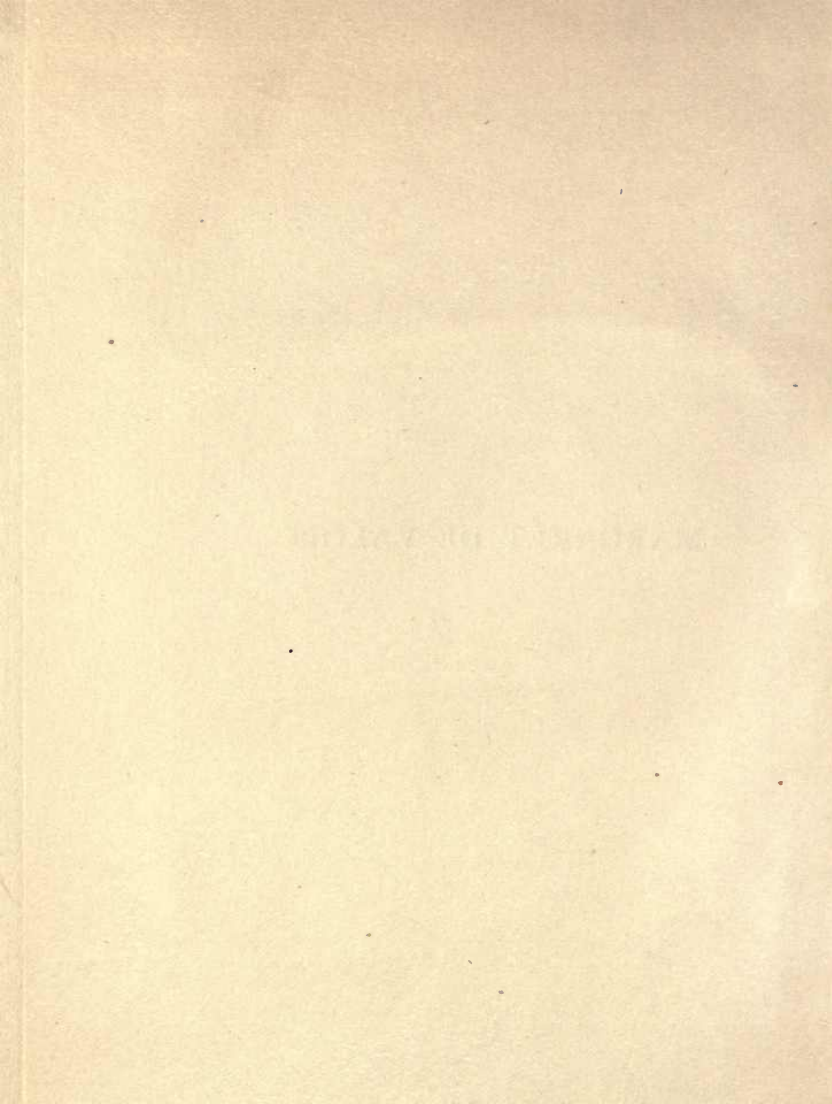


Mrs. C. L. Anderson.

MARGARET DE VALOIS





"HE SAW MARGUERITE LIFTING THE TAPESTRY"

Dumas, Vol. Three

THE WORKS OF
ALEXANDRE DUMAS
IN THIRTY VOLUMES



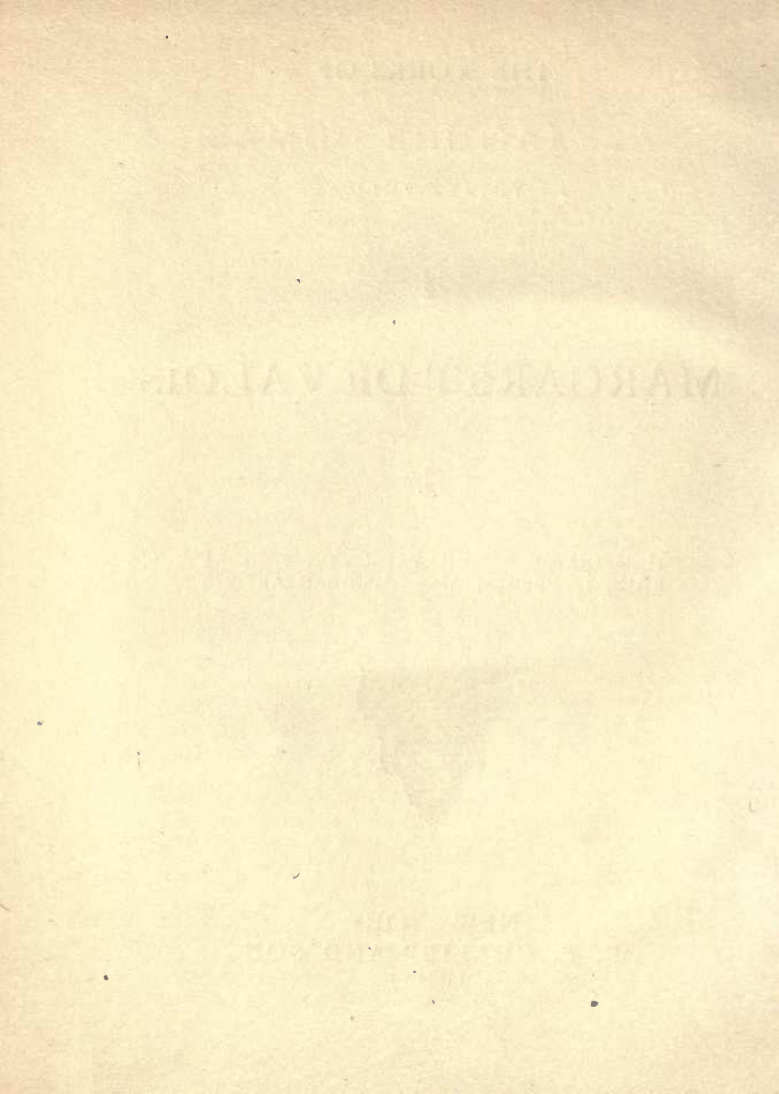
MARGARET DE VALOIS



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THE following introductory remarks are extracted from a review of Dumas' Novels, etc., in BLACKWOOD'S MAGAZINE.

“On the eighteenth day of August, 1572, a great festival was held in the palace of the Louvre. It was to celebrate the nuptials of Henry of Navarre and Marguerite de Valois.

“This alliance between the chief of the Protestant party in France, and the sister of Charles IX. and daughter of Catherine de Medicis, perplexed, and in some degree alarmed, the Catholics, whilst it filled the Huguenots with joy and exultation. The king had declared that he knew and made no difference between Romanist and Calvinist—that all were alike his subjects, and equally beloved by him. He caressed the throng of Huguenot nobles and gentlemen whom the marriage had attracted to the court, was affectionate to his new brother-in-law, friendly with the Prince of Condé, almost respectful to the venerable Admiral de Coligny, to whom he proposed to confide the command of an army in a projected war with Spain. The chiefs of the Catholic party were not behindhand in following the example set them by Charles. Catherine de Medicis was all smiles and affability; the Duke of Anjou, afterwards Henry III., received graciously the compliments paid him by the Huguenots themselves on his successes at Jarnac and Moncontour, battles which he had won before he was eighteen years old; Henry of Guise, whose reputation as a leader already, at the age of two-and

twenty, almost equalled that of his great father, was courteous and friendly to those whose deadly foe he had so lately been. The Duke of Mayenne and the Admiral, the Guise and the Condé, were seen riding, conversing, and making parties of pleasure together. It was the lion lying down with the lamb.

“On the twenty-second of August, four days after the marriage, in which the Huguenots saw a guarantee of the peaceful exercise of their religion, the Admiral de Coligny was passing through the street of St.-Germain-l’Auxerrois, when he was shot at and wounded by a captain of *Petardiers*, one Maurevel, who went by the name of *Le Tueur du Roi*, literally, the King’s Killer. At midnight on the twenty-fourth of August, the tocsin sounded, and the massacre of St. Bartholomew began.

“It is at this stirring period of French history, abounding in horrors and bloodshed, and in plots and intrigues, that M. Alexandre Dumas commences ‘Marguerite de Valois.’ Beginning with the marriage of Henry and Margaret, he narrates, in his spirited and attractive style, various episodes, real and imaginary, of the great massacre, from the first fury of which Henry himself, doomed to death by the remorseless Catherine de Medicis, was only saved by his own caution, by the indecision of Charles IX., and the energy of Margaret of Valois. The marriage between the King of France’s sister and the King of Navarre was merely one of *convenance*, agreed to by Henry for the sake of his fellow Protestants, and used by Catherine and Charles as a lure to bring ‘those of the Religion,’ as they were called, to Paris, there to be slaughtered, unsuspecting and defenseless. Margaret, then scarcely twenty years of age, had already made herself talked of by her intrigues; Henry, who was a few months younger, but who, even at that early period of his life, possessed a large share of the shrewdness and prudence for which his countrymen, the Béarnese, have at all times been noted, was, at the very time of his marriage, deeply in love with the Baroness de Sauve, one of Catherine de Medicis’ ladies, by whom he was in his turn beloved. But although little affection

existed between the royal pair, the strong links of interest and ambition bound them together ; and no sooner were they married, than they entered into a treaty of political alliance, to which, for some time, both steadily and truly adhered.

* * * *

“ The author, according to his custom, introduces a vast array of characters, for the most part historical, all spiritedly drawn and well sustained. M. Dumas may, in various respects, be held up as an example to our history spoilers, self-styled writers of historical romance, on this side the Channel. One does not find him profaning public edifices by causing all sorts of absurdities to pass, and of twaddle to be spoken, within their precincts ; neither does he make his kings and beggars, high-born dames and private soldiers, use the very same language, all equally tame, colorless, and devoid of character. The spirited and varied dialogue in which his romances abound, illustrates and brings out the qualities and characteristics of his actors, and is not used for the sole purpose of making a chapter out of what would be better told in a page. In many instances, indeed, it would be difficult for him to tell his story, by the barest narrative, in fewer words than he does by pithy and pointed dialogue.”

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MARGUERITE DE VALOIS.

CHAPTER I.

M. DE GUISE'S LATIN.

ON Monday, the 18th of August, 1572, there was a splendid fête at the Louvre.

The windows of the ancient royal residence were brilliantly illuminated, and the squares and streets adjacent, usually so solitary after the clock of Saint Germain-l'Auxerrois had tolled nine, were now crowded with people, although it was past midnight.

All this assemblage, threatening, pressing, and turbulent, resembled, in the gloom, a dark and rolling sea, each swell of which increases to a foaming wave; this sea extending all along the quay, spent its waves at the base of the walls of the Louvre, on the one hand, and against the Hôtel de Bourbon, which was opposite, on the other. There was in spite of the royal fête, and perhaps even because of the royal fête, something threatening in the aspect of the people.

The court was celebrating the marriage of Madame Marguerite de Valois, daughter of Henry II. and sister of King Charles IX., with Henry de Bourbon, King of Navarre; and that same morning the Cardinal de Bourbon had united the young couple with the usual ceremonial observed at the marriages of the royal daughters of France, on a stage erected at the entrance to Notre Dame.

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