princess in Christendom."

Cardinal Beaufort was also a visitor at King Charles's castle at Chinon, and was immensely moved by Margaret's appearance and accomplishments. He also detected her latent strength of character, and certain traits therein which marked her unerringly as the counterfoil of his royal pupil and master's mental and moral weaknesses. The Cardinal returned to England full of the charms of the young Princess, and descanted upon them so enthusiastically to the King that Henry was in a perfect fever to behold the beauteous Princess for himself. His amorous appetite was further stimulated by conversations he quite accidentally had with one Jules Champchevier, a prisoner of war on parole from Anjou, lodging with Sir John Falstaff, in attendance upon the King. Champchevier was sent off to Saumur to obtain, if possible, a portrait of the bewitching young Princess. The King wished her to be painted quite simply and naturally "in a plain kirtle, her face unpainted, and her hair in coils." He required information about "her height, her form, the colour of her skin, her hair, her eyes, and what size of hand she hath."

Champchevier was taken prisoner on landing in France, and threatened with death for breaking his parole whilst executing the royal commission; but news reaching Charles VII. of the unfortunate fellow's predicament, he laughed heartily at the situation when he learned the reason of his mission, and forthwith ordered his release. The idea of a matrimonial contract between his royal rival and his royal niece opened His Majesty's eyes to possibilities created thereby of a satisfactory peace between the two countries. Once more,—and how many times [262] before and since!—a royal maiden's heart contained the key to great political issues.

The portrait was painted exactly to order—perhaps, and quite correctly, with a little artistic embellishment. The beauty of Nature is always enhanced by the decorative features of art. Henry was charmed with the sweet face he gazed and gazed upon, quite putting into the shade the other reigning beauties of his heart. He was himself as comely as might be, just four-and-twenty, highly educated, his mind unusually refined. In thought and deed he was pure and devout, and very shy of strange women. Upon the latter head he was emphatic, for when at Court or elsewhere he beheld women with open bosoms *à l'Isabeau de Bavière* he was shocked, and turned away his face, muttering: "Oh fie! oh fie! ye be much to blame!" His earnest wish was marriage, not concubinage. The King's choice very soon became noised abroad, and the Court became agitated and divided. The Duke of Gloucester, the King's next of kin and heir-presumptive to the throne, championed the Armagnac match, whilst Cardinal Beaufort and the Earl of Suffolk decided for Margaret of Anjou.

There was, however, an obstacle in the way, quite consistently with the proverbial rugged course of all true love; the Count of Nevers refused to release his fiancée. He was prepared, he averred, to cancel the contentious clause in the marriage contract, made at Tarascon, and not to insist upon anything derogatory to the dignity of King René and his elder daughter, the Countess Ferri de Vaudémont. The prospect to René of such an auspicious union, however, which would [263] place his daughter upon one of the greatest of European thrones, was too dazzling to be ignored, and the outcome of the imbroglio was the assembling in January, 1444, of a mixed Commission,

representing England, France, Anjou, and Burgundy, at Tours, whereat two protocols were framed: a treaty for a two years' peace, and a marriage agreement between the King of England and the Princess of Anjou. This was signed on May 28 of the same year. The marriage contract thus drawn out was very favourable to the House of Sicily-Anjou: Henry asked for no dowry, but required only the rights transmitted to King René by Queen Yolande with respect to the kingdom of Minorca. Henry further agreed to the retrocession of Le Mans and other points in Anjou held by the English.

To the Earl of Suffolk, the leading English plenipotentiary, was mainly due the successful issue of the conference. Henry created him Marquis and Grand Seneschal of the Royal Household. The King furthermore despatched to him an autograph letter to the following effect: "As you have lately, by the Divine favour and grace, in our name, and for us, engaged verbally the excellent, magnificent, and very bright Margaret, the second daughter of the King of Sicily, and sworn that we shall contract marriage with her, we consent thereto, and will that she be conveyed to us over the seas at our expense." Arrangements were forthwith made for the immediate marriage of the Princess. Suffolk,—one of the handsomest and most cultivated men of the day, though now verging on fifty years of age,—headed a majestic embassy to Nancy, where the Sicily-Anjou Court was in residence. He bore with him a dispensation from his royal master to act as his proxy at the [264]
nuptial ceremony, and to receive in his name the hand of his fascinating bride. It was indeed a notable function, and held in the ancient cathedral of Tours, whereat all that was royal, noble, brave, and beautiful, forgathered. The witnesses for Margaret were the King and Queen of France, the King and Queen of Sicily-Anjou, and the Duke and Duchess of Calabria, with the Dauphin Louis. The Princess's supporters were the Duke of Alençon, the most gallant and most accomplished Prince in France, and the Marquis of Suffolk, the premier noble of England. Upon the latter's consort, the clever Marchioness, devolved the duties of Mistress of the Robes.

That day,—February 27, 1445,—was a red-letter day in the annals of all three kingdoms. Louis d'Harcourt, Bishop of Toul, was chief celebrant, assisted by half the prelates of France, and Cardinal Beaufort was in choir to administer the Papal benediction. The young Queen's Maids of Honour were the two most lovely girls in France—Jehanne de Laval, in the suite of Queen Marie, and Agnes Sorel, in that of Queen Isabelle. It was a singular and delightful coincidence that these two lovely damsels were in evidence on that auspicious day; for were they not the charming cynosures respectively of two pairs of kingly eyes—René and Charles!

The interest and the importance of the celebration was heightened considerably by the fact that there was a double wedding: Count Ferri de Vaudémont and Princess Yolande of Sicily-Anjou were united in the bonds of matrimony immediately after the nuptials of the new Queen. Fêtes [265]
and festivities were carried out right royally for eight whole days and nights. The "Lists" were held in the great wide Place de Carrière in Nancy. Charles and René met in amicable conflict, but it was the former's lance which was tossed up, and René gained the guerdon, which he presented gallantly enough to his sister, the Queen of France. The champion of champions, however, was none other than Pierre de Luxembourg, the earliest fiancée of Queen Margaret, and he had the happy satisfaction of receiving the victor's crest of honour from her hands—now another's! Minstrelsy and the stage also lent their aid to the general rejoicings. King René was already styled the "Royal Troubadour," and he rallied his melodious, merry men in a goodly phalanx, whilst he himself led the music in person and recited his own new marriage poem. The theatre proper had only very recently been established in France. Church mysteries and pageant plays had had their vogue, when, in 1402, Charles VI. granted his charter to "*La Confrèrerie de la Passion*,"—a company, or guild, of masons, carpenters, saddlers, and other craftsmen, and women,—which he established at the village of St. Maur, near Vincennes. These merry fellows introduced to their distinguished audience, in the Castle of Nancy, secular travesties of the well-worn religious spectacles, and won the heartiest applause. King René personally, through the gracious hands of the royal bride, decorated the actors with gay ribbons and medallions.

The dress of the right royal company was, as may well be supposed, sumptuous in the extreme; but among the wearers of rich attire a pathetic note was struck, when it was mooted that royal [266]
Margaret had been dressed for her bridal by Queen Marie, her aunt, because her own parents were too much impoverished to supply suitable marriage robes! The bride's dress was mainly that worn by Queen Marie herself, twenty-three years before, at her own nuptials with Charles VII. The kirtle was of cloth of gold cunningly embroidered with the white lilies of France—the same for Anjou; the robe of state was of crimson velvet bordered with ermine, which also formed the trimming of the stomacher she wore. Her hair was dressed *à l'Angloise*, its rich golden coils being crowned with a royal diadem, almost the only jewel of Queen Yolande's treasury which had not been sold or pawned. The little Queen was slight of build and short of stature for her age; very fair of skin, with a peachy blush; her eyes light blue, her hair a golden auburn; her whole face and figure lent themselves to delightful expression and graceful pose. Above all, she was very self-possessed, and gave all beholders the impression of ability and decision beyond the average.

With respect to King René's inability to provide a fitting trousseau for his daughter, there is an entry in the *Comptes de Roy René* which indicates that he was not unmindful of the sartorial requirements of his family. Under date September 11, 1442, is an order, addressed to Guillaume de la Planche, merchant of Angers, for 11 *aulnes* of cloth of gold, embroidered in crimson and pleated, at 30 *écus* per *aulne*, with a suite of trimming to cost 30 *livres*. At the same time François Castargis, furrier of Angers, is directed to supply ten dozen finest marten skins at a cost of £15 7s. 6d., and to pack and despatch them to the care of the Seigneur de Precigny at Saumur, [267]
"for dresses for Madame Margaret." This de Precigny was Bertrand de Beauvau, who married

King René's natural daughter Blanche d'Anjou.

At the wedding of Henry VI. and Margaret at Tours and Nancy, the courtiers were very richly attired in short jackets or tunics of pleated brocade trimmed with silk fringes; their body hose was of parti-coloured spun silk to match their tunics. Their shoes were made long, of white kid with high heels, and were laced with golden thread. Calves where skimpy were padded, and narrow shoulders were puffed out. They wore long pendent sleeves, pricked and furred. Their hair, generally worn *à la Nazarene*, hung in thick straight locks upon their shoulders, cut square over the forehead. A small *berretta*, with a heron's plume and a jewelled brooch, completed the costume. Chains of gold and jewels were worn at will. The ladies of the Court wore short kirtles or petticoats, with long bunched-up trains of silk brocade in two contrasting colours; cloth of gold was reserved for dames of royal degree. Strict rules were observed in the wearing of fur—its quality and its breadth; ermine was reserved for royalty. Their gloves were long-fingered, and their shoes long-toed, the points of each being caught up with thin golden chains to their garters —"*un chose ridicule et absurde*," as Paradin wrote. The salient mark adopted by the ladies of fashion was noted in their coiffures. The popular name, or, rather, the name of scorn,—thanks to Father Thomas of Brittany,—for the astounding headgear *à la mode*, "*hennin*," was in select circles called *en papillons*—"butterflied." Some ladies had double horns like the mitres of Bishops, some had round redoubts "*comme les donjons*," some were half-moon shape, and some [268] like hearts, whilst many goodly dames made themselves still more ridiculous by wearing miniature windmills! All these erections were made of white stiffened linen, built up on frameworks of wicker and carton. Over all *floquarts*,—thin gauze veils,—were gently cast. Collars of jewels and ropes of pearls were *de rigueur*, and most of the ladies wore badges of chivalry—the guerdons of their lords and sweethearts. One very pretty conceit was introduced at the time of Queen Margaret's marriage—a dainty holder for the necessary pocket-handkerchief. This took the shape of a small heart of gold suspended from an enamelled white *marguerite*, and hung at the side of the jewelled cincture. The ladies' shoes were richly embroidered with seed-pearls and gold thread. Rings were worn outside the gloves.

Among the suite sent by Henry to attend upon his bride were the Countess of Shrewsbury and the Lady Emma de Scales, with five Barons and Baronesses of the realm. In attendance, too, was Scrivener William Andrews, Private Secretary to the King, who acted as juris-consult at the signing of the marriage registers. In his diary he wrote: "Never have I seen or heard of a young Princess so greatly loved and admired."

EMPANELLING THE KNIGHTS BEFORE THE "LISTS," SAUMUR TOURNAMENT, 1446

Painted by King René. From "Le Livre des Tournois"

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Upon the ninth day after the marriage ceremony Queen Margaret took a tearful but brave farewell of her fond parents and of the princely company, and King René committed her proudly, yet regretfully, to the care of the Marquis of Suffolk. An imposing cavalcade accompanied the parting Queen; indeed, all Nancy, noble and bourgeois, rich and poor, turned out to do honour to [269] Her Majesty. King Charles and Queen Marie went as far as Toul, and then bade their niece adieu. Charles was strangely sad, and said with a deep-drawn sigh: "I seem to have done nothing for you, my well-beloved niece, in placing you upon one of the greatest thrones in Europe, but it certainly is worthy of possessing you as Queen." Queen Marie's farewell was very affecting: "I bid you God-speed, my best-loved niece. I am sure I do not know what we shall do without you. I weep for you, my child!"

King René and Queen Isabelle travelled with their dear daughter right on to Bar-le-Duc, where the cortège was enthusiastically received, and where a rest was called over the Sunday, and parents and daughter partook of the Communion. Then, on the morrow, Margaret broke down completely at the parting, and both René and Isabelle gave way to sobs and tears. If the prospect

of the royal marriage had been pleasant to them all, its realization and the future filled their hearts with apprehension. A dearly loved child was now to make her way all alone among strangers—too young to go so far from home, but too good to err.

"*Je fais peur pour vous, ma fille*," cried the sorrowing father, "*en vous plaçant sur un des plus grands trônes de Chrétienté; que le bon Dieu vous gardiez. Pour moi et pour vôtre mère, nous sommes tous les deux désolés.*"[A] Queen Isabelle's heart was too full for words. She folded her child to her bosom, and the two wept together. It was Margaret who first dried her tears, and said bravely: "*N'ayez aucun regret pour moi; je serai vôtre fille la plus devouée pour jamais. Si mon corps veçut en Angleterre, mon âme restera tousjours en France avec la vôtre.*"[B] [270]

[A] "I am fearful for you, my daughter, in placing you upon one of the mightiest thrones in Christendom; may the good God protect you. As for me and your mother, we are filled with desolation."

[B] "Do not feel any regret for me; I shall be always your most devoted daughter. If my body dwells in England, my soul shall rest always in France with yours."

Bare-headed, King René stood at the castle portal till Margaret and her escort had faded from his sight; then he and the Queen shut themselves up in their apartments and gave way to their pent-up feelings. Travelling as the Queen of England, Margaret had now for her supporters her brother, the Duke of Calabria, the Duke of Alençon, and the courteous Marquis of Suffolk. Leisurely enough the company traversed the fertile fields of Champagne, ever aiming for the north French coast. Besides a strong escort of soldiery, in the royal train were seventeen knights and two esquire-carvers, sixty-five esquires, twenty grooms, and 174 servitors of all kinds, and with them serving-maids and dressers. At every stopping-place heartiest greetings awaited the young Queen, and Princes and nobles knelt to pay their homage. The English garrisons *en route* were forward in their loyal salutations; their new Queen was the pledge of a greatly-yearned-for *entente cordiale*.

At Nantes the Duke of York, King Henry's near kinsman, and the representative of the older line of the English Royal House, received the Queen, and entertained her in the castle of the French Kings. On March 23 the royal progress ended at Rouen, where a week's rest was called. Bicknoke, in his "*Computus*," has enumerated several curious items in the bill of costs which [271] covered the lengthy journey from Lorraine. The Barons and Baronesses of the Queen's suite received each four shillings and sixpence a day, the knights had half a crown each a day, and, at the tail of the following, the grooms were paid no more than fourpence per diem. At Rouen the Queen paid four shillings and ninepence for fourteen pairs of shoes to give to certain poor women of the town. She also made many purchases of second-hand silver plate from a silversmith, Jean Tubande by name. The articles were chiefly cups and plates which bore the arms of Henry, Count of Luxembourg, father of her first fiancé. These escutcheons the Queen had removed, and in place of them *marguerites* were engraved. The Queen, moreover, came short of ready cash, so she pawned some of her real silver wedding presents to the Marchioness of Suffolk, that she might have the wherewithal for gifts to the seamen on her transport to England.

The royal party embarked in river boats, and made for Honfleur, where the *Cokke John*, a great galley, was waiting off the port. Such a stormy passage as that which was the prelude to Queen Margaret's triumphant progress to the English capital had hardly been exceeded for fury in the memory of the most ancient mariners. Thunder and lightning and sheets of ice-cold water threatened to destroy the stately craft and to engulf her lordly fares. After beating about in the Channel for one whole day and night, with utmost difficulty the harbour of Porchester was attained on April 10.

It was rather hard upon the Queen's impoverished exchequer that she should have been called [272] upon to pay £5 4s. 10d. for her pilot, £13 6s. 8d. for new hawsers, and £9 7s. for alterations and repairs in the vessel.

The terrified young Queen had never beheld the angry sea before nor tasted its misery, and she was utterly prostrated in her state-room, and wept and cried for her mother and to God for help. The Marquis raised her inanimate form gently in his arms, and wading bravely to land through the scudding sea-foam, he bore his precious burden, marching manfully along the fresh-rush-strewn streets of the little fishing town. King Henry was at Winchester, anxiously awaiting couriers who should gladden his ears by the news of his royal bride's arrival, and he galloped off at once to greet her at the Goddes House of Southwick, whither she was borne for rest and treatment. Unhappily, Margaret had contracted some infectious complaint,—perhaps chicken-pox,—and, very tantalizing for herself and Henry, their meeting was postponed until her illness had abated.

At the priory church of St. Mary and All Saints the ceremony of the English espousal was celebrated by Cardinal Kemp, and Henry placed upon Margaret's finger the ring which he had worn at his coronation in Paris eighteen years before. If the King was charmed by the portrait of his Queen, he was transported with joy and passion when he beheld and embraced beauteous Margaret. The half of her excellence had not been revealed in pigment; she was more, much more, lovely and attractive than he had imagined. Preparations for the state nuptials were hurried forward, and also for the coronation of the Queen, and Henry with his bride rowed on to [273] Southampton, saluted as they passed by all the shipping in the Solent. Two Genoese galleys in particular were gaily festooned and manned, and as the royal barge swept by seven trumpeters blew a wedding fanfare, and then the crews shouted their loud "*Evviva*." Margaret insisted on sending for the two captains of the foreign crafts, and gave them £1 3s. 4d. "for plaieing so merrielie my musique"—so the Queen phrased it. Another heavy item in the cost of her progress

was her doctor's fee; Maistre François of Nancy claimed £5 9s. 2d. for his professional services upon the journey. A further delay was caused in the completion of the nuptial arrangements by reason of the poverty of the Queen's wardrobe. Her trousseau was quite unworthy of her rank, and Henry, although himself as poor as a King might be, despatched messengers to London to summon Margaret Chamberlayne, a famous tire-worker, and a number of craftswomen with sumptuous materials for the wedding gown. The King, indeed, had to pawn his own jewellery and plate to furnish sufficient funds for the double ceremony.

Henry of England and Margaret of Anjou were married by Cardinal Beaufort in the abbey church of Titchfield on April 22. The bride was just sixteen years of age—already a woman, but with the heart of a man. Most extraordinary presents were showered upon the young Queen: a lion in a cage, a score of hedgehogs, a dozen thick all-wool blankets, two tuns of English wine, a suit of bronze silver armour, several chairs,—two of state,—five young lambs' fleeces, and so forth. Then the royal progress began to the capital. Halfway between Fareham and London the Duke of Gloucester, with 500 armed and superbly mounted retainers, greeted the King and [274] Queen, and conducted them to the palace at Greenwich. Triumphal arches spanned the road, and maidens scattered spring blossoms before the royal couple.

On May 30 the King and Queen quitted Blackheath for Westminster, passing many notable pageant spectacles—"Noah's Ark," "Grace," "God's Chancellor," "St. Margaret," the "Heavenly Jerusalem," and so forth—all marshalled in their honour. Somewhat wearied by the dust and the shaking of her chariot, and deafened by the plaudits of the crowds, Margaret was handed down by the King, at the great west door of the royal abbey. Her entry was accompanied by minstrelsy, for King René had sent over for the ceremonial a large company of the troubadours and glee maidens of Bar, Lorraine, and Provence, under the orders of his Groom of the Stole, Sire Jehan d'Escose. The cost of this expedition ran up to nearly £100, a great sum for the poor King of Sicily to disburse.

King Henry spared no expense, but ran still more heavily into debt to make the crowning of his Queen magnificent. Rarely had such a gallant and splendid company gathered for a royal wedding. Everybody wore the Queen's badge—a red-tipped daisy. Three days were set apart for tournaments between Palace Yard and Broad Sanctuary, whereat the new Queen presided, wearing the Queen-consort's jewelled crown of England.

Margaret was now *de facto* and *de jure* Queen of England and mistress of her destiny—her husband's, also. What a unique elevation it was for a young girl of sixteen, all alone among [275] strangers, rivals, and adventurers! A false step seemed inevitable; indeed, absolute rectitude and tactfulness of conduct under the exigeant circumstances which surrounded her would have tried the grit of the stoutest mind and the grasp of the strongest hand. Dubbed "*La Française*" by men and women jealous of the King and of herself, she had to steer her course amid endless pitfalls placed in her way. Warfare and politics were the two chief contentions of the day. As for the first, she (Margaret) was its mascot, and warriors laid down their arms at her feet; but with respect to the wordy warfare of parties and their intrigues and plots the young Queen danced upon the thinnest ice, and unconsciously she slipped. She gave herself into the hands, quite naturally, of the party which held first to the King and herself, as opposed to that which sought initially self-interest. The Duke of Gloucester was the leader of the loyal section of her lieges, and to him the young Queen turned for light and leading.

Very soon the impress of Margaret's strong character made itself felt in every quarter. She spared neither the Duke of York himself, nor any other rival to her own Lord and King; but what could a child still in her teens do against the cabals of crafty and influential foes? Henry was as weak as water; he hated political questions, caring very much more, of course, for peaceful intercourse with his fascinating spouse, and for the delights of leisure and learning, than for the turmoil of Parliament and the vexed questions of the day. York held Henry in his hand, but Margaret was a doughty nut to crack, and she kept him in his proper place.

Letters written from Sheen and Windsor to Queen Isabelle by her loving daughter show how [276] happy was her state. Henry's passionate love she returned as passionately, and their loves made for peace both at home and abroad. Literary pursuits and benevolent aims were in both their minds: the King founded Eton College, and King's College, Cambridge, in 1446; the Queen, Queen's College, Cambridge. Together they invited Italian, French, and Flemish craftsmen to settle in England, and teach their ignorant but not unwilling subjects some of the arts of peace. The poor were relieved, the naked clothed, the hungry fed; but when all estates of the realm seemed secure and in prosperity, the dark spectre of sedition rose at the beck and call of the Duke of York. King Henry had to rouse himself and lay low the insurrection of Jack Cade and 30,000 mislead Kentish men. This was the beginning of troubles.

## II.

For some little time Margaret had detected signs in her consort's speech and manner that caused her the gravest solicitude. She had witnessed the mental depression and lassitude of her uncle, the King of France, and she had grieved for her beloved aunt's (Queen Marie's) anxieties. The insanity of King Charles VI., too, had been one of the sad family histories of her school days in Anjou. Now she was faced with a trouble far away more terrible than any of these. In 1453 the King's memory began to fail, he was bereft of feeling, and gradually he lost his power of walking. The malady, indeed, had shown itself during the Christmas revels at Greenwich. The Queen was already broken-hearted by the news she received from France of the critical state of her mother's [277] health, and when, on March 5, she heard of her death, poor Margaret was indeed disconsolate. In

pain she turned to Henry for comfort, but he failed to comprehend her sorrow. All around were men and women intriguing against herself and him; alone she had to bear her trouble, and the trouble was intensified in pathos by the fact that she was at last enceinte. Would her child be stillborn, she asked herself many a time; how could she expect otherwise when so utterly cast down? Then she realized the loneliness of a throne. The menace of the Duke of York was a scourge to wear her down, and his denunciation of her barrenness an unspeakable affront.

Crushed indeed she was, and yet she had to play the man; for she was both King and Queen of England, and while she lived she determined that none should sap her authority. Henry subsided into imbecility, but Margaret's will matched and vanquished York's, although he was proclaimed "Protector of the Realm and Church." The year sped on, but it brought joy to the sad heart of the lonely Queen, and the whole nation shared her happiness. On October 11 she brought forth her first-born child, a son and heir, a fact of the vastest importance for all concerned, friend and foe. York at once denounced the child for a changeling; but the nation would not have it so, and he was christened Edward publicly at Westminster, and created Prince of Wales, so named because his birthday was that of the holy King St. Edward.

Alas! the King could not be roused sufficiently to recognize his son, nor, indeed, his wife, and this was construed by York and his party as proof conclusive against the truth of the Queen's [278] accouchement. At the same time they threw out insinuations against her character with respect to relations with many prominent men of her entourage.

The chivalrous spirit of the Queen felt York's false imputations crushingly. Her convalescence was retarded, and when she came to be churched at the Abbey of Westminster, she was almost too prostrate to go through the ceremony. Like the noble woman that she was, she roused herself; and when she beheld the distinguished and numerous suite awaiting her,—the forty most influential peeresses in the land,—she took heart, and was herself once more. She assumed her costly churching robe. It was of white, gold-embroidered silk and was bordered with 500 sable pelts, and it had cost £554 16s. 8d.

The Duke's despicable conduct was flouted when Christmas next came round, for on the Feast of the Nativity the Queen presented herself holding her babe in her arms before the King. To her unspeakable joy, Henry held out his hands and drew her and the infant Prince to his breast, and out loud thanked God for the recovery of his reason and acknowledged the child as his. York was away on mischief bent, and Margaret did not fail to make use of the opportunity for checkmating his unworthy aspirations. She took the King to the Parliament, then sitting, and at his command and in his presence the decree appointing York Protector of the kingdom was revoked, and Henry, Margaret, and Edward, assumed their orthodox positions. This step was the first move in the great war game which devastated the whole realm, and ended, alas! in the absolute undoing of the King, the Queen, and the Prince. York, hearing what had transpired at Westminster, [279] hurried from the Welsh border with 5,000 armed followers. The King met him at St. Albans, and ordered him to disband his troop and salute the royal banner. The Duke refused to obey only on impossible conditions.

But what of King René and Queen Isabelle? Their hearts were torn asunder, we may be sure, at the contemplation of their Margaret's peril. They were powerless to assist her save by their whole soul's sympathy; besides, they were faced by a contrariety of facts. The all too brief "truce of Margaret" was broken in 1449, and René was summoned to support King Charles and fight against the servants of her consort,—her subjects too,—for, spite of being "*La Française*," she had won all hearts in bonnie England. A beautiful girl and a brave is unmatchable! Fortune of war favoured the French-Anjou colours, and Charles became master of Normandy and all English-held North France. Guienne, too, was yielded to the valiant young Duke of Calabria. Moreover, the war-galleys of "*Le Petit Roy de Bourges*" scoured the Channel, and gained prizes and renown for Charles and René off the English coast.

Somerset's defeat was a loss of credit, however, to Queen Margaret, and York of course made the most of it. He boasted that, "as Henry was fitter for a cell than a throne, and had transferred his authority to Margaret, the affairs of the kingdom could not be managed by a Frenchwoman, who cared only for her own power and profit." To placate this arrogance the Queen made a tactless move: she named the Duke Governor of Ireland, thus adding to his prestige and opportunity. Talbot's death at Albany further weakened the King's authority and Margaret's [280] strategy.

Upon the death of Queen Isabelle, so deeply mourned, not alone by her daughter in England, but by all the chivalry of France, René devolved his authority in Bar and Lorraine upon Jean, Duke of Calabria, intending to withdraw gradually from the responsibilities of government. His efforts, however, were discounted by the entreaties of Francesco Sforza, Duke of Milan, and his Florentine allies, that he should again take up arms and appear in the field against King Alfonso of Aragon and the Venetians who were supporting him. René was victorious, but the palm of triumph was withered in his hand by the news that reached him on his way back to France: civil war had broken out in England, and Margaret was in command of the Lancastrians. Margaret, so lovely, so cultivated, and so fearless, was adding lustre to the heroic deeds of the House of Anjou —but what terrible risks she ran! The initial victory at Wakefield was tarnished by the irony of circumstances, and, though decreed by her in the moment of her emphatic triumph, York's grey head speared upon the walls of York must have shocked her sense of magnanimity.


KING RENÉ WRITING HIS POEM, “LE MORTEFIEMENT DE VAINE PLAISANCE”

From the Frontispiece painted by King René

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Margaret led her troops in person,—they worshipped the ground she trod,—but her splendid courage was of no avail at the second battle of St. Albans. Henry was deposed, and York’s eldest son, the Earl of March, was proclaimed King as Edward IV. Margaret never accepted defeat; she quailed not, but off she went with her little son, who was never parted from her side, to Yorkshire and the North.

“Love Lady-Day” was the quaint if somewhat hypocritical name bestowed by general consent [281] upon March 25, 1458. On that auspicious Lady-Day a very notable assemblage gathered together at the Palace of Westminster. The Queen had personally summoned the leaders of the rival factions to meet the King and accompany him and herself in procession to St. Paul’s, to crave from on high the spirit of conciliation. The streets were crowded with loyal and appreciative citizens, whose delight knew no bounds as they witnessed pass before them the King in his crown, his horse’s bridle held by a “White Rose” knight and a “Red.” Then followed the Queen in a litter, escorted by the new Duke of York, Somerset hand in hand with Salisbury, Essex with Warwick, and others in order of precedence. No man was armed, no woman feared, and joy-bells tossed themselves over and over again, swung by stalwart ringers. *Te Deum* was sung, but as the progress turned westward rumblings of thunder made wise-acres shake their heads,—and in sooth they had good cause, as matters chanced,—at the dire omen.

Warwick was the *bête noire* of the reconciliation. By instinct and preference a plotter-royal, he incurred the Queen’s suspicion by a system of sea-piracy he established, and because of inconsiderate language about the elder line of Plantagenet. An unfortunate street fracas led to Warwick’s imprisonment. He was too proud to plead guilty, the Queen too jealous to release him. York and Salisbury at once enrolled their retainers, and stood ready to deliver Warwick. The fruits of the reconciliation fell instantly to the ground, and the complement of “Love Lady-Day” was renunciation and conflict *à l’outrance*. Before the fresh outbreak of hostilities, whilst the [282] King retired for rest and quietude to St. Albans Abbey, the Queen, accompanied by the baby Prince, made a progress through the Midlands. The child’s winning ways touched every heart, and when he distributed to struggling hands everywhere the cognizance of his patron saint, St. Edward,—little silver swans,—everybody swore to be his henchman and to stand by Henry and Margaret. Salisbury hung upon the skirts of the Queen’s cortège, and Margaret inquired his business. His curt reply determined her to demand his body, alive or dead. At Bloreheath adherents of both sides met, and then Margaret had her baptism of blood; her own was tinged with warriors’ strains from Charlemagne of old, and in her veins the old lion sprang up phœnix-like. Margaret saw red. She offered two courses only to her rebellious and disaffected subjects, submission or death—no quarter. Alas! her experience was the common one, the faithlessness of friends.

The Battle of Northampton, on July 10, 1460, was lost by the treachery of Lord Grey de Ruthen.

The Queen and Prince were posted upon an eminence to view the fight, and her military instinct detected the base defection whereby Warwick was enabled to take the King's army in the rear. Henry was captured before her eyes, and Margaret, powerless to retrieve the disaster, fled with her boy at once to the North. By a circuitous route they reached the impregnable walls of Harlech Castle. Henry was led in mock triumph to the Tower, whence Warwick had the effrontery to demand the custody of the persons of the Queen and Prince. Margaret expressed her indignation at the insult emphatically, but, waiting not to bandy useless words, she hurried off to [283] Scotland to seek sympathy and assistance. Meanwhile the Duke of York formally claimed the crown. Margaret's response was impressive. Without difficulty she roused Scottish enthusiasm,—generally so slow to move,—and, sweeping across the border, she gathered in her train an army of 60,000 men, and appeared before the gates of York. There she called a plenary council of lords, to whom she expressed her determination "to rest not till I have entered London and set free the King."

York, taken by surprise, hastened to meet the valiant Queen, and found her encamped at Wakefield. Warned of his approach, she sent heralds to his quarters, who in her name defied the Duke "to meet her in honest, open fight." He held back, and then she poured the vials of her scorn upon his head: "Doth want of courage," she exclaimed, "allow thee to be browbeaten by a woman—fie on thee, thou traitor!" The battle was joined on December 30, and gained in less than half an hour. A troop of horse, headed by young Lord Clifford,—and followed immediately by the Queen, mounted and armed,—made an impetuous dash to where the Duke's standard hung heavy in the still, damp air. It they captured, and forthwith threw it over Margaret's knees, and with his sword Clifford struck the rebel leader down from his horse, and slew him as he lay at Margaret's feet. In a trice he had severed the head of her mortal enemy, and upon his knee he offered the ghastly trophy to his Queen. "Madam," he said, "the war is over; here is the King's ransom!" The Queen turned sick at the terrible sight, and hysterically sobbed and laughed alternately, and she [284] screamed aloud when soldiers stuffed the blood-dripping head into a common chaff-sack. Lord Clifford she knighted on the spot, using his own gory sword; then she ordered York's head to be carried off to York, and placed on the city's southern gateway.

Salisbury was also *hors de combat*, wounded and a prisoner, and by the Queen's orders he was beheaded on the field of battle,—for he would not yield his sword and word,—and his head was placed by the side of his leader's. In a moment, too, of justifiable vengeance, the Queen directed that space should be left on that carrion portal for two other traitors' heads—Warwick's and March's. "There," she said, "they all four shall dangle till the rain and the sun and the birds have consumed them—warnings to all and sundry who shall hereafter raise voice and hand against their liege."

Margaret pushed south, and at St. Albans, on February 17, met Warwick, with the King in his camp. The issue was soon decided; 2,000 Yorkists were slain, and Henry and Margaret were united once more. Lord Montague discovered him alone seated under a tree. Clifford galloped off to the Queen to tell her the good news, and, bereft of kirtle and veil and every sign of royalty, she rushed as she was to where the King was awaiting her. He bade her kneel before he embraced her, and gave her then and there the knightly accolade, as well as to his son, who had run as hard as he could after his mother, and he also knighted sixty worthy, loyal gentlemen. All entered the abbey church for *Te Deum* and Benediction, and then the royal pair sought the monastery for rest and food. Leaving Henry at his devotions, and the Prince to cheer him, Margaret again mounted [285] her charger and marched straight on London, where York's eldest son, Edward, Earl of March, a lad of eighteen, had been proclaimed King as Edward IV. Perhaps over-confident, and at all events uncompromising in her intention to punish the disloyal and rebel citizens, she failed to post her army advantageously, although she had 60,000 men against Warwick's 40,000. At Towton the fates were once more against her, and she, with the King and the Prince, fled for their lives to Newcastle, and over the border to the friendly Court of the Queen Regent, Margaret. Henry was established in royal state at Kirkcudbright, and the Queen and Prince at Dunfermline, and there the little fellow, just eight years of age, was betrothed to the young King's sister, Margaret.

Margaret was really happy in her new home, and, resourceful as she was and never cast down, she turned her attention to peaceful pursuits, and in particular interested herself in the local industry of wool-weaving. She had seen her father's and her mother's interest, in her happy days in Lorraine and Anjou, in the craftsmen and craftswomen about them, and her own skilful fingers had busied themselves in homely, peaceful avocations. Margaret endeared herself to her Fifeshire friends, as she usually did to all who were fortunate enough to be thrown into contact with her, and they sang of her:

"God bless Margaret of Anjou,
For she taught Dunfermline how to sew."

[286]

It was said, too, of Margaret, that "if she had not been destined to play the rôle of Bellona, she would have glorified that of Minerva." The Earl of March,—to whom she never allowed the style of Edward IV.,—was wont to repeat his quaint joke: "Margaret is more to be feared when a fugitive than all the leaders of Lancaster put together!"

On April 16, 1462, Queen Margaret bade adieu to her consort at Kirkcudbright, and with her son and suite, in four well-found Scottish galleys, set sail for France. She landed at Ecluse in Brittany, after more perils on the sea, and was cordially welcomed by Duke Francis, who gave her 12,000 *livres*. Thence she made straight to Chinon,—of happy memories,—to interview King Louis, who had just been crowned at Reims, upon the death of his father, Charles VII. There she

was folded in the loving arms of her dear aunt, Queen Marie; and what a meeting that was for both royal ladies! They had not seen each other since that auspicious wedding-day sixteen years before. Then they were both in the heyday of prosperity; now both were crushed by Providence—Marie flouted by her ill-conditioned, jealous daughter-in-law, Charlotte de Savoy, now Queen-consort of France, and Margaret a fugitive!

Louis played a double game—a cruel one indeed, and insincere so far as Margaret was concerned. He spoke to her fairly, but his mind was with the usurping King of England. Under one pretext or another he delayed his reply to her plea for assistance, but at length, in desperation, Margaret pledged Jersey with him for 2,000 French bowmen. King René was in Provence, but, taking a hint from Louis that his presence would be undesirable just then in Anjou, he sent for his daughter to join him at Aix. This was impossible; for Margaret time was all too valuable, and she set sail for Scotland on October 10. With her went a few single-hearted knights, [287] but of all the hosts of admirers and loyal followers of sixteen years before, only one of mark wore his badge of chivalry consistently—the gallant and accomplished Pierre de Brézé, a *preux chevalier* indeed, the forerunner of Bayart, and like him "*sans peur et sans reproche*."

Again the elements were not only unpropitious, but malevolent. Escaping the vigilance of Edward's cruisers, and the rebel guns of Tynemouth, basely trained upon their Queen, her ships were wrecked on Holy Island. There 500 of her troops were massacred, and Margaret and de Brézé, and a very meagre following, put to sea in a fisherman's open boat which landed them on Bamborough sands. The banner of Henry of Lancaster, once more raised aloft by Margaret, magnet-like drew all the northern counties, and in spite of Somerset's desertion the Queen soon found herself at the head of a formidable army, with the King beside her and the Prince. Once more at Hexham fickle fortune failed the intrepid Queen. Henry was again a captive, but Margaret and Edward made good their escape over the Scottish border.

How often, when human affairs appear most desperate, and all hope and effort are thrown away, help comes from some unexpected quarter! So it was in Queen Margaret's experience. There is a romantic tale with respect to her flight from Hexham's stricken field—the story of the robber. Whether one or more outlaws waylaid and robbed the fugitives it matters not, but, stripped of everything but the clothes they wore, Queen and Prince were in dismal straits. Wonder of wonders! a messenger followed Margaret from no less a person than the Duke of [288] Burgundy, the inveterate enemy of her house, the friend and ally of the English in France. The message was in effect an invitation to the Queen and Prince to Flanders—the splendid appanage of ducal Burgundy. Margaret's implacable foes,—the winds and seas,—were waiting for their prey, and nearly secured their quarry as she tossed to and fro across the wild North Sea on her way to meet Philippe. Landing on the Flemish coast on July 31,—when storm and tempest should never have appeared,—with utmost difficulty, the Queen presented a sorry figure. No badge or symbol of royalty marked her worn-out figure; she was clad meanly in a coarse short worsted skirt—*robette*—without chemise or shawl, her stockings low down on her heels, her hair dishevelled and unveiled. Who could have recognized in that chastened traveller "the loveliest woman in Christendom"?

True to his loyal devotion, Sieur Pierre de Brézé was with his Queen poor as herself, he had, he said, "spent 50,000 crowns for nothing"—and a faithful valet, Louis Carbonelle, and no more than seven women-dresses. At once the Duke was apprised of Margaret's coming; but, being on a pilgrimage to Our Lady of Boulogne, he sent his apologies by Philippe Pot, Seigneur de la Roche and a Knight of the Golden Fleece, bidding the Queen welcome, and saying that he would present his homage to her shortly if she would proceed direct to Bruges.

That progress was a nightmare, an "Inferno," a masquerade—what you will: the Queen of England clad in rags, her hair untied, seated in a common country bullock-cart, drawn by a pair [289] of sorry steeds, mocked all the way along as "*Une Merrie Mol!*" "*Une Naufragée!*" "*Une Sorcière de Vent!*" The Comte de Charolois, heir to the duchy, met her Majesty at the *digue*, saluted her with all reverence, and conducted her to the Castle of St. Pol. On the morrow the Duke of Burgundy arrived, and at once went to the Queen's lodgings to pay his homage. Right in the middle of the street, where Margaret stood to greet him, with a courtly bow he swept the ground with the drooping plume of his *berretta*, whilst the Queen curtsied in her abbreviated gown twice majestically. Never was there a finer piece of royal burlesque enacted!

Margaret caught the Duke by the arm as he was about to give the kiss of etiquette. "Thanks, my cousin," she said; "now I am, perhaps, in no fit mind for compliments. I seek your aid for Henry and our son, and I beseech you, by the love of Our Lady, not to credit the abominable tales which have been circulated touching me." The Duke did not commit himself, but generously gave his "sweet cousin" 2,000 golden crowns,—wherewith "to fit your Majesty with proper raiment," he said,—and a fine diamond to wear for him. The next day the Duchess of Bourbon, Philippe's sister, visited Queen Margaret, and in her she found a sincere and sympathizing confidante. She set before the Duchess all the sad facts of her impoverished condition, and told her all about the hardships she and her spouse and son had met with in England. "We were reduced," she said, "on one occasion to one herring among three, and not more bread than would suffice for five days' nourishment." She went on to say that once at Mass, at Dunfermline, she had no coin for [290] the offertory, and she asked an archer of the King of Scotland, kneeling near her, for a farthing, which he most reluctantly gave her.

"Alas!" replied the weeping Duchess, "no Queen save your Majesty has been so hardly dealt with by Providence; but now we must offer you, sweet cousin, some consolation for your sufferings." One more affecting speech of the heroic Queen must be recorded. "When on the day of my espousal," she said, "I gathered the rose of England, I was quite well aware that I should

have to wear it whole with all its thorns!”

The Duchess, true to her word, organized splendid fêtes at the Castle of St. Pol in honour of the royal refugees, and Margaret, now attired as became her lofty station, put on one side her cruel anxieties, and yielded herself to the pleasures and humours of the festivities. They put her in mind of the gay tournaments in her happy home—the Court of her good father, King René.

Henry was all the while a prisoner in the Tower, and Margaret’s tender heart bled on his account. She for the moment was without resources, and she had to bide her time. She knew that that time would come, and never for a moment did she lend herself to unprofitable despair. The Duke stood by her, a friend in need, and bestowed both money and an escort upon his royal visitor. In the spring of 1463 she and the Prince were welcomed in Bar-le-Duc by King René and his Court, though it cost Margaret a pang to see her one-time Maid of Honour, Jehanne de Laval, in her dear mother’s place.

Six months passed all too swiftly under the hospitable roofs of her brother Jean, Duke of Calabria, and now actual Duke of Lorraine as well, and of her sister Yolande, Countess of Vaudémont. Then widowed Queen Marie sent an urgent summons for her favourite niece to pay her a visit at Amboise in Touraine, and there most happily Margaret forgot her troubles, and looked more hopefully than ever to the future. [291]

King René’s affairs were in hopeless confusion, and his interests and resources were drained by his son’s campaign in Italy. He could offer nothing but a loving father’s whole-hearted love and protection to his unfortunate daughter and his little grandson, the pride and joy of his life. He breathed out his deep feelings in two elegant canticles eloquent of Margaret’s woes. His example set all the poets singing sweetly of the Lancastrian Queen; her beauty and her accomplishments, her troubles and her fortitude, appealed to them mightily. They sought, too, to cheer the riven soul of their liege lord and poet leader:

“Rouse thee, King René! rouse thee, good René!
Let not sorrow all thy spirits beguile.
Thy dear daughter, brave spouse of King Henry,
Tho’ sadly she wept still she coaxes a smile.”

All that René was able to do for his royal daughter was to establish her and her son at his castle of Kuerere, near St. Mihil’s by Verdun in Lorraine, with 2,000 *livres* to carry on the education of the Prince. Sir John Fortescue, a soldier of fortune, was appointed his tutor. He was a devoted adherent of the Red Rose. “We are,” he wrote, “reduced to great poverty, and the Queen with difficulty sustaineth us in meat and drink.”

Louis XI., who had refused to have anything to do with his unfortunate cousin, Queen Margaret, at last agreed to meet her at Tours in December, 1469, and with her he invited King René; Jean, Duke of Calabria and Lorraine; and her sister Yolande, with her husband, Ferri, Count of Vaudémont, “to consider,” as he put it, “what may or may not be done.” Louis treated Margaret with scant ceremony. Whilst discussions were going on, startling news came from England which very much altered the situation. The North and Midlands had again risen against Edward, and Warwick had gone over to the Lancastrians. Edward was a prisoner at Middleham Castle, and Warwick was virtually King of England! The diversion was, however, of short duration, for in a few weeks Edward managed to escape. And now it was Warwick’s turn to fly. He sought the French Court, and confided in Louis, who, sinister and scheming as he was always, saw a way to help Margaret and still be on the winning side. The King proposed an interview between the Queen and the Earl, with a view to a reconciliation. Margaret rejected indignantly the proposal. “The Earl of Warwick,” she exclaimed, “has pierced my heart with wounds that can never be healed. They will bleed till the Day of Judgment. He hath done things which I can never forgive.” [292]

AGRICULTURAL PURSUITS

From a Miniature, MS. Fourteenth Century, “Livre des Proprietez des Choses”

British Museum

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The King was, however, determined that his idea of a *rapprochement* between the Lancastrians and the wing of the Yorkists who looked to Warwick for light and leading should be realized, and he urged his view so emphatically upon Margaret that at last she agreed to meet Warwick, but upon one condition: that “he shall unsay before your Majesty and the King of Sicily, my father, all that he has foully uttered about me and the Prince, and shall swear to repeat the same at Paul’s Cross in London later.” [293]

Warwick, to the amazement of Louis, agreed to this condition, and forthwith presented himself most humbly to the Queen upon his knees. Swordless, gloveless, and uncovered, he sought pardon for his evil conduct, and prayed her to accept him as her true henchman and devoted lieutenant. Margaret seemed stunned by this extraordinary *volte-face*, and kept the Earl upon his knees quite a long time before she vouchsafed a reply. At last she extended her hand for him to kiss, and he, further, servilely kissed the fur hem of her robe. Then he laid his plans before the august company for releasing the King and placing him once more upon his throne. He next called on King Louis and King René to stand surety for the performance of his purpose. He said he could command immediately 50,000 men to fight under his orders, and he craved the presence of the Queen in the saddle by his side.

With Warwick was the Earl of Oxford and other leaders of his party, who all knelt in homage to the Queen and craved her clemency. To Oxford she at once extended her hand. “Your pardon, my lord,” she said, “is right easy. What wrongs you have done me are cancelled by what you have borne for King Henry.” The conference at Tours was adjourned, and resumed at the Castle of Angers; and then Louis had another startling proposition to lay before Queen Margaret: no less than the betrothal of Prince Edward,—now a well-grown and handsome lad of seventeen,—to the Earl of Warwick’s daughter Anne! Margaret flared up at once. “Impossible!” she said. “What! will he indeed give his daughter to my royal son, whom he has so often branded as the offspring of adultery or fraud! By God’s name, that can never be!” [294]

For a whole fortnight Margaret stood her ground. She could not agree to this extraordinary proposal; but then the peaceful, fatherly insistence of René caused her to relent, but not before she roundly rated her good sire for his pusillanimity and too ready credence. Meanwhile the Countess of Warwick and her daughter had arrived at Amboise, and had been most ostentatiously received by King Louis. Then happened, by happy coincidence, an event vastly important to the King of France—the birth of an heir. Queen Charlotte was delivered of a son, the future Charles VIII., on June 30. Nothing would content the King but Prince Edward and Anne Neville must be among the child’s sponsors. At the same time, to influence Queen Margaret, Warwick, at Louis’s suggestion, made a solemn asseveration in the cathedral church of Angers: “Upon this fragment of the True Cross I promise to be true to King Henry VI. of England; to Queen Margaret, his spouse; and to the Prince of Wales, his true and only son; and to go back at once to England, raise 50,000 men, and restore the King to his honours.” Louis gave him 46,000 gold crowns and 2,000 French archers, and at the same time asked Queen Margaret to accept the charge of his young daughter Anne whilst he was away.

Margaret could not stand out any longer, and so, immediately after the baptismal ceremony,—

where she herself held her little royal nephew at the font,—Edward, Prince of Wales, and Anne Neville were betrothed with gorgeous ceremonial in the Chapel of St. Florentin, within the Castle of Amboise, in the presence of nearly all the Sovereigns of France and their Courts. [295]

"The Prince," so said the chroniclers, "is one of the handsomest and most accomplished Princes in Europe, tall, fair like his mother, and with her soft voice and courteous carriage, was well pleased with his pretty and sprightly fiancée." People sought to belittle the match, and called it a *mésalliance*; but the bride's great-grandmother was Joanna Beaufort, daughter of Prince John of Ghent, Edward III.'s third son. She married the Earl of Westmoreland. In Queen Margaret's estimation, what certainly did weigh very considerably was the fact that her daughter-in-law-to-be was one of the wealthiest heiresses in England. The august company went on to Angers after the double ceremony, at the desire of Queen Margaret, who insisted that a Prince of Wales could only be married in his ancestral dominions. She cited the intention of King René to leave to her and her heirs the duchy of Anjou, and so she claimed it as already English territory. Louis acceded to her whim. He could afford to wait and watch the course of events. The marriage of Prince Edward and the Lady Anne was consequently solemnized, on August 15, in the Cathedral of St. Maurice, which had witnessed so many royal functions.

The Earl of Warwick, accompanied by the Duke of Clarence, grandson of King Henry IV., departed immediately for England, to make good his brave words and prove his loyalty. His proclamation in favour of Henry, Margaret, and Edward, produced an immense sensation, and in a couple of days he found himself in command of 70,000 men, all crying, "A Henry! A Henry!" Edward IV. immediately left the capital and sought the friendly shores of Holland, and Warwick was, without a blow being struck, master of the kingdom. His first step was to send the Bishop of Winchester to the Tower, to clothe King Henry in regal robes, and conduct him with the Sovereign's escort to the Palace of Westminster. On October 13 the King went to St. Paul's, wearing once more his crown. Louis ordered *Te Deum* to be sung in every church in France, and went in person to the Castle of Saumur to salute Queen Margaret. Early in November the Queen, with the Prince and Princess of Wales and a very distinguished following, set out for Paris, on their way to London. Every town through which the royal cortège passed was gaily decorated, and the hearty plaudits of the thronging inhabitants were mingled with the joy peals of all the bells. [296]

Harfleur once more was fixed upon as the port of passage, and once more the Channel churned and a tempest fell upon the royal flotilla. Nobody has been able to explain why Margaret of England was so persistently persecuted by the divinities of the weather. Twice they put back to port, and then, after tossing about for sixteen whole days and nights, they made Weymouth,—a passage ordinarily of no more than as many hours,—and landed on April 13. That day was indeed ill-omened for the cause Queen Margaret had at heart, and for which she had suffered such appalling vicissitudes. The Battle of Barnet was fought and lost; Warwick was killed, and King Henry was again a prisoner. Verily, Queen Margaret's star was a blaze of disasters!

The terrible news staggered the courageous Queen; she swooned, but soon recovered her usual equanimity, although out of the bitterness of her soul she sobbed: "Better die right out, methinks, than exist so insecurely!" She appeared to have no plan of action, for such a disaster seemed to be impossible; so, to gain time for thought and effort, she moved herself and those she loved into the safe sanctuary of Beaulieu Abbey. There Somerset and many other notable fugitives forgathered. To them she counselled retreat—"Till Providence," she said, "ordereth better luck." The Prince now for the first time asserted himself, and, with his mother's daring, gave an emphatic "No." At Bath a goodly array of soldiers rallied to the royal standard, and Margaret determined to cross the Severn and join her forces to Jasper Tudor's army of sturdy loyal Welshmen. The Duke of Gloucester opposed her advance, and so she turned aside to Tewkesbury, and there encamped. [297]

The morrow (May 4, 1471) was to be the darkest in all the chequered career of Margaret of Anjou and England. Sweet Pentecost though it was, the spirit of comfort belied, failed the fated Queen once more. With early dawn fell aslant the springtide sunbeams a rain of feathered hail. Battle was joined, each man at his post—save one, the perjured Lord Wenlock. His command, in the centre of Queen Margaret's forces, lacked its leader, and Somerset rode off to find him. At a low brothel he discovered the miscreant drinking with and fondling loose wenches. "Traitor!" cried the Duke; "die, thou scoundrel!" And he clove his head in two. This defection caused irretrievable disaster; still, the Prince of Wales did prodigies of valour, and so did many more; but he was felled from his horse, and the "Hope of England" was lead captive to victorious Edward's tent. Received with every mark of discourtesy, the heart of the chivalrous young Prince must have quailed as he stood before the arch-enemy of his house, but he had very little time for reflection. [298]

"How durst thou, changeling, presumptuously enter my dominions with banners displayed against me?" demanded Edward.

"To recover my father's crown, the heritage of my ancestors," bravely replied the Prince.

"Speakest thou thus to me, thou upstart! See, I smite thee on thy bastard mouth!" roughly exclaimed the conqueror, and with that he demeaned himself and the crown he fought for by cowardly and savagely striking with his mailed fist the unsuspecting and unarmed Prince. This treacherous blow was the signal to the titled scoundrels standing by for a murderous attack upon the Prince of Wales. He fell crying fearlessly: "A Henry! A Henry!" pierced by many daggers. It was a dark deed and dastardly; its stain no course of years will ever cleanse, and Edward IV. is for all time "Bloody Edward."

Queen Margaret, seeing the hopelessness of the conflict, and fearing the worst had happened to the Prince,—for he never came to cheer her,—took the Princess and fled to a convent hard by the battlefield, and there lay concealed. Edward, yielding to the base instincts of a cruel nature, very soon got news of Margaret's hiding-place, and with a demoniacal scowl, "Ah, ah!" he cried out, "we've settled the cub; now for the she-wolf!"

The Queen was dragged from her hiding-place, and borne to Edward's quarters, where, like the [299]
brute he was, he reviled and insulted her.

"Slay me, thou bloodthirsty wretch, if thou wilt! I care not for death at thy desecrating hands! May God strike thee, as He will!" she exclaimed.

Margaret was sent to the Tower, but not to her husband; they were kept apart, and the Princess of Wales was delivered over to the care of her uncle, the Archbishop of York. But even so Edward's malice was not exhausted. The Queen was conducted without honour, or even decency, in the suite of Edward on his return to the capital. At Coventry,—of all places for further outrage, a place so greatly agreeable to Henry and herself,—ill-fated Margaret was subjected to personal insults from her vanquisher. In reply she reviled him, and thrust him with abhorrence from her. In revenge he ordered her to be fastened upon a common sumpter horse, and he ordered a placard to be placed on her breast, "This is Queen Margaret, good lieges," and her hands were tied behind her back. Thus was the most valiant, most unselfish, and most loyal Queen that England ever had led to grace the mock triumph of a royal murderer. She was thrust into the foulest dungeon of the grim Tower, and there remained, bereft of food, of service, and wellnigh of reason, too, for seven dreary, weary months.

The day after her incarceration King Henry's dead body was discovered in his cell. Gloucester, it was said, had killed him; but Edward was, if not the actual murderer, privy to the deed. Queen Margaret, hearing in her dark, foul den the heavy tramp of men-at-arms, scrambled up to the bars of her little window, and beheld,—what probably Edward meant she should,—the corpse of her slaughtered husband borne past for burial. No ceremony of any kind accompanied that [300]
mournful passing. At St. Paul's, Henry's body was exposed in a chapel of the crypt, and then it found merciful sepulture in the God's-acre at Chertsey Abbey.

That her beloved son,—her one and only hope,—was dead as well, heart-broken Margaret gathered amid ribald blasphemies of the intoxicated soldiery as she was borne to London in that "Triumph." Now was she bereft indeed, and nothing seemed so desirable as death; indeed, she resigned herself, and prepared herself for execution at any moment, at any savage hint of her consort's supplanter on England's throne—accursed Edward! It was, however, not to be supposed that King Louis of France or King René of Sicily-Anjou should silently condone the unhalting cruelty of a bloodthirsty monarch, especially when the person and the honour of a French Princess were at stake.

## III.

Efforts were made, more or less feeble, for the delivery of the incarcerated Queen by Louis,—fearful of offence to the Yorkist King,—and by René, who had no resources with which to back up his appeal. Anyhow, Margaret was, at the Christmas following the fatal battle, released from durance vile, and consigned to the care of the Duchess-Dowager of Somerset,—one of her earliest friends,—and went to live under her wing at Wallingford. Edward made her the beggarly grant of 5 marks weekly for the support of herself and two maid-servants! There Margaret remained for five years, each one more intolerable than its predecessor.

At the Peace of Picquigny, August 29, 1475, between Louis and Edward, the latter agreed to [301]
accept a ransom of 50,000 gold crowns for the widowed Queen. This compact was not an act of grace on the part of Louis so much as a *quid pro quo*. He insisted upon René ceding Provence to the crown of France, upon his death, by way of payment of the ransom. Still, in this matter Edward was as good as his bond, and directly the first instalment of the amount was paid in London to John Howard, Edward's Treasurer, Margaret was conducted to Sandwich, not without indignity, and placed upon a common fishing-boat. Landing at Dieppe, January 14, 1476, she was taken on to Rouen, where she received the following affecting letter from her sorrowing father, King René:

> "*Ma fille, que Dieu vous assiste dans vos conseils, car c'est rarement des hommes qu'il faut en attendre dans les revers de fortune. Lorsque vous désirerez moins ressentir vos peines, pensez aux miennes; elles sont grandes, ma fille, et pourtant je vous console.*"[A]

[A] "My child, may God assist thee in thy counsels, for rarely do men render help in times of fortune's reverses. When you desire to resent your trials the least, think of mine; they are great, my child, and therefore I wish to console you."

True enough, the troubles and reverses of King René were more than fall to the lot of most men of high culture and degree; but what of Queen Margaret's shipwreck? For nearly thirty years she had endured experiences which had tried no other Queen half so hardly; and all the while she had set a unique example of devotion, loyalty, courage, and endurance, unexampled in history. There never was a truer wife, a more self-sacrificing mother, a more intrepid and a nobler Queen, [302]
than Margaret of Anjou.

From Rouen the Queen sent a message to King Louis, desiring to see him; but he, knowing well her desperate case, and seeing no likelihood of profit accruing to himself, coward-like, evaded an

interview. His miserable aunt might forage for herself, for all he cared, and go where she listed, but not to Paris nor Amboise. With bent head and slow feet, the great heroine of the Wars of the Roses, broken like a pitcher at a fountain, took her lonely way no more in gallant cavalcade, but almost in funereal cortège, to Anjou and Angers—the cradle of her race.

At Reculée father and daughter once more embraced each other. Alas, what a sorrowful meeting that was, and how mixed their feelings! Margaret's filial duty conquered the reproaches she had prepared, and René's tears and silence spoke more loudly than words of regret could do. Providence had been cruel to them both. René loved Reculée for its peace and solitude, and there Margaret should repose awhile and recover mind and body. No prettier resort was there in all Anjou than the Maison de Reculée—"Reculée" René named it, a place of "recoil" from the buffetings of fate. He had purchased the estate, in 1465, from one Colin, an Angers butcher, for 300 *écus d'or*, and had greatly enjoyed laying out the estate and erecting a bijou residence. His paintings and his sculptures, his books, his music scores, his miniatures, and all his artistic hobbies, he lavished there for himself and fair Queen Jehanne. They often dropped down the Maine in a pleasure barge, and landed in the sedges, full of warblers and wild life. Reculée was but a league or two from Angers. Hard by the *manoir* was the sheltered and picturesque [303] hermitage of La Baumette,—a shrine of St. Baume, patroness of Provence,—and hither René and Margaret resorted daily for prayer and meditation.

Margaret's home-coming was sad enough, but her demeanour was rather that of defiance than of patience. Her pride had been laid low by her sufferings and ill-treatment, but not slain; and when she heard of the treachery and chicanery of the King of France in entering Angers in force, and proclaiming himself Sovereign of Anjou, her scorn knew no bounds, and she chided her father for his pusillanimity, and reproached him for his *dilettante* life. His sedentary pleasures and his artistic tastes bored her cruelly; she despised his peaceful handiwork, and craved his strong arm once more in the fight. If England was lost to her, Anjou and Provence should not be; this was her grim determination, and she roused herself for action and foray. Like a lioness at bay, she fought out to a finish strenuously her troubled life, away from stricken fields and gruesome dungeons. René felt his daughter's strictures more acutely than he said; indeed, they fell like blows of sharp poniards upon his wounded heart. The deaths of all his near relatives, sons and daughters, and his son-in-law, Ferri de Vaudémont, saddening as they were, were as nothing to the vituperations of Margaret—now almost a frenzied recluse. King René sank at last, wearied, heart-broken, yet trustful in his God, into his mortal resting-place, and Queen Margaret retired to the Castle of Dampière, near Saumur, the modest *manoir* of a devoted servant of her father's house,—the Sieur François de la Vignolles, of Moraens,—to end her dire days of woe.

Her father left her what he could, impoverished as he was: 1,000 gold crowns and the Castle of [304] Queniez—an inconsiderable estate between Angers and Saumur. René wrote to Louis a few months before his death, commending Margaret to his care and charity, and this is how the King of France executed the trust, so characteristic of his greed and cunning. He negotiated with Margaret the sale of her reversionary rights in Lorraine, Anjou, Maine, Provence, and Barrois, for an annual income of 600 *livres*. The deed was executed at Reculée, November 19, 1480, but Louis never paid the annuity! One purpose Margaret had in view in this arrangement was the recovery of the bodies of her husband and son, that she might give them decent burial. Edward IV. would not allow this seemly duty, and the bones of the illustrious dead were left dishonoured and unnoted.

Margaret's nature would not allow of comfort. She was devoured with regret and consumed by revenge; she spent the last two years of her stormy life in fretting and fuming over the disasters of her family. Her whole appearance and her manner changed. No longer lovely, as when she stepped on England's inhospitable shore, she became shrunk, aged, and pallid. The ravenings of her spirit had indeed transformed her into the "grim grey wolf of Anjou." She became leprous and hideous—"the most hideous Princess in Europe," one might write. Gently but firmly she had to be restrained, lest she should do herself some harm and injure others. Alas! Margaret of Anjou came to her death, not in the halo of sanctity, but in the mist of mental obscurity, and thus she died alone—perhaps unlamented, and certainly misjudged by posterity. Near her end languor and [305] paralysis seized her, and she passed away unconsciously on August 25, 1482.

Above the chief portal of his castle De la Vignolles put up this epitaph:

"In the year 1480 Margaret of Anjou and Queen of England, daughter of René, King of Naples, Sicily, and Jerusalem, forced to abandon her kingdom after having courageously borne herself in a great number of encounters and in twelve pitched battles, deprived of the rights of her family, spoiled of all her possessions, without means of support and without help, found a resting-place in this *manoir*, the home of François de la Vignolles, an old and faithful servant of her father. She died here August 25, 1482, aged no more than fifty-three years. Upon whose soul may Christ Jesus have pity."

All that remained of this remarkable woman was interred without ceremony in the Cathedral of Angers. She was laid, it was said, by her father's side, but no inscription, no mark of any kind, records the fact. No one knows exactly where to bow the head in reverence and bend the knee in homage to the memory of Great Queen Margaret. In a very few words, however, are summed up in the "Paston Letters," No. 275, the character of Margaret d'Anjou: "The Queen is a grete and stronge laborid woman, for she spareth noo peyne to save hir things."

# CHAPTER IX

## JEHANNE DE LAVAL—"THE LADY OF THE CREST"

[306]

### I.

There are roses at Christmas as well as at midsummer, and although the pale single blossoms of the winter festival have not the fragrance of the floral queens of the month of May, they are roses all the same. All roses, though, have thorns, or their petals are crinkled and their leaves torn. In the Temple Gardens, as the story goes, once on a time two rival warriors met, and plucked, one a white, and one a red, rose from the bushes. They stuck them in their caps, and so carried them to battle, fierce and long—the deadly Wars of the Roses. The story of the rose heroine of those troubled scenes, the intrepid Queen Margaret, we have learnt; now we must read the narrative of another Queen of Roses, La Demoiselle Jehanne de Laval, and of her nigh fifty-years-old bridegroom, le bon Roy René, a Christmas rose.

"May and December" we call such nuptials. But never mind. The monarch and the maid went very well together, and for them literally came true, "Roses, roses, all the way." He the great red standard rose of Provence, she the nestling, creeping, sweet wild-rose of Laval, mingled their renown and charm for the pleasure of all ages.

JEHANNE DE LAVAL

From a Painting by King René, finished by Nicholas de Froment (1475-76) at Aix Cathedral

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Jehanne, or Jeanne, de Laval, "a very beautiful woman and superbly dressed"—this is a succinct and alluring description of one of the most fascinating beauties, as lovely in mind as in body, be it said, who ever took her gracious path across the pages of sentimental biography. Born at the [307] Castle of Auray,—of which now not a stone is standing,—in Brittany, overlooking the tempestuous Atlantic and the Druid fable-land of Carnac-Locmariaker, on November 10, 1433, Jehanne was the fifth child of Guy XIII., Count of Laval, and his wife, Isabelle de Bretagne, whose father was Jean VI., Duke of Brittany, and mother Princess Joanna of France, sister of Charles VII. The House of Laval was very famous in the annals of mediæval France, and linked by auspicious marriages to all the Sovereign Princes of the land. The first Count was a Baron of Charlemagne—a "Guy," the unalterable prenominate of all the line. Their castle was founded by that King of romance and chivalry, King Arthur, and each succeeding occupant made good his claim to the gilded spurs of knighthood either on a stricken field or in a crusade to Palestine; they were war-lords all. Laval was their principal stronghold, midway between Rennes and Le Mans, where the machicolated donjon of the Seigneurs of La Trémouille, upon its isolated rock, dominates the smiling country-side.

The full title of the lordly Guys was Counts of Laval, Vitré, Gaure, and Montfort—all in Brittany. Count Guy XIII. had ten children by his consort Isabelle: Guy, who succeeded him as Guy XIV.;

Pierre, Duke and Archbishop of Reims; Yolande, sponsored by Queen Yolande of Sicily-Anjou, and twice married, last to Charles of Anjou, King René's brother; Françoise, who only survived her birth fourteen days; Jehanne, or Jeanne; Anne, died in infancy; Artuse, who died unmarried at Marseilles in 1467; Hélène, wife of Jehan de Malestroit, son of the Bishop of Nantes by his mistress, Isabel Kaër; and Louise, who married Edward, Count of Penthièvre. Guy XIII., [308] inconsolable for the loss of the mother of his children, sought comfort in another matrimonial venture, and for his second wife took Françoise, daughter of Jacques de Dinan, Seigneur of Châteaubriant and Grand Butler at the Court of King Charles VI. She bore him three children,—Pierre, François, and Jacques,—so Jehanne was a member of a large and, we may presume, a happy family. Little Jehanne was baptized in the Audience Hall of the Castle of Auray by Amaury de la Motte, Bishop of Vannes.

There is rarely very much to record of the early years of any girl's life, and Jehanne de Laval was no exception. A maiden was only made conspicuous by an early betrothal, and for that her parents worked assiduously. Jehanne was an exception to the rule of precocious marriages, for no one appears to have claimed her hand and heart until she was past her majority, and suitors probably regarded her as a negligible quantity. Jehanne, however, was not wanting in her *entrée* upon the world of men and manners, and we make her acquaintance when not more than fourteen years of age, as she comes forward curvetting upon a *blanche haquenée* at a royal tournament.

This was King René's Anjou tournament, famous, with those in Lorraine and Provence, as the most brilliant ever seen in France. The "Lists" in the Anjou tournament were held in turn at Angers, Chinon, and Saumur, and it was at the latter gathering of chivalry, in 1446, that every knight and squire, every dame and damsel, turned in amazement as they beheld "a very young girl of most graceful shape and bearing, covered with a thin veil, and wearing silken garments [309] sparkling with precious stones, riding most easily up to the tribune of honour." The colours of her habit were blue and white—blue, as tender as her eyes; white, fair as her skin. The reins and crupper of her palfrey were decked with ribbons, blue and white, and he bore nodding feathers upon his head-piece. At each side walked her brothers Guy and Pierre, decked, too, in Laval colours, the most good-looking and best dressed of all the pages, holding the horse's snaffle. By way of suite there rode behind Jehanne de Laval,—for such was the beauteous maiden's name,—four maids of honour, each one a comely feature of a picture pageant. Amid exclamations of admiration and most pleasant greetings, the charming cavalcade described the circuit of the festival ground, and then its "Queen" leaped lightly to her feet, and, advancing to the royal stand, made curtsies to the Queens of Sicily and France, and to Charles and René, their royal consorts.

Young knights and old came flocking round the "Fairy Queen," and she, naïve and winsome, cast furtive glances here and there, until her bonnie blue eyes fastened themselves upon the young Count of Nevers, and he delightedly stepped forth to cavalier her to her seat amid the throng of beauty and fair fame upon the ladies' seats of honour. He was still *a parti* in spite of his rejection as suitor for the hand of Princess Margaret, and his handsome looks and gallant bearing stood him in good stead where amorous maidens forgathered. King René,—ever susceptible to female charms, both of mind and body,—did not behold the fair Demoiselle de Laval unmoved; he had a tender spot in his great loving heart for any attractive damsel; what healthy-minded man [310] has not? He could not know that that pretty, clever hand, which so skilfully managed her curvetting cob, would one day take his in hers for better, and not for worse!

The coming of young Jehanne de Laval to the tournament at Saumur provided the sensation of the day's exploits. The highest honour, which the assembled knights before the encounters in the "Lists" began could confer, was hers by universal acclamation. She was to be the lady bearer of the champion's crest, and, as "Queen of Queens," to affix the coveted guerdon of victory upon the helm of the most successful knight. This election was preceded by a characteristic observance, true to the pure spirit of chivalry. Each knight had to kneel before an altar for the blessing of his weapons, and for the mental registration of his suffrage for the "Queen." She was "the lady of his thought." So, certainly, the beauteous apparition of the young daughter of Guy de Laval caused many a misgiving in the hearts of gallant men. The "Lady" each had chosen none divulged by name, but, all the same, Cupid had done so to the ears of curious friends and foes. The wholesale desertion of their chosen divinities might very well account for hard looks and frowns from emulous maidens:—all we know, is not gold that glitters!

The precious *gage d'amour et de guerre*, the champion's crest, took the form of a small gold crown, heavily jewelled, from which sprang, retained by wires of gold, three pure white curled feathers of the crested heron. It was awarded to the knight whose bearing in the "Lists" had been [311] the most gallant, and whose victories over adversaries had been most effective, and who had thereby gained the unanimous votes of the tournament judges. Other prizes there were of scarcely less distinction: the first, a golden lance in miniature, to the knight who administered the most brilliant blow and in the shortest time; the second, a rich ruby valued at 1,000 *écus d'or*, —for mounting in his helm,—for the breaker of the most lances; and the third, a pure diamond of a similar value, for him who lasted out the longest before being vanquished by his opponent's lance.

The "Bringing in the Champion's Crest" was a remarkably pretty ceremony. The "Queen of Beauty," attended by two maids of honour, all clad in full state robes, with towering *hennins*, and wearing superb jewels and ornaments, were escorted to a chamber of preparation, within the castle, immediately before the closing banquet of the tournament. There a procession was marshalled; pages of the contestant knights, arrayed in their proper colours and wearing ermine mantles, danced gaily before the "Queen of Beauty," and knelt as she advanced, bearing the

flashing crest upon an embroidered scarf. Pursuivants, heralds, and kings-of-arms, swelled the glittering progress with tabards, wands, and crowns. Masters of the ceremony were in attendance on the “Queen.” All moved with grace and dignity to the banqueting-hall, which they traversed up to the royal daïs, accompanied by attendants bearing great flaring torches and waxen candles. Everybody rose at the entry of the procession, and the Prince of highest rank handed the “Queen” to her special seat, whence she might receive the homage of the knightly company, and bestow upon the champion the crest she bore. Strident music and the blare of [312] brazen horns filled the great hall, and the high-pitched roof re-echoed the plaudits of the company.

The “Grand Prix” was gained neither by King René nor by King Charles. The former, indeed, caused a sensation by appearing in black tournament armour, his shield studded with silver spangles; his lance was black, and his charger caparisoned in a black housing, which trailed the ground. René was mourning still for his good mother, Queen Yolande, and for his second son of promise rare, Louis, Marquis of Pont-à-Mousson. The “Champion of Champions” was not the Count of Nevers,—perhaps to Jehanne’s regret,—but Louis de Beauvau; whilst the second prize fell to Robert de Florigny, and the third to Ferri de Vaudémont. These famous tournaments did not lack the assistance by illustration of painters; Jehannot le Flament,—better known nowadays as Jan van Eyck,—King René’s master at Bar-le-Duc, was in attendance on his royal pupil, and painted at least two considerable pictures of the pageants. Alas! those valuable paintings are lost to us.

Well, the “Lists” were over, and the world and his wife resumed their usual avocations, and Jehanne de Laval went home once more with her parents, to finish her education and to be provided with a husband. And now the chroniclers of such events as matrimony fail us. Very well we might have expected the announcement of the “Fairy Queen’s” betrothal immediately after that famous tournament. But no—and in vain we search for the reason. Jehanne was not espoused. Some have said that Count Guy, seeing King René’s unconcealed admiration for his [313] captivating little daughter, and bearing to his beloved companion in peace and war well-worn confidence, conceived a romantic dream. Queen Isabelle was said to be very delicate. She might die young, and then Jehanne might be René’s solace and his love! Whether the King and the maiden met again and often we do not know. Very likely indeed they did, for Jehanne and Margaret d’Anjou were playmates, and Laval was not so very far from Angers. This is a dream, of course.

There is a touching story which connects Jehanne de Laval with another Margaret—Margaret of Scotland, the virtuous and accomplished spouse of Louis the Dauphin, and a great favourite with King Charles and Queen Marie. The unhappy Princess died of poison at Sarry-le-Château on August 16, 1445—poison administered, it was understood, by her unscrupulous husband. She was only twenty-three years of age, but had been Dauphiness for eight years—years of neglect and cruelty. Among the suite which gathered around the bonnie Scottish Princess were young girls, and of these one was Jehanne de Laval, of whom Margaret made a special pet, and shared with her her meals and leisure. Some candies were given to the children by the Princess, who rejected them as tasting bitter. Margaret, to allay their mistrust, ate a number, and she sickened and died. Her last words were: “A curse on life! Don’t trouble me about it.” This lamentable cry was drawn from her through the false aspersions on her honour raked up against her by her husband. Marriage was indeed a failure to Margaret of Scotland, for “there was no one she dreaded,” says de Commines, “like my lord the Dauphin.” [314]

The next scene wherein Jehanne de Laval is recorded to have been a participant was the obsequies of Queen Isabelle of Sicily-Anjou and Naples. We may, however, be quite certain that she was not absent very far what time that excellent Princess was in Angers attending to the education of her family. They were all of near age to the daughter of Count Guy. Yolande d’Anjou was five years her senior, and Margaret no more than four. Be this as it may, King René, anyhow, was not very much in Anjou; his brain and hands were full of warlike things, and embarrassed by lack of means.

René d’Anjou, King and Duke, the *preux chevalier* of all the beautiful women in his dominions, did not fail to excite feelings of admiration and of a profounder passion in the pulsating hearts of the amorous women and girls of Genoa. There he was received with acclamations by warrior men, and with kisses by their wives and sweethearts. A foreign Prince, especially if he had gained renown in love and war, was always welcomed enthusiastically by the strong-blooded Ligurians. The customary characteristic offering of the city,—a maiden or two of high birth,—was at the King’s disposal. Their names, alas! have not been recorded, but René showed his appreciation of his host’s magnificent and patriarchal hospitality by despatching, on November 10, 1447, four splendid collars of beaten gold, with medallions of himself, to Tommaso Spinola, Giacomo Fiesco, Tommaso Fregoso, and Francesco Doria, fathers of his *innamorate*. The historians of Genoa all wrote sententiously of the royal visitor: “Every woman, even the poorest, put on a new guise,—pure white raiment,—in compliment to the Holy Maid’s lieutenant, and all wore ornaments of [315] pure gold in token of their love for her, and for him their favour. Tournament, dance, and song, made the city a rare paradise of joy.” The daughters of Genoa,—true daughters of Eve,—ever evoked the encomiums of all, as the following quaint quintet, in perhaps dubious parlance, affirms:

“Le Donne son Santi in Chiesa,
Angele in Istrada,
Diavole in Casa,
Civette alla Finestra,
Gassi alla Porta.”

“Women are Saints in Church,
Angels in the Street,
Devils at Home,
Owls in the Window,
Magpies at the Door.”

On Monday, March 5, 1453, when the Queen’s burial casket was borne under its silken canopy through the streets of Angers, twenty fair daughters of Anjou and the adjoining States strewed white flowers in the way. Their leader was Jehanne de Laval, now grown to womanhood, fresh and sweet. She had loved the lamented Queen, and learned much from her gentle ways and her heroism, and she grieved for the bereavement of King René and his children. Companions in love and comrades in sorrow cling equally to one another, and those who rejoice together in the sunshine compassionate each other in the shade. Pity is the tender veil of Cupid’s favours.

## II.

King René’s grief at the untimely death of his devoted spouse completely unstrung the man and [316] disabled the monarch. He gave himself away to tears and melancholy, from which even the embraces of his children failed to rouse him. His Ministers and courtiers viewed the desolation of their Sovereign with sincere and deep concern, for it threatened to unnerve him permanently for the arduous duties of his station. A consultation was held at Angers by the Barons and nobles of Anjou, Maine, Lorraine, Barrois, and Provence, with respect to their beloved Sovereign’s prostration, and a unanimous decision was reached—a second marriage with a young consort, comely, cultivated, and of good fame. A petition was presented to the King praying him to yield to the advice of his “right loyal lieges,” that he should look out for some noble and virtuous “*pucelle qui fust à son gré*.” They add: “We have found just such *une très belle fille nommée Jehanne de Laval*,—wise, well-conditioned, and of adult age,—and we know that she is ready to become the spouse of our very good lord.”

The sorrowful King took heart of grace, acceded to his subjects’ agreeable suggestion, and, knowing well himself all young Jehanne’s charms, despatched forthwith a gallant embassy to his old friend, Count Guy, demanding the hand of his beauteous daughter. Only one bar appeared to stop the course of true love,—for such René’s was for Jehanne,—the disparity of age: he was forty-seven, she twenty-two. This was soon dismissed, and “May” and “December” were betrothed in the August month of ripe red gold. Articles of marriage were signed at Angers on September 3, 1455—by Seigneur de Couldray, Captain of the Guard; Guy de Laval; Louis de Beauvau; the Counts of Vendôme and Tancarville; the Seigneur de Lohere; Raoul de Bosket; and Olivier de Feschal—whereby the bride’s *dot* was fixed at 40,000 *écus d’or* (*circa* £2,000). The [317] marriage ceremony was celebrated at the abbey church of St. Nicholas d’Angers on September 16 by Cardinal de Foix, Archbishop of Arles, in the presence of Bishops and deputations from every part of King René’s dominions. The wedding ceremony was notable for the appearance of the bride’s young brother Pierre, a boy of eleven years of age, habited in full episcopal vestments. He was nominal Archbishop of Reims and Bishop of St. Brieux and St. Malo.

The citizens of Angers received their new Queen “*en grant joye et lyesse*,” but, notwithstanding the general satisfaction, the Court became grave and serious, and, to universal astonishment, there were neither tournaments for the nobles nor junketings for the poorer people. The heart of the King was still sore; he seemed disinclined for festivities, and sought solitude and devotional exercises; his spirit was *acharné*—sad within him. “Had he,” people asked, “renounced the pleasures he so loved for ever?” René found relief from the tension of his feelings in the composition of a moral allegory which he entitled “*Le Mortefiement de Vaine Plaisance*,” which he dedicated to his confessor, Jean Bernard, Bishop of Tours. It is by way of being a dialogue between a soul devoured by love divine and a heart full of earthly vanities. Other *dramatis personæ* are introduced at intervals: “Fear of God;” “Divine Justice;” “Faith,” “Hope,” and “Sovereign Love,” with “True Contrition.” Midway in the lengthy poem is a “similitude,” accompanied by a very beautiful drawing, showing a Queen,—perhaps Isabelle,—seated open-bosomed in a country waggon, bare-headed, her crown upon her knees. The two horses are tandem-harnessed, the wheeler bestridden by a rider with a thong in hand, the leader turning [318] sharply round. Thus did René’s poetic imagination picture his loss and his woe. The dedication is most touching: “Considering that the course of life runs like a river, without stopping or running back, it is necessary to do good deeds to earn a sweet repose. I set myself to write this book for the love of the Redeemer, but, that my work may be useful for all, I tell in plain speech the conflict of the soul and heart.”

The royal couple left Angers immediately after their marriage, and spent the month’s honeymoon at the Castle of Launay les Saumur. Then they set off for Provence, and reached Arles early in November. This was the prelude to an entirely new course of life which King René had in his mind. For thirty years and more he had courted the smiles of Fortune in the arena of arms, and she had only given him frowns. His courage and his chivalry had met with scant success. Hopes disappointed and finances wasted, he was a wiser if a poorer man; but now the residue of his days and enterprises should be differently expended. Peace has its triumphs as well as war.

Poets and writers, troubadours and musicians, artists and craftsmen, farmers and sportsmen, and peasants and fishermen, were peaceful folk; with such would he throw in his lot—a *roi-patron*, a *roi-fainéant*, would he be!

The journey to the south was, as usual, by river barge up the winding sylvan Loire to Roanne, and thence *à portage* to Valence, and on by water past Montelimart, Orange, and Avignon. The King, like other rulers in France, maintained a fleet of vessels for trade and pleasure upon the [319] splendid waterways. It was, of course, a royal progress such as René and his father and brother, and Queen Yolande, his venerated mother, had often made, and very cordial were the greetings by the way. At Arles, where the King and Queen were rapturously received, they found awaiting them deputations from every considerable place in Provence, each bearing goodly offerings to their liege lord and lady. Arles presented 400 *écus d'or* in two enamelled gold flasks, and six chased cups of silver; Aix, two great bowls of silver embossed and jewelled, six silver cups, and three goblets of gold; Marseilles, 200 *écus d'or*, to be spent in buying fine wax, at the pleasure of the Queen,—a treasured possession,—and four silver cups; Avignon, twelve enamelled silver cups and two gold goblets; Tarascon, a great gold ewer and six small goblets—and so on. Formalities completed and *Te Deum* sung, René and Jehanne went off to Aix, there to settle and to arrange their household affairs. In recognition of this auspicious visit to Provence, the King created his consort Countess of Les Baux, with proprietary rights in that ancient stronghold.

The ancient family had become extinct in the comely person of Countess Alix, a helpless girl placed under the guardianship of her uncle, Robert de Beaufort, better known as "*Le Fléau de Provence*," the leader of a band of ruffians designated "*Les Tards-Venus*." Fair Alix died unmarried in 1426, and the county of Les Baux passed to Louis III. d'Anjou, King René's brother. For Jehanne de Laval her loving spouse repaired and decorated the ruinous old castle. The pleasure-grounds were laid out by René, and the "*Pavillon de la Royne Jehanne*" erected, a true "*Pavillon d'Amour*," wherein he and she could repose and utter sweet nothings to one another, *[320]* and revive also some of the fascinating observances of the once famous "Court of Love" of Les Baux. Spirits of former Countess-Presidents of Chapters of the Troubadours flitted to and fro the "Chamber of the Rose." The beauteous if fateful sisters, Étiennette and Douce, gracious spouses of two fierce rival Counts, Raymond des Baux and Berenger de Barcelona, but rivals in the poems and dances of the troubadours, away in the twelfth century, looked down, perhaps, from the eerie thrones in "*Il Paradiso*" upon the new Queen of Beauty. The girlish figure, too, of Cécile des Baux, "*La Passe Rose*," the fairest beauty of them all, sought, a century later, the spiritual companionship of Alix, the last of the châtelaines, with her to observe the graceful figure of Queen Jehanne. Memories of lovely women and the romances of their lives appealed irresistibly to the royal troubadour; he could picture the gay crowds in the games of Love. Dark deeds, too—the clash of weapons and the stealthy poniard; the smothered cries from the *oubliettes*, and the defiant oaths of men in irons: these the imaginative poet-monarch could most easily re-create. A thought-moving memento of a vivid and lurid past was brought to light not so many years ago in a coffin discovered in the crypt of the ruined church of St. Catherine—it was a woman's long soft golden hair cut off at the roots. To whom did this *cabelladuro d'or* belong? Some beauty done to death, perhaps, or peacefully fallen upon sleep in the dim, dim past? Or was it, as it may have been, the *chevelure* of that beautiful young Italian girl in the suite of Queen Jehanne, who [321] married at Les Baux the Queen's Seneschal, and died ere ever that day's curfew sounded? The "*Pavillon de la Royne Jehanne*," with its miniature dome and delicate frieze, supported on Ionic columns, still stands, but hidden away amid cornstalks and verdure, whilst, alas! nothing whatever remains of the Queen's gardens, where courtier cavaliers flirted and toyed with her Maids of Honour. Jehanne loved Les Baux almost as much as she did her Laval barony of Beaufort, and René loved it, too, for her sake.

SAINT MADELEINE PREACHING BEFORE KING RENÉ AND QUEEN JEHANNE AT MARSEILLES

From a Painting by King René. Musée de Cluny, Paris

Early in the springtide which followed the settlement of the King and Queen in Provence, they sought the peaceful charms of the country-side, and made their way, accompanied by a very limited suite, to the neighbourhood of Tarascon. The stately castle, so lately René's favourite abode, had little attraction for ruralizing royalty, so they packed themselves into a modest *bastide*, or farmstead, upon the kingly estate, Pertuis, not far from Cadenet, below Mont Lubéron. Its position was delightful, overlooking the turbulent river Durance, with its strewn verdure-grown rocks and boulders, and its banks lined by sedges, willows, and alders, hiding many a still pool of trout. There the royal couple wandered forth hand in hand, quite unattended, amid the growing vines and chestnut woods, conversing with all the country-folk they met, sharing with them their homely fare, and watching delightedly their rural games and dances. Many a time René, with Jehanne as his happy assessor, sat upon old *saules*, or willow stumps, under a spreading tree, to receive requests and discern disputes, dispensing royal justice with the simple hand of equity.

The life they led was an ideal one—a dream, an inspiring fantasy. The songs of birds, the brush [322] of wings of butterflies, the thousand and one mysterious sounds of animated, sun-cheered Nature, and the scent of spring narcissi, with the glowing glories of anemones, seemed all to be in harmony with the fresh greenery of tree and crop, the gambols of young lambs, and the cooing of sweetheart doves. The King and Queen became for the nonce shepherd and shepherdess; Jehanne was nymph of the bosquets, René her impassioned Apollo, his heart's wounds healed at last, his soul's new hopes at bud. The Muse of Poetry dwelt also in that pleasant fairy-land, and her voice, rustling the zephyr-moved foliage, reached the poetic nature of the agrestical King, and out of his sympathetic brain came the impulse of the hand which penned one of the most delicate and affecting "Pastorals" that ever man produced.

The scene is laid in the meadows of the royal country house, where shepherds and shepherdesses and toilers in the soil,—vigorous and fair,—are giving themselves away to the joys of pastoral revels. Chancing that way is a pilgrim, newly come from recording his vows at the shrine of Nôtre Dame de Larghet. Looking ahead, the penitent beholds the entrancing vision, and, whilst he brushes away the assiduous attentions of a big bumble-bee, he is conscious of voices murmuring close at hand. It is but the love-chat of a lovelorn lad and lass, seated by a dripping fountain of the rivulet. Behind them is the stump of a great forest king with no more than one lean branch to show its life. The youth vanishes mysteriously, but the girl beckons caressingly to the wandering pilgrim, and she invites him with dulcet voice: [323]

"Regnault, vien environ
De la souche; et nous asseon,
Cy toy et moy!"

"Regnault, come thee near
This tree; have no fear,
Only thee and me!"

The shy wanderer approaches diffidently, and then the maiden opens her little luncheon basket, which hangs from her shoulders by blue silken ribbons, and eats a portion of a roll; to him she offers the remainder. The fascination of the moment overrides all scruples, and Regnault, as she has called him, kneels at his enchantress's feet, strokes her hands and arms, and protests his love. The damsel is willy-nilly, and naïvely cries: "All fall in love, and all fall out; and so may you, fair sir, for aught I know!" Carried away by the vehemence of his passion, Regnault tries to seize the girl and press his hot lips upon hers, so coral pink; but she evades him, slips from his grasp, and, presto! she has vanished. All dazy-wazy Regnault rises, holds out his hands beseechingly, and then, folding them upon his breast, with bowed head he seeks once more the mountain shrine, and before our sweet Lady of Consolation pours out his heart and his soul. Compline still finds him saying his *Aves*, and Night covers him with her restful shroud; his last words are addressed to his meadow nymph:

"T'ameray très parfaictment,
Du bon du Cuer si loyaument,
Que ne te fauldray nullement [324]
Jusques à mort."

"I love thee perfectly,
From bottom of my heart;
I will never fail thee
Till death us two shall part."

This very beautiful poem the royal lover entitled "*Regnault et Jehanneton*," or "*Les Amours du Bergier et de la Bergeronne*,"—a play, of course, upon his own name and Queen Jehanne's. At the end of the manuscript René drew a very pretty design—side by side two shields of arms, his and Jehanne's, united by a royal crown; his supporter, on the left, *une souche*,—the stump of a forest tree,—with one flourishing foliaged branch bearing a censer of burning incense; her supporter, on the right, a chestnut-tree in full flower, and on a branch two royal paroquets—lovebirds!

In 1457 the poet-King put forth an allegory of chivalry which he called "*La Conqueste de*

*Doulce Mercy par le Cuer d'Amour espris*." The conceit of the story is just a simple knight,—youthful, vigorous, and a true lover of women,—setting forth for the devotion he holds for his mistress to endure perilous adventures. René himself is, of course, the hero of the poem, the intrepid soldier of Naples, the heroic prisoner of Bulgneville.

The opening of the poem reveals "*le Bon Roy*" one night wakeful, and suffering heartache —"*Mortie dormant en resverie*." It appeared to him that his heart left his breast, and that "*Vif Désire*" whispered gently:

"Si, Doulce Mercy,
Desires de povoir avoir,
Il fault que tu faces devoir [325]
Par la force d'armes l'acquerir."

"If, True Chivalry,
Thou wouldst have power,
Then thy metal try
And by arms acquire."

"*Vif Désire*" then armed "*Cuer*" with a blade of steel, keen and bright, a helmet stamped with amorous thoughts bearing the crest of hope, three blooms of "*N'oubliez mye*." Then led gently forth, he meets "*Franc Vouloir*," tall and strong, and fully armed for all emergencies; and putting spurs to his charger, he goes off at a gallop with his companions. Over hill and dale they dash, until they come in view of a lovely damsel—

"plaiesante et blonde
Et de tous biens la plus parfaict du monde."

After passing through a weird forest, they emerge upon a smiling valley, where they behold a sumptuous palace. On approaching, they see a very splendid column of jasper, and after dismounting they read the inscription carved thereon:

"A vous, tous Cuers gentilz et gracieux,
Qui conquérir voulez pour valori mieulx
Du Dieu d'Amour et de vos Dames aussi
Doulce grace et eureuse mercy.
N'ayez en vous changement de pensée
Pour delaissier vos premières amours,
Soiez loyaux sans varier tousjours,
Pitie pur vous ne sera par lasée."

Whilst pondering over this epithet, a very beautiful woman approaches them, splendidly attired in royal robes, and seizes hold of the reins of "*Franc Vouloir's*" steed. "*Cuer*" at once turns to her, and, kneeling, kisses her hand and asks her name. "*Douce Éspérance*," she replies, "and I greet you, worthy gentlemen, and desire to set you on your way." Directed by this gracious lady, they reach the shores of a great lake or sea, and, moored by the water's edge, they espy a little sailing [326] vessel, and in it two lovely maidens—"*Fiance*" and "*Actente*"—about whom "*Douce Éspérance*" had spoken. Leaving their mounts to wander free, the travellers board the frail craft, and, presto! they are at the glorious temple of the Isle of Love. The day passes dillydally; they all sup together, and the sweet, soft shadows hide their repose. Other characters are "*Bel Accueil*," "*Franchise*," "*Piété*," "*Faux Semblant*," and "*Largesse*"; and the allegory ends, as all should do, in the complete victory of Cupid.

The year that Louis XI., by his greed and treachery, drove his noble uncle, "*le Bon Roy René*," out of Anjou was one of trial and embarrassment for the King of Sicily. At first his feelings, outraged by the infamous behaviour of the son of his best-loved sister, Queen Marie, got the better of his equanimity, and he gave way to indignant protests; but when a man is in his sixties he learns to put up with base affronts. René learned by sad experience to measure hypocrites by their professions, but to leave their castigation to posterity. He accepted philosophically, adverse circumstances as they arose and not only checked the expression of his own sentiments, but discouraged reprisals on the part of his impatient and indignant subjects. With this same restraint the poet-King put forth a sententious drama, which he entitled "*L'Abuzé en Court*"; we may translate it, perhaps, "The Victim of Circumstances." Its theme may be gauged as follows: Within the shady portal of an ancient church,—the pavement strewn with the persons of the blind and crippled seeking alms,—a pious wayfarer beheld an oldish man whose silken though shabby [327] attire spoke of better days. His doublet was torn and his long poniard broken, his light brown hair streaked with silver strands, and his pouch poorly furnished. The wayfarer speaks kindly to the victim of Providence:

“Mon gentil homme, Dieu vous garde,
Et vous doint ce que déseriez.
Pardonnez moi, je vous en prie,
Et me dictez par courtousie
De vostre vie le renom
Que vous estez et vostre nom.”

“My good fellow, God protect you,
And grant you all that now you desire.
Forgive me fully, now I pray you,
And tell me something of your despair.
By your courtesy I would your name,
And your life’s story and deeds of fame.”

*L’Abuzé* politely replies:

“Sire! pourquoi le demandez
C’est raison que je vous le dye.
J’ay nom sans que riens en mesdye
Le pouvre homme abuzé en court.”

Then he goes on to tell his story—the story of his life’s adversity, a biograph of René’s. In happy days, now past, he had his amours and his ambitions, his military exploits and his acts of peace. Much of his time he had spent unselfishly caring for others, whose weal depleted his purse and embarrassed his affairs until he was forced to settle with his creditors. The narrative is worked out in dialogue by the concourse of many speakers—among them a great lady, “*La Court*”—Providence, and two *demoiselles* of pity—“*Abuz*”—Wantoncy, and “*Folcuideo*”—Mockery.

The *mise en scène* varies as the tension, and the vicissitudes of human life are presented under every aspect. The poem is a “morality,” as that term was erstwhile understood. [328]

The end of the whole matter is summed up characteristically as follows:

“J’ay pascience!
Et pour vostre paine et salaire
Y-a-t-il aulcun que y pense?
Pour à voz loyers satisfaire
Que avez vous?
J’ay pascience!”

“Patience is mine!
For your ailing and for your health,
Is there anything for which you pine
Openly to gain, or by your stealth,
What would you?
Patience is mine!”

René and Jehanne went to Provence in 1473 in the guise of fugitives. The Angevines deplored excessively this exile; they loved both King and Queen, and Louis and all his works they hated cordially. René saw no other course to follow. He was heavily cast down by family afflictions. Jean, his noble eldest son, was dead; dead, too, were Charles d’Anjou, his brother, and Nicholas, his dear grandson, and Ferri de Vaudémont. He sought peace and consolation, and Provence and the Provençaux offered both most loyally.

The story of Louis’s perfidy may be shortly told. In 1474 René proclaimed Charles de Maine, his nephew, his heir to Anjou-Provence, regardless of the French King’s presumptions. Louis summoned his uncle to Paris to answer before the Parliament. Something of a compromise was come to, for Louis said he should be content for Charles to be proclaimed Duke and Count, but after him he or his heirs would annex both duchy and county to France.

It had always been the policy of Sovereigns to encourage knight-errantry and tournaments, for the competitors who assembled became lieges of the lord. The names and performances of candidates were inscribed on parchment rolls with gold and enamels; these were read out aloud by tabarded heralds. The champions were escorted in pageants to be decorated by the Queen or Lady President of the “Lists”—a graduation, so to speak, in a world-wide University of chivalry. In 1453 Duke Philippe of Burgundy instituted a very singular festival, “The Pageant of the Pheasant,” in which knights were made to swear for Church and fame. The oath ran as follows: “I *N.* swear before God, my Creator, in the first place; the ever-glorious Mary, His mother; and, lastly, before these ladies of the tournament and the Pheasant, to be a true and Christian knight.” The Pheasant was the emblem of fecundity, the mascot of would-be brides and mothers! [329]

Troubadours and “Courts of Love” were complements of warlike deeds on stricken field or in tilting-joust. The Provençal seigneurs and their ladies lived in lonely castles, with nothing on earth to do. Provence was the cradle of the troubadours. Every troubadour had to choose the lady of his passion; she might return it or not, as she chose. It was Guillaume de Poitou, a very famous troubadour, who gave the maxim: “If you propose a game of love, I am not too foolish to refuse, but I shall choose the side that is the best.” All this appealed to King René, and his bent fell in distinctly with that of the famous troubadours of the past. His poetic and sentimental nature found reflective expression in the old “*Magali*,” of the popular melodies of Provence:

"O Magali ma tant amado,
Mete la tête au fenestroun,
Esecuto un pan aguesto subado
De Tambourine, de Viouloun
Esplein estello paramount,
L'Auro os tournado
Mailes estello paliran
Quand te verraut."

This was the spirit of the life to which King René introduced his young and beauteous consort—a romantic existence which appealed forcibly to the sweet instincts of the royal bride. Her response was the joy of René's heart; if denied the fruit of sexual love, he and she were productive of the issue of kindred souls. They lived for one another in an elysium of bliss, chaste and unalloyed, with no qualms of conscience and no aftermath of reproach.

René's love of Jehanne became a passion; her freshness and animation and the evenness of her disposition were to him like so many springs of invigorating water, whence, quaffing, he ever rose to new activities. She became the inspirer of his poetry, the spur in his official duties, and the pivot of his benevolence. He was never tired of extolling her virtues in prose and verse, nor of painting her in miniature and in large. It was said that he always carried about with him wherever he went her portrait, which he himself painted upon a small oval piece of walnut wood let into a locket frame of chiselled gold and enamel. More than this, his most treasured trophy of the "Lists"—the lance with which he unseated Charles VII. at the nuptial tournament for Queen Marguerite d'Anjou—contained an orifice wherein he inserted another likeness of "*la bonne Jehanne*." In the inventory of his garderobe at Angers Castle we read: "*Item, Ung bois de lance creux, ou il y a dedans un rollet de parchemin, auquel c'est dedans la portraicture de la Royne de Sicile.*"[A] [331]

[A] "Item, A hollow lance pole wherein there is a roll of parchment upon which is a portrait of the Queen of Sicily."

The *Comptes de Roi René*, filling very many folios, wherein are noted household, State, and private expenses and other correlative matters, were stored in the *Chambre des Comptes* which René caused to be built at Angers Castle. A suite of apartments facing the river was used for the transaction of business matters and for the deposit of valuable documents. Here, too, was the King's council-chamber, whilst in the gardens stretching in front along the river-side were cages and caves, wherein were kept many lions and strange beasts the collection of which became a royal hobby. Beyond the spacious buildings at the centre of the gardens was a pavilion which René used as a study and a sanctum, wherein he spent much of his leisure time dreaming, reading, and writing. Here he kept a register of artists and artisans, noting their several qualifications, their works, and their honorariums and salaries. He had a sort of school of architect-surveyors who, under his personal direction, prepared plans and projections of all the works, public and private, in which he was interested—markets, bridges, fountains, cottages, etc.

A work at Angers in which he took the greatest interest, and on which he lavished large sums of money, was the erection and decoration of a chapel within the Cathedral of St. Maurice, which he dedicated to the ever-blessed memory of St. Bernardin, his cherished friend and confessor. [332]

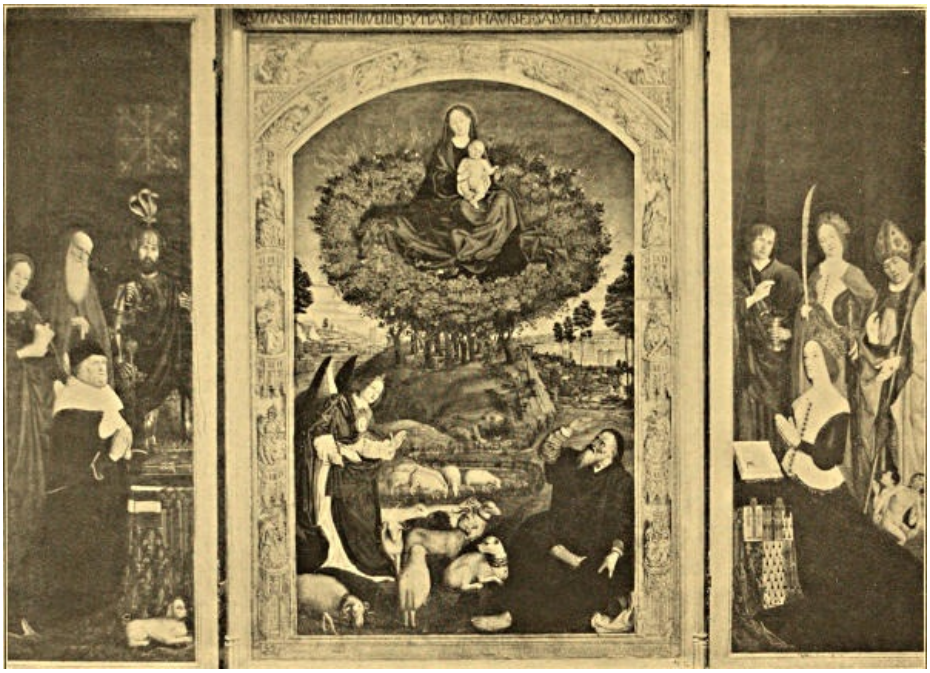
Giovanni della Porta was born at Massa di Carrara at the close of 1384. He took the cord and cowl of St. Francis d'Assisi, and was sent with other brethren of the Order to evangelize the people of Marseilles. He became attached to the household of King Louis II., René's father, and thus an intimacy sprang up between the two. He accompanied René on all his expeditions to Italy, and remained in priestly attendance upon him when at home. The good man died of fever at Aquila in Calabria in 1449, and René, ever grateful to his mentor and spiritual father, in 1450 prevailed upon Pope Nicholas V. to order his canonization. Certain miracles said to have been wrought at his tomb in Southern Italy, and weird happenings as his body was translated to Anjou, convinced the Curia of his sanctity. His memorial chapel at Angers was a sumptuous erection, and in its adornment the King took an active part, painting the glass windows and the altar and its reredos. Before the resting-place of the dead saint's corpse René directed a funeral chamber to be made, wherein he subsequently ordered by his will that his heart should be deposited. This was an action truly characteristic of "*le bon Roy*." He had so often unburdened himself to the saint, and from him had obtained not only absolution, but direction, that their two hearts beat in accord in life, and in death they were also joined.

Not only did the heart of René rest near St. Bernardin, but the hearts also,—each in its golden casket,—of Jehanne and the valiant and chivalrous Jean de Calabria, René's eldest son.

King René and Queen Jehanne were pious folk indeed. At Marseilles, at Tarascon, and at Aix itself, they assisted humbly at Church festivals, processions, and pilgrimages. The lives and loves of the humble home at Bethany in Palestine, transhipped to the reverent shores of tuneful Provence, kindled the affection and the reverence of one and all. The feasts of "*Les Maries*," St. Marthe de Tarasque, and of St. Maximin, good Lazarus's disciple, were honoured by enthusiastic annual devotions. No one tired of hearing of those saintly lives, and no sacrifice was too great to show the heart's devotion. King René and his consort's offerings took the form of costly reliquaries in gold, enamels, and jewels, depositories upon high-altars for holy relics. The royal couple assisted at the translation of St. Martha's relics to Tarascon, May 10, 1458. In 1461 from Aix went a splendid casket to the collegiate church of St. George at Nancy, in pious memory of that redoubtable warrior and of the gentle Isabelle de Lorraine. It was intended for the encasement of a thigh-bone of the Knight of Cappadocia. The King and Queen in 1473 presented [333]

another precious reliquary to the Church of St. Nicholas du Port at Angers, and with it they bestowed upon the clergy the unique gift of an arm and a hand of the saint. Twelve leagues from Aix is the curious little town of St. Maximin, where, in the thirteenth-century church,—built by Charles II. of Naples and Provence, ancestor of Queen Giovanna II.,—are preserved the sacred bones of St. Mary Magdalen. The skull, it is said, has still a small fragment of flesh adhering where Christ touched her forehead. Here, too, the kingly couple bestowed a golden reliquary for the saint's right arm and founded a perpetual Mass. This sad saint of Christ, the repentant one, ever had great influence with René and his royal consort. Not content with listening to her sweet [334]
voice,—perhaps an imagination, after all,—in the streets of Marseilles (as the King himself has depicted), in a beauteous retreat near Angers he fixed a sweet shrine, La Baumette, or Bausome, near Reculée, where he founded a hermitage, "La Madeleine de St. Baumette." This was partly in honour of "St. Baume," as the Magdalen, the patroness of Provence was familiarly called. In the chapel the King painted a picture of St. Bernardin hearing confession—perhaps his own.

If René had lost the crown of Naples, another crown was shortly laid at his feet. In 1469 the Grand Council of Barcelona rejected Juan II. as King of Catalonia. He was brother of Alfonso V., René's rival and conqueror in Naples, but unpopular and blind, and somewhat unready. His wife, the courageous Queen Blanche of Navarre, had taken his place in line of battle, and was enthusiastically beloved by the Catalonians; she died, unhappily, in 1468, of a cancer or of poison, so it was rumoured, and with her died the love of Juan's subjects. The vacant throne was offered with one accord to King René of Sicily-Anjou, the son of the beloved and venerated Princess Yolanda,—who had been brought up at Barcelona,—the only child of old King Juan I. René, in accepting the graceful tribute to his dear mother's claim and person, placed his son Jean de Calabria in the hands of the Catalonians, and begged them,—his own age being far advanced, and his son in his prime and a famous warrior,—to proclaim him in his stead. Jean was acclaimed generally, and hastened to Barcelona to assume his crown, being backed by Louis XI. with a money subsidy and a strong force of men. The landing of the new King was a scene of uproarious [335]
rejoicing. His princely qualities appealed to them, and his grandmother had been their own Princess. People struggled to embrace his knees as he rode to the castle; they kissed the harness of his charger, and ladies tossed valuable rings and jewellery with their flowers and their kisses sweet.



"THE BURNING BUSH"

A Triptych at Aix Cathedral. Portraits of King René and Queen Jehanne.

Designed by King René, finished by Nicholas de Froment

Alas for the joys of nations and of individuals! when things are rosiest, and all tend to good and peace and prosperity, there swoops down the insatiable mower with his scythe, to garner what men can least well spare. King Juan III. of Catalonia and Calabria had not been installed in the kingdom of his grandmother more than one short year, when he fell ill of plague or poison,—the two fellest foes to Sovereigns then,—and died at Barcelona on December 13, 1470. He had fought for his father's cause and his own right nobly in Italy, defeating Ferdinand d'Aragon, Alfonso's son, at Sarno in 1460, but, beaten at Troia, he fled to Ischia.

The Castle of Beaufort was built upon a lofty rock rising above the Loire, overlooking the whole of that fertile and lovely valley; from its battlements both Angers and Saumur were visible. King René purchased it and its estate in 1469 for 30,000 gold crowns, and assigned it as part of Queen Jehanne's fortune. After the King's death and burial, and when she had taken a sad and affectionate farewell of her devoted people in Provence, the royal widow settled down in this attractive residence, and there spent the residue of her life. The *Comptes* contain many items for building materials, decoration, and furniture, showing King René's anxiety to make his dear wife's bijou residence a very real pleasaunce for her.

René indeed was a master-builder, not merely in the way of a hobby, but practically and in [336]

many places. He studied the works of Leon Battista Alberti and other famous architects, and entertained and employed numbers of Italian sculptors. Pietro da Milano was one of these; he was engaged principally in Barrois, and there added the duties of director of revels to his other artistic occupations. Marble busts of René and Jehanne, of Queen Margaret of England and her unhappy son Edward, Prince of Wales, of Ferri de Vaudémont and Yolande, with their young son René, and many others, found expression under Pietro's skilful chisel. In the "*Farce des Pastoureaux*," acted at the Palace of Bar-le-Duc in August, 1463, King René provided costly dresses for his clever little namesake grandson, then twelve years old, and for the rest of the juvenile cast; these were made by Noel Bontault, after Pietro da Milano's designs. The King and his Court were then in residence at the Castle of Louppy, which he had repaired along with the castles of Clermont en Argonne, de Koeurs, and Bonconville, and where he received and comforted his miserable daughter, the heroic consort of Henry VI. Queen Jehanne's ministrations to the forlorn Queen were tenderly rendered and gratefully received. She is credited with the characteristically graceful acts of reclothing the fugitive, and according to Queen Margaret precedence and homage. King René's handiwork in all these enterprises was varied and extensive. He painted the windows, he carved the escutcheons of arms, and he fashioned the hinges and locks of the doors. The *Comptes* prove by very many entries his royal excellence as a [337] craftsman as well as an artist. Scarcely a church in Barrois, Lorraine, Anjou, and Provence, but bore evidence of the kingly artistry. Perhaps his two specialities were glass working and decorating, and wool and silk weaving and embroidery.

One of the most admirable works of the King and Queen,—for Jehanne was not only the amanuensis of her husband, but his inspirer also,—was the conception and the elaboration of the procession of the "*Fête Dieu*" and "*Les Jeux de la Tarasque*." This pageant originated in the mind of René when, as a youth, he witnessed with emotion in 1427, at Bar-le-Duc, "*La Mystère de la Passion*," under the direction of Conrad Bayer, Bishop of Metz. Thirty years of war and travel did not banish the impression the young Christian warrior gained, and from time to time in Anjou and elsewhere he composed *rondeaux*, *ballades*, and *chansons*, in a masque or mystery which he called "*Le Roy Avenir*." In 1474 the King and Queen assisted at Aix at the first rendition of "*Les Jeux de la Fête Dieu*." This was preceded by "*La Procession du Sacré*"—the Procession of the Sacred Host. All the clergy, nobles, troubadours, pretty women, and gallant knights, of Provence assisted, and all the trade corporations took part. Everybody in the procession carried upon the tip of a white wand a piece of *pain béni*. Each section of the cortège was a moving spectacle or pageant. The first section, by acclamation, exhibited "*Lon Grand Juée deis Diables*"—the Grand Play of the Devils. The devils were black and red and green, and every youth's ambition was to figure as a Prince of Darkness; indeed, in later times a young fellow based his claim to be a devil on the fact that his father and all his ancestors had been devils, so "*c'est pourquoi ne le serrais je* [338] *pas!*"

To "the Devils" succeeded "the Magi," "the Innocents of Bethlehem," "the Apostles," "the Queen of Sheba and Solomon," and other *tableaux movants* from Scriptural sources. Most amusing were "The Play of the Jews," represented by human cats—a reference to the features characteristic of the race; "*Les Chevaux fringants*," hobby-horses played by four-and-twenty children, dressed as knights of the "Lists"; a masque of morris-dancers. The two last spectacles were lugubrious: "The Company of Lepers" and "The March of Death."

The revels filled five whole days in and out of church, through and through the streets and squares, and out into the open pleasure-grounds. Prizes were awarded, honours bestowed, and profits made, and everybody was the better for the prodigality of "*le bon Roy*" and the graciousness of "*la bonne Royne*."

René had been in early life remarkable for his simple tastes and abstemiousness in food and drink, and Queen Isabelle was equally careful in personal matters. Their lives were passed in strenuous times when self-denial required great sacrifices of individual indulgences. Isabelle was a soldier's wife, Jehanne the consort of a statesman when life's battle had given way to the ease of peace. Both were attractive women, few their superiors, but Isabelle's hand was upon the hilt of the sword and the snaffle of the charger. Jehanne's held the mirror of fashion and the goblet of pleasure. After René and Jehanne had arranged their domestic settlement in Provence, at once their Court became noted for its magnificent hospitality. René employed the first master-cook of [339] the day, Maestro Guillaume Real, as his Master of the Household. People nicknamed him "*Courçon*," as marshal of the courses of a banquet, rather than "*Soupçon*," the secret of each! The royal repasts were arranged as spectacles; at the cross high table were placed the hosts and guests of honour, and at tables down the hall other guests were accommodated. The walls were hung with silver and crystal sconces full of torches or tapers, and the trophies of war and the chase belonging to the house were there displayed. The covers and the service were as rich and costly as could be. Gold, enamels, crystals, rare faience, and other art treasures, were used with lavish taste.

Each course was proclaimed heraldically by blasts of horns and *motets* from the music gallery. The high table was served by knights and men of rank, who bore the splendid bowls and dishes upon napery of cloth of gold. The richer viands were enclosed in golden caskets, and the keys offered to the guests, who in turn unlocked them and took or refused their contents. Some of the confections have not their parallel to-day. One table, for example, was made to represent a stag-hunt, another a village revel, one a castle with a moat of rare vintage, another an abbey church with bells pealing and hidden children singing. Small animals and birds, and actually growing trees and flowers, were used. The roast and the dessert were the *pièces de résistance*; each was carried up the hall in gay procession with much ceremonious bowing, and guarded by archers of

the guard in gorgeous liveries. At the sight of any very splendid and appealing course the whole lordly company were wont to burst out into song—a well-known and lengthy *chanson*; it was called "*Le Sauve-garde de ma Vie*." [340]

Over the anticlimax of the feast the kindly chroniclers usually draw a discreet veil, for warriors in the field were vanquished in the hall, and beauties beloved in the boudoir were forgotten in the debauch. We may suppose rightfully, however, that the hospitalities of René and Jehanne never caused a flush of shame or a prick of scorn. They aimed at and happily succeeded in proving that "*il n'y pas au monde de royauté comparable au bonheur d'être aimé d'elle*," as the King prettily termed it.

For twenty-five years the simple delights of a useful domestic life were serenely enjoyed by the happy King and Queen. Their spirit of contentedness hallowed the homes of their people, and Provence became a paradise of peace. Certainly the want of children caused Jehanne many a pang, but the devotion of a good husband, one so accomplished, so unselfish, and so universally beloved, was a real compensation, and she had learned the lesson of mingled weal and woe. She found congenial occupation in furthering the good intentions of the King and in ministering to all in need around her. She had, nevertheless, quasi-maternal cares, for in the palace at Aix and in other royal residences were several children and young people of both sexes, besides the three acknowledged bastards by convention, who could lay claim to royal parentage. Some of these are mentioned in *Les Comptes* as receiving alimony and gifts from René. An entry on July 8, 1466, records the gift to Demoiselle Odille of a pelisse of marten fur. She was then somewhere about twenty years of age, but had charge of the King's rings and jewellery under the eye of Sieur [341] Guillaume de Remerville, the Treasurer of the Household. René had married her, in 1460, to Gaspare Spinola, a Genoese attendant in his train, who died in 1465, leaving his child-widow to the care of her father. Another child is also named, Hélène,—"*la petite Hélène*," as René called her,—an attractive little creature, "singing like a lark and dancing like a gazelle," who died on her fifteenth birthday, in the year 1469. The King liked to have her near him at meal-times, when he fondled her affectionately, "*comme ma vraie fille*."

Besides these family cares, Queen Jehanne devoted much of her time to feminine industries. In the convents, in the workshops, in the fields, were poor girls and women needing assistance and encouragement. The example of "good Queen Yolande" was ever before her eyes, and she strove to make herself not only mistress of their hearts, but of their occupations. Spinning, weaving, embroidering, and generally all needlework, found her an accomplished executant. She, too, could use her brush and palette, in miniature and in large, and her chisel and mallet both in wood and stone, and she was a very excellent artificer in gold and silver work. Her benefactions were on the most liberal and most catholic scale; no good cause was overlooked, and when she came to make her will, paragraph after paragraph was taken up by bequests to charitable institutions and to cherished needy individuals. If less devout than her sister-in-law, Queen Marie, and less religiously exercised, Queen Jehanne was a model daughter of the Church, and none recognized this more completely than His Holiness the Pope, who bestowed upon her the precious [342] decoration of the Golden Rose, "for virtue as a spouse and benevolence as a Queen."

Approaching her jubilee,—an anxious period for many women,—the good Queen fell away in health, and appeared to be sickening for her end. Poison was hinted at, but in all probability she suffered, not from poison designedly administered, but from the poison of the atmosphere, laden time out of mind, in those low-lying lands near the mouths of the Rhine, with the seeds of disease —the dreaded plague and black-death.

Happily, Jehanne was able, through her robust constitution and abstemious way of life, to throw off the evil effects of her malady; but no sooner had she regained her accustomed vigour than a crushing sorrow came to her—the mortal illness of her cherished spouse, King René. His was a green old age, with his venerable but erect figure and his winning if somewhat melancholy expression. His blue eyes and gracious aspect drew forth confidence all round, and his gentle voice and genial manners excited true affection. Dressed almost with monkish severity in a great long coat of black silk or velvet, with a heavy collar and revers of brown squirrel fur, and wearing a girdle with a crucifix and beads, his long white hair was capped by a simple velvet *berretta*, and he displayed neither jewels nor decorations, only his Sovereign's badge and chain of gold. He was a typical father of his people.

Struck down mysteriously one day at Mass in the Cathedral of Aix by a stalking epidemic,—he had not spared himself in visits of condolence to the stricken and bereaved,—in the springtide of [343] 1480, the King was borne tenderly to the palace. No more tender nurse could there be than his devoted consort. She took her station at once at his bedside, and, laying her head upon his pillow, she cheered and solaced him as none other could; only did she rouse herself for needful ablutions, for food, and for the saying of the "Hours" in the oratory. With her was a little maiden, René's grandchild Marguerite, thirteen years of age, Yolande de Vaudémont's daughter, a great pet of Queen Jehanne. The child had the sweetest of sweet voices,—a quality very precious in the estimation of the King,—and she soothed his sufferings and refreshed his weaknesses by childish songs and minstrelsy, whilst she stroked his withered hands and in them placed her own.

At dawn of day, July 10, amid the rustling of the summer foliage outside the wide-open windows of the palace, came whisperings from the sick-room—soft, low, and sad: "*Le bon Roy est mort!*" It was gently told to the weeping Queen by the royal physicians, but her Ladies of Honour in the anteroom caught the ominous news besides. They stole outside the heavy arras and told the terrible secret to the valets and men-at-arms; then it flashed out through the galleries and across the courtyards, and stayed the janitors of the gates as they prepared to open them as usual for the new day's life. "*Le bon Roy est mort!*" soon was echoed through the city streets, and tears

and protestations of affection and tender souvenirs of regret found full utterance. "*Le bon Roy is mort!*" was like the knell of doom. No one could realize it or prophesy.

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## III.

No one has told us of Queen Jehanne's sorrow—better so. No stranger ever shares a full heart's loss. Broken, but submissive and self-sustained, her consort's fortitude in distress had come to her as well; she failed not at the moment of her trial. With her own hands she led the last offices of reverent duty to the dead. Shrouded in a simple white linen shift, but covered with the crimson and ermine mantle of state, they laid their deceased Sovereign upon the canopied bed of Estate, moved to the centre of the great hall. The Queen herself had closed his eyes, and now she arranged his hands. In them she placed a costly ruby cross he had given her at her marriage; at his feet she laid the "*Livre des Heures*," which was also his nuptial gift; and then she placed around his neck the Sovereign's jewel,—there was no heir to wear it, alas!—and last of all she knelt and sprinkled holy water on his corpse.

Every door and window was set wide ajar that, night or day, all might see and pray and bless. Dusk fell on that long, long day, but the crowd of loving servants and subjects still surged along reverently to pay their last respects; and so night fell and passed, not in the peaceful hush of slumber, but with smothered tread of painful feet and the smothered sob of woe.

All Aix was hung in black, and on July 14 the streets were lined by weeping citizens as the funeral cortège of "*le bon Roy*" passed to the Cathedral of St. Sauveur. The burial casket, after the requiem and Court ceremonies, was placed, not in a tomb direct, but in a *chapelle ardente*, and watches of religious mounted guard and prayed. Soon the wish of their venerated Sovereign [345] was made public property, and then, amid fresh lamentations lest Aix should lose his remains, appeals were made to Queen Jehanne. She was deeply affected, but remained quiet and resigned. She could not reverse her husband's will, but she could allow his body to remain awhile where it was. With this the authorities had to be content, and forthwith, to strengthen their hold upon that sacred casket, steps were taken to erect a splendid monument and tomb. An embassy was sent off at once to Rome to ask for a "Bull" whereby the late Sovereign's directions as to the place of sepulture might be laid aside. Aix was not so much jealous of Angers as she was devoted to her King.

In accordance with the marital customs of the time, King René had a mistress—perhaps more than one, but one at least whose name has been preserved by chroniclers, Marie de la Chapelle, a respectable middle-class woman of Provence. Whether "de la Chapelle" was a sobriquet or not is not clear; probably it was so, and given her later on in life after the artist King had painted her wearing a *chapelle*, or black velvet hood, in a diptych, wherein he faces her, which he kept secretly in his own studio. It is said that she did not really love René, but liked to rule him and to direct the royal household. She was exigeant, too, for the legitimatizing of the three children she bore the King, whom René had always duly acknowledged as his. These were Jean, "*le Bâtard d'Angers*," created, after the premature death of Prince Louis, Marquis de Pont-à-Mousson and Seigneur of St. Cannot; Blanche; and Madeleine. Jean married Isabelle, daughter of Raymond de [346] Glandevez, Ambassador to the Pope, pro-Governor of Genoa, and Grand Master of France. Blanche d'Anjou married Bertrand de Beauvau, Seigneur de Precigny, Master of the Court of Angers and Seneschal of Anjou. He was in 1462 appointed President of Provence. His father was Seigneur de Rochette. René gave his daughter the estate of Mirabeau in Poitou, which he purchased in 1488. In the *Comptes du Roy René* is the record of a gift to Blanche of a gold mirror worth 20 *écus d'or*, under date January 12, 1488, and the same year, on March 18, she received a large table diamond from her father, which unfortunately she lost when playing in a farce before the Court on the following *Jour de l'An*. The precious bauble was found by a monk, Alfonso de la Rocque, Prior of the monastery of Les Anges d'Aix, and restored on payment of a tun of red wine. The discovery was only made known, it appears, through the confessional; the good friar had qualms about not making known his find. This Blanche d'Anjou was educated at Beaucaire by Demoiselle Collette, a worker in furs, who received many costly gifts from King René. It has been sought to prove that Marie de la Chapelle was this Demoiselle Collette. Among the King's gift were homely objects, too. His *Comptes*, under April 4, 1447, record "three cannes of fine holland cloth; two ditto fine muslin, and five black silk velvet for a head-dress." Another gift to Blanche d'Anjou, on May 16, 1447, was hair for a *rigotter*, a *coiffure postiche* for which the King paid 7 florins to Marguerite, wife of Jehan Augier, at Beaucaire. Again Blanche was the recipient of her father's generosity, for on June 7 the same year he gave her a cincture of wrought silver which [347] cost 11 florins.

Before Blanche married the Seigneur de Precigny he had buried three wives, and he himself was buried with them at Angers in October, 1474. She died prematurely in giving birth to a child, April 11, 1470, no more than twenty-one years of age. Madeleine, René's second illegitimate daughter, married Louis Jehan, Seigneur de Belleneve, Chamberlain to Charles VIII. of France when Dauphin. He gave him for his marriage 15,000 florins, that he might "espouse worthily *ma cousine*," as he calls her. Louis XII. gave her on her widowhood a sum of 12,000 florins.

On the death of King René, his eldest daughter, Yolande, Countess of Vaudémont, claimed and assumed the title of Queen of Sicily, Jerusalem, Naples, and Aragon, but took no steps to enforce her claim upon that vulture monarch, Louis XI., who at once seized upon the lands of his uncle, and styled himself Duke of Anjou and Count of Provence. Countess Yolande was her father's child, tender and retiring. She craved the charms of the quiet life, and consequently, at the convocation of the Estates of Anjou and Provence, she renounced her title, and made it over to

her son René. He had already taken up the gauntlet of his grandfather, and given proof of the sterling qualities of his ancestry. The duchy of Lorraine and that of Bar were his through his mother also, and as Duke of Lorraine René II. is known to historians. Countess Yolande died at Nancy February 21, 1483. René II. was the Prince whom his father, Ferri de Vaudémont, insisted should make a pilgrimage from Vezelay,—famous in the history of Thomas à Becket,—the capital of Le Morvan, to Jerusalem with one foot booted, the other bare, and, as he went, to distribute to [348] every poor person he met 12 *livres* by way of satisfaction for small sums he himself had borrowed and had not paid back—surely a wide stretch of fatherly authority and the law of substitution!

The widowed Queen lost little time in settling her affairs in Provence, for she was minded to go to Anjou with her precious dead; indeed, René had expressed a wish to that effect. She carefully surveyed the names of all the people René loved and of those who loved him most nearly too. To each and all some token was sent or given; she spared few things for herself. Churches, institutions, schools, guilds, and all public bodies, received mementoes of the dead monarch. To Jehanne came many pangs at parting. She had learned to love the gentle Provençals, and they had not failed to return her regard most warmly. At last her preparations were completed, and she spent a day and night in the cathedral by the casket of her dear dead, and then sorrowfully she took her journey to distant Anjou, home to her kith and kin.

RENÉ D'ANJOU

(*Circa 1470*)

Painted by himself on wood. Aix Library

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King René in his will speaks thus of his beloved Queen: "Because Jehanne has loved me, so I do and shall love her as my dearest wife till death. Her virtues and her goodness to me I cannot forget, nor her loving services which she has rendered me for so long a time. I will that she shall have unrestricted liberty of action to settle, when I am dead, where she will.... I give to her the county of Beaufort; the castle and estate of Mirabeau; the town of Aubagne; the castles of San Remy, Pertuis, and Les Baux, with my *bastides* in and about Aix and at Marseilles, with all their [349] furniture and appurtenances." King René also specially bequeathed to Jehanne his most valuable jewels: collars of diamonds; "*le grand et le petit bulay*," rubies, with sprays of gold and gems;[A] his diamonds "*à la cesse*," uncut and strung (?); his plates and caskets of gold; his great bowls of gold; his great trays of silver; and his precious goblet and ewer of gold encrusted with jewels; and many other splendid precious objects.

[A] "*Le grand bulay*" was a famous ruby, richly mounted, which he had bought for 18,000 florins (= £7,000).

With respect to the body of King René, it has been chronicled that the Queen before leaving Aix made secret arrangements for its translation to Angers. She feared a hostile demonstration if open measures were taken. She took into her confidence a priest belonging to the cathedral chapter, and they together worked out a plan which was put into operation after Queen Jehanne had arrived at Angers. She sent two of her most trusty attendants, Jehan de Pastis and Jacquemain de Mahiers, with an imposing suite, conveying a letter to the Archbishop of Aix

asking for the heart of René. The priestly confidant was at the service of the envoys, and they very cleverly contrived to secrete the casket with the King's body in a royal chariot which the Queen had commanded to be laden with certain dresses and properties she had left behind, and in particular the pall she had worked with her own hand, and which was still covering the dead King's coffin. The precious burden was driven to a secluded backwater of the Rhone, and there embarked upon a great royal barge; and so King René's body passed through France once more, as he had so often done in life. The disembarkment of the royal corpse was effected at Ponts-de- [350]
Cé, across the Loire, a few miles out of Angers, and thence the second obsequies were conducted with splendid ceremonies and amid universal tokens of joy and sorrow of his Angevine subjects. The heart was with the body, but the entrails were left at Aix in the cathedral.

This was the last public appearance of Queen Jehanne. She retired to her Castle of Beaufort, and there she spent the residue of her life, eighteen long and solitary years—years never idle, never self-indulgent, years loyal to the fond memory of her spouse, years yearning for reunion. The day Jehanne entered her new home was St. Luke's festival, 1481, the second summer of the year, when the last grapes hang ripened upon the vines, and the year's vintage is gathered in. Perhaps the simile from Nature enforced itself upon the widowed Queen's sympathetic mind. Her harvest was now that of the quiet eye; its growth had been when eye met eye—hers and René's; now was approaching the winter of her life, when her work was to be finished and her rest full-garnered.

Jehanne chose as the companions of her widowhood three trusty servitors—René de Breslay, her Seneschal; Thibault de Cossé, her Master of the Household; and Bernard de Praneas, her Confessor. She spent her time in prayer and charity. She established hostels for poor people, for pilgrims and the sick; schools for children left orphans, and for those cast upon the world by miserable parents. Besides these pious works, the good Queen preserved her interest in such arts and crafts as she and René had encouraged in Provence. She studied once more books and [351]
sciences he had loved, she painted miniatures, composed madrigals and hymns, and sang and played as she had done for him, and her pen became that of the ready writer. She translated Guillaume de Guillerville's tragedy, "The Pilgrimage of Human Life"; "The Soul separated from the Body," a poem by Jehan Galoppez, a priest of Angers and her Private Secretary; and a moralization upon "The Certainty of Paradise." All her works were, however, in prose, which, she said "*conservez le sens et les images, mais déliverez moi du martelage et des grimaces de ce baragouin!*"[A]

[A] "Preserve the sense and the shape, but protect me from forced metaphor and gibberish!"

Perhaps the action which most endeared the memory of the good Queen to the hearts and minds of the people about her was the extraordinary pains she took to alleviate taxation and to readjust tribute. When René took over the estate in 1471, he made vast reductions in the imposts on land and stock and crop. These were confirmed by Queen Jehanne ten years later, and further reductions were conceded. Her plea to herself was: "Now René is no more, I have no other rôle to play but to do as he would have wished me." The Forest of Beaufort, where René and she had followed the chase in princely fashion, now no longer echoed the blast of hunting-horns and the cracks of hunting-whips, but with the gentle notes of the *Angelus*, and when the curfews rang out in neighbouring village and homestead, they carried with them the refrain, "*Priez pour la bonne Jehanne*."

These soft nocturnes and sweet visions of ancient days still linger in Anjou. The memory of the [352]
Queen of Sicily, Jehanne, is cherished, and almost a proverb it has become, that all good things done in that rich province are due to the watchful spirit of the Queen. In this connection a very weird narrative may be told. In 1469 Guillaume de Harancourt, Bishop of Verdun, invented a cage of wood and iron for refractory criminals. One such was sent to Angers, which after Jehanne's death became known as the "cage of the Queen of Sicily." It was said that Jehanne had been put therein wearing wooden sabots. The why and wherefore of her incarceration was perfectly uncertain, but the sabots are to-day in Angers Museum; the cage has disappeared. Another version has it that King René had among his wild creatures at Reculée and elsewhere a very ferocious eagle which he could not tame, and so the bird was sent to Angers and placed in the Bishop's wood and iron cage, and dubbed "*La Reine*"—"The Queen"! This bird of prey deserved the name; its appetite was prodigious. In *Les Comptes*, among other entries referring to "her Majesty," is—"June 3, 1474, 'La Reine' has a whole sheep day by day." This is quaint indeed, but characteristic of stories and storytellers!

Queen Jehanne died at the Castle of Beaufort, December 19, 1498,—as the chroniclers tell us, —"in the odour of sanctity and with all the consolations of Holy Church."

The Queen's will—a most lengthy document—contains many affecting and many quaint bequests. She first of all commends herself conventionally to the Almighty, and then goes on to [353]
indicate her desire to be laid not far from "Marie of blessed memory"—her consort's grandmother, Marie de Blois-Châtillon—"before the altar where is laid my lord and consort," and she warns all and sundry against laying any other bodies there. Her heart she bequeaths to the Chapel of St. Bernardin, within the Church of the Cordeliers at Angers, to be placed beside that of René. She directs that her body shall be covered with a pall of black silk, and that at her funeral six poor religious should attend habited in black, and each bearing a flaming torch. Her heart and René's should repose upon a pall of cloth of gold embroidered in crimson, and bearing their joined shields of arms. Lights shall always burn in front of the tomb and the cardial reliquary. She instructs her brother and nephew, Seigneurs de la Roche and de Montafiland, to hand over to the Chapter of St. Maurice in Angers 200 *livres tournois* (*circa* £120) to pay for her

burial cortège, and for Mass, absolutions, vespers, and bells. Particularly she notes her preference for flags of *bougran*—stuff (?)—over silken banners.

The day after her interment the Queen directs that with reverent ritual a crown shall be placed over her head like that she placed over René's, upon their monument. Certain saintly relics which he and she had been the means of rescuing from sacrilege, and had deposited in the Church of St. Tugal de Laval, shall be displayed gratuitously to "such *dames comtesses* as may wish to become mothers." Her "Breviary," "Psalter," "Hours," and other books of devotion, she bequeaths to the Church of St. Tugal de Laval, for the use of daughters of her father's house at [354] their marriage or when residing in Laval. Two gold rings she particularly desires to be placed upon the relics of St. Nicholas d'Angers, within his reliquary: "one, my wedding-ring, which my very redoubtable lord and consort,—whom God absolve,—placed upon my finger at our nuptials, with a small heart of diamonds and enamelled with deep red roses." The other ring had a large diamond mounted on a fleur-de-lis, and the band bore the enamelled arms of Anjou. Queen Jehanne did not forget her friends and attendants; for example, among very many legacies, she left 200 *livres tournois* each to three ladies: Jacqueline de Puy du Jour, Catherine Beaufilz, and "*ma petite*" Gindine de la Jaille, to provide them with trousseaux upon marriage.

The body of the Queen was reverently shrouded in a plain linen chemise, such as that with which she herself had assisted to cover King René's corpse, and over it was placed his robe of state. Hers was the last lying in state of a Queen of Sicily, and every mark of homage and respect was rendered her remains by high and low. Peasants and citizens conspired together to show their grateful sense of her virtues and her benefactions, and the country road from Beaufort to Angers was lined with sympathetic crowds of mourners. Her passing was in the night time,—so consonant with her love of seclusion and simplicity,—and the whole country-side was ablaze with torches and bonfires. The Queen's burial was at St. Maurice's Cathedral, in the tomb of her consort; whilst her heart,—"so full of love and so tenderly beloved,"—in a golden casket exactly [355] like that of the King, was placed next his in the Chapel of St. Bernardin. Upon a memorial tablet was inscribed the epitaph: "Here lies the Heart of the very high and puissant Princess, Jehanne de Laval, second wife of King René, and daughter of Guy, Count de Laval."

The monument to King René, which she at last came to share in blessed memory, had his effigy reclining, and at his feet a sculptured lion, symbol of courage; at Jehanne's feet were carved two hounds, emblematic of fidelity. The Chapel of St. Bernardin thus became the royal mausoleum of the last Anjou dynasty—René, with his father and mother, his two wives, his eldest son, and his two daughters, in holy company; and so they remained for 300 years, until that cataclysmatic year 1793, when every holy stone was tumbled down and every reverent memorial defaced. The memorial chapel was for centuries a thing of beauty. King René himself painted the glass windows and designed the tomb. Soon after his marriage with Jehanne de Laval he employed Francesco Laurana and Pietro da Milano to decorate the chapel.

Soon after the death of King René, Sieur Guillaume de Remerville,—his Treasurer at Aix,—voiced the universal sorrow and permanent regret of all the royal servants of his lord in a beautiful funeral ode, which he dedicated to "Queen Jehanne, his worshipful mistress":

"Pleurez, petits et grands! Pleurez!
Car perdu avez le bon Sire. [356]
Jamais ne le recouverierez—
Sa mort sera grief martyir."

"Weep little, weep great, weep all!
For we have lost our good Lord.
Ne'er more his form to recall—
Hearts broken by his mord."

Such was the refrain. The same loving dirge of woe was re-echoed through Anjou and Provence when Jehanne passed royally to her burial.

KING RENÉ'S SIGNATURE.

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