

## The Kidnapping of Henry IV (1062)

- Greater Annals of Niederalthaich
- Lampert of Hersfeld, Annals
- Bonizo of Sutri, Book to a Friend
- Berthold, Annals
- Life of the Emperor Henry IV

From the Greater Annals of Niederalthaich *s.a.* 1062, pp. 59-60.

The Caesar celebrated Christmas at Goslar and Easter at Nemido.<sup>1</sup> Although the king was now entering adolescence, those controlling the palace looked after only their own interests; no one taught the king what was good and just, and therefore many things happened in the kingdom without order. In response, Archbishop Anno of Köln and the dukes and magnates of the realm held numerous meetings where they very anxiously conferred with each other about what should be done about this situation. Finally, they decided upon a plan: when the king was staying near the Rhine at a place called Kaiserswerth, they advanced upon the estate unexpectedly with a great multitude, removed the cross and royal lance from the chapel, placed the king himself in a boat, and took him to Köln without any resistance. The king's mother departed that place aggrieved but when she recalled how weighty a matter it was to handle the affairs of the realm, she made a virtue of necessity and asked to receive the sacred veil. She therefore retained only the lands which had been given to her as dowry, entirely renounced all governance of the kingdom, and gave herself wholly to the service of God. Indeed, whoever saw the urgency of her vigils and prayers, the frequency of her almsgiving, the spareness of her food and drink, the meagerness of her clothing and care for herself, and her other acts of piety and humility could easily attest that this transformation was the work of the right hand of the Most High.<sup>2</sup> And because the bishop,<sup>3</sup> who then presided in the palace, was jealous for justice, the republic, too, began to flourish.

**From Lampert of Hersfeld, Annals *s.a.* 1062, pp. 72-74.**

The empress, while raising her son, attended to the business of the realm by

herself and made use, in particular, of the counsel of Henry, bishop of Augsburg.<sup>4</sup> As a result, she was unable to escape the suspicion of impure love, since the rumor was bandied about that they had developed so great degree of intimacy not without foul intercourse. This situation gravely offended the princes, namely when they saw that on account of her private love for one man, their own authority, which ought to have been the most weighty in the republic, had been almost obliterated. And so, unwilling to bear the indignity of the situation, they held constant meetings, they were more remiss about their public duties, they aroused the spirits of the common people against the empress, and finally they tried in every way to estrange the boy from his mother and transfer the administration of the realm to themselves. Finally, the bishop of Köln, after sharing his plans with Count Ekbart and Otto, duke of the Bavarians, came by ship up the Rhine to a place which is called the island of St Switbert. The king was there at the time. One day, when the king had become very merry after a festive banquet, the bishop began to encourage him to come take a look at a certain boat of his which he had built with wondrous workmanship for this very purpose.

This easily persuaded the simple boy who suspected nothing, especially not a trap. But once he had entered the boat with the support of the men whom the bishop had procured as allies and servants of his party, rowers suddenly sprang up, laid into their oars, and, faster than one could say it, they propelled the boat into the middle of the river. Confused by the new face of things and uncertain in his own mind—since he judged that nothing but violence and death awaited him—he threw himself headlong into the river. The violent water would have quickly drowned him had Count Ekbart not dived in after him and, running no small risk himself, managed to save [the king] from a grim death and

get him back into the boat. Then, after calming him with whatever kind words they could muster, they took him to Köln. The rest of the crowd followed on land, with many complaining that the royal majesty had been violated and had become powerless over itself. The bishop, in order that he might lessen the hatred of the deed and might not seem to have done this for the sake of private glory instead of for the general welfare, decreed that any bishop in whose diocese the king stayed for a time, should make provision lest the republic suffer any damage and should respond most forcefully to cases which had been brought to the king.

The empress wished neither to follow her son nor proclaim her injuries in accordance with the law of nations. Rather, returning home, she proposed to lead her life as a private citizen from that moment on. And not long after, having endured the travails of the world and learned from the calamities of her own household how swiftly the grass of temporal glory is dried out when the spirit of God blows,<sup>1</sup> she planned to renounce the world; and she would have rushed headlong to accomplish what she had planned, had friends not restrained the impetuous spirit in her with their more mature advice.

**From Bonizo of Sutri, Liber ad Amicum Bk. VI, pp. 595-6.**

. . . . Meanwhile, the archbishops, bishops, abbots, dukes, and counts of the Germans (*Teutonici*) set up their own court in which they decided that the empress should live from then on in the dress of a private person, since they judged the realm to be undeserving of womanly judgment as its king, both because she was a monk and it

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<sup>1</sup> A paraphrase of Joshua 40:7.

therefore was not appropriate for her to serve secular matters and because their lord [Henry] already was seen to have risen to the age of adulthood. And by common counsel they decreed that the venerable Anno, archbishop of Köln, would have governance over the king and queen; and deposing Wibert, they established Gregory of Vercelli as chancellor of the Italian kingdom.

**From Berthold, Annals s.a.1062, p. 272.**

At this time, the Empress Agnes, now dressed in the sacred veil after her royal garments had been set aside, dedicated herself to Christ and betook herself to Fruttuaria.<sup>2</sup>

On 8 February there occurred an earthquake, lightning, and thunder. The pestilence and death that followed killed many. King Henry celebrated the day of Easter in Utrecht, a Frisian city, with his mother the empress.

In these days, Anno, archbishop of Köln, with the help of certain princes of the realm, snatched King Henry by force from his mother the empress together with the lance and the other symbols of the Empire and brought them with him to Köln.

**From the Life of Henry IV §2, pp. 13-14.**

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<sup>2</sup> Fondered by William of Volpiano, Fruttuaria was a ...

2. When the emperor Henry . . . succeeded the most glorious emperor Henry III in the kingship while still a boy — for he was still small when his father gave way to nature — the kingdom kept its earlier state: wars did not disturb the peace, the trumpets of battle did not break the silence, rapine was not on the prowl, and faith was not false. Justice still had its own vigor, power was still independent. The most serene empress Agnes, a woman of manly intellect, greatly aided this blessed state of the realm and, together with her son, she governed the republic with equal right. Yet because immaturity inspires little fear and when dread languishes, audacity grows, the king's boyish years instilled in many a mind for crime. As a consequence, each man strived to be equal to or greater than someone greater than himself; the might of many increased through crime, and there was no dread of the law, which had little authority under the little king. And so that everyone could do everything with greater license, they despoiled the mother of her son, a mother whose mature wisdom and grave behavior they feared — though they took as the reason [for their action] that it was not fitting that the realm be administered by a woman, even though many queens are read to have administered kingdoms with manly wisdom. But after the boy king, torn from the bosom of his mother, came into the hands of the princes to be raised, he did whatever they commanded should be done, since he was just a boy. He raised up whomever they wished, deposed whomever they wished, so that they were rightly said not to be not so much the king's ministers as masters.<sup>3</sup> When they discussed affairs of the realm, they looked out not so much for the affairs of the realm as their own

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<sup>3</sup> Literally, “they were said not so much to serve their king as to command him” but through the juxtaposition of the two perfect infinitives “ministrasse” and “imperasse” the author clearly intends word play, which I have tried to preserve.

affairs. And for them it was most important in all that they did to achieve their own gain before all else. This was their greatest act of treachery, however: that in his boyish actions they allowed [this boy] — who should have been kept almost under seal! — to do whatever he wanted, so that they might thus elicit from him what they desired.

## Endnotes

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1. In Utrecht.
  2. Compare Ps. 77:11.
  3. I.e. Anno of Köln.
  4. Formerly Henry III's chaplain and head of his Italian chancery, Henry served as bishop of Augsburg from 1047 until his death in the summer of 1063. In a catalog of abbots from the monastery of SS Afra and Ulrich, Henry is also said to have "educated" the young Henry; for this document, see M. Horn, "Bishöfe und Bischofskirche von Augsburg," in Die Salier und das Reich II, p. 256. His position of prominence during the regency was said to have aroused tremendous resentment among the princes, on which see now the comments of I.S. Robinson, Henry IV, pp. 30-1.