# Catherine’s Daughter

# Marguerite of Valois(2)

# (1553-1615)

**In 1577**, Marguerite requested and was granted permission to travel to the Netherlands on business for her brother **Francois Duke of Alencon**.

## Francois Duke of Alencon

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Francis,_Duke_of_Anjou#/media/File:Fd'Alen%C3%A7on.jpg

It seemed that they were looking for a prince to become their king,who would support and protect them from Spanish rule under which they had rebelled. **(just like Poland / Lithuania crowning Henry as their king.**

**Henry III** thought that it would be a great idea and would also help him get rid of his pesky little brother **Francois d’Alencon**.

Nothing worthwhile came of the mission, and Margaret returned to Paris.

There, she witnessed petty palace politics between supporters of **Henry III and Francois**.

**In 1578**, Francois escaped the court after being refused a request to leave the court.

**Henry III** had turned it down because he saw it as a conspiracy plot against himself.

**Shortly thereafter, Margaret was given permission to join her husband in Navarre.**

Henry had escaped from Paris in 1575.

Catherine eventually accompanied Marguerite back to Henry, accompanied by her chancellor, **Guy du Far de Prebec.**

**Prebec**, a magistrate and poet, had designs on Marguerite, but she rebuffed him with disdain.

*It is suggested that Catherine hoped to use Henry of Navarre and her daughter to pacify the southern provinces on behalf of* ***Henry III.***

*Catherine also seized the opportunity to establish the authority of the crown* ***(like she did with Charles IX)*** *and build closer ties with the king's subjects.*

Catherine held talks with Henry of Navarre about a Nerac conference where ***issues over the application/misapplication of the past Edict of Pacification*** was to be discussed.

They agreed on the process of fulfilling the demands of that edict.

**In 1579**, Catherine left for Paris while Henry and Marguerite stayed in Pau for a little while but soon settled in Nerac.

There she found that the court lacked nothing of the court of Paris.

She enjoyed the company of her sister-in-law, **Catherine de Bourbon** and her many ladies in waiting.

She experienced what **Henry's court** was really like, for the first time.

Henry's court consisted of *'gallant lords and gentlemen'* as impressive as the court of Paris. Her only complaint was that they were all *'Huguenots'*.

She recounted having long walks along the river with her husband during the day and attending balls at night.

## Enjoying Nerac

Marguerite thoroughly enjoyed her stay at Nerac where she developed a fondness for Henry's sister.

She experienced, a plethora of ***accomplished poets and writers who frequented her court. She considered her court 'a true literary academy'.***

Some of the well-known names of the times that she met included:

- **Agrippa d’Aubigne** (soldier and poet)
- **Guy du Far de Prebec** (magistrate and poet),

- **Saluste du Bartas** (soldier, nobleman, religious poet, lawyer)

- **Montaigne** (philosopher, author of **‘Essays,** ***moderate Catholic, mayor of Bordeaux, faithful to Henry IV)*** of whom, it is said, that he influenced **William Shakespeare’s** style of writing.

**It is also said that the romantic adventures of the court of Nerac inspired Shakespeare's *Love's Labours Lost.***

While Henry was held captive in Catherine's court, he fell captive to the **'Flying Squadron'.**

These were women whom ***Catherine trained to seduce powerful men to find out their secrets.*** These were the exact women of whom Jeanne had warned Henry.

Over the course of their marriage, Marguerite was sterile and never conceived.

Henry had many mistresses, which did not help their marriage. Marguerite also had affairs with other men.

Both Marguerite and Henry were indiscriminate and promiscuous in their marital affairs at Nerac.

**Pressure to produce an heir brought many hopeful women into Henry's life.**

**As with Sarah and Hagar**, a 14 year old young woman of Marguerite's Navarre court, **Françoise de Montmorency Fosseux**, had a mutually satisfying relationship with Henry.

She became pregnant with his child, and successfully competed with Marguerite for Henry’s love and attention.

Marguerite proposed banishing this young woman from her court.

She refused to cooperate; instead, she worked successfully at driving a wedge between Henry and Marguerite.

She had hopes of Henry divorcing Marguerite to marry her instead.

Marguerite's relationship with Henry suffered great strain until the birth of the baby, who was stillborn.

Later Marguerite returned to Paris with her retinue.

Marguerite followed Catherine's advice and forced the young lady from Marguerite’s court, sending her back to her parents.

This further alienated Marguerite from her husband.

Henry developed another relationship with a wealthy widow, Catholic noblewoman of Bearn, **Diane D’Andouins,** who supported him during the siege of Paris.

She sold her jewels to raise an army of 20,000 men to help him fight. She also hoped that Henry would divorce Marguerite and marry her instead.

**Marguerite returned to Paris in 1582** (at age 29), **never returning to Navarre again.**

It is suggested that she was unhappy about her barrenness, her estrangement with her husband, and probably to support her youngest brother, **Francois of Alencon.**

It is said that between **1582 and 1583**, she was also in an unfaithful relationship with someone else in Paris.

Marguerite soon became embroiled in petty personal politics in her brother’s court, **Henry III** by criticizing him, his morals, and his inner circle of friends.

**King Henry III's** friends retaliated by circulating nasty stories about her private life.

The result was **a strained relationship with her brother, Henry III.**

**In 1583** she fell ill, and rumours of an illegitimate child circulated. Her brother **(King Henry III)** was so unhappy with her plummeting reputation that he expelled her from his court.

Some of her attending court were arrested and interrogated about the possible birth of an illegitimate child, which increased her humiliation.

**Henry of Navarre refused to receive his wife for eight months** while negotiating with his brother-in-law **Henry III**.

**Henry of Navarre** was compensated by **Henry III of France,** by giving him the territory of **Mont-de-Marsan**.

**Marguerite returned to her husband's court in early 1584** and was not well received.

**By June, her brother and closest friend (Francois), had died** making her husband the presumptive heir.

**In 1585,** Marguerite abandoned her husband.

In an effort to get back at her family and her husband, **she joined forces with the Catholic League and intransigent Catholics and** seized a city - **Agen. Recruiting troops, she sent them to attack surrounding cities.**

The troops revolted and turned back to **Henry III's** troops who had arrived.

Catherine entreated Marguerite to move to a royal manor, but instead she fled from one fortress to another, and was eventually besieged for a month before being **imprisoned by Henry III in 1586.**

She was forced to watch as her accomplice was beheaded.

**In 1587, Marguerite's** jailor switched **allegiance from the King Henry III to the Catholic League** and released her.

It is suggested that she paid him off.

The League was happy about that because in their mind, as long as she was around, Henry of Navarre would have no heir to the throne when he did become King.

Even though she gained her freedom, she chose to remain in the **Castle Usson** for 18 years.

**From there, she heard the news about her mother’s death, her brother’s assassination, and her husband’s rise to the throne as King Henry IV.**

She also heard that he was not accepted by most Catholics until he abjured four years later.

***Marguerite surrounded herself with a new court of intellectuals, musicians and writers.***

***Many famous authors of the day also visited her.***

***The castle was restored, she spent her time reading and learning, and her finances improved as her sister, Elisabeth of Austria, sent her money.***

She was spurred to write her **‘Memoirs’** when a good friend and writer, **Pierre de Bourdelle (Brantome**) sent her his narrative of the lives of nobility in verse form.

In it there were false rumours and misinformation about her. Her ‘Memoirs’ were written in response to his narrative. It is said that she was the first woman to do so.

**She dedicated her autobiography (from infancy to 1582) to Brantome, which was published posthumously in 1628.**

Marguerite had resumed contact with her husband to improve her financial situation.

**In 1593,** Henry proposed an annulment of their marriage so that he could marry again to produce a legitimate heir.

The supporting claims were her sterility, the fact that they shared a common ancestor, and other formal defects of their marriage.

At the trial, witnesses attested falsely to the fact that she was forced to marry Henry by her mother and brother.

She stopped negotiations when she learnt that Henry wanted to marry his mistress, **Gabrielle d'Estrees**, whose son had been legitimized in **1595.**

She called it a ***'dishonorable marriage'*** which she refused to endorse.

Providentially, Gabrielle died in childbirth. Negotiations concluded with Marguerite receiving financial compensation and the right to retain her royal title.

**The marriage was annulled in 1599** and the following year **Henry married Marie de Medici,** who bore him a son a year later.

After **20 years in exile,** with the annulment and remarriage, **Henry IV and Marguerite** were on good terms again.

With her new position, she was allowed to receive royal visitors at Usson.

In **1605**, an older, stouter, more devout, and unfashionably dressed, **Marguerite** was allowed to return to Paris and plead her case of an inheritance she should have received from her mother, Catherine.

She was affectionately received.

***In Paris, Marguerite became known as a mentor for the arts, and a supporter of the charitable work of her chaplain, Vincent de Paul.***

**In 1606,** she won her lawsuit and gained her entire inheritance.

She named the dauphin **Louis XIII** as her heir, symbolizing the official transition of the throne from the **Valois** branch, of which she was the last surviving legitimate descendant, to the **Bourbon** family now on the throne.

In a way, **it was collusion between Marguerite and the new Queen Marie, to thwart the claims of one of Henry's mistress, (Henriette)** who claimed that her son was the legitimate heir to the throne, because Henry had promised marriage to her at one time.

**Marie de Medici** would include **Marguerite** in planning events at court, helping to nurture Henry's children.

**In 1608**, **Henry IV** chose **Marguerite** to be the godmother of his newborn **Prince, Gaston, Duke of Orleans.**

She eventually settled her household on the left bank of the **Seine River**, her palace became a hub of intellectual and political activity.

It also became a **nucleus of the arts,** theatrical performances and elaborate receptions.

***She encouraged literary pursuits by opening a literary lounge to entertain philosophers, poets and scholars.***

***She continued to play minor roles during Marie de Medici's regency after Henry was assassinated.***

**In 1615, Marguerite Became very ill and died.**