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1 March [1531]
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646. EUSTACE CHAPUYS TO THE EMPEROR.

The Jew whom the King sent for, perceiving that his opinion of the case has not been considered authentic (*auctentique*) has drawn out another as vain and ill-founded as the former, propounding that it is allowable for a man to take to wife the widow of his brother, provided he do it out of his own desire and will, and with the direct intention of procuring descent to his brother's line. Without such marked intention, he maintains, the marriage is forbidden by Divine Law. God says the Jew, said so by the mouth of Moses, and cast his malediction on all those who married without such an intention, for if they did so marry no generation could spring forth from them, and if any it could not last long. And as the male children begot by the King in the Queen, his wife, have not lived long, the Jew argues and concludes that he [Henry] must have married his brother's widow without the above express intention, and consequently that his marriage is illegitimate and invalid.

Parliament is still sitting but without passing any important Act, as I have been told by some of its members, which circumstance makes them and me suspect that the King is keeping them assembled for some mysterious purpose. All are preciously tired of it, and every day several members keep asking permission to go home, which permission is readily granted to those *who are known to hold for the Queen, or supposed to be her friends*, though it is generally denied to the others, which fact naturally leads to the conjecture that the King intends one of these fine days to have the divorce question discussed in Parliament, and that he is only waiting for favourable *news from France* to take that step. Meanwhile the King will go on *treating and coaxing La Guiche*, who is still residing here, until he obtains *from that quarter all he wishes for*. Thus, one day in Lent, at a most solemn banquet, where the King dined in public *with the Lady* and several of his courtiers, among whom was the said La Guiche, [79] the King *drank his health as representative of the Icing of France*, saying that if he could be sure for ever of the friendship and alliance of France he should not be afraid of all the rest, and other things to the same purpose.

The King has not attended the sessions of this Parliament since its opening until yesterday evening (*iusques hier sur le tard*). He was about one hour and a half or two hours in the House of the Lords and prelates, but did not go down to the Commons. He said a good deal to them about his love of justice, and his zeal for the good administration of the kingdom and the protection of his subjects. On this topic he spoke for some time, but proposed nothing except that they should discuss and debate certain privileges and immunities of the Church in England under which malefactors in this country had at all times taken shelter, which, as he said, had been the cause of many evils not to be tolerated, and which he was determined to put down for the future. He also requested them to look into the case of the bishop of Rochester's cook, which is a very strange one and happened thus. About ten days ago, in the said Bishop's house, some sort of soup was prepared, of which all who tasted (including almost all the household servants) were on the point of death, though only two actually died, besides some poor beggars to whom the soup (*potage*) had been distributed for charity. All, however, were taken very ill and suffered much pain. Very luckily the worthy Bishop, whom God no doubt considers very useful and necessary in this world, did not taste of the drug (*drogues*). and thus escaped. They say that the cook having been immediately arrested on the application of the Bishop's brother, confessed at once that he had actually put into the broth some powders, which he had been given to understand would only make his fellow servants very sick without endangering their lives or doing them any harm. I have not yet been able to ascertain who it was who gave the cook such advice, nor for what purpose. The King has certainly shewn some displeasure at this, but whatever demonstrations of sorrow he makes he will not be

able to avert *suspicion* from falling, if not on himself, for he is too noble-minded to have resource to such means—at least on the Lady and her father.¹ The Bishop is unwell (*mal disposure*), and has been so ever since the acknowledgment (*reconnoyssance*) subscribed by the Clergy, about which I wrote to Your Majesty on the 31st of January, and which has caused him considerable sorrow and disappointment; but notwithstanding his indisposition he intends leaving to-morrow [for his diocese], having already obtained the King's permission to that effect. I cannot, however, conceive how, being in bad health, bishop Fisher can think of exposing himself to the fatigues of such a journey, [80] when by remaining here [in London] he might find better medical advice and more resources than anywhere else, unless it be that he chooses to be absent from the discussion of matters appertaining to the Church, or else that he fears there may be yet some *relics of the powders from which he has do miraculously escaped*. Should the King resume in the meantime his proceedings against the Queen, certainly his absence at this conjuncture, and that of the bishop of Duran (Durham), formerly of London, who is also away, will be exceedingly inconvenient.²

Tallebout (Talbot) has said to a person, who repeated it to me, that to his office in this kingdom belongs the right of holding the Queen's royal crown, and that as neither he nor any of his family had ever anything to reproach themselves with, he would now take care not to fall into dishonour by placing it on any other head but that of the present Queen, in which opinion and determination I should think he is likely to persevere as much on account of his honourable and upright principles as of the *sincere affect ion he professes towards the Queen*. **In this laudable purpose Tallebout is likely to be encouraged by his great friend, the Chancellor, who, as I once wrote to Your Majesty, has always behaved in the most virtuous manner about the Queen, and certainly shews such sympathy and affection for all that concerns you that he is justly called the father and protector of Your Majesty's subjects.** He has never met at Court one of my secretaries that he has not immediately left those with whom he might have been conversing, and approached him to inquire what his business was, and whether he could be useful in any way. All those I have recommended to him he has invariably received and attended to their private affairs most thoroughly. For all these reasons I should advise that some mention he made of him in Your Majesty's letters that I may shew it to him.

Lately all letters from Rome have been opened and read at Calais, even those directed to the cousin of Sir Gregory Casale, who resides here as agent of that ambassador, and who, as Your Majesty must know, has charge of this king's affairs in that capital. In addition to this some of the letters which the said Gregory wrote to his cousin have also been detained for two or three days, and it is believed that they contained some disclosures (*ouvertures*) respecting the revelations made by the physician of the late Cardinal (Wolsey), who since the receipt of those letters has been kept closely watched in the duke of Norfolk's apartments, without anyone knowing wherefore.

I have this very day procured the copy of certain articles drawn up by the King's order to be notified to and laid before Parliament. I cannot say for certain what the object of the [81] notification may be, but most probably it will not turn to the Pope's benefit and advantage. As to the articles themselves, Your Majesty will be able to judge much better than I can what direction affairs are taking here, and the poor foundation these people are laying for their consciences to rest upon.—London, the first day of March [1531].

Signed: "Eustace Chapuys."

French. Holograph. pp. 4.

1 "Le roy fait bien [semblant] de monstrier quelque malcontent [ment] de ce cas, si ne sçaura tant fere que yl ny aye de [la suspicion] sinon de luy, que tient tropt [bon pour fere telle chose au-moings de la dame et son pere]."

2 "Sil estoit question que le roy vousist [traicter do laffere de la royne labsence du dit évesque et celluy de duran, iaidis de Londres. viendroit mal a point.]"