

JEAN PUGET DE LA SERRE
HISTOIRE CURIEUSE DE TOUT CE QUI C'EST PASSÉ À
L'ENTRÉE DE LA REYNE MÈRE DU ROY TRÈS CHRÉTIEN
DANS LES VILLES DES PAYS-BAS

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Translated section – the entry of Marie de Medici into Antwerp (pp 43-88).

When Messieurs the Magistrates of Antwerp received notification of the imminent arrival of the Queen Mother and of the *Infante* [the Archduchess Isabella, daughter of Philip II of Spain and Regent of the Spanish Netherlands] in their city, they immediately gave order for a huge number of light frigates and other ships to assemble in the port of Villebroeck in order to receive the two courtly parties of the Queen and of Her Highness [the Archduchess] – whose ladies, lords and knights brought together to enter the city constituted a huge number of people.

The frigate that they had specially prepared for the Queen Mother and for the Archduchess was constructed in the form of a small galley, richly ornamented and embellished with a tapestry decorated with the most agreeable architectural and decorative motifs (grotesqueries). Twelve sailors, all dressed in the same fabric with the same decorations and colour-scheme, were intended to row the vessel, and were so enthusiastic about their task that they were only with difficulty restrained from setting out to meet the courtly party too early. There were also amongst the reception party numerous important captains who had expressly commissioned new ships, decorated with their own standards and with banners in the colours of their mistresses, which would allow them to take part in the reception ceremonies with greater ease. The effect of this was that the little port was so filled with an infinite variety of boats and ships that it was necessary to look far across them to see the sea itself.

What simultaneous cries of joy, loud acclamations and sounds of trumpets, drums and musket fire greeted the arrival of the carriage which contained the Queen Mother and the *Infante*. I do not ever recall having heard a sound more agreeable than the joyous cacophony which accompanied the Queen and the *Infante* as they boarded the superb frigate awaiting them in the port. Immediately after this all of the Household Ladies and Maids [Dames et Filles d'honneur] of the Queen and the Archduchess took their places in the newly constructed boats assembled for their service. Immediately after this the Lords and Knights forced themselves into the first boats that they could find – apart from those individuals who had been allocated to specific boats by specific arrangement. When the fleet set off the sailors of each of the boats, anxious to outpace each other, made a great show of competition, proving that they could row out of the port more quickly than their rivals. At first both the wind and the tide seemed to assist this competition to achieve the greatest speed in leaving the port.

It was truly marvellous to see such a mass of craft on the sea, waving and signalling to those left in the port, whose numbers were as great as those in the fleet. Even more

astonishing was to see yet another huge crowd of people gathered outside the port but along each side of the channel, mostly dressed in rustic clothing, and showing that they shared the joy and enthusiasm of the main participants in the reception.

All the forts encountered along the route, under the command of their captains and governors, fired off an infinite number of cannon shots as the royal party passed in the boats, using this means both to demonstrate their homage to the royal party and to signal news of the passage of the flotilla to the surrounding areas.

Consider that each of the frigates in the fleet has its own band of musicians as well as the sailors. In one boat the sound of voices would charm the ears, while in another selected groups of instruments would ravish the spirit. In another boat the clarions and trumpets would offer a more martial music, while in a fourth a band of violins would offer a more melancholy and reflective style of music. I leave to you to imagine the combination of joy and happiness that all of this diverse and beautiful music-making, and the ravishing spectacle had on those present – lifting their souls to a pitch of ecstasy such as angels would not enjoy, nor all the virtues gathered together. What could ever equal this combination of the marvels of the earth, the wonderful harmonies of the music and the grace visible to the eyes? For my part I must confess that were I to contemplate such scenes for too long I would fall all too easily into the temptations of idolatry; for the senses, the intellect, even the soul itself, were equally ravished by the spectacle. What new marvels this spectacle offered, as if Orpheus with his lyre and Amphion through the melodiousness of his voice were acting together to enchant the rocks and the mountains? These two great royal princesses, whose renown was being trumpeted out to the world, in whose trains the whole court was assembled – every lady and gentleman of note formed part of the trains of the princesses. It was true to say at this point that the empire of the earth was less great than that of the seas, for the latter contained upon it during this procession everything that was glorious, precious, pious and worthy of admiration.

With what pleasure did we listen to the sound of the waves which, with a full measure of vanity and arrogance, carried upon their backs such a rich and precious burden! I will say in passing that it seemed to me that the boats containing the Ladies travelled more rapidly than the others – as if the breath and sighs of their lovers helped to fill the sails of their boats and drive them more rapidly.

I had the thought in seeing this great mass of courtiers that it was an army of lovers, which for the love of justice would be prepared to give combat against the general miseries of the times. And it was as if the voice of the people, emanating from a heavenly organ, already bore witness to the triumph of this army by the cries of joy. The noise and celebration multiplied in scale and intensity, such that it obliged Monsieur the Marquis de Sainte-Croix, Governor-General of the armies of the King of Spain in the Netherlands, and Monsieur the Marquis of Aytona, the King's ambassador and Admiral, together with a throng of other Spaniards and Netherlanders, to approach the Queen Mother and the Archduchess in their own fleet - a large number of barges decorated with banners and armed with cannons. And once in view of the frigate in which the Queen

Mother and the Archduchess were sitting, the cannons of the barges fired off a barrage to signal their own respect and homage – a sound which resonated through the air, across land and sea, and by whose echo the princesses received an affirmation of joy and declaration of service.

As the courtly party continued they were approached by a large number of full-size warships, joining together with the barges and other reception craft to compose an entire armada. In excellent sailing order, and to the sound of thousands and thousands of musket and cannon shots, this fleet approached the royal boats in order to offer their own homage to Innocence and Piety, and to celebrate their triumph. Holding off from approaching too close by respect for the persons of the princesses, the great armada took positions along the Flanders side of the channel in order to allow the royal party to pass in front of them. It was a splendid sight to see this entirely new armada which had come out to meet the other, already apparently so numerous, and with another barrage of shot and cannon fire, softened by the sound of trumpet fanfares, to provide yet another great concert of triumphal music.

Trying to describe all of this to you, I have difficulty reminding myself that such a splendid scene could actually occur in the real world, and my account must seem excited and confused as I attempt to order my thoughts to describe what actually happened. In the midst of all this grandeur, noise and celebration, the fleet approached Antwerp itself. As the courtly party approached yet another barrage of cannon and musket fire greeted them, this time fired off by the garrison of the city. In response to these salvos from the city walls, the various ships of the accompanying fleet, performing the same duty, fired off their own reciprocal barrage from the sea. The waves themselves seemed to flee away from this great mass of fire-power, but in shying away from the firing they carried their precious charges further inland and towards the city.

It was indeed a marvellous sight to see the superb city of Antwerp rising up from its position on the edge of the sea, its ramparts, belfries, towers, bastions and harbour being absolutely full of people, such that it appeared a city made up entirely of people, hiding from sight houses and walls. Moreover as the fleet approached it seemed that the number of people, although already innumerable, continued miraculously to increase as the full scale of the vast numbers became apparent, a number so vast that it must have been the case that every house in the city had been abandoned as the crowd flocked to see the greatest queen in the world and the most admirable princess. But I will moderate my tone at this point to share with you a moment of seriousness.

I found myself thinking as had the great king Xerxes when he saw the great mass of his army, and though I sighed rather than wept, I thought nevertheless that in one hundred years time there would be nothing left of this great mass of humanity but a few ashes, and that one hundred years after that not even a trace of the cinders would remain. This reflection served to temper the extreme joy which I had hitherto felt at the sight of all this splendour and rejoicing, and the pleasures that assailed all of my senses. I tell you of my serious thoughts simply to remind you of the constant need to resist the temptations of the vanities of the world. Thus do you apprehend the reverse of the medal.

But what astonishment seized me in the midst of such joy. I saw the earth apparently all in arms, the air filled with smoke from muskets and cannons, and the waves apparently a mass of flame. The earth seemed to shake with joy, fires burnt across the sea with flames of amorous love. The air itself seemed full of the spirit of rejoicing. As no heart amongst all those present breathed anything other than this spirit of rejoicing, the sentiment overwhelmed everything around about.

This was no imagination: the cannons charged with the celebration of this public rejoicing truly caused the earth to shake, the ardor of their firing seemed impossible to extinguish, and a happy concordance of fire and water could be admired. At first I thought that the weather had changed, and that a thick fog had swept across the brightness of the sun, shrouding the sight of so many marvellous images. But I was deceived; what clouded the sun was merely the smoke from the cannon and musketry, an effect too agreeable and impressive for me to complain of its effects. The sun gradually reappeared as the clouds of smoke dispersed little by little, and it was most pleasing to see the rays of the sun streaming through the gradually dissipating smoke – as if the sun itself was the fire which had caused the billowing clouds.

It was no less a pleasure for me to hear music from all sides – voices, instruments, oboes, clarions, trumpets, drums and bells; their various resonances and harmonies creating a delightful concert of sounds which appealed to the ears but defied any careful analysis. Everything came together on this theatre of the waters to please every one of the senses. The eyes were attracted by the great multitude of people, whose innumerable diversity provided constant diversion; the ears were constantly assailed by sweet music. Like a theatre moreover, in which all exists to provide pleasure and diversion, it was possible to admire everything at once within the same frame, though constantly shaped and reshaped in new forms.

Reflect for a moment upon the diversity of the pleasures: simultaneously the flashing of fire on the surface of the waters, the sound of the cannon from which the fires were emanating, the great number of ships on the water, whose shadows cast were as impressive as the ships themselves; in the midst of all this a new concert of music began, and was carried across the waters to reach all across the earth. It was possible to believe that these sweet sounds would reach as far as my own King's court, and that his own most generous heart would respond in kind to this celebration, participating in this way in all of these joys and triumphs.

Truly I imagined myself in a most agreeable dream, perhaps a celebration of the mythical marriage of Neptune and Amphitriton, joined in the vast ocean-depth celebrations by Thetis and the marine gods together with the nymphs of the waters. As we approached the citadel of Antwerp, this great, impregnable fortress also began to salute the royal barges with its cannons, rending the air with the thundering of the guns and the lightning of their fire. The profusion of smoke produced by the firing created the illusion of night-time, hiding sky, earth and sea from our gaze. Yet the memory of having seen so many agreeable and awe-inspiring sights, and the expectation of seeing them again when the clouds lifted, itself gave a pleasure so great that it defies description.

Soon it appeared to be dawn again, as the rising sun pierced the clouds of night, and the golden light once again fell first of all upon the distant mountains and their jagged, rocky peaks, then gradually illuminated the countryside, the forests, whole towns. But in this case the pleasure was even greater, for the growing light of this artificial dawn slowly revealed not just the surrounding countryside, but the outlines of a proud tower, then the spires of numerous belfries, and then the great, lustrous outline of the Palace; and at this very hour the outlines of one of the most beautiful cities in the world, replete with all of its population, came once more back into view. What made this sight even more amazing was the recognition that the towers, steeples, houses and walls had all been opened up to create innumerable windows from which the crowds could watch the approaching party, and express their joy and admiration.

The ramparts and the streets of the city looking out towards the sea were all lined with numerous cannon, and their firing complemented, with delightful confusion, the noise, flame and smoke of the other batteries in the citadel and on the ships. The sound was martial, but as it was the result of joyous celebration the effect was more of pleasure than of fear.

The ramparts of the city were lined, from the port of Croonenborch as far as the guard-house of the boulevard of the Abbey of Saint-Michel, with five companies of civic guards, all richly equipped; and on the Hoykay five other companies also stood to receive the courtly party in the most disciplined order, as there were also guards on the Werf, the point at which the Queen and the Archduchess would disembark. The six guilds, the companies of the most distinguished citizens, were also cause for admiration, fully equipped and uniformed in the most splendid manner. Each of the groups of guards expressed their joy at the event by firing off salvos from their muskets, three from each company. The order for the celebratory salvos was given by M. Henry van Etten, Sr of Westmeerbeke and Burgomaster of the city, whose combination of good birth and outstanding merit caused him to be admired and honoured by all.

I should say at this stage that though the constant firing of guns and muskets, the clarion-calls and bells, the rattling of drums and the shrill sound of fifes might have been sufficient to cause alarm amongst the spectators, it was nonetheless the case that the happiness and contentment that seized all hearts at this scene of triumph, removed any sense of anxiety and fear. The cries and acclamations of the people as the royal party approached were far louder and indeed drowned out the fanfares of the trumpets. The general anticipation as the boats moved towards the port crowded out any fear, and created an atmosphere of pleasure and almost of leisurely anticipation, despite the background of noise and military-sounding animation. At the same time the shadows of this night created by the smoke of artillery-firing served to inflame the imaginations of those watching and rejoicing.

This whole great fleet of ships, boats and barges finally berthed, following the frigate in which the Queen and the Archduchess were riding, mooring in positions all along the bank of the Werf. A whole army of carriages was assembled waiting for the seaborne party to disembark. The Queen Mother and the Archduchess together mounted into a single carriage, while the others were filled with the Ladies from their entourages. But

there appeared at the same time as the carriages an entirely new army of people, intending to escort the two princesses into the city itself. The citizens constituted the infantry of this mighty army, the lords of the surrounding territory the cavalry; and in this way the Queen and the *Infante* made their entry into the city.

By this time the sun was now starting to set, and the heat of the day was much reduced, allowing the ladies in the procession to display their beauties without fear of being coloured or bronzed by the sun. All of this beauty, having seemingly cast off its mourning by abandoning the veils which had hitherto protected the ladies' faces from the sun, attracted the attention of all of the onlookers, overwhelmed by such a display of charm and physical grace. Even the greatest tapestries I have seen could not capture the image of this great mass of different people thronging the streets of Antwerp. The houses from roofs to basements were crammed with people, and as the largest part of these spectators were women, one could not but contemplate the array of beauty and graces, and their great diversity.

In the great market place a further eight companies of civic guards were arrayed, so richly dressed and equipped that nothing more could have been added without turning surfeit to excess. These added their own salute of musketry to the reception of the Queen and the Archduchess. In the same way a further seven companies did the same with all possible finesse and grace as the princely party passed the square known as the Oeuer. At the far end of this square the party encountered yet more civic guards, arranged in files along the route to the Abbey of Saint Michael, where the Queen's lodgings had been prepared – in accordance with the customary precedent that it was here that the dukes of Brabant were accustomed to lodge. The six companies made up of the leading guildsmen followed the courtly procession, adding their good order and discipline to the general atmosphere of pomp and magnificence. And when the princesses finally alighted in the front courtyard, M. Jean Chrysostom van Der Sterre, the most worth Abbot, accompanied by Ms the Prior, Fredegand Bonello, and the Chamberlain, Abeel Camerier, came out to meet the Archduchess, and presented her with a gilded key which she could bestow as she saw fit. But the Archduchess insisted that they give the key instead to the Queen Mother, and this the religious did with all marks of respect and humility, after having uttered the following speeches:

“Madame,

We would have hoped that this poor hovel might have been as rich and magnificent as the superb [Palace of the] Louvre itself, in order to receive your majesty with all the dignity due to you. But unable to transform our wishes into reality, we must simply transform them into prayers, offering you a thousand sincere hopes that your own wishes will be entirely fulfilled.”

The Queen was most satisfied by this harangue which combined zeal for her service with great eloquence. She indicated her great satisfaction to the Abbot with the reception that he had accorded to her, and received the key to the Abbey with the most effusive thanks. Her Majesty then encountered all of the magistrates of the city assembled as a body in the

first great hall of the Abbey, where Master Jacques Edelheere, First Councillor and Pensioner, spoke these words on behalf of the entire assembled company:

“Madame,

The Magistrates of this city have come to prostrate themselves at Your Majesty’s feet, in order to render you the homage and the respect that is entirely due to you as the greatest Queen in the world. But the glory and magnificence of your greatness has so overwhelmed us in our humbleness that we find ourselves rather in confusion and disorder as much as in a great mood of rejoicing – such that we cannot express our reverence and service in acts, and still less in words. None of which is surprising, Madame, when we are brought to contemplate your greatness; for nothing in nature is more precious, nothing on the earth is more rare. To offer our humble obedience and service to your majesty it would be necessary to pass by so many thrones in order to mount up to that which enfolds your own glory, and we fear that in doing so we would offend you in offering our unworthy honour and service. For all such honours are infinitely base and unworthy in comparison with your great perfection. Madame, all that we would dare to ask of you is that Your Majesty would at least be satisfied with our zeal and eagerness for your service, zeal which this day has been sufficient to illumine a thousand joyous fires in this city as a public sign of our devotion and thanks at your entry.”

The Queen, ever generous and magnanimous in all such encounters with those who offered their service, replied in order to express her entire satisfaction with the favours that their courtesy had offered to her. Amongst the things which she most wanted was the opportunity to reciprocate such offers of devotion and service. These words were treasured as gold by Messieurs the Magistrates, not just for their meaning, but for the grace and gentleness with which they were offered by the Queen.

The Archduchess accompanied the Queen into her private chamber whence, after having spent some time in private and quiet conversation, she got back into her carriage and travelled, with all the rest of her courtiers, to the house of the heirs of the late Simon Roderiguez, which had been prepared for her stay, since she had given up the lodging that was customarily given to her when in Antwerp in favour of the Queen.

Eight companies of the most notable citizens saluted her with enthusiasm as she passed along the rue de la Mer, along which they were standing in file on both side of the street as far as the entrance to her palace.

Though night had fallen, it cast few of its shadows across the earth, for the light of an infinite number of joyous bonfires had been lit in every square in the city, and these dissipated much of the darkness. The effect was as if a new day had dawned casting out the shadows, a conceit much enjoyed by the population, who treated the warmth and light from the bonfires as if these were the rays of the sun, and used the opportunity provided by this light and warmth to continue their public festivities and rejoicing into the night, singing and dancing and engaging in other no less agreeable diversions.

On every street corner, and in all the squares one encountered concerts whose audiences were both men and women, and all together danced to songs, encouraging passers by to join their revelry or at least to show their enthusiasm for these scenes of merriment and celebration. I got the greatest pleasure from hearing the native singing of these beautiful Flemish girls, for though I could not follow the words of their songs, the lightness and animation of their voices offered up the most harmonious sounds to my ears.

I did not tell you that the Abbey of Saint Michael where the Queen was lodged, was situated along the bank of that sea-channel which served as part of the defenses of the city. Thus the joyous bonfires which had been lit in the front courtyard of the Abbey carried their light far out to sea. Truly I imagined that the brightness of these lights sweeping out to sea would incite the tritons and the naiads to light their own joyful fires of celebration in Neptune's palace. The sea seemed to me to glitter and sparkle so much that had Venus been sleeping that night with Cupid in the palace of Thetis then I am persuaded that Thetis would not have been blinded and unable to see the scene. Imagine as well that all the sparks from these fires in the city produced an infinite number of stars which gleamed briefly then were extinguished. The sea and land were thus lit by so many types of light, yet unifying themselves together in a single joyful glow. Sea, sky and land all seemed lit by this joyful glow, and joined in celebrating the same event. The stars themselves were eclipsed by the bright light and the sparkling fires from the earth. That night was widely considered one of the most beautiful days of the year, having been so clear and bright, and yet no one needed to take heat of the scorching rays of the sun. The night lasted long, and it was quite late into the morning before the rejoicing populace realized that day had actually broken. So agreeable had been the celebrations and the activities of the night that people had simply forgotten to become tired and had sacrificed the need for sleep. Thus did all of the public rejoicing end as joyfully as it had begun.

The Sunday had been established by the command of the Archduchess as the day specially allocated to celebrate the city feast itself and to undertake the accustomed procession. I say that this event took place by command of the Archduchess insofar as she had ordered that the customary solemnities should be held up until the arrival of the Queen, in order that Marie de Medici should have the chance to observe these distinctive and magnificent ceremonies. And in accordance with this wish the Burgomaster, van Etten, and the other deputies of the Magistrature invited the Archduchess and the Queen Mother to witness the sumptuous ceremonies.

Early in the morning of this beautiful day which had been anticipated by the citizenry for so long, the people turned out of their houses and ran through the streets of the city in order to be present at the beginning of the festivities. The numbers, growing by the moment, astonished the outsiders who were there as onlookers.

The Queen and the Archduchess, each surrounded by their courtiers, were accommodated in the house of M. Alexander van Der Goes, as the place most suitable to view the entirety of the procession. Both were seated on a balcony, at a height which ensured that they had the best possible view. The women of the Queen and of the Archduchess were installed in a great salon looking out onto the street. Looking through the barred windows of the salon they appeared like so many slaves gazing out from their captivity.

A great crowd of knights and lords had gathered around these windows, with their eyes, hearts and thoughts focused with love for the desirable contents of the salon. For my own part I could appreciate without envying this spectacle, as I was unable to get a good enough view to justify standing in the full glare of the light.

Here is a feeble account of the procession itself, with its religious solemnities and mysteries. Following the passage in procession of the various numerous religious Orders, the spectator next saw a series of floats, each bearing its own religious image, and each with its own devotional mystery. Each of these images was fully explained to the bystanders, whether through the artistic skills with which the individual statues had been represented, or through the muses whose music and poetry served in addition to explain each of images to even those with the slowest apprehension. The most curious sight was seeing those who professed to despise these images. For among the mass of beautiful objects whose passage through these streets lodged them in the memory, the most striking of all the images was the *chef d'oeuvre*, a model of Mount Parnassus borne on a vast chariot. In this model Phoebus sat on the throne of the god Mars and the goddess Pallas, and was seen playing her lyre, while at her feet sat Bellona, a captive, vanquished by the superior force of Phoebus. The Muses occupied their own customary places on the Mountain, and each of them made their own contribution to the musical concert – as beautiful as anything previously heard. And when the float came to a halt in front of the Queen and the Archduchess I heard quite distinctly the actual words of the song being sung by the muses, which I note down here:

To the Queen:

Oh Queen, how your devotees
 In all places offer their wishes and vows,
 And across the whole world exercise their authority,
 For although they are ever triumphant and glorious,
 Comparing their grandeur with their birth
 They owe everything not to being kings but to being your children.

To the Archduchess:

Perfect example amongst Princesses,
 Listen well to Heaven for the effects of our vows;
 You will see the fate
 Of those who support the party of the rebellious,
 Punished for this action – both leader and accomplices,
 But in whatever way that Heaven contrives to bring low their scheming,
 It will not be able to offer any more cruel punishment
 Than to be deprived of being your subjects.

We saw at the same time in this procession a superb triumphal chariot, richly ornamented, in which Cybèle, mother of the gods, sat on a throne under a silver pavilion, and held in her protective arms a girl dressed in a blue dress embroidered with gold and

silver, and carrying a crown on her head and a sceptre in her hand – and representing the Queen Mother. At her side was depicted the “August Felicity of the Reign”, represented by a young girl whose breasts were full of milk, and who held on her lap a half-naked child, who with one hand she caressed and with the other held up a cornucopia full of fruits.

It was an image of the fecundity of the Queen, mother of the three greatest kings of Europe, who were themselves represented by three nymphs, one dressed in the costume of a Frenchwoman, one as a Spaniard and the third as an English girl, each carrying a sceptre and a crown to signify the realms that they represented. [Marie’s son was Louis XIII, while her daughters were married to Philip IV of Spain - Elizabeth - and Charles I of England – Henrietta-Maria. Both her daughters had produced male sons by these marriages.] These crowns were tied together by a silk ribbon, one end of which was held by Hymen, god of marriages, as a sign of the union hoped for between the three great realms. Hymen appeared on the float dressed in white, with a green crown on his head and a burning torch in his hand. Also visible was the personification of Europe, dressed in classical robes but with great richness of apparel. She was seated on three cornucopias, each filled with every kind of fruit – symbolizing the flourishing and abundance that would come from the harmonious union of the three realms. In front of the float were two men, half naked, wearing marine crowns and each carrying on one arm a river vessel, signifying respectively the Scheldt and the Arno, bringing together the rivers which flowed through Antwerp and Florence respectively – showing how the two great cities flourished through the union and peace of the three realms.

To the side of the girl who represented the queen, was depicted “Glorious Expectation” (*l’Esperance Auguste*), wearing a long green robe, her hands full of flowering grasses, a sign of the hope that she had for Her Majesty that the three realms of Europe brought together in flourishing unity would one day extend the bounds of their empire. And to express more worthily the subject of this great conceit and rich invention, four lines of Virgil were attached, taken from the Aeneid:

*Felix prole virûm, qualis Berecynthia mater
Invehitur curru Phrygias turrita per urbes,
Laeta Deûm partu, centum complexa nepotes,
Omnes coelicolas, omnes supera alta tenentes.*

Translated as:

“Happy in your children, the equal of Cybèle,
Who marched into Phrygia superbly apparelled,
Embracing one hundred offspring of immortal birth,
All gods, all elevated above the sun itself.”

The citizens of the town had the opportunity to admire a whole sequence of subsequent floats following in the procession, offering a theatrical display of further exotic and rare scenes. I say admire, since the procession moved in the most perfect order, and every

float and character in the procession was so richly equipped and so sumptuously dressed that the very least participant would pass for a military commander in dress and appearance.

The Queen and the Archduchess gained much satisfaction from the sight of all this magnificence, richly enshrouded in the great waves of public rejoicing. Retiring from the balcony where they had been seated in order to return to the chamber behind they found that a superb feast had been prepared for them. And at this magnificent feast Messieurs the Magistrates had the opportunity to offer once again their zeal for the service of the princesses. The princesses were treated with such splendor and sumptuousness that they had to push themselves into the room, so laden was it with every food of the finest description.

I want to tell you of another festival, this time of piety, to which the Revd. Father Souffran invited all of the devoted souls of the city. The following day, the day of the birth of the Virgin Mary, the Church of the Jesuits in Antwerp was filled with a great crowd assembled to hear him preach. But before he covered up the memory of the great tables of meats and other foods with his preaching of the word of God, or rather before he mounted the pulpit to begin his sermon, I would like to take the opportunity to describe some of the precious and rare marvels of this great church.

Placed in the middle of the city to ensure that it was the most convenient and accessible of all the city churches for the majority of the inhabitants, the façade is of white stone and decorated with the three orders of architecture – Doric, Ionic and Composite, each of which is displayed to its greatest perfection and fully embellished with columns and cornices, each niche filled with sculpture and relief-work. The cornice of the first order was decorated with triglyphes, the second with interlocking branches, the third with cartouches. But the hand of the stonemasons had added far more detail to this, adding almost as many marvels to the façade as there were hammer blows – the skill of execution and the ultimate achievement were each as impressive as the other. The interior of the church is in marble, and the vault is made up of compartments, decorated with three hundred roses of gilded copper which project out of the coffering. The orders inside are the Doric and the Ionic, and the vault is supported on forty columns of white marble, which are like brightly polished mirrors catching and reflecting all the other artifacts in the church – rendering the reflection of the objects more beautiful indeed than the objects themselves. The columns are arranged one on top of the other in the form of a double gallery, the higher of these being guarded by a balustrade, the panels in between being decorated with paintings by the new Appelles, Monsieur Rubens, with frames and bordering of the paintings covered with gilding, which threw a marvellous and rich light across the church.

The High Altar is of marble in all sorts of colours; but the total appearance is so carefully contrived by the master who constructed it that all the different colours blend together harmoniously to create a perfect work of art. To each side of the High Altar is a chapel constructed by the same master, whose imagination remains as lively and inspired as in the case of the High Altar. At the transept of the church are two further chapels, one

consecrated to the Virgin and the other to Saint Ignatius [Loyola]. The vaults of these chapels are of white stone, sculpted into elaborate relief, but so skilfully that the sculpting appears to be entirely detached from the surrounding space and to stand free, deceiving the eye. The two altars are decorated with the marble from a famous quarry, and again are worthy of the highest admiration.

This beautiful church, as if jealous of its own magnificence, does not permit the sun to stream into the building at all hours of the day; and as it faces east, the light which enters is always a little pallid, as if all the precious objects within the building which are so much admired dispute amongst themselves about who should have the light thrown upon them, and end up with very little light indeed to spread around.

It was in this holy place that the Revd Father Souffran preached this day in the presence of the Queen and the Archduchess, and a great mass of other citizens and visitors. As usual his preaching was a miraculous as ever, and I say miraculous for the effect of his voice alone was enough to animate all manner of charitable feelings, provoking thousands of streams of tears from as many persons with hearts of stone. I will say no more, simply to allow you to meditate upon the truths that the Revd Father expounded.

A few days after this Her Majesty was invited to attend a tragedy staged in the College of the Jesuit Fathers, situated at the far end of the city, which she attended in the company of all her courtiers. A covered theatre had been prepared for her arrival, richly decorated, sufficient to offer shelter to the mass of those attending the performance together with all the ladies of the Queen's court. I will not discuss the subject of this staged tragedy, although it was a splendid invention, admirable in the range of expression and emotion. The actors were truly excellent, their costumes rich, and the intervals in the play were passed to the delicate sound of an innumerable number of instruments – capable of charming away the greatest cares and concerns. The theatre stagings were changed on numerous occasions by secret means, deceiving the expectations of the audiences after having already ravished their senses. Numerous ballets were staged within the play, where the delicacy and agility of the dancers and their magnificent costumes managed to extract praise from the most grudging and ill-humoured members of the audience. In sum the entire event succeeded fully, to the great satisfaction of the Jesuit Fathers, especially when the Queen herself expressed her singular pleasure with the play.

For my part I cannot conceal the honour which is certainly due to the Jesuits, whether for their great piety, their charitable works, or for their profession in general which even the most envious are coming to appreciate and to moderate their criticism. No company of religious in all the other Orders of the Catholic church has done so much to carry forward the banner of the true religion. Europe, Asia or Africa have served the Jesuits both as a scaffold for their martyrs and a theatre for their glory as no other Order. It is as if God has elevated their status and rank above all other of His servants, giving them His grace to serve with zeal and courage, and it is right that they should bear both His name and his arms ['IHS' – used as the symbol of the Order in every iconographic context]. This is not the place to expand in greater detail on such a worthy subject, so let us return from the general to the specific.

M. de Chanteloue, Preacher from the Oratory of Jesus, showed publicly by following Her Majesty to Antwerp that the passion he had for her service was the best medicine that he could possibly take to help cure his illness. For his zeal and generosity gave him the strength and courage to undertake the journey. And having assured us that his previous life had been a story of faithfulness, valour and wisdom, his subsequent retirement [into the Oratory] and his espousal of all the virtues should now serve as a lesson to appreciate the true nature of his merit. I will continue with my narration.

The Queen, having a great desire to see the Plantin printing house, now managed by M. Balthasar Moretus, grandson of Christophe Plantin and as flourishing as ever through his knowledge and careful attention. You will see some samples below of the eloges in Latin and French that this educated printer produced in honour of the Queen and the Archduchess – eloges which were also a token of his esteem at having been paid the honour of a specific visit by the two great princesses.

(Translation:

To the Most Christian Queen Marie, Mother of Three Kings who are the greatest in the world. Because a cloud of dissension has spread over the realm of your son, God has permitted you to pass out of France into this territory of your relative. Your serene and Florentine presence will cause rejoicing in the territory of Flanders which has been disfigured by the effects of war. The Platinienne printing-press glitters from the reflection of the light of such great majesty, and applauds your presence with the greatest respect. It wishes you all happiness as a worker for peace, as she was crowned for that honour having worked to the end of pacifying the disputes between France and Flanders [the Julich-Cleves conflict of 1610-1614, brought to an end during Marie's Regency].
10 September 1631.

To the Most Serene Princess Isabella Clara Eugenia, *Infanta* of Spain, most devoted and religious widow of the serene Archduke Albert the Pious of eternal memory. Most prudent princess of the Low Countries and of Burgundy, cherished by God for her piety and by men for her bounty. The wise conduct of her councils has given all her subjects reason to hope for the end of the wars and the return of the much-desired peace. The Platinienne printing press, honoured by the presence of her Princely Highness, wishes with the greatest respect that she should be able to combine prosperity on earth with the true happiness of Heaven.
10 September 1631.

The Queen and the Princess received with great favour this small present of the eloges, rating their price in terms of the zeal for their service with which they were composed. And it should be said that both eloges excelled as much as a devoted tribute as a mark of professional skill, being admirable in their devotion and inimitable in the quality of their production.

You may imagine the great crush of persons who hoped every day to see the Queen dine or take supper. The great guard room - the salon of the Swiss Guards – and all the subsequent antechambers were so full of people that sometimes the hour of the Queen's

dinner needed to be delayed, as it was quite impossible to make room through the crowds for the food to be brought to her, and men had to be urged to stand aside and allow the passage of the meats. The curiosity and wish to admire this wise princess turned all-too rapidly into impatience and jostling to get a glance at the Queen, such that the Court Ladies found themselves in danger of being trampled by the spectators, risking the loss of their carrying implements [for the royal meal – specifically the receptacles for carrying the bread], dirtying their lace costumes and exposing all of their grace and charm to indiscriminate jostling and confusion.

The citizens of the town were not at all worried about fasting for an entire day provided that they could have a brief glimpse of this great Queen. But the other pleasure was to watch the activities of the Court Ladies when they had finally entered the Queen's chamber. For having now reached the port they promptly cast aside all memory of the recent tempest, or if they did remember the jostling and struggle they had just experienced these simply enhanced their gentleness in serving the Queen. They considered themselves fortunate to have suffered this minor inconvenience in order to enjoy the far greater contentment of being able to see their virtuous princess, whose majesty incited them to ever-greater respect, admiration and astonishment.

I will also mention the ruse of a large number of painters, who under the pretext of going to see the Queen take her dinner, took full note of all the features of her face in order to enrich the portraits of other women who they were painting, and to enhance thereby their sales. For they knew full well that it would not be possible to represent beauty, gentleness, grace better than in the traits of the Queen Mother, whose possession of these qualities had already ravished an admiring world. But although this attempted theft of the charms and beauty of the Queen was hopeless – one might as well try to depict the sun using a lump of coal – I nonetheless admired their audacity, and it stemmed from a desire to vaunt the Queen's beauty.

M. the comte de Noyelle treated the Queen's court with his customary generosity, maintaining a common table for all the knights and lords who wished to attend for meals. What was most magnificent about all of these festivities was that they continued day after day, with exactly the same lavishness and generosity, and arranged in the same good order. I mention this to add honour to the reputation of the Comte de Noyelle, whose merit extends far beyond these small activities, and could achieve the greatest things if only he could change his nation and his language.

The Queen was curious to walk through the city itself in order to get a sense of the beauty of the streets, which were, it is true to say, galleries for pleasures and for walking. The pavements of the streets are so even and so clean that the pedestrian encounters no obstacle – whether of uneven cobbles or of dust and dirt. In addition the walker will suddenly encounter some beautiful garden [square?] from which a number of streets will lead off in various directions. So that though refreshed by the shade and the freshness of the open space, there is nonetheless the decision to be made of which other street to take when leaving. This was the situation of the Queen, who at various points during her walk seemed to be at a loss as to which of innumerable, equally beautiful streets she should choose to pass along next: for one seemed especially agreeable because of its

great length, another because of its gracious width, while a third seemed especially attractive because of the magnificent buildings which lined it, and a fourth seemed filled with shops containing all manner of new and attractive objects. Wherever she chose to walk however she passed along streets which had been strewn with flowers – as if the entire city were a scene of all manner of diverse activities.

It must be said that Antwerp is one of the most beautiful cities in Europe. I found only one fault in its most justified renown, which is that it is too little praised. It is almost impossible to describe the city, for whatever one says about it there is always more to add. To speak of the kindness and generosity of the people, for example, which I have experienced at length, would require a whole volume to do justice to, and not just these few lines. But as the pressure of time and my own haste to describe all that I saw deprives me of this leisure, I must simply restrict myself to saying that the people are the most kind and charitable to outsiders, the most zealous in their religious observances, and the most obedient to their ruler, of any group of citizens I have encountered in any other city. But to return to the beauty of the city.

The ramparts of Antwerp are as renowned for their beauty as those of classical Babylon were renowned for their size and their extent. Imagine the great rows of trees planted in rows, sufficient numbers to create three shady avenues between the trees and sheltered by the leafy vaults. The effect is of a splendid park surrounding the city. It's a great pleasure to see the two outside alleys filled with walking people and the central avenue filled with an infinite bustle of carriages, occupied by ladies and gentlemen. The ramparts seem to have been explicitly designed for such agreeable promenading. And though the numbers of people crowded together on the ramparts can be large these three adjacent tree-lined alleys, forming three separate roads, allow everyone the freedom to pursue their business at their own pace and without any inconvenience, and all shaded from the sun.

The Queen frequently made excursions in her carriage along these attractive alleys, from the heights of which it is possible to get a view across the surrounding countryside, spread with forests, meadows and rivers. All of these vistas ensured that a trip along the ramparts, however extended, never seemed to be long enough to take in all the sights. She would undoubtedly have exchanged all of this for the opportunity to return to the Tuileries if the King [her son, Louis XIII], whom she loved more than anyone else, had been present in the Louvre [the palace immediately adjacent to the Tuileries – both on the western edge of seventeenth-century Paris]. But separated from the King she sought pleasure from such things that could offer pleasure. I will change topic without abandoning the subject. Monsieur de Baradas, disgraced in the eyes of the King for an unhappy offence, decided after having tested his courage in the Italian campaigns to travel to serve two mistresses in Flanders – the Queen and Mlle de Cressia. He acquitted himself so well in this service towards the Queen and his mistress, and claimed that his service was merely just regard for their merits. Here are some further eulogies. The Jesuit Father Le Jeune preached marvellously before the Queen and the Archduchess at the Church of Our Lady on the feast day of the Exaltation of the Cross. His zeal, piety

and eloquence all added most marvellously to the weight and force of his praises. And this duty which I offer up to their virtue is merely a faint echo of his praises.

M. the Abbot of Saint Germain also offered a splendid sermon before the Queen and the *Infante* at the Abbey of Saint Michael on the day of the festival. His great eloquence was even more outweighed by his merit, while his moral qualities were even more outstanding than anything he might write. The greatest praises would not do justice to his qualities of piety, learning and holiness. But it was above all as a confessor that his virtues were greater than all the others put together.

The Queen and the Archduchess paid reciprocal visits to each other's apartments on alternate days, always finding consolation in one another's gentle company; and this joint presence of the two princesses offered no less consolation to everyone else around them, who imagined, with good reason, that the union of so many virtues in these two princesses could only bear fruit in good councils and wise resolutions. The two princesses had sought each day to find new means of showing their affection and friendship for each other, and finally came up with the plan to dine together. The Queen Mother was the first to entertain the Archduchess to dinner in her apartments, and did so with all the magnificence and pomp that the circumstances [the times] permitted. The event provided further testimony of the gracious and gentle mutual affection of the two princesses. The Archduchess also wished to invite the Queen to dine with her in turn, and I imagined that this event would be comparable with the [biblical] scene in which Elizabeth entertained Mary in her little house, but where angels served the meal and the sun did not dare to enter the place out of concern that its rays would be insufficiently pure and bright. It was tribute to the splendour of the occasion that such ideas occurred to me.

The Queen Mother decided that she was curious to see all of the beautiful and rich paintings that were kept in the house of Monsieur Rubens. He was a man whose hard work, although unusual and marvellous, was the least of his qualities: his judgement of the state's interests, and his intellect and self-control (*gouvernement*) carried him so high above the normal rank of his profession that the works of his prudence and sagacity [i.e. as a diplomat and statesman] were as remarkable and admirable as those of his paintbrush. Her Majesty was most satisfied to contemplate the marvellous images conjured up by the paintings; the admiration of the Queen was enough in itself to cause painters to achieve marvels, for one could never tire of either her beauty or her perfection.

However as I must tell the full truth in this account, it should be said that Monsieur Van Dyck holds the advantage over all the other great painters who have rashly tried to depict the Queen. For to tell the truth no one has depicted the Queen on her throne with such perfection as van Dyck in his most recent portrait of her. It is said that Apelles [painter to Alexander the Great, and granted a legendary status in Renaissance art and theory] combined the most beautiful features from a number of different faces in order to paint one image of perfect beauty to represent Helen of Troy. But this painter (Van Dyck) was even more ingenious and managed to reveal to us, through the portrait of the Queen alone, all the beauties of the world but without stealing anything from nature as it exists apart from the use of his outstanding skill. The Queen did him the honour of visiting

him in his own house, where she saw, in his main salon, Titian's own study – that's to say all of the greatest works of this painter. However I venture to say, without flattery, that M. Van Dyck could well enjoy the same glory and renown as Titian. For if the latter painter was the ornament of his century, Van Dyck is the marvel of this present age.

Monsieur the marquis of Sainte-Croix, seeking always to honour the Queen Mother through every kind of gesture of respect and deference, asked her to supply a password for the use of the army. And though the army was directly under the control of the Archduchess, Sainte-Croix handled the matter with such elegance and grace that it redounded much to his credit.

Monsieur the Sergeant-Major did the same thing each day, asking the Queen to provide the password for the ordinary guards of the Queen in the city. Every time she left her apartments she found a company of Spanish guards lined up on the two sides of the front courtyard of the Abbey, serving as an escort as she mounted into her carriage. This same Spanish company was on guard day and night in the entrance hall to the Queen's apartments, and the sentinel who had the duty of guarding the Queen's private chambers was selected from amongst the retired standard bearers (*alferes reformez*), following the custom that was always followed with the guard for Spanish kings. The most precise and exact duty was maintained in carrying out all of the duties surrounding the service and guard of the Queen.

Before leaving the city, the Queen Mother wished to see the citadel of Antwerp; she was received there not with the sound of canon and musket fire, but with the strains of most agreeable musical instruments, whose melody spoke only of peace and rejoicing. She received as much honour in her visit to the citadel as she gave reason for content amongst those who received her. The soldiers became all at once sentinels, overseeing and surveying the arrival of the sweetness and graces which inevitably accompanied Her Majesty, and were able to admire these at their ease. But at her departure from the citadel the cannons, jealous of the previous sweet music of the instruments, brought the melodies to an end by the roar of their fire – a noise so great as to cause the surrounding earth to tremble. But before you tire of all this, let me assure you that I am near to the end of my account.

It must be admitted that Monsieur d'Andelot appeared gloriously zealous for the service of the Queen Mother, and endlessly concerned to obey and facilitate all of the wishes of the Archduchess that were intended to give every possible satisfaction to the Queen. For in all that could contribute in any way to the contentment of the Queen Mother or could give her evidence of her affection and concern for her service, she was unsurpassed. It is not of course that I would wish to restrict myself to the praises that are due simply to the merit of these particular actions; everything that the Archduchess did was of praiseworthy merit and virtue, and my pen will serve as a trumpet to make these known.

I should remember as well to inform you that the Queen made the fortunate acquaintance of M. Deslandes during her tour of the cities of the Low Countries, who went on to assume the office of private secretary to her (*Secrétaire de ses commandemens*). I say fortunate, for ambition and self-interest which are the two most powerful enemies of conscience, never made the slightest mark upon his own conscience and actions. Which

gives me to believe that he had no enemies at all, except those persons who are enemies to virtue. I must though finally acquit myself of this account which I owe to posterity and truth.

Monsieur the Abbot of Saint Germain gave reason for further admiration when he preached on the feastday of St Theresa before the Queen and the Archduchess in the new church of the discalced Carmelites, and before a huge congregation. As the subject of his sermon was divine love, the marks of his eloquence appeared as so many divine arrows piercing the thousands of hearts of the congregation. The ardour and zeal of his preaching; the fervour with which he reached out to the souls of those to whom he was preaching: all ensured that it would not be possible to praise sufficiently a person who brought together and combined so fortunately so many virtues.

The Queen was greatly impressed by the city of Antwerp, as a great commercial centre, as a repository for many of the most beautiful things in the world, for the charm of the people and the sweetness of the air, for the charm of the apartments in the abbey of Saint Michel where she was lodged. All these things came together to draw her favourable comments and to ensure that she cherished the time she spent here. But I am not at all astonished that Kings and sovereign princes should admire the lodgings made available to them in the abbey of Saint Michel, for the piety and the exemplary life of the prior and the monks ensure that a rain of graces and benedictions would fall from heaven on the abbey and all within it. The abbey was one of the earliest and the most famous of the Order of the Premonstratensians, founded in 1122 by St Norbert, founder and patriarch of the Order, as an eternal tribute to the victory that he won over the enemies of the Faith in this same city of Antwerp. And since that day, three times blessed by this great triumph, God has always ensured that this abbey has been filled with a succession of the most virtuous and saintly abbots, and with devout monks, such that with both exemplary doctrine and piety they have fought simultaneously against vice and heresy – the one by their virtuous actions, the other by their most charitable but learned remonstrances. I know of no other way to demonstrate these truths than by pointing to the merit of the present and most reverend abbot, who after so many famous predecessors, nonetheless maintains the highest reputation of the abbey solely by his own great virtues. If all the abbeys of this age resembled that of Saint Michel, the devout would have the most outstanding example to encourage them to lead holy lives.

Amongst the most remarkable antiquities found in the church of the Abbey is the tomb of Isabelle de Bourbon, wife of Charles the Rash, Duke of Burgundy. Placed in the middle of the church, it is a tomb of the most extraordinary magnificence, but also a grim reminder of death, which is everywhere depicted on the tomb. It was in this church that the Queen heard Mass every day, and where each day as well a number of persons assembled to witness the piety of this great princess – having already been admiring devotees of all her other virtues.

Finally there came the day when the Queen and the Archduchess were scheduled to depart from Antwerp in order to return to Brussels. It was both a sad and deeply festive day. The sun was hidden by innumerable small clouds which gave a sombre hue to the

rays of light, and the effect was to obscure some of the scenes of the departure in a way that was intriguingly deceptive to the eye.

The sailors were impatient awaiting the precious charges who were to fill their boats and barges. The Queen and Archduchess processed down to the harbour, while the citizens turned out in their entirety, fully armed and arrayed along the banks of the river, to watch the departure. They wished to thank the two great princesses for the honour of their visit by customary salutes from their muskets. Once again they entered their magnificent boat, which had been specially prepared for them by the town councillors. The cannons added their salutes to the musket volleys, but none of this lasted for long, since the winds which were reigning over the waves on this day, lacked the force to carry the sound of the shots far out to sea. At least though the cannon and musket fire signalled to all those living near to Antwerp that the princesses were now departing, and that a period that had seen the townspeople full of contentment was now ending.

I will not give you a long account of the honours that were rendered to the Queen and the Archduchess on the point of their embarkation, because everyone present seemed so gloomy that the magnificence of the occasion had more in common with mourning. Carriages awaited the princely party at Villebroeck, where they dined in the same house of Monsieur de la Faille, whose merits I had previously taken the opportunity to praise. The same day they arrived back in Brussels.

I could describe with what joyful acclamations the princesses were greeted on their new entry back into Brussels, but your own imagination of this event is more vivid than the capacity of my pen to describe. I would prefer instead to leave you with a depiction, however feeble, of the merits of the Archduchess. But once again I am forced to remain silent, there being simply too much that I would have to speak of to do justice to her qualities. To speak of her virtues would require such skill and such extraordinary actions that no one could conjure up a true picture of her life. It suffices to say that the sun itself has fewer brilliant rays than this princess has adorable and admirable qualities; and moreover the sun, though entirely composed of light, does less to illumine the world than the Archduchess' virtues. Without exaggeration, her merits are elevated to such a high degree, that it would be impossible to try to enumerate all of her perfections. But my pen aims too high, and I already begin to lose myself in the midst of this glorious light of her virtues. To expiate my temerity in even thinking I could measure and describe such virtues, I must fall silent.