

THE WEDDING JOURNEY OF KING CHARLES I

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AMONG the host of memories evoked by the stretch of Watling Street which links London with the coast, none are more enduring than those of the wedding journey of King Charles I in May and June, 1625. Yet, surprisingly, nothing satisfactory has been written on the subject. The accounts contained in the numerous semi-popular biographies both of Charles and his bride, Princess Henrietta Maria of France, are necessarily incomplete, if not perfunctory, inadequately, or even incorrectly, documented, with little attempt made to distinguish the value of the various sources cited, and, as regards one important circumstance, positively erroneous. Moreover, beginning with Agnes Strickland a hundred years ago, the emphasis has generally been laid on Henrietta's part in the story and consequently largely upon her point of view. This has often led not only to considerable distortion of the truth, but to the omission of some interesting facts. The space at my disposal prevents the compilation of an exhaustive record: a fully-documented one within the limits imposed is, however, offered. First and foremost my object has been to look at this Kentish journey from the standpoint of the King, a salutary adjustment since the English sources, from which our knowledge of Charles's actions and reactions are necessarily mainly derived, are more reliable as well as more copious than the French. When subjected to searching scrutiny, the pathetic picture, too often painted, of a neglected little bride arriving unwelcomed and unprepared for on a foreign shore, can only be cherished by those who wilfully prefer fiction to history.

Contemporary sources for the wedding journey and its preliminaries are abundant but not altogether easily come by. No official or semi-official account of the whole proceeding exists. Of two small pamphlets with long titles which for brevity we will term *Le Triomphe glorieux*¹ and *A True Discourse*,² both published in 1625, only the latter includes events which took place on English soil. The story has to be

¹ *Le Triomphe glorieux et l'ordre des Ceremonies observees au mariage du Roy de la Grande Bretagne, et de Madame sœur du Roy*, reprinted in Somers's *Tracts*, 2nd ed., Vol. IV, pp. 95-99 (1810).

² *A True Discourse of all the Royal Passages, Tryumphs and Ceremonies observed at the Contract and Marriage of the High and Mighty Charles, King of Great Britaine, and the most Excellentest of Ladies, the Lady Henrietta Maria of Burbon, sister to the most Christian King of France.*

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pieced together from a multitude of documents of very varying character. State Papers, Domestic, French, and Venetian, naturally take first place but they are closely rivalled by private letters. In the absence in the England of Charles I's early years of newspapers and journals giving home intelligence and of an informative publication such as the *Mercure François*, we have cause to be grateful to a gossipy correspondent like John Chamberlain¹ and an authoritative one like the Rev. Joseph Mead, or Mede.² Of other sources, the little-quoted *Philoxenis* of Sir John Finett,³ assistant master (later master) of the ceremonies, and the *Autobiography* of Phineas Pett,⁴ the famous shipwright, afford us the most precious details. The King himself has left a personal contribution to the story in a memorandum sent to the French court in July, 1626.⁵ Finally, the *Mémoires* of the Comte de Brienne,⁶ an ambassador-extraordinary, and of the Comte de Tillières,⁷ chamberlain to the young Queen, furnish accounts of the Royal progress from Dover to London as seen through French eyes. Although these narratives were not drawn up until long after 1625 and Tillières's description is replete with spite and prejudice, he and Brienne tell us things which we should be the poorer for not knowing and they do, in the main, confirm our English reports.

On March 23rd, 1624-5, Chamberlain wrote to his friend Sir Dudley Carleton:⁸ "The Duke of Buckingham prepares for Fraunce with all

¹ Chamberlain's letters, addressed with few exceptions to Sir Dudley Carleton, are preserved among the State Papers, Domestic in the Public Record Office. They have been edited with an introduction by N. E. McClure in two volumes, *American Philosophical Society Memoirs*, XII (1939).

² Mead's voluminous correspondence (1620-31) with his friend and kinsman, Sir Martin Stuteville, of Dalham, Suffolk, is preserved in Harleian MSS. 389 and 390 in the British Museum. The great importance of the correspondence is that Mead was at pains to secure from accredited "intelligencers" in London (the chief of whom was Dr. James Meddus, rector of St. Gabriel's, Fenchurch) reliable information about noteworthy affairs taking place in, or being talked of, in the capital. Mead's practice was either to incorporate the substance of his news in his own letter (carefully showing whence it was derived and upon what date) or else to write it out on a separate sheet, enclosing it as a dated London "news-letter" in his own missive. Portions of these letters and enclosures covering the period April to June, 1625, are printed in Vol. I of *The Life and Times of Charles I.*, edited by R. F. Williams (1848), and by Sir Henry Ellis (with partially modernized spelling) in his *Original Letters*, Vol. III (1824). A scholarly edition of Mead, giving the full text and original spelling, is greatly to be desired.

³ Published in 1856 as *Finetti Philoxenis* under the editorship of James Howell, who, in his dedicatory epistle, stresses Finetti's first-hand knowledge, largely derived from an "exact *Diary*" kept by him "of what things had passed, in his Province as *Master of the Ceremonies*".

⁴ Ed. W. G. Perrin, Navy Records Society (1918).

⁵ Edmund Ludlow, *Memoirs*, Vol. III (1699), xxxiv, pp. 305-9.

⁶ *Collection des Mémoires Relatifs à l'Histoire de France*, 2e. sér., Tome XXXV (1824).

⁷ Ed. M. C. Hippeau, Tome I (1862).

⁸ S. P. D., James I, Vol. CLXXXV, p. 99; N. E. McClure, *Letters of John Chamberlain*, Vol. II, p. 607.

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speed, for Wat Montague hath brought word that all is there in great forwardnes, and assurance geven that the young Lady shold be redy to be delivered at the end of thirty dayes from his parting." Four days later James I died. On April 5th it was reported of the new King that he "kept privately his bed or chamber, at St. James's untill Sunday last, & then dined abroad, in the privy Chamber, being in a plain black cloth Cloke to the ancle."¹ Doubtless Charles, with his genuine devotion to his father and his early-developed strict sense of decorum, would have preferred to postpone his marriage, but the length and difficulty of the preceding negotiations made it imperative to carry out the ceremony as soon as possible. Thus it seemed at first sight as if to the "inky cloak" there was to be added yet another *Hamlet* touch, and that the "funeral bak'd meats" would indeed "coldly furnish forth the marriage tables." The date fixed for the short rite outside the "frontispiece" of Nôtre Dame, at which his distant kinsman the Duc de Chevreuse acted as proxy for the King of England, was May 1st-11th.² This day was adhered to by the French: in every other arrangement they let the bridegroom down.

The next six weeks read like a nightmare for Charles. Committed to war with Spain, confronted with the twin trials of plague and parliament, he was driven almost frantic by delay after delay in his bride's journey from Paris to the coast.³ The rumours assigning constantly changing dates for the King's departure from London to meet her, which were circulating throughout May, are not surprising in view of the fact that Charles was forced to alter his plans at least four times before finally setting off. The series of documents addressed to the mayor and corporation of Rochester and others makes this plain. A letter of warrant signed by nine privy councillors at Whitehall on May 6th informs the civic authorities that His Majesty intended "in his way to Dover to lye at Rochester the 13th of this p'sent month."⁴ On the 13th, however, the mayor was told that the King had "this daie altered his tyme of cominge into Kent" and "will be at Rochester on Friday the xxth of May, and not before."⁵ On May 20th, Walter

¹ Sir William Le Neve to Sir Thomas Holland. Birch Historical Letters, Vol. II, British Museum Add. MS. 4177, No. 261, f. 82v.

² The plan of the Duke of Buckingham going to France to celebrate the nuptials in the name of his master and receive the bride, was immediately abandoned on the death of King James.

³ On May 11th-21st, there being no sign of Henrietta's departure, Buckingham crossed to France to hasten the bride. On May 20th, Secretary Conway confided to his fellow-Secretary, Morton, that the delay was very prejudicial (Minute, Conway's Letter Book, f. 213, S.P.D. 14-214), a view confirmed by the Venetian ambassador in England, "these delays occasion the most pernicious results" (May 20th-30th, *Cal. S.P.V.* 1625-26, p. 62).

⁴ *Archæologia*, Vol. XII, p. 124. The series of letters is printed at pp. 124-31. The whereabouts of the originals cannot now be traced.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 125.

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Balcanquhall, dean of Rochester, wrote from the Savoy in great haste and considerable perturbation of spirit to his "worthy and much respected friend, Mr. Dyer, preacher at Rochester," to say: "I pray yow let no tyme be made account of for the king's comming till I send you woord, it is now delayed till the next Thursday [i.e. the 26th] and for anything I can learne is lyke to be put of longer."¹ The careful Scot, who was due to entertain his Sovereign at dinner at Rochester, when he did come, was worried lest he should have incurred unnecessary expense. "For fear of further mistaking, command John Hall presently to send a messenger to Mrs. Wyat at Boxley,² with a note signifying the delay of the King's coming, and that, therefore, no provisions be sent to Rochester till they hear from me, for unless a messenger be presently dispatched, they will perhaps be sent on Monday morning [i.e. the 23rd]."

When at last the day was finally fixed for Tuesday, May 31st, everything was done to expedite matters and to allow the King to travel light: the Royal baggage had been sent ahead to the sea.³ Charles left London on the appointed day, although it was still uncertain whether the Queen would continue her journey without further delay: "by moving he wished to incite her, and he sent an express to tell her of his departure and to urge despatch on her side."⁴ "His Majesty . . . went by water to Gravesend, thence by Post and Coach to Canterbury."⁵

It is worth pausing a moment or two to consider the implications of these facts. The route employed seems to have been the usual one: it would be possible to quote several instances of similar combinations of road and water travel employed by Royalties and ambassadors at this period. What appears as quite out of the ordinary is the rapidity with which the route was covered. Charles accomplished the journey from London to Canterbury (it is 56 miles by road) in one day, abandoning his original plan of sleeping a night at Rochester: the normal time allowed for getting from London to Dover was three days. When Brienne returned to France in January 1624-5, "au lieu d'aller a Douvres en trois jours, comme on le fait d'ordinaire, je m'y rendis en trente-six heures."⁶ This was evidently considered very quick, but it was not so fast a rate as the King's a few months later. Mead's London correspondent went so far as to say that he would perform the journey in four hours, adding an (incorrect) marginal note to the effect that it was 43 miles from London to Canterbury:⁷ but this is gross

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 126.

² A village between Rochester and Maidstone.

³ London, May 27th-June 6th. *Cal. S.P.V.*, 1625-26, p. 69.

⁴ London, June 3rd-13th. *Ibid.*, pp. 74-75.

⁵ *Philoxenis*, p. 152.

⁶ *Mémoires*, p. 395.

⁷ London, May 27th, 1625. Harl. MS., 389, f. 454v.

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exaggeration. Quite as significant as the swiftness of the journey is its simplicity: the two features are, of course, closely connected. Whereas the Queen of England was moving slowly, with the utmost pomp and magnificence, from Paris to Boulogne, the King of England, luggage, pensioners, musicians, and most of his suite all gone before, was unostentatiously travelling post to meet her like any private gentleman. This striking contrast is typical of the fundamental difference between contemporary French and English ideas which was to be productive of much trouble in the early married life of Charles and Henrietta. It is also typical of Charles himself. Untainted by the extravagances of his father's court or by Buckingham's flamboyant style of living, to travel without parade or fuss was thoroughly congenial to the young King's unassuming nature.

From Gravesend Charles went by road to Rochester, which he reached by mid-day, crossing the Medway by the famous stone bridge of eleven arches dating from 1387. Apart from some scanty references in the corporation records,¹ we should know nothing of his halt there but for the *Autobiography* of Phineas Pett. Pett, who had idolized Charles's elder brother Henry, "the noble Prince my Master," had also been familiar with the King since the latter's boyhood and had escorted him back from the ill-starred visit to Spain in 1623. He writes:²

"All April and May I attended at Chatham, to prepare the Fleet that was then bound to fetch over the Queen. In the latter end of May his Majesty came to Rochester, where I presented myself unto him in the Dean's Yard and kissed his hand and had speech with him, till he came into the house, where he dined, and I attended him all the dinner while. Thence I hasted home, and waited his Majesty's coming by towards Canterbury, who alighted at my house³ and stayed there awhile and gave me leave to drink his health, and then returned to his coach, giving me charge to follow him and to hasten on board the Prince, being then in the Downs."

A quiet dinner with Dean Balcanquhall (who, let us hope, had satisfactorily solved his commissariat problems) and an informal call upon

¹ F. F. Smith, *A History of Rochester* (1928), p. 345, quotes three items from the mayor's expense book which must refer to this visit, as Sir Thomas Walsingham, who ceased to be M.P. for Rochester in 1626, is mentioned in one of them. From another, we learn that the city officials met to attend the King at the Crown Inn, the famous hostelry near the bridge where it was customary for Royalty to be entertained.

For the information of students, it may be useful to add a note on the Rochester corporation archives which, by kind permission of the Town Clerk, Mr. P. H. Bartlett, I examined in 1955. The mayor's expense books and the meeting books (see P. 89, Note 2) quoted by Smith, are no longer extant: the meeting books do not begin until 1698, according to a useful MS. schedule of the corporation records compiled by J. H. Bolton in 1938.

² *Autobiography*, pp. 134-35.

³ It stood near St. Bartholomew's Chapel in the High Street.

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his old friend the Chatham shipwright—such is the attractively intimate picture which Pett has left us of Charles's doings at Rochester.

Doubtless the bells of many village churches rang as Charles passed in his coach along Watling Street from Rochester to Canterbury. We know for certain that they rang at Boughton under the Blean, for payments were made to the ringers "when the King went by."¹ "His Majesty entering Canterbury was received by the Mayor (who had borrowed the Recorder (Master *Henry* [*sic*] *Finches* mouth for a well-comming Speech delivered with much Elegancy),"² a very different kind of reception from that which had been his the last time he was there.

Charles's memories of his two previous visits to Canterbury can scarcely have been happy ones. On the first occasion, in April, 1613, as a boy of twelve, he parted from his only sister, Elizabeth, at the outset of *her* wedding journey, baulked by a sudden recall from his father of the promised melancholy privilege of seeing her aboardship at Margate. On the second occasion, in February, 1622-3, at the start of the Spanish adventure, he and Buckingham had actually been arrested and brought before the mayor as suspicious characters, a pretty extraordinary experience for a King of England to look back upon! (Sir) John Finch³ did not fail to grasp the piquancy, not to say, awkwardness, of the situation, and after referring in tactful terms to the Spanish episode as the time when "you our Sunne were in the West," proceeded with some natural embarrassment to urge:⁴

"Let it not (most gracious and mightie kinge) be registred in your royall heart amonge the errors of this citty that your highnes were here stay'd in that Journey (for I see they are damp't with the remembrance of it and humbly expect to have their pardon sealed by one gracious look of yours)."

Finett is our only authority for Charles's quarters in Canterbury. He tells us that the King was "lodg'd at the Lord *Wootons* House, parcell of the demolisht Abby of Saint *Augustine*; The great Lords, and their Ladies that attended him from London . . . were quartered severally in the City, and had their *Randezvous* for Diet (of his Majesties providing) at the Bishops Palace."⁵ After the suppression of St. Augustine's, the abbot's lodgings on the west side of the cloister were converted into a palace by Henry VIII, who added some buildings of his own. This palace subsequently passed through the hands of

¹ *Arch. Cant.*, Vol. XXI, p. 335.

² *Philoxenis*, p. 152.

³ Afterwards the well-known Chief Justice of the Common Pleas who was mainly responsible for the Ship-money judgment of 1637.

⁴ British Museum Sloane MS. 1455, ff. 2-2v. This speech (wrongly dated "May 30") and that delivered by Finch to Charles and Henrietta on June 13th, are printed between pp. 28 and 29 of some editions of *A True Discourse*.

⁵ *Philoxenis*, p. 152.

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Cardinal Pole, Lord Cobham, and Lord Salisbury into the possession of Edward, first Baron Wotton (1548-1626). An excellent idea of the appearance of the buildings only thirty years after Charles's visit, can be obtained from the engraving by Daniel King of a drawing by Thomas Johnson which is to be found in Dugdale's *Monasticon Anglicanum* (1655).¹ The most notable features are the Fyndon or principal gateway; the former guests' hall adjoining; the former abbot's guest hall, or *magna aula* (wrongly styled by Dugdale the monks' refectory), and the staircase leading thereto; and the "Ethelbert" tower. Of these, the original hall (except for the undercroft), the staircase, and the tower have long since disappeared: the Fyndon gateway and the guests' hall alone remain.

Charles stayed two nights at Canterbury, in order probably to recover from the fatigue of his rapid journey there, and it was not until Thursday, June 2nd, that he went on by Watling Street to Dover. "The third day following his Majesty, leaving the married Lords and Ladies at Canterbury, went to Dover for view, and directions of what was fitting for the Queens accommodation, about which, and in expectation of the newes of her approach, he there spent the time from Thursday to Tuesday."² The King's activities at Dover may be studied in considerable detail. On the evening of Friday the 3rd he climbed the Castle keep presumably in order to survey the Channel from that vantage-point for any sign of "the young Lady's" approach. Secretary Conway, writing to Buckingham next day in his execrable hand—one understands after puzzling over the extraordinary strokes which do duty for letters why James I was "wont pleasantly to say that Stenny . . . had given him . . . a secretary who could neither write nor read"³—is our authority for this. Newcomers to Dover arriving at "9 of the cloke last night found his maiesty on the leads where he spent 2 verey cold owers."⁴ On Saturday, the 4th (Whitsun Eve) the King made closer contact with the sea. Pett records:⁵

"Saturday the 4th of June, his Majesty came on board the Prince [the ship detailed to bring Henrietta across to England] riding then in Dover Road, where he dined and was safely landed again. Yet this evening we let slip and went room for the Downs with very foul weather."

Chamberlain's account of the same incident runs as follows:⁶

¹ Vol. I, between pp. 22 and 23.

² *Philoxenis*, p. 152. A letter from Sir Thomas Walsingham to the mayor of Rochester, dated from Canterbury June 2nd, confirms this: "the King is gone this day to Dover" (*Archæologia*, Vol. XII, p. 127).

³ Clarendon, *History of the Rebellion*, Bk. I, § 141.

⁴ [Dover], June 4th. S.P.D., Charles I, Vol. III, 25.

⁵ *Autobiography*, p. 135.

⁶ London, June 12th. S.P.D., Charles I, Vol. III, 60. McClure, Vol. II, p. 622.

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“ On Whitsun eve he dined aboard the Prince royall, and visited two or three of his ships more that lay in the roade, but that evening there fell out such a storme that made them fall fowle one vpon another, and did much harme.”

Whitsunday, the 5th, was passed by Charles at Dover, but “ on munday he rode into the Downes & viewed the Castles & Sandwich,” a piece of information supplied by Mead’s London correspondent alone.¹ The inspection of the ships in particular must have been a treat to the King, who, like nearly all the Stuarts, took a strong interest in the navy; it was also the first holiday that he had enjoyed since his accession.

A holiday Charles must have needed. Not only had he the anxieties of preparing for his bride, but while he was at Dover reports would have reached him of the “ little armie ” that was accompanying her. Typical of the French demands was the request preferred on June 3rd from Amiens through Lord Carlisle by the Duchesse de Chevreuse that she might have special transport arrangements across the Channel as she expected to be confined shortly after reaching England.²

Meantime most of the court had remained, not too cheerfully, at Canterbury, where an added gloom was cast by the death of the famous composer, Orlando Gibbons, on Whitsunday. “ Orlando Gibbon, the organist of the chappell (that had the best hand in England) died the last weeke at Caunterburie, not without suspicion of the sicknes,” says Chamberlain.³ Mead’s correspondent adds that as he was coming from “ Service at Christchurch ” he “ fell downe dead.”⁴ “ Yt should seeme we have poore intelligence,” commented Chamberlain,⁵ “ when the King posted hence the last of May to meet her [the Queen] and the LLs and Ladies were sent somewhat before to attend her comming at Caunterburie, where they have taried ever since to their great trouble and charge, but the k. cheeres them vp almost every day wth messages from Douer and perswades them to patience.”

Patience was indeed needed by both King and courtiers. A fresh delay was caused by the Queen Mother, Marie de Medicis, being taken ill at Amiens. Some enterprising spirits such as Sir Henry Mildmay, master of the King’s jewel house, sought permission to slip over to France to see “ three Queenes together,”⁶ pleading “ all my service

¹ London, June 10th. Harl. MS. 389, f. 458.

² S.P. Foreign, France, 75, ff. 58-59.

³ London, June 12th. S.P.D., Charles I, Vol. III, 60. McClure, Vol. II, p. 623.

⁴ London, June 10th. Harl. MS. 389, f. 458.

⁵ London, June 12th. S.P.D., Charles I, Vol. III, 60. McClure, Vol. II, p. 622.

⁶ Anne of Austria, wife of Louis XIII, accompanied her mother-in-law and sister-in-law.

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beinge heere [at Canterbury] done untill the Queene comes, and his Maiesties plate and jewels safely brought to Canterbury, and well settled in a stronge place wth a good wotch boath day and night."¹ Charles himself had long been toying with the idea of going to meet Henrietta and her mother at Boulogne. Feeling in England ran very strongly against this, however. "It is feared he will go to Bulleine, but I hope he will not," Sir Thomas Walsingham had declared on June 2nd,² and on the 4th both the Secretaries of State had written decidedly on the subject to Buckingham.³ Marie de Medicis's illness, however, put a stop to the whole plan, and on Wednesday, June 8th, the King returned to Canterbury "with the reason of giving to the Queen [now reported to be reaching Boulogne that day] some time of refreshing after her Sea-distempers before he would see her."⁴

With the King's return, the court cheered up. On June 10-20th, Pesaro, the Venetian ambassador, reported from London that "all the Court, cavaliers and ladies, are entertained at the royal cost and spend the days in conversation and the nights in dancing."⁵ Charles, having completed his preparations for the reception of his bride, had nothing to do but wait again. This time the weather, not the lady, proved unkind. Pett records:⁶

"Thursday the 9th of June, we got over to Boulogne [Bullen] and anchored in Boulogne Road. The 10th day we had a great storm, the wind north-west, where all our ships drove, and we brake our best bower and were forced to let fall our sheet anchor . . .

Sunday morning, being the 12th day, all things prepared fit and the great storm allayed, about 11 of the clock we received our young Queen on board, and having a fair leading gale, fitting the entertainment of a Queen, we set sail out of Boulogne Road about one [of the] clock, and before 8 had safely landed her and her train at Dover."

This account is confirmed by Finnet, who adds that Henrietta landed at seven o'clock. A sentence in a letter from Dean Balcanquhall written from Canterbury that very evening, recaptures for us the excitement of the occasion.⁷ "Their are newes just nowe come to the King that the Queen is within sight of Dover, and readie to land." It fell to Robert Tyrwhitt,⁸ most faithful of Royal equeries, to bring the tidings of Henrietta's actual disembarkation, on one of the famous

¹ Canterbury, June 3rd. S.P.D., Charles I, Vol. III, 13.

² *Archæologia*, Vol. XII, p. 127.

³ Dover. S.P.D., Charles I, Vol. III, 24 and 25.

⁴ *Philoxenis*, p. 153.

⁵ *Cal. S.P.V.*, 1625-26, p. 81.

⁶ *Autobiography*, p. 135.

⁷ *Archæologia*, Vol. XII, p. 129.

⁸ For an account of Tyrwhitt (1590-1651), who had been in Charles's service since 1616, see R. P. Tyrwhitt, *Notices and Remains of the Family of Tyrwhitt* (privately printed 1872), pp. 55-57.

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rides of history. "The newes of her arriveall was by Master *Tirwhit* within half an hour and six minuits carried to the King at Canterbury."¹

Everything had been designed for the "young Lady's" convenience, "passing," as she did, "out of her Boat on shore by an artificiall moveable Bridge framed for that use only."² The compiler of the account of the landing in the *Mercure François*³ waxes eloquent over the arrangements. Apparently Henrietta dreaded being sea-sick on the crossing. As far back as April 30th Mead had written: "she hath desired (saith mine author) of our K to forbear her 2 dayes after her Landing till she be recovered of her Seasicknes; but I wonder how such secrets come to be known."⁴ For once report spoke true. According to the *Mercure François*,⁵ Henrietta sent an urgent message to her husband not to come to Dover that night. Finett⁶ says that "Her Majesty rather ill at ease, then sick after her Sea motions, was carried from the shore to the Town in a Litter, there received Wellcome and presented by the Mayor, she went in Coach up to the Castle."

No cost had been spared in making Dover Castle comfortable for Henrietta. Charles had expressly repaired "the King's Lodging in the square tower within the inner keep and the most useful buildings and offices thereto adjoining" at the cost of £2,600, a very large sum in those days.⁷ A suite of nine rooms was prepared by the Duke of Buckingham as admiral of the Cinque Ports⁸ and fitted up with the Crown furniture, as Brienne, who commended the "magnifique souper" awaiting the travellers, was handsome enough to acknowledge.⁹ Tillières, on the other hand, was disgusted with Dover Castle and its furnishings: "Le château est un vieux bâtiment fait à l'antique, où la reine fut assez mal logée, pirement meublée . . ."¹⁰ It is a pity that some modern biographers of Henrietta have chosen to believe Tillières and at this point in the story to sentimentalize over the horror of her arrival, confronted with this terrible castle and a sulking husband not there to greet her.

Early on Monday morning, June 13th, Charles set off once more along the lap of Watling Street which joins Canterbury and Dover. Just before the road makes the sharp descent of Lydden Hill, given the right light and atmosphere, there flashes on the eye an unforgettable vignette of Dover Castle, floating in the distance like a fairy palace in

¹ *Philoxenis*, p. 153.

² *Ibid.* Cf. *Le Mercure François*, Tome XI, p. 394.

³ Tome XI, p. 394.

⁴ Harl. MS. 389, f. 434.

⁵ Tome XI, p. 394.

⁶ *Philoxenis*, p. 153. Cf. Brienne, p. 407.

⁷ John H. Mowl, *Royal Visitors at Dover* (1937), p. 26.

⁸ London, June 17th-27th. *Cal. S.P.V.*, p. 87.

⁹ P. 407.

¹⁰ *Mémoires*, p. 89.

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mid-air. The present writer, who saw it thus in the autumn of 1945, cannot but hope that Charles too was favoured with this romantic vision of his goal. He reached Dover about 10 o'clock, and we, too, have reached the climax of our narrative.

The account of the actual lovers' meeting of Charles and Henrietta at Dover Castle is so well known that I do not propose to retread the familiar ground. It is, however, important to recall what the sources for it are. Of actual eyewitness accounts, we have the King's own report of part of a conversation between himself and the Queen; Finett; and the impressions of the two Frenchmen. Sources derived from eyewitnesses are two detailed newsletters of June 17th;¹ the Venetian ambassador; and the *True Discovrse*. The accounts in the *History of the Thrice Illustrious Princess Henrietta Maria de Bourbon* by John Dauncy (1660) and *The Life and Death of . . . Henrietta Maria de Bourbon* (1669), although they doubtless preserve valuable traditions, cannot be placed in the same class, and should not, as has too often been done, be treated as of equal worth.

Finett's neglected narrative speaks of the Queen's "best and happiest Reception from the King."² It goes on to tell how:

"Their Majesties dining that day together, the King after dinner gave Audience to the Duke de *Chevereux*, the Duke of Buckingham with my service introducing him to the Presence Chamber of the Queen, whence the King honoured him (after his Audience) with his company to his Majesties own Presence Chamber for a sight and well-come of the faire Dutches de *Chevereux*."

After dinner, at which Charles carved for his wife, the coaches were brought round for the bridal party to proceed to Canterbury. Unhappily, the initial harmony was at once shattered. Madame St. George, Henrietta's sub-governess, claimed to ride in the coach with the King and Queen. Of this Charles did not approve. His own account of the incident, penned after a year of most unhappy married life and constant bickerings, is as follows:³

"Madam *St. George* taking a Distast because I would not let her ride with us in the Coach, when there was Women of better Quality to fill her room, claiming it as her due (which in *England* we think a strange thing) set my Wife in such an Humor of Distaste against me, as from that very hour to this, no Man can say that ever she used me two Days together with so much respect as I deserved of her."

It does not take much imagination to envisage the string of clumsy coaches tackling the long pull-up from Dover to Lydden Hill. At

¹ Harl. MS. 389, ff. 460-1v.

² *Philoxenis*, p. 153.

³ Ludlow, *Memoirs*, Vol. III (1699), xxxiv, p. 306. Cf. the accounts of Brienne, pp. 407-8, and Tillières, p. 90.

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Barham Downs, some five miles from Canterbury, a halt was made. Finett reports:¹

“Their Majesties . . . on Barrham Down were attended (for their meeting, and reception) by the Lords and Ladies mentioned, these latter presenting themselves from a fitting distance (where the Queen stood) to her Majesty, each in their ranke, with three low reverences kissing her hand, and her Majesty them for their greater honour.”

A True Discovrse recounts:²

“Being come from the Towne of *Douer*, they came vpon *Barrrome Downe*, a spatious and goodly place, where were assembled all the *English Nobilitie*, and many Ladies of Honour and high place, which being ranckt according to the dignitie of their great places, and the knight Marshall with a carefull respect keeping the vulgar from intruding or doing them offence. The King and Queene in greate State rode betweene them giuing such respect and grace to euery one of deseruing qualitie, that euery one stroue in their prayers and praises, to let the world vnderstand the infinitenesse of their joy and comfort.” James Howell says:³

“There were a goodly train of choice Ladies attended her coming upon the Bowling-green on *Barham Downs* upon the way, who divided themselves into two rows, and they appeared like so many Constellations; but methought the Country-Ladies out-shined the Courtiers”. Agnes Strickland⁴ thought good to add to these particulars that “there were pavilions and a banquet prepared.” Tents and picnics have been introduced as part of the Barham Downs reception ever since.

A True Discovrse continues:⁵

“From *Barrrome Downe* the King and Queen came the same night to the Citie of *Canterburie*, all the ways whereupon they rode being strewed with greene rushes, Roses, and the choicest flowers that could be gotten, and the trees loaden with people of all sorts, who with shouts and acclamations gaue them a continuall welcome. Being come neare vnto the Citie, their Highnesses were met, and receiued by the Maior, and the rest of the Citie Magistrates, and so brought within the walles, where was pronounced before them diuers learned gratulatory Orations, and such infinite preparations made of all kindes for the generall entertainment, that *Canterbury* seemed for that little time, a very *Eden* or *Paradise*, where nothing was wanting that might serue joy or delight.”

One of the “learned gratulatory Orations” was a second speech from

¹ *Philoxenis*, p. 153.

² Pp. 27-28.

³ *Familiar Letters*, ed. Joseph Jacobs (1890), p. 238.

⁴ *Lives of the Queens of England*, Vol. IV (Bohn's Historical Library, 1883), p. 157.

⁵ Pp. 28-29.

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Finch, which may also be read.¹ Both King and Queen were much to be pitied: the King because he had endured the tedium of a speech from Finch less than a fortnight before, the Queen because she could not follow a single word.

The Royal party then drove to St. Augustine's: the "palais de l'archeveque," inaccurately writes Brienne.² And here we come to the capital error mentioned at the beginning of this paper, an error which is in urgent need of refutation. By the end of the eighteenth century³ the tradition had become established that in the evening of June 13th the King and Queen were married at Canterbury: this was expanded by Agnes Strickland into a marriage in the great hall of St. Augustine's according to the rites of the English Church. For the past century, the story has been repeated in practically every guide-book to Canterbury and every biography of Charles and Henrietta.

Agnes Strickland writes:⁴ "No particulars of the ceremony have been preserved, excepting that the great English composer, Orlando Gibbons, performed on the organ at the royal nuptials." Small wonder that no particulars have been preserved, since no such ceremony took place. The statement about Gibbons is, of course, absurd: he died, as we have seen, on June 5th, and his memorial in Canterbury Cathedral cited by Miss Strickland as evidence, simply records that he was *summoned* to the marriage. Not one of the contemporary accounts of June 13th, 1625, has a word about an Anglican wedding service: a conspiracy of silence on such an important event is quite incredible. It had indeed been expressly laid down in the marriage treaty that no other ceremony than that outside Nôtre Dame should be allowed. The only suggestions to the contrary are the rumour reported by Mead's correspondent on April 27th: "It was sayd our K. and the Madam should be married at Canterbury after the English manner,"⁵ and the phrase in the late *Life and Death of . . . Henrietta Maria de Bourbon*.⁶ "At Canterbury, June 14/24 [*sic*] they were personally married." Lingard's invention of a civil ceremony—"the contract of marriage was publicly renewed in the great hall in Canterbury"⁷—is perhaps partly responsible for the fable.

¹ Sloane MS. 1455, ff. 4-6.

² Curiously enough none of the contemporary English authorities mention where the King and Queen stayed at Canterbury, but tradition and the fact that Charles had stayed there on the outward journey, point strongly to St. Augustine's.

³ William Gostling, *A Walk In and About the City of Canterbury* (1774), p. 25.

⁴ *Op. cit.*, *loc. cit.*

⁵ Harl. MS. 389, f. 433v.

⁶ P. 12.

⁷ *History of England*, Vol. VI (1825), p. 230, followed by Janet Mackay, *Little Madam* (1939), p. 56.

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That the marriage was consummated that night at Canterbury¹ admits of no shadow of doubt: all the contemporary authorities are agreed about this. "Their Majesties supt, and slept together. *Sic consummatū est*," says Finett.² A letter in the beautiful hand of Endymion Porter, one of the grooms of the Bedchamber, addressed to his wife ("My dear Oliue") from "Conterburie this tuesdaye morning," seems to transport us straight back to 1625:³

"This last night the king and queene did lie together here att Conterburie, Long maye they do soe, and haue as manie children as wee are like to haue, I haue sent you two of the kings poyntes one for your selfe and an other for a frend . . ."

Not even the vivid accounts of the letters of June 17th (which should certainly be studied) can convey a sense of immediacy such as this.

Tuesday, June 14th, was spent by the Royal party at Canterbury. The only facts about it that have been preserved are the preaching before the King in the Cathedral by Dean John Boys⁴ and the writing by Charles of a formal letter of compliment in French to Louis XIII.⁵

On Wednesday, June 15th, Charles and Henrietta continued their journey along Watling Street towards London. Again the bells of Boughton under the Blean pealed, "at the Kynges returne from Conterburie."⁶ Passing through Rochester without making any stay, they

"rode in the most triumphant manner that might be to *Cobham* Hall, finding (as before I said) all the high-waies strewed with Roses, and all maner of sweet flowers, and here at *Cobham* they lodged al that night, where there was all plentifull entertainment, and nothing wanting that might adde any honour either to the King or Kingdome."⁷

At Cobham the King and Queen were entertained by the recently-widowed Katharine, Duchess of Lennox. The Lennox Stuarts had always been particular favourites of King James, and Charles was disposed to be equally friendly to his nine young cousins and their mother, the nearest kinsfolk in his kingdom. The eldest son, James, a boy of thirteen, had been sworn a gentleman of the Bedchamber on April 23rd: the eldest daughter, Elizabeth, was only a few months

¹ The Royal bedchamber is said to have been over the gateway, but the statement (Harl. MS. 389, f. 461) that the King bolted seven doors with his own hands, makes this improbable.

² *Philoxenis*, p. 153. Cf. Harl. MS. 389, f. 461. Some modern writers wrongly speak of a "banquet" in the evening at Canterbury and transfer to it incidents from the dinner at Dover.

³ S.P.D., Charles I, Vol. III, 69.

⁴ The sermon, on the text "One day in Thy courts is better than a thousand", is printed in Boys's *Remaines* (1631), pp. 211-27.

⁵ S.P. Foreign, France, 75, f. 76. Draft.

⁶ *Arch. Cant.*, Vol. XXI, p. 335.

⁷ *A True Discourse*, p. 29.

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younger than Henrietta. But in spite of the cheerful description of the Cobham visit given above, the irreconcilable Tillières's only comment on the Queen's sojourn at "une maison de la duchesse de Lenox, proche de Gravesend" is that "ce jour-la, elle se montra fort mélancholique."¹

We have now come to the last day of the wedding journey.

"On Thursday being the Sixteenth of June according to our Computation the King and Queen departed from *Cobham* all the waies prepared as hath been before shewed, and so in most glorious manner came to the City of *Rochester* where there was expectation of some stay; but the day being spent too farre they rid thorow the City, not withstanding the Maior, Magistrates & Citizens of that City gaue both the King & Queene a noble & most hearty welcome, and the Recorder of the City made vnto them a most learned and eloquent oration, for which both the King and Queene returned back their Royall thanks and so passing away from the City a braue volley of shot and great Ordnance was deliuered from the Shippes which lay vpon the Riuer."² From Gravesend Charles and Henrietta proceeded by barge to Whitehall:³ the King's journey had come full circle. The enthusiasm was tremendous. "Only once again was Charles to attract such crowds; but then there would be no shouting—only a horror-struck silence."⁴

¹ P. 91.

² *A True Discourse*, p. 29. On May 21st it had been decided to present two cups, each worth £15, to the King and Queen (Abstract of a minute from a lost meeting book (1621-53), contained in a volume of abstracts made by S. Downe in 1808, and preserved at the Guildhall). It took some time to raise the money to pay for the cups: see Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 345.

³ Harl. MS. 389, ff. 461-61v, and f. 460; *Philoxenis*, p. 154.

⁴ E. Wingfield Stratford, *King Charles and the Conspirators* (1937), p. 145.