

THE HISTORY
OF
PROTESTANTISM.

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~~ILLUSTRATED.~~

"PROTESTANTISM, THE SACRED CAUSE OF GOD'S LIGHT AND TRUTH AGAINST
THE DEVIL'S FALSITY AND DARKNESS."—*Carlyle.*

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PROTESTANTISM IN FRANCE FROM DEATH OF FRANCIS I. (1547)
TO EDICT OF NANTES (1598).

CHAPTER I.

HENRY II. AND PARTIES IN FRANCE.

Francis I.—His Last Illness—Waldensian Settlement in Provence—Fertility and Beauty—
Massacre—Remorse of the King—His Death—Lying in State—Henry II.—Parties at
Court—The Constable de Montmorency—The Guises—Diana of Poitiers—Marshal de
St. Andre—Catherine de Medici.

We have rapidly traced the line of Waldensian story from those early ages when the assembled barbes are seen keeping watch around their lamp in the Pra del Tor, with the silent silvery peaks looking down upon them, to those recent days when the Vaudois carried that lamp to Rome and set it in the city of Pius IX. Our desire to pursue their conflicts and martyrdoms till their grand issues to Italy and the world had been reached has carried us into modern times. We shall return, and place ourselves once more in the age of Francis I.

We resume our history at the death-bed of that monarch. Francis died March 31st, 1547, at the age of fifty-two, “of that shameful distemper,” says the Abbe Millot, “which is brought on by debauchery, and which had been imported, with the gold of America.”¹ The character of this sovereign was adorned by some fine qualities, but his reign was disgraced by many great errors. It is impossible to withhold from him the praise of a generous disposition, a cultivated taste, and a chivalrous bearing; but it is equally impossible to vindicate him from the charge of rashness in his enterprises, negligence in his affairs, fickleness in his conduct, and excess in his pleasures. He lavished his patronage upon the scholars of the Renaissance, but he had nothing but stakes wherewith to reward the disciples of Protestantism. He built Fontainebleau, and began the Louvre. And now, after all his great projects for adorning his court with learned men, embellishing his capital with gorgeous fabrics, and strengthening his throne by political alliances, there remains to him only “darkness and the worm.”

Let us enter the royal closet, and mark the setting of that sun which had shed such a brilliance during his course. Around the bed upon which Francis I. lies dying is gathered a clamorous crowd of priests, courtiers, and

¹ Millot, *Elements of History*, vol. iv., p, 317; Lond., 1779.

courtesans,¹ who watch his last moments with decent but impatient respect, ready, the instant he has breathed his last, to turn round and bow the knee to the rising sun. Let us press through the throng and observe the monarch. His face is haggard. He groans deeply, as if he were suffering in soul. His starts are sudden and violent. There flits at times across his face a dark shadow, as if some horrible sight, afflicting him with unutterable woe, were disclosed to him; and a quick tremor at these moments runs through all his frame. He calls his attendants about him and, mustering all the strength left him, he protests that it is not he who is to blame, inasmuch as his orders were exceeded. What orders? we ask; and what deed is it, the memory of which so burdens and terrifies the dying monarch?

We must leave the couch of Francis while we narrate one of the greatest of the crimes that blackened his reign. The scene of the tragedy which projected such dismal shadows around the death-bed of the king was laid in Provence. In ancient times Provence was comparatively a desert. Its somewhat infertile soil was but thinly peopled, and but indifferently tilled and planted. It lay strewn all over with great boulders, as if here the giants had warred, or some volcanic explosion had rained a shower of stones upon it. The Vaudois who inhabited the high-lying valleys of the Piedmontese Alps, cast their eyes upon this more happily situated region, and began to desire it as a residence. Here, said they, is a fine champaign country, waiting for occupants; let us go over and possess it. They crossed the mountains, they cleared the land of rocks, they sowed it with wheat, they planted it with the vine, and soon there was seen a smiling garden, where before a desert of swamps, and great stones, and wild herbage had spread out its neglected bosom to be baked by the summer's sun, and frozen by the winter's winds. "An estate which before their establishment hardly paid four crowns as rental, now produced from three to four hundred."² The successive generations of these settlers flourished here during a period of three hundred years, protected by their landlords, whose revenues they had prodigiously enriched, loved by their neighbours, and loyal to their king.

When the Reformation arose, this people sent delegates—as we have related in the previous book—to visit the Churches of Switzerland and Germany, and ascertain how far they agreed with, and how far they differed from, themselves. The report brought back by the delegates satisfied them that the Vaudois faith and the Protestant doctrine were the same; that both had been drawn from the one infallible fountain of truth; and that, in short, the Protestants were Vaudois, and the Vaudois were Protestants. This was enough. The priests, who so anxiously guarded their territory against the

¹ Félice, *History of the Protestants of France*, vol. i., p. 61; Lond., 1853.

² Félice, vol. i., p. 45.

entrance of Lutheranism, saw with astonishment and indignation a powerful body of Protestants already in possession. They resolved that the heresy should be swept from off the soil of France as speedily as it had arisen. On the 18th of November, 1540, the Parliament of Aix passed an *arrêt* to the following effect:—"Seventeen inhabitants of Merindol shall be burnt to death" (they were all the heads of families in that place); "their wives, children, relatives, and families shall be brought to a trial, and if they cannot be laid hold on, they shall be banished the kingdom for life. The houses in Merindol shall be burned and razed to the ground, the woods cut down, the fruit-trees torn up, and the place rendered uninhabitable, so that none may be built there."¹

The president of the Parliament of Aix, a humane man, had influence with the king to stay the execution of this horrible sentence. But in 1545 he was succeeded by Baron d'Oppède, a cruel, intolerant, bloodthirsty man, and entirely at the devotion of Cardinal Tournon—a man, says Abbe Millot, "of greater zeal than humanity, who principally enforced the execution of this barbarous *arrêt*."² Francis I. offered them pardon if within three months they should enter the pale of the Roman Church. They disdained to buy their lives by apostacy; and now the sword, which had hung for five years above their heads, fell with crushing force. A Romanist pen shall tell the sequel:—

"Twenty-two towns or villages were burned or sacked, with an inhumanity of which the history of the most barbarous people hardly presents examples. The unfortunate inhabitants, surprised during the night, and pursued from rock to rock by the light of the fires which consumed their dwellings, frequently escaped one snare only to fall into another; the pitiful cries of the old men, the women, and the children, far from softening the hearts of the soldiers, mad with rage like their leaders, only set them on following the fugitives, and pointed out the places whither to direct their fury. Voluntary surrender did not exempt the men from execution, nor the women from excesses of brutality which made Nature blush. It was forbidden, under pain of death, to afford them any refuge. At Cabrieres, one of the principal towns of that canton, they murdered more than seven hundred men in cold blood; and the women, who had remained in their houses, were shut up in a barn filled with straw, to which they set fire; those who attempted to escape by the window were driven back by swords and pikes. Finally, according to the tenor of the sentence, the houses were razed, the woods cut down, the fruit-trees pulled up, and in a short time this country, so fertile and so populous, became uncultivated and uninhabited."³

¹ *Ibid.*, vol. i, p. 44.

² Millot, vol. iv., pp. 317, 318.

³ Abbe Anquetil, *Histoire de France*, Tom. iii., pp. 246–249; Paris, 1835.

Thus did the red sword and the blazing torch purge Provence. We cast our eyes over the purified land, but, alas! we are unable to recognise it. Is this the land which but a few days ago was golden with the yellow grain, and purple with the blushing grape; at whose cottage doors played happy children; and from whose meadows and mountain-sides, borne on the breeze, came the bleating of flocks and the lowing of herds? Now, alas! its bosom is scarred and blackened by smouldering ruins, its mountain torrents are tinged with blood, and its sky is thick with the black smoke of its burning woods and cities.

We return to the closet of the dying monarch. Francis is still protesting that the deed is not his, and that too zealous executioners exceeded his orders. Nevertheless he cannot banish, we say not from his memory, but from his very sight, the awful tragedy enacted on the plains of Provence. Shrieks of horror, wailings of woe, and cries for help seem to resound through his chamber. Have his ministers and courtiers no word of comfort wherewith to assuage his terrors, and fortify him in the prospect of that awful Bar to which he is hastening with the passing hours? They urged him to sanction the crime, but they leave him to bear the burden of it alone. He summons his son, who is so soon to mount his throne, to his bedside, and charges him with his last breath to execute vengeance on those who had shed this blood.¹ With this slight reparation the unhappy king goes his dark road, the smoking and blood-sprinkled Provence behind him, the great Judgment-seat before him.

Having breathed his last, the king lay in state, preparatory to his being laid in the royal vaults at St. Denis. Two of his sons who had pre-deceased him—Francis and Charles—were kept unburied till now, and their corpses accompanied that of their father to the grave. Of the king's lying-in-state, the following very curious account is given us by Sleidan:—

“For some days his effigies, in most rich apparel, with his crown, sceptre, and other regal ornaments, lay upon a bed of state, and at certain hours dinner and supper were served up before it, with the very same solemnity as was commonly performed when he was alive. When the regal ornaments were taken off, they clothed the effigies in mourning; and eight-and-forty Mendicant friars were always present, who continually sung masses and dirges for the soul departed. About the corpse were placed fourteen great wax tapers, and over against it two altars, on which from daylight to noon masses were said, besides what were said in an adjoining chapel, also full of tapers and other lights. Four-and-twenty monks, with wax tapers in their hands, were ranked about the hearse wherein the corpse was carried, and before it

¹ Sleidan, bk. xix., p. 429. Beza, *Hist. Eccles. des Eglises Réformées du Royaume de France*, livr. i., p. 30; Lille, 1841. Laval, *Hist. of the Reformation in France*, vol. i., bk. i., p. 55; Lond., 1737.

marched fifty poor men in mourning, every one with a taper in his hand. Amongst other nobles, there were eleven cardinals present.”

Henry II. now mounted the throne of France. At the moment of his accession all seemed to promise a continuance of that prosperity and splendour which had signalised the reign of his father. The kingdom enjoyed peace, the finances were flourishing, the army was brave and well-affected to the throne; and all men accepted these as auguries of a prosperous reign. This, however, was but a brief gleam before the black night. France had missed the true path.

Henry had worn the crown for only a short while when the clouds began to gather, and that night to descend which is only now beginning to pass away from France. His father had early initiated him into the secrets of governing, but Henry loved not business. The young king sighed to get away from the council-chamber to the gay tournament, where mailed and plumed warriors pursued, amid applauding spectators, the mimic game of war. What good would this princedom do him if it brought him not pleasure? At his court there lacked not persons, ambitious and supple, who studied to flatter his vanity and gratify his humours. To lead the king was to govern France, and to govern France was to grasp boundless riches and vast power. It was under this feeble king that those factions arose, whose strivings so powerfully influenced the fate of Protestantism in that great kingdom, and opened the door for so many calamities to the nation. Four parties were now formed at court, and we must pause here to describe them, otherwise much that is to follow would be scarcely intelligible. In the passions and ambitions of these parties, we unveil the springs of those civil wars which for more than a century deluged France with blood.

At the head of the first party was Anne de Montmorency, High Constable of France. Claiming descent from a family which had been one of the first to be baptised into the Christian faith, he assumed the glorious title of the *First Christian* and Premier Baron¹ of France. He possessed great strength of will, and whatever end he proposed to himself he pursued, without much caring whom he trod down in his way to it. He had the misfortune on one occasion to give advice to Francis I. which did not prosper, and this, together with his headstrongness, made that monarch in his latter days banish him from the court. When Francis was dying he summoned his son Henry to his bedside, and earnestly counselled him never to recall Montmorency, fearing that the obstinacy and pride which even he had with difficulty repressed, the weaker hands to which he was now bequeathing his crown² would be unequal to the task of curbing.

¹ Davila, *Historia delle Guerre Civili di Francia*, livr. i., p. 9; Lyons, 1641. Maimbourg, *Hist. du Calvinisme*, livr.ii., p. 118; Paris, 1682.

² Davila, p. 14.

No sooner had Henry assumed the reins of government than he recalled the Constable. Montmorency's recall did not help to make him a meeker man. He strode back to court with brow more elate, and an air more befitting one who had come to possess a throne than to serve before it. The Constable was beyond measure devout, as became the *first Christian* in France. Never did he eat flesh on forbidden days; and never did morning dawn or evening fall but his beads were duly told. It is true he sometimes stopped suddenly in the middle of his chaplet to issue orders to his servants to hang up this or the other Huguenot, or to set fire to the corn-field or plantation of some neighbour of his who was his enemy; but that was the work of a minute only, and the Constable was back again with freshened zeal to his Pater-nosters and his Ave-Marias. It became a proverb, says Brantôme, "God keep us from the Constable's beads."¹ These singularities by no means lessened his reputation for piety, for the age hardly placed acts of religion and acts of mercy in the same category. Austere, sagacious, and resolute, he constrained the awe if not the love of the king, and as a consequence his heavy hand was felt in every part of the kingdom.

The second party was that of the Guises. The dominancy of that family in France marks one of the darkest eras of the nation. The House of Lorraine, from which the Lords of Guise are descended, derived its original from Godfrey Bullen, King of Jerusalem, and on the mother's side from a daughter of Charlemagne. Anthony, flourishing in wealth and powerful in possessions, was Duke of Lorraine; Claude, a younger brother, crossed the frontier in 1513, staff in hand, attended by but one servant, to seek his fortunes in France. He ultimately became Duke of Guise. This man had six sons, to all of whom wealth seemed to come at their wish. Francis I, perceiving the ambition of these men, warned his son to keep them at a distance.² But the young king, despising the warning, recalled Francis de Lorraine as he had done the Constable Montmorency, and the power of the Guises continued to grow, till at last they became the scourge of the country in which they had firmly rooted themselves, and the terror of the throne which they aspired to mount.

The two brothers, Francis and Charles, stood at the head of the family, and figured at the court. Francis, now in the flower of his age, was sprightly and daring; Charles was crafty, but timid; Laval says of him that he was "the cowardliest of all men." The qualities common to both brothers, and possessed by each in inordinate degree, were cruelty and ambition. Rivals they never could become, for though their ambitions were the same, their spheres lay apart, Francis having chosen the profession of arms, and Charles the Church. This division of pursuits doubled their strength, for what the craft of

¹ Laval, vol. i., pp. 70, 71.

² Thaurus, *Hist.*, lib. iii. Laval, vol. i., p. 71.

the one plotted, the sword of the other executed. They were the acknowledged heads of the Roman Catholic party. “But for the Guises” says Mezeray, “the new religion would perhaps have become dominant in France.”

The third party at the court of France was that of Diana of Poitiers. This woman was the daughter of John of Poitiers, Lord of St. Valier, and had been the wife of the Seneschal of Normandy. She was twenty years older than the king, but this disparity of age did not hinder her from becoming mistress of his heart. The populace could not account for the king’s affection for her, save by ascribing it to the philtres which she made him drink. A more likely cause was her brilliant wit, and sprightly manners, added to her beauty, once dazzling, and not yet wholly faded. But her greed was enormous. The people cursed her as the cause of the taxes that were grinding them into poverty; the nobility hated her for her insulting airs; but access there was none to the king, save through the good graces of Diana of Poitiers, whom the king created Duchess of Valentinois. The title by embellishing made only the more conspicuous the infamy of her relation to the man who had bestowed it. The Constable on the one side, and the Guises on the other, sought to buttress their own power by paying court to Diana.¹ To such a woman the holy doctrines of Protestantism could not be other than offensive; in truth, she very thoroughly hated all of the religion, and much of the righteous blood shed in the reign of Henry II. is to be laid at the door of the lewd, greedy, and cruel Diana of Poitiers.

The fourth and least powerful faction was that of the Marshal de St. Andre. He was as brave and valiant as he was witty and polite; but he was drowned in debt. Though a soldier he raised himself not by his valour, but by court intrigues; “under a specious pretence for the king’s service he hid a boundless ambition, and an unruly avarice,” said his Romanist friends, “and was more eager after the forfeited estates than after the overthrow of the rebels and Huguenots.”² Neither court nor country was likely to be quiet in which such a man figured.

To these four parties we may add a fifth, that of Catherine de Medici, the wife of Henry. Of deeper passions but greater self-control than many of those around her, Catherine meanwhile was “biding her time.” There were powers in this woman which had not yet disclosed themselves, perhaps not even to herself; but when her husband died, and the mistress no longer divided with the wife the ascendancy over the royal mind, then the hour of revelation came, and it was seen what consummate guile, what lust of power, what love of blood and revenge had slumbered in her dark Italian soul. As one after another of her imbecile sons—each more imbecile than he who had preceded

¹ Davila, lib. i., pp. 13, 14.

² Laval, vol. i., p. 73.

him—mounted the throne, the mother stood up in a lofty and yet loftier measure of truculence and ambition. As yet, however, her cue was not to form a party of her own, but to maintain the poise among the other factions, that by weakening all of them she might strengthen herself.

Such were the parties that divided the court of Henry II. Thrice miserable monarch! without one man of real honour and sterling patriotism in whom to confide. And not less miserable courtiers! They make a brave show, no doubt, living in gilded saloons, wearing sumptuous raiment, and feasting at luxuriant tables, but their hearts all the while are torn with envy, or tortured with fear, lest this gay life of theirs should come to a sudden end by the stiletto or the poison-cup. “Two great sins,” says an old historian, “crept into France under this prince’s reign—atheism and magic.”

CHAPTER II.

HENRY II. AND HIS PERSECUTIONS.

Bigotry of Henry II.—Persecution—The Tailor and Diana of Poitiers—The Tailor Burned—The King Witnesses his Execution—Horror of the King—Martyrdoms—Progress of the Truth—Bishop of Maçon—The Gag—First Protestant Congregation—Attempt to Introduce the Inquisition—National Disasters—Princes and Nobles become Protestants—A Mercuriale—Arrest of Du Bourg—A Tournament—The King Killed—Strange Rumours.

Henry II. walked in the ways of his father, Francis, who first made France to sin by beginning a policy of persecution. To the force of paternal example was added, in the case of Henry, the influence of the maxims continually poured into his ear by Montmorency, Guise, and Diana of Poitiers. These councillors inspired him with a terror of Protestantism as pre-eminently the enemy of monarchs and the source of all disorders in States; and they assured him that should the Huguenots prevail they would trample his throne into the dust, and lay France at the feet of atheists and revolutionists. The first and most sacred of duties, they said, was to uphold the old religion. To cut off its enemies was the most acceptable atonement a prince could make to Heaven. With such schooling, is it any wonder that the deplorable work of burning heretics, begun by Francis, went on under Henry; and that the more the king multiplied his profligacies, the greater his zeal in kindling the fires by which he thought he was making atonement for them?¹

The historians of the time record a sad story, which unhappily is not a solitary instance of the bigotry of the age, and the vengeance that was beginning to animate France against all who favoured Protestantism. It affectingly displays the heartless frivolity and wanton cruelty—two qualities never far apart—which characterised the French court. The coronation of the queen, Catherine de Medici, was approaching, and Henry, who did his part so ill as a husband in other respects, resolved to acquit himself with credit in this. He wished to make the coronation fêtes of more than ordinary splendour; and in order to this he resolved to introduce what would form a new feature in these rejoicings, and give variety and piquancy to them, namely, the burning piles of four Huguenots. Four victims were selected, and one of these was a poor tailor, who, besides having eaten flesh on a day on which its use was forbidden, had given other proofs of being not strictly orthodox. He was to form, of course, one of the coronation torches; but to burn him was not enough. It occurred to the Cardinal of Lorraine that a little amusement might be extracted from the man. The cardinal pictured to himself the confusion that

¹ Laval, vol. i., p. 73.

would overwhelm the poor tailor, were he to be interrogated before the king, and how mightily the court would be diverted by the incoherence of his replies. He was summoned before Henry, but the matter turned out not altogether as the Churchman had reckoned it would. The promise was fulfilled to the confessor, “When ye shall be brought before kings and rulers for my sake and the Gospel’s, it shall be given you in that hour what ye shall speak.” So far from being abashed, the tailor maintained perfect composure in the royal presence, and replied so pertinently to all interrogatories and objections put by the Bishop of Maçon, that it was the king and the courtiers who were disconcerted. Diana of Poitiers—whose wit was still fresh, if her beauty had faded—stepped boldly forward, in the hope of rescuing the courtiers from their embarrassment; but, as old Crespian says, “the tailor cut her cloth otherwise than she expected; for he, not being able to endure such unmeasured arrogance in her whom he knew to be the cause of these cruel persecutions, said to her, ‘Be satisfied, Madam, with having infected France, without mingling your venom and filth in a matter altogether holy and sacred, as is the religion and truth of our Lord Jesus Christ.’”¹ The king took the words as an affront, and ordered the man to be reserved for the stake. When the day of execution came (14th July, 1549), the king bade a window overlooking the pile be prepared, that thence he might see the man, who had had the audacity to insult his favourite, slowly consuming in the fires. Both parties had now taken their places, the tailor burning at the stake, the king reposing luxuriously at the window, and Diana of Poitiers seated in haughty triumph by his side. The martyr looked up to the window where the king was seated, and fixed his eye on Henry. From the midst of the flames that eye looked forth with calm steady gaze upon the king. The eye of the monarch quailed before that of the burning man. He turned away to avoid it, but again his glance wandered back to the stake. The flames were still blazing around the martyr; his limbs were dropping off, his face was growing fearfully livid, but his eye, unchanged, was still looking at the king; and the king felt as if, with Medusa-power, it was changing him into stone.

The execution was at an end: not so the terror of the king. The tragedy of the day was reacted in the dreams of the night. The terrible apparition rose before Henry in his sleep. There again was the blazing pile, there was the martyr burning in the fire, and there was the eye looking forth upon him from the midst of the flames. For several successive nights was the king scared by this terrible vision. He resolved, nay, he even took an oath, that never again would he be witness to the burning of a heretic. It had been still better had he given orders that never again should these horrible executions be renewed.

¹ Beza, tom. i., livr. ii., p. 50.

So far, however, was the persecution from being relaxed, that its rigour was greatly increased. Piles were erected at Orleans, at Poitiers, at Bordeaux, at Nantes—in short, in all the chief cities of the kingdom. These cruel proceedings, however, so far from arresting the progress of the Reformed opinions, only served to increase the number of their professors. Men of rank in the State, and of dignity in the Church, now began, despite the disfavour in which all of the “religion” were held at court, to enrol themselves in the Protestant army. But the Gospel in France was destined to owe more to men of humble faith than to the possessors of rank, however lofty. We have mentioned Chatelain, Bishop of Maçon, who disputed with the poor tailor before Henry II. As Beza remarks¹, one thing only did he lack, even grace, to make him one of the most brilliant characters and most illustrious professors of the Gospel in France. Lowly born, Chatelain had raised himself by his great talents and beautiful character. He sat daily at the table of Francis I., among the scholars and wise men whom the king loved to hear discourse. To the accomplishments of foreign travel he added the charms of an elegant latinity. He favoured the new opinions, and undertook the defence of Robert Stephens, the king’s printer, when the Sorbonne attacked him for his version of the Bible.² These acquirements and gifts procured his being made Bishop of Maçon. But the mitre would seem to have cooled his zeal for the Reformation, and in the reign of Henry II. we find him persecuting the faith he had once defended. Soon after his encounter with the tailor he was promoted to the See of Orleans, and he set out to take possession of his new bishopric. Arriving at a monastery in the neighbourhood of Orleans, he halted there, intending to make his entry into the city on the morrow. The Fathers persuaded him to preach; and, as Beza remarks, to see a bishop in a pulpit was so great a wonder in those days, that the sight attracted an immense crowd. As the bishop was thundering against heretics, he was struck with a sudden and violent illness, and had to be carried out of the pulpit. He died the following night.³ At the very gates of his episcopal city, on the very steps of his episcopal throne, he encountered sudden-arrest, and gave up the ghost.

Five days thereafter (9th July, 1550), Paris was lighted up with numerous piles. Of these martyrs, who laid gloriously with their blood the foundations of the French Protestant Church, we must not omit the names of Leonard Galimar, of Vendôme, and Florent Venot, of Sedan. The latter endured incredible torments, for no less a period than four years, in the successive prisons into which he was thrown. His sufferings culminated when he was brought to Paris. He was there kept for six weeks in a hole where he could neither lie, nor stand upright, nor move about, and the odour of which was

¹ Beza, tom. i., livr. ii., p. 51. Laval, vol. i., p. 76.

² Laval, vol. i., p. 78.

³ Beza, tom. i., pp. 51, 52.

beyond measure foul and poisonous, being filled with all manner of abominable filth. His keepers said that they had never known any one inhabit that dreadful place for more than fifteen days, without losing either life or reason. But Venot surmounted all these sufferings with a most admirable courage. Being burned alive in the Place Maubert, he ceased not at the stake to sing and magnify the Saviour, till his tongue was cut out, and even then he continued to testify his joy by signs.¹

In the following year (1551) a quarrel broke out between Henry and Pope Julius III., the cause being those fruitful sources of strife, the Duchies of Parma and Placentia. The king showed his displeasure by forbidding his subjects to send money to Rome, and by protesting against the Council of Trent, the Fathers having returned for the second time to that town. But this contention between the king and the Pope only tended to quicken the flames of persecution. Henry wished to make it clear to his subjects that it was against the Pope in his temporal and not in his spiritual character that he had girded on the sword; that if he was warring against the Prince of the Roman States, his zeal had not cooled for the Holy See; and that if Julius the monarch was wicked, and might be resisted, Julius the Pope was none the less entitled to the obedience of all Christians.²

To teach the Protestants, as Maimbourg observes, that they must not take advantage of these quarrels to vent their heresies, there was published at this time (27th June) the famous Edict of Chateaubriand, so called from the place where it was given. By this law, all former severities were re-enacted; the cognisance of the crime of heresy was given to the secular power; informers were rewarded with the fourth part of the forfeited goods; the possessions and estates of all those who had fled to Geneva were confiscated to the king; and no one was to hold any office under the crown, or teach any science, who could not produce a certificate of being a good Romanist.³ This policy has at all times been pursued by the monarchs of France when they quarrelled with the Pope. It behoved them, they felt, all the more that they had incurred suspicion, to vindicate the purity of their orthodoxy, and their claim to the proud title of “the Eldest Son of the Church.”

Maurice, Elector of Saxony, was at this time prosecuting his victorious campaign against Charles V. The relations which the King of France had contracted with the Protestant princes, and which enabled him to make an expedition into Lorraine, and to annex Metz and other cities to his crown, moderated for a short while the rigours of persecution. But the Peace of Passau (1552), which ratified the liberties of the Protestants of Germany, rekindled the fires in France. “Henry having no more measures to observe with

¹ *Ibid.*, tom. i., p. 52.

² Maimbourg, *Hist. Calv.*, livr. ii., p. 94; Paris, 1682.

³ *Ibid.*, livr. ii., pp. 94, 95. Laval, vol. i., p. 80.

the Protestant princes,” says Laval, “nothing was to be seen in his kingdom but fires kindled throughout all the provinces against the poor Reformed.”¹ Vast numbers were executed in this and the following year. It was now that the gag was brought into use for the first time. It had been invented on purpose to prevent the martyrs addressing the people at the stake, or singing psalms to solace themselves when on their way to the pile. “The first who suffered it,” says Laval, “was Nicholas Noil, a book-hawker, who was executed at Paris in the most barbarous manner.”²

The scene of martyrdom was in those days at times the scene of conversion. Of this, the following incident is a proof. Simon Laloe, of Soisson, was offering up his life at Dijon. As he stood at the stake, and while the faggots were being kindled, he delivered an earnest prayer for the conversion of his persecutors. The executioner, Jacques Sylvester, was so affected that his tears never ceased to flow all the time he was doing his office. He had heard no one before speak of God, or of the Gospel, but he could not rest till he was instructed in the Scriptures. Having received the truth, he retired to Geneva, where he died a member of the Reformed Church.³ The same stake that gave death to the one, gave life to the other.

The insatiable avarice of Diana of Poitiers, to whom the king had gifted the forfeited estates of the Reformed, not less than zeal for Romanism, occasioned every day new executions. The truth continued notwithstanding to spread. “When the plague,” says Maimbourg, “attacks a great city, it matters little what effort is made to arrest it. It enters every door; it traverses every street; it invades every quarter, and pursues its course till the whole community have been enveloped in its ravages: so did this dangerous sect spread through France. Every day it made new progress, despite the edicts with which it was assailed, and the dreadful executions to which so many of its members were consigned.”⁴ It was in the midst of this persecution that the first congregations of the Reformed Church in France were settled with pastors, and began to be governed by a regular discipline.

The first Church to be thus constituted was in Paris; “where,” says Laval, “the fires never went out.” At that time the disciples of the Gospel were wont to meet in the house of M. de la Ferrière, a wealthy gentleman of Maine, who had come to reside in the capital. M. de la Ferrière had a child whom he wished to have baptised, and as he could not present him to the priests for that purpose, nor undertake a journey to Geneva, he urged the Christians, who were wont to assemble in his house, to elect one of themselves to the office of pastor, with power to administer the Sacraments. They were at last

¹ Laval, vol. i., p. 81.

² Laval, vol. i., p. 82. Beza, tom. i., p. 59.

³ Beza, tom. i., p. 59.

⁴ Maimbourg, livr. ii., p. 95.

prevailed upon, and, after prayer and fasting, their choice fell on Jean Maçon de la Rivière. He was the son of the king's attorney at Angers, a rich man, but a bitter enemy of Protestantism. He was so offended at his son for embracing the Reformed faith, that he would have given him up to the judges, had he not fled to Paris. The sacrifice which M. de la Rivière had made to preserve the purity of his conscience, fixed the eyes of the little flock upon him. In him we behold the first pastor of the Reformed Church of France,¹ elected forty years after Lefevre had first opened the door for the entrance of the Protestant doctrines. "They chose likewise," says Laval, speaking of this little flock, "some amongst them to be elders and deacons, and made such other regulations for the government of their Church as the times would allow. Such were the first beginnings of the Church of Paris in the month of September, 1555, which increased daily during the war of Henry II. with Charles V."²

If France blazed with funeral piles, it was day by day more widely illuminated with the splendour of truth. This gave infinite vexation and torment to the friends of Rome, who wearied themselves to devise new methods for arresting the progress of the Gospel. Loud accusations and reproaches passed between the courts of jurisdiction for not showing greater zeal in executing the edicts against heresy. The cognisance of that crime was committed sometimes to the royal and sometimes to the ecclesiastical judges, and sometimes parted between them. The mutual recriminations still continued. A crime above all crimes, it was said, was leniently treated by those whose duty it was to pursue it without mercy. At last, in the hope of attaining the requisite vigour, the Cardinal of Lorraine stripped the Parliament and the civil judges of the right of hearing such causes, and transferred it to the bishops, leaving nothing to the others but the mere execution of the sentence against the condemned. This arrangement the cardinal thought to perfect by establishing the Inquisition in France on the Spanish model. In this, however, he did not succeed, the Parliament having refused its consent thereto.³

The calamities that befell the kingdom were a cover to the evangelisation. Henry II. had agreed on a truce with the Emperor Charles for five years. It did not, however, suit the Pope that the truce should be kept. Paul IV. sent his legate to France to dispense Henry from his oath, and induce him to violate the peace. The flames of war were rekindled, but the French arms were disgraced. The battle of St. Quentin was a fatal blow to France, and the Duke of Guise was recalled from Italy to retrieve it. He recovered in the Low Countries the reputation which he had lost in Sicily;⁴ but even this tended in the

¹ Beza, tom. i., pp. 62–64.

² Laval, vol. i., pp. 83, 84.

³ Beza, tom. i., p. 72. Laval, vol. i., pp. 85, 86.

⁴ Davila, *Hist. delle Guerre Civili di Francia*, lib. i., p. 13.

issue to the weakening of France. The duke's influence at court was now predominant, and the intrigues which his great rival, Montmorency, set on foot to supplant him, led to the Treaty of Cateau Cambrésis (1559), by which France lost 198 strongholds,¹ besides the deepening of the jealousies and rivalships between the House of Lorraine and that of the Constable, which so nearly proved the ruin of France. One main inducement with Henry to conclude this treaty with Philip of Spain, was that it left him free to prosecute the design formed by the Cardinal of Lorraine and the Bishop of Arras for the utter extirpation of the Reformed. In fact, the treaty contained a secret clause binding both monarchs to combine their power for the utter extirpation of heresy in their dominions.

But despite the growing rigour of the persecution, the shameful slanders which were propagated against the Reformed, and the hideous deaths inflicted on persons of all ages and both sexes, the numbers of the Protestants and their courage daily increased. It was now seen that scarcely was there a class of French society which did not furnish converts to the Gospel. Mezeray says that there was no town, no province, no trade in the kingdom wherein the new opinions had not taken root. The lawyers, the learned, nay, the ecclesiastics, against their own interest, embraced them.² Some of the greatest nobles of France now rallied round the Protestant standard. Among these was Antoine de Bourbon, Duke of Vendôme, and first prince of the blood, and Louis de Bourbon, Prince of Condé, his brother. With these were joined two nephews of the Constable Montmorency, the Admiral Gaspard de Coligny, and his brother, Francois de Chatillon, better known as the Sire d'Andelot. A little longer and all France would be Lutheran. The king's alarm was great: the alarm of all about him was not less so, and all united in urging upon him the adoption of yet more summary measures against an execrable belief, which, if not rooted out, would most surely overthrow his throne, root out his house, and bring his kingdom to ruin. Might not the displeasure of Heaven, evoked by that impious sect, be read in the many dark calamities that were gathering round France?

It was resolved that a "Mercuriale," as it is called in France, should be held, and that the king, without giving previous notice of his coming, should present himself in the assembly. He would thus see and hear for himself, and judge if there were not, even among his senators, men who favoured this pestilent heresy. It had been a custom from the times of Charles VIII. (1493), when corruption crept into the administration, and the State was in danger of receiving damage, that representatives of all the principal courts of the realm should meet, in order to inquire into the evil, and admonish one another to

¹ Laval, vol. i., p. 107.

² Mezeray, *Abr. Chr.*, tom. iv., p. 720. Laval, vol. i., p. 107.

greater vigilance. Francis I. had ordered that these “Censures” should take place once every three months, and from the day on which they were held—namely, Wednesday *{Dies Mercurii}*—they were named “Mercuriales.”¹

On the 10th of June, 1559, the court met in the house of the Austin Friars, the Parliament Hall not being available, owing to the preparations for the wedding of the king’s daughter and sister. The king suddenly appeared in the assembly, attended by the princes of the blood, the Constable, and the Guises. Having taken his seat on the throne, he delivered a discourse on religion; he enlarged on his own labours for the peace of Christendom, which he was about to seal by giving in marriage his daughter Elizabeth to Philip of Spain, and his only sister Margaret to Philibert Emmanuel, Duke of Savoy; and he concluded by announcing his resolution to devote himself henceforward to the healing of the wounds of the Christian world. He then ordered the senators to go on with their votes.

Though all felt that the king was present to overawe them in the expression of their sentiments, many of the senators declared themselves with that ancient liberty which became their rank and office. They pointed to the fact that a Council was at that moment convened at Trent to pronounce on the faith, and that it was unjust to burn men for heresy before the Council had decreed what was heresy. Arnold du Ferrier freely admitted that the troubles of France sprang out of its religious differences, but then they ought to inquire who was the real author of these differences, lest, while pursuing the sectaries, they should expose themselves to the rebuke, “Thou art the man that troubles Israel.” Annas du Bourg, who next rose, came yet closer to the point. There were, he said, many great crimes and wicked actions, such as oaths, adulteries, and perjuries, condemned by the laws, and deserving of the severest punishment, which went without correction, while new punishments were every day invented for men who as yet had been found guilty of no crime. Should those be held guilty of high treason who mentioned the name of the prince only to pray for him? and should the rack and the stake be reserved, not for those who raised tumults in the cities, and seditions in the provinces, but for those who were the brightest patterns of obedience to the laws, and the firmest defenders of order? It was a very grave matter, he added, to condemn to the flames men who died calling on the name of the Lord Jesus. Other speakers followed in the same strain. Not so the majority, however. They recalled the examples of old days, when the Albigensian heretics had been slaughtered in thousands by Innocent III.; and when the Waldenses, in later times, had been choked with smoke in their own dwellings, and the dens of the mountains; and they urged the instant adoption of these time-honoured usages. When the opinions of the senators had been marked,

¹ Laval, vol. i., pp. 109, 110.

the king took possession of the register in which the votes were recorded, then rising up, he sharply chid those members who had avowed a preference for a moderate policy; and, to show that under a despot no one could honestly differ from the royal opinion and be held guiltless, he ordered the Constable to arrest Du Bourg. The captain of the king's guard instantly seized the obnoxious senator, and carried him to the Bastille. Other members of Parliament were arrested next day at their own houses.¹

The king's resolution was fully taken to execute all the senators who had opposed him, and to exterminate Lutheranism everywhere throughout France. He would begin with Du Bourg, who, shut up in an iron cage in the Bastille, waited his doom. But before the day of Du Bourg's execution arrived, Henry himself had gone to his account. We have already mentioned the delight the king took in jousts and tournaments. He was giving his eldest daughter in marriage to the mightiest prince of his time—Philip II. of Spain—and so great an occasion he must needs celebrate with fetes of corresponding magnificence. Fourteen days have elapsed since his memorable visit to his Parliament, and now Henry presents himself in a very different assemblage. It is the last day of June, 1559, and the rank and beauty of Paris are gathered in the Faubourg St. Antoine, to see the king tilting with selected champions in the lists. The king bore himself "like a sturdy and skilful cavalier" in the mimic war. The last passage-at-arms was over, the plaudits of the brilliant throng had saluted the royal victor, and every one thought that the spectacle was at an end. But no, it was to close with a catastrophe of which no one present so much as dreamed. A sudden resolve seizing the king yet farther to display his prowess before the admiring multitude, he bade the Count Montgomery, the captain of his guard, make ready and run a tilt with him. Montgomery excused himself, but the king insisted. Mounting his horse and placing his lance in rest, Montgomery stood facing the king. The trumpet sounded. The two warriors, urging their steeds to a gallop, rushed at each other: Montgomery's lance struck the king with such force that the staff was shattered. The blow made Henry's visor fly open, and a splinter from the broken beam entered his left eye and drove into his brain. The king fell from his horse to the ground. A thrill of horror ran through the spectators. Was the king slain? No; but he was mortally wounded, and the death-blow had been dealt by the same hand—that of the captain of his guard—which he had employed to arrest the martyr Du Bourg. He was carried to the Hotel de Tournelles, where he died on the 10th of July, in the forty-first year of his age.²

Many strange things were talked of at the time, and have been related by contemporary historians, in connection with the death of Henry II. His queen,

¹ Beza, tom. i., pp. 122, 123.

² Davila, lib. i., pp. 17, 18. Laval, vol. i., p. 142.

Catherine de Medici, had a dream the night before, in which she saw him tilting in the tournament, and so hard put to, that in the morning when she awoke she earnestly begged him that day not to stir abroad; but, says Beza, he no more heeded the warning than Julius Caesar did that of his wife, who implored him on the morning of the day on which he was slain not to go to the Senate-house. Nor did it escape observation that the same palace which had been decked out with so much magnificence for the two marriages was that in which the king breathed his last, and so “the hall of triumph was changed into the chamber of mourning.” And, finally, it was thought not a little remarkable that when the bed was prepared on which Henry was to lie in state, and the royal corpse laid upon it, the attendants, not thinking of the matter at all, covered it with a rich piece of tapestry on which was represented the conversion of St. Paul, with the words in large letters, “Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?” This was remarked upon by so many who saw it, that the officer who had charge of the body ordered the coverlet to be taken away, and replaced with another piece.¹ The incident recalled the last words of Julian, who fell like Henry, warring against Christ: “Thou hast overcome, O Galilean!”

¹ Beza, tom. i., p. 124.

CHAPTER III.

FIRST NATIONAL SYNOD OF THE FRENCH PROTESTANT CHURCH.

Early Assemblies of French Protestants—Colportage—Holy Lives—The Planting of Churches throughout France—Play at La Rochelle—First National Synod—Confession of Faith of the French Church—Constitution and Government—Gradation of Courts—Order and Liberty—Piety Flourishes.

The young vine which had been planted in France, and which was beginning to cover with its shadow the plains of that fair land, was at this moment sorely shaken by the tempests; but the fiercer the blasts that warred around it, the deeper did it strike its roots in the soil, and the higher did it lift its head into the heavens. There were few districts or cities in France in which there was not to be found a little community of disciples. These flocks had neither shepherd to care for them, nor church in which to celebrate their worship. The violence of the times taught them to shun observation; nevertheless, they neglected no means of keeping alive the Divine life in their souls, and increasing their knowledge of the Word of God. They assembled at stated times, to read together the Scriptures, and to join in prayer, and at these gatherings the more intelligent or the more courageous of their number expounded a passage from the Bible, or delivered a word of exhortation. These teachers, however, confined themselves to doctrine. They did not dispense the Sacraments, for Calvin, who was consulted on the point, gave it as his opinion that, till they had obtained the services of a regularly ordained ministry, they should forego celebrating the Lord's Supper. They were little careful touching the fashion of the place in which they offered their united prayer and sang their psalm. It might be a garret, or a cellar, or a barn. It might be a cave of the mountains, or a glen in the far wilderness, or some glade shaded by the ancient trees of the forest. Assemble where they might, they knew that there was One ever in the midst of them, and where he was, there was the Church. One of their number gave notice to the rest of the time and place of meeting. If in a city, they took care that the house should have several secret doors, so that, entering by different ways, their assembling might attract no notice. And lest their enemies should break in upon them, they took the precaution of bringing cards and dice with them, to throw upon the table in the room of their Bibles and psalters, as a make-believe that they had been interrupted at play, and were a band of gamblers instead of a congregation of Lutherans.¹

In the times we speak of, France was traversed by an army of book-hawkers. The printing-presses of Geneva, Lausanne, and Neuchâtel supplied

¹ Flor. de Ræmond, *Hist. de la Naissance, &c., de l'Hérésie de ce Siècle*, lib. vii., p. 931.

Bibles and religious books in abundance, and students of theology, and sometimes even ministers, assuming the humble office of colporteurs carried them into France. Staff in hand, and pack slung on their back, they pursued their way, summer and winter, by highways and cross-roads, through forests and over marshes, knocking from door to door, often repulsed, always hazarding their lives, and at times discovered, and dragged to the pile. By their means the Bible gained admission into the mansions of the nobles, and the cottages of the peasantry. They employed the same methods as the ancient Vaudois colporteur to conceal their calling. Their precious wares they deposited at the bottom of their baskets, so that one meeting them in city alley, or country highway, would have taken them for vendors of silks and jewellery—a deception for which Florimond de Ræmond rebukes them, without, however, having a word in condemnation of the violence that rendered the concealment necessary. The success of these humble and devoted evangelists was attested by the numbers whom they prepared for the stake, and who, in their turn, sowed in their blood the seed of new confessors and martyrs.

At times, too, though owing to the fewness of pastors it was only at considerable intervals, these little assemblies of believing men and women had the much-prized pleasure of being visited by a minister of the Gospel. From him they learned how it was going with their brethren in other parts of France. Their hearts swelled and their eyes brightened as he told them that, despite the fires everywhere burning, new converts were daily pressing forward to enrol themselves in the army of Christ, and that the soldiers of the Cross were multiplying faster than the stake was thinning them. Then covering the table, and placing upon it the “bread” and “cup,” he would dispense the Lord’s Supper, and bind them anew by that holy pledge to the service of their heavenly King, even unto the death. Thus the hours would wear away, till the morning was on the point of breaking, and they would take farewell of each other as men who would meet no more till, by way of the halter or the stake, they should reassemble in heaven.

The Singular beauty of the lives of these men attracted the notice, and extorted even the praise, of their bitterest enemies. It was a new thing in France. Florimond de Ræmond, ever on the watch for their halting, could find nothing of which to accuse them save that “instead of dances and Maypoles they set on foot Bible-readings, and the singing of spiritual hymns, especially the psalms after they had been turned into rhyme. The women, by their deportment and modest apparel, appeared in public like sorrowing Eves, or penitent Magdalenes, as Tertullian said of the Christian women of his day. The men too, with their mortified air, seemed to be overpowered by the Holy Ghost.”¹ It does not seem to have occurred to the monkish

¹ Flor de Ræmond, lib. vii., p. 864.

chronicler to inquire why it was that what he considered an evil tree yielded fruits like these, although a true answer to that question would have saved France from many crimes and woes. If the facts were as Ræmond stated them—if the confessors of an heretical and diabolical creed were men of preeminent virtue—the conclusion was inevitable, either that he had entirely misjudged regarding their creed, or that the whole moral order of things had somehow or other come to be reversed. Even Catherine de Medici, in her own way, bore her testimony to the moral character of Protestantism. “I have a mind,” observed she one day, “to turn to the new religion, to pass for a prude and a pious woman.” The persecutors of that age are condemned out of their own mouths. They confess that they “killed the innocent.”

Truly wonderful was the number of Protestant congregations already formed in France at the time of the death of Henry II. “Burning,” yet “not consumed,” the Reformed Church was even green and flourishing, because refreshed with a secret dew, which was more efficacious to preserve its life than all the fury of the flames to extinguish it. We have already recorded the organisation of the Church in Paris, in 1555. It was followed in that and the five following years by so many others in all parts of France, that we can do little save recite the names of these Churches. The perils and martyrdoms through which each struggled into existence, before taking its place on the soil of France, we cannot recount. The early Church of Meaux, trodden into the dust years before, now rose from its ruins. In 1546 it had seen fourteen of its members burned; in 1555 it obtained a settled pastor.¹ At Angers (1555) a congregation was formed, and placed under the care of a pastor from Geneva. At Poitiers, to which so great an interest belongs as the flock which Calvin gathered together, and to whom he dispensed, for the first time in France, the Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper, a congregation was regularly organised (1555). It happened that the plague came to Poitiers, and drove from the city the bitterest enemies of the Reformation; whereupon its friends, taking heart, formed themselves into a Church, which soon became so flourishing that it supplied pastors to the congregations that by-and-by sprang up in the neighbourhood.² At Alevvert, an island lying off the coast of Saintonge, a great number of the inhabitants received the truth, and were formed into a congregation in 1556. At Agen, in Guienne, a congregation was the same year organised, of which Pierre David, a converted monk, became pastor. He was afterwards chaplain to the King of Navarre.

At Bourges, at Aubigny, at Issoudun, at Blois, at Tours, at Montoine, at Pau in Bearn, Churches were organised under regular pastors in the same

¹ Beza, tom. i., p. 124.

² Laval, vol. i., p. 146. Beza, tom. i., p. 125.

year, 1556. To these are to be added the Churches at Montauban and Angoulême.¹

In the year following (1557), Protestant congregations were formed, and placed under pastors, at Orleans, at Sens, at Rouen in Normandy, and in many of the towns and villages around, including Dieppe on the shores of the English Channel. Protestantism had penetrated the mountainous region of the Cevennes, and left the memorials of its triumphs amid a people proverbially primitive and rude, in organised Churches. In Brittany numerous Churches arose, as also along both banks of the Garonne, in Nerac, in Bordeaux, and other towns too numerous to be mentioned. In Provence, the scene of recent slaughter, there existed no fewer than sixty Churches in the year 1560.²

The beginnings of the “great and glorious” Church of La Rochelle are obscure. So early as 1534 a woman was burned in Poitou, who said she had been instructed in the truth at La Rochelle. From that year we find no trace of Protestantism there till 1552, when its presence there is attested by the barbarous execution of two martyrs, one of whom had his tongue cut out for having acted as the teacher of others; from which we may infer that there was a little company of disciples in that town, though keeping themselves concealed for fear of the persecutor.³

In 1558 the King and Queen of Navarre, on their way to Paris, visited La Rochelle, and were splendidly entertained by the citizens. In their suite was M. David, the ex-monk, and now Protestant preacher, already referred to. He proclaimed openly the pure Word of God in all the places through which the court passed, and so too did he in La Rochelle. One day during their majesties’ stay at this city, the town-crier announced that a company of comedians had just arrived, and would act that day a new and wonderful piece. The citizens crowded to the play; the king, the queen, and the court being also present.

When the curtain rose, a sick woman was seen at the point of death, shrieking in pain, and begging to be confessed. The parish priest was sent for. He arrived in breathless haste, decked out in his canonicals. He began to shrive his penitent, but to little purpose. Tossing from side to side, apparently in greater distress than ever, she cried out that she was not well confessed. Soon a crowd of ecclesiastics had assembled round the sick woman, each more anxious than the other to give her relief. One would have thought that in such a multitude of physicians a cure would be found; but no: her case baffled all their skill. The friars next took her in hand. Opening great bags which they had brought with them, they drew forth, with solemn air, beads

¹ Beza, tom. i., p. 135.

² Beza, tom. i., p. 108.

³ Laval, vol. i., p. 149.

which they gave her to count, relics which they applied to various parts of her person, and indulgences which they read to her, with a perfect confidence that these would work an infallible cure. It was all in vain. Not one of these renowned specifics gave her the least mitigation of her sufferings. The friars were perfectly non-plussed. At last they bethought them of another expedient. They put the habit of St. Francis upon her. Now, thought they, as sure as St. Francis is a saint, she is cured. But, alas! attired in cowl and frock, the poor sick woman sat rocking from side to side amid the friars, still grievously tormented by the pain in her conscience, and bemoaning her sad condition, that those people understood not how to confess her. At that point, when priest and friar had exhausted their skill, and neither rosary nor holy habit could work a cure, one stepped upon the stage, and going up to the woman, whispered into her ear that he knew a man who would confess her right, and give her ease in her conscience; but, added he, he goes abroad only in the night-time, for the day-light is hurtful to him. The sick person earnestly begged that that man might be called to her. He was straightway sent for: he came in a lay-dress, and drawing near the bolster, he whispered something in the woman's ear which the spectators did not hear. They saw, however, by her instant change of expression, that she was well pleased with what had been told her. The mysterious man next drew out of his pocket a small book, which he put into her hand, saying aloud, "This book contains the most infallible recipes for the curing of your disease; if you will make use of them, you will recover your health perfectly in a few days." Hereupon he left the stage, and the sick woman, getting out of bed with cheerful air, as one perfectly cured, walked three times round the stage, and then turning to the audience, told them that that unknown man had succeeded where friar and priest had failed, and that she must confess that the book he had given her was full of most excellent recipes, as they themselves might see from the happy change it had wrought in her; and if any of them was afflicted with the same disease, she would advise them to consult that book, which she would readily lend them; and if they did not mind its being somewhat hot in the handling, and having about it a noisome smell like that of a fagot, they might rest assured it would certainly cure them. If the audience desired to know her name, and the book's name, she said, they were two riddles which they might guess at.¹

The citizens of La Rochelle had no great difficulty in reading the riddle. Many of them made trial of the book, despite its associations with the stake and the fagot, and they found that its efficacy was sufficiently sovereign to cure them. They obtained deliverance from that burden on the conscience

¹ Laval, vol. i., pp. 150–152—*ex* Vincent, *Recherches sur les Commencemens de la Réf. à la Rochelle*.

which had weighed them down in fear and anguish, despite all that friar or penance could do to give them ease. From that time Protestantism flourished in La Rochelle; a Church was formed, its members not daring as yet, however, to meet for worship in open day, but assembling under cloud of night, as was still the practice in almost all places in France.

We are now arrived at a new and most important development of Protestantism in France. As has been already mentioned, the crowns of France and Spain made peace between themselves, that they might be at liberty to turn their arms against Protestantism, and effect its extermination. Both monarchs were preparing to inflict a great blow. It was at that hour that the scattered sections of the French Protestant Church drew together, and, rallying around a common standard, presented a united front to their enemies.

It was forty years since Lefevre had opened the door of France to the Gospel. All these years there had been disciples, confessors, martyrs, but no congregations in our sense of the term. The little companies of believing men and women, scattered over the country, were cared for and fed only by the Great Shepherd, who made them lie down in the green pastures of his Word, and by the still waters of his Spirit. But this was an incomplete and defective condition. Christ's people are not only a "flock," but a "kingdom," and it is the peculiarity of a kingdom that it possesses "order and government" as well as subjects. The former exists for the edification and defence of the latter. In 1555 congregations began to be formed on the Genevan model. A pastor was appointed to teach, and with him was associated a small body of laymen to watch over the morals of the flock. The work of organising went on vigorously, and in 1560 from one to two thousand Protestant congregations existed in France. Thus did the individual congregation come into existence. But the Church of God needs a wider union, and a more centralised authority.

Scattered over the wide space that separates the Seine from the Rhone and the Garonne, the Protestant Churches of France were isolated and apart. In the fact that they had common interests and common dangers, a basis was laid, they felt, for confederation. In this way would the wisdom of all be available for the guidance of each, and the strength of each be combined for the defence of all.

As the symbol of such a confederation it was requisite that a creed should be drafted which all might confess, and a code of discipline compiled to which all would submit. Not to fetter the private judgment of individual Christians, nor to restrict the rights of individual congregations, was this creed framed; on the contrary, it was intended as a shield of both liberty of opinion and liberty of Christian action. But in order to effect this, it was essential that it should be drawn from the doctrines of the Bible and the models of apostolic times, with the same patient investigation, and the same accurate deduction, with which men construct a science from the facts which they

observe in nature, but with greater submission of mind, inasmuch as the facts observed for the framing of a creed are of supernatural revelation, and with a more anxious vigilance to avoid error where error would be so immensely more pernicious and destructive, and above all, with a dependence on that Spirit who inspired the Word, and who has been promised to enlighten men in the true sense of it. As God has revealed himself in his Word, so the Church is bound to reveal the Word to the world. The French Protestant Church now discharged that duty to its nation.

It was agreed between the Churches of Paris and Poitiers, in 1558, that a National Synod should be held for the purpose of framing a common confession and a code of discipline. In the following spring, circular letters were addressed to all the Churches of the kingdom, and they, perceiving the benefit to the common cause likely to accrue from the step, readily gave their consent. It was unanimously agreed that the Synod should be held in Paris. The capital was selected, says Beza, not because any pre-eminence or dignity was supposed to belong to the Church there, but simply because the confluence of so many ministers and elders was less likely to attract notice in Paris than in a provincial town.¹ As regards rank, the representative of the smallest congregation stood on a perfect equality with the deputy of the metropolitan Church.

The Synod met on the 25th of May, 1559. At that moment the Parliament was assembling for the Mercuriale, at which the king avowed his purpose of pursuing the Reformed with fire and sword till he had exterminated them. From eleven Churches only came deputies to this Synod: Paris, St. Lô, Dieppe, Angers, Orleans, Tours, Poitiers, Saintes, Marennes, Châtellerault, and St. Jean d'Angely.² Pastor François Morel, Sieur of Collonges, was chosen to preside. Infinite difficulties had to be overcome, says Beza, before the Churches could be advertised of the meeting, but greater risks had to be run before the deputies could assemble: hence the fewness of their number. The gibbet was then standing in all the public places of the kingdom, and had their place of meeting been discovered, without doubt, the deputies would have been led in a body to the scaffold.

There is a simplicity and a moral grandeur appertaining to this assembly that compels our homage. No guard stands sentinel at the door. No mace or symbol of authority graces the table round which the deputies of the Churches are gathered; no robes of office dignify their persons; on the contrary, royal edicts have proclaimed them outlaws, and the persecutor is on their track. Nevertheless, as if they were assembled in peaceful times, and under the shadow of law, they go on day by day, with calm dignity and serene

¹ Beza, tom. i., p. 109.

² Félice, vol. i., p. 70.

power, planting the foundations of the House of God in their native land. They will do their work, although the first stones should be cemented with their blood.

We can present only an outline of their great work. Their Confession of Faith was comprehended in forty articles, and agrees in all essential points with the Creed of the Church of England. They received the Bible as the sole infallible rule of faith and manners. They confessed the doctrine of the Trinity; of the Fall; of the entire corruption of man's nature, and his condemnation; of the election of some to everlasting life; of the call of sovereign and omnipotent grace; of a free redemption by Christ, who is our righteousness; of that righteousness as the ground of our justification; of faith, which is the gift of God, as the instrument by which we obtain an interest in that righteousness; of regeneration by the Spirit to a new life, and to good works; of the Divine institution of the ministry; of the equality of all pastors under one chief Pastor and universal Bishop, Jesus Christ; of the true Church, as composed of the assembly of believers, who agree to follow the rule of the Word; of the two Sacraments, baptism and the Lord's Supper; of the policy which Christ has established for the government of his Church; and of the obedience and homage due to rulers in monarchies and commonwealths, as God's lieutenants whom he has set to exercise a lawful and holy office.¹

Their code of discipline was arranged also in forty articles. Dismissing details, let us state in outline the constitution of the Reformed Church of France, as settled at its first National Synod. Its fundamental idea was that which had been taught both at Wittenberg and Geneva, namely, that the government of the Church is diffused throughout the whole body of the faithful, but that the exercise of it is to be restricted to those to whom Christ, the fountain of that government, has given the suitable gifts, and whom their fellow Church members have called to its discharge. On this democratic basis there rose four grades of power: — 1. The Consistory. 2. The Colloquy. 3. The Provincial Synod. 4. The National Synod. Corresponding with these four grades of power there were four circles or areas—the Parish, the District, the Province, and the Kingdom. Each grade of authority narrowed as it ascended, while the circle within which it was exercised widened. What had its beginning in a democracy, ended in a constitutional monarchy, and the interests of each congregation and each member of the Church were, in the last resort, adjudicated upon by the wisdom and authority of all. There was perfect liberty, combined with perfect order.

Let us sketch briefly the constitution of each separate court, with the sphere within which, and the responsibilities under which, it exercised its powers. First came the Consistory. It bore rule over the congregation, and

¹ Beza, tom. i., pp. 109–118. Laval, vol. i., pp. 118–132.

was composed of the minister, elders, and deacons. The minister might be nominated by the Consistory, or by the Colloquy, or by the Provincial Synod, but he could not be ordained till he had preached three several Sundays to the congregation, and the people thus had had an opportunity of testing his gifts, and his special fitness to be their pastor. The elders and deacons were elected by the congregation.

The Colloquy came next, and was composed of all the congregations of the district. Each congregation was represented in it by one pastor and one elder or deacon. The Colloquy met twice every year, and settled all questions referred to it from the congregations within its limits.

Next came the Provincial Synod. It comprehended all the Colloquies of the Province, every congregation sending a pastor and an elder to it. The Provincial Synod met once a year, and gave judgment in all cases of appeal from the court below, and generally in all matters deemed of too great weight to be determined in the Colloquy.

At the head of this gradation of ecclesiastical authority came the National Synod. It was composed of two pastors and two elders from each of the Provincial Synods, and had the whole kingdom for its domain or circle. It was the court of highest judicature; it determined all great causes, and heard all appeals, and to its authority, in the last resort, all were subject. It was presided over by a pastor chosen by the members. His pre-eminence was entirely official, and ended at the moment the Synod had closed its sittings.

In the execution of their great task, these first builders of the Protestant Church in France availed themselves of the counsel of Calvin. Nevertheless, their eyes were all the while directed to a higher model than Geneva, and they took their instructions from a higher authority than Calvin. They studied the New Testament, and what they aimed at following was the pattern which they thought stood revealed to them there, and the use they made of Calvin's advice was simply to be able to see that plan more clearly, and to follow it more closely. Adopting as their motto the words of the apostle—"One is your Master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren"—they inferred that there must be government in the Church—"One is your Master"—that the source of that government is in heaven, namely, Christ; that the revelation of it is in the Bible, and that the depository of it is in the Church—"All ye are brethren." Moving between the two great necessities which their motto indicated, authority and liberty, they strove to adjust and reconcile these two different but not antagonistic forces—Christ's royalty and his people's brotherhood. Without the first there could not be order, without the second there could not be freedom. Their scheme of doctrine preceded their code of discipline; the first had been accepted before the second was submitted to; thus all the bonds that held that spiritual society together, and all the influences that ruled it, proceeded out of the throne in the midst of the Church. If they, as constituted

officers, stood between the Monarch and the subjects of this spiritual empire, it was neither as legislators nor as rulers, strictly so called. “One” only was Master, whether as regarded law or government. Their power was not legislative but administrative, and their rule was not lordly but ministerial; they were the fellow-servants of those among whom, and for whom, their functions were discharged.

The Synod sat four days; its place of meeting was never discovered, and its business finished, its members departed for their homes, which they reached in safety. Future councils have added nothing of moment to the constitution of the French Protestant Church, as framed by this its first National Synod.¹

The times subsequent to the holding of this assembly were times of great prosperity to the Protestants of France. The Spirit of God was largely given them; and though the fires of persecution continued to burn, the pastors were multiplied, congregations waxed numerous, and the knowledge and purity of their members kept pace with their increase. The following picture of the French Church at this era has been drawn by Quick:—“The holy Word of God is duly, truly, and powerfully preached in churches and fields, in ships and houses, in vaults and cellars, in all places where the Gospel ministers can have admission and conveniency, and with singular success. Multitudes are convinced and converted, established and edified. Christ rideth out upon the white horse of the ministry, with the sword and the bow of the Gospel preached, conquering and to conquer. His enemies fall under him, and submit themselves unto him.

“Oh! the unparalleled success of the plain and earnest sermons of the first Reformers! Multitudes flock in like doves into the windows of God’s ark. As innumerable drops of dew fall from the womb of the morning, so hath the Lord Christ the dew of his youth. The Popish churches are drained, the Protestant churches are filled. The priests complain that their altars are neglected; their masses are now indeed solitary. Dagon cannot stand before God’s ark. Children and persons of riper years are catechised in the rudiments and principles of the Christian religion, and can give a satisfactory account of their faith, a reason of the hope that is in them. By this ordinance do their pious pastors prepare them for communion with the Lord at his holy table.”²

¹ Beza, tom. i., pp. 118–121. Laval, vol. i., pp. 132–139.

² *Synodicon in Gallia Reformata*, Introduction, v., vi.; Lond., 1692.

CHAPTER IV.

A GALLERY OF PORTRAITS.

National Decadence—Francis II.—Scenes Shift at Court—The Guises and the Queen-mother—Anthony de Bourbon—His Paltry Character—Prince of Condé—His Accomplishments—Admiral Coligny—His Conversion—Embraces the Reformed Faith—His Daily Life—Great Services—Jeanne d'Albret, Queen of Navarre—Greatness of her Character—Services to French Protestantism—Her Kingdom of Navarre—Edict Establishing the Reformed Worship in it—Her Code—Her Fame.

Henry II. went to his grave amid the deepening shadows of fast-coming calamity. The auspicious signs which had greeted the eyes of men when he ascended the throne had all vanished before the close of his reign, and given place to omens of evil. The finances were embarrassed, the army was dispirited by repeated defeat, the court was a hotbed of intrigue, and the nation, broken into factions, was on the brink of civil war. So rapid had been the decline of a kingdom which in the preceding reign was the most flourishing in Christendom.

Henry II. was succeeded on the throne by the eldest of his four sons, under the title of Francis II. The blood of the Valois and the blood of the Medici—two corrupt streams—were now for the first time united on the throne of France. With the new monarch came a shifting of parties in the Louvre; for of all slippery places in the world those near a throne are the most slippery. The star of Diana of Poitiers, as a matter of course, vanished from the firmament where it had shone with bright but baleful splendour. The Constable Montmorency had a hint given him that his health would be benefited by the air of his country-seat. The king knew not, so he said to him, how to reward his great merits, and recompense him for the toil he had undergone in his service, save by relieving him of the burden of affairs, in order that he might enjoy his age in quiet, being resolved not to wear him out as a vassal or servant, but always to honour him as a father.¹ The proud Constable, grumbling a little, strode off to his Castle of Chantilly, ten leagues from Paris. The field cleared of these parties, the contest for power henceforward lay between the Guises and the Queen-mother.

Francis II. was a lad of sixteen, and when we think who had had the rearing of him, we are not surprised to learn that he was without principles and without morals. Feeble in mind and body, he was a tool all the more fit for the hand of a bold intriguer. At the foot of the throne from which she had just descended stood the crafty Italian woman, his mother, Catherine de Medici: might she not hope to be the sovereign-counsellor of her weak-minded son?

¹ Davila, *Hist. del. Guer. Civ. Franc.*, p. 20.

During the lifetime of her husband, Henry II., her just influence as the wife had been baulked by the ascendancy of the mistress, Diana of Poitiers. That rival had been swept from her path, but another and more legitimate competitor had come in the room of the fallen favourite. By the side of Francis II., on the throne of France, sat Mary Stuart, the heir of the Scottish crown, and the niece of the Guises. The king doated upon her beauty,¹ and thus the niece was able to keep open the door of the royal closet, and the ear of her husband, to her uncles. This gave the Guises a prodigious advantage in the game that was now being played round the person of the king. And when we think how truculent they were, and how skilled they had now become in the arts by which princes' favour is to be won, it does not surprise us to learn that in the end of the day they were foremost in the race. Catherine de Medici was a match for them any day in craft and ambition, but with the niece of her rivals by the king's side, she found it expedient still to dissemble, and to go on a little while longer disciplining herself in those arts in which nature had fitted her to excel, and in which long practice would at last make her an expert, and then would she grasp the government of France.

The question which the Queen-mother now put, "What shall be my policy?" was to be determined by the consideration of who were her rivals, and what the tactics to which they were committed. Her rivals, we have just said, were the Guises, the heads of the Roman Catholic party. This threw Catherine somewhat on the other side. She was nearly as much the bigot as the Cardinal of Lorraine himself, but if she loved the Pope, still more did she love power, and in order to grasp it she stooped to caress what she mortally hated, and feigned to protect what she secretly wished to root out. Thus did God divide the counsels and the arms of these two powerful enemies of his Church. Had the Guises stood alone, the Reformation would have been crushed in France; or had Catherine de Medici stood alone, a like fate would have befallen it; but Providence brought both upon the scene together, and made their rivalry a shield over the little Protestant flock. The Queen-mother now threw herself between the leaders of the Reformed, and the Guises who were for striking them down without mercy. The new relation of Catherine brings certain personages upon the stage whom we have not yet met, but whom it is fitting, seeing they are to be conspicuous actors in what is to follow, we should now introduce.

The first is Anthony de Bourbon, Duke of Vendôme, and first prince of the blood. From the same parent stock sprang the two royal branches of France, the Valois and the Bourbon. Louis IX (St. Louis) had four sons, of whom one was named Philip and another Robert. From Philip came the line of the Valois, in which the succession was continued for upwards of 300

¹ Davila, p. 19.

years. From Robert, through his son's marriage with the heiress of the Duchy of Bourbon, came the house of that name, which has come to fill so large a space in history, and has placed its members upon the thrones¹ of France, and Spain, and Naples. Princes of the blood, and adding to that dignity vast possessions, a genius for war, and generous dispositions, the Bourbons aspired to fill the first posts in the kingdom. Their pretensions were often troublesome to the reigning monarch, who found it necessary at times to visit their haughty bearing with temporary banishment from court. They were under this cloud at the time when Henry II. died. On the accession of Francis II. they resolved on returning to court and resuming their old influence in the government; but to their chagrin they found those places which they thought they, as princes of the blood, should have held, already possessed by the Guises. The latter united with the Queen-mother in repelling their advances, and the Bourbons had again to retire, and to seek amid the parties of the country that influence which they were denied in the administration.

Anthony de Bourbon had married Jeanne d'Albret, who was the most illustrious woman of her time, and one of the most illustrious women in all history. She was the daughter of Margaret of Valois, Queen of Navarre, whose genius she inherited, and whom she surpassed in her gifts of governing, and in her more consistent attachment to the Reformation. Her fine intellect, elevated soul, and deep piety were unequally yoked with Anthony de Bourbon, who was a man of humane dispositions, but of low tastes, indolent habits, and of paltry character. His marriage with Jeanne d'Albret brought him the title of King of Navarre; but his wife was a woman of too much sense, and cherished too enlightened a regard for the welfare of her subjects, to give him more than the title. She took care not to entrust him with the reins of government. Today, so zealous was he for the Gospel, that he exerted himself to have the new opinions preached in his wife's dominions; and tomorrow would he be so zealous for Rome, that he would persecute those who had embraced the opinions he had appeared, but a little before, so desirous to have propagated. "Unstable as water," he spent his life in travelling between the two camps, the Protestant and the Popish, unable long to adhere to either, and heartily despised by both.² The Romanists, knowing the vulgar ambition that actuated him, promised him a territory which he might govern in his own right, and he kept pursuing this imaginary principedom. It was a mere lure to draw him over to their side; and his life ended without his ever attaining the power he was as eager to grasp as he was unable to wield. He died fighting in the ranks of the Romanists before the walls of Rouen; and,

¹ Davila, pp. 7, 8.

² Maimbourg, livr. ii., p. 123. Laval, vol. i., p. 170.

true to his character for inconsistency to the last, he is said to have requested in his dying moments to be readmitted into the Protestant Church.

His brother, the Prince of Condé, was a person of greater talent, and more manly character. He had a somewhat diminutive figure, but this defect was counterbalanced by the graces of his manner, the wit of his discourse, and the gallantry of his spirit.¹ He shone equally among the ladies of the court and the soldiers of the camp. He could be gay with the one, and unaffectedly frank and open, with the other. The Prince of Condé attached himself to the Protestant side, from a sincere conviction that the doctrines of the Reformation were true, that they were favourable to liberty, and that their triumph would contribute to the greatness of France. But the Prince of Condé was not a great man. He did not rise to the true height of the cause he had espoused, nor did he bring to it that large sagacity, that entire devotion of soul, and that singleness of purpose which were required of one who would lead in such a cause. But what was worse, the Prince of Condé had not wholly escaped the blight of the profligacy of the age; although he had not suffered by any means to the same extent as his brother, the King of Navarre. A holy cause cannot be effectually succoured save by holy hands. "It may be asked whether the Bourbons, including even Henry IV., did not do as much damage as service to the Reformation. They mixed it up with politics, thrust it into the field of battle, dragged it into their private quarrels, and then when it had won for them the crown, they deserted it."²

The next figure that comes before us is a truly commanding one. It is that of Gaspard de Coligny, better known as Admiral de Coligny. He towers above the Bourbon princes, and illustrates the fact that greatness of soul is a much more enviable possession than mere greatness of rank. Coligny, perhaps the greatest layman of the French Reformation, was descended from an ancient and honourable house, that of Chatillon. He was born in the same year in which Luther commenced the Reformation by the publication of his Theses, 1517. He lost his father on the 24th of August, 1522, being then only five years of age. The 24th of August was a fatal day to Coligny, for on that day, fifty years afterwards, he fell by the poignard of an assassin in the St. Bartholomew Massacre. His mother, Louise de Montmorency, a lady of lofty virtue and sincere piety, was happily spared to him, and by her instructions and example those seeds were sown in his youthful mind which afterwards bore so noble fruit in the cause of his country's religion and liberty. He was offered a cardinal's hat if he would enter the Church. He chose instead the profession of arms. He served with great distinction in the wars of Flanders and Italy, was knighted on the field of battle, and returning home in 1547 he

¹ *Ibid.*, livr. ii., p. 124. Laval, vol. i., p. 171.

² Félice, vol. i., p. 83.

married a daughter of the illustrious house of Laval—a woman of magnanimous soul and enlightened piety, worthy of being the wife of such a man, and by whose prompt and wise counsel he was guided at more than one critical moment of his life. What he might have been as cardinal we do not know, but in his own profession as a soldier he showed himself a great reformer and administrator. Brantôme says of the military ordinances which he introduced into the French army, “They were the best and most politic that have ever been made in France, and, I believe, have preserved the lives of a million of persons; for, till then, there was nothing but pillage, brigandage, murders, and quarrels, so that the companies resembled hordes of wild Arabs rather than noble soldiers.”¹

At an early age Coligny was taken prisoner by the Spaniards, and to beguile the solitary hours of his confinement, he asked for a Bible and some religious books. His request was complied with, and from that incident dates his attachment to the Reformed doctrines. But he was slow to declare himself. He must be fully persuaded in his own mind before openly professing the truth, and he must needs count the cost. With Coligny, Protestantism was no affair of politics or of party, which he might cast aside if on trial he found it did not suit. Having put his hand to the plough, he must not withdraw it, even though, leaving castle and lands and titles, he should go forth an outcast and a beggar. For these same doctrines men were being every day burned at the stake.

Before making profession of them, Coligny paused, that by reading, and converse with the Reformed pastors, he might arrive at a full resolution of all his doubts. But the step was all the more decisive when at last it was taken. As men receive the tidings of some great victory or of some national blessing, so did the Protestants of France receive the news that Coligny had cast in his lot with the Reformation. They knew that he must have acted from deep conviction, that his choice would never be reversed, and that it had brought a mighty accession of intellectual and moral power to the Protestant cause. They saw in Coligny’s adherence an additional proof of its truth, and a new pledge of its final triumph. Protestantism in France, just entering on times of awful struggles, had now a leader worthy of it. A captain had risen up to march before its consecrated hosts, and fight its holy battles.

From the moment he espoused the Protestant cause, Coligny’s character acquired a new grandeur. The arrangements of his household were a model of order. He rose early, and having dressed himself, he summoned his household to prayers, himself leading their devotions. Business filled up the day and not a few of its hours were devoted to the affairs of the Church; for deputies were continually arriving at the Castle of Chatillon from distant

¹ Brantôme, tom. iv., p. 204.

congregations, craving the advice or aid of the admiral. Every other day a sermon was preached before dinner when it chanced, as often happened, that a minister was living under his roof. At table a psalm was sung, and a prayer offered. After an early supper came family devotions, and then the household were dismissed to rest. It mattered not where Coligny was, or how occupied—in the Castle of Chatillon surrounded by his children and servants, or in the camp amid the throng of captains and soldiers—this was ever the God-fearing manner of his life. Not a few of the nobles of France felt the power of his example, and in many a castle the chant of psalms began to be heard, where aforetime there had reigned only worldly merriment and boisterous revelry.

To the graces of Christianity there were added, in the character of Coligny, the gifts of human genius. He excelled in military tactics, and much of his life was passed on the battle-field; but he was no less fitted to shine in senates, and to guide in matters of State. His foresight, sagacity, and patriotism would, had he lived in happier times, have been the source of manifold blessings to his native country. As it was, these great qualities were mainly shown in arranging campaigns and fighting battles. Protestantism in France, so at least Coligny judged, had nothing for it but to stand to its defence. A tyranny, exercised in the king's name, but none the less an audacious usurpation, was trampling on law, outraging all rights, and daily destroying by horrible deaths the noblest men in France, and the Protestants felt that they owed it to their faith, to their country, to the generations to come, and to the public liberties and Reformation of Christendom, to repel force by force, seeing all other means of redress were denied them. This alone made Coligny unsheathe the sword. The grand object of his life was freedom of worship for the Reformed in France. Could he have secured that object, most gladly would he have bidden adieu for ever to camps and battle-fields, and, casting honours and titles behind him, been content to live unknown in the privacy of Chatillon. This, however, was denied him. He was opposed by men who "hated peace," and so he had to fight on, almost without intermission, till the hour came when he was called to seal with his blood the cause he had so often defended with his sword.

Before quitting this gallery of portraits, there is one other figure which must detain us a little. Her name we have already mentioned incidentally, but her great qualities make her worthy of more lengthened observation. Jeanne d'Albret was the daughter of the accomplished and pious Margaret of Valois; but the daughter was greater than the mother. She had a finer genius, a stronger character, and she displayed the graces of a more consistent piety. The study of the Bible drew her thoughts in her early years to the Reformation, and her convictions ripening into a full belief of its truth, although untoward circumstances made her long conceal them, she at last, in 1560,

made open profession of Protestantism. At that time not only did the Protestant cause underlie the anathemas of Popes, but the Parliament of Paris had put it beyond the pale of law, and having set a price upon the heads of its adherents, it left them to be hunted down like wild beasts. Jeanne d'Albret, having made her choice, was as resolute as her husband, Anthony de Bourbon, was vacillating. Emulating the noble steadfastness of Coligny, she never repented of her resolution. Whether victory shone or defeat lowered on the Reformed cause, Jeanne d'Albret was ever by its side. When overtaken by disaster, she was ever the first to rally its dispirited adherents, and to bring them succour. Her husband forsook her; her son was taken from her; nothing daunted, she withdrew to her own principality of Bearn, and there devised, with equal wisdom and spirit, measures for the Reformation of her own subjects, at the same time that she was aiding, by her counsels and her resources, the Protestants in all parts of France.

Her little kingdom lay on the slope of the Pyrenees, looking toward France, which it touched on its northern frontier. In former times it was divided into Lower Navarre, of which we have spoken above, and Upper Navarre, which lay on the southern slope of the Pyrenees, and was conterminous with Old Castile. Though but a small territory, its position gave Navarre great importance. Seated on the Pyrenees, it held in the one hand the keys of France, and in the other those of Spain. It was an object of jealousy to the sovereigns of both countries. It was coveted especially by the Kings of Spain, and in the days of Jeanne's grandfather Upper Navarre was torn from its rightful sovereigns by Ferdinand, King of Arragon, whose usurpation was confirmed by Pope Julius II. The loss of Upper Navarre inferred the loss of the capital of the kingdom, Pampeluna, which contained the tombs of its kings. Henceforward it became a leading object with Jean d'Albret to recover the place of his fathers' sepulchres, that his own ashes might sleep with theirs, but in this he failed; and when his granddaughter came to the throne, her dominions were restricted to that portion of the ancient Navarre which lay on the French side of the Pyrenees.

In 1560, we have said, Jeanne d'Albret made open profession of the Protestant faith. In 1563 came her famous edict, dated from her castle at Pau, abolishing the Popish service throughout Bearn, and introducing the Protestant worship. The majority of her subjects were already prepared for this change, and the priests, though powerful, did not venture openly to oppose the public sentiment. A second royal edict confiscated a great part of the temporalities of the Church, but without adding them to the crown. They were divided into three parts. One-third was devoted to the education of the youth, another third to the relief of the poor, and the remaining third to the support of the Protestant worship. The private opinion of the Roman Catholic was respected, and only the public celebration of his worship forbidden. All

trials and punishment for differences of religious opinions were abolished. Where the majority of the inhabitants were Protestant, the cathedrals were made over to them for their use, the images, crucifixes, and relics being removed. Where the inhabitants were equally divided, or nearly so, the two faiths were permitted the alternate use of the churches. The monasteries were converted into schools, thus anticipating by three centuries a measure long afterwards adopted by the Italian and other Continental Governments. Colleges were founded for the higher education. Jeanne caused the Bible to be translated into the dialects of her dominions. She sent to Geneva for ministers, and recalled the native evangelists who had been driven out of Navarre, in order to the more perfect instruction of her subjects in the doctrines of the Word of God. Thus did she labour for the Reformation of her kingdom. The courage she displayed may be judged of, when we say that the Pope was all the while thundering his excommunications against her; and that the powerful Kings of Spain and France, affronted by the erection of an heretical establishment on the frontiers of their dominions, were threatening to overrun her territory, imprison her person in the dungeons of the Inquisition, and raze her kingdom from the map of Europe.

In the midst of these distractions the Queen of Navarre gave herself to the study of the principles of jurisprudence. Comparing together the most famous codes of ancient and modern times, she produced, after the labour of seven years, a body of laws for the government of her kingdom, which was far in advance of her times. She entertained the most enlightened views on matters then little cared for by kings or parliaments. By her wise legislation she encouraged husbandry, improved the arts, fostered intelligence, and in a short time the beautiful order and amazing prosperity of her principality attracted universal admiration, and formed a striking contrast to the disorder, the violence, and misery that overspread the lands around it. In her dominions not a child was permitted to grow up uneducated, nor could a beggar be seen. The flourishing condition of Bearn showed what the mightier realms of Spain and France would have become, had their peoples been so wise as to welcome the Reformation. The code of the wise queen continued in operation in the territories of the House of D'Albret down to almost our own times. She is still remembered in these parts, where she is spoken of as the "good queen."

We have dwelt the longer upon these portraits because one main end of history is to present us with such. The very contemplation of them is ennobling. In a recital like the present, which brings before us some of the worst of men that have ever lived, and portrays some of the darkest scenes that have ever been enacted, to meet at times grand characters, like those we have just passed in review, helps to make us forget the wickedness and worthlessness on which the mind is apt to dwell disproportionately, if not exclusively.

All is not dark in the scene we are surveying; beams of glory break in through the deep shadows. Majestic and kingly spirits pass across the stage, whose deeds and renown shall live when the little and the base among their fellows, who laboured to defame their character and to extinguish their fame, have gone down into oblivion, and passed for ever from the knowledge of the world. Thus it is that the good overcomes the evil, and that the heroic long survives the worthless. The example of great men has a creative power: they reproduce, in the ages that come after, their own likeness, and enrich the world with men cast in their own lofty and heroic mould. Humanity is thus continually receiving seeds of greatness into its bosom, and the world is being led onwards to that high platform where its Maker has destined that it shall ultimately stand.

CHAPTER V.

THE GUISES, AND THE INSURRECTION OF AMBOISE.

Francis II.—Pupillage of the King—The Guises Masters of France—Their Tool, the Mob—*Chambres Ardentes*—Wreckings—Odious Slanders—Confiscation of Huguenot Estates—Retribution—Conspiracy of Amboise—Its Failure—Executions—Tragedies on the Loire—Carrier of Nantes Renews these Tragedies in 1790—Progress of Protestantism—Condemnation of Condé—Preparations for his Execution—Abjuration Test—Death of Francis II.—His Funeral.

HENRY II., smitten by a sudden blow, has disappeared from the scene. Francis II. is on the throne of France. The Protestants are fondly cherishing the hope that with a change of men will come a change of measures, and that they have seen the dawn of better times. “Alas! under the reign of this monarch,” says Beza, “the rage of Satan broke out beyond all former bounds.”¹ No sooner had Henry breathed his last, than the Queen-mother and the two Guises carried the young king to the Louvre, and, installing him there, admitted only their own partisans to his presence. Now it was that the star of the Guises rose proudly into the ascendant. The duke assumed the command of the army; the cardinal, head of the Church, took also upon him the charge of the finances—thus the two brothers parted between them the government of France. Francis wore the crown; a sort of general superintendence was allowed to the Queen-mother; but it was the Guise and not the Valois that governed the country.²

One of the last acts of Henry II. had been to arrest Councillor Du Bourg and issue a commission for his trial. One of the first acts of the son was to renew that commission. Du Bourg, shut up in his iron cage, and fed on bread and water, was nevertheless continually singing psalms, which he sometimes accompanied on the lute. His trial ended in his condemnation as a heretic, and he was first strangled and then burned in the Place de Grève. His high rank, his many accomplishments, and his great character for uprightness fixed the eyes of all upon his stake, and made his death serviceable in no ordinary degree to the cause of Protestantism.³

The power of the Guises, now in full blossom, was wholly put forth in the extirpation of heresy. Their zeal in this good work was not altogether without alloy. “Those of the religion,” as the Protestants were termed, were not less the enemies of the House of Guise than of the Pope, and to cut them off was to consolidate their own power at the same time that they strengthened the foundations of the Papacy. To reclaim by argument men who had

¹ Beza, livr. iii., p. 133.

² Maimbourg, livr. ii., p. 121.

³ Beza, livr. iii., p. 156. Laval, vol. i., pp. 176–181.

fallen into deadly error was not consonant with the habits of the Guises, scarcely with the habits of the age. The sword and the fanatical mob were their quickest and readiest weapons, and the only ones in which they had any confidence. They were the masters of the king's person; they carried him about from castle to castle; they took care to gratify his tastes; and they relieved him of all the cares of government, for which his sickly body, indolent disposition, and weak intellect so thoroughly indisposed him.

While the monarch lived in this inglorious pupillage, the Guises appended his seal to whatever edict it pleased them to indite. In the Treaty of Gateau Cambrésis, our readers will remember, there was a special clause binding the late king to exert himself to the utmost of his power to extirpate heresy. Under pretence of executing that treaty, the Guises fulminated several new and severe edicts against the Reformed. Their meetings were forbidden on pain of death, without any other form of judgment, and informers were promised half the forfeitures. Other rewards were added to quicken their diligence. The commissaries of the various wards of Paris were commanded to pay instant attention to the informations lodged before them by the spies, who were continually on the search, and the Lieutenant-Criminal was empowered by letters patent to judge without appeal, and execute without delay, those brought before him. And the vicars and cures were set to work to thunder excommunication and anathema in their parishes against all who, knowing who among their neighbours were Lutherans, should yet refrain from denouncing them to the authorities.¹

The Protestant Church in Paris in this extremity addressed the Queen-mother, Catherine de Medici. A former interview had inspired the members of that Church with the hope that she was disposed to pursue a moderate policy. They had not yet learned with what an air of sincerity, and even graciousness, the niece of Clement VII. could cover her designs—how bland she could look while cherishing the most deadly purpose. They implored Catherine to interpose and stay the rigour of the government, and, with a just and sagacious foresight, which the centuries since have amply justified, they warned her that “if a stop was not speedily put to those cruel proceedings, there was reason to fear lest people, provoked by such violences, should fall into despair, and break forth into civil commotions, which of course would prove the ruin of the kingdom: that these evils would not come from those who lived under their direction, from whom she might expect a perfect submission and obedience; but that the far greater number were of those who, knowing only the abuses of Popery, and having not as yet submitted to any ecclesiastical discipline, could not or would not bear persecution: that they had thought proper to give this warning to her Majesty, that if any mischief

¹ Laval, vol. i., pp. 194, 195.

should happen it might not be put to their account.”¹ It suited the Queen-mother to interpret the warning of the Protestants, among whom were Coligny and other nobles, as a threat; and the persecution, instead of abating, grew hotter every day.²

We have already related the failure of the priests and the Sorbonne to establish the Inquisition in Paris. Paul IV, whose fanaticism had grown in his old age into frenzy, had forwarded a bull for that purpose, but the Parliament put it quietly aside. The project was renewed by the Guises, and if the identical forms of the Spanish tribunal were not copied in the courts which they succeeded in erecting, a procedure was adopted which gained their end quite as effectually. These courts were styled *Chambres Ardentes*, nor did their name belie their terrible office, which was to dispatch to the flames all who appeared before them accused of the crime of heresy. They were presided over by three judges or inquisitors, and, like the Spanish Court, they had a body of spies or familiars in their employment, who were continually on the hunt for victims. The sergeants of the Châtelet, the commissaries of the various quarters of Paris, the officers of the watch, the city guard, and the vergers and beadles of the several ecclesiastical jurisdictions—a vast body of men—were all enjoined to aid the spies of the *Chambres Ardentes*, by day or night.³ These ruffians made domiciliary visits, pried into all secrets, and especially put their ingenuity on the rack to discover the Conventicle. When they succeeded in surprising a religious meeting, they fell on its members with terrible violence, maltreating and sometimes murdering them, and those unable to escape they dragged to prison. These miscreants were by no means discriminating in their seizures; they must approve their diligence to their masters by furnishing their daily tale of victims. Besides, they had grudges to feed, and enmities to avenge, and their net was thrown at times over some who had but small acquaintance with the Gospel. A certain Mouchares, or Mouchy, became the head of a band who made it their business to apprehend men in the act of eating flesh on Friday, or violating some other equally important command of the Church. This man has transmitted his name and office to our day in the term *mouchard*, a spy of the police. The surveillance of Mouchares’ band was specially exercised over the Faubourg St. Germain, called, from the number of the Reformed that lived in it, “the Little Geneva.” A hostelry in this quarter, at which the Protestants from Geneva and Germany commonly put up, was assailed one Friday by Mouchares’ men. They found the guests to the number of sixteen at table. The Protestants drew their swords, and a scuffle ensued. Mouchares’ crew was driven off, but returning reinforced, they sacked the house, dragged the landlord and his family to

¹ Laval, vol. i., pp. 193, 194.

² Félice, vol. i., p. 91.

³ Beza, livr. i., p. 145.

prison, and in order to render them odious to the mob, they carried before them a larded capon and a piece of raw meat.¹

The footsteps of these wretches might be traced in the wreckings of furniture, in the pillage and ruins which they left behind them, in those quarters of Paris which were so unfortunate as to be visited by them. “Nothing was to be seen in the streets,” says Beza, describing the violences of those days, “but soldiers carrying men and women, and persons of all ages and every rank, to prison. The streets were so encumbered with carts loaded with household furniture, that it was hardly possible to pass. The houses were abandoned, having been pillaged and sacked, so that Paris looked like a city taken by storm. The poor had become rich, and the rich poor. What was more pitiable still was to see the little children, whose parents had been imprisoned, famishing at the doors of their former homes, or wandering through the streets crying piteously for bread, and no man giving it to them, so odious had Protestantism become to the Parisians. Still more to inflame the populace, at the street-corners certain persons in priests’ habits harangued the crowd, telling them that those heretics met together to feast upon children’s flesh, and to commit all kinds of impurity after they had eaten a pig instead of the Paschal lamb. The Parliament made no attempt to stop these outrages and crimes.”² Nor were these violences confined to the capital; the same scenes were enacted in many other cities, as Poitiers, Toulouse, Dijon, Bordeaux, Lyons, Aix, and other places of Languedoc.³

This terror, which had so suddenly risen up in France, struck many Romanists as well as Protestants with affright. Some Popish voices joined in the cry that was now raised for a moderate Reform; but instead of Reform came new superstitions. Images of the Virgin were set up at the corners of streets, tapers were lighted, and persons stationed near on pretence of singing hymns, but in reality to watch the countenances of the passers-by. If one looked displeased, or if he refused to uncover to the Virgin, or if he did not drop a coin into the box for defraying the cost of the holy candle that was kept burning before “our Lady,” the cry of heretic was raised, and the obnoxious individual was straightway surrounded by the mob, and if not torn to pieces on the spot, was carried off to the prison of the Châtelet. The apprehensions were so numerous that the prisons were filled to overflow, and the trials of the incarcerated had to be hurried through to make room for fresh victims. The cells emptied in the morning were filled before night. “It was one vast system of terror,” says Félice, “in which even the shadow of justice was no longer visible.”⁴

¹ *Ibid.*, livr. i., p. 146. Laval, vol. i., p. 198.

² Beza, livr. i., p. 147.

³ Laval, vol. i., p. 200. Félice, vol. i., p. 91.

⁴ Félice, vol. i., p. 91.

No arts were neglected by the Guises and the priests to maintain at a white heat the fanaticism of the masses, on which their power to a large extent was based. If any public calamity happened—if a battle was lost, if the crops were destroyed by hail-storms, or if a province or city was ravaged by disease—“Ah!” it was said, “see what judgments these heretics are bringing on France!” Odious calumnies were put in circulation against those of the “religion.” To escape the pursuit of the spies by whom on all sides they were beset, the Reformed sought for retreats yet more secret in which to assemble—the darkest alley in city, the gloomiest recess of forest, the most savage ravine of wilderness. “Ah!” said their enemies, “they seek the darkness to veil their monstrous and unnatural wickedness from the light of heaven and from the eyes of men.” It was the story of pagan times over again. The long-buried calumny of the early persecutor was raked up from old histories, and flung at the French Protestant. Even the Cardinal of Lorraine was mean enough to have recourse to these arts. His own unchaste life was no secret, yet he had the effrontery to advance, not insinuations merely, but open charges against ladies of illustrious rank, and of still more illustrious virtue—ladies whose lives were a rebuke of the profligacy with which his lawn was bespotted and bemired. The cardinal knew how pure was the virtue which he laboured to blacken. Not so the populace. They believed these men and women to be the atheists and monsters which they had been painted as being, and they thought that in massacring and exterminating them, they were cleansing France from what was at once a defilement of the earth, and a provocation of Heaven.

Avarice came to the aid of bigotry. Not a few of the Reformed were persons of position and property, and in their case confiscation of goods was added to loss of life. Their persecutors shared their estates among them, deeming them doubtless a lawful prize for their orthodox zeal; and thus the purification of the kingdom, and the enriching of the court and its myrmidons, went on by equal stages. The history of these manors and lands cannot in every case be traced, but it is known that many of them remained in possession of the families which now appropriated them till the great day of reckoning in 1789, and then the wealth that had been got by confiscation and injustice went as it had come. Indeed, in perusing the era of Francis II. we seem to be reading beforehand the history of the times of the Great Revolution. The names of persons and parties changed, the same harrowing tale will suit both periods. The machinery of injustice and oppression, first constructed by the Guises, was a second time set a-working under Danton and Robespierre. Again is seen a Reign of Terror; again are crowds of spies; again are numberless denunciations, with all their terrible accompaniments—prison cells emptied in the morning to be filled before night, tribunals condemning wholesale, the axe incessantly at work, a triumphant

tyranny wielding the mob as its tool, confiscations on a vast scale, and a furious political fanaticism madly driving the nation into civil war.

It was evident that a crisis was approaching. The king was a captive in the hands of the Guises. The laws were not administered—wrong and outrage stalked defiantly through the kingdom; and to complain was to draw upon oneself the punishment which ought to have visited the acts of which one complained. None were safe except the more bigoted of the Roman Catholics, and the rabble of the great cities, the pliant tools of the oppressor. Men began to ask one another, “What right have these strangers from Lorraine to keep the king a captive, and to treat France like a conquered country? Let us hurl the usurpers from power, and restore the government to its legitimate channels.” This led to what has been called the “Conspiracy of Amboise.”

This movement, in its first origin, was entirely political. It was no more formed in the interest of the Reformed religion than of the Popish faith. It was devised in the interests of France, the emancipation of which from a tyrannous usurpation was its sole aim. It was promoted by both Roman Catholics and Protestants, because both were smarting from the oppression of the Guises. The testimony of Davila, which is beyond suspicion, is full to this effect, that the plot was not for the overthrow of the royal house, but for the liberation of the king and the authority of the laws.¹ The judgment of the German and Swiss pastors was asked touching the lawfulness of the enterprise. Calvin gave his voice against it, foreseeing “that the Reformation might lose, even if victorious, by becoming in France a military and political party.”² Nevertheless, the majority of the pastors approved the project, provided a prince of the blood were willing to take the lead, and that a majority of the estates of the nation gave it their sanction. Admiral de Coligny stood aloof from it.

It was resolved to proceed in the attempt. The first question was, Who should be placed at the head of the movement? The King of Navarre was the first prince of the blood; but he was too apathetic and too inconstant to bear the weight of so great an affair. His brother, the Prince of Conde, was believed to have the requisite talents, and he was accordingly chosen as the chief of the enterprise. It was judged advisable, however, that he should meanwhile keep himself out of sight, and permit Godfrey du Barry, Lord of La Renaudie, to be the ostensible leader.³ Renaudie was a Protestant gentleman of broken fortunes, but brave, energetic, and able. Entering with prodigious zeal into the affair, Renaudie, besides travelling over France, visited

¹ Davila, livr. i., p. 33. With Davila on this point agree Pasquier, De Thou, and D'Aubigné.

² Bungener, *Calvin's Life, &c.*, p. 304; *Calvin's Letters*, iv. 107.

³ Davila, livr. i., p. 35.

England,¹ and by his activity and organising skill, raised a little army of 400 horse and a body of foot, and enlisted not fewer than 200 Protestant gentlemen in the business. The confederates met at Nantes, and the 10th of March, 1560, was chosen as the day to begin the execution of their project. On that day they were to march to the Castle of Blois, where the king was then residing, and posting their soldiers in the woods around the castle, an unarmed deputation was to crave an audience of the king, and present, on being admitted into the presence, two requests, one for liberty of worship, and the other for the dismissal of the Guises. If these demands were rejected, as they anticipated they would be, they would give the signal, their men-at-arms would rush in, they would arrest the Guises, and place the Prince of Conde at the head of the government. The confederates had taken an oath to hold inviolable the person of the king. The secret, though entrusted to thousands, was religiously kept till it was on the very eve of execution. A timorous Protestant, M. d'Avenelles, an attorney in Paris, revealed it to the court just at the last moment.²

The Guises, having come to the knowledge of the plot, removed to the stronger Castle of Amboise, carrying the king thither also. This castle stood upon a lofty rock, which was washed by the broad stream of the Loire. The insurgents, though disconcerted by the betrayal of their enterprise, did not abandon it, nevertheless they postponed the day of execution from the 10th to the 16th of March.

Renaudie was to arrive in the neighbourhood of Amboise on the eve of the appointed day. Next morning he was to send his troops into the town, in small bodies, so as not to attract notice; he himself was to enter at noon. One party of the soldiers were to seize the gates of the citadel, and arrest the duke and the cardinal; this done, they were to hoist a signal on the top of the tower, and the men-at-arms, hidden in the neighbouring woods, would rush in and complete the revolution.³

But what of the king while these strange events were in progress? Glimpses of his true condition, which was more that of a captive than a monarch, at times dawned upon him. One day, bursting into tears, he said to his wife's uncles, "What have I done to my people that they hate me so? I would like to hear their complaints and their reasons. I hear it said that people are against you only. I wish you could be away from here for a time, that we might see whether it is you or I that they are against." The men to whom he had made this touching appeal gruffly replied, "Do you then wish that the

¹ *Ibid.*, livr. i., p. 36. Laval, vol. i., p. 222.

² Laval, vol. i., p. 223.

³ Laval, vol. i., p. 226.

Bourbon should triumph over the Valois? Should we do as you desire, your house would speedily be rooted out.”¹

We return to affairs outside the walls of Amboise. Among those to whom the secret was entrusted was a Captain Lignières, who repairing to Amboise revealed the whole matter to the Queen-mother. He made known the names of the confederates, the inns at which they were to lodge, the roads by which they were to march on Amboise—in short, the whole plan of the assault. The Guises instantly took their measures for the security of the town. They changed the king’s guards, built up the gate of the city-wall, and dispatched troops to occupy the neighbouring towns. Renaudie, surrounded as he was advancing by forced marches to Amboise, fell, fighting bravely, while his followers were cut in pieces, or taken prisoners. Another body of troops under Baron de Castelnau was overpowered, and their leader, deeming farther resistance useless, surrendered on a written promise that his own life and that of his soldiers should be spared.

The insurgents were now in the power of the Guises, and their revenge was in proportion to their former terror, and that had been great. The market-place of the town of Amboise was covered with scaffolds. Fast as the axe and the gallows could devour one batch of victims, another batch was brought out to be dispatched in like manner. Crowding the windows of the palace were the Cardinal of Lorraine and the duke, radiant with victory; the ladies of the court, including the Scottish Mary Stuart, in their gayest attire; the young king and his lords, all feasting their eyes on the terrible scenes which were being enacted in front of the palace. The blood of those that fell by the axe overflowed the scaffolds, filled the kennels, and poured in rushing torrents to the Loire.² That generous blood, now shed like water, would in after-years have enriched France with chivalry and virtue. Not fewer than 1,200 persons perished at this time. Four dismal weeks these tragedies were continued. At last the executioners grew weary, and bethought them of a more summary way of dispatching their victims. They tied their hands and feet, and flung them into the Loire. The stream went on its way with its ghastly freight, and as it rolled past corn-field and vineyard, village and city, it carried to Tours and Nantes, and other towns, the first horrifying news of the awful tragedies proceeding at Amboise. Castelnau and his companions, despite the promise on which they had surrendered, shared the fate of the other prisoners. One of the gentlemen of his company, before bowing his head to the axe, dipped his hands in the blood of his already butchered comrades, and holding them up to heaven, exclaimed, “Lord, behold the blood of thy children unjustly slain; thou wilt avenge it.”³ That appeal went up to the

¹ Guizot, vol. iii., pp. 302, 303.

² Laval, vol. i., p. 234. Davila, lib. i., p. 40.

³ Beza, livr. iii., pp. 162–166. Laval, vol. i., p. 236.

bar of the great Judge; but the answer stood over for 230 years. With the Revolution of 1789, came Carrier of Nantes, a worthy successor of the Cardinal of Lorraine, and then it was seen that the cry had been heard at the great bar to which it ascended. On the banks of the same river did this man enact, in the name of liberty, the same horrible butcheries which the cardinal had perpetrated in the name of religion. A second time did the Loire roll onward a river of blood, bearing on its bosom a ghastly burden of corpses. When we look down on France in 1560, and see her rivers reddening the seas around her coasts, and when again we look down upon her in 1790, and see the same portentous spectacle renewed, we seem to hear the angel of the waters saying, "Thou art righteous, O Lord, who art, and wast, and shalt be, because thou hast judged thus: for they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink, for they are worthy. And I heard another angel out of the altar say, Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are thy judgments."¹

The Reformation continued to advance in the face of all this violence.² "There were many even among the prelates," Davila tells us, "that inclined to Calvin's doctrine."³ The same year that witnessed the bloody tragedy we have just recorded, witnessed also the establishment of the public celebration of Protestant worship in France. Up until this time the Reformed had held their assemblies for worship in secret; they met over-night, and in lonely and hidden places; but now the very increase of their numbers forced them into the light of day. When whole cities, and well-nigh entire provinces, had embraced the Reformation, it was no longer possible for the confessors of Protestant truth to bury themselves in dens and forests. Why should the population of a whole town go out of its gates to worship? why not assemble in its own cathedrals, seeing in many places there were not now Papists to occupy them? The very calumnies which their enemies invented and circulated against them compelled them to this course. They would worship in open day, and with open doors, and see who should dare accuse them of seeking occasion for unnatural and abominable crimes. But this courageous course on the part of the Reformed stung the Guises to madness, and their measures became still more violent. They got together bands of ruffians, and sent them into the provinces where the Calvinists abounded, with a commission to slay and burn at their pleasure. The city of Tours was almost entirely Protestant. So, too, were Valence and Romans. The latter towns were surprised, the principal inhabitants hanged, and the Protestant pastors beheaded with a label on their breasts, "These are the chiefs of the rebels."⁴ These barbarities, as might

¹ Rev. xvi.

² Beza, livr. iii., pp. 183, 184.

³ Davila, livr. ii., pp. 47, 48.

⁴ Beza, livr. iii., pp. 220–222.

have been expected, provoked reprisals. Some of the less discreet of the Protestants made incursions, at the head of armed bands, into Provence and Dauphine. Entering the cathedrals, and turning the images and priests to the door, they celebrated Protestant worship in them, sword in hand; and when they took their departure, they carried with them the gold and silver utensils which had been used in the Romish service.

Such was now the unhappy condition of France. The laws were no longer administered. The land, scoured by armed bands, was full of violence and terror, of rapine and blood. The anarchy was complete; the cup of the ruler's oppression, and the people's suffering, was full and running over.

The Guises, intent on profiting to the utmost from the suppression of the "Conspiracy of Amboise," pushed hard to crush their rivals before they had time to rally, or set on foot a second and, it might be, more formidable insurrection. In order to this, they resolved on two measures—first, to dispatch the Prince of Condé, the head of the Protestant party; and, secondly, to compel every man and woman in the kingdom to abjure Protestantism. In prosecution of the first, having lured the prince to Orleans, they placed him under arrest, and brought him to trial for complicity in the Amboise Conspiracy. As a matter of course he was condemned, and the Guises were now importuning the king to sign the death-warrant and have him executed. The moment Conde's head had fallen on the scaffold, they would put in force the second measure—the abjuration, namely. A form of abjuration was already drawn up, and it was resolved that on Christmas Day the king should present it to all the princes and officers of the court for their signature; that the queen, in like manner, should present it to all her ladies and maids of honour; the chancellor to all the deputies of Parliament and judges; the governors of provinces to all the gentry; the cures to all their parishioners; and the heads of families to all their dependents. The alternative of refusing to subscribe the abjuration oath was to be immediate execution. The cardinal, who loved to mingle a little grim pleasantry with his bloody work, called this cunning device of his "the Huguenot's rat-trap."¹

All was prospering according to the wish of the government. The scaffold was already erected on which Conde was to die. The executioner had been summoned, and was even now in Orleans. The abjuration formula was ready to be presented to all ranks and every individual the moment the prince had breathed his last. The year would not close without seeing France covered with apostasies or with martyrdoms. Verily, it seemed as if the grave of the French Reformation were dug.

When all was lost, as it appeared, an unseen finger touched this complicated web, woven with equal cruelty and cunning, and in an instant its

¹ Laval, vol. i., pp. 318, 319.

threads were rent—the snare was broken. The king was smitten with a sudden malady in the head, which defied the skill of all his physicians. The Guises were thrown into great alarm by the illness of the king. “Surely,” said the duke to the physicians, “your art can save one who is only in the flower of his age.” And when told that the royal patient would not live till Easter, he stormed exceedingly, and accused the physicians of killing the king, and of having taken the money of the heretics for murdering him. His brother, the cardinal, betook him to the saints of Paradise. He ordered prayers and processions for his recovery. But, despite the prayers that ascended in the temples—despite the images and relics that were carried in solemn procession through the streets—the king rapidly sank, and before Condé’s death warrant could be signed, or the abjuration test presented for subscription, Francis II. had breathed his last.¹

The king died (5th December, 1560) at the age of seventeen, after a reign of only as many months. The courtiers were too busy making suit for their places, or providing for their safety, to care for the lifeless body of the king. It lay neglected on the bed on which he had expired. Yesterday they had cringed and bowed before him, today he was nothing more to them than so much carrion. A few days thereafter we see a funeral procession issuing from the gates of Orleans, and proceeding along the road to the royal vaults at St. Denis. But what a poor show! What a meagre following! We see none of the usual pageantry of grief—no heralds; no nodding plumes; no grandees of State in robes of mourning. We hear no boom of cannon, no tolling of passing bell—in short, nothing to tell us that it is a king who is being borne to the tomb. A blind bishop and two aged domestics make up the entire train behind the funeral car.² It was in this fashion that Francis II. was carried to his grave.

¹ Beza, livr. iii., p. 249.

² Laval, vol. i., p. 336.

CHAPTER VI.

CHARLES IX.—THE TRIUMVIRATE—COLLOQUY AT POISSY.

Mary Stuart—Charles IX.—Catherine de Medici Regent—Meeting of States-General—Chancellor de l'Hôpital on Toleration—Speeches of the Deputies—The Church's Advocate calls for the Sword—Sermons at Fontainebleau—The Triumvirate—Debt of France—Colloquy at Poissy—Roman Members—Protestant Deputies—Beza—His Appearance—Points of Difference—Commotion in the Conference—Cardinal of Lorraine's Oration—End of Colloquy—Lesson—Impulse to Protestantism—Preaching of Pierre Viret—Dogmas and their Symbols—Huguenot Iconoclasts.

WE have seen Francis II. carried to the tomb with no more pomp or decency than if, instead of the obsequies of a king, it had been the funeral of a pauper. There followed a sudden shifting of the scenes at court. The day of splendour that seemed to be opening to Mary Stuart was suddenly overcast. From the throne of France she returned to her native country, carrying with her to the Scottish shore her peerless beauty, her almost unrivalled power of dissembling, and her hereditary and deeply cherished hatred of the Reformation. To her uncles, the Guises, the death of the king brought a not less sad reverse of fortune. Though they still retained their offices and dignities, they were no longer the uncontrolled masters of the State, as when Francis occupied the throne and their niece sat by his side. But in the room of the Guises there stood up one not less the enemy of the Gospel, and whose rule was not less prolific of woes to France.

Catherine de Medici was now supreme in the government; her day had at last arrived. If her measures were less precipitate, and her violence less open, her craft was deeper than that of the Guises, and her stroke, if longer delayed, was the more deadly when it fell. Her son, Charles IX., who now occupied the throne, was a lad of only nine and a half years; and, as might have been expected in the case of such a mother and such a son, Charles wore the crown, but Catherine governed the kingdom. The sudden demise of Francis had opened the prison doors to Condé. Snatching him from a scaffold, it restored him to liberty. As a prince of the blood, the Regency of France, during the minority of Charles, by right belonged to him; but Catherine boldly put him aside, and made herself be installed in that high office. In this act she gave a taste of the vigour with which she meant to rule. Still she did not proceed in too great haste. Her caution, which was great, served as a bridle to her ambition, and the Huguenots,¹ as they began to be called, had now a breathing-space.

¹ The origin of this word has been much discussed and variously determined. In both France and Geneva the Protestants were called *Huguenots*. Laval tells us that each city in France had a word to denominate a bugbear, or hobgoblin. At Tours they had their King

The Queen-mother fortified herself on the side of the Guises by recalling the Constable Montmorency, and installing him in all his dignities and offices. The next event of importance was the meeting of the States-General at Orleans (December 13th, 1560), a few days after Charles IX. had ascended the throne. The assembly was presided over by the Chancellor Michel de l'Hôpital, a man learned in the law, revered on the judgment-seat for the wisdom and equity of his decisions, and tolerant beyond the measure of his times. The words, few but weighty, with which he opened the proceedings, implied a great deal more than they expressed. The Church, he said, that great fountain of health or of disease to a nation, had become corrupt. Reformation was needed. "Adorn yourselves," said he to the clergy, "but let it be with virtues and morality. Attack your foes, by all means, but let it be with the weapons of charity, prayer, and persuasion."¹ Enlightened counsels these, which needed only wisdom in those to whom they were addressed, to work the cure of many of the evils which afflicted France.

The city of Bordeaux had sent an orator to the Parliament. Lying remote from the court, and not domineered over by the Popish rabble as Paris was, Bordeaux breathed a spirit more friendly to liberty and the Reformation than did the capital, and its deputy was careful to express the sentiments entertained by those who had commissioned him to represent them in this great assembly of the nation. "Three great vices," he said, "disfigure the clergy—ignorance, avarice, and luxury and after dwelling at some length on each, he concluded by saying that if the ministers of religion would undertake to reform themselves, he would undertake to reform the nation. The spokesman of the nobility, the Lord of Rochefort, next rose to express the sentiments of the body he represented. His words were not more palatable to the clergy than had been those of the speakers who preceded him. He complained that the course of justice was obstructed by the interference of the priests. He did not know which was the greater scandal, or the source of greater misery to the country—the prodigious wealth of the clergy, or the astounding ignorance of their flocks. And he concluded by demanding "churches" for the "gentlemen of the religion." Thus all the lay speakers in the States-General united as one man in arraigning the Roman Church as pre-eminently the source of the many evils which afflicted France. They all with one voice

Hugo, who used, they said, every night to ride through the uninhabited places within and without the walls, and carry off those he met. And as the Protestants of Tours used to resort to these places at night to hold their meetings, they were here first of all in France called Huguenots. Beza, De Thou, and Pasquier agree in this etymology of the word. Others, and with more probability, derive it from the German word *Eidgenossen*, which the French corrupt into *Eignots*, and which signifies sworn confederates. It strengthens this supposition that the term was first of all applied to the sworn confederates of liberty in Geneva. Of this opinion are Maimbourg and Voltaire.

¹ See Laval, for report of the speeches in the States-General (vol. i., pp. 384–424).

demanded that the clergy should reform their doctrine, amend their lives, moderate the magnificence and luxury in which they lived, and laying aside their arrogance and bigotry, should labour to instruct their flocks, and to reclaim those who had gone astray, not with the knife and the faggot, but with the weapons of truth and reason.

It was now the turn of the clergy to be heard through the oracle whom they had selected—Jean Quintin, Professor of Canon Law. He had undertaken the cause of an institution laden with abuses, and now arraigned at the bar of the nation, as the cause of the manifold distractions and oppressions under which the country groaned. He took the responsibility lightly. He began by expressing his regret—a regret, we doubt not, perfectly sincere—that a most unwonted and dangerous innovation had been practised in permitting the nobility and commons to address the assembly. The Church, he said, was the mouth of the States-General; and had that mouth, and no other, been permitted to address them, they would have been spared the pain of listening to so many hard things of the Church, and so many smooth things of heresy. The heretics, said the orator, had no other Gospel than revolution; and this pestiferous Gospel admitted of no remedy but the sword. Were not all the men who had embraced this Gospel under the excommunication of the Church? and for what end had the sword been put into the hand of the king, if not to execute the deserved vengeance to which “the Church” had adjudged those who had so fatally strayed? And, turning to the young king, he told him that his first and most sacred duty, as a magistrate, was to defend the Church, and to root out her enemies. Coligny, who sat facing the speaker, started to his feet on hearing this atrocious proposal, which doomed to extermination a third of the population of France. He demanded an apology from the speaker. Quintin could doubtless plead the authority of canon law, and many a melancholy precedent to boot, for what he had said; but he had overshot the mark. He found no response in that assembly; even Catherine de Medici felt the speech to be an imprudent one, and the priests, whatever their secret wishes, durst not openly support their orator; and so Quintin was compelled to apologise. Sickening under his mortification, he died three days thereafter.

Something had been gained by the meeting of the States-General. The priest-party had suffered a rebuff; Catherine de Medici had felt the pulse of the nation, and was more convinced than ever that the course she had resolved to steer was the wise one. Her supreme object was power; and she would best attain it by being on good terms with both parties. She opened the halls of Fontainebleau to the Protestant preachers, and she and her maids of honour were to be seen at times waiting with edifying seriousness upon the sermons of the Reformed pastors. So far did the Queen Regent carry her favours to the Protestants, that the Roman Catholics took alarm, fearing that she had gone over, not in seeming only, but in reality, to the “religion.” There

was little cause for their alarm. Catherine had no intention of becoming a Huguenot. She was merely holding the balance between the two parties—making each weaken the other—judging this to be the most effectual way of strengthening herself.

These favours to the Protestants roused the slumbering zeal of the Romanists. Now arose the Triumvirate. The party so named, which makes some figure in the history of the times, was formed for the defence of the old religion, its members being the Duke of Guise, the Constable Montmorency, and the Marshal St. André. These three men had little in common. The bond which held them together was hatred of the new faith, the triumph of which, they foresaw, would strip them of their influence and possessions. There had been a prodigal waste of the public money, and a large confiscation of the estates of the Protestants under the two former reigns. These three men had carried off the lion's share of the spoil; and should Protestantism win the day, they would, in modern phrase, have to *recoup*, and this touched at once their honour and their purses. As regards the Guises, their whole influence hung upon the Roman Church. Her destruction, therefore, would be their destruction. As respects the Constable Montmorency, he prided himself on being the first Christian in France. He was descended in a direct line from St. Louis; and a birth so illustrious—not to speak of the fair fame of his saintly ancestors—imposed upon him the duty of defending the old faith, or if that were impossible, of perishing with it. He was incapable of defending it by argument; but he had a sword, and it would ill become him to let it rust in its scabbard, when the Church needed its service. As regards Marshal St. André, the least influential member of the Triumvirate, he was a noted gourmand, a veritable Lucullus, to whom there was nothing in life half so good as a well-furnished table. Marshal St. André foresaw that should Roman Catholicism go down in France, he would not only lose his Church—he would lose his dinner. The first might be borne, but the latter was not to be thought of. These men had formerly been at deadly feud among themselves; but now they resolved to sacrifice their differences upon the altar of their country, and to unite together in this holy league for the defence of their religion and their estates. The Triumvirate will again come before us: it has left its mark on the history of France.

The States-General again assembled in the end of 1561. The first thing that came under its notice was the financial state of the kingdom. The national debt amounted to £48,000,000, and bade fair greatly to exceed that sum in a short time, for the expenditure was a long way in excess of the revenue. What was to be done? A proposal was made that anticipated the measure which was carried out in France in 1789, and adopted long after that date in all the countries in which Roman Catholicism is the established religion. The speaker who made the proposal in question, laid down the principle

that the ecclesiastical property belongs to the nation; that the clergy are merely its administrators; and founding on that principle, he proposed that the estates of the Church should be put up for sale, and the proceeds divided as follows:—one-third to go to the support of the Church; one-third to the payment of the national debt; and one-third to the revenues of the crown, to be applied, of course, to national uses. In this way it was hoped the financial difficulty would be got over; but the great difficulty—the religious one—lay behind; how was it to be got over?

It was agreed that a Council should be summoned; but it augured ill for the era of peace it was to inaugurate, that men disputed regarding its name before it had assembled. The priests strongly objected to its being called a Council. That would imply that the Protestant pastors were Christian ministers as well as themselves, entitled to meet them on terms of equality, and that the Reformed bodies were part of the Church as well as the Roman Catholics. The difficulty was got over by the device of styling the approaching assembly a Colloquy. The two parties had a different ideal before their mind. That of the Romanists was, that the Protestants came to the bar to plead, and to have their cause judged by the Church. That of the Protestants was, that the two parties were to debate on equal terms, that the Bible should be the supreme standard, and that the State's authorities should decide without appeal. Knox, in Scotland, drew the line more justly; framing his creed from the Bible, he presented it to the Parliament, just a year before this, and asked the authorities to judge of it, but only for themselves, in order to the withdrawal from the Roman hierarchy of that secular jurisdiction in which it was vested, and which it was exercising for the hindrance of the evangel, and for the destruction of its disciples. The Protestant Church of France had no Knox.

On September 9th, 1561, this Colloquy—for we must not call it a Council—assembled at Poissy. On this little town, which lay a few leagues to the west of Paris, were the eyes of Christendom for the moment fixed. Will the conference now assembling there unite the two religions, and give peace to France? This issue was as earnestly desired by the Protestant States of Germany and England, as it was dreaded by the Pope and the King of Spain.

Nothing was wanting which pomp could give to make the conference a success. The hall in which it was held was the refectory of the convent at Poissy. There was set a throne, and on that throne sat the youthful sovereign of France, Charles IX. Right and left of him were ranged the princes and princesses of the blood, the great ministers of the crown, and the high lords of the court.¹ Along two sides of the hall ran a row of benches, and on these sat the cardinals in their scarlet robes. On the seats below them were a crowd

¹ Laval, vol. i., p. 482.

of bishops, priests, and doctors. The assembly was a brilliant one. Wherever the eye turned, it fell upon the splendour of official robes, upon the brilliance of rank, upon stars, crosses, and other insignia of academic distinction or of military achievement. It lacked the moral majesty, however, which a great purpose, earnestly and sincerely entertained, only can give. No affluence of embroidered and jewelled attire can compensate for the absence of a great moral end.

The king rose and said a few words. Much could not be looked for from a lad of only ten years. The chancellor, Michel de l'Hôpital, followed in a long speech, abounding in the most liberal and noble sentiments; and had the members of the assembly opened their ears to these wise counsels, they would have guided its deliberations to a worthy issue, and made the future of France a happy and glorious one. "Let us not pre-judge the cause we are met to discuss," said in effect the chancellor, "let us receive these men as brethren— they are Christians as well as ourselves; let us not waste time in subtleties, but with all humility proceed to the Reformation of the doctrine of the Church, taking the Bible as the arbiter of all our differences." L'Hôpital aimed at striking the key-note of the discussions; but so little were his words in harmony with the sentiments of those to whom they were addressed, that the speech very nearly broke up the conference before it had well begun. It called for Reform according to the Bible. "The Bible is enough," said he; "to this, as to the true rule, we must appeal for the decision of the doctrine. Neither must we be so averse to the Reformed, for they are our brethren, regenerated by the same baptism, and worshipping the same Christ as we do."¹ Straightway there arose a great commotion among the cardinals and bishops; angry words and violent gestures bespoke the irritation of their minds; but the firmness of the chancellor succeeded in calming the storm, and the business was proceeded with.

The Protestant deputies had not yet been introduced to the conference. This showed that here all did not meet on equal terms. But now, the Papal members having taken their seats, and the preliminary speeches being ended, there was no excuse for longer delaying the admission of the Protestants. The doors were thrown open, and Theodore Beza, followed by ten Protestant pastors and twenty-two lay deputies, entered the hall. There was a general desire that Calvin, then in the zenith of his fame, should have taken part in the discussions. The occasion was not unworthy of him, and Catherine de Medici had invited him by letter; but the magistrates of Geneva, unable to obtain hostages of high rank as pledges of his safety, refused to let him come, and Theodore Beza was sent in his room. No better substitute could have been found for the illustrious chief of the Reformation than his distinguished

¹ *Ibid.*, vol. i., pp. 484, 485.

disciple and fellow-labourer. Beza was a native of Burgundy, of noble birth; learned, eloquent, courtly, and of a dignified presence. We possess a sketch of the personal appearance of this remarkable man by the traveller Fynes Moryson, who chanced to pass through Geneva in the end of that century. "Here," says he, "I had great contentment to speak and converse with the reverend Father Theodore Beza, who was of stature something tall and corpulent, or big-boned, and had a long thick beard as white as snow. He had a grave senator's countenance, and was broad-faced, but not fat, and in general, by his comely person, sweet affability, and gravity, he would have extorted reverence from those that least loved him."¹

The Reformed pastors entered, gravely and simply attired. They wore the usual habits of the Geneva Church, which offered a striking contrast to the State robes and clerical vestments in which courtier and cardinal sat arrayed. Unawed by the blaze of stars, crosses, and various insignia of rank and office which met their gaze, the deputies bore themselves with a calm dignity, as men who had come to plead a great cause before a great assembly. They essayed to pass the barrier, and mingle on equal terms with those with whom they were to confer. But, no; their place was outside. The Huguenot pastor could not sit side by side with the Roman bishop. The Reformation must not come nigh the throne of Charles IX. and the hierarchy of the Church. It must be made appear as if it stood at the bar to be judged. The pastors, though they saw, were too magnanimous to complain of this studied affront; nor did they refuse on that account to plead a cause which did not rest on such supports as lofty looks and gorgeous robes.

The moral majesty of Beza asserted its supremacy, and carried it over all the mock magnificence of the men who said to him, "Stand afar off, we are holier than thou." Immediately on entering he fell on his knees, the other deputies kneeling around him, and in the presence of the assembly, which remained mute and awed, he offered a short but most impressive prayer that Divine assistance might be vouchsafed in the discussions now to commence, and that these discussions might be guided to an issue profitable to the Church of God. Then rising up he made obeisance to the young monarch, thanking him for this opportunity of defending the Reformation; and next, turning to the prelates, he besought them to seek only to arrive at truth. Having thus introduced himself, with a modest yet dignified courteousness, well fitted to disarm prejudice against himself and his cause, he proceeded to unfold the leading doctrines of the Reformation. He took care to dwell on the spirit of loyalty that animated its disciples, well knowing that the Romanists charged it with being the enemy of princes. He touched feelingly on the rigours to which his co-religionists had been subjected, though no fault had been

¹ Fynes Moryson, *Itinerary*, part i., p. 181: Lond., 1617.

found in them, save in the matters of their God; and then launching out on the great question which had brought the conference together, he proceeded with much clearness and beauty of statement, and also with great depth of argument, to discuss the great outstanding points between the two Churches. The speech took the Roman portion of the assembly by surprise. Such erudition and eloquence they had not expected to find in the advocates of the Reform; they were not quite the contemptible opponents they had expected to meet, and they felt that they would do well to look to their own armour. Beza, having ended, presented on bended knee a copy of the Confession of the French Protestant Church to the king.

But the orator had not been permitted to pursue uninterruptedly his argument to its close. In dealing with the controverted points, Beza had occasion to touch on the Sacrament of the Eucharist. It was the centre of the controversy. The doctrine he maintained on this head was, in brief, that Christ is spiritually present in the Sacrament, and spiritually partaken of by the faith of the recipient; but that his body is not in the elements, but in heaven. If the modest proposal of the Chancellor de l'Hôpital, that the Bible should rule in the discussion, had raised a commotion, the words of Beza, asserting the Protestant doctrine on the great point at issue between Rome and the Reformation, evoked quite a storm. First, murmurs were heard; these speedily grew into a tempest of voices. "He has spoken blasphemy!" cried some. Cardinal Tournon demanded, anger almost choking his utterance, that the king should instantly silence Beza, and expel from France men whose very presence was polluting its soil and imperilling the faith of the "most Christian king." All eyes were turned upon Catherine de Medici. She sat unmoved amid the clamour that surrounded her. Her son, Charles IX., was equally imperturbable. The *ruse* of the Roman bishops had failed—for nothing else than a *ruse* could it be, if the Romanists did not expect the Protestant deputies quietly and without striking a blow to surrender their whole cause to Rome—and the assembly by-and-by subsiding into calm, Beza went on with his speech, which he now pursued without interruption to its close.

The feeling among the bishops was that of discomfiture, though they strove to hide it under an air of affected contempt. Beza had displayed an argumentative power, and a range of learning and eloquence, which convinced them that they had found in him a more formidable opponent than they expected to encounter. They regretted that the conference had ever met; they dreaded, above all things, the effect which the reasonings of Beza might have on the mind of the king. "Would to God," said the Cardinal of Lorraine, "that Beza had been dumb, or we deaf." But regrets were vain. The conference had met, Beza had spoken, and there was but one course—Beza must be answered. They promised a refutation of all he had advanced, in a few days.

The onerous task was committed to the hands of the Cardinal of Lorraine. The choice was a happy one. The cardinal was not lacking in ingenuity; he was, moreover, possessed of some little learning, and a master in address. Claude d'Espence, accounted one of the most learned of their doctors, was appointed to assist him in the way of collecting materials for his answer. On the 16th of September the Colloquy again met, and the cardinal stood forth before the assembly and delivered an eloquent oration. He confined himself to two points—the Church and the Sacrament. “The Church,” he said, “was infallibly guarded from error by the special promise of Christ. True,” he said, glancing at the Protestant members of the Colloquy, “individual Christians might err and fall out of the communion of the Church, but the Church herself cannot err, and when any of her children wander they ought to submit themselves to the Pontiff, who cannot fail to bring them back to the right path, and never can lose it himself.” In proof of this indefectibility of the Church, the cardinal cast himself upon history, expatiating, as is the wont of Romish controversialists, upon her antiquity and her advance, *pari passu*, with the ages in power and splendour. He painted her as surviving all changes, withstanding the shock of all revolutions, outlasting dynasties and nations, triumphing over all her enemies, remaining unbroken by divisions within, unsubdued by violence without, and apparently as imperishable as the throne of her Divine Founder. So spoke the cardinal. The prestige that encompasses Rome has dazzled others besides Romanists, and we may be sure the picture, in the hands of the cardinal, would lose none of its attractions and illusions. The second point, the Sacrament, did not admit of the same dramatic handling, and the cardinal contented himself with a summary of the usual arguments of his Church in favour of transubstantiation. The orator had not disappointed the expectations formed of him; even a less able speech would have been listened to with applause by an audience so partial; but the cheers that greeted Lorraine when he had ended were deafening. “He has refuted, nay, extinguished Beza,” shouted a dozen voices. Gathering round the king, “That, sire,” said they, “is the true faith, which has been handed down from Clovis; abide in it.”

When the noise had a little subsided, Beza rose and requested permission to reply on the spot. This renewed the confusion. “The deputies had but one course,” insisted the prelates, “they ought to confess that they were vanquished; and, if they refused, they must be compelled, or banished the kingdom.” But the hour was late; the lay members of the council were in favour of hearing Beza, and the bishops, being resolved at all hazards that he should not be heard, broke up the assembly. This may be said to have been the end of the conferences; for though the sittings were continued, they were held in a small chamber belonging to the prior; the king was not permitted to come any more to them; the lay deputies were also excluded; and the debates

degenerated into mere devices on the part of the Romanist clergy to entrap the Protestants into signing articles craftily drafted and embodying the leading tenets of the Roman creed. Failing in this, the Cardinal of Lorraine attempted a characteristic *ruse*. He wrote to the Governor of Metz, desiring him to send to him a few divines of the Augsburg Confession, “holding their opinions with great obstinacy,” his design being to set them a-wrangling with the Calvinists on the points of difference. Arriving at Paris, one of them died of the plague, and the rest could not be presented in public. The cardinal consequently was left to manage his little affair himself as best he could. “Do you,” said he to Beza, “like the Lutherans of Germany, admit consubstantiation?” “And do you,” rejoined Beza, “like them, deny transubstantiation?” The cardinal thought to create a little bad blood between the Protestants of Germany and the Protestants of France, and so deprive the latter of the assistance which he feared might be sent them from their co-religionists of the Fatherland. But his policy of “divide and conquer” did not prosper.¹

It was clear that no fair discussion, and no honest adjustment of the controversy on the basis of truth, had from the first been intended. Nevertheless, the Colloquy had prompted the inquiry, “Is Romanism simply a corruption of the Gospel, or rather, has it not changed in the course of the ages into a system alien from and antagonistic to Christianity, and can there in that case be a possibility of reconciling the two faiths?” The conference bore fruit also in another direction. It set the great Chancellor de l’Hôpital to work to solve the problem, how the two parties could live in one country. To unite them was impossible; to exterminate one of them—Rome’s short and easy way—was abhorrent to him. There remained but one other device—namely, that each should tolerate the other. Simple as this way seems to us, to the men of the times of L’Hôpital, with a few rare exceptions, it was unthought of and untried, and appeared impossible. But, soon after the breakdown of Poissy, we find the chancellor beginning to air, though in ungenial times, his favourite theory—that men might be loyal subjects of the king, though not of the king’s faith, and good members of the nation, though not of the nation’s Church; in short, that difference of religious opinions ought not to infer exclusion from civil privileges, much less ought it to subject men to civil penalties.

Another important result of the Colloquy at Poissy, was that the Reformation stood higher in public estimation. It had been allowed to justify itself on a very conspicuous stage, and all to whom prejudice had left the power of judging, were beginning to see that it was not the disloyal and immoral system its enemies had accused it of being, nor were its disciples the vicious and

¹ See very lengthened accounts of the debates and whole proceedings of this Conference in Beza’s *Histoire des Eglises Réformées au Royaume de France*, tom. i., pp. 308–390; Lille, 1841; and Laval’s *History of the Reformation in France*, vol. i., pp. 482–587; Lond., 1737.

monstrous characters which the priests had painted them. A fresh impulse was given to the movement. Some important towns, and hundreds of villages, after the holding of the Colloquy, left the communion of Rome. Farel was told by a pastor "that 300 parishes in the Agenois had put down the mass." From all quarters came the cry, "Send us preachers!" Farel made occasional tours into his native France. There arrived from Switzerland another remarkable man to take part in the work which had received so sudden a development. In October, 1561, Pierre Viret came to Nismes. He had been way-laid on the road, and beaten almost to death, by those who guessed on what errand he was travelling; and when he appeared on the scene of his labours, "he seemed," to use his own words, "to be nothing but a dry skeleton covered with skin, who had brought his bones thither to be buried." Nevertheless, on the day after his arrival, he preached to 8,000 hearers. When he showed himself in the pulpit, many among his audience asked, "What has this poor man come to do in our country? Is he not come to die?" But when the clear, silvery tones of his voice rang out upon the ear, they forgot the meagre look and diminutive figure of the man before them, and thought only of what he said. There were an unction and sweetness in his address that carried captive their hearts. All over the south of France, and more particularly in the towns of Nismes, Lyons, Montpellier, and Orthez, he preached the Gospel; and the memory of this eloquent evangelist lingers in those parts to this day.¹

Nor was Beza in any haste to depart, although the conferences which brought him to Paris were at an end. Catherine de Medici, on whom his learning, address, and courtly bearing had not failed to make an impression, showed him some countenance, and he preached frequently in the neighbourhood of the capital. These gatherings took place outside the walls of Paris. The people, to avoid all confusion, going and returning by several gates. In the centre were the women; next came the men, massed in a broad circular column; while a line of sentinels stationed at intervals kept watch on outside, lest the fanatical mob of Paris should throw itself upon the congregation of worshippers.

It was impossible that a great movement like this, obstructed by so many and so irritating hindrances, should pursue its course without breaking into occasional violences. In those parts of France where the whole population had passed over to Protestantism, the people took possession of the cathedrals, and, as a matter of course, they cleared out the crucifixes, images, and

¹ The important part played by colporteurs in the evangelisation of France is attested by an edict of Francis II., 1559, in which he attributes the troubles of his kingdom to "certain preachers from Geneva," and also to "the malicious dispersion of condemned books brought from thence, which had infected those of the populace who, through want of knowledge and judgment, were unable to discern doctrines." (*Mémoires de Condé*, tom. i., p. 9; Londres, 1743.)

relics which they contained. In the eyes of the Protestants these things were the symbols of idolatry, and they felt that they had only half renounced Romanism while they retained the signs and symbols of its dogmas. They felt that they had not honestly put away the doctrine while they retained its exponent. A nation of philosophers might have been able to distinguish between the idea and its symbol, and completely to emancipate themselves from the former without destroying the latter. They might have said, These things are nothing to us but so much wood and metal; it is in the idea that the mischief lies, and we have effectually separated ourselves from it, and the daily sight of these things cannot bring it back or restore its dominancy over us. But the great mass of mankind are too little abstract to feel or reason in this way. They cannot fully emancipate themselves from the idea till its sign has been put away. The Bible has recognised this feebleness, if one may term it so, of the popular mind, when it condemned, as in the second commandment, worship *by* an image, as the worship of the image, and joining together the *belief* and the *image* of the false gods, stringently commanded that both should be put away. And the distinctive feeling of the masses in all revolutions, political as well as religious, has recognised this principle. Nations, in all such cases, have destroyed the symbols as well as exploded the idea these symbols represented. The early Christians broke the idols and demolished the temples of paganism. In the revolution of 1789, and in every succeeding revolution in France, the populace demolished the monuments and tore down the insignia of the former *regime*. If this is too great a price to pay for Reformation, that is another thing; but we cannot have Reformation without it. We cannot have liberty without the loss, not of tyranny only, but its symbols also; nor the Gospel without the loss of idolatry, substance and symbol. Nor can these symbols return without the old ideas returning too. Hence Ranke tells us that the first indication of a reaction against the Reformation in Germany was “the wearing of rosaries.” This may enable us to understand the ardour of the French iconoclasts of the sixteenth century. Of that ardour we select, from a multitude of illustrative incidents, the following:—On one occasion, during the first war of religion, news was brought to Conde and Coligny that the great Church of St. Croix in Orleans was being sacked. Hurrying to the spot, they found a soldier mounted on a ladder, busied in breaking an image. The prince pointed an arquebuse at him. “Monseigneur,” said the Huguenot, “have patience till I have knocked down this idol, and then I will die, if you please.”

CHAPTER VII.

MASSACRE AT VASSY AND COMMENCEMENT OF THE CIVIL WARS.

Spring-time of French Protestantism—Edict of January—Toleration of Public Worship—Displeasure of the Romanists—Extermination—The Duke of Guise—Collects an Army—Massacres the Protestants of Vassy—The Duke and the Bible—He Enters Paris in Triumph—His Sword Supreme—Shall the Protestants take up Arms?—Their Justification—Massacres—Frightful State of France—More Persecuting Edicts—Charlotte Laval—Coligny sets out for the Wars.

THE failure of the Colloquy of Poissy was no calamity to either Protestantism or the world. Had the young Reform thrown itself into the arms of the old Papacy, it would have been strangled in the embrace. The great movement of the sixteenth century, like those of preceding ages, after illuminating the horizon for a little while, would again have faded into darkness.

By what means and by what persons the Gospel was spread in France at this era it is difficult to say. A little company of disciples would start up in this town, and in that village, and their numbers would go on increasing, till at last the mass was forsaken, and instead of the priest's chant there was heard the Huguenot's psalm. The famous potter, Palissy, has given us in his *Memoirs* some interesting details concerning the way in which many of these congregations arose. Some poor but honest citizen would learn the way of peace in the Bible; he would tell it to his next neighbour; that neighbour would tell it in his turn; and in a little while a small company of simple but fervent disciples would be formed, who would meet regularly at the midnight hour to pray and converse together. Ere their enemies were aware, half the town had embraced "the religion;" and then, taking courage, they would avow their faith, and hold their worship in public. As the rich verdure spreads over the earth in spring, adding day by day a new brightness to the landscape, and mounting ever higher on the mountain's side, so, with the same silence, and the same beauty, did the new life diffuse itself throughout France. The sweetness and joy of this new creation, the inspired Idyll alone can adequately depict—"Lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone: the flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land. The fig-tree putteth forth her green figs, and the vines with the grape give a good smell."

Like that balmy morning, so exquisitely painted in these words, that broke on the heathen world after the pagan night, so was the morning that was now opening on France. Let the words of an eyewitness bear testimony:—"The progress made by us was such," says Palissy, "that in the course of a few years, by the time that our enemies rose up to pillage and persecute us, lewd plays, dances, ballads, gourmandisings, and superfluities

of dress and head-gear had almost entirely ceased. Scarcely was there any more bad language to be heard on any side, nor were there any more crimes and scandals. Law-suits greatly diminished. . . . Indeed, the Religion made such progress, that even the magistrates began to prohibit things that had grown up under their authority. Thus they forbade innkeepers to permit gambling or dissipation to be carried on within their premises, to the enticement of men away from their own homes and families.

“In those days might be seen on Sundays bands of workpeople walking abroad in the meadows, in the groves, in the fields, singing psalms and spiritual songs, and reading to and instructing one another. There might also be seen girls and maidens seated in groups in the gardens and pleasant places, singing songs or sacred themes; or boys, accompanied by their teachers, the effects of whose instructions had already been so salutary that those young persons not only exhibited a manly bearing, but a manful steadfastness of conduct. Indeed, these various influences, working one with another, had already effected so much good that not only had the habits and modes of life of the people been reformed, but their very countenances seemed to be changed and improved.”¹

On the 17th of January, 1562, an Assembly of Notables was convened at St. Germain.² This gave the Chancellor de l’Hôpital another opportunity of ventilating his great idea of toleration, so new to the men of that age. If, said the chancellor, we cannot unite the two creeds, does it therefore follow that the adherents of the one must exterminate those of the other? May not both live together on terms of mutual forbearance? An excommunicated man does not cease to be a citizen. The chancellor, unhappily, was not able to persuade the Assembly to adopt his wise principle; but though it did not go all lengths with L’Hôpital, it took a step on the road to toleration. It passed an edict, commonly known as the “Edict of January,” “by which was granted to the Huguenots,” says Davila,” “a free exercise of their religion, and the right to assemble at sermons, but unarmed, outside of the cities in open places, the officers of the place being present and assistant.”³ Till this edict was granted the Protestants could build no church within the walls of a city, nor meet for worship in even the open country. Doubtless they sometimes appropriated a deserted Popish chapel, or gathered in the fields in hundreds and thousands to hear sermons, but they could plead no statute for this: it was their numbers solely that made them adventure on what the law did not allow. Now, however, they could worship in public under legal sanction.

¹ *Œuvres Complètes de Bernard Palissy*, par Paul-Antoine, *Réception Véritable*, p. 108; Paris, 1844.

² Laval, vol. i, p. 604.

³ Davila, lib. ii., p. 78.

But even this small scrap of liberty was bestowed with the worst grace, and was fettered by qualifications and restrictions which were fitted, perhaps intended, to annul the privilege it professed to grant. The Protestants might indeed worship in public, but in order to do so they must go outside the gates of their city. In many towns they were the overwhelming majority: could anything be more absurd than that a whole population should go outside the walls of its own town to worship? The edict, in truth, pleased neither party. It conferred too small a measure of grace to awaken the lively gratitude of the Protestants; and as regards the Romanists, they grudged the Reformed even this poor crumb of favour.

Nevertheless, paltry though the edict was, it favoured the rapid permeation of France with the Protestant doctrines. The growth of the Reformed Church since the death of Henry II. was prodigious. At the request of Catherine de Medici, Beza addressed circular letters at this time to all the Protestant pastors in France, desiring them to send in returns of the number of their congregations. The report of Beza, founded on these returns, was that there were then upwards of 2,150 congregations of the Reformed faith in the kingdom. Several of these, especially in the great cities, were composed of from 4,000 to 8,000 communicants. The Church at Paris had no less than 20,000 members. As many as 40,000 would at times convene for sermon outside the gates of the capital. This multitude of worshippers would divide itself into three congregations, to which as many ministers preached; with a line of horse and foot, by orders from Catherine de Medici, drawn round the assembly to protect it from the insults of the mob.¹ The number of the Reformed in the provincial cities was in proportion to those of Paris. According to contemporary estimates of the respective numbers of the two communions, the Reformed Church had gathered into its bosom from one fourth to one half of the nation—the former is the probable estimate; but that fourth embraced the flower of the population in respect of rank, intelligence, and wealth.

The chiefs of Romanism beheld, with an alarm that bordered on panic, all France on the point of becoming Lutheran. The secession of so great a kingdom from Rome would tarnish the glory of the Church, dry up her revenues, and paralyse her political arm. Nothing must be left undone that could avert a calamity so overwhelming. The Pope, Philip II. of Spain, and the Triumvirate at Paris took counsel as to the plan to be pursued, and began from this hour to prosecute each his part, in the great task of rolling back the tide of a triumphant Huguenotism. They must do so at all costs, or surrender the battle. The Pope wrote to Catherine de Medici, exhorting her as a daughter of Italy to rekindle her dying zeal—not so near extinction as the Pope

¹ Laval, vol. i., p. 623. Félice, vol. i., pp. 139, 140. Bayle, *Diet.*, art. Hôpital, note 45.

feared—and defend the faith of her country and her house. The wily Catherine replied, thanking her spiritual father, but saying that the Huguenots were, meanwhile, too powerful to permit her to follow his advice, and to break openly with Coligny. The King of Navarre, the first prince of the blood, was next tampered with. The Romanists knew his weak point, which was an inordinate ambition to be what nature—by denying him the requisite talents—had ordained he should not be, a king in his own right, and not a titular sovereign merely. They offered him a kingdom whose geographical position was a movable one, lying sometimes in Africa, sometimes in the island of Sardinia, seeing the kingdom itself was wholly imaginary. They even flattered him with hopes that he might come to wear the crown of Scotland. The Pope would dissolve his marriage with Jeanne d’Albret, on the ground of heresy, and he would then secure him the hand of the young and beautiful Mary Stuart. Dazzled by these illusions, which he took for realities, the weak, unstable, unprincipled Antoine de Bourbon passed over to the Roman camp, amid the loud vauntings of those who knew how worthless, yet how handy, the prize was.¹

The way was thus prepared so far for the execution of bolder measures. The Duke of Guise, quitting Paris, spent the winter on his family estates in Lorraine, and there, unobserved, began to collect an army, to co-operate with the troops which the King of Spain had promised to send him. He hoped to take the field in spring with such a force as would enable him to root out Huguenotism from the soil of France, and restore the supremacy of the old faith.

But matters so fell out that the duke was obliged to begin his campaign sooner than he had intended. All that winter (1562) the populace of Paris had been kept in a state of great excitement. The Romanists believed that they were being betrayed. They saw the Queen-mother, whose present policy it was to play off the Huguenots against the Triumvirate, favouring the “religion.” Then there was the Edict of January, permitting the free exercise of the Protestant worship. In the eyes of every Roman Catholic this edict was abomination—a disgrace to the statute-book—a bulwark to the Huguenots, whom it protected in their psalm-singing and sermonising. The pulpits of Paris thundered against the edict. The preachers expatiated on the miseries, temporal and eternal, into which it was dragging down France. They told how they were nightly besieged by souls from purgatory, dolefully lamenting the cruelty of their relations who no longer cared to say mass for their deliverance. Visions of hell, moreover, had been made to them, and they saw it filled with Huguenots. They turned their churches into arsenals, and provided

¹ Davila, lib. ii., p. 80. Félice, vol. ii., p. 146.

the mob with arms.¹ The Duke of Guise had been heard to say that he “would cut the knot of the edict with his sword,”² and when the Parisians saw the Huguenots, in thousands, crowding out at the city gates to sermon, and when they heard their psalm borne back on the breeze, they said, “Would that the duke were here, we would make these men pipe to another tune.” These were unmistakable signs that the moment for action was come. The duke was sent for.

The message found him at his Chateau of Joinville. He lost no time in obeying the summons. He set out on Saturday, the 28th of February, 1562, accompanied by his brother the cardinal, 200 gentlemen, and a body of horse. Three leagues on the road to Paris is the town of Vassy. It contained in those days 3,000 inhabitants, about a third of whom had embraced the Reformed faith. It stood on lands which belonged to the duke’s niece, Mary Stuart of Scotland, and its Protestant congregation gave special umbrage to the Dowager-Duchess of Guise, who could not brook the idea that the vassals of her granddaughter should profess a different faith from that of their feudal superior. The duke, on his way to this little town, recruited his troop at one of the villages through which he passed, with a muster of foot-soldiers and archers. “The Saturday before the slaughter,” says Crespin, “they were seen to make ready their weapons—arquebuses and pistols.”³

On Sunday morning, the 1st of March, the duke, after an early mass, resumed his march. “Urged by the importunities of his mother,” says Thaunus, “he came with intention to dissolve these conventicles by his presence.”⁴ He was yet a little way from Vassy when a bell began to ring. On inquiring what it meant, seeing the hour was early, he was told that it was the Huguenot bell ringing for sermon. Plucking at his beard, as his wont was when he was choleric, he swore that he would Huguenot them after another fashion.⁵ Entering the town, he met the provost, the prior, and the curate in the market-place, who entreated him to go to the spot where the Protestants were assembled.⁶ The Huguenot meeting-house was a barn, about 100 yards distant, on the city wall. A portion of the duke’s troop marched on before, and arrived at the building. The Protestants were assembled to the number of 1,200; the psalm and the prayer were ended, and the sermon had begun. The congregation were suddenly startled by persons outside throwing stones at the windows, and shouting out, “Heretics! rebels! dogs!” Presently the discharge of fire-

¹ Laval, vol. i., p. 625.

² Davila, lib. iii., p. 86..

³ Crespin, *Hist. des Martyrs*, livr. viii., p. 615; à Genève, 1619..

⁴ Thaunus, *Hist.*, lib. xxix., p. 78.

⁵ Félice, vol. i., p. 151.

⁶ Thaunus, *Hist.*, lib. xxix., p. 78.

arms told them that they were surrounded by armed men. The Protestants endeavoured to close the door, but were unable from the crowd of soldiers pressing in, with oaths and shouts of “Kill, kill!” “Those within,” says Crespin, “were so astonished that they knew not which way to turn them, but running hither and thither fell one upon another, flying as poor sheep before a company of ravening wolves. Some of the murderers shot off their pieces at those that were in the galleries; others cut in pieces such as they lighted upon; others had their heads cleft in twain, their arms and hands cut off, and thus did they what they could to hew them all in pieces, so as many of them gave up the ghost even in the place. The walls and galleries of the said barn were dyed with the blood of those who were everywhere murdered.”

Hearing the tumult, the duke hastened to the spot. On coming up he was hit with a stone in the face. On seeing him bleeding, the rage of his soldiers was redoubled, and the butchery became more horrible. Seeing escape impossible by the door or window, many of the congregation attempted to break through the roof, but they were shot down as they climbed up on the rafters. One soldier savagely boasted that he had brought down a dozen of these pigeons. Some who escaped in this way leaped down from the city walls, and escaped into the woods and vineyards. The pastor, M. Morel, on his knees in the pulpit invoking God, was fired at. Throwing off his gown, he attempted to escape, but stumbling over a dead body, he received two sabre-cuts, one on the shoulder, another on the head. A soldier raised his weapon to hough him, but his sword broke at the hilt. Supported by two men the pastor was led before the duke. “Who made you so bold as to seduce this people?” demanded the duke. “Sir,” replied M. Morel, “I am no seducer, for I have preached to them the Gospel of Jesus Christ.” “Go,” said the duke to the provost, “and get ready a gibbet, and hang this rogue.” These orders were not executed. The duke’s soldiers were too busy sabreing the unarmed multitude, and collecting the booty, to hang the pastor, and none of the town’s-people had the heart to do so cruel a deed.¹

When the dreadful work was over, it was found that from sixty to eighty persons had been killed, and 250 wounded, many of them mortally. The streets were filled with the most piteous spectacles. Women were seen with dishevelled hair, and faces besmeared with blood from their streaming wounds, dragging themselves along, and filling the air with their cries and lamentations. The soldiers signalled their triumph by pulling down the pulpit, burning the Bibles and Psalters, plundering the poor’s-box, spoiling the killed of their raiment, and wrecking the place. The large pulpit Bible was taken to the duke. He examined the title-page, and his learning enabled him to make out that it had been printed the year before. He carried it to his

¹ Crespin, livr., viii., p. 616.

brother the cardinal, who all the time of the massacre had been loitering by the wall of the churchyard, and presented the Bible to him as a sample of the pestiferous tenets of the Huguenots. "Why, brother," said the cardinal, after scanning its title-page a moment, "there is no harm in this book, for it is the Bible—the Holy Scripture." "The duke being offended at that answer," says Crespin, "grew into a greater rage than before, saying, 'Blood of God!—what!—how now!—the Holy Scripture! It is a thousand and five hundred years ago since Jesus Christ suffered his death and passion, and it is but a year ago since these books were imprinted; how, then, say you that this is the Gospel?'"¹

The massacre at Vassy was the first blow struck in the civil wars of France, and it is important to note that it was the act of the Romanists. Being done in violation of the Edict of January, which covered the Protestants of Vassy, and never disowned or punished by any constituted authority of the nation, it proclaimed that the rule of law had ceased, and that the reign of force had begun. A few days afterwards the duke entered Paris, more like a conqueror who had routed the enemies of France, than a man dripping with the blood of his fellow-subjects. Right and left of him rode the Constable and the Marshal St. André, the other two members of the Triumvirate, while the nobles, burgesses, and whole populace of the capital turned out to grace his entry, and by their enthusiastic cheers proclaim his welcome. As if he had been king, they shouted, "Long life to Guise!"² The blood of Vassy, said the mob of Paris, be on us, and on our children.

The Protestants of France had for some time past been revolving the question of taking up arms and standing to their defence, and this deplorable massacre helped to clear their minds. The reverence, approaching to a superstition, which in those days hedged round the person of a king, made the Huguenots shrink with horror from what looked like rebellion. But the question was no longer, Shall we oppose the king? The Triumvirate had, in effect, set aside both king and regent, and the duke and the mob were masters of the State. The question was, Shall we oppose the Triumvirate which has made itself supreme over throne and Parliament? Long did the Huguenots hesitate, most unwilling were they to draw the sword; especially so was the greatest Huguenot that France then contained, Coligny. Ever as he put his hand upon his sword's hilt, there would rise before him the long and dismal vista of battle and siege and woe through which France must pass before that sword, once unsheathed, could be returned into its scabbard. He, therefore, long forbore to take the irrevocable step, when one less brave or less foreseeing would have rushed to the battle-field. But even Coligny was at last convinced

¹ Félice, vol. i., p. 153.

² Laval, vol. i., p. 34.

that farther delay would be cowardice, and that the curse of liberty would rest on every sword of Huguenot that remained longer in its scabbard.

Had the Edict of January, which gave a qualified permission for the open celebration of the Reformed worship, been maintained, the Protestants of France never would have thought of carrying their appeal to the battle-field. Had argument been the only weapon with which they were assailed, argument would have been the only weapon with which they would have sought to defend themselves; but when a lawless power stood up, which trampled on royal authority, annulled laws, tore up treaties, and massacred Protestant congregations wholesale; when to them there no longer existed a throne, or laws, or tribunals, or rights of citizenship; when their estates were confiscated, their castles burned, the blood of their wives and children spilt, their names branded with infamy, and a price put upon their heads, why, surely, if ever resistance was lawful in the case of any people, and if circumstances could be imagined in which it was dutiful to repel force by force, they were those of the French Protestants at that hour. Even when it is the civil liberties only of a nation that are menaced by the tyrant or the invader, it is held the first duty of the subject to gird on his sword, and to maintain them with his blood; and we are altogether unable to understand why it should be less his duty to do so when, in addition to civil liberty, the battle is for the sanctity of home, the freedom of conscience, and the lives and religion of half a nation. So stood the case in France at that hour. Every end for which government is ordained, and society exists, was attacked and overthrown. If the Huguenots had not met their foes on the battle-field, their name, their race, their faith would have been trodden out in France.

Far and wide over the kingdom flew the news of the Massacre of Vassy. One party whispered the dreadful tale in accents of horror; another party proclaimed it in a tone of exultation and triumph. The impunity, or rather applause, accorded to its author emboldened the Romanists to proceed to even greater excesses. In a few weeks the terrible scenes of Vassy were repeated in many of the towns of France. At Paris, at Senlis, at Meaux, at Amiens, at Chalons, at Tours, at Toulouse, and many other towns, the fanatic mob rose upon the Protestants and massacred them, pillaging and burning their dwellings. All the while the cathedral bells would be tolled, and the populace would sing songs of triumph in the streets. At Tours 300 Protestants were shut up in their church, where they were kept three days without food, and then brought out, tied two and two, led to the river's brink, and butchered like sheep. Children were sold for a crown a-piece. The President of Tours was tied to two willow-trees, and disembowelled alive.¹ At Toulouse the same horrible scenes were enacted on a larger scale. That city contained at

¹ Laval, vol. ii., pp. 57, 58.

this time between 30,000 and 40,000 Protestants —magistrates, students, and men of letters and refinement. The tocsin was rung in all the churches, the peasantry for miles around the city was raised *en masse*; the Huguenots took refuge in the Capitol of Toulouse, where they were besieged, and finally compelled to surrender. Then followed a revolting massacre of from 3,000 to 4,000 Protestants.¹ The Seine, the Loire, and the Garonne were dyed with Protestant blood, and ghastly corpses, borne on the bosom of the stream, startled the dwellers in distant cities and castles, and seemed to cry for justice, as they floated away to find burial in the ocean.

The Duke of Guise now repaired to Fontainebleau, whither the King and the Queen-mother had fled, and compelled them to return to Paris. Catherine de Medici and her son were now wholly in the hands of the duke, and when they entered the Castle of Vincennes, about a mile from Paris, “the queen bore a doleful countenance, not able to refrain from tears; and the young king crying like a child, as if they had been both led into captivity.”² The Parliament was not less obsequious. Its humble office was to register *arrêts* at the duke’s bidding. These persecuting edicts followed each other with alarming rapidity during the terrible summer of 1562, than which there is no more doleful year in the French annals, not even excepting perhaps the outstanding horror of 1572—the Massacre of St. Bartholomew. The Popish mob was supplied with arms and formed into regiments. The churches served as club-houses. When the tocsin sounded, 50,000 men would turn out at the summons. All Huguenots were ordered to quit Paris within twenty-four hours;³ after this, any one seen in the streets, and suspected of being a Huguenot, was mobbed and dispatched. Advantage was in some cases taken of this to gratify private revenge. One had only to raise the cry of Huguenot against those at whom one happened to have a spite, or to whom one owed money, and the bystanders did the rest. On the 8th of June the Parliament passed a law empowering any one who should meet a Huguenot to kill him on the spot. The edict was to be read by the cures every Sunday after the sermon that follows high mass.⁴ The peasantry provided themselves with scythes, pikes, cutlasses, knives, and other cruel weapons, and scoured the country as if they had been ridding it of wild beasts. The priests facetiously called this “letting slip the big hound.”⁵ They selected as captain, sometimes a monk, sometimes a brigand; and on one occasion, at least, a bishop was seen marching at their head. Their progress over the country, especially in the south, where the Protestants were numerous, could be traced in the frightful

¹ Félice, vol. i., pp. 174–176.

² Laval, vol. ii., p. 42.

³ *Mémoires de Condé*, tom. i., p. 89.

⁴ Félice, vol. i., p. 163.

⁵ *Ibid.*

memorials they left on their track—corpses strewed along the roads, bodies dangling from the trees, mangled victims dyeing the verdure of the fields with their blood, and spending their last breath in cries and supplications to Heaven.

On the 18th of August, 1562, the Parliament issued yet another decree, declaring all the gentlemen of “the religion” traitors to God and the king. From this time the conflict became a war of province against province, and city against city, for the frightful outrages to which the Protestants were subjected provoked them into reprisals. Yet the violence of the Huguenot greatly differed from the violence of the Romanist. The former gutted Popish cathedrals and churches, broke down the images, and drove away the priests. The latter burned houses, tore up vines and fruit-trees, and slaughtered men and women, often with such diabolical and disgusting cruelty as forbids us to describe their acts. In some places rivulets of Huguenot blood, a foot in depth, were seen flowing. Those who wish to read the details of the crimes and woes that then overwhelmed France will find the dreadful recital, if they have courage to peruse it, in the pages of Agrippa d’ Aubigné, De Thou, Beza, Crespin, and other historians.¹

But before these latter edicts were issued the Huguenots had come to a decision. While Coligny, shut up in his Castle of Chatillon, was revolving the question of civil war, events were solving that question for him. Wherever he looked he saw cities sacked, castles in flames, and men and women slaughtered in thousands; what was this but civil war? The tidings of today were ever sadder than those of yesterday, and the tidings of tomorrow would, he but too surely guessed, be sadder than those of today. The heart of his wife, the magnanimous Charlotte Laval, was torn with anguish at the thought of the sufferings her brethren and sisters in the faith were enduring. One night she awoke her husband from sleep by her tears and sobs. “We lie here softly,” said she, “while our brethren’s bodies, who are flesh of our flesh and bone of our bone, are some of them in dungeons, and others lying in the open fields, food for dogs and ravens. This bed is a tomb for me, seeing they are not buried. Can we sleep in peace, without hearing our brethren’s last groanings?” “Are you prepared,” asked the admiral in reply, “to hear of my defeat, to see me dragged to a scaffold and put to death by the common hangman? are you prepared to see our name branded, our estates confiscated, and our children made beggars? I will give you,” he continued, “three weeks to think on these things, and when you have fortified yourself against them, I will go forth to perish with my brethren.” “The three weeks are gone already,” was

¹ The terrible array of these edicts and outrages may be seen in *Mémoires de Condé*, tom. i., pp. 70–100.

the prompt and noble reply of Charlotte Laval. “Go in God’s name and he will not suffer you to be defeated.”¹

A few mornings only had passed when Admiral Coligny was seen on his way to open the first campaign of the civil wars.

¹ Agrippa d’Aubigné, *Univ. Hist.*, tom. i., lib. iii., cap. 2

CHAPTER VIII.

COMMENCEMENT OF THE HUGUENOT WARS.

Condé Seizes Orleans—His Compatriot Chiefs—Prince of Porcian—Rochefoucault—Rohan—Grammont—Montgomery—Soubise—St. Phale—La Mothe—Genlis—Marvelous Spread of the Reformed Faith—The Popish Party—Strength of Protestantism in France—Question of the Civil Wars—Justification of the Huguenots—Finance—Foreign Allies.

THE Protestant chiefs having resolved to take up the gage which the Triumvirate had thrown down, the Prince of Condé struck the first blow by dispatching Coligny's brother D'Andelot, with 5,000 men, to make himself master of Orleans. In a few days thereafter (April 2nd, 1562), the prince himself entered that city, amid the acclamations of the inhabitants, who accompanied him through the streets chanting grandly the 124th Psalm, in Marot's metre.¹ Admiral Coligny, on arriving at head-quarters, found a brilliant assemblage gathered round Condé. Among those already arrived or daily expected was Anthony of Croy, Prince of Porcian. Though related to the House of Lorraine, the Prince of Porcian was a firm opponent of the policy of the Guises, and one of the best captains of his time. He was married to Catherine of Cleves, Countess of Eu, niece to the Prince of Condé, by whom he was greatly beloved for his amiable qualities as well as for his soldierly accomplishments. And there was also Francis, Count of La Rochefoucault, Prince of Marcillac. He was by birth and dignity the first noble of Guienne, and the richest and most potent man in all Poitou. He could have raised an army among his relations, friends, and vassals alone. He was an experienced soldier: valiant, courageous, generous, and much beloved by Henry II., in whose wars he had greatly distinguished himself. It was his fate to be inhumanly slaughtered, as we shall see, in the St. Bartholomew Massacre. There was René, Viscount of Rohan. He was by the mother's side related to the family of Navarre, being cousin-german to Jeanne d'Albret. Being by her means instructed in the Reformed faith, that queen made him her lieutenant-general during the minority of her son Henry, afterwards King of France, whom he served with inviolable fidelity. There was Anthony, Count of Grammont, who was in great esteem among the Reformed on account of his valour and his high character. Having embraced the Protestant faith, he opposed uncompromisingly the Guises, and bore himself with great distinction and gallantry among the Huguenot chiefs in the civil wars. No less considerable was Gabriel, Count of Montgomery, also one of the group around the prince. His valour, prudence, and sagacity enabled him, in the absence of large estates

¹ Laval, vol. ii.. p. 49.

or family connections, to uphold the credit of the Protestant party and the lustre of the Protestant arms after the fall of Condé, of Coligny, and of other leaders. It was from his hand that Henry II. had received his death-blow in the fatal tournament—as fatal in the end to Montgomery as to Henry, for Catherine de Medici never forgave him the unhappy accident of slaying her husband; and when at last Montgomery fell into her hands, she had him executed on the scaffold. And there was John, Lord of Soubise, of the illustrious House of Partenay of Poitou, and the last who bore the name and title. Soubise had borne arms under Henry II., being commander-in-chief in the army of Tuscany. This gave him an opportunity of visiting the court of René at Ferrara, where he was instructed in the Reformed doctrine. On his return to France he displayed great zeal in propagating the Protestant faith, and when the civil wars broke out the Prince de Condé sent him to command at Lyons, where, acquitting himself with equal activity and prudence, he fully answered the expectations of his chief. Louis of Vadray, known in history by the name of Lord of Mouy St. Phale, was one of the more considerable of the patriot-heroes that followed the banners of Condé. Of great intrepidity and daring, his achievements are amongst the most brilliant feats of the civil wars. He was assassinated in 1569 by the same person—Maurevel of Brie—who wounded the Admiral Coligny in Paris in 1572. Nor must we omit to mention Anthony Raguier, Lord of Esternay and of La Mothe de Tilly. Not only did he place his own sword at the service of Condé, he brought over to the standard of the prince and the profession of the Protestant faith, his brother-in-law Francis of Bethune, Baron of Rosny, father of the Duke of Sully. And there was the head of the ancient and illustrious House of Picardy, Adrian de Hangest, Lord of Genlis, who was the father of thirty-two children by his wife Frances du Maz. Like another Hamilcar leading his numerous sons to the altar, he devoted them to the defence of their country's laws, and the maintenance of its Protestant faith. The enthusiasm and bravery of the sons, as displayed under the banners of Condé, amply rewarded the devotion and patriotism of the father. All of them became distinguished in the campaigns that followed.¹

Nothing could more conclusively attest the strength of the position which Protestantism had conquered for itself in France than this brilliant list. The men whom we see round the Huguenot chief are the flower of a glorious land. They are no needy adventurers, whom the love of excitement, or the hope of spoil, or the thirst for distinction has driven to the battle-field. Their castles adorn the soil, and their names illustrate the annals of their country; yet here we see them coming forward, at this supreme hour, and deliberately staking the honour of their houses, the revenues of their estates, the glory of

¹ *Memoirs of Castelnau; Le Labereaur's Additions—apud Laval, vol. ii., pp. 59–64.*

their names, and even life itself! What could have moved them to this but their loyalty to the Gospel—their deep, thorough, and most intelligent conviction that the Reformed doctrine was based on Scripture, and that it had bound up with it not more their own personal salvation than the order, the prosperity, and the glory of their country?

The Protestant cause had attractions not alone for the patricians of France. It was embraced by the intelligence and furthered by the energy of the middle classes. It is well to remember this. 'Bankers and men of commerce; lawyers and men of letters; magistrates and artists; in short, the staple of the nation, the guides of its opinion, the creators of its wealth, and the pillars of its order, rallied to the Protestant standard. In every part of France the Reformed faith spread with astonishing rapidity during the reigns of Francis II. and Charles IX. It was embraced by the villages scattered along at the foot of the Alps and the base of the Pyrenees. It established itself in the powerful city of Grenoble. The Parliament and magistracy of that prosperous community took special interest in the preaching of the Protestant doctrine in their town; and the example of Grenoble had a great influence on the whole of that rich region of which it was the capital. The city of Marseilles on the Mediterranean shore; the flourishing seaports on the western coast; the fertile and lovely valleys of central France; the vine-clad plains on the east; the rich and populous Picardy and Normandy on the north—all were covered with the churches and congregations of the Reformed faith. "Climate, custom, prejudice, superstition," says Gaberel, "seemed to have no power to resist or modify the spread of the Protestant doctrines. No sooner was a church provided with a pastor, than the inhabitants of the villages and towns in the neighbourhood demolished their Popish altars, and flocked to hear the preaching of the Protestant doctrine. The occupants of the castles and rich houses followed the example of their tenantry, and opened their mansions for worship when the church stood at too great a distance."¹ Many of the prelates, even, had perused the writings of Calvin, and were favourable to the Reformed doctrine, although, for obvious reasons, they had to be careful in avowing their convictions and preferences.

When we turn from the grand phalanx of nobles, warriors, jurists, literary men, merchants, and cities around the Protestant standard, to contemplate the opposing ranks which still remained loyal to Rome, and were now challenging the Reformed to do battle for their faith, we are forcibly struck with the vast inferiority, in all the elements of real power, on the Popish side. First on that side came the crown. We say the crown, for apart from it Charles IX. had no power. Next to the crown came the Queen-mother, who, despite certain caprices which at times excited the hopes of the Protestants and

¹ Gaberel, *Histoire de l'Eglise de Geneve*) tom. i., pp. 352–354.

awakened the fears of the Pope, remained staunchly loyal at heart to the cause of Rome—for what else could be expected of the niece of Clement VII.? After the Queen-mother came the Triumvirate. It embraced one grand figure—the bluff, honest, wilful Constable, so proud of his ancient blood and his ancient Christianity! Over against him we may set the weak and wicked St. Andre, who was continually enriching himself with plunder, and continually sinking deeper in debt. Then came the Guises—truculent, thoroughly able, and as athirst for blood as the Marshal St. Andre for money. These strangers in France seem to have taken kindly to the soil, if one may judge from the amazing rapidity with which their power and their honours had flourished since their arrival in it. We assign the last place here to the King of Navarre, though as a prince of the blood he ought to have had the first place after the crown, but for his utter insignificance, which made him be fully more contemned even by the Papists than by the Protestants.

The Popish party were numerically the majority of the nation, but in respect of intelligence and virtue they were by much the smaller portion of it. There was, of course, a moiety of the nobility, of professional men, and of the middle orders still attached to the Roman worship, and more or less zealous in its behalf; but the great strength of the Triumvirate lay in another quarter. The Sorbonne, the secular priests, and the cloistered orders continued unwavering in their attachment to the Pope. And behind was a yet greater force—without which, the zeal of Triumvirate, of cure, and of friar would have effected but little—the rabble, namely, of Paris and many of the great cities. This was a very multifarious host, more formidable in numbers than in power, if names are to be weighed and not counted. Protestantism in France was not merely on the road to victory, morally it had already achieved it.

And further, to form a true estimate of the strength of the position which Protestantism had now won, we must take account of the situation of the country, and the endowments of the people in which it had so deeply rooted itself. Placed in the centre of Christendom, France acted powerfully on all the nations around it. It was, or till a few years ago had been, the first of the European kingdoms in letters, in arts, in arms. Its people possessed a beautiful genius. Since the intellect of classic days there had appeared, perhaps, no finer mental development than the French mind; none that came so near the old Roman type. Without apparent labour the French genius could lay open with a touch the depths of an abstruse question, or soar to the heights of a sublime one. Protestantism had begun to quicken the French intellect into a marvellous development of strength and beauty, and but for the sudden and unexpected blight that overtook it, its efflorescence would have rivalled, it may be eclipsed, in power and splendour that extraordinary outburst of in-

tellec that followed the Reformation in England, and which has made the era of Elizabeth for ever famous.

Nor was it the least of the advantages of French Protestantism that its head-quarters were not within, but outside the kingdom. By a marvellous Providence a little territory, invisibly yet inviolably guarded, had been called into existence as an asylum where, with the thunders of the mighty tempests resounding on every side of it, the great chief of the movement might watch the execution of his plans in every part of the field, but especially in France. Calvin was sufficiently distant from his native land to be undisturbed by its convulsions, and yet sufficiently near to send daily assistance and succour to it, to commission evangelists, to advise, to encourage—in short, to do whatever could tend to maintain and advance the work. The Reformer was now giving the last touches to his mighty task before retiring from the view of men, but Geneva, through her Church, through her schools, and through her printing-presses, would, it was thought, continue to flood France with those instrumentalities for the regeneration of Christendom, which the prodigious industry and mighty genius of Calvin had prepared.

But the very strength of Protestantism in France at this era awakens doubts touching the step which the Protestants of that country were now about to take, and compels us to pause and review a decision at which we have already arrived. How had Protestantism come to occupy this position, and what were the weapons which had conquered for it so large a place in the national mind? This question admits of but one answer: it was the teachings of evangelists, the blood of martyrs, and the holy lives of confessors. Then why not permit the same weapons to consummate the victory? Does it not argue a criminal impatience to exchange evangelists for soldiers? Does it not manifest a sinful mistrust of those holy instrumentalities which have already proved their omnipotency by all but converting France, to supersede them by the rude appliances of armies and battle-fields? In truth, so long as the Protestants had it in their power to avoid the dire necessity of taking up arms, so long, in short, as the certain ruin of the cause did not stare them in the face in the way of their sitting still, they were not justified in making their appeal to arms. But they judged, and we think rightly, that they had now no alternative; that the Triumvirate had decided this question for them; and that nothing remained, if the last remnants of conscience and liberty were not to be trodden out, but to take their place on the battle-field. The legitimate rule of the king had been superseded by the usurpation of a junto, the leading spirits of which were foreigners. The Protestants saw treaties torn up, and soldiers enrolled for the work of murder. They saw their brethren slaughtered like sheep, not in hundreds only, but literally in thousands. They saw the smoke of burning cities and castles darkening the firmament, unburied corpses tainting the air, and the blood of men and women dyeing their rivers,

and tinting the seas around their coasts. They saw groups of orphans wandering about, crying for bread, or laying themselves down to die of hunger. The touching words of Charlotte Laval addressed to her husband, which we have already quoted, show us how the noblest minds in France felt and reasoned in the presence of these awful tragedies. To remain in peace in their houses, while these oppressions and crimes were being enacted around them—were being done, so to speak, in their very sight—was not only to act a cowardly part, it was to act an inhuman part. It was to abnegate the right, not of citizens only, but of men. If they should longer refuse to stand to their defence, posterity, they felt, would hold them guilty of their brethren's blood, and their names would be coupled with those of the persecutors in the cry of that blood for vengeance.

The pre-eminence of France completes the justification of the Huguenots, by completing the necessity for the step to which they now had recourse. Rome could not possibly permit Protestantism to triumph in a country so central, and whose influence was so powerfully felt all over Europe. The Pope must needs suppress the Reformation in France at all costs. The Popish Powers, and especially Spain, felt equally with the Pope the greatness of the crisis, and willingly contributed the aid of their arms to extinguish Huguenotism. Its triumph in France would have revolutionised their kingdoms, and shaken their thrones. It was a life-and-death struggle; and but for the stand which the Protestant chiefs made, the soldiers of the Triumvirate, and the armies of Spain, would have marched from the Seine to the Mediterranean, from the frontier of Lorraine to the western seaboard, slaughtering the Huguenots like sheep, and Protestantism would have been as completely trampled out in France as it was in Spain.

Both sides now began to prepare with vigour for the inevitable conflict. On the Huguenot banner was inscribed "Liberty of Worship," and the special grievance which compelled the unfurling of that banner was the flagrant violation of the Edict of January—which guarantee them that liberty—in the dreadful massacre of the Protestants as they were worshipping at Vassy under the supposed protection of that edict. This was specially mentioned in the manifesto which the Huguenots now put forth, but neither was regret expressed by the Triumvirate for the violation of the edict, nor promise given that it would be observed in time to come, which made the Protestant princes conclude that the Massacre of Vassy would be repeated again and again, till not a Huguenot was left to charge the Government with its shameful breach of faith. "To arms!" must therefore be their watchword.

Wars, although styled religious, must be gone about in the ordinary way; soldiers must be enrolled, and money collected, without which it is impossible to fight battles. The Prince of Condé wrote circular letters to the Reformed Churches in France, craving their aid in men and money to carry on

the war about to be commenced.¹ Several of the Churches, before voting the desired assistance, sent deputies to Paris to ascertain the real state of matters, and whether any alternative was left them save the grave one of taking up arms. As a consequence, funds and fighting men came in slowly. From La Rochelle came neither men nor money, till after the campaign had been commenced; but that Church, and others, finding on careful inquiry that the state of matter's was such as the Huguenot manifesto had set forth, threw themselves afterwards with zeal into the conflict, and liberally supported it.

The Huguenot chiefs, before unsheathing the sword, sat down together and partook of the Lord's Supper. After communion they subscribed a bond, or "Act of Association," in which they pledged themselves to fidelity to God and to one another, and obedience to Condé as head of the Protestant League, and promised to assist him with "money, arms, horses, and all other warlike equipages." They declared themselves in arms for "the defence of the king's honour and liberty, the maintenance of the pure worship of God, and the due observance of the edicts."² They swore also to promote reformation of manners and true piety among themselves and followers, to punish blasphemy, profanation, and vice, and to maintain the preaching of the Gospel in their camp.³ This deed, by which the Huguenot wars were inaugurated, tended to promote confidence among the confederates, and to keep them united in the presence of a crafty enemy, who continually laboured to sow jealousies and divisions among them; and further, it sanctified and sublimed the war by keeping its sacred and holy object in the eye of those who were in arms.

Another matter which the Calvinist lords deemed it prudent to arrange before coming to blows, was the important one of succours from abroad. On this point their opponents enjoyed great advantages. Not only could they draw upon the national treasury for the support of the war, having the use of the king's name, but they had powerful and zealous friends abroad who, they knew, would hasten to their aid. The Triumvirate had promises of large succours from the then wealthy governments of Spain, Italy, and Savoy; and they had perfect confidence in these promises being kept, for the cause for which the Triumvirate was in arms was the cause of the Pope and Philip of Spain quite as much as it was that of the Guises. The Huguenots, in like manner, cast their eyes abroad, if haply they might find allies and succourers in those countries where the Protestant faith was professed. The war now commencing was not one of race or nationality; it was no war of creed in a narrow sense; it was a war for the great principle of Protestantism in both its Lutheran and Reformed aspects, and which was creating a new commonwealth, which the Rhine could not divide, nor the Alps bound. That was not

¹ Laval, vol. i., n. 64.

² Davila, lib. iii., p. 93. *Mem. de Condé*, vol. iii., pp. 222, 319.

³ Laval, vol. ii., pp. 71, 72.

a Gallic commonwealth, nor a Teutonic commonwealth, but a great spiritual empire, which was blending in sympathy and in interest every kindred and tribe that entered its holy brotherhood. Therefore, in the war now beginning neither Germany nor England could, with due regard to themselves, be neutral, for every victory of the Roman Catholic powers, now confederate for the suppression of the Reformation, not in France only, but in all countries, was a step in the triumphant march of these powers towards the frontiers of the other Reformed . countries. The true policy of England and Germany was clearly to fight the battle at as great a distance as possible from their own doors.

To Coligny the project of bringing foreign soldiers into France was one the wisdom of which he extremely doubted. He feared the effect which such a step might have on a people naturally jealous and proud, and to whom he knew it would be distasteful. For every foreign auxiliary he should obtain he might lose a home soldier. But again events decided the matter for him. He saw the Savoyards, the Swiss, and the Spaniards daily arriving to swell the royalist ranks, and slaughter the children of France, and if he would meet the enemy, not in equal numbers—for he saw no likelihood of being able to bring man for man into the field—but if he would meet him at the head of such a force as should enable him to fight with some chance of success, he must do as his opponents were doing, and accept help from those who were willing to give it. Accordingly two ambassadors were dispatched on the errand of foreign aid, the one to Germany and the other to England, and both found a favourable reception for their overtures. The one succeeded in negotiating a treaty for some thousands of German Reiter, or heavy cavalry—so well known in those days for the execution they did on the field, where often they trampled down whole ranks of the lighter troops of France; and the other ambassador was able to persuade Queen Elizabeth—so careful both of her money and her subjects, for England was not then so rich in either as she long years afterwards became—to aid the Huguenots with 140,000 crowns and 6,000 soldiers, in return for which the town of Havre was put in her keeping.

CHAPTER IX.

THE FIRST HUGUENOT WAR, AND DEATH OF THE DUKE OF GUISE.

Final Overtures—Rejection—The Two Standards—Division of France—Orleans the Huguenot Head-quarters—Condé the Leader—Coligny—The Two Armies Meet—Catherine's Policy—No Battle—Rouen Besieged—Picture of the Two Camps—Fall of Rouen—Miseries.—Death of the King of Navarre—Battle of Dreux—Duke of Guise sole Dictator—Condé a Prisoner—Orleans Besieged—The Inhabitants to be put to the Sword—The Duke of Guise Assassinated—Catherine de Medici Supreme—Pacification of Amboise.

UNWILLING to commit himself irrevocably to war, the Prince of Condé made yet another overture to the court, before unsheathing the sword and joining battle. He was willing to furl his banner and dismiss his soldiers, provided a guarantee were given him that the Edict of January would be observed till the king attained his majority, and if then his majesty should be pleased no longer to grant liberty of conscience to his subjects, the prince and his confederates were to have liberty to retire into some other country, without prejudice to their estates and goods. And further, he demanded that the Triumvirs meanwhile should withdraw from court, adding that if the Government did not accept these reasonable terms, it would be answerable for all the calamities that might befall the kingdom.¹ These terms were not accepted; and all efforts in the interest of peace having now been exhausted, the several provinces and cities of the kingdom made haste to rally, each under its respective standard. Once again France pronounces upon the question of its future; and unhappily it repeats the old answer: it confirms the choice it had made under Francis I. A second time it takes the downward road—that leading to revolution and the abyss. France is not unanimous, however; it is nearly equally divided. Speaking generally, all France south of the Loire declared for the Protestant cause. All the great cities of the Orleanois—Tours, Poitiers, Bourges, Nismes, Montauban, Valence, Lyons, Toulouse, Bordeaux—opened their gates to the soldiers of Condé, and cordially joined his standard: as did also the fortified castles of Languedoc and Dauphine. In the north, Normandy, with its towns and castles, declared for the same side.² The cities and provinces just enumerated were the most populous and flourishing in France. It was in these parts that the Reformation had struck its roots the

¹ Laval, vol. ii., pp. 77, 86.

² It is a curious fact that the Franco-German war of 1870 divided France almost exactly as the first Huguenot war had done. The Loire became the boundary of the German conquests to the south, and the region of France beyond that river remained almost untouched by the German armies: the provinces that rallied round the Triumvirate in 1562, to fight the battle of Romanism, were exactly those that bore the brunt of the German arms in the campaign of 1870.

most deeply, and hence the unanimity and alacrity with which their inhabitants enrolled themselves on the Protestant side.

Coligny, though serving as Condé's lieutenant, was the master-genius and director of the campaign. His strength of character, his long training in military affairs, his resource, his prudence, his indomitable resolution, all marked him out as the man pre-eminently qualified to lead, although the notions of the age required that such an enterprise should be graced by having as its ostensible head a prince of the blood. Coligny, towering above the other princes and nobles around Condé, inspired the soldiers with confidence, for they knew that he would lead them to victory, or if that were denied, that he could do what may seem more difficult, turn defeat into triumph. His sagacious eye it was that indicated Orleans as the true centre of the Huguenot strategy. Here, with the broad stream of the Loire rolling in front of their position, and the friendly provinces of the south lying behind it, they would lack neither provisions nor soldiers. Supplies to any amount would be poured into their camp by the great highway of the river, and they could recruit their army from the enthusiastic populations in their rear. But further, the Huguenots made themselves masters of Rouen in Normandy, which commands the Seine; this enabled them to isolate Paris, the camp of the enemy; they could close the gates of the two main arteries through which the capital procured its supplies, and afflict it with famine: by shutting the Loire they could cut off from it the wine and fruits of the fertile south; and their command of the Seine enabled them to stop at their pleasure the transportation of the corn and cattle of the north.

With these two strong positions, the one in the south and the other in the north of the capital, it seemed as if it needed only that the Huguenots should make themselves masters of Paris in order to end the campaign. "Paris," says Davila, "alone gave more credit to its party than half the kingdom would have done." It was a stronghold of Romanism, and its fanatical population furnished an unrivalled recruiting-field for the Triumvirate. The advantage which the possession of Paris would give the Huguenots, did not escape the sagacious glance of Coligny, and he counselled Condé to march upon it at once, and strike before the Guises had had time to complete their preparations for its defence. The Prince unhappily delayed till the golden opportunity had passed.¹

In the end of June, Condé and Coligny set out from Orleans to attack Paris, and almost at the same moment the Triumvirs began their march from Paris to besiege the Huguenots in Orleans. The two armies, which consisted of about 10,000 each, met half-way between the two cities. A battle was imminent, and if fought at that moment would probably have been

¹ Félice, vol. i., p. 161.

advantageous to the Huguenot arms. But the Queen-mother, feigning a horror of bloodshed, came forward with a proposal for a conference between the leaders on both sides. Catherine de Medici vaunted that she could do more with her pen than twenty generals with their swords, and her success on this occasion went far to justify her boast. Her proposal entangled the Protestants in the meshes of diplomacy. The expedient which Catherine's genius had hit upon for securing peace was that the leaders of the two parties should go into exile till the king had attained his majority, and the troubles of the nation had subsided. But the proposed exile was not equal. Coligny and his confederates were to quit France, the Guises and their friends were only to retire from court.¹ One obvious consequence of this arrangement was that Catherine would remain in sole possession of the field, and would rule without a compeer. The Triumvirs were to remain within call, should the Queen-mother desire their presence; Condé and Coligny, on the other hand, were to remove beyond the frontier; and once gone, a long time would elapse before they should be told that their services were needed, or that the soil of France was able to bear their steps. The trap was too obvious for the Huguenot chiefs to fall into it. The Queen had gained her end, however; her adroitness had shielded Paris, and it had wasted time in favour of the Government, for the weeks as they sped past increased the forces of the royalists, and diminished those of the Huguenots.

It was the Triumvirs that made the next move in the campaign, by resolving to attack Rouen. Masters of this town, the Huguenots, as we have said, held the keys of the Seine, and having cut off the supplies from Paris, the Triumvirs were greatly alarmed, for it was hard to say how long the fanaticism and loyalty of the Parisians would withstand the sobering influences of starvation. The Seine must be kept open at all costs; the Government, moreover, was not free from fear that the Queen of England would send troops into Normandy, and occupy that province, with the help of the Huguenots. Should this happen, Paris itself would be in danger. Accordingly the Duke of Guise was dispatched with his army to besiege Rouen. While he is digging his trenches, posting his forces, and preparing the assault, let us observe the state of discipline and sobriety in the two camps.

We are all familiar with the pictures of Cromwell's army. We have read how his camp resounded with the unwonted sounds of psalms and prayers, and how his soldiers were animated by a devotion that made them respond as alertly to a summons to sermon, which they knew would be of two hours' length, as to a summons to scale the breach, or join battle. A century before the great English Puritan, similar pictures might be witnessed in the camp of the French Huguenots. The *morale* of their armies was high, and the

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 162. Laval, vol. ii., pp. 114, 115.

discipline of their camp strict, especially in their early campaigns. The soldier carried the Bible a-field, and this did more than the strictest code or severest penalty to check disorder and excess. The Huguenots had written up on their banners, "For God and the Prince," and they felt bound to live the Gospel as well as fight for it. Their troops were guilty of no acts of pillage, the barn of the farmer and the store of the merchant were perfectly safe in their neighbourhood, and everything which they obtained from the inhabitants they paid for. Cards and dice were banished their camp; oaths and blasphemies were never heard; acts of immorality and lewdness were prohibited under very severe penalties, and were of rare occurrence. One officer of high rank, who brought disgrace upon the Huguenot army by an act of libertinism, was hanged.¹

Inside the town of Rouen, round which there now rose a bristling wall of hostile standards and redoubts, the same beautiful order prevailed. Besides the inhabitants, there were 12,000 choice foot-soldiers from Condé's army, four squadrons of horse, and 2,000 English in the place, with 100 gentlemen who had volunteered to perish in the defence of the town.² The theatres were closed. There needed no imaginary drama, when one so real was passing before the inhabitants. The churches were opened, and every day there was sermon in them. In their houses the citizens chanted their daily psalm, just as if battle had been far distant from their gates. On the ramparts, the inspired odes of Hebrew times were thundered forth with a chorus of voices that rose loud above the shouting of the captains, and the booming of the cannon.

The enthusiasm for the defence pervaded all ranks, and both sexes. The daughters and wives of the citizen-soldiers hastened to the walls, and regardless of the deadly shot falling thick around them, they kept their fathers and husbands supplied with ammunition and weapons.³ They would maintain their liberties or die. The town was under the command of the Count Montgomery.⁴ Pursued by the implacable resentment of Catherine de Medici, he had fled to England, where he embraced the Reformed religion, and whence he returned to France to aid the Huguenots in their great struggle. He was a skilful and courageous general, and knowing that he would receive no quarter, he was resolved rather than surrender to make Rouen his grave.

Let us turn to the royalist camp. The picture presented to us there is the reverse of that which we have been contemplating. "There," says Félice, "the grossest licentiousness prevailed." Catherine de Medici was present with her maids of honour, who did not feel themselves under any necessity to practise severer virtues in the trenches than they usually observed in the Louvre.

¹ Félice, Vol. i., p. 172.

² Davila, lib. iii., p. 105.

³ Laval, vol. ii., p. 171.

⁴ *Mém. de Condé*, tom. i., p.97.

Games and carousals filled up the leisure hours of the common soldiers, while tournaments and intrigues occupied the captains and knights. These two widely different pictures are parted not by an age, but simply by the city walls of Rouen.

The King of Navarre commanded in the royalist camp. The besiegers assaulted the town not less than six times, and each time were repulsed. At the end of the fifth week a mine was sprung, great part of the wall was laid in ruins, and the soldiers scaling the breach, Rouen was taken. It was the first to drink that bitter cup which so many of the cities of France were afterwards called to drain. For a whole week it was given up to the soldiers. They did their pleasure in it, and what that pleasure was can be conceived without our describing it. Permitting the veil to rest on the other horrors, we shall select for description two deaths of very different character. The first is that of Pastor Augustin Marlorat. Of deep piety and great erudition, he had figured conspicuously in the Colloquy of Poissy, where the Reformation had vindicated itself before the civil and ecclesiastical grandees of France. Present in the city during the five memorable weeks of the siege, his heroic words, daily addressed to the citizens from the pulpit, had been translated by the combatants into heroic deeds on the wall. "You have seduced the people," said Constable de Montmorency to him, when he was brought before him after the capture of the town. "If so," calmly replied Marlorat, "God first seduced me, for I have preached nothing to them but the Gospel of his Son." Placed on a hurdle, he was straightway dragged to the gallows and hanged, sustaining with meekness and Christian courage the indignities and cruelties inflicted on him at the place of execution.¹

The other death-scene is that of Antoine de Bourbon, King of Navarre. Ensnared, as we have already said, by the brilliant but altogether delusive promises of the King of Spain, he had deserted the Protestants, and consented to be the ornamental head of the Romanist party. He was mortally wounded in the siege, and seeing death approaching, he was visited with a bitter but a late repentance. He implored his physician, who strove in vain to cure his wound, to read to him out of the Scriptures; and he protested, the tears streaming down his face, that if his life were spared he would cause the Gospel to be preached all throughout his dominions.² He died at the age of forty-four, regretted by neither party.

After the fall and sack of Rouen, seven weeks passed away, and then the two armies met (19th December) near the town of Dreux. This was the first pitched battle of the civil wars, and the only regular engagement in the first campaign. The disparity of force was considerable, the Huguenots having

¹ Laval, vol. ii., p. 194. Félice, vol. i., p. 165.

² Laval, vol. ii., p. 182.

only 10,000 of all arms, while the royalists had 20,000, horse and foot, on the field. Battle being joined, the Huguenots had won the day when a stratagem of the Duke of Guise snatched victory from their grasp. All the time that the battle was raging—that is, from noon till five in the afternoon—Guise sat in the rear, surrounded by a chosen body of men-at-arms, intently watching the progress of the action, and at times sending forward the other Triumvirs with succours. At last the moment he had waited for came. The duke rode out to the front, rose in his stirrups, cast a glance over the field, and bidding his reserves follow, for the day was theirs, dashed forward. The Huguenots had broken their ranks and were pursuing the routed royalists all over the field. The duke was upon them before they had time to re-form, and wearied with fighting, and unable to sustain this onset of fresh troops, they went down before the cavalry of the duke.¹ Guise's stratagem had succeeded. Victory passed over from the Huguenot to the royalist side.

The carnage was great. Eight thousand dead covered the field, among whom was La Brosse, who had begun the massacre at Vassy. The rank not less than the numbers of the slain gave great political consequence to the battle. The Marshal St. Andre was killed; Montmorency, severely wounded, had surrendered himself prisoner; and thus, of the three Triumvirs, Guise alone remained. The battle of Dreux had crowned him with a double victory, for his immediate appointment as lieutenant-general of the kingdom, and commander-in-chief of the army, placed France in his hands.

This battle left its mark on the Huguenot side also. The Prince of Condé was taken prisoner at the very close of the action. Being led to the headquarters of Guise, the duke and the prince passed the night in the same bed;² the duke, it is said, sleeping soundly, and Condé lying awake, ruminating on the strange fortune of war which had so suddenly changed him from a conqueror into a captive. The prince being now a prisoner, Coligny was appointed generalissimo of the Huguenots. The two Bourbons were removed, and Guise and Coligny stood face to face.

It chanced that a messenger who had left the field at the moment that the battle was going against the Government, brought to the Louvre the news that the Huguenots had won the day. The remark of Catherine de Medici, who foresaw that the triumph of Coligny would diminish the power of Guise—whose authority had begun to over-shadow her own—was imperturbably cool, and shows how little effort it cost her to be on either side, if only she could retain power. “Well, then,” she said, on hearing the messenger's report, “Well, then, we shall have to say our prayers in French.”³

¹ Brantome, vol. in., p. 112. Laval, vol. ii., p. 221. Browning, *Hist. of the Huguenots*, vol. i., p. 151; Lond., 1829.

² Laval, vol. ii., p. 225.

³ *Ibid.*, vol. ii., p. 224. Guizot, vol. iii., p. 335.

The war went on, although it had to be waged on a frozen earth, and beneath skies often dark with tempest; for it was winter. All France was at this hour a battle-field. Not a province was there, scarce even a city, in which the Roman Catholics and Huguenots were not arrayed in arms against each other. We must follow the march of the main army, however, without turning aside to chronicle provincial conflicts. After the defeat at Dreux, Coligny — now commander-in-chief—formed the Huguenot forces into two armies, and with the one he marched into Normandy, and sent his brother D’Andelot at the head of the other to occupy Orleans—that great centre and stronghold of the Huguenot cause. The Duke of Guise followed close on the steps of the latter, in order to besiege Orleans. Having sat down before the town on the 5th of February, 1563, the siege was prosecuted with great vigour. The bridge of the Loire was taken. Next two important suburbs fell into the hands of the duke. On the 18th all was ready for the capture of Orleans on the morrow. He wrote to the Queen-mother, telling her that his purpose was to put every man and woman in Orleans to the sword, and sow its foundations with salt.¹ This good beginning he would follow up by summoning all the nobles of France, with their retainers, to his standard, and with this mighty host he would pursue the admiral into Normandy, and drive him and all his followers into the sea, and so stamp out the Huguenot insurrection. “Once unearth the foxes,” said he, “and we will hunt them all over France.”²

Such was the brief and terrible programme of the duke for purging France of the Huguenot heresy. Where today stood the fair city of Orleans, tomorrow would be seen only a blackened heap; and wherever this leprosy had spread, thither, all over France, would the duke pursue it with fire and sword, and never rest till it was burned out. A whole hecatomb of cities, provinces, and men would grace the obsequies of Huguenotism.

The duke had gone to the trenches to see that all was ready for the assault that was to give Orleans to him on the morrow. Of all that he had ordered to be done, nothing had been omitted. Well pleased the duke was returning along the road to his chateau in the evening twilight. Behind him was the city of Orleans, the broad and deep Loire rolling beneath its walls, and the peaceful darkness gathering round its towers. Alas! before another sun shall set, there will not be left in that city anything in which is the breath of life. The blood of mother and helpless babe, of stern warrior, grey patriarch, and blooming maiden, will be blent in one red torrent, which shall rival the Loire in depth. It is a great sacrifice, but one demanded for the salvation of France. By the side of the road, partly hidden by two walnut-trees that grow on the spot, sits a figure on horseback, waiting for the approach of some one. He

¹ Laval, vol. ii., p. 234.

² Félice, vol. i., p. 166.

hears the sound of horses' hoofs. It is the duke that is coming; he knows him by his white plume; he permits him to pass, then slipping up close behind him, discharges his pistol. The ball entered the right shoulder of the duke—for he wore no cuirass—and passed through the chest. The duke bent for a moment upon his horse's mane, but instantly resuming his erect position in the saddle, he declared his belief that the wound was slight, and added good-humouredly, "They owed me this." It was soon seen, however, that the wound was mortal, and his attendants crowding round him, carried him to his house, and laid him on the bed from which he was to rise no more.

The assassin was John Poltrot, a petty nobleman of Angoumois, whom the duke's butcheries, and his own privations, had worked up into a fanaticism as sincere and as criminal as that of the duke himself. The horror of the crime seems to have bewildered him, for instead of making his escape on his fine Spanish horse, he rode round and round the spot where the deed had been done, all night,¹ and when morning broke he was apprehended. He at first charged Coligny with being privy to the murder, and afterwards denied it. The admiral indignantly repudiated the accusation, and demanded to be confronted with Poltrot.² The Government hurried on the execution of the assassin, and thus showed its disbelief in the charge he had advanced against Coligny, by preventing the opportunity of authenticating an allegation which, had they been able to substantiate it, would have done much to bring strength and credit to their cause, and in the same proportion to disgrace and damage that of the Huguenots.

We return to the duke, who was now fast approaching his latter end. Death set some things in a new light. His belief in Roman Catholicism it did not shake, but it filled him with remorse for the cruel measures by which he had endeavoured to support it. He forgave his enemies, he asked that his blood might not be revenged, he confessed his infidelities to his duchess,³ who stood beside him dissolved in tears, and he earnestly counselled Catherine de Medici to make peace with the Huguenots, saying "that it was so necessary, that whoever should oppose it ought to be deemed an impious man, and an enemy to the king and the kingdom."⁴ The death of the Duke of Guise redeems somewhat the many dark passages in his life, and the sorrow into which he was melted at his latter end moderates the horror we feel at his bigotry and the cruel excesses into which it hurried him. But it more concerns us to note that he died at the moment when he had attained that proud summit he had long striven to reach. He was sole Triumvir: he was at the head of the army: all the powers of government were gathered into his single hand:

¹ Laval, vol. ii., pp. 237, 238.

² *Mem. de Conde*, tom. i., p. 125.

³ Guizot, vol. iii., p. 339.

⁴ Thau., *Hist.*, lib. xxxiv, p. 234. Laval, vol. ii., p. 235.

Huguenotism was at his feet: his arm was raised to crush it, when, in the words of Pasquier, his “horn was lowered.”

The death of the Duke of Guise threw the government into the hands of Catherine de Medici. It was now that this woman, whom death seemed ever to serve, reached the summit of her wishes. Her son, Charles IX., reigned, but the mother governed. In presence of the duke’s bier, Catherine was not indisposed to peace with the Protestants, but it was of her nature to work crookedly in all that she undertook. She had the Prince of Condé in the Louvre with her, and she set herself to weave her toils around him. Taken prisoner on the battle-field, as we have already said, “he was breathing,” says Mezeray, “the soft air of the court,” and the Queen-mother made haste to conclude the negotiations for peace before Coligny should arrive, who might not be so pliant as Condé. The prince had a conference with several of the Protestant ministers, who were unanimously of opinion that no peace could be satisfactory or honourable unless it restored, without restriction or modification, the Edict of January, which gave to all the Reformed in France the liberty of public worship. The Queen-mother and Condé, however, patched up a Pacification of a different kind. They agreed on a treaty, of which the leading provisions were that the nobles should have liberty to celebrate the Reformed worship in their castles, that the same privilege should be granted to certain of the gentry, and that a place should be set apart in certain only of the towns, where the Protestants might meet for worship. This arrangement came far short of the Edict of January, which knew no restriction of class or place in the matter of worship, but extended toleration to all the subjects of the realm. This new treaty did nothing for the pastors: it did nothing for the great body of the people, save that it did not hinder them from holding opinions in their own breasts, and celebrating, it might be, their worship at their own firesides. This peace was signed by the king at Amboise on the 19th April, 1563; it was published before the camp at Orleans on the 22nd, amid the murmurs of the soldiers, who gave vent to their displeasure by the demolition of some images which, till that time, had been permitted to repose quietly in their niches.¹ This edict was termed the “Pacification of Amboise.” When the Admiral de Coligny was told of it he said indignantly, “This stroke of the pen has ruined more churches than our enemies could have knocked down in ten years.”² Returning by forced marches to Orleans in the hope of finding better terms, Coligny arrived just the day after the treaty had been signed and sealed.

Such was the issue of the first Huguenot war. If the Protestants had won no victory on the battlefield, their cause nevertheless was in a far stronger

¹ Laval, vol. ii., p. 255.

² Felice, vol. i., p. 169.

position now than when the campaign opened. The Triumvirs were gone; the Roman Catholic armies were without a leader, and the national exchequer was empty; while, on the other side, at the head of the Huguenot host was now the most skilful captain of his age. If the Huguenot nobles had had the wisdom and the courage to demand full toleration of their worship, the Government would not have dared to refuse it, seeing they were not in circumstances at the time to do so; but the Protestants were not true to themselves at this crisis, and so the hour passed, and with it all the golden opportunities it had brought. New enemies stood up, and new tempests darkened the sky of France.

CHAPTER X.

CATHERINE DE MEDICI AND HER SON, CHARLES IX.—CONFERENCE AT BAYONNE—THE ST. BARTHOLOMEW MASSACRE PLOTTED.

The Peace Satisfactory to Neither Party—Catherine de Medici comes to the Front—The Dance of Death at the Louvre—What will Catherine's Policy be—the Sword or the Olive-branch?—Charles IX.—His Training—A Royal Progress—Iconoclast Outrages—Indignation of Charles IX.—The Envoys of the Duke of Savoy and the Pope—Bayonne—Its Château—Nocturnal Interviews between Catherine de Medici and the Duke of Alva—Agreed to Exterminate the Protestants of France and England—Testimony of Davila—of Tavannes—of Maimbourg—Plot to be Executed at Moulins, 1566—Postponed.

THE Pacification of Amboise (1563) closed the first Huguenot war. That arrangement was satisfactory to neither party. The Protestants it did not content; for manifestly it was not an advance but a retrogression. That toleration which the previous Edict of January had extended over the whole kingdom, the Pacification of Amboise restricted to certain bodies, and to particular localities. The Huguenots could not understand the principle on which such an arrangement was based. If liberty of worship was wrong, they reasoned, why permit it in any part of France? but if right, as the edict seemed to grant, it ought to be declared lawful, not in a few cities only, but in all the towns of the kingdom. Besides, the observance of the Amboise edict was obviously impracticable. Were nine-tenths of the Protestants to abstain altogether from public worship? This they must do under the present law, or undertake a journey of fifty or, it might be, a hundred miles to the nearest privileged city. A law that makes itself ridiculous courts contempt, and provokes to disobedience.

Moreover, the Pacification of Amboise was scarcely more to the taste of the Romanists. The concessions it made to the Huguenots, although miserable in the extreme, and accompanied by restrictions that made them a mockery, were yet, in the opinion of zealous Papists, far too great to be made to men to whom it was sinful to make any concession at all. On both sides, therefore, the measure was simply unworkable; perhaps it never was intended by its devisers to be anything else. In places where they were numerous, the Protestants altogether disregarded it, assembling in thousands and worshipping openly, just as though no Pacification existed. And the Roman Catholics on their part assailed with violence the assemblies of the Reformed, even in those places which had been set apart by law for the celebration of their worship; thus neither party accepted the arrangement as a final one. Both felt that they must yet look one another in the face on the battle-field; but the Roman Catholics were not ready to unsheathe the sword,

and so for a brief space there was quiet—a suspension of hostilities if not peace.

It was now that the star of Catherine de Medici rose so triumphantly into the ascendant. The clouds which had obscured its lustre hitherto were all dispelled, and it blazed forth in baleful splendour in the firmament of France. It was thirty years since Catherine, borne over the waters of the Mediterranean in the gaily-decked galleys of Pisa, entered the port of Marseilles, amid the roar of cannon and the shouts of assembled thousands, to give her hand in marriage to the second son of the King of France. She was then a girl of sixteen, radiant as the country from which she came, her eyes all fire, her face all smiles, a strange witchery in her every look and movement; but in contrast with these fascinations of person was her soul, which was encompassed with a gloomy superstition, that might more fittingly be styled a necromancy than a faith. She came with a determined purpose of making the proud realm on which she had just stepped bow to her will, and minister to her pleasures, although it should be by sinking it into a gulf of pollution or drowning it in an ocean of blood. Thirty years had she waited, foreseeing the goal afar off, and patiently bending to obstacles she had not the power summarily to annihilate.

Death had been the steady and faithful ally of this extraordinary woman. Often had he visited the Louvre since the daughter of the House of Medici came to live under its roof; and each visit had advanced the Florentine a stage on her way to power. First, the death of the Dauphin—who left no child—opened her way to the throne. Then the death of her father-in-law, Francis I., placed her on that throne by the side of Henry II. She had the crown, but not yet the kingdom: for Diana of Poitiers, as the mistress, more than divided the influence which ought to have been Catherine's as the wife. The death of her husband took that humiliating impediment out of her way. But Mary Stuart, the niece of the Guises, and the wife of the weak-minded Francis II., profited by the imbecility through which Catherine had hoped to govern. Death, however, removed this obstacle, as he had done every previous one, by striking down Francis II. only seventeen short months after he had ascended the throne. Once more there stood up another rival, and Catherine had still to wait. Now it was that the Triumvirate rose and grasped with powerful hand the direction of France. Was the patience of the Italian woman to be always baulked? No: Death came again to her help. The fortune of battle and the pistol of the assassin rid her of the Triumvirate. The Duke of Guise was dead: rival to her power there no longer existed. The way so long barred was open now, and Catherine boldly placed herself at the head of affairs; and this position she continued to hold, with increasing calamity to France and deepening infamy to herself, till almost her last hour. This long delay, although it appeared to be adverse, was in reality in favour of the Queenmother.

If it gave her power late, it gave it her all the more securely. When her hour at last came, it found her in the full maturity of her faculties. She had had time to study, not only individual men, but all the parties into which France was divided. She had a perfect comprehension of the genius and temper of the nation. Consummate mistress of an art not difficult of attainment to an Italian—the art of dissembling—with an admirable intellect for intrigue, with sense enough not to scheme too finely, and with a patience long trained in the school of waiting, and not so likely to hurry on measures till they were fully ripened, it was hardly possible but that the daughter of the Medici would show herself equal to any emergency, and would leave behind her a monument which should tell the France of after times that Catherine de Medici had once governed it.

Standing as she now did on the summit, it was natural that Catherine should look around her, and warily choose the part she was to play. She had outlived all her rivals at court, and the Huguenots were now the only party she had to fear. Should she, after the example of the Guises, continue to pursue them with the sword, or should she hold out to them the olive-branch? Catherine felt that she never could be one with the Huguenots. That would imply a breach with all the traditions of her house, and a change in the whole habits of her life, which was not to be thought of. Nor could she permit France to embrace the Protestant creed, for the country would thus descend in the scale of nations, and would embroil itself in a war with Italy and Spain. But, on the other side, there were several serious considerations which had to be looked at. The Huguenots were a powerful party; their faith was spreading in France; their counsels were guided and their armies were led by the men of the greatest character and intellect in the nation. Moreover, they had friends in Germany and England, who were not likely to look quietly on while they were being crushed by arms. To continue the war seemed very inadvisable. Catherine had no general able to cope with Coligny, and it was uncertain on which side victory might ultimately declare itself. The Huguenot army was inferior in numbers to that of the Roman Catholics, but it surpassed it in bravery, in devotion, and discipline; and the longer the conflict lasted, the more numerous the soldiers that flocked to the Huguenot standard.

It was tolerably clear that Catherine must conciliate the Protestants, yet all the while she must labour to diminish their numbers, to weaken their influence, and curtail their privileges, in the hope that at some convenient moment, which future years might bring, she might be able to fall upon them and cut them off, either by sudden war or by secret massacre. Doubtless what she now sketched was a policy of a general kind: content to fix its great outlines, and leave its details to be filled in afterwards, as circumstances might arise and opportunity offer. Accordingly, the Huguenots had gracious looks and soft words, but no substantial benefits, from the Queen-mother. There

was a truce to open hostilities; but blood was flowing all the time. Private murder stalked through France; and short as the period was since the Pacification had been signed, not fewer than three thousand Huguenots had fallen by the poignard of the assassin. In truth, there was no longer in France only one nation. There were now two nations on its soil. The perfidy and wrong which had marked the whole policy of the court had so deeply parted the Huguenot and Romanist, that not the hope only, but the wish for conciliation had passed away. The part Catherine de Medici had imposed upon herself—of standing well with both, and holding the poise between the two, yet ever making the preponderance of encouragement and favour to fall on the Roman Catholic side—was an extremely difficult one; but her Italian nature and her discipline of thirty years made the task, which to another would have been impossible, to her comparatively easy.

Her first care was to mould her son, Charles IX., into her own likeness, and fit him for being an instrument, pliant and expert, for her purposes. Intellectually he was superior to his brother Francis II., who during his short reign had been treated by both wife and mother as an imbecile, and when dead was buried like a pauper. Charles IX. is said to have discovered something of the literary taste and aesthetic appreciation which were the redeeming features in the character of his grandfather Francis I. In happier circumstances he might have become a patron of the arts, and have found scope for his fitful energy in the hunting field; but what manly grace or noble quality could flourish in an air so fetid as that of the Louvre? The atmosphere in which he grew up was foul with corruption, impiety, and blood. To fawn on those he mortally disliked, to cover bitter thoughts with sweet smiles and to caress till ready to strike, were the unmanly and unkingly virtues in which Charles was trained. His mother sent all the way to her own native city of Florence for a man to superintend the education of the prince—Albert Gondi, afterwards created Duke of Retz. Of this man, the historian Brantôme has drawn the following character: —“Cunning, corrupt, a liar, a great dissembler, swearing and denying God like a sergeant.” Under such a teacher, it is not difficult to conceive what the pupil would become; by no chance could he contract the slightest acquaintance with virtue or honour. What a spectacle we are contemplating! At the head of a great nation is a woman without moral principle, without human pity, without shame: a very tigress, and she is rearing her son as the tigress rears her cubs. Unhappy France, what a dark future begins to project its shadow across thee!

In the summer of 1565, Catherine and her son made a royal progress through France. A brilliant retinue, composed of the princes of the blood, the great officers of state, the lords and ladies of the court—the dimness of their virtues concealed beneath the splendour of their robes—followed in the train of the Queen-mother and the royal scion. The wondering provinces sent out

their inhabitants in thousands to gaze on the splendid cavalcade, as it swept comet-like past them. This progress enabled Catherine to judge for herself of the relative strength of the two parties in her dominions, and to shape her measures accordingly. Onward she went from province to province, and from city to city, scattering around her prodigally, yet judiciously, smiles, promises, and frowns; and who knew so well as she when to be gracious, and when to affect a stern displeasure? In those places where the Protestants had avenged upon the stone images the outrages which the Roman Catholics had committed upon living men, Catherine took care to intimate emphatically her disapproval. Her piety was hurt at the sight of the demolition of objects elevated to sacred uses. She took special care that her son's attention should be drawn to those affecting mementoes of Huguenot iconoclast zeal. In some parts monasteries demolished, crosses overturned, images mutilated, offered a spectacle exceedingly depressing to pious souls, and over which the devout and tender-hearted daughter of the Medici could scarcely refrain from shedding tears. How detestable the nature of that religion—so was the king taught to view the matter—which could prompt to acts so atrocious and impious! He felt that his kingdom had been polluted, and he trembled—not with a well-feigned terror like his mother, but a real dread—lest God, who had been affronted by these daring acts of sacrilege, should smite France with judgment; for in that age stone statues and crosses, and not divine precepts or moral virtues, were religion. The impression made upon the mind of the young king, especially in the southern provinces, where it seemed as if this impiety had reached its climax in a general sack of holy buildings and sacred furniture, was never, it is said, forgotten by him. It is believed to have inspired his policy in after-years.¹

The Queen-mother had another object in view in the progress she was now making. It enabled her, without attracting observation, to gather the sentiments of the neighbouring sovereigns on the great question of the age—namely, Protestantism—and to come to a common understanding with them respecting the measures to be adopted for its suppression. The kings of the earth were “plotting against the Lord and his anointed,” and although willingly submitting to the cords with which the chief ruler of the Seven-hilled City had bound them, they were seeking how they might break the bands of that King whom God hath set upon the holy hill of Zion. The great ones of the earth did not understand the Reformation, and trembled before it. A power which the sword could slay would have caused them little uneasiness; but a power which had been smitten with the sword, which had been trodden down by armies, which had been burned at the stake, but which refused to die—a power which the oftener it was defeated the mightier it became, which

¹ Davila, lib. iii., p. 147.

started up anew to the confusion of its enemies from what appeared to be its grave, was a new thing in the earth. There was a mystery about it which made it a terror to them. They knew not whence it came, nor whereunto it might grow, nor how it was “to be met.” Still the sword was the only weapon they knew to wield, and this caused them to meet often together to consult and plot. The Council of Trent, which had just closed its sittings, had recommended—indeed enjoined—a league among the Roman Catholic sovereigns and States for the forcible suppression of the Reformed opinions; and Philip II. of Spain took the lead in this matter, as became his position. His morose and fanatical genius scarcely needed the prompting of the Council. Catherine de Medici was now on her way to meet the envoy of this man, and to agree on a policy which should bind together in a common action the two crowns of Spain and France. Her steps were directed to Bayonne, the south-western extremity of her dominions; but her route thither was circuitous—being so on purpose that she might, under show of mutual congratulations, collect the sentiments of neighbouring rulers. As she skirted along by the Savoy Alps, she had an interview with the ambassador of the Duke of Savoy, who carried back Catherine’s good wishes, and other things besides, to his master. At Avignon, the capital of the Papacy when Rome was too turbulent to afford safe residence to her Popes, Catherine halted to give audience to the Papal legate. She then pushed forward to Bayonne, where she was to meet the Duke of Alva, who, as the spokesman of the then mightiest monarch in Christendom, was a more important personage than the other ambassadors to whom she had already given audience. There a final decision was to be come to.

The royal calvacade now drew nigh that quiet spot on the shores of the Bay of Biscay where, amid flourishing plantations and shrubs of almost tropical luxuriance, and lines of strong forts, nestles the little town of Bayonne—the “good bay”—a name its history has sadly belied. A narrow firth, which terminates in a little bay, admits the waters of the Atlantic within the walls of the town, and permits the ships of friendly Powers to lie under the shelter of its guns. The azure tops of the Pyrenees appearing in the south notify to the traveller that he has almost touched the frontier of Spain. Here, in the château which still stands crowning the height on the right of the harbour, Catherine de Medici met the plenipotentiary of Philip II.¹ The King of Spain

¹ This château has a special and dreadful interest, and as the Author had an opportunity on his way to Spain, in 1869, of examining it, he may here be permitted to sketch the appearance of its exterior. It is situated on a low mound immediately adjoining the city ramparts, hard by the little harbour on which it looks down. The basement storey is loopholed for cannon and musketry, and the upper part is simply a two-storey house in the style of the French chateau of the period, with two rows of small windows, with their white jalousies, and a roof of rusty brown tiles. The front is ornamented with two terminating round towers: the whole edifice being what doubtless Holyrood Palace, Edinburgh, was in the days of Queen Mary Stuart—that is, a quadrangular building with a castellated front. The place is now a barrack, but the French sentinel at the gate kindly gives permission for the visitor to

did not come in person, but sent his wife Elizabeth, the daughter of this same Catherine de Medici, and sister of Charles IX. Along with his queen came Philip's general, the well-known Duke of Alva. This man was inspired with an insane fury against Protestantism, which, meeting a fanaticism equally ferocious on the part of his master, was a link between the two. Alva was the right hand of Philip; he was his counsellor in all evil; and by the sword of Alva it was that Philip shed those oceans of blood in which he sought to drown Protestantism. Here, in this château, the dark sententious Spaniard met the crafty and eloquent Italian woman. Catherine made a covered gallery be constructed in it, that she might visit the duke whenever it suited her without being observed.¹ Their meetings were mostly nocturnal, but as no one was admitted to them, the precise schemes discussed at them, and the plots hatched, must, unless the oaken walls shall speak out, remain secrets till the dread Judgment-day, save in so far as they may be guessed at from the events which flowed from them, and which have found a place on the page of history. It is certain from an expression of Alva's, caught up by the young son of the Queen of Navarre, the future Henry IV.—whose sprightliness had won for him a large place in Catherine's affections, and whom she at times permitted to go with her to the duke's apartments, thinking the matters talked of there altogether beyond the boy's capacity—that massacre was mooted at these interviews, and was relied upon as one of the main methods for cleansing Christendom from the heresy of Calvin. The expression has been recorded by all historians with slight verbal differences, but substantial identity. The idea was embodied by the duke in a vulgar but most expressive metaphor—namely, “The head of one salmon is worth that of ten thousand frogs.” This expression, occurring as it did in a conversation in which the names of the Protestant leaders figured prominently, explained its meaning sufficiently to the young but precocious Henry of Navarre. He communicated it to the lord who waited upon him. This nobleman sent it in cipher to the prince's mother, Jeanne d'Albret, and by her it was communicated to the heads of Protestantism. All the Protestant chiefs, both in France and Germany, looked upon it as the foreshadowing of some terrible tragedy, hatched in this chateau, between the daughter of the fanatical House of Medici and the sanguinary lieutenant of Philip II. Retained meanwhile in the darkness of these two bosoms, and it might be of one or two others, the secret was destined to write itself one day on the face of Europe in characters of blood; whispered in the

inspect the interior. It is a small paved court, having a well in the centre, shaded by two tall trees, while portions of the wall are clothed with a vine and a few flowering shrubs. Such is the aspect of this old house, neglected now, and abandoned to the occupancy of soldiers, but which in its time has received many a crowned head, and whose chief claim to glory or infamy must lie in this—that it is linked for ever with one of the greatest crimes of an age of great crimes.

¹ De Thou, livr. 37 (vol. v., p. 35).

deep stillness of these oaken chambers, it was soon to break in a thunder-crash upon the world, and roll its dread reverberations along history's page till the end of time. This, in all probability, was what was resolved upon at these conferences at Bayonne. The conspirators did not plan a particular massacre, to come off on a particular day of a particular year; what they agreed upon was rather a policy towards the Protestants of treachery and murder, which however, should circumstances favour, might any day explode in a catastrophe of European dimensions.

"The Queen of Spain," says Davila, narrating the meeting at Bayonne, "being come to this place, accompanied with the Duke of Alva and the Count de Beneventa, whilst they made show with triumphs, tournaments, and several kinds of pastimes, as if they had in eye nothing but amusement and feasting, there was held a secret conference in order to arrive at a mutual understanding between the two crowns. Their common interest being weighed and considered, they agreed in this, that it was expedient for one king to aid and assist the other in pacifying their States and purging them from diversity of religions. But they were not of the same opinion as to the way that was most expeditious and secure for arriving at this end. . . . The duke said that a prince could not do a thing more unworthy or prejudicial to himself than to permit liberty of conscience to his people, bringing as many varieties of religion into a State as there are fancies in the minds of men; that diversities of opinion never failed to put subjects in arms, and stir up grievous treacheries and rebellions; therefore, he concluded that they ought by severe remedies, no matter whether by fire or sword, to cut away the roots of that evil."¹

The historian says that the Queen-mother was inclined to milder measures, in the first place, being indisposed to embroil her hands in the blood of the royal family, and of the great lords of the kingdom, and that she would reserve this as the last resort. "Both parties," says he, "aimed at the destruction of the Huguenots, and the establishment of obedience. Wherefore, at last they came to this conclusion, that the one king should aid the other either covertly or openly, as might be thought most conducive to the execution of so difficult and so weighty an enterprise, but that both of them should be free to work by such means and counsels as appeared to them most proper and seasonable."² Tavannes, whose testimony is above suspicion, confirms the statement of Davila. "The Kings of France and Spain at Bayonne," says he in his *Memoires*, "through the instrumentality of the Duke of Alva, resolved on the destruction of the Huguenots of France and Spain."³

¹ Davila, lib. fit, p. 145.

² *Ibid.*, lib. iii., p. 146.

³ *Mém. de Tavannes*, p. 282.

Maimbourg reiterates the same thing. “The two kings came to an agreement,” says he, “to exterminate all the Protestants in their dominions.”¹

The massacre, it is now believed, was to have been executed in the year following (1566) at the Assembly of Notables at Moulins. But meanwhile the dark secret of Bayonne had oozed out in so many quarters, that Condé and Coligny could not with prudence disregard it, and though they came, with their confederates, to Moulins, in obedience to the royal summons, they were so well armed that Catherine de Medici durst not attempt her grand stroke.

¹ Maimbourg, *Hist. du Calvinisme*, livr. v., p. 354.

CHAPTER XI.

SECOND AND THIRD HUGUENOT WARS.

Peace of Longjumeau—Second Huguenot War—Its One Battle—A Peace which is not Peace—Third Huguenot War—Conspiracy—An Incident—Protestant Chiefs at La Rochelle—Joined by the Queen of Navarre and the Prince of Bearn—Battle of Jarnac—Death of the Prince of Condé—Heroism of Jeanne d'Albret—Disaster at Montcontour—A Dark Night—Misfortunes of Coligny—His Sublimity of Soul.

WE return to the consideration of the condition of the Protestants of France. The Pacification of Amboise, imperfect from the first, was now flagrantly violated. The worshipping assemblies of the Protestants were dispersed, their congregations murdered, their ministers banished or silenced; and for these wrongs they could obtain no redress. The iron circle was continually narrowing around them. Were they to sit still until they were inextricably enfolded and crushed? No; they must again draw the sword.

The court brought matters to extremity by hiring 6,000 Swiss mercenaries. On hearing of this, the Prince de Condé held a consultation with the Huguenot chiefs. Opinions were divided. Coligny advised a little longer delay. "I see perfectly well," said he, "how we may light the fire, but I do not see the water to put it out." His brother D'Andelot counselled instant action. "If you wait," he exclaimed, "till you are driven into banishment in foreign countries, bound in prisons, hunted down by the mob, of what avail will our patience be? Those who have brought 6,000 foreign soldiers to our very hearths have thereby declared war already." Condé and Coligny went to the Queen to entreat that justice might be done the Reformed. Catherine was deaf to their appeal. They next—acting on a precedent set them by the Duke of Guise five years before—attempted to seize the persons of the King and Queen-mother, at their Castle of Monceaux, in Brie. The plot being discovered, the court saved itself by a hasty flight. The Swiss had not yet arrived, and Catherine, safe again in Paris, amused the Protestants with negotiations. "The free exercise of their religion" was the one ever-reiterated demand of the Huguenots. At last the Swiss arrived, the negotiations were broken off, and now nothing remained but an appeal to arms.

This brings us to the second civil war, which we shall dispatch in a few sentences. The second Huguenot war was a campaign of but one battle, which lasted barely an hour. This affair, styled the Battle of St. Denis, was fought under the walls of Paris, and the field was left in possession of the Huguenots,¹ who offered the royalists battle on the following day, but they declined it, so giving the Protestants the right of claiming the victory. The

¹ Davila, lib. iv., p. 168.

veteran Montmorency, who had held the high office of Constable of France during four reigns, was among the slain. The Duke of Anjou, the favourite son of Catherine, succeeded him as generalissimo of the French army, and thus the chief authority was still more completely centred in the hands of the Queen-mother. The winter months passed without fighting. When the spring opened, the Protestant forces were so greatly reinforced by auxiliaries from Germany, that the court judged it the wiser part to come to terms with them, and on March 20th, 1568, the short-lived Peace of Longjumeau was signed. "This peace," says Mezeray, "left the Huguenots at the mercy of their enemies, with no other security than the word of an Italian woman."¹

The army under Condé melted away, and then Catherine forgot her promise. All the while the peace lasted, which was only six short months, the Protestants had to endure even greater miseries than if they had been in the field with arms in their hands. Again the pulpits thundered against heresy, again the passions of the mob broke out, again the dagger of the assassin was set to work, and the blood of the Huguenots ceased not to flow in all the cities and provinces of France. It is estimated that not fewer than ten thousand persons perished during this short period. The court did nothing to restrain, but much, it is believed, to instigate to these murders. One gets weary of writing so monotonous a recital of outrage and massacre. This bloodshed, it must be acknowledged, was not all confined to one side. Some two hundred Roman Catholics, including several priests, were massacred by the Protestants. This is to be deplored, but it need surprise no one. Of the hundreds of thousands of Huguenots in France, all were not pious men; and further, while these two hundred or so of Romanists were murdered, the Huguenots were perishing in tens of thousands by every variety of cruel death, and of shocking and shameful outrage. There was no justice in the land. The crew that occupied the Louvre, and styled themselves the Government, were there, as the Thug is in his den, to entrap and dispatch his victim. There were men in France doubtless who reasoned that, although the laws of society had fallen, the laws of nature were still in force.

Matters were brought to a head by the discovery of a plot which was to be immediately executed. At a council in the Louvre, it was resolved to seize the two Protestant chiefs—the Prince of Condé and Admiral Coligny—and put them out of the way, by consigning the first to a dungeon for life, and sending the second to the scaffold. The moment they were informed of the plot, the prince and the admiral fled with their wives and children to La Rochelle. The road was long and the journey toilsome. They had to traverse three hundred miles of rough country, obstructed by rivers, and beset by the worse dangers of numerous foes. An incident which befell them by the way

¹ *Ibid.* lib. iv., pp.173–175. Mezeray, tom. v., p. 104.

touched their hearts deeply, as showing the hand of God. Before them was the Loire—a broad and rapid river. The bridges were watched. How were they to cross? A friendly guide, to whom the by-paths and fords were known, conducted them to the river's banks opposite Sancerre, and at that point the company, amounting to nearly two hundred persons, crossed without inconvenience or risk. They all went over singing the psalm, *When Israel went out of Egypt*. Two hours after, the heavens blackened, and the rain falling in torrents, the waters of the Loire, which a little before had risen only to their horses' knees, were now swollen, and had become impassable. In a little while they saw their pursuers arrive on the further side of the river; but their progress was stayed by the deep and angry flood, to which they dared not commit themselves. "Escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowlers," the company of Coligny exchanged looks of silent gratitude with one another.¹ What remained of their way was gone with lighter heart and nimbler foot; they felt, although they could not see, the Almighty escort that covered them; and so, journeying on, they came at last safely to La Rochelle.

La Rochelle was at this period a great mart of trade. Its inhabitants shared the independence of sentiment which commerce commonly brings in its train. Having early embraced the Reformation, the bulk of its inhabitants were by this time Protestants. An impression was abroad that another great crisis impended; and under this belief, too well founded, all the chiefs and captains of the army were repairing with their followers to this stronghold of Huguenotism. We have seen Condé and Coligny arrive here; and soon thereafter came another illustrious visitor—Jeanne d'Albret. The Queen of Navarre did not come alone; she brought with her, her son Henry, Prince of Bearn, whose heroic character was just then beginning to open, and whom his mother, in that dark hour, dedicated to the service of the Protestant cause. This arrival awakened the utmost enthusiasm in La Rochelle among both citizens and soldiers. Condé laid his command of the Huguenot army at the feet of the young Prince of Bearn—magnanimously performing an act which the conventional notions of the age exacted of him, for Henry was nearer the throne than himself. The magnanimity of Condé evoked an equal magnanimity. "No," said Jeanne d'Albret; "I and my son are here to promote the success of this great enterprise, or to share its disaster. We will joyfully unite beneath the standard of Condé. The cause of God is dearer to me than my son."

At this juncture the Queen-mother published an edict, revoking the Edict of January, forbidding, on pain of death, the profession of Protestantism, and commanding all ministers to leave the Kingdom within a fortnight.² If

¹ *Vie de Coligny*, p. 346. Davila, lib. iv., p. 193. Guizot, tom. iii., p. 353.

² Davila, lib. iv., p. 196.

anything was wanting to complete the justification of the Protestants, in this their third war, it was now supplied. During the winter of 1569, the two armies were frequently in presence of one another; but as often as they essayed to join battle, storms of unprecedented violence broke out, and the assailants had to bow to the superior force of the elements. At last, on the 15th March, they met on the field of Jarnac. The day was a disastrous one for the Protestants. Taken at unawares, the Huguenot regiments arrived one after the other on the field, and were butchered in detail, the enemy assailing in overwhelming numbers. The Prince of Condé, after performing prodigies of valour, wounded, unhorsed, and fighting desperately on his knees, was slain.¹ Coligny, judging it hopeless to prolong the carnage, retired with his soldiers from the field; and the result of the day as much elated the court and the Roman Catholics, as it engendered despondency and despair in the hearts of the Protestants.

While the Huguenot army was in this mood—beaten by their adversaries, and in danger of being worse beaten by their fears—the Queen of Navarre suddenly appeared amongst them. Attended by Coligny, she rode along their ranks, having on one hand her son, the Prince of Bearn, and on the other her nephew, Henry, son of the fallen Condé. “Children of God and of France,” said she, addressing the soldiers, “Condé is dead; but is all therefore lost? No; the God who gave him courage and strength to fight for this cause, has raised up others worthy to succeed him. To those brave warriors I add my son. Make proof of his valour. Soldiers! I offer you everything I have to give—my dominions, my treasures, my life, and what is dearer to me than all, my children. I swear to defend to my last sigh the holy cause that now unites us!” With these heroic words she breathed her own spirit into the soldiers. They looked up; they stood erect; the fire returned to their eyes. Henry of Navarre was proclaimed general of the army, amid the plaudits of the soldiers; and Coligny and the other chiefs were the first to swear fidelity to the hero, to whom the whole realm was one day to vow allegiance.

Thus the disaster of Jarnac was so far repaired; but a yet deeper reverse awaited the Huguenot arms. The summer which opened so ominously passed without any affair of consequence till the 3rd of October, and then came the fatal battle of Montcontour. It was an inconvenient moment for Coligny to fight, for his German auxiliaries had just mutinied; but no alternative was left him. The Huguenots rushed with fury into action; but their ranks were broken by the firm phalanxes on which they threw themselves, and before they could rally, a tremendous slaughter had begun, which caused something like a panic amongst them. Coligny was wounded at the very commencement; his lower jaw was broken, and the blood, oozing from the wound and trickling

¹ *Ibid.*, lib. iv., p. 211.

down his throat, all but choked him. Being unable to give the word of command, he was carried out of the battle. A short hour only did the fight rage; but what disasters were crowded into that space of time! Of the 25,000 men whom Coligny had led into action, only 8,000 stood around their standards when it was ended. Ammunition, cannon, baggage, and numerous colours were lost. Again the dark night was closing in around French Protestantism.

As Coligny was being carried out of the field, another litter in which lay a wounded soldier passed him by. The occupant of that other litter was Lestrangle, an old gentleman, and one of the admiral's chief counsellors. Lestrangle, happening to draw aside the curtains and look out, recognised his general. "Yes," said he, brushing away a tear that dimmed his eye—"Yes, God is very sweet." This was all he spoke. It was as if a Divine hand had dropped a cordial into the soul of Coligny. Speaking afterwards to his friends of the incident, he said that these words were as balm to his spirit, then more bruised than his body. There is here a lesson for us—nay, many lessons, though we can particularise only one. We are apt to suppose that those exemplify the highest style of piety, and enjoy most of the Spirit's presence, who are oftenest in the closet engaged in acts of devotion, and that controversy and fighting belong to a lower type of Christianity. There are exceptions, of course; but the rule, we believe, is the opposite. We must distinguish between a contentious lot and a contentious spirit; the former has been assigned to some of the most loving natures, and the most spiritual of men. That is the healthiest piety that best endures the wear and tear of hard work, just as those are the healthiest plants which, in no danger of pining away without the shelter of a hot-house, flourish in the outer air, and grow tall, and strong, and beautiful amid the rains and tempests of the open firmament. So now: breaking through the clouds and dust of the battle-field, a ray from heaven shot into the soul of Coligny.

The admiral had now touched the lowest point of his misfortunes. We have seen him borne out of the battle, vanquished and wounded almost to death. His army lay stretched on the field. The few who had escaped the fate of their comrades were dispirited and mutinous. Death had narrowed the circle of his friends, and of those who remained, some forsook him, and others even blamed him. To crown these multiplied calamities, Catherine de Medici came forward to deal him the *coup de grâce*. At her direction the Parliament of Paris proclaimed him an outlaw, and set a price of 30,000 crowns upon his head. His estates were confiscated, his Castle of Chatillon was burned to the ground, and he was driven forth homeless and friendless. Were his miseries now complete? Not yet. Pius V. cursed him as "an infamous, execrable man, if indeed he deserved the name of man." It was now that Coligny appeared greatest. Furious tempests assailed him from all quarters at once, but he did not bow to their violence. In the presence of defeat, desertion,

outlawry, and the bitter taunts and curses of his enemies, his magnanimity remained unsubdued, and his confidence in God unshaken. A glorious triumph yet awaited the cause that was now so low. Perish it could not, and with it he knew would revive his now sore-tarnished name and fame.

He stood upon a rock, and the serenity of soul which he enjoyed, while these tempests were raging at his feet, is finely shown in the letters which at that time he addressed to his children—for his wife, the heroic Charlotte Laval, was dead two years, and saw not the evil that came upon her house. “We must follow Jesus Christ,” wrote Coligny (October 16th, 1569), “our Captain, who has marched before us. Men have stripped us of all they could; and if this is still the will of God, we shall be happy, and our condition good, seeing this loss has not happened through any injury we have done to those who have inflicted it, but solely through the hatred they bear toward me, because it has pleased God to make use of me to aid his Church. For the present, it suffices that I admonish and conjure you, in the name of God, to persevere courageously in the study of virtue.”

CHAPTER XII.

SYNOD OF LA ROCHELLE.

Success as Judged by Man and by God—Coligny's Magnanimous Counsels—A New Huguenot Army—Dismay of the Court—Peace of St. Germain-en-Laye—Terms of Treaty—Perfidiousness—Religion on the Battle-field—Synod of La Rochelle—Numbers and Rank of its Members—It Ratifies the Doctrine and Constitution of the French Church as Settled at its First Synod.

WE left Protestantism in France, and its greatest champion, Admiral de Coligny, reeling under what seemed to be a mortal blow. The Prince of Condé was dead; the battle of Montcontour had been lost; the army mostly lay rotting on the field; and a mere handful of soldiers only remained around the standard of their chief. Many who had befriended the cause till now abandoned it in despair, and such as still remained faithful were greatly disheartened, and counselled submission. Catherine de Medici, as we have seen, thinking that now was the hour of opportunity, hastened to deal what she did not doubt would be the finishing blow to the Protestant cause, and to the man who was pre-eminently its chief. It was now, in the midst of these misfortunes, that Coligny towered up, and reached the full stature of his moral greatness; and with him, rising from its ashes, soared up anew the Protestant cause.

Success in the eye of the world is one thing: success in the eye of God is another and a different thing. When men are winning battles, and every day adding to the number of their friends, and the greatness of their honours—"These men," says the world, "are marching on to victory." But when to a cause or to a party there comes defeat after defeat, when friends forsake, and calamities thicken, the world sees nothing but disaster, and prognosticates only ruin. Yet these things may be but the necessary steps to success.

Chastened by these sore dispensations, they who are engaged in the work of God are compelled to turn from man, and to fortify themselves by a yet more entire and exclusive reliance on the Almighty. They cleanse themselves from the vitiating stains of flattery and human praise; they purge out the remaining leaven of selfishness; God's Spirit descends in richer influences upon them; the calm of a celestial power fills their souls; they find that they have been cast down in order that they may be lifted up, and that, instead of ruin, which the world's wise men and their own fears had foretold, they are now nearing the goal, and that it is triumph that awaits them. So was it with Protestantism in France at this hour. The disaster which had overtaken it, and in which its enemies saw only ruin, was but the prelude to its vindicating for itself a higher position than it had ever before attained in that nation.

The heads of the Protestant cause and the captains of the army gathered round Admiral de Coligny, after the battle, but with looks so crestfallen, and speaking in tones so desponding, that it was plain they had given up all as lost. Not so Coligny. The last to unsheathe the sword, he would be the last to return it to its scabbard, nor would he abandon the enterprise so long as a single friend was by his side.

“No,” said Coligny, in answer to the desponding utterances of the men around him, “all is not lost; nothing is lost; we have lost a battle, it is true; but the burial trenches of Montcontour do not contain all the Huguenots. The Protestants of France have not been conquered. Those provinces of the kingdom in which Protestantism has taken the deepest root, and which have but slightly felt the recent reverses, will give us another army.” The Protestants of Germany and England, he reminded them, were their friends, and would send them succours; they must not confine their eye to one point, nor permit their imagination to dwell on one defeat. They must embrace in their survey the whole field; they must not count the soldiers of Protestantism, they must weigh its moral and spiritual forces, and, when they had done so, they would see that there was no cause to despair of its triumph. By these magnanimous words Coligny raised the spirit of his friends, and they resolved to continue the struggle.¹

The result justified the wisdom as well as the courage of the admiral. He made his appeal to the provinces beyond the Loire, where the friends of Protestantism were the most numerous. Kindling into enthusiasm at his call, there flocked to his standard from the mountains of Bearn, from the cities of Dauphine, and the region of the Cevennes, young and stalwart warriors, who promised to defend their faith and liberties till death.² When the spring opened the brave patriot-chief had another army, more numerous and better disciplined than the one he had lost, ready to take the field and strike another blow. The fatal fields of Jarnac and Montcontour were not to be the grave of French Huguenotism.

When the winter had passed, and after some encounters with the enemy, which tested the spirit of his army, Coligny judged it best to march direct on Paris, and make terms under the walls of the capital. The bold project was put in instant execution. The tidings that Coligny was approaching struck the Government with consternation. The court, surrendering itself to the pleasant dream that Protestantism lay buried in the gory mounds of its recent battle-fields, had given itself up to those pleasures which ruin body and soul, those who indulge in them. The court was at its wits' end. Not only was the redoubtable Huguenot chief again in the field, he was on his road to Paris, to

¹ Davila, lib. v., pp. 243, 244.

² Félice, vol. i., p. 193.

demand a reckoning for so many Pacifications broken, and so much blood spilt. The measure which the court adopted to ward off the impending danger was a weak one. They sent the Duke of Anjou—the third son of Catherine de Medici, the same who afterwards ascended the throne under the title of Henry III.—with an army of gallants, to stop Coligny’s march. The stern faces and heavy blows of the mountain Huguenots drove back the emasculated recruits of Anjou. Coligny continued his advance. A few days more and Paris, surrounded by his Huguenots, would be enduring siege. A council of war was immediately held, attended by the King, the Queen-mother, the Duke of Anjou, and the Cardinal of Lorraine. It was resolved, says Davila, to have recourse to the old shift, that namely of offering peace to the Huguenots.

The peace was granted, Davila tells us—and he well knew the secrets of the court—in the hope “that the foreign troops would be sent out of France, and that artifice and opportunity would enable them to take off the heads of the Protestant faction, when the common people would yield, and return to their obedience.”¹ This ending of the matter, by “artifice and opportunity,” the historian goes on to remark, had been long kept in view. Catherine de Medici now came to terms with Coligny, the man whom a little time ago she had proclaimed an outlaw, setting a price upon his head; and on the 8th of August, 1570, the Peace of St. Germain-en-Laye was signed.

The terms of that treaty were unexpectedly favourable. Its general basis was an amnesty for all past offences; the right of the Huguenots to reside in any part of France without being called in question for their religious opinions; liberty of worship in the suburbs of two towns in each province; admissibility of the Protestants to most of the offices of state, and the restoration of all confiscated property. As a guarantee for the faithful execution of the treaty, four cities were put into the hands of the Protestants—La Rochelle, La Charité, Cognac, and Montauban. The torn country had now a little rest; sweet it was for the Huguenots to exchange camps and battle-fields for their peaceful homes. There was one drawback, however, the remembrance of the many Pacifications that had been made only to be broken. This was the third in the space of seven years. Meanwhile the daughter of the Medici held out the olive-branch: but so little was she trusted that none of the Huguenot chiefs presented themselves at court, nor did they even deem themselves secure in their own castles; they retired in a body within the strongly fortified city of La Rochelle.

Davila admits that the Protestants had good grounds for these suspicions. The peace was the gift of the Trojans; and from this time the shadow of the St. Bartholomew massacre begins to darken the historian’s page. “The peace

¹ Davila, lib. v., p. 253.

having been concluded and established,” says he, “the stratagem formed in the minds of the king and queen for bringing the principal Huguenots into the net began now to be carried out, and they sought to compass by policy that which had so often been attempted by war, but which had been always found fruitless and dangerous.”¹ Davila favours us with a glimpse of that policy, which it was hoped would gain what force had not effected. The king “being now come to the age of two-and- twenty, of a resolute nature, a spirit full of resentment, and above all, an absolute dissembler,” scrupulously observed the treaty, and punished the Roman Catholic mobs for their infractions of it in various places, and strove by “other artifices to lull to sleep the suspicions of Coligny and his friends, to gain their entire confidence, and so draw them to court.” Maimbourg’s testimony, which on this head may be entirely trusted, is to the same effect. “But not to dissemble,” says he, “as the queen did in this treaty, there is every appearance that a peace of this kind was not made in good faith on the part of this princess, who had her concealed design, and who granted such things to the Huguenots only to disarm them, and afterwards to surprise those upon whom she wished to be revenged, and especially the admiral, at the first favourable opportunity she should have for it.”²

When from the stormy era at which we are now arrived—the eighth year of the civil wars—we look back to the calm day-break under Lefevre, we are touched with a tender sorrow, and recall, with the din of battle in our ears, the psalms that the reapers, as they rested at mid-day, were wont to sing on the harvest-fields of Meaux. The light of that day-break continued to wax till the morning had passed into almost noon-day. But with the war came an arrest of this most auspicious progress. Piety decayed on the battle-field, and the evangelisation began to retrograde. “Before the wars,” says Félice, “proselytism was conducted on a large scale, and embraced whole cities and provinces; peace and freedom allowed of this; afterwards proselytes were few in number, and obtained with difficulty. How many corpses were there heaped up as barriers between the two communions; how many bitter enmities, and cruel remembrances, watched around the two camps to forbid approach.”³ Still, if the root of that once noble vine which stretched its branches on the one side to the Pyrenees, and on the other to the English sea, is still in the soil of France, we owe it to the heroes of the Huguenot wars. Different circumstances demand the display of different graces. Psalms and hymns became the first Protestants of France. Strong cries to God, trust in his arm, and strivings unto blood formed the worship of the Huguenots. They were

¹ “Cominciarono ad adoporarsi le machine destinate nell’ animo del Rè, e della Reina condurre nella rete i principali Ugonotti.” (Davila, lib. v., p. 254.)

² Maimbourg, *Hist. du CaZwmsme*, lib. vi., p. 453.

³ Félice, vol. i., pp. 195,196.

martyrs, though they died in armour. The former is the lovelier picture, the latter is the grander. In truth, times like those in which Coligny lived, act on the spiritual constitution much as a stern climate acts on the physical. The sickly are dwarfed by it, the robust are nourished into yet greater robustness. The oak, that battles with the winds, shows its boughs sorely gnarled, and its trunk sheathed in a bark of iron, but within there flows a current of living sap, which enables it to live and ripen its acorns through a thousand years. And so of the Christian who is exposed to such tempests as those amid which Coligny moved; what his piety loses in point of external grace, it acquires in respect of an internal strength, which is put forth in acts of faith in God, and in deeds of sacrifice and service to man.

Meanwhile the great winds were holden that they might not blow on the vine of France, and during these two tranquil years a synod of the Reformed Church was held at La Rochelle (1571). This synod marks the acme of Protestantism in France. To borrow a figure from classic times, the doors of the temple of Janus were closed; war's banner was furled; and the Huguenots went up to their strong city of La Rochelle, and held their great convocation within its gates. The synod was presided over by Theodore Beza. Calvin was dead, having gone to the grave just as these troubles were darkening over France; but his place was not unworthily filled by his great successor, the learned and eloquent Beza. The synod was attended by the Queen of Navarre, Jeanne d'Albret, who was accompanied by her son, the Prince of Bearn, the future Henry IV. There were present also Henry, the young Prince of Condé; Gaspard de Coligny, Admiral of France; the Count of Nassau; the flower of the French *noblesse*; the pastors, now a numerous body; the captains of the army, a great many lay deputies, together with a miscellaneous assemblage composed of the city burghers, the vine-dressers of the plains, and the herdsmen of the hills. They sat day by day to receive accounts of the state of Protestantism in the various provinces, and to concert measures for the building up of the Reformed Church in their native land.

We have already related the meeting of the first synod of the French Protestant Church at Paris, in 1559. At that synod were laid the foundations of the Church's polity; her confession of faith was compiled, and her whole order and organisation were settled. Five national synods had assembled in the interval, and this at La Rochelle was the seventh; but neither at this, nor at the five that preceded it, had any alteration of the least importance been made in the creed or in the constitution of the French Church, as agreed on at its first national synod, in 1559. This assembly, so illustrious for the learning, the rank, and the numbers of its members, set the seal of its approval on what the eleven pastors had done at Paris twelve years before. There is no synod like this at La Rochelle, before or since, in the history of the French Protestant Church. It was a breathing-time, short, but beyond measure

refreshing. “The French Church,” says one, “now sat under the apple-tree; God spread a table for her in the presence of her enemies.”

CHAPTER XIII.

THE PROMOTERS OF THE ST. BARTHOLOMEW MASSACRE.

Theocracy and the Punishment of Heresy—The League—Philip II.—Urges Massacre—Position of Catherine de Medici—Hopelessness of Subduing the Huguenots on the Battlefield—Pius V.—His Austerities—Fanaticism— Becomes Chief Inquisitor—His Habits as Pope—His Death—Correspondence of Pius V. with Charles IX. and Catherine de Medici—Massacre distinctly Outlined by the Pope.

THE ever-memorable Synod of La Rochelle has closed its sittings; the noon of Protestantism in France has been reached; and now we have sadly to chronicle the premature decline of a day that promised to be long and brilliant. Already we are within the dark shadow of a great coming catastrophe.

The springs and causes of the St. Bartholomew Massacre are to be sought for outside the limits of the country in which it was enacted. A great conjunction of principles and politics conspired to give birth to a tragedy which yields in horror to no crime that ever startled the world. The first and primary root of this, as of all similar massacres in Christendom, is the divine vicegerency of the Pope. So long as Christendom is held to be a theocracy, rebellion against the law of its divine monarch, in other words heresy, is and must be justly punishable with death.

But, over and above, action in this special direction had been plotted and solemnly enjoined by the Council of Trent. "Roman Catholic Europe," says Gaberel, "was to erase Reformed Europe, and proclaim the two principles—the sovereign authority of the kings in political affairs, and the infallibility of the Pope in religious questions. The right of resisting the temporal, and the right of inquiring into the spiritual, were held to be detestable crimes, which the League wished to banish from the world."¹ At the head of the League was Philip II.; and the sanguinary ferocity of the King of Spain made the vast zeal of the French court look but as lukewarmness. A massacre was then in progress in the Low Countries, which took doubtless the form of war, but yielded its heaps of corpses almost daily, and which thrills us less than the St. Bartholomew only because, instead of consummating its horrors in one terrible week, it extended them over many dismal years. Philip never ceased to urge on Catherine de Medici and Charles IX. to do in France as he was doing in Flanders. These reiterated exhortations were doubtless the more effectual inasmuch as they entirely coincided with what Catherine deemed her truest policy. The hopelessness of overcoming the Huguenots in the field was now becoming very apparent. Three campaigns had been fought, and the position of the Protestants was stronger than at the beginning of the war. No

¹ Gaberel, vol. ii., p. 341.

sooner was one Huguenot army defeated and dispersed, than another and a more powerful took the field. The Prince of Condé had fallen, but his place was filled by a chief of equal rank. The court of France had indulged the hope that if the leaders were cut off the people would grow disheartened, and the contest would languish and die out; but the rapidity with which vacancies were supplied, and disasters repaired, at last convinced the King and Queen-mother that these hopes were futile. They must lay their account with a Huguenot ascendancy at an early day, unless they followed the counsels of Philip of Spain, and by a sudden and sweeping stroke cut off the whole Huguenot race. But the time and the way, as Catherine told Philip, must be left to herself.

At this great crisis of the Papal affairs—for if Huguenotism had triumphed in France it would have carried its victorious arms over Spain and Italy—a higher authority than even Philip of Spain came forward to counsel the steps to be taken—nay, not to counsel only, but to *teach authoritatively* what was DUTY in the matter, and enjoin the performance of that duty under the highest sanctions. This brings the reigning Pontiff upon the scene, and we shall try and make clear Pope Pius V.'s connection with the terrible event we are approaching. It will assist us in understanding this part of history, if we permit his biographers to bring before us the man who bore no inconspicuous part in it.

The St. Bartholomew Massacre was plotted under the Pontificate of Pius V., and enacted under that of his immediate successor, Gregory XIII. Michael Ghislieri (Pius V.) was born in the little town of Bosco, on the plain of Piedmont, in the year 1504. His parents were in humble station. "The genius of the son," says his biographer Gabutius, "fitted him for higher things than the manual labours that occupied his parents. The spirit of God excited him to that mode of life by which he might the more signally serve God and, escaping the snares of earth, attain the heavenly felicity."¹ He was marked from his earliest years by an austere piety. Making St. Dominic, the founder of the Inquisition, his model, and having, it would seem, a natural predilection for this terrible business, he entered a Dominican convent at the age of fourteen. He obeyed, body and soul, the laws of his order. The poverty which his vow enjoined he rigidly practised. Of the alms which he collected he did not retain so much as would buy him a cloak for the winter; and he fortified himself against the heats of summer by practising a severe abstinence. He laboured to make his fellow-monks renounce their slothful habits, their luxurious meals, and their gay attire, and follow the same severe, mortified, and pious life with himself. If not very successful with them, he continued

¹ *De Vita et Rebus Gestis Pii V., Pont. Max.* Auctore Io Antonio Gabutio, Novariensi Presbytero Congregationis Clericorum Regularium S. Pauli. Lib. i., p. 5; Romæ, 1605.

nevertheless to pursue these austerities himself, and soon his fame spread far and near. He was appointed confessor to the Governor of Milan, and this necessitated an occasional journey of twenty miles, which was always performed on foot, with his wallet on his back.¹ On the road he seldom spoke to his companions, “employing his time,” says his biographer, “in reciting prayers or meditating on holy things.”² His devotion to the Roman See, and the zeal with which he combated Protestantism, recommended him to his superiors, and his advancement was rapid. Of several offices which were now in his choice, he gave his decided preference to that of inquisitor, “from his ardent desire,” his biographer tells us, “to exterminate heretics, and extend the Roman Catholic faith.” The district including Como and the neighbouring towns was committed to his care, and he discharged the duties of this fearful office with such indefatigable, and indeed ferocious zeal, as often to imperil his own life. The Duchy of Milan was then being inoculated with “the pernicious and diabolical doctrines,” as Gabutius styles them, of Protestantism; and Michael Ghislieri was pitched upon as the only man fit to cope with the evil. Day and night he perambulated his diocese on the quest for heretics. This was judged too narrow a sphere for an activity so prodigious, and Paul IV., himself one of the greatest of persecutors, nominated Ghislieri to the office of supreme inquisitor. This brought him to Rome; and here, at last, he found a sphere commensurate with the greatness of his zeal. He continued to serve under Pius IV., adding to the congenial office of inquisitor, the scarlet of the cardinalate.³ On the death of Pius IV., Ghislieri was elevated to the Popedom, his chief recommendation in the eyes of his supporters, including Cardinal Borromeo and Philip II., being his inextinguishable zeal for the suppression of heresy. Rome was then in the thick of her battle, and Ghislieri was selected as the fittest man to preside over and infuse new vigour into that institution on which she mainly relied for victory. The future life of Pius V. justified his elevation. His daily fare was as humble, his clothing as mean, his fasts as frequent, and his household arrangements as economical, now that he wore the tiara, as when he was a simple monk. He rose with the first light, he kneeled long in prayer, and often would he mingle his tears with his supplications. He abounded in alms, he forgot injuries, he was kind to his domestics. He might often be seen with naked feet, and head uncovered, his white beard sweeping his breast, walking in procession, and receiving the reverence of the populace as one of the holiest Popes that had ever trodden the streets of Rome.⁴ But one formidable quality did Pius V. conjoin with all this—even an intense, unmitigated detestation of Protestantism, and

¹ *Ibid.*, lib. i., p. 7.

² *Ibid.*, lib. i., p. 8.

³ Gabutius, *Vita Pii V.*, lib. i., cap. 5.

⁴ *Ibid.*, lib. vi., cap. 13–17.

a fixed, inexorable determination to root it out. In his rapid ascent from post to post, he saw the hand of God conducting him to the summit, that there, wielding all the arms, temporal and spiritual, of Christendom, he might discharge, in one terrible stroke, the concentrated vengeance of the Popedom on the hydra of heresy. Every hour of every day he occupied in the execution of what he believed to be his predestined work. He sent money and soldiers to France to carry on the war against the Huguenots. He addressed continual letters to the kings and bishops of the Popish world, inciting them to yet greater zeal in the slaughter of heretics; ever and anon the cry "To massacre!" was sounded forth from the Vatican; but not a doubt had Pius V. that this butchery was well-pleasing to God, and that he himself was the appointed instrument for emptying the vials of wrath upon a system which he regarded as accursed, and believed to be doomed to destruction.

Such was the man who at this era filled the Papal throne. But let us permit Pius V. himself to speak. In 1569, the Pope, despairing of overcoming the French heretics in open war, darkly suggests a way more secret and more sure. "Our zeal," says he, in his letter to the Cardinal of Lorraine, "gives us the right of earnestly exhorting and exciting you to use all your influence for procuring a definite and serious adoption of the measure most proper for bringing about the destruction of the implacable enemies of God and the king."¹ After the victory of Jarnac the French Government acknowledged the help the Pope had given them in winning it, by sending to Rome some Huguenot standards taken on the field, to be displayed in the Lateran. Pius V. replied in a strain of exultation, and laboured to stimulate the court to immediate and remorseless massacre. "The more the Lord has treated you and me with kindness," so wrote he to Charles IX., "the more you ought to take advantage of the opportunity this victory offers to you, for pursuing and destroying all the enemies that still remain; for tearing up entirely all the roots, and even the smallest fibres of the roots, of so terrible and confirmed an evil. For unless they are radically extirpated, they will be found to shoot up again; and, as it has already happened several times, the mischief will reappear when your majesty least expects it. You will bring this about if no consideration for persons, or worldly things, induces you to spare the enemies of God—who have never spared yourself. For you will not succeed in turning away the wrath of God, except by avenging him rigorously on the wretches who have offended him, by inflicting on them the punishment they have deserved."²

These advices, coming from such a quarter, were commands, and they could take no practical shape but that of massacre; and to make it unmistak-

¹ *Epp. Pii V. a Goubau.* The letters of Pius V. were published at Antwerp in 1640, by Francis Goubau, Secretary to the Spanish Embassy at Rome.

² *Epp. Pii V. a Goubau.* This letter is dated 28th March, 1569.

able that this was the shape the Pope meant his counsels to take, he proceeds to cite a case in point from Old Testament history.

“Let your majesty take for example, and never lose sight of, what happened to Saul, King of Israel. He had received the orders of God, by the mouth of the prophet Samuel, to fight and to exterminate the infidel Amalekites, in such a way that he should not spare one in any case, or under any pretext. But he did not obey the will and the voice of God . . . therefore he was deprived of his throne and his life.” If for Saul we read Charles IX., and for the prophet Samuel we substitute Pius V., as the writer clearly intended should be done, what is this but a command addressed to the King of France, on peril of his throne, to massacre all the Huguenots in his realm, without sparing even one? “By this example,” continues the Pope, “God has wished to teach all kings that to neglect the vengeance of outrages done to him is to provoke his wrath and indignation against themselves.”

To Catherine de Medici, Pius V. writes in still plainer terms, as if he knew her wolfish nature, as well as her power over her son, promising her the assistance of Heaven if she would pursue the enemies of the Roman Catholic religion “till they are all massacred,¹ for it is only by the entire extermination of heretics² that the Roman Catholic worship can be restored.”³

There follow letters to the Duke of Anjou, and the Cardinal of Lorraine, and another to the king, all breathing the same sanguinary spirit, and enjoining the same inexorability towards the vanquished heretics.⁴

At Bayonne, in 1565, Catherine met the Duke of Alva, as we have already seen, to consult as to the means of ridding France of heretics. “They agreed at last,” says the contemporary historian Adriani, “in the opinion of the Catholic king, that this great blessing could not have accomplishment save by the death of all the chiefs of the Huguenots, and by a new edition, as the saying was, of *the Sicilian Vespers*.”⁵ “They decided,” says Guizot, “that the deed should be done at Moulins, in Bourbonnes, whither the king was to return. The execution of it was afterwards deferred to the date of the St. Bartholomew, in 1572, at Paris, because of certain suspicions which had been manifested by the Huguenots, and because it was considered easier and more certain to get them all together at Paris than at Moulins.” This is confirmed by Tavannes, who says: “The Kings of France and of Spain, at Bayonne, assisted by the Duke of Alva, resolved on the destruction of the heretics in France and Flanders.”⁶ La Nouë in his *Memoires* bears witness to the

¹ “Ad interneccionem usque.”

² “Deletis omnibus.”

³ Edit. Goubau, livr. iii., p. 136.

⁴ These letters are dated 13th April, 1569.

⁵ Adriani (continuator of Guicciardini) drew his information from the *Journal* of Cosmo de Medici, who died in 1574. (Guizot, vol. iii., p. 376.)

⁶ *Memoires de Tavannes*, p. 282.

“resolution taken at Bayonne with the Duke of Alva, to extirpate the Huguenots of France and the *beggars* of Flanders, which was brought to light by intercepted letters coming from Rome to Spain.”¹

“Catherine de Medici,” says Guizot, “charged Cardinal Santa Croce to assure Pope Pius V. ‘that she and her son had nothing more at heart than to get the admiral and all his confidants together some day, and make a massacre [un macello] of them; but the matter,’ she said, ‘was so difficult, that there was no possibility of promising to do it at one time more than at another.’” “De Thou,” adds the historian, “regards all these facts as certain, and after having added some details, he sums them all up in the words, ‘This is what passed at Bayonne in 1565.’”²

We have it, thus, under the Pope’s own hand, that he enjoined on Charles IX. and Catherine de Medici the entire extermination of the French Protestants, on the battle-field if possible; if not, by means more secret and more sure; we have it on contemporary testimony, Popish and Protestant, that this was what was agreed on between Catherine and Alva at Bayonne; and we also find the Queen-mother, through Santa Croce, promising to the Pope, for herself and for her son, to make a massacre of the Huguenots, although, for obvious reasons, she refuses to bind herself to a day. From this time that policy was entered on which was designed to lead up to the grand *denouement* so unmistakably shadowed forth in the letters of the Pope, and in the agreement between Alva and Catherine.

¹ Guizot, vol. iii., p. 376. Noue, *Discours Polit. et Milit.*, p. 65.

² Guizot, vol. iii., pp. 376, 377.

CHAPTER XIV.

NEGOTIATIONS OF THE COURT WITH THE HUGUENOTS.

Dissimulation on a Grand Scale—Proposed Expedition to Flanders—The Prince of Orange to be Assisted—The Proposal brings Coligny to Court—The King's Reception of him—Proposed Marriage of the King's Sister with the King of Navarre—Jeanne d'Albret comes to Court—Her Sudden Death—Picture of the French Court—Interview between Charles IX. and the Papal Legate—The King's Pledge—His Doublings.

GREAT difficulties, however, lay in the path of the policy arranged between the Queen-mother and Alva. The first was the deep mistrust which the Protestants cherished of Catherine and Charles IX. Not one honest peace had the French court ever made with them. Far more Protestants had perished by massacre during the currency of the various Pacifications, than had fallen by the sword in times of war. Accordingly, when the Peace of St. Germain-en-Laye was made, the Huguenot chiefs, instead of repairing to court, retired within the strongly fortified town of La Rochelle. They must be drawn out; their suspicions must be lulled to sleep, and their chief men assembled in Paris. This was the point to be first effected, and nothing but patience and consummate craft could achieve it.

No ordinary illusion could blind men who had been so often and so deeply duped already. This the French court saw. A new and grander style of stratagem than any heretofore employed was adopted. Professions, promises, and dignities were profusely lavished upon the Huguenots, but, over and above, great schemes of national policy were projected, reaching into the future, embracing the aggrandisement of France, coinciding with the views of the Huguenot chiefs, and requiring their co-operation in order to their successful execution. This gave an air of sincerity to the professions of the court which nothing else could have done, for it was thought impossible that men who were cogitating plans so enlightened, were merely contriving a cunning scheme, and weaving a web of guile. But Catherine was aware that she was too well known for anything less astute to deceive the Huguenot leaders. The proposal of the court was that the young King of Navarre should marry Margaret de Valois, the sister of Charles IX., and that an armed intervention should be made in the Low Countries in aid of the Prince of Orange against Philip of Spain, and that Coligny should be placed at the head of the expedition. These were not new ideas. The marriage had been talked of in Henry II.'s time, while Margaret and Henry of Navarre were yet children; and as regards the intervention in behalf of the Protestants of the Low Countries, that was a project which the Liberal party, which had been forming at the Louvre, headed by Chancellor l'Hopital, had thrown out. They were revived by Catherine as by far her best stratagem: "the King and Queen-mother,"

says Davila, “imparting their private thoughts only to the Duke of Anjou, the Cardinal of Lorraine, the Duke of Guise, and Alberto Gondi, Count of Betz.”¹

Charles IX. instantly dispatched Marshal de Biron to La Rochelle, to negotiate the marriage of his sister with the Prince of Bearn, and to induce his mother, the Queen of Navarre, to repair to court, that the matter might be concluded. The king sent at the same time the Marshal de Cosse to La Rochelle, to broach the project of the Flanders expedition to the Admiral de Coligny, “but in reality,” says Sully, “to observe the proceedings of the Calvinists, to sound their thoughts, and to beget in them that confidence which was absolutely necessary for his own designs.”² After the repeated violations of treaties, Pacifications, and oaths on the part of Catherine and her son, it was no easy matter to overcome the deeply-rooted suspicions of men who had so often smarted from the perfidy of the king and his mother. But Catherine and Charles dissembled on this occasion with an adroitness which even they had never shown before. Admiral de Coligny was the first to be won. He was proverbial for his wariness, but, as sometimes happens, he was now conquered on the point where he was strongest. Setting out from La Rochelle, in despite of the tears and entreaties of his wife, he repaired to Blois (September, 1571), where the court was then residing. On entering the presence of the king, Coligny went on his knee, but Charles raised and embraced him, calling him his father. The return of the warrior to court put him into a transport of joy. “I hold you now,” exclaimed the king; “yes, I hold you, and you shall not leave me again; this is the happiest day of my life.” “It is remarkable,” says the Popish historian Davila, after relating this, “that a king so young should know so perfectly how to dissemble.”³ The Queen-mother, the Dukes of Anjou and Alençon, and all the chief nobles of the court, testified the same joy at the admiral’s return. The king restored him to his pensions and dignities, admitted him of his council, and on each succeeding visit to the Louvre, loaded him with new and more condescending caresses and flatteries.

Charles IX. was at this time often closeted with the admiral. The topic discussed was the expedition to Flanders in aid of William of Orange in his war with Spain. The king listened with great seeming respect to the admiral, and this deference to his sentiments and views, in a matter that lay so near his heart, inspired Coligny doubtless with the confidence he now began to feel in Charles, and the hopes he cherished that the king was beginning to see that there was something nobler for himself than the profligacies in which his mother, for her own vile ends, had reared him, and nobler for France than

¹ Davila, lib. v., p. 254.

² *Mémoires de Sully*, tom. i., livr. i., p. 28; Londres, 1752.

³ Davila, lib. v., p. 262.

to be dragged, for the Pope's pleasure, at the chariot-wheel of Spain. The admiral would thus be able to render signal service to Protestantism in all the countries of Europe, as well as rescue France from the gulf into which it was fast descending; and this hope made him deaf to the warnings, which every day he was receiving from friends, that a great treachery was meditated. And when these warnings were reiterated, louder and plainer, they only drew forth from Coligny, who longed for peace as they only long for it who have often gazed upon the horrors of the stricken field, protestations that rather would he risk massacre—rather would he be dragged as a corpse through the streets of Paris, than rekindle the flames of civil war, and forego the hope of detaching his country from the Spanish alliance.

The admiral, having been completely gained over, used his influence to win Jeanne d'Albret to a like confidence. Ever as the marriage of her son to the daughter of Catherine de Medici was spoken of, a vague but dreadful foreboding oppressed her. She knew how brilliant was the match, and what important consequences might flow from it. It might lead her son up the steps of the throne of France, and that would be tantamount to the establishment of Protestantism in that great kingdom; nevertheless she could not conquer her instinctive recoil from the union. It was a dreadful family to marry into, and she trembled for the principles and the morals of her son. Perefice, afterwards Archbishop of Paris, who cannot be suspected of having made the picture darker than the reality, paints the condition of the French court in one brief but terrible sentence. He says that "impiety, atheism, necromancy, most horrible pollutions, black cowardice, perfidy, poisonings, and assassinations reigned there in a supreme degree." But Catherine de Medici urged and re-urged her invitations. "Satisfy," she wrote to the Queen of Navarre, "the extreme desire we have to see you in this company; you will be loved and honoured therein as accords with reason, and what you are." At last Jeanne d'Albret gave her consent to the marriage, and visited the court at Blois in March, 1572, to arrange preliminaries. The Queen-mother but trifled with and insulted her after she did come. Jeanne wrote to her son that she could make no progress in the affair which had brought her to court. She returned to Paris in the beginning of June. She had not been more than ten days at court, when she sickened and died. The general belief, in which Davila and other Popish historians concur, was that she died of a subtle poison, which acted on the brain alone, and which exuded from certain gloves that had been presented to her. This suspicion was but natural, nevertheless we are inclined to think that a more likely cause was the anxiety and agitation of mind she was then enduring, and which brought on a fever, of which she died on the fifth day.¹

¹ Davila, lib. v., p. 266. Davila says that she died on the fourth day. Sully says, "le cinquieme jour de sa maladie," and that the reputed poisoner was a Florentine named René, perfumer to the Queen-mother. (*Mémoires*, tom. i., livr. i., p. 53.)

She was but little cared for during her illness, and after death her corpse was treated with studied neglect. “This,” says Davila, “was the first thunderbolt of the great tempest.”

The king was dissembling so perfectly that he awakened the suspicions of the Papists. Profound secrecy was absolutely necessary to the success of the plot, and accordingly it was disclosed, in its details, to only two or three whose help was essential to its execution. Meanwhile the admirable acting of the king stumbled the Romanists: it was so like sincerity that they thought it not impossible that it might turn out to be so, and that themselves and not the Huguenots would be the victims of the drama now in progress. The courtiers murmured, the priests were indignant, the populace expected every day to see Charles go over to the “religion;” and neither the Pope nor the King of Spain could comprehend why the king was so bent on marrying his sister to the son of the Protestant Queen of Navarre. That, said the direct and terrible Pius V., was to unite light and darkness, and to join in concord God and Belial. Meanwhile, Charles IX., who could not drop the mask but at the risk of spoiling all, contemplated with a certain pride the perfection of his own dissimulation. “Ah, well,” said he one evening to his mother, “do I not play my *role* well?” “Yes, very well, my son,” replied Catherine, “but it is nothing if it is not maintained to the end.”¹ And Charles did maintain it to the end, and even after the St. Bartholomew, for he was fond of saying with a laugh, “My big sister Margot caught all these Huguenot rebels in the bird-catching style. What has grieved me most is being obliged to dissimulate so long.”²

The marriage, we have said, was the hinge on which the whole plot turned; for ordinary artifices would never have enabled Catherine and Charles to deceive on a great scale. But Pius V. either did not quite comprehend this, or he disapproved of it as a means of bringing about the massacre, for he sent his legate, Cardinal Alexandrine, to Paris to protest against the union. At his interview with the legate, Charles IX. pleaded the distractions of his kingdom, and the exhaustion of his treasury, as his reasons for resorting to the marriage rather than continuing the civil wars. But these excuses the legate would not accept as sufficient. “You are in the right,” replied Charles. “And if I had any other means of taking vengeance on my enemies, I would never consent to this marriage; but I can find no other way.” And he concluded by bidding the legate assure the Pope that all he was doing was with the best intention, and for the aggrandisement of the Roman Catholic religion; and taking a valuable ring from his finger he offered it to Alexandrine as “a pledge of his indefectible obedience to the ‘Holy See,’ and his resolution to implement whatever he had promised to do in opposition to the

¹ Sully, tom. i., livr. i., p. 36.

² Guizot, vol. iii., p. 380.

impiety of these wicked men.”¹ The legate declined the ring on the pretext that the word of so great a king was enough. Nevertheless, after the massacre, Charles IX. sent the ring to Rome, with the words NE PIETAS POSSIT MEA SANGUINE SALVI engraven upon it. Clement VIII., who was auditor and companion to Alexandrino on his mission to France, afterwards told Cardinal d’Ossat that when the news of the St. Bartholomew Massacre reached Rome, the cardinal exclaimed in a transport of joy, “Praise be to God, the King of France has kept his word with me!”²

Action was at the same time taken in the matter of supporting the Protestant war in the Low Countries, for the dissimulation had to be maintained in both its branches. A body of Huguenot soldiers, in which a few Papists were mingled, was raised, placed under Senlis, a comrade of Coligny’s in faith and arms, and dispatched to the aid of William of Orange. Senlis had an interview with Charles IX. before setting out, and received from him money and encouragement. But the same court that sent this regiment to fight against the Duke of Alva, sent secret information to the duke which enabled him to surprise the Protestant soldiers on the march, and cut them in pieces. “I have in my hands,” wrote the Duke of Alva to his master, Philip II., “a letter from the King of France, which would strike you dumb if you were to see it; for the moment it is expedient to say nothing about it.”³ Another piece of equal dissimulation did Charles IX. practise about this time. The little party at the French court which was opposed to the Spanish alliance, and in the same measure favoured the success of William of Orange in Flanders, was headed by the Chancellor l’Hopital. At the very time that Charles IX. was making Coligny believe that he had become a convert to that plan, Chancellor l’Hôpital was deprived of the seals, and banished from court.⁴

The inconsistencies and doublings of Charles IX. are just enough to give some little colour to a theory which has found some advocates—namely, that the St. Bartholomew Massacre was unpremeditated, and that it was a sudden and violent resolve on the part of Catherine de Medici and the Guises, to prevent the king yielding to the influence of Admiral de Coligny, and putting himself at the head of a Huguenot crusade in favour of Protestantism.⁵ Verily

¹ Gabutius, *Vita Pii V.*, lib. iv., cap. 10, p. 150; Romæ. 1605.

² *Lettr. d’Ossat à Roma*, 1599. Besides the letters of Cardinal d’Ossat, ambassador of Henry IV. at Rome, which place the facts given in the text beyond all reasonable doubt, there is also the work of Camillo Capilupi, published at Rome in October, 1572, entitled, *Lo Stratagemma di Carolo IX., Re di Francia, contra gli Ugonotti rebelli di Dio et suoi: descritto dal Signor Camillo Capilupi*. See also Mendham, *Life of Pius V.*, pp. 184–187; Lond., 1832.

³ Guizot, vol. iii., p. 383.

⁴ Sully, tom. i., livr. i., pp. 37, 38.

⁵ The Abbé Anquetil was the first, or among the first, to propound this theory of the massacre in the interests of the Church of Rome. He lays the blame entirely on Catherine, who was alarmed at the confidence her son placed in the admiral. The same theory has since

there never was much danger of this; but though the hesitations of Charles impart some feasibility to the theory, they give it no solid weight whatever. All the historians, Popish and Protestant, who lived nearest the time, and who took every care to inform themselves, with one consent declare that the massacre was premeditated and arranged. It had its origination in the courts of Paris, Madrid, and the Vatican. A chain of well-established facts conducts us to this conclusion. Most of these have already come before us, but some of them yet remain to be told. But even irrespective of these facts, looking at the age, at Charles IX., and at the state of Christendom, can any man believe that the King of France should have seriously contemplated, as he must have done if his professions to the Huguenots were sincere, not only proclaiming toleration in France, but becoming the head of an armed European confederation in behalf of Protestantism? This is wholly inconceivable.

been elaborately set forth by others, especially by the historian Lingard. The main evidence on which it rests is the statement of the Duke of Anjou to his physician Miron, on his journey to Poland, which first appeared in the *Memoires d'Etat de Villeroy*. That statement is exceedingly apocryphal. There is no proof that it ever was made by Anjou. The same is to be said of the reported conversation of Charles IX. with his mother on their return from visiting Coligny. It is so improbable that we cannot believe it. Opposed to these we have the clear and decided testimony of all contemporary historians, Popish and Protestant, confirmed by a hundred facts. The interior mechanism of the plot is shrouded in mystery, but the result establishes premeditation. The several parts of this plan all coincide: each piece falls into its place, each actor does his part, and the one end aimed at is effected, so that we no more can doubt prearrangement than, to use Paley's illustration, we can doubt design when we see a watch. If farther it is asked, Who is the arranger in this case? the argument of *Cui bono?* leaves only one answer possible.

CHAPTER XV.

THE MARRIAGE, AND PREPARATIONS FOR THE MASSACRE.

Auguries—The King of Navarre and his Companions arrive in Paris—The Marriage—The Rejoicings—Character of Pius V.—The Admiral Shot—The King and Court Visit him—Behaviour of the King—Davila on the Plot—The City-gates Closed—Troops introduced into Paris—The Huguenot Quarter Surrounded—Charles IX. Hesitates—Interview between him and his Mother—Shall Navarre and Conde be Massacred?

THE Queen of Navarre, the magnanimous Jeanne d'Albret, was dead; moreover, news had reached Paris that the Protestant troop which had set out to assist the Prince of Orange had been overpowered and slain on the road; and further, the great advocate of toleration, L'Hopital, dismissed from office, had been banished to his country-seat of Vignay. All was going amiss, save the promises and protests of the King and the Queen-mother, and these were growing louder and more emphatic every day. Some of the Huguenots, alarmed by these suspicious occurrences, were escaping from the city, others were giving expression to their fears in prognostications of evil. The Baron de Bosny, father of the celebrated Duke of Sully, said that "if the marriage took place at Paris the wedding favours would be crimson."¹ In the midst of all this the preparations for the marriage went rapidly on.

The King of Navarre arrived in Paris in deep mourning, "attended by eight hundred gentlemen all likewise in mourning." "But," says Margaret de Valois herself, "the nuptials took place a few days afterwards, with such triumph and magnificence as none others of my quality; the King of Navarre and his troop having changed their mourning for very rich and fine clothes, and I being dressed royally, with crown and corset of tufted ermine, all blazing with crown jewels, and the grand blue mantle with a train four ells long, borne by three princesses, the people choking one another down below to see us pass."² The marriage was celebrated on the 18th of August by the Cardinal of Bourbon, in a pavilion erected in front of the principal entrance of Notre Dame. When asked if she accepted Henry of Navarre as her husband, Margaret, it is said, remained silent;³ whereupon the king, putting his hand upon her head, bent it downward, which being interpreted as consent, the ceremony went on. When it was over, the bride and her party entered Notre Dame, and heard mass; meanwhile the bridegroom with Coligny and other friends amused themselves by strolling through the aisles of the cathedral. Gazing up at the flags suspended from the roof, the admiral remarked that one day soon these would be replaced by others more appropriate; he

¹ Sully, tom. i., livr. i., p. 43.

² Guizot, vol. iii., p. 378.

³ Margaret is thought to have had a preference for the young Duke of Guise.

referred, of course, to the Spanish standards to be taken, as he hoped, in the approaching war. The four following days all Paris was occupied with fêtes, ballets, and other public rejoicings. It was during these festivities that the final arrangements were made for striking the great meditated blow.

Before this, however, one of the chief actors passed away, and saw not the work completed which he had so largely helped to bring to pass. On the 5th of May, 1572, Pope Pius V. died. There was scarcely a stormier Pontificate in the history of the Popes than that of the man who descended into the tomb at the very moment when he most wished to live. From the day he ascended the Papal throne till he breathed his last, neither Asia nor Europe had rest. His Pontificate of seven years was spent in raising armaments, organising expeditions, giving orders for battles, and writing letters to sovereigns inciting them to slay to the last man those whom he was pleased to account the enemies of God and of himself. Now it was against the Turk that he hurled his armed legionaries, and now it was against the Lutherans of Germany, the Huguenots of France, and the Calvinists of England and Scotland that he thundered in his character of Vicar of God. Well was it for Christendom that so much of the military *furor* of Pius was discharged in an eastern direction. The Turk became the conducting-rod that drew off the lightnings of the Vatican and helped to shield Europe. Pius' exit from the world was a dreadful one, and bore a striking resemblance to the bloody malady of which the King of France expired so soon thereafter.¹ The Pontiff, however, bore up wonderfully under his disease, which was as painful as it was loathsome.

The death of the Pope opened a free path to the marriage which we have just seen take place. The dispensation from Rome, which Pius V. had refused, his successor Gregory XIII. conceded. Four days after the ceremony—Friday, the 22nd of August—as Coligny was returning on foot from the Louvre, occupied in reading a letter, he was fired at from the window of a house in the Rue des Fosses, St. Germain. One of the three balls with which the assassin had loaded his piece, to make sure of his victim, smashed the two fore-fingers of his right hand, while another lodged in his left arm. The admiral, raising his wounded hand, pointed to the house whence the shot had come. It belonged to an old canon, who had been tutor to Henry, Duke of Guise; but before it could be entered, the assassin had escaped on a horse from the king's stables, which was waiting for him by the cloisters of the Church of L'Auxerrois.² It was Maurevel who had fired the shot, the same who was known as the king's assassin. He had posted himself in one of the

¹ Platina, *Vit. Som. Pont.*, p.300; Venetia, 1600. Both Platina and Gabutius have given us lives of Pius V.; they are little else than a record of battles and bloodshed.

² Sully, tom. i., livr. i., p. 54.

lower rooms of the house, and covering the iron bars of the window with an old cloak, he waited three days for his victim.

The king was playing tennis with the Duke of Guise and Teligny, the admiral's son-in-law, when told of what had happened; Charles threw down his stick, and exclaiming with an oath, "Am I never to have peace?" rushed to his apartment. Guise slunk away, and Teligny went straight to the admiral's house in the adjacent Rue de Betizy.

Meanwhile Ambrose Pare had amputated the two broken fingers of Coligny. Turning to Merlin, his chaplain, who stood by his bedside, the admiral said, "Pray that God may grant me the gift of patience." Seeing Merlin and other friends in tears, he said, "Why do you weep for me, my friends? I reckon myself happy to have received these wounds in the cause of God." Toward midday Marshals de Damville and de Cosse came to see him. To them he protested, "Death affrights me not; but I should like very much to see the king before I die." Damville went to inform his majesty.

About two of the afternoon the King, the Queen-mother, the Duke of Anjou, and a number of the gentlemen of the court entered the apartments of the wounded man. "My dear father," exclaimed Charles, "the hurt is yours, the grief and the outrage mine; but," added he, with his usual oaths, "I will take such vengeance that it shall never be effaced from the memory of man." Coligny drew the king towards him, and commenced an earnest conversation with him, in a low voice, urging the policy he had so often recommended to Charles, that namely of assisting the Prince of Orange, and so lowering Spain and elevating France in the councils of Europe. Catherine de Medici, who did not hear what the admiral was saying to the king, abruptly terminated the interview on pretence that to prolong it would be to exhaust the strength and endanger the life of Coligny. The King and Queen-mother now returned to the Louvre at so rapid a pace that they were unobservant of the salutations of the populace, and even omitted the usual devotions to the Virgin at the corners of the streets. On arriving at the palace a secret consultation was held, after which the king was busied in giving orders, and making up dispatches, with which couriers were sent off to the provinces. When Charles and his suite had left Coligny's hotel, the admiral's friends expressed their surprise and pleasure at the king's affability, and the desire he showed to bring the criminal to justice. "But all these fine appearances," says Brantôme, "afterwards turned to ill, which amazed every one very much how their majesties could perform so counterfeit a part, unless they had previously resolved on this massacre."¹

They began with the admiral, says Davila, "from the apprehension they had of his fierceness, wisdom, and power, fearing that were he alive he would

¹ Brantôme, vol. viii., p. 184.

concert some means for the safety of himself and his confederates.”¹ But as the Popish historian goes on to explain, there was a deeper design in selecting Coligny as the first victim. The Huguenots, they reasoned, would impute the murder of the admiral to the Duke of Guise and his faction, and so would avenge it upon the Guises. This attack upon the Guises would, in its turn, excite the fury of the Roman Catholic mob against the Huguenots. The populace would rise *en masse*, and slaughter the Protestants; and in this saturnalia of blood the enemies of Charles and Catherine would be got rid of, and yet the hand of the court would not be seen in the affair. The notorious Betz, the Florentine tutor of Charles, is credited with the authorship of this diabolically ingenious plan. But the matter had not gone as it was calculated it would. Coligny lived, and so the general *melee* of assassination did not come off. The train had been fired, but the mine did not explode.

The king had already given orders to close all the gates of Paris, save two, which were left open to admit provisions. The pretence was to cut off the escape of Maurevel. If this order could not arrest the flight of the assassin, who was already far away on his fleet steed, it effectually prevented the departure of the Huguenots. Troops were now introduced into the city. The admiral had earnestly asked leave to retire to Chatillon, in the quiet of which place he hoped sooner to recover from his wounds; but the king would not hear of his leaving Paris. He feared the irritation of the wounds that might arise from the journey; he would take care that neither Coligny nor his friends should suffer molestation from the populace. Accordingly, bidding the Protestants lodge all together in Coligny’s quarter,² he appointed a regiment of the Duke of Anjou to guard that part of Paris.³ Thus closely was the net drawn round the Huguenots. These soldiers were afterwards the most zealous and cruel of their murderers.⁴

Friday night and Saturday were spent in consultations on both sides. To a few of the Protestants the designs of the court were now transparent, and they advised an instant and forcible departure from Paris, carrying with them their wounded chief. Their advice was over-ruled mainly through the over-confidence of Teligny in the king’s honour, and only a few of the Huguenots left the city. The deliberations in the Louvre were more anxious still. The blow, it was considered, should be struck immediately, else the Huguenots would escape, or they would betake them to arms. But as the hour drew near the king appears to have wavered. Nature or conscience momentarily awoke. Now that he stood on the precincts of the colossal crime, he seems to have

¹ Davila, lib. v., p. 269.

² Maimbourg says that the former occupants were turned out to make room for the new-comers. (*Hist. du Calvinisme*, livr. vi., p. 469.)

³ Davila, livr. v., p. 270. Mezeray.

⁴ Ag. d’Aubigné, *Mém.*, p. 30.

felt a shudder at the thought of going on; as well he might, fierce, cruel, vindictive though he was. To wade through a sea of blood so deep as that which was about to flow, might well appal even one who had been trained, as Charles had been, to look on blood. It is possible even that the nobleness of Coligny had not been without its effect upon him. The Queen-mother, who had doubtless foreseen this moment of irresolution on the part of her son when the crisis should arrive, was prepared for it. She instantly combated the indecision of Charles with the arguments most fitted to influence his weak mind. She told him that it was now too late to retreat; that the attempt on the admiral's life had aroused the Protestants, that the plans of the court were known to them, and that already messengers from the Huguenots were on their way to Switzerland and Germany, for assistance, and that to hesitate was to be lost. If he had a care for his throne and house he must act; and with a well-feigned dread of the calamities she had so vividly depicted, she is said to have craved leave for herself and her son, the Duke of Anjou, to retire to some place of safety before the storm should burst. This was enough. The idea of being left alone in the midst of all these dangers, without his mother's strong arm to lean upon, was frightful to Charles. He forgot the greatness of the crime in the imminency of his own danger. His vulpine and cowardly nature, incapable of a brave course, was yet capable of a sudden and deadly spring. "He was seized with an eager desire," says Maimbourg, "to execute the resolution already taken in the secret council to massacre all the Huguenots."¹ "Then let Coligny be killed," said Charles, with an oath, "and let not one Huguenot in all France be left to reproach me with the deed."

One other point yet occasioned keen debates in the council. Shall the King of Navarre and the Prince of Conde be slain with the rest of the Huguenots? "The Duke of Guise," says Davila, "was urgent for their death; but the King and the Queen-mother had a horror at embruing their hands in royal blood;"² but it would seem that the resolution of the council was for putting them to death. The Archbishop of Paris, Perefice, and Brantôme inform us that "they were down on the red list" on the ground of its being necessary "to dig up the roots," but were afterwards saved, "as by miracle." Queen Margaret, the newly-married wife of Navarre, throwing herself on her knees before the king and earnestly begging the life of her husband, "the King granted it to her with great difficulty, although she was his good sister."³ Meanwhile, to keep up the delusion to the last, the king rode out on horseback in the afternoon, and the queen had her court circle as usual.

¹ Maimbourg, livr. vi., p. 471.

² Davila, lib. v., p. 271.

³ Perefice, *Hist. de Henri le Grand*—Brantome, vol. i., p. 261.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE MASSACRE OF ST. BARTHOLOMEW.

Final Arrangements—The Tocsin—The First Pistol-shot—Murder of Coligny—His Last Moments—Massacre throughout Paris—Butchery at the Louvre—Sunrise, and what it Revealed—Charles IX. Fires on his Subjects—An Arquebus—The Massacres Extend throughout France—Numbers of the Slain—Variously Computed—Charles IX. Excusing Accuses himself—Reception of the News in Flanders—in England—in Scotland—Arrival of the Escaped at Geneva—Rejoicings at Rome—The Three Frescoes—The St. Bartholomew Medal.

It was now eleven o'clock of Saturday night, and the massacre was to begin at daybreak. Tavannes was sent to bid the Mayor of Paris assemble the citizens, who for some days before had been provided with arms, which they had stored in their houses. To exasperate them, and put them in a mood for this unlimited butchery of their countrymen, in which at first they were somewhat reluctant to engage, they were told that a horrible conspiracy had been discovered, on the part of the Huguenots, to cut off the king and the royal family, and destroy the monarchy and the Roman Catholic religion.¹ The signal for the massacre was to be the tolling of the great bell of the Palace of Justice. As soon as the tocsin should have flung its ominous peal upon the city, they were to hasten to draw chains across the streets, place pickets in the open spaces, and sentinels on the bridges. Orders were also given that at the first sound of the bell torches should be placed in all the windows, and that the Roman Catholics, for distinction, should wear a white scarf on the left arm, and affix a white cross on their hats.

“All was now arranged,” says Maimbourg, “for the carnage;” and they waited with impatience for the break of day, when the tocsin was to sound. In the royal chamber sat Charles IX., the Queen-mother, and the Duke of Anjou. Catherine’s fears lest the king should change his mind at the last minute would not permit her to leave him for one moment. Few words, we may well believe, would pass between the royal personages. The great event that impended could not but weigh heavily upon them. A deep stillness reigned in the apartment; the hours wore wearily away; and the Queen-mother feeling the suspense unbearable, or else afraid, as Maimbourg suggests, that Charles, “greatly disturbed by the idea of the horrible butchery, would revoke the order he had given for it,” anticipated the signal by sending one at two o'clock of the morning to ring the bell of St. Germain l’Auxerois,² which was nearer than that of the Palace of Justice. Scarcely had its first peal startled the silence of the night when a pistol-shot was heard. The king started to his feet, and

¹ Maimbourg, livr. vi., p. 472.

² De Thou, livr. lii.

summoning an attendant he bade him go and stop the massacre.¹ It was too late; the bloody work had begun. The great bell of the Palace had now begun to toll; another moment and every steeple in Paris was sending forth its peal; a hundred tocsins sounded at once; and with the tempest of their clamour there mingled the shouts, oaths, and howlings of the assassins. "I was awakened," says Sully, "three hours after midnight with the ringing of all the bells, and the confused cries of the populace."² Above all were heard the terrible words, "Kill, kill!"

The massacre was to begin with the assassination of Coligny, and that part of the dreadful work had been assigned to the Duke of Guise. The moment he heard the signal, the duke mounted his horse and, accompanied by his brother and 300 gentlemen and soldiers, galloped off for the admiral's lodgings. He found Anjou's guards with their red cloaks, and their lighted matches, posted round it; they gave the duke with his armed retinue instant admission into the court-yard. To slaughter the halberdiers of Navarre, and force open the inner entrance of the admiral's lodgings, was the work of but a few minutes. They next mounted the stairs, while the duke and his gentlemen remained below. Awakened by the noise, the admiral got out of bed, and wrapping his dressing-gown round him and leaning against the wall, he bade Merlin, his minister, join with him in prayer. One of his gentlemen at that moment rushed into the room. "My lord," said he, "God calls us to himself!" "I am prepared to die," replied the admiral; "I need no more the help of men; therefore, farewell, my friends; save yourselves, if it is still possible." They all left him. and escaped by the roof of the house. Téligny, his son-in-law, fleeing in this way was shot, and rolled into the street. A German servant alone remained behind with his master. The door of the chamber was now forced open, and seven of the murderers entered, headed by Behme of Lorraine, and Achille Petrucci of Sienna, creatures of the Duke of Guise. "Art thou Coligny?" said Behme, presenting himself before his victim, and awed by the perfect composure and venerable aspect of the admiral. "I am," replied Coligny; "young man, you ought to respect my grey hairs; but do what you will, you can shorten my life only by a few days." The villain replied by plunging his weapon into the admiral's breast; the rest closing round struck their daggers into him. "Behme," shouted the duke from below, "hast done?" "'Tis all over," cried the assassin from the window. "But M. d'Angoulême," replied the duke, "will not believe it till he see him at his feet." Taking up the corpse, Behme threw it over the window, and as it fell on the pavement, the blood spurted on the faces and clothes, of the two lords. The duke, taking out his handkerchief and wiping the face of the murdered man,

¹ Villeroy, vol. ii., p. 88.

² Sully, Mémoires, tom. i., livr. i., p. 62.

said, "Tis he sure enough," and kicked the corpse in its face. A servant of the Duke of Nevers cut off the head, and carried it to Catherine de Medici and the king. The trunk was exposed for some days to disgusting indignities; the head was embalmed, to be sent to Rome; the bloody trophy was carried as far as Lyons, but there all trace of it disappears.¹

The authors of the plot having respect to the maxim attributed to Alaric, that "thick grass is more easily mown than thin," had gathered the leading Protestants that night, as we have already narrated, into the same quarter where Coligny lodged. The Duke of Guise had kept this quarter as his special preserve; and now, the admiral being dispatched, the guards of Anjou, with a creature of the duke's for their captain, were let loose upon this *battue* of ensnared Huguenots. Their work was done with a summary vengeance, to which the flooded state of the kennels, and the piles of corpses, growing ever larger, bore terrible witness. Over all Paris did the work of massacre by this time extend. Furious bands, armed with guns, pistols, swords, pikes, knives, and all kinds of cruel weapons, rushed through the streets, murdering all they met. They began to thunder at the doors of Protestants, and the terrified inmates, stunned by the uproar, came forth in their night-clothes, and were murdered on their own thresholds. Those who were too affrighted to come abroad, were slaughtered in their bed-rooms and closets, the assassins bursting open all places of concealment, and massacring all who opposed their entrance, and throwing their mangled bodies into the street. The darkness would have been a cover to some, but the lights that blazed in the windows denied even this poor chance of escape to the miserable victims. The Huguenot as he fled through the street, with agonised features, and lacking the protection of the white scarf, was easily recognised, and dispatched without mercy.

The Louvre was that night the scene of a great butchery. Some 200 Protestant noblemen and gentlemen from the provinces had been accommodated with beds in the palace; and although the guests of the king, they had no exemption, but were doomed that night to die with others. They were aroused after midnight, taken out one by one, and made to pass between two rows of halberdiers, who were stationed in the underground galleries. They were hacked in pieces or poniarded on their way, and their corpses being carried forth were, horrible to relate, piled in heaps at the gates of the Louvre. Among those who thus perished were the Count de la Rochefoucault, the Marquis de Renel, the brave Piles—who had so gallantly defended St. Jean

¹ Davila, Maimbourg, De Thou, and others, all agree in these facts.—"After having been subjected, in the course of three centuries, at one time to oblivion, and at others to diverse transferences, these sad relics of a great man, a great Christian, and a great patriot have been resting for the last two-and-twenty years in the very Castle of Châtillon-sur-Loing, his ancestors' own domain having once more become the property of a relative of his family, the Duke of Luxembourg." (Guizot, vol. iii., p. 398; Lond., 1874.)

D'Angely—Francourt, chancellor to the King of Navarre, and others of nearly equal distinction. An appeal to the God of Justice was their only protest against their fate.¹

By-and-by the sun rose; but, alas! who can describe the horrors which the broad light of day disclosed to view? The entire population of the French capital was seen maddened with rage, or aghast with terror. On its wretched streets what tragedies of horror and crime were being enacted; Some were fleeing, others were pursuing; some were supplicating for life, others were responding by the murderous blow, which, if it silenced the cry for mercy, awoke the cry for justice. Old men, and infants in their swaddling clothes, were alike butchered on that awful night. Our very page would weep, were we to record all the atrocities now enacted. Corpses were being precipitated from the roofs and windows, others were being dragged through the streets by the feet, or were piled up in carts, and driven away to be shot into the river. The kennels were running with blood. Guise, Tavannes, and D'Angoulême—traversing the streets on horseback, and raising their voices to their highest pitch, to be audible above the tolling of the bells, the yells of the murderers, and the cries and moanings of the wounded and the dying—were inciting to yet greater fury those whom hate and blood had already transformed into demons. “It is the king’s orders!” cried Guise. “Blood, blood!” shouted out Tavannes. Blood! every kennel was full; the Seine as it rolled through Paris seemed but a river of blood; and the corpses which it was bearing to the ocean were so numerous that the bridges had difficulty in giving them passage, and were in some danger of becoming choked and turning back the stream, and drowning Paris in the blood of its own shedding. Such was the gigantic horror on which the sun of that Sunday morning, the 24th of August, 1572—St. Bartholomew’s Day—looked down.

We have seen how Charles IX. stood shuddering for some moments on the brink of his great crime, and that, had it not been for the stronger will and more daring wickedness of his mother, he might after all have turned back. But when the massacre had commenced, and he had tasted of blood, Charles shuddered no longer—he became as ravenous for slaughter as the lowest of the mob. He and his mother, when it was day, went out on the palace balcony to feast their eyes upon the scene. Some Huguenots were seen struggling in the river, in their efforts to swim across, the boats having been removed. Seizing an arquebus, the king fired on them. “Kill, kill!” he shouted; and making a page sit beside him and load his piece,² he continued the horrible

¹ Davila, lib. v., pp. 272, 273.

² Voltaire states in one of the notes to the *Henriade*, that he heard the Marquis de Tesse say that he had known an old man of ninety, who in his youth had acted as page to Charles IX., and loaded the carbine with which he shot his Protestant subjects.

pastime of murdering his subjects, who were attempting to escape across the Seine, or were seeking refuge at the pitiless gates of his palace.¹

The same night, while the massacres were in progress, Charles sent for the King of Navarre and the Prince de Conde. Receiving them in great anger, he commanded them with oaths to renounce the Protestant faith, threatening them with death as the alternative of refusal. They demurred: whereupon the king gave them three days to make their choice.² His physician, Ambrose Pare, a Protestant, he kept all night in his cabinet, so selfishly careful was he of his own miserable life at the very moment that he was murdering in thousands the flower of his subjects. Pare he also attempted to terrify by oaths and threats into embracing Romanism, telling him that the time was now come when every man in France must become Roman Catholic. So apparent was it that the leading motive of Charles IX. in these great crimes was the dominancy of the Roman faith and the entire extinction of Protestantism.

For seven days the massacres were continued in Paris, and the first three especially with unabating fury. Nor were they confined within the walls of the city. In pursuance of orders sent from the court,³ they were extended to all provinces and cities where Protestants were found. Even villages and chateaux became scenes of carnage. For two months these butcheries were continued throughout the kingdom. Every day during that fearful time the poniard reaped a fresh harvest of victims, and the rivers bore to the sea a new and ghastly burden of corpses. In Rouen above 6,000 perished; at Toulouse some hundreds were hewn to pieces with axes; at Orleans the Papists themselves confessed that they had destroyed 12,000; some said 18,000; and at Lyons not a Protestant escaped. After the gates were closed they fell upon them without mercy; 150 of them were shut up in the archbishop's house, and were cut to pieces in the space of one hour and a half. Some Roman Catholic, more humane than the rest, when he saw the heaps of corpses, exclaimed, "They surely were not men, but devils in the shape of men, who had done this."

The whole number that perished in the massacre cannot be precisely ascertained. According to De Thou there were 2,000 victims in Paris the first day; Agrippa d'Aubigné says 3,000. Brantôme speaks of 4,000 bodies that Charles IX. might have seen floating down the Seine. La Popeliniere reduces them to 1,000. "There is to be found, in the account-books of the city of Paris, a payment to the grave-diggers of the Cemetery of the Innocents, for having interred 1,100 dead bodies stranded at the turns of the Seine near Chaillot,

¹ Maimbourg, livr. vi., p. 478. Brantome, livr. ix., p. 427.—The arquebus is preserved in the museum of the Louvre. Two hundred and twenty years after the St. Bartholomew, Mirabeau brought it out and pointed it at the throne of Louis XVI.—"*visiting the iniquities of the fathers upon the children.*"

² Sully, tom. i., livr. i.

³ Maimbourg, livr. vi., p. 485.

Auteuil, and St. Cloud; it is probable that many corpses were carried still further, and the corpses were not all thrown into the river.”¹ There is a still greater uncertainty touching the number of victims throughout the whole of France. Mezeray computes it at 25,000; De Thou at 30,000; Sully at 70,000; and Perefixe, Archbishop of Paris in the seventeenth century, raises it to 100,000; Davila reduces it to 10,000. Sully, from his access to official documents, and his unimpeachable honour, has been commonly reckoned the highest authority. Not a few municipalities and governors, to their honour, refused to execute the orders of the king. The reply of the Vicompte d'Orte has become famous. “Sire,” wrote he to Charles IX., “among the citizens and garrison of Bayonne, you have many brave soldiers, and loyal subjects, but not one hangman.”²

Blood and falsehood are never far apart. The great crime had been acted and could not be recalled; how was it to be justified? The poor unhappy king had recourse to one dodge after another, verifying the French saying that “to excuse is to accuse one's self.” On the evening of the first day of the massacre, he dispatched messengers to the provinces to announce the death of Coligny, and the slaughters in Paris, attributing everything to the feud which had so long subsisted between Guise and the admiral. A day's reflection convinced the king that the duke would force him to acknowledge his own share in the massacre, and he saw that he must concoct another excuse; he would plead a political necessity. Putting his lie in the form of an appeal to the Almighty, he went, attended by the whole court, to mass, solemnly to thank God for having delivered him from the Protestants; and on his return, holding “a bed of justice,” he professed to unveil to the Parliament a terrible plot which Coligny and the Huguenots had contrived for destroying the king and the royal house, which had left him no alternative but to order the massacre. Although the king's story was not supported by one atom of solid truth, but on the other hand was contradicted by a hundred facts, of which the Parliament was cognisant, the obsequious members sustained the king's accusation, and branded with outlawry and forfeiture the name, the titles, the family, and the estates of Admiral de Coligny. The notorious and brazen-faced Retz was instructed to tell England yet another falsehood, namely, that Coligny was meditating playing the part of Pepin, mayor of the palace, and that the king did a wise and politic thing in nipping the admiral's treason in the bud. To the court of Poland, Charles sent, by his ambassador Montluc, another version of the affair; and to the Swiss yet another; in short, the inconsistencies, prevarications, and contradictions of the unhappy monarch were

¹ Guizot, vol. iii., p. 405.

² Sully, livr. i., p. 74. De Thou, livr. lii., lv.

endless, and attest his guilt not less conclusively than if he had confessed the deed.

Meanwhile, the tidings were travelling over Europe, petrifying some nations with horror, awakening others into delirious and savage joy. When the news of the massacre reached the Spanish army in the Netherlands the exultation was great. The skies resounded with salvoes of cannon; the drums were beat, the trumpets blared, and at night bonfires blazed all round the camp. The reception which England gave the French ambassador was dignified and most significant. Fénelon's description of his first audience after the news of the massacre had arrived is striking. "A gloomy sorrow," says he, "sat on every face; silence, as in the dead of night, reigned through all the chambers of the royal residence. The ladies and courtiers, clad in deep mourning, were ranged on each side; and as I passed by them, in my approach to the queen, not one bestowed on me a favourable look, or made the least return to my salutations."¹ Thus did England show that she held those whom the King of France had barbarously murdered as her brethren.

We turn to Geneva. Geneva was yet more tenderly related to the seventy thousand victims whose bodies covered the plains of France, or lay stranded on the banks of its rivers. It is the 30th of August, 1572. Certain merchants have just arrived at Geneva from Lyons; leaving their pack-horses and bales in charge of the master of their hotel, they mount with all speed the street leading to the Hôtel de Ville, anxiety and grief painted on their faces; "Messieurs," said they to the councillors, "a horrible massacre of our brethren has just taken place at Lyons. In all the villages on our route we have seen the gibbets erected, and blood flowing; it seems that it is the same all over France. Tomorrow, or the day after, you will see those who have escaped the butchery arrive on your frontier." The distressing news spread like lightning through the town; the shops were closed, and the citizens met in companies in the squares. Their experience of the past had taught them the demands which this sad occurrence would make on their benevolence. Indoors the women busied themselves providing clothes, medicines, and abundance of viands for those whom they expected soon to see arrive in hunger and sickness. The magistrates dispatched carriages and litters to the villages in the Pays de Gex; the peasants and the pastors were on the outlook on the frontier to obtain news, and to be ready to succour the first arrivals. Nor had they long to wait. On the 1st of September they beheld certain travellers approaching, pale, exhausted by fatigue, and responding with difficulty to the caresses with which they were overwhelmed. They could hardly believe their own safety, seeing that days before, in every village through which they passed, they had been in imminent danger of death. The number of these arrivals

¹ Fénelon's *Despatches*—*apud* Carte.

rapidly increased; they now showed their wounds, which they had carefully concealed, lest they should thereby be known to belong to the Reformed. They declared that since the 26th of August the fields and villages had been deluged with the blood of their brethren. All of them gave thanks to God that they had been permitted to reach a "land of liberty." Their hearts were full of heaviness, for not one family was complete; when they mustered on the frontier, alas! how many parents, children, and friends were missing! By-and-by this sorrowful group reached the gates of Geneva, and as they advanced along the streets, the citizens contended with each other for the privilege of entertaining those of the travellers who appeared the greatest sufferers. The wounded were conveyed to the houses of the best families, where they were nursed with the most tender care. So ample was the hospitality of the citizens, that the magistrates found it unnecessary to make any public distribution of clothes or victuals.¹

On the suggestion of Theodore Beza, a day of general fasting was observed, and appointed to be repeated every year on St. Bartholomew's Day. On the arrival of the news in Scotland, Knox, now old and worn out with labours, made himself be borne to his pulpit, and "summoning up the remainder of his strength," says McCrie, "he thundered the vengeance of Heaven against that cruel murderer and false traitor, the King of France," and desired Le Croc, the French ambassador, to tell his master that sentence was pronounced against him in Scotland; that the Divine vengeance would never depart from him, nor from his house, if repentance did not ensue; but his name would remain an execration to posterity, and none proceeding from his loins would enjoy his kingdom in peace."²

At Rome, when the news arrived, the joy was boundless. The messenger who carried the despatch was rewarded like one who brings tidings of some great victory,³ and the triumph that followed was such as old pagan Rome might have been proud to celebrate. The news was thundered forth to the inhabitants of the Seven-hilled City by the cannon of St. Angelo, and at night bonfires blazed on the street. Before this great day, Pius V., as we have already seen, slept with the Popes of former times, and his ashes, consigned to the vaults of St. Peter's, waited the more gorgeous tomb that was preparing for them in Santa Maria Maggiore; but Gregory XIII. conducted the rejoicings with even greater splendour than the austere Pius would probably have done. Through the streets of the Eternal City swept, in the full blaze of Pontifical pomp, Gregory and his attendant train of cardinals, bishops, and monks, to the Church of St. Mark, there to offer up prayers and thanksgivings

¹ Gaherel, tom. ii., pp. 321., 322.

² McCrie, *Life of Knox*, vol. ii., p. 217.

³ De Thou informs us that the Cardinal of Lorraine, at that time in Rome, gave the messenger a thousand gold crowns.

to the God of heaven for this great blessing to the See of Rome and the Roman Catholic Church. Over the portico of the church was hung a cloth of purple, on which was a Latin inscription most elegantly embroidered in letters of gold, in which it was distinctly stated that the massacre had occurred after “counsels had been given.”¹ On the following day the Pontiff went in procession to the Church of Minerva, where, after mass, a jubilee was published to all Christendom, “that they might thank God for the slaughter of the enemies of the Church, lately executed in France.” A third time did the Pope go in procession, with his cardinals and all the foreign ambassadors then resident at his court, and after mass in the Church of St. Louis, he accepted homage from the Cardinal of Lorraine, and thanks in the name of the King of France, “for the counsel and help he had given him by his prayers, of which he had found the most wonderful effects.”

But as if all this had not been enough, the Pope caused certain more enduring monuments of the St. Bartholomew to be set up, that not only might the event be held in everlasting remembrance, but his own approval of it be proclaimed to the ages to come. The Pope, says Bonanni, “gave orders for a painting, descriptive of the slaughter of the admiral and his companions, to be made in the hall of the Vatican by Georgio Vasari, as a monument of vindicated religion, and a trophy of exterminated heresy.” These representations form three different frescoes.² The first, in which the admiral is represented as wounded by Maurevel, and carried home, has this inscription—*Gaspar Colignius Amirallius accepto vulnere domum refertur. Greg. XIII., Pontif. Max., 1572.*³ The second, which exhibits Coligny murdered in his own house, with Teligny and others, has these words below it—*Cædes Colignii et sociorum ejus.*⁴ The third, in which the king is represented as hearing the news, is thus entitled—*Pex necem Colignii probate.*⁵

The better to perpetuate the memory of the massacre, Gregory caused a medal to be struck, the device on which, as Bonanni interprets it, inculcates that the St. Bartholomew was the joint result of the Papal counsel and God’s instrumentality. On the one side is a profile of the Pope, surrounded by the words—*Gregorius XIII., Pont. Max., an. I.* On the obverse is seen an angel

¹ *Consiliorum ad rem datorum.* The Author’s authority for this statement is a book in the Bodleian Library which contains an official account of the “Order of Solemn Procession made by the Sovereign Pontiff in the Eternal City of Rome, for the most happy destruction of the Huguenot party.” The book was printed “At Rome by the heirs of Antonio Blado, printers to the Chamber, 1572.”

² When the Author was in the Library of the Vatican a few years ago, he observed that the inscriptions below Vasari’s frescoes had been removed. Other travellers have observed the same thing. On that account, the Author has thought right to give them in the text.

³ “Gaspar Coligny, the Admiral, is carried home wounded. In the Pontificate of Gregory XIII., 1572.”

⁴ “The slaughter of Coligny and his companions.”

⁵ “The king approves Coligny’s slaughter.”

bearing in the one hand a cross, in the other a drawn sword, with which he is smiting a prostrate host of Protestants; and to make all clear, above is the motto—*Ugonottorum strages*, 1572.¹

¹ “The slaughter of the Huguenots, 1572.”—The group before the exterminating angel consists of six figures; of which two are dead warriors, the third is dying, the fourth is trying to make his escape, a woman in the background is holding up her hands in an attitude of horror, and a figure draped as a priest is looking on. The letters F. P. are probably the initials of the artist, Frederic Bonzagna, called “Parmanensis,” from his being a native of Parma.

CHAPTER XVII.

RESURRECTION OF HUGUENOTISM—DEATH OF CHARLES IX.

After the Storm—Revival—Siege of Sancerre—Horrors—Bravery of the Citizens—The Siege Raised—La Rochelle— The Capital of French Protestantism—Its Prosperous Condition—Its Siege—Brave Defence—The Besiegers Compelled to Retire—A Year after St. Bartholomew—Has Coligny Risen from the Dead?—First Anniversary of the St. Bartholomew—The Huguenots Reappear at Court—New Demands—Mortification of the Court—A Politico-Ecclesiastical Confederation formed by the Huguenots—The Tiers Parti—Illness of Charles IX.—His Sweat of Blood—Remorse—His Huguenot Nurse—His Death.

WHEN the terrible storm of the St. Bartholomew Day had passed, men expected to open their eyes on only ruins. The noble vine that had struck its roots so deep in the soil of France, and with a growth so marvellous was sending out its boughs on every side, and promising to fill the land, had been felled to the earth by a cruel and sudden blow, and never again would it lift its branches on high. So thought Charles IX. and the court of France. They had closed the civil wars in the blood of Coligny and his 70,000 fellow-victims. The governments of Spain and Rome did not doubt that Huguenotism had received its death-blow. Congratulations were exchanged between the courts of the Louvre, the Escorial, and the Vatican on the success which had crowned their projects. The Pope, to give enduring expression to these felicitations, struck, as we have seen, a commemorative medal. That medal said, in effect, that Protestantism *had been!* No second medal, of like import, would Gregory XIII., or any of his successors, ever need to issue; for the work had been done once for all; the revolt of Wittemberg and Geneva had been quelled in a common overthrow, and a new era of splendour had dawned on the Popedom.

In proportion to the joy that reigned in the Romanist camp, so was the despondency that weighed upon the spirits of the Reformed. They too, in the first access of their consternation and grief, believed that Protestantism had been fatally smitten. Indeed, the loss which the cause had sustained was tremendous, and seemed irretrievable. The wise counsellors, the valiant warriors, the learned and pious pastors—in short, that whole array of genius, and learning, and influence that adorned Protestantism in France, and which, humanly speaking, were the bulwarks around it— had been swept away by this one terrible blow.

And truly, had French Protestantism been a mere political association, with only earthly bonds to hold its members together, and only earthly motives to inspire them with hope and urge them to action, the St. Bartholomew Massacre would have terminated its career. But the cause was Divine; it drew

its life from hidden sources, and so, flourishing from what both friend and foe believed to be its grave, it stood up anew, prepared to fight ever so many battles and mount ever so many scaffolds, in the faith that it would yet triumph in that land which had been so profusely watered with its blood.

The massacre swept the cities and villages on the plains of France with so unsparring a fury, that in many of these not a Protestant was left breathing; but the mountainous districts were less terribly visited, and these now became the stronghold of Huguenotism. Some fifty towns situated in these parts closed their gates, and stood to their defence. Their inhabitants knew that to admit the agents of the government was simply to offer their throats to the assassins of Charles; and rather than court wholesale butchery, or ignominiously yield, they resolved to fight like men. Some of these cities were hard put to it in the carrying out of this resolution. The sieges of La Rochelle and Sancerre have a terribly tragic interest. The latter, though a small town, held out against the royal forces for more than ten months. Greatly inferior to the enemy in numbers, the citizens laboured under the further disadvantage of lacking arms. They appeared on the ramparts with slings instead of fire-arms; but, unlike their assailants, they defended their cause with hands unstained with murder. "We fight here," was the withering taunt which they flung down upon the myrmidons of Catherine—"We fight here: go and assassinate elsewhere." Famine was more fatal to them than the sword; for while the battle slew only eighty-four of their number, the famine killed not fewer than 500. The straits now endured by the inhabitants of Sancerre recall the miseries of the siege of Jerusalem, or the horrors of Paris in the winter of 1870–71. An eye-witness, Pastor Jean de Lery, has recorded in his Journal the incidents of the siege, and his tale is truly a harrowing one. "The poor people had to feed on dogs, cats, mice, snails, moles, grass, bread made of straw, ground into powder and mixed with pounded slate; they had to consume harness, leather, the parchment of old books, title-deeds, and letters, which they softened by soaking in water." These were the revolting horrors of their *cuisine*. "I have seen on a table," says Lery, "food on which the printed characters were still legible, and you might even read from the pieces lying on the dishes ready to be eaten." The mortality of the young by the famine was frightful; scarce a child under twelve years survived. Their faces grew to be like parchment: their skeleton figures and withered limbs; their glazed eye and dried tongue, which could not even wail, were too horrible for the mother to look on, and thankful she was when death came to terminate the sufferings of her offspring. Even grown men were reduced to skeletons, and wandered like phantoms in the street, where often they dropped down and expired of sheer hunger.¹ Yet that famine could not subdue their

¹ See Laval, vol- iii., pp. 479–481.

resolution. The defence of the town went on, the inhabitants choosing to brave the horrors which they knew rather than, by surrendering to such a foe, expose themselves to horrors which they knew not. A helping hand was at length stretched out to them from the distant Poland. The Protestantism of that country was then in its most flourishing condition, and the Duke of Anjou, Catherine's third son, being a candidate for the vacant throne, the Poles made it a condition that he should ameliorate the state of the French Huguenots, and accordingly the siege of Sancerre was raised.

It was around La Rochelle that the main body of the royal army was drawn. The town was the capital of French Protestantism, and the usual rendezvous of its chiefs. It was a large and opulent city, "fortified after the modern way with moats, walls, bulwarks, and ramparts."¹ It was open to the sea, and the crowd of ships that filled its harbour, and which rivalled in numbers the royal navy, gave token of the enriching commerce of which it was the seat. Its citizens were distinguished by their intelligence, their liberality, and above all, their public spirit. When the massacre broke out, crowds of Protestant gentlemen, as well as of peasants, together with some fifty pastors, fleeing from the sword of the murderers, found refuge within its walls. Thither did the royal forces follow them, shutting in La Rochelle on the land side, while the navy blockaded it by the sea. Nothing dismayed, the citizens closed their gates, hoisted the flag of defiance on their walls, and gave Anjou, who conducted the siege, to understand that the task he had now on hand would not be of so easy execution as a cowardly massacre planned in darkness, like that which had so recently crimsoned all France, and of which he had the credit of being one of the chief instigators. Here he must fight in open day, and with men who were determined that he should enter their city only when it was a mass of ruins. He began to thunder against it with his cannon; the Rochellese were not slow to reply. Devout as well as heroic, before forming on the ramparts they kneeled before the God of battles in their churches, and then with a firm step, and singing the Psalms of David as they marched onward, they mounted the wall, and looked down with faces undismayed upon the long lines of the enemy. The ships thundered from the sea, the troops assailed on land; but despite this double tempest, there was the flag of defiance still waving on the walls of the beleaguered city. They might have capitulated to brave men and soldiers, but to sue for peace from an army of assassins, from the train-bands of a monarch who knew not how to reward men who were the glory of his realm, save by devoting them to the dagger, rather would they die a hundred times. Four long months the battle raged; innumerable mines were dug and exploded; portions of the wall fell in, and the soldiers of Anjou hurried to the breach in the hope of taking the city. It

¹ Davila, lib. v.

was now only that they realised the full extent of the difficulty. The forest of pikes on which they were received, and the deadly volleys poured into them, sent them staggering down the breach and back to the camp. Not fewer than twenty-nine times did the besiegers attempt to carry La Rochelle by storm; but each time they were repulsed,¹ and forced to retreat, leaving a thick trail of dead and wounded to mark their track. Thus did this single town heroically withstand the entire military power of the government. The Duke of Anjou saw his army dwindling away. Twenty-nine fatal repulses had greatly thinned its ranks. The siege made no progress. The Rochellese still scowled defiance from the summit of their ruined defences. What was to be done?

At that moment a messenger arrived in the camp with tidings that the Duke of Anjou had been elected to the throne of Poland. One cannot but wonder that a nation so brave, and so favourably disposed as the Poles then were towards Protestantism, should have made choice of a creature so paltry, cowardly, and vicious to reign over them. But the occurrence furnished the duke with a pretext of which he was but too glad to avail himself for quitting a city which he was now convinced he never would be able to take. Thus did deliverance come to La Rochelle. The blood spilt in its defence had not been shed in vain. The Rochellese had maintained their independence; they had rendered a service to the Protestantism of Europe; they had avenged in part the St. Bartholomew; they had raised the renown of the Huguenot arms; and now that the besiegers were gone, they set about rebuilding their fallen ramparts, and repairing the injuries their city had sustained; and they had the satisfaction of seeing the flow of political and commercial prosperity, which had been so rudely interrupted, gradually return.

By the time these transactions were terminated, a year wellnigh had elapsed since the great massacre. Catherine and Charles could now calculate what they had gained by this enormous crime. Much had France lost abroad, for though Catherine strove by enormous lying to persuade the world that she had not done the deed, or at least that the government had been forced in self-defence to do it, she could get no one to believe her. To compensate for the loss of prestige and influence abroad, what had she gained at home? Literally nothing. The Huguenots in all parts of France were coming forth from their hiding-places; important towns were defying the royal arms; whole districts were Protestant; and the demands of the Huguenots were once more beginning to be heard, loud and firm, as ever. What did all this mean? Had not Alva and Catherine dug the grave of Huguenotism? Had not Charles assisted at its burial? and had not the Pope set up its gravestone? What right then had the Huguenots to be seen any more in France? Had Coligny risen from the dead, with his mountain Huguenots, who had chased Anjou back to

¹ Maimbourg, lib. vi., p. 489.

Paris, and compelled Charles to sign the Peace of St. Germain? Verily it seemed as if it were so.

A yet greater humiliation awaited the court. When the 24th of August, 1573—the anniversary of the massacre—came round, the Huguenots selected the day to meet and draw up new demands, which they were to present to the government.

Obtaining an interview with Charles and his mother, the delegates boldly demanded, in the name of the whole body of the Protestants, to be replaced in the position they occupied before St. Bartholomew's Day, and to have back all the privileges of the Pacification of 1570. The king listened in mute stupefaction. Catherine, pale with anger, made answer with a haughtiness that ill became her position. "What!" said she, "although the Prince of Condé had been still alive, and in the field with 20,000 horse and 50,000 foot, he would not have dared to ask half of what you now demand." But the Queen-mother had to digest her mortification as best she could. Her troops had been worsted; her kingdom was full of anarchy; discord reigned in the very palace; her third son, the only one she loved, was on the point of leaving her for Poland; there were none around her whom she could trust; and certainly there was no one who trusted her; the only policy open to her, therefore, was one of conciliation. Hedged in, she was made to feel that her way was a hard one. The St. Bartholomew Massacre was becoming bitter even to its authors, and Catherine now saw that she would have to repeat it not once, but many times, before she could erase the "religion," restore the glories of the Roman Catholic worship in France, and feel herself firmly seated in the government of the country.

To the still further dismay of the court, the Protestants took a step in advance. Portentous theories of a social kind began at this time to lift up their heads in France. The infatuated daughter of the Medici thought that, could she extirpate Protestantism, Roman Catholicism would be left in quiet possession of the land; little did she foresee the strange doctrines—foreshadowings of those of 1789, and of the Commune of still later days—that were so soon to start up and fiercely claim to share supremacy with the Church.

The Huguenots of the sixteenth century did not indeed espouse the new opinions which struck at the basis of government as it was then settled, but they acted upon them so far as to set up a distinct politico-ecclesiastical confederation. The objects aimed at in this new association were those of self-government and mutual defence. A certain number of citizens were selected in each of the Huguenot towns. These formed a governing body in all matters appertaining to the Protestants. They were, in short, so many distinct Protestant municipalities, analogous to those cities of the Middle Ages which, although subject to the sway of the feudal lord, had their own independent municipal government. Every six months, delegates from these

several municipalities met together, and constituted a supreme council. This council had power to impose taxes, to administer justice, and, when threatened with violence by the government, to raise soldiers and carry on war. This was a State within a State. The propriety of the step is open to question, but it is not to be hastily condemned. The French Government had abdicated its functions. It neither respected the property nor defended the lives of the Huguenots. It neither executed the laws of the State in their behalf, nor fulfilled a moment longer than it had the power to break them the special treaties into which it had entered. So far from redressing their wrongs, it was the foremost party to inflict wrong and outrage upon them. In short, society in that unhappy country was dissolved, and in so unusual a state of things, it were hard to deny the Protestants the right to make the best arrangements they could for the defence of their natural and social rights.

At the court even there now arose a party that threw its shield over the Huguenots. That party was known as the *Politiques* or *Tiers Parti*.¹ It was composed mostly of men who were the disciples of the great Chancellor de l'Hôpital, whose views were so far in advance of the age in which he lived, and whose reforms in law and the administration of justice made him one of the pioneers of better and more tolerant times. The chancellor was now dead—happily for himself, before the extinction of so many names which were the glory of his country—but his liberal opinions survived in a small party which was headed by the three sons of the Constable Montmorency, and the Marshals Cose and Biron. These men were not Huguenots; on the contrary, they were Romanists, but they abhorred the policy of extermination pursued toward the Protestants, and they lamented the strifes which were wasting the strength, lowering the character, and extinguishing the glory of France. Though living in an age not by any means fastidious, the spectacle of the court—now become a horde of poisoners, murderers, and harlots—filled them with disgust. They wished to bring back something like national feeling and decency of manners to their country. Casting about if haply there were any left who might aid them in their schemes, they offered their alliance to the Huguenots. They meant to make a beginning by expelling the swarm of foreigners which Catherine had gathered round her. Italians and Spaniards filled the offices at court, and in return for their rich pensions rendered no service but flattery, and taught no arts but those of magic and assassination. The leaders of the *Tiers Parti* hoped by the assistance of the Huguenots to expel these creatures from the government which they had monopolised, and to restore a national *regime*, liberal and tolerant, and such as might heal the deep wounds of their country, and recover for France the place she had lost in Europe. The existence of this party was known to Catherine, and she had

¹ Davila, lib. v.

divined, too, the cleansing they meant to make in the Augean stable of the Louvre. Such a reformation not being at all to her taste, she began again to draw toward the Huguenots. Thus wonderfully were they shielded.

There followed a few years of dubious policy on the part of Catherine, of fruitless schemes on the part of the *Politiques*, and of uncertain prospects to all parties. While matters were hanging thus in the balance, Charles IX. died. His life had been full of excitement, of base pleasures, and of bloody crimes, and his death was full of horrors. But as the curtain is about to drop, a ray—a solitary ray—is seen to shoot across the darkness. No long time after the perpetration of the massacre, Charles IX. began to be visited with remorse. The awful scene would not quit his memory. By day, whether engaged in business or mingling in the gaities of the court, the sights and sounds of the massacre would rise unbidden before his imagination; and at night its terrors would return in his dreams. As he lay in his bed, he would start up from broken slumber, crying out, “Blood, blood!” Not many days after the massacre, there came a flock of ravens and alighted upon the roof of the Louvre. As they flitted to and fro they filled the air with their dismal croakings. This would have given no uneasiness to most people; but the occupants of the Louvre had guilty consciences. The impieties and witchcrafts in which they lived had made them extremely superstitious, and they saw in the ravens other creatures than they seemed, and heard in their screams more terrible sounds than merely earthly ones. The ravens were driven away; the next day, at the same hour, they returned, and so did they for many days in succession. There, duly at the appointed time, were the sable visitants of the Louvre, performing their gyrations round the roofs and chimneys of the ill-omened palace, and making its courts resound with the echoes of their horrid cawings. This did not tend to lighten the melancholy of the king.

One night he awoke with fearful sounds in his ears. It seemed—so he thought—that a dreadful fight was going on in the city. There were shoutings and shrieks and curses, and mingling with these were the tocsin’s knell and the sharp ring of fire-arms—in short, all those dismal noises which had filled Paris on the night of the massacre. A messenger was dispatched to ascertain the cause of the uproar. He returned to say that all was at peace in the city, and that the sounds which had so terrified the king were wholly imaginary. These incessant apprehensions brought on at last an illness. The king’s constitution, sickly from the first, had been drained of any original vigour it ever possessed by the vicious indulgences in which he lived, and into which his mother, for her own vile ends, had drawn him; and now his decline was accelerated by the agonies of remorse—the Nemesis of the St. Bartholomew. Charles was rapidly approaching the grave. It was now that a malady of a strange and frightful kind seized upon him. Blood began to ooze from all the pores of his body. On awakening in the morning his person would be wet all

over with what appeared a sweat of blood, and a crimson mark on the bed-clothes would show where he had lain. Mignet and other historians have given us most affecting accounts of the king's last hours, but we content ourselves with an extract from the old historian Estoile. And be it known that the man who stipulated, when giving orders for the St. Bartholomew Massacre, that not a single Huguenot should be left alive to reproach him with the deed, was waited upon on his death-bed by a Huguenot nurse! "As she seated herself on a chest," says Estoile, "and was beginning to doze, she heard the king moan and weep and sigh. She came gently to his bedside, and adjusting the bed-clothes, the king began to speak to her; and heaving a deep sigh, and while the tears poured down, and sobs choked his utterance, he said, 'Ah, nurse, dear nurse, what blood, what murders! Ah, I have followed bad advice. Oh, my God, forgive me! Have pity on me, if it please thee. I do not know what will become of me. What shall I do? I am lost; I see it plainly.' Then the nurse said to him, 'Sire, may the murders be on those who made you do them; and since you do not consent to them, and are sorry for them, believe that God will not impute them to you, but will cover them with the robe of his Son's justice. To him alone you must address yourself.'"

Charles IX. died on the 30th of May, 1574, just twenty-one months after the St. Bartholomew Massacre, having lived twenty-five years and reigned fourteen.¹

¹ "Mourut de chagrin et de langueur en la fleur de son age." (Maimbourg, lib. vi., p. 490.)



FACSIMILES OF MEDALS STRUCK IN ROME AND PARIS IN HONOUR OF THE ST. BARTHOLOMEW MASSACRE.

EXPLANATION OF THE MEDALS.

1. St. Bartholomew Medal. (described in text.)

2. Hercules and the Hydra. Hercules, who represents Charles IX., says, *Ne ferrum temnat simul ignibus obsto*—viz., “If he does not fear the sword I will meet him with fire.” The hydra symbolises heresy, which, contemning the sword of justice, is to be assailed by war and the stake.

3. Hercules and the Columns. Hercules bore two columns plucked from the ground to be carried farther, even to the Indies; hence the words, *Plus ultra*—“Yet farther.” Hence the medal in honour of Charles IX. with the motto, “He shall be greater than Hercules.”

4. Charles IX. is seen on his throne; in his left hand the sceptre of justice, in his right a sword twined round with palm, in sign of victory. Some heads and bodies lie at his feet. Around is the motto, “Valour against rebels.”

CHAPTER XVIII.

NEW PERSECUTIONS—REIGN AND DEATH OF HENRY III.

Henry III.—A Sensualist and Tyrant—Persecuting Edict—Henry of Navarre—His Character—The Protestants Recover their Rights—The League—War—Henry III. Joins the League—Gallantry of “Henry of the White Plume”—Dissension between Henry III. and the Duke of Guise—Murder of Guise—Murder of the Cardinal of Lorraine—Henry III. and Henry of Navarre Unite their Arms—March on Paris—Henry III. Assassinated—Death of Catherine de Medici.

THE Duke of Anjou, the heir to the throne, was in Poland when Charles IX. died. He had been elected king of that country, as we have stated, but he had already brought it to the brink of civil war by the violations of his coronation oath. When he heard that his brother was dead, he stole out of Poland, hurried back to Paris, and became King of France under the title of Henry III. This prince was shamelessly vicious, and beyond measure effeminate. Neglecting business, he would shut himself up for days together with a select band of youths, debauchees like himself, and pass the time in orgies which shocked even the men of that age. He was the tyrant and the bigot, as well as the voluptuary, and the ascetic fit usually alternated at short intervals with the sensual one. He passed from the beast to the monk, and from the monk to the beast, but never by any chance was he the man. It is true we find no St. Bartholomew in this reign, but that was because the first had made a second impossible. That the will was not wanting is attested by the edict with which Henry opened his reign, and which commanded all his subjects to conform to the religion of Rome or quit the kingdom. His mother, Catherine de Medici, still held the regency; and we trace her hand in this tyrannous decree, which happily the government had not the power to enforce. Its impolicy was great, and it instantly recoiled upon the king, for it advertised the Huguenots that the dagger of the St Bartholomew was still suspended above their heads, and that they should commit a great mistake if they did not take effectual measures against a second surprise. Accordingly, they were careful not to let the hour of weakness to the court pass without strengthening their own position.

Coligny had fallen, but Henry of Navarre now came to the front. He lacked the ripened wisdom, the steady persistency, and deep religious convictions of the great admiral; but he was young, chivalrous, heartily with the Protestants, and full of dash in the field. His soldiers never feared to follow wherever they saw his white plume waving “amidst the ranks of war.” The Protestants were further reinforced by the accession of the *Politiques*. These men cared nothing for the “religion,” but they cared something for the honour of France, and they were resolved to spare no pains to lift it out of the mire

into which Catherine and her allies had dragged it. At the head of this party was the Duke of Alençon, the youngest brother of the king. This combination of parties, formed in the spring of 1575, brought fresh courage to the Huguenots. They now saw their cause espoused by two princes of the blood, and their attitude was such as thoroughly to intimidate the King and Queen-mother. Never before had the Protestants presented a bolder front or made larger demands, and bitter as the mortification must have been, the court had nothing for it but to grant all the concessions asked. Passing over certain matters of a political nature, it was agreed that the public exercise of the Reformed religion should be authorised throughout the kingdom; that the provincial Parliaments should consist of an equal number of Roman Catholics and Protestants; that all sentences passed against the Huguenots should be annulled; that eight towns should be placed in their hands as a material guarantee; that they should have a right to open schools, and to hold synods; and that the States-General should meet within six months to ratify this agreement. This treaty was signed May 6th, 1576. Thus within four years after the St. Bartholomew Massacre, the Protestants, whom it was supposed that that massacre had exterminated, had all their former rights conceded to them, and in ampler measure.

The Roman Catholics opened their eyes in astonishment. Protestant schools; Protestant congregations; Protestant synods! They already saw all France Protestant. Taking the alarm, they promptly formed themselves into an organisation, which has since become famous in history under the name of "The League." The immediate aim of the League was the prevention of the treaty just signed; its ulterior and main object was the extirpation, root and branch, of the Huguenots. Those who were enrolled in it bound themselves by oath to support it with their goods and lives. Its foremost man was the Duke of Guise; its back-bone was the ferocious rabble of Paris; it found zealous and powerful advocates in the numerous Jesuit fraternities of France; the duty of adhesion to it was vociferously preached from the Roman Catholic pulpits, and still more persuasively, if less noisily, urged in all the confessionals; and we do not wonder that, with such a variety of agency to give it importance, the League before many months had passed numbered not fewer than 30,000 members, and from being restricted to one province, as at the beginning, it extended over all the kingdom. A clause was afterwards added to the effect that no one should be suffered to ascend the throne of France who professed or tolerated the detestable opinions of the Huguenots, and that they should have recourse to arms to carry out the ends of the League. Thus were the flames of war again lighted in France.

The north and east of the kingdom declared in favour of the League, the towns in the south and west ranged themselves beneath the standard of Navarre. The king was uncertain which of the two parties he should join.

Roused suddenly from his sensualities, craven in spirit, clouded in understanding, and fallen in popular esteem, the unhappy Henry saw but few followers around him. Navarre offered to rally the Huguenots round him, and support the crown, would he only declare on their side. Henry hesitated; at last he threw himself into the arms of the League, and, to cement the union between himself and them, he revoked all the privileges of the Protestants, and commanded them to abjure their religion or leave the kingdom. The treaty so recently framed was swept away. The war was resumed with more bitterness than ever. It was now that the brilliant military genius of Navarre, "Henry of the White Plume," began to blaze forth. Skilful to plan, cool and prompt to execute, never hesitating to carry his white plume into the thick of the fight, and never failing to bring it out victoriously, Henry held his own in the presence of the armies of the king and Guise. The war watered afresh with blood the soil so often and so profusely watered before, but it was without decisive results on either side. One thing it made evident, namely, that the main object of the League was to wrest the sceptre from the hands of Henry III., to bar the succession of Henry of Navarre, the next heir, and place the Duke of Guise upon the throne, and so grasp the destinies of France.

The unhappy country did not yet know rest; for if there was now a cessation of hostilities between the Roman Catholics and the Huguenots, a bitter strife broke out between the king and Guise. The duke aspired to the crown. He was the popular idol; the mob and the army were on his side, and knowing this, he was demeaning himself with great haughtiness. The contempt he felt for the effeminacy and essential baseness of Henry III., he did not fail to express. The king was every day losing ground, and the prospects of the duke were in the same proportion brightening. The duke at last ventured to come to Paris with an army, and Henry narrowly escaped being imprisoned and slain in his own capital. Delaying the entrance of the duke's soldiers by barricades, the first ever seen in Paris, he found time to flee, and taking refuge in the Castle of Blois, he left Guise in possession of the capital. The duke did not at once proclaim himself king; he thought good to do the thing by halves; he got himself made lieutenant of the kingdom, holding himself, at the same time, on excellent terms of friendship with Henry. Henry on his part met the duke's hypocrisy with cool premeditated treachery. He pressed him warmly to visit him at his Castle of Blois. His friends told him that if he went he would never return; but he made light of all warnings, saying, with an air that expressed his opinion of the king's courage, "He dare not." To the Castle of Blois he went.

The king had summoned a council at the early hour of eight o'clock to meet the duke. While the members were assembling, Guise had arrived, and was sauntering carelessly in the hall, when a servant entered with a message that the king wished to see him in his bed-room. To reach the apartment in

question the duke had to pass through an ante-chamber. In this apartment had previously been posted a strong body of men-at-arms. The duke started when his eye fell on the glittering halberds and the scowling faces of the men; but disdainingly retreat he passed on. His hand was already on the curtain which separated the antechamber from the royal bed-room, with intent to draw it aside and enter, when a soldier struck his dagger into him. The duke sharply faced his assailants, but only to receive another and another stroke. He grappled with the men, and so great was his strength that he bore them with himself to the floor, where, after struggling a few minutes, he extricated himself, though covered with wounds. He was able to lift the curtain, and stagger into the room, where, falling at the foot of the bed, he expired in the presence of the king. Henry, getting up, looked at the corpse, and kicked it with his foot.

The Queen-mother was also at the Castle of Blois. Sick and dying, she lay in one of the lower apartments. The king instantly descended to visit her. "Madam," he said, "congratulate me, for I am again King of France, seeing I have this morning slain the King of Paris." The tidings pleased Catherine, but she reminded her son that the old fox, the uncle of the duke, still lived, and that the morning's work could not be considered complete till he too was dispatched. The Cardinal of Lorraine, who had lived through all these bloody transactions, was by the royal orders speedily apprehended and slain. To prevent the superstitious respect of the populace to the bodies of the cardinal and the duke, their corpses were tied by a rope, let down through a window into a heap of quicklime, and when consumed, their ashes were scattered to the winds. Such was the end of these ambitious men.¹ Father, son, and uncle had been bloody men, and their grey hairs were brought down to the grave with blood.

These deeds brought no stability to Henry's power. Calamity after calamity came upon him in rapid succession. The news of his crime spread horror through France. The Roman Catholic population of the towns rose in insurrection, enraged at the death of their favourite, and the League took care to fan their fury. The Sorbonne released the subjects of the kingdom from allegiance to Henry. The Parliament of Paris declared him deposed from the throne. The Pope, dealing him the unkindest cut of all, excommunicated him. Within a year of the duke's death a provisional government, with a younger brother of Guise's at its head, was installed at the Hotel de Ville. Henry, appalled by this outburst of indignation, fled to Tours, where such of the nobility as adhered to the royalist cause, with 2,000 soldiers, gathered round him.

This force was not at all adequate to cope with the army of the League, and the king had nothing for it but to accept the hand which Henry of Navarre

¹ Laval, vol. iv., p. 530.

held out to him, and which he had aforesaid rejected. Considering that Henry, as Duke of Anjou, had been one of the chief instigators of the St. Bartholomew Massacre, it must have cost him, one would imagine, a severe struggle of feeling to accept the aid of the Huguenots; and not less must they have felt it, we should think, unseemly and anomalous to ally their cause with that of the murderer of their brethren. But the flower of the Huguenots were in their grave; the King of Navarre was not the high-minded hero that Coligny had been. We find now a lower type of Huguenotism than before the St. Bartholomew Massacre; so the alliance was struck, and the two armies, the royalist and the Huguenot, were now under the same standard. Here was a new and strange arrangement of parties in France. The League had become the champion of the democracy against the throne, and the Huguenots rallied for the throne against the democracy. The united army, with the two Henries at its head, now began its march upon Paris; the forces of the League, now inferior to the enemy, retreating before them. While on their march the king and Navarre learned that the Pope had fulminated excommunication against them, designating them "the two sons of wrath," and consigning them, "in the name of the Eternal King," to "the company of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram," and "to the devil and his angels." The weak superstitious Henry III. was so terrified that for two days he ate no food. "Cheer up, brother," said the more valorous Henry of Navarre, "Rome's bolts don't hurt kings when they conquer." Despite the Papal bull, the march to Paris was continued. King Henry, with his soldiers, was now encamped at St. Cloud; and Navarre, with his Huguenots, had taken up his position at Meudon. It seemed as if the last hour of the League had come, and that Paris must surrender. The Protestants were overjoyed. But the alliance between the royalist and Huguenot arms was not to prosper. The bull of the Pope was, after all, destined to bear fruit. It awoke all the pulpits in Paris, which began to thunder against excommunicated tyrants, and to urge the sacred duty of taking them off; and not in vain, for a monk of the name of Jacques Clement offered himself to perform the holy yet perilous deed. Having prepared himself by fasting and absolution, this man, under pretence of carrying a letter, which he would give into no hands but those of the king himself, penetrated into the royal tent, and plunged his dagger into Henry. The League was saved, the illusions of the Huguenots were dispelled, and there followed a sudden shifting of the scenes in France. With Henry III. the line of Valois became extinct. The race had given thirteen sovereigns to France, and filled the throne during 261 years.

The last Valois has fallen by the dagger. Only seventeen years have elapsed since the St. Bartholomew Massacre, and yet the authors of that terrible tragedy are all dead, and all of them, with one exception, have died by violence. Charles IX., smitten with a strange and fearful malady, expired in

torments. The Duke of Guise was massacred in the Castle of Blois, the king kicking his dead body as he had done the corpse of Coligny. The Cardinal of Lorraine was assassinated in prison; and Henry III. met his death in his own tent as we have just narrated, by the hand of a monk. The two greatest criminals in this band of great criminals were the last to be overtaken by vengeance. Catherine de Medici died at the Castle of Blois twelve days after the murder of the Duke of Guise, as little cared for in her last hours as if she had been the poorest peasant in all France; and when she had breathed her last, "they took no more heed of her," says Estoile, "than of a dead goat." She lived to witness the failure of all her schemes, the punishment of all her partners in guilt, and to see her dynasty, which she had laboured to prop up by so many dark intrigues and bloody crimes, on the eve of extinction. And when at last she went to the grave, it was amid the execrations of all parties. "We are in a great strait about this bad woman," said a Romanist preacher when announcing her death to his congregation; "if any of you by chance wish, out of charity, to give her a *pater* or an *ave*, it may perhaps do her some good." Catherine de Medici died in the seventieth year of her age; during thirty of which she held the regency of France. Her estates and legacies were all swallowed up by her debts.¹

¹ *Inventaire des Meubles de Catherine de Medicis*. Par Edmond Bonnaffé. Pages 3, 4. Paris, 1874. (From old MS. in Bib. Nationale.)

CHAPTER XIX.

HENRY IV. AND THE EDICT OF NANTES.

Henry IV.—Birth, and Rearing—Assumes the Crown—Has to Fight for the Kingdom—Victory at Dieppe—Victory at Ivry—Henry's Vacillation—His Double Policy—Wrongs of the Huguenots—Henry turns towards Rome—Sully and Duplessis—Their Different Counsel—Henry's Abjuration—Protestant Organisation—The Edict of Nantes—Peace—Henry as a Statesman—His Foreign Policy—Proposed Campaign against Austria—His Forebodings—His Assassination—His Character.

THE dagger of Jacques Clement had transferred the crown of France from the House of Valois to that of Bourbon. Henry III. being now dead, Henry of Navarre, the Knight of the White Plume, ascended the throne by succession. The French historians paint in glowing colours the manly grace of his person, his feats of valour in the field, and his acts of statesmanship in the cabinet. They pronounce him the greatest of their monarchs, and his reign the most glorious in their annals. We must advance a little further into our subject before we can explain the difficulty we feel in accepting this eulogium as fully warranted.

Henry was born in the old Castle of Pau, in Bearn, and was descended in a direct line from Robert, the sixth son of Saint Louis. The boy, the instant of his birth, was carried to his grandfather, who rubbed his lips with a clove of garlic, and made him drink a little wine; and the rearing begun thus was continued in the same hardy fashion.

The young Henry lived on the plainest food, and wore the homeliest dress; he differed little or nothing, in these particulars, from the peasant boys who were his associates in his hours of play. His delight was to climb the great rocks of the Pyrenees around his birth-place, and in these sports he hardened his constitution, familiarised himself with peril and toil, and nurtured that love of adventure which characterised him all his days. But especially was his education attended to. It was conducted under the eye of his mother, one of the first women of her age, or indeed of any age. He was carefully instructed in the doctrines of Protestantism, that in after-life his religion might be not an ancestral tradition, but a living faith. In the example of his mother he had a pattern of the loftiest virtue. Her prayers seemed the sacred pledges that the virtues of the mother would flourish in the son, and that after she was gone he would follow with the same devotion, and defend with a yet stronger arm, the cause for which she had lived. As Henry grew up he displayed a character in many points corresponding to these advantages of birth and training. To a robust and manly frame he added a vigorous mind. His judgment was sound, his wit was quick, his resource was ready. In disposition he was brave, generous, confiding. He despised danger; he courted

toil; he was fired with the love of glory. But with these great qualities he blended an inconvenient waywardness, and a decided inclination to sensual pleasures.

The king had breathed his last but a few moments, when Henry entered the royal apartment to receive the homage of the lords who were there in waiting. The Huguenot chiefs readily hailed him as their sovereign, but the Roman Catholic lords demanded, before swearing the oath of allegiance, that he should declare himself of the communion of the Church of Rome. "Would it be more agreeable to you," asked Henry of those who were demanding of him a renunciation of his Protestantism upon the spot, "Would it be more agreeable to you to have a godless king? Could you confide in the faith of an atheist? and, in the day of battle would it add to your courage to think that you followed the banner of a perjured apostate?" Brave words spoken like a man who had made up his mind to ascend the throne with a good conscience or not at all. But these words were not followed up by a conduct equally brave and high-principled. The Roman Catholic lords were obstinate. Henry's difficulties increased. The dissentients were withdrawing from his camp; his army was melting away, and every new day appeared to be putting the throne beyond his reach. Now was the crisis of his fate. Had Henry of Navarre esteemed the reproach of being a Huguenot greater riches than the crown of France, he would have worn that crown, and worn it with honour. His mother's God, who, by a marvellous course of Providence, had brought him to the foot of the throne, was able to place him upon it, had he had faith in him. But Henry's faith began to fail. He temporised. He neither renounced Protestantism nor embraced Romanism, but aimed at being both Protestant and Romanist at once. He concluded an arrangement with the Roman Catholics, the main stipulation in which was that he would submit to a six months' instruction in the two creeds—just as if he were or could be in doubt—and at the end of that period he would make his choice, and his subjects would then know whether they had a Protestant or a Roman Catholic for their sovereign. Henry, doubtless, deemed his policy a masterly one; but his mother would not have adopted it. She had risked her kingdom for her religion, and God gave her back her kingdom after it was as good as lost. What the son risked was his religion, that he might secure his throne. The throne he did secure in the first instance, but at the cost of losing in the end all that made it worth having. "There is a way that seemeth right in a man's own eyes, but the end thereof is death."

Henry had tided over the initial difficulty, but at what a cost!—a virtual betrayal of his great cause. Was his way now smooth? The Roman Catholics he had not really conciliated, and the Protestants stood in doubt of him. He had two manner of peoples around his standard, but neither was enthusiastic in his support, nor could strike other than feeble blows. He had assumed the

crown, but had to conquer the kingdom. The League, whose soldiers were in possession of Paris, still held out against him. To have gained the capital and displayed his standard on its walls would have been a great matter, but with an army dwindled down to a few thousands, and the Roman Catholic portion but half-hearted in his cause, Henry dared not venture on the siege of Paris. Making up his mind to go without the prestige of the capital meanwhile, he retreated with his little host into Normandy, the army of the League in overwhelming numbers pressing on his steps and hemming him in, so that he was compelled to give battle to them in the neighbourhood of Dieppe. Here, with the waters of the English Channel behind him, into which the foe hoped to drive him, God wrought a great deliverance for him. With only 6,000 soldiers, Henry discomfited the entire army of the League, 30,000 strong, and won a great victory.

This affair brought substantial advantages to Henry. It added to his renown in arms, already great. Soldiers began to flock to his standard, and he now saw himself at the head of 20,000 men. Many of the provinces of France which had hung back till this time recognised him as king. The Protestant States abroad did the same thing; and thus strengthened, Henry led his army southward, crossed the Loire, and took up his winter quarters at Tours, the old capital of Clovis.

Early next spring (1590) the king was again in the field. Many of the old Huguenot chiefs, who had left him when he entered into engagements with the Roman Catholics, now returned, attracted by the vigour of his administration and the success of his arms. With this accession he deemed himself strong enough to take Paris, the possession of which would probably decide the contest. He began his march upon the capital, but was met by the army of the League (March 14, 1590) on the plains of Ivry.. His opponents were in greatly superior numbers, having been reinforced by Spanish auxiliaries and German *reiter*. Here a second great victory crowned the cause of Henry of Navarre; in fact, the battle of Ivry is one of the most brilliant on record. Before going into action, Henry made a solemn appeal to Heaven touching the justice of his cause. "If thou seest," said he, "that I shall be one of those kings whom thou givest in thine anger, take from me my life and crown together, and may my blood be the last that shall be shed in this quarrel?" The battle was now to be joined, but first the Huguenots kneeled in prayer. "They are begging for mercy," cried some one. "No," it was answered, "they never fight so terribly as after they have prayed." A few moments, and the soldiers arose, and Henry addressed some stirring words to them. "Yonder," said he, as he fastened on his helmet, over which waved his white plume, "Yonder is the enemy: here is your king. God is on our side. Should you lose your standards in the battle, rally round my plume; you will always find it on the path of victory and honour." Into the midst of the enemy advanced that white

plume; where raged the thickest of the fight, there it was seen to wave, and thither did the soldiers follow. After a terrible combat of two hours, the day declared decisively in favour of the king. The army of the League was totally routed, and fled from the field, leaving its cannon and standards behind it to become the trophies of the victors.¹

This victory, won over great odds, was a second lesson to Henry of the same import as the first. But he was trying to profess two creeds, and “a double-minded man is unstable in all his ways.” This fatal instability caused Henry to falter when he was on the point of winning all. Had he marched direct on Paris, the League, stunned by the blow he had just dealt it, would have been easily crushed; the fall of the capital would have followed, and, with Paris as the seat of his government, his cause would have been completely triumphant. He hesitated—he halted; his enthusiasm seemed to have spent itself on the battlefield. He had won a victory, but his indecision permitted its fruits to escape him. All that year was spent in small affairs—in the sieges of towns which contributed nothing to his main object. The League had time to recruit itself. The Duke of Parma—the most illustrious general of the age—came to its help. Henry’s affairs made no progress; and thus the following year (1591) was as uselessly spent as its predecessor. Meanwhile, the unhappy country of France—divided into factions, traversed by armies, devastated by battles—groaned under a combination of miseries. Henry’s great qualities remained with him; his bravery and dash were shown on many a bloody field; victories crowded in upon him; fame gathered round the white plume; nevertheless, his cause stood still. An eclipse seemed to rest upon the king, and a Nemesis appeared to dog his triumphal car.

With a professed Protestant upon the throne, one would have expected the condition of the Huguenots to be greatly alleviated; but it was not so. The concessions which might have been expected from even a Roman Catholic sovereign were withheld by one who was professedly a Protestant. The Huguenots as yet had no legal security for their civil and religious liberties. The laws denouncing confiscation and death for the profession of the Protestant religion, re-enacted by Henry III., remained unrepealed, and were at times put in force by country magistrates and provincial Parliaments. It sometimes happened that while in the camp of the king the Protestant worship was celebrated, a few leagues off the same worship was forbidden to a Huguenot congregation under severe penalties. The celebrated Mornay Duplessis well described the situation of the Protestants in these few words: “They had the halter always about their necks.” Stung by the temporising and heartless policy of Henry, the Huguenots proposed to disown him as their chief, and to

¹ It is scarcely necessary to remind our readers that this battle formed the subject of Lord Macaulay’s well-known ballad-song of the Huguenots.

elect another protector of their Churches. Had they abandoned him, his cause would have been ruined. To the Protestants the safety of the Reformed faith was the first thing. To Henry the possession of the throne was the first thing, and the Huguenots and their cause must wait. The question was, How long?

It was now four years since Henry after a sort had been King of France; but the peaceful possession of the throne was becoming less likely than ever. Every day the difficulties around him, instead of diminishing, were thickening. Even the success which had formerly attended his arms appeared to be deserting him. Shorn of his locks, like Samson, he was winning brilliant victories no longer. What was to be done? this had now come to be the question with the king. Henry, to use a familiar expression, was “falling between two stools.” The time had come for him to declare himself, and say whether he was to be a Roman Catholic, or whether he was to be a Protestant. There were not wanting weighty reasons, as they seemed, why the king should be the former. The bulk of his subjects were Roman Catholics, and by being of their religion he would conciliate the majority, put an end to the wars between the two rival parties, and relieve the country from all its troubles. By this step only could he ever hope to make himself King of all France. So did many around him counsel. His recantation would, to a large extent, be a matter of form, and by that form how many great ends of State would be served!

But on the other side there were sacred memories which Henry could not erase, and deep convictions which he could not smother. The instructions and prayers of a mother, the ripened beliefs of a lifetime, the obligations he owed to the Protestants, all must have presented themselves in opposition to the step he now meditated. Were all these pledges to be profaned? were all these hallowed bonds to be rent asunder? With the Huguenots how often had he deliberated in council; how often worshipped in the same sanctuary; how often fought on the same battle-field; their arms mainly it was that raised him to the throne; was he now to forsake them? Great must have been the conflict in the mind of the king. But the fatal step had been taken four years before, when, in the hope of disarming the hostility of the Roman Catholic lords, he consented to receive instruction in the Romish faith. To hesitate in a matter of this importance was to surrender—was to be lost; and the choice which Henry now made is just the choice which it was to be expected he would make. There is reason to fear that he had never felt the power of the Gospel upon his heart. His hours of leisure were often spent in adulterous pleasures. One of his mistresses was among the chief advisers of the step he was now revolving. What good would this Huguenotism do him? Would he be so great a fool as to sacrifice a kingdom for it? Listening to such counsels as these, he laid his birth-right, where so many kings before and since have laid theirs, at the feet of Rome.

It had been arranged that a conference composed of an equal number of Roman Catholic bishops and Protestant pastors should be held, and that the point of difference between the two Churches should be debated in the presence of the king. This was simply a device to save appearances, for Henry's mind was already made up. When the day came, the king forbade the attendance of the Protestants, assigning as a reason that he would not put it in the power of the bishops to say that they had vanquished them in the argument. The king's conduct throughout was marked by consummate duplicity. He invited the Reformed to fast, in prospect of the coming conference, and pray for a blessing upon it; and only three months before his abjuration, he wrote to the pastors assembled at Samur, saying that he would die rather than renounce his religion; and when the conference was about to be held, we find him speaking of it to Gabrielle d'Estrées, with whom he spent the soft hours of dalliance, as an ecclesiastical tilt from which he expected no little amusement, and the *denouement* of which was fixed already. "This morning I begin talking with the bishops. On Sunday I am to take the perilous leap."¹

Henry IV. had the happiness to possess as counsellors two men of commanding talent. The first was the Baron Rosny, better known as the illustrious Sully. He was a statesman of rare genius. Like Henry, he was a Protestant; and he bore this further resemblance to his royal master, that his Protestantism was purely political. The other, Mornay Duplessis, was the equal of Sully in talent, but his superior in character. He was inflexibly upright. These two men were much about the king at this hour; both felt the gravity of the crisis, but differed widely in the advice which they gave. "I can find," said Sully, addressing the king, "but two ways out of your present embarrassments. By the one you may pass through a million of difficulties, fatigues, pains, perils, and labours. You must be always in the saddle; you must always have the corselet on your back, the helmet on your head, and the sword in your hand. Nay, what is more, farewell to repose, to pleasure, to love, to mistresses, to games, to dogs, to hawking, to building; for you cannot come out through these affairs but by a multitude of combats, taking of cities, great victories, a great shedding of blood. Instead of all this, by the other way—that is, changing your religion—you escape all those pains and difficulties in this world," said the courtier with a smile, to which the king responded by a laugh: "as for the other world, I cannot answer for that."

Mornay Duplessis counselled after another fashion. The side at which Sully refused to look—the other world—was the side which Duplessis mainly considered. He charged the king to serve God with a good conscience; to keep Him before his eyes in all his actions; to attempt the union of the kingdom by the Reformation of the Church, and so to set an example

¹ "Le saut périlleux." (Mem, de *Sully*, tom. ii., livr. v., p. 234, foot-note.)

to all Christendom and posterity. "With what conscience," said he, "can I advise you to go to mass if I do not first go myself? and what kind of religion can that be which is taken off as easily as one's coat?" So did this great patriot and Christian advise.

But Henry was only playing with both his counsellors. His course was already irrevocably taken; he had set his face towards Rome. On Thursday, July 22, 1593, he met the bishops, with whom he was to confer on the points of difference between the two religions. With a half-malicious humour he would occasionally interrupt their harangues with a few puzzling questions. On the following Sunday morning, the 25th, he repaired with a sumptuous following of men-at-arms to the Church of St. Denis. On the king's knocking the cathedral door was immediately opened. The Bishop of Bourges met him at the head of a train of prelates and priests, and demanded to know the errand on which the king had come. Henry made answer, "To be admitted into the Church of Rome." He was straightway led to the altar, and kneeling on its steps, he swore to live and die in the Romish faith. The organ pealed, the cannon thundered, the warriors that thronged nave and aisle clashed their arms; high mass was performed, the king, as he partook, bowing down till his brow touched the floor; and a solemn *Te Deum* concluded and crowned this grand jubilation.¹

The abjuration of Henry was viewed by the Protestants with mingled sorrow, astonishment, and apprehension. The son of Jeanne d'Albret, the foremost of the Huguenot chiefs, the Knight of the White Plume, to renounce his faith and go to mass! How fallen! But Protestantism could survive apostasies as well as defeats on the battle-field; and the Huguenots felt that they must look higher than the throne of Henry IV., and trusting in God, they took measures for the protection and advancement of their great cause. From their former compatriot and co-religionist, ever since, by the help of their arms, he had come to the throne, they had received little save promises. Their religion was proscribed, their worship was in many instances forbidden, their children were often compulsorily educated in the Romish faith, their last wills made void, and even their corpses dug out of the grave and thrown like carrion on the fields. When they craved redress, they were bidden be patient till Henry should be stronger on the throne. His apostasy had brought matters to a head, and convinced the Huguenots that they must look to themselves. The bishops had made Henry swear, "I will endeavour to the utmost of my power, and in good faith, to drive out of my jurisdiction, and from the lands under my sway, all heretics denounced by the Church." Thus the sword was again hung over their heads; and can we blame them if now they formed themselves into a political organisation, with a General Council, or

¹ Mém. de *Sully*, tom. ii., livr. v., p. 239.

Parliament, which met every year to concert measures of safety, promote unity of action, and keep watch over the affairs of the general body? To Henry's honour it must be acknowledged that he secretly encouraged this Protestant League. An apostate, he yet escaped the infamy of the persecutor.

The Huguenot council applied to Henry's government for the redress of their wrongs, and the restoration of Protestant rights and privileges. Four years passed away in these negotiations, which often degenerated into acrimonious disputes, and the course of which was marked (1595) by an atrocious massacre—a repetition, in short, of the affair at Vassy. At length Henry, sore pressed in his war with Spain, and much needing the swords of the Huguenots, granted an edict in their favour, styled, from the town from which it was issued, the Edict of Nantes, which was the glory of his reign. It was a tardy concession to justice, and a late response to complaints long and most touchingly urged. “And yet, sire,” so their remonstrances ran, “among us we have neither Jacobins nor Jesuits who aim at your life, nor Leagues who aim at your crown. We have never presented the points of our swords instead of petitions. We are paid with considerations of State policy. It is not time yet, we are told, to grant us an edict,—yet, O merciful God, after thirty-five years of persecution, ten years of banishment by the edicts of the League, eight years of the present king's reign, and four of persecutions. We ask your majesty for an edict by which we may enjoy that which is common to all your subjects. The glory of God alone, liberty of conscience, repose to the State, security for our lives and property—this is the summit of our wishes, and the end of our requests.”

The king still thought to temporise; but new successes on the part of the Spaniards admonished him that he had done so too long, and that the policy of delay was exhausted. The League hailed the Spanish advances, and the throne which Henry had secured by his abjuration he must save by Protestant swords. Accordingly, on the 15th April, 1598, was this famous decree, the Edict of Nantes, styled “perpetual and irrevocable,” issued.

“This *Magna Charta*” says Félice, “of the French Reformation, under the ancient *regime*, granted the following concessions in brief:—Full liberty of conscience to all; the public exercise of the ‘religion’ in all those places in which it was established in 1577, and in the suburbs of cities; permission to the lords' high justiciary to celebrate Divine worship in their castles, and to the inferior gentry to admit thirty persons to their domestic worship; admission of the Reformed to office in the State, their children to be received into the schools, their sick into the hospitals, and their poor to share in the alms; and the concession of a right to print their books in certain cities.” This edict further provided for the erection of courts composed of an equal number of Protestants and Roman Catholics for the protection of Protestant interests, four Protestant colleges or institutions, and the right of holding a National

Synod, according to the rules of the Reformed faith, once every three years.¹ The State was charged with the duty of providing the salaries of the Protestant ministers and rectors, and a sum of 165,000 livres of those times (495,000 francs of the present day) was appropriated to that purpose. The edict does not come fully up to our idea of liberty of conscience, but it was a liberal measure for the time. As a guarantee it put 200 towns into the hands of the Protestants. It was the Edict of Nantes much more than the abjuration of Henry which conciliated the two parties in the kingdom, and gave him the peaceful possession of the throne during the few years he was yet to occupy it.

The signing of this edict inaugurated an era of tranquillity and great prosperity to France. The twelve years that followed are perhaps the most glorious in the annals of that country since the opening of the sixteenth century. Spain immediately offered terms of peace, and France, weary of civil war, sheathed the sword with joy.

Now that Henry had rest from war, he gave himself to the not less glorious and more fruitful labours of peace. France in all departments of her organisation was in a state of frightful disorder—was, in fact, on the verge of ruin. Castles burned to the ground, cities half in ruins, lands reverting into a desert, roads unused, marts and harbours forsaken, were the melancholy memorials which presented themselves to one's eye wherever one journeyed. The national exchequer was empty; the inhabitants were becoming few, for those who should have enriched their country with their labour, or adorned it with their intellect, were watering its soil with their blood. Some two millions of lives had perished since the breaking out of the civil wars. Summoning all his powers, Henry set himself to repair this vast ruin. In this arduous labour he displayed talents of a higher order and a more valuable kind than any he had shown in war, and proved himself not less great as a statesman than he was as a soldier. There was a debt of three hundred millions of francs pressing on the kingdom. The annual expenditure exceeded the revenue by upwards of one hundred millions of francs. The taxes paid by the people amounted to two hundred millions of francs; but, owing to the abuses of collection, not more than thirty millions found their way into the treasury. Calling Sully to his aid, the king set himself to grapple with these gigantic evils, and displayed in the cabinet no less fertility of resource and comprehensiveness of genius than in the field. He cleared off the national debt in ten years. He found means of making the income not only balance the expenditure, but of exceeding it by many millions. He accomplished all this without adding to the burdens of the people. He understood the springs of the nation's prosperity, and taught them to flow again. He encouraged agriculture, promoted

¹ *Mém. de Sully*, tom. iii., livr. x., pp. 204, 358.

industry and commerce, constructed roads, bridges, and canals. The lands were tilled, herds were reared, the silkworm was introduced, the ports were opened for the free export of corn and wine, commercial treaties were framed with foreign countries; and France, during these ten years, showed as conclusively as it did after the war of 1870–71, how speedily it can recover from the effects of the most terrible disasters, when the passions of its children permit the boundless resources which nature has stored up in its soil and climate to develop themselves.

Henry's views in the field of foreign politics were equally comprehensive. He clearly saw that the great menace to the peace of Europe, and the independence of its several nations, was the Austrian power in its two branches—the German and Spanish. Philip II. was dead; Spain was waning; nevertheless that ambitious Power waited an opportunity to employ the one half of Christendom of which she was still mistress, in crushing the other half. Henry's project, formed in concert with Elizabeth of England, for humbling that Power was a vast one, and he had made such progress in it that twenty European States had promised to take part in the campaign which Henry was to lead against Austria. The moment for launching that great force was come, and Henry's contingent had been sent off, and was already on German soil. He was to follow his soldiers in a few days and open the campaign. But this deliverance for Christendom he was fated not to achieve. His queen, Marie de Medici, to whom he was recently married, importuned him for a public coronation, and Henry resolved to gratify her. The ceremony, which was gone about with great splendour, was over, and he was now ready to set out, when a melancholy seized him, which he could neither account for nor shake off. This pensiveness was all the more remarkable that his disposition was naturally gay and sprightly. In the words of Schiller, in his drama of "Wallenstein"—

"The king
Felt in his heart the phantom of the knife
Long ere Ravaillac armed himself therewith.
His quiet mind forsook him; the phantasma.
Startled him in his Louvre, chased him forth
Into the open air: like funeral knells
Sounded that coronation festival;
And still, with boding sense, he heard the tread
Of those feet that even then were seeking him
Throughout the streets of Paris."

When the coming campaign was referred to, he told the queen and the nobles of his court that Germany he would never see—that he would die soon, and in a carriage. They tried to laugh away these gloomy fancies, as

they accounted them. "Go to Germany instantly," said his minister Sully, "and go on horseback." The 19th of May, 1610, was fixed for the departure of the king. On the 16th, Henry was so distressed as to move the compassion of his attendants. After dinner he retired to his cabinet, but could not write; he threw himself on his bed, but could not sleep. He was overheard in prayer. He asked, "What o'clock is it?" and was answered, "Four of the afternoon. Would not your Majesty be the better of a little fresh air?" The king ordered his carriage, and, kissing the queen, he set out, accompanied by two of his nobles, to go to the arsenal.¹

He was talking with one of them, the Duke d'Epemon, his left hand resting upon the shoulder of the other, and thus leaving his side exposed. The carriage, after traversing the Rue St. Honoré, turned into the narrow Rue de la Ferronnière, where it was met by a cart, which compelled it to pass at a slow pace, close to the kerbstone. A monk, Francois Ravailac, who had followed the royal *cortége* unobserved, stole up, and mounting on the wheel, and leaning over the carriage, struck his knife into the side of Henry, which it only grazed. The monk struck again, and this time the dagger took the direction of the heart. The king fell forward in his carriage, and uttered a low cry. "What is the matter, sire?" asked one of his lords. "It is nothing," replied the king twice, but the second time so low as to be barely audible. Dark blood began to ooze from the wound, and also from the mouth. The carriage was instantly turned in the direction of the Louvre. As he was being carried into the palace, Sieur de Cerisy raised his head; his eyes moved, but he spoke not. The king closed his eyes to open them not again any more. He was carried up-stairs, and laid on his bed in his closet, where he expired.²

Ravailac made no attempt to escape: he stood with his bloody knife in his hand till he was apprehended; and when brought before his judges and subjected to the torture, he justified the deed, saying that the king was too favourable to heretics, and that he purposed making war on the Pope, which was to make war on God.³ Years before, Rome had launched her excommunication against the "two Henries," and now both had fallen by her dagger.

On the character of Henry IV. we cannot dwell. It was a combination of great qualities and great faults. He was a brave soldier and an able ruler; but we must not confound military brilliance or political genius with moral greatness. Entire devotion to a noble cause—the corner-stone of greatness—he lacked. France—in other words, the glory and dominion of himself and house—was the supreme aim and end of all his toils, talents, and manoeuvrings. The great error of his life was his abjuration. The Roman Catholics it

¹ P. de L'Estoile, *apud Mém. de Sully*, tom. vii., pp. 406, 407.

² L'Estoile, Mathieu, Perefixe, &c.—*apud Mem. de Sully*, tom. vii., pp. 404–412. Malherbe, *apud Guizot*, vol. iii., pp. 623, 624.

³ *Mém. de Sully*, tom. vii., p. 418.

did not conciliate, and the Protestants it alienated. It was the Edict of Nantes that made him strong, and gave to France almost the only ten years of real prosperity and glory which it has seen since the reign of Francis I. Had Henry nobly resolved to ascend the throne with a good conscience, or not at all—had he not paltered with the Jesuits—had he said, “I will give toleration to all, but will myself abide in the faith my mother taught me”—his own heart would have been stronger, his life purer, his course less vacillating and halting; the Huguenots, the flower of French valour and intelligence, would have rallied round him and borne him to the throne, and kept him on it, in spite of all his enemies. On what different foundations would his throne in that case have rested, and what a different glory would have encircled his memory! He set up a throne by abjuration in 1593, to be cast down on the scaffold of 1793!

We have traced the great drama of the sixteenth century to its culmination, first in Germany, and next in Geneva and France, and we now propose to follow it to its new stage in other countries of Europe.