

SUMMARY: The document below is a letter dated 5 March 1575 written by Dr Valentine Dale (c.1520–1589), the English ambassador in Paris, to Lord Burghley.

Oxford was then in Paris on his continental tour. Dr Dale describes Oxford's conduct as both modest and moderate, mentioning that he cannot yet procure him an audience with the French King, Henri III, because of mourning for the King's sister, Claude of Lorraine, who had died in childbirth at Nancy on 21 February 1575.

Shortly before Oxford's arrival in Paris, the King had been crowned (the sacre) at Rheims on 13 February 1575, and had made an unpopular marriage two days later to Louise of Lorraine. From Frieda, Leonie, *Catherine de Medici; Renaissance Queen of France* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2006), pp. 320-5:

[The] King had already made up his mind to marry someone else. He had secretly decided upon Louise de Vaudemont, the princess from Lorraine whom he had met there just before leaving for Poland. Her striking resemblance to his dead Marie and her humble demeanour both charmed him. This unloved child of a minor prince of the Lorraine family, whose stepmother had treated her so cruelly, would become his bride and Queen, but for the moment Henri said nothing. . . .

Having broken the news to his mother about his choice of bride and borrowed 100,000 ecus to defray the expenses ahead, Henri, his mother and the Court left Avignon on 10 January 1575 and headed north on a journey that would lead him to Rheims for his coronation and marriage. . . .

The coronation itself, which took place on 13 February 1575, was replete with bad omens of all sorts. When the Cardinal of Guise (Henri, Duke of Guises's brother and nephew of the recently deceased cardinal) placed the ancient crown of Charlemagne on the King's head he felt weak and dizzy, and it slipped and nearly fell off. . . .

Furthermore, the preparations for the King's marriage two days later had been reduced to a farce. Henri had become so overexcited about his bride's wedding gown and other fine costumes for the festivities – all of which he had painstakingly designed himself – that he even insisted upon personally dressing her hair. . . .

The next embarrassment that Catherine had to endure was the royal party's lack of funds to continue to Paris. Word soon spread that 'the King had not the price of a dinner'. She made an appeal to Parlement and enough money was finally collected for the King and his Court to journey to the capital. At last, after one and a half years, Henri returned to Paris. Before him lay a truly monumental task: he must untangle years of corruption and lack of accounts, and put in place stringent measures to remedy matters, and do all this in a financial climate that was depressed all over Europe during 1575. . . .

Even before arriving in Paris, Catherine had received word that her beloved daughter Claude, Duchess of Lorraine, had fallen ill again. When she reached the capital, Claude was dead.

It was in the midst of these events that Oxford arrived in Paris.

Persons mentioned in Dr Dale's letter in the order of their appearance include:

Henry III (1551-1589), born Alexandre Edouard de France, King of France from 1574 to 1589

Anthony Woodville (c.1440–1483), 2nd Earl Rivers

Edward IV (1442–1483), King of England

Louise of Lorraine (1553-1601), Queen consort of France from 1575 to 1589

Catherine de Medici (1519-1589), mother of King Henri III

Louis de Lorraine (1527-1578), Cardinal of Guise

Louis II (1555-1588), elected Archbishop of Rheims in 1574, created Cardinal of Guise in 1578

Henri I (1550-1588), 3rd Duke of Guise

Charles de Lorraine (1554-1611), Duke de Mayenne

Claude II de Lorraine (1526-1573), Duke d'Aumale

Charles I de Lorraine-Guise (1556-1605), Marquis d'Elbeuf

Alberto Gondi (1522-1602), Count of Retz

Anne (1531-1607), Duchess of Guise, later Duchess of Nemours (born Anne d'Este)

Alfonso II d'Este (1533-1597), Duke of Ferrara

Claude (1547-1574), Duchess of Lorraine

Charles III (1543-1608), Duke of Lorraine

Henri Robert de la Marck (1540-1574), Duke of Bouillon

Louis Gonzaga (1539-1595), Duke of Nevers

Jacques of Savoy (1531-1585), 2nd Duke of Nemours

Nicolas de Lorraine (1524-1577), Duke of Mercœur, father of Louise of Lorraine (1553-1601), Queen consort of King Henri III of France

Henry IV (1553-1610), King of Navarre from 1572 to 1610, and King of France from 1589 to 1610

Henri de Montmorency-Damville (1534-1614)

Claude de la Chastre

Roger de Saint-Lary (c.1525-1579), Seigneur de Bellegarde, Marshal of France

Charles du Puy de Montbrun (1530-1575)

Francois de Montmorency (1530-1579)

My good Lord, God be thanked we are at end of this weary and chargeable journey for this time, and I hope the King will be better advised before he go so far from Paris again, for he hath utterly lost both his credit and the love of his people abroad with these former doings, and misliking groweth daily with this marriage. Your Lordship doth remember the Lord Rivers under King Edward the Fourth, but this matter is not like to tarry so long because the one side is more insolent and the other more impatient. Queen Mother is not unlike to have her part of it. Wise men do take it that she was not made privy to the matter until it was privily concluded, but now she maketh the best of it as though it had been her doing, *sed nescio quid videtur consternata presertim ex hoc nouo luctu*. And surely neither she nor the King nor any of them all do know where to begin, for they do see their late doings have taken evil effects, and that hope which they had of peace waxeth cold.

I have written in this packet the particularities that were to be noted both of the sacre and also of this marriage and of the things which have happened since, which is in effect that the whole ceremony of the sacre was done by the Guises. The Cardinal of Guise supplied the place of the Archbishop of Rheims; the Duke of Guise, the Duke de Mayenne, the Duke d'Aumale the place of three of the lay peers; the Marquis d'Elbeuf the place of the Duke of Guise as Grand Chambellan. The Conte Retz as Mareschal had the place of the Constable.

The Duke of Lorraine arrived the morrow after the sacre. The King rose from his dinner to receive him and to bring him to the Queen Mother with such honour *vt nihil supra*.

The feast both of the sacre and of the marriage wholly directed by the Duke of Guise as Grand Chambellan.

The King would fain have all men like of this marriage, and amongst other the Queen's Majesty specially, and therefore I was invited alone the second day because I could not be there at the first day by the reason of the question of the precedence with Spain, and had much good countenance and familiarity both with the King and Queen Mother. The Queen could bride it well enough.

The King would needs have it that his mother made the marriage, *elle me fit ce* (dict il) *et me maria aussi*. Queen Mother's tongue walked where her tooth ached, how much she had found her other sons' wives at hand with her, but the old Duchess of Guise was always at one end *satis cu{m} imperio* (=magisterially) with the King and Queen, and to Queen Mother as one that fain would be her right hand, and indeed she is very wise, and if Queen Mother were ever matched it is by her, one Italian with another, for as your Lordship knoweth, the Duchess is the Duke of Ferrara's sister.

The rest of women's news your Lordship shall understand by my wife's letter to my Lady, *cui cupimus esse commodatissimi nec alia est qua vxor mea magis colat semperque est ei filia tua in ore si que fit mentio alicuius egregie forme*, whereof my Lord of Oxford is partly a witness, to whom I do that honour that becometh me to my power, and surely he governeth himself *et modeste & moderate*. I cannot yet procure his access to the King because of this new mourning for the Duchess of Lorraine, whose death Queen mother taketh very heavily, being her dear daughter.

The Duke of Lorraine parted from Rheims upon news that his wife was in extremity, who now is departed the world, wherewithal the Queen Mother is in great sorrow, *que res aliqua ex parte minuit fastu{m} Guisiana{m} na{m} videbantur rem sua{m} velle hoc tempore stabilire illius Ducis & regij soceri freti presentia*.

There is great heart-burning for the bestowing of the government of Normandy, being void by the death of the Duke of Bouillon. The Duke of Nevers claimed it as by promise made to him at his being in Polonia. The Duchess of Nemours stepped in requiring that preferment as of duty for her husband before a stranger, and now the King will bestow it from them both upon his father-in-law, Monsieur Vaudemont. And thereupon the Duke of Nevers is departed to his house.

The King of Navarre had leave to go to his house in Picardy called La Fere in company of Monsieur de Losse, Captain of the Guard, and is returned.

Monsieur Damville hath taken another strong town lying upon the Levant Sea not far from Aigues-Mortes called Agde.

The King gave out divers commissions to divers captains for levying of men when he was at Rheims.

Monsieur la Chastre, gouverneur of Bourges in Berry, is appointed to come in embassy to the Queen's Majesty to signify unto her Majesty the King's sacre and marriage, and as they say, to require continuance of the league.

LM: This la Chastre is famous for the siege of Sancerre, where he was general, and used much extremity, & therefore now the more esteemed.

The King's ambassadeur with the Turk hath written to the King that the Turk doth make double the preparation for war that his father did. He hath put his brothers to death.

It is said that they of Marseilles have cast two of the Italians, customers there, into the sea.

Mareschal Bellegarde hath left Dauphine *pro derelicto*, and is come to the court. It is said Montbrun hath taken two towns already there upon the river of Rhone, and likely it is to be true for there is no man that looketh to that country for the King.

It was constantly reported that Monsieur Montmorency should have been set at liberty, but now the matter is as far off as ever it was. Some say the King had a good inclination thereunto, but that the Chancellor dissuaded him upon pretense that the Parisians would give the King no money if he should deliver Monsieur Montmorency.

It is given out daily that the deputies do come to the King to treat a peace, but I do enquire diligently of that matter and find that they find fault with their passports and such other dilatory excuses. And thus I beseech Almighty God long to preserve your Lordship in good health. From Paris the 5th of March 1574.

Your Lordship's most humble,

Endorsed: (1) To the right honourable my very good Lord, the Lord Treasurer of England; (2) (in Lord Burghley's hand) v Martij 1574, D{octor} Dale, Ambassador in Fra{n}ce, fro{m} Paris; (3) Valentyne Dale