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."[2] "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 Condé 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;"[3] but it would seem that the resolution of the council was for putting them to death. The Archbishop of Paris, Perefixe, and Brantôme inform us that "they were down on the red list" on the ground of its being neccessary "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."[4] 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.

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

[1] Maimbourg, livr. vi., p. 472.

[2] Maimbourg, livr. vi., p. 471.

[3] Davila, lib. v., p. 271.

[4] Perefixe, *Hist. de Henri le Grand*—Brantôme, vol. i., p. 261.

THE MASSACRE OF ST. BARTHOLOMEW: ATTACK ON COLIGNY'S LODGINGS.

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,[1] 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 summoning an attendant he bade him go and stop the massacre.[2] 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."[3] 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, 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.[4]

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 *battu* of ensnared Huguenots. Their work was done with a summary

[1] De Thou, livr. lii.
[2] Villeroy, vol. ii., p. 88.
[3] Sully, *Mémoires*, tom. i., livr. i., p. 62.

[4] 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.)

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 poignarded 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 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 pastime of murdering his subjects, who were attempting to escape across the Seine, or were seeking refuge at the pitiless gates of his palace.[3]

The same night, while the massacres were in

[1] Davila, lib. v., pp. 272, 273.

[2] Voltaire states in one of the notes to the *Henriade*, that he heard the Marquis de Tessé 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.

[3] Maimbourg, livr. vi., p. 478. Brantôme, 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.*"

progress, Charles sent for the King of Navarre and the Prince de Condé. 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.[1] His physician, Ambrose Paré, 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. Paré 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,[2] they were extended to all provinces and cities where Protestants were found. Even villages and châteaux became scenes of carnage. For two months these butcheries were continued throughout the kingdom. Every day during that fearful time the poignard 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 Popelinière 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, Auteuil, and St. Cloud; it is probable that many corpses were carried still further, and the corpses were not all thrown into the river."[3] 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."[4]

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

[1] Sully, tom. i., livr. i.
[2] Maimbourg, livr. vi., p. 485.
[3] Guizot, vol. iii., p. 405.
[4] Sully, livr. i., p. 74. De Thou, livr. lii., lv.

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 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. To-morrow, 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. In-doors 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 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.[2]

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 M'Crie, "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."[3]

At Rome, when the news arrived, the joy was

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

[2] Gaberel, tom. ii., pp. 321, 322.

[3] M'Crie, *Life of Knox*, vol. ii., p. 217.

boundless. The messenger who carried the despatch was rewarded like one who brings tidings of some great victory,[1] 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 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."[2] 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.[3] 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.[4] The second, which exhibits Coligny murdered in his own house, with Téligny and others, has these words below it—*Cædes Colignii et sociorum ejus.*[5] The third, in which the king is represented as hearing the news, is thus entitled —*Rex necem Colignii probat.*[6]

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 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.[7]

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

[2] *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."

[3] 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.

[4] "Gaspar Coligny, the Admiral, is carried home wounded. In the Pontificate of Gregory XIII., 1572."

[5] "The slaughter of Coligny and his companions."

[6] "The king approves Coligny's slaughter."

[7] "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.

THE NIGHT OF THE MASSACRE OF ST. BARTHOLOMEW.

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 50,000 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 unsparing 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 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."[2] 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 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,[3] 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

[1] See Laval, vol. iii., pp. 479–481. [2] Davila, lib. v.

[3] Maimbourg, lib. vi., p. 489.

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 grave-stone? 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 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 Cosé 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 *régime*, 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 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 gaieties 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

[1] Davila, lib. v.

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

FAC-SIMILES OF MEDALS STRUCK IN ROME AND PARIS IN HONOUR OF THE ST. BARTHOLOMEW MASSACRE.[1]

[1] Explanation of the Medals.

1. St. Bartholomew Medal. (Described in text, p. 606.)

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

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.'"

PORTRAIT OF HENRY IV., "KING HENRY OF NAVARRE."

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]

lie at his feet. Around is the motto, "Valour against rebels."

Copies of these medals are in the possession of C. P. Stewart, Esq., M.A., who has kindly permitted engravings to be made of them for this work.

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

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 disdaining retreat he passed on. His hand was already on the curtain which separated the ante-chamber 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 Hôtel 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 held out to him, and which he had aforetime 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

[1] Laval, vol. iv., p. 530.

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]

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 Pyrences 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

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

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."

MEDAL OF CATHERINE DE MEDICI. (*From the original in the Bibliothèque Nationale.*)

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, 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

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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

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 was it 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 battle-field. 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 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,

[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."

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 Saumr, 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 *dénouement* 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 these 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 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. Dénis. 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.[2]

The abjuration of Henry was viewed by the Protestants with mingled sorrow, astonishment, and

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

[2] *Mém. de Sully*, tom. ii., livr. v., p. 239.

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 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 *régime*, 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.

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

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 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'Epernon, 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 Ferronière, where it was met by a cart, which compelled it to pass at a slow pace, close to the kerbstone. A monk, François Ravaillac, 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]

Ravaillac 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 manœuvrings. The great error of his life was his abjuration. The Roman Catholics it 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.

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

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

[3] *Mém. de Sully*, tom. vii., p. 413.