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## THE CONVERSION OF THE RANEE

Brian Taylor

When the Ranee Margaret Brooke died in her home in London on 1 December 1936, her obituary in The Times stated, "Born a Catholic she had high standards. It was for her to live up to them, not to obtrude them on others, and knowing how fallible is human nature, she was readier with help than with criticism."<sup>1</sup> This, however, was not the case, as was known to Fr John Rooney MHM, the author of the history of the Catholic Church in Borneo.<sup>2</sup>

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On 11 January 1789 a contract of marriage was made between Jacques Gabriel de Chapt vicomte de Rastignac and Judith de Windt, the daughter of Dutch parents.<sup>3</sup> In June 1791 the vicomte bought a plot of land in Paris, 3 rue Saint-Georges, and within the next two years built a house there. This was the family town house until it was sold in December 1854.<sup>4</sup> As a country home, in June 1801, he bought the château d'Épinay-sur-Orge from the family of M. Gilbert Georges de Montcloux, who had been guillotined on 9 May 1791.<sup>5</sup> There is no evidence that the vicomte was a Catholic, and the surviving registers of Épinay do not contain entries for the de Rastignac or de Windt families.<sup>6</sup> The vicomte died on 10 April 1822, and the vicomtesse Judith on 9 August 1827. Their daughter Rosam . . . had died on 29 May 1815, aged 15. Their graves are in the 39th division of the Cimetière du Père Lachaise in Paris.<sup>7</sup>

By his will, dated 12 January 1822, the vicomte named his wife as "legataire universelle".<sup>8</sup> On the same day Judith made a will,<sup>9</sup> but replaced it with another on 9 March 1824.<sup>10</sup> In this will, as well as making numerous bequests to members of the family, she bequeathed the houses to her nephews, the château to John William de Windt, and 3 rue Saint Georges to Peter Henry Adolphus de Windt, both charged with annuities for