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## Peers of France and Princes of the Blood

*Richard A. Jackson*

A very serious problem arose on the eve of the coronation of Henry II of France in 1547. It had been decided that three of the "old" Peers of France (the Duke of Guyenne, the Count of Flanders, and the Count of Champagne) were to be represented respectively by the Duke of Guise (Claude of Lorraine), of Nevers (Francis of Cleves), and of Montpensier (Louis II of Bourbon). Since the dukes normally preceded the counts, and since Flanders preceded Champagne, Montpensier found himself in a subordinate position. All three men had the honor of being among France's "new" peers, but Montpensier claimed that, as a Prince of the Blood (*prince du sang*), he should have precedence over both Guise and Nevers, who were not Princes of the Blood. On the other hand, the latter two claimed that they ought to take precedence over Montpensier because their "new" peerages were older than his. On July 25, 1547, the day before his coronation, Henry II published a provisional ordinance temporarily regulating the matter of precedence between Montpensier and his two opponents:

We make known that, having put this matter to the deliberation of some princes and seigneurs as well as the other lay and ecclesiastical Peers of France assembled here, these were of the opinion with us that on account of the brevity of the time before our consecration and coronation it would be too difficult to be able to decide the matter presently. For this reason, and considering that in this solemn act of our consecration and coronation there is no question of anything which touches in any way the honor and preeminence of the royal blood [*il n'est question de chose qui touche en rien l'honneur et prééminence du Sang*]

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*Royal*], . . . we have ordained by this present ordinance—in a provisory manner, owing to the brevity of time, and until it has been otherwise decided—that our cousins the Dukes of Guise and of Nevers (Count of Eu), created and received as Peers of France before our cousin the Duke of Montpensier, shall precede—in this act alone—this our cousin the Duke of Montpensier, but that, nonetheless, this may not in any way prejudice him afterwards [*sans ce que cela luy puisse toutesfois aucunement prejudicier par cy-aprés*], whether in similar acts, or in any other of honor and preeminence, whatever they be. . . .<sup>1</sup>

In short, the king refrained from directly meeting the issue by resorting to a vague reassurance to Montpensier and by using the rank of the person represented—rather than the rank of the person representing—as the basis of precedence for his coronation ceremony.<sup>2</sup>

This episode dramatizes a crucial phase of the struggle between the Peers of France and the Princes of the Blood. The Peers of France, second only to the king in prestige, represented the medieval principle of a ruling consortium of king and great barons. The Princes of the Blood—male members of a ruling dynasty and its cadet lines, and capable of becoming king of France if the present king or his direct line should die out<sup>3</sup>—represented royal absolutism's dynastic principle. The prestige of the Princes of the Blood was rising in the sixteenth century, and Montpensier as one of them could assert his claim to preeminence in 1547, but the peers were still able to maintain their rights. At this

<sup>1</sup> The ordinance is printed in Théodore Godefroy, *Le Cérémonial françois* (Paris, 1649), I, 295-97 (all references are to Volume I), and in Jean du Tillet, *Recueil des rangs des grands de France* (n.p., 1606; bound with *Recueil des roys de France, leurs couronne et maison* [Paris: Pierre Mettayer, 1618]), pp. 94-95. That the dispute did not arise suddenly on the day before the coronation is demonstrated by a royal request to the Parlement of Paris asking to be given the dates of the origin of the various peerages. This information was sent to Henry on July 6 by Jean du Tillet, *Greffier* (Clerk) of the Parlement (Godefroy, *Cérémonial françois*, 294-95). See also Ralph E. Giesey, *The Juristic Basis of Dynastic Right to the French Throne, Transactions of the American Philosophical Society, New Series LI, part 5* (Philadelphia, 1961), p. 39, n.151. The Count of Nevers had been raised to the peerage by Charles VII in 1459 (raised to duke by Francis I in 1538) and the Duke of Guise in 1527; the Count of Montpensier had been raised to duke and peer early in 1539. On the distinction between the "old" and the "new" peers, see below, n.11 (references are as often to the accompanying text as they are to footnotes themselves).

<sup>2</sup> This was recognized in the sixteenth century by Du Tillet, *Recueil des roys*, p. 315 ("le rang des representez estoit gardé, non des representans"), and *Recueil des rangs*, p. 16.

<sup>3</sup> It is worth quoting the definition of Prince of the Blood which Charles Loyseau gives in his *Traité des ordres et simples dignitez* (Paris, 1620; bound with *Cinq Livres du droit des offices* [Paris, 1620] and *Traité des seigneuries* [Paris, 1620]), p. 103 (ch. VII, no. 12): "[Princes are those] qui sont de la lignee de nos Roys, à sçavoir que la coronne est destinee à chacun d'eux en son rang et degré de consanguinité: destinee dis-je par voye d'heredité, qui transfere le droit du defunct au plus proche heritier, et par consequent le charge de ses faits et promesses, comme representant sa personne. . . ."

point the Princes of the Blood had been growing in importance for about a century, and Henry II's ordinance specifically stated that his decision did not endanger "in any way the honor and preeminence of the royal blood"; in the half-century after this, the princes would win complete precedence. Thus, the quarrel at Henry's coronation may mark a moment of equilibrium between the two forces.

Although the story of the rise of the Princes of the Blood has not been written by modern historians, practically every sixteenth-century writer on the institutions of the French monarchy thought the princes' struggle for supremacy of sufficient importance to warrant discussion. Two of the most able of them, Jean du Tillet and Charles Loyseau, even devoted major portions of whole books to the issue of precedence.<sup>4</sup> Upon examination, the history of the struggle shows that it does indeed have its own story to tell of the rise of French royal absolutism.

It was most natural that the dispute should have broken out on the eve of the coronation ceremony. The main function of the Peers of France was to act at the coronation ceremony, and the peers played a commanding rôle in the ceremony throughout late medieval and modern times. The most important of the peers in the ceremony was, of course, the Archbishop of Reims, France's primate, who normally officiated. However, the other peers also played prominent rôles, either singly, in groups, or *in toto*. Some of the peers were occasionally entrusted with carrying the regalia,<sup>5</sup> and the Duke of Burgundy placed the royal spurs upon the king and then removed them. The bishops of Laon and Beauvais were entrusted with the task of going to seek the king in the archiepiscopal palace and of leading him to the cathedral church to be consecrated and crowned. All the peers stretched forth their hands to support the crown after it had been placed upon the king's head by the officiant, and all participated in the inthronization of the king. It was even asserted that the king took his coronation oath "in the hands of the Peers," who thus served as the recipients of the oath.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Du Tillet, *Recueil des rangs*; Loyseau, *Des ordres et simples dignitez*. The subject is mentioned also in the work of the able lawyer, Louis Charondas Le Caron, *Pandectes ou digestes du droict françois* (Paris, 1637), p. 120 (liv. I, ch. xxi).

<sup>5</sup> For a partial listing of the peers and the regalia borne by them, see René Choppin, *Traité du domaine de la couronne de France*, in *Oeuvres* (Paris, 1662), II, 425 (liv. III, tit. viii, no. 1).

<sup>6</sup> Guy Coquille, who ought to have known better, speaks in his *Institution au droit des françois*, in *Oeuvres* (Paris, 1666), II, 7, of "le serment que le Roy preste à son sacre és mains des Pairs." I intend to treat briefly of this and similar assertions in my forthcoming study, "Elective Kingship and *Consensus Populi* in Sixteenth-Century France."

A German historian, the late Percy Ernst Schramm, employing an argument which was developed in sixteenth-century France, has argued that the support of the crown by the peers was a symbolic expression of the origin of the kingship, which came not from God alone, but also from the people, who were acting through the hands of the peers. It is debatable, though, whether Schramm's argument fits the sixteenth century, and it most certainly is not applicable to any previous period. The French coronation *ordines* emphasize that the crown was placed upon the head of the king by the archbishop alone; only then did the peers support it. By this the peers were pledging support to the crowned king rather than expressing any elective principle—they were acting as vassals. Likewise, after the king had been seated upon his throne by the archbishop the peers all gave him a kiss of homage. Both the coronation and the inthronization were thus but different aspects of an expression of the feudal relationship between the king and the Peers of France. At least one early seventeenth-century scholar clearly recognized this feudal relationship when he called the peers “the first vassals of the kingdom.”<sup>7</sup>

The twelve Peers of France had not always been so important for the coronation of the French king. While theoretically all vassals of the king were peers, the terms *par regni* and *par Franciae* were first used towards the end of the twelfth century to distinguish the greater from the lesser of those vassals who held immediately of the king, the greater being the ones with the title of count or duke. By 1216 there were nine peers: the Archbishop of Reims, the bishops of Langres, Beauvais, Châlons, and Noyon, the dukes of Burgundy, Normandy, and Guyenne, and the Count of Champagne. Not until about 1225 were the Bishop of Laon, the Count of Flanders, and the Count of Toulouse added to

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I discuss at length the precoronation ritual in the archiepiscopal palace in “The Sleeping King,” *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance*, XXXI (1969), 525-51.

<sup>7</sup> Choppin, *Traité du domaine*, II, 425 (liv. III, tit. viii, no. 1): “Or d'autant que la principale charge des Pairs de France consiste au devoir et assistance, à laquelle ils sont obligez au Sacre et Couronnement du Roy, pour luy rendre toutes soubmissions et devoirs de serment de fidelité, comme les premiers vassaux du Royaume. . . .” There are occasional implications that the peers swore a special oath to the king either at his coronation or at other times (examples will appear in “Elective Kingship and *Consensus Populi* in Sixteenth-Century France”). Percy Ernst Schramm, *Der König von Frankreich: Das Wesen der Monarchie vom 9. zum 16. Jahrhundert* (2nd ed., Weimar, 1960), I, 173-74, argued that the peers acted as representatives of the people when they supported the crown, but he did recognize (202) that the kiss was the kiss of homage. Cf. the comments of the fourteenth-century monk, Jean Golein: “Adonc vient l'arcevesque par devant et le [le Roy] baise. et apres les pers evesques. et apres les autres pers seculiers. et cest en demonstrent quil li font hommage et quil ont avec lui union paisible et amiable” (Richard A. Jackson, “The *Traité du sacre* of Jean Golein,” *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, CXIII [1969], 317).

bring the number up to twelve. These later additions seem to have resulted from a very conscious imitation of the *chansons de geste*, which speak of the twelve paladins (also called the peers) of Charlemagne; the propaganda inherent in this archaizing was so effective that there were some who believed even in the eighteenth century that the origin of the twelve peers was to be found in the reign of Charlemagne.<sup>8</sup>

It is impossible to tell when the Peers of France first began to participate in the coronation ceremony. The *ordo* of Reims (ca. 1270)—the first surviving coronation *ordo* to be written after the formation of the college of peers—definitely assigned functions to the Peers of France. In this *ordo*, the Duke of Burgundy, who was the only peer named, placed the spurs on the king and removed them. The peers—it was not said how many—immediately stretched forth their hands to support the crown when it had been placed upon the king's head by the archbishop. They also supported the crown while the king was being led to his elevated throne; after the inthronization the episcopal and lay peers kissed the king, and the archbishop then returned to the altar. We do not know which peers were to carry out the stipulations of the *ordo*, and we do not know whether any provision was made for the representation of the Duke of Normandy, whose duchy had reverted to the crown. We may assume no more than that the ecclesiastical peers and the lay peers whose territories had not reverted were to be present.<sup>9</sup>

By the Renaissance the peers had important rights and prerogatives in addition to their crucial function at the coronation ceremony, for they had come to occupy a very special position in the French hierarchy. They had always acted as judges in the so-called *cour des pairs*, which eventually came to be confused with the *cour du roi* so that they acquired a deliberative voice in the Parlement of Paris. Within their

<sup>8</sup> This is not the place to get into the vexing problem of the origin of the peers. One of the best studies of the subject is Ferdinand Lot, "Quelques mots sur l'origine des pairs de France," *Revue historique*, LIV (1894), 34-59. I tend to agree with Lot on the origin of the ecclesiastical peers, although I should like to suggest that it is significant that all of the five bishops, with the exception of the Bishop of Langres, were suffragan bishops of the Archbishop of Reims; why Langres, then, should have been selected I cannot say unless it was at the time also a suffragan bishopric of Reims. Lot's explanation of the origin of the lay peers is inferior to that given by Robert Holtzmann, *Französische Verfassungsgeschichte von der Mitte des neunten Jahrhunderts bis zur Revolution* (Munich, 1965 [reprint of the Munich and Berlin edition of 1910]), p. 233.

<sup>9</sup> "Ordo ad inungendum regem," in Ulysse J. Chevalier, *Sacramentaire et martyrologe de l'abbaye de Saint-Remy, Bibliothèque liturgique* (Paris, 1900), VII, 222-26. On the date of this *ordo* of Reims, see Percy Ernst Schramm, "Ordines-Studien II: Die Krönung bei den Westfranken und den Franzosen," *Archiv für Urkundenforschung*, XV (1938), 24-28; H. G. Richardson, "The Coronation in Medieval England: The Evolution of the Office and the Oath," *Traditio*, XVI (1960), 113-15, 192.

peerages they possessed a type of superior jurisdiction which otherwise was limited to apanages and royal dowries. By the early seventeenth century a new awareness of institutions led to the assertion that the peerages were offices like other offices in that they could not be exercised by third parties.<sup>10</sup> By then, though, the nature of the peerage had changed drastically from its original form.

The college of the twelve peers had always been more ideal than real. With the judgment against John Lackland in 1202 Normandy reverted to the crown. Thus, by the time the number of peers was set at twelve there were no longer twelve peers. This process continued during the thirteenth century: Toulouse reverted to the crown in 1271, and Champagne was added to the crown lands with the accession of Philip the Fair in 1285. Three new peerages were created in 1297 to replace the old; in 1315 a thirteenth was created, and eventually there were to be twenty-six Peers of France. A distinction first seems to have been made between the original twelve Peers of France and the newer peers sometime in the latter half of the fourteenth century. The former came to be called the "old" peers, and it was their rôles which were played at the coronation until the end of the Old Regime.<sup>11</sup>

In the course of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries the last three of the "old" lay peerages reverted to the crown or were lost to the crown. Some of them were given out again as apanages, but these also reverted from time to time. Burgundy fell to the crown in 1361 with the death of Philippe de Rouvres, the last Capetian Duke of Burgundy. It was given as an apanage to King John's son Philip in 1363, but the Valois dukes of Burgundy became extinct with the death of Charles the Bold in 1477, in which year Louis XI managed to get himself recognized in

<sup>10</sup> Loyseau, *Traité des seigneuries*, p. 64 (ch. V, no. 4); pp. 82-85 (ch. VI, nos. 46-60). The best sixteenth-century discussion of the peers as judges is Guillaume Budé, *Annotaciones in quatuor et viginti pandectarum libros* (Paris, 1530), fol. lxi<sup>r</sup>-v (on *Digest* I, 9, 12, 1, "Senatores autem accipiendum"). More recently, A. Chéruel discussed the rights of the peers in *Dictionnaire historique des institutions, moeurs et coutumes de la France* (5th ed., Paris, 1880), II, 922-23, *s.v.*, "Pairs."

<sup>11</sup> This brief survey of the early history of the Peers of France is based on Holtzmann, *Französische Verfassungsgeschichte*, pp. 231-35; Schramm, *König von Frankreich*, I, 170-76; Chéruel, *Institutions*, II, 920-22; Paul Viollet., *Histoire des institutions politiques et administratives de la France* (Paris, 1890-1903), III, 301-8. Viollet, III, 305, asserts that in 1386 no distinction was made between the "old" peers and the "new" and that the same was true in 1458. However, the source he quotes (Du Tillet, *Recueil des rangs* [*ed. cit.*, p. 65]) for the latter occasion demonstrates just the opposite, that a distinction was indeed made (see below, n.14). The "old" were distinguished from the "new" peers as early as 1374; a list of the peers at the end of the *ordo* preceding the British Museum's manuscript of the *ordo* of Charles V (E. S. Dewick, *The Coronation Book of Charles V of France*, *Henry Bradshaw Society*, XVI [London, 1899], 13-14) clearly differentiates when it uses the words "ces pers anciens."

the duchy. The County of Flanders, however, had passed into the hands of the dukes of Burgundy in 1384, and it disappeared as a peerage since it was not recovered by Louis XI when he reacquired Burgundy. The Treaty of Brétigny recognized the English sovereignty over the Duchy of Guyenne in 1360, and the duchy was not to return to French possession until 1451 (although it was given to Charles VI's son Louis as an apanage in 1401). Guyenne remained with the crown after the death of Charles, Duke of Berry (brother of Louis XI) in 1472. Thus, ever since the number of the Peers of France had been set at twelve there were some of the "old" lay peerages which did not exist and none of them existed after 1477. Since it had become obligatory for twelve peers to act at the ceremonies of the monarchy, it was also necessary that someone represent those "old" peerages which no longer existed. This representation set the scene for the struggle between the peers and the Princes of the Blood in 1547.

The phrase "Princes of the Blood" has been—and is—often abused, for, like most such expressions (and the concepts which they convey), it developed gradually. At least as early as the reign of King John phrases such as "nobles of our blood" or "nobles of our lineage" were being used in a restrictive sense to refer to those who were later to be called the Princes of the Blood, and, during the first half of the fifteenth century, the commonest term came to be "nobles of our blood and lineage"; these nobles were given special consideration in many matters. Nevertheless, the earliest use (which I have been able to find) of the phrase "Princes of the Blood" dates only from 1441, when it was used in a complaint of the Estates; strictly speaking, it would therefore seem inappropriate to apply it to earlier times.<sup>12</sup> The addition of the word "prince" was a crucial step in the development of the concept because it implied a separation of the Princes of the Blood from the other nobles of France; by increasingly enriching the connotations of the term, the French monarchy subsequently completed the outline which had been sketched by the mid-fifteenth century.

<sup>12</sup> The "Doléance des états" is printed in François André Isambert *et al.*, eds., *Récueil général des anciennes lois françaises* (Paris, 1823-33), IX, 108-109: "Item, qu'aux grans affaires de ce royaume, le roi devroit appeller les princes de son sang, plus que nuls autres; et qu'ainsi se doit faire raisonnablement, veu leur grand intérêt; et ainsi est accoutumé de faire par les très-chrétiens roys de France, ses progéniteurs." For examples of the earlier phrases from the reign of John, see *ibid.*, V, 105, 156; after that such phrases are quite common (e.g., *ibid.*, V, 213, 270-71, 277, 329; VIII, 641 [in the Treaty of Troyes of 1420], 731); I have not searched for earlier examples. One of the best of the lawyers at the end of the Renaissance, Charles Loyseau, recognized that the term "Princes of the Blood" was not as old as commonly thought, but he did not indicate when he thought that the phrase came into use (*Des ordres et simples dignitez*, p. 105 [ch. VII, no. 29]).



Although "Princes of the Blood" had been coined by 1450 the phrase was not yet in common use, and the accompanying notion was still not well developed. The emphasis on royal consanguinity had already begun, but its importance had yet to be established. Already during the reign of Charles VI the Princes of the Blood were disputing precedence among themselves, and they supported their respective contentions by means of noble titles as well as by degrees of relationship to the king.<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, the relative position of the Princes of the Blood per se in the noble hierarchy was still undefined. In 1458 the Parlement of Paris decided, in response to a royal query, that those Princes of the Blood (the term used was "seigneurs du sang") who were also peers should be present and called to the trial of John, Duke of Alençon (a Prince of the Blood and a "new" peer) "comme les anciens Pairs." On the other hand, the Parlement refused to decide whether the Princes of the Blood who were not Peers of France should enjoy the same prerogatives as the peers in judgments concerning their persons, positions, and estates. The Parlement's hesitation may be explained by the fact that it was then trying the Duke of Alençon for treason and did not want to confuse the trial.<sup>14</sup> Nonetheless, the Parlement's evasion of the issue is a measure of the distance the Princes of the Blood had risen in the French hierarchy.

The growing significance of royal blood probably resulted from the disaster of the Hundred Years' War, for blood became one of the weapons taken from the French intellectual arsenal to combat the English pretensions to the French throne. Perhaps the war even contributed a specific event which did much to raise the Princes of the Blood above other nobles—the anomalous circumstances surrounding the coronation of Charles VII in 1429. The six men chosen to represent

<sup>13</sup> Du Tillet, *Recueil des roys*, p. 316; *Recueil des rangs*, p. 15. Loyseau, *Des ordres et simples dignitez*, p. 106 (ch. VII, nos. 31-32), saw the dispute among Princes of the Blood as beginning already in 1380. One must be cautious about reading into Giesey, *Dynastic Right to the French Throne*, p. 39, the implication that "Princes of the Blood" was a well-developed concept by the fifteenth century.

<sup>14</sup> Du Tillet, *Recueil des rangs*, pp. 65-66; Parlement's refusal, as quoted in Du Tillet, said, "La Cour n'y a peu deliberer pour le present, pource qu'il y a procès appointé en droit en ladite Cour en pareil cas, et seroit la deliberation de cet article en effect la decision du procès." This implies that an otherwise unknown case was being deliberated, but one still has the impression that the refusal was related to the trial of the Duke of Alençon. Giesey, *Dynastic Right to the French Throne*, p. 39, aptly says that by the decision of 1458 "we see an equilibrium of the passing feudal monarchy and the rising dynastic monarchy"—as we shall see, it was an equilibrium which lasted for more than another century.

the "old" lay Peers of France were an interesting group: John, Duke of Alençon (he who was to be tried for treason in 1458), represented the Duke of Burgundy; Charles of Bourbon, Count of Clermont (whose father, the Duke of Bourbon, had been a prisoner of the English for ten years, and who himself led the revolt known as the "Pragerie" in 1440), probably represented the Duke of Normandy; Louis of Bourbon, Count of Vendôme, who probably represented the Duke of Guyenne; Georges, Seigneur de la Trémoille (Charles' favorite who was removed from the office of Grand Chamberlain by force in 1433); Gilles de Laval, Seigneur de Rais (who was executed in 1440 for his murder of a number of young boys); and Raoul, Seigneur de Gaucourt (who apparently played an important rôle in reorganizing the French military system later in Charles' reign).<sup>15</sup> The first three of these men were Princes of the Blood, and the fact that they were chosen to represent the "old" dukes-peers did not go unnoticed in later times. By selecting them as he (or his advisers) did, Charles emphasized both royal blood and loyalty to the throne, for there were no less than twelve (and possibly eighteen) adult Princes of the Blood alive at the time; although some, like the Duke of Bourbon, were prevented from attending the coronation by the exigencies of the struggle with England, others had cast their lots with the English and Burgundians.

The rôle of the Princes of the Blood continued to be augmented at the coronations of Louis XI in 1461 and Charles VIII in 1484. On both of these occasions nobles who were Princes of the Blood represented five of the six "old" lay peers (the Duke of Burgundy was present in 1461, but he was represented by Louis, Duke of Orléans, in 1484). This trend was reversed at the coronation of Louis XII in 1498, when

<sup>15</sup> I have culled this information from a great variety of sources, but here, as elsewhere throughout this study, relationships and genealogies (up to ca. 1725) are taken primarily from Anselme de Sainte-Marie, *Histoire généalogique et chronologique de la maison royale de France* (Paris, 1726). It will probably never be possible to say with certainty who represented the peers at Charles' coronation. For example, Enguerrand de Monstrelet, *Chroniques*, ed. J. A. Buchan, *Collection des chroniques nationales françaises* (Paris, 1826-27), V, 238-39, does not list Vendôme, Gilles de Rais, or Gaucourt but names instead "le seigneur de Beaumanoir, breton, [and] le seigneur de Mailly, en Touraine." The last Seigneur of Beaumanoir died in 1408, and any others who bore the family name were of no notable importance in the 1420's. Likewise, it was improbable that John, Baron of Mailly, would have been chosen to exercise the important office of peer because he had adhered to the Burgundian cause (until shortly before the coronation?), and Hardouin, Baron of Maillé (whom some modern authors list) was quite insignificant. On the other hand, all those whom I have listed did play important rôles in the court of Charles VII, and they all seem to have been present at the coronation, so they probably represented the peers.

only two Princes of the Blood represented the "old" lay Peers of France.<sup>16</sup> Nevertheless, the concept of the Princes of the Blood continued to develop, and the records of the Estates General held at Tours early in 1484 demonstrate amply that "Princes of the Blood" had almost completely supplanted the older terminology.<sup>17</sup>

A second reversal of the trend for Princes of the Blood to represent peers at the sixteenth-century coronations occurred, but not before princes represented four of the "old" peers at the coronation of Francis I in 1515. Although the sixteenth century was not yet as strict about rankings in the feudal hierarchy as it was to become, the relative importance of the royal blood certainly seemed to be emphasized at Francis' postcoronation entry into Paris in 1515, when the Duke of Alençon, the Duke of Bourbon, and the Count of Vendôme—all Princes of the Blood—immediately followed the king and preceded the Duke of Lorraine and other members of the nobility. In other words, by 1515 a count of the royal blood could take precedence over a duke in whose veins the blood of kings did not flow. A single event did not provide a sufficient precedent for all time, though, and at the dinner on the evening following the entry the Duke of Lorraine sat above the Count of Vendôme (but below the first two Princes of the Blood).<sup>18</sup>

The equivocal situation at Francis I's coronation entry was entirely appropriate: during the first half of the century, the peers and the Princes of the Blood constantly exchanged positions, and a lengthy series of rather distasteful disputes was the natural consequence. The first of these occurred in 1506, when, at a meeting of the Parlement, the

<sup>16</sup> Godefroy, *Cérémonial français*, 173, 193, 228, 232f; Alexandre Le Noble, *Histoire du sacre et du couronnement des rois et reines de France* (Paris, 1825), pp. 264, 285, 309. It was at this last coronation that a member of the house of Lorraine (René, Duke of Lorraine) first represented one of the "old" peers. Members of the house of Lorraine—or of the house of Guise which descended from it—were to represent peers at every coronation from 1498 to 1575. No fewer than four members of this house were to act as peers at the coronation of Charles IX—the Princes of the Blood were not better represented (see Jackson, "The Sleeping King," pp. 536-38). Du Tillet, *Recueil des roys*, p. 315, erred when he wrote that all of the peers were represented by Princes of the Blood at Louis XI's coronation; the Count of Eu, who represented the Count of Toulouse, was not a Prince of the Blood.

<sup>17</sup> Jehan Masselin, *Journal des États Généraux de France tenus à Tours en 1484 sous le règne de Charles VIII*, ed. and trans. A. Bernier, *Collection de documents inédits sur l'histoire de France*, première série (Paris, 1835), pp. 124-25 (speaks of the Princes of the Blood as *principes*), p. 140 ("*principibus regii sanguinis*"), p. 144 ("*regii sanguinis viros*"). In a speech at the Estates General, Jehan de Rély often used the term "princes du sang" (*ibid.*, pp. 167ff).

<sup>18</sup> Le Noble, *Histoire du sacre*, p. 316. For Francis' entry see *L'Ordre observé à l'entrée du roy François I. à Paris, l'an 1514. au retour de son sacre*, in Godefroy, *Cérémonial français*, 272f. (All dates up to the adoption of the Gregorian calendar are Old Style, except that I take January 1 as the beginning of the new year.)

Peer-Bishop of Laon refused to cede to Louis of Bourbon, Prince of La Roche-sur-Yon, a Prince of the Blood, but not a peer; the Parlement ordered both to retire with the understanding that their disagreement would be settled, but nothing was done. There were times when the matter of precedence was comparatively easy to resolve. One such case occurred in 1517, when the Cardinal of Vendôme, a Prince of the Blood and Peer of France, was allowed to precede the Peer-Duke of Nevers, who had claimed that the lay peers preceded the ecclesiastical peers.<sup>19</sup> In 1521 and again in 1523 the double dignity of peer and prince allowed the Duke of Alençon to precede the Bishop-Duke of Langres, one of the ecclesiastical peers. Nevertheless, to be a Prince of the Blood alone was not sufficient to warrant precedence, and the importance of the peerage was recognized at a *lit de justice* in 1527 when Francis I created the Count of Saint-Paul (a Prince of the Blood) peer solely for the judgment of Charles of Bourbon, Constable of France. A decade later that seemed no longer necessary, and, at the trial of Emperor Charles V as Count of Flanders, two Princes of the Blood who were not peers sat above one of the peers. On that occasion, nonetheless, the basic ambiguity of the situation was emphasized by the fact that the Cardinal of Lorraine, Archbishop and Duke of Reims, sat above the Cardinal of Bourbon, Prince of the Blood and Bishop and Duke of Laon; the fact that the former was France's primate could not help but cloud the issue.<sup>20</sup>

Two individuals played a crucial rôle in resolving the dispute to the advantage of the Princes of the Blood: Louis II, Duke of Montpensier (1513-1582) and Catherine de Médicis, who as Queen-Mother eventually came to his aid. The Duke of Montpensier was a man extremely jealous of his rights, which is understandable if we realize that the Capetian dynasty was experiencing a tremendous contraction. By 1550 many of the branches of the dynasty had died out: the direct Valois line; the Angevin line; the dukes of Burgundy; the Valois counts of Alençon; the Valois counts of Nevers; the counts of Évreux; the

<sup>19</sup> Du Tillet, *Recueil des roys*, p. 315; *Recueil des rangs*, pp. 12-13, 79-80. Whether that lay peers should precede the ecclesiastical peers was another issue which had not yet been settled; for later examples of this issue, see Jean Dumont, *Le Cérémonial diplomatique des cours de l'Europe, Supplément au corps universel diplomatique du droit des gens*, (Amsterdam and The Hague, 1739), IV, 34. The Prince of La Roche-sur-Yon (Louis I of Bourbon) was the father of Louis II of Bourbon, Duke of Montpensier, who was to play such an important rôle in the struggle over precedence from 1547 on (see below, nn.21-33). Louis of Bourbon, Cardinal of Vendôme (or of Bourbon) was, as Bishop of Laon, a Peer of France; he was the younger brother of Charles, Duke of Vendôme (the father of Antoine de Bourbon, King of Navarre).

<sup>20</sup> Du Tillet, *Recueil des rangs*, pp. 14, 15, 80, 91-92. Charles, Duke of Alençon, was the last survivor of the nearest of the cadet lines.

Bourbon counts of Clermont; the Bourbon counts of Montpensier; the Bourbon counts of Saint-Pol; and the Bourbon seigneurs of Carency. The Valois-Orléans kings (Francis I and his successors), the descendants of the Bourbon Charles, Duke of Vendôme (e.g., Antoine, King of Navarre and Louis, Prince of Condé), and the Bourbon princes of La Roche-sur-Yon, dukes of Montpensier were the only descendants of Saint-Louis still alive. In 1550 there were only ten Princes of the Blood (not including the king, Henry II), whereas in 1450, for example, there had been at least twenty-three Princes of the Blood. Of course, the situation was to become even more serious before the end of the century, and the desperate danger of the total demise of Saint-Louis' progeny contributed much to the rise of the Princes of the Blood, of dynastic kingship, and of French royal absolutism, which must be seen as the chance result of a number of historical accidents (e.g., the death of Henry II in 1559 after his fatal joust).<sup>21</sup>

Under these circumstances, it is not surprising that the Princes of the Blood established themselves as a group set apart from the other nobles of France in the sixteenth century. Even those who were Peers of France came to be distinguished from the other peers by virtue of their direct descentance from a royal progenitor, and, at the same time, they assumed—or were given—the rights and prerogatives of the peers. Before the end of the century they were often called born counsellors of the king (a term originally applied to the peers) or a part of the royal dignity, and they were even referred to “as a ray of royal majesty.”<sup>22</sup> Like the peers they were granted the right to wear their swords in the

<sup>21</sup> The composition of a genealogy of all the male heirs of Saint-Louis was an important portion of the research for this study; the genealogy impressively and graphically portrays the disappearance of line after line in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

<sup>22</sup> Le Caron, *Pandectes ou digestes du droit françois*, p. 120 (liv. I, ch. xxi), wrote, “Aussi tousjours leur [the Princes'] autorité, comme un rayon de la Majesté Royale, a esté grandement honorée, estans Conseillers nez du Roy . . .” (Le Caron's terminology suggests solar symbolism, which I touch upon in my study, “The Sleeping King,” pp. 543-49). See also Coquille, *Institution au droit des françois*, II, 2; Du Tillet, *Recueil des roys*, p. 314; Loyseau, *Des ordres et simples dignitez*, pp. 114-15 (ch. VII, nos. 80-81). Jacques-Auguste de Thou, *Historiarum sui temporis libri CXXXVIII* (London, 1733), II, 105 (lib. xxxvii, 23), says, “Non eadem ratio in regii sanguinis principibus habita, quippe qui absque ullis titulis et patriciorum privilegio gaudent et patricos omnes natalium praerogativa non patriciatus ratione praecedunt; quoniam dignitatis atque adeo personae regiae, quae cunctas alias exsuperat, pars ipsi quodammodo censentur”; one French edition (The Hague, 1740), III, 47, translates this: “Cette préseance n'est pas un appanage de leurs Pairies, s'ils en ont; c'est un privilège attaché à leur auguste naissance, qui les fait considerer comme faisant partie de la personne sacrée du Roi, dont la dignité éminente surpasse incontestablement toute autre dignité.” (On the editions of de Thou, see Samuel Kinser, *The Works of Jacques-Auguste de Thou, International Archives of the History of Ideas*, XVIII [The Hague, 1966].)

Parlement, and the prince closest to the king (but who was not the son of the king) was granted special privileges.<sup>23</sup> Charles Loyseau said that they were true princes (even though there was only one prince, in the sense of the Latin *princeps*) “because they alone are capable of true Principality and sovereignty.”<sup>24</sup> While some of these attributes date only from the latter part of the century and thus anticipate to some extent the resolution of the struggle between the princes and the peers, it is not inaccurate to note that as the Princes of the Blood acted for the “old” Peers of France at various ceremonies—particularly the coronation ceremony—those ceremonies themselves came to be an expression of the dynastic principle of absolutism. In the sixteenth century the coronation became constitutive of dynasticism, not of the man entering into an office. It was for this reason that, at the coronation of Henry II in 1547, the nasty argument between the Duke of Montpensier, on the one hand, and the dukes of Guise and Nevers, on the other, was of such great importance.<sup>25</sup>

The eve of Henry’s coronation was not the first time that Montpensier had gotten himself involved in a dispute with the peers. In 1541, at the presentation of roses to the Parlement, Montpensier claimed that, since he was a Prince of the Blood as well as a peer, he should present the roses before the Duke of Nevers, whose peerage was older, but who was not a Prince of the Blood. Each protagonist argued his case, and the court decided in favor of Montpensier.<sup>26</sup>

Montpensier was not to be so fortunate in 1547, though. Henry II settled the dispute for his coronation ceremony by temporarily giving precedence to the older peers rather than to a Prince of the Blood. The provisional character of the charter by which Henry arranged this is very explicit, and the outcome of the struggle might have been quite

<sup>23</sup> Paris, Archives nationales, ms. *Table de Lenain*, XXII, 317, quoting from the *Registres du Parlement*, XL, 266<sup>v</sup> (Sept. 10, 1551), says, “En l’absence du Roy, les Pairs, Princes du Sang, et non autres entrerant en la Cour avec l’espée. Le Roy la mandé.” Du Tillet, *Recueil des roys*, pp. 314-15.

<sup>24</sup> Loyseau, *Des ordres et simples dignitez*, p. 160 (ch. XI, no. 8): “les Princes du sang . . . soient vrais Princes, pource qu’ils sont seuls capables de la vraye Principauté et souveraineté”; *Traité des seigneuries*, p. 73 (ch. V, no. 74); Jean de Saint-Gelais, *Histoire de Louys XII, Roy de France*, ed. Théodore Godefroy (Paris, 1622), p. 47.

<sup>25</sup> For the dispute in 1547, see above, nn.1-2. One must not confuse the Bourbon dukes of Montpensier with the former Bourbon counts of Montpensier, the last of whom (Charles of Bourbon, Constable of France) was killed during the sack of Rome in 1527. Louis II of Bourbon, Duke of Montpensier, was, through his mother, a nephew of the Constable, but he was more distantly related through the male line, which was all that counted as a Prince of the Blood.

<sup>26</sup> Du Tillet, *Recueil des rangs*, pp. 93-94. On the ceremony of presentation of the roses, see Chéruel, *Institutions*, II, 1049, *s.v.*, “Redevances féodales.”

obvious had it not been for one important factor: one of the men over whom Montpensier claimed precedence at Henry's coronation was Claude of Lorraine, Duke of Guise; given the power of the house of Guise in sixteenth-century France, the outcome was anything but a foregone conclusion.

At first, matters went quite well for Montpensier and his fellow Princes of the Blood—despite Henry's indecision in 1547. At the royal supper following Henry's entry into Paris in June 1549 only Princes of the Blood sat at the table with the king: two cardinals on the king's right and four lay princes on his left. In the Parlement two weeks later three Princes of the Blood sat above the dukes of Guise and Nevers (although the Cardinal of Guise, as Archbishop-Duke of Reims and first Peer of France, sat first on the king's left). Then the winds began to blow in favor of the peers, especially of the Duke of Guise. At a *lit de justice* held in November 1551 Guise sat immediately on the king's right, and when in February 1552 he was preceded by Montpensier, he apparently created a considerable row. As a result Henry II wrote a letter patent to the Parlement ordering it "to correct and re-write the register which was made and kept for the day of that sitting and assembly of the Peers, where by inadvertence, as is said, our cousin [the Duke of Guise] allowed himself to be preceded."<sup>27</sup> Henry's changed attitude towards the Princes of the Blood was illustrated by his decision in August 1551 that the princes could not take part in some judgments if they were not peers, and the king placed the Duke of Lorraine and the Duke of Nevers immediately on his left in a meeting in 1557. While three Princes of the Blood were given the first three positions on the king's left in Parlement in June 1559 (only a few weeks before Henry's accident), it was the Duke of Guise as Grand Chamberlain who was granted the position of honor at the king's feet. Of course, the decision that the ecclesiastical officials should be ranked in the order of their ecclesiastical offices (rather than their other titles or blood relationships) worked to the advantage of the Cardinal of Lorraine, Archbishop of Reims and Primate of France, throughout the last decade of Henry's life.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>27</sup> Du Tillet, *Recueil des rangs*, pp. 15, 95-99. Henry II's letter patent is printed in Godefroy, *Cérémonial françois*, 297f. That the issue on the last occasion was argued between Montpensier and Guise as peers does not really hide the essential nature of the struggle.

<sup>28</sup> Du Tillet, *Recueil des rangs*, pp. 15, 100-01, 104; Du Tillet gives a number of similar examples from the 1550's. Henry II may have avoided ending the strife between Montpensier and his opponents in order to keep the issue as confused as possible and,

Montpensier as representative of the Princes of the Blood continued to fare badly during the first years after Henry II's death. The Duke of Guise preceded him at the coronations of Francis II and Charles IX, and it may be that Montpensier was preceded even by the Duke of Nevers in 1561. Each time, though, Antoine of Bourbon, as King of Navarre, preceded Guise. Furthermore, Catherine de Médicis intervened on both occasions; she placed the monarch's oldest surviving brother immediately after the king and before Navarre in 1559 and 1561, and at Francis' coronation she had the king's brothers (nine, eight, and five years of age) dressed as peers so that they could march before Guise.<sup>29</sup>

Catherine was probably responsible for placing Guise after the Princes of the Blood in the summer of 1561 and again in 1563,<sup>30</sup> and she was certainly responsible for arranging a significant meeting of the Princes of the Blood in 1573 after the election of her son (the future Henry III) to the Polish throne. Present at the meeting were the king and the two other Valois princes (his brothers) and seven of the eight (or nine) Bourbon Princes of the Blood. The members of this assemblage signed a statement to the effect that Henry's rights to the French throne would be recognized by all after his acquisition of the Polish crown and that Henry's heirs would be considered the legitimate successors to the French throne even though they might be born outside the kingdom. This compact of the Princes of the Blood marked the penultimate stage in the feud between the royal blood and the antiquity of the peerage—by the agreement of 1573 the princes closed their ranks for a particular reason; from there it was but a short step to concerted

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thus, to help prevent either party from becoming overly powerful; obviously, such a policy did not work. On the other hand, Henry might simply have taken a dislike to Montpensier, who does strike one as having been an unpleasantly aggressive sort of individual.

<sup>29</sup> Both of these coronations remain enigmatic; no records of Francis II's coronation survive, so we are forced to rely on the word of later writers, and the sources for Charles IX's coronation conflict. For Francis II, see de Thou, *Historiae*, I, 772-73 (lib. xxiii, 7); Loyseau, *Des ordres et simples dignitez*, p. 106 (ch. VII, no. 33); Claude Fauchet, *Origines des dignitez et magistrats de la France* (Paris, 1600), p. 48r; Giesey, *Dynastic Right to the French Throne*, p. 39, n.153; one wonders whether the king's youngest brother was dressed as a peer on this occasion. For Charles IX's coronation, see de Thou, *Historiae*, II, 105-6 (lib. xxvii, 23-24); *Du sacre dudit Roy Charles IX. et de ce qui s'y passa pour le regard des pairs* (in Godefroy, *Cérémonial françois*, 317-18), 318; *L'Entree, sacre, et couronnement du Roy Charles IX.* (in *ibid.*, 312-14), 312; *Ordre tenu au sacre du roy, nostre sire Charles IX.* (Lyons, 1561 [I have prepared an edition of this, which will appear under the title "A Little-Known Description of Charles IX's Coronation," *Renaissance Quarterly*, forthcoming]), p. 4. Since the latter two works list Montpensier after Guise and Nevers, while the former two list Montpensier before Nevers, it is impossible to determine whether Montpensier preceded or followed Nevers in 1561.

<sup>30</sup> Du Tillet, *Recueil des rangs*, pp. 105-6.



action against something specific, that is, against the claims of the Peers of France.<sup>31</sup>

Although the feud may not have broken out again until after Henry III's coronation early in 1575 because Montpensier did not represent one of the "old" Peers of France at this coronation, it was Henry who finally settled the dispute in 1576. Sometime in the first part of 1575 Montpensier requested Henry to resolve the affair. In his request he argued that "in your kingdom the lay peerages are reunited in your person and that none of your subjects can represent them except ideally or by imagination." He continued by asserting: "Monsieur de Guise . . . , under the pretext that his predecessors had made themselves believe that they represented the Peers of the Duchy of Burgundy . . . at the coronations of Henry II, Francis II, and Charles IX . . . , wants at the present by such means to infer a consequence . . . detrimental to the suppliant. . . ."<sup>32</sup> On April 17 Henry III ordered the Parlement to investigate the matter and to be prepared within one month to render a decision. On March 15, 1576, Montpensier appeared before the Parlement to present his case verbally, and the Parlement apparently reported favorably to his cause. Henry discussed the matter with his mother, the Princes of the Blood, the Duke of Guise, and other great nobles, and at Blois in December 1576 Henry promulgated

<sup>31</sup> Giesey, *Dynastic Right to the French Throne*, pp. 39-40. The compact is printed in full in Prince Sixte de Bourbon de Parme, *Le Traité d'Utrecht et les lois fondamentales du royaume* (Paris, 1914), pp. 247-48, and in P. de Ceneval, "Un Document relatif à la succession de Charles IX," *Bibliothèque de l'École des Chartes*, LXXII (1911), 223-24. As far as I can determine, the only Princes of the Blood who did not sign the agreement were Charles of Bourbon (the fourth surviving son of Louis, Prince of Condé), who was born only in 1566 and was consequently still a minor, and Henry of Bourbon (the grandson of Montpensier and the last of the Bourbon dukes of Montpensier), who was born in 1573 and may not have been born at the time of the agreement (August 22).

<sup>32</sup> *Requête présentée au Roy par Monsieur le Duc de Montpensier*, in Godefroy, *Cérémonial françois*, 332-33: "Toutesfois encores que en vostre Royaume les Pairies Layes soient confuses en vostre personne, Sire, et que nul de vos sujets n'en pût faire représentation, sinon par idée ou imagination . . . , Monsieur de Guise, qui sous pretexte que ses predecesseurs se sont fait à croire qu'ils representent les Pairs du Duché de Bourgogne . . . és Sacres de Henry II. François II. et Charles IX. . . . veut de present par tels moyens induire une consequence . . . contre les Suppliant. . . ." Montpensier's request was probably made between February 13 (the date of Henry's coronation) and April 17 (the date of the *Arrêt* ordering the Parlement to investigate Montpensier's demands). Montpensier does not seem to have played any rôle at Henry's coronation, although he was present for Henry's wedding the next day; cf. *Brief, et sommaire discours de l'entree, sacre et couronnement de Henry III.* (in Godefroy, *Cérémonial françois*, 321-27), 327. Was he excluded from acting as one of the "old" peers on this occasion? Francis, Duke of Alençon (Henry's younger brother), acted for the Duke of Burgundy at Henry's coronation, thus playing the rôle taken by Henry himself at the previous coronation (*ibid.*, 325). Henry of Navarre represented Normandy, and the Duke of Guise represented Guyenne on both occasions (cf. the sources cited above, n.29).

an edict designed to settle the dispute once and for all: “. . . henceforth the Princes of our Blood, Peers of France, shall precede and hold rank according to their degree of consanguinity over the other princes and seigneurs, Peers of France, no matter what title they may have, just as much at the consecrations and coronations of kings as at the sessions of the court of Parlement and any other solemnities, assemblies, and public ceremonies.”<sup>33</sup> When this edict was registered in the Parlement of Paris on January 8, 1577, it became a part of French public law. Royal blood had triumphed over its feudalistic opponents.

Literally interpreted, the edict of 1576 had a rather confined character. It only settled the rank of those princes who were also peers; it did not say anything about those princes who were not peers, and it did not establish rank among the princes themselves. Nonetheless, the edict was construed to give the princes absolute precedence over the peers. Charles Loyseau wrote with characteristic succinctness in the early seventeenth century:

. . . now that the rank of the Princes of the Blood is better established than ever, even though they be neither dukes nor counts, one no longer doubts that they should march in all places before the dukes and the counts, even before the peers, and that among themselves they ought similarly to rank according to their proximity to the Crown, not according to the title of their lordships; the other lords no longer enter into comparison with them since . . . some have come to the Crown . . . in the collateral line, . . . above all our great King Henry IV, who was twenty-one degrees removed from his predecessor. In such a fashion the Princes of the Blood now constitute a separate body and an order of supreme dignity and surpass by much all the other dignities of France.<sup>34</sup>

Written less than four decades after the promulgation of Henry III's edict, Loyseau's words are one gauge of the preeminence of the Princes of the Blood; the high regard in which Loyseau was held undoubtedly

<sup>33</sup> The documents relative to this decision are printed in Godefroy, *Cérémonial françois*, pp. 332-46. The most important portion of the edict is printed in Loyseau, *Des ordres et simples dignitez*, p. 106 (ch. VII, no. 34), in Le Caron, *Pandectes ou digestes du droict françois*, p. 120 (liv. I, ch. xxi), and in Giesey, *Dynastic Right to the French Throne*, p. 40, n.155. Godefroy, pp. 334-36, quotes from the registers of the Parlement the report of Montpensier's verbal request and gives as the date March 15, 1575; internal evidence demonstrates that the year was 1576, which seems to have been the last year that the Parlement began the new year with Easter, since the registration of the edict is dated 1577 (the remainder of France had been beginning the new year on January 1 since 1565; cf. Isambert, *Anciennes lois françaises*, XIV, 176, n.1).

<sup>34</sup> *Des ordres et simples dignitez*, p. 107 (ch. VII, nos. 36-37). Loyseau discussed the limitations of the edict in no. 35 and the continuing problems of precedence in nos. 63-66, pp. 111-12.

did much to make his interpretation the one generally accepted. Other late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century writers likewise made statements implicitly glorifying the dynastic principle. The princes were to take precedence over prelates, they were to have a deliberative voice in the Parlement of Paris, they were exempt from duels, and, along with the king, they were exempt from excommunication.<sup>35</sup> Furthermore, they were specifically chosen to represent the "old" Peers of France at the coronations. Perhaps the final step in the development of royal blood mysticism was taken in 1711, when an edict attempted to provide that Louis XIV's legitimized sons and their male heirs should represent the "old" peers at the coronations, "after and in default of the Princes of the Blood."<sup>36</sup>

The coronations following the edict of 1576 certainly provide proof of the triumph of the absolutist principle of dynastic right as incorporated in the Princes of the Blood. Three of the four adult Princes of the Blood represented "old" lay peers at Henry IV's coronation in 1594; the only one who did not was Charles, Cardinal of Bourbon, who had barred himself from representation by his active attempt to gain the crown for himself.<sup>37</sup> At Louis XIII's coronation in 1610, all three of the adult princes represented peers, but when Louis XIV was crowned in 1654, only Monsieur, the king's brother, represented a peer; the other three adult Princes of the Blood (Gaston d'Orléans, the Prince of Condé, and the Prince of Conti) were probably prevented from taking an active part in their opponent's coronation by their important rôles in the revolt of the Fronde.<sup>38</sup> At Louis XV's coronation

<sup>35</sup> Du Tillet, *Recueil des roys*, p. 316; Le Caron, *Pandectes ou digestes du droit françois*, p. 120 (liv. I, ch. xxi); Loyseau, *Des ordres et simples dignitez*, pp. 115, 119 (ch. VII, nos. 81-83, 104-105).

<sup>36</sup> Loyseau, *Traité des seigneuries*, p. 85 (ch. VI, no. 60); Isambert, *Anciennes lois françaises*, XX, 566-67.

<sup>37</sup> He is not to be confused with his uncle Charles II, Cardinal of Bourbon (1523-90), who was the League's nominal king "Charles X" after the assassination of Henry III. This Charles III, Cardinal of Bourbon (b. ca. 1560) formed a third party of Catholics with the intention of obtaining the crown for himself, and Henry IV seems to have formed a particular dislike for him. In any case he could not have acted as a peer at Henry's coronation because he was bedridden during the last year of his life (he died on July 30, 1594). Cf. L. G. Michaud, *Biographie universelle ancienne et moderne* (Paris, 1843-65), V, 273f.

<sup>38</sup> Gaston d'Orléans was exiled to his estates in Blois from 1652 until his death in 1660. Louis, Prince of Condé (the Great Condé), turned against the French and fought for the Spanish until pardoned in 1660, after the Peace of the Pyrenees; he had a son eleven years old at the time of Louis XIV's coronation, and he might have acted as a peer except that he naturally shared his father's fortune. The Prince of Conti, on the other hand, was reconciled to Cardinal Mazarin in 1653 and married to the Cardinal's niece in 1654, so he could have represented a peer, except that his changing policies during the troubles of the Fronde probably led to his being passed over in favor of more stalwart supporters of the king.

in 1722 all five of the adult Princes of the Blood represented peers (the Spanish Bourbons were excluded from the succession by the Peace of Utrecht), and all six of the "old" peers were represented by Princes of the Blood at Louis XVI's coronation in 1775.<sup>39</sup>

The aftermath of the quarrel between the Peers of France and the Princes of the Blood, in particular, between the dukes of Guise and the Duke of Montpensier, amply demonstrates the consequences of Henry III's decision. Yet Montpensier's rôle during the crucial phase of the squabble might be thought to have been characteristic of the great nobles of the sixteenth century, his struggle for precedence to have been part of some sort of "noble resurgence" that made civil war nearly inevitable. To explain noble incentives in this way explains little, though, for in all of the last centuries of the French monarchy historians have detected a noble recovery. The revolt of the Fronde has been seen as such, and it has been said that eighteenth-century France saw a great resurgence of the nobles<sup>40</sup>; one could equally argue that the war of the *Ligue du Bien Public* in the fifteenth century was indicative of such rehabilitation, or even that the activities of Charles VI's uncles during his minority and insanity marked an increased power of the "overmighty subject." Since it was a noble against whom the Duke of Montpensier asserted himself, this interpretation is further weakened—only if the two had made common cause against some nonnoble institution or class of people could Montpensier's actions possibly be viewed as part of a general trend on the part of the French nobility.

It is wiser to seek some personal ground or grounds for Montpensier's activity. He may have felt a personal antipathy to the dukes of Guise, he may have thought that the policy of the Guises was harmful to France, he may even have been constantly impressed by the fact that he, as a Prince of the Blood, stood a chance, however remote, of one day becoming the king of France; he may have been motivated by all of these. It is still more likely that Montpensier was attempting simply to acquire the greatest possible power and prestige for himself, which is what members of the other great families of the time—the Guises, the

<sup>39</sup> For listings of the representatives of the "old" Peers of France from Henry IV to Louis XVI, see Le Noble, *Histoire du sacre*, pp. 440, 480, 504, 506, 538, 569-70. See Giesey, *Dynastic Right to the French Throne*, pp. 40-42, for a brief characterization of the rôle of the Princes of the Blood after the Bourbons came to the throne in France.

<sup>40</sup> See, for example, John B. Wolf, *Louis XIV* (New York, 1968), p. 365: "However, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries a new feudality struggled to establish itself out of the disorders of the 'religious' war and the rebellions of the first half of the seventeenth century." R. R. Palmer, *A History of the Modern World* (2nd ed., New York, 1956), p. 335: "The noble order . . . had enjoyed a great resurgence since the death of Louis XIV in 1715."

Montmorencys, the Colignys, the Bourbons—were doing; if they were more successful in the latter half of the century than the Duke of Bourbon had been during the reign of Francis I, that achievement must be attributed more to a whole host of internal and external problems which France faced (including the problems of minor kings and a hesitant and vacillating government) than to any general activity peculiarly characteristic of the period after the death of Francis I.

Montpensier's dispute with the Guises naturally led to acrimonious feelings on both sides; both parties naturally sought aid from the most powerful figure in the land, the king, but the accident of blood relationship enabled Montpensier to enlist the argument from blood to his cause and to identify his personal interests with those of the French monarchy and, particularly, of the dynasty which governed it. The result of this—whatever the personal impulse behind Montpensier's suit—was clear: a glorification of dynasticism and the royal blood.

The dynasticism implicit in the conception of the Princes of the Blood had clearly replaced the feudal kingship which had brought the Peers of France into being. In the twentieth century we find it difficult to appreciate the importance of royal consanguinity, just as we find it difficult to appreciate all that went into the composition of French royal absolutism. If we are to understand that absolutism, we must apprehend events like Henry III's edict of Blois, which cemented the cornerstone of dynastic right into place by giving those Princes of the Blood who were peers absolute precedence over all other Peers of France. The foundations of Bourbon dynastic right were swiftly completed by Henry IV's succession, and that right was concisely expressed at all succeeding French coronations by the representation of the "old" Peers of France by as many adult Princes of the Blood as were not barred from participation in the ceremony by active opposition to the monarchy.

When the Bourbons were restored to the throne in 1815, a new twist was given to the French monarchy: the upper house of the bicameral legislature was called the Chamber of Peers. At France's last royal coronation ceremony, that of Charles X in 1825, neither the twelve "old" Peers of France nor any of the new peers played any rôle as peers. The functions of the six representatives of the "old" lay peers were assumed by three men: not surprisingly, these three were the only adult Princes of the Blood.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>41</sup> Ch. C. J. Siret, *Précis historique du sacre de S. M. Charles X* (Reims, 1826), p. 68 et *passim*.