

SOME NEW LIGHT ON 'L'ÉCOSSAISE' OF ANTOINE DE MONTCHRÉTIEN

IN spite of the researches of modern scholars a good deal of obscurity still surrounds the work and the lives of that group of men who were the pioneers of classical tragedy in France. In particular the career of Antoine de Montchrétien contains elements of mystery which have never been satisfactorily cleared up. Since so little is known of the man and of his work, the following small discoveries in connexion with *L'Écossaise*, Montchrétien's most celebrated play, may be of interest to students of that mysterious poet and economist.

Able critics have dealt with the literary and aesthetic aspects of *L'Écossaise*, pointing out its importance as one of the finest examples of the sixteenth-century type of classical tragedy and its value as lyric poetry. Attention has also been drawn to the interesting fact that the subject of the play, the execution of Mary, Queen of Scots, was drawn from modern, almost contemporary, history, instead of dealing with the usual classical or biblical themes, and this is the point which it is the purpose of the present article to develop.

It was not a new idea to use contemporary events as the subject of a play; to quote only two examples, Pierre Matthieu dramatised the assassination of the Guises in 1589, and in 1612 Claude Billard put the murder of Henri IV on the stage. In fact the dramatisation of contemporary events seems to have been used as a kind of political journalism in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Montchrétien's play on the death of Mary Stuart, although immeasurably superior in execution to the general run of these political plays, is not unlike them in subject and design and the question arises whether or not *L'Écossaise* was intended by the author to carry a political implication. There are in effect two references among English diplomatic records of the period, which have, I believe, hitherto escaped the notice of students of Montchrétien, and which would seem to prove beyond all doubt that this play was considered by some contemporaries to have a dangerous political significance.

In Sir Ralph Winwood's *Memorials*, there is a letter from Winwood at Paris to Cecil, dated 17 March 1601, O.S., in which the following passage occurs:

Since the beginning of Lent, certaine base Comedians have publickly plaied in this Towne the Tragedy of the late Queen of Scottes. The King being then at

Vernueil, I had no other recourse but to the Chancellor; who upon my complaint was very sensible of that so lewde an Indiscretion, and in my hearing gave an especiall Charge to the Lieutenant Civill, (to whose Duty the Provisions for such Disorder doth appertaine,) to have a care, both that this Folly should be punished, and that the like hereafter should not be committed. Since, Monsieur de Villeroy (upon the Notice which I gave him) doth promise that he will give order both for the Punishment of that which is past, and for future Remedy¹.

It might be argued that as the author is not here mentioned by name and as the title is given in English, we have no certain proof that Winwood is indeed speaking of Montchrétien's play on the death of the Queen of Scots. There may, of course, have been other plays on the same subject extant. But the precise way in which this information of Winwood's fits in with a letter found by L. Auvray, which has hitherto constituted the only known mention of a performance of *L'Écossaise*, proves, in my opinion at least, that the English ambassador is indeed referring to Montchrétien's play and to no other. I beg leave to quote in full the letter found by M. Auvray among the correspondence of Pompone de Bellièvre in order that it may be compared with Winwood's:

Lettre de M. de Beauharnais, lieutenant général à Orléans, au chancelier Pompone de Bellièvre.

Monseigneur,

Pour obéir à voz commandemens, je me suis tres soigneusement enquis quelz estoient ces comédiens qui avoient joué en cete ville, depuis deux mois ou environ, une tragédie sur la mort de la feue royne d'Ecosse, et n'ay peu aprandre autre chose, sinon que le chef de leur compaignie se nomme La Vallée, et qu'ilz sont partis de cete ville depuis ung mois ou six sepmaines, sans que j'aye peu scavoit où ilz sont allez. Mais j'ay tant fait, que j'ay recouvré ung livre de tragédies, la première desquelles, nommée 'l'Ecossoise' aultrement 'le Désastre,' est celle mesme qu'ilz ont représentée, ainsi qu'il m'a esté asseuré par gens d'honneur qui y ont assisté. Je vous envoie, Monseigneur, ce livre, tres marry que je ne puis obéir entièrement à ce que vous m'avez commandé, et supplie Dieu le Créateur vous donner, Monseigneur, heureuse yssue de tous vos desirs et vous conserver en longue vie pour le repos de ce royaume. A Orléans, ce xxi juin 1603.

Vostre très humble serviteur,
Beauharnois,
lieutenant général à Orléans².

The details given by Beauharnais establish beyond all doubt that he is certainly referring to Montchrétien's play; *L'Escossoise ou le Desastre* is its exact title in the first edition, and in that edition it is the first play in the book. And if we now compare Beauharnais' letter with Winwood's, I think we shall be convinced that they are both writing about the same play.

¹ Sir Ralph Winwood, *Memorials of Affairs of State in the Reigns of Queen Elizabeth and King James I*, 1725, I, p. 398.

² Published in the *Revue d'histoire littéraire de la France*, 1897, pp. 89-91.

The significant points of the comparison can be summarised thus: in March 1601, Winwood complained to the Chancellor about a public performance of the 'Tragedy of the late Queen of Scottes.' The Chancellor proclaimed himself 'very sensible of that so lewde an Indiscretion' and gave orders to prevent its occurring again. In June 1603, the Chancellor (the same man, Pompone de Bellièvre, was still in office) wrote to Orleans to enquire who had been acting in that town 'une tragédie sur la mort de la feue royne d'Ecosse'—an exact translation, be it noticed, of the expression Winwood uses to describe the play. Evidently the Chancellor was keeping the promise he made to Winwood and was doing his best to prevent the performance of a play which gave offence to the English ambassador and was considered unbecoming by the French authorities themselves.

But the incident was not even yet closed, as the following extract from a hitherto unpublished dispatch among the State Papers at the Public Record Office shows. The English ambassador (Parry) at Paris writes to Cecil on 13 February 1604 as follows:

The Comedians, ye heretofore sd, bn. prohibited to represent on stadge ye Tragedy of ye death of ye k. mother, adventured this weeke to act it agayne publickly. But ye k. counsel advised of it, caused them ye next morning to be apprehended and imprisoned, where they yeat remayn: besides ye booke is suppressed, and the author and ye printer inquired after to tast of ye same cupp. The k. shewed hymself very highly offended, and hath commanded very rigourous punishment to be done on them al¹.

There is little doubt, I think, that we have here to do with Montchrétien's play again. Parry especially states that the subject has been mentioned before: 'The Comedians, ye heretofore sd, bn. prohibited etc.' Also it is known that La Vallée, whom Beauharnais mentions as the leader of the troupe which performed *L'Écossaise* at Orleans, and his company were at the Hôtel de Bourgogne in 1604², the year in which Parry writes. It was therefore almost certainly at the Hôtel de Bourgogne that the performance of which Parry speaks took place.

The most interesting aspect of these two new documents—Winwood's letter of 1601 and Parry's of 1604—is the proof which they afford of two public performances in Paris of *L'Écossaise* by professional comedians. This, with the performance at Orleans recorded by Beauharnais, brings the total number of public performances of this play of which we now have proof up to three. The old view that the sixteenth-century type of classical play, of which Garnier and Montchrétien are the chief

¹ P.R.O. State Papers, Foreign, France, 51.

² See Rigal, *Le théâtre français avant la période classique*, p. 50.

exponents, was not meant by its authors to be acted on the public stage has been gradually exploded by the evidence of actual public performances of such plays which M. Lanson has collected¹. The evidence of Winwood and Parry adds two further small items to M. Lanson's list. *L'Écossaise* must have had a considerable vogue with the public since the comedians continued to present it in face of such risks.

Secondly these documents are of interest since they are a small addition to the very fragmentary material from which the biography of Montchrétien has to be constructed.

'Ye booke is suppressed,' Parry tells us. It is strange to hear this because it was in 1604 that the new and emended edition of Montchrétien's tragedies appeared at Rouen. Perhaps these happenings account for the depressed tone of the preface of the new edition, addressed to the Prince de Condé. 'S'il m'estoit possible de les dégager (i.e., les tragédies) totalement du public,' says Montchrétien, 'ce me seroit un grand contentement et par mon propre consentement elles seroient désormais plustost supprimées que reimprimées.'

'The author and ye printer inquired after,' continues Parry. Is it not possible that this affair may have been at the bottom of Montchrétien's hasty departure into England which biographers, following the *Mercure François*, have hitherto attributed solely to his having killed the son of the Sieur de Grichy-Moinnes in a duel?

It must be confessed that these documents tend to increase rather than diminish the mystery of Montchrétien's life. How can one reconcile these records of complaints of *L'Écossaise* made by English representatives in France with the legend that Montchrétien dedicated this very play to James I, and through James's intercession with Henri IV on his behalf, obtained permission to return to France? The following is the passage from the *Mercure François* on which this tale is based:

Il (Montchrétien) a esté des bons poetes tragiques de son temps; il fit imprimer plusieurs tragedies qu'il avoit composées, lesquelles furent bien receues: entr' autres il desdia l'Écossaise au Roy de la Grande Bretagne, ce qui lui sauva la vie; car s'estant trouvé en un rencontre accusé d'avoir tué le fils du sieur de Grichy moynnes pres Bayeux, en feignant de luy demander la vie, il s'en alla en Angleterre, crainte d'estre pendu, jusques à ce que sa M. de la grande Bretagne obtint du feu roy Henry 4 sa grace².

It is, perhaps, not inconsistent with what we know or can guess of Montchrétien's character that he should have taken the bold step of

¹ G. Lanson, *Études sur les Origines de la Tragédie Classique en France*. Article published in the *Revue d'histoire littéraire de la France*, 1903, pp. 177-231, 413-36.

² *Documents concernant la Normandie* (extracts from *Le Mercure François*), edited A. Héron, 1883, p. 188.

dedicating to the English monarch the very play which had given offence to the English authorities. He may have taken the bull by the horns and turned failure into success by these impudent methods. But it is also very possible that the author of the passage in the *Mercure*, who is writing some fifteen years after the events, may have been misinformed, or may be giving an intentionally misleading account of the connexion between *L'Écossaise* and the British Government¹. At any rate he confirms the fact that there was some such connexion, even though the details he gives seem difficult to reconcile with the information we have derived from the ambassadors' dispatches. It is possible that further search among English correspondence of the period might throw more light on this problem.

Why did the English ambassadors disapprove of a play which seems to us now a most mild and harmless elegy on the death of the ill-fated queen? What can have been the political significance of *L'Écossaise* in the eyes of contemporaries? Let us now turn to the play itself, and dismissing from our minds all aesthetic considerations, let us endeavour to discern what are the political views which it reveals or fails to reveal.

Practically every critic who has ever had anything to say about *L'Écossaise* has been struck by the remarkable fact that the last three acts seem to have no logical connexion with the first two. The play falls into two distinct halves. The heroine of the first half is Queen Elizabeth. She is represented as being most unwilling to give the order for Mary's execution. She shrinks from an act which seems to her cruel and unwomanly and brings forward every argument she can think of in Mary's defence. But her counsellors lay before her the reasons which render the execution of the Queen of Scots imperative—namely, that she is known to have been plotting with the Spaniards and other enemies of England. These plots have had for their object nothing less than the assassination of Elizabeth and the seizure of the throne for Mary. Nothing but Mary's execution will put a stop to these continually renewed conspiracies, which are a menace not merely to Elizabeth but also to England. In the name of her subjects, the representatives of Parliament implore Elizabeth to put an end to the life of the treasonable queen. Overwhelmed by this reasoning Elizabeth consents to Mary's death, and then, touched again by pity, rescinds the order. Montchrétien leaves her at that point and does not show Elizabeth actually giving the

¹ The passage in the *Mercure* was written by a political enemy of Montchrétien and is very likely to be unjust and unreliable. Funck-Brentano, in his introduction to Montchrétien's *Traité de l'économie politique* (1889), p. xii, note i, finds the story of the dedication of *L'Écossaise* to James I difficult to believe.

order for Mary's death. Elizabeth, then, is represented as having been unwillingly forced to the deed for the good of her subjects. In short the first two acts are a presentation of what one may call broadly the English-Huguenot view of the subject.

In the last three acts we hear no more of Elizabeth and her counsellors. Mary, the noble and innocent victim of a cruel sentence, holds the centre of the stage. She is shown going to meet her death with nobility and fortitude, and the poet appears to be doing all he can to engage the sympathies of the reader on Mary's side. Great stress is laid on the enormity of putting a lady of royal blood to death in this manner and the choruses expatiate on the sacred immunity from violence which should surround the persons of kings. In these last acts Montchrétien seems to have gone over completely to the French-Catholic position.

It is therefore somewhat difficult to decide what the politics and religion (the two were inseparably bound together at that period) of our author really were, since he states the two opposite positions consecutively without making any attempt to reconcile them. He gives more space to Mary, and his heart seems to be much more in her defence than in that of Elizabeth, therefore some biographers have concluded that he was a Catholic when he wrote *L'Écossaise*, although he would appear to have gone over to the Protestant side later in life.

It is my belief, however, that Montchrétien's two-sided presentation of the subject is less original than at first appears. I suggest that Pierre Matthieu's *Histoire des derniers troubles de France* (1597) should be added to the list of sources of *L'Écossaise* compiled by M. Lanson in his article on the subject¹. Matthieu's *Histoire des derniers troubles* was widely read by contemporaries, as the number of editions it went through proves, and at the end of the second book there is a fairly long 'Digression sur la mort de la Roynne d'Escosse,' the argument of which can be briefly condensed as follows.

France mourned at the death of the Queen of Scots, whereas in England it was a cause of rejoicing. After making this statement Matthieu proceeds to examine the arguments which support these two contrary opinions and he casts his examination in the form of a dialogue between a Frenchman and an Englishman, the former supporting Mary whilst the latter is the champion of Elizabeth. The keystone of the Englishman's argument is that since Mary had been conspiring against the safety of the realm, reasons of state made her execution imperative.

¹ G. Lanson, *Les sources historiques de la 'Reine D'Escosse,'* published in the *Revue Universitaire*, 1905, p. 395.

He describes at length Elizabeth's reluctance to consent to the deed, and the pressure put upon her by her counsellors and by the 'Estats d'Angleterre' (compare Montchrétien's 'chœur des Estats'). 'Le Chancelier, au nom des trois ordres d'Angleterre, la supplia de laisser le cours à la Justice.' This is also the plea of the 'chœur des Estats' in *L'Écossaise*:

Ains que tu permettras que la iuste sentence
Donnee en plain Conseil en ta sainte presence
Contre ceste Princesse, aye son libre cours...¹.

'Puckering Procureur general, luy remonstra que la longue prison, ny la continuation de la bien veillance de sa Maiesté n'avoit peu fleschir une ame tant ingrate et obstinee, qu'elle n'eust souvent entreprins contre sa vie, et la tranquillité de sa Couronne....' Compare this with:

Quoy que de sa prison l'ennuyeuse longueur
Peust un iuste courroux allumer en son cœur;
Par mon doux traitement elle devoit l'esteindre,
Se plaignant en son mal de ne s'en pouvoir plaindre:
Mais l'on m'a rapporté qu'en ce dernier effort,
Elle brigue mon Sceptre, et minute ma mort,
Seroit-ce donc l'amour, Ame ingrate et legere,
Que me iuroit sans fin ta bouche mensongere?²

Matthieu's 'Chancelier' and 'Puckering Procureur general' correspond to Montchrétien's 'Conseiller' who argues with Elizabeth in the first act of *L'Écossaise*; in the second act 'Conseiller' disappears and his argument is continued by the 'chœur des Estats.' Montchrétien exactly follows Matthieu's order in this; for we read in the *Histoire des derniers troubles* that when the Chancelier and Puckering had exposed their arguments: 'Elle (i.e., Elizabeth) non contente de ses remonstrances envoya encores un Milord à Messieurs du Parlement, les supplier d'essprouver tout pour sauver la vie à ceste Roine...lesquels encores qu'ils regrettassent le desastre de ceste Princesse, trouverent que la Roine feroit bien de s'asseurer.' Notice the word 'desastre' in this passage, used by Montchrétien as a sub-title to his play.

What would you have had the Queen do? asks Matthieu's Englishman, amongst all these 'contraires agitations.' She was warned by M. de Believre³, he continues, that Mary's death would raise an avenging host of relations and allies. Compare Montchrétien:

Les Roys qui font mourir ceux qui leur sont contraires,
Pensant les amoindrir, croissent leurs aduersaires...⁴.

¹ Lines 389-91 in the edition published under the direction of G. Michaut, Paris, 1905.

² *Ed. cit.*, ll. 47-54.

³ Curiously enough this 'M. de Believre,' sent by Henri III to remonstrate with Elizabeth on her treatment of the Queen of Scots, is the same Pomponne de Bellièvre who later, as Chancellor, took proceedings against the players for the 'lewde Indiscretion' of performing *L'Écossaise*.

⁴ *Ed. cit.*, ll. 189-90.

But the Englishman thinks this an idle objection. 'Pour eviter un grand danger il se faut hasarder au danger.' In short, I believe I am right in saying that every argument used by Montchrétien in the first two acts can be traced to this passage in the *Histoire des derniers troubles*.

Matthieu's Frenchman bases his argument on the premise that a sovereign prince is above all human laws and answerable only to God. Elizabeth and her Parliament had therefore absolutely no right to pass a sentence on the Queen of Scots. 'Quant aux souverains qui ne reconnoissent superieur que Dieu, je ne lis point que jamais ils ayent passé par les arrests d'un Parlement, ny au jugement de leurs voisins.' There is no form of punishment which can ever be applied to a sovereign, and to inflict on a queen the indignity of a public execution was a most unheard-of sacrilege. Compare Montchrétien:

On fait si peu de cas du sacré sang Royal
Que la hache s'en trempe et le bras desloyal
L'espand ne plus ne moins que le sang mercenaire;
On donne aux maiestez le supplice vulgaire...¹.

In short to Matthieu's Frenchman, as to Montchrétien in the last three acts, Mary is the innocent victim of a cruel and unjustifiable sentence.

I hope I have said enough to prove that this passage of Matthieu's must have suggested the plan of *L'Écossaise* to Montchrétien². The discrepancy which we have noted between the first two and the last three acts of the play is thus explained; Montchrétien has simply presented the Englishman's argument in the first two and the Frenchman's in the last three acts. Like Matthieu, he gives far more space and weight to the French argument without ever definitely condemning the English position. Matthieu's closing paragraph may even have suggested to the poet the larger philosophical significance of Mary's fate, as a type of the transitory nature of fame and beauty and the shortness of human life. 'Voila une vie bien tragicque, et un vray tableau de la vanité des grandeurs du monde,' says Matthieu, and concludes his 'digression' with the exclamation, 'Allez faire estat des felicitéz du monde!' The historian's prose style, pompous and stilted though it is, is capable of achieving a certain dignity at times.

It is, perhaps, not irrelevant to add here that some years later Pierre Matthieu, like Montchrétien, also got into trouble with the English ambassador. The incident is related in the State Papers at the Public

¹ *Ed. cit.*, ll. 1385-8.

² Montchrétien uses a few details not given by Matthieu; he introduces, for instance, the character of Davison who announces the death sentence to Mary at the beginning of Act III. Davison is not mentioned in the *Histoire des derniers troubles*. The latter was, therefore, Montchrétien's chief, but not quite his only source.

Record Office¹. In 1610 a libellous book on King James I appeared in France. The English ambassador in Paris was instructed to endeavour to track the author; and King James himself suggested that Matthieu might possibly be the culprit because the style of the libel resembled that of the historian and also because 'he (Matthieu) hath been ghirding at this State before.' It transpired, however, that one Rebout was the real author of the libel. Matthieu had a serious conversation with the ambassador, in the course of which it was explained to him that 'for the partialities which we had observed he had shewed against the State of England, in his *Storie*, his pen, which was formerly accused by us, was the more suspected upon the coming forth of this lewed booke,' and was then dismissed with a warning. Matthieu had written various other historical works, so the rather vague expression 'his *Storie*' may or may not refer to the *Histoire des derniers troubles*. But it is a rather curious coincidence that the author of what we believe to be the source of *L'Écossaise* should also have come into conflict with the English authorities.

This discussion as to the source of *L'Écossaise* has led us somewhat from our original enquiry, which was to discover what it was that the English ambassadors objected to in the play. One might have thought that a poem which glorified the memory of James's mother whilst palliating the part played in the affair by Elizabeth would have met with their approval. But no doubt the truth of the matter is that the disapprobation of the English ambassadors did not rest upon fine distinctions of this kind, but upon a general principle which was gradually being formulated in England, the basis of which was that any representation on the stage of a 'modern Christian king' was, in itself, unseemly². In their horror at hearing that the characters of Queen Elizabeth and Queen Mary were being presented on a public stage, they would not stop to consider the matter or the argument of the play.

But a French contemporary did ponder the argument of *L'Écossaise* and seems to have seen in it a dangerous attempt at arousing again the old popular passion for the Guise family, a stirring up, as it were, of the embers of the League.

I base the above statement upon my interpretation of *Le Triomphe de la Ligue*, a play by R. J. Nerée, published in 1607, which I believe the author intended as an answer to *L'Écossaise*. In order to support this

¹ P.R.O. State Papers, Foreign, France, 56. The Matthieu incident is related in the following (unpublished) letters: Salisbury to Edmondes, 16 Oct. 1610, and 27 Oct. 1610; Edmondes to Salisbury, 2 and 3 Nov. 1610.

² See E. K. Chambers, *Elizabethan Stage*, I, pp. 322-8.

claim I shall be obliged to give a short résumé of the argument of the play.

Its central theme is the painful story—then still very fresh in the minds of Frenchmen—of the religious wars of the preceding century, the bitter struggle between Catholics and Huguenots. The first act begins with a long monologue deploring the unhappy state of France, spoken by a personage entitled 'Constance garde-loix' who afterwards turns out to represent the Reformed Religion. Then 'Giesu' (Guise), 'Numiade' (Du Maine, i.e., Mayenne), and 'Jeusoie' (Joyeuse) appear upon the scene. The Guises are here represented as ambitious self-seekers who have fomented civil wars and ruined France to further their private ends—namely the seizure of the crown of France for their own family. François II and Charles IX were their tools, but the third brother, Henri III, has proved less tractable. To crush him they have formed, with the help of Spain, the Catholic League; they have deluded the people into supporting this with empty promises. Henry of Navarre is the hero who contrasts with these villains, although he never appears in person. The Guises regard him as their most dangerous enemy, first, because he is the legitimate heir to the throne which they had hoped to seize for themselves, and secondly because his valour and personal charm have made him extremely popular. The author of this play is himself a Protestant; but he bears no grudge against Catholics who will accept Henry of Navarre as king, that is to say Catholics who are not Leaguers. He belongs, in short, to that body of 'politique' opinion which found its chief expression in the *Satire Ménippée* and which did so much to place Henri IV firmly on the throne of France.

This general presentation of the situation occupies the first three acts. In the last two we learn, through the mouths of various messengers, of the successive blows which fell upon the House of Guise and the League. First of all—and this is the most significant part of the play from our point of view—a Jesuit, just returned from England, imparts to Guise the news of the death of the Queen of Scots. The Duke is enraged at this affront to his family, and realises at once what a set-back this will be to his ambitious schemes. The next piece of bad news Guise receives is the intelligence of Henry of Navarre's victory at the Battle of Coutras. And then comes a third great blow, the news of the ruin of the Spanish Armada, for the fortunes of the League are bound up with those of Spain. One feels that the object of the author is to demonstrate the intimate connexion between events in France and events in England; between the League, the tool used by Spain to destroy France, and

Mary, Queen of Scots, the centre of Spanish intrigue against England; between the Duke of Guise, who hoped to oust the legitimate kings of France, and Mary of Scotland—whose maiden name was Mary of Guise—whom her supporters hoped to place upon the throne of England.

The last scene of the fifth act is devoted to the description of Guise's assassination which, of course, is excused on the grounds that the Duke was plotting to murder the king and seize the crown.

It is easy to see how the argument of this play refutes Montchrétien. By putting the death of Mary into its historical context, Nerée demonstrates that the Frenchman who sympathises with that unhappy queen, must, if he is logical, be still an adherent of the League and a traitor to His Majesty King Henri IV. The plots in England against Elizabeth, of which Mary was the centre, had the same Spanish origin as the plots in France against the legitimate French sovereigns. This is made quite clear, and great stress is laid on the fact that the execution of the Queen of Scots was a blow to Guise and to the League.

The proof that Nerée really did intend this play to be an answer to Montchrétien's is the fact that the speeches of 'Visteie' (i.e., 'Jesuite') are verbally reminiscent of *L'Écossaise*. In order to support this claim I shall be obliged to quote at some length. It will be remembered that in the final chorus of *L'Écossaise*¹, Montchrétien enumerates the charms of Mary—her eyes, her forehead, her hair, etc.—and concludes that everything in life must be transitory indeed since such beauties have already faded into nothingness. Bearing this passage in mind it is interesting to read the following oration made by the Jesuit in Act IV, Sc. i of *Le Triomphe de la Ligue*:

ô grandeurs qu'on adore,
Patronnés vous ici, veu ce front dont l'aurore
Empruntoit la splendeur, ces yeux rians et doux
Ains ses brillants soleils, qui d'Apollon jaloux
Ternissoient les rayons, cest amoureux Chef mesmes
Qui s'est veu honorer de deux grands diademes,
Leur beau lustre ecclipser par la meurtrière main
D'un infame bourreau, ô supplice inhumain!
Puis allez vous fier aux blandices du monde,
Aux trompeuses faveurs, malheureux qui s'y fonde....

The whole passage is an obvious and not unskilful imitation of Montchrétien's style.

The Jesuit also tells us that Mary prayed for the League with her last breath:

Aidez au moins la Ligue, et prenez la défense
Du parti commencé dès que j'estois en France.

¹ *Et. cit.*, R. 1539-610.

And it must be admitted that Montchrétien had put a similar sentiment, though couched in much vaguer terms, into the mouth of the Queen of Scots. In the long 'farewell' speech in *L'Écossaise*, Mary thus apostrophises her relations the Guises:

Adieu braues Lorrains, qui de Lauriers couuers,
Faites que vostre Race en tous lieux estimée,
Vante encor' à bon droit les palmes d'Idumée¹.

It will be noticed that Nerée replies to the argument of the last three acts of *L'Écossaise* and evidently considers that they, and not the first two, contain Montchrétien's real opinion. He also strongly attacks the statement that it was a sin to put to death a person of royal blood. In the chorus which immediately precedes the scene between Guise and the Jesuit, Nerée puts forward his views on this subject in no uncertain terms. The power of kings is indeed, he says, divinely ordained, and in that sense they are sacred. But if they provoke God to anger they forfeit all immunity from punishment. Let all wicked princes come now and behold the terrible fate that has recently overtaken a queen!

Voiez, voiez ceste fois,
Froids de peur, rouges de honte,
La Roine des Escossois
Qu'un *desastre* estrange dompte:
Apprenez par ses douleurs,
Qu'en ces bas lieux ou nous sommes,
Vous n'estes rien que des hommes
Subiects a mesmes malheurs.

The words which I have italicised are surely a final proof that Nerée had Montchrétien in mind. They are, I believe, an allusion to the titles of the latter's play, which in the first edition was called *L'Escossoise ou le Desastre*, and in the second, *La Tragedie de la Reine D'Escosse*.

It has also occurred to me that the dedication of the *Triomphe de la Ligue* to 'Samuel Korecky, Comte de Korec'—obviously a made-up name—may also be aimed at Montchrétien, whose high-sounding title of 'Seigneur de Vasteville' was of rather doubtful authenticity, or so his enemies hinted.

It would be interesting to identify the author of *Le Triomphe de la Ligue*. Beauchamps² attributes it, curiously enough, to that same Pierre Matthieu who wrote the *Histoire des derniers troubles*. But Beauchamps has confused *Le Triomphe de la Ligue* with Matthieu's play *La Guisiade*. Paul Lacroix suggests Nicholas Rapin, one of the principal authors of the *Satire Ménippée*. He says, 'Le style (du *Triomphe de la Ligue*) a

¹ *Ed. cit.*, II. 1242-4.

² Godart de Beauchamps, *Recherches sur les théâtres de France*, II, pp. 10-11.

beaucoup d'analogie avec celui de Rapin, qui fut mandé à la cour l'année même de la publication de cette pièce...¹ If this hypothesis should be correct, the play would take on an additional importance as an official reply to *L'Écossaise*, sanctioned—possibly even ordered—by Henri IV himself.

It would appear, then, that Montchrétien's play, since it called forth the ire of Winwood and Parry and elicited a reply from Nerée, must have been something of a storm centre in the early years of the seventeenth century. And yet one feels that it was primarily as a poet and as a man of sentiment, rather than as a politician, that he was first attracted to the story of the beautiful and ill-fated Queen of Scots. Montchrétien always seems to have had a genius for getting into difficulties, and I leave it to others to follow up the clue to some of his difficulties which the facts related above would seem to suggest.

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¹ *Bibliothèque dramatique de M. de Soleinne*. Catalogue rédigé par P. L. Jacob (Paul Lacroix), 1843-5, No. 920.