The COURTSHIPS of QUEEN ELIZABETH

A HISTORY OF THE VARIOUS NEGOTIATIONS FOR HER MARRIAGE

BY

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PREFACE TO REVISED EDITION.

One of the gratifying testimonies of the interest with which an indulgent public has read this book has been the receipt by the author of a great number of letters from various parts of the world requesting further information on certain of the events related therein. Of these communications a few were from students who desired guidance to enable them to pursue the subject in greater detail than is possible in a comparatively popular history covering so long a period as does the present work; but by far the larger number of the letters received expressed or implied regret that the question of the actual relations that existed between the Queen and various favourites had not been dealt with. As a political historian I must confess that this phase of the subject did not appear to me to be one of any great importance, as the national results of the courtships here described depended rather upon the intrigue that prompted them than upon the real or feigned passion that accompanied them; and a study of the non-political philanderings, of which this book had little or nothing to say, though useful in elucidating the personal character of the Queen, and perhaps

in exposing her frailty, would throw but little light upon the subtle war of wits from which England, under Elizabeth's guidance, emerged the victor. Another, and revised, edition of the work being, however, demanded, I have thought that two supplementary chapters dealing with the personal aspect of Queen Elizabeth's courtships might be added without disadvantage to the original text. I am fully conscious of the difficulty of treating adequately, and yet inoffensively, this branch of the subject in a book which will naturally reach the hands of readers of all ages and conditions; and it is probable that I shall still be reproached by some inquirers for a want of frankness in stating my final opinions. If that be the case I must submit to the reproach with such contrition as I may; but I venture, nevertheless, to believe that those to whom the knowledge will be innocuous, and who care to seek for it, will have no great difficulty in gathering the conclusions which seem to me the inevitable corollary of the facts indicated. It only remains for me to express my heartfelt gratitude to reviewers and readers for the favour they have accorded to this, my first original book, since its earliest appearance eight years ago.

MARTIN HUME.

LONDON, *March*, 1904.

PREFACE.

It has been my pleasant duty to consider carefully in chronological order a great mass of diplomatic documents of the time of Elizabeth, in which are reflected, almost from day to day, the continually shifting aspects of political affairs, and the varying attitudes of the Queen and her ministers in dealing therewith. I have been struck with the failure of most historians of the time, who have painted their pictures with a large brush, to explain or adequately account for what is so often looked upon as the perverse fickleness of perhaps the greatest sovereign that ever occupied the English throne; and I have come to the conclusion that the best way in which a just appreciation can be formed of the fixity of purpose and consummate statecraft which underlay her apparent levity, is to follow in close detail the varying circumstances and combinations which prompted the bewildering mutability of her policy.

To do this through the whole of the events of a long and important reign would be beyond the powers of an ordinary student, and the attempt would probably end in confusion. I have therefore considered it best to limit myself in this book to one set of negotiations, those which relate to the Queen's

proposed marriage, running through many years of her reign; and I trust that, however imperfectly my task may have been effected, the facts set forth may enable the reader to perceive more clearly than hitherto, that capricious, even frivolous, as the Queen's methods appear to be, her main object was rarely neglected or lost sight of during the long continuance of these negotiations.

That a strong modern England was rendered possible mainly by the boldness, astuteness, and activity of Elizabeth at the critical turning-point of European history is generally admitted; but how masterly her policy was, and how entirely personal to herself, is even yet perhaps not fully understood. I have therefore endeavoured in this book to follow closely from end to end one strand only of the complicated texture, in the hope that I may succeed by this means in exhibiting the general process by which England, under the guidance of the great Tudor Queen, was able to emerge regenerated and triumphant from the struggle which was to settle the fate of the world for centuries to come.

MARTIN HUME.

LONDON, *February*, 1896.

CHAPTER I.

Character of Elizabeth and her contemporaries—Main object of her policy—Youth of Elizabeth—The Duke of Angoulême—Philip of Spain—Seymour and Catharine Parr—Mrs. Ashley's and Parry's confessions—Execution of Seymour—Proposed marriage of Elizabeth with a son of the Duke of Ferrara—With a son of Hans Frederick of Saxony—Courtney—Emmanuel Philibert, Duke of Savoy—Prince Eric of Sweden—Death of Queen Mary—The Earl of Arundel.

THE greatest diplomatic game ever played on the world's chessboard was that consummate succession of intrigues which for nearly half a century was carried on by Queen Elizabeth and her ministers with the object of playing off one great Continental power against another for the benefit of England and Protestantism, with which the interests of the Queen herself were indissolubly bound up. Those who were in the midst of the strife were for the most part working for immediate aims, and probably understood or cared but little about the ultimate result of their efforts; but we, looking back as over a plain that has been traversed, can see that, from the tangle of duplicity which obscured the issue to the actors, there emerged a new era of civilisation and a host of young, new, vigorous thoughts of which we still feel the impetus. We perceive now that modern ideas of liberty and enlightenment are

the natural outcome of the victory of England in that devious and tortuous struggle, which engaged for so long some of the keenest intellects, masculine and feminine, which have ever existed in Europe. It seems impossible that the result could have been attained excepting under the very peculiar combination of circumstances and persons then existing in England. Elizabeth triumphed as much by her weakness as by her strength; her bad qualities were as valuable to her as her good ones. Strong and steadfast Cecil would never have held the helm so long if he had not constantly been contrasted with the shifty, greedy, treacherous crew of councillors who were for ever ravening after foreign bribes as payment for their honour and their loyalty. Without Leicester as a permanent matrimonial possibility to fall back upon, the endless negotiations for marriage with foreign princes would soon have become pointless and ineffectual, and the balance would have been lost. But for the follies of Mary Stuart, which led to her downfall and lifelong imprisonment, the Catholic party in England could never have been subjected so easily as it was. Elizabeth, with little fixed religious conviction, would, with her characteristic instability, almost certainly at one difficult juncture or another have been drawn into a recognition of the papal power, and so would have destroyed the nice counterpoise, but for the unexampled fact that such recognition would have upset her own legitimacy and right to reign. The combination of circumstances on the Continent also seems to have been exactly that necessary to aid the result most favourable to English interests; and the special personal qualities

both of Philip II. and Catharine de Medici were as if expressly moulded to contribute to the same end. But propitious, almost providential, as the circumstances were, the making of England and the establishment of Protestantism as a permanent power in Europe could never have been effected without the supreme and sustained statecraft of the Queen and her great minister. The nimble shifting from side to side, the encouragement or discouragement of the French and Flemish Protestants as the policy of the moment dictated, the alternate flouting and flattering of the rival powers, and the agile utilisation of the Queen's sex and feminine love of admiration to provoke competing offers for her hand, all exhibit statesmanship as keen as it was unscrupulous. The political methods adopted were perhaps those which met with general acceptance at the time, but the dexterous juggling through a long course of years with regard to Elizabeth's marriage is unexampled in the history of government. Not a point was missed. Full advantage was taken of the Queen's maiden state, of her feminine fickleness, of her solitary sovereignty, of her assumed religious uncertainty, of her accepted beauty, and of the keen competition for her hand. In very many cases neither the wooer nor the wooed was in earnest, and the courtship was merely a polite fiction to cover other objects; but at least on two occasions, if not three, the Queen was very nearly forced by circumstances or her own feelings into a position which would have made her marriage inevitable. Her caution, however, on each occasion caused her to withdraw in time without mortal offence to the family of her suitor; and to the end of her days she was able, painted old

harridan though she was, to act coquettishly the part of the peerless beauty whose fair hand might possibly reward the devoted admiration paid to her, with their tongues in their cheeks, by the bright young gallants who sought her smiles. The story of the various negotiations for the Queen's marriage has been told in more or less detail in the histories of the times, but no comprehensive view has yet been given of the marriage negotiations alone: nor has their successive relation to other events been set forth as a connected narrative. Within the last few years much new material for such a narrative has become available both in England and on the Continent, and it is now possible to see with a certain amount of clearness the hands of the other players besides that of the English Queen. The approaches made to Elizabeth by the brothers de Valois, or rather by their intriguing mother, Catharine de Medici, have been related somewhat fully, mainly from the documents in the National Library in Paris, by the Count de la Ferrière,[1] and the recent publications of the Spanish State Papers at Simancas of the reign of Elizabeth by the Record Office,[2] puts us into possession of a vast quantity of hitherto unused material of the highest interest, especially with regard to the matrimonial overtures made by Philip II. and the princes of the house of Austria; whilst the full text of the extraordinary private letters to and from the Queen in relation to the Alençon match, 1579–82, printed by the His-

[1] "Projets de Mariage de la Reine Elizabeth." Ferrière. Paris.

[2] Calendar of Spanish State Papers (Elizabeth), Rolls Series. Edited by Martin A. S. Hume.

torical MSS. Commission from the Hatfield Papers, affords an opportunity of the greatest value for criticising the by-play in this curious comedy. From these sources, from the Walsingham Papers from the French diplomatic correspondence, from the Foreign, Domestic, and Venetian Calendars of State Papers, and from the various contemporary and later chroniclers of the times, it is proposed to construct a consecutive narrative of most of the important attempts made to persuade the "Virgin Queen" to abandon her much-boasted celibacy.

In October, 1532, exactly eleven months before the birth of Elizabeth, Henry VIII. paid his pompous visit to the French king, accompanied by his privately married wife, Anne Boleyn, Marchioness of Pembroke. He had deeply offended the Spanish Emperor by his treatment of Queen Catherine, and felt the need of drawing closer the bonds of union with Francis I., which twelve years before had been tied on the Field of the Cloth of Gold; and almost as soon as the little Princess Elizabeth was born, negotiations were opened for her marriage with the child-prince, Duke of Angoulême, third son of Francis I. Henry asked for too much, as was his wont. He required the French king and his nobles to make a declaration of approval of the Act of Succession which had been passed in England defying the Pope and settling the crown on the issue of Anne Boleyn. Francis was to press the Pope to revoke the anathemas that the Church had hurled upon the schismatic king, and the little prince was to be brought up in England, holding his dukedom as an independent fief of the French crown. The last two demands might have been complied with,

as they could subsequently have been revoked, but the eldest son of the Church could never accept the first article, which would have brought him into definite defiance of the papacy; and the negotiation fell through.

Elizabeth was only three years old when her mother's fall removed her from the line of the succession, and with the strange vicissitudes of her early girlhood we have nothing here to do. When, however, in 1542, the death of James V. of Scotland and the almost simultaneous birth of his daughter Mary seemed to bring nearer to its consummation Henry's idea of a union of the two crowns, he proposed to marry the baby Queen of Scots to his own infant son and at the same time offered the hand of Elizabeth, who was then nine years old, to the son of Arran, head of the house of Hamilton, the next heir to the Scottish crown. The Earl was greedy and weak, and failed to see the advantages of such a connection, the consequence being that French intrigue and French money, backed up by the influence of the Queen Dowager of Scotland, Mary of Lorraine, were victorious; and Henry was thwarted of his desire. The fact that he had been checkmated by the French King in this manner rankled in his breast and caused that foolish and profitless war, in alliance with the Emperor, against France, which is principally remembered for the siege and capture and subsequent loss of Boulogne. Charles V. tried very hard to get his cousin, Mary Tudor, Henry's elder daughter, acknowledged as legitimate, but although this was not done in so many words, both she and her sister Elizabeth were restored to their respective places in the line of succession; and whilst

the treaty of alliance between the two sovereigns was under discussion a suggestion was made that Charles' son, Philip of Spain, then a lad of seventeen, should be betrothed to Elizabeth, who was eleven. It was probably never meant to be anything but a compliment, and certainly would not have been seriously entertained by the Emperor, but in any case the suggestion was quietly dropped and Spanish and English interests rapidly drifted apart again. In January, 1547, Henry VIII. died, leaving the succession to his two daughters in tail after his child-son Edward VI. and his heirs. The Queen Dowager, Catharine Parr, immediately married Sir Thomas Seymour, brother of the Protector Somerset, and uncle of the little King. To their care was confided Princess Elizabeth, then a girl of fourteen, who resided principally in the Queen's dower houses at Chelsea and Hanworth, and it was at this critical period of her life that her personal interest in her love affairs may be said to have commenced.

When, subsequent to the death of the Queen Dowager, a short year afterwards, her husband's ambitious schemes had aroused the jealousy of his all-powerful brother, one of the charges made against him was that he had planned to marry the Princess Elizabeth and use her as one of his instruments for obtaining supreme power. The original confessions and declarations of those who were supposed to be concerned with him in the plot, which are still amongst Lord Salisbury's papers at Hatfield, were published in full many years ago by Haynes, and have more recently been calendared by the Historical MSS. Commission. They have been used by all historians of the times, and there is no

intention of repeating here fully the oft-told story divulged by these curious declarations. It is needless to say that they disclose scandalous treatment of a young and sensitive girl both by Seymour and Catharine Parr, even after allowing for the free manners then prevalent. It is difficult to understand, indeed, what can have been Seymour's real intention towards the Princess, unless it was the guilty satisfaction of his own passions. His wife was young and healthy, and in the natural course of events might have been expected to live long, so that he could hardly have looked forward to his marriage with Elizabeth; and yet Mrs. Ashley,[1] her governess, confessed in the Tower in February, 1549, that Seymour was in the habit of visiting the girl's bedroom before she was dressed, sometimes by himself and sometimes with his wife, and there indulged in much indelicate and suggestive romping, in which Catherine Parr herself occasionally took part. Thomas Parry,[2] the cofferer, repeats in his confession a story told him by Mrs. Ashley which carries the matter somewhat further. "She said the Lord Admiral loved the Lady Elizabeth but too well, and had done so for a good while, and this was the cause that the Queen was jealous of him and Lady Elizabeth. On one occasion the Queen coming suddenly upon them had found him holding the Lady Elizabeth in his arms; upon which she fell out with them both, and this was the cause why the Queen and Lady Elizabeth parted."

Whatever may have been Seymour's intentions

[1] Confessions of Mrs. Ashley and Thomas Parry. Hatfield Papers. Historical MSS. Commission.
[2] Ibid.

towards Elizabeth during his wife's life, he left them in no doubt as soon as she died. For a conspirator, indeed, he was the most open-mouthed person imaginable. By the confessions, early in 1549, of Wightman, Sharington, Dorset, Harrington, and Parry, it would appear that he had openly expressed his discontent with his brother's supremacy and made no secret of his pretensions to the guardianship of the young King and the hand of Elizabeth. His accomplice, Sharington, master of the Bristol mint, was coining testoons out of the national treasure, and hoarding vast sums of coin for his use; noblemen were advised by him to retire to their estates and raise forces to support him; and the seizure of himself and his friends was a mere movement of self-defence on the part of the Protector. With regard to the match with Elizabeth, Parry appears to have been the first person approached directly. He was closely attached to the person of the Princess, and had been sent to Seymour ostensibly to ask for the use of Durham Place as a temporary town residence for her. Seymour said this could not be, as the house was to be made into a mint, but she could have his own house to stay in until she could see the King. Parry confesses that Seymour asked him many questions about Elizabeth's pecuniary means; and when he got back to Hatfield the cofferer asked the young Princess whether she would be willing to accept Seymour for a husband if the Council were agreeable. She asked Parry sharply who told him to put such a question to her, to which he answered that "nobody had done so, but he thought he perceived by Seymour's inquiries that he was given

that way." "She said that she could not tell her mind therein." [1]

When the Master of the Household and Denny suddenly arrived at Hatfield to interrogate the household as to their communications with Seymour Parry quite lost his head, "went to his own chamber and said to his wife, 'I would I had never been born, for I am undone,' and wrung his hands, cast away his chain from his neck and his rings from his fingers."

Elizabeth's profound diplomacy and quick intelligence were shown even thus early at this critical juncture. Sir Robert Tyrwhitt and his wife were sent by the Protector to worm out of her all she knew of the plot. Threats, cajolery, forged letters and invented confessions, were all tried upon her in vain. She would tell nothing of importance. "She hath," says Tyrwhitt, "a very good wit and nothing is gotten of her but by great policy." She bitterly resented the imprisonment of her governess, Mrs. Ashley, and the substitution of Lady Tyrwhitt; and said that she had not so behaved that they need put more mistresses upon her; wept all night and sulked all day, but withal was too much for Tyrwhitt, who avowed that "if he had to say his fantasy he thinks it more meet she should have two governesses than one."

The confessions of Parry and Ashley with regard to Elizabeth's conduct, and their own, are bad enough; but they probably kept back far more than they told, for on Elizabeth's succession, and for the rest of their lives, they were treated with marked

[1] Tyrwhitt to the Protector, January 23, 1549. Hatfield Papers. Historical MSS. Commission.

favour; Parry was knighted and made Treasurer of the Household, and on Mrs. Ashley's death in July, 1565, the Queen visited her in person and mourned her with great grief. It is probable that the inexperienced girl was really in love with the handsome, showy Seymour; but how far their relations went will most likely never now be known. She indignantly wrote to the Protector complaining of the slanders that were current about her, to the effect that she was with child by the Lord Admiral and demanded to be allowed to come to Court and "show herself as she was"; but virtuous indignation, real and assumed, was always one of her favourite weapons. Tyrwhitt said he believed a secret compact had been entered into between her and Ashley and Parry never to confess during their lives. "They all sing one song and she hath set the note for them."

After this dangerous escapade and the execution of Seymour, Elizabeth became almost ostentatiously saintly and straitlaced, until the accession of her sister made her the heiress presumptive to the crown and the hope of the Protestant party, now that Northumberland's nominees had been disposed of. Even before this event, the reforming party in England were anxious to further strengthen themselves by allying her to a foreign prince of Protestant leanings, not powerful enough to force her claims to the crown upon them, but of sufficient weight to give them moral support, whilst removing her from the way in England. As early as August, 1551, Northumberland (or, as he was then, the Earl of Warwick) had put his agents upon the alert on the Continent to find a suitable match for her, and

one of them, Sir Anthony Guidotti,[1] says that the Duke of Guise had suggested the Duke of Ferrara's son, "who was one of the goodliest young men of all Italy." The youth was a son of that Renée of France, Duchess of Ferrara, who vied with her kinswoman, Jeanne d'Albret, in her attachment to the reformed faith, but Northumberland would hardly accept the recommendation of the Guises as disinterested; and the matter went no further. The same agent suggests that the son of the Duke of Florence (Medici) who was then only eleven years old might do, and "if this party were liked it were an easy matter to be concluded without any excessive dote." This was less likely to please even than the previous proposal, and nothing was done; but the Ferrara family were apparently anxious for the connection, and early in 1553 Sir Richard Morysine,[2] the English Envoy in Antwerp, wrote to the Council reporting that Francesco d'Este, the brother of the Duke of Ferrara, had approached him on the matter and had asked for a description of the Princess. Morysine replied that "If God had made her Grace a poor man's daughter he did not know of a prince that might not think himself happy to be the husband of such a lady," and added that d'Este was of the same opinion "at present." A much more likely match had been privately suggested to Cecil by Morysine shortly before this.[3] "Hans Frederick's (of Saxony) second son, who is the goodlier gentleman, would, if he durst, bear a great affection towards the Lady Elizabeth's grace. The land in Germany is divided, and as much comes to

[1] Calendar of State Papers (Foreign).
[2] Ibid. [3] Ibid.

the second son as to the eldest, which eldest is thought to be of no long life. Were Dukes Maurice and Frederick to die their lands go to Hans Frederick's sons." But the collapse of Northumberland and the accession of Mary entirely changed Elizabeth's prospects, so that her marriage had to be considered in conjunction with Mary's own, and the capture of the Queen by the Spanish interest made it desirable to secure her sister if possible for the same side. In the autumn of 1553, Simon Renard had suggested to Mary a marriage between herself and Prince Philip. She herself was in grave doubt at that time and afterwards as to its wisdom or practicability. Young Courtney had been designated by the public voice as the most fitting consort for her; and although the romantic theories of many historians as to her supposed attachment to him are unsupported by a single shred of evidence, it is certain that for a time she seriously contemplated the wisdom of conciliating English feeling by marrying the man who was one of her first competitors for the possession of the throne. Gradually, however, Renard, with his logical persuasiveness, convinced her that she would acquire more strength by an alliance with the only son of the Emperor than by a marriage "with one of her own vassals, without credit, power, or assistance, who has seen and knows nothing of the world, having been reared in servitude and never left England." [1]

Renard presented the Emperor's formal offer of his son's hand to the Queen on the 6th of October, and after some hesitation she asked him to put upon paper his arguments in favour of the match. He

[1] Renard Correspondence, Transcripts, MSS. Record Office.

did so in a long paper dated the 11th, which will be found in the Renard Correspondence transcripts in the Record Office. In it he tells her that she is surrounded by dangers against which only a powerful marriage can protect her. She has, he says, four sets of enemies: namely, the heretics and schismatics, the rebels and friends of Northumberland, the powers of France and Scotland, and Madam Elizabeth, who would never cease to trouble and threaten her. Mary replied that she knew all about the French intrigues, and was certain to be kept well informed of approaches made by the French ambassador Noailles to Elizabeth and Courtney. In conversation with Renard afterwards she told him, and he faithfully transmitted the conversation to his master,[1] that she had had a long talk with Courtney three days before at the instance of his mother, and he had told her in all simplicity that an English lord had suggested to him that he should marry Elizabeth, since he could not now hope to obtain the Queen. If he took the Princess either he or his heirs might hope to succeed to the throne as the Queen was getting old. The idea seems to have originated with Lord Paget, who was doubtless the lord referred to by Courtney, and who thought to stand well with all parties in future by the device. As he was the principal supporter in the Privy Council of the Spanish match, Renard could not at first openly veto the suggestion. Mary consulted Renard upon the subject, and told him that Courtney had said that his own thought was only to "*marry a simple lady rather than Elizabeth who*

[1] Renard to Charles V., October 12, 1553. Renard transcripts. Record Office.

was too proud a heretic and of a doubtful race on her mother's side." The imperial ambassador replied that such a marriage would have to be very deeply weighed and discussed,[1] and so politely shelved the question. On the other hand, the idea was zealously promoted by Noailles, who, Courtney asserted some months afterwards, pressed him warmly to marry Elizabeth,[2] and it was considered even by the strongest Spanish partisans in the Council to be a happy combination which would conjure away all dangers. How far Elizabeth herself was a consenting party it is difficult to say, but Noailles, who was in the heart of the intrigue, writes to his king on the 14th of December that it depends entirely on Courtney whether she married him and joined him in Devonshire to raise the flag of revolt. "But the trouble," he says, "is that Courtney is so alarmed and timid that he dares nothing." So Courtney disappears promptly from the scene where soon such rough work was to be undertaken. Even before the arrival of Egmont in the winter of 1553 to offer formally Philip's hand to Mary, the Council was mainly opposed to the match. Paget was first bought over with a large sum of money, then Gardiner, Courtney's greatest friend, was reluctantly won with the promise of a cardinal's hat, and others by similar means; but the self-seeking Earl of Arundel immediately saw how his own interests might be benefited by the Spanish match. De Noailles says that he knew that at the Queen's age, and with her health, every month's delay decreased the probability of her having issue; and he, therefore,

[1] Renard to Charles V., October 31, 1553. Record Office.
[2] "Papiers d'Etat de Granvelle," vol. iv. p. 256.

warmly supported the marriage with Philip, which could not be rapidly effected, in order to marry his young son to Elizabeth, and so, practically, get the reversion to the crown. The matter never seems to have got beyond a suggestion ; and the youth soon after dying, Arundel, as will be told, subsequently became a suitor himself. But whilst these nebulous speculations with regard to Elizabeth's hand were going on, Renard had been arranging a clever scheme by which the Spanish party should ensure tc themselves the control of England not only during the Queen's life but after her death. When Egmont and his splendid embassy arrived all England was in a whirlwind of panic and indignation at the idea of a Spanish match. Elizabeth had retired to Woodstock, ostensibly on friendly terms with the Queen, but deeply wounded at her contemptuous treatment, and at the equivocal position she occupied, now that the divorce pronounced by Cranmer of Henry VIII. and Catharine of Aragon had been quashed, and Elizabeth consequently bastardised. Egmont was instructed to point out to the Queen that all might be pleasantly settled by marrying her sister to the gallant young Emmanuel Philibert, Duke of Savoy, the son of the Emperor's sister-in-law, and thus first cousin to Philip. His patrimonial states, all but a mere shred of them in the valley of Aosta, had been occupied by the French in the course of the war, and the prince was fighting like a hero in the Emperor's army. But his blood was the bluest of any in Europe, and before he could marry Elizabeth she must be legitimised and placed in the order of the succession, without which the throne would probably pass on Mary's

death to the French candidate, Mary of Scotland. This was gall and wormwood to Mary Tudor. They could not both be legitimate. If the grounds for the divorce of Queen Catharine were good she was never Henry's lawful wife, and her daughter had no right to the crown. If they were bad, then Elizabeth was necessarily the bastard that the law of England inferentially had just declared her to be. The King of France, foiled in his attempts to prevent the Queen's Spanish marriage, instructed de Noailles [1] to use every possible means to hinder a match between Elizabeth and Savoy, "poor and dispossessed as he is"; and, alert as the ambassador was, no great effort on his part was needed. The Queen, bitterly jealous of her sister, who she knew was more or less openly working with the Carews, the Courtneys, the Wyatts and others to undermine her throne, peremptorily refused to rehabilitate Elizabeth's birth. Then came the Wyatt rebellion and Elizabeth's imprisonment. In after years both Philip and Elizabeth often referred to the fact that at one juncture he had saved her life, and it is highly probable that the Princess was released from the Tower in May, 1554, on the recommendation of Renard, made in the name of the coming bridegroom of the Queen. De Noailles writes that she was to go to Richmond from the Tower, and was there to receive two gentlemen from the Emperor who were to sound her as to a marriage with Emmanuel of Savoy. If she refused the match she was to be taken to Woodstock under guard, again a prisoner. De Noailles knew that the best way of preventing such a match was to arouse the Queen's

[1] Correspondence de Noailles.

suspicion that Elizabeth was plotting with the French. So with devilish ingenuity he sent a man with a present of apples to the Princess to meet her on her arrival at Richmond. The man was seized and searched to the skin, and no letters were found, but to de Noailles' undisguised glee the Princess was hurried off at once to Woodstock without seeing the Emperor's envoys. Again by Philip's intercession Elizabeth was released, and invited to be present at the Queen's entry into London after her marriage. Philip had been anxious that his favourite cousin of Savoy should have come to England for the ceremony, but Emmanuel was in the midst of war in an important command, his own oppressed people, the prey of a ruthless invader, were imploring him, their prince, to come and rescue them; he was desperately short of money, and his visit to England had to be deferred. Soon after the wedding he sent a confidential envoy named Langosco to pave the way for his coming, and subsequently (December, 1554) the Prince himself arrived. Elizabeth's town house, Somerset House, was placed at his disposal, and he was made as welcome as his cousin could make him. Philip tried his hardest to get him into the good graces of the Queen. She was kindly and sympathetic; gave him the Garter, and went so far to please Philip as once more to liberate Elizabeth at his urgent request, but she would not let the Princess and her suitor meet. Emmanuel's thoughts, moreover, were elsewhere. An unsuccessful attempt was being made to patch up a peace between Spain and France, and the young Prince's one idea was to get his patrimonial Piedmont restored to him in the scramble. So he had to hurry back again to

Flanders with nothing done about the marriage. The idea was not dropped, however. Renard gave wise advice to Philip in his constant letters. He told him, amongst other things, that now that the Queen's hopes of progeny had proved illusive the only way to prevent England from slipping through their fingers was to get command of Elizabeth. "You cannot," he said, "change the succession as laid down in King Henry's will without causing a rebellion. Marry Elizabeth to the Duke of Savoy, it will please the English and be popular, provided that her right to the succession be not interfered with; and it might be a means towards expelling the French from Piedmont." Philip's agents found plenty of opportunities for trying to ingratiate themselves with the Princess, but she was cool and cautious; professed that she had no desire to marry, and so forth. She was quite aware of the reason for the Spanish desire that she should marry Savoy, and even thus early began her great policy of keeping people friendly by deferring their hopes. As the clouds gathered ever darker over the miserable Mary in the last sad months of her life, and Elizabeth's star rose, suitors became more plentiful. At the beginning of 1558 Philip had sent haughty Feria as his ambassador to his wife to drive her into providing men and money to help him in his war against France. Calais and Guisnes had just been lost to England, and Mary, all her hopes and illusions fled, was fretting her heart out in despair. In April an ambassador arrived from the King of Sweden, Gustavus, with letters to the Queen proposing a treaty of commerce between the two countries, and the marriage of his eldest son

Eric, with Princess Elizabeth. The ambassador was in no hurry to seek audience of the Queen—her day was already on the wane—but posted down to Hatfield to see the Princess, to whom he delivered a letter from Prince Eric himself. The Queen was overcome with rage at this and with fear that Philip would blame her for refusing his request to restore Elizabeth in blood and marry her to Emmanuel of Savoy, and thus giving rise to this embarrassing Swedish offer. Hearing that Feria was about to send a courier to Flanders, she summoned him, and in a violent passion of tears reproached him with wishing to be beforehand with her in telling the story to her husband. Feria says, "Her Majesty has been in great anguish about it, but since hearing that Madam Elizabeth gave answer that she had no desire to marry she has become calmer, but is still terribly passionate in the matter. One of the reasons why she is so grieved about the miscarriage is the fear that your Majesty should press her about Savoy and Madam Elizabeth. Figueroa and I think that the opportunity of the coming of this ambassador, and the illusion about the pregnancy should be taken advantage of to do so; but it must not be done at the same time as we press her about raising troops here. In short, I do not think now that she will stand in the way of her sister's succession if providence do not bless your Majesty with children." [1]

The Swedish ambassador was to have been openly reproved by the Queen before the whole Court, but the Queen thought better of it, and received him in the presence of Gardiner and the

[1] Feria to Philip II., May 1, 1558. MSS. Simancus.

Marquis of Winchester only. She dismissed him curtly—almost rudely—and told him that after committing such a breach of etiquette as to deliver a letter to her sister before presenting his credentials, he had better go home and never come back to England with such a message as that again. Before Feria left England to see his master in July, 1558, he visited Elizabeth at Hatfield, and did his best to persuade her that she had all Philip's sympathy, and that her safe course would be to adhere to the Spanish connection. He was no match for her in diplomacy even then, and got nothing but smiles and genial generalities. In November Mary was dying, and Dassonleville, the Flemish agent, wrote to the King begging him to send Feria back again to forward Spanish interests, "as the common people are so full of projects for marrying Madam Elizabeth to the Earl of Arundel or some one else." On the 8th of November a committee of the Council went to Hatfield to see Elizabeth and deliver to her the dying Queen's message, begging her "when she should be Queen to maintain the Catholic Church and pay her (Mary's) debts." Elizabeth would pledge herself to nothing. She knew now that she must succeed, with or without Mary's good-will, and she meant to have a free hand. Before the Queen died even, Feria, who had arrived when she was already almost unconscious, hastened to Hatfield to see the coming Queen. So long as he confined himself to courteous commonplace she answered him in the same spirit, but as soon as he began to patronise her and hint that she owed her coming crown to the intervention and support of Philip, she stopped him at once, and said that she would owe it only to

her people. She was equally firm and queenly when Feria thus early hinted at her marriage with her Spanish brother-in-law before the breath was out of Mary's body, and showed a firm determination to hold her own and resist all attempts to place her under the tutelage of Philip. A week afterwards the Queen died, and then began the keen contest of wits around the matrimonial possibilities of Elizabeth, which ended in the making of modern England.

The first letter that Feria wrote to Philip after the new Queen's accession indicated how powerless had been all his blandishments to pledge Elizabeth. "The new Queen and her people," he says, "hold themselves free from your Majesty, and will listen to any ambassadors who may come to treat of marriage. Your Majesty understands better than I how important it is that this affair should go through your hands, which . . . will be difficult except with great negotiation and money. I wish, therefore, your Majesty to keep in view all the steps to be taken on your behalf; one of them being that the Emperor should not send any ambassador here to treat of this, for it would be inconvenient enough for Ferdinand to marry here even if he took the titbit from your Majesty's hand, but very much worse if it were arranged in any other way. For the present, I know for certain they will not hear the name of the Duke of Savoy mentioned, as they fear he will want to recover his estates with English forces, and will keep them constantly at war. I am very pleased to see that the nobles are beginning to open their eyes to the fact that it will not do to marry this woman in the country itself. . . . The more I think over this business the more certain I am that every-

thing depends upon the husband this woman may take. If he be a suitable one, religious matters will go on well, and the kingdom will remain friendly with your Majesty, but if not it will all be spoilt. If she decide to marry out of the country she will at once fix her eyes on your Majesty, although some of them here are sure to pitch upon the Archduke Ferdinand."[1] Feria was wrong in his estimate of Elizabeth's character. From the first she had determined to be a popular sovereign, and all observers remarked her almost indignified anxiety to catch the cheers of the crowd. She knew that the most unpopular step she could take would be one that bound her interests to Spain, and particularly a marriage with Philip. A French marriage was impossible, for the heir to the crown of France was married to Mary Stuart, whose legal right to the English throne was undoubtedly stronger than that of Elizabeth herself.

So the Englishmen began to pluck up heart and to think that the great prize might fall to one of them. Early in December the Earl of Arundel came over from Flanders, and Feria remarks in one of his letters that he had seen him at the palace, "looking very smart and clean, and they say he carries his thoughts very high." He was a widower of mature age, foppish and foolish, but, with the exception of his son-in-law, the Duke of Norfolk, the only English noble whose position and descent were such as to enable him without impropriety to aspire to mate with royalty, and for a short time after his arrival he was certainly looked upon by the populace as the most likely husband for the young Queen.

[1] Calendar of Spanish State Papers (Elizabeth), vol. i.

CHAPTER II.

The Spanish policy with regard to the Austrian match—English suitors for the Queen's hand—Arundel and Pickering—Philip II.—The Archduke Ferdinand—Lord Robert Dudley—The Prince of Sweden—Philip's attitude towards the Austrian match—The Archduke Charles Pickering and Dudley—The Earl of Arran—Dudley's intrigues against the Archduke Charles' suit—Death of Lady Robert Dudley—Prince Eric again.

In the same ship that brought Arundel from Flanders came that cunning old Bishop of Aquila, who was afterwards Philip's ambassador in England. He conveyed to Feria the King's real wishes with regard to Elizabeth's marriage, which were somewhat at variance with those which appeared on the surface. Philip had now definitely taken upon himself the championship of the Catholic supremacy, and his interests were hourly drifting further away from those of his Austrian kinsmen, who were largely dependent upon the reforming German princes. This was the principal reason why Sussex and other modern Protestants in England were promoting an Austrian marriage which, it was assumed, would conciliate Philip without binding England to the ultra-Catholic party. The Bishop's instructions were to throw cold water on the scheme whilst outwardly appearing to favour it, but if he saw that such a marriage was inevitable, then he

was to get the whole credit of it for his master, who was to subsidise his impecunious cousin, the Archduke, and make him the instrument of Spain. Feria confessed himself puzzled. If he was not to forward the Archduke Ferdinand, he did not know, he said, whom he could suggest. Everybody kept him at arm's length and he could only repeat current gossip. Some people thought the Earl of Arundel would be the man, others the Earl of Westmoreland; then Lord Howard's son, and then Sir William Pickering; "every day there is a new cry raised about a husband." "At present," he said, "I see no disposition to enter into the discussion of any proposal on your Majesty's own behalf, either on her part or that of the Council, and when it has to be approached it should be mentioned first to her alone." The first step, he thought, should be to arouse the jealousy of each individual councillor of the Queen's marriage with any Englishman; and at the same time to work upon the Queen's pride by hinting that she would hardly stoop to a marriage inferior to that of her sister. He thought, however, that a marriage with Philip would scarcely be acceptable, as he could not live in England, and Feria was still in hope that if they took any foreigner the Archduke Ferdinand would be the man. Feria's plan of campaign was an ingenious one. After he had aroused Elizabeth's jealousy of her dead sister and deprecated the idea of the degradation to the Queen of a marriage with a subject, "we can take those whom she might marry here and pick them to pieces one by one, which will not require much rhetoric, for there is not a man amongst them worth anything, counting the married ones and all. If,

after this, she inclines to your Majesty, it will be necessary for you to send me orders whether I am to carry it any further or throw cold water on it and set up the Archduke Ferdinand, for I see no other person we can propose to whom she would agree." [1]

Philip had sent to the Queen a present of jewels by the Bishop of Aquila, with which she was delighted, and assured Feria that those who said her sympathies were French told an untruth. She was indeed quite coquettish with him sometimes, but he felt that he was outwitted. He could get no information as he did in the last reign. The councillors fought shy of him, anxious as ever for bribes and pensions, but willing to give no return for them, for the very good reason that they had nothing to give, they being as hopelessly in the dark as every one else as to the Queen's intentions. "Indeed I am afraid that one fine day we shall find this woman married, and I shall be the last man in the place to know anything about it," said Feria. In the meanwhile Arundel was ruining himself with ostentatious expenditure; borrowing vast sums of money from Italian bankers and scattering gifts of jewels of great value amongst the ladies who surrounded the Queen. He was a man far into middle age at the time, with two married daughters, the Duchess of Norfolk and Lady Lumley, and was in antiquity of descent the first of English nobles; but one can imagine how the keen young woman on the throne must have smiled inwardly at the idea of the empty-headed, flighty old fop aspiring to be her partner. "There is a great deal of talk also," writes Feria, "lately about the Queen marrying the Duke

[1] Spanish Calendar (Elizabeth), vol. i.

Adolphus, brother of the King of Denmark. One of the principal recommendations they find in him is that he is a heretic, but I am persuading them that he is a very good Catholic and not so comely as they make him out to be, as I do not think he would suit us." At last, after the usual tedious deliberation, the prayers and invocations for Divine guidance, Philip made up his mind that he, like another Metius Curtius, would save his cause by sacrificing himself. He approached the subject in a true spirit of martyrdom. Feria had been repeating constantly—almost offensively—how unpopular he was in England, ever since Mary died. He had, he was told, not a man in his favour, he was distrusted and disliked, and so on, but yet he so completely deceived himself with regard to the support to be obtained by Elizabeth from her people through her national policy and personal popularity, as to write to Feria announcing his gracious intention of sacrificing himself for the good of the Catholic Church and marrying the Queen of England on condition of her becoming a Catholic and obtaining secret absolution from the Pope. "In this way it will be evident and manifest that I am serving the Lord in marrying her and that she has been converted by my act. . . . You will, however, not propose any conditions until you see how the Queen is disposed towards the matter itself, and mark well that you must commence to broach the subject with the Queen alone, as she has already opened a way to such an approach." It must have been evident to Feria at this time (January, 1559) that the Queen could not marry his master without losing her crown. The Protestant party

were now paramount, the reformers had flocked back from Switzerland and Germany, and Elizabeth had cast in her lot with them. To acknowledge the Pope's power of absolution would have been to confess herself a bastard and an usurper. There was only one possible Catholic sovereign of England and that was Mary Queen of Scots, and it is difficult to see what could have been Philip's drift in making such an offer, which, if it had been accepted, would have vitiated his wife's claim to the crown of England and have strengthened that of the French candidate.

In any case Elizabeth perceived it quickly enough, and when Feria approached her and delivered a letter from Philip to her, she began coyly to fence with the question. She knew she could not marry Philip; but she was vain and greedy of admiration, and it would be something to refuse such an offer if she could get it put into a form which would enable her to refuse it. So she began to profess her maiden disinclination to change her state; "but," says Feria, "as I saw whither she was tending, I cut short the reply, and by the conversation which followed . . . as well as the hurry she was in to give me the answer, I soon understood what the answer would be . . . to shelve the business with fair words." The end of it was that he refused to take any answer at all, unless it were a favourable one, and so deprived Elizabeth of the satisfaction of saying she had actually rejected his master's offer—which was a grievance with her for many years afterwards.

Of all this the multitude knew nothing. They were busy with speculation elsewhere. "Il Scha-

fanoya," the Italian gossip-monger, gives an interesting account of the coronation ceremony and the self-sufficient pomposity of Arundel, who was Lord Steward, "with a silver wand a yard long, commanding everybody, from the Duke (of Norfolk) downwards." [1] Lord Robert Dudley as Master of the Horse "led a fair white hackney covered with cloth of gold after the Queen's litter," but no one as yet seemed to regard him as her possible consort. That came afterwards. Schafanoya, writing to the Mantuan ambassador in Brussels (January, 1559), says: "Some persons declare that she will take the Earl of Arundel, he being the chief peer of this realm, notwithstanding his being old in comparison with the Queen. This report is founded on the constant daily favours he receives in public and private from her Majesty. Others assert that she will take a very handsome youth, eighteen or twenty years of age and robust, judging from passion, and because at dances and other public places she prefers him to any one else. A third opinion is that she will marry an individual who until now has been in France on account of his religion, though he has not yet made his appearance, it being well known how much she loved him. He is a very handsome gallant gentleman whose name I forget. But all are agreed that she will take an Englishman although the ambassadors of the King of Sweden seek the contrary."

The "very handsome youth" was perhaps the Earl of Oxford; the "handsome gentleman" was certainly Sir William Pickering, who for a time was the favourite candidate. It is known that

[1] Calendar of Venetian State Papers.

there had been love passages long before between Elizabeth and him, but to what extent was never discovered. He can hardly have been a very stable character, for he had fled to France under Mary, but had very soon entered into treacherous correspondence with the Spanish party to spy upon the actions of the Carews and the rest of the Protestant exiles. Shortly before Mary's death he had been commissioned to go to Germany and bring thence to England a regiment of mercenaries which had been raised for Mary. They were, however, used by Philip for his own purposes, and when Elizabeth ascended the throne, Pickering thought proper to have a long diplomatic illness at Dunkirk, to learn how he would be received in England after his more than doubtful dealings. As soon as he was satisfied that bygones would be bygones, he came to England in fine feather. Tiepolo writes to the Doge, February 23rd: "Concerning her marriage it still continues to be said that she will take that Master Pickering, who from information received by me, is about thirty-six years of age, of tall stature, handsome, and very successful with women, for he is said to have enjoyed the intimacy of many and great ones." [1] Parliament had sent a deputation to the Queen to urge her to marry, and to represent the disadvantages of a foreign match, to which the Queen had given a sympathetic but cautious answer. This had raised the hopes of Pickering to a great height, and in the early spring he made his appearance. He had lingered too long, however. Lord Robert Dudley had already come to the front.

[1] Calendar of Venetian State Papers.

Feria wrote to Philip on the 18th of April: "During the last few days Lord Robert has come so much into favour that he does whatsoever he pleases with affairs, and it is even said that her Majesty visits him in his chamber day and night. People talk of this so freely that they go so far as to say that his wife has a malady in one of her breasts and the Queen is only waiting for her to die to marry Lord Robert. I can assure your Majesty that matters have reached such a pass that I have been brought to consider whether it would not be well to approach Lord Robert on your Majesty's behalf, promising him your help and favour and coming to terms with him." At the same time the Swedish ambassador was again pressing the suit of Prince Eric; but he must have been extremely maladroit, for he offended Elizabeth at the outset by saying that his master's son was still of the same mind, and asked for a reply to the letter he had sent her. "What letter?" said the Queen. "The letter I brought your Majesty." Elizabeth replied that she was now Queen of England, and if he required an answer he must address her as such. She added that she did not know whether his master would leave his kingdom to marry her, but she could assure him that she would not leave hers to be the monarch of the world, and in the meanwhile she would say neither yes nor no. A messenger was sent off with this cold comfort, and came back with fine presents of furs and tapestries, and for a time Swedish money was lavished on the courtiers very freely—and it is curious that the King of Sweden is always spoken of as being one of the richest of monarchs—but

the ambassador became a standing joke and a laughing-stock of the Court ladies as soon as his presents ran out. A more dignified embassy from Eric shortly afterwards arrived with a formal offer of his hand, but they were, as the Bishop of Aquila says, treated in a similar manner, and ridiculed to their own faces in Court masques represented before them.

A much more serious negotiation was running its course at the same time. When the Emperor had been informed that Philip had desisted from the pursuit of the match for himself, he begged him to support the suit of the Archduke Ferdinand. It was considered unadvisable to mention at first which of the Archdukes was the suitor, but Philip himself made no secret of his preference to Ferdinand, who was a narrow bigot of his own school; so the Spanish ambassador in England was instructed to forward the matter to the best of his ability, in conjunction with an imperial ambassador who was to be sent for the purpose. When the instructions arrived, matters had gone so far that a secretary had already come to London from the Emperor with letters for the Queen and a portrait of Ferdinand. This had been arranged by Sir Thomas Challoner, who had recently been in Vienna; but much doubt existed as to the sincerity of Philip's professions of good-will towards the affair. Indeed, those who were most in favour of it appear to have thought, not unreasonably, that the marriage would become impossible if it were hampered with conditions dictated by Spain. The Austrian match certainly had influential support at Court. Cecil, Sussex, and all of Dudley s many enemies thought at

the time that it offered the best way of checking his growing favour, and forwarded it accordingly. In April Feria wrote: "They talk a great deal about the marriage with the Archduke Ferdinand and seem to like it, but for my part I believe she will never make up her mind to anything that is good for her. Sometimes she appears to want to marry him, and speaks like a woman who will only accept a great prince; and then they say she is in love with Lord Robert and never lets him leave her. If my spies do not lie, which I believe they do not, for a certain reason which they have recently given me, I understand she will not bear children; but if the Archduke is a man, even if she should die without any, he will be able to keep the kingdom with the support of your Majesty."

When Pickering finally arrived, therefore, he found the field pretty well occupied, but his advent caused considerable stir. He was at once surrounded by those who for various reasons were equally against Dudley and a Catholic prince. Two days after his arrival Dudley was sent off hunting to Windsor, and Sir William was secretly introduced into the Queen's presence; and a few days afterwards went publicly to the palace and stayed several hours by the Queen's side. "They are," wrote Feria, "betting four to one in London that he will be king. . . . If these things were not of such great importance and so lamentable, they would be very ridiculous." [1]

Pickering's arrival at Court is thus spoken of by Schafanoya, writing on the 10th of May, 1559: "The day before yesterday there came Sir William

[1] Spanish Calendar (Elizabeth), vol. i.

Pickering, who is regarded by all people as the future husband of the Queen. He remains at home, courted by many lords of the Council and others, but has not yet appeared at Court. It is said they wished in Parliament to settle what title they should give him and what dignity, but nothing was done. Many deem this to be a sign that she will marry the Archduke Ferdinand, but as yet there is no foundation for this, although the news comes from Flanders. Meanwhile my Lord Robert Dudley is in very great favour and very intimate with her Majesty. On this subject I ought not to report the opinion of many persons. I doubt whether my letter may not miscarry or be read, wherefore it is better to keep silence than to speak ill." [1] When Challoner had returned from Vienna he had brought with him full descriptions of the Emperor's sons. Ferdinand was a bigot and a milksop, and Charles, the younger Archduke, was said to have narrow shoulders and a great head. So when Baron Ravenstein arrived in London on his matrimonial embassy the Queen was quite ready for him. Ravenstein himself was as devout a Catholic as his master, and was received very coolly at first. The Queen told him she would marry no man whom she had not seen, and would not trust portrait painters; and much more to the same effect. To his second audience Ravenstein was accompanied by the Bishop of Aquila, as it was desirable that, if anything came of the negotiation, Spain should get the benefit of it. It soon became clear to the wily churchman that Ferdinand would never do. He says: "We were received on

[1] Venetian Calendar.

Sunday at one, and found the Queen, very fine, in the presence-chamber looking on at the dancing. She kept us there a long while, and then entered her room with us." The Bishop pressed her, in his bland way, to favourably consider the offers of the Emperor's ambassador; "but I did not name the Archduke, because I suspected she would reply excluding them both. She at once began, as I feared, to talk about not wishing to marry, and wanted to reply in that sense; but I cut short the colloquy by saying that I did not seek an answer, and only begged her to hear the ambassador." He then stood aside and chatted with Cecil, who gave him to understand that they would not accept Ferdinand, "as they had quite made up their minds that he would upset their heresy,"[1] and went on to speak of the various approaches that had already been made to the Queen; politely regretting that affinity and religious questions had made the marriage with Philip impossible. In the meanwhile poor Ravenstein was making but slow progress with the Queen, who soon reduced him to dazed despair, and the Bishop again took up the running, artfully begging her to be plain and frank in this business, "as she knew how honestly and kindly the worthy Germans negotiated." And then, cleverly taking advantage of what he had just heard from Cecil, he said that he had been told that the Archduke had been represented to her as a young monster, very different from what he was; "for, although both brothers are comely, this one who was offered to her now was the younger and more likely to please her than the one who had been spoken of before.

[1] Spanish Calendar (Elizabeth), vol. i.

I thought best to speak in this way, as I understood in my talk with Cecil that it was Ferdinand they dreaded." The Queen at this pricked up her ears, and asked the Bishop of whom he was speaking. He told her the Archduke Charles, who was a very fit match for her as Ferdinand was not available. "When she was quite satisfied of this," says the Bishop, "she went back again to her nonsense, saying that she would rather be a nun than marry a man she did not know, on the faith of portrait painters." She then hinted that she wished Charles to visit her in person, even if he came in disguise. Her thirst for admiration and homage was insatiable, and, popular parvenue as she was, the idea of princes of spotless lineage humbling themselves before her very nearly led her into a quagmire more than once. She probably had not the slightest intention of marrying Charles at the time, but it would have been a great feather in her cap if she could have brought a prince of the house of Austria as a suitor to her feet. But the Bishop was a match for her on this occasion. "I do not know whether she is jesting . . . but I really believe she would like to arrange for this visit in disguise. So I turned it to a joke, and said we had better discuss the substance of the business. . . . I would undertake that the Archduke would not displease her." The Bishop having soothed the Queen with *persiflage* of this sort, disconsolate Ravenstein was called back rather more graciously, and told that, on the Bishop's request, the Queen would appoint a committee of the Council to hear his proposals.

In the meanwhile Dudley and Pickering were manœuvring for the position of first English can-

didate. Sir William had now a fine suite of rooms in the palace, and was ruffling bravely, giving grand entertainments, and dining in solitary state by himself, with minstrels playing in the gallery, rather than feast, like the other courtiers of his rank, at one of the tables of the household. He pooh-poohed Ravenstein and his mission and said that the Queen would laugh at him and all the rest of them, as he knew she meant to die a maid. Pickering appears to have rather lost his head with his new grandeur, and soon drops out of the scene, upon which only the keenest wits could hope to survive. His insolence had aroused the indignation of the greater nobles, but somehow it was only the least pugnacious of them with whom he quarrelled. The Earl of Bedford, who from all accounts seems to have been a misshapen monstrosity with an enormous head, said something offensive about Pickering at a banquet, and a challenge from the irate knight was the immediate result; Dudley, of all men, being the bearer thereof, always at this time ready to wound the extreme Protestant party, to which Bedford belonged. But Pickering was as distasteful to Catholics as to Protestants. On one occasion he was about to enter the private chapel inside the Queen's apartments at Whitehall, when he was met at the door by the Earl of Arundel, who told him he ought to know that that was no place for him, but was reserved for the lords of the Council. Pickering answered that he knew that very well, and he also knew that Arundel was an impudent knave. The Earl was no hero, and Pickering went swaggering about the Court for days telling the story. With such a swash-

buckler as this for a rival, it is not surprising that the handsome and youthful Dudley rapidly passed him in the race for his mistress's favour. Dudley played his game cleverly. His idea was first to put all English aspirants out of the running by ostensibly favouring the match with the Archduke, whilst he himself was strengthening his influence over the Queen, in the certainty that, when matters of religion came to be discussed, difficulties might be raised at any moment which would break off the Austrian negotiations. In the meanwhile the Queen coquetted with dull-witted Ravenstein, and persuaded him that if the Archduke would come over and she liked him, she would marry him, although she warned the ambassador not to give his master the trouble of coming so far to see so ugly a lady as she was. Instead of paying her the compliment for which she was angling, he maladroitly asked her whether she wished him to write that to the Archduke. "Certainly not," she replied, "on my account, for I have no intention of marrying." She jeered at Ferdinand and his devotions, but displayed a discreet maidenly interest in Charles, and, it is easy to see, promptly extracted from Ravenstein all the knowledge he possessed, much to Bishop Quadra's anxiety. Feria had gone back to Philip, with the assurance that she never meant to marry, and that it was "all pastime," but Quadra thought that she would be driven into matrimony by circumstances. "The whole business of these people is to avoid any engagement that will upset their wickedness. I believe that when once they are satisfied about this they will not be averse to Charles. I am not sure about her, for I do not

understand her. Amongst other qualities which she says her husband must possess is that he should not sit at home all day among the cinders, but should in time of peace keep himself employed in warlike exercises." For many reasons it suited Elizabeth to show an inclination to the match; for she could thus keep the English Catholics in hand, notwithstanding the religious innovations and her severity, whilst satisfying others "who want to see her married and are scandalised at her doings." But the Bishop disbelieved in the marriage unless she were driven to it. Whilst Ravenstein was being caressed and befooled, the French were doing their best to hinder an understanding with him. There were sundry French noblemen in London as hostages—and very troublesome guests they were—who industriously spread the idea that it was ungrateful of the Queen to disdain to marry one of her own subjects who had raised her to the throne. When Ravenstein discussed this view with her, "she was very vexed, and repeated to him that she would die a thousand deaths rather than marry one of her subjects; but for all this," says the Bishop, "he does not seem to have got any further than usual with his master's affair." And Bishop Quadra and his master were determined he should not do so, except with Spanish intervention and on Spanish terms, which would make the marriage impossible in England. Things were thus going prosperously for Dudley. The Swedish embassy had come and gone, "much aggrieved and offended . . . as they were being made fun of in the palace, and by the Queen more than anybody. I do not think it matters much whether they depart pleased

or displeased."[1] It was clear that Elizabeth would have nothing to do with "Eric the Bad," and the Archduke was now the only serious competitor; which exactly suited Dudley, as he knew the insuperable religious obstacles that could be raised to him.

But Dudley was not by any means the only artful or self-seeking man in Elizabeth's Court, and was not allowed to have all his own way. The real difficulties of the marriage with the Archduke, hampered as he would be by unacceptable Spanish conditions, were soon obvious to the Protestant party, who tried a bold stroke, which, if their weapon had been a strong instead of a lamentably weak one, might have altered the whole course of English history. To a French Catholic princess, as Queen of Scotland and heiress to the crown of England, the natural counterpoise was a close alliance between England and Spain; but the Protestants saw that, from a religious point of view, one position was as bad as the other, and conceived the idea of encouraging the claims of a son of the house of Hamilton, who, after Mary, was next heir to the crown of Scotland. The Earl of Arran, son of the Duke of Chatelherault, was in France; and Cecil's henchmen, Randolph and Killigrew, were sent backwards and forwards to him and to Throgmorton, in Paris, to urge him to action. If he could raise a revolution in Scotland against papists and foreigners, and seize the crown, he might, thought Cecil, marry Elizabeth, unite the two countries, and defy their enemies. Trouble in Scotland was easily aroused; but the King of France, just before his own death, which raised

[1] Spanish Calendar (Elizabeth), vol. i.

Mary Stuart to the throne of France as well, learn of the plan and ordered Arran's capture alive o dead. Killigrew managed to smuggle him out c France disguised as a merchant, and took him t Geneva and Zurich, where he sat at the feet c Peter Martyr and other reformers, and then a secretly was hurried over to England in July, 155[illegible] The Spanish party and the Emperor's ambassado soon got wind of it, and were in dismay. Th Earl was hidden first in Cecil's house, an was afterwards conveyed secretly to the Queen' chambers at Greenwich. The news soon spreac and the marriage was looked upon, all throug August and part of September, as a settled thing; and, although Bedford and Cecil went out of thei way to buoy up the hopes of a marriage with th Archduke, it was clear to the Spanish party tha Arran was the favoured man, the more especiall that Mary Stuart's husband had now become Kin of France. But this did not suit Dudley. Earl in September Lady Mary Sidney, Dudley's siste came to the Spanish ambassador with a wonderfu story that a plot had been discovered to poison th Queen and Dudley at a dinner given by the Earl c Arundel. This, she said, had so alarmed the Queer who had now a war with France on her hands, tha she had determined to marry at once, and awaite the ambassador at Hampton Court with the offer c the Archduke, whom she would accept. Lad Sidney professed to be acting with the Queen' consent, and emphatically insisted that, if the matte were now pushed and the Archduke brought over a

[illegible] Quadra's letters, Spanish Calendar, and Michieli's letter Venetian Calendar.

once, it could be concluded without delay. The cunning Bishop himself was for once taken in. Before going to Hampton Court he saw Dudley, who placed himself entirely at the disposal of the King of Spain, "to whom he owed his life." He said the Queen had summoned him and his sister the night before, and had directed them how to proceed. The marriage, he assured the Bishop, was now necessary and could be effected.

The Bishop wrote to Cardinal de Granvelle directly after the interview: "Lord Robert and his sister are certainly acting splendidly, and the King will have to reward them well—better than he does me—and your Lordship must remind him of it in due time. The question of religion is of the most vital importance, as is also the manner of the Archduke's marriage and its conditions and ceremonies. In view of these difficulties it would be better for the wedding to be a clandestine one. I do not know how he will get over the oath that he will have to take to conform with the laws of the land, which are some of them schismatic."[1]

The Bishop's interview with the Queen, however, fairly mystified him. She blew hot and cold as usual. "She hoped to God that no harm would come to the Archduke on his incognito visit; she would be glad to see him; but mind," she said, "I am not bound to marry him if he come," which the Bishop assured the Emperor "was only dissimulation, and she really meant to marry him." She was very careful to repeat that she had not invited the Archduke, and was not bound to marry him, and went so far as to say she could not trust Quadra to state this

[1] Spanish Calendar (Elizabeth), vol. i.

clearly, and would write to the Emperor herself. But whilst she said it in words she took equal care to contradict it in looks and gestures that could never be called up in witness against her. The Bishop was at last completely won over, and strongly urged the Emperor to send his son and seize the prize. This new turn of events hardly pleased Cecil, but it was necessary for him to dissemble, for Elizabeth was now at war with France and Scotland, and she could not afford to give the cold shoulder to Spain as well. When the Bishop saw him on leaving the Queen, he says: "I listened to him (Cecil) for some time, and seeing that he was beating about the bush, I begged that we might speak plainly to each other, as I was neither blind nor deaf, and could easily perceive that the Queen was not taking this step, to refuse her consent after all. He swore that he did not know, and could not assure me," and with this, and vague protestations of Cecil's personal wish for the Archduke's success, the Bishop had to be contented. He faithfully conveyed the Queen's words to the Emperor, but her looks and gestures could not be put upon paper, so that it is not surprising that his Majesty could see no further assurance than before that he was not to be fooled after all. Feria was more deeply versed in the ways of women than was the Bishop, and on receiving the news, answered: "It seems that the Emperor up to the present refuses leave for his son to go, and, to tell the truth, I cannot persuade myself that he is wrong, nor do I believe that she will either marry him, or refuse to marry him whilst the matter at issue is only his visit . . As to what Lord Robert and his sister say, I do not believe

more than the first day that the only thing the Queen is stickling for is the coming of the lad." There was one point touched upon by the Queen in her interview with the Spanish ambassador, which, as he tells his own master, he dared not refer to in his letter to the Emperor. After much fencing and fishing for compliments respecting her personal attractions, and expressed doubts on the Queen's part as to whether the Archduke would be satisfied when he saw her, she said that even if he were, he might be displeased with what he heard about her, as there were people in the country who took pleasure in maligning her. The Bishop wrote that she displayed some signs of shame when she said this, whilst he parried the point diplomatically, and hastened to change the subject. "I saw she was pleased, as she no doubt thought that if the Archduke heard any of the idle tales they tell about her (and they tell many) he might take advantage of them to the detriment of her honour if the match were broken off, although, from this point of view, I was not sorry, as the fear may not be without advantage to us." But to the Queen he expressed himself shocked that she should think of such a thing as he had done previously when Lady Sidney had hinted at a similar doubt. For the next two months an elaborate attempt was made to keep up the appearance of cordiality towards the Archduke's match, and the Spanish party was still further beguiled by the sudden tendency of the Queen to smile on Catholicism. Candles and crucifixes were placed on the altar in the Chapel Royal, and the Queen entertained the Bishop with long religious discussions, for the purpose of inducing him to believe

that she was a Catholic in her heart. But they could not deceive the Bishop for very long; nothing definite could be got from the Queen, from whose side Dudley never moved, and by the middle of November (1559) the Bishop satisfied himself that he was being played with. A new Swedish embassy had arrived, and was being entertained with hopes for the first time, particularly by Dudley, who thought that the Austrian suit, having now served his turn and eclipsed Arran, was becoming too hot to be safe for him. The Bishop writes: "I noticed Lord Robert was slackening in our business, and favouring the Swedish match, and he had words with his sister because she was carrying our affair further than he desired. I have heard from a certain person who is in the habit of giving me veracious news that Lord Robert had sent to poison his wife. Certainly all the Queen has done with us and with the Swede, and will do with all the rest in the matter of her marriage, is only to keep Lord Robert's enemies and the country engaged with words, until this wicked deed of killing his wife is consummated. I am told some extraordinary things about this intimacy which I would never have believed, only that now I find Lord Robert's enemies in the Council making no secret of their evil opinion of it." The Queen tried to face the Bishop with her usual blandishments, but his eyes were opened, and when he pressed the point closely, she became coolly dignified, surprised that she had been misunderstood, and threw over Lady Sidney and Dudley, who reciprocally cast the blame upon each other. The Bishop and the Emperor's ambassador were furious; and, as the best way to checkmate

Dudley, approached the Duke of Norfolk, who had been declaiming for some time against the insolence of the rising favourite, saying that if he did not abandon his plans he should not die in his bed, and so forth. The Duke, who was the most popular as well as the most exalted of the English nobles, listened eagerly to anything that should injure Dudley, and promised all his influence and personal prestige in favour of the Archduke. He recommended that the latter should at once come openly in state to England, and he, the Duke, wagered his right arm if he did "that all the biggest and best in the land should be on his side." Whatever may have been passing in Norfolk's mind, there is no doubt as to what the Bishop's own plan was, to avenge himself for the trick played upon him. He says: "I am of opinion that if the Archduke comes and makes the acquaintance, and obtains the goodwill of these people, even if this marriage—of which I have now no hope except by force—should fall through, and any disaster were to befall the Queen, such as may be feared from her bad government, the Archduke might be summoned to marry Lady Catharine (Grey) to whom the kingdom comes if this woman dies. If the Archduke sees Catharine he should so bear himself that she should understand this design, which, in my opinion, will be beneficial and even necessary." The "design" evidently was the murder of the Queen and Dudley, and the securing of Catharine Grey to the Spanish interest. A daring plan, but requiring bold instruments and swift action. Weak, unstable Norfolk was no leader for such an enterprise, as he proved years afterwards. Whilst Quadra was plotting and sulking at

Durham House, Dudley's opponents strove to checkmate him by keeping the Archduke's match afoot. Count Helfenstein had come from the Emperor before the fiasco, and it was now proposed to send special English envoys to Austria and to the King of Spain, the purpose of course being to frighten the French into the idea that the matter was settled. One day at Court Dudley and Norfolk came to high words about it. He was neither a good Englishman nor a loyal subject who advised the Queen to marry a foreigner, said Dudley; and on another occasion, Clinton and Arundel actually fell to fisticuffs on the subject. The Swedes had stood less on their dignity than the Austrians, and Eric's brother, the young Duke of Finland, had come over to press his brother's suit. When he arrived with vast sums of money for gifts, as before, he preferred rather to become a suitor himself, but with little success. When he begged for a serious audience he was kept so long outside in an antechamber alone that he went away in a huff. The Venetian Tiepolo writes on December 15th, giving an account of Arran's defeat in Scotland by the French, which, with his growing dementia, spoilt him as a suitor; and Tiepolo goes on to say: "The Queen is still undecided about her marriage, though amongst all the competitors she showed most inclination for the Archduke Charles. The Duke of Finland, second son of the King of Sweden, is with her. He came to favour the suit of his elder brother, and then proposed himself, but the man's manners did not please the Queen. The second son also of the late John Frederick of Saxony, who heretofore was proposed to the Queen by the French, but was afterwards deserted by them

because they wished her to marry an Englishman . . . has not relinquished his pretensions, and has sent Count Mansfeldt to propose to the Queen. The King of Denmark, in like manner, has not failed to exert himself, although the general opinion is that if the affairs of the Earl of Arran prosper he will prevail over all competitors." [1]

All through the winter of 1559–60 matters thus lingered on. The Bishop plotting and planning for the invasion of England from Flanders, and completely undeceived with regard to the Queen's matrimonial intentions, whilst the English still desired to keep up an appearance of cordial friendship with the Spanish party, as a counterpoise to the King of France, with whom they were at war in Scotland. The Bishop gives an account of an interview which he and Helfenstein, the new imperial ambassador, had with the Queen in February, and it is clear that at this time she was again very anxious to beguile the Emperor into sending his son on chance. But Helfenstein was a very different sort of ambassador from Ravenstein, and she could not do much with him; his idea being to hold her at arm's length until she was forced to write to the Emperor herself, as she promised to do, in which case it would not, he thought, be difficult to construe something she might say into a pledge which she could be forced to fulfil. "I do not," says the Bishop, "treat this matter with her as I formerly did, as I want her to understand that I am not deceived by her." Nor was he for a time deceived by Dudley. "The fellow is ruining the country with his vanity." "If he lived for another

[1] Venetian Calendar.

year he" (Dudley) "said he would be in a very different position," and so forth. During the summer an envoy named Florent (Ajacet) was sent by Catharine de Medici and her son to propose as a husband for Elizabeth a son of the Duke de Nevers. As may be supposed, such a match—or indeed any match recommended by the consort of her enemy Mary Stuart, with whom her war was hardly ended—did not meet with her approval, and the envoy then went to Bishop Quadra and told him he knew of a certain way of bringing about the marriage with the Archduke. His plan was that the Emperor should prevail upon the King of France to give up Calais to England. This was merely a feeler and absurd, as Francis II. had nothing to gain by the Austrian match, but the Bishop maliciously told the Queen the joke, as he called it, whereupon she was very angry that her claim for Calais should be treated so lightly. She then told him that she saw now she must marry without delay, "although with the worst will in the world," and tried again to lead him to believe that she was anxious to marry the Archduke, "but I fear," said he, "that it is with the hope of gaining your Majesty's favour in her cause, as she calls it, with the French . . . Religious matters make me believe that in case she determines to marry, she will rather lay hands on any of these heretics than on the Archduke. I understand now that the Earl of Arran is excluded as being poor and of small advantage, and also because he is not considered personally agreeable. They all favour the Prince of Sweden as he is both heretical and rich, and especially Secretary Cecil,

who would expect to remain at the head of affairs as at present." Shortly afterwards, in September, 1560, Cecil took the Bishop aside and complained bitterly of Dudley, who he said was trying to turn him out of his place; and then, after exacting many pledges of secrecy, said that the Queen was conducting herself in such a way that he, Cecil, thought of retiring, as he clearly foresaw the ruin of the realm through the Queen's intimacy with Dudley, whom she meant to marry. He begged the Bishop to remonstrate with the Queen, and ended by saying that Dudley was thinking of killing his wife, "who was said to be ill although she was quite well." [1] "The next day," writes the Bishop, "as she was returning from hunting, the Queen told me that Robert's wife was dead, or nearly so, and asked me not to say anything about it. Certainly this business is most shameful and scandalous; and, withal, I am not sure whether she will marry the man at once or even at all, as I do not think she has her mind sufficiently fixed. Cecil says she wishes to do as her father did." In a postcript of the same letter the writer gives the news of poor Amy Robsart's death. "She broke her neck—she must have fallen down a staircase," said the Queen. Thenceforward Dudley was free, and the marriage negotiations had another factor to be taken into account.

About a month afterwards Cecil came to the Bishop and said that as the Queen had personally assured him she would not marry Dudley, he urged him once more to bring the Archduke forward; but Quadra was wary now, for he saw the design was

[1] Spanish Calendar (Elizabeth).

only to arouse the fears of the French, and he would take no hasty step. It is difficult to see how he could have done so, for, after sending three ambassadors, the Emperor had now quite made up his mind that the Queen should not again play with him. Every weapon in the feminine battery had been employed—maiden coyness, queenly reserve, womanly weakness, and the rest of them, had been tried in vain. A good portrait of the Archduke had been sent, and her own agents had seen him. If, said the Emperor, this were not enough, the young man should come himself; but only on a distinct pledge that she would marry him if he did. Beyond this the Emperor would not go, and the Queen always stopped short at a binding promise. Nor, indeed, would the match have pleased the extreme reform party in England led by Cecil, Bedford, and Clinton, which was now the paramount one. It was useful to Cecil, in order to play it as a trump card whenever the negotiations with the French rendered it necessary, but, at the time, undoubtedly the Swedish match was most in favour with the Protestant party. Prince Eric was very persevering. When his brother returned to Sweden he proposed to come to England himself, but was induced to delay his visit; according to Throgmorton,[1] in order that his father might abdicate, and he might get better terms. "Both father and son, however, have sent to propose very advantageous conditions to the Queen, should she consent to the marriage. They will bind themselves to send to England annually 200,000 crowns to be expended for the benefit

[1] Michieli to the Doge, August 16, 1560. Venetian Calendar.

of English subjects, and in time of war to keep fifty armed ships at their own cost, with other private conditions very profitable for England, which the King defers making known until his coming to her." It is evident that Eric was too much in earnest to suit Elizabeth, and she had to behave rudely enough to him on several occasions to prevent his ardour from causing inconvenience. It is more than probable that she deceived Cecil and the rest of advisers as to her matrimonial intentions as completely as she did the suitors themselves, and that she never meant to marry—except perhaps on two occasions, which will be specified, when circumstances or her feelings nearly drove her to the irrevocable step. Her own motives were less complicated than those of her advisers, and the lifelong playing off of France against Spain, of which her matrimonial negotiations were a part, was obviously only possible whilst she kept single; whereas party, religious, and personal affinities all operated on the minds of her courtiers and ministers, and, to a certain extent, separated their interests from hers.

CHAPTER III.

Dudley and the Council of Trent—The Bishop of Aquila tricked—Eric makes another attempt—Dudley again approaches the Bishop—The suitors for Mary of Scotland—Darnley—The Archduke Charles—Dudley—Melvil's mission to Elizabeth—Hans Casimir—French approaches.

WHEN it was clear that the Archduke Charles was shelved and that Cecil and the Protestants were urging the suit of the Prince of Sweden, who evidently meant business, it behoved Dudley to make a countermove. Bishop Quadra had over and over again said he had found him out, and would not be deceived by him again; but in January, 1561, only four months after Lady Robert Dudley's death, Sir Henry Sidney came to see the Bishop. Sir Henry was Lord Robert's brother-in-law, and had always belonged to the Spanish or Catholic party, and consequently was a *persona-grata* with Quadra, especially as he was a near relative of the Duchess of Feria (Jane Dormer) whose husband was the Bishop's great patron. He came (of course from Dudley), and after much beating about the bush said that as the Queen's attachment to Lord Robert, and her desire to marry him were now public, he, Sidney, was much surprised that some approach was not made to Dudley on behalf of the King of Spain; as in the event of a helping hand

being extended to him now, "he would hereafter serve and obey your Majesty like one of your own vassals." The Bishop intimated that there was no particular reason why his master should put himself out of the way about it, as he had nothing to gain in the matter, although if the Queen expressed a desire for his good offices he would be always ready to extend courtesy to her. But really such strange tales were afloat, said the Bishop, that he had not dared to write to the King about them. Sidney took the bull by the horns and said that if the Bishop were satisfied about Lady Robert's death he saw no other reason for hesitation, "as after all, though it was a love affair, the object of it was marriage, and there was nothing illicit about it." He had, he said, inquired carefully into Lady Robert's death, and was satisfied that it was an accident, although he knew that public opinion held to the contrary. The Bishop was very dubious upon the point, and said drily that it would be difficult for Lord Robert to make things appear as he represented them. Sidney admitted that no one believed it was an accident, and that even preachers in the pulpits impugned the honour of the Queen in the matter. This led him to the real object of his visit, which was to propose that in return for the King of Spain's help towards Dudley's marriage he would undertake to "restore religion." The Bishop still held off, reminding him of how he had been tricked by Robert and the Queen before through Sidney's wife, and refused to move unless the Queen herself spoke about it and told him what to write to his master. This, said Sidney, was impossible, unless he broached the subject first, but

promised that Dudley himself should come and state his own case. The Bishop deprecated the making of any bargain about religion. If Robert wished to relieve his conscience he would be glad to hear him, but he could enter into no agreement to reward him for doing what was the duty of every good Christian: all of which meant that the Bishop was determined not to be caught again and made to act by vague professions. In his letter to the King, however, he emphatically urges him to take advantage of the Queen's passion for Dudley to bring her to her knees, "as she will not dare to publish the match if she do not obtain your Majesty's consent," popular feeling being dead against it. "There is not a person," he says, "without some scandalous tale to tell about the matter, and one of the Queen's gentlemen of the chamber is in prison for blabbing." It was even asserted that the Queen had had children by Dudley, but this the Bishop said he did not believe. Shortly after this interview Sidney brought his brother-in-law and the Bishop together, and Dudley, wisely avoiding any direct reference to the religious bargain, merely asked the ambassador to recommend the Queen to marry him. The Bishop said he could not do that, but would make an opportunity for praising him to the Queen whilst speaking of the advisability of her marriage. This was even more than Dudley expected, and he urged that no time should be lost. Two days afterwards the Queen received the Bishop, who more than fulfilled his promise to praise Dudley; although he was careful to say that the King knew nothing of the matter, but he succeeded in per-

suading the Queen that his help would be readily forthcoming if it were requested.

"After much circumlocution she said she wished to confess to me. . . . She was no angel, and did not deny that she had some affection for Lord Robert . . . but she certainly had not decided to marry him or any one else, although she daily saw more clearly the necessity of her marriage, and to satisfy the English humour it was desirable that she should marry an Englishman. . . . What would your Majesty think, she asked, if she married one of her servants?" The Bishop replied that he did not know, but would write and ask the King, if she desired him to do so, although he believed his master would be glad to hear of her marriage in any case, and would no doubt be happy to learn of the advancement and elevation of Lord Robert, for whom he felt much affection. The Queen had perforce to be content with this, which she at once repeated to Dudley, who came to the Bishop to thank him. Dudley was so elated at the almost unexpected help he was getting that in the fulness of his heart he repeated Sidney's pledge that in return the whole control of the Government should be handed over to the King of Spain, and the Catholic religion restored. The Bishop stopped him at once. He had done, he said, and would do, all he could to forward his marriage, but he would make no bargain about religion. That was an affair of their own conscience. "I am thus cautious with these people, because if they are playing false, which is quite possible, I do not wish to give them the opportunity of saying that we offered them your Majesty's favour in return for their changing

their religion, as they say similar things to make your Majesty disliked by the heretics here and in Germany. If they are acting straightforwardly, a word from your Majesty in due time will do more than I can do with many." [1] At the same time the Bishop made no secret to the King of his opinion that unless the "heretics" were to finally prevail Dudley's marriage must be forwarded or a revolution and the removal of the Queen carried out. Philip was even more cautious than his ambassador. He was anxious to help Dudley on the lines suggested, but there must be something in writing from the Queen and her lover, and some prior earnest must be given of their chastened hearts in the matter of religion, either by the despatch of plenipotentiaries to the Council of Trent or otherwise. Dudley was all eagerness to get the matter settled, and for the next few weeks kept urging the Queen to request the King of Spain's good offices towards the marriage. But the recognition of the Pope's Council of Trent was a serious matter and could not be done without the co-operation of Cecil. He had been bought over temporarily to Dudley's side in appearance by the gift of some vacant sinecure offices, but he saw—as did the Queen in her calmer moments—that the participation of Elizabeth in the Catholic Council would ruin England by destroying the balance upon which its safety depended. So whilst ostensibly countenancing it he artfully frustrated Dudley's plan. Francis II., Mary Stuart's husband, was now dead, and France was ruled by the Queen-mother Catharine de Medici, whose tenure of power largely depended upon Huguenot support. So

[1] Spanish Calendar (Elizabeth), vol. i.

to her was sent the Puritan Earl of Bedford to suggest joint action with England in relation to the Council and religious affairs generally as a countercheck to Dudley, and Cecil himself began to intervene in the negotiations with the Bishop. He urged the latter to get his master to write a letter to the Queen recommending the marriage, in terms that he knew were impossible, and when the Bishop asked him point blank whether this was the Queen's message or his own, he begged that a modest maiden like her Majesty might not be driven into a corner and made to appear anxious for her own marriage. He further said the intention was to summon Parliament, and lay the King's letter before it as an inducement for them to adopt the marriage with Dudley—a course which he knew well would have an entirely opposite effect. The Bishop soon saw the drift. "The sum of it all is that Cecil and these heretics wish to keep the Queen bound and subject to their heresies, and although she sees that they treat her badly, and especially the preachers, she dares not go against Cecil's advice, as she fears both sides would then rise up against her. Robert is very much displeased at all this, and has used great efforts to cause the Queen to make a stand and free herself from the tyranny of these people and throw herself entirely on your Majesty's favour. I do not think, however, that he has been able to prevail, as he is faint-hearted and his favour is founded on vanity." Sidney, Pembroke, and others, urged Dudley to action, but, infatuated as the Queen was with him, she knew what a weak reed he was in Council, and always checked herself in her passion to take the wise advice of Cecil. For some weeks, however, the

Bishop was deceived. A great show of cordiality was made towards him; the Catholic nobles and bishops, persuaded that Dudley's suit was being pushed by Spain, began to gather round the favourite, and ostensible preparations were made for receiving the Pope's Nuncio in England with the invitation to the Council of Trent. The Bishop wrote to the King that, at last Dudley "appeared to have made up his mind to be a worthy man and gain respect." Dudley was now more emphatic than before of his intention to restore the Catholic religion in England, and the Protestant party took fright. Greatly to Quadra's indignation public opinion was excited against himself as the promoter of a plot to restore Catholicism; the Nuncio was informed that he would not be allowed to land in England, the Queen refused to send envoys to the Council of Trent, Sidney was hurried off to his Government in Wales, and, by the end of April, Cecil's underhand diplomacy had triumphed and Dudley's plan to force the Queen into a marriage by the aid of the Catholics was frustrated. It is undoubted that the Queen was perilously near taking the step on this occasion, and, but for Cecil, might have been betrayed into doing so; although Dudley's vain and giddy boasting, when he thought he had triumphed on this and other occasions aided the disillusionment. Her own imperiousness could not brook his assumption of superior airs in her presence, and she quickly resented it. She would let them know, she said, that in England there was only one mistress and no master. Shortly before she had told Morette, who came at the instance of the Duke of Savoy, to propose the Duke de Nemours

for a husband, that in England there was a woman who acted as a man, and did not need a Granvelle or a Montmorenci to guide her. Elizabeth was now in the very prime of her beauty and powers. Her complexion was of that peculiar transparence which is only seen in golden blondes, her figure was fine and graceful, and her wit and accomplishments were such as would have made a woman of any rank or time remarkable. She was a splendid horsewoman too, with a keen eye for popular effect in her actions, and for ever on the look-out, as her ill-fated mother had been, for the cheers of the populace. One of the German agents sent by the Emperor about the Archduke Charles's match, gave a glowing account of her.[1] "She lives, he says, a life of such magnificence and feasting as can hardly be imagined, and occupies a great portion of her time with balls, banquets, hunting, and similar amusements, with the utmost possible display, but nevertheless she insists upon far greater respect being shown her than was exacted by Queen Mary. She summons Parliament, but lets them know that her orders must be obeyed in any case." Her vanity was perfectly insatiable, and only those who would consent to pander to it could hope for a continuance of her favour, always excepting Cecil, but yet the great mind, the far-seeing caution, the strong will, the keen self-interest, kept even the vanity and frivolity in check when they otherwise would have led her into danger. As Dudley was necessary to her weak side, so was Cecil needful to her strong one: the one to amuse and gratify her, the other

[1] Coloredo's account. Tiepolo to the Senate, December 10, 1559. Venetian Calendar.

to counsel and sustain her and to protect her against herself.

The Bishop attributed the approaches made to him by Dudley to a deep-laid scheme to propitiate Spain until the widowed Mary Stuart should be married, but he seems to leave out of account Dudley's real desire for his marriage with the Queen on any terms, and his wrath at the fiasco. The Bishop thought the hand of Cecil had been forced by the coming of the Pope's Nuncio, and that otherwise the farce would have been kept up for some time longer. In any case the Catholic hopes in England and Ireland, which had revived at the news of the negotiation with Spain, were speedily crushed by fresh persecutions, and the Protestants in England, France, and Germany were for the first time drawn together in a common understanding. That the Bishop was deeply chagrined at the way he had been treated is clear by his behaviour towards the Queen and Dudley during the entertainment given by Dudley on St. John's Day, 1561. It was only a month after the Nuncio had been turned back, and the Catholic prosecutions were being carried on vigorously. The Queen, Dudley, and the Bishop were alone in the gallery of the State-barge off Greenwich witnessing the fireworks and other entertainments, "when she and Robert began joking, which she likes to do much better than talking about business. They went so far in their jokes that Lord Robert told her that if she wished I could be the clergyman to marry them, and she, nothing loath to hear it, said she was not sure whether I knew enough English. I let them jest for a time, but at last spoke to them

in earnest, and told them that if they listened to me they could extricate themselves from the tyranny of the councillors who had taken possession of the Queen and her affairs, and could restore peace and unity to the country by reinstating religion. If they did this they could effect the marriage they spoke of, and I should be glad to perform it, and they might severely punish those who did not like it, as they could do anything with your Majesty (Philip) on their side. As things were now I did not think the Queen would be able to marry except when and whom Cecil and his friends might please. I enlarged on this point somewhat, because I see that unless Robert and the Queen are estranged from this gang of heretics they will continue as heretofore, but if God ordain that they should fall out with them I should consider it an easy thing to do everything else we desire." No action more likely to attain the end in view than that adopted by the Bishop can be conceived, and had it depended upon Dudley alone, not many days would have passed before England was handed over to Spain and the Catholics for the satisfaction of the worthless favourite's ambition. Happily the Queen and Cecil had to be taken into account as well, and England was saved. In August news came to England that the new king, Eric XIV., encouraged by certain Puritan messages sent to him when Dudley's marriage was pending, was on his way to England. His servants and household stuff arrived in Dover, with smart new liveries and a showy stud of horses, and it was announced that the King would follow at once to ask for Elizabeth's hand. This was inconvenient, for Mary of Scotland was still a widow,

and the wedding of Elizabeth to Eric would have been at once followed by the marriage of Mary to a nominee of Philip, to the utmost certain destruction of the Protestant party. Elizabeth assured the Swedes that she had no intention of marrying, refusing a passport for the King on the ground that it was not becoming for a modest maiden to be always giving passports to a young unmarried prince—besides, she had given him two already—one of which he did not use and the other was lost. In face of this coolness Eric affected to put to sea, but a providential tempest caused him to return, and the affair was again shelved, the Queen in the meanwhile dallying with Lord Robert, which she could do without much danger to the State now that Cecil had upset his Catholic plan. But Dudley's personal enemies were always on the alert. Arundel considered he had been insulted by him, and in revenge had a minute inquiry made as to the circumstances of Lady Robert's death, which disclosed very suspicious facts. This humbled Dudley somewhat and made him more cautious, but as he found the Catholics incensed against him, he tried to balance matters by approaching their opponents. He sent an envoy to Henry of Navarre with similar proposals to the Huguenots to those he had previously made to the Spaniards and Catholics. If they would uphold him in his pretensions to the Queen's hand he would practically hand over England to their control. They politely agreed, but knew full well that the control of England was in stronger hands than his, and did nothing to help him. It was little indeed they could have done just then, for their own great struggle was yet before them, and Dudley

soon found that he had made a mistake. His sending Mowbray to negotiate with Navarre had offended the regular English ambassador, Throgmorton, and the noise of the intrigue had reached England, more than ever irritating the Catholics against Dudley. The latter had no scruples and no shame, and turned completely round again. In January, 1562, he once more went servilely to Bishop Quadra, professing his attachment to Spanish interests and begging that Philip should write to the Queen urging her to marry him. He was in a great hurry, and wanted the letter before Easter; but the Bishop was not to be rushed into another compromising position, and said that he had so often assured the Queen of Philip's affection for Dudley that a fresh letter from the King was unnecessary, but he would again speak to her Majesty in his favour. This did not satisfy Lord Robert, but it was all he could get, and a few days afterwards the Bishop asked Elizabeth what was the meaning of Dudley's request, as Philip's approval of the match had already been expressed. "She replied that she was as free from any engagement to marry as on the day she was born, no matter what the world might think or say, but she had quite made up her mind to marry nobody whom she had not seen or known, and consequently she might be obliged to marry in England, in which case she thought she could find no person more fitting than Lord Robert. She did not wish people to say that she had married of her own desire, but that her friends and neighbouring princes should persuade her to do so." "This," said she, "is what Robert wants; as for me, I ask for nothing." Seeing that the Bishop still held off

and refused to budge, she said it was of no consequence at all. It was only for appearance' sake. She could as well marry without Philip's approval as with it, but if she did, Robert would have but small reason to serve the interests of Spain. "I answered her in a joking way," said the Bishop, 'and told her not to dilly-dally any longer, but to satisfy Lord Robert at once . . . and so I passed over the question of the letter." He, no doubt correctly, surmised that the letter was wanted merely for the purpose of mollifying the Catholics towards Dudley, and plainly told Philip that if he were not prepared to force Catholicism upon England by an invasion, there was no reason why the letter should not be sent, as it would at all events please somebody, whilst his present attitude of reserve pleased no one, and the English Catholics would never move without active help. The letter, however, was never written, and three months afterwards the Bishop himself had altered his opinion about it. In April, 1562, he writes to Granvelle that the time had now gone by for Philip to help Robert, as the Catholics were against him, and instead of their being propitiated they would be alienated thereby. "The Queen," he says, "desires not to act in accord with his Majesty, as will have been seen by her behaviour in this case and all others. I have already pointed out that the letter they requested was only to smooth over all difficulties here and carry out their own intentions." Quadra was now completely undeceived, and declined to be snared again with matrimonial negotiations. Indeed, for the present, the point upon which European policy pivoted was not the marriage

of Elizabeth, which had now grown stale, but that of the widowed Mary Stuart in Scotland. The persevering Eric XIV., after yet one more repulse from the Queen Elizabeth, had sent to propose to Mary—which, however, did not prevent his ambassador in London from politely suggesting a match with one of the daughters of the Emperor—Darnley, the Earl of Arran, Don Carlos, and even the Archduke Charles, were already being dangled before Mary's eyes. Her uncles, the Guises, were in an atmosphere of intrigue on the subject, and there was hardly a Court in Europe that had not its own candidate for the Scottish Queen's hand. Elizabeth's great efforts, seconded by those of James Stuart (afterwards the Regent Murray), were directed towards preventing Mary from marrying a powerful foreign prince, particularly a Catholic, and as a means to this end the Huguenots in France were encouraged to break down the power of the Guises. Catharine de Medici, the regent, was glad of the chance, for she hated them; and now that their niece was no longer Queen of France there was no excuse for their predominance. The best way for the English to please the Huguenots was to flout Spain and the Catholics, and the Bishop soon found that frowns instead of smiles greeted him. Elizabeth had been informed that an intrigue was afoot to marry Mary to Don Carlos, the vicious young lunatic who was Philip's only son. This would have meant the ruin of Protestant England and the strengthening of the Guises in France, to the detriment of Catharine de Medici. The plan of the latter, supported by James Stuart, was to hasten on a marriage between Mary and Darnley. Elizabeth

did not relish the idea of the union of the two next legal heirs to her own crown, but pretended to approve of it,[1] and Dudley promised Lethington to support it strongly, in the hope that such a precedent might bring his own marriage nearer. The Spanish ambassador was openly slighted, his couriers stopped, his letters read, his secretary suborned, and he himself placed under semi-arrest, charged with plotting against the Queen. Among other things he was accused of writing to Philip, in a letter that had been intercepted, that the Queen had been privately married to Lord Robert in the Earl of Pembroke's house. To this he answered that he had merely written what all London was saying, namely, that the wedding had taken place. "When he had said as much to the Queen herself she was not annoyed thereat, for she had replied that it was not only people outside who thought so, as on her return that afternoon from the Earl's house her own ladies-in-waiting, when she entered the chamber with Lord Robert, had asked her whether they were to kiss his hand as well as her own, to which she had replied no, and that they were not to believe what people said." The Bishop inserted a sting at the end of his justification by saying that, considering the way people were talking, he did not think he would injure the Queen by saying she was married. Elizabeth's next step was to send powerful aid to the Huguenots in France, who were already in arms, to draw closer the connection with the Protestants in Germany and Holland, and for the first time openly to disregard Spain and the

[1] Castelnau de la Mauvissière, "Mémoires," and "Melvil Memoirs."

Catholic party in Europe. With a divided France and a discontented Netherlands this was possible as it never had been before. In the midst of the warlike preparations in England to occupy Havre for the Huguenots, Elizabeth fell ill of small-pox at Hampton Court, and was thought to be on her death-bed. The consternation in the palace was great, as the crisis was unexpected; but whilst the acrimonious discussions as to the succession were still in progress the Queen rallied, and was pronounced out of danger. The first thing she did on recovering speech and consciousness was to beg the Council to make Dudley protector, with a peerage and an income of £20,000. Everything she asked was promised, though, as Quadra says, without any intention of fulfilling it. But Dudley and the Duke of Norfolk were admitted members of the Council, which was a great point gained for the former. When the Queen feared she might die she protested solemnly before God that, although she loved Robert dearly, nothing improper had ever passed between them.[1]

Parliament assembled early in 1563, and deputations from both Houses addressed the Queen on the subject of fixing the succession. She was extremely angry, and said that what they saw on her face were pock marks and not wrinkles, and she was not so old yet as to have lost hope of children. Subsequent attempts to approach her on the subject, or that of the marriage, met with a similar or more violent repulse. In March, during the sitting of Parliament, Maitland of Lethington, Mary of Scotland's famous Secretary of State,

[1] Spanish Calendar (Elizabeth), vol. i.

arrived in London for the purpose of forwarding his mistress's claim to the succession. He soon saw that the Queen would have her way, and that no successor would be appointed, the evident intention of both Elizabeth and Catharine de Medici being, as Mary herself said, to force an unworthy or a Protestant marriage upon her, in order to injure her prestige with the English Catholics. Cardinal Lorraine and others were anxious that Mary should wed the Archduke Charles, but Mary said she must have a prince strong enough to enforce her claim to the English throne, which Charles was not, and refused him, her own Catholic noblemen being also strongly against him for similar reasons. The opponents of the Guises in France, and the Protestants in England, were of course against the marriage of Mary with a member of the house of Austria, so that, although his name was kept to the front for some time, Charles was never a probable husband for the Queen of Scots. In a long conversation Elizabeth had with Maitland she told him that if his mistress would take her advice, and wished to marry with safety and happiness, she would give her a husband who would ensure both: and this was Lord Robert, in whom nature had implanted so many graces that if she (Elizabeth) wished to marry she would prefer him to all the princes in the world. Maitland said this was indeed a proof of the love she bore to his mistress, to give up to her what she cherished so much herself, but he hardly thought his mistress, even if she loved Lord Robert as dearly as Elizabeth did, would consent to deprive her of all the joy and solace she received from his company. Elizabeth, after some

more talk of this sort, said she wished to God that his brother, the Earl of Warwick, had the grace and good looks of Robert, in which case each Queen could have one of the brothers. Maitland was much embarrassed by this unexpected sally, and adroitly turned the subject to one that he knew would silence the Queen. He said that as his mistress was much the younger, it would be well that Elizabeth should marry Robert first and have children, and then when she died she might leave both her kingdom and her husband to Mary.

The Scots nobles at this time saw that, with Elizabeth and Catharine united against their Queen, things were likely to go badly with her; and even Protestants such as Maitland and Murray were desirous of counteracting the opposing combination by enlisting the help of Spain. Maitland, therefore, after much circumlocution and mystery, proposed to Quadra that Mary should be offered to Don Carlos. The Bishop was delighted with the idea, and sent the offer to Philip, who also approved of it. If such a marriage had been possible, and had been carried out swiftly and suddenly, it might have been the turning-point to make England Catholic—but it was not to be. Events marched too rapidly for Philip's leaden method, and the opportunity was lost whilst information, pledges, and securities were being sought from the Scotch and English nobles, upon whom Philip depended for deposing Elizabeth and placing Mary and her consort on the throne of Great Britain. In vain through a course of years Philip was told with tiresome reiteration that things could not be done in that way. The Catholics would not rise without a certainty of aid, and the

pledges could not be all on one side. So, tired of waiting, at last the Scots nobles were driven to consent to Mary's marriage with Darnley, and she, for a time at least, ceased to be the centre figure in the marriage manœuvres.

Sir James Melvil, one of those cosmopolitan Scotsmen who were in so much request at European Courts in the sixteenth century, had been sent by the Emperor and the Elector Palatine, to whom he was then attached, to propose a marriage between the boy-king, Charles IX., and one of the granddaughters of the Emperor Ferdinand, and whilst he was still in Paris, early in 1564, his own Queen, Mary of Scotland, recalled him. He had lived abroad for many years—since he was a child—and Catharine de Medici made him tempting offers to remain with her, but he decided to obey Mary's summons and return home. He had, of course, first to go to Heidelberg and take leave of his master, the Palatine. Some time before this the Palatine's second son, the famous Duke Hans Casimir, had requested Melvil to carry an offer of marriage from him to Elizabeth. Melvil refused, as he says he had reason to believe from what he had heard that Elizabeth knew herself incapable of child-bearing, and "would never subject herself to any man." When Melvil was taking leave of the Palatine, Hans Casimir forgot his resentment sufficiently to request the Scotch courtier to take his portrait and present it to the Queen on his way through London, and after considerable demur Melvil consented to do so on condition that he carried with him portraits of all the rest of the Elector Palatine's family, so that Hans Casimir's picture might be introduced as if accidentally.

Melvil took with him also an important message from the Protestant princes of Germany to Elizabeth; and, with his polish and wit, very soon got into the Queen's good graces. He deftly introduced the subjects of the portraits, and she at once asked him pointedly whether he had that of Hans Casimir, as she wished to see it. He told her he had left the portraits in London, he being then at Hampton Court, whereupon she said he should not go until she had seen the pictures. Melvil delivered them to her next day, and even suggested that she should keep them. But she only asked Dudley's opinion about them, "and would have none of them. I had also sure information that first and last she despised Duke Casimir." Which, indeed, seems highly probable. In one of the Queen's familiar chats with Melvil she told him she had determined to propose two persons as fit husbands for his Queen, and promised to make the Scotsman her agent in the matter, which, he says, at the persuasion of Dudley, she failed to do. He was soon sent back again to London as Mary's envoy, to, if possible, mollify Elizabeth's anger at the Scotch queen's cool reception of her matrimonial advice, and at Mary's intimacy with Lennox, the father of Darnley.

He arrived in London early in October, 1564, and soon became on friendly terms with Elizabeth again. In his first interview in an "alley" in the gardens at Whitehall he told the Queen that his mistress had not considered the proposal for her to marry Dudley until a joint commission of Scotch and English statesmen should have met; and Melvil suggested that the English commissioners should be the Earl of Bedford and Lord Robert.

Elizabeth took offence at the order in which the names were mentioned. "She said," writes Melvil, "that I appeared to make small account of my Lord Robert, seeing that I named the Earl of Bedford before him, but she said that ere long she would make him a far greater earl, and that I should see it done before I returned home. For she esteemed him as her brother and best friend, whom she would herself have married had she ever minded to have taken a husband. But being determined to end her life in virginity, she wished the Queen her sister might marry him, as meetest of all other with whom she could find in her heart to declare her second person." [1] Elizabeth's reason for her recommendation was a curious one. She said she trusted Dudley so implicitly that she knew that if he married Mary he would not allow any attempt to usurp the throne of England whilst she, Elizabeth, lived. The Queen was as good as her word, and before Melvil left he saw Dudley made Earl of Leicester and Baron Denbeigh. The ceremony of investure was a splendid one, and the Queen herself helped to decorate the new earl with the insignia of his rank, "he sitting on his knees before her with great gravity. But she could not refrain from putting her hand in his neck, smilingly tickling him, the French ambassador and I standing by. Then she turned, asking at me, 'How I liked him.' Melvil gave a courtly answer. 'Yet,' says she, 'you like better of yonder long lad,' pointing towards my lord Darnley, who, as nearest prince of the blood, did bear the sword of honour that day before her. My answer was that no woman of spirit would make

[1] "Melvil Memoirs."

choice of such a man, who more resembled a woman than a man. For he was handsome, beardless, and lady-faced." But for all that one of Melvil's principal purposes in England was diplomatically to obtain permission for Darnley to go to Scotland. On another occasion Elizabeth told Melvil that she would never marry unless forced thereto by his mistress's "harsh behaviour." "I know the truth of that, Madam," said he, "you need not tell me. You think that if you were married you would be but Queen of England, and now you are both King and Queen. I know your spirit cannot endure a commander." She then took him to her bedchamber and opened a little cabinet "wherein were divers little pictures, and their names written with her own hand on the papers. Upon the first that she took up was written 'My lord's picture.' I held up the candle and pressed to see the picture so named, but she appeared loath to let me see it, yet my importunity prevailed, and found it to be the Earl of Leicester's picture." Melvil tried to get the picture to carry to Scotland, as the Queen had, as he says, the original; but Elizabeth would not part with the counterfeit, although she pretended to be willing to give Dudley himself to "her dear sister." Melvil gives a very amusing account of the manner in which the Queen pressed him to give his opinion as to the respective perfections of his mistress and herself. She dressed herself in every possible style for his delectation, showed off her dancing, her music (with a fair amount of coyness), her knowledge of languages. "Her hair," he says, "was more reddish than yellow, curled, in appearance, naturally. She desired to know whether my

Queen's hair or hers was the best." He rather fenced so delicate a question, but the Queen insisted upon an answer, and she was told that "she was the fairest Queen in England, and mine the fairest Queen in Scotland." But still she was not satisfied, and after much pressure Melvil was fain to answer that "she was the whiter of the two, but that Mary was very lovely."

Shortly before Melvil's visit a new Spanish ambassador, Guzman de Silva, had arrived in London, and Dudley lost not a day in trying upon him the tactics that had failed with Quadra. A Catholic friend of his was sent to Guzman to assure him that, if he would exert his influence to ruin Cecil with the Queen, Dudley would place himself under the orders of Philip, and at a second interview with the ambassador the same person told him "that Robert still looks to marry the Queen, and thinks that religious questions will be settled thereby. Robert, he says, has an understanding with the Pope on the matter, and a person in Rome to represent him. This he told me in strict secrecy, and greatly praises Robert's good intentions with regard to religion and the marriage, but with equivocal assurances as to what measures would be adopted." Needless to say that the former ambassador's experience was not lost upon his successor, and Dudley was henceforward looked at askance by the Spanish party. The Queen herself next tried her blandishments on the new envoy. He was invited to a grand masque represented in the palace, and sat next to her Majesty, who interpreted the play to him. Of course it was all about love, which gave an opportunity for the Queen to ask the Spaniard whether

Don Carlos had grown manly. She was told that he had, and then, sighing sentimentally, she said: "Ah me! every one disdains me! I hear he is to be married to the Queen of Scots." The ambassador assured her that it was not true—Carlos had been too ill of late for any thought of his marriage, but still people would gossip about great people. "That is very true," said the Queen. "Why, they even said in London the other day that the King was sending an ambassador to treat of the marriage of the prince (Don Carlos) with *me!*" The feasting and entertainment lasted till two in the morning, but it is probable that this hint was the origin and end of it all. This was in July, 1564, when the Queen felt the need of again drawing closer to the house of Austria. She had been somewhat badly treated by Condé and his Huguenots. Peace had been made in France on terms which again gave the Catholics a predominance, and Cardinal Lorraine had already practically arranged the interview between Catharine de Medici and her daughter, the Queen of Spain, which took place at Bayonne in the following spring. It was known in England and Germany that the real object of this meeting between mother and daughter was to give an opportunity for the Catholic statesmen to form a league for the utter extermination of Protestantism the world over; and, since the Protestant princes in France had been gained over, it became necessary for Elizabeth now to trim to the side of Spain. She soon began dropping hints to Guzman about her marrying a German, and assured him that she was a Catholic at heart, "although she had to conceal her real feelings

to prevail with her subjects in matters of religion." [1] When, with the desire of turning her against the Protestants, he told her that preachers were slandering her because she had placed a crucifix on the altar of her chapel, she said that she would order crosses to be placed in all the churches, and then continued: "They also charge me with showing more favour to Robert than is fitting, speaking of me as if I were an immodest woman. I am not surprised that occasion for it should have been given by a young woman and a young man of good qualities, to whose merits and goodness I show favour, although not so much as he deserves; but God knows how great a slander it is, and a time will come when the world will know it. My life is open . . . and I cannot understand how so bad a judgment can have been formed of me." She then referred to the negotiations, which were still lingering on, for the marriage of Mary of Scotland with Don Carlos, of which she was evidently in great fear, and on the ambassador laughingly saying that Mary was more likely to marry the King of France, who was then only fifteen years of age, Elizabeth at once said that was impossible, as approaches had been made to marry him to her, "which, she was assured, was a more suitable marriage than that which your Majesty (Philip) had contracted with her sister." She had, however, she said, laughed at it as a thing not to be spoken of considering their ages." This was quite true, for Condé had suggested the matter to Sir Thomas Smith, the English ambassador in Paris, a year before, whilst the bickering was going on between them

[1] Spanish Calendar (Elizabeth), vol. i.

as to the terms of the peace and the repayment to the English of the cost of the aid given to the Huguenots.[1] Smith had passed it over at the time as impossible, and the matter had gone no further; but only a month after the interview described above between Guzman and the Queen, the marriage of the latter with the boy Charles IX., who was barely half her age, was brought forward in a more authoritative form. When the Catholics were again dominant in Paris, and the objects of the Spanish and French *rapprochement* beyond doubt, Elizabeth had sent to the new Emperor Maximilian, ostensibly to condole with him on his father's death, but really to reopen the negotiations for the marriage with the Archduke Charles. This action had to be met and parried by Catharine de Medici, who at this time—November, 1564—found herself getting rather more completely pledged than she liked to the Catholic and Spanish party, the complete success of which she knew would be her own downfall; and it was a characteristic stroke of policy of hers to propose so farcical a match as that of Charles IX. with Elizabeth, with the objects, first of hindering the negotiations with the Archduke Charles, secondly of keeping her own Huguenots in hand and preventing England from helping them, and thirdly to checkmate the attempts to marry Mary of Scotland to a Spanish prince. In one of her familiar chats with Smith, who followed her in her voyage through Southern France, she told him she would like to see her son married to the Queen of England. Smith was not sympathetic, but gave a full account of

[1] Foreign Calendar, 1563.

the conversation to Cecil, who clearly looked upon the proposal with equal dislike and incredulity. Very soon afterwards a more direct approach was made to Elizabeth herself, through one of those intriguing ladies of the Valois Court whom Brantome is so fond of describing. This was Madame de Crussol, who is stated to have worked for Catharine in sending Chastelard to Scotland for the express purpose of compromising and injuring Mary of Scotland.[1] This woman wrote a long letter to Elizabeth hinting at the marriage, and shortly afterwards instructions were sent to Paul de Foix, the French ambassador in England, to make a formal offer to Elizabeth. The instructions arrived early in February, 1565, and de Foix was received by the Queen of England a few days afterwards. The interview took place at first in the presence-chamber, but on the ambassador saying that he had something secret to communicate, the Queen led him into her private apartment, where, after much high-flown compliment, he read to her Catharine's despatch, saying that she would be the happiest of mothers if her dearly beloved sister would marry her son and become a daughter to her. She hastened to add that "she (Elizabeth) would find both in the body and mind of the King that which would please her."[2] Elizabeth blushed with satisfied vanity as much as confusion at this, expressed a deep sense of the honour done her, and deplored that she was not ten years younger. She was afraid she would be abandoned as her

[1] Spanish Calendar (Elizabeth), vol. i.
[2] "Dépèches de De Foix," Bibliothèque Nationale. Ferrière.

sister was, and foresaw the grave obstacles to such a match; but de Foix sought to reassure her by saying that the Queen-mother knew her age, and expected she would yet bear many children to her son. Elizabeth replied that she would rather die than be neglected; but still, though her people would prefer that she should marry an Englishman, there was none she could marry but the Earl of Arundel, "and he was as far off as the poles are asunder." As for the Earl of Leicester, she had always esteemed his merit, but her sense of dignity would not allow her to endure him as a husband. It was agreed between the Queen and de Foix that the matter should be kept secret, and she promised him a reply shortly. The next day Cecil drew up one of his lucid Latin papers, setting forth in detail the many dangers and objections which would ensue from such a marriage, and the Queen at once repeated all of Cecil's arguments to the French ambassador as her own, assuring him that she had not mentioned the matter to any one. The ambassador still pressed the King's suit; she would have a husband in the flower of his youth, she would be certain to bear children, Parliament might certainly be induced to give its consent, and all the objections might be overcome by a wisely drafted treaty. But, said the Queen, who would bring the King to book if he violated it? Upon this de Foix lost patience, and said that as a consequence of the good reports he had sent to the Queen-mother with regard to Elizabeth's disposition towards her son, she had thought of this match; but as he saw that her affections were placed elsewhere he would withdraw. This did not suit

the Queen. She assured him she had not given a refusal, made him sit close by her, and thanked him warmly for the good report he had sent of her to his King, dismissing him at last with a promise to send Cecil to him in a couple of days. Cecil was certainly not in favour of the match, although Leicester affected to be so, thanks partly to the bribes sent to him from France, and partly because he considered the marriage an impracticable one. Cecil, indeed, was now almost ostentatiously leaning to the Catholic side, forcing the vestments on to the clergy, relaxing the persecution of the Catholics, and gaining praise even from the Spanish ambassador. If the new Emperor was going to fulfil the promises he had made to the Protestant princes who had elected him, and turn reformer, no husband would have been so favourable to England as the Archduke Charles, who would have disarmed Philip and the Catholics whilst satisfying the Protestants and avoiding the dangers to English independence which would arise from the marriage of the Queen with a prince of the reigning houses of France or Spain. When Cecil saw de Foix, therefore, he diplomatically combated the views advanced by the ambassador. When the latter remarked that the aid of France would for ever preserve England from danger, Cecil replied proudly that England had nothing to fear. At the end of the interview Cecil promised to put his objections to the match in writing; but when he was asked for the paper, some days afterwards, he refused it, and said that the Queen would go no further until she had a reply from Catharine to her remarks made to de

Foix. Secretaries and couriers therefore went backwards and forwards actively for the next few months. This unwonted movement of messengers soon attracted the attention of the Spanish ambassador, who wrote, on the 15th of March: "The question of marriage is a difficult one, because if she weds Robert great dissatisfaction will be caused in the country, both amongst the higher classes and the common people. The Queen has told me several times that she wishes to marry, but not with Robert; and Robert himself has told me the same. Apart from this all eyes are fixed on the Archduke Charles, and I am informed that negotiations are actually going on about him through Robert. . . . Of Robert's leaning towards the matter there is no doubt, in appearance, although it is impossible to say with what object. On the other hand, it is said that negotiations are afoot about the King of France, which the Queen herself told me, and it may be true now, because the French, having got wind of the Archduke's affair, may wish to divert it. It may be also that, however great the disparity of years, they may be willing to overlook it in order to join this country to theirs. By the same rule this Queen may be listening to the Archduke for the purpose of stopping his negotiations with Scotland, and the French may be trying to beat her at her own game." [1] It will be seen by this how tangled was the diplomatic skein even to those contemporaries whose especial business it was to unravel it.

A week after the date of the letter just quoted Guzman saw the Queen, when, as usual, she

[1] Spanish Calendar (Elizabeth), vol. i.

turned the conversation to the subject of marriages, and the ambassador slily hinted that there was some talk of her marrying the French king. She held down her head and giggled at this, and Guzman continued that the French ambassador had asked his opinion about the match, seeing that the King was so little and she so tall. "O!" said the Queen, "they tell me he is not very short; but as it is Lent, and you are my friend, I will make a confession to you. A proposal for marriage was formerly made to me by the King, my brother-in-law (Philip). The King of France has now made me an offer, as well as the Kings of Denmark and Sweden, and, I am told, the Archduke Charles also. The only person who has not been suggested is your prince (Don Carlos)." Guzman replied that the reason no doubt was that, as she had refused the King himself, it was concluded that she had no desire to marry, since no higher match could be proposed to her. She retorted that she did not consider such an inference clear: it is true that she had no desire to marry, and would not do so if she could appoint a satisfactory successor; but her people were pressing her, and she was now forced either to marry or nominate an heir, which would be difficult. "The world thinks that a woman cannot live unmarried, and, if she refrains from marriage, that she does so for some bad reason; as they said of me that I avoided doing so because I was fond of the Earl of Leicester, whom I could not marry, as he had a wife living. His wife is now dead, but yet I do not marry him, although I have been pressed to do so even by your King."[1] Elizabeth

[1] Spanish Calendar (Elizabeth), vol. i.

was getting very uneasy about the Franco-Spanish meeting at Bayonne and the rumoured voyage of Philip to the Netherlands with a strong force to crush Protestantism for good and for all; the idea of her marriage with Charles IX. was one eminently calculated to breed distrust of the French in the mind of Philip, and, as such, was being actively forwarded by the Huguenot party. When therefore de Foix, the French ambassador, saw her a few days afterwards she told him that she had refused to let Cecil put into writing his objections to the match, as promised, because the objections were really all reducible to one—namely, the question of disparity of age. She said that Smith had written lately, saying that the King had grown wonderfully, and that, when he had seen him after an interval of a few weeks, he hardly recognised him, as he had grown so tall, and he would no doubt be as tall as his father had been. De Foix afterwards sat next to the Queen at supper, when she was in very high spirits, and drank the King's health, and during the entertainment which followed talked of nothing but the attractions of the French Court.[1]

Catharine de Medici on her side was just as eager in appearance for the match as Elizabeth—and probably equally insincere, since she too had her own game to play. She had a long talk about it with Smith in Bordeaux in April, in which she said that the ages seemed the principal objection, but if Elizabeth would put up with the youth of the King, she (Catharine) would put up with the age of the Queen; upon which the youthful suitor himself

[1] De Foix despatches, Bib. Nat., Paris.

burst in with the remark that he hoped his mistress would be as satisfied of his age as he was of hers. Catharine went on to discuss the other two difficulties raised; namely, the objection to the Queen residing out of England, and the fear of the unpopularity of the match; but Smith declined to give any opinion upon the matter. It was clear, indeed, all through that the English ambassador would not commit himself in a negotiation which he felt to be a hollow one. He said his instructions were limited. If the King were a few years older, if he had seen the Queen and really liked her, he (Smith) would feel less astonishment at the present advances, but now—— "But really," interrupted the King, "I do love her." "Your Majesty does not know yet what love is," said Smith, "but you will soon go through it. It is the most foolish, impotent and disrespectful thing possible." The boy blushed at this, and his mother answered for him saying that his was not a foolish love. Perhaps not, said the ambassador, but it is just because it must rest upon very grave reasons and great and worthy considerations that it ought only to be undertaken after mature deliberation.[1] Catharine pressed for a reply before the Bayonne meetings, which were fixed for the following month of May, but this Smith thought impossible. On the following day she again tackled Smith on the subject; and said that, as Cecil himself had had a son at fifteen or sixteen, the King's age could not be made an objection. Secret as the negotiations were kept, Guzman in London was irritated and alarmed to see the coming and going of Huguenot

[1] Foreign Calendar.

secretaries, without being able to fathom the reasons, although it was evident that something was afoot. Both de Foix and he were ecclesiastics, and many were the feline passages of words that passed between them on the subject. There was really nothing at all going on, said de Foix, only mercantile affairs were being negotiated. Guzman did not believe him—as he was a Huguenot although an Archbishop—but still did not guess that the Queen's marriage with Charles IX. was seriously being discussed. For some time he thought that the matter in hand was the marriage of the Queen and Leicester under French patronage, but at last in the middle of April the Queen could keep the secret from him no longer. He was sneering at the long delay at the arrival of a present of a coach and some camels that were being sent from Catharine to the Queen, when the latter told him he was jealous, and asked him what he would think if he found her one day Queen of France. He declined to consider such a hypothetical case, and the Queen, having said so much, tried to make light of the matter, saying that she knew nothing of all this coming and going of couriers that he talked about. He could get no further, and concludes his account of the interview thus: "She is very artful, wished to appear reserved and give the idea that there was no matter of importance afoot."[1] On the 20th of April de Foix pressed the Queen urgently for a reply. The interviews of Bayonne were fixed for the 20th of May, and if the King's offer were rejected, his betrothal to a princess of the house of Austria would be arranged. Elizabeth put the

[1] Spanish Calendar (Elizabeth), vol. i.

ambassador off with vague professions of friendship which a week later changed into complaints that Catharine was unduly hurrying her.[1] In fact, the insincere negotiations for the Queen's marriage with Charles IX. could now be dropped, as they had served Elizabeth's immediate purpose, and had brought a prince of the House of Austria once more into the meshes of her net.

[1] La Ferrière, "Projets de Mariage."

CHAPTER IV.

Spain and the Archduke Charles—Swetkowitz's mission—Leicester's continued intrigues — The French suit dropped—Eric IV. again—Heneage—Renewed negotiations with the Emperor—The French patronise Leicester's suit—Dissensions in the English Court respecting the Austrian match—Mission of Sussex to Vienna—End of the Austrian negotiations—Marriage of Charles IX.

IN the meanwhile Guzman was more at fault than ever, and was quite persuaded that the matter being discussed was the marriage of Mary of Scotland with Leicester, with the connivance of the Guises; but gradually the coil began to unwind before his eyes. First he received news from Vienna that secret negotiations had been going on ever since the Emperor Ferdinand's death for the marriage of the Queen with the Archduke Charles; and that Adam Swetkowitz, Baron Mitterburg, was on his way to England, ostensibly to return Ferdinand's insignia of the Garter, but really with a mission about the marriage; then came the news of the marriage, or immediately impending marriage, of Mary with Darnley, which, however much Elizabeth may have pretended otherwise, must have relieved her from much anxiety and cleared the situation. News came to him also of the proposals for betrothing Charles IX. to a daughter of the Emperor, and Leicester's many enemies were again strongly

urging the Queen's marriage with ths Archduke. Guzman by this time had become highly sceptical of the Queen's intention to marry at all, and was not apparently anxious to help forward the Archduke's suit until the new Emperor's attitude in religion was well established. He therefore tried to face both ways. He received Swetkowitz cordially and promised him support, but before doing anything sounded Leicester again. The Earl, whilst hunting with the Queen, had met with an accident, and was confined to his bed. This gave Guzman an opportunity of calling upon him. Maitland, Cecil, and Throgmorton were already there when he entered, but stood aside whilst he conversed with the Earl. He whispered to him that his affection prompted him to say how sorry he was that he (Leicester) was losing so much time in bringing about his marriage with the Queen, and that he had better act promptly now or he would regret it. Guzman reminded him that he had always done his best for him with the Queen and assured him of Philip's attachment to him. Leicester protested his abject gratitude, but said sorrowfully that the Queen would never marry him, as she was bent on wedding a great prince; but there was none she could marry but Don Carlos or the Archduke. Guzman passed this over by saying he understood that there had formerly been some talk about the Archduke, and then again reverted to Leicester's own suit. Leicester's spirit rose at this, as it seemed to betoken a coolness towards the Archduke's advances, and said that if Guzman would speak to the Queen now about marrying him he thought she would be more favourable than formerly as her

reasons for rejecting him before was the fear that Mary of Scotland would marry a powerful prince; "whereas now that this marriage with Darnley had taken place my business will be more easily arranged. I have not cared to press the point upon her hitherto, although the Council has done so. I think, therefore, that this is a good juncture for my business." The Spanish ambassador told him to leave the matter to him, and adds in his letter to Philip: "I thought well to approach the matter and have the road thus prepared before the Emperor's envoy arrived, so that if he does not tell me what he is arranging I can still find out and proceed in the business."[1] It appeared that for once Leicester and Throgmorton had been co-operating with Cecil and others to bring the Archduke forward again, the Earl having taken up this new position no doubt as soon as he thought the French match was looking serious; but, withal, Guzman did not believe in the sincerity of the new Austrian negotiations, which he looked upon as a "mere diversion," and, after his conversation with Leicester, wrote: "Lord Robert is more confident now and said . . . he could not contemplate the Queen's marriage with any one but himself without great repugnance." It is probable that at this time the Queen seriously leant again towards a marriage with Leicester. The proposals for a match with the French king were never anything but a feint, with the objects which have been mentioned, and the new negotiations with the Archduke were undertaken, not only to disarm Spain at the Bayonne meetings, but also to clear the ground and deceive Cecil,

[1] Spanish Calendar (Elizabeth.)

Sussex, and Norfolk, by an apparently sincere attempt to bring about the marriage, which could subsequently be wrecked on some religious scruple. The general desire for the Queen's marriage might then be pleaded, even to Leicester's enemies, as a reason why the Queen should marry him, the only remaining possible suitor. For the first time in her reign the Queen now might do it, as she had nothing to fear from "her dear sister" Mary of Scotland. There is ample reason to believe that this was the key to the present attitude of the Queen and Leicester; and Guzman makes no secret of his opinion that it was so. In the meanwhile Cecil was proceeding in good faith with Swetkowitz; and de Foix was still pressing the Queen daily for some decision respecting Charles IX., to whom she grew colder and colder. Swetkowitz was being beguiled, as others had been, with dinners and masques at Greenwich, and was made much of by the Queen; but when, after many fruitless attempts, de Foix got to close quarters with her, she assured him that she had held out no hopes to the Archduke, and then turned the tables upon him and complained that Charles IX. was seeking a bride elsewhere before he had received her answer. But at last the comedy could be carried on no longer, and the Queen referred de Foix to her Council for his reply. The interview took place on June 12, 1565, and although the principal difficulty raised was again the King's youth, yet de Foix saw now plainly that the affair was at an end. He and the other honest instruments had been deceived from the first. It suited Catharine and Elizabeth equally to play the game

for their own ends, and when the need for it had disappeared it was dropped.

Swetkowitz was a Lutheran, and on Whit Sunday attended Protestant service with the Queen, who after dinner had an interesting conversation with him, in which he promised that the new Emperor would not stand so much upon his dignity as his father had done, and would let the Archduke come and see her as he (the Archduke) greatly wished to do. She blushed with pleasure at this, and said that if they liked one another the matter could soon be settled. What was uppermost in her mind, however, was seen in her next remark: "I pray you tell me, have you heard from any one that the Earl of Leicester is not dealing favourably with this affair or is opposing it in any way?" He replied that on the contrary Leicester had been most favourable, and had even himself written to the Emperor urging the match. He pointed out to her that it was not surprising that the public considered the match probable, as if she married out of England there was no other prince of suitable age whom she could marry. "But," she said, "I have never said yet that I would not marry the Earl of Leicester." This rather damped Swetkowitz, and Guzman was further confirmed in his opinion that the whole negotiation was dishonest and for the benefit of Leicester, who was now leaning more towards French interests at Court. Guzman distrusted and disliked him, but thought necessary to feign approval of his suit, in order to have a claim upon his gratitude; and Swetkowitz, who was duly informed of this, consequently had great doubts of the sincerity of Spanish support in the Archduke's pretensions.

This caused a coolness between the two ambassadors, and somewhat paralysed the action of Swetkowitz, who said that as soon as he was satisfied that the King of Spain really favoured the match he, Swetkowitz, had means for bringing it about. At an interview Guzman had with the Queen she expressed her doubts about the *bona-fides* of Philip's approval and tried to draw the Spanish ambassador into some clear expression of it. He told her that if she decided to marry one of her own subjects he, Guzman, could not forget the interests of his friend (*i.e.*, Leicester), but if she chose a foreign prince he begged her not to overlook the house of Austria, as he had said before. "That is true," she replied, "but you said the house of Spain." He told her she was mistaken. He had no reason for saying Spain, as his master was head of the house of Austria, and he did not particularise or exclude any member of his house. This was sufficiently indefinite, and conveyed to the Queen the impression which was intended; namely, that either match could only be effected by her coming to an arrangement with Spain. She replied that she thanked the ambassador for his kind remark about his friend, and left Philip to thank him for the rest. "This makes it evident to me," he wrote to the King, "that Lord Robert's affair is not off, and I have many reasons for being doubtful about the Archduke." Leicester's enemies, particularly Sussex, were busy trying to animate Swetkowitz, and persuade Guzman to take a more active share in the negotiations. But the new Emperor's religious attitude was still undefined, and Guzman at this time believed that the Queen and Leicester were already

married.[1] He looked, moreover, upon the promotion of the Archduke's suit by Sussex as a Court intrigue. "Throgmorton," he says, "is for ever coming here to ask questions of the Emperor's envoy, who tells them that the Archduke is coming; and they (Leicester's friends) have devised some other scheme to stop the business." What the scheme was soon appeared. A day or two after Guzman's interview with the Queen, in June, 1565, the French ambassador saw the Council ostensibly to again press the marriage of the Queen with Charles IX. He was once more told that the King's youth made such a match impossible, and replied that as she refused his master it was evident that she did not intend to marry a foreigner, and warned the Council that the chosen consort must be a person who was well affected towards French interests, or trouble would ensue. He was asked what person would best please his master, and he replied the Earl of Leicester. With the more or less overt support of the ambassadors of the two great powers, Leicester's chance was now sufficiently good to alarm Cecil and Sussex, who saw the necessity of doing something to better the Archduke's position. Cecil therefore approached Leicester through his friend Throgmorton, and suggested that if the Queen married the Archduke, Leicester might be provided with a wife and his position secured by his wedding some relative of the Emperor, such as the young Princess of Cleves, who was then fifteen. Throgmorton was quite in love with the idea, and approached the Emperor's envoy with suggestions of Leicester's marriage with a sister of the Emperor or some

[1] Spanish Calendar (Elizabeth), vol. i. p. 436.

other princes of the house of Austria. The proposal was of course received very coldly. Guzman thought the object of it was perhaps only to couple Leicester's name with those of great marriageable princesses, in order that the people might gradually be brought to consider him a fit husband for the Queen, who had always told the ambassador that she would marry him (Leicester) if he were a king's son, but the real purpose was to buy off Leicester's opposition to the Archduke. The sham proposals for the marriage of the Queen with Charles IX. having served their purpose were now quite at an end, and the Queen of Scots' determination to take Darnley had further simplified the situation, so that Leicester's chance was better than ever it had been, supported as he was, for interested reasons, both by France and Spain, the promotion of the Archduke's suit being mainly pushed in the English Court by those who were Leicester's declared enemies, whilst the Spanish ambassador was only giving it half-hearted countenance. Norfolk and Sussex, however, continued to talk to the Queen about the Archduke, and in a conversation with Sussex on the subject she told him that "Robert pressed her so that he does not leave her a moment's peace." When Leicester urged his suit she was just as ready to say that she was never free from the importunities of Sussex on behalf of the Archduke. Matters were in this position in July, 1565, when, doubtless at the instance of the English Protestant party, inimical to Leicester, King Eric made another attempt. First came an envoy with a present of magnificent sables for the Queen, and news that the King's sister,

Princess Cecilia, who had married the Margrave of Baden, was awaiting a ship at Embden to sail for England, and Elizabeth lost no time in sending two of her own vessels to convey her royal visitor to her capital. Early in September the Margravine arrived at Dover with her husband and a large suite, and a few days afterwards came by boat from Gravesend to Durham House, where she was to be the guest of the Queen. She was dressed, we are told, in a black velvet robe and a mantle of cloth of silver, her fair hair being surmounted by a golden crown. The Queen could not do too much, apparently, to honour the first royal visitor she had received since her accession. Lord and Lady Cobham had awaited her at Dover, the Queen's cousin, Hunsdon, with six of the Queen's gentlemen, attended her from Gravesend, and at the water gate of Durham House she was welcomed by the Countess of Sussex, with Lady Bacon, and Lady Cecil, who were leading members of the Puritan party. The Queen herself visited the Margravine a few days afterwards, and was prodigal of her marks of affection to her. Shortly afterwards the Princess gave birth to a son and heir, to whom Elizabeth stood sponsor, and for a time Durham House and Whitehall vied with each other in the splendour of their reciprocal entertainments, although Eric's vicarious wooing prospered no better than before, notwithstanding the efforts in its favour made by the Bacons, the Cecils, and their friends. They had, indeed, been checkmated even before the Swedish princess's arrival. The Spanish ambassador, with the connivance of Sussex, Norfolk, and Arundel, at once became much warmer in his

apparent support of the Archduke's pretensions, whilst at the same time privately assuring Leicester of his master's good-will towards him. He pressed the Queen to look favourably upon the Emperor's brother, gave hopes that the Archduke might be allowed to have his way and visit her, and congratulated her upon having avoided so unequal a match as that projected with the King of France, who, the Queen herself said, might be her grandson. The Emperor's answer about his brother's coming was hardly as cordial as was wished, but as it contained full particulars of the conditions demanded, both as to religion, finances, and position of the consort, the match was now brought seriously and officially under consideration. The terms were so hard, and the tone of the Emperor's communication so dry, that it was decided not to show the letter to the Queen, and to conceal the text of the conditions from her, by saying merely that the Emperor was willing for his brother to come, but desired first that commissioners should meet and decide upon some bases for negotiation, in case she should be favourably impressed by him. It was seen at once by the friends of the match that the Emperor's terms were impossible. The Archduke was to have the title of king and to govern jointly with his wife; in case of her death without heirs he was to remain in the government of the country, and was to exercise the Catholic religion without hindrance. Cecil, Sussex, and others privately met Swetkowitz, and agreed that, if the matter were to go on, the conditions must be softened to the Queen, and by some means the Archduke be brought to England, in the hope that his coming

would so far pledge her that she could not well recede. But withal, the answer given by the Queen and Council was not very encouraging. The main question, that of religion, was slurred over and left for future discussion, but a decided negative was given to the claim that the consort should be called king, or that a permanent income should be settled upon him. As soon as the Emperor's hard terms were received a decided change took place in the attitude of Leicester and his friends towards the match. It was evident to him that it could always be prevented by raising difficulties with regard to religion, and Leicester had therefore no hesitation in pretending to favour and forward it in order to choke off the Swedish suit. He even entered into a regular treaty with the Spanish ambassador by which he agreed to help the Archduke's affair on condition that he was to receive Spanish support in case the Austrian marriage came to nothing, as he meant it to do. Still further to beguile people into the belief that he himself was entirely out of the running, and that the Archduke's suit was now really in a fair way, an elaborate comedy was concocted, by which the Queen was to flirt with Heneage—a married man—whilst the Earl was to make love to Viscountess Hereford, afterwards Countess of Essex, whom he subsequently married. This he probably did too realistically, and a quarrel, real or pretended, ending in tears on all sides, consequently took place between him, Heneage, and the Queen, whereupon the favourite went to his rooms and sulked for a few days, until he was recalled, and Heneage, who had been sent away, was also allowed to return.

In the meanwhile Sussex was straining every nerve to pledge the Queen to the Archduke; and Guzman was really doing his best to forward the match, although he never was for a moment deceived by Leicester, whom he now saw through. "I keep Leicester in hand," he said, "in the best way I can, as I am still firm in my opinion that if any marriage at all is to result from all this it will be his." Swetkowitz hurried back to Vienna with the English reply, and to explain to his master the only method by which success was possible. Lutheran as he was, he would have given way upon the vital point of religion, although he confessed his fear that the Emperor would not do so; "but," said he, "you must put up with a good deal to gain such a kingdom as this." To have given up on the point of religion, however, would have made the match useless to Philip, and there was never any chance of the marriage being effected on such terms. Leicester, of course, did not know how pliable the Emperor might prove, but Swetkowitz's hopefulness and conciliatory attitude seems in August to have alarmed both him and the French ambassador into the belief that perhaps, after all, the marriage would be effected. At all events, Leicester and the French again began to push his suit warmly, as soon as Swetkowitz left, and the Queen, with just an occasional smile to Heneage, was kinder to him than ever. Philip II., who knew Elizabeth as well as any one, thus writes in October to his ambassador: "The Archduke's suit is now quite at an end, as I am informed by the Emperor that he is undeceived, and withdraws altogether from the business. You will, therefore, say no more about

it unless he writes to the contrary, which I do not think he will. . . . Let me know the result of the Swedish negotiations, although no doubt they will end like the rest; and, after all, she will either not marry or else marry Robert, to whom she has always been so much attached. You did well in writing to me fully about the quarrel with Heneage, because the whole affair and its sequel clearly show that the Queen is in love with Robert, and for this reason, and in case at last that she may take him for her husband, it will be very expedient to keep him in hand."[1] Maximilian, however, was not playing quite fairly with Philip when he told him he had abandoned the idea of marrying his brother to the Queen of England. The interference of the Spanish king in the affair was, in fact, a great hindrance to its success, as, dependent as the Emperor partly was upon the German Protestant princes, he could not bind himself hard and fast to the extreme Catholic militant party; and to saddle an Austrian match with impracticable Spanish conditions, was to make it impossible. Early in 1566, therefore, the Emperor sent back a temporising reply to England, saying that the wording of the clause about religion appeared somewhat harsh, and begging that it might be modified. The Emperor's tone was so conciliatory, as a result of Swetkowitz's representations, that the hopes of Sussex and Norfolk again rose high for a time. But as the Emperor advanced the Queen receded. She complained to the Spanish ambassador of the delay in the sending of the reply, and was petulant about the Emperor's objections. "How could she marry," she asked, "a

[1] Spanish Calendar (Elizabeth), vol. i.

man whom she had to feed, and let the world say she had taken a husband who could not afford to keep himself! The Emperor must think they (the English) lived like Turks, whereas they had the Holy Sacrament the same as he had;" and then she began to talk about Leicester in a way which convinced the ambassador that his chance was better than ever. She said that she had promised the Earl no answer—in fact, he had never had the presumption to ask her to marry him, but the Council had done so, and it was for them to ask for a reply, and not Leicester; "but the Earl had good parts and great merits, and if she had to marry a subject she had a great liking for him." Referring to Mary of Scotland's recent marriage with Darnley, she said that if she married Leicester two neighbouring queens would be wedded in the same way. "She is so nimble in her dealing and threads in and out of this business in such a way that her most intimate favourites fail to understand her, and her intentions are, therefore, variously interpreted." In the meanwhile both the Archduke's and Leicester's friends were confident that their respective suits were prospering, although Leicester either was, or feigned to be, bitterly jealous of the Queen's new flame, his erstwhile bosom friend Heneage, with whom he had another noisy quarrel, nearly ending in bloodshed, in February, 1566.[1] Cecil, Sussex, and Bacon, in the meanwhile, were constantly praying Guzman to exert his influence with the Queen in favour of the Archduke; and the Duke of Norfolk was induced to speak to her on the subject. He told the Queen that the former recommendation of

[1] Michaeli Surnian in Venetian Calendar.

the Council to her to marry Leicester was only adopted because they thought her own desires lay that way, and not because they approved of it. The Duke himself strongly urged her to marry the Archduke and rescue the country from the evils of a disputed succession. After leaving the Queen Norfolk saw Leicester and taxed him with breaking faith with them, as he had promised not to press his own suit, the Queen having distinctly announced that she would not marry him. On the strength of this negotiations were being conducted with the Emperor, and yet, said Norfolk, no sooner was the imperial ambassador gone than Leicester pushed his own courtship more strongly than ever. He was told plainly that if he did not desist evil would befall him, as all the nobility were against him; whereupon Leicester went off in a huff and sulked for a fortnight, until the Queen recalled him and petted him more than ever, upon which Norfolk in turn took umbrage and went home, leaving the Archduke's interests in the hands of Sussex. For months this game of cross purposes went on. One afternoon in February, 1566, Guzman saw the Queen walking with Leicester in the lower gallery overlooking the gardens of Whitehall. In conversation with the ambassador she praised her favourite to his face, and said that he was just trying to persuade her to marry, for the sake of herself, the country, and even on his (Leicester's) account, as every one believed that he was the cause of her remaining single, and his life was in danger if he remained at Court. She again said that "if he were a prince she would marry him to-morrow."[1] With

[1] Spanish Calendar (Elizabeth), vol. i.

the Emperor's cool dilatoriness and Leicester's constant efforts, the cause of the latter was distinctly in the ascendant during the spring of 1566. Norfolk and Sussex were too evidently biased by personal enmity towards the favourite to be good negotiators for his rival, whilst Cecil and Bacon on the one hand, and Guzman on the other, did not care to be hasty in concluding the Archduke's marriage until the religious conditions were clearly understood. It was finally determined that an envoy should be sent to the Emperor with the Queen's reply to the objections he had raised, and at first Francis Bertie, the Duchess of Suffolk's husband, was chosen. He was, however, a strong Protestant, and a friend of Leicester's, and the Spanish ambassador privately urged Cecil to have the appointment cancelled. This was done, and the Queen's kinsman, Sir Thomas Sackville, was then selected. When this appointment was made Leicester was, in one of his periodical sulking fits, driven away by the remonstrances of Cecil and Sussex and by the Queen's flirting with the Earl of Ormond. The French ambassador, de Foix, says that Elizabeth had positively promised to marry the favourite during the winter, and at Christmas had begged him to wait till Candlemas, in order that Catharine de Medici's approval might be sent. Leicester found that his best weapon was to deprive the Queen of his presence, as she generally came round in a few days so far as to promise him anything to bring him back. Between her promises and their fulfilment, however, there was usually a great gap, and Leicester felt that he was powerless to get beyond a certain point. His influence was

always strong enough to prevent the success of another suitor, but not powerful enough to ensure his own. His sulking bouts, indeed, were often feigned, in concert with the Queen, to appease Cecil, or to prevent the entire cessation of the Archduke's negotiations. This probably was the case when the appointment of Bertie as ambassador to the Emperor had aroused suspicion, as, after an apparent tiff with the Queen, Leicester went to Pembroke House, where the Queen, disguised, joined him in a friendly dinner before he left the Court.[1] On the representations of Cecil she consented to appoint Sackville instead of Bertie; but she had quietly agreed with Leicester beforehand that her complaisance should not go beyond appearance, and before the favourite returned to Court Sackville's departure had been indefinitely postponed. During Leicester's absence from Court Cecil and Sussex were more hopeful about the Archduke, although as we now see with very little reason. The Austrians were lethargic, the Spaniards coldly cautious, whilst the French were determined and unceasing in their effort to thwart the Archduke's suit. De Foix spent large sums in Leicester's interest, and Catharine de Medici showered gifts and favours upon him constantly. The moment that he was in disgrace, however, or when the Archduke's match seemed really progressing, they played their trump card in bringing forward Charles IX. again. When Rambouillet, the French envoy to Scotland, saw Elizabeth in February he had enlarged, by the Queen-mother's orders, upon the vigour and comeliness of the young King. The

[1] Spanish Calendar (Elizabeth), vol. i.

Queen was always ready to listen to talk like this, and sighed that she would like to meet him, "but," she said, "do you think it would be a good match for the King to marry an old woman like me?" De Foix, before his departure in May, 1566, again and again referred to the matter lightly, with the evident intention of keeping it alive, to the detriment of the Archduke's match and for the benefit of Leicester. The manœuvre was easily seen through, of course, and Guzman, in an interview with Cecil on the 18th of May, said to him, "These Frenchmen are in a fine taking when they see the Archduke's match progressing, and at once bring forward their own king to embarrass the Queen. When they see that this trick has hindered the negotiations they take up with Leicester again, and think we do not see through them." Cecil was of the same opinion, and said the French thought they could do as they liked when they had Robert on their side. Instead of Sackville, a Kentish gentleman named Danett was sent to the Emperor, merely as an accredited messenger, with a reply to his letter and the offer of the Garter. The letters from Danett arrived in London in June, 1566, and were of so encouraging a nature that the advocates of the Austrian match again became confident that their man would win the prize. This gave rise as usual to fresh activity on the part of the French. Catharine de Medici, in her instructions to the new ambassador, Bôchetel de la Forest, directed him to help forward Leicester's pretensions with all his might, and thwart those of the Archduke, and Elizabeth had an interesting conversation with the ambassador's nephew Vulcob

on the subject during her progress in the autumn of 1566. The Queen was staying at Stamford, and Vulcob was charged with his uncle's excuses for not attending her. He met Leicester at the door of the chamber, to whom he conveyed the regard and sympathy of the King and Queen-mother of France. The Earl replied that the Queen was more undecided about marrying him than ever, and he did not know what to think. He had known the Queen, he said, since they were children together, and she had always announced her intention to remain single, but if by any chance she did marry, he was sure she would marry no one but him. Vulcob was then summoned by the Queen, who at once began to dwell upon the physical qualities of Charles IX., and the Frenchman, nothing loath, launched into high-flown panegyrics of her own perfections and his master's manliness. A day or two afterwards he got into talk with the Queen's physician, who suggested that the best way to cement the alliance between England and France would be to bring about a marriage between the King and Queen. Vulcob objected that their ages were so different, and the unlikelihood of issue; to which the physician replied: "Your King is seventeen, and the Queen only thirty-two. Take no notice of what she says in that respect, it is only her passing fancies. If the King marries her, I will answer for her having ten children, and no one in the world knows her temperament better than I do. If you like, you and I will secretly manage this business. Your King is young and vigorous and accustomed to travel; let him come to Boulogne to see this fair

lady."[1] The hint was faithfully conveyed to Catharine de Medici, but she was not deceived by it. Both she and her ambassador clearly saw the drift, and talked of the affair only when necessary to thwart the Austrian match, or when Leicester himself was not strong enough to stand alone against his enemies.

This position continued during the summer and autumn of 1566: Elizabeth bitterly jealous of the birth of Mary of Scotland's child, apprehensive of the secret aid in money being sent by Alba to Mary for the promotion of her cause, and yet afraid to offend the house of Austria, which might arm her own Catholic subjects against her; Leicester alternately hopeful and despairing; the Archduke's friends minimising points of difference and smoothing over difficulties in the hope of getting their man to England at any cost; and the French party sleepless in their efforts to prevent Elizabeth's marriage with any nominee of Spain. More than once the quarrel between Leicester and his enemies nearly flamed out into open hostility. The Queen peremptorily insisted upon his making friends with Sussex, and even forced him to an appearance of reconciliation with his rival Ormond. Both the Spanish and French ambassadors give numberless instances of the rancour existing at Court, and profess themselves shocked at the Queen's lightness and giddiness of conduct in connection with the marriage question. The nation itself, so far as public opinion could be said to exist at the time, was also disturbed, and when Parliament met in October, all Cecil's efforts were unavailing to prevent

[1] Bib. Nat. Paris. De la Ferrière.

the discussion of the Queen's marriage and the succession. A joint committee of both Houses was appointed to draw up an address to the Queen on the subject, and the resentment of Elizabeth against the majority for dealing with the matter of the succession particularly, against her wish, was cunningly fanned by Guzman, who pointed out that they were nearly all extreme Protestants. "I do not know what the devils want," said the Queen. "O! your Majesty," replied the ambassador, "what they want is simply liberty; and if monarchs do not look out for themselves and combine, it is easy to see how it will end."[1] So the irate Queen sent for the leaders of both Houses to have it out with them. First came the Duke of Norfolk, her kinsman and most distinguished subject, himself almost a sovereign in his own county, and received the full torrent of her vituperation. He was a traitor, a conspirator, and much else, and the poor man, overwhelmed, stammered out that he never thought to ask her pardon for having offended her thus. Next came the turn of Leicester, Pembroke, Northampton, and Howard, who remonstrated with her upon her treatment of Norfolk. She told Pembroke he talked like a swaggering soldier; said that Northampton was a nice fellow to prate about marriage—he had better look after his own matrimonial difficulties than mince words with her. Then softening somewhat she turned to Leicester and said that, even if all the world had abandoned her, she did not think he would have done so. He said something about his willingness to die at her feet, to which she replied that that was not the

[1] Spanish Calendar (Elizabeth).

purpose. When the interview was at an end, the lords met in conclave and sent Sussex to beg Guzman again to exert his influence in favour of the Archduke. The next day the ambassador saw the Queen for the purpose, when she again broke out in denunciation of her councillors for putting this pressure upon her, and was particularly bitter about Leicester. "What did Guzman think," she asked, "of such ingratitude after she had shown him so much kindness and favour that even her honour had suffered for his sake. She was glad, however, of so good an opportunity of sending him away, and the Archduke might now be quite free from suspicion." Her anger of course was mostly directed against the attempt to force her hand in the matter of the succession; and, by the advice of Guzman, she saw the leaders separately in a calmer mood and put them off with vague assurances that she would marry shortly, and would summon a Parliament if anything prevented her from doing so. Once only she lost her temper again in her long speech to the joint committee, and that was when she addressed the Bishops of London and Durham, whom she turned upon and rent for their inconsistency. By dint of alternate bullying and cajolery she reduced both Houses of Parliament to a condition of pliability, and having got her supplies voted, dissolved Parliament early in January, 1567, and was again free to do as she liked without interference. Her indignation against Leicester was short-lived. Only a month after she had rejoiced in sending him away, she told Guzman that she thought he had acted for the best and was deceived by the others. "She was quite certain," she said, "that he would lay down

his life for hers, and that if one of them had to die he would willingly be the one.'

To satisfy the powerful combination which was determined to press the Archduke's cause, it was decided that the Earl of Sussex should be sent with the Garter to the Emperor, with powers to discuss the terms of marriage; but Leicester and the French managed, by casting doubts and raising difficulties, to delay his departure. Norfolk was brought up to London to exert his influence, and for several months again the Court was a hot-bed of intrigue, in which Norfolk, Sussex, and the Conservative party, aided by Guzman, and cautiously supported by Cecil and Bacon, were pitted against Leicester and the French ambassador. From day to day the fickle Queen changed. First Sussex was to be hurried off at once, then he was to go after Shrovetide; then when he had prepared for his journey Elizabeth told him he would not leave so quickly as he thought. With Leicester, too, she was equally changeable, one day turning her back upon him, and the next begging the Spanish ambassador to be friendly with him. On one occasion in February, 1567, when the Council had progressed very far in the settlement of Sussex's instructions, Leicester's Puritan friends again brought up the matter of the succession in order to embroil matters and embarrass the Queen; but she put her foot down firmly then, and they dropped the subject in a fright. This having failed, they renewed their agitation for an inquiry into the conduct of Sussex as Viceroy of Ireland; but out of this honest Ratcliff emerged triumphant, to the sorrow of his enemies. At last Sussex got tired of the constant quarrelling, and begged for leave to go

home, which was refused, and some sort of reconciliation was patched up between him and Leicester. In view of almost hourly changes in the Queen's matrimonial attitude, and the certainty that the Leicester party would after all try to wreck the Archduke's suit on the religious conditions, Sussex firmly refused to undertake the embassy to the Emperor, unless he had precise orders signed by the Queen as to the terms he might accept, "as he was determined not to deceive the Emperor." At last, after infinite trouble, Sussex was despatched at the end of June, 1567, bearing full instructions to negotiate the marriage. He was to raise no great difficulty except on two points: first the question of the Archduke's income, and secondly that of religion. He was to say that "the Queen will take care that he wants for nothing, but she does not wish her people to think she had married a man too poor to keep himself." The Archduke might privately hear Mass in his own chamber, but must conform outwardly to the law of England and accompany the Queen to Protestant service publicly.

It was felt by all those who favoured the match that the Spanish ambassadors in London and Vienna might have been more cordial in their support of it than they were; and both the Queen and Sussex were for ever trying to get at Philip's real desires in the matter. With the papers now before us, we see that if the Emperor was to be induced to give way on the question of religion, and England was to remain Protestant, the marriage would injure rather than benefit Philip's plans; whilst a thoroughly Catholic match, by which Elizabeth would have submitted to the Pope, would have cut the ground

from under her feet and made her the humble servant of Spain. This she knew better than any one, and however much Philip may have again deceived himself on the matter, there was never a shadow of a chance of such a match being made by her or consented to by her wisest councillors. Upon this rock the matrimonial hopes of the Archduke again split. Sussex remained with the Emperor until February, 1568, probably the only prominent English statesman who was sincere or honest in the negotiations, but was at last himself undeceived, and begged for his recall in deep disappointment and resentment against Leicester and his party, upon whom he laid the blame of the failure of his mission. A decent pretence was assumed on both sides that the project was still pending; and the Emperor was invested with the Garter with great pomp; but the matter was practically at an end on the departure of Sussex from Vienna: not altogether to Philip's displeasure, as he had lost all belief in the Queen's matrimonial professions, and was daily becoming more convinced of the impossibility of her humbling herself to the extent of accepting the Catholic conditions by which alone a marriage with his kinsman would be advantageous to him. Elizabeth, too, was in a better position now than she had been to drop the hollow negotiations, since the civil war in France, and Philip's own difficulties in the Netherlands and the South of Europe, secured her from present danger from either power, whilst the standing menace of Scotland had disappeared for the first time for years, as Mary was a prisoner with a cloud of doubt and disgrace hanging over her head.

Under these circumstances Elizabeth could rest somewhat from the long comedy of mystification about her matrimonial affairs, continuing, however, to keep her hand in by dallying with Leicester and occasionally smiling upon Heneage. An attempt was made nearly three years later, in December, 1570, to revive the negotiations for the Archduke's match by sending young Henry Cobham to the Emperor; but the device had at last grown too stale to deceive, and a cold refusal to entertain the matter was given, much to the indignation of Elizabeth, who now found that both her royal suitors had deserted her, Charles IX. having recently married a daughter of the Emperor.



CHAPTER V.

Marriage with the Duke of Anjou suggested—Guido Cavalcanti and La Mothe's negotiations—Walsingham's description of Anjou—Anjou's religious scruples—His objections overcome—Lord Buckhurst's mission to Paris—Anjou's conditions—Religious difficulties—The Ridolfi plot—Anjou obstinate again—Smith's mission to France—Marriage with the Duke of Alençon suggested—Great disparity of Age.

THE treaty of St. Germain between Charles IX. and the Huguenots, signed in August, 1570, brought to an end the long civil war in France. It had for some time been a favourite project of the Guises and the Catholic party in France to rescue Mary of Scotland by force, with the help of the Pope, marry her to the Duke of Anjou, and place her on the throne of England. Charles IX. was bitterly jealous of his brother Anjou, the hope of the Catholic league, and was desirous of providing for him somewhere out of France. Such a proposal, therefore, as that made for his union with Mary Stuart, met with some countenance from the King and his mother. Elizabeth and her ministers were not aware to what extent support would be given by Spain to such a project, which, whilst on the one hand strengthening the league, would on the other have given the French a footing in Great Britain; but with France at peace Elizabeth was always ap-

prehensive, and a counter-move had to be made. The two great Huguenot nobles who had resided in England during the war, the Vidame de Chartres and Cardinal Chatillon—Coligny's brother—were permitted to re-enter France by the peace of St. Germain; and to them and their party it appeared a desirable thing to disarm the weak, fanatical Catholic figurehead Anjou by yoking him, under their auspices, to strong-minded Protestant Elizabeth, and so remove him from active interference in French politics. Such a proposal, moreover, was a welcome one to Elizabeth and her friends, because it effectually checkmated the intrigues of the Guises and the league in favour of Mary Stuart, which for the moment were founded on the suggested marriage of the latter with Anjou. In the autumn of 1570, therefore, both Chatillon and Chartres, before they left England, separately broached the idea. Before doing so, however, Chartres wrote asking the opinion of Constable Montmorenci, and Chatillon sought guidance direct from the Queen-mother. The replies apparently being favourable Chartres mentioned the matter to Cecil, who discussed it privately with the Queen, whilst at the end of November Chatillon opened his approach by asking the new French ambassador, La Mothe Fénélon, how Anjou's suit with the Princess of Portugal was prospering, as he had reason to believe that if the Duke became a suitor for the Queen of England's hand he would be welcomed. La Mothe, who doubtless had already received his instructions from France, replied that he had always understood that the Queen had no intention of marrying, but if she would accept the Duke for her consort greater peace

and tranquillity to France and the world would result than from anything else. He promised to write to the Queen-mother on the subject, which he did at once.[1] But Catharine always preferred to negotiate through one of the many crafty Florentines who were personally devoted to her, rather than through the leaders of either French political party, so an excuse was invented for sending her trusty Guido Cavalcanti to England. La Mothe was ill when Guido arrived in London, and the latter called to ask after his convalescence. In conversation with the ambassador he mentioned Elizabeth's great indignation at the rebuff she had received through young Cobham from the Archduke Charles, who, to make matters worse, had since married a Bavarian princess. He then asked the ambassador whether he thought this would not be a good opportunity to bring Anjou forward. La Mothe's reply being favourable, Cavalcanti next approached Leicester, who was equally encouraging, and promised to revert to the subject when he returned from Hampton Court, whither he was then going to see the Queen. When La Mothe was told this by Cavalcanti, he thought it time to assert himself as the accredited ambassador, and at once went to Hampton Court personally. Before seeing the Queen he visited Leicester, and hinted that approaches had been made to him for a marriage between the Queen and Anjou, but as Leicester was regarded by the French as their best friend, he, the ambassador, had decided to carry the matter no further without his co-operation, so that he might have the credit of the negotiation. Leicester replied that he was

[1] La Mothe Fénélon Correspondence.

always against an Austrian alliance, and as the Queen was determined not to marry a subject, he would sacrifice his own chance in favour of Anjou's suit. The matter, he said, could be discussed fully when the Court returned to London, but in the meanwhile it would be well for La Mothe to say a word or two to the Queen about it. When Leicester introduced him into the presence, Elizabeth was awaiting him in her smartest clothes. After the usual coy fencing she said she was growing old, and but for the idea of leaving heirs, would be ashamed to speak about marriage, as she was one of those women whom men seek for their possessions and not for their persons. The princes of the house of France, she said, had the reputation of being good husbands, and to pay all honour to their wives, but not to love them. This was enough for the present, and La Mothe sent off post-haste to Catharine a full account of the interview, with no great confidence, as he said, of a successful termination of the affair; but the chance was so great a one that it should not be missed, and the Duke of Anjou should be carefully prepared. Catharine replied in the same strain. She had considered, she said, that this might be one of Elizabeth's intrigues with the intention of prolonging the negotiations and making use of the French in the meanwhile, and if the Queen of England had a daughter or heiress she would be a more fitting match for Anjou than the Queen herself. But still he (La Mothe) was to keep the matter alive on every opportunity, and push it forward as if of his own action. Catharine urged La Mothe that the greatest secrecy should be observed, but Elizabeth

could not refrain from gossiping about it, and it soon became common talk, much to the annoyance of La Mothe, who blamed the indiscretion of Chartres and Chatillon, who blamed each other. In conversation with the ambassador Elizabeth appeared entirely favourable to the match, but objected that although Anjou had reached manhood — he was just twenty—he was still much younger than she. "So much the better for your Majesty," replied he, laughingly. On another occasion he extolled the happiness of his young King Charles IX. with his bride, and advised all princesses in search of happy matrimony to mate with princes of the house of France. The Queen thereupon cited some rather conspicuous instances to the contrary, and said that it would not satisfy her to be honoured as a Queen, she must be loved for herself; and La Mothe duly gave the expected gallant reply. Chatillon was then announced and the ambassador retired. The Cardinal put the question point blank—would she accept the Duke if he proposed? To which she replied that on certain conditions she would. To his request that she would at once submit the proposal to the Council she at first demurred, but the next day she did so.[1] "One of the members only said that the Duke would be rather young, and that it would be well to consider deeply before they broke entirely with the house of Burgundy. The other members were silent, surprised to see her so set upon this marriage, which they have hitherto thought was merely a fiction. The Earl of Leicester is greatly dismayed at having been the instigator of it, but the Cardinal promises him a grand

[1] Correspondence de La Mothe Fénélon. La Ferrière.

estate and honours, and says he shall go to France to conclude it. The fickleness of the Queen makes it impossible to say whether the marriage will go forward or not. She has assured the Cardinal that she is free from any pledge elsewhere, and that she is determined to marry a prince and not a subject, whilst she has a good opinion of the character of Anjou."[1] This was in the third week of January, 1571; and on the 31st of the month La Mothe was entertained at a grand banquet, where he was seated next to the Queen. She was as usual sentimental, and afraid that she would not be loved for herself alone, but the ambassador assured her that the Prince would both love and honour her, and would in due time make her the mother of a fine boy. This being an aspect of the case upon which she liked to dwell, the Queen became more talkative but pledged herself no further. She was indeed so full of the subject that she could speak of nothing else. She consulted Lady Clinton and Lady Cobham, she discussed it with her other ladies, and the Court was filled with feminine tittle-tattle about Anjou's personal charms and supposed gallantries. With regard to the latter we may reserve our opinion; but of the former we are in good position to judge from contemporary portraits and descriptions of him. When the match had begun to look serious Walsingham was sent as ambassador to France, and before he went he had a long conversation with Leicester in his closet at Hampton Court, when the Earl asked him to send a description of the Prince to him as soon as possible after his arrival. On the 16th of January Leicester

[1] Spanish Calendar (Elizabeth), vol. ii. Spes to Philip II.

wrote to ask him for this description, and was evidently even then not very enthusiastic for the match. "I confesse our estate requireth a match, but God send us a good one and meet for all parties."

Walsingham, replying on the 28th, says he has had a good opportunity of seeing the prince, and describes him as being three inches taller than himself (Walsingham), somewhat sallow, "his body verie good shape, his legs long and thin but reasonably well proportioned. What helps he has to supply any defects of nature I know not. Touching the health of his person I find the opinion diverse, and I know not what to credit, but for my part I forbeare to be over curious in the search thereof, for divers respects. If all be as well as outwardly it showeth he is of body sound enough. And yet at this present I do not find him so well coloured as when I was last here."[1] He goes on to describe him as being haughty at first approach, but really more affable than either of his brothers. It will be seen that Walsingham, Puritan and ally of Leicester, was not very favourable to the match, and he was indeed regarded as opposed to it in the French Court.

Jean Correro, the Venetian ambassador, describes Anjou as being stronger built, of better colour, and more agreeable appearance than his brother, Charles IX., and says he was very fond of playing with the ladies of the palace; but Michaeli, another Venetian envoy, paints him in colours more familiar to us. "He is completely dominated," he says, "by voluptuousness; covered with perfumes and essences. He wears a double row of rings, and pendants at his ears, and spends vast sums on shirts and clothes. He charms

[1] Walsingham Correspondence.

and beguiles women by lavishing upon them the most costly jewels and toys."[1] Walsingham says that a portrait could not be sent to England, as it was forbidden to paint pictures of the King or his brothers, but a great French Catholic courtier[2] wrote to Walsingham, in the hope that he would transmit it to Elizabeth, the following glowing but insidious account of the young prince: "It is his misfortune that his portraits do not do him justice. Janet himself has not succeeded in depicting that certain something which nature has given him. His eyes, that gracious turn of the mouth when he speaks, that sweetness which wins over all who approach him, cannot be reproduced by pen or pencil. His hand is so beautiful that if it were turned it could not be more perfectly modelled. Do not ask me whether he has inspired the passion of love! He has conquered wherever he has cast his eyes, and yet is ignorant of one-hundredth part of his conquests. You have been persuaded that he has a leaning to the new religion, and might be brought to adopt it. Undeceive yourself. He was born a Catholic, he has lived the declared champion of Catholicism, and, believe me, he will live and die in the faith. I have, it is true, seen in his hands the psalms of Marot and other books of that sort, but he only had them to please a great Huguenot lady with whom he was in love. If the Queen, your mistress, be not satisfied with so worthy a person she will never marry. Henceforward the only thing for her to do is to vow perpetual celibacy."

Things went smoothly for the first few weeks,

[1] Baschet La Diplomatie venitienne. La Ferrière.
[2] Mémoires de Nevers.

although the French, warned by past experience, were determined not to be drawn too far unless Elizabeth showed signs of sincerity. But soon the Guises and the nobles of the league took fright, and the Pope's Nuncio personally exhorted Anjou not to be driven into such a match with a heretic woman who was too old to hope for issue by him. He told him that "England, which he was well assured was the mark he chiefly shot at, might be achieved, and that right easily too, by the sword, to his great honour, and less inconvenience than by making so unfit a match."[1] Walsingham, on the other hand, was not very active in pushing the suit. He evidently disbelieved in the Queen's sincerity, and he was probably right in doing so, notwithstanding her professions to him of her desire for the match. Whatever may have been in the Queen's own mind, the Walsingham Correspondence proves beyond question that the marriage was looked upon by Cecil as necessary at the time, and it would seem as if even Leicester and Walsingham were reluctantly drawn to the same opinion. Matters were indeed in a critical condition for England. The Ridolfi plot was brewing, the English Catholic nobles in a ferment, and the Pope, Philip, the league, and the Guises, ready to turn their whole power to the destruction of Elizabeth. Scotland was in revolt against the English faction, Alba was reported to be preparing for the invasion of England, and Thomas Stukeley was planning with Philip and the Pope his descent upon Ireland. It was a desperate, forlorn hope to think that the painted puppet in the hands

[1] Walsingham to Cecil, February 8, 1571. "Compleat ambassador."

of the Catholic party in France would change his religion for the sake of marrying Elizabeth, but for the moment there seemed no other chance of salvation for Protestant England. The Duke himself spoke slightingly of the Queen and the match. The Guises and the Spanish ambassador, says Walsingham, "do not stick to use dishonourable arguments to dissuade him from the same. They urge rather the conquest of England." Cecil, on the 3rd of March, told Walsingham from the Queen that if he were approached on the subject he was to say that the Queen was convinced of the necessity of marriage for the welfare of her realm and would only marry a prince. And then in a private note Cecil adds: "If God should order this marriage or any other to take place no time shall be wasted otherwise than honour should require. I am not able to discern what is best, but surely I see no continuance of her quietness without a marriage." Leicester, even, seems to have believed in the match taking place. He says he was so anxious for a personal description of the Duke because he finds that matter is likely to come into question, "and I do perceive her Majesty more bent upon marrying than heretofore she has been. God make her fortunate therein." Walsingham, in a letter to Leicester (March 9th) in reply, says the opinion is that "unless Anjou marries the Queen it will be most dangerous, as he will then turn to the Queen of Scots, since he must be provided for somewhere out of France." This, indeed, was almost the only hopeful element in the situation, the absolute need for the young King and his mother to deprive the French Catholic nobles of their royal figurehead. Charles IX. and

his mother tried their hardest to persuade Anjou to the marriage, but for a time without success. The Duke grew more and more scornful of the match under the influence of the monks by whom he was surrounded. The Huguenots, to whom it was a matter of life or death to get rid of the King's brother as chief of their enemies, sent Téligny to Charles IX. to complain of the Duke's attitude. The King replied that he was sufficient master of his brother to overcome every obstacle to the match unless it were that of religion. He said he would send his brother away from the Court so as to destroy the influence of the monks over him. Catharine at last despaired, and wrote to La Mothe deploringly that Anjou spoke disparagingly of Elizabeth's honour, and refused absolutely to marry her, notwithstanding all her prayers. "So, M. de La Mothe," she adds, "you are on the point of losing such a kingdom as that for my children." But a few days afterwards, by the aid of Cavalcanti, she apparently overcame her son's scruples, and on the 18th of February she wrote more cheerfully to La Mothe, saying that Anjou had consented to marry the Queen if he were asked.

Two days after this Lord Buckhurst, with a brilliant suite, arrived in Paris, ostensibly to congratulate Charles IX. on his marriage, but with secret instructions from the Queen to negotiate with Catharine again about the Anjou match. Fêtes and banquets, masques and coursing, kept Buckhurst brilliantly busy until the eve of his departure, when Cavalcanti came and asked him whether he would not like to see the new gardens of the Tuileries, of which Catharine was extremely proud. Buckhurst

went, and of course found there the Queen-mother, who expressed pleasurable astonishment at the unexpected meeting. She was glad, she said, to have the opportunity before he left of expressing to him the friendship of the King and herself towards his mistress, and their desire to strengthen it when opportunity offered. Time was short, and Buckhurst did not beat about the bush. "Your Majesty doubtless refers to the marriage of the Queen and the Duke of Anjou," he said. Catharine replied that if she and the King could feel sure that Elizabeth was not playing with them as she had done with others, they would be pleased with the match, always on condition that their honour did not suffer thereby. Buckhurst assured her that the Queen had instructed him to say that she was determined to marry a foreign prince, but as it was not becoming for a maiden to seek a husband, she could only say that when she was sought she would prove to them that no mockery need be feared. Buckhurst tried very hard to draw Catharine into a direct offer of her son's hand, but she would only say that if the Queen really wished to marry they were quite ready to enter into negotiations. Before Buckhurst left the next day, however, she sent him a written offer of her son's hand to the Queen, on certain conditions to be arranged. Elizabeth's attitude when she received this offer by Buckhurst convinces us that, however earnest some of her councillors may have been to bring about the marriage, she herself was playing her usual trick. On the 24th of March she wrote to Walsingham, telling him of the offer made to her through Buckhurst. It was her wish, she said, that only Walsingham and de Foix

should deal with the matter. It was her intention to marry some person of royal blood, and Walsingham was to tell the Queen-mother that his mistress knew full well that it had been reported that she did not intend to marry, but only to hear offers and "bruits of marriage from persons of great estate and then reject them." She was grieved to be so misunderstood. It is true that at the beginning of her reign she desired to live single, but the Queen-mother must recollect *whom* it was she rejected and how inconvenient such a marriage would have been. This, of course, referred to Philip II.'s offer, and was a very adroit turn, considering Catharine's own feelings towards her erstwhile son-in-law. Walsingham was, indeed, instructed to take credit for his mistress's abnegation and nobleness in refusing such a match. She was now resolved to marry, he was to say; but through all the instructions she cleverly avoided giving any specific pledge or encouragement to Anjou personally. Her language, indeed, is almost the same as that which she had employed eleven years before with the Austrian suitors. Amongst the characteristic passages in her letter is one in which she says that the Queen-mother's experience in marriage affairs would enable her to do all that was fitting in the case without pressing Elizabeth to take too direct a part: "Pray the Queen-mother not to be over-curious as desiring so precise an answer until the matter may be further treated of and explained, and not to think it any touch to the honour of her son to be named as a suitor to us, as others of as great degree have been, though the motions took no effect, rather for other impediments than for any mislike of their persons." [1]

[1] Walsingham Correspondence.

He was not to say more than needful about the conditions; but if he were pressed he was to suggest those adopted on Mary Tudor's marriage with Philip II. There was no desire, said Elizabeth, to urge Anjou to any change of conscience, but he could not be allowed to exercise in England a religion prohibited by the law, and must attend the Anglican Church for form's sake. Above all, the Queen-mother was to be assured that, whatever might be said to the contrary, Leicester was "ready to allow of any marriage that we shall like."

When Walsingham received this ambiguous letter things in Paris were looking less favourable. Unstable Anjou had again veered round to the Catholic side, and Spanish intrigues were active all over Europe to prevent the marriage. Anjou had just told de Foix that he knew it was "all dalliance," and reproached him for drawing him so far in the match. "I will take no step forward," said the prince, "unless a decisive reply is sent from England." When Walsingham learnt this from de Foix he saw that it would be unwise to repeat his mistress's words about religion, and simply told the Queen-mother that Elizabeth was disposed to accept the hand of the Duke of Anjou. But this was too dry an answer for Catharine, who well knew that affairs could not be arranged so easily, and told Walsingham as much. He replied that as Elizabeth did not wish La Mothe in London to deal with the affair, all points at issue might be settled by sending de Foix thither, which Catharine promised should be done shortly, but at present she preferred to send a "neutre," as she called Cavalcanti, upon whose penetration and faithfulness to her she knew

she could depend. It is clear that she still distrusted Elizabeth's sincerity, and she was undoubtedly correct in doing so. Leicester's letters to Walsingham [1] at the same time show that his mind ran in the same groove as that of the Queen. The Queen, he said, was determined to marry, but "wished to deal privately, for less reproach to both parties if nothing came of it." "The person of Monsieur is well liked of, but his conversation is harder to know." There was no difficulty about Anjou's person or estate, he said, but the Queen was firm about religion; whereat he, Leicester, rejoiced, and hoped that God would always keep her firm therein. He well knew that upon that rock he could always split the marriage barque when it looked too much like entering port.

Cavalcanti, who had only just returned from London and who could better than any man fathom the inner feelings of the English Court, doubtless made his mistress acquainted with the true state of affairs; and was again sent back to England with a draft of the conditions proposed on behalf of Anjou, which shows clearly the determination of Catharine that there should be no ambiguity in her son's position. Cavalcanti arrived in London on the 11th of April, 1571, but did not present his conditions until La Mothe had made a formal offer, in the name of the King of France, of his brother's hand. The Duke, he said, had long felt great admiration and affection for her, to which the Queen replied that the matter had already been mentioned to her by others. She then elaborately excused herself for the delay that had

[1] Walsingham Correspondence.

attended her other marriage negotiations, promised that no cause for complaint in this respect should exist in the present instance, and hoped that the French would not be too exacting on the point of religion. The next day they came to business. Cecil and Leicester were deputed to examine the draft contract; and Cecil's copy thereof is still at Hatfield and is printed by the Historical MSS. Commission in the Hatfield Papers, part 2.

The proposals, which are evidently such as Elizabeth could never have accepted, may be summarised as follows: (1) No ceremonies were to be used at the marriage but those in accordance with the religion of Monseigneur. (2) That he and his household should be allowed the free exercise of their religion. (3) That immediately after the marriage he should receive the title of king and govern and administer the country jointly with the Queen. (4) That he should be crowned after the consummation of the marriage. (5) That he should receive from the English revenues a life pension of £60,000 sterling a year. (6) That the issue of the marriage should succeed to the paternal and maternal properties in conformity with the laws of the countries where such property may be situate. (7) That in the event of the Queen's predeceasing her husband and leaving issue he was to govern the country as king on their behalf. (8) In case there were no issue Anjou was to still be paid his pension of £60,000 for life.

On the 14th Cecil submitted to the Queen the draft answer to be sent to these proposals, and after some alterations were made in it, Cavalcanti started for France with the English terms on the 17th of

April. This able State paper will also be found entire in part 2 of the Hatfield Papers (Hist. MSS. Com.), and appears to be a sincere attempt on the part of Cecil to compromise matters, although there are two or three points upon which the Queen probably depended to raise further difficulties if necessary to prevent the match. The marriage was to be celebrated according to the English rites, but Anjou's ministers might attend as witnesses, so far as might be necessary to legalise the marriage from his point of view. The Duke, however, was not required to act against his conscience if any of the ceremonies were openly offensive to the Catholic religion. Neither he nor his household were to be compelled against their conscience to attend Anglican worship, but the Queen's consort was expected to accompany her to church at suitable and accustomed times. He was forbidden to attempt to change any of the ecclesiastical laws or customs of England, or to favour those who violated them. He was not to allow, so far as he could help, the ceremonies of the English Church to be despised. He was to have the title of king and his status was to be fixed by the precedent of Philip and Mary, but he was not to be crowned. The Queen would undertake to supply him with such sums from the Treasury as she might consider necessary for the proper maintenance of his position. The French demands with regard to the issue of the marriage were practically conceded, but the demand for a life pension to continue even after the death of the Queen was refused.

Matters, however, were not brought even to this point without a great deal of finesse and wrangling between La Mothe and the Queen and many long

interviews with Cecil and Leicester. When Cavalcanti was about to depart La Mothe begged the Queen to write a letter to Anjou in answer to one he had sent to her. She, of course, was shocked; she had never done such a thing, the pen would fall from her hand, she would not know what to say, and so on. But the letter was written nevertheless, and a very curious production it is, full of worldly wisdom about the marriage proposals, but with plenty of fulsome flattery of Anjou's beauty, of his lovely hand, and his gifts of mind and body. She apparently thought herself entitled to a little flattery from La Mothe in return, and sighed that whilst in seven or eight years the Duke would be better looking than ever, she would have grown old. She then asked whether any one had spoken to the Duke about her foot, her arm, "and other things she did not mention," and said she thought the Duke very *desirable*, to which La Mothe replied, nothing loath, that they were both "very desirable," and it was a pity they were so long debarred from enjoying each other's perfections.[1]

All this was looked upon with dismay by the Spaniards and the league. Gerau de Spes, the Spanish ambassador in England, writes to his master[2] an assurance that the marriage will take place, and that the English are treating him more arrogantly than ever in consequence. "The real remedy," he says, "is that with which Ridolfi is charged." Nor were the ultra-Catholics in Paris less desperate. In vain Charles IX. assured Téligny that he would have

[1] Correspondence de La Mothe Fénélon.

[2] Spes to Philip, 10th and 15th of April, 1571. Spanish Calendar (Elizabeth), vol. ii.

his brother "away from the superstitious friars, and would in a few days work him, as he will yield to anything that he, the King, might require." The King said that his brother was every day growing less superstitious, but his Catholic courtiers left no stone unturned to make the match impossible. Soon after Cavalcanti had left London La Mothe went to see the Queen, and instead of smiles was received with frowns. She had just heard that a great gentleman in the French Court had openly stated that she had an incurable malady in one of her legs—this was a sore point with Elizabeth, who really suffered from an issue in the leg—and had said that this would be a good reason for Anjou to give her a "French potion" after he married her, and then marry the Queen of Scots. She was in a great rage, and threatened to make friends with the Spaniards again, but would not mention the name of the peccant courtier, which, indeed, she did not know. She afterwards told La Mothe she was sorry he had not seen her dance at the Marquis of Northampton's ball, so that he might be able to assure the Duke that he ran no risk of marrying a cripple. Cavalcanti arrived in Paris on the 24th of April, but Walsingham was unable to see the Queen-mother until the 27th, when an interview took place at St. Cloud. Catharine professed to be discontented with the religious conditions proposed by the English, and said that if her son submitted to them the Queen might blame herself for accepting as a husband a man so ready to change his religion as to prove himself without piety or conscience. Walsingham replied that the Queen did not wish him to change his religion

suddenly, or that he or his people should be forced to conform to the Anglican Church, but it would be a violation of the laws of her realm to allow him the exercise of his own faith. Troubles such as had recently afflicted France indeed might result therefrom. This did not please Catharine. Her son, she said, could never accept such a condition, which in effect was tantamount to a change of religion. If any troubles arose in England such as those feared, the support of France would be the best safeguard. When she saw that Puritan Walsingham was not to be gained in this way, she hinted that her son might more easily be brought to change his views by the influence of the Queen after his marriage, so that probably the objections they feared would not last long. The Catholics, she said, were afraid of the marriage, which they thought might cause a change of religion throughout Europe. Instructions at the same time were sent to La Mothe, who told Cecil that if the religious conditions were insisted upon the negotiation might be regarded as at an end. But this by no means suited the English Court. Cecil had been assured by the Huguenot partisans of the match that the French would give way on the crucial point of religion if Elizabeth stood firm; but when this appeared doubtful, Cecil himself moderated his tone, and a pretence of great cordiality and agreement between the French and English was carefully assumed in order to deceive the Spaniards. In this they were successful, and Spes writes to his king constantly that the match is practically settled and that Anjou was to turn Protestant. How necessary it was for Elizabeth to foster this belief

at the time (May, 1571) is clear when we recollect that Bailly, the Bishop of Ross' servant, had just confessed under the rack the heads of the Ridolfi plot. Step by step the clue was being followed up, and the vast conspiracy of Norfolk and the Catholic English nobles, with Mary of Scotland, Spain, the Pope, and the league, was being gradually divulged in all its ramifications. There was no room for doubt any longer. Spain and the Catholics were determined to crush Elizabeth, and henceforward it must be war to the knife between them. In such a struggle England, unaided, would have been at the mercy of the Catholic powers, and it was vital both for Elizabeth and Catharine de Medici that they should hold together for mutual support. It was necessary, therefore, that the negotiations should not be ostensibly dropped, and the Queen-mother requested that Elizabeth should submit her amended propositions. La Mothe had assured her that Elizabeth would yield on the point of religion if she only stood firm, and she, knowing the English Queen's extremity, was evidently determined to extort conditions equally favourable with those formerly granted by Elizabeth in the case of the Archduke Charles. As a somewhat disingenuous device Leicester suggested that the article of religion should be omitted altogether from the draft treaty, and to this Catharine consented. But as a point of honour she insisted that Elizabeth should at once send her counter-propositions as promised, and Walsingham plaintively begs over and over again that she should avoid "jealousy" by sending them without delay.

On the 20th of May Walsingham saw the Queen-

mother at Gaillon and laid before her the strong arguments which Elizabeth had for insisting upon the law of England being respected in the matter of the celebration of the Catholic religion. Catharine was forced to admit their weight, and said that she must consult the King and Anjou about them. Walsingham then went to see the Duke himself. He exerted on the young prince all his powers of persuasion; palliating and minimising points of difference, and suggesting compromise, but all to no purpose. "The Queen," said Anjou, "is, I am told, the rarest creature that was in Europe these 500 years." But this was a matter that touched his soul and conscience, and he could not forsake his faith even for such a prize.[1]

The next day Walsingham saw the King and his mother to beg them to exert pressure on Anjou. Let the Queen of England send her amended demands as promised, said they, and all reasonable concessions shall be made. De Foix and Montmorenci should be sent to England to conclude the treaty when the heads were agreed upon, and in the meanwhile efforts should be made to win over Anjou somewhat. De Foix himself was hardly so hopeful. He had done, he said, all that mortal man could do to persuade the Duke; but the constant influence of the Guises and their friends rendered the matter more and more difficult: "Monsieur being by them persuaded that it would be his hap to march with the forsaken." If, said de Foix, the Queen persisted in forbidding her husband the exercise of his faith the matter was at an end. But withal Walsingham thought this was simply bluff, and was assured by

[1] Foreign Calendar, Walsingham to Cecil, May 25, 1571.

some great Huguenot noble whom he does not name, but who was probably Coligny, that if the Queen stood firm she would have her way.

Some days afterwards Walsingham was still further encouraged by learning that Anjou was seeking advice and guidance about English affairs, and how to become popular with the people. At the beginning of June Anjou was ill in bed, and Cavalcanti went to visit him. He found the Duke in appearance almost eager for the match; but always on condition that his honour should be regarded in religion; and the King and Queen-mother were most enthusiastic and hopeful. This change of feeling was brought about by the receipt, after long delay, of the propositions from Elizabeth dated June 4, 1571, which will be found printed entire in the Hatfield State Papers, part 2. MSS. Com. The articles are mainly identical with the marriage treaty of Philip and Mary, and not a word is mentioned about religion at all. Cavalcanti was sent off post-haste to England almost as soon as the paper was received, to express the King's thanks to Elizabeth for her moderation. He would never forget her friendship, he said, and would also send at once M. L'Archant, the captain of Anjou's guard to England to formally announce the coming of de Foix and Montmorenci as plenipotentiaries to complete the contract. Still Catharine knew Elizabeth of old, and sent word privately to Cecil beseeching him not to let de Foix and Montmorenci come unless the Queen really meant business.[1] What Cavalcanti, or rather his mistress, thought is reflected in a remark he made to the Venetian ambassador

[1] Foreign Calendar.

in Paris a day or two before he left for England. The match, he said, would create a weight to balance the great power of the King of Spain, by uniting England and France in one interest, and he had now great hopes that it would take place.[1] Whilst Cavalcanti and L'Archant were awaiting the finishing of some portraits of Anjou they were to take with them, Catharine again saw Walsingham. She begged him as a private gentleman to tell her the best way to bring about the match. He said there were two things he wished—first, that they (the French) would not stand out stiffly about religion, and next "that there should be a more honourable sort of wooing." Her reply with regard to religion discloses a curious and artful intrigue by which Cardinal Lorraine, through Throgmorton, sought to catch Elizabeth. A form of English prayer, she said, had been handed to de Foix, which the Pope offered to authorise if the Queen would acknowledge to have received it from him, and this would obviate all difficulty. With regard to a "more honourable wooing," she must think, she said, of her son's dignity if the match were broken off. This distrust, Walsingham thought, arose from La Mothe's report of the Queen's indignant outburst about her rumoured lameness. De Foix sought to reassure Walsingham by telling him that Anjou would within a year be as forward in religion as any man in England, and related a story of the Duke's visit to Madame Carnavalet. Turning to her husband he said, "Carnavalet, thou and I were once Huguenots, and are now again become good Catholics." "Aye," says she, "and if you proceed in the matter

[1] Venetian Calendar.

you wot of you will be so again." Anjou put his finger on his lips and replied, "Not a word of that, good Carnavalet."[1] The lady herself told Walsingham that Anjou was not really against the reformed religion, but Sir Francis seems to have had as poor an opinion of his consistency, as of his mother's sincerity. He tells Cecil, June 20, 1571, that Anjou's religion depends entirely on his mother. It was she, he says, that made him so superstitious last Lent, so as not to lose her hold on the Catholics if this falls through. "What *her* religion is your lordship can partly guess."

In the meanwhile the Guises were moving heaven and earth to stop, or at least delay, the match, and that between Henry of Navarre and the King's sister Margaret. Better marriages both for brother and sister were promised. Hopes of the crown of Poland were held out to Anjou, detraction of Elizabeth was spread broadcast, plots in favour of Mary Stuart and plans to marry her went on unceasingly. Poor weak Anjou was wafted from side to side like a straw upon the wind. When Cavalcanti took the Duke's portrait to England he carried with him also that of the Princess of Cleves, to whom it was suggested Leicester might be married as a consolation. Marshal Tavannes thereupon told Anjou that since he was going to marry Leicester's mistress he had better return the compliment by marrying Leicester to his, Anjou's, mistress, Mdlle. Chateauneuf.[2]

L'Archant and Cavalcanti arrived in London towards the end of June, but Elizabeth had one of her diplomatic illnesses and they could not see her for

[1] Foreign Calendar. [2] Mémoires de Tavannes. La Ferrière.

a week. Their mission was only to thank her for the moderation of her proposals, and to request passports for the special ambassadors. The Queen evidently thought that matters were looking too much like business to please her. The sincerity of Cecil, and even of Walsingham, now, in their desire to bring about the match is undoubted; but it is equally certain that Elizabeth, as usual, wished to play off France against Spain, Protestant against Catholic, without burdening herself with a husband. So she once more harked back to the religious difficulty, and said it would be useless for the formal embassy to come until that point was settled. She was very amiable and gracious, coyly charmed at Anjou's portrait, full of protestations of friendship and affection, but on the vital point of allowing her consort the exercise of his faith, even privately, she would not budge an inch. With her own hands she wrote letters by L'Archant to the King, his mother, and Anjou. She had given, as was her wont, she said, a very straightforward answer. She was most anxious to banish all suspicion, and hoped they would take her answer in good part. To Anjou she wrote one of her usual ambiguous love-letters, saying that, although her rank caused her to doubt whether her kingdom is not sought after more than herself, yet she understands that he has found other graces in her. She is sorry she cannot come up to the opinion which L'Archant tells her the Duke has formed of her; but whatever she may lack she will never fail in her fraternal amity towards him.[1] With this cold comfort L'Archant had to go back. The Spanish ambassador in England, detected in

[1] Foreign Calendar.

his complicity in the Ridolfi plots, was fuming impotently, almost a prisoner in his own house, and in daily fear of expulsion, but he managed to send a courier who passed L'Archant on the road, and arrived in Paris two days before him. The false news he spread, to the delight of the Guises, was that L'Archant had been treated off-handedly, and the match might now be considered at an end. Some one told this to young Charles IX., who burst out that if any one dared to oppose the match in his presence he should forthwith be hanged. L'Archant and Cavalcanti were back in Paris on the 16th of July, and by some mischance saw the Duke first, when the latter was offended at the Queen's persistence in the matter of religion, and coldly sent the envoys to his mother. It did not suit Catharine to have the negotiations broken off, for she was now really alarmed at Philip's open support of the Guises and the league in France, and she was determined at all risks to cripple the Catholic power for harm against her. With her full connivance Navarre and Huguenots were arming privateers by the score at Rochelle and elsewhere, to aid the revolted Netherlands and prey on Spanish commerce, and she could not afford to fall away from the English friendship. So, discontented though she was with Elizabeth's persistence, both she and the King made the best of it, and affected to believe that all was going well. But they reckoned without Anjou. Neither his mother's tears nor his brother's threats could move him, for Cardinal Lorraine now had him in the hollow of his hand. The Guises, the Nuncio, and the Spaniards were untiring. They had surrounded Anjou with their friends, who could lead him as they liked, and

Catharine said she suspected that "Villequier, Lignerolles, and Sarret were the authors of all these fancies. If we were only certain, I can assure you they should repent it." One of them, Lignerolles, at all events, was soon after put out of the world by murder. The King came to high words more than once with Anjou himself. He had insulted the Queen of England, he told him, by his foolishness. Conscience, he was sure, had nothing to do with it, and Anjou was only moved by greed through a pension given to him by the Catholic clergy to be their champion. "I will let you know," cried the young King, "that I will have no champions here but myself." Anjou shut himself up in his rooms all day bathed in tears, but he would not yield. The Queen-mother herself sometimes pretended to take Anjou's part, and made a show of standing out about religion, but on this occasion no one was deceived by her, and Walsingham writes to Cecil, July 30, 1571, that she and the King are most anxious to be friendly with Elizabeth, and are sending de Foix to London with all sorts of offers and protestations to secure an alliance, even if the match fall through. They are growing, he says, daily more suspicious of Spain; and the King will not have Anjou here. Even Walsingham pitied poor abject Anjou, torn, as he says, from one side to the other. De Foix left for London on August 1st, but although a pretence of marriage negotiations was still kept up, it was acknowledged by all those who were interested that the affair was at an end, and that de Foix's real mission was to sound Elizabeth as to a new offensive and defensive alliance against Spain.

The envoy, who was a *persona grata* in England,

where he had long resided as ambassador, was received with marked distinction, and had eight audiences of the Queen. All the old arguments and hair-splittings about the observance of religion were gone over again. Sometimes the Queen appeared to give way, but the next day she would be obdurate again. Cecil himself was puzzled at her nimble gyrations, and wrote to Walsingham that "the conferences have had as many variations as there have been days." The Queen was withal gracious and full of protestations of friendship, and at the last audience the real hint was given which justified de Foix's mission. After finally satisfying him that if Anjou came he must conform to the Anglican Church, Cecil asked whether his instructions extended beyond the marriage nogotiations. De Foix said they did not, but this was enough, and he posted back to Paris with the hint, leaving Cavalcanti behind him. Before leaving, on September 6th, he suggested to Cecil that it might be well to send Sir Thomas Smith, who was well known in France, or some one else, to discuss the marriage, or a treaty, with the Queen-mother.

In the meanwhile, a somewhat curious change had taken place in Paris. Charles IX. had been informed, probably at the instance of the Catholic party, that the Huguenots, seeing Anjou so bigoted, were now opposing Elizabeth's marriage with him, and were proposing to her a match with Henry of Navarre, who was engaged to the King's sister Margaret. There was little or no foundation for this, but it served its purpose and frightened the King into distrust of the Huguenots ; and when de Foix arrived in Paris he found Charles IX. coolly acquiescent in

the Queen's refusal, and on the watch for signs of treachery from the Protestant party. Walsingham, in Paris, soon felt the effect; and on the 26th of September he wrote to Cecil that the Anjou marriage was absolutely at an end, and he was in great alarm to see that France and Spain were growing friendly. The smallest demonstration of this was sufficient to bring Elizabeth to her knees, and she at once sent Walsingham instructions to revive the marriage negotiations on any terms. He was even to give way on the crucial point of religion.[1] The very day upon which he received this letter, namely the 8th of October, his great confidant (probably Coligny) had told him how anxious the Queen-mother was for her son, the King, not to break with Elizabeth, and had asked him how she could bring about a match between the English Queen and her youngest son, the Duke of Alençon. Her interlocutor had scouted the idea, he said, but the seed was sown, which was probably all that Catharine wanted. Anjou had now openly stated that under no circumstances would he marry Elizabeth, even if she gave way on all points, so that he was no longer of any use as a piece in the game. Walsingham accordingly wrote back to Elizabeth saying that he would do his best to revive the negotiations, but he was not hopeful, and would keep his mistress's tardy surrender to himself until he "saw a better disposition here."

There is no doubt that Walsingham and Cecil were now thoroughly alarmed. The Queen-mother and the King were almost ostentatiously tending to the side of Spain. The Churchmen were busy pro-

[1] Foreign Calendar.

moting a marriage between Anjou and Mary Stuart, whilst the Queen-mother, for her part, was plotting with Cosmo de Medici for the wedding of her favourite son—"*her idol*," as her daughter called Anjou—to a Polish princess. The full discovery of Norfolk's plot in England, with its extensive ramifications abroad, the troubles in Scotland and Ireland, and the final rupture of diplomatic relations between England and Spain, were so many more black clouds gathering from all quarters over Elizabeth; and Cecil's letters to Walsingham at the time were almost despairing. The marriage, he said, was the only chance for the Queen's safety, and he thought now she was resolved to accept the King of France's conditions. But the French were now cold. Walsingham did his best to renew the talk of the marriage, but with little success, and earnestly urged upon the Queen to hold firm to the French friendship. But though Coligny was restored to high favour, and the murderers of the Guisan Lignerolles were immediately pardoned and favoured, the murmurs of the coming St. Bartholomew were already in the air, and Cecil was warned long beforehand of Coligny's danger. In October Walsingham fell ill, and went to England to recruit and discuss the perilous situation, Henry Killigrew being appointed temporarily to replace him. In the middle of December Sir Thomas Smith was despatched on a special mission to revive, at all costs, the talk of the Anjou match, or to negotiate the bases of a treaty. He was well fitted for the task; one of the first scholars in England who had been maintained by Henry VIII. at foreign Courts in order that his experience might

afterwards be useful. He had on more than one occasion been instrumental in settling treaties of peace between England and France, his witty, jocose method evidently suiting the temper of the Queen-mother and her advisers. His letters, some printed in the Hatfield Papers and the Foreign Calendar, and some in the "Compleat ambassador," are extremely graphic and amusing, in contrast with those of Walsingham, in which penetration and perspicuity are the salient characteristics.

Sir Thomas Smith and Killigrew arrived at Amboise, where the Court was, on January 1, 1572. His first interview was with de Foix, who assured him that Anjou was still firm on the question of religion. Smith said he did not think the last word had been said on that matter, but refrained from appearing anxious for an audience of the Queen-mother or the King until Coligny and Montmorenci had been sounded as to the best mode of procedure. De Foix went so far as to say that Anjou was religious mad, whereupon Smith replied that if he thought the Duke was really obstinate about it he "would soon turn tail," and thus save his mistress's honour. It is very evident that Smith had no belief in Anjou's devotion, for he tells Cecil that his "religion was really fixed on Mdlle. Chateauneuf and now in another place."

Smith had his first audience with the Queen-mother on the 6th of January. The King and the rest of them, he says, were busy dancing, when the Queen-mother took him apart into her chamber and opened the colloquy by saying that the only obstacle to the match was still the question of religion, as Anjou was so bigoted as to think that

he would be damned if he yielded the point. Smith then asked whether, in the event of Elizabeth giving way on this, the match would be carried through. "Well," replied Catharine, "that is the principal point, but still there are other questions which will have to be settled touching the honour and dignity of the Prince. Yet she assured the English envoy there was nothing they ever desired so much in their lives as the marriage, and they had not the slightest desire to break off. To this Smith replied that if they *did* want to break off the religious question would be the most honourable point of difference. Catharine assured him again of their sincerity, but deplored that Anjou was so "assotted." What more can he desire, asked Smith, than that which the Queen was now willing to concede; namely, that he should have free exercise of his religion, "only excepting such parts of the mass as were against God's words"? If he did not have full mass he thought he would inevitably be damned, said Catharine. The English envoy only gave way step by step. Suppose, he asked, the Duke were allowed to hear private mass in his own little chapel, would that do for him? No, replied the Queen-mother, he must have full, open, public mass; he was so devout that he heard three or four masses a day, and fasted so rigidly at Lent that "he began to look lean and evil-coloured," whereupon, she said, she was angry with him, and told him she would rather he were a Huguenot than thus hurt his health. No, she continued, he will not have mass in a corner, but "with all the ceremonies of the Romish Church, with priests and singers and the rest." "Why, Madame," quoth Smith, "then he

may require also the four orders of friars, monks, canons, pilgrimages, pardons, oil, cream, relics, and all such trumperies—that in nowise could be agreed to." He told Catharine of the cruel persecutions in England in the time of Mary, and the present disaffection of the English Catholics, "all of whom had their hands in the pasty of the late treason," and pointed out the danger of allowing them again to raise head in England. This touched the Queen of England's extremity, and Catharine diplomatically added fuel to the fire by saying that Alba had hired two Italian assassins to murder Elizabeth. Killigrew interposed here, thinking perhaps that Smith had made a *faux pas*, and said that the same party had not scrupled to use their arts against Catharine's own blood, and hinted that the flower of her flock, the beautiful Elizabeth of Valois, Philip's third wife, had been sacrificed by them. But Killigrew's French was weak, and instead of saying "Votre fille perdue," he said "Votre fille perdrie," which made the Queen-mother laugh whilst her eyes filled with tears at the thought of her gentle daughter lying dead in the convent of barefooted Carmelites in far-away Madrid. At this point de Foix was summoned to the conference, and Smith called him to witness that whereas the Queen of England had always refused to concede the exercise of the mass at all, the Queen-mother now demanded "high mass, with all the public ceremonies of the Church, with priest, deacon, sub-deacon, chalice, altar, bells, candlesticks, paten, singing-men, the four mendicant orders, and all the thousand devils." [1] They laughed at Smith's vehemence, but they understood as well as he the

[1] Foreign Calendar.

dire straits in which his mistress was, and stood firm. The next day de Foix and the Bishop of Limoges had another conversation with the English envoys, whom they told that Anjou "would nothing relent," and that the King was very angry with him for his obstinacy. Smith said he would rather die than lead his Queen to consent; whereupon de Foix appears to have hinted again at Alençon, or an alliance without a marriage, but of this Smith would say nothing, and closed the interview. As a matter of fact Elizabeth was deeply mortified at the cool dilatoriness with which her advances were being received. It was almost a new experience for her. Hitherto, with one exception, she had only had to soften somewhat to bring her suitor to her feet again, but now Anjou was openly scorning her and his mother and brother receding as the English Queen advanced. It was mainly a game of brag on the part of Catharine, who was really as anxious as Elizabeth at the time to maintain a close connection between England and France. Alençon and his brother Anjou were, says Smith, like Guelph and Ghibelline, the former surrounded only by those of "the religion," whilst the latter's suite and courtiers were all "Papists." Catharine had not apparently yet been won over to the view that her own interests would be served by allowing the Catholic party complete domination, and their opponents to be massacred; and when she was so persuaded, and the St. Bartholomew had been perpetrated, she soon found out her mistake and took up her old policy again. The day following the interview just mentioned, Cavalcanti came to Smith with a formal copy of Anjou's demand; namely,

that he should have full religious liberty in England. Smith writes to Cecil on the 9th of January, giving an account of his reception of the document. He affected to be perfectly shocked at the terms, and said he dared not send them to his mistress, which really meant that before being quite off with the old love he wished to have some advance from the new. He asked Cavalcanti to suggest to the Queen-mother whether she could not think of some salve to accompany this bitter pill. Cavalcanti knew what he meant, and said something about Alençon, but Smith says he pretended to be too much perturbed to hear, "for I will have it from the Queen-mother's own mouth." Catharine sent word that she was grieved that the paper had disturbed Smith so much, and would be glad to see him. The next day she sent a coach for him and Killigrew, and they were accompanied to the Court by Castelnau de la Mauvissière and Cavalcanti. She hoped, she said, that his mistress would not break amity with them on this matter, as she and the King were very earnest, and trusted the Queen of England would have pity upon them. She had another son who, if the Queen would consent to "phantasy him," would make no scruple about religion. She also hinted at a national alliance, and asked Smith whether he had powers to negotiate. He told her he must await further instructions, but as to the Duke of Alençon, if the Queen were as much astonished at Anjou's demand as he was, she would not lend ear to any other proposition from them of the sort. He could not, he said, write to the Queen about it, but would sound Cecil; and himself would meet any French statesman the Queen-mother might appoint to "rough

hew" a treaty. Smith's firmness had its reward, and the Queen-mother softened considerably. She had the envoys assured that in order to pacify Elizabeth Alençon should be sent to England unconditionally. Their evident anxiety inspired Smith with high hopes. "Never," he said, "was there a better time than now for a marriage or a league," and he begs Cecil to urge the Queen to lose no time nor to procrastinate, "as is commonly her wont." Killigrew, for his part, was just as hopeful, and wrote to the Queen that "Papists and Huguenots alike all wish Alençon to go to England, and he is very willing, although Anjou is against it. Alençon," he says, "is not so tall or fair as his brother, but that is as is fantasied. Then he is not so obstinate, papistical, and restive like a mule, as his brother is. As for getting children, I cannot tell why, but they assure me he is more apt than the other."[1]

In the meanwhile the "rough hewing" of the treaty of alliance went on, but to all attempts to draw him about the Alençon proposals Smith was dumb until he could receive instructions from England, which did not come; so the indispensable Cavalcanti was sent over to broach the matter there. La Mothe Fénélon, the French ambassador in England, had some months before looked coldly upon the suggestion of a match between Alençon and the Queen, and had told Catharine that he feared such a proposal would cause offence; but, urged by the Queen-mother and her emissary, Cavalcanti, he broached the matter to Cecil one day at the end of January as he was coming from a long interview with the Queen. Have you spoken to

[1] Foreign Calendar.

the Queen about it? said Cecil. La Mothe said he had not, and Cecil told him to keep it secret until they two had put themselves in accord on the subject. Smith's repeated letters in favour of the idea, and La Mothe's advances, at last decided him to open the suggestion to the Queen. She naturally at once objected to the great disparity of ages—she was nearly thirty-nine and Alençon was not seventeen—and then she asked Cecil what was Alençon's exact height. He is about as tall as I am, replied the lord treasurer. "You mean as tall as your grandson," snapped the Queen, and closed the conversation.[1] Elizabeth's vanity had been wounded by the way in which the French had played fast and loose with her about Anjou, and she was somewhat restive; but Cecil and most of the English ministers were better pleased with Alençon than with his brother, first because he had been always attached to the Huguenots by his diplomatic mother, and would make no difficulty about religion; and secondly, as he was not the next heir to the French crown, the danger which might arise in the event of his succession was more remote.

On Sunday, the 9th of February, a grand masque and tourney were given by Catharine de Medici, apparently for the purpose of showing off her youngest son to the English envoys. He and his brother the King, splendidly dressed and mounted, with six followers aside, tilted at the ring, the Queen-mother the meanwhile pointing out the perfections of the younger, who, she told Killigrew, was rather richer than his brother Anjou.

[1] La Mothe Fénélon Correspondence. La Ferrière.

CHAPTER VI.

Interview of Walsingham and Smith with Catharine de Medici respecting Alençon—Treaty between England and France—Cavalcanti's negotiations—Montmorenci's mission to London — Walsingham's description of Alençon—La Mole's visit to the Queen—The Alençon match prospers—The St. Bartholomew—Resumption of negotiations — Alençon's first letter to the Queen — Maisonfleur's mission—Special embassy of Castelnau de la Mauvissière—Civil war in France—Anjou elected King of Poland—Disappears as a suitor for Elizabeth's hand.

On the 21st of March Walsingham, who had now returned to his post, was walking with Smith in the park at Blois, when by accident or design they met the Queen-mother. A quaint account of the interview with her is given in a letter from Smith to Cecil dated the following day. They were speaking of the Duke of Norfolk's conspiracy, when the Queen-mother seized the opportunity of once more trying to urge the suit of her youngest son. "I would," she said, "that the Queen were quiet from all these broils; doe you (Smith) know nothing how she can fancie the marriage with my son the Duke of Alençon?" "Madam," said Smith, "you know me of old; I can affirm nothing except I have some good ground. Why, if she be disposed to marrie, I do not see where she shall marrie so well; and yet, saith she, I may as a mother be justly accounted

partial, but as for those which I have heard named, as the Emperor's son or Don John, they be both lesser than my son is, and of less stature by a good deal, and if she should marrie it were pity any more time were lost. Madam, quoth I, if it pleased God that she were married and had a child, all these braggs and all these treasons would soon be appalled, and on condition that she had a child by M. d'Alençon, for my part I care not if ye had the Queen of Scotland here, for you would then take as good care of her as we do." Catharine de Medici confirmed this view, and said that there was no reason why they should not have several children. "And if the Queen," she said, "could have fancied my son Anjou, why not this one, of the same house, father and mother, and as vigorous and lusty as he, and rather more? And now he beginneth to have a beard come forth, for that I told him the last day that I was angry with it, for I was now afraid he would not be so high as his brethren. Yea, Madam, I said, a man doth commonly grow in height to his years, the beard maketh nothing. Nay, said she, he is not so little; he is as high as you, or very near. For that, Madam, quoth I, I for my part make small account, if the Queen's Majesty can fancie him, for Pepin the short did not reach his wife's girdle and yet had Charlemagne. It is true, said she, that it is heart and courage and activity that is to be looked for in a man. But have you no word of your Queen's affection that way? Can you give me no comfort?" But Smith was not to be drawn out of his reserve without special instructions from England, and these did not come; so that although the conversation continued

in the same strain for a long time, Catharine could get nothing definite in the way of encouragement to Alençon.

In the meanwhile the "rough hewing" of the treaty had been steadily going on, and on the 19th of April the draft protocol was signed at Blois. Aid was to be given unofficially by both nations to the revolted Hollanders; the fleets of Protestant privateers in the Channel were to be sheltered and encouraged, and, above all, the Huguenot Henry of Navarre was to marry Margaret of Valois, the King's sister. Catharine wrote a letter to Elizabeth on the 22nd of April, through Smith, expressing her joy at the prospect of peace and harmony in France, which the treaty and her daughter's marriage held out, and Marshal de Montmorenci and de Foix were sent as a special embassy to England for the ratification of the formal alliance, whilst Lord Admiral Clinton, the Earl of Lincoln, was to proceed to France for a similar purpose. The Protestant party in France were thus for the moment victorious all along the line, and the connection between England and France closer than it had been for many years. Catharine, naturally desirous of securing a double hold upon England whilst these relations lasted, by settling her youngest son as Elizabeth's consort, instructed Montmorenci to make a formal offer of his hand to the Queen. As usual, Cavalcanti was sent over as a harbinger, and took with him a flattering portrait of the Prince, which was given to the Queen through Leicester. Alençon was deeply pitted with the small-pox from which he had recently suffered, and otherwise was far inferior in appearance to his brother Anjou, so

that to a person of Elizabeth's temperament he was less likely to be acceptable. She had, moreover, obtained by the treaty of Blois the close alliance with France and the predominance of the Huguenots which she desired, and could therefore afford to hold off somewhat in the marriage negotiations in which she personally had never been sincere. She accordingly instructed Lord Lincoln [1] that if any mention were made to him of the marriage, he might say that he believed she considered she had not been well treated in the Anjou business; and moreover the disparity of years between herself and Alençon was so great as in her opinion to be a complete "stay" to the match.

Montmorenci and de Foix arrived in London on the 13th of June and were lodged at Somerset House, their entertainment being the most lavish and splendid that had been seen in England for many years. After the swearing of the alliance on the 15th at Westminster, the ambassadors had audience of the Queen and presented her with Catharine's letter offering the hand of her son. She again objected to her suitor's youth, and sustained the discussion with Montmorenci until supper was announced. Subsequently, at Windsor, he returned to the charge, when Elizabeth once more raised the religious question. The ambassador said they would be contented with the concessions which Smith had offered at Blois when Anjou was under discussion. But matters were changed now, and the Queen said she did not recollect to have made any such concessions; besides which the difference of age was so great as to be an obstacle. De Foix replied that the dis-

[1] Foreign Calendar, May 25, 1572.

proportion was not so very great after all. Alençon was strong and vigorous, capable of begetting children, whilst she who was used to command would be better pleased with a young and docile husband than with an older one. There was much beating about the bush on the religious question, but the ambassadors made it evident that Alençon was not a bigot like his brother, and that no great stand would be made on that point. On their departure, therefore, at the end of the month the matter was still left in suspense.

As soon as they had gone Burleigh sent some account of their visit to Walsingham in France. "They were," he says, "entertained as never before in man's memory. The honour done them also by the Queen was such as she could do no more. All the higher nobility attended them, the only difference from the Lord Admiral's entertainment in France being that no lord but my Lord Leicester entertained them, saving I at Midsummer eve did feast them and all their gentlemen with a collation of all things I could procure, not being flesh to observe their manner." He deplores that the presents of plate given to the ambassadors were not so great as he would have wished, although they both got "cupboards of plate and Montmorenci also a great gold cup of 111 ounces." With regard to Alençon, "they got neither yea nor nay, only a month's delay."

But at the end of the letter it is clear that Elizabeth, who was not now in such a hurry, was determined if she did marry to drive as hard a bargain as possible. Walsingham is instructed to get full information of the Prince's age, stature,

condition, devotion, &c., with all speed, for the Queen; and Burleigh assures his correspondent that he sees no lack of will in the Queen but on account of Alençon's age. "If we could counterbalance that defect with some advantage such as Calais for their issue, he being governor for life."[1] Otherwise, he says, he doubts the result, as the Queen mislikes Alençon's youth and appearance.

In the meanwhile Lincoln came back from Paris loaded with 2,800 ounces of gilt plate, worth, says Walsingham, 10s. per ounce, and full of the magnificence and gaiety of his entertainment in France. His stay had been one succession of splendid feasts, and Alençon especially had treated him with marked distinction. Coligny and the great Huguenot chiefs had emphatically praised the young Prince to him, and Lincoln came back to his mistress greatly impressed with all he had heard and seen, and assured her that Alençon, far from being inferior, was better than his brother, both in bearing and credit. She characteristically objected that he was not nearly so good-looking, and that the small-pox had not improved him. Lincoln's favourable opinion was to a great extent confirmed by Walsingham's report to Cecil. The Duke, he said, was born on the 25th of April, 1555, and his stature is about the same as that of Lord Lincoln. He was reputed to be prudent and brave, but also somewhat feather-headed, which, says Walsingham, is a common fault with his countrymen. Coligny was in great hope of him in religion, and thought he might soon be brought to a knowledge of the truth; and Walsingham concludes his good

[1] "Compleat ambassador."

character of the Prince by hinting that he was really in love with the Queen. But it will be noticed that he says not a word as to his physical charms, which indeed could not compare with his brother Anjou's somewhat effeminate beauty. He is thus described at the time by the Venetian ambassador in Paris. "His complexion is swarthy and his face pitted with small-pox, his stature small but well set, his hair black and curling naturally. He wears it brushed up from the forehead, which lengthens the oval of his face. He affects popular manners, but his prodigal promises of reforms are only a cloak for his unbridled desire for trouble and dissension." [1]

On the 20th of July the Queen sent instructions to Walsingham saying that "although the forbearing of her Majesty's consent to the motion of Marshal Montmorenci for a marriage with the Duke of Alençon was grounded on their ages, yet a greater cause of misliking proceeds from the report made by all of his great blemish in his face by means of small-pox, which is such that none dare affirm to her Majesty the good liking of him in that respect," [2] and Walsingham is directed to let this view be known to the Queen-mother, as if coming from himself without instructions. The Queen herself wrote a letter to Walsingham at the same time, going over the whole ground. She says she was moved by the importunity of Montmorenci to consider the match, notwithstanding her treatment in the matter of Anjou and the youth of Alençon, but "has now spoken to Lord Lincoln and others from France,

[1] Tomaseo, "Ambassadeurs venetiens." Ferrière.
[2] Foreign Calendar.

and finds the conditions and qualities of the said Duke nothing inferior to the Duke of Anjou, but rather better liked. But as to visage and favour everybody declares the same to be far inferior, and especially for the blemishes of small-pox; so, the youngness of his years being considered, she cannot bring herself to like this offer, especially finding that no other great commodity is offered with him, whereby the absurdity that the general opinion of the world might grow, might in some measure be recompensed." Walsingham is to decline with thanks. She has no lack of desire for their friendship but, really, the ages of her suitor and herself were too disproportionate, particularly "as she cannot hear of anything which may countervail the inconvenience."[1] She again repeats that although the *official* objection is Alençon's youth, yet his pock-marked visage has had a large share in personally influencing her to refuse the offer, unless indeed some great countervailing advantage—such as the restoration of Calais—could make her forget it. In another letter, a few days later, she enlarges upon these points, but says that the only way to overcome the difficulty will be for them to meet and see whether they could fancy each other. But she knew that this trick to feed her vanity was getting stale, and foresaw the answer. If, she says, the King and Queen-mother reply that it is not usual for princes of the house of France thus to go on approval, and that she only makes the suggestion for the purpose of increasing her own reputation and not to marry him, Walsingham is to point out that the prize he aims at is a great one and worth

[1] Foreign Calendar.

some small sacrifice. If they hold out on the point, Walsingham is to propose that the question of religion should be left open, so that it may be used as an excuse for breaking off, if she and Alençon do not fancy each other when they meet, and thus the Prince's *amour propre* may be saved. The reason why Elizabeth was again presenting the bait of marriage is not far to seek. A few days before this letter was written an answer came from Charles IX. to the Queen's letter taken by Montmorenci. The French king was already beginning to cry off of his bargain about aiding the revolted Netherlands against Philip. Pressure was being brought to bear upon him from the Pope and the Emperor, whispers of Huguenot plots and treasons against him were instilled into his ears from morn till night by his Catholic nobles; and the Queen-mother herself had taken fright at the arrogance of the now dominant Protestant party, who were riding roughshod over their enemies. Paris was in a ferment at the supersession of its beloved Guises; and Charles IX. and his mother felt that in avoiding the Scylla of Catholic subjection they had fallen into the Charybdis of complete Huguenot thraldom. Their connection with the "Englishwoman" had gone too far for the patience of Paris, and the King's throne was in danger. As usual, the cooler he grew towards the English alliance the more openly was the bait of marriage held out by the Queen. There was an additional reason, too, for his holding back. The Huguenot force under Genlis, which had entered Flanders, had been completely crushed and routed by Don Fadrique de Toledo, and it was clear to Charles IX. that unless he could

disconnect himself from the unsuccessful attempt, he might be dragged down by the overthrow of the Huguenot party. On the day, therefore, that the news of Genlis's defeat reached Paris the King was closeted for hours with Montmorenci, and the result of this conference was the dispatch the same night of a young noble named La Mole to England. He was a mere lad, a great friend of Alençon's, and the reason for choosing him was that he might fittingly seem to be pressing Alençon's suit, and so keep Elizabeth from quite breaking away, whilst really his object was to dissociate the King from any act of hostility against Spain in Flanders, and thus practically to withdraw from the treaty of alliance of which the ink was hardly yet dry.

La Mole travelled post night and day, and arrived in London only on the fourth day after he had left Paris: he brought flattering letters of introduction from Walsingham, Montmorenci, and Coligny, whose main hope, it is clear to see by his letter, now rested upon Alençon's marriage with the Queen. La Mole arrived in London on the 27th of July, and on the following night at eleven o'clock Burleigh had a long private interview with him and La Mothe Fénélon at the house of the latter. The Queen was on her progress towards the splendid visit to Kenilworth, and it was some days before her decision with regard to receiving La Mole could arrive. He started from London with La Mothe Fénélon on the 1st of August, and reached the Queen on the night of the 3rd, Sunday. He was at once secretly introduced into the Queen's chamber, Leicester, Smith, and La Mothe Fénélon alone being present. The Queen, we are told, was

full of graciousness and caresses,[1] for the envoy was young and gallant, but she could hardly have been pleased with his mission. "His King," he said, "could not openly declare himself in the matter of Flanders, as she desired . . . as otherwise it would provoke a league of the Pope, the King of Spain, the Venetians, and others against which he could not defend himself. He was against any rash action. The King of Portugal had a large force of 12,000 or 15,000 men, and he was assured the Duke of Savoy was fully armed—all this must be considered before any bold step was taken."[2] The next day La Mole went openly to the palace ostensibly only as an emissary from Alençon, "with all the tricks and ceremonies of the French and these people. He is still at Court, being feasted and made much of."[3] The Queen, indeed, was so pleased with him that she carried him to Kenilworth where a grand supper was given specially in his honour, at which Elizabeth herself presided and drank the young envoy's health. The next day he and La Mothe were entertained at dinner by Cecil, and Elizabeth was again present. After dinner she fully explained her new position towards the Alençon match with her usual nimble *volte face*, to suit the changed circumstances. La Mothe Fénélon gives an account of the conversation as if the Queen's expressions were quite spontaneous; but it is instructive to note that everything she said was carefully drawn up by Cecil, and the interesting paper is still at Hatfield.[4] They (the French), she said, had quite misunderstood Walsingham. It

[1] Spanish Calendar (Elizabeth). [2] Ibid. [3] Ibid.
[4] Hatfield Papers, Hist. MSS. Com., part 2.

would have been absurd for her to have said that her marriage with Alençon was impossible and immediately afterwards to have suggested a meeting between them. She only raised certain difficulties as to their ages, religion, and the like, but these might doubtless be overcome. And so she again holds out her hand, smooths away obstacles, suggests a meeting between the Duke and herself, proposes the adoption of the Anjou articles, with the exception of religion, which she and Alençon will settle between them, and generally opens wide once more the door for negotiation. At this and subsequent interviews at Kenilworth she exerted all her powers of fascination upon La Mole and La Mothe, who were both ready enough to flatter her to the top of her bent. She played her spinet to them, sighed that she was determined to marry and must see the Duke at once, and persistently set her cap at young La Mole as proxy for his master. Solid Cecil and jocose Smith appear to have been almost as much carried away as La Mole. They both wrote to Walsingham the belief that at last the affair would prosper in good earnest, if only the lover would take the trouble to run over to England and see the object of his affection. There are plenty of ways, said Smith, of coming over; and he would do more in an hour than we could do in two years—"Cupido ille qui vincit omnia in oculis insidet," and so on. Everything seemed to be prospering in the wooing, though the Queen herself was no more in earnest than before; and doubtless she and Leicester laughed in their sleeves at the way they were hoodwinking some of the keenest eyes of both nations. One person they certainly

did not deceive, and that was Catharine de Medici; for at the very moment when all this billing and cooing was going on the massacre of St. Bartholomew was being planned, and the person who was being kept in hand and cajoled into a false sense of security, notwithstanding the refusal of Charles IX. to help the Hollanders, was Elizabeth herself. But deceived though she was, she had prudence enough to mistrust the curious new attitude adopted by the French, whose one object was to draw her into a position of overt enmity to Spain in the Netherlands, whilst Charles IX. deprecated taking up such a position for himself. La Mole's blandishments were not powerful enough for this; and after twenty days' stay he and La Mothe left the Queen with great professions of love and affection and a gold chain worth 500 ducats for the young envoy, and came to London, where they arrived on the 27th of August. On the same day there arrived at Rye two couriers from Paris, one with letters from Walsingham to the Queen, and the other with despatches for La Mothe Fénélon, the French ambassador. Acting by order the English courier immediately on his arrival caused the authorities of the port to seize the papers of the other courier and send them together with Walsingham's letters in all haste to the Queen at Kenilworth. The Queen was out hunting when they arrived, and read in them first as she rode the news of St. Bartholomew — overwhelmed with the great tragedy which seemed to be as much directed against herself as against the French Huguenots. All rejoicings were stopped, mourning garb was adopted, and long, anxious conferences took the

place of gay diversion. Before the Queen herself received the news the dire calamity had become known in London. Terrified Huguenots by the hundred, flying, as they thought, from a general massacre, were scudding across the Channel to the English ports in any craft they could get. From mouth to mouth spread the dreadful story, growing as it spread, and for a time London and the Court were given up to panic at what was assumed to be a world-wide murderous conspiracy against Protestantism. The treachery of the French was especially condemned, and La Mole lost no time in getting away from a country where he could be of no more use. La Mothe was ordered by Elizabeth to keep in his house until the safety of her ambassadors in France could be ascertained, and for several days La Mothe himself was but imperfectly informed as to what had happened on Navarre's terrible wedding-day. It was not until the 7th of September that the Queen received him at Woodstock on her way to Windsor. She and her Court were in deep mourning, and La Mothe was received in silence and with no greeting from the Queen except a cold inquiry whether the news she had heard was true. He made the best of the sad story; repeated the assertion that there was a plot of Coligny and the Huguenots to seize the Louvre; urged that the massacre was unpremeditated, and that the King was obliged to sacrifice Coligny to save himself. In the midst of his reading the King's letter Elizabeth interrupted the ambassador and said that her knowledge of events would suffice to prevent her from being deceived, or giving entire credit to

the King's assertions; but even if they were all true, she did not understand why harmless women and children should have been murdered.[1] La Mothe urged the continuance of the French friendship, but Elizabeth knew that such friendship would be a false one so long as the Guises ruled in the Councils of the King, and dismissed La Mothe with a plain indication of her opinion.

Philip and the Catholics were of course overjoyed, and the Guises soon made their heavy hands felt. And then, not many days after the massacre, Catharine de Medici saw the mistake she had made, and tried so far as she could to retrace her steps, by again raising hopes of the Huguenots and redressing the balance of parties. She accordingly sent Castelnau de la Mauvissière, a moderate man known in England, to Walsingham for the purpose of once again bringing the Alençon match forward. Walsingham, sick with the horrors he had lately witnessed, bluntly told him he had no belief in their sincerity, and in a subsequent interview with Catharine he repeated the same to her, much to her indignation. But Walsingham carefully reported that Alençon himself was entirely free from complicity in the massacre, which he openly and loudly condemned, taking the side of the Huguenots and swearing with Henry of Navarre to avenge the murdered admiral. He was closely watched at Court, and was for long meditating an escape and flight to England. On the 21st of September he had a private interview with Walsingham, whom he satisfied of his good faith personally, and on the

[1] Spanish Calendar (Elizabeth), and La Mothe Correspondence.

following day he signed a letter to Elizabeth which was the beginning of the extraordinary correspondence which continued for years, most of which still may be found at Hatfield.[1] The body of the letter is written by a secretary, and is full of the most fulsome flattery of Elizabeth, of "her rare virtues and infinite perfections." "His affection and fidelity for her are such that there is nothing in the world, however great or difficult it may be, that he would not willingly do in order to render her more certain thereof;" and with this he begs her to listen to what will be said on his behalf by the bearer of the letter, a certain L'huillier, seigneur de Maisonfleur. At the bottom Alençon has scrawled a postscript himself in his ridiculously illiterate boyish French, saying, "Madame je vous supli mescuser si sete letre nest toute escripte de ma min, et croies que nay peu faire autrement." Maisonfleur was a strangely chosen emissary for such a mission. He had been a follower of the Guises and a sergeant-carver to Catharine, and was now a Protestant and an equerry of Alençon. It was arranged that after seeing Elizabeth, he should return to Dover and receive Alençon, who had planned to escape and sail for England. When Maisonfleur arrived at Court he found the Huguenot nobles who were with the Queen had told her something of his history and she refused to give him audience. Either for this reason or from the Duke's misgivings Alençon's flight to England on this occasion fell through, and Maisonfleur returned to London from Dover without having seen his master. After his return he managed to obtain access of the Queen, and gradu-

[1] Hatfield Papers, Hist, MSS. Com., parts 2 and 3.

ally broke down her distrust. In a letter of great length, dated December 1st, he wrote to his master under the name of Lucidor, giving him an encouraging account of Elizabeth's attitude, and urging him to fulfil his former intention of escaping to England. He says: "She would not use the short word you desire, but her heart seemed to speak to me through her eyes—'Tell him to come and to despair of nothing; if I marry any prince in the world it will be he.'"[1] He urges Alençon that it will be useless to attempt to bring about the match by ordinary diplomacy, and above all by the intervention of Madame la Serpente, as he calls Catharine de Medici, the deepest distrust prevailing of the ruling powers in France since St. Bartholomew. The only way, he says, will be for Don Lucidor to strike out a line independent of his relatives, to break with the Catholics, draw to his side the Huguenots, and the German and Swiss Protestants, come over and marry Madame L'isle (Elizabeth) and become a great sovereign. Maisonfleur, in a postscript which he showed to Burleigh, laid down full instructions for Alençon's escape and urged him to bring Navarre and Condé with him, but only a few attendants, amongst whom should be La Mole, to whom he also wrote begging him to urge his master to escape.

A few days before this letter was written Castelnau de la Mauvissière arrived in London with great ostentation, as a special ambassador from the King of France. He was a *persona grata* with Elizabeth, and his task on this occasion was to smooth down the distrust and asperity caused by the St. Bartholomew and thus to induce her to

[1] Hatfield Papers, Hist. MSS. Com., part 2.

refrain from actively helping the Huguenots in France. Stern Rochelle, Protestant to the backbone, was still held firmly against the Catholics, Guienne, Languedoc and Gascony, where the reformers were strongest, had now recovered the panic of St. Bartholomew and were arming for the fray; Portsmouth, Plymouth, and the eastern ports of England were swarming with shipping, being fitted out for Rochelle and the Netherlands; privateers in the interest of Orange held command of the North Sea, and emissaries were going backwards and forwards between England and Germany to plan concerted action for the defence of Protestantism the world over. Henry of Navarre, Condé, and Alençon were looked upon by the Catholics in France with daily growing suspicion, whilst Montgomeri and the Vidame de Chartres, at the Court of Elizabeth, were unceasing in their vigilance to pledge the young princes ever deeper to the cause of England and the Protestants. Castelnau's task was therefore not an easy one, and was only partially successful. Elizabeth consented to stand sponsor to Charles IX.'s infant daughter, and the personal relations between the sovereigns became somewhat less strained, but not for a moment did Elizabeth's ministers slacken in their aid to beleaguered Rochelle and the stubborn Dutchmen in the North. Anjou was at the head of the Catholic army before Rochelle and his brother Alençon, much against his will, was forced to accompany him. Over and over again he planned to escape to Montgomeri's fleet outside, and prayed his mother to place him in command of the King's ships. But the Catholics well knew they dared not trust him,

and he was never allowed out of sight. Month after month Anjou cast his men fruitlessly against the impregnable walls of Rochelle; well supplied with stores from England by Montgomeri's fleet, the townspeople bade defiance to the Catholics, and the reformers through the rest of France were rendered the more confident thereby. It was clear to Catharine and her son that Protestantism had not been extinguished in the blood of St. Bartholomew, and they began to think it time to make terms with an enemy they saw they could not crush. On the 7th of March, 1573, therefore, La Mothe Fénélon saw Elizabeth and assured her that "his King would most faithfully continue in the league and confederation which he had sworn to her, and would strictly uphold it without departing therefrom for any reason in the world." He begged her to lay aside her distrust of him, and then again broached the subject of her marriage with Alençon. The King and Queen-mother, he said, would never trouble her with the matter again if she would only let them know her pleasure now. They reminded her that she had said that she would be obliged to marry for the sake of her subjects, and that the only question at issue was that of religion. Although Alençon was a purely Catholic prince, and she would be the first person to reject him as unworthy if he changed his religion out of the mere ambition to marry her, yet he would be content to perform his religious exercises behind closed doors, guarded by one of her own ushers.[1] The Queen thought these approaches afforded her a good opportunity for striking a bargain in favour of

[1] Hatfield Papers, Hist. MSS. Com., part 2.

Protestantism, and said she would proceed no further in the matter of the marriage unless fair terms were given to the Huguenots and peace made at Rochelle. There was nothing Catharine desired more. Anjou was heartily sick of his unsuccessful siege. The heroic Rochellais ostentatiously feasted out of their meagre store, and danced round the maypole on May-day, under his very eyes. Montgomeri's swift smacks threaded their way safely through the King's blockading fleet outside, and it was seen that the starving, plague-stricken, and disheartened besiegers were in far worse case than the heroic besieged. The elective crown of Poland, moreover, was already within Anjou's grasp, and both he and his mother were only too glad to end a bad business by granting to the Protestants some of the terms they demanded. The draft treaty was signed by Anjou on the 25th of June and ratified a fortnight later by the King. A general amnesty was granted, full religious liberty was accorded in the towns of Rochelle, Montauban, and Nismes, and private household worship elsewhere in France. Anjou was then elected to the throne of Poland, which he changed for that of France a year later (May 24, 1574), and thenceforward disappears as one of the possible suitors for Elizabeth's hand.

CHAPTER VII.

Revival of the Alençon match—Dr. Dale's interview with Catharine de Medici—Alençon's letters to Elizabeth—Illness and death of Charles IX.—Imprisonment of Alençon—Huguenot plots and execution of La Mole and Coconas—Alençon kept in durance and the marriage negotiations discontinued.

Dr. Valentine Dale had replaced Walsingham as English ambassador in France, and soon after the signing of the peace at Rochelle, he and his temporary colleague, Edmund Horsey, were summoned by Catharine and asked whether their mistress was willing to carry through the Alençon match, now that her condition with regard to peace had been fulfilled. Dale replied that if it were announced that peace had been effected through Alençon's intervention their Queen would be willing to proceed in the matter. This was accepted, and it was arranged that, as the Queen of England intended to stay a week at Dover in the ensuing month of August, an opportunity for a meeting between her and the Prince might be found. The Queen-mother told Dale that Alençon had grown greatly during his absence at Rochelle, "and that his beard had grown, which helps much his imperfections." [1] He had good hopes, too, that the young Prince

[1] Foreign Calendar.

would openly become a Protestant. When August came, however, Catharine began to cry off, and Dale thought she would not let her son come unless "some further word of comfort be given," thinking of the "*honte*" if the affair fell through after all. As for the Prince, he was not only ready but eager to make the journey, and managed to convey as much to Dale, who thus describes him on August 2nd: "His pock-holes are thick but not great, as are seen in some men whose faces are little disfigured with them, if the visage and colour are otherwise liked. He was bashful and blushing at parting. His speech is not so fast as his brother's, and he seems more advised. He is of 'statura mediocre.'" [1]

A few days after this Catharine sent Cavalcanti to see Dale and sound him about Elizabeth's present sincerity. He talked about the "*honte*" to them all if the Duke went to England and nothing came of it, and hinted that he, Cavalcanti, or a greater personage might first be sent to the English Court to "learn the Queen's mind." Dale prudently conselled Cavalcanti not to deal alone in the matter, but to have some other pair of shoulders to bear part of the responsibility if the affair fell through. This was not very encouraging, and two days afterwards Alençon providentially fell ill of fever. This was at once seized upon as the excuse for his not meeting the Queen; and Gondi, Count de Retz, was sent to England in the last week of August to see Elizabeth at Dover and explain the reason for Alençon's absence. He took letters from the King, Catharine, and Alençon, and was to obtain, if possible, some assurance from the Queen.

[1] Foreign Calendar.

He accompanied her as far on her journey to London as Canterbury, and there took his leave with many loving but vague messages. By him Elizabeth wrote to Alençon (September 15th) thanking him for the visit he intends making her, and saying she considers herself fortunate that the sea cannot restrain his desire to see her. Besides the formal letter he had sent by Retz, Alençon had written another in much warmer terms. "He had been," he says, "twice near his last sigh, but is now, thank God, better, although still with continual fever. He is told that there are some in France who, *par finese, cotele, ou ruze*, wish to bring about that she shall love him no longer. He begs her not to believe them, for if such should be the case he should die," and he sends her a ring as a love token. This was a fair beginning of a romance between a "feather-headed" prince of eighteen and the clever Queen of forty, and for a time all looked prosperous again. Retz's report was favourable, and Catharine was more inclined to let her son go. Dale saw the Prince, and wrote to Burleigh in October that he had "shot up" much since his sickness, and that his "colour was amended of the ruddiness it had"; but, he adds, "as for the rest, the liking or misliking is in the hands of God."

Elizabeth had vigilant agents who kept her informed of the progress of events in France, and it was soon seen that great changes were impending there, for which it behoved her to move with caution. Charles IX., although only twenty-four, was in declining health. The Huguenots were clamorously discontented with the terms granted at Rochelle, and were demanding further concessions;

and above all the "politicians," or moderates, under the Montmorencis, were joining the Huguenots, and the combined parties were much stronger than the Guises and Catholics. Elizabeth therefore began to talk about the unfortunate pock-marks in Alençon's face again. It appears that Retz had raised some difficulty about Alençon's visit, and Elizabeth affected to believe that the real reason was a fear that the pock-marks were too deep, and she would dislike him if he came. She therefore sent Thomas Randolph, late in October, to see and report closely on his appearance, and to compare it with a portrait of the Prince that had been sent to her. If he found the marks very bad, he was confidentially to tell Retz that there were several obstacles to the match, which was unpopular in England, and so put off the matter. He was also to study how the impending changes and Anjou's absence in Poland would affect Alençon. Anjou had delayed his departure until the sick king grew suspicious and insisted upon his going. Catharine went with him to the French frontier, and as she dared not lose sight of Navarre and Alençon, she took them with her. Whilst the party were in Picardy, a few miles only from the English coast, the Huguenot agents were busy planning the escape of the two younger princes to England, from whence they might rally the Protestant forces and work their will in France. As soon as Alençon took leave of his brother, the new King of Poland, he sent one of his *valets de chambre* to Elizabeth with a loving letter dated early in November, to communicate with her the details of his proposed flight. Maisonfleur also, who had now quite gained the Queen's good graces, wrote,

urging his master most emphatically not to fail this time. If, he says, you do not hasten to come this time, the Queen will have some reason to believe that all your past delays, and all the fine words you have written to her have only been so many deceptions practised upon her by the advice of Madame la Serpente, in order to draw out matters and keep them in hand for some design which nobody understands. "What will you say to that, Lucidor? You are summoned, you are entreated to hasten your coming. O! Lucidor, the most fortunate prince in the world, if only he know how to take advantage of his fortune."[1] Once more the plan of escape fell through, divulged this time by the faithless Valois, wife of Henry of Navarre, and Catharine took good care thenceforward that neither her son nor her son-in-law should give her the slip.

The position was a somewhat curious one. The King and his mother were quite as anxious to bring about the marriage as were Alençon and the Huguenots, yet each party tried to frustrate the other's efforts to that end. In fact, unless the marriage were effected on such terms as would enable the King to get rid of his turbulent brother and protect him in future from Huguenot aggression in France, it would have been worse than useless to him; whilst, on the other hand, it would have been equally useless to the Protestant party if it were effected on such conditions. When, therefore, La Mothe Fénélon, on Randolph's return from Picardy with a fairly favourable report, submitted the final terms for the match on the King's behalf, Elizabeth fenced and prevaricated again. The Duke should

[1] Record Office State Papers (France).

come to England incognito and not publicly. She refused to fix a date for the visit. She alleged that the Protestants at La Rochelle were being treated treacherously; and, in her usual fashion, thus again involved the matter in clouds of uncertainty. Her reason for this was not far to seek. She knew, as we know now, that a vast Protestant conspiracy enveloped France from one end to the other, strong enough to overwhelm the Guises and seize the Government. The absence of the figurehead Alençon in England at such a time would have been unfavourable to the Huguenot cause, unless he had gone thither under Huguenot auspices, and was ready to sail from there at any moment to lead the great revolt. Catharine had taken him and Navarre to St. Germain with her, and it had been arranged that the general movement was to be preceded by the forcible rescue of the princes by a body of chosen horsemen under an officer named Guitry. But the intention was betrayed in time to frustrate it, panic seized the courtiers, La Mole, Alençon's chosen friend, lost his head, and told the whole story to Navarre's wife Margaret, who divulged it to her mother. Flight to Catholic Paris was the only course for Catharine and the sick King, and thither they fled during the night, the Queen-mother taking with her in her own carriage both Alençon and Navarre.[1] Both the princes were kept prisoners for the next month or so, but the faithful La Mole and the Count de Coconas were busy the while planning their escape. Elizabeth had given a safe conduct, all was ready, and the horses waiting on the

[1] La Ferrière, and "Mémoires de la Reine Marguerite" (The Hague, 1715), p. 78.

18th of April, but Catharine was on the alert and once more stopped the princes. La Mole and Coconas were seized with an Italian magician, and charged, amongst other things, with causing the illness of the King by witchcraft. Young La Mole was subjected to the most inhuman torture, his legs crushed by the boot, his flesh seared with fire, but the poor lad could only cry out in pity for himself, and declare that he had plotted nothing but his master's flight. Coconas and others, who were probably deeper in the secret intentions of the Huguenots, made more incriminating admissions,[1] and Catharine grasped the nettle firmly. Marshals Montmorenci and De Cossé, the leaders of the "politicians," were imprisoned, and armies were sent to crush the various Huguenot risings in the South—an easy task now that all the leaders were under lock and key. Elizabeth did not forget young La Mole in his trouble, and Dr. Dale besought his life as a favour to his Queen. But Catharine refused coldly, and referred to the Duke of Norfolk's execution as a similar case. Elizabeth afterwards made a grievance of it against Catharine, who, she said, had promised Dale to spare La Mole's life. The King certainly had promised Alençon to do so. The Duke was beside himself with sorrow and rage. He alternately stormed and implored, cast himself at his mother's feet in an agony of tears; and at last the King promised him the life of his friend. But suddenly, and without notice, La Mole and Coconas were beheaded on the 30th of April. Then Alençon fell seriously ill of excitement and fear for his own life. Elizabeth evidently was also apprehensive, both as to the fate

[1] Le Labourer's continuation of Castelnau's "Mémoires."

of her youthful suitor and the immediate future of the Protestant cause. She therefore sent, early in May, Thomas Leighton, Governor of Guernsey, to France, ostensibly to reassure the King with regard to an anticipated Huguenot descent upon Normandy from that island, but really to advise Catharine "to avoid violent counsels, and especially in the division of the two brothers," and to beg Charles IX., in Elizabeth's name, not to be hard upon Alençon.

The King was dying by this time, and could not receive Leighton for several days. On the 15th of May, although too ill to stand, he saw the envoy, and in reply to his message affected to be surprised at the rumours that he and his brother were bad friends. They were on the best of terms, he said; and when Leighton asked whether he might see the Duke, he replied: "Oui Jesus!" as one would say, why of course you can. But Alençon well knew the falseness behind it all, and was afraid to say anything; so Leighton got no confirmation from him. He afterwards saw the Queen-mother, who was somewhat indignant at Elizabeth's meddling in her family quarrels, and retorted, sarcastically, that as "she was so careful of Alençon, it was an undoubted argument and good augury of some good effect to follow of the former matters that had been moved."[1] The result of Leighton's remonstrances, however, was that Alençon and Navarre were "allowed to go abroad for supper for countenance sake."

When Leighton took leave of the King at the end of May Charles was sinking, and Alençon was in daily fear of poison and the Bastille from the

[1] Foreign Calendar.

Guises and their friends. Charles IX. finally expired on the 30th of May, and almost before the breath was out of his body his mother, without any authority other than an alleged dying order of the King, seized the regency, placed Navarre and Alençon under strict guard in rooms with grated windows, "where none dared speak with them." To all of Dale's remonstrances she gave smooth answers, and "took Alençon about with her as a show," but she never relaxed her hold upon him and Navarre for one moment. When her son himself asked why she was keeping him prisoner, she told him she must hold him fast until his brother Henry came from Poland. She was no doubt right in doing so, for the Huguenots were suspiciously busy, and Catharine almost came to words with Leighton about the plots of some of his suite. During the interview she had with him she pointed out how she had always desired to be friendly with his mistress, and had offered her the hand of each one of her sons in turn. Alençon entered the room at the moment, and his mother turned to Leighton and said, "Here is another one whom I would willingly give to her." The Duke, who had been taught his lesson, protested his fidelity to the new King, his brother, and when he took leave Leighton whispered some words in the Duke's ear which Catharine was curious to learn, and asked her son what Leighton had said. "He told me," replied Alençon, "that Queen Elizabeth had nothing that was not at my service." [1]

Lord North was sent by Elizabeth to congratulate the new King, and was present at a grand ball

[1] La Ferrière, Projets de Mariage."

in his honour at Lyons. He sat next to the Queen-mother, and watched Alençon and his frail and beautiful sister Margaret dancing together. North's eyes were all for the lovely Queen of Navarre, but Catharine directed his attention to her brother. "'He is not so ugly nor so ill-favoured as they say, do you think so?' she asked. North of course agreed with her, when she replied, 'It is from no fault on our part that the marriage with your mistress has not taken place.'"[1] When Lord North took leave of Alençon in November the prince was careful not to mention love matters, but only spoke of "service" and "duty," but, says Dale, he wrung him by the arm, the old token between them, as one that would say "*et cupio et timeo.*"[2] North, however, went home with the fixed idea that Catharine was making fun of his mistress. He thought her praises of Elizabeth's beauty were suspiciously overdone, and told his Queen so. She of course was furious; and when La Mothe Fénélon, instructed by the Queen-mother, once more advanced the marriage negotiations, he found the Queen on her dignity, and advised Catharine to discontinue the matter for the present.

[1] La Mothe Fénélon Correspondence.
[2] Foreign Calendar.

CHAPTER VIII.

Henry III. King of France—Escape of Alençon—Rising of the Huguenots—Revival of the marriage negotiations—Suggested marriage of Queen Elizabeth and Don John of Austria—Efforts of Henry III. and Catharine to provide for Alençon abroad—Alençon's negotiations with the Flemings—Flight of Alençon from Paris—Elizabeth's distrust of French interference in Flanders—Her negotiations with Alençon on the subject—De Bacqueville and De Quincy's mission to England — L'Aubespine and Rambouillet sent by the King—Spanish fears of the Alençon match—Alençon enters Flanders and clamours for English aid.

For the first year after the new King's arrival in France, he and his brother seemed to hold rival Courts. The King's, perhaps, was the more horribly and shamelessly licentious, but both were filled with quarrelsome, dissolute, and utterly unscrupulous young men, who gloried in their vices. Those who surrounded the King were mostly Catholics, whilst Alençon's courtiers were oftener Huguenots and moderates. Between the two Courts quarrels, duels, and secret murders were incessant, and a fresh civil war was the inevitable outcome of such a rivalry.

At last matters came to a crisis, and Alençon, on the evening of September 15, 1575, walked out of the Louvre with his face covered, and accompanied only by a single attendant. Outside, in a quiet spot near the Porte Ste. Honoré, his faithful courtier,

Jehan Simier, of whom more anon, was waiting with a fair lady's carriage into which Alençon mounted, and was carried as fast as the horses could gallop to where a body of three hundred horsemen were ready to serve as his escort. They got two hours' start before the King learnt of his brother's flight, and orders were given in rage and panic to bring him back at any cost. But Alençon was the heir to the crown, and the courtiers did not care to risk his future displeasure by too much zeal, and he reached Dreux unharmed. There he issued his proclamation, demanding reform of abuses but taking care not to identify himself too closely with the Huguenot cause.

From town to town through Central France the Queen-mother followed her flying son, but he always escaped her. At last she had the boldness to appeal for aid to the *moderates*, and released their chief, Montmorenci, from the Bastille for the purpose of influencing Alençon. By this time the Huguenots were in arms everywhere. Wilkes, the clerk of Elizabeth's Council, was sent to Condé and Montmorenci's son, Meru, at Strasburg, with a large sum of money, and thence across the Rhine to raise, through Duke Casimir, "one of the finest armies that for twenty years has issued from Germany" to enable Alençon to hold his own against Henry III. and the Guises. But before reinforcements could reach him Marshal Montmorenci had induced him to patch up a six months' truce with his brother at the end of November, and for the moment the danger of civil war was averted But Henry III. found, as his brother Charles had found before him, that France was not large enough

to hold both him and Alençon. The latter must be got rid of somehow. The Duke himself said that an attempt was made to poison him, but in any case his mother suggested to him that now that Elizabeth had been so ready to help him with money would be a good opportunity for reviving the marriage negotiations. Alençon, nothing loath, sent one of his friends, named La Porte, with two letters of thanks to Elizabeth dated at Montreuil on November 28, 1575.[1] They contain no word about marriage, but La Porte was instructed to co-operate with Castelnau de la Mauvissière, who was now the ambassador in England, in bringing it forward. Elizabeth insisted, however, as a preliminary, that a complete reconciliation should take place between the brothers and peace made with the Huguenots before she would again entertain the matter. The best way, said Catharine to Dale, to bring that about is for your mistress to desist from helping the rebels; and again the negotiations were shelved. Elizabeth's new coolness is easily explained. Convinced, probably, of the inutility of an alliance with France in its present divided and unstable condition, she was for the moment actively engaged in making friends with Spain. Granvelle's brother Champigny, who had come from Flanders as an envoy from Philip's governor of the Netherlands to treat for a resumption of friendly relations, had been received with effusive civility. Philip's fleet, under Pedro de Valdes, had been hospitably entertained at Plymouth, and Corbet had been sent to Flanders to arrange a commercial treaty between England and the Spanish States. Elizabeth had, moreover,

[1] Hatfield Papers, part 2.

hastily recalled the English levies serving with Orange, although but few obeyed the call; and finally she had despatched young Henry Cobham as an envoy to Philip himself, in order to smooth matters over between them. In Philip's notes of his interview with Cobham,[1] he says that the latter told him that Elizabeth had seen a letter from the King of France to the Prince of Orange, "making him many fine promises"; and then he said something about a marriage which I did not very well understand." We shall probably not be far out if we guess that Cobham's vague hint about marriage, which was so lost upon Philip, was not altogether unconnected with certain approaches which at the same time were made on Elizabeth's behalf to Don John of Austria, Philip's natural brother, the heroic young victor of Lepanto, who at that very time was dreaming of a marriage with the captive Queen of Scots. Don John, writing to his brother, says: "She (Elizabeth) has sent an agent to me, who has hinted at a marriage. I am, in my replies, putting the matter aside, but I beg your Majesty to tell me if I am to follow it up. Although I may be led thus to restore a Queen and her realm to the true faith, I would not for all the world make a dishonourable choice. I blush whilst I write this to think of accepting advances from a woman whose life and example furnish so much food for gossip."[2] Philip told his brother that such an approach should not be neglected; but events marched quickly, and before anything could come of it another turn of the kaleidoscope made it impossible.

[1] Spanish Calendar (Elizabeth).
[2] Gachard, Correspondence de Philippe II.

Alençon's six months' truce had not stopped Duke Casimir's mercenaries with Condé from crossing the frontier. Navarre, too, had escaped from the Court, and had assumed the leadership of the Huguenots; and then Henry III., sorely against his will, was forced to let his mother make the best terms she could with the insurgents and their allies. Alençon was bought over with 100,000 livres and the rich duchies of Berri Touraine and Anjou; Casimir got 300,000 crowns, a pension of 40,000 livres a year and rich estates in France; Condé was promised the governorship of Picardy; the Chatillons, Montgomeri, and even poor dead La Mole and Coconas were rehabilitated, the crown jewels were pawned to pay the German troops, and so at last peace was made. But still the necessity for getting Alençon out of the way existed; and, in despair of Elizabeth, active negotiations were opened for him to marry elsewhere. Catharine of Navarre, a princess of Cleves, and a daughter of the Palatine were all mentioned, but the most tempting and diplomatic project was to marry him to Philip's eldest daughter and give him the government of the Spanish Netherlands. This would have drawn his claws indeed. The Walloons and Catholic Flemings also approached him with similar suggestions, and Alençon deserted the Protestant cause entirely, and became suddenly a devout Catholic. He even accepted the command of a force against the Huguenots, upon whom he was implacable in his severity.[1]

This change of front frightened Elizabeth, who feared that if the Protestants in the Netherlands were

[1] La Ferrière, "Projets de Mariage."

conquered her turn would come next, and she once more held out the bait of marriage. She expressed sorrow to Castelnau that the Duke had ceased to write to her and had forgotten her. But this time the fish failed to rise, and for the next three years Alençon remained ostentatiously Catholic, sometimes in arms against Huguenot resistance, sometimes at Court with his brother, with whom he was nominally on good terms. But the personal hatred and jealousy between them continued still, and the duels and murders between their respective courtiers went on as before. The Duke's turbulent and discontented friends openly scoffed at the painted mignons who surrounded the King, and if they resented the insult, Bussy d'Amboise, the first swordsman in France, was ready to fight any number of them.

At length, at the beginning of 1578, Bussy d'Amboise was waylaid in Paris and nearly murdered by some of the King's courtiers, and had to seek safety in absence from the Court. Then several other of the Duke's friends were bought over by favours to the King's side, and the mignons, emboldened by his isolation, went to the length of sneering at Alençon himself. This was at a ball at the palace of the Montmorencis to which Catharine had forced her son to go against his will; and fearing that this demonstration of the mignons portended the Bastille or poison for himself, the Duke lost patience, and demanded permission to withdraw himself from Court for a time. The only answer vouchsafed was the rigid searching of his apartments by the Scots guard at midnight, in the presence of the King himself, with every circumstance of contumely. The Duke was arrested, all his papers were seized, and

the principal friends who remained with him were cast into the Bastille.

It must be confessed that, given Alençon's turbulent character, there were circumstances which fully justified the suspicions of Henry III. against his brother. The "Spanish fury" in Antwerp in 1576 had turned even the Walloons and Catholic Flemings against Philip's rule, and they had made common cause with Orange's Protestants in the North. It was seen then that all the arms of Spain would be powerless to subdue them; and, hardly pressed as Philip was, he was forced to send his brother Don John on a mission of pacification at all costs. But Don John was a soldier, and it cut him to the heart, as he said, to bend the knee and make terms "with these drunken wineskins of Flemings"; so after swearing the perpetual edict of pacification, he resented the continued exigencies of the States, treacherously seized the citadel of Namur, summoned troops from Italy and elsewhere, and bade the "rebels" do their worst. In order to sow dissension between the two branches of the house of Austria, the Walloon nobles had brought to Flanders as their governor the young Archduke Mathias as an avowed rival of the Protestant Orange. He was a poor creature, but the great Taciturn patriotically persuaded his followers to recognise him as their chief, he, Orange, being his lieutenant. This, after some turmoil and bloodshed, they did, and it was in his name that the hastily gathered levies of the States went out to attack Don John who had betrayed them. The victor of Lepanto with his few veterans met them on the last day of January, 1578, and completely defeated them, and the in-

surgent Flemings once more were at the mercy of the cruel Spanish soldiery, who were speeding back again from Italy eager to shed the blood again of the brave burghers who only a few months before had insisted upon their withdrawal. Mathias was a broken reed—he had no money, no followers, no influence, and no prestige, so the Flemings were fain to look elsewhere for help. Elizabeth had aided the Protestant Hollanders bravely, but the Catholic Flemings did not wish to be merged in and governed by the Dutch States, and had to seek help from a Catholic prince. Conciliation they had tried, and they had been betrayed. A prince of the house of Austria had been chosen, and had turned out useless. Where, then, could they look but to a prince of France, unfettered by Spanish sympathies? So Alençon was approached, and expressed his willingness to raise his friends, the moderate Catholics and the Huguenots, to aid the Flemings in their resistance. This, of course, was known to Catharine and Henry III., and as such an action on the part of Alençon might have involved France in a war with Spain, there was no doubt good ground for the Duke's belief that his brother intended to put him out of harm's way by quietly shutting him up in the Bastille to keep company with his faithful friends who were there already.

Bussy d'Amboise had not been idle outside in the meanwhile. He had sent the fiery cross through the provinces, and men-at-arms and nobles were flocking to the Flemish frontier to join the standard of Alençon when it should be raised. The gates of Paris, it is true, were closely guarded, and Alençon himself, with his sister Margaret (who herself tells

the story so racily), were not allowed out of the sight of the Scottish archers. But the Court was full of nobles who were disgusted with the King's mode of life, and plans were rife to rescue the captive. Bussy crept back into Paris to plan an escape with Simier, but both were captured and laid by the heels. Then Catharine managed somehow to patch up a reconciliation. Bussy was made to kiss his principal antagonist Quélus in the presence of the whole Court, which he did in so exaggerated a fashion as to make every one laugh, and left Quélus more enraged than ever. The prison doors were opened, the guards removed, and the partisans of both brothers swore eternal friendship. But the mignons saw the wound was rankling, and told the King so the same night. The guards were again ordered to watch Alençon's door, and after three days of semi-imprisonment, on the 14th of February, his sister contrived his escape with Simier, from her chamber on the second floor of the Louvre, by a rope into the moat. Bussy was awaiting him in the abbey of St. Généviève, where, by connivance of the abbot, a hole had been knocked in the city wall, through which they escaped, and swift horses carried them to Angers, where they were safe.[1]

All France was in a turmoil. Huguenots and "malcontents" raised their heads once more, and all the South was up in arms. Catharine, who was never to rest, sped after her fugitive son, and with tears and entreaties besought him to return, but without avail. Henry III. pretended to put a good face upon it, and told the Spanish ambassador Mendoza, on his way to England a few days after-

[1] "Mémoires de la Reine Marguerite."

wards, that his brother was still obedient and would do nothing against Flanders. But all the world knew better, and an entirely new complicating element had entered into European politics, of which it was difficult for the moment to guess the ultimate effect. How disturbing an element it was to Elizabeth may be seen by a minute in Burleigh's handwriting,[1] putting the case from every point of view. Envoys were sent from England both to the States and to Don John to urge them to come to a peaceful arrangement without French interference. The States were to be reminded how much England had done for them, and the danger incurred by allowing the French to enter, as, being poor, they (the French) would seek to reimburse themselves by making themselves masters of the country, or otherwise would end in turning to the side of Don John and the Spaniards. In either of these cases the English would have to oppose them, and the only terms upon which Elizabeth would allow the French to be employed were that an equal number of Englishmen should enter with them. Don John, on the other hand, was to be alarmed by the idea that Alençon's entrance would only be a cloak for a French national invasion of Flanders, and that Elizabeth would be forced to aid the States to repel it. In fact, if Alençon's adventure was secretly under his brother's patronage, it would have been as disastrous for England as for Spain, whilst, if affairs could so be guided that Alençon might depend upon English patronage and money for his expedition, Elizabeth's ends would be well served. For the next few years, therefore, the aim

[1] Hatfield Papers, Hist. MSS. Com., part 2, p. 179.

of English diplomacy was to capture Alençon for English interests and embroil him with his brother, whilst at the same time avoiding an open rupture with Spain. Alençon knew, as Elizabeth did not, that he would get no aid, secret or overt, from his brother, so he lost no time in protesting to the English Queen his "undying affection for her" in a letter written from the town of Alençon in May, 1578, and to this an encouraging reply was sent. In vain his brother and mother threatened and cajoled. Dukedoms, money, marriage-alliances were offered him in vain. On the 7th of July he crossed the frontier at the request of the States and threw himself into Mons for the purpose, as he declared, of "helping this oppressed people, and humiliating the pride of Spain." Two days before this he had despatched one of his wisest friends—his chamberlain, de Bacqueville—to Elizabeth, to assure her again of his entire devotion to her, to explain his entry into Flanders, to beg for her guidance and counsel, and renew his offer of marriage. But Elizabeth distrusted the French, and half thought Alençon's move was only a cloak for a Catholic invasion of England from France and Spain combined; so she could run no risks, and at once subsidised a mercenary German army of 20,000 men, under the Duke Hans Casimir, to be ready to cross the Flemish frontier when necessary in her interest, whilst she still actively continued her efforts to bring about a fresh agreement on the basis of the pacification of Ghent between Don John and the States. Under no circumstances, she repeated again and again to all parties, would she allow the French to become paramount in Flanders, and she swore violently to

Mendoza, "three times by God that if Don John did not re-enact the perpetual edict of peace, she would help the States whilst she had a man left in England." [1]

English auxiliaries were allowed to slip over to the States by the thousand with arms and money; and the Duke of Arschot's brother, the Marquis d'Havrey, who came from the Walloons to beg for aid, was made clearly to understand that for every Frenchman in Flanders there must be an Englishman. The States desired nothing better; it meant double help for them, and they were ready to promise anything for men and money. When de Bacqueville first arrived in England Elizabeth was still uncertain as to whether Henry III. was helping his brother, and she kept the envoy at arm's length for awhile, Sussex being the intermediary between them; but when Walsingham and Cobham returned from an unsuccessful mission of peace in Flanders, and her own agents in France had assured her that Alençon was really acting in despite of his brother, her attitude towards her young suitor completely changed. De Bacqueville had succeeded in impressing honest Sussex with his master's sincerity, and the desirability of the match. Alençon, he said, was determined to marry "either the Queen or the Netherlands"; and if she would not listen to his suit, he would join hands with Don John and the Spaniards. Late in July Alençon sent another agent, named de Quincy, to England, to again assure the Queen that "he would be directed by her in all his actions in the Low Countries"; and Sussex, who was again the intermediary laid before

[1] Spanish Calendar (Elizabeth).

the Queen strong arguments in favour of her marriage.[1]

At length Elizabeth felt assured. Hans Casimir had entered Flanders with a strong force of mercenary Germans; Don John was chafing in Namur, frantic with despair and disappointment, his heart-broken cries for help all unheeded by cold-blooded Philip and false Perez; Alençon depended entirely upon England; the Flemings, Catholics and Protestants alike, having found the Archduke Mathias a broken reed, could only look to Elizabeth and Alençon for rescue from their troubles. So, the game being now entirely in her own hands, the Queen could once more enter with full zest into the long-neglected marriage negotiations. She was on a progress through the eastern counties, and received de Bacqueville and de Quincy at Long Melford. Extraordinary efforts were made to show them special honour, and Mendoza in one of his letters[2] gives a curious instance of this, and of Elizabeth's treatment of even her most distinguished ministers. At a banquet given by her to Alençon's envoys, she took it into her head that there ought to have been more plate on the sideboard to impress the Frenchmen. Angrily calling Sussex, as Lord Steward, she asked him why there was so little silver. He replied that he had accompanied the sovereigns of England on their progresses for many years past, and he had never seen so much plate carried before as she was carrying; whereupon she flew into a rage, told him to hold his tongue, called him a great rogue, and said that the more she did for people like him

[1] Hatfield Papers, Hist. MSS. Com., part 2.
[2] Spanish Calendar (Elizabeth), August 14, 1578.

the worse they became. This was bad enough before the envoys and the Frenchmen; but it was not all, for Elizabeth turned to Lord North, a friend of Leicester's of course, and asked his opinion. He, courtier-like, agreed that there was very little silver, and threw the blame on Sussex. The latter waited for him outside and called him a knave and threatened to thrash him; Leicester intervened, and the whole Court was set by the ears, whereupon the Spanish ambassador chuckles to think how easy "they may all be brought to discord." In fact, no sooner did the marriage negotiations assume a serious aspect than Leicester and his friends secretly thwarted them. The young Earl of Oxford, for instance, was a very graceful dancer, and was twice sent for by the Queen to show off his agility before Alençon's envoys, but he absolutely refused, of course at Leicester's prompting, to contribute to the pleasure or amusement of Frenchmen. After all the feasting and cajolery of de Bacqueville and de Quincy they got but little solid satisfaction from the Queen. She told them that it was entirely their master's fault that the negotiations had been dropped for two years. She herself could give no other answer than that which she had given so often before. She could not marry any prince without seeing him, and if Alençon was going to take offence in case, after seeing him, she did not accept him, he had better not come; if, on the other hand, he was in earnest, and would remain friendly in any case, he could come on a simple visit with but few followers. Cecil, at all events, did not believe in the Queen's sincerity at this time, for he said that if he were in de Bacqueville's place he would

not bring his master over on such a message. With the message, such as it was, de Quincy went back to his master at Antwerp at the end of August, but the loan of 300,000 crowns for which de Bacqueville had entreated was not forthcoming, at all events without good security. Bussy d'Amboise soon after came to England with a similar errand, but with no better result. The Queen's first condition of the marriage was the retirement of Alençon from the Netherlands. Nor was pressure wanting from other quarters to the same effect. The Pope, through his Nuncio, offered the young prince a great pension if he would retire, his brother alternately threatened and cajoled, Catharine de Medici held out the bait of a marriage with one of the infantas, and Alençon himself was already disappointed at the failure of the States to fulfil their promises to him and place some strong places in his hands. In fact, the French prince was looked upon by the northern Dutchmen as coldly as Mathias had been, and if he could bring neither the national support of England or France he would be as useless as the Austrian had been. And so everything hung on the caprice of Elizabeth. It was still desirable for the King of France, if possible, to marry his brother in England, and especially if, at the same time, he could secure an alliance between the two countries. The principal point he had to avoid was being driven into an attitude of antagonism to Spain whilst England remained unpledged and Alençon unwed; and these were the very objects towards which Elizabeth's personal policy tended. Whilst de Bacqueville was in England in the autumn of 1578, two of the French king's principal

advisers were sent to forward the marriage negotiations. These were Rambouillet and L'Aubespine, who were received by the Queen at Norwich, and satisfied her that Henry III. would give her and his brother a free hand in Flanders and every help in his power if a marriage and alliance could be brought about, but not otherwise; and another attempt was made to disarm the secret opposition of Leicester to the match by suggesting to him a marriage between himself and a French princess. These negotiations went on with varying success during the months of September and October, 1578, and it was publicly announced that Alençon himself would come in November. Philip never believed in the sincerity of the Queen and consequently told his ambassador that it was "all pastime and would end in smoke"; but Mendoza, less experienced than his master in Elizabeth's policy, was much perturbed at the prospect. He had an interview with the Queen early in October about the pacification of Flanders, and turned the conversation to the subject of her marriage with Alençon. Mendoza asked her when it was to take place; to which she replied that she did not know, but asked him whether he thought she ought to marry Alençon. His answer was that, although she as usual would act with wisdom, he knew the object of the French was to prevent the aggrandisement of her crown and the quietude of her country. Elizabeth at this time was nerself again conceiving suspicions of the French. Catharine de Medici and her dissolute daughter between them, aided by their "flying squadron" of beauties, had managed to sap the vigour and Protestant ardour of Henry of Navarre

and his Court, and Paulet sent from France shortly afterwards alarmist news that the King of France had entered into the Papal league against England, and had sent to engage mercenaries in Germany to enable Alençon to keep a footing in Flanders in spite of her opposition. The news was probably untrue, but in any case it was clear to Alençon that unless aid came to him promptly and liberally from somewhere he must ignominiously turn tail again and re-enter France. The country people looked upon the Frenchmen as enemies and intruders; all stragglers were murdered without mercy, and Alençon himself was without means even to feed his followers. He must therefore gain Elizabeth's support or confess himself beaten and return to the tender mercy of his affectionate brother, and he had to choose an envoy more persuasive than those he had sent before. The man he selected was one who for the next three years played a prominent and astounding part in this strange drama.

CHAPTER IX.

An account of Simier—His mission to the Queen—Her strange relations with him—Leicester's jealousy—Simier's negotiations on behalf of Alençon—Rochetaillé's mission—Leicester's attempts to have Simier murdered—Alençon's first visit to England—Elizabeth's infatuation for him—His departure and letters to the Queen—Exhaustive discussion of the marriage negotiations by the English Council—The Queen announces her determination to marry Alençon—Philip Sidney's remonstrance.

JEHAN DE SIMIER, Alençon's Master of the Wardrobe, and one of his firmest friends, was a consummate courtier steeped in the dissolute gallantry of the French Court, and, above all, a *persona grata* of Catharine de Medici. He arrived in London on January 5, 1579, having gone through Paris on his way to England, and presumably can hardly have been at the moment in a very happy frame of mind. During his absence with Alençon his wife had been guilty of infidelity with his young brother, and on Simier's arrival home the intrigue was divulged to him. He sent his men ahead to kill his brother at the gate of the château before his arrival, and his wife died, probably of poison, perhaps of grief, soon afterwards, and the avenged husband then went his way and came on his mission to England. He was lodged and entertained at the Queen's cost,

and brought with him twelve thousand crowns' worth of jewels to win over the courtiers to his master's cause. At his first interview with the Queen on the 11th of January she was not very cordial, and said that Alençon could not have been very eager, as Simier had tarried three months on his way since his coming was first announced, but she soon melted under the influence of the envoy's dulcet words and the casket of jewels he handed her from his master. After the interview Leicester entertained him at supper, and the same night a grand ball was given by the Queen in his honour, at which we are told there was an entertainment in imitation of a tournament between six ladies and a like number of gentlemen who surrendered to them. Young La Mole had charmed Elizabeth with his language of French gallantry, but Simier was a much more experienced hand at the game, and artfully made violent love to the Queen under shelter of his master's name. The sober ambassador, Castelnau de la Mauvissière, even could not avoid seeing the effect upon Elizabeth, and wrote to the Queen-mother: "This discourse rejuvenates the Queen; she has become more beautiful and bonny than she was fifteen years ago. Not a woman or a physician who knows her who does not hold that there is no lady in the realm more fit for bearing children than she is." [1]

On the 16th of January, only a few days after her first interview with Simier, the Queen wrote a letter to Alençon, in which her delight at his envoy is clearly indicated. She says that she is so pleased

[1] Castelnau Correspondence. La Ferrière, "Projets de Mariage."

with him that no other advocate is necessary to make his peace with her. Alençon's own words, she tells him, are worthy not of being written on parchment, but graven on marble. She bids him consult his wisest friends about coming over, but if he thinks his honour will suffer the least thereby she would not have him come for untold gold. She assures him of her eternal friendship. She has never, she says, broken her word in her life, so that as constancy is rare amongst princes she is offering no common thing. She ends by hoping that he will reach the years of Nestor, and that all his foes may be confounded.[1]

This was a pretty good beginning, but the correspondence thereafter daily becomes more affectionate. On the 8th of February the Queen writes a long letter to her lover, in which she says: "Je voy clair la constance rare résider en vostre cœur qui ne se diminue par quelque ombre d'ingratitude, qu'est asses de preuve pour m'assurer de vostre affection sincère." She then goes on to point out to her *tres cher* that her people are strongly opposed to the match, and it will be best for Alençon and herself to settle the conditions before commissioners are sent. The meaning of this was that Simier, to whom even thus early she had given the punning pet name of her monkey (singe), was trying to get better terms for his master, especially in the matter of religion. In vain the young Prince flatters her by saying that he should sink under his troubles but for "l'imagination de vos beautés, et lesperance que j'ai de vos bonnes grases"; in vain he says he

[1] Hatfield Papers, Hist. MSS. Com., part 2.

will leave every other point to her sole discretion, but cannot give up his religion, and so offend God; but Elizabeth and her advisers were firm, and things dragged on month after month. In the meanwhile Alençon was obliged to cross the border and re-enter France, and in March made a voyage of semi-reconciliation to see his brother in Paris. Simier at the same time was pressing him warmly to come over to England at once, strike the iron whilst it was hot, and marry the Queen offhand; but the Queen's own letters persistently threw cold water on this proposal, as did Castelnau, the French ambassador, who was bitterly jealous of Simier; and Alençon, for the present contented himself with staying at his town of Dreux awaiting her favourable decision as to the conditions "for which hope alone he lives." But he was more loving than ever in his letters, and writes on the 22nd of March: "Je garde vostre belle pinture, qui ne se separara james de moi que par la fin de mes os. C'est ou je fes mes auresons et pase la pluspart du tans en ladoration des divintés qui y sont. Je supplie tres humblement vostre majesté pardonner a mes pations (*i.e.*, passions) si trop presontuheuzement je dis se qui est dans mon ame." It is evident that the Queen was playing with him again, but she must have deceived many of her ministers as well, for in the Hatfield Papers there exists a whole series of documents, mostly in Burleigh's hand, discussing the advantages and disadvantages of the match from every conceivable point of view at prodigious length, at which grave State papers doubtless her Majesty and Leicester laughed heartily in their sleeves. The Queen told the Spanish ambassador

that it "was a fine idea for an old woman like her to talk about marriage," and more than hinted to him that the negotiations had only been undertaken for the purpose of getting the French out of the Netherlands, as she did not want them there. She assured him that nothing would be arranged about the marriage unless Alençon came. All through March the negotiations for Alençon's visit continued, whilst the Puritan pulpits rang with denunciations of the proposed popish match, and London was in a fever of apprehension of the coming of a French King consort. At last it was settled that the Prince should come over in April; and it was then considered necessary to secure Leicester's neutrality at least. He and Hatton had very soon got jealous of the bewitching "monkey," who rarely left the Queen's side now, so Castelnau, the ambassador, had to be the intermediary. Some letters signed by the King of France, but really concocted by Castelnau in London, were delivered to the Queen and Leicester, saying that Alençon would come in May, and assuring Leicester on the King's word that the marriage should in no way injure his honour or position. Leicester urged that Alençon should come whilst Parliament was sitting, even though the conditions were not agreed upon beforehand, and said he would move the House to demand the marriage. As the match was extremely unpopular in London, this was about the very worst advice that could be given, and was meant to be so. Whilst the proposed conditions were being discussed with Alençon's special envoy, Rochetaillé, in April, and the marriage was looked upon in London as inevitable, some persons told the Queen

that papers had been found in the late Chancellor Sir Nicholas Bacon's office, proving that when the affair was under discussion before, the object of the French was only to ruin the country, kill the Queen, and place Mary of Scotland on the throne. If Elizabeth had been in earnest she would have taken fright at this; but she only smiled and passed it over. Both she and Leicester, however, were now ostentatiously in favour of the match, as also were Leicester's enemies, with a very different end in view. Great preparations were made at Court for the Prince's coming; new clothes as fine as money could buy them were brought from far and near. Leicester himself wrote to his "cousin," Davison, in Flanders, to send him 4,000 crowns' worth of crimson, black, and coloured velvet, satin, and silk, and £400 worth of gold and silver tissue "or such-like pretty stuffs"[1]; but Philip II. was still incredulous, and continued to assure his ambassador that it was "a mere invention." During the billing and cooing personally with Simier, and in writing with his master, an occasional cloud of distrust passed over. Once, late in April, 1579, news came of a possible French naval expedition to Scotland in the interest of Mary, and the dispatch of a papal expedition from Spain to the Catholic insurgents in Ireland; and the Queen was in a panic for a day or two and even turned her back on Simier. On such occasions as these bribes found their way from Mendoza to the Queen's ministers to large amounts, to induce them to impede the marriage; Burleigh, Sussex, Crofts, Leicester, and Hatton, all got their share, but seem to have given very little value for it,

[1] Domestic Calendar, April 25, 1579.

for they were just as heavily bribed by the French on the other side.

The new conditions demanded by Simier and Rochetaillé in the interest of Alençon were, first his coronation immediately after marriage, secondly the association of him with the Queen in the government, and thirdly the granting to him of a life pension of £60,000 per annum. These new demands had been strenuously resisted by Cecil and Sussex and the other councillors, but at length Simier began to get restive and threatened to leave unless a decided reply were given within two days. Representations were being made to the Queen from all quarters, and especially from the Spanish ambassador and his creatures as to the danger she would incur if the match were effected, but, says Mendoza, "she expresses to Simier such a strong desire to marry that not a councillor, whatever his real opinion may be, dares to say a word against it." At length she could procrastinate no longer, and started for a short stay at Leicester's house at Wanstead, in the last days of April, taking Simier and Castelnau with her for the purpose of giving them an answer. As usual she desired to free herself from personal blame, and ordered each member of her Council to give her his opinion on the match in writing. This they all refused to do, and confined themselves to stating the arguments on both sides, leaving her to draw the conclusion. During the stay at Wanstead, almost day and night, Sussex, Leicester, Burleigh, and Walsingham remained in conference, but could come to no conclusion; and the Court had to return with the Queen to London still without an answer

being given. At Whitehall on the 3rd of May, a full meeting of the Council was held to finally discuss the conditions, and Simier was invited to be present. The second demand of the association of Alençon with the Queen in the government and distribution of offices was at once declared to be impossible, and was abandoned by Simier after some demur; but the other two conditions were insisted upon by him. Simier then retired to an adjoining room whilst the Council discussed these points. The first councillor to speak was the new Lord Chancellor Bromley, who set forth the danger of the match, in admitting Frenchmen, their traditional enemies, into the country, its unpopularity and the improbability of there being any issue, and ended by declaring uncompromisingly against the marriage. In the end the whole of the Council except Sussex agreed with him, and word was privately sent to the Queen that the Council was well-nigh unanimously unfavourable. Then Simier was called in and told that his new demands were such as had never been made before, and were absolutely inadmissible. The Frenchman's suavity suddenly left him, and he flew into a great rage, flinging out of the room before Sussex could reach him, banged the door after him in a fury, and went straight to the Queen, who was in the garden.[1] She professed great sorrow at her Council's decision, swore to Simier that she would marry in spite of them all, assumed an appearance of settled melancholy in his presence, and sent a loving letter to the Prince by his secretary, de Vray, who was despatched the same night to his master with the Council's reply.

[1] Spanish Calendar (Elizabeth).

But Alençon was not lightly put off. Rochetaillé was already on his way back to England with handsome presents for Leicester and the rest of them, and de Vray returned at the end of May with his master's answer. He would, he said, marry her on her own terms, and only timidly stipulated that he should be allowed the private exercise of the mass in his own apartments, concluding by announcing his approaching visit to the Queen to press his suit in person. This was by no means welcome news to Elizabeth, who at the time certainly had no intention of marrying him, and who feared the visit might either force her hand or throw upon her personally the responsibility of breaking off the match. The Council, however,decided unanimously that the Duke should not be affronted by a refusal to receive him, and that the Queen could not decently draw back now without at all events seeing her suitor. So it was settled with Simier that his master should come to England in the middle of August, and the Queen's ships and safe-conduct should await him at Calais. When this was decided the Queen desired to be left alone with Simier, and Leicester was obliged, however unwillingly, to take Castelnau out hunting. When they returned three hours afterwards Simier and the Queen were still together, and whilst Castelnau supped with Leicester Simier took his evening repast at the Queen's table.

Castelnau, writing an account of affairs to the Queen-mother,[1] says that all was now going as smoothly as ever: "Not a day passes that she

[1] Castelnau Correspondence. La Ferrière, "Projets de Mariage."

fails to send for him (Simier). On one occasion she came in her barge to my lodging to fetch him before he had read his despatches, and when he was not dressed. He was obliged to come out to see her with only his doublet on, and she took him with her. Those who are against it are cursing him, and declare that Simier will cheat her, and has bewitched her." Castelnau now quite believed in the marriage. The Queen told him she really was convinced that the Duke was seeking her for herself alone, and not for her crown, but she feared that, however much he might esteem her, he would only love her for a year or two. She would, however, promise before God that if he was a good husband to her she would be the best wife in the world.

It is probable that by this time the Queen's feelings were really getting the better of her judgment, and that the satisfied vanity of having a young prince at her feet was carrying all before it. The whole country was ringing with the strange news of her close intimacy with Simier, who had, it was said, bewitched her with a love philtre ; and afterwards Mary Stuart, in her prison, imprudently made herself the echo of the scandal by writing to the Queen the outrageous letter published by Labanoff, accusing her of immorality with both Simier and Alençon. The murmurs were industriously fostered (and paid for) by the Spanish ambassador, who did his best to stir up trouble and make the match unpopular. He writes to his King at the end of June : "Although there is no binding undertaking about the marriage, the Queen gives every sign of being most anxious for it, and affirms that she will never marry a man whom she has not previously

seen. She is burning with impatience for his (Alençon's) coming, although her councillors have laid before her the difficulties which may arise, the other side having her support, has carried the day. She herself is largely influenced by the idea that it should be known that her talents and beauty are so great that they have sufficed to cause him to come and visit her without any assurance that he will be her husband." [1]

Leicester, who knew her better than any one, was quick to see whither she was drifting, and became violently jealous. When the time came for signing the passport for Alençon, at the end of June, he made a fervent appeal to the Queen not to sign it; but Simier was too strong for him, and the passport was sent, whereupon Leicester went and sulked at Wanstead, feigning illness, and refused to be comforted, although the Queen herself went there secretly and stayed two days to console him. Shortly afterwards a desperate attempt was made by one of the Queen's guard to assassinate Simier, and it was at once concluded, doubtless correctly, that it had been done at the instance of Leicester and Hatton. The Queen was in a red-hot rage, and so was Simier himself, who determined to strike a blow at his rival, which no other had yet dared to do. Leicester had been secretly married some time before to the widowed Countess of Essex, the daughter of Elizabeth's cousin, and Vice-Chamberlain Sir Francis Knollys: it was a *secret de polichinelle* to every one but the Queen, but no one had ventured to tell her until Simier, choosing the propitious moment, did so. Her fury

[1] Spanish Calendar (Elizabeth).

passed all bounds of decency and decorum; she raged and swore against the "she-wolf," as she called her cousin, who had thus been instrumental in wounding her vanity; but Simier was victorious, for she became more inseparable from him than ever, and for a time kept Leicester under lock and key in a fort in Greenwich Park. Soon afterwards another attempt was made upon Simier's life, this time by a shot whilst he was on the river with the Queen. He had previously lived with Castelnau at the French embassy, but now, in order to avoid the risk of his going backwards and forwards daily by water, the Queen brought him to her palace at Greenwich, and there lodged him, to the dismay and disgust of the English courtiers.

The way seemed now clear. The King of France and his mother had been convinced by Simier and Castelnau that Alençon had only to appear before the Queen for her to marry him, and they were willing to run the risk of his going secretly on the chance, in order, if possible, to get rid of so troublesome an element as Alençon was in France. In England the match was looked upon as settled; but still gloomy, patient Philip, in his cell, was incredulous. "Whatever may be said," he wrote to Mendoza, early in August, "I do not believe the marriage will take place, as there can be on either side no great desire for it, but a large amount of pretence." The only thing he left out of the calculation was Elizabeth's passion and vanity, which for a time were overmastering her judgment.

Alençon started from Paris on the 2nd of August, sending a confidential messenger ahead of him to announce his coming to the Queen and Simier.

The latter had previously lodged in apartments adjoining those of the Queen, to which he had a key giving him private access, but now, for the sake of appearances, he was transferred to a pavilion in the garden at Greenwich, where rooms were also prepared for the Prince. Various attempts at mystification were made to prevent the knowledge of his arrival becoming public and to throw people off the scent, but as he was delayed by bad weather at Boulogne for some days, the news spread and his arrival was after all an open secret. The Queen coyly told the Spanish ambassador that her lover had not come, but her hints and her simpers clearly implied that he had. The courtiers, to keep up an appearance of innocence, stayed away as much as possible, and they were prudent in doing so, for the Countess of Derby and the Earl of Bedford's daughter, who were caught gossiping about the Prince's arrival, were incontinently placed under arrest until after he had gone.

From a letter from Simier to the Queen,[1] it would appear that the Prince's approach was first made known to her early in the morning, and that she instantly sent word to Simier, who was in bed. Simier says that as her messenger left his room the Prince himself entered it so effectively disguised that he hardly knew him. He had, he said, been met in the street by many persons, but had not been recognised. He was, says Simier, tired to death, but notwithstanding that, entreated Simier to go at once to the Queen and beg her to let him go and salute her, all travel-stained and weary as he was. "But I showed him how impossible this was, as he would

[1] Hatfield Papers, part 2, p. 468.

have to pass through a dozen chambers before he got to yours, and that you were still asleep. At last I persuaded him to take some rest, and soon got him between the sheets, and I wish to God you were with him there, as he could then with greater facility convey his thoughts to you, for I well know that 'mal si riposa chi non ha contentezza.'"

Leicester in the meanwhile was furious, and the Spanish ambassador was missing no opportunity of fanning the flame of discontent against the marriage. The Queen dined alone with Alençon in Simier's room on the 17th of August, the day after his arrival, and although the young Prince was no beauty, with his swart, pocked-marked face, Elizabeth at once fell in love with him. He became from the first day her "frog" (grenouille), and the little endearments of the two young lovers went on ceaselessly all day, and often far into the night. "The Queen," writes Mendoza on the 25th of August, "is delighted with Alençon, and he with her, as she has let out to some of her courtiers, saying that she was pleased to have known him, was much taken with his good parts, and admired him more than any man. She says that for her part she will not stand in the way of his being her husband."[1] Castelnau, the French ambassador, writing at the same time, says to the Queen-mother: "These loving conferences have lasted eight days. The lady has with difficulty been able to entertain the Duke, being captivated, overcome with love: she told me she had never found a man whose nature and actions suited her better. She begs me to write to your Majesty asking you not to punish him too

[1] Spanish Calendar (Elizabeth).

much for the great folly of risking so much in coming to see a woman so unworthy as she is." The young Prince had been brought up in a Court where love-making was the great business of life, and flattered and languished as successfully as La Mole and Simier had done, and Elizabeth's overweening vanity had probably never been so satisfied before. She gave a ball on Sunday, the 23rd of August, 1579, at Greenwich, Alençon being only half hidden behind the arras. The Queen danced and posed even more than usual, and ever and anon made signals to her guest, of whose presence all the courtiers pretended to be ignorant. On the same night news came to the Duke that his staunch friend, Bussy d'Amboise, had at last been killed in a duel, and on the 27th Alençon started by coach to Dover to take the ship which was awaiting to carry him to Calais. Castelnau said after he went that he wrote letters "ardent enough to set fire to water," and to judge from the curious letters sent by him and Simier from Dover before he embarked, the ambassador was not very wide of the mark. These letters are in the Hatfield collection, and are worth transcribing as a specimen of the love-letters of the time, although that of the Prince seems to our eyes a perfect burlesque, considering that it was written by a lover of twenty-four to a mature beauty of nearly double his age. He is, he says, envious of his letter which will reach her hand. He dare not commit himself to a long discourse, knowing well that he is not himself, as he is continually occupied in stanching the tears which flow from his eyes without intermission. He swears that his affection for her will last for ever, and that he is and will remain

the most faithful and affectionate slave who can exist on earth. "As such," he says, "on the brink of this troublesome sea I kiss your feet."

This was accompanied by a letter from Simier in the quaint French of the time, which the reader may well be spared. It runs as follows: "Madame: I must tell you how little rest your frog had last night, he having done nothing but sigh and weep. At eight o'clock he made me get up to discourse to him of your divine beauty and of his great grief at leaving your Majesty, the jailor of his heart, the mistress of his liberty. Only his hope that he will soon see you again gives him some consolation. He has sworn to me a thousand times, but for that he would not wish to live another quarter of an hour. Do not then be cruel to him as he desires only to preserve his life so long as you are kind. Before he was out of bed he seized the pen and has ordered me to send off Captain Bourg with this, pending my own return to you, which will be as soon as I see him (Alençon) at sea with his sails spread. The weather is beautiful and the sea calm and I expect he will have a fair passage unless he swell the waves with the abundance of his tears. The monkey takes the liberty of humbly kissing your lovely hands."[1] These letters were sent on the 28th of August, and on the two following days similar extravagant missives were sent by the Prince, by Castelnau, and Simier; and then, on his arrival at Boulogne, more lovelorn epistles followed, by the hands of Admiral Howard and Edward Stafford, who had escorted the Prince so far. The Queen could only talk of her ardent young lover,

[1] Hatfield Papers, Hist. MSS. Com., part 2.

who, by the way, had scattered liberally amongst the courtiers the rich jewels his mother had provided for the occasion, the Queen herself receiving a splendid diamond ring worth 10,000 crowns; and in conversation with the Spanish ambassador she could find no words of praise strong enough for Catharine de Medici, "whom she had formerly abominated." The circumstances indeed again rendered a close alliance between England and France desirable either by marriage or otherwise. Catharine had managed to disarm Henry of Navarre, and the signing of the treaty of Nerac in February, 1579, had for a time brought harmony to France, and when France was united it was always necessary for Elizabeth to be in cordial agreement with that country or Spain. Her undisguised help to the revolted Flemings and her depredations on Spanish shipping had alienated her more and more from Philip, and now another circumstance had arisen which must drive both her and Catharine de Medici into more pronounced antagonism to Spain. The King of Portugal was old, ailing, and childless, and intrigues were ripe as to the succession of the crown. The strongest claimant was Philip himself, and it was felt that a further addition to his power and the acquisition of so fine a seaboard as that of Portugal would gravely prejudice the interest of France and England. Catharine had a shadowy claim to the crown herself for form's sake, but she and Elizabeth were quite agreed that, whoever got the prize, they would do their best to prevent Philip from gaining it, by stirring up war elsewhere and aiding the other pretenders.

Matters were therefore again ripe for an attempt

to bring about a binding offensive and defensive alliance between the two countries; and as soon as the lovelorn swain had gone home, serious and exhaustive discussions of the pros and cons of the projected match was undertaken by the Council at Greenwich. They appear to have sat continuously from the 2nd to the 8th of October, and the minutes of their proceedings in great detail, written by Burleigh, exist in the Hatfield Papers.[1] No phase or eventuality seems to have been lost sight of, and a sort of debit and credit account of advantages and disadvantages is carefully drawn up. The main result of the well-nigh interminable discussions was that the possible dangers of the match outbalanced the benefits, and an address to the Queen was drawn up and signed by the whole Council, dated the 8th of October, 1579, which, however, carefully avoided the expression of a decided opinion, and cast the onus of the final resolution on to the Queen. They say that they "have not proceeded to a full resolution as is usual in such consultations, feeling that inasmuch as her Majesty's own wishes and dispositions are principally to be regarded, it was their duty first to offer to her Majesty all their services and counsel to do what best shall please her." They beg her to show them the inclination of her mind, and if she pleases each councillor will state his opinion to her and bear the responsibility she might lay upon them." This message was taken to her by Burleigh, Leicester, Sussex, and Lincoln in the forenoon, and, as may be supposed, did not please their mistress. She wept and railed at them in no measured terms that their tedious disputations

[1] Hatfield Papers, Hist. MSS. Com., part 2.

should seem to imply a doubt as to the wisdom of her marrying and "having a child of her own body to inherit and continue the line of Henry VIII.; and condemned herself of simplicity in committing this matter to be argued by them, for that she thought to have rather had a universal request made to her to proceed in this marriage than to have made a doubt of it, and being much troubled thereby she requested them to forbear her till the afternoon." When they went to her again they found her even more indignant, "and shewed her mislike of such as she thought would not proffer her marriage before any device of surety." She complained very bitterly that they should think so "slenderly" of her as to assume that she would not be as careful to safeguard religion as they were, and that they should begrudge her marriage and child-bearing for that reason. We are told (in Burleigh's own hand) that "her answers were very sharp in reprehending all such as she thought would make argument against her marriage, and though she thought it not meet to declare to them whether she would marry or not, yet she looked from their hands that they should with one accord have made special suit to her for the same." [1] This meant, of course, that the responsibility should rest on other shoulders than her own whilst she had her way. Stubbs's famous book, "The discovery of a gaping gulf wherein England is like to be swallowed by another French marriage," had recently been published, and a fierce proclamation had just been issued by the Queen denouncing such publications

[1] Hatfield Papers, Hist. MSS. Com., part 2, and Spanish Calendar (Elizabeth).

as "lewde and seditious." Stubbs himself had his right hand chopped off and was exposed to public contumely, but with his left hand he raised his bonnet the moment after the blow was struck, and cried, "God save the Queen!" Nearly all London shared his opposition to the match and his personal loyalty to the Queen; and Elizabeth, who clung to her popularity above all things, was desirous of avoiding the blame for the marriage and yet to bring it about. In the meanwhile almost daily couriers sped backwards and forwards with exchanges of presents and loving missives between the Queen and Alençon, who had had another quarrel with his brother, and had retired to his own town of Alençon. He cannot imagine, he says, how her people can ever gainsay "une si bell royne qui les a tousjours tant bien gouvernés qu'il ne se peut mieus en monarchie du monde": and her Majesty was determined they should not gainsay her if she could help it. Once Walsingham, in conversation with her, expressed an unfavourable opinion, whereupon she turned upon him in a fury, and told him to be gone for a shielder of heretics; and when Sir Francis Knollys, presuming upon his relationship, asked her how she could think of marrying a Catholic, she threatened that he should suffer for his zeal. His was a fine way, she said, of showing attachment to his sovereign. Why should not she marry and have children like any other woman? Even her faithful "sheep" Hatton had a squabble with her about it, and was rusticated for a week.[1]

Philip Sidney's bold and nobly-worded letter of

[1] Spanish Calendar (Elizabeth).

remonstrance with the Queen against the match was accepted in a better spirit. The virtues and talents of the writer, coupled with the disinterested patriotism which evidently inspired his protest, secured him against the vituperation which Elizabeth lavished on Walsingham and other Protestant champions who timidly ventured to offer not a tithe of Sidney's outspoken opinions. "These" (the Protestants), said Sidney—"how will their hearts be galled, if not alienated, when they shall see you take a husband, a Frenchman and a papist, in whom, howsoever fine wits may find further dealings or painted excuses, the very common people well know this: that he is the son of a Jezebel of our age; that his brother made oblation of his sister's marriage, the easier to make massacres of our brethren in belief. That he himself, contrary to his promise and all gratefulness, having his liberty and principal estate by the Huguenot's means did sack La Charité and utterly spoil them with fire and sword! This I say, even at first sight gives occasion to all truly religious to abhor such a master, and consequently to diminish much of the hopeful love they long held to you." The Queen wept over this, as well she might, but to her credit it may be said that she did not visit the writer with her displeasure as she would have done in the case of a less high-minded adviser.

CHAPTER X.

Simier's departure with the draft agreement—The Queen suddenly cools towards the match—Her perplexity—Her efforts to temporise—Suggestions for an alliance with France—Simier's letters pleading Alençon's cause—Alençon's plans in Flanders—Signature of the Peace of Fleix—Queen Margaret's intrigues against the Alençon match—Simier's disgrace—Catholic intrigues to gain Alençon—Alençon's new envoys to England—Clausse de Marchaumont's negotiations—His favour with the Queen—"La belle jarretière."

On the 9th of November, 1579, Simier came to the Queen and told her he could delay no longer going back to his master; and if a final decision was not at once adopted, he must return without it. He was closeted with her for several hours, and the next day she summoned the principal councillors to her chamber, and told them that she had made up her mind to marry, and they need say no more about it; their duty now was simply to devise the necessary means for carrying out her wishes. She then sent post-haste to bring back Stafford, who was on his way to Alençon, and for a day her councillors thought the matter was settled. But the next day a cool gust of prudence passed over her passion, and she again sent to the councillors ordering them to give her individually their opinions in writing. This did not suit

Simier, and he rushed off to the Queen and told her it was now unwise and unnecessary, as she had made up her mind. She haughtily asked who told him that, to which he replied that it was Cecil; whereupon she flew into one of her violent rages against councillors who could not keep their mouths shut, and flung out of the room, leaving Simier to meditate upon the inconstancy of woman. She then ordered the councillors to send a joint letter begging Alençon to expedite his coming, but they refused to do so, and urged that before the Prince himself came a person of higher rank and more serious standing than Simier should come to settle the conditions. When Simier heard this he booted and spurred without more ado, and went in a huff to take leave of the Queen. She mollified him, however, with blandishments, and during the next few days the terms of settlement were hastily agreed upon and signed in draft, giving Alençon and his household the right to attend the Catholic service in his own chapel. But when the protocol was handed to Simier for conveyance to France the Queen characteristically insisted upon his giving an undertaking which always left her a loophole of escape. The original document in Simier's handwriting is at Hatfield, and agrees that the articles shall remain in suspense for two months, "during which time her Majesty hopes to have brought her people to consent to the marriage." If before that time she did not write to the King and Alençon consenting to receive ambassadors to sign the contract, the whole present conditions were to be absolutely null and void.

Simier left London on the 24th of November, loaded with presents, and from Gravesend wrote a

long letter to the Queen, warning her against those who, for their own ends, were trying to persuade her to forego the match, and who had been publicly boasting in London that as soon as his back was turned they would easily change her mind. He finishes his letter by what comes perilously near a bit of love-making on his own account, and during his two days' stay at Dover, and from Calais, letter followed letter from him to the Queen, in all of which the hope is fervently expressed that "le singe restera tousjours vostre, et que la distance des lyeus, ni la longeur du tanps, ni les fausses invantions des mes contrères, ne me pouront aporter aucun préjudisse en vos bonnes grasses ni enpecher le souleil de mes yeulx, qui ne puevent être contans que voyent vostre grenouille aupres de vostre Majesté et moy coume singe me voyr hordinere à vos piés," and so on, page after page. Stafford accompanied him across, and brought back a letter with a great emerald embedded in the seal, from Alençon to the Queen, telling her of the efforts which were being made to bring him and Navarre again into good agreement with the King, to which the Queen replied, leaving for once the philandering strain, and writing a serious and statesmanlike warning against his being too pliant. There is no doubt that for a time after Simier left, the influence of Leicester, Hatton, and Walsingham somewhat cooled her towards the marriage. Stafford went first with Simier to Paris to lay the draft conditions before the King, and took the opportunity of demanding some further limitation with regard to the exercise of the Catholic religion. Henry III. would have nothing to say to this, but left it to his brother's

conscience, but he wrote to his ambassador in England pointing out that this was another of their tricks to break off the affair.

Stafford found Alençon no more yielding than his brother, and for a time matters looked unpromising, the "monkey" continuing to write gushing letters to the Queen, begging her not to be influenced by the "mile faulx bruis" of Walsingham and others, who are trying to render the affair abortive. At this juncture, doubtless, the Queen wrote the long letter without date to the Duke,[1] pointing out to him the unpopularity of the match and the many difficulties of carrying it through, unless the terms taken by Simier, particularly with regard to religion and the pension, were relaxed. If this is impossible, she says, and the affair falls through, let us not worry any more about it, but remain faithful friends for ever. This did not at all please the Prince, who plainly told her (January 28, 1580, Hatfield Papers) that some people believed that she was only making use of the religious question as an excuse to break off the match, and that he is not at all astonished that she has requested that the departure of commissioners for the ratification should be stayed. He was probably right in his conjecture, for only a few days before (January 17, 1580, Hatfield Papers) the Queen tried to pick a quarrel about the rank of the ambassadors to be sent. She had roundly told the King, she said, that she did not think France was so short of princes that he must needs send her a child or a low-born person. A person of the very highest lineage must come or none at all: she would never have the chroniclers record that any slight was

[1] Hatfield Papers, Hist. MSS. Com,. part 2, p. 298.

offered to her honour on so great an occasion. The poor "monkey" might write his inflated letters to the Queen, deploring, and denouncing the enemies who were impeding the match, and pleading in heartbroken accents the cause of his lovelorn "frog"; but there can be no doubt that at the end of January, 1580, in London, the affair was looked upon as at an end. A long and instructive State paper exists at Hatfield in the writing of Sir Thomas Cecil, dated the 28th of January, addressed to the Queen, and setting forth that the Alençon marriage, having fallen through, the Prince would probably seek revenge for his disappointment, and ally himself to the King of Spain, with the object of aiding a general Catholic assault on England and Ireland. Sir Thomas then lays down a certain course of action necessary to meet this danger. Alençon is to be encouraged to push his ambitious projects in Flanders in order to keep him at issue with Spain; the Queen's forces by sea and land are to be put on a war footing, and German mercenaries are to be hired; English trade, as far as possible, is to be carried in foreign bottoms; the Irish are to be conciliated by large concessions to their national traditions; the Queen of Scots is to be more strictly held and her son subsidised; and the Netherlanders and the Huguenots are to be vigorously helped. This was a bold programme indeed, but was fully warranted by the circumstances as we now know them. The Guises were moving heaven and earth to prevent an understanding between Alençon and the Huguenots; the Queen of Scots was in active negotiation with Philip, through Beaton and Guise, for a Spanish invasion of England in her interest;

and the Spanish troops, under the Papal banner, were backing up the insurgent Irish.[1]

The reason for Alençon's tardy resistance to further surrender about his religion must be sought in the fact that the Catholic Flemings were still in active negotiations with him for his assuming the sovereignty of the States, and any wavering on his part in religion would at once have made him an impossible candidate for them. The fact of the Prince of Orange and the Huguenots being in his favour was already rather against his chances with the Walloons, and it was necessary for him to assume a devotion to Catholicism, the sincerity of which may well be doubted. It will thus be seen that the position was full of danger and uncertainty to Elizabeth, as she could never allow a Frenchman to be dominant in the Netherlands unless he was her humble servant. This, of course, was obvious to Alençon as it was to her, and it was necessary for him to know upon which side he would have to depend for the promotion of his ambition, either the Queen of England and the Huguenots, or the Catholic Flemings and his brother. On the very day, therefore, that the two months stipulated with Simier expired, namely, the 24th of February, 1580, Castelnau, the French ambassador, went to the Queen and asked for a definite answer as to whether she would marry the Prince on the terms arranged or not. She replied that it was not a matter which could be settled in such a hurry, and she must consult her Council and her people. After a good deal of bickering the ambassador unmasked his batteries, and told her that if she did not carry out her agree-

[1] Spanish Calendar (Elizabeth), vol. iii.

ment to marry him, the Prince, in his own justification and to show people that he had not come to England out of mere flightiness, would be obliged to publish all her letters. She replied, in her usual vein, that she was surprised that Alençon should think of treating any lady in this way, much less a Queen, and with this she closed the colloquy in great anger and indignation.

Mendoza tells the story,[1] and adds that after the ambassador had left, "she being alone in her chamber with Cecil and the Archbishop of York, whom she considers a very clever man, she said, My lord, here am I between Scylla and Charybdis. Alençon has agreed to all the terms I sent him, and he is asking me to tell him when I wish him to come and marry me. If I do not marry him I know not whether he will remain friendly with me; and if I do I shall not be able to govern my country with the freedom and security I have hitherto enjoyed. What shall I do?" The answer of the Archbishop was that every one would be glad with whatever she decided upon. She then turned to Cecil and asked him what he thought, as he had been absent from the Council for three days past. He said that if she wished to marry she should do so, as no harm could come to the country now that Alençon had agreed to their terms; but, he added, if she did not mean to marry him she ought to undeceive him at once. She sharply told him that the rest of the councillors were not of his opinion, but that the Duke should be kept in hand by correspondence. How could she tell, she asked, the feeling of the King of Spain towards her, and whether it would

[1] Spanish Calendar (Elizabeth), vol. iii.

be safe for her to let go her hold on France? Cecil, not relishing the snub, replied that those who tried to trick princes were themselves generally tricked in the end. The Spanish ambassador thought, and he was no doubt right, that Alençon's pressure and covert threats were for the purpose of forcing the Queen to help him in his designs in Flanders as some solatium for the slight she had put upon him and his family by throwing him over in the marriage negotiations; and colour is given to this view by the fact that envoys arrived simultaneously from La Noue, the Huguenot chief, who was now in the service of the States, from Orange, and the Prince of Condé, to beg the Queen to send help to establish Alençon in the Netherlands. This appeared to the Queen a good way out of her difficulty, and she seems to have seized it with avidity, though always with a pretence that the marriage negotiations were still pending, in order to save appearances and disarm the French Government. On the receipt, therefore, of a letter from Alençon by Captain Bourg, on the 7th of March, announcing that he only awaited her permission to send Marshal de Cossé, to settle the conditions, the Queen took what was for her a very unusual step, namely, to pay a ceremonious visit by water to the French ambassador, to promise him shortly to fix a date for the coming of the commissioners. How hollow the pretence was, however, is seen by a letter written at the same time by Simier to the Queen, headed by a true lovers' knot, in which "her faithful monkey" deplores that she has broken off the match which he ascribes to the machinations of his enemies, and says that he would rather have given his right arm and

ten years of his life than it should have happened, or if she had decided to break it off that she had not done so ten months before. Elizabeth continued her great show of cordiality to the French ambassador, and when the Prince of Condé himself came in June to complain to her of the treatment suffered by the Protestants in France, and to beg her aid, she went to the length of refusing to receive him excepting in the presence of Castelnau, and by every means in her power sought to bring about an understanding with the French Government before she pledged herself single-handed too deeply in the troubled affairs of Flanders. But this did not at all suit Alençon, who had his own game to play and knew full well that if a cordial alliance were arranged between his brother and the Queen of England there would be no need for the latter to marry him, or for either party to risk an open rupture with Spain for the sake of his personal aggrandisement; particularly at the present moment, when Elizabeth was in great alarm at a powerful Spanish fleet which had just put to sea. So the faithful "frog" and his attendant monkey began to get ardent again. De Vray was sent to smooth down misunderstandings and to mollify Leicester, who, after grumbling that the French were not giving him enough presents, had gone whining to the Spanish ambassador to offer his services to impede the understanding with the French—for a consideration. Simier writes on the 18th of April:[1] "As for your frog, his flame is immortal, and his love towards you can never end either in this world or the next. By God, Madame, lose no more time! Take counsel

[1] Hatfield Papers, Hist. MSS. Com., part 2.

with yourself and those whose faithful attachment is known to you for your own sake rather than their advancement . . . let Monseigneur soon approach your charms. This is the daily prayer of your monkey who, with all humility, kisses the shadow of your footsteps." Alençon's letters, although somewhat less hyperbolical, are yet very loving, and press the Queen urgently to allow commissioners to come to finally settle the marriage conditions, and in this request he was seconded by his mother and brother. To all these letters answers were sent after much delay, "containing many sweet words but no decision;" and the Spanish ambassador writing an account of matters to his master on the 21st of May,[1] says that the French were threatening the Queen with Alençon's resentment if she did not marry him now the matter was so far advanced. "In this way both parties are weaving a Penelope's web simply to cover the designs which I have already explained to your Majesty." These designs were, on Alençon's part, to force Elizabeth into a marriage, or into supporting him in Flanders as the price of throwing him over; on Elizabeth's part that if he went into Flanders at all he should do so only as her tool and that of the Huguenots; or otherwise to bring about a close alliance between England and France, or a rupture between the latter and Spain: and on the part of Henry III. and his mother, to get rid of their "enfant terrible," by marrying him in England, and to drive Elizabeth single-handed into a contest with Spain. The States envoys from Ghent meanwhile were pressing upon Alençon the sovereignty of the Netherlands, and the matter

[1] Spanish Calendar (Elizabeth), vol. iii.

could not brook long delay, for Alexander Farnese, who was no sluggard, had just routed La Noue, and was pressing them hard. Alençon therefore thought that affairs must be precipitated or he would slip to the ground between his brother and the Queen of England, between Protestant and Catholic support; and the pressure put upon Elizabeth was now so strong, and the danger that Alençon would enter Flanders independent of her so great, that a Council was held on the 5th of June, and unanimously decided that a request should be sent to France for commissioners to be despatched to England. Sir Edward Stafford at the same time was despatched to Alençon, to negotiate with him and obtain his co-operation with the embassy. But Stafford found the Duke in the sulks. He knew full well that the sending of a formal embassy by his brother to England would be more likely to lead to an alliance than a marriage, or that if a marriage was brought about by these means it would be on such terms as would hamper rather than help his ambition; so he stood out, and at last only gave his concurrence with the embassy on condition that it should solely be empowered to negotiate a marriage and not a national alliance.[1] Shortly after this, on the 12th of August, a formal deputation of the States offered Alençon the sovereignty of the Netherlands, which he nominally accepted. He was, however, powerless to move or assume his sovereignty until peace was made between his brother and Henry of Navarre, and his Huguenots, who were now at open warfare. No French troops of either party were

[1] Alençon and Simier to the Queen, July 21st and August 4th, 1580. Hatfield Papers, part 2.

available for Alençon until he had persuaded the Bearnais to come to terms, and had raised the siege of La Fère, The Duke's first care, therefore, was to patch up some sort of settlement between the two factions in France, not a very easy matter, particularly when the King, learning of the vast Spanish plunder brought by Drake from America, and concluded that Elizabeth's fear of reprisals would render her powerless to back up the Huguenots. At last, however, the peace of Fleix was signed in November, 1580, and the horizon for Alençon began to brighten somewhat. Amongst those in the French Court who most strongly opposed his marriage was his sister Margaret, Queen of Navarre, for reasons which the scandalmongers of the time had much to say; and in the correct belief that Simier was largely instrumental in bringing about the match, she prompted her great friend Fervaques and his ally Balagny to pick a quarrel with the "monkey," and if possible kill him. Thereupon ensued a bitter feud in Alençon's household, which ended in the flight of Simier to his abbey of Bourgueil, whence he wrote a series of interesting letters to Elizabeth in his usual strain, giving her a full account of all that had happened. She, for her part, kept up the correspondence actively, and zealously endeavoured to induce his master to restore him to favour. Alençon seems to have treated his servitor very badly. Simier tells the Queen that only a few days before his disgrace he lent the Duke 90,000 crowns, and that suddenly he had been deprived of all he possessed, "and turned out in his shirt." He ascribes his trouble mostly to Margaret, and his letters—particularly that of the 18th of October [1]—are so full of

[1] Hatfield Papers, Hist. MSS. Com., part 2.

scandal that one can well understand his fervent prayers that the Queen will burn his letters and not let a soul but herself read them. It is almost impossible to read these letters and believe in the innocence of the Queen's relations with Simier, as witness the final words in the aforesaid long letter of the 18th of October: "I pray you, madame, that no living soul shall know of my letters. I place my life in your hands, and only wish to preserve it to do you service. For I am your ape, and you are my creator, my defender, my stay, and my saviour. You are my god, my all, my life, my hope, my faith, and my consolation. I supplicate you then, and pray you with all my power to deign in your grace to bring my affairs to a happy issue. You will thus still further pledge the ape who in all humility will render you complete obedience to death, as willingly as he now humbly kisses and rekisses a hundred million times your beautiful and loving hands." All this is mighty fine, but he gives the Queen in a postscript a piece of news which must have interested her still more, and certainly influenced her attitude towards Alençon. "Saturn" (*i.e.*, the King of Spain), he says, "has informed the King and Queen-mother that if they can dissuade Monsieur from his plans in the Netherlands, he (the King of Spain) will grant him the territory of Cambresis, and will put him into possession of all the rest (*i.e.*, of Catholic Flanders). The Pope and the Dukes of Savoy, Florence, Urbino, and Ferrara will guarantee this grant; and the Queen-mother has undertaken to make these overtures to Monsieur, who knows nothing of the matter yet. For God's sake burn this letter and let no soul see it."

The effect of this was that loving letters were at once sent to Alençon, all difficulties were smoothed over, the commissioners should be cordially welcomed as soon as they liked to come, and what was of far more importance still, the Queen promised the French ambassador that when they arrived she would give Alençon 200,000 crowns of Drake's plunder to help him in the Netherlands enterprise and subsidise Duke Casimir's mercenary army of Germans to cross the frontier and co-operate with him.

But it was not a very easy task to settle with the King of France the preliminaries of the embassy, the extent of its powers, and the choice of its members. Cobham, in Paris, tried to pledge Henry III. to break first with Spain on account of his mother's claim to the Portuguese crown, which Philip had usurped, but the King said he would make no move until Elizabeth did so. Whilst these discussions were going on in Paris, Alençon sent an embassy of his own to London (in February, 1581) to pave the way, in his interest, for the coming of the commissioners. The principal envoy was Clausse de Marchaumont, Count de Beaumont, who was accompanied by Jean Bodin, the famous writer, and others; and his principal task for many months to come was to beg for money aid for his master's enterprise. He was received with apparent cordiality by the Queen, who was closeted with him for hours every day, and especially recommended him to the French ambassador as a great favourite of Alençon; but withal she must have watched him closely at first, for in one of his most secret letters her "faithful monkey" assures her that Marchaumont

was entirely dependent upon the Guises, and recommends her to have a little secretary of his named Obterre "untrussed," when she will find some news about Scotland. The Duke of Guise, it seems, had dropped a hint about it in the hearing of one of Simier's friends. Whatever was the result of the Queen's secret conferences with Marchaumont, not even her own councillors knew it, and she wrote a private letter, which no one saw, for one of the envoys, a cousin of Marchaumont's, M. de Mery, to take to the Duke, and with it she sent a wedding-ring as a token. Mendoza says that "she also said publicly that she was now so anxious for the commissioners to come that every hour's delay seemed like a thousand years to her, with other tender speeches of the same sort, which make most people who hear them believe that the marriage will take place. The three ministers (*i.e.*, Sussex, Cecil, and Crofts) for whom Marchaumont brought letters only replied to him that they could say nothing further, but that the Queen seemed very desirous that the wedding should be effected." The tone of this last remark is sufficient to prove that the Queen, at this time, was not in earnest, and that her real design, as I have already pointed out, was to compass her ends without burdening herself with a husband. At a subsequent stage, as we shall see, her passion once more, and for the last time, nearly swept away her judgment, and drove her into a position from which it was difficult to extricate herself without matrimony or loss of prestige. Marchaumont brought with him a secretary of Alençon's named de Bex, who kept up an extremely active correspondence during the whole of his stay in England, with a large circle of friends

in France (Hatfield Papers), letters which are full of curious sidelights on the manners of the times, but which do not give us much fresh information on the marriage negotiations. Another confidential agent of Alençon was also constantly about the Queen's person, and his letters at Hatfield prove that for many months the most secret instructions of the French ambassador and the special envoys were immediately conveyed to Elizabeth by this man, who is only known to us under the pseudonym of "Le Moyne," with which he signed his letters to the Queen and to Alençon, with both of whom he seems to have been equally familiar. "Le Moyne" has, I believe, never hitherto been identified, but a careful comparison of his letters with certain known facts of Marchaumont's life convinces me that the mysterious "monk" who was so deep in the confidence of the Queen was Marchaumont himself. How highly she favoured him is proved by her behaviour to him on the occasion of her famous visit to Drake's ship, the *Pelican*, at Deptford early in April, 1581. When the great sailor approached his sovereign after the banquet to receive the honour of knighthood, she jokingly told him she had a gilded sword wherewith to strike off his head, but turning to Marchaumont she handed the sword to him and authorised him to give Drake the accolade, which he did.[1] When she was crossing the gangway to go on board the *Pelican*, one of her purple and gold garters slipped down and trailed behind her, whereupon Marchaumont, who followed, seized it as a lawful prize to send to his master. The Queen besought him to return it to her, as she had nothing

[1] Spanish Calendar (Elizabeth).

else to prevent her stocking from slipping down; but the gallant Frenchman refused to surrender it until she promised to restore it to him as soon as she returned to Westminster. She made no ado about putting the garter on before him, and the next day M. de Mery was started off hastily to the love-lorn "frog," again bearing with him a letter of high-flown affection from the Queen and the precious garter from Marchaumont.[1] For a long time afterwards Alençon, in his letters to the Queen, refers to her "belle jartière" as a talisman which is the cause of all his good fortune. Garters and loving words were very well in their way, but Alençon was anxious to come to business. The embassy was waiting to go over to England, and affairs both in Flanders and France were reaching a point where it was necessary for the Duke to know upon whom he could depend. His answer, therefore, was most pressing. "He could have," he said, "no rest until the Queen gave him a certain and definite answer as to the fulfilment of the marriage so long treated of. He earnestly beseeches her, in recompense for his faithful affection, to put aside all doubts, ambiguities, and irresolutions, and give expression to her final wishes on the matter. If she shall approve of the setting out of the embassy to conclude the marriage, as soon as her reply to the present despatch shall have been received, they shall be sent with instructions to obey and satisfy her rather by deeds than by words."[2]

[1] Spanish Calendar (Elizabeth).
[2] Hatfield Papers, part 2.

CHAPTER XI.

Great French embassy to England to settle the Alençon match—Elizabeth's efforts to gain her objects without marriage—Alençon's determination to relieve Cambrai—Henry III. strenuously opposes his brother's plans in Flanders—Alleged flying visit of Alençon to England—Catharine's efforts to divert Alençon from his plans in Flanders—Elizabeth attempts to draw France into war with Spain without her marriage with Alençon.

At length, after endless bickering about the rank of the proposed ambassadors and the Queen's assent had been received by Alençon, the envoys were ordered to rendezvous at Calais. There they were delayed for some weeks, first for the young Prince Dauphin, of Montpensier, whom the King had added to the list of ambassadors to please the Queen at Alençon's request, and then by the illness of other members of the embassy. Early in April, 1581, however, all was ready for their crossing, and then the English Council began to get alarmed at the number of their following and the sumptuous nature of the embassy, which most of the councillors knew was destined to return with the marriage still undecided. At last, however, a general passport was granted at the instance of the Queen, who said she could not afford to offend Alençon at this juncture. Workmen were set on in furious haste to build a grand-stand in the palace at Westminster, wherein

to entertain the visitors. Ten thousand pounds' worth of plate was ordered for presents, and jousts, banquets, and balls were hastily organised. "The Queen went to the length of issuing an order in Council that shopkeepers were to sell their cloth of gold, velvets, silks, and other such stuffs at a reduction of one quarter from the price per yard, as she says she wishes them to do her this service in order that the ladies and gentlemen may be the better able to bedizen themselves. "This seems an evident sign that her only object is to satisfy her own vanity and keep Alençon in hand." [1] The writer goes on to say that the Queen is paying no heed to the weighty questions which will have to be settled by the embassy, but is entirely absorbed by the consideration of new devices for jousts, where a ball is to be held, what beautiful women are to be at Court, and such-like trifles. On the 14th of April the glittering embassy embarked at Calais. It consisted of nearly five hundred persons in all, and included Francis de Bourbon, Dauphin of Auvergne, the son of the Duke of Montpensier; Charles de Bourbon, Count of Soissons, the youngest of the Condé family; Marshal de Cossé; the Counts of Sancerre and Carrouges; Lansac, Barnabé Brisson, the famous president of the parliament of Paris; La Mothe Fénélon; Pinart, Catharine's Secretary of State; de Vray; Jean Bodin, and others of high rank. Lord Cobham, Warden of the Cinque ports, the Earl of Pembroke, and others, received them at Dover with a great train of the Queen's carriages, in which they were conveyed to Gravesend, where

[1] Mendoza to Philip, April 6, 1581. Spanish Calendar, vol. iii.

a great number of nobility met them with the Queen's barges to carry them to Somerset House. London itself was crowded with the nobility and Parliament-men, who had been specially ordered to remain in town with their families. "They are also collecting," says Mendoza, "all their servants and trains, both for the sake of ostentation and because, being a suspicious folk, they fear some disturbance, particularly Leicester, who is making greater efforts than any one to collect a large company of kinsmen and servants." London itself was gloomy and discontented at the coming of the embassy, but withal was kept from open disturbance by the underlying belief, now pretty general, that State alliance rather than marriage would be the ultimate result of it all. A salute of two hundred guns greeted the envoys as they passed under London bridge in their barges on the 21st of April. Saturday, the 24th, was St. George's Day, and the ambassadors were taken in great state by water to visit the Queen at Whitehall. A vast banqueting-hall, says Hollingshead, had been erected on the south side of the palace covered with painted canvas and decorated in a style of most fantastic splendour. Pendants of fruits, and even vegetables were hung from festoons of ivy, bay, rosemary, and flowers, the whole lavishly sprinkled with spangles. The ceiling was painted like a sky, with stars and sunbeams intermixed with escutcheons of the royal arms, and a profusion of glass lustres illuminated the whole. The envoys themselves, giving an account of their reception,[1] say that the walls of the chamber were

[1] Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris. Fonds francais, 3308. La Ferrière.

hung entirely with cloth of gold and silver; the throne, raised on a dais, being surmounted by a silken canopy covered with roses embroidered in pearls. The Queen herself was dressed in cloth of gold spangled with diamonds and rubies, and smilingly inclined her head as the less important members of the embassy passed before her. When the young Dauphin, a prince of the blood and the representative of the King, approached, however, she stepped down from the dais and in English fashion kissed him on the lips, and said a few gracious words to Marshal de Cossé, Brisson, Carrouges, and La Mothe Fénélon, who followed him. Again and again she besought the young Prince to don his plumed bonnet, and the crowd being dense and the heat great, instead of again mounting her dais she retired to an open window overlooking the Thames. Lansac seized the opportunity of presenting to her a French painter who had been commissioned by Catharine de Medici to paint her portrait, whereupon the Queen, ever avid for compliments, said he must represent her with a veil over her face, so that they might not think her too old. That day and the next passed in almost interminable entertainments, which, as they are described in the pages of Hollingshead, and by the ambassadors themselves, appear to us incredibly far-fetched, childish, and absurd; but which doubtless at the time were considered models of poetry and delicate compliment to the Queen and her guests. At length, on taking leave of the Queen after the third day of feasting, the Prince Dauphin asked her when they should get to business, and which councillors she would appoint

to negotiate with the embassy. She was of course well prepared for the request, and had planned her course before the envoys had set foot in England. Leicester and Walsingham had done their best to prevent the passport for them from being sent, but had been overborne by Cecil, Sussex, and the Queen herself; and when Leicester, on the day before their crossing, came again to his mistress and pointed out the danger she ran in, carrying the matter so far, she tranquillised him by saying that if the embassy became too pressing she would confuse the negotiations by bringing Alençon himself over to England for a few days, whilst the envoys were here. She could, she said, square matters without a marriage and without offence by giving him a money aid to his Netherlands projects. To Sussex, and, above all, to Marchaumont, she artfully told an entirely opposite tale, and led them to believe that if the Duke came suddenly and secretly she would certainly marry him, and, needless to say, "the monk" at once wrote pressing his master to make ready to come over if necessary. But Marchaumont at the same time told the ambassadors that he was of opinion that unless they could get a distinct pledge that the marriage should take place they ought to veto the Duke's visit. The control of events was thus cunningly centred in the Queen's hand. As the Spanish ambassador points out to Philip, she had silenced the opposition of Leicester and his friends, had convinced those favourable to the marriage of her sincerity, whilst providing herself with a loophole of escape in any case. If Alençon did come she could deal with him over the heads of the embassy, and so confuse

matters, whilst if he did not come she could allege that as a reason for not marrying him, and infer that the negotiations had fallen through by no fault of her own.[1] When the Prince Dauphin therefore asked her to appoint a committee of the Council she was ready for him, and named Cecil, Bedford, Leicester, Sussex, Hatton, and Walsingham—that is to say, three men who were determined to prevent the marriage if possible, one—Sussex—honestly in favour of it, and the other two—Cecil and Bedford—only concerned in rendering the match innocuous to English interests, if the Queen determined to carry it through, which neither of them believed she would. Business began with a grand banquet at the Lord Treasurer's new house in the Strand, hard by the lodgings of the embassy. After a verification of powers Cecil made a long speech to the effect that, although he had formerly opposed the marriage, he now considered that it would be conducive to the interests of England, and Brisson replied in a similar strain. Walsingham then launched his thunderbolt. He alleged that since, and as a consequence of, de Bacqueville's mission eighteen months before, the Pope had flooded England with Jesuit emissaries, and had sent armed forces to Ireland. The projected marriage, he said, had raised the hopes of the Catholics in England, who were already discounting its effects. He dwelt upon the dangers which might attend an accouchement of the Queen at her age, and complained bitterly that Alençon, even since the negotiations had been in progress, had entered into dealings with the States-General of Flanders. The marriage

[1] Spanish Calendar (Elizabeth).

might therefore drag England into war, and the Queen had consequently written a letter to the Duke, to which she was now awaiting the reply.[1] The envoys replied in astonishment that they had looked upon the principle of the marriage as settled before they came, and could not enter into discussions of that sort, but pointed out that as England had now offended Spain past forgiveness, it was needful for the Queen to gain the friendship of France by means of the marriage. They were told that if the Queen married it would be from no such consideration as this, but out of pure affection, and suggested that if the marriage did not take place an offensive and defensive alliance against Spain might be concluded. But this, although the main object of the Englishmen, did not at all suit the French. They were only authorised, they said, to conclude the marriage, for which purpose they had come, and not to arrange an alliance. Let the Queen marry Monsieur first, and then she might be sure the King of France would help her in the Netherlands and elsewhere. "In the meanwhile," says Mendoza, "no formal commission has been given to the English ministers, by which it is clear that the Queen is simply procrastinating about the marriage in order to draw the French into an offensive alliance without burdening herself with a husband, whilst the French wish first to make sure of the marriage.[2] That the Spanish ambassador was quite right in his reading of events we may now see by the note in Cecil's hand summarising the argu-

[1] Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris. Fonds francais, 3308. La Ferrière.

[2] Mendoza to Philip, May 4, 1581. Spanish Calendar (Elizabeth).

ments pro and con for the Queen's guidance, and also by the draft of the discourse pronounced by Walsingham to the ambassadors, which very plainly show that the Queen at this time, notwithstanding her honeyed words to "the monk" and loving letters to Alençon, was not in earnest. Banquet succeeded banquet, but the Frenchmen could get no further. In vain they protested that they had simply come to conclude the draft contract negotiated by Simier, that their mission was limited, and that they had no more time to waste in merry-making. Let us get to business first, they said, and feast afterwards. On the 7th of May they were invited to a ball at Whitehall, after which the Queen again pressed upon them the necessity for an alliance between England and France, but said she could not go any further with the marriage until she heard again from Alençon. In vain her plaintive "monkey," from his abbey of Bourgueil, wrote praying her to make her lovelorn "frog" happy without further delay, in vain Marchaumont pressed in his master's name that she would not shame him by throwing him over after all that had passed between them. Smiles, sweet words, and vague protestations were all they could get; and Secretary Pinart wrote on the 21st of May to Catharine: "The Queen makes all sorts of demonstrations to us, but we can get no further." At a supper given by Sussex the Queen expressed her satisfaction to La Mothe Fénélon at the approaches the French had made to Leicester, who, she said, had done his best to forward their views and to maintain a friendly understanding between the two countries. La Mothe drily replied that

such an understanding would be easy when the marriage was concluded. Oh! said the Queen, as for the marriage, that is in the hands of God, and she could say nothing more about that until she received a reply from Alençon. La Mothe thereupon declined to discuss any other question and the Queen closed the colloquy in a huff. Two days after this, when the envoys had become quite disheartened and perplexed at Marchaumont's secret dealings with the Queen and Sussex over their heads, Elizabeth suddenly sent de Vray to Alençon with a private autograph letter,[1] in the sealing-wax of which she embedded a diamond; and at the same time Marchaumont wrote urging his master to come over and gain the prize by a *coup-de-main*, on the strength of a document which he had obtained from the Committee of the Council containing some favourable expressions towards the match. At the same time Marchaumont was brought to a lodging in the gardens of Whitehall and an elaborate pretence of keeping some important personage concealed there was made, partly to prepare the public mind for the coming of the Duke and partly to still further mystify the envoys. In this the Queen and Marchaumont were entirely successful, and the Queen was looking almost hourly for the arrival of her suitor, with whom she could make her own terms and force France into an

[1] Probably the important letter misdated 1580 in the Hatfield Papers (MSS. Com., part 2, p. 358) wherein the Queen urges Alençon to obtain a distinct pledge of aid from his brother against the Spanish power in the Netherlands. The main object of her policy was, of course, to bring about a complete rupture between France and Spain, which would have ruined the Guises, raised the Huguenots, weakened Spain, and have rendered England secure on all sides.

alliance. Alençon himself was all eagerness to come, but he had pledged himself solemnly to the States to relieve Cambrai which was beleaguered by Parma, and he dared not abandon his task. Simier, moreover, was away from him, and his sister Margaret's friend, Fervaques, was ever at his ear urging him to wrath against poor "monkey" and the Queen of England. Fervaques, writing to Marchaumont, says that if Elizabeth succeeds in getting Simier reinstated, "the very day he comes back I will quit the service; car s'il me donnait tout son bien par la teste de Dieu je ne serverais pas une heure. Send us some money or we shall starve. Our master will make peace (*i.e.*, in France) for he rules the King of Navarre, and they say that after that we are going to England. Je donne aux mille diables le voyage et le premier qui mit les james en avant. Tell my secretary if he comes not back soon by God I will cut his throat." [1]

Alençon accordingly wrote to Marchaumont on the 20th of May saying that he could not come until he had arranged for the relief of Cambrai at any cost. He was, he said, like a bird on a branch and might be able to fly off at any moment, and in the meanwhile sent the clothes he would need on his arrival. But events forced his hands. On the 17th of May the King issued a decree in Paris ordering the dispersion by force of arms of all the levies of Frenchmen being raised for the service of his brother in Flanders. Great pressure, bribes, persuasions and threats, were brought to bear upon Alençon by his mother, to prevent him from again entering Flanders to relieve Cambrai, and so, per-

[1] Hatfield Papers, part 2.

haps, embroil France with Spain; but he plainly saw now that his ambition would never be served by the Catholic party and that he must frankly depend upon the Protestants and Elizabeth, so he hurriedly made preparations for a flying visit to England. When the Queen was satisfied that he was coming and that the King of France was quite determined not to offend Spain as a preliminary of the marriage, her tone towards the ambassadors immediately changed, and the clause in the draft treaty giving the bridegroom the right of exercising his religion in England was struck out. The envoys were naturally indignant, refused to accept the alteration, and said that as, under the circumstances, the marriage was an impossibility, they would depart at once. To preserve appearances it was decided that some sort of draft agreement, based on the marriage contract of Philip and Mary, should be agreed to, and after long bickering as to which party should sign first, the Queen insisted that the draft should be accompanied by a letter from her to the effect that the conditions did not bind her to marry at all, but should be adopted if at any future time she decided to do so. This appeared absurd to the envoys, and, whilst the subject was being discussed, the Queen learnt that Alençon was on his way and would submit to her will in all things. She then turned round and said there was no need for any capitulations at all. She and Alençon were the persons to be married and they understood each other perfectly well, so that his brother's intervention was unnecessary. This change of front completely puzzled the ambassadors, but they were not long in the dark as to the reason of it, for three days after-

wards Leicester told them that an English merchant had just arrived in London who had seen Alençon embark from Dieppe for England two days before, namely on the 28th of May. The envoys and the ambassador Castelnau were chagrined beyond measure at this new escapade of the King's brother and obstinately shut themselves up to avoid seeing him. Such rigorous silence did they maintain as to this visit in their correspondence that even the most recent and best informed French historian of the events does not credit its having taken place. The correspondence of Mendoza, the Spanish ambassador in London, which has passed through my hands, leaves me, however, little doubt upon the subject [1]; although Philip, writing to his ambassador, says that the news he receives from France is incompatible with Alençon's visit to England on this occasion.

On the 1st of June, 1581, Marchaumont visited Castelnau, the ambassador, who showed him a letter from a certain Cigogne, one of Alençon's gentlemen, giving him intelligence of his master's movements. The Duke had embarked at Dieppe at six o'clock on the morning of the 28th of May, and after knocking about in the Channel for five hours very seasick, had to return to land. He had then ridden with all his suite to Evereux, whence he had sent Cigogne to inform his brother of his going to England, and had then himself started on horseback with a very small company towards Boulogne. The faithful "monk" at once hastened to the Queen with the news, which she had already heard

[1] Spanish Calendar. Mendoza to the King, 2nd and 5th of June, 1581.

elsewhere. She appeared overjoyed at the coming of her suitor, and she was for sending Stafford at once to greet him. But de Bex was sent to Dover instead, bearing a written message from the Queen, couched in the most loving terms,[1] and rooms were ordered secretly to be prepared for the Prince in Marchaumont's chambers. On the afternoon of the 2nd of June the visitor came up the Thames with the tide, evading the spies whom the King's envoys had posted everywhere, and was safely lodged in the apartments destined for him in the Queen's garden. Immediately afterwards one of his gentlemen entered the presence-chamber as if he had just come from France (as indeed he had) bringing letters from his master to the Queen, and Marchaumont sent to Leicester the agreed token of his coming, namely, a jet ring. This strange prank of the young Prince upset all calculations. He had come without his brother's prior knowledge or permission and without consultation with the ambassadors, the whole affair having been managed by Marchaumont over their heads. Says Mendoza, writing to Philip a day or two after his arrival: "No man, great or small, can believe that he has come to be married, nor can they imagine that she will marry him because he has come. It may be suspected that her having persuaded him to come with hopes that they two together would settle matters better than could be done by the intervention of his brother's ministers, had been the motive which brought him."

The fact is that Henry III. had shown his hand.

[1] Hatfield Papers, part 2, pp. 360, 362, 483.

Alençon's levies had been attacked by the King's troops, and it was evident that unless he consented to forego his ambition and again become the laughing-stock of the mignons he must cleave to the Queen of England, marriage or no marriage. This she knew better than any one, and it was this for which she had been playing. If the French under Alençon went to the Netherlands to weaken Spain, they would go in her interest and at her behest, and not in those of France. No words accordingly could be too sweet for her to greet her lover, no promises too brilliant which could pledge him to go in person to relieve Cambrai, notwithstanding the pressure to the contrary from his mother and brother. Leicester, Hatton, and Walsingham, who feared their mistress's impressionable nature, were frightened when Alençon appeared, and began as usual to stir up discontent of the match. "If he came to marry the Queen," said the people, "he ought to have come as the brother of a king should do and with proper means, whereas if he did not come to marry, they needed no poor Frenchmen in this country." Money and support for Cambrai were liberally promised by the Queen if Alençon would only go back again as quickly as he came and undertake the relief in person. So after only two nights' stay in London he dropped down the river, unseen by any of his countrymen except Marchaumont and de Bex, and went back to France. No sooner was he gone than the envoys came out of their hiding again and boldly averred, with the aid of Leicester and his friends, that he had not been in England at all; and the hollow negotiations to cover their retreat were once

more resumed. The capitulations with the nullifying letter were signed, sealed, and delivered,[1] and the pompous embassy took its departure on the 12th of June, much less hopeful of the result of the mission than when it started. They were loaded with gifts, cloyed with fine words, and some of them even cajoled into the idea that Elizabeth was a Catholic at heart; but whatever the young figure-heads may have thought, statesmen like Pinart, Brisson, and La Mothe, knew full well by this time that the marriage was all moonshine. Sussex of course threw all the blame on Leicester, and tried to arouse the indignation of the French against him, whilst Leicester boldly said the Queen had never intended to marry, and those who said she did only wished to bring about a quarrel between England and France. The Spanish ambassador, too, ever busy at mischief, was trying his best by means of willing tools to embitter French feeling at the way in which a great nation had been flouted, as he said, to magnify the Queen's importance and feed her insatiable vanity.

When Catharine had gone to see her younger son at his town of Alençon late in May, she had spent five days in fruitless entreaty to him not to imperil the future of his country by entering Flanders. But she found him obdurate, and returned in despair to Chenonceaux, whilst he took his flying visit to England. But the violent measures adopted by Henry III. against his brother frightened the poor lady, who once more had to journey to St. Germain to endeavour to patch up

[1] The original draft of the treaty is in the British Museum, MSS. Add. 33963.

some sort of peace between the brothers. The King was irreconcilable for a time, but when his mother threatened to abandon him for good and set out for Chenonceaux he soon followed her, and the result of their long private conferences was that Catharine again hurried north to meet Alençon and exacted from him a promise that he would go and see his brother at St. Germain before taking any active steps to relieve Cambrai. But Alençon distrusted his brother and preferred to stay safely at Chateau-Thierry, awaiting the aid promised to him by the English Queen. Elizabeth, however, was determined if possible to obtain the co-operation of the King of France, or at all events a promise of neutrality before she flew in the face of Spain to the extent of aiding Alençon to enter Flanders, and she sent Somers, late in June, to sound Henry III. as to his intentions. He and Cobham, the English ambassador, found the French king and his mother diplomatic and evasive, but they made it clear that the marriage must precede all other negotiations, and that the King would take no steps against Spanish interests unless conjointly with England after the marriage. When Alençon learnt this at Mantes he instructed Marchaumont to assure the Queen that he had resolutely refused to delay the relief of Cambrai, and to beg her to urge his brother to help him, at least by sending Marshal de Cossé to guide him in his military actions. He was more ardent for the conclusion of the marriage than ever, and the moment he could get away he would fly to the Queen's side. But this did not suit Elizabeth at all. It was clear that it might mean ruin to her if she were driven into open war with Spain whilst

France, under the guidance of the Guises, was free to join or make terms with the other side. So she wrote an extremely interesting letter on the 21st of July [1] to Alençon in which once more her tone is completely changed. The time has come, she says, when she can speak plainly to him. Nothing in the world can bring her so much sorrow as to be unable to pass the few years of life remaining to her in the company of him she loves most in the world, who has sought her in so many honourable ways. She is sure that grief alone will be her future portion in the world, not only by reason of her being deprived of the society of him she most highly esteems, but also because she will be accused of ingratitude, of which she has the greatest horror. It appears, however, by the King's answers to Somers, that the marriage can only take place in conjunction with a joint war of England and France against Spain in the Netherlands. She has striven all her life, and successfully, to secure peace for her people, and to make her marriage a war-cry would alienate them from her and it, and she cannot do it. But still in order that he may see she has not forsaken him, and to prevent the Spaniards from entirely having their wicked way in the Netherlands, she is sending Walsingham to France to persuade the King how necessary it is for him to help his brother in his noble task. This must have appeared plain enough to the suitor as meaning that France must pull the chestnuts out of the fire for her, and Elizabeth probably thought it was rather too blunt, for she has added in her own hand these words: "Ne pences pas que chose du monde me changera

[1] Hatfield Papers, part 2, p. 400.

de vous demourer telle que prendra toujours part de vostre fortune, voyr la plus mauvaise; et que si le corps me soit, l'ame vous est tout dédiê, comme ces tabliers vous tesmoignent."

When at a subsequent stage the Queen found fault with some of Walsingham's proceedings, he wrote to her, recapitulating her private instructions to him on his mission, and we are therefore in possession of her real intentions at the time.[1] He says: "The principal cause why I was sent over was to procure a straiter degree of amity between the King and you without marriage, and yet to carry myself in the procuring thereof, as might not altogether break off the marriage."

[1] Walsingham to the Queen. Hatfield Papers, part 2, p. 415.

CHAPTER XII.

Walsingham's mission to France—His alarm of the consequences of the Queen's fickleness—Alençon enters Flanders—Relief of Cambrai—Alençon entreats Elizabeth's aid—Walsingham's remonstrance to the Queen for her penuriousness—Alençon again visits England—Elizabeth's severity to the Catholics during his stay—Leicester's continued intrigues—The Queen's solemn pledge to marry Alençon—Dismay of Leicester and his friends—The Queen's recantation—Arrival of Secretary Pinart—Elizabeth's plan to evade the marriage—Her correspondence with Simier—He arrives in England again—Elizabeth's efforts to get rid of Alençon—He refuses to leave unless she marries him—Simier's advice to the Queen.

WHEN Walsingham landed at Boulogne he found a message from Alençon at Chateau-Thierry asking him to meet him and his mother at La Fère before going to see the King. This he did, where he was met by the Duke with complaints and reproaches at the indefinite postponement of the marriage by the Queen until a national alliance had been effected. He told Walsingham that he could never get the King to consent to an alliance unless the marriage took place first, as the King feared that when they had pledged him too far for him to draw back the Queen would slip out of it and leave France alone face to face with Spain. The efforts of Catharine and her adviser, Turenne, were directed to obtaining at least a money subsidy to

Alençon first, which would have pledged Elizabeth to some extent; but Walsingham was too discreet to be drawn, and tried to get an arrangement which should embark France in the business before England was compromised. Catharine said she was well aware of the need for concerted action, but she was afraid, as Elizabeth had apparently thrown over the marriage for fear of offending her subjects, she might afterwards throw over the alliance for the same reason.

It is easy to see that both sides were finessing with the same object, namely, to throw upon the other the burden and onus of curbing the power of Spain, which they both feared; and when Catharine saw she could make nothing of Walsingham or his mistress, she played her trump card, with which she had come to La Fère fully prepared. She promised Alençon that if he would abandon his attempt, the Prince of Parma would retire from Cambrai, Alençon should marry the infanta, gain the support and friendship of Spain, obtain a larger dotation from his brother, and receive the investure of the sovereign states of Saluzzo and Provence. But Alençon could not trust Spain and the Guises, and refused the tempting bait. Cecil and Elizabeth mistrusted the presence of Catharine near her son, and fearing that he might at last cede to her influence, had sent a considerable sum of money by Walsingham, according to Mendoza, to help Alençon to make masked war upon Spain, without pledging England or drawing the Queen into war through the marriage. Alençon was angry at this suggestion, and said that he would take no such answer, which was quite at

variance with the Queen's own words. He threatened and stormed until Walsingham almost lost his temper, and Sir James Crofts told Mendoza that when the Queen received the news of this "she wept like a child, saying that she did not know what to do, or into what trouble Leicester had drawn her." Walsingham also reported that the King of France was extremely offended that after so grand an embassy had been sent to England only Walsingham should be sent in return, "and that if he could manage to have him put out of the way he would attempt it." Lord Henry Howard was at once sent off with a loving message to Alençon to mollify him, and urgent new instructions were despatched to Walsingham in Paris to bring the marriage forward again on any terms. But no sooner were Walsingham, Cobham, and the French ministers in conference to settle the terms of an alliance which was to accompany a marriage, than Alençon sent, by de Vray, peremptorily refusing to have anything to do with an alliance. It must, he said, be a marriage pure and simple first, and after that they could make what leagues they pleased, but he was sure that if the endless negotiations for an alliance had to be settled first he should never be married at all. All things were therefore again brought to a standstill, and Walsingham and Cobham wrote a most serious, almost vehement, memorandum to the Queen warning her of the danger of her fickle course.[1] They entreated her to make up her mind one way or the other. The French will think they are being played with and

[1] Memorandum to the Queen, August 13, 1581. Hatfield Papers, part 2.

will be greatly exasperated. France, Spain, and Scotland will all be against us, and then God alone can help us. Surely they say the only question is one of expense, and it is "very hard that treasure should be preferred before safety. I beseech your Majesty that without offence I may tell you that your loathness to spend even when it concerns your safety is publicly delivered out here. . . . For the love of God, madame, look into your own estate, and think that there can grow no peril so great unto you as to have a war break out in your own realm, considering what a number of evil subjects you have; and you cannot redeem this peril at too high a price." In another letter to Cecil, Walsingham complains bitterly of the task that is set for him. I would rather, he says, be shut up in the Tower than be an English ambassador abroad. These constant variations discredit us and shock the King.

Suddenly, towards the middle of August, 1581, Alençon crossed the frontier into Spanish Flanders with a fine army of 12,000 infantry and 5,000 cavalry, in which were enrolled half the young nobility of France as volunteers, notwithstanding the King's anathemas. Parma at once raised the siege of Cambrai and stood on the defensive, and the whole position was changed in a moment. The King of France felt, or at least expressed, the utmost alarm at his brother's action, lest he should be drawn into the quarrel. Elizabeth, on the other hand, was no less apprehensive that the King, the Guises, and the Catholics might be after all behind the movement. She, however, was soon tranquillised on this score, and wrote a loving letter of congratula-

tion.[1] No sooner was Alençon in Cambrai than he found himself without money. If the States will not aid me, he wrote to the Prince of Orange, I can go no further. But the attempt had been made without the open patronage of the Queen of England, and the Protestant States would do nothing. De Bex was sent off post-haste by Alençon to take her the news, and to beg for 300,000 crowns, "as he had spent all his own money in the relief, and neither the States nor his brother would give him a penny. If she did not provide him with money he should be obliged to return with his army to France without going any further."[2]

Marchaumont continued to urge his master's need for money, and besides the £22,000 which had been taken by Walsingham a further sum of £20,000 in gold was secretly sent from Drake's plunder to Alençon. But Elizabeth herself was somewhat short of money, and still not without suspicion, besides which she had no intention whatever of defraying the whole expense of Alençon's army, and would send him no more money. Things went from bad to worse. The French troops deserted in bodies and fell to pillage; the young noblemen slipped back over the frontier by hundreds. By the first week in September Alençon had retired to Chatelet, leaving a garrison in Cambrai; only 3,000 of his men remained with him, and he sent again de Bex to the Queen to beg for more help before they were all gone. His victory at Cambrai he attributes all to the "belle jartière," which he says he will never surrender whilst he lives, nor the

[1] Hatfield Papers, part 2, p. 458.
[2] Spanish Calendar (Elizabeth).

desire to see again "vostre belle Majesté a la quelle pour la hate de ce porteur je me contenteré de bayzer les belles mins et les belles greves qui ont porté la belle jartière." But the Queen was not to be wheedled out of her money by talk about the beautiful garter, and Marchaumont began to hint that his master's only course would be to once more cross the Channel and press his own suit.

In the meanwhile Walsingham was making no progress in Paris, and the Queen as usual was reproaching in no measured terms. Walsingham, who knew his mistress well, gave her on this occasion at least as good as she sent.[1] He told her bluntly that if she was sincere about the marriage she was losing time she could ill spare; whilst, if otherwise, it "is the worst remedy you can use." "Sometimes when your Majesty doth behold in what doubtful terms you stand with foreign princes, then you do wish with great affection that opportunities offered had not been overslipped; but when they are offered to you, accompanied with charges, they are altogether neglected. The respect of charges hath lost Scotland, and I would to God I had no cause to think it might put your Highness in peril of the loss of England." He reproaches her almost rudely for her niggardliness, which he compares with the wise liberality of her predecessors where expenditure was needful for the safety of the realm. "If this sparing and provident course be held on still, the mischiefs approaching being so apparent as they are, there is no one that serveth in place of councillor . . . who would not wish himself rather in

[1] Walsingham to the Queen, September 12th. Hatfield Papers, part 2.

the farthest parts of Ethiopia than enjoy the fairest palace in England." On his way back to England Walsingham saw Alençon at Abbeville, in Picardy, and rather encouraged the Duke in his desire to come to England again. It is evident that, much as Walsingham was attached to Leicester, he was in grave alarm that the Protestant religion, to which he was devoted, might be overborne by the threatened union against England of the Catholic powers, and at this time would have gladly welcomed the marriage of the Queen and Alençon, which would have prevented France from joining the coalition and have banished the danger. When Walsingham arrived in London at the end of September, however, he found the Queen very strongly opposed to her suitor's proposed visit, not wishing to have her hands forced in this way. She told Marchaumont that his master must not come on any account, or a rising of the people might be feared, so angry were they at the idea of the match. On the other hand, both Marchaumont and Castelnau, the ambassador, took care to spread broadcast the intelligence that the Duke would soon be here; and when no open discontent ensued they pointed out that the Queen's fears were groundless. Leicester, as usual, tried to run with the hare and hunt with the hounds, to retain French bribes and yet to stand in the way of French objects. Mendoza says that he took good care to turn the Queen against Alençon's coming, but as soon as he was sure that his efforts were effectual he went out of town and hypocritically professed to the French that Hatton and Walsingham alone were to blame for the opposition.

But by the end of October the Queen's apprehensions seem to have been dissipated. Walsingham must have made it clear to her that unless the marriage were again taken up with some show of sincerity she had no chance of getting the close understanding with France which was necessary to her plans. She had, moreover, spent large sums of money in Flanders, which she could never get back unless the States could be enabled to hold their own, and she accordingly decided to make the best of Alençon's coming in the assurance that, if the worst came to the worst, she could avoid a marriage by supplying funds for his maintenance in Flanders.

Shortly before the Duke's arrival the "monk" (Marchaumont) wrote to de Bex saying that every one, from the Queen downwards, was expecting his Highness's arrival with pleasure, but he hints that he had better make haste as the Spanish ambassador was making certain proposals to the Queen; which we now know to be true.[1] He says that even Leicester had now been won over, his only fear being that if the marriage took place his bitter enemy, Simier, might come, who, he was sure, would plot his ruin. This state of things had not been brought about without a good deal of friction. Several sums of money had been sent by the Queen with the hope of staving off the visit, but with no effect. The Queen had a great row with Walsingham in consequence of mischief-making of Sussex, who had shown Marchaumont a letter written by Walsingham from France, containing some slighting expressions towards Alençon which had been re-

[1] Spanish Calendar (Elizabeth), vol. iii. p. 182.

peated to the Queen; "although," says Mendoza, "some people think that it is all put on, and that she herself ordered Walsingham to write this so as to hinder the marriage, as she is a woman very fond of adopting such tricks. At all events Walsingham takes very little notice of her anger, and Alençon turns a deaf ear to everything, and only asks for money, whilst Marchaumont keeps the negotiation alive by pressing for a decision with regard to the marriage."

The Queen had lent Marchaumont a small house attached to her own palace at Richmond, to which entrance could be gained through it by means of a connecting gallery. Two chambers were refurnished and warmed in this house for the Prince's use, the Earl of Arundel (son of the attainted and executed Duke of Norfolk) and his uncle, Lord Harry Howard, were charged by the Queen to make all arrangements for his comfort; and her Majesty herself superintended the installation in one of the rooms of a crimson bed, which she told Marchaumont archly that his master would recognise. A day or so before the Duke was expected Marchaumont wrote to de Bex, who was with his master on his journey hither, that he learnt by a message the Queen had sent him "that every hour seemed a month to her so anxious was she to see her lover, for whose reception great preparations had been made, although the Queen will pretend that nothing special had been done. [1]

When Walsingham had seen the Prince in France the latter had expressed a desire to rest a day and a night in Walsingham's house in London before

[1] Hatfield Papers, part 2.

going to see the Queen at Richmond, but when the time approached for the visit Walsingham managed to avoid the trouble of entertaining the guest by saying that the plague was raging round the house, and it was settled that he should be lodged for the night in the house of Sir Edward Stafford, the son of Elizabeth's friend and Mistress of the Robes. "But I need not tell you," says Marchaumont to de Bex, "to keep strict secrecy as to the Prince's movements, for if Lady Stafford knows anything it will be easier to stem a torrent than to stop the woman's tongue."

Alençon embarked from Calais at the end of October, 1581, having met the Portuguese pretender, Don Antonio, before going on board, and promised him to plead his cause with the English Queen. The heavy weather necessitated his anchoring in the Downs instead of entering Dover, and it was only at the cost of some risk and trouble that he landed. Leaving the Prince Dauphin and most of his suite of gentlemen to follow him, he pressed on in disguise with de Bex to London, where he arrived and slept at Stafford's house on the night of the 1st of November. The next morning he started off to see the Queen privately at Richmond, the first public reception being fixed for the 3rd of November, when the Prince Dauphin and the rest of the suite were fetched from London in the Queen's state coaches. It was, in truth, high time the Prince came, for the Queen was very much out of temper with him and every one else. She complained to Castelnau that the Prince had acted in Flanders without her permission, that the King of France was intriguing with Spain for her ruin, that

the States were a lot of drunkards, who only thought of borrowing money and not paying it back. She was too old, she said, to be played with, and would let them all see it. But when her young lover came she was full of smiles and blandishments. Fortunately he had plenty of money with him—money, however, brought to him by St. Aldegonde, at Calais, collected by the sorely pressed Flemings for the support of his army, and not to be squandered in England; but he bribed the ladies and the councillors liberally with it. At first all went as merrily as a marriage-bell. The Queen again took to calling Alençon her little Moor, her little Italian, her little frog, and so on; whilst she, as before, was to him all the orbs of the firmament. Leicester was radiant, however, which was a bad sign, and Sussex was in the sulks, which was equally so; but the French, and Alençon himself grew more and more confident of success. The Queen was playing her usual game, and Leicester understood it perfectly, but she could not help having her fling at Walsingham when he tried clumsily to humour her. He was praising the good parts and understanding of Alençon one day to the Queen, and said that the only thing against him was his ugly face. "Why, you knave," she replied, "you were for ever speaking ill of him before: you veer round like a weathercock."[1] At the same time all sorts of scandalous tittle-tattle began to arise. Every morning little love-letters signed "your prince frog," were sent from Alençon to the Queen, and Lippomano, the Venetian ambassador, assures the Doge and Senate that the Queen entered his chamber every

[1] Spanish Calendar (Elizabeth).

morning before he was out of bed, and brought him a cup of broth. He was with her, says Mendoza, all day and every day, no one being present but Sussex and Stafford, and even they were not allowed to hear their conversation. In order to allay the fears of her Protestant subjects, some of whom were grumbling because Alençon heard mass daily, unwonted severity was used towards the Catholics during Alençon's visit, and the Jesuit priests Campion, Sherwin, and Briant, were executed at Tyburn under circumstances of the most heartrending cruelty. The Spanish ambassador at last got somewhat anxious, and by Philip's orders began to approach Cecil with suggestions of the falsity of Frenchmen and the advisability of a close union between England and Spain, all injuries on each side being forgiven and forgotten. He went to the length, indeed, of hinting that the French were intriguing with Mary of Scotland under cover of the marriage negotiations, although he himself at the time was plotting with and for her. But Cecil was a match for him, and let him understand that the friendship proposed was more necessary for Spain than it was for England. The position at the time of Alençon's visit is well summarised by Mendoza in a letter to King Philip[1] as follows: "as soon as the Queen learnt that Alençon had arrived, she said to certain of the councillors separately that they must consider what would have to be done with him; to which they replied that they could hardly do that unless she made her own intentions upon the subject clear. To this she answered that she was quite satisfied with the person of Alençon.

[1] Spanish Calendar (Elizabeth), vol. iii., November 11, 1581.

When he arrived here he told those who he knew were in his favour that he would not go out in public nor undertake any other affairs until he had settled with the Queen the subject about which he came. If this be so, present indications prove that he has got an affirmative answer, as he now shows himself almost publicly, and appears to be in high spirits, all the principal people at Court being allowed to see him at dinner and supper. Leicester leaves nothing undone, and in the absence of the Prince Dauphin, always hands Alençon the napkin, publicly declaring that there seems to be no other way for the Queen to secure the tranquillity of England but for her to marry Alençon ; and Walsingham says the same. The Frenchmen who came with him, and the ambassadors who were here before, look upon the marriage as an accomplished fact, but the English in general scoff at it, saying that he is only after money, and that he has already begged the Queen to give him £100,000 and 4,000 men to aid your Majesty's rebels. The principal Englishmen indeed are saying that if he wanted a regular pension they would grant him £20,000 a year, so there are more indications of money being given him than anything else. It is certain that the Queen will do her best to avoid offending him, and to pledge him in the affairs of the Netherlands, in order to drive his brother into a rupture with your Majesty, which is her great object, whilst she keeps her hands free, and can stand by looking on at the war." Few men were better informed than Mendoza ; part of the Privy Council was in his pay, and the most secret information was conveyed to him at once by his spies, who were everywhere. He was,

moreover, one of the most keen-sighted statesmen of his time, and we may accept his opinion therefore, confirmed as it is by much other evidence, that up to this time (November 11th) Elizabeth was once more playing her old trick, and befooling Alençon and the French.

When Leicester thought that matters were going a little too far he persuaded the Queen to urge her lover to start at once for Flanders, for which purpose she would give him three ships and £30,000, in order to receive the oath of allegiance which the States were offering him, and then to return and marry her; but Sussex saw through the device, and privately warned Alençon that whatever pledges might be made to him now, he might be convinced that if once he went away without being married the marriage would never take place. He entreated him on no account to be driven out of England, and as Alençon well knew that Sussex at least was honest in his desire to see the Queen married and freed from the baleful influence of Leicester, he put his back to the wall and plainly told the Queen that not only would he refuse to leave England, but he would not ever vacate the rooms in her palace until she had given him a definite answer as to whether she would marry him or not. Crofts, the privy councillor in Philip's pay, told Mendoza that "when the Queen and Alençon were alone together she pledges herself to him to his heart's content, and as much as any woman could to a man, but she will not have anything said publicly."

Things were thus getting to a deadlock again. The King of France wrote to the Queen saying that under no circumstances, whether his brother

married or not, would he help him against Spain in the Netherlands, and the Queen-mother began pressing her son with all sorts of promises, to return and abandon his hopeless quest before he became the laughing-stock of the world. This of course made the Queen warmer in her protestations, and by the third week in November she had contrived to convince Alençon again of her sincerity. He at once wrote off to his brother, requesting that commissioners might be sent to settle the conditions of the treaty which had been discussed with Walsingham when he was in France. The Queen encouraged him to do this, knowing full well that Henry III. would refuse to take his brother's unsupported word as to her *bona fides*, and send another embassy, whilst his refusal to do so would furnish her if necessary with an excuse for proceeding no further in the matter.

On November 21, 1581, the Queen and Court moved to Whitehall, where Alençon was lodged in the garden-house, and on the following morning—coronation day—he and the Queen were walking in the gallery, Walsingham and Leicester being present, when Castelnau, the French ambassador, entered, and said that he had been commanded by his master to learn from her own lips what her intentions were with regard to her marrying the King's brother. Either because she was driven into a corner from which there was no other escape, or because once more her passions overcame her, she unhesitatingly replied to Castelnau, "You may write this to the King: that the Duke of Alençon shall be my husband, and at the same moment she turned to Alençon and kissed him on the mouth, drawing a ring from her

own hand and giving it to him as a pledge. Alençon gave her a ring of his in return, and shortly afterwards the Queen summoned the ladies and gentlemen from the presence-chamber to the gallery, repeating to them in a loud voice in Alencon's presence what she had previously said." [1]

The French were naturally elated at this, and Alençon at once sent off the great news to his brother, but the feeling amongst the courtiers was very different. Leicester and Hatton were in dismay; they had felt certain hitherto that the Queen was only play-acting, but surely matters were getting serious, and tears, lamentations, and reproaches, were the order of the day. But the Queen was playing her own game, and sage old Cecil was perhaps the only one of her advisers who really understood her move. He was ill in bed with the gout at the time, and was chatting with a couple of gossips when the message reached him. Instead of dismay he expressed great satisfaction, and placed the matter at once in its true light. "Thank God," he said, "the Queen, for her part, has done all that she can; it is for the country now to take the matter in hand." This meant that the Queen, ever evasive of responsibility, had shifted the onus upon Parliament, which had been summoned for the 6th of December. There was not the slightest need for Parliament to be consulted at all, but Elizabeth had been driven into a corner by Alençon's presence and persistence and the immovable determination of his brother to stand aloof until the marriage had taken place. By taking the course she did, she artfully attained three objects which could have been compassed by no other

[1] Spanish Calendar (Elizabeth), vol. iii. p. 226.

way short of marriage: she secured further delay without offence to the King, she personally bound Alençon to her, come what might, and, most important of all, she sowed the germ of discord between him and his brother, who now appeared the principal obstacle to the marriage, as he refused the terms demanded by the English (which Parliament would be asked to insist upon) before the marriage could take place. Having the most secret correspondence before our eyes now, we are able to see clearly that this was the clever plan of the Queen herself; but her most intimate contemporaries were puzzled and disturbed at her apparent instability. The balance of opinion was that the Queen had been caught at last, and had pledged herself too deeply to draw back, although Leicester, after his first dismay was over, went about industriously spreading a contrary view. He and Hatton, however, were not so reassured as they would have had it appear. Hatton went to the Queen, and with many tears and sighs boldly told her that even if she wanted herself to marry, she ought to consider the grief she was bringing upon the country by doing so, not to mention what might happen to her personally if she married against the will of her people, upon whose affection the security of her throne depended. This almost seditious speech at another time would have aroused Elizabeth to fury, and consigned her "sheep" Hatton to the Tower, but the Queen was quite confident in her game and only smiled and petted her future Lord Chancellor. Leicester, by right of his greater intimacy with his mistress, was blunter in his reproaches He asked her point blank

whether she was a maid or a married woman, to which she replied that she was a maid, as the conditions upon which she gave the marriage pledge would never be fulfilled. He told her that she had acted very unwisely in carrying the matter so far and so ostentatiously, and they put their heads together there and then to devise some scheme by which the Queen's words might be minimised, probably solely at Leicester's instance, and contrary to her own better judgment, as her plans were well laid. A message was therefore sent to Alençon, saying that the Queen had been pondering about the ring she had given him, and she felt sure that if she married him she would not have long to live. He might, she said, see that for himself, as he was a witness of the dissatisfaction of the English people at her attachment to him, which attachment she hoped he did not wish to be fatal to her. She prayed him therefore to let the matter rest for the present, and there was nothing in her country she would refuse him. She would be more attached to him as a friend, even than if he were her husband. Walsingham took this message, and whilst he was with the Prince the latter remained calm. All he had said and done, he protested, was solely to please the Queen, whose death, very far from desiring, he would imperil his own life to avert and to give her pleasure, as, indeed, he was doing now to save her from annoyance by refraining from pressing his suit with less ardour at her request.[1] But as soon as Walsingham was gone the young Prince lost all control over himself. He saw now how he had been tricked; it was too late to prevent

[1] Spanish Calendar (Elizabeth), vol. iii. p. 229.

the coming of the commissioners whom his brother had despatched to England to finally settle the conditions, and in his rage he cursed the inconstancy of woman, tore the ring from his finger and cast it upon the ground.[1] He told Elizabeth he would leave at once, hinted at revenge for his and his country's slighted honour, and again brought matters to a crisis. Then Elizabeth saw that her complaisancy to Leicester had led her into a false position, and once more resumed her original plan. She mollified and lulled the Duke into a fool's paradise again with: "nouvelles démonstrations accompagnées de baisers, privautés, caresses, et mignardises ordinaries aux amants." She received the King's envoy, Secretary Pinart, with new protestations of her desire to marry, and appointed a committee of the Council, consisting of the Lord Chancellor, Cecil, Sussex, and Leicester to discuss the *pourparlers* with him. She asked them first to report their opinion to her, as, desirous as she was of the marriage, she would not entertain it if she was not satisfied that it was for the benefit of her country; but they knew she was playing her own game, of which most of them did not see the drift, and were determined to avoid giving any opinion which might offend and hamper her. In the meanwhile Leicester, through his agents, was stirring up the Protestants to distrust and hatred of the match, whilst the host of Catholic sympathisers in the interests of Spain were equally working against it on the ground that Alençon had not raised a finger to save the lives of his co-religionists who had been martyred whilst he had been in England. Matters

[1] "Mémoires du Duc de Nevers."

therefore did not look particularly promising when the Council met Pinart early in December, although Alençon himself had been petted into hopefulness. The English began by advancing claims for all sorts of impossible conditions and assurances, and after succeeding in making the marriage appear impracticable they proposed that in lieu of marriage they should give Alençon a regular subsidy for his Netherlands projects if the King of France would also support his brother. This had been proposed and refused in different forms time after time, and Pinart, who was an old diplomatist, at once retorted that he had come to settle the marriage and nothing else; if the marriage was not to take place all negotiations must cease, and he must go back. Catharine was equally disillusioned, and told Priuli, the Venetian ambassador in France, that although Alençon had given the Queen's ring back again, she attached no importance to it, as the gift of a ring did not constitute a binding engagement. "Queen Elizabeth, she said, is very artful, and my son is very young. He has allowed himself to be drawn by her into this adventure, in spite of all our arguments and advice; he is being overwhelmed with entertainments, and he has just written to me that he still has hope." [1]

The next day there was a meeting of the Council, where it was proposed to settle matters by granting to Alençon a pension of 10,000 marks a year, the King of France a subsidy of £100,000, and the States £80,000 on condition of a similar amount being contributed by the King for the purpose of

[1] Bibliothèque Nationale, Ambassadeurs venetiens. La Ferrière.

making war upon Spain in the Netherlands under the leadership of Alençon. If the King of France refused this it was proposed to make an immediate grant of £200,000 to Alençon, in consideration of the relief of Cambrai, and that the marriage negotiations be dropped. This was Leicester's plan, who undertook to answer for Alençon's acquiescence and the raising of the money by privy-seal loans and exchequer bills, but when they sent the proposal to the Queen as the result of their deliberation she was furious. Her plans were working as she intended them to work, and she could throw the whole blame for the failure of her marriage upon the King of France, whilst raising enmity between him and his brother, and pledging Alençon to her hard and fast without marriage. And yet these dense councillors of hers, and jealous, shallow Leicester, would keep thwarting her with their officious interference. Cecil was the only one who refused to do so, and always had a diplomatic attack of gout at critical times. Crofts gave an account to Mendoza of the way in which the Queen received the proposal of her Council. "She made, he says, a great show of anger and annoyance, saying that her councillors only thought of their own profit, wasting the substance of the country without reflection, and buying, under cover of her authority, that which suited them best. As Alençon thought fit to forget her in exchange for her money, she would neither marry him nor give him any money, and he might do the best he could." Then she sent for Alençon and angrily told him the same, and a quarrel between them ensued. When she had thus upset the results of her Council's officious-

ness, she began her own game again. Pinart had made clear to her that her demands for the restitution of Calais, a rupture with Spain, and the cessation of the old alliance between France and Scotland were unreasonable, and that if the marriage were broken off in consequence of such preposterous conditions the responsibility would be cast upon her and not upon his master. So she harked back to somewhat more moderate-sounding claims, which she knew would be also refused. She said that she had given the ring and pledge to Alençon on condition that he should make war on Spain in the Netherlands at the expense of the King of France, whilst she sent assistance from England in form of men. She said she had distinctly understood that this was to be the condition of the marriage; but of course if the French King could not fulfil it, there was the end of the matter. She was extremely sorry, but it was not her fault if there was a misunderstanding, or the French failed to carry out the condition, and she urged that Marchaumont, her devoted "monk," whose letters are only a degree less loving than those of Simier, should be sent to Paris to urge this view upon the King and his mother.

Marchaumont had long been tiring of his task in England, and had not ceased to entreat his master to give him active employment, and especially to bestow a stray abbey or two upon him instead of giving everything to Fervaques and de Quincy. He assures Elizabeth that he has received nothing in consequence of his attachment to her, which had aroused the jealousy of his fellows, and he left England breathing vows and protestations of his eternal devotion to her.[1]

[1] Hatfield Papers, part 2, p. 468.

Ever since Simier left England he had maintained a copious cipher correspondence with Elizabeth, which is now at Hatfield, containing the most minute details of Alençon's movements and intentions, interspersed with curious marks which presumably stand for kisses, twin hearts, transfixed with Cupid's darts and other lover-like devices. But amongst his frantic, not to say impious, professions of adoration for the Queen he continued to complain of the machinations of Fervaques, the Queen of Navarre, and his other enemies who had brought about his disgrace and ruin. Elizabeth, for her part, was for ever urging Alençon through Marchaumont, and by her own letters to reinstate Simier in his good graces. Sometimes more or less vague promises of acquiescence were sent, sometimes the Prince told her that if she knew all she would not be so warm in Simier's defence, and sometimes the revenues and favours now enjoyed by her favourite were detailed to prove that he had quite as much as he could expect, but the net result was that Simier remained in disgrace and Fervaques ruffled it more bravely than ever. At last Simier appears to have got tired of obscurity and entreaty, and finding he could get no more by serving Alençon, bethought him that he might employ his great influence with the Queen in the service of Henry III. The offers of such an instrument to mould events to the liking of the King were eagerly accepted, and at first an attempt was made by Henry and Catharine to induce Alençon to discard Fervaques and de Quincy and take Simier back again. But, as Simier writes to the Queen, this only made Alençon love them the more, for Queen Margaret's influence on her brother

was too strong to be overcome. So when Fervaques, Champvallon, Queen Margaret's lover, and the rest of the crew, came over with their master to England, Simier, with the King's connivance, followed them in order ostensibly to challenge his foe, but really to watch Alençon's negotiations from his point of vantage near the Queen, and, if necessary, frustrate them in the King's interest. With him he took a second, another fire-eater named Baron de Viteau, and when the challenge was sent to Fervaques, the latter, true to Gascon character, would only accept a pitched battle with six on each side. This was obviously impossible, as Simier had not six partisans in England, but it gave Fervaques time to arrange with Leicester, who hated Simier more bitterly than any one, to have the poor "ape" assassinated in cold blood. Simier was attacked on the London 'Change by hired cut-throats, but fortunately once more escaped. He again complained to his protectress, whose rage knew no bounds. Calling Leicester to her, she called him a murderous poltroon who was only fit for the gallows and warned him and Alençon's courtiers that if anything happened to her "ape" in England they should suffer for it. Fervaques, rightly or wrongly, thought that Simier had been warned of the plot by a certain Lafin, with whom he consequently picked a quarrel in the palace itself. Lafin fled, pursued by Fervaques with a drawn dagger, into the presence of the Queen, who broke out into one of her uncontrollable rages at such disrespect for her, and cried out that if Fervaques were one of her subjects, she would soon have his head off. There were ample materials, therefore, for dissensions, and by the

middle of December Alençon had lost heart again. He earnestly pressed the Queen for an answer, and a pledge that she would marry him if the King acceded to her last demands. But she then advanced another claim which had hitherto not been mentioned, namely, the suppression of the English Jesuit seminary at Rheims. Alençon, anxious to make an end, asked her whether if he obtained this concession she would bind herself to marry him; but she still held back. Even in such case, she said, she would have to consider very deeply whether it would be advisable for her to change her state. This was mere trifling, and Alençon in despair begged her to send an envoy to discuss these conditions with his brother, but she replied that the King of France had better send one to her. Pinart was still in England, although waiting and ready to depart, and he was consequently delayed to discuss these new pretensions. In the meanwhile news arrived of the fall of Tournai, and the States, at the end of their wits and resources, sent a deputation to Alençon offering to invest him at once, if he would come over, with the dukedom of Brabant, which he had coveted from the first. This suited the Queen excellently, as nothing was more likely to bring about a rupture between France and Spain, but it would never do to let the future sovereign of the Netherlands leave her in dudgeon, or the control might slip through her fingers after all. So she at once changed her tone. Ships were made ready with furious haste, money, munitions, and men were promised in his aid, and every inducement was offered for him to accept the States' invitation; whilst at the same time the Queen, with sighs and feigned

tears, entreated her lover not to leave her, but if he must go to promise her faithfully soon to come back again. Alençon replied that he would not return unless she now gave an unconditional promise to marry him. But this was no part of the Queen's programme, and she evaded the question with her usual dexterity.

On the 20th of December all was ready for the Duke's departure. The vessels were awaiting him, and some of his baggage and household had started; a grand farewell supper was laid for him and the Queen at Cobham House, near Gravesend, where he was to take leave of her, and he was about to embark in the barges which were to convey him from Greenwich, when a strong north-east gale sprang up and blew continuously for many days, and prevented his departure.

Mendoza says that although she displayed publicly great grief at his going, in the privacy of her own chamber she danced for very joy at getting rid of him. One day during his detention he reproached her for letting him go so easily. He saw now, he said, that she did not love him much, and that she was tired of him, and she was sending him away openly discarded. She protested with an abundance of sounding oaths that she had only been induced to let him go for his own gratification and not for hers, and that she was sorry he was going so soon. She did not mean it, of course, but it was enough for Alençon, who seized the opportunity at once. "No! no! Madame," said he, "you are mine, as I can prove by letters and words you have written to me, confirmed by the gift of the ring, of which I sent intelligence to my brother, my mother, and the

princes of France, and all those who were present at our interviews are ready to bear testimony. If I cannot get you for my wife by fair means and affection I must do so by force, for I will not leave this country without you." The Queen was much perturbed at this, and exclaimed that she had never written anything which she could not justify. She did not care, she said, what interpretation people chose to put upon her letters, as she knew her own intentions better than any one else could; and as for the ring, it was only a pledge of perpetual friendship and of a conditional contract, dependent upon his brother the King acceding to her conditions, which she was quite sure he never would do. She repeated her repugnance to entering the married state, but softened the blow by saying that there was nothing she desired more than that he should stay in England as her brother, friend, and good companion, but not as her husband.[1] Alençon was deeply grieved at all this, but it ended in a promise that after the new year's holidays she would see what help she could give him in his enterprise, and with this he was perforce to appear content. But withal, Alençon's fresh talk of remaining in England disturbed her, especially as Cobham in Paris sent her news that the King was anxious to prolong negotiations in order to keep him there and prevent his going to Flanders. So she instructed Cecil to inflame his ambition for the great career there open to him, and at the same time sent for Simier to contrive with him how she best might get him gone. Simier had told her that if she really wished to avoid the marriage she need only stand fast to the condi-

[1] Spanish Calendar (Elizabeth), vol. iii. p. 243.

tions she had demanded from the King of France as a preliminary. She repeated to him her last demands, and said she was sure the King would not consent to break with Spain and bear the whole cost of the war without any contribution from her, and this would furnish her with the excuse she sought after, while she might make a show of approaching Spain, and this would ensure Alençon's recall and the cessation of the marriage negotiations. Simier, after all, said he was not so sure of this. Alençon was such an evil weed that his brother might consent to anything to get rid of him from France. "Well," replied the Queen, "I do not believe the King will grant such terms, but even if he do I shall find a way out of it." And then she and Simier began to make merry at the fine gallant who would so readily give up his lady-love in consideration of a money payment. I offered him, she said, so much a month, and it has brightened him up to such an extent that you would not know him. But as soon as he is once across the sea I will tell him my Council will not agree to the arrangement, on the ground that my country cannot without unduly weakening itself provide so large a sum, and that the people would not allow it.[1] Both Elizabeth and Cecil were strongly of opinion that whilst she held large sums of money she would remain mistress of the situation, and whatever promises were held out to Alençon to induce him to embark in the enterprise, the intention always was to dole out the subsidies to him as sparingly as possible.

[1] Spanish Calendar (Elizabeth), vol. iii. p. 243.

CHAPTER XIII.

Simier and his former master—Alençon's altercation with the Queen—the Queen appeals to Sussex—Unpopularity of the match in England—Catharine de Medici plays Elizabeth with her own game—Cecil suggests a loophole of escape — Elizabeth demands French strongholds as security—Alençon undeceived—Vows vengeance against Elizabeth and his brother for the failure of his suit—Collapse of his resolution—Pinart threatens Elizabeth—Alençon's departure for Flushing—Extraordinary demonstration on the part of Elizabeth—Alençon still doubtful.

As may be imagined, it was not very long before matters came to a crisis between Simier and his former master. The Prince urged Elizabeth again and again, as she loved him, to expel Simier from England, but she was shocked at such an idea. He had only come to justify himself, and she could testify that he had conducted the marriage negotiations better than any one else before or since, and she could not be so unjust as to expel him even to gratify her "chère grenouille." Then Alençon began to hector and threaten Simier, and ordered him to return. Simier replied that he was no longer in his service, and would not budge until it suited him; and against this Alençon could only chafe fruitlessly and continue his complaints to the Queen. All that she, and indeed the whole country, wanted was to see her too persistent suitor himself across the sea.

Cecil pointed out to him that if he stayed over New Year's Day it would cost him a very large sum in presents, which he might save if he left before; but still he would not go, and Elizabeth began to get angry. She told Cecil on Christmas night that she would not marry Alençon to be empress of the world, and the next day the Lord Treasurer made another strenuous attempt to get him away, but he found him more obstinate than ever. He said he had been drawn into this Flemish adventure by the English on the bait of a marriage with the Queen, and until she had married him he would stir no further, whatever might happen. If the Queen contemned and threw him over he would arouse Catholic Christendom to avenge him. This alarmed her, and she again sought to bend him to her will by tears, cajoleries, and blandishments. It was not her fault, she said; would he not accept her as a dear friend and a sister instead of as a wife? No, he replied; he had suffered, risked, and lost too much to give up the quest now. He would rather die than leave here unmarried to her. Did he, the Queen asked, mean to threaten a poor old woman in her own country? Was this the only result of all his boasted love for her? If she did not think that his violence was inspired by the strength of his affection for her she would surely think him crazy, and she warned him not to sacrifice his best friends by such words. He melted at this, poor, overwrought, sorely-beset lad as he was, burst into tears, and swore he would rather be torn into a thousand bits than lose the hopes of marrying her, and thus become the laughing-stock of the whole world. In this mood the Queen could deal with him; she

mingled her tears with his, wiped his wet cheeks with her own handkerchief, and "consoled him with words more tender even than the occasion demanded."[1] As soon as Alençon had left her she sent for Sussex, and told him what had passed. She would rather, she said, succeed in getting Alençon gone without offence than possess another kingdom. She was much disturbed, especially that Alençon had sent an account to France, as he said he had, of the giving of the pledge and ring. For his own dignity's sake she thought he ought not to have done so, as her pledge was purely conditional, and the King had not seen fit to accede to her conditions. Besides, she could not bring herself to the idea of marriage, which had always been repugnant to her; "and she hated it more every day, for reasons which she would not divulge to a twin soul if she had one, much less to any living creature." She entered into a very complete defence of her action in the matter to Sussex, and wound up with, "And now, by God! what living man in future will ever dare to throw the blame on me, seeing that they want to pin me down to a contract that was only conditional?" Poor, honest, consumptive Sussex was certainly not the man to disagree with her, and promised to do his best to get Alençon away in good humour. There was an excellent reason why the Queen should prime Sussex with arguments in her justification, because he was the only councillor who was a hard-and-fast advocate of the match, and she knew that all she said to him would be repeated both to Castelnau and to Alençon's friends. But Sussex could no more get

[1] Spanish Calendar (Elizabeth), vol. iii. p. 351.

rid of him than could Cecil. The Queen, seeing the possibility of her terms being accepted by Henry III., tried on one occasion to raise the religious difficulty again. Look how difficult it would be, she said to Alençon, for them to live together if one were a Protestant and the other a Catholic; but he soon met this objection by swearing that he would be a Protestant for her sake, and she dropped the subject.

On New Year's Day a grand tournament was given in his honour, where he made a determined attempt to revive the idea of a romantic affection for the Queen. When he had to appear in the jousts he entered mounted on a chariot fashioned in the form of a rock, to which he was bound by heavy fetters. He was drawn by figures representing Love and Fate to the Queen's feet; and Fate addressed to her Majesty some couplets beseeching her to restore the prisoner to his cherished liberty, and then to forget her vow of chastity and let Hymen bind their hearts together. The Duke acquitted himself well in the tourney, and the Queen, before all the company, embraced him again and again for his gallantry. At night she accompanied him to the door of his apartment, and came to visit him before he was out of bed the next morning.[1] This was all very fine and quite raised poor Alençon's spirits for the time; but our present knowledge enables us to see quite clearly that all these cajoleries were only with the object of getting him away with a good grace.

But if Alençon failed to understand this his astute mother had no doubt about it, and wrote sharply, reproaching him for his sacrifice of dignity and his interests in submitting to be played with in

[1] "Mémoires du Duc de Nevers."

this way. A marriage with an infanta of Spain was once more held out to him, but he knew that his return to France without an alliance and without money would have reduced him to impotence and to the scorn and derision of his brother's Catholic subjects; and he obstinately held on and refused to go. At last matters began to look serious in England. The murmurs at Alençon's continued stay became deeper and deeper. Leicester and Hatton secretly fanned the flame of discontent at the dreaded match until it was ready to burst out at any time; and Cecil went to the Queen and told her that since promises were ineffectual she had better give her suitor a large sum of ready money to induce him to go to the aid of the States, which were now in desperate straits. They had sent a deputation to urge Alençon to give them a definite answer as to whether he would accept their offer of sovereignty and come over at once or not. He replied that they must do the best they could with the small aid he had already sent them, as he was determined not to go until the Queen had married him, convinced as he was that he would not be supported in the war by her and his brother unless he was married. But when it came to giving ready money frugal Elizabeth was on her guard, and told Cecil that the King of France had not yet sent her an answer to her last conditions, and she was informed that Lansac was on the way with it. She must wait until he arrived. It was clear that if the reply was negative the responsibility for breaking off the marriage would not be hers, and she was not bound to give more money than she felt inclined.

But Simier knew what he was talking about when

he warned her that the King would accept any terms in the end for the sake of getting quit of his troublesome brother, and although Lansac did not come with the reply, the son of Secretary Pinart arrived in London on the 11th of January bringing with him a complete acceptance by the King, the Queen-mother, and the leading Huguenots, of all Elizabeth's conditions. This was a facer indeed. Catharine de Medici had beaten her at her own game. But the answer did not find her unprepared: Simier had some days before informed her of its purport, and she had privately summoned Cecil to a conference to devise a way out of the difficulty. He pointed out that as no one could bring the King of France to book if he failed to fulfil the conditions after the marriage had been effected, and Elizabeth was running all the risk in marrying, whilst the King of France incurred none at all, it was only reasonable that he should place the town of Calais into her hands as a security for the due execution of the treaty. This was a device after Elizabeth's own heart and she adopted it with effusion, pledging Cecil to secrecy and at the same time beguiling Sussex with the hope that the marriage would now really take place, all difficulties being overcome. This latter view was, as was intended, immediately conveyed to Alençon, and when young Pinart came with his message, the Prince burst into tears at his brother's love and goodness to him, and bitterly denounced those who had so long estranged them by lies and intrigues. As soon as the Queen was alone he flew to her, bursting with the great news, and said that all her conditions being complied with she had only to say yes and the marriage would

be concluded. She was kindly, but cool and collected, and told him she would settle the matter with him in a couple of days.

The next morning Alençon sent Marchaumont to implore the good offices of Cecil, but the old minister said that the matter was entirely in the Queen's hands, and he was powerless to do anything but express his opinion if the Council was consulted. Sussex was then appealed to, but it happened that he was sulking just then because Marchaumont had persuaded Alençon to make much of Leicester; and he replied that they had better get the support of their new friend as they appeared to have forgotten their old one, who had done so much for them. This rather damped the young Prince's hopes, and when he saw the Queen in the evening he pressed her very warmly for an answer. She coolly answered that the King's communication would be duly considered in Council and a reply given in ordinary course—until then she could say no more. Alençon lost his temper at this, and they wrangled until they parted.

Elizabeth had to thank her "faithful ape" for the fix in which she found herself. She had opened her inmost heart to him, and he had understood that she would really never marry, but proposed unacceptable conditions in order that the King's rejection of them might relieve her of the responsibility of the failure whilst binding Alençon personally to her and raising discord between him and his brother. Simier, as I have said, was now in the King's pay and faithfully transmitted his knowledge to France. It was perfectly safe, therefore, for Henry III. to promise on paper to accept any conditions, and thus at one

stroke to earn the gratitude of his brother and cast all responsibility upon the Queen of England. Elizabeth must have had some suspicion of her "ape's" falsity, because a day or so after young Pinart arrived, Alençon, who looked upon Simier as the author of all his disappointment, entered the Queen's chamber and implored her to send him away. She was apparently hesitating when the Prince whipped out his dagger and pressed it against his own breast, swearing by God that he would drive it home and die at her feet if she would not promise him on the spot to dismiss Simier. She replied that he had no need to go to such extremes as that, and that although it was hardly fair to send him away until he had obtained justification, she would do so to please Alençon. Simier was therefore sent off with letters to the Duke of Montpensier, who, within a given time, was to exonerate him from the charges against him in Alençon's name. Before he left, however, he asked the Queen what she was going to do for Alençon to recompense him for his expenditure in England; to which she replied that she had already done three things for him. She had sent £30,000 in cash to help him in the Cambrai affair, she had maintained him in England for a long time, whereby he saved his usual outlay and could employ the money in Flanders, and she had been no party to his going there at all. She said she was very sorry she had carried the marriage negotiations so far, but it was all Simier's fault, "because the first time Alençon came he, Simier, insisted upon his having another interview with her before he left." [1]

[1] Spanish Calendar (Elizabeth), vol. iii.

In the meanwhile the sudden complaisance of the King of France aroused all sorts of suspicion in the Queen's mind. It might be a plan for her ruin, she thought, to induce her to entrust large English forces to Alençon who might at once turn round and make terms with the Spaniards to her detriment, and she was more loath than ever to be over-liberal with him or to allow him to obtain uncontrolled power in the Netherlands. Orange kept writing to Alençon, showing him how badly he was acting in breaking his promise to the States and lingering in England, but Elizabeth and St. Aldegonde in England were at the same time putting their heads together and planning that if he did go, Orange and his Protestants should always be the stronger power.

In order to ascertain whether anything was being arranged between the French and the Spaniards the Queen took the opportunity, on the night of the 21st of January, as she was walking in the gallery at Whitehall with Alençon, to say that she had decided to come to terms with Philip. Poor Alençon was thunderstruck at this specious piece of news, and told Marchaumont afterwards that he could only suppose the Queen meant to leave him floundering in the morass into which she had led him. But this was not her only shot at the same interview. She had already fully primed Simier, who was still lingering here, with similar intelligence, and had arranged that he should enter the gallery by a private door, of which he had the key, as soon as she had fired her shot. Directly he entered she discreetly said it would not become her to stand between master and servant, and retired, leaving Alençon and the "ape" together. The Prince turned upon his

former favourite, and sneeringly asked why he was still staying in England. Was he afraid that he, Alençon, would have him killed if he went to France? "No," said Simier, "I do not think you would have me killed, but I do fear that I should be murdered by some of my enemies." Then Alençon opened the floodgates of his anger and piled reproach upon reproach on the devoted head of poor Simier. He had sold and betrayed his master, he told him; it was through him alone that the marriage had fallen through, and he had been the means of frustrating his hopes of intervening in the Netherlands. As soon as he could get in a word, Simier asked the Prince to tell him what he had done to cause all this. "You have discredited and defamed the best friend I have in England, the Earl of Leicester," replied the irate Prince, "and he has consequently been unable to influence the Queen in my favour as he would otherwise have done."

Simier was not long in conveying this to the Queen, and took care to have another fling at his enemy, Leicester, at the same time. He was surprised, he said, as all the world was, that she should still favour a man who had deceived her as Leicester had done by telling her he was not married when he was. But Elizabeth's object was not to quarrel with Leicester, but to learn by the hasty words of Alençon whether he was intriguing with the King of Spain, and she turned the subject by saying that Leicester was too powerful to be disgraced all at once. The consideration of the King of France's reply was undertaken the next day by the Council, but no decision was arrived at, as the Queen and Cecil alone really knew what her plans were. Cecil

said something to the Queen before the Council about three masses being celebrated every morning in London now, *i.e.*, those of Alençon, the Dauphin, and Marchaumont, whereas by the marriage treaty one only could take place even after the marriage. She told him to have a little patience and leave it to her. They and their masses would soon be across the sea. The same night at her customary walk in the gallery with Alençon she opened her batteries. She pointed out to him that it would be much better to abandon the Netherlands enterprise; nothing but danger and trouble could come to him from it. If she did not marry him she was sure the King of France would not help him, and she alone was unable to sustain the whole cost, particularly now that the States themselves were exhausted and wavering; whereas, on the other hand, if she did marry him, it was equally certain that her ministers and people would not consent to be brought into conflict with so powerful a state as Spain. She was more inclined at present to come to terms and bring about peace. He might see by this, she said, that he was not likely to benefit whether he married her or not. Alençon quite broke down at this, and as soon as he could get away flew to his false friend Leicester to ask him what was the meaning of it. It was all, said Leicester, the fault of Sussex, who had continued to advise the Queen to make friends with the King of Spain. So the next morning after dinner the young Prince made a formal complaint against Sussex, who he said had accepted Spanish bribes to frustrate the marriage—which was not true—and not only that, but he had undertaken to serve Philip even against his own mistress, as he

was informed by the French ambassador in Madrid. Elizabeth stoutly defended honest Sussex against this calumny, but she took care to repeat it all to him as soon as Alençon was gone, and told him that she would never trust the Prince again after he had so defamed in this way those who were his oldest and best friends. Sussex, for his part, could only swear with tears in his eyes to be avenged upon the authors of such a falsehood. Everything that Alençon did and said, therefore, was turned to his disadvantage. At last, after all this preparation, the Queen gave him her final reply. Calais and Havre must both be garrisoned with Englishmen as a security for her that the King of France would fulfil all his promises. Alençon could hardly believe his ears. Was she in earnest, he asked, and was this the final reply? Certainly, replied the Queen, and she could give no other: and Alençon, thunderstruck, flung out of the room in a rage, now thoroughly undeceived. He at once called a council of his friends, and told them how he had been betrayed. His honour must be avenged at all costs, but for the present he must dissemble with the Queen, as her help was necessary to enable him first to wreak his vengeance upon the prime author of his downfall, his false brother the King, who had sent Simier hither, knowing he could do as he liked with the Queen, in order to frustrate the marriage. The sinister tyrant his brother, and his evil-minded mother had plotted against his welfare, and he would be even with them. His mother's only object was to keep him under her thumb in France in order to hold his brother the better in her thraldom. There were two courses open to him, he

said: first, to carry on the war in Flanders; and secondly, to raise civil war in France. The first he could not do without the English Queen's help, which he probably could not get, as she was in treaty with the Spaniards, and he was certain his brother would not aid him; but the Queen would willingly support him in a Huguenot war in France, as she had promised the King of Navarre to do so. After much of this heated talk and denunciation of the proud Guises, in which Marchaumont and de Quincy added fuel to the fire, the Prince Dauphin, old beyond his years, who had hitherto remained silent, being urged by Alençon to give his opinion, turned a cold stream of good sense on the inflated balderdash of Alençon and his friends. He would have nothing to do with treason, he said, and warned them to take care they did not lose their heads for such talk. This fairly frightened them all, and Alençon took him apart in a window recess and prayed him earnestly not to desert him. But the Dauphin was obdurate; he would leave for France at once, and consort no more with the enemies of his King. He and the spies behind the arras soon told everything to cautious old Pinart, who had brought the King's reply and he flew to the Queen to urge her not to help Alençon against his brother. She had not heard a word about such a project, she truly said, but Pinart did not quite know whether to believe her, and warned her in almost threatening words of her danger if she listened to talk which would bring all Christendom down upon her. Then he went and rated Alençon soundly, who began to whimper, protesting that he did not mean anything wrong, and collapsed completely.

Elizabeth had now quite satisfied herself that there was no arrangement between Alençon, his brother, and Spain; and at the same time had brought the poor creature to a sufficiently chastened and humble frame of mind, so she could without misgiving send him off to the Netherlands on her own terms. Seeing him in his barge on the river, she ordered her own and joined him, and persuaded him that it was at all events his duty to keep his word and accede to the invitation of the States to go to Flanders, and when he had been there he might retire or stay as he thought best. She would give him £30,000 in cash for his expenses and a regular subsidy for the war, with some ships to take him to Flushing. Alençon was glum and tearful, but had no alternative. The ships were waiting for him, the money ready in the exchequer, and the deputation from the States with St. Aldegonde pressing for his departure. Events and Elizabeth were too strong for him, and he consented to sail next day for Protestant Zeeland, instead of first to Catholic Flanders, where he and his Frenchmen might have caused trouble to the Queen of England. All was settled for the Prince to sail on the next morning, the 25th of January. Sussex was sent to say that the Queen desired that all future correspondence between them should be carried on through Simier, but this Alençon refused point blank, said he would have no more to do with him, and complained to Sussex bitterly of the Queen's demand for Calais and Havre, and of his brother for refusing them. But before the morning came another change occurred. A courier came post-haste to Pinart from France urging him, as he loved his King and country to

keep Alençon in England at any cost rather than allow him to drag his brother into trouble with Spain by going to the Netherlands. Alençon thereupon feigned illness, and Pinart went to the Queen and threatened that if she were too exacting France might join with Spain and put Mary Stuart on the throne. Although the King could not give her Calais and Havre as security, he would send such hostages as should satisfy her. This thoroughly alarmed the Queen, who kept Lady Stafford awake all night with her lamentations, and was in a high fever in the morning. She was still in bed after dinner, when she sent for Sussex in great trouble, and told him she must marry Alençon after all. Pinart threatened her with all sorts of dangers, and besides that she must have a companion in the government to enable her to curb her insolent favourites, which she, a lone woman, could not do. She knew this was the way to appeal to Sussex, who hated Leicester with all his heart, but these changes from hour to hour had completely obfuscated him, and he could only beseech her to do as she thought best, and not to ask his opinion until he knew hers. She begged him at least to say what he thought about the proposal to give hostages, and he gave it as his opinion that she ought to insist upon her demand for the ports. Immediately afterwards a Council was called, when, the marriage now appearing again possible, Leicester and Hatton, who had been loaded with French bribes, showed in their true colours. They both opposed the match strenuously. It was a danger, they said, to England and to religion, and no words were strong enough to condemn it. Sussex, of

course, was in favour of it, and he and Leicester were about to come to fisticuffs when Cecil stepped between them, and told them that the question of marriage or no marriage was in the hands of the Queen—all they had to consider was what security should be exacted if the marriage took place. They broke up in confusion, without coming to any decision, and Cecil alone remained afterwards in conclave with the Queen, the result of their conference being that the ships were again ordered to make ready to sail with Alençon.

When Pinart found that his threats to Elizabeth had produced no permanent result, he fell back upon his alternative instructions, to threaten Alençon that if he went to the Netherlands under English auspices he and his followers should be treated as rebels and the enemies of France. This again alarmed the Queen, who next tried her cajoleries on Pinart. What were his final instructions, she asked, with all her battery of fascinations; but he said he would not tell her until he received her decided reply about the marriage, and only warned her to desist from helping Alençon in the Netherlands, or evil would come of it both to him and to her. She said she had not urged him to it, and had only helped him after he began, whilst she now thought it was better for him to retire and have done with the business. All this fickleness left poor Alençon in a chaotic condition of mind from day to day. First the Queen would give him £30,000, then a mere trifle of 20,000 crowns, then nothing, then £70,000, and so on, Cecil being strongly of opinion that no large sum should be furnished to him; but withal every effort was made to get him gone in a good humour. He was tardy

and unwilling, afraid of Pinart's threats, and full of sulky vows of vengeance against the Queen for sending him away unmarried. He was only dissembling, he told his friends; they should all see what he would do before he went. Poor creature! he could do nothing but impotently grumble and vapour, mere twig as he was on the torrent of events, borne hither and thither by stronger minds than his own.

The Queen on one occasion told him that he would only be away three weeks, and should then come back and marry her; the castle of Dover was already, she said, being prepared for his reception when he returned; and although he smiled at this, and feigned pleasure, he was no sooner alone with Marchaumont than he burst into an agony of tears, swore that he would only live to be revenged on her, if he had to make friends with his brother for the sake of doing it. But still from that day he hung back on one pretext or another. Marchaumont and most of his friends had been bribed by the Queen to persuade him to go, and they used every artifice with that object. How would he like, they asked him, to go back to France, and dance attendance on La Valette and d'Arques, his brother's mignons? Better surely, they said, suffer any hardship in Flanders than put up with such an indignity as that! As soon as they had persuaded him, Pinart would come and threaten all manner of terrible things if he trusted to rebels and heretics. At last, on the 1st of February, on the arrival of a new deputation from the States, the Queen prevailed upon him to start for Dover with her by his side. Leicester, Hunsdon, and Howard were to accom-

pany him, and the Queen told the Prince that if he did not like to stay he could come back with the Earl in three weeks, and she would then have decided about the marriage. Sussex took the opportunity of urging Alençon secretly to keep Leicester in Flanders when he arrived, but he was powerless to do anything, for the money, except 20,000 crowns for his expenses, was handed to Hunsdon and Leicester to be laid out for the benefit of the States; and it was well understood that the French prince was to be a mere figurehead to beguile the Catholic Flemings. Every demonstration the Queen could make was made. She went with him as far as Canterbury, weeping copiously all the way. On taking leave of him she cast herself about his neck and asked him not to go until they learnt whether there was any danger from the Spaniards at Antwerp as was reported. The Flushing deputation had urged him somewhat roughly to set out; and she flared up at their disrespect, called them heretical cobblers and tinkers to dare to talk like that to a prince. It was all make-believe of course, though she swore to her own ministers that she would not live an hour but for the hope of her lover's prompt return, for she was determined to marry him in spite of everything.[1]

She gave him a personal present of £25,000 when she left him, and told him that a wound on his little finger would pierce her heart. Amongst all these blandishments the real object appears when we learn that she urged him above all things to obtain help from his brother. If she could only bring France and Spain to loggerheads she would be safe. Leicester, by means of Hatton, tried at

[1] Spanish Calendar (Elizabeth), vol. iii.

the last moment to shirk the voyage, but the Queen threatened them both with all sorts of penalties if such disrespect were "shown to the person she loved best in the world," but the real reason why she was so anxious for Leicester to go was that he bore secret instructions to Orange to detain Alençon in Holland at any cost, and never let him come back to England, notwithstanding that the Queen had given him her word at parting that if he would only return to her in six weeks she would marry him on the conditions that Pinart had propounded. The scales, however, were gradually falling from the Prince's eyes, for before he went Marchaumont, who stayed in England, was instructed to make approaches for his marriage with the wealthy daughter of the Duke of Florence.

CHAPTER XIV.

Arrival of Alençon in the Netherlands—His investure as Duke of Brabant—Leicester's suspicion and intrigues—Alençon's ceaseless demands for money—Henry III. refuses aid to his brother—the Queen's attempts to revive the marriage negotiations—Universal distrust of her—Attempted assassination of William of Orange—Danger of Alençon—Elizabeth's fear of a French and Spanish understanding—To prevent it she again declares she will marry Alençon—Her renewed efforts to pledge the King of France before the marriage—She threatens France that she will make friends with Spain unless her terms are granted.

On February 10, 1582, Alençon's fleet of fifteen ships anchored before Flushing, where the Princes of Orange and Epinay, with the members of the States, were already assembled to welcome the new sovereign of Brabant. He entered the town in great pomp with William the Silent on one side of him and Leicester on the other, and followed by Hunsdon, Willoughby, Philip Sidney, Sir John Norris, who was in command of the English auxiliaries, and many other Englishmen. The bells rang, the guns thundered their welcome, and the crowds acclaimed their new ruler; but as Orange in his speech to the States clearly indicated, it was not the feeble prince, a Frenchman, and a Catholic, they were greeting so much as the strong Protestant Queen of England, under whose auspices and protection he came.

Wherever Frenchmen alone appeared they were looked at askance: at Middleburg the townspeople stoutly refused to admit even their new Duke's French bodyguard until Leicester himself besought them to do so on his guarantee. All the citadels were open to Englishmen, but not a Frenchman, except Alençon, was allowed to enter them. Alençon wrote to Marchaumont almost as soon as he arrived that Orange and Leicester were arranging everything over his head, and he saw clearly that after all he was to play second fiddle. After some delay and misgiving, and a dispute for precedence between Brussels and Antwerp, the already disillusioned Prince made his state entry into the latter city, and received the oath of allegiance as Duke of Brabant. Everything that pomp could do was done to invest the ceremony with solemnity. When Orange clasped around the new Duke his ermine-bordered mantle he whispered to him, "I will fasten it firmly, Monseigneur, so that no one shall deprive you of it." Garbed in his ducal panoply he passed through the city on horseback to the palace of St. Michael, sums of money in coins stamped with his effigy were flung to the crowd, and in appearance at least his longing for sovereignty was satisfied. But in appearance alone, for the States and Orange were urged by Leicester never to let the power out of their hands—and they never did.

In the meanwhile Elizabeth in England was still playing her part of the comedy. When she had parted from her lover at Canterbury she prayed him to address her in his letters as his wife, and daily epistles full of lovesick nonsense continued to pass between them. She openly said that she would

willingly give a million for her dear "frog" to be disporting himself in the clear waters of the Thames rather than in the sluggish ponds of the Netherlands, and again asserted her intention of marrying her suitor if his brother would fulfil his promises. All this made Leicester in Flanders and Hatton in London somewhat distrustful. The former thought that perhaps after all he might be duped, and that Alençon might detain him against his will. The Queen, moreover, in Hatton's hearing had made some remark about men never knowing how fortunate they were until fortune had left them, which he applied to Leicester, and sent a special messenger to urge him to return at once. Leicester needed no second bidding. The very day after the investure of Alençon he suddenly left Antwerp at dinner-time and hastened to England. He arrived in London on the 26th of February in high glee, boasting of the good service he had done in leaving the Queen's troublesome suitor stuck fast in the bogs, like a wrecked hulk, deserted by wind and tide. The oath of allegiance, he said, was only a farce, and Alençon a laughing-stock. Pasquins and insulting placards had been fixed to his chamber-door on the very first day of his stay in Antwerp ; the Queen of England, and she alone, was now arbitratress of the peace of Europe. This was pleasant talk for Elizabeth, but was soon conveyed to Marchaumont, who made a formal complaint to the Queen of Leicester's words. For this reason or from fear of Spain, she had a great wrangle with Leicester the next night. She had never meant to sanction the formal investure, she said, and had not been informed of it. Leicester, for his own ostentation, had implied by his

presence at the ceremony her authority for it, and had drawn her into an act of open hostility to the King of Spain. He was a knave and a traitor, she said, and much else of the same sort. It was all a planned thing between him and that tyrannical Orange, so that the latter might have his own way in all things. She then turned on Walsingham, and called him a scamp for persuading Alençon to go to the Netherlands at all. Probably all this extraordinary talk, and the Queen and Cecil's sudden attempt to gain the goodwill and friendship of Spain, were caused by the intelligence sent by her ambassador, Cobham, in France, that the King had stoutly refused to countenance his brother's attempt, and had declared traitors all those who helped him. Henry's hand was then not to be forced, and after all she might find herself alone face to face with all the Catholic powers united. The fear of this always brought her to her knees, and she insisted upon Cecil's leaving a sick bed to come and advise her what to do. He urged her emphatically either to marry Alençon at once or make terms with the King of Spain, as things had now come to a crisis which could not be prolonged. She was peevish and quarrelsome with all about her, and perplexed to the last degree. Cecil urged her one way, Walsingham another, and Sussex a third. Alençon was clamouring through Marchaumont for money, more money, for not a penny could he get elsewhere. His new subjects were bitterly distrustful of him, and hated his Frenchmen almost as much as they did their Spanish oppressors; and the poor Queen had nearly come to the end of her clever serpentine devices. First she decided to write, pressing

Alençon to come over at once and marry her—anything to relieve herself of the sole and open responsibility of the war—she solemnly swore to Castelnau that this time she was in earnest, and would really marry the Prince if he came. But Castelnau was incredulous and irresponsive, Walsingham and Leicester were inimical, and it is very doubtful whether the letter to Alençon was really sent. Certain it is that the Queen wrote a letter with her own hand, and handed it the same day (March 5th) to Marchaumont to send to Alençon, urging him not to trust the Flemish mob overmuch, or to venture further in the business than the support he was sure of would warrant. As his brother would not help him he must not expect her to quarrel with the King of Spain alone. She thus coolly left him in the lurch. The very day after this letter left, one of Pinart's secretaries brought important letters from the King of France, his mother, and from Cobham to the Queen, which once more entirely changed the aspect of affairs. The King assured her that under no circumstances would he help his brother or break with Spain, whilst Cobham detailed a long conversation he had had with the King, in which the latter had expressed the greatest anger and indignation at the way in which a vain and fickle woman had befooled a prince of the blood royal of France for her own hands. Thank God! he said, he was not such a fool as his brother, and if the latter had only listened to him he would have safely and surely raised him to a better place than the Queen of England could do. In vain Cobham had sought to mollify the King. The Queen might try her cleverness upon others, said Henry, but if she

was not straightforward with him she should suffer for it. He had already conceded too much to her, and would go no further. In future all responsibility must rest on the Queen of England. Elizabeth did not wait even to consult the Council, but at once sent a special courier to Cobham, ordering him to assure the King that there was nothing she desired more than to marry if he would fulfil the conditions. Then she summoned Sussex, and told him to arrange with Marchaumont to renew the arrangements for the marriage. But Sussex was sick of the whole business; he felt he was a mere catspaw, and yet he was being blamed by all parties; so he declined to interfere, on the ground that the Queen had so often expressed her natural repugnance to marriage that he was sure she would never bring herself to it, and she had better try to excuse the slights she had offered to the French royal house than commence a new series of them. Besides, he said, however fit Alençon might be personally, his present position in the Netherlands made it most dangerous for her to marry him now, as it might bring her country face to face with Spain. He should not be doing his duty, said Sussex, did he not advise her, if she decided to marry the Duke, only to do so in case he left the Netherlands and surrendered the title of Duke of Brabant. She assured Sussex in reply that if she did marry she would make the Duke abandon the Netherlands enterprise. She then went to visit Cecil, who was ill with gout, and told him she had overcome her last scruple, and had decided to marry; but he was just as cool as Sussex, and would have nothing to do with it, and warned her to take care

what she was about, or ill would come of it. Marchaumont was next taken in hand, and told by the Queen that at last she had decided to marry in real earnest. She urged him to persuade his master on this assurance, to retire from the Netherlands until she had arranged with his brother to break with Spain jointly with her. Marchaumont had long been begging for money, and seized the opportunity of suggesting that he should himself go to Flanders and bring Alençon round to her views, taking with him the gold she had promised him from Drake's plunder. The Council would not consent to Marchaumont's going, but they sent the £15,000 with the letter the next night. This was early in March, 1582, and on the 18th of the same month Alençon was giving an entertainment to celebrate his birthday at the palace of St. Michael, in Antwerp, when a young Biscayner discharged a pistol in the face of the Prince of Orange and wounded him in a way that kept him hovering between life and death for weeks to come. At the first news of the treacherous shot at the national hero, the hatred of the stout Dutchmen for the French flared out. It ran like wildfire from town to town that this was another plot of the false brood of Valois and Medici, and for a day Alençon's own life was in danger. But for the courage and presence of mind of Orange himself in his own apparently mortal strait every Frenchman in Flanders would probably have been massacred, and Alençon amongst them. The moment the Queen of England heard the news all the ports were closed, and one of her Gentlemen of the Chamber was instructed to hasten to Antwerp and tell

Alençon to leave the States instantly. When Walsingham learnt this he solemnly warned his mistress to take care what she did. If Alençon came again she must marry him or bring all Catholic Christendom against her. She therefore, but very unwillingly, took another course—namely, to send for Castelnau, the French ambassador, and assure him on her word of honour as a Queen that she would marry Alençon. This and other things she desired that he would convey to the King officially; but really the trick was getting too stale. Castelnau replied that she had at various times made him write so many things which she had no intention of fulfilling that he must decline to do so any more. After much persuasion, however, he consented to write, although he made no secret of his derision of the whole affair.

If Mendoza is to be believed, the Queen was playing a doubly false game on the present occasion. She was trying to prevent the King of France from joining a coalition against her by again professing willingness to become his sister-in-law, she was beguiling Alençon with renewed ideas of marriage and help, to prevent him in his despair from making terms with Parma, she was sending messages urging him to retire from the Netherlands for his safety's sake in order to relieve herself of the responsibility of helping him, whilst, by the very same messenger, she was instructing Orange and the Protestants on no account to let him go, so that she might not be plagued again by his appearance in England as a pressing suitor. All through March and April news continued to arrive of the Prince of Orange's desperate condition. For days he was only kept

alive by the repression of the severed artery by the fingers of relays of attendants night and day. Several times apparently well-founded intelligence came of his death, and Elizabeth and her councillors had to consider the new aspect of affairs which such an event would produce. Leicester, Hatton, and Walsingham were in favour of the Queen herself taking the protectorate of the Netherlands, as she could then, if necessary, make better terms with Spain; whilst if Alençon and the French once got their grip on the country it would be ruinous to England. Sussex and Cecil, on the other hand, were for making an arrangement with Spain at once. When they submitted their diverse opinions to the Queen she angrily complained that the death of a single person made all her councillors tremble and deprived her subjects of their courage. But she took her own tortuous course whatever her councillors' opinions might be. First she publicly declared on every occasion her fixed intention of marrying Alençon; then she sent for Sussex and begged him to write to the Duke that when he had made terms with Spain or had otherwise arranged to relieve her of the need for contributing to the war, she would marry him at once; and to this she would pledge her word as a Queen and her oath as a Christian. But Sussex refused this time to be the instrument for still further injuring her reputation, as he said. He had innocently done so before, but he knew that marriage was repugnant to her, and he would have no more to do with it.[1] Finding that Sussex was obdurate, the Queen, not to be baulked, sent her message by a gentleman

[1] Spanish Calendar (Elizabeth), vol. iii.

of Alençon's named Pruneaux, who was then in London.

The reason for this was that in case the amicable settlement she feared was arrived at by Alençon and his brother after Orange's death, she should not be left out of the arrangement, which she certainly would not be if Alençon still hoped to be accepted as her husband. She was indeed in greater fear of the French now than ever; Henry III. had become more and more complaisant with his brother as the danger of Orange increased, and notwithstanding all her diplomacy she could not extract even the smallest conditional promise to break with Spain, even, as she put it, as a matter of form. The coast of Flanders and Holland in the hands of the French would mean ruin to England, and, as usual, she railed at Walsingham for his innocent share in promoting Alençon's going thither. "You knave!" she greeted him with one day, "you ought to have your head off your shoulders for persuading the Duke to go to Antwerp. He is trying now to get hold of the ports, but they will see whether I will put up with that coolly;" whereupon the secretary answered not a word. She wrote again to Alençon, telling him she would marry him if he came, and would not stand in the way of his Netherlands plans if she were not expected to contribute to the cost; but if he continued the war without marrying her she would be his mortal foe and would expend her last man and her last shot in preventing him from obtaining uncontrolled possession of the Netherlands. The £15,000 she had sent him, she said, was a mark of affection rather than a subsidy for the war, and indeed at this time—the end of April,

1582—it is clear that her most pressing fear was lest the death of Orange should allow the French to obtain the control of the country over her head, to make their own terms with Philip, and leave her and the Protestants in the lurch. She left no effort untried to persuade the French that she really would marry Alençon, but Castelnau, as well as his master and the Queen-mother, were not very credulous by this time, and were inclined rather to make a joke of her newly-revived ardour. On one occasion when she was setting forth in detail to Castelnau the various reasons which she said made her marriage with Alençon now necessary, he told her that she had forgotten the most important reason of all, namely, that people were saying that she had already given him the privileges of a husband. This was expressed in words that would in our day be considered unpardonably coarse and insulting if applied to the humblest woman, but the Queen only answered that she would soon stop the rumour. The ambassador told her that she might perhaps do so in her own realm, but it would be impossible in other countries where it was public talk. Excited and angry at this the Queen exclaimed that her conscience was clear and innocent, and she therefore feared nothing; she would stifle such calumnies everywhere by her marriage.[1]

Very anxiously she awaited the replies from the King and Alençon to her new approaches. After some delay the former very coolly sent word that he could go no further than the terms which had been conveyed by Pinart; but day after day passed without the arrival of and answer from Alençon, and

[1] Spanish Calendar (Elizabeth), vol. iii.

the Queen, in the interim, hardly sought to hide her trepidation from her councillors, especially from Sussex. In the meanwhile Leicester and his friends were busy again stirring up Protestant fears against the match, and Cecil and Sussex were urging an arrangement with Spain. At last, on the 2nd of May, Bacqueville arrived with a letter from Alençon to the Queen full of extravagant professions of love and rejoicing. He had, he said, ceased to mention the marriage for the last two months as he had despaired of it, she having told him herself that the mountains would move ere she would willingly wed. Now, however, that she had changed her mind, he would not trust to letters, but would himself take flight like a swallow and nest in England. This was his final resolution, and he entreated her to send him word immediately when he might come and consummate his joy. This letter plunged the Queen once more in the midst of the intrigue, and she confidently resumed her masterly handling of the tangled skein. She openly expressed her pleasure at her approaching union, she scolded poor Walsingham as if he were a pickpocket, because, she said, he had caused dissension between her and her lover, and then she sent for Castelnau and Marchaumont. She conveyed to them Alençon's determination to come, and swore solemnly that since she had given him the ring she had never wavered for a moment in her intention of becoming Alençon's wife, if the King of France would fulfil the conditions. Having thus demonstrated her sincerity with regard to the marriage itself, her next move was to dissociate herself from Alençon's prospect in the Netherlands. She turned upon Marchaumont like a fury, told him

he was a sordid, venal fellow who had never ceased to importune her for money since her master left, as if they both of them only cared for her to administer to his ambition, and his only object was to torment the old woman until they had drained her purse.[1] She then formally requested the ambassador to inform the King—first, that Alençon was coming to marry her as soon as word was sent to him; second, that she herself was of the same mind; and third, that the final word now rested with the King. She had demanded that he should defray half of the expenses of the war in the Netherlands, not because she desired war with Spain—quite the contrary. She desired universal peace and goodwill, but as Alençon, for his own ends, had entered into the affair she did not want her subjects to say that she had broken their long peace and prosperity and wasted their treasure for the sake of marriage; and she therefore wished the King to promise to defray half the cost of the war *before* the marriage. It was of the utmost importance, she repeated, that the King should hand the money over *before the ceremony*, and she did not see how she could marry unless he did so. She urged the ambassador to impress upon the King how very straightforwardly she had acted in the matter, and to request him to send a person of sufficiently high rank fully empowered to settle; and she would then summon Alençon and marry him without further ado. Castelnau demurred at this. She had deceived him, he said, so often, that his master had reproved him for his credulity. How could he believe her word, he asked. "These are not words alone," replied the

[1] Spanish Calendar (Elizabeth), vol. iii.

Queen, "these are the solemn oaths of a Queen and a Christian woman," and she called God's vengeance down upon herself if she broke them. Then she began to hector. If the King did not accede to so reasonable a demand, she said, she would know that he had been tricking her all along, and she would be his and his brother's mortal foe for life. Her last man and her last penny should be sacrificed, she swore, before she would permit the French to gain a footing in the Netherlands. She had plenty of powerful friends, the King of Spain was seeking her, and if the King of France did not make haste and consent to her terms, she should consider his action as a negative, and immediately throw him over and join the King of Spain.[1]

[1] Spanish Calendar (Elizabeth), vol. iii.

CHAPTER XV.

Elizabeth temporises with Alençon pending the King's reply —Alençon's joy at the false news of his brother's yielding —Elizabeth throws upon Henry III. the blame for the failure of the match—Fall of Oudenarde—Alençon's ultimatum to Elizabeth—Salcedo's plot—Henry III. more pliable—Alençon again hopeful—New exigencies of Elizabeth—She again declares she will marry Alençon—Is generally disbelieved—La Mothe's interview with her —Alençon's treacherous attempt to seize the garrisons—Elizabeth's jealousy of the French in the Netherlands—Alençon's flight to Vilvorde and Dunkirk—His flight to Calais—His interview with his mother—Reconciliation with Henry III.—Preparations for a new expedition—Elizabeth offers her co-operation too late—Death of Alençon—Disappearance of the last serious suitor for Elizabeth's hand and end of the negotiations for her marriage.

THE Queen's bold game of brag succeeded. Castelnau wrote to his King urging him to give way and not to drive Elizabeth into the arms of Spain on the one hand or of the Huguenots on the other.

On the same day, May 4, 1582, the Queen wrote from Greenwich to Alençon a reply full of vague professions of affection, and with not a word about his coming to marry her. God knows it is not her fault! She is ready, as she always was, to carry out the contract "according to my last promise on the

conditions, which you alone know—very difficult ones I confess."[1] It is entirely the King's fault. She is thoroughly ashamed of writing to him so often about it. He (Henry) only repeats that he can go no further than the conditions sent by Pinart. "Jugez sur ce, mon tres cher, que puis je plus faire? Considerez mon tres cher . . . si tout l'univers ne s'ebahist comment la reine d'Angleterre ayt tant oblié l'Angleterre pour amener nouveaux voisins sur le continent prez de son pais . . . et puis voyez si de ma part je n'ay rien hazardé pour vous; m'estant l'amour de ma nation plus cher que la vie,"[2] and so on, but not a word to cause him to come to England. Almost at the same time as he received this letter false news came to Alençon from his sister Margaret that the King had consented to the whole of Elizabeth's demands. He was almost beside himself for joy; a letter, which is now at Hatfield,[3] was instantly sent off to the Queen, containing the most exuberant expressions of pleasure and relief. There never was happiness equal to his, which he can conceal no longer. He has no further care now than to order the clothes and everything necessary for the nuptials. But she must more than ever fulfil her promise to him, for now that he is to be her husband she would not like to see him perish for want of assistance so solemnly promised by her. "I have been sorry hitherto," he says, "to importune you so much, being uncertain of the King's intentions; but now that I am sure of sleeping in the great bed and being your husband, I claim, as the fulfilment of the treaty between us, the payment of the whole sum of money you were good enough to promise me at your

[1] Hatfield Papers, part 3. [2] Ibid. [3] Ibid.

own instance." He begs her to send her proxy over for the marriage contract, and he will authorise Castelnau to enter into the engagement in his name; and concludes, "Adieu ma femme par immagination que jespere sera bientost par effet. Celuy qui brulle de dessir. Françoys." But a few days afterwards he was informed that his sister's news was untrue, and wrote in heartbroken strain to the Queen: "Quand je pense les affayres du mariage en bon aytre je suys gai, et quand je connois le contrere la mort nest plus hideuze que moy." From the happy assurance that he would soon be her husband he has now become "froit et transi de tristesse" because of the doubt she casts on the King's surety. "Mon Dieu, Madame," he writes, "en quoi esse que je vous ay esté si desagreeable pour ne pouvoir tirer nulle resolution de vostre Majesté?"[1] Before this letter was received by the Queen she had anticipated its contents, and wrote a very long communication to her suitor, casting great doubt upon Queen Margaret's news. The delay, she said, was entirely owing to the King of France. She, Heavens knows! had done enough, even to the verge of impropriety. "Et pense que le Roy pour telle me reputera, que je suis la récherchante, qui sera tousjour une belle reputation pour une femme." But she still kept tight hold of the money and did not send him the aid he so confidently requested. She was, she said, a poor hand at financial affairs and had but little love for playing the economist. She was, fain, therefore, to leave money matters in the hands of those who understood them better than she did, and the answer would be given to Marchaumont. This meant that

[1] Hatfield Papers, part 3.

she would send him no money until the position of his brother was made clear, but she reminds him that she has risked much already for him, and that England has nothing to gain by the marriage and very much to lose if the French should become masters of Flanders.[1] This letter was cool enough and contrasts greatly with a short note written by Alençon the next day—May 25th—brought by one of the English courtiers who was returning. He winds up this note by bidding her farewell: "avecque autant dafection que je me souhet vostre mari couché entre deus dras dedans vos beaus bras."

The fear that the French might after all dominate the Netherlands or make terms with Spain, was not only tightening her purse-strings but had led her to consider an entirely new combination of the European powers, by which the North was brought in to redress the balance of the South. Eric of Sweden had a fair daughter of fourteen, whom it was proposed to marry to Alençon: a confederacy between England, Scotland, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Russia, and Poland being formed; the reversion of the elective crown of Poland being secured to Eric, and a northern fleet being placed at Alençon's disposal to oppose any naval attack upon him by Spain. Alençon and his mother, it was understood, were not indisposed to listen to this arrangement, but the countries were distant, their interests not identical, and whilst the negotiations were slowly dragging, events outstripped them and rendered them nugatory.

Oudenarde fell early in July, and Alençon immediately afterwards sent an ultimatum to Elizabeth.

[1] Hatfield Papers, part 3.

He was at the end of his resources. If she did not at once send him the money she had promised he must abandon his task, and Spain would crush Flanders for good and for all under the heel of Alexander Farnese. The time had gone by for high-strained compliments and billing and cooing, and Alençon, in his letter to the Queen, says his mind is too full of war to talk about marriage, and he must leave Antwerp and await her answer elsewhere. Leicester and his friends feared he might go to Flushing, and thence run over to England, and were consequently anxious to send him £20,000 at once. Cecil was strongly opposed to this, as at the end of July there was in the Exchequer less than £80,000, which, with the £400,000 in gold in the Tower, formed the whole of the national treasury. Whilst this was being discussed there came news of the discovery of the Salcedo plot, said to have been prompted by Spain, the Pope, and the Guises, to assassinate Alençon and the Prince of Orange. The avowals made by Salcedo on the rack satisfied even Henry III. that a vast Catholic conspiracy was in progress, from which he was excluded, and this once more drew him nearer to Elizabeth, and he instructed his ambassador to assure her that he would accede to the conditions she demanded as soon as she had decided upon the marriage. Her answer was that since the King consented to defray the cost of the war she must have it under his own hand, with an undertaking that England under no circumstances should be called upon to contribute anything in case of a war with Spain. The King's readiness to accede to every demand of Elizabeth was of itself a source of

suspicion to her, and was by many attributed to a deep Papist plot to throw the whole responsibility for breaking off the marriage upon her, and so turn Alençon against her. To a certain extent it had this effect, for although Alençon's letters to the Queen herself were a mixture of erotics and reproaches, his communications to Sussex were in a different tone. The Queen, he said, was the cause of his ruin, and if she will not at once come to his aid or marry him he must join her enemies, and she will have no cause to complain. Lierre had just been captured by the Spaniards, and all Alençon's prayers for money were ineffectual. A new turn of the screw was applied to the King of France by Elizabeth nearly every day. The last demand was that he was to defend her not against Spain alone, but against all her enemies whatsoever, and that an undertaking to this effect, stamped with the great seal of France, was to be sent to her — anything, indeed, to drag France into open enmity with Spain before she showed her hand. Events seemed to be working for her. Henry III. was already jealous of the Guises, his mother's fleet to aid the Portuguese pretender at Terceira against Philip had been destroyed, and Catharine was vowing vengeance, so that Henry was pliable.

Alençon, writing to the Queen early in August, "thanks God that his brother has at last sent the despatch she asked for, and assures himself now that, having, as all well-bred ladies must, caused herself to be sought, she will readily fulfil her promise and receive him as her husband ; me fezant jouir du fruit et contantement du mariage a quoy je me prepare, fezant peu decquesersise (d'exercise) me nouri-

sant si bien que je masure que en resceveres plus de contantement que d'autre qui soit sur la terre." But withal he entreats her again and again for money. He is not, he says, a mercenary soldier, but his honour is at stake, and he cannot obtain a penny elsewhere. The answer to this was a remittance of £20,000 and a fresh body of English auxiliaries, but no fresh word about marriage, the main line of policy now inaugurated being that which was subsequently followed, namely, to nullify the presence of Frenchmen in Flanders by the sending of larger numbers of English volunteers. Catharine de Medici also began to move in order to have her revenge on Spain for her Terceira defeat, and both men and money began to flow over the French frontier to Alençon. At the same time the formal document, signed and sealed by the King, was read by Castelnau to Elizabeth. In it Henry bound himself to relieve the Queen of all expense of the war if she married Alençon, but would not bind himself to break openly with Spain. Castelnau had instructions in case the Queen were not satisfied with this to drop the fruitless marriage negotiations, and frankly propose an offensive and defensive alliance between the two countries. The Guises were openly discontented, and Paris swarmed with their men-at-arms. It was clear to Henry and his mother that they must cling to England and the Protestants, or the house of Valois was doomed, and France must become subservient to Spain and the bigots. So, marriage or no marriage, Elizabeth must be conciliated.

The task was not an easy one, for she knew the position as well as anybody, and was hard to please.

She was dissatisfied with the formal undertaking, which was read to her, and demanded that the King should add a personally binding confirmation in his own handwriting; but this he refused to do. When the Queen again talked about marrying Alençon immediately, if certain new conditions were granted, Castelnau besought her to speak frankly and state her final terms, so that, in any case, a firm national alliance might be arranged. She affected to fly into a passion at this, and said she was not such a simpleton as to trust Frenchmen if she did not marry Alençon. She then broke into strong language, as was her wont, and called curses down upon her own head if she did not instantly marry the Prince after the King granted her demands. Calling Cecil as witness to her words, she renewed her vows, swearing like a trooper, until, as Castelnau says, it made his blood run cold, and Cecil himself whispered to Lady Stafford as he left the chamber that if the Queen did not fulfil her word this time God would surely send her to hell for such blasphemy.[1]

The French, however, strongly backed up by Leicester, were now all for a national alliance, having lost belief in a marriage; the Queen for her part stoutly maintaining that one thing was impossible without the other; and when Cobham, early in December, approached the King with regard to the new conditions demanded, he was made clearly to understand that there was no belief whatever in the Queen's sincerity, and that her object was what we now know it to have been, namely, to pledge France

[1] Spanish Calendar, vol. iii., Mendoza to the King, November 15, 1582.

to a war with Spain, whilst her own hands were free. The "monk" Marchaumont, too, was equally undeceived and sick of the whole affair; blamed by Alençon for his ill-success, and ceaselessly begging for his recall. Indeed, by this time there was not a soul who believed any more in the marriage negotiations, and Elizabeth began to grow angry that the trusty weapon which had served her well for so many years had lost its point. So when La Mothe Fénélon, on his way to Scotland, spoke to her about the relations between France and England, she gave him a piece of her mind. She told him that, notwithstanding all his professions, the King of France was the worst enemy she had. The Dauphin and Marshal de Biron, she said, although on the frontier of Flanders with troops, had tarried long there, and had refused to go to the aid of the States; besides which France, Spain, and the Pope, were all intriguing against her in Scotland and elsewhere; and the King was making friends with the Guises again. Having thus tried to alarm La Mothe, a desperate attempt was made once more to drag up the marriage. Walsingham assured him that the Queen really was in earnest, and a suggestion was made that if the King of France would break with Spain and help Alençon, the Queen would declare the latter heir to the English crown. As all this was obviously only to delay La Mothe, and after some days the Queen was peremptorily told that if she did not allow him to proceed at once to Scotland, he would return to France, and another ambassador would be sent by sea. She was very angry, and came to high words with La Mothe, threatening Mary Stuart, in whose

behalf she said she knew all these plots were being carried on. But as La Mothe was leaving she gave him a last message for the King about the marriage, saying that if she were exonerated from expense in the Flemish war, and a regular dotation was given to Alençon, she would marry him. La Mothe replied that they had no longer the slightest belief in her sincerity, either about the marriage or the Netherlands, and the King was not much concerned on those points; but if she sent a single man into Scotland, or interfered there in any way, he would send four times as many, and take the matter up strongly. He softened this somewhat by saying that, although the King would not openly make war upon Spain, the Queen-mother would do so; but all this fencing ended in talk alone, and La Mothe proceeded on his way to Scotland, leaving matters in their former condition.

In the meanwhile Alençon's position was getting more and more unpleasant. He had succeeded in alienating his Protestant subjects, the backbone of resistance to Spain; Orange was disgusted with and tired of him, and was praying Elizabeth and her councillors to have him back in England, or anything to rid him, Orange, of a profitless burden. The Dutchmen hated the French more than ever, and Alençon himself was chafing in impotent fury at his lack of means, his failure, and the undignified figure he cut before the world. By the aid of his mother, a number of Frenchmen flocked over the frontier during the winter of 1582–3, and at length Marshal de Biron himself joined the Prince, and the plot that had long been hatching was attempted. This was nothing less than by a *coup-de-main* to

seize and garrison all the strong places in Flanders with Frenchmen. If this succeeded, Alençon might demand his own terms, either from Philip or Elizabeth, and the combined attempt was made on the 16th of January, 1583. Alençon himself took charge of the affair at Antwerp, wherein one thousand additional Frenchmen had secretly entered. This being noticed by the burghers aroused suspicion, and certain despatches from Alençon to Marchaumont in England having been intercepted and read by Orange, the latter gave timely warning to the Antwerpers. A large body of Frenchmen arrived suddenly before the town, and an excuse was made that Alençon was to review them outside the Burgerhout gate. As he sallied from the gate of the town with his Swiss and French Guard of four hundred men, he was joined by three hundred French horsemen, and turning towards the gate he cried to his countrymen, "Courage, comrades, Antwerp is yours!" This was the signal, and the Flemings at the gate were massacred. The slight resistance overcome, the main force of the French, with banners flying, entered the town with cries of "The Duke and the mass!" The burghers, unaware at first what the tumult meant, were taken by surprise, and sought refuge in their houses. But soon pillage and murder began to remind them of the "Spanish fury" of six years before. Alençon and Biron, however, were very different men from Sancho de Avila and Julian Romero; and the stout Antwerpers turned upon their false friends, blocked the streets, mustered their companies, and fought like the heroes they were in defence of their homes. Fire-

eating Fervaques was taken prisoner, as were du Fargis, le Rieux, and Bodin. Biron's son, the nephew of Cardinal Rambouillet, the Duke of St. Aignan, and his son, and two hundred and fifty other gentlemen were killed; the French loss altogether reaching two thousand men, one-half of their entire force, whilst the burghers lost only about one hundred. Alençon, from afar, outside the town, watched with sinking heart the failure of his treachery, and when he saw that all was lost, fled with difficulty, by the swollen rivers hotly pursued until he arrived at Vilvorde, where the French had succeeded in gaining the upper hand, as they also had at Ostend, Dixmunde, Alost, and Dunkirk, whilst they had failed at Antwerp, Ghent and Bruges.

The news came to England confusedly and in fragments at first, and the Queen was inclined to bring her suitor over to England for safety; but when full accounts came from the Prince of Orange, and the treason was thoroughly understood, all England growled at the falseness of Frenchmen in general and Alençon in particular. Orange sought to fasten some of the responsibility upon Elizabeth, because, in answer to all remonstrances as to his action and the increased number of Frenchmen with him, Alençon had invariably said that he was there as the Queen of England's lieutenant, and was acting with her full connivance. She was, moreover, he said, already his wife before God and man, and on this plea had obtained large sums of money from her adherents for his own purposes. Orange was strongly of opinion that Alençon was acting in concert with the Spaniards, with the ultimate object

of avenging himself upon the English Queen; and entreated her to help the States in the trouble that had befallen them mainly through their attachment to her, which had led them to trust Alençon. On the other hand, Marchaumont tried his best to stem the torrent that was setting in against his master, and to persuade the Queen that he was forced to take the step he did; and Elizabeth, who could not yet entirely turn against him, sent Captain the Honourable John Russell to inquire into the real facts of the case, and, if necessary, to offer Alençon a refuge in England. But the Prince's power, such as it was, had fled, and with it his spirit and his health. Biron kept command of the French garrisons in the conquered towns, whilst Alençon wandered from Vilvorde to Dendremond and thence to Dunkirk, disavowed by his brother, and cursed even by his mother for his perversity.

Whilst Alençon was at Dendremond, in March, the Queen made an attempt through Darcy, whom she sent, to patch up a reconciliation between him and the States. She made an elaborate pretence of disavowing and threatening Sir John Norris and the Englishmen who had abandoned him when he attempted to assail the Flemings; but when he asked her to withdraw them all and leave him to deal with the States alone, she thought better of it, and the attempts at reconciliation fell through. But all this time not a word of the marriage. Letter after letter came from the Prince reproaching the Queen for leaving him unsuccoured in his misery, and complaining of Norris, who disregarded his authority; but even he apparently was undeceived now.

By the time he arrived at Dunkirk he was humble indeed. The very sight of the coast ruled by his "belle Majesté" revives him, and he beseeches her favour: "a mins jointes avecques les petits dois." He feels a sweet and gracious air from her proximity, which he has not experienced since his sad parting from her; and finally, on the 30th of May, when the dreaded Farnese was already approaching his refuge, he ventures to remind her of her "promise and contract with him, and throws himself on her favour."[1] But all to no purpose; he had served her turn, and was now useless to her. A month later he was forced to fly to Calais, and from thence went to Chaulnes, where his mother saw him for the first time since his adventure. She had gone with anger on her lips, but found her son with death in his heart, and had nothing but loving words for him and consolation for his disappointment. Once more for a short time an attempt was made by Catharine to maintain an appearance of keeping up the idea of marriage with Elizabeth, to prevent a closer approach between England and Spain; but it was only momentary and meant nothing. A cold, almost severe letter was written by the Queen to Alençon on the 10th of September, 1583, which really sounds the death-knell of the marriage.[2] She has not, she says, been favoured with his letters for a very long time, but now M. de Reaux had visited her from him. She is much surprised at his message asking what help she will give him to hold the Netherlands. "My God! Monsieur!" she says, "is this the way to keep our friends—to be always draining them? Is the King your brother so weak

[1] Hatfield Papers, part 3. [2] Ibid

that he cannot defend his own blood without the help of his neighbours?" . . . It is not her fault, she says, that things have turned out as they have, and she will not bear the blame; and she ends the cruel letter with: "God save you from painted counsels, and enable you to follow those who respect you more than you respect yourself."

In January, 1584, Catharine sought her son at Chateau-Thierry, and at last persuaded him to a reconciliation with his brother, and took him to Paris with her. There, with tears and repentance on both sides, the brothers embraced each other, and the King promised his help towards another expedition to Flanders. Alençon returned to Chateau-Thierry to make his preparations, and there fell gravely ill. Guise, the Spaniards, and the Archbishop of Glasgow in Paris, were busy at the time planning the invasion of England and the liberation of Mary Stuart; and Catharine, in April, hastened to Alençon with a new project—that he should share in the plot and marry his sister-in-law, the Scottish Queen. But his health was broken. For the next two months he was battling with approaching death, though still actively preparing for his new expedition. But Elizabeth could not afford to allow the French to go alone to Flanders, and when she saw that Henry III. was helping his brother, she suddenly proposed to Castelnau to join her aid with that of the King. By the time the offer reached Paris Alençon was dying, and shortly afterwards, on the 11th of June, 1584, he breathed his last. Catharine cursed the Spaniards, and swore to be revenged upon them for her dead son, though how they were to blame for his death is not very clear; but the messages, both

from the King and his mother to Elizabeth, kept up to the last the fiction of love and marriage negotiations between her and the dead Prince. Catharine, indeed, sent to the English Queen the mourning which she wore for her so-called affianced husband; and the letter in which Elizabeth sent her condolence to Catharine is carefully conceived in the same strain. "Your sorrow," she says, "cannot exceed mine, although you were his mother. You have another son, but I can find no other consolation than death, which I hope will soon enable me to rejoin him. If you could see a picture of my heart, you would see a body without a soul; but I will not trouble you with my grief, as you have enough of your own." [1]

In very truth the farce of marriage by this time had been played out to the bitter end. Elizabeth was now fifty years of age and there were no princes left in Europe marriage with whom would have given her any advantage. From the far-off Ivan the Terrible, who had been dismissed with a gibe, to the youngest of the Valois, with whom she had played for years, every marriageable prince in Christendom had, in his turn, been suggested as a suitor for Elizabeth's hand. The long juggle she had carried on had resulted in so much advantage to her country that she was in any case strong enough now to discard the pretence. Her old enemy, Philip, was a sad and broken recluse, sorely pressed even to hold his own, unable to avenge his ruined commerce, swept from the seas by the ubiquitous Drake, whilst his destined successor was too young to be feared, and he had no man of his house

[1] British Museum, MSS. Cotton Galba vi.

to second him. One more despairing effort was he to make in which he was to risk his all and lose it on the hazard of regaining the paramount position from which he had allowed himself to be ousted by the bold chicanery of the English Queen. But the armada was beaten by anticipation years before it was launched amid so much pompous mummery; for the English seaman knew full well that fast, well-handled ships that would sail close to the wind could harass the cumbrous galleons of Philip as they pleased, and the victory for England was a foregone conclusion. The King of France was a childless cipher, incapable of great designs or important action; his mother, whose busy brain had for so long been the dominant factor in France, was rapidly sinking to her rest. Protestantism was now firmly rooted in England, and had nothing to fear from within during the life of the great Queen, whose popularity was unbounded amongst all sections of her subjects, whilst in the rest of Europe it was evidently a waxing rather than a waning power. The Huguenot Henry of Navarre was next heir to the French crown, and could be trusted to give a good account of the Pope, the Guises, and the league; the strong Protestant princes of Germany rendered the Emperor harmless as a Catholic force, whilst the stubborn determination of the brave Dutchmen to hold to their faith at all costs, gave to their sympathetic English neighbours the certainty of a guiding voice in their affairs.

Elizabeth had, in fact, begun her long marriage juggle in 1559 in hourly danger of being overwhelmed and crushed by her own Catholic subjects, in union with one or the other of her great Conti-

nental neighbours ; she ended it in 1583, triumphant all along the line, with both her rivals crippled and distracted, whilst she really held the balance of peace and war of Europe in her hands.

So at length the elaborate pretence of marriage negotiations, which for many years had been her great card, always ready to be played in the interests of England, could safely be abandoned. But it was too much to expect an elderly woman of Elizabeth's temperament, who for the whole of her adult lifetime had fed her colossal vanity with the tradition of her irresistible beauty, who had gained great ends and derived the keenest enjoyment from the comedy of love-making, to give up entirely what for so long had brought her pleasure, profit, and power.

It was no longer a question of marriage, of course, but many gallant gentlemen, Raleigh, Essex, Blount, Harrington, and the rest of them, were yet to keep her hand in at the courtly old game, and bow their handsome heads before the perennial beauty which had now become an article of the national faith. With these one-sided courtships, the vain amusements of the Queen in her declining age, we have nought to do in these pages. The death of François de Valois, Duke of Anjou, and Alençon, removed from the scene the last serious suitor for the Queen's hand in marriage ; and his passing bell rang down the curtain upon the longest and most eventful comedy in the history of England.

CHAPTER XVI.

In investigating the inner character of an individual it is a safe rule to regard only as auxiliary indications the unsupported assertions, favourable or otherwise, made by the person himself or by his friends and foes. There are, at least in the case of great historical personages, usually extant numberless small circumstances, details of conversation and demeanour, and scraps of correspondence, which, pieced together and considered critically in the light of worldly experience, form a much safer guide to judgment than do interested protestations. Queen Elizabeth's own proclamations of her spotless virginity were so constant and vociferous that their emphatic repetition, whilst doubtless serving the political purpose aimed at, positively added to the social obloquy that was cast upon her by the malicious gossip current throughout Europe about her. On the other hand, the gross accusations of habitual immorality aimed at the Queen by Father Persons and his followers, accusations which, from the very nature of things, could only rest on assumption, not only ranged the opposite political party strongly on her side as a Queen, but raised up countless friends to her who resented what seemed an unfair attack upon a woman. Between

these two extremes of immaculate virtue and abandoned viciousness opinion has usually had to choose. They could not, it was urged, both be true; and belief in the one carried with it the complete rejection of the other. The people of her own day, with the exception of a few confidants, were in a much worse position than we are for the formation of a sound opinion on the subject; and the fact that, even in her own Court, and much more so abroad, the scandals against her were generally believed, should not be allowed to bias our judgment, if the inferences to be drawn from evidence now available, but not in the possession of the Queen's contemporaries, seem to point in an opposite direction.

The known facts, many of them cited in the earlier chapters of this book, seem to prove beyond doubt that the Queen was as much in love with Leicester as it was in her nature to be with any man; and, consequently, that if he was not her favoured lover no other of her suitors was likely to be. Even before his wife's death the Queen was said to visit his apartments night and day; and it became a regular subject of gossip at Court, eagerly seized upon as a political instrument by the Conservative nobles to discredit Leicester himself. That the matter was made the most of by this powerful party, with the result of rendering Leicester the best-hated man in England, is unquestionable in the face of numerous State papers now accessible in the Calendars. But, after making all deductions, the evidence available from so many trustworthy sources leaves no doubt that the relations existing between the Queen and her lover were very intimate,

and even compromising, for at least ten years after her accession. It is not surprising that, as a natural outcome of the gossip referred to, rumours were set afloat that children had been born to the pair. As early as February, 1561, soon after Amy Robsart's death, when Leicester's friends were really hopeful of carrying the match, it was asserted that the Queen had been already secretly married, and had had children previously by Leicester. This statement was repeated, particularly abroad, with many variations, until it became an article of faith with Elizabeth's opponents.

In 1587, a young Englishman in the garb of a pilgrim was arrested at Fontarrabia, in the north of Spain, on suspicion of being a spy. It was at the period when the great Armada was in active preparation, and the presence of an undomiciled Englishman in maritime Spain was a serious matter. The suspect was consequently sent to Madrid for examination, and there confronted with the King's English secretary, Sir Francis Englefield. To him he told verbally at first, and afterwards reduced to writing in the Dominican Monastery of the Atocha, an extraordinary story, which Sir Francis at first was somewhat inclined to believe. His name, he said, was Arthur Dudley, and he was a son of Queen Elizabeth and the Earl of Leicester. His story was carefully constructed, and he evidently knew the personages about the Court. He had been brought up, he asserted, in his childhood by one Robert Southern, a dependent of the Queen's closest confidant and former governess, Mrs. Ashley. Southern had been summoned to Hampton Court by his mistress, and was

ordered by Lady Harrington, a relative of the Queen's, to procure a nurse "for the new-born child of a lady who had been careless of her honour." The next morning the babe was handed to Southern in a corridor leading to the Queen's apartments. Thenceforward the child was brought up, at first in the country and afterwards in London, being cared for and clothed much better than Southern's own children. When the child had reached the age of eight years, Mr. Ashley, who was keeper of the royal domain of Enfield Chase, made Southern his deputy there, and at Enfield Arthur Dudley thenceforth passed the summers, being instructed in all the accomplishments usual for young gentlemen of birth. At the age of fifteen he represented himself as stealing a handful of silver from Southern, and running away to see strange lands. Whilst waiting at Milford Haven for a ship to take him abroad, he was the guest of the Honourable George Devereux, the uncle of the Earl of Essex, and during his stay there a horse messenger came in hot haste from London, with a letter signed by seven members of the Privy Council, ordering his immediate return to London. He was thereupon carried before the local justices of the peace, whom he names, and conveyed under their order to Pickering House in London, satisfied, as he says, by this time, that he was really a much more important personage than the son of Robert Southern. He was gravely taken to task for his escapade by John Ashley, Sir Henry Wotton, and Sir Thomas Henage, who told him that Mr. Ashley had paid for his education, and had authority over him. Some time afterwards, he

says, Mr. Ashley, finding that his determination to go abroad was irresistible, sent him in charge of a dependent of the Earl of Leicester to join General La Noue, the famous Huguenot leader then serving in the Netherlands against the Spaniards. This was in the early spring of 1580. La Noue was taken prisoner shortly afterwards, and Dudley then went to France, where he stayed until his money was all spent, upon which he returned to England for a fresh supply. After another stay in France, he was again recalled home at the end of 1583 by Robert Southern, who told him that his immediate return would be advantageous to him. He found Southern paralysed, and apparently mortally ill, at Evesham, where he kept an inn; and after much hesitation on the one side, and entreaty and threats on the other, Dudley learnt from Southern that he was the son of the Queen by Leicester. Seeking Mr. Ashley, who was with Sir Drue Drury in London, Dudley taxed him with his knowledge, and the alarm expressed by his hearers being very great, the mysterious young man represents himself as at once flying to France. There he seems to have consorted with English Jesuits and other disaffected persons, not a very probable thing, one would think, for a man in his position, and after apparently endeavouring, without success, to extort funds from Ashley by letter, and from Sir Edward Stafford, the English ambassador in France, personally, he returned to England. We may suppose that the ostentatious mystery of his demeanour frightened the shipmaster who brought him over, and he was told that he would be denounced to the justices of the peace on arrival at Gravesend. He

begged that instead of this the skipper would take a letter from him to the Earl of Leicester. This he did, and Leicester is represented as receiving the missive graciously. The next day as the vessel passed Greenwich two of the Earl's gentlemen, one of them his equerry, Blount, came on board to attend Dudley, and on their arrival at Ratcliff, Mr. Fludd, the Earl's secretary, was in waiting to conduct him to the presence of his alleged father at Greenwich. "The Earl was in the garden with the Earls of Derby and Shrewsbury, and on Arthur's arrival the Earl of Leicester left the others, and went to his apartment, where, by his tears, words, and other demonstrations, he showed so much affection for Arthur, that the latter believed he understood the Earl's deep intentions towards him. The secretary (Fludd) remained in Arthur's company all night; and the next morning when the Earl learned that the masters and crews of other ships had seen and known Arthur, and had gone to Secretary Walsingham to give an account of the mysterious passenger, he said to Arthur: 'You are like a ship under full sail at sea, pretty to look at but dangerous to deal with.' The Earl then sent his secretary with Arthur to Secretary Walsingham to tell him that he (Arthur) was a friend of the Earl's, and Fludd was also to say that he knew him personally. Walsingham replied that if that was the case he could go on his way. Fludd asked for a certificate and license to enable Arthur to avoid future molestation; and Walsingham then told Arthur to come again, and he would speak with him." The young man then represents himself as going that day with his alleged father to Wan-

stead House, and returning for the night to Greenwich with Fludd. But being afraid of Walsingham's searching questions, on the renewed request being made for the license, he again took fright and appealed to Castelnau de la Mauvissière, the French ambassador, for a passport for France, which, after much difficulty, he obtained in the disguise of a servant. He states that he supped that night with the French ambassador, with whom he stayed until midnight; but finding on his arrival at Gravesend that his passport would have to be countersigned by Lord Cobham, Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports, before he would be allowed to embark at Dover, he surreptitiously went on board an English transport carrying troops to Holland, which lay in the river, and thus escaped, landing at Bergen-op-Zoom, and apparently at once entering the English service. This must have been early in 1585, and the relation thenceforward consists of an extraordinary, and somewhat rambling, account of Arthur Dudley's attempts to betray the English cause in the Netherlands to the Spaniards, and his wanderings in Germany and Italy, everywhere, according to his own showing, entering into communication with high personages, the enemies of his country, and, it would appear from the context, living luxuriously on his story. He claims that he came to Spain on a pilgrimage to Monserrat in Catalonia, and hearing of the condemnation of Mary Queen of Scots, he took ship for France and was cast back upon the Biscay coast, where he was apprehended as a spy. His cool proposal to Englefield was that the King of Spain should take him under his protection, and make use of him in

his attack upon England. He suggests that a rumour should be spread to the effect that he had escaped, "As everybody knows now that I am here, and my future residence could be kept secret. I could then write simply and sincerely to the Earl of Leicester, telling him all that had happened to me in order to keep in his good graces; and I could also publish a book to any effect that might be considered desirable, in which I should show myself everybody's friend and nobody's foe." There is in the manuscript much more to the same effect, the poor, foolish young man being apparently under the impression that King Philip was an amiable altruist, who would help him to a crown for the sake of his *beaux yeux*. Englefield, though inclined to believe the story, after much conference and cogitation surmised that Dudley might be a simple instrument in the hands of Elizabeth herself, perhaps with the object of sounding the Catholic Powers with regard to the murder of the King of Scots, which Dudley suggested, and the absorption of Scotland by England, jointly with the settlement of the religious questions in a way satisfactory to the Catholics, after which the claimant Dudley might either be acknowledged as her son, or given some other position as might be arranged with neighbouring Powers. In any case Englefield recommended that the unfortunate young fellow should be held tight in the Monastery.[1]

I have given this strange story somewhat at length, in the first place because, so far as I have been able to discover, it had never received attention until I was fortunate enough to exhume it at

[1] Spanish Calendar of Elizabeth, vol. iv.

Simancas after the latest edition of this book was published, and secondly, because it is the only account known to me where details are given of the birth and youth of Elizabeth's alleged offspring, the statements being usually so vague as to defy examination. That Arthur Dudley did appear in Spain and tell the story I have summarised does not depend entirely upon my transcription of the original documents. In the Venetian Calendar, vol. viii., will be found a letter from the Venetian ambassador at Madrid, dated April 14, 1587, giving the news of Dudley's apprehension at Fontarrabia, on the French frontier; and saying that the King is very doubtful whether to keep him prisoner or let him go; and another letter from the same ambassador a week later than Englefield's interviews with Dudley informs us that the latter had then been sent to the Castle of Lameda, and was believed to be a spy. Then darkness falls upon him, and we hear no more.

Now this story, on the face of it, is a very plausible one. Lady Harrington and Mrs. Ashley were, in fact, the only ladies about the Queen who were absolutely in her confidence, and who would be likely to undertake so delicate a task as the disposal of her infant. Mrs. Ashley died on July 18, 1565, so that if Dudley was born, as the dates and events he gives seem to indicate, in 1562 or 1563, she well might have taken the part in the affair that he represents. In October, 1562, the Queen fell ill at Hampton Court of the serious illness which was supposed to be small-pox, and in the extremity of her illness made the famous protestation, which has been quoted in an earlier chapter, to the effect

that, though she had always loved Leicester, she called God to witness that nothing improper had ever passed between them. It was then, moreover, that she urged his appointment as protector of the realm, with an income of £20,000 a year; and granted to Tamworth, the earl's confidential man, a pension of £500 per annum. So humble a person as Robert Southern, it might be thought, could be safely invented so many years after his death, as when Dudley told his story in Spain; but such a man actually *was* a dependent of the Ashleys, and in 1576 *was* one of the deputy-keepers of Enfield Chase.[1] Fludd, moreover, *was* Leicester's private secretary, and Blount *was* a member of his household, who was specially attached to his nephew, Philip Sidney, when the latter went to the Netherlands. The more recent events in Flanders also fit in accurately, so that, whoever Arthur Dudley was, his story must have been very carefully drawn up by some person much older than himself who could recollect the date of the Queen's illness, the position held by Mrs. Ashley at the time, shortly before her death, and the details of situation of so inconsiderable a person as Robert Southern. Dudley's interviews with Sir Edward Stafford in Paris must have taken place some time in 1584, as the ambassador only took up his residence there late in 1583; whilst Dudley's return to England, coinciding as it did with the projected protectorate of England over the States, must have been in the early summer of 1585; and it is a fact that the Earl of Derby, who returned from his mission to France at the end of March, was in London during that summer,

[1] Hatfield Papers, vol. ii., 139.

whilst the Earl of Shrewsbury, after many years' absence in charge of Mary Stuart, had also come to court earlier in the year, and remained prosecuting his suit against his wife until September, when he took leave of the Queen, saying that her Majesty had released him from two devils, the Queen of Scots and the Countess of Shrewsbury.[1] It thus happens that at the very time indicated by Dudley he might have seen these two noblemen with Leicester, although it had not been possible for years previously, nor was afterwards. The reinforcements sent for Norris from the Thames did in fact leave Gravesend for Bergen-op-Zoom in July, 1585,[2] so that the date of Arthur's flight is thus confirmed. As he was shriven at Monserrat in July of 1586, the period of his service in Flanders and his wanderings in Germany are thus ascertained; and he must have remained in different parts of Spain for about nine months before his capture.

All these independent confirmations of unimportant details of the story prove beyond doubt that Arthur Dudley was no common impostor, but must have been well coached by persons who were intimately acquainted with high political personages in England for at least five-and-twenty years previously. But withal, the inherent improbability of the main story is rendered the more conspicuous by the careful preparation evident in the details. In the first place, the Queen's illness at the time stated was certified to be smallpox by all her Council: she was seen by a multitude of people during the progress of her malady, and bore unmistakable marks of it on her face for the rest of her life. I

[1] Spanish Calendar, vol. iii. [2] Ibid.

can find no record of her being laid up at Hampton Court for years afterwards. Nor can it be considered probable for a moment that Robert Southern himself would be let into the secret of the birth of the child confided to him, whatever his suspicions might be; and one of the weak points of the narrative is that he is not stated to have been told, although many years afterwards he divulged the secret to Dudley. It is equally beyond belief that a boy born in the condition represented would have been allowed to run about the world at his own free will, boasting, or at least strongly hinting, *urbe et orbi*, that he was the child of the Queen. Walsingham was far too well served by his spies, and Leicester much too unscrupulous and wary, to have allowed such a youth to slip through their fingers with his dangerous tittle tattle when once they had him safe in the hands of Fludd at Greenwich; nor would Castelnau de la Mauvissière have dared to give a passport to a mysterious stranger, unknown and unintroduced to him, much less entertain him at supper. On his own showing, moreover, Dudley must have been utterly blind to his own interest to have left clandestinely, and without apparent reason, a father who had received him with tears of tenderness (surely an unusual mood for Leicester) to go wandering about the Continent picking up a precarious living by betraying the country and the faith from which alone he had anything to expect, and consorting with the professed enemies of his alleged father and mother, whose regard he must have known might make or mar him. Sir Francis Englefield was an astute old statesman, versed in all the crooked political craft of the day, and his

final judgment on the matter was doubtless the correct one: namely, that Arthur Dudley was one of the army of spies, most of them faithless to both sides, who had been carefully tutored in his plausible tale in order that he might the better obtain access to great personages, and save himself from summary extinction in case he was caught, as, indeed, happened when he was apprehended on his attempt to leave Spain. The fact that he had remained for very nearly a year in Spain and did not divulge his story until he was about to cross the few yards of water between Fontarrabia and French soil, seems to prove that the wonderful tale he had to tell was kept for emergencies and had not in the first place brought him to the territory of his alleged mother's deadly enemy. Looking, then, at the whole of the circumstances, I am most strongly of opinion that Arthur Dudley's tale was false. If this be so, as I contend it is, with the most detailed and circumstantial allegations ever made of Elizabeth's having borne a child, then the vague and utterly unsupported rumours of a son in Venice, and a dozen other hazy hints of a similar character, may be relegated to the limbo that awaits slanderous lies without a shred of real evidence.[1]

It must be recognised that the demeanour and relations of Leicester towards the Queen differed

[1] Amongst the other assertions to the same effect may be mentioned that of Antonio de Guaras, the acting Spanish agent in London in December, 1574, to the effect that Mary Stuart's marriage to Darnley was to be counteracted by the marriage of the son of the Earl of Hertford by Catharine Grey, the next heir to the throne by the will of Henry VIII., with "a daughter of Leicester and the Queen of England, who, it is said, is kept hidden, although there are bishops to witness that she is legitimate. They think this will shut the door to all other claimants."

widely from those of any other of her lovelorn favourites, except perhaps Essex, under entirely dissimilar circumstances which will be considered later. He had known her from childhood, and was a great noble, much as the old Conservative families might affect to contemn him; her openly confessed love for him and the protracted talk of the match between them, placed him in some sort upon a personal equality with Elizabeth. It is true that on more than one occasion when he attempted to assert his power on the strength of this, his imperious mistress let him know in her usual violent tones "that there was only one mistress in England and no master." But at such outbursts as this, a tithe of which would have reduced Hatton, Heneage, and Raleigh into an abject condition of lachrymose maundering, Leicester flung away in a huff, and sulked at Wanstead until Elizabeth herself had to step down from her high horse and coax into a good humour the man whose presence she could not do without. Whatever intimate personal relations may have existed between them in the earlier years of the reign, it is evident that from about 1571 or 1572 onwards there was no real question of marriage between the Queen and Leicester. His knowledge of her character and his hold upon her affection were still

Guaras was a merchant living in Thames Street, and, although he was allowed access to the Court when Elizabeth wished to be friendly with Spain, he was not of a rank to mix familiarly with courtiers, and is not likely to have had other sources of information than the gossip of the Catholic party, in favour of which he ceaselessly conspired and plotted until his head was in danger and he was expelled from England. He was a fussy, injudicious busybody whose ambition led him into all sorts of trouble.

very great, but the appearance of Christopher Hatton upon the scene persuaded him that, regarded simply as a lover to serve the Queen's caprice, he was not now absolutely indispensable. It remained to his advantage that other marriage projects should be frustrated; for his power and favour would always depend upon the Queen's regard for him, which would naturally be weakened by the presence of a husband of royal blood by her side. But his haste to be married himself,[1] as soon as he became convinced that the Queen would not marry him, and that she only sought her own gratification and thirst for adoration, proves that, in the absence of the ambitious prospect of marriage with her, the other attractions provided by their relationship were not such as satisfied him.

No one can look at the best portraits of Elizabeth without recognising at a glance that she was not a sensual woman. The lean, austere face, the tight, thin lips, the pointed, delicate chin, the cold dull eyes, tell of a character the very opposite of lascivious; but every feature of her countenance, as every act of her life, cries aloud that here was a woman whose personal vanity and love of dominion conquered and crushed every other feeling in her nature. She herself worshipped her own corporeal beauty, and she yearned that others, especially that men who took her fancy, should share in her adoration. That such men, having been vouchsafed the inestimable boon of gazing upon and approaching

[1] He was secretly married to Lady Frances Howard, Lady Sheffield, at this time; both she and her sister being in love with him. By her he had the famous Robert Dudley, whose widow was confirmed in the title of Duchess of Northumberland many years after Elizabeth's death.

ineffable charms such as hers, should dare to waver in their worship of them and marry women of the common mould, was to her not unfaithfulness alone but impiety. Even in her old age this curious craze possessed her. When she received the grave French ambassador, De Maisse, in December, 1597, she being then nearly sixty-five years of age, he found her standing in the embrasure of a window, dressed in great magnificence, but to his eyes strangely and with little decorum. Her black silk robe, lined with crimson and with wide gold bands across it, was open down the front like a dressing gown. Under it was a fine white damask gown, opening in the same way, covering a soft lawn chemise, also open, the whole of the garments being held together at the waist by a girdle. The Queen's curious habit it was whilst speaking to throw up her chin, and with both hands cast open the collars of her dress, as if the heat oppressed her. De Maisse thus describes this trick: "*Tellement qu'elle ouvrait souvent cette robe, et lui voyait-on tout l'estomac jusques au nombril, mais elle a cette façon, qu'en rehaussant sa teste, elle met les deux mains à sa robe et l'entre 'ouvre tellement qu'on lui voit tout l'estomac.*"[1] If this was the case when she was receiving an elderly ambassador at the time that she herself was an old woman, it may be well imagined the lengths to which this imperious fury for male admiration might lead her in her comparative youth, and with a man who had taken her fancy. That the indulgence of such a tendency, necessarily in private, would compromise her in appearance almost as much as if all the evil alleged against her had been

[1] Journal de De Maisse, Prevot-Paradol.

true, is obvious; and the solemn and almost blasphemous protestations she so frequently made that no immorality had ever passed between her and Leicester, much less any other man, notwithstanding appearances, assume a fresh significance when regarded in the light of this possibility. So long as Leicester, whose position legitimately allowed him frequent access to the Queen, was the principal, if not the only, person with whose name people made free in the scandalous talk, the matter did not extend much beyond the Court and diplomatic circles, and was utilised mainly by the party who were enemies both of Elizabeth and of the Earl himself; but when an upstart like Hatton was brought from the obscurity of the Inner Temple, and for no apparent merits of his own, was overwhelmed with royal favour and bounty, and kept dancing constant attendance upon the Queen's person, then the jealousy of Leicester's friends, added to the bitterness of the envious old aristocracy, gave to the scandals a wider publicity; and far outside the Court circle indignation and annoyance found tongue. In 1570 one Marsham, at Norwich, was condemned to lose his ears, or pay a fine of a hundred pounds, for saying that the Queen had borne two children to Leicester. In the following year a spy named Bernay confessed to the Earl that one Mather had said that the "Queen desireth nothing but to feed her own lewd fantasy, and to cut off such of her nobility as were not perfumed and court-like to please her delicate eye, and place such as were for her turn, meaning dancers, and meaning you, my Lord of Leicester, and Mr. Hatton, who, he said, had more recourse to her Majesty's Privy

Chamber than reason would suffer if she were so virtuous and well inclined as some noiseth her." Another prisoner at Dover, being examined by the Mayor, "uttered most shameful words against the Queen; namely, that the Earl of Leicester and Mr. Hatton were such towards her as the matter is so horrible," that the Mayor would not venture to put them on paper. There is, of course, no doubt that Hatton was allowed privileges far greater than the Queen had ever extended to a man of his rank before. As captain of her bodyguard, he, like Ralegh later, was always by her side; and the extraordinary tone of the letters that passed between them testify to a philandering familiarity which certainly was not decorous considering their respective positions. But in Hatton's lovelorn whimpering there is never the unmistakable ring of the successful wooer. He is always the pursuer, languishing for the bliss which is for ever denied him; and yearns but for a glance again at the divine beauty of which he is enamoured. This was the tone which he doubtless found was the most profitable, and it was that which he adopted, as did Ralegh subsequently, until the last. But it is evident from the letters of Sir Edward Dyer to him in October, 1572, that he was once perilously near adopting another line, which would probably have caused his ruin. It was at the time when the flighty young Earl of Oxford had just caught the fancy of the Queen. The Earl was as fine a dancer as Hatton himself, though not so open to the influences to which Hatton would succumb. Leicester, though desperately trying to retain his influence over the Queen, was in the midst of his secret love-making

with Lady Sheffield; and Hatton, fearing that in mutual bumping of the brass pitchers he, the earthen crock, would be smashed and sink, thought to take high ground and reproach the Queen for her fickleness towards her bleating "bell wether," as she called him. Before doing so, however, he consulted his friend Dyer, who at a later period was himself brought forward by Leicester's friends to divert the Queen from another flame. Dyer's letter to Hatton [1] wisely dissuades him thus: "First of all, you must consider with whom you have to deal; and what we be towards her: who though she do descend very much in her sex as a woman, yet we may not forget her place, and the nature of it as our sovereign. Now, if a man of secret cause known to himself, might in common reason challenge it, yet if the Queen mislike thereof, the world followeth the sway of her inclination; and never fall they in consideration of reason as between private persons they do. And, if it be after that rate for the most part in causes that may be justified, then much more will it be so in causes not to be avowed. . . . That the Queen will mislike of such a course this is my reason: she will imagine that you go about to imprison her fancy, and to warp her grace within your disposition; and that will breed despite and hatred in her towards you, and so you may be cast forth to the malice of every envious person, flatterer, and enemy of yours, out of which you shall never recover yourself. . . . But the best and soundest way in mine opinion is to put on another mind; to use your suits towards her Majesty in words, behaviour and deeds, to acknowledge your duty; de-

[1] Sir Harris Nicolas' "Life of Hatton."

claring the reverence which in heart you bear, and never seem deeply to condemn her frailties, but rather joyfully to commend such things as should be in her, as though they were in her indeed; hating my Lord (of Oxford) in the Queen's understanding for affection's sake and blaming him openly for seeking the Queen's favours. *For though in the beginning, when her Majesty sought you (after her good manner), she did bear with rugged dealing of yours, until she had what she fancied, yet now after satiety and fulness it will rather hurt than help you;* whereas behaving yourself as I said before, your place shall keep you in worship, your presence in favour, your followers will stand to you, at the least you shall have no bold enemies, and you shall always dwell in the way to take all advantage, wisely and honestly, to serve your turn." Hatton prudently followed the advice, and prospered splendidly until death overtook him. Probably, however, to prove his love, he fell ill shortly after Dyer's letter, as the Queen's fancy for Oxford grew—which passion wise old Burghley, the Earl's father-in-law, winked at, as Gilbert Talbot says, whilst Lady Burghley indignantly railed—and Hatton went to Spa, in Belgium, for a course of the waters, under some displeasure of the Queen's; probably for his envy of Oxford. His letters from Spa are frantic outpourings of love for an unattainable deity. The Queen's anger, real or assumed, soon softened after his departure, and Hatton's letters, even before he left England, grew tearful in their gratitude. "If I could express my feelings of your gracious letters" (he wrote from Dover), "I should utter unto you matter of strange effect. In reading them with my

tears I blot them. In thinking of them I feel so great comfort that I find cause, as God knoweth, to thank you on my knees. Death had been much more my advantage than to win health and life by so loathsome a pilgrimage. The time of two days hath drawn me further from you than ten when I return can lead me towards you. Madam, I find the greatest lack that ever poor wretch sustained. No death, no, not hell, no fear of death, shall ever win of me my consent so far to wrong myself again as to be absent from you one day. God grant my return. I will perform this vow. I lack that which I live by. The more I find this lack, the further I go from you. Shame whippeth me forward. Shame take them that counselled me to it. . . . My spirit and soul agree with my body and life, that to serve you is heaven, but to lack you is more than hell's torment unto them. My heart is full of woe. Pardon, for God's sake, my tedious writing—I will wash away the faults of these poor letters with the drops from your poor Lydds;[1] and so enclose them. Would to God I were with you but for one hour. My wits are overwrought with my thoughts. I find myself mazed. Bear with me, my most dear sweet Lady. Passion overcometh me. I can write no more. Love me: for I love you. God, I beseech thee, witness the same on behalf of thy poor servant." This is a fair sample of Hatton's usual letters to the Queen throughout the whole of his life. The Queen's caprice often sent him away for a time, and his letters beseeching leave to return

[1] Lids, or rather Eyelids, was one of the Queen's pet names for Hatton, and he always signed his letters with two or three triangular marks representing closed eyelids.

are never those of a spoilt and confident favourite, as Leicester was, who could afford to wait in dignified and wealthy retirement until his mistress's tantrums had passed. In September, 1580, for instance, on such an occasion Hatton writes thus: "Your kingly benefits, together with your most rare regard for your poor slave, hath put this passion into me to imagine that for so exceeding and infinite parts of unspeakable goodness, I can use no other means of thankfulness than by bowing the knees of my own heart, with all humility to look upon your singular graces with love and faith perdurable. I should sin, most gracious Sovereign, against a Holy Ghost, most damnably, if towards your Highness I should be found unthankful. Afford me the favour therefore, my most dear Lady, that your clear and most fair eyes may read and register these my duties, which I beseech our God to requite you for." Ralegh's sun was soon to rise, and then Leicester and Hatton joined forces to oppose the new favourite, who had been brought forward by the Cecil interest to strengthen the moderate party against Leicester. Hatton sent to the Queen on the 25th October, 1582, through Sir Thomas Heneage (it will be remarked that the jealousy of the favourites was always political or financial, it never seemed to extend to their amours), a present, consisting of a gold hairpin to which a little gold bucket was attached. This was handed to the Queen by Heneage as she was hunting in Greenwich Park in the morning, with a letter from Hatton, and a sly message that he thought a bucket would be handy as water (which was Ralegh's pet name) would be sure to be near her as soon as she

left her chamber, which, says Heneage, in his letter to Hatton, was the fact. Elizabeth blushed and pouted as she read his languishing letter, uncertain whether to be cross with Hatton or to be pleased at his jealous hint. At last she told Heneage to write to his friend that she liked his preamble so ill that she had a good mind not to look at his present; but "that if Princes were like gods, as they should be, they would suffer no element so to abound as would breed confusion; and that her bell-wether was so dear to her that she bounded her banks so sure as no *water* could ever be able to overthrow them. For better assurance that you should fear no drowning, she hath sent you a bird that, together with the rainbow, brought the good tidings that there should be no more destruction by water." Behind all this trifling there is no sign on Hatton's part of the self-satisfied glorification of a successful lover for whom a proud Queen has humbled herself even once. In Hatton's ravings, as in those which we shall consider later of Alençon, Simier, and Ralegh, the erotic admiration expressed is never accompanied by the confidential complacency that almost inevitably marks, even unconsciously, the manifestations of a love that has triumphed over a woman. The strange expression in Dyer's letter which I have underlined is open, it is true, to a sinister interpretation; but the very fact of his having written it thus openly seems to negative the idea that he wished such an interpretation to be attached to it. Whatever gratification Elizabeth might experience from the companionship of Hatton would be just as applicable to the expression as would be the suggestion that the relationship was

an actually immoral one; whilst the tone of Hatton's letters throughout seem to me to make the latter conjecture extremely improbable. When years afterwards (in November, 1584),[1] Mary Stuart concentrated into the famous letter which she wrote to Elizabeth—but which probably never reached her hands—all the hatred and bitterness she had nursed so long against the Countess of Shrewsbury and Elizabeth herself, she was not repeating the vague tittle tattle of the market-place, but the words, carefully treasured, and presented in the form she knew would wound Elizabeth most, that in the course of years she had gathered from a woman who was deep in the inner mysteries of the Court if any one was. Old Bess of Hardwick, a clever, forceful termagant, with her great wealth and her connections, by her various marriages and different families of children, with most of the principal people around the Queen, would not be likely to invent false details, though she well might blurt out in her rage inconvenient truths. Mary Stuart herself, who sought to attack Elizabeth through the Countess, and gloated with vitriolic glee over the part of her communication that told of the way in which her lovers were laughing at her, would certainly not of her own motion have introduced the slight palliative suggestion in the following sentence unless the Countess of Shrewsbury herself had said it. "Que vous aviez fait promesse de mariage (*i.e.*, with Leicester) . . . (et qu'il) avait couché infinies foys avecques vous, avecque toute la licence et privaulté qui se peut user entre mari et femme: *mais qu'indubitablement vous n'estiez pas comme les autres femmes,*

[1] Labanoff, "Recueil," vol. vi.

et pour ce respect c'estoit toute folie à tous ceulx qu'affectoient vostre mariage avec M. le Duc d'Anjou, d'aultant qu'il ne se pourroit accomplir, et que vous ne vouldriez jamais perdre la liberté de vous faire faire l'amour et avoir votre plaisir toujours avec nouveaulx amoureulx, regrettant, ce disoit elle (*i.e.*, the Countess of Shrewsbury) que vous ne vous contentiez de Maistre Hatton et un autre (*i.e.*, Leicester) de ce royaume." The Queen proceeds to give the Countess as her authority for saying that the Queen made love so desperately to Hatton before the whole Court that he for very shame had to retire; and that Killigrew, having failed to bring Hatton back on another occasion, when the lover had left the Queen after some little squabble about some gold buttons he wore on his coat, the Queen boxed the unfortunate Killigrew's ears for his ill success. There is much more to a similar effect, but the sting in the letter—the more keen because it was, according to my view, undoubtedly true—was that the mainspring of Elizabeth's love affairs was her personal vanity. The Countess had suggested with a burst of laughter, said Mary Stuart, that it would be a good plan for the latter to bring forward her son, the boy King James, as a suitor for Elizabeth's hand, as all suggestions for the French match would thus be defeated. "I replied that if I did such a thing it would be taken purely as a piece of mockery. She (the Countess of Shrewsbury) replied that you were so vain, and had so great an opinion of your beauty—as if you were some heavenly goddess—that she would wager her head that you would easily be brought to believe it sincere, and would encourage my son's suit. She

said that you took so great a pleasure in the exaggerated flattery paid to you, such as that no one dared to look you full in the face because your countenance shone like the sun, that she (the Countess of Shrewsbury) and the other ladies of the Court were obliged to humour you in it; and that the last time she went to see you she and the late Countess of Lennox,[1] whilst they were in conversation with you, did not dare to look at one another for fear they should burst out laughing at the flams she was cramming you with. When she came back she asked me to scold her daughter (*i.e.*, the Countess of Lennox), whom she never could persuade to treat you in the same way."

In this letter the Queen is represented by a person who was trying to make the truth as disagreeable and outspoken as possible, as being moved in her amours mainly by her personal vanity—apart, naturally, from her political objects of which the other chapters of this book exclusively deal—and although the private access to her apartments allowed to certain of her favourites gave rise to scandal, yet that: "indubitablement vous n'etiez pas comme les autres femmes," and that it was "all folly." How careful even an old and powerful favourite like Leicester had to be in keeping up the tradition that not he alone, but other suitors, would naturally fall in love with the Queen, and that, however certain he might be that a marriage would not result, he should never express to Elizabeth a conviction that it was unlikely, as

[1] The Countess of Shrewsbury's daughter, who had married Charles Stuart, Darnley's brother, and was the mother of the unfortunate Arabella Stuart.

throwing a doubt upon her fatal fascination for all men, is seen in a letter from the Earl to Walsingham (August 7, 1579) which has come to light since this book was last printed. The letter was written at the time that Alençon was expected daily in England, Walsingham then being on a mission to the Netherlands. Leicester says that the Queen is afraid of Alençon's coming, but can think of nothing better than to allow him to come, and then "mislike him for it." In fact to practice upon the poor fellow as we have seen her do in the earlier pages of this book. Leicester then seriously warns Walsingham not to appear to disbelieve in Alençon's wish for the match. "You know her disposition as well as I do. . . . I would have you, as much as you may, avoid her Majesty's suspicion that you doubt Monsieur's love for her, or that you had devotion enough in you to forward her marriage; though I promise I think she has little enough herself to it. Yet what she would have others think and do, you have cause to know."[1] The fiction that had to be maintained at any cost was that of the Queen's personal desirableness. Upon that the wealth and splendour of her favourites depended; and, as we have seen, Hatton, at least, fooled her to the top of her bent. That there was no physical reason that the Queen should not marry and bear children may be deduced not only from Lord Burghley's several State memoranda addressed to, or drawn up for, the Queen herself, and in which the continuance of the direct royal line is usually made one of the principal arguments in favour of her marriage with one suitor after

[1] Foreign Calendar, 1578–1579.

another, but also from the many similar expressions used in the private letters that passed between Burghley, Sussex, Leicester, Walsingham, and other ministers, who, even if they wished to keep up a pretence to the Queen herself in public papers, would not have done so in private and confidential communications to each other if marriage and issue had really been out of the question, which they would certainly have known if such had been the case. The reference in Mary Stuart's letter, to Elizabeth's not being like other women, must therefore have had some different meaning from this. In one respect, at least, she was unlike the Queen of Scots herself; whilst indulging to the full her mania for exciting the admiration of men and compelling the worship of her physical endowments, her own cold-blooded self-command was sufficiently strong to enable her to dictate the limits and conditions to which her slaves were bound. Opportunities for admiration were generously furnished where her fancy fell, doubtless to her own gratification as well as to that of her friends. But half-despairing hope rather than conquest was the note she liked to hear; and her favourites promptly learnt one after the other that upon their sounding that note in a sufficiently languishing and adoring tone their own wealth and power depended.

CHAPTER XVII.

In Mary Stuart's letter repeating the Countess of Shrewsbury's malicious gossip about the Queen the grossest charge is that concerning the Queen's favour to Simier and his master. "Pour l'honneur du pays il lui (*i.e.*, the Countess) fashoit le plus, que vous aviez non seulement engagé votre honeur avecques un étranger nommé Simier, l'allant trouver de nuit dans la chambre d'une dame, que la dicte Comtesse blasmait fort á c'este occasion lá, ou vous le baisiez et usiez avec lui de diverses privautez déshonestes: mais aussy lui révelliez les segretz du royaume, trahaisant vos propres conseilliers avec lui. Que vous vous estiés desportée de la meme dissolution avec le Duc son maistre (*i.e.*, Alençon), qui vous avez été trouver une nuit á la porte de votre chambre, ou vous l'aviez rencontré avec vostre seule chemise et manteau de nuit et que par apréz vous l'aviez laissé entrer, et qu'il demeura avecques vous pres de trois heures."[1] It will be remarked that, although the same private access to the Queen is alleged here tohave been accorded to Simier and his master as to certain of her English favourites, no accusation of actual incontinence is in this case formulated by

[1] "Labanoff Recueil," vol. vi.

Mary Stuart or the Countess of Shrewsbury. If it had been it could not for a moment have been believed. Simier, as will have been seen by the earlier pages of this book, came as a vicarious wooer for the Duke of Alençon, and he soon crept into the Queen's good graces. She was hungry, as usual, for the loving admiration of a royal prince, but determined not to pledge herself beyond retreat. Simier, the confidential agent and close friend of Alençon, would of course give a precise account to his master of all that he saw and heard in England, and it is preposterous to believe that a woman so able as Elizabeth, and with so tremendous a stake as that for which she was playing, would, at the age of forty-five years, have put it into the power of such a man as Simier to upset all the political marriage intrigues, present and future, by surrendering herself to him. But it *was* to her interest that he should be in a position to inflame his young master's ardour and to overcome the cautious counsels that bade Alençon stand off and defer a compromising visit to England until a positive unconditional pledge was given that the Queen would marry him if he came. No better means could be devised—and certainly none more delightful to Elizabeth — than to bewitch Simier himself and to enable him to describe to the prince in glowing terms the supreme attractions of the prize for which the latter was bidding; a prize so glorious, it would be contended, apart from its political aspect, as to be worth the sacrifice of some of the prized safeguards dictated by elderly statesmen. The manners and ethics of the sixteenth century were widely different from those of

our own. Shocked as Mary Stuart affected to be at Elizabeth's alleged reception of Simier in the diaphanous garments of her hours of repose, such a proceeding at the Court of France under Henry II., or under Alençon's brother, Henry III., would hardly have called for the notice of the most prudish.[1] The famous and much-admired portrait of Henry II.'s mistress, the proud and devout Duchess of Valentinois, which forms the frontispiece of her Life recently published in the Goupil series, will prove thus much, without further insistence on the point. Actual unchastity was, it is true, almost as much condemned as it is to-day; but short of that there was apparently not much harm in anything, at least in the Court of France where Simier had learnt his social code. Maisonfleur, and perhaps poor young La Mole, had previously to some extent been able to assure the prince of the Queen's many attractions, and "l'imagination de vos divins beautés" had for some time been a stock phrase of his when writing to the Queen. But Simier's more detailed reports were needed before Alençon could be worked up to the pitch of throwing political prudence to the winds and making the flying visit to England described in Chapter IX. The moment he chose for coming was, for political reasons, as has been related, an unfortunate one, and Elizabeth, whilst anxious

[1] A few months after Simier's arrival, for instance, Alençon writes to the Queen saying that Simier had "told him that it had been his good fortune to find himself in her Majesty's chamber, where he had robbed her of her nightcap, which he had sent to him. This he will keep most carefully, together with her handkerchief, and thanks her most humbly for allowing Simier so much favour on his behalf." Hatfield Papers, vol. ii., 323.

to satisfy her vanity by captivating the prince as she had done his envoy, began now to blow hot and cold alternately upon both. Castelnau shortly before had written that Elizabeth at last was persuaded, "that you (*i.e.*, Alençon) do not want her for her crown, but rather for her good qualities and her body, which she hopes will be agreeable to you;" but no sooner was the Prince's visit decided upon than the Queen became less loving, and Simier, astounded at the change, wrote, "Je ne croirai au mariage, que lorsque les draps seront levés, les flambeaux eteints, et mon maitre dans le lit."

Of the loving relations which were promptly established between the Queen and Alençon on his arrival on this occasion enough has been said in the earlier chapters; and in the Prince's subsequent letters, and those of Simier, must be sought a key as to the extent to which the intimacy was carried. Some specimens of the correspondence have been given from the letters following Simier's departure from England, and thereafter nearly every letter from Alençon or his envoy contains the assurance that the only thing that keeps either of them alive is: "la souvenance de vos rares et grandes beautés, sur les-quelles il a fondé tous ses desirs."[1] The letters of Simier throughout the whole protracted correspondence are abject in the extreme; nauseous in their blasphemous adoration and in their slavering gratitude, which can never be repaid, for some great special favour done him; and on one occasion when he was in disgrace with Alençon, in writing to

[1] Simier to the Queen, February 25, 1580. Hatfield Papers, vol. ii.

Elizabeth he lets us see how well he understood her character. Some one had told her, it appears, that he was married again. To this he replies: "Assurez vous, Madame, que je n'aurai jamais aultre femme que la mort, estimant le mariage le comble de tous malheurs." In the same letter he writes: "Vous avez la sagesse de tout le monde, et un beauté incomprensible. Aussi n'étes vous fait que pour le plus grand de tous les dieux; et, á la verité, je serai hereux cent et cent fois tant qu'il vous plaira m'onorer de vos bonnes graces." These expressions, so often repeated by Simier in his letters to the Queen, are inspired by a similar spirit to that of Hatton's letters. There is never in them a breath of self-assertion or satisfied vanity. The Queen is simply a radiant goddess, who for her own satisfaction has granted to them the inestimable boon of being able to judge better than the ordinary crowd of her perfections, and their eyes thence-forward must be shut to all other attractions if they are to keep intact in her good graces."[1]

When Alençon made his long stay in England during the winter of 1581, fully described in an earlier chapter, the relations between the Queen and him were those of betrothed persons of the period, with the added familiarity arising from the Queen's political methods and personal tendency. To guess exactly what these relations were we must analyse the expressions employed subsequently by the Prince in his many confidential letters to the Queen. In one of his half-despairing communica-

[1] Marchaumont's (Moine's) letters, though just as humble, are filled with a certain Gascon pride, and are bolder in their expressions of love, though yearning is still the note.

tions during the prolonged false negotiations which followed his departure from England, he repeats his usual frantic words of adoration of the Queen, but continues very significantly thus: "Estant continuellement en colère contre cette miserable fortune, qui ne m'a voulu tant favouriser jusque á present que de me faire coucher au grand lit; au lit ou je me souhaite sans intermission. Será t'il possible que je m'y puisse voir un jour? Si cela est, je serai le plus content de la terre, et espère de vous en rendre si bons temoinages que votre Majesté me tiendra pour bon compagnon. . . . Baysant, et rebayzant, tout ce que votre belle Majesté peut penser, je prie le Créateur vous donner cent mille années de belle et contente vie, avec un petit Prince de Galles, fait et forgé du petit français, qui est, et sera, en etérnité, votre humble et affectioné esclave."[1] According to the ideas of our century this, and many other letters of a similar character, but too gross to be fully quoted here, would be looked upon as an outrageous insult if addressed to any honest woman; but such was evidently not the case in the days of Elizabeth; and, immodest as the words are, one fact stands out perfectly clear, namely, that the privilege of sleeping in the "great bed," to which so many suggestive references are made—evidently the bed in Elizabeth's own chamber—was as yet for Alençon but a distant and doubtful vision of future felicity—not a proud reminiscence; and that, moreover, his qualities as a fit helpmate to the Queen had yet to be demonstrated to her. This impression is repeated in various forms throughout the letters from the

[1] Hatfield Papers, vol. ii. p. 476.

Prince, as well as those from Simier. In the letters written by the latter in the autumn of 1582, when by means chiefly of Elizabeth's influence he was endeavouring to regain the confidence of the Prince, there occur many mysterious expressions which have given rise to a doubt whether, after all, there had not been a closer bond between the writer and the Queen than that which I have suggested. But his fervent prayers to the Queen to be careful that their correspondence should not be discovered, and his fears of Walsingham's vigilance, seem to supply the key to the real reason for his fears. "Nothing in the world," he says, "would cause me greater disgrace than that Monsieur should discover *what has taken place between me and you.*" "They all hate me because I love you. . . . You, the Queen of my soul."[1] But a careful consideration of the letter, long and obscure as it is, will show that what Simier is afraid of is not the revelation of any intimate love-passages between him and the Queen—for which, indeed, there had been no opportunity since the evidently incomplete philandering of some years before—but the discovery of his treacherous arrangement with Elizabeth to re-enter Alençon's service as her spy and instrument for the purpose of thwarting every action of his master that might be considered inimical to Elizabeth's interests. It may, I think, be accepted, on a close consideration of the whole of the facts and correspondence, that Elizabeth's relations with Alençon and his envoy were of a similar character to those with Hatton, and probably also with Leicester, namely, that

[1] See especially the letter of August 19, 1582. Hatfield Papers, vol. ii. p. 517.

whilst they extended to an amount of familiarity that would be considered indecorous even in those days, they were mainly prompted and maintained to satisfy the overweening personal vanity of the Queen, and that they stopped short of actual immorality. If we had not, in the words I have quoted from Alençon's letter, what is practically his admission that this was the case with him, it would still be quite incredible that it should be otherwise. He was the Queen's suitor in marriage. Political exigencies had compelled the Queen to pledge herself to him more deeply than she liked, and we have seen throughout the latter half of this book that she had devoted all her great craft and ability to gain her political objects, whilst always minimising the hold of the French Prince upon her. That a woman of her cold-blooded nature, and of her mature age, should stultify the efforts of years and imperil her imperial policy by giving him the strongest possible claim upon her, whilst she forfeited her greatest claim upon him, is quite beyond belief in the case of Elizabeth, however possible it might have been for Mary Stuart.

Whilst the lingering insincerity of the Alençon match was coming to a disappointing end, and the "poor frog" was sighing his soul out in despair for the joys that were never to be his, a far more splendid figure than that of the dapper Frenchman, with his swarthy, pockmarked visage, attracted the notice of the Queen. He was a tall, handsome man of thirty, with bold, dark eyes and curling, black hair over a fair face, and he had done good service in the Huguenot wars and the Irish rebellion. An adherent of the Earl of Leicester, and wearing his

livery, he attended the Earl on his voyage to Flanders when poor Alençon received the empty title of Duke of Brabant, early in 1582, and only a few weeks afterwards, on his return to England, he was already a full-fledged favourite with the Queen, privileged to plead the cause of that turbulent young Earl of Oxford, upon whom the Queen's eyes had now ceased to look upon with unrequited favour, and who had fallen into fresh disgrace for his violence at Court. Where the Queen saw Walter Ralegh first, and when, cannot now be said; probably at the end of 1581, when he came from Ireland with the Viceroy's despatches, and was bold enough to attack the policy of his chief before the Council. The son of a Devonshire yeoman, speaking always, even in the days of his greatest splendour, with the soft burr of the west country, he had, nevertheless, that gift of the gods, a ready euphonic speech, to vest in glowing garment clear-cut thoughts, thronging from one of the brightest brains that ever dwelt in English head. We have seen how jealous Hatton was of the growing favour of "water," but others, too, soon began to look askance at the "jumping jack," as they contemptuously called him. They had some reason. Greedy as Hatton was, he was modest in comparison to Ralegh. Not even Leicester in his youth had been more splendid and gaudy in his dress than this Devonshire squireling's son. Elizabeth loved fine clothes, almost as much as she loved herself without them, and this "fine figure of a man," decked by her bounty in shimmering satins and flashing jewels, absorbed for a time all the admiration she had to spare from the contemplation of her looking-glass. Lord Burghley,

sorely tried by Leicester's influence, which was always in favour of war with Spain, bethought him, when he saw how the Queen was absorbed by her new flame, that he might be used as a fit instrument for his political ends, and Ralegh was enlisted on the side of the moderate opportunist party in the Council. Ralegh's own traditions and convictions, if he had any, were entirely Puritan and anti-opportunist; but Burghley was powerful, and, perhaps, before Ralegh well realised the process, he found that his future was bound up in the success of the Cecils and opposition to Leicester. Still, for some years he was full of lip-service to the Earl, and spoke humbly to the great nobles, who frowned and sneered at him for a flashy upstart. During the Earl's absence in the Netherlands he was told that Ralegh was no well-wisher of his, and when Sir Walter heard this he wrote to him as follows: "In ought else your Lordshipe shall finde me most assured to my power to performe all offices of love, honour, and service to you. But I have byn of late very pestilent reported in this place to be rather a drawer back than a furtherer of the action where you govern. . . . But all that I have desired at your Lordship's hands, is that you will evermore deal directly with mee in all matters of suspect dubleness, and so ever esteme mee as you shall finde me deserving, good or bad. In the mean tyme I humblie beseich you, lett no poetical scribe work your lordship by any device to doubt that I am a hollow or cold servant to the action, or a mean well-willer and follower of your own." [1]

[1] MSS. Harl. 6994, British Museum. Edward's "Ralegh."

Though, as Spenser sang, Ralegh was

> ". . . the summer nightingale,
> Thy sovereign goddess's most dear delight,"

he had to walk warily amidst the pitfalls set for him. The Queen, for some years after his first appearance at Court, would hardly willingly let him out of her sight, but at the slightest attempt on his part to presume over others on the strength of his sovereign's favour, the imperiousness of Elizabeth blazed out as usual; and to the day of her death Ralegh was never allowed to enter the Privy Council. On one occasion, when the Queen was at Croydon in 1585, love-sick superannuated Hatton sent to the Queen by Sir Thomas Heneage some presents of jewellery, at which her old tenderness for the giver was revived. She expressed to Heneage her deep regard for Hatton, and said the time of his absence seemed as long to her as it did to him: "and she marvelled that you came not." Heneage replied that he had learned that there was no room for him at Croydon; and the Queen thereupon, in a great rage, asked who had dared to occupy Hatton's usual lodgings. When she was told that Ralegh was occupying them, "She grew more angry with my Lord Chamberlain than I wished she had been, and used bitterness of speech against Ralegh, telling me before them all that she would rather see him hanged than equal with you, or that the world should think she did so."

Though Ralegh's insolence and pride brought enemies in plenty to him as his fortune grew so prodigiously, it is plain to see that the jealousy of Leicester and his friends—including Essex and

Hatton—was far more political and financial than amorous. Hatton's affection, as well as Leicester's, was certainly platonic by this time, whatever had been the case years before; and Ralegh's own readiness to get married in the face of incalulable risk to him certainly tends to the presumption that his relations with the Queen were similar to those of the favourites who had preceded him. But we discover something more than presumptive evidence of this in Spenser's "Fairie Queen," where Timias is avowedly intended to represent Ralegh, and Belphœbe the Queen. Ralegh was Spenser's best friend and benefactor, and perhaps no man was more likely to know the real truth of the matter than he. In the course of his adventures Timias, wounded and swooning in a wood, is succoured and tended by Belphœbe, with whom he, as in duty bound, falls in love. The fair lady on her side lavishes upon the knight every boon that wealth and affection can supply:

> "But that sweet cordial, which can
> Restore a love-sick heart, she did to him envy.
> To him and all the unworthy world forebore,
> She did him envy that sovereign salve in secret store."

Ralegh's own letter to the Queen when he was in disgrace and banishment shortly before Elizabeth's death in 1602 leads to a similar conclusion. He wrote to his sovereign in the low-spirited strain common to him, even more than to other favourites, when he was denied her presence, sending her certain notes, which might be useful to her to repulse those who are again urging upon her the recognition of a successor—"But I feare I have

alreddy presumed too much, which love, stronger than reason, hath encouraged: for my errors are eternal, and those of others mortal; and my labours thankless—I mean unacceptable, for thanks belongeth not to vassals. If your Majesty pardon it, it is too greate a rewarde. *And so humbly embracing and admiringe the memory of those celestial bewtys, which, with the people, is denied me to review,* I pray God your Majesty may be eternal in joys and happiness. Your Majesty's most humble slave, W. R." When in 1592 Ralegh disobeyed the Queen and sailed with his ships to attack the Spanish silver fleet, his enemies gave out that he was afraid to face his sovereign because he had secretly married Elizabeth Throckmorton, who, for the rest of his life, made him so faithful and noble a wife. His letter to his friend Cecil the younger with reference to this rumour shows him to have been as mean in spirit as he was great in intellect. His relations with the Queen, the object of which was to pander to her vanity alone, were as inadequate to him as similar relations had been to all her other favourites, except meek Hatton, whose fear was stronger than his desire for a married life. It was perfectly legitimate and right that Ralegh should marry in the circumstances; but having done so, and fearing to lose his wealth and countenance at Court, he wrote: "I mean not to come away, as they say, for fear of a marriage, and I know not what. If any such thing weare I should have imparted it unto yourself before any man living: and therefore I pray believe it not; and I beseech you to suppress what you can any such malicious report. *For, I protest before*

God, there is none on the face of the earth that I would be fastened unto." But notwithstanding his denials, when driven back to England by tempest, and, empty-handed, he went to Court in June, 1592, he found himself and his wife suddenly lodged in the Tower. There could have been no true nobility in the man who, thus finding himself in disgrace with the Queen for that which was, from all points of view, a good action rather than a bad one, could write such a letter as the following for the eyes of the woman whose caprice having alighted upon him and loaded him with favours, had now cast him into prison because he had dared to marry a good woman: "My heart was never broken till this day, that I hear the Queen goes away so far off; whom I have followed so many years with so great love and desire in so many journeys, and am now left behind her in a dark prison all alone. Whilst she was yet near at hand, that I might hear of her once in two or three dayes, my sorrows were less: but even now my heart is cast into the depth of all misery. I, that was wont to behold her riding like Alexander, hunting like Diana, walking like Venus; the gentle wind blowing her fair hair about her pure cheeks like a nymph: sometimes sitting in the shade like a goddess, sometimes singing like an angel; sometimes playing like Orpheus. Behold the sorrow of this world! Once amiss hath bereaved me of all. O! glory that only shineth in misfortune, what is become of thy assurance? All wounds have scars but that of fancy; all affections their relenting but that of womankind. Who is the judge of friendship but adversity, and when is grace witnessed but in offences? There were no divinity

but by reason of compassion; for revenges are brutish and mortal. All those times past—the loves, the sighs, the sorrows, the desires, can they not weigh down one frail misfortune? Cannot one drop of gall be hidden in so great heaps of sweetness? I may then conclude *spes et fortuna valete.* She is gone in whom I trusted, and of me hath not one thought of mercy, nor any respect of that that was. Do with me now, therefore, what you list. I am more weary of life than they are desirous I should perish, which if it had been *for* her, as it is *by* her, I had been too happy born."

For doleful whimpering Hatton himself could hardly have beaten this. It was to some extent a courtly tradition that prompted it, and there is no reason to believe that Ralegh was so inconsolable about it from the amorous point of view, however much he may have regretted the threatened loss of his fat sinecures and rich royal grants. But the main point to be considered in this letter, as in the many others from former favourites, is the complete absence of the slightest hint of any feeling but languishing unattained desire. In no case of the four suitors whose despairing letters I have quoted is even a veiled threat discernible, or pressure of any sort brought upon the Queen by a suggestion of compromising relations in the past. It is incredible that, if they had possessed such a secret, none of the rejected or disgraced favourites would sooner or later have attempted, at least, to make capital or gain revenge for themselves by suggesting their possession of information for which Elizabeth's many enemies would have paid splendidly.

When Ralegh was at the height of his fortune in 1587, after the great Babington estates had been granted to him, it seems to have been recognised by Leicester's friends that a counter-attraction sufficiently potent to distract the Queen's fancy was for them a political necessity. Several young men had been tried with indifferent success, and, as what certainly looks like a desperate resource, it had been determined in 1585 or 1586 to bring prominently before the sovereign's notice Leicester's very youthful stepson Robert Earl of Essex. It was a risky experiment, for the Queen was fifty-two, whilst the lad was only nineteen years of age at the time, and had been wayward and pampered all his life. His mother, moreover, was Elizabeth's cousin, Lettice Knollys, whose marriage with Leicester, indecently soon after her husband's suspicious death, the Queen had so bitterly resented, and had never forgiven. But those who had conceived the plan of running the young noble against Ralegh knew what they were at, absurd as the project appears now. The fair youthful grace of Essex was no doubt a welcome change from the mature attractions of Ralegh's thirty-six years, and before many months of 1587 had passed a courtier wrote: "When she (the Queen) is abroad nobody is near her but my Lord of Essex: and at night my Lord is at cards, or one game or another, with her, till the birds sing in the morning." Shortly after this, when Essex was in attendance upon the Queen in her progress through Hertfordshire, he wrote to his friend Dyer a letter which shows, even thus early, how insolently he regarded the favour shown to him. He was complaining violently of some slight

which he alleges that the Queen had put upon his sister and repeating the Queen's excuses for it, and continues: "Such bad excuses gave me a theme large enough, both for answer of them, and to tell her what the true causes were, why she would offer this disgrace both to me and my sister; *which was only to please that knave Ralegh*, for whose sake I saw she would grieve both me and my love, and disgrace me in the eye of the world. From thence she came to speak of Ralegh; and it seemed she could not endure anything to be spoken against him. And taking hold of the word *disdain*, she said there was no such cause why I should disdain him. This speech did trouble me so much that, as near as I could, I did describe unto her what he had been and what he was. . . . I did let her know whether I had cause to disdain his competition of love, or whether I could have comfort to give myself over to the service of a mistress who was in awe of such a man. I spake, what of grief and choler, as much against him as I could: and I think that he, standing at the door (as Captain of the Guard) might very well hear the worst that I spoke of himself. In the end I saw she was resolved to defend him and cross me. . . . For myself, I told her, I had no joy to be in any place, but was loth to be near about her when I knew my affection so much thrown down, and such a wretch as Ralegh highly esteemed of her. . . . This strange alteration is by Ralegh's means, and the Queen, who hath tried all other ways, now will see whether she can by these hard courses drive me to be friends with Ralegh, which shall rather drive me to many other extremities." This letter was written

to the universal confidant, Sir Edward Dyer,[1] and it gives us a good insight into the character of the overbearing young hot-head, Elizabeth's love for whom was in her waning age to be the Nemesis to avenge her former levities.

In all her other attachments, as we have seen, the mere contemplation of her peerless beauties was a boon so great—especially when accompanied by lavish grants of estates and offices—as to reduce her votaries to abject slaves of her caprice, and to make them whining malingerers when they were deprived of their ocular feast. Leicester, when the Queen and he were both young, had sometimes, it is true, shown some independence and indifference at his royal mistress's crossness with him, but they understood each other thoroughly, and in most cases these tiffs were but comedies carefully got up for political or party reasons. But, with this possible exception, Elizabeth's flirtations had invariably been conducted on the theory that the eternally unpayable obligation was on the side of the favourite, and that the Queen, out of sheer pity for men dying for love of her, occasionally unveiled her refulgence before them. With Essex the matter was quite different. Jealous, proud, and impatient, he was willing to be petted and spoilt by an old maid who was, as he knew, desperately in love with him in her own way. But from his point of view —not unnatural at their respective ages—the Queen, and not he, was the obliged and favoured party. Very far from feigning desperation when he was banished from a view of her charms, he

[1] Tanner MSS., Bodleian Library; also quoted in Edwards "Ralegh."

ran away from her gaily as often as he had the chance, and was as peevish and exacting with her as she hitherto had been with the men who had caught her fancy. The tradition of her marvellous beauty, which might have affected older men who had been at Court before the Queen's attractions began to fade, could not have had any hold upon Essex, who as an adult never saw her until her neck had grown scraggy, her bosom withered, her cheeks wrinkled, and her coiffure was a red wig, whilst he was in the first bloom of adolescent virility. This change of standpoint, which is evident in all Essex's relations with the Queen, could not be accepted contentedly by a woman of her character and antecedents, and all the misery that the connection brought to both parties was the result of this natural incompatibility of view. Essex was quite willing to humour the Queen so long as he had all his own way and was splendidly rewarded; but sulked and declared he would not play any more the moment he was thwarted. Sir Robert Naunton, who knew them both, writes thus, blaming first "the violent indulgence of the Queen (which is incident to old age where it encounters with a pleasing and suitable object) towards this great lord, which argued a non-perpetuity; and the second fault was in the object of her grace, my lord himself, who drew in too fast, like a child sucking on an over-uberous nurse: and had there been more decent decorum observed in both, or either of them, without doubt their affections would have been more permanent, and not so in and out as they were. . . . The greater error of the two, though unwilling, I am constrained to impose on

my Lord of Essex, and rather on his youth . . . he was noted for too bold an engrosser both of fame and favour." That Essex proceeded with the Queen peremptorily in the way he did was not the result of petulant folly, but of conviction that she might best be managed by that means, is seen in Lord Bacon's letter to Lord Devonshire about him: "My Lord (Essex) had a sort of settled opinion that the Queen should be brought to nothing but by a kind of necessity or authority: and I well remember when by violent courses at any time he had got his will, he would ask me: now, Sir, whose principles be true? and I would again say to him: my Lord, these courses be like to hot waters; they will help at a pang, but if you use them you shall spoil the stomach; and you shall be fain still to make them stronger and stronger, and yet in the end they will lose their operation."

The Queen's ardent and unappeasable attachment to such a lover as Essex brought her constant inquietude. In 1587, only just after he wrote the letter to Dyer quoted above, the Earl, thinking doubtless, as Bacon says, to force the Queen to banish Ralegh by adopting a violent course with her, gave her the slip, and attempted to get away to the Netherlands war. Elizabeth, nearly beside herself with anger, sent messengers after him, and he was brought back almost by force just as he was about to embark at Sandwich. Even more incensed was she two years afterwards, when her favourite managed to escape and embark at Plymouth to join Drake's expedition to capture Lisbon in the interest of the Portuguese pretender Don Antonio.[1]

[1] Full particulars of this escapade will be found in the writer's "The Year after the Armada."

Knollys, and even the Earl of Huntington, were sent galloping after him to the west country, as fast as horses could carry them, with warrants of arrest and the like; but the *Swiftsure* was out at sea before the favourite was discovered, and thenceforward Elizabeth had nothing but bitter words and scowling looks for the cause that had temporarily deprived her of the delightful torture of having her pet near her. Sir Roger Williams, the general second in command of the troops, who had connived at the escape, she ordered peremptorily to be hanged. But neither Drake nor Norris, far away on the coast of Portugal, would obey her in this, threaten as she might; and when Essex came back in pretended contrition from his escapade the sin of helping him away was forgotten in the Queen's delight in his return.

The undignified squabbles between the two were as frequent as they were unprecedented in the case of former favourites. Previously the Queen had done all the railing, and her lovers had waxed lachrymose at her slightest hasty word. Now Essex considered himself entitled to retort in kind. The story of how young Charles Blount at the age of twenty attracted the Queen's notice at about the time of Ralegh's disgrace (1592) illustrates not only Elizabeth's methods but Essex's jealous insolence. Blount was the younger brother of a ruined peer, Lord Mountjoy, and was a student at the Inner Temple, being, as Naunton says, "brown haired of a sweet face, and of a most neat composure, tall in his person." "The Queen was then at Whitehall and at dinner, whither he came to see the fashion of the Court. The Queen soon found him out, and with a kind of affected favour, asked her carver who he

was. He answered he knew him not; inasmuch that enquiry was made one from another who he might be, till it was told the Queen that he was Lord Mountjoy's brother. This enquiry, with the eye of her Majesty fixed upon him, as she was wont to do, and to daunt men she knew not, stirred the blood of the young gentleman, inasmuch as his colour went and came; which, the Queen observing, called unto him and gave him her hand to kiss, encouraging him with gracious words and new looks; and so turning her speech to the lords and ladies, she said she had no sooner observed him than she knew he was of noble blood, with some expression of pity towards his house; and then again demanding his name, she said, "Fail you not to come to Court, and I will bethink me how to do you good." We may be sure that the Cecils and their friends did their best to capture Blount as an instrument of their policy; but, as Naunton says, "though he wanted not wit nor courage, for he had very fine attractives, as being a good piece of a scholar, yet were those accompanied with the retractives of bashfulness and natural modesty." His "backwardness," and a desire to win fame in war rather than by Court dalliance were such, we are told, that: "had not some wise men about him laboured to remove his desire for gadding abroad, and the Queen laid her own command upon him, he would have marred his own market." He came very nearly doing it more than once, by rushing over to the Netherlands on the pretext of visiting the regiment of which he was nominally in command, and then rashly exposing himself to danger, as he did also with Norris' army in Brittany. When he was brought back from

the latter place by the Queen's command, and came into his irate mistress's presence: "She fell into a kind of railing, demanding of him how he dared to go over without her leave. Serve me so (quoth she) once more, and I will lay you fast enough for running. You will never leave off till you get knocked on the head, as that inconsiderate fellow Sidney was. You shall go when I send you; in the meantime see that you lodge in the Court, where you may follow your book, and read and discourse of the wars." Blount did more than this when he grew older; and as Lord Mountjoy was not the least of Elizabeth's generals.

When Essex saw that Blount had attracted the favourable notice of the Queen his insolent pride burst out. The younger favourite distinguished himself on one occasion by grace and dexterity at tilting, and Elizabeth, as a token of her pleasure, sent him a beautifully enamelled gold queen of a chess set. Blount, as was the fashion, fastened it upon his doublet sleeve with a crimson ribbon, taking care, with youthful ostentation, to wear his cape on the other shoulder only, in order to exhibit his new ornament. Essex, passing through the Privy Chamber, noticed it, and asked Greville what was the meaning of wearing a chessman upon a sleeve. He was told that it was the Queen's own favour. "Ah! I see," replied Essex; "every fool must have a favour nowaday." Blount, on being told this, sent the Earl a challenge, and they met in what is now Regent's Park, to fight it out, Essex being wounded in the flesh of the thigh and disarmed. Elizabeth, ever vigilant for the presence of the men she loved, asked what had become of her

young favourites. No one dared tell her for a time; but when she heard the story—not altogether unpleasant to her, doubtless—she burst out with her customary oath. "God's death! it was time that some one or other should take him down, and teach him better manners; otherwise there would be no rule with him."

It will be noticed that these two young favourites of Elizabeth's old age stood upon a different footing from those who had preceded them. Not only were they younger when her fancy first fell upon them, but she was proportionately older. Instead of beseeching her in heartbroken supplications to keep them near her, and to give them some hope of the attainment of their elusive dreams of happiness in her presence, as Simier, Alençon, Hatton, and Ralegh had done, these two young men were with the greatest difficulty kept from running away from her; and it is evident that the relationship, apart from the honour and profit it brought, gave them no gratification. The very fact of so violent an attachment for them having been inspired in the Queen at all, when she was between fifty and sixty, and her anxiety to keep them near her, may be advanced as another physiological argument, which need not be further insisted upon, that the several attachments she had formed in her prime had been platonic.

How the imperious temper of Essex led him down the steep slope that ended in treason and rebellion against his benefactress, I have told fully elsewhere,[1] but the unhappy domestic squabbles

[1] "Treason and Plot: Struggles for Catholic Supremacy in the last Years of Elizabeth," by Martin Hume.

between him and the Queen before he entered upon his final traitorous course, bring out in clear relief her hankering yearning for his affection, and his selfish want of consideration for her. His fractious sneering and flouting of every suggestion for the pacification of Ireland, except those which emanated from himself, had stung the Queen deeply, and her anger was met with fresh captiousness on the part of the Earl. Burghley's rich sinecure of Master of the Wards was refused to him, and this was a new cause of complaint. But Elizabeth was now determined that she must humble him, or in her old age she must forego her proud boast, that in England there was only one mistress and no master. Shortly before, in a fit of temper, Essex had ostentatiously turned his back upon her, whilst she was arguing with him about Ireland; whereupon she rose from her seat and gave him a sounding box on the ear, and told him to go and be hanged. The Earl, clapping his hand to his sword, swore that he would take such an indignity from no one, not even from Henry VIII. if he had been alive; and he was seized, and for a time he was forbidden the angry sovereign's presence. His mother tearfully prayed her "Sweet Robin" to humble himself to his Queen; and Lord Keeper Egerton warned him that, unless he kept command of his own temper it would lead him to destruction.

At last, but with a bad grace, he wrote an epistle to the Queen in the approved strain of despairing love, which always touched her vanity; and a reconciliation was patched up. When his enemies cornered him by saying that, as he opposed all suggestions for the Irish command, he had better

undertake it himself, he could hardly refuse; and thereafter there matured in his brain that wicked scheme that brought about his ruin; to insist upon a great force being given to him, and then to use the Queen's army for his own ambitious ends. His danger long before he left England was patent to all the Court. Egerton and Bacon both warned him, and the Queen's heart was hardening against him for his pride and presumption.

At length he himself saw the pitfall into which his passion was leading him, and, in the old voice of love and sorrow, deplored to the Queen that she was banishing him, in the vain hope that her tenderness would melt her to recall him; for without disgrace he could not retreat of himself from the position into which he had allowed himself to be manœuvred. From the first day of his arrival in Ireland he disobeyed the Queen's direct commands, and she daily grew more and more angry at his petulant discontent, his military incapacity or worse, and his ceaseless demands for more troops. His mysterious arrangement with Tyrone was the last straw to the overburdened patience of the Queen, and she wrote to her erstwhile favourite a letter so bitter and scornful as to have bereft him of what little judgment his envy had left him.

But one thing for him remained, he thought. The old woman's love for him could not be dead, surely. His tears of contrition, his languishing sighs of love, that had served his turn so often before, would not be in vain now. So he took the disastrous step that ruined him: deserted his command, and, without orders, crossed the sea, and

rode night and day, until he came unbidden, haggard and mudstained as he was, to cast himself at the Queen's feet, whilst she sat in her nightdress in her bedchamber. She forbore to chide him; but her heart was cold now; for her reigning passion, pride, had crushed the love that alone could contend against it; and Essex, a ruined man thenceforward, was handed over to the tender mercies of the enemies he had spurned and spat upon so long. The hate he bore them for outwitting him, and to the Queen for the waning of her love, led him, depending upon the fickle crowd that idolised him as the enemy of unpopular Ralegh, thenceforward to plot against them all. His wild schemes were known to the Cecils and the Queen, as they are known to us now, though most of his contemporaries knew them not, and marvelled that Elizabeth should have consented, in any case, to sacrifice the man she had loved. That she did so with bitter tears, and afterwards with endless repentance, is certain. But she was a Queen, and a great one. The man she had cherished and loved had attacked her and her state; and if she had spared Essex no future traitor should ever have been punished.

There was no more lovemaking after Essex returned from Ireland, and Blount was sent as his successor. The Queen's heart, so greedy of flattery, was dead, because at last she had learnt the hard lesson that she was a withered old woman whom no man would love for her personal attractions. But, if she could not inspire affection for her beauty any longer, she could arouse fear for her anger, and admiration for her strength. Of her

two ruling passions, personal vanity and love of dominion, the latter outlived the former, and only died with her last breath.

All the love affairs that we have glanced at in their non-political aspect, were but the solace of a great governing genius, who was supremely vain. Though they were accompanied by circumstances which were reprehensible, undignified and indelicate for any virtuous woman, much less a Queen, the arguments and evidence that I have been able to adduce should lead, in my opinion, to the delivery of a verdict of non-proven on the generally believed main charge against the Queen of actual immorality. Probably Lord Bacon, who must have known the truth, states the case best. "Some of the graver sort may perhaps aggravate her levities; in loving to be admired and courted, nay to have love poems made on her; and continuing this humour longer than was decent for her years: yet these matters, taken in a milder sense, may claim admiration, being often found in fabulous stories; as that of a certain Queen of the fortunate islands, in whose Court love was allowed but lust banished."

THE END.