

☰ HENRY ☰
OF NAVARRE

AND THE RELIGIOUS WARS

BY
EDWARD T. BLAIR



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1998

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PREFACE.

Go where one will in Béarn, one is never long out of sight of the Pyrenees nor unreminded of Henry IV. Therefore it is not surprising that I should have become interested in his history during a two years' residence in his birthplace. On finding how little of his personal biography was accessible to English readers, I resolved to ask their indulgence in attempting a brief description of what appeared to me to be one of the most interesting periods and characters in French history. The only claim that I make for it is that it endeavors to avoid partiality, and to present a faithful picture of characters and events which have been much distorted by partisan writers.

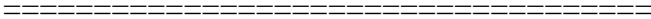
EDWARD T. BLAIR.

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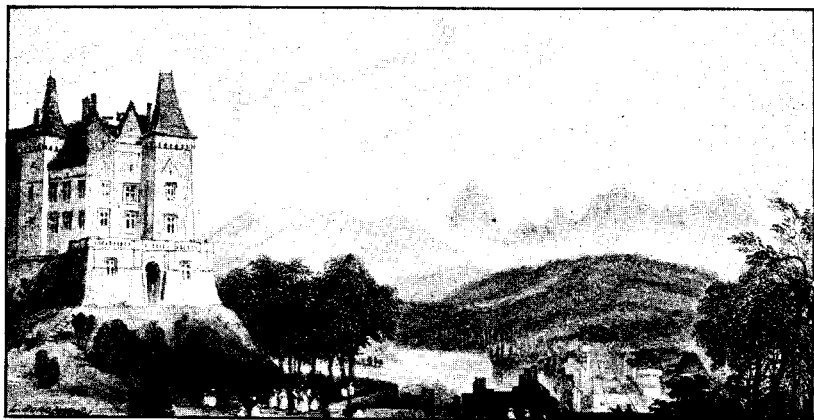
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HENRY OF NAVARRE.

CHAPTER I.

THE PRINCE OF BÉARN.

THE ancient kingdom of Navarre was situated in the south-western corner of France, and formerly extended on both sides of the Pyrenees, but in 1512, Ferdinand the Catholic wrested Spanish Navarre from the last Princess of Foix, who married Jean d'Albret and was the great-grandmother of Henry IV.

Mountain air is the breath of freedom, and the Béarnais, like the Scotch and Swiss, preserved their liberties even under the fiery princes of Foix. They were a hardy adventurous race, in whose character the southern sun had infused that curious mixture of shrewdness and bravado which has always made the Gascons favorites with writers of the romantic school.

The importance of Navarre lay in its situation between France and Spain, to which fact it also owed its nominal independence. The relative positions of France and Spain in the sixteenth century were very different from what they are to-day. The power of Spain at that time almost rivalled the sway of ancient Rome, but its decadence has been so great that it is difficult for us now even to realize its past grandeur. In the time of Charles V. the house of Austria threatened to subjugate all Europe, and the war France and England maintained against it was a struggle for existence. Even to-day the Spanish influence is much more noticeable on the French side of the Pyrenees than that of France in Spain, and there is much of the Spaniard in the character as well as in the language and appearance of the Gascon.

Pau, the birthplace of Henry IV., is situated on a cliff overlooking the valley of the Gave, which washes its base and dashes with ceaseless roar under the arches of a mediæval bridge. At one end of this bridge was a miraculous image of the Virgin, whose aid the good wives of Pau were wont to invoke in a Béarnaise chanson beginning "Notre Dame, au bout du pont, aidez-moi à cette heure!" The song has many verses, and tradition records that when Henry IV. was born, his mother, Jeanne d'Albret, sang it from beginning to end in obedience to a promise she had made her father. Narrow streets zigzag up the cliff to the imposing old château of the princes of Foix, whose great donjon tower dates back to the Middle Ages and has been the scene of many a dark and violent deed. Looking from its battlements on the valley below, intersected with poplar-bordered highways and dotted with white-walled and red-roofed villages, the soft, southern beauty of the landscape recalls Andalusia or Lombardy; while above the vine-covered hills to the south, and as far as the eye reaches to the east and west, the

snowy chain of the Pyrenees towers against the blue southern sky, like a dazzling vision ; the most magnificent panorama in Europe.

The thirteenth day of December, 1553, must have been a day of unusual interest, not only in the château, but in the town of Pau, for on that day was born an heir to the childless house of D'Albret. The old king and his people were beside themselves with joy, though they little dreamed that the child then born was destined to reach the throne of France.

Jeanne d'Albret, who had lost two children in their infancy, had promised her father to come to Pau for her third confinement and commit the child to his care. Although it was mid-winter and she was on the very eve of motherhood, Jeanne traversed the whole of France, from Picardy, where her husband was stationed, to Pau. The day after her arrival she questioned her father about his will, which it had been rumored was too favorable to his mistress. "You shall have it," he said, "on condition that you sing during the birth of your child, so that it shall not be crying or puny." When the birth of his grandson was announced to Henri d'Albret, he took the casket containing his will to his daughter. "That is for thee, but this is for me," he said, wrapping the child in a fold of his dressing-gown and carrying it to his chamber. As he had mischievously kept the key to the casket, Jeanne was not much the gainer.

The dream of Henri d'Albret, to the realization of which all his policy had been directed, was the recovery of his mother's inheritance of Spanish Navarre. When his only child had proved a daughter, the Spaniards, it is said, exclaimed, in derision, "The cow has borne a sheep," a vulgar allusion to the armorial bearings of Béarn,—two cows on a field *or*.

Charles V., who was anxious to get a foothold in France, had

at one time proposed a marriage between his son Philip II. and Jeanne d'Albret. To prevent this, Francis I. removed Jeanne from her parents and kept her secluded at Plessis-les-Tours during her girlhood. When Philip became a widower some years later, Charles V. again advised his son, in his will of Augsburg, to marry Jeanne, but Francis I. intended her for his son the Duke of Anjou, afterwards Henry II., until his Italian ventures made it desirable for him to marry Anjou to a Medici. Francis then bestowed Jeanne on the Duke of Cleves as the price of his alliance against Charles V., but the marriage was never consummated, and after the Emperor had forced the Duke to renounce his French alliance Jeanne obtained a divorce. Two suitors for her hand now presented themselves,—the Duke of Guise and Antoine de Bourbon, Duc de Vendôme, the first prince of the blood, because of his descent from Robert de Clermont, sixth son of St. Louis. The self-possession with which Guise entered the lists against a royal prince prejudiced Jeanne against him, and although the king pressed the suit of his imperious favorite, Jeanne preferred to marry the handsome feather-pate, Antoinc.

The birth of an heir to the throne of Navarre revived the hopes of Henri d'Albret, and as he held the babe aloft among his courtiers he exclaimed, "My sheep has borne me a lion!" Then, in order that he might be hardy and brave, he rubbed the child's lips with a piece of garlic and gave him a few drops of wine from his own golden cup. Tradition says that Henry IV. raised his head when he tasted the wine, whereupon the delighted old king exclaimed, "Tu seras un vrai Béarnais!" Prognostications are only remembered when they come true, but none were ever more completely realized than those regarding Henry IV. He made his entry into the world with four teeth,

and is said to have passed through the hands of seven different wet nurses before he came into the care of Jeanne Fourcade, a healthy peasant woman, the wife of a laborer of Billhere, who



reared him in a cottage by the Gave. He was baptized in the Catholic faith, being carried to the font by Henri d'Albret in a tortoise shell, which is still shown in the château of Pau.

Henri d'Albret possessed a theory that Jeanne's other children had died because they were too delicately nurtured ; therefore, by his express command, Henry IV. was brought up like a peasant's son. He ran at large, bareheaded, in the roughest of clothes, and talked with any one and every one. Everybody's business was his, and his business was everybody's. From his youth up he was hail fellow with every one, and never lacked for a jest or repartee. His nature was frank and his heart open ; indeed, it was said of him in later life that he was always ready with a tear in his eye and his purse in his hand, only the purse was always empty and the tears came at will.

The death of Henri d'Albret and the political exigencies of the time ere long called the King and Queen of Navarre with their son to the French court. Here, it is related, in the midst of an angry discussion between the kings of France and Navarre on an occasion not long afterwards, the little prince ran into the room where the monarchs were. Henry II., struck with the beauty of the child, took him in his arms and kissed him.

“Will you be my son?” he asked.

The little prince, pointing to the King of Navarre, answered, in the patois of Béarn, “No, that is my father.”

“Then will you be my son-in-law?”

“Oh, yes, willingly,” replied the child.

Court chroniclers are prone to note in royalty graces which in others would pass unobserved, but they are unanimous in describing the little Prince of Béarn as a vigorous and attractive child, endowed with unusual physical and mental activity. The well-known statue of the youthful Henry is certainly that of a handsome lad, but as he approached manhood he outgrew his good looks. The little prince was held at court somewhat as a hostage for Jeanne d'Albret, after her return to Navarre. It

is said that he was once soundly whipped for presuming to hold his own in a quarrel with one of the royal children. He and the two other Henrys, Henry of Valois and Henry of Guise, attended daily mass and studied together at the college of Navarre, on the most amicable terms. About this time he chose as his motto ἢ νικᾶν ἢ ἀποθανεῖν, to conquer or to die, a youthful proceeding which caused Catherine de Médicis some uneasiness. She forbade his instructors inculcating any such apothegms in the future, saying that they tended to make one obstinate. His writing was bold and firm, in pleasing contrast to the illegible penmanship of the time, and he was said to have translated the greater part of Plato at the early age of eight years. But Catherine de Médicis deprecated his being given serious tasks, and preferred to have him taught Italian, poetry, and drawing, for which he showed considerable aptitude. She was very fond of the little prince, and kept him about her, even at the council table, partly from policy and partly from affection. It thus happened that the lad was present at the conference between Catherine de Médicis and the Duke of Alva at Ba-



yonne, where the massacre of St. Bartholomew was alleged to have been first discussed. He was said to have overheard the famous saying of the duke, that "The head of a salmon was worth a hundred frogs," and repeated it to his mother.

Although affable and light-hearted, Henry could maintain his dignity when occasion demanded. He knew his rank, and suffered no one to treat him without due respect. There was something in his manner, if we are to credit contemporaneous observers, which impressed those who met him with a presentiment of his future greatness. The Duke of Medina, the greatest grandee of Spain, is said to have exclaimed, "It appears to me this prince is either an emperor or deserves to be one." He won the affections of his cousin, the young Queen of Spain, to such good purpose that when Philip at a later day tried to kidnap Jeanne and her son, Elizabeth warned them of his intention in time for their escape. Catherine thought it politic to encourage the young prince to enter the dissipations of the court, and only laughed at the alarm felt by Jeanne at her son's inclination for gallantry and cards.

But the Queen of Navarre felt that the time had come when her son should be beginning serious preparations for his future. Making an excuse of a lawsuit requiring her presence, she came to Paris and obtained permission to take her son with her on a short visit to one of her estates in Picardy; then, turning her course towards Béarn, she never stopped until she and the lad were safe within the bounds of their ancestral domain. Henry had then reached the age of thirteen, and from this time forward, in addition to the usual studies of youth, he was instructed, under his mother's direction, in history, the arts of war, and the religion and politics of a kingdom small in its resources but great in its possibilities. Although surrounded by

a community whose moral tone was severe enough to suit a Puritan, and where even games of chance and frivolous amusements were forbidden by law, Henry's mother kept him carefully secluded from the ladies of the court ; but all the precautions in the world cannot change human nature.

A description of him at this time written by one of the magistrates of Bordeaux exists : " We have here the young Prince of Béarn. One cannot help acknowledging that he is a beautiful creature. At the age of thirteen he displays all the qualities of a person eighteen or nineteen. He is agreeable, he is civil, he is obliging. Others might say that as yet he does not himself know what he is ; but for my part, who study him very often, I can assure you that he does know perfectly well. He deems himself towards all the world with so easy a carriage that people crowd round wherever he is. . . . He speaks always to the purpose, . . . and never says anything which ought not to be said. . . . I shall hate the new religion all my life for having carried off from us so worthy a person."

Another letter of the same period tells us, " The Prince of Béarn gains new servants every day. He insinuates himself into all hearts with inconceivable skill. . . . His face is very well formed, the nose neither too large nor too small, the eyes extremely soft, his skin brown but very smooth ; and the whole animated with uncommon vivacity."

From the same source one gathers, thus early, a hint of some of the foibles of his character : " We have the pleasantest carnival in the world ; the Prince of Béarn has besought our ladies to mask and give balls by turn. He loves good play and good living. When money fails him, he has skill enough to find more, and in a manner quite new and obliging towards others. That is to say, he sends to those whom he believes to be his friends

a promise written and signed by himself, begging them to return the note or the sum which it bears. You may judge whether there is any house where he is refused."

Even nineteenth-century readers will appreciate and excuse the enthusiasm of the good people of Bordeaux over the presence of a royal prince at their carnival whose condescension delighted them to such an extent that they felt honored at being called on to loosen their purse-strings for his pleasures.

Before following Henry's fortunes in the civil wars, which he was thus early to enter, it is desirable to review the events which gave rise to them.



CHAPTER II.

HENRY II.

By the middle of the sixteenth century questions of religion had found a permanent solution in most of the countries of Europe, except France. The Reformation had been stifled in Italy and Spain, while in England abuses had been purged away, and the Scandinavian Peninsula, the Low Countries, and parts of Germany and Switzerland had declared for the new faith. There was no question of the desirability of a reform in the abuses of the church; even Charles V. admitted it and labored all his life towards its accomplishment, but dynastic and political necessities rendered his project impossible of execution. The temporal and spiritual support of the Holy See was too necessary to Spain in her battle with England and France to be

lightly jeopardized, and the Emperor died with his hopes unrealized.

The great body of Reformers were without question sincere in their motives, and comprised the most intelligent and earnest of every class. At first even bishops and clergy opened their churches to their teachings, with a view to reforming the abuses of the Church rather than seceding from it. Among the earliest friends of the Reformation in France was the king's own sister, his peerless "Marguerite des Marguerites," the protector of Marot and Calvin. At her intercession Francis I. twice rescued Berquin from the clutches of the Church, but the third time he was allowed to suffer the martyrdom he seemed so persistent in courting.

Francis I., although he at one time went so far as to send for Melancthon, finally declared against the new faith. "Those people," he said, "do nothing but bring trouble into the State." He was obliged, however, to seek alliance with the Protestants of Germany against Charles V. and at the same time to keep in the good graces of the Pope, so that his actions were often inconsistent. "We at Augsburg," wrote a deputy from that city, "know the King of France well; he cares very little for religion or even for morality. He plays the hypocrite with the Pope, and gives the Germans the smooth side of his tongue, thinking of nothing but how to cheat them of the hopes he gives them. His only aim is to crush the Emperor."

Napoleon at St. Helena said that the great mistake of Francis I. was that he did not espouse the Reformation and head a coalition of Protestant powers against the house of Austria.

When the first case of iconoclasm occurred, Francis I. offered a reward of a thousand gold crowns for the discovery of the

perpetrators. He then went bareheaded, with a lighted taper in his hand, to the scene of the desecration, accompanied by a procession of all the great nobles and prelates of the court. There were eighty-one executions for heresy during his reign, and even the Pope is said to have deprecated the king's severity; reminding him that our Lord, when on earth, made more use of mercy than of justice. This is not as improbable as it may sound. The Popes changed their policy later, but at this time the Inquisition existed only on Spanish soil, and Charles V.'s Italian subjects were in the habit of taking refuge from it in the Papal States. There were good and wise men among the Catholics as well as the Protestants. Besides Paul III., who interceded with Francis for the Protestants, there was Clement VIII., who opposed persecution, Paul V., who refused to sign the sentence for the expulsion of the Moors from Spain, and Innocent XI., who disapproved of the revocation of the Edict of Nantes. Francis I. permitted the massacre of the Vaudians, because they had resisted his officers and were said to be intriguing with foreign powers to establish an independent republic in Provence, but he had his misgivings regarding it later, and is said on his death-bed to have enjoined his successor to make an inquiry into the iniquities of this slaughter.

Henry II. continued the policy of his father, but Catherine de Médicis, who was probably a sceptic at heart, showed herself favorable to the reformed faith when it was in the ascendant, and allowed its ministers to preach at court. It is also worthy of remark that she selected Huguenot physicians and nurses for her children. The Pope admonished Catherine because of her laxity, and she in turn wrote him demanding in no ambiguous terms, reform of the Church. She it was who proposed to Montmorency the policy of encouraging the Huguenots, as a means

of curbing the ambition of the house of Guise, and she never hesitated to combat one with the other, while two, at least, of the Guises would have supported the Protestants as readily as the League, had it been to their advantage. Brantôme declares that Catherine would as willingly have made a St. Bartholomew of the Guisards as of the Huguenots, and that when it was reported at court that the Huguenots had won the battle of Dreux, she only said, "Very well, then, we will have to pray God in French."

The relentless cruelty which always characterizes religious conflicts has been the subject of many a scathing remark, but it is worthy of note that there were no religious wars in France until the Protestants became a political party ; and the wars which then arose were caused more frequently by political than religious motives. The explanation of this is simple : Until the destruction of the feudal system by Louis XI., France consisted of great feoffs, practically independent of the crown, whose lieges waged war on each other, or on their suzerain, whenever they pleased. During the next two centuries down to the Fronde, in spite of the severities of Richelieu, the great nobles, when out of favor, never hesitated to rebel against the government, for the purpose of securing its recognition rather than its overthrow ; a course followed generally with impunity, frequently with success. The history of England, where revolts were bloody and treason meant death, offers no parallel.

When Francis I. was on his death-bed, he warned his successor against the Constable Montmorency and the Guises, who, he said, "would strip his children of the coats off their backs, and his subjects of their shirts." But Henry II. was attached to the Constable, whose great services, both military and political, entitled him to rank as the first subject of the realm, and the

new king did not feel able to take up the reins of government without Montmorency's assistance. Almost the first act of his reign was to recall the Constable, whose long exile from court had not softened a disposition at no time very tractable. Few dared approach him except on business, and the courtiers fled from the king's ante-chambers at his approach. The people hated him because of his ferocity and arrogance, which even Francis I. had not always been able to keep within the bounds of respect. The Constable's method of enforcing obedience was to say, "Go hang me such a one; tie yon fellow to that tree; despatch this fellow with pikes and arquebuses, this very minute, right before my eyes; cut me in pieces all those rascals who chose to hold such a clock-case as this against the king; burn me yonder village; light me up a blaze everywhere, for a quarter of a mile all around." Montmorency paid the greatest attention to the discipline of his troops, and after securing them double pay, forbade their plundering the inhabitants on pain of death, but his inordinate ambition, his avidity for money, as well as his insatiable desire to aggrandize his family, made him a very dangerous adviser for a weak king.



The most prominent member of this family, next to Mont-

morency, was his nephew, Admiral Coligny, a young man who at twenty-three drafted a set of regulations for his regiment, which were ultimately adopted by all the armies of France. Coligny had two brothers, D'Andelot and the Cardinal de Châtillon, of whom more hereafter.

The first act with which the Constable signalized his return to power was the suppression of an insurrection against the gabelle in Guienne. The people of Bordeaux submitted at the very rumor of his approach, and went out to meet him with the city keys. "Away with your keys," he exclaimed, "I will hang you all; I will teach you to rebel against your king and murder his governor and his lieutenant." Ordering his soldiers to throw down the city wall, he entered through the breach, at the head of his troops, with matches lighted and swords drawn. He had nearly all of the inhabitants on their knees in the streets, and executed a hundred and forty of the most guilty. He suppressed the magistracy, suspended the parliament, and razed the City Hall to the ground. He even took the bells from the churches and made a hundred of the leading citizens and judges dig up the body of the king's lieutenant with their nails and carry it to the cathedral. Such a method of pacification was necessarily very effectual, and his name became a terror to the province. In some cases such methods might be more salutary than mild ones, but this time it was a needless severity, for the king removed the cause of complaint the following year of his own accord. The Constable was a physician who rarely tempered his remedies, even in the mildest cases.

The rivalry between Charles V. and Francis I., which had caused half a century of warfare and disaster, left France and Spain involved in an implacable feud. Soon after Henry II.'s accession, Maurice of Saxony and the German Protestant princes

revolted against Charles V. and appealed to the King of France for assistance. Montmorency, who had defeated the Emperor's invasion of Provence by wasting the country until it was a desert on which the invading army could not subsist, advised defensive tactics, but Guise, Vieilleville, and the younger generation preferred an offensive campaign, and seized Metz and other of the Emperor's towns in Lorraine and Flanders. Charles V.



soon came to terms with the German princes, and then turned his attention to the recovery of Metz, which he boasted he would batter about the ears of M. de Guise. But he gave the duke time to reinforce the garrison and repair the fortifications, and it was too late to carry Metz by storm when the Emperor, pale and worn, with sunken eyes and white beard, arrived at the head of his great army. The siege lasted two months, and at times there

were as many as fourteen thousand cannon-shots fired in a single day, but the defence was heroic, and the Emperor's troops forced him to raise the siege at the approach of winter. "I was wont once to be followed to battle," he sorrowfully remarked, "but I see that I have no longer men about me ; I must bid farewell to the empire, and go and shut myself up in some monastery." His army filed off by night, leaving their tents and munitions as they stood. "I see very well," he said, "that fortune resembles women ; she prefers a young king to an old emperor."

The success of Guise at Metz made him the hero of the nation, and excited the jealousy of Montmorency. The dissensions of the rival commanders prevented the further success of the campaign, and Guise was sent to Italy, where he succeeded no better than those before him, so Henry was very willing to accept the five years truce which the Emperor offered him preparatory to his abdication. Coligny, who was sent to negotiate with the Emperor, found Charles V. dressed in mourning, and seated in an apartment hung in black. The Emperor's fingers were so disabled by the gout that he could hardly open the letter from Henry II. which Coligny handed him. The Bishop of Arras, who was present, offered to assist him.

"Gently, my lord of Arras," said the Emperor ; "would you rob me of the duty I am bound to discharge towards the king, my brother-in-law ? Please God, none but I shall do it."

Then he turned to Coligny.

"What will you say of me, admiral ? Am I not a pretty knight to run a course and break a lance,—I, who can only with great difficulty open a letter ?"

He inquired after Henry II.'s health, and spoke of belonging to the house of France through his grandmother, Mary of Burgundy.

“I hold it to be an honor,” he said, “to have issued from the stock which wears the most famous crown in the world.”

It was not long before the truce between France and Spain was broken, although it cost Coligny, who was a man of scrupulous honor, a struggle to do it. A Spanish army under the Duke of Savoy advanced on St. Quentin. Coligny threw himself into the beleaguered town and manned its scanty fortifications with heroic courage, while Montmorency raised an army and hastened to his nephew's assistance, accompanied by half the nobility of the realm. The Constable's army was inferior in numbers to that of the Duke of Savoy, but with the obstinacy of old age and the memory of former successes he affected to despise the Duke of Savoy's youth, and said, “I will show him a move of an old soldier.” When the Prince of Condé warned Montmorency that he was being surrounded, the obstinate old warrior only exclaimed, “I was serving in the field before the Prince of Condé came into the world; I have good hopes of still giving him lessons in the art of war for some years to come.”

Montmorency's defeat before St. Quentin was complete, in spite of the valor of the French nobility, and the Constable, left on the field with a shattered thigh, was made a prisoner by the Spaniards, together with the dukes of Montpensier, Longueville, La Rochefoucauld, and six thousand others. Over three thousand French were killed. The Duke de Nevers and the Prince of Condé fought their way to La Fère with the remnants of the army, Coligny being left unsupported in St. Quentin, which was in ruins when it surrendered, a fortnight later. There was nothing to prevent the Spanish army from marching on the capital, and when Charles V., in his cloister, received the news of the victory, he asked, “Is the king, my son, at Paris?”

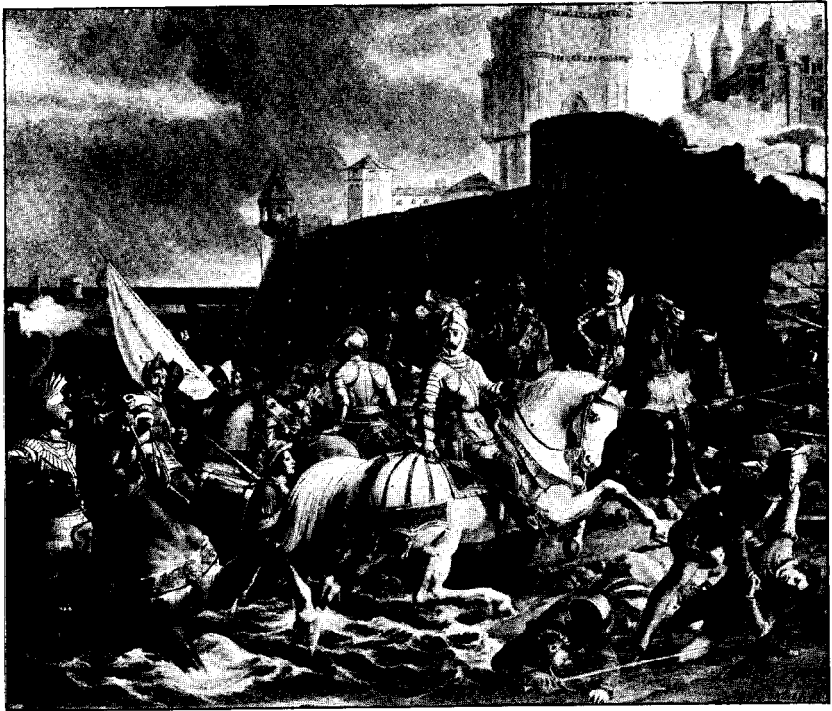
But none of the captains of the sixteenth century knew how to take advantage of their victories. At that time strategy was unknown, and the cumbersome warfare of the age prescribed the taking of St. Quentin before the army should proceed farther. Napoleon had not yet taught invading armies to mask fortresses on their march, so that while Coligny was desperately defending the smoking ruins of St. Quentin, the Spanish army lost the opportunity of capturing Paris.

In the mean time fresh levies were made in France, a body of Swiss mercenaries was engaged, and Guise and his troops were recalled from Italy. The enthusiasm of the people at the arrival of the hero of Metz was unbounded. The king created him at once lieutenant-general of the armies of France, and there was even talk of making him viceroy of the kingdom. Affecting to despise the proximity of the Spanish army, and seeking some brilliant stroke, easier of accomplishment, Guise suddenly turned from St. Quentin and surprised the garrison of Calais, wresting it from the English, who had held this gate-way to France for over two hundred years. This occasioned great rejoicing in France and intense indignation in England.

Continuing the campaign, Guise took some of the neighboring towns, and then hearing that Vieilleville was about to reduce Thionville, hurried in that direction, writing to him in advance, "I have heard that you have a fine enterprise on hand ; I pray you do not commence the execution of it until I be with you ; as lieutenant-general of his Majesty in this realm, I should be very vexed if there should be done therein anything of honor and importance without my presence." Vieilleville was much provoked, and even D'Estrées, who was sent to him by Guise, remarked, "The duke might surely have dispensed with coming ; it will be easy for him to swallow what is all chewed ready for

him." Guise brought Strozzi and Blaise de Montluc with him. Strozzi was mortally wounded at his side.

"By God's head!" he exclaimed, "the king to-day loses a good servant, and so does your excellency."



Guise, greatly moved, begged him to think of God, but Strozzi was one of the numerous atheists produced by the warring religions.

"I believe in no God," said he; "my game is played."

"You will appear to-day before His face," insisted Guise.

"Mordieu, I shall be where all the others are who have died in the last six thousand years."

It was not until Guise's plans were dropped and those of

Vieilleville adopted that the town fell ; even then a strong tower held out, until Montluc stormed it at the head of his men. Guise threw his arms around his neck. "The old proverb is infallible," he exclaimed, "a good horse will go to the last." Guise then retired exhausted, intending to commence the siege of a neighboring town at daybreak, but when he awoke he was informed that Montluc had surprised and carried the place during the night. "That is making the pace very fast," the duke exclaimed, but he thought it best not to complain about it. The army had waited so long for Guise that it was impossible now to carry on the campaign in Luxembourg as Vieilleville had intended. But Guise was satisfied with having won all the glory of war, and the king was anxious to get back to his two favorites, Montmorency and St. André, who were prisoners in Spain. It was said that their ransom cost the kingdom more than that of Francis I., for the treaty of Cateau-Cambresis restored to Spain one hundred and eighty-nine places, but France kept Calais and Metz, which have ever since been her frontier citadels.

The power of the house of Guise had now risen to such a height that they ventured to neglect Diane de Poitiers, through whose favor they had risen, and Montmorency attached her permanently to his side by a marriage between his son and her grand-daughter. In the mean time the position of the Guises was consolidated by two alliances with the royal family itself. Their niece, the little Queen of Scots, married the heir of the throne, and later the young king's sister married the Duke of Lorraine, the head of their house. The king treated the Duke of Guise almost as his equal, and gave the duke's brother, the Cardinal of Lorraine, the first place in his council. The Duke of Guise was the eldest of six brothers, each of whom possessed talents enough to confer distinction on a family. The greatest

defect in the brilliant character of the duke was his ambition, which knew no bounds. He was proud and dignified, yet courteous, and the charm of his address amounted almost to fascination. Guise was as rapacious as he was prodigal, and although his natural disposition was kindly, he was cruel and treacherous at times, when influenced by the Cardinal of Lorraine. His military talents were universally acknowledged. Dauntless and chivalrous personally, as a commander he was distinguished for the rarer qualities of perseverance, coolness, and self-command. He had not the craft, the versatile intellect, or the eloquence of his brother the cardinal, who was by common consent the



leading spirit of the family. It was Lorraine's marvellous intellect and discernment which planned, and Guise's courage and address which executed. Guise's disposition, however, was moderate, and had it not been for the cardinal's recklessness he would not have pushed the ambition of his house so heedlessly.

The cardinal was unscrupulous in his energy, and as ostentatious and munificent as he was grasping and vindictive. His private life was scandalous, but his outward appearance was dignified. He had a noble presence, and was as eloquent a preacher as ever thrilled an audience, resembling Cardinal du Perron, who, when congratulated by the king on the convincing eloquence

with which he had proved the existence of the Deity, replied, "I can now turn about and prove to you with arguments equally irrefutable, that there is no God." Of the other brothers of this remarkable family, the Duke of Aumale, distinguished for his courage and pride, was equally celebrated for his obtuseness and fanaticism. Another, as Cardinal Guise, earned the inglorious title of the "Bottle Cardinal;" two younger brothers became respectively Marquis of Elbœuf and Grand Prior of France.

There were no other factions at court strong enough to dispute the control exercised by the houses of Guise and Montmorency, so that all who looked for advancement were obliged to choose between these two leaders. Antoine de Bourbon, the first prince of the blood, was a nonentity who had not the strength to maintain against Guise the precedence to which his birth entitled him. His brother, the Prince of Condé, was ambitious, and had already earned in the field a reputation for ability and energy, but he had no following until after the failure of his conspiracy against the Guises, when he secured the support of the Protestant party by adopting their faith.

There were probably by this time two million Protestants in France; indeed, a Catholic historian of the time estimates them at one-quarter of the entire population. They held their first general synod in Paris in 1559, and paraded the streets openly singing the psalms of Marot, in spite of the royal edicts, which made heresy a capital offence. There was even a Protestant party in the parliament of Paris, which prevented the rigid execution of these edicts, and the Catholics accused the Huguenots of assassinating its president, Minart, because of his endeavors to secure their enforcement.

Antoine de Bourbon affected the new faith for the sake of popularity with his wife's subjects and securing the crown matri-

monial. Coligny and D'Andelot had embraced its tenets from more sincere motives, and D'Andelot attempted the conversion of the peasants on his estates. As might have been expected, the Cardinal of Lorraine did not neglect so excellent an opportunity of prejudicing the king against the Constable's family. When D'Andelot was summoned to Henry's presence to explain himself, and declared his belief that the Mass was an act of impiety, the king flew into a passion, threw a plate at his subject's head, and at once caused his arrest. The Constable's nephews having embraced the reformed faith, the Guises declared themselves the champions of the established religion, although the cardinal and his brother were accused of preferring in their hearts the Confession of Augsburg.

One of the conditions of the treaty of Cateau-Cambresis was that the Princess Elizabeth should marry Philip II. Henry II. was therefore urged by the Cardinal of Lorraine to win the approval of his prospective son-in-law and vindicate his title of the "Very Christian King," by making an example of the parliament. Against the advice of Vieilleville, Seguier, and his older and more temperate advisers, he went to parliament and encouraged its members to express their opinions without reserve. He was so enraged, however, with what he heard that he gave orders that five of their members should be arrested for heresy, and declared that one of them—Anne du Bourg—should be burned before his eyes. He afterwards regretted this hasty act, which was almost the last of his life, for he was killed in a tournament soon after. He had run three tilts with the captain of his guard, but in the last neither had any advantage, and the king insisted on repeating the encounter against the wishes both of his adversary, Montgomery, and Vieilleville. Both contestants broke their lances, but Montgomery did not drop the fragment

remaining in his hand quickly enough and a splinter struck the king in the eye, piercing the brain. All the resources of medical science were exhausted without avail. After lingering a few days the king died. During this time the queen never left his bedside, and watched over him with a devotion which was scarcely warranted by his past neglect. Henry II. was unvarying in his attachments. His friendship once given to man or woman was never withdrawn. He inherited from his father a mistress so much his senior that it excited the derision of the court, but Diane de Poitiers held her influence over him to the end.

Before the death of his elder brother had made him heir to the throne, Henry II. had been married by Francis I. to Catherine de Médicis to further his Italian enterprises. His bride had been regarded almost as a creature of ill-omen, and was left by her parents in a convent during the civil wars of Florence. The citizens threatened to suspend her from the walls in a basket if the Pope's cannon fired on them. Her only protection in the perils which surrounded her was the cunning of her race, and, girl as she was, she learned early to dissemble and rely on herself. Coming to the court of France as a bride—she was little over fourteen—with her intellect more cultivated than her moral nature, the courtiers did not discover at once how rusé she was, and praised her modesty and courtesy, her sweet smiles and musical voice. Always suave and smiling, she insinuated herself into the good graces of her father-in-law by studying his weaknesses and propitiating his mistresses. At her request she was admitted into the "petite bande" which Francis I. took with him everywhere. She also accompanied him in his hunts, for she was a great horsewoman until she was sixty, and is said to have introduced the side-saddle in France. The king's friendship stood her in good stead, for when, after having been

married ten years without children, her husband applied for a divorce on dynastic grounds, it was Francis who vetoed this project. Catherine succeeded in overcoming her husband's aversion to her, and the children which had been so long denied her began to come so fast as to excite the suspicions of the court. But Catherine had the reputation of a model wife, who had never consoled herself for her husband's neglect. She bestowed on her children all the attention and devotion which her husband had contemned, and took no part in the politics or intrigues of the court. Only twice in the long years of her married life did she exert the wonderful powers of intrigue which lay dormant within her,—once to defeat her husband's projects of divorce, and a second time, during the king's absence after the defeat of St. Quentin, when she solicited supplies from parliament in such words that people wept, and nothing else was talked of in Paris for days.

The most singular circumstance in the career of this remarkable woman, whose political ambitions and powers were now destined to become the most potent factor in French politics, was that for twenty years, with all this desire and capacity for ruling, she could humble herself before her husband's mistress and consent to remain a nonentity in the realm. But she was friendless and isolated, regarded at the French Court as merely the daughter of a Florentine banker, while her position as the unhonored wife of an unwilling husband was a trying one even for a Medici. Catherine wisely decided that her only safety lay in dissimulating and cultivating that self-repression for which her whole life had been one long training. But after bowing before circumstances for twenty years, she now rose serene and confident of her powers, and her first act was to avenge herself on the woman who had humiliated her all these years.

The Venetian ambassador speaks of Catherine at the time of her son's minority as being a woman of affable manners, great moderation, and superior intelligence. "She is never away from the king, and allows no one else to sleep in his room. She holds everything in her own hands. In the council she allows others to speak, but decides as she thinks best. . . . She has great designs, and does not allow them to be easily penetrated. As for her way of living, she is very fond of her ease and pleasure. She observes few rules; she eats and drinks a great deal; she

considers that she makes up for it by taking a great deal of exercise." In middle life Catherine became quite stout, and did not hesitate to jest about it. Her face was of an Italian type, full of intelligence and expression, although later in life it became sombre and severe. She had a graceful neck and a beautiful hand. Some claim she was tall, others short; some say

her skin was white, and others that it was dark. It is possible that the discrepancy is due to their seeing her at different periods of her life, but all agree as to her love of exercise and her extraordinary powers of physical endurance. Although restrained by no moral scruples, in a court whose licentiousness she encouraged for her own ends, it is doubtful if there are any well-authenticated accusations against her virtue.



Catherine never willingly made an enemy, and was always smiling and courteous. She excelled in unravelling the intricacies of human action; but penetrating and unscrupulous as she was in intrigue, she lacked the consistency and scope of true political genius. Her courage was unquestioned, but she was wanting in decision and energy, never pursuing any course unwaveringly, but changing her policies and parties with the times. She was too prone to dissimulate and temporize, too dexterous in using expedients for overcoming present difficulties without regard to the future, having no fixed aim except to rule by the transient policy of dividing her opponents. Catherine neither made friendships nor indulged in animosities, and was as likely, when the occasion demanded it, to conciliate her enemies as she was to desert her friends. As a rule she deprecated extreme measures and was not cruel, but she was indifferent to the sanctity of human life, and to escape difficulties would sacrifice both friends and opponents without hesitation. The greatest weakness of Machiavellian policy is that it is soon discredited. Henry IV., in much more difficult situations, said, "Deceit is everywhere odious, but especially in princes, whose word ought to be inviolable." Catherine betrayed all parties in turn, and was consequently abused and libelled by every one. The Huguenots considered her the incarnation of bloodthirstiness and treachery, but although Protestant historians have agreed to pillory her for the benefit of posterity, it is doubtful if St. Bartholomew was the result of any preconceived plan on her part. If the alleged consultation with the Duke of Alva ever took place, it was seven years before the massacre, during which interval she more than once leaned to the side of the Huguenots and several times made what she hoped was lasting peace with them.



CHAPTER III.

THE CONSPIRACY OF AMBOISE.

BEFORE Henry II. had breathed his last, Catherine commanded Diane de Poitiers to restore the crown jewels which the king had presented to her and retire from court. The haughty favorite answered that until the king was dead she had no master.

Catherine, who had endured twenty years of Montmorency's domination, believed that she was more likely to be admitted to a share in the government under the Guises, so when the parliament went to the little king to receive his commands, he was instructed to say, "With the approbation of the queen my mother, I have chosen the Duke of Guise and the Cardinal of Lorraine, my uncles, to have the direction of the State."

The Constable de Montmorency was deprived of his office of grand master and dismissed to Chantilly. Mindful of the alli-

ance between Montmorency and Diane de Poitiers, as well as the many slights which the Constable had inflicted on her in the past, Catherine listened but coldly when he represented to her the danger of allying herself with a foreign house, like that of Lorraine, against the princes of the blood. Then the Constable sent to the princes of the blood, urging on them the necessity of appearing at court to claim their places in the councils of the regency; but they paid little attention to his representations, remembering that in the day of his power he had neglected them, while the Guises, on the other hand, had conciliated them and dwelt on the unfriendliness of the house of Montmorency.

When the cardinal and his brother came to the control of the government on the death of the king, they found all the lucrative patronage disposed of and the treasury empty. In this deplorable state of affairs they resorted to the arbitrary measure of declaring all previous crown grants annulled; Cardinal Lorraine also refused to pay the debts of the crown, and erected gibbets around the palace, ordering all applicants to be gone in twenty-four hours on pain of being hanged. This caused a great outburst of indignation throughout the kingdom against the arrogance of the house of Lorraine. Then, as if the unpopularity caused by these measures was not enough, the cardinal aroused further opposition by renewing the persecutions of the Protestants, which had been allowed to drop. The clamor of contending religious and political factions in the kingdom became now so great that there was a general demand for the States-General. The Guises violently opposed this, telling the king that the people wished to strip him of his power, and that whoever spoke of the States-General was guilty of high treason. They even appealed to the King of Spain, who promised forty thousand troops in case of need. This condition of affairs roused Mont-

morency and the princes of the blood to ask the opinion of the most celebrated jurisconsults and theologians as to whether it was permissible for the malcontents, without committing high treason, to take up arms for the purpose of rescuing the government from the Guises. The Prince of Condé claims, in his memoirs, that the government of the Guises was illegal, because it had been the custom in France, from time immemorial, for the States-General to assemble during a minority and appoint a regency from the princes of the blood nearest the throne.

This resulted in the conspiracy of Amboise, which Voltaire says was the first in France. It originated at a council of princes at Vendôme. The Constable de Montmorency was represented by his secretary, but his three nephews were present,—the Cardinal de Châtillon, bland and insinuating in his manner; D'Andelot, frank and impetuous; Coligny, gloomy and taciturn, but opposed to civil war. Condé was recognized by the initiated as the “mute captain” of the conspiracy, but an able and unscrupulous soldier of fortune by the name of La Renaudie was selected for the active work. This incautious agitator not only harangued Huguenot assemblies and made secret levies of troops, but entered into communication with the Protestants abroad, even crossing to England for the purpose of securing Elizabeth's support. Such extensive preparations could not fail to reach the ears of the Guises.

The cardinal, who was as pusillanimous as he was violent, became panic-stricken. Guise, who was not so easily disturbed, removed the king to the stronghold of Amboise, where the leaders of the opposition were summoned by Catherine to a consultation, having as its ostensible object the alleviation of the causes of the discontent. Condé, D'Andelot, and Coligny bravely accepted the invitation, and the latter boldly arraigned the gov-

ernment before the council, asking a modification of the laws against the Protestants, in which request he was supported by the chancellor and the majority of those present. Catherine de Médicis, vexed and provoked with the Guises for attempting to exclude her from the government, stood aloof and bided her time.

Meanwhile, the insurgents were marshalling their forces around Amboise. The Duke of Nemours was sent to bring their leaders to court under a promise of safe-conduct from the king, but when they arrived, in spite of the protests of the Duke of Nemours, they were thrown into prison by the Guises. The rebel leaders were afterwards tortured and executed with the greatest cruelty, while the royal troops dispersed their adherents.

It is said that when D'Aubigny was only eight years of age, his father, who happened to be passing through Amboise with him, stopped before the heads affixed to the posts in the market-place, and, solemnly laying his hand on his son's head, exclaimed, "My boy, spare not thy head, after mine, to avenge these brave chiefs; if thou spare thyself, thou shalt have my curse upon thee." So savage was the slaughter that the Chancellor Olivier is said to have sickened and died, exclaiming, "Ah, cursed cardinal, thou damnest thyself and makest us condemn ourselves likewise." Even the young king, completely subservient to the influence of his wife and the Guises as he was, said to them, "I don't know how it is, but I hear it said that the people are against you only. I wish you could be away from here for a time, that we might see whether it is you or me that they are against." But the Guises told him that "neither he nor his brothers would live one hour after their departure, and that the house of Bourbon was only seeking how to exterminate the house of Valois."

For a whole month there was nothing but executions, which were offered as spectacles to the court. When any poor wretch died with more than usual fortitude, the Cardinal of Lorraine would say to the little king, "See, sir, the fear of death cannot abate their pride and felony. What would they do then, if they had you in their clutches?" So extreme was the vengeance taken on the conspirators that the Duchess of Guise left the court in despair, exclaiming to Catherine de Médicis, "Ah, madame, what a whirlwind of hatred is gathering about the heads of my poor children!" They even dared to aim at the "mute captain" of the conspiracy, whose cool and confident demeanor at court surprised all. With magnificent audacity he met them more than half-way and boldly declared in full council that those who sought to connect him with the conspiracy lied, and that he, renouncing his privileges of birth, was willing to meet them at the sword's point, whereupon Guise, at whom this defiance was directed, rose and declared not only his belief in Condé's innocence, but his willingness to act as his second. The prince's cool audacity saved him, and, taking advantage of its effect, he asked permission to retire from court and sought safety with his brother in Navarre.

The Guises now planned to entrap the princes of the blood, and satisfy the popular clamor for the States-General by calling an assembly of notables. The houses of Montmorency and Châtillon appeared thereat with nearly a thousand followers, and Coligny again pleaded for freedom of worship for the Protestants, presenting a petition to the king, which he said would have fifty thousand signatures. "And I," spoke up the Duke of Guise, "would find a million to sign a contrary petition." However, the queen and the Guises were finally forced to grant a suspension of the religious edicts and to issue a summons for

the States-General; which, although it might endanger their power, would afford them an opportunity either of capturing the persons of the princes, or of declaring them traitors and rebels if they did not attend.

After consulting with their Huguenot supporters, whose religion both brothers had now adopted, Condé and Antoine thought it wiser not to attend the assembly of notables. The union of the two brothers in Béarn had excited the suspicions of the Guises. They found nothing against the King of Navarre, but through the capture of one of their agents they obtained confessions and letters which, true or false, compromised Montmorency and proved that Condé was planning a rising of the Protestants, the capture of several fortified towns, and the hiring of German mercenaries.

Every effort was now made to lure the princes to the States-General. They were not without friends at court, including the Duchess of Montpensier, who warned them of their danger, if indeed they had not been already aware of it. Each party penetrated the other's designs, and the Princess of Condé proposed that instead of trusting themselves together in their enemy's power, the King of Navarre should attend while Condé remained in Béarn. But letters were written them skilfully playing on the weakness of Navarre and the daring of Condé. Their brother the Cardinal de Bourbon, as well as Marshal St. André, assured them solemnly of the king's safe-conduct, and urged so earnestly the necessity of their exculpating themselves that at last they both reluctantly consented to attend. Declining the protection of a body of several hundred Protestant gentlemen who wished to go with them, they were met half-way by a body of royal troops who pretended to be an escort of honor, but in reality fell in behind in order to

cut off any possible escape. When they arrived at Orleans they found the great gate closed, and were obliged to pass on foot through the wicket. No one received them. The streets were deserted save for long lines of troops drawn up to overawe them, and at court they passed through double rows of guards and gentlemen who made them no sign of recognition. The king angrily upbraided Condé in a speech which had been dictated to him by the Guises. When the prince answered with spirit, and reminded his Majesty of his safe-conduct, Francis interrupted him and ordered his arrest.

It was the intention of the Guises to arrest Montmorency also, but the old Constable was too wary. He delayed answering the summons on various excuses until he heard of Condé's arrest, on which he beat a precipitate retreat. Coligny hastened boldly to court, where he fearlessly opposed his enemies, but they were after larger game. The trial of Condé in the privy council was begun at once. He claimed his privileges as a prince of the blood and a knight of St. Michael, haughtily refusing to plead except before a properly constituted court of his peers, and boldly appealing "from the king ill-advised to the king better advised." It was thought in his extremity he might be induced to withdraw from the new faith, but he replied, "I came to clear myself from calumnies, which is of more consequence to me than hearing Mass." When it was suggested to him that a reconciliation with the Duke of Guise might still be possible, he fearlessly replied, "It can only be at the point of the lance."

The Princess of Condé worked day and night in her husband's interest. She threw herself on her knees before the king and begged with tears for her husband's pardon, until the Cardinal of Lorraine rudely drove her away. In spite of all, Condé was

condemned. The next thing the Guises considered was how to dispose of Antoine. It is said they planned an altercation between him and the king, which would give the by-standers an excuse for his assassination, in which butchery the king was to strike the first blow. Catherine, it is said, went to her son and protested against this with tears in her eyes, and Antoine was not unwarned when he was summoned to the royal cabinet. With the courage which was the heritage of his race, and almost the only redeeming trait of an otherwise weak character, he turned to one of his gentlemen and said, "If they slay me yonder, as I am told they will, carry my bloody shirt to my wife and son, and adjure him by the name of God, by his blood, and by his honor to avenge me, when he shall be of age to do so." Antoine answered the king's angry reproaches with such moderation that Francis found no excuse for striking him, and permitted him to retire uninjured, while Guise muttered between his teeth, "'Tis the very whitest liver that ever was."

Because of the extremities to which they were proceeding, there was a revolution at court against the Guises. The tide was turning. The chancellor and several others refused to sign the death-warrant of Condé and represented to Catherine de Médicis the imprudence, which she already realized, of thus making the Guises omnipotent. Moreover, the young king was dying, and the Guises, feeling the ground slipping from under them, tried in vain to hasten Condé's execution. The queen-mother had assured the prince in the beginning of the proceedings against him, truly or not, that she had no part in them. She now saw her way to power by means of a rapprochement with the party of the princes. Believing no time more favorable than the present for a bargain with Antoine, she visited him in his prison by night, deplored the situation with tears, and eventu-

ally agreed that if Antoine resigned his claims to the regency during the approaching minority in her favor, he should be made lieutenant-general of the kingdom, Condé should be liberated, and both princes restored to their places in the council. She also promised to enter into negotiations with the King of Spain for the restoration of Spanish Navarre, well knowing that nothing would come of them. The usual Protestant demands



for freedom of worship and the exclusion of the Guises were made and evaded. Even the Guises now hastened to make peace with the imprisoned princes, and the dying king was induced solemnly to declare their innocence to Antoine. Condé was finally prevailed on to embrace Guise, who vehemently protested that he was not responsible for his rival's imprisonment. The prince was playing cards in prison with his guards, when

one of the servants pretending to pick up a card whispered in his ear, "Our gentleman is croqueted." Francis II. was dead. Coligny, who was at the king's bedside when he breathed his last, rose and gravely announced to the court, "Gentlemen, the king is dead. A lesson to us to live." At that very moment the Constable Montmorency, without whom the princes would conclude nothing, was thundering at the city gates, threatening to hang the keepers for not opening them. Entering, he dismissed the troops he found drawn up, saying, "Since the queen restores me to my functions, I will soon take care that the soldiers shall not have the trouble of mounting guard in times of peace." The rough old warrior then proceeded to court, where he folded his niece, the Princess of Condé, to his heart, and gazed with tears on the dead body of the king.

Everything now seemed to favor Montmorency and the princes. A marriage was even projected between the little Duke of Anjou and the daughter of the King of Navarre. But Catherine's policy was to hold the balance of power, and at the new coronation she permitted the Duke of Guise to take precedence of the princes of the blood. The Protestants also were disappointed at her disregard of their interests, but a still greater surprise was in store for them. The Constable Montmorency, who in the beginning had threatened to have Antoine declared regent unless the Guises were excluded from the government, now, in spite of the entreaties of the princes, his son, and his nephews, all of whom had cast their lot with the Protestants, went over to the side of the old faith, to which he was bound by the sympathies and prejudices of a lifetime. There was another reason. It was found that, without any apparent excuse, the finances of the kingdom were terribly involved. Condé and Coligny were forced to the identical

measure which had made the Guises so unpopular, and proposed that those who had plundered the State so freely under Francis I., Hénry II., and Francis II. should be forced to disgorge. But this affected Montmorency, as well as the Guises and Marshal St. André, and it was in vain his nephew attempted to calm the veteran's indignation by the assurance that he would be shielded.

A treaty of alliance was drawn up between Montmorency, Guise, and St. André, henceforth known as the Triumvirate. This was as great a blow to the queen as to the Protestants. Catherine, in pursuance of her policy of keeping the balance of power, lost no time in throwing the weight of her influence on the other side of the scales, and now courted the King of Navarre and the Protestants most assiduously. The Triumvirate also held out most alluring prospects to the vacillating Antoine. They promised him at one time a divorce from Jeanne d'Albret, from whom he had become permanently alienated, and the crown of Scotland with Mary Stuart; at another, the cession from Spain of the Island of Sardinia as a kingdom for him and his mistress, Mlle. de Rouet, who had just borne him a son. To inflame Antoine's imagination, the Cardinal of Lorraine caused a map of this barren island to be drawn, replete with imaginary cities and covered with fabulous orange-groves. Antoine himself attributed his conversion to the futile colloquy between the Catholics and Protestants at Poissy. Although sanctioned and attended by the court, its only result was to weaken the belief of many on both sides. Leaving her husband and son at court, the unhappy Jeanne returned alone to Béarn and sought comfort and protection in joining the faith her husband had just deserted. She never saw Antoine again. Before she left Paris it was said the Triumvirate de-

bated whether they should not arrest Jeanne and assassinate Catherine de Médicis.

The formation of the Triumvirate marked the final reorganization, on religious rather than political lines, of the struggle for power which had been maintained at court ever since the



death of Francis I. The first conflict between the religions was occasioned by the malicious ringing of the bells of the Catholic church of St. Médard during a Protestant service near by. The Protestants who were sent to remonstrate with their disturbers were so maltreated that the exasperated congregation invaded St. Médard's in a body, committing all sorts

of sacrilege and precipitating a conflict in which a number of lives were lost. But it was the massacre of Vassy, as it was called by the Protestants, which served as the spark that lighted the fires of civil war. The Duke of Guise, returning from Germany, where he had been endeavoring to prevent the enlisting of mercenaries by the Protestants, arrived with his suite at Vassy just as the bells of the Huguenot church were ringing for worship. He inquired if the Protestants were numerous, and when he was informed that they were, began to "mutter and put himself in a white heat, gnawing his beard as he was wont to do when he was enraged or had a mind to take vengeance." Having retired to a hostelry, his suite went to observe the Huguenots, who, according to Catholic accounts, threw stones at them, calling them idolaters. The Protestant version that the Catholics were the aggressors seems more reasonable, however, as it is far from probable that Guise's arrogant followers would wait to be insulted by a country rabble. At any rate a conflict, which was not premeditated, took place. The duke was wounded in the face with a stone, while endeavoring to restore peace, whereupon the Cardinal of Lorraine ordered the cavalry to charge, and nearly three hundred Protestants were killed or wounded.

The news of this outrage was received by their co-religionists throughout the kingdom with the greatest indignation. Condé offered to raise an army of fifty thousand men to resent it, but the renegade Antoine raged against his brother and the party he had just deserted, officiously declaring that whosoever touched so much as the little finger of his brother of Guise would have to do with his whole body. Theodore Bézà, the eloquent Protestant divine, overwhelmed Antoine in reply, declaring that, "It is true the church of God should endure

blows and not inflict them, but remember, I pray you, that it is an anvil which has used up a great many hammers."

There had been a score of Protestant massacres committed by the Catholics before that of Vassy, and four or five by the Huguenots in retaliation. Montluc, who was sent to suppress the heretics in Languedoc, was one of the ablest and most honorable of the Catholic leaders in times of general turpitude. But gentleness was not a characteristic of the age, and men

otherwise upright and humane were ferocious to their enemies. Montluc believed the only way of treating rebellion was to extirpate it, root and branch, and he hanged right and left, "without expense of paper and ink," he writes, "or giving them a hearing, for those gentry are regular Chrystostoms." The capture of towns was generally followed by a massacre of the defenders, and when Montluc was wounded on



one of these occasions and was supposed to be dying, his last request was that none of the prisoners should be spared. "Nobody commits cruelty in repaying it," he wrote; "the first are called cruelties, the second justice. The only way to stop the enemy's barbarities is to meet them with retaliation." He had able imitators on the Protestant side in De Piles and Baron

des Adrets. It is related that after the capture of Montbrison the latter ordered the prisoners to throw themselves from the top of the citadel. One of them could not persuade himself to do it, although he made two attempts. "Come, twice is enough to take your soundings," shouted the baron. "I'll give you four times to do it in," was the prompt reply of the victim, which so pleased Des Adrets that he spared his life.

While one's blood boils at the recital of Catholic atrocities, it must not be forgotten that they were repaid in kind by the Protestants, who sacked the churches, fed the consecrated wafers to swine, cut out the tongues and eyes of priests, sawed them in half, disembowelled them, and at St. Ouen roasted one alive and fed his flesh to the dogs. Condé tried in vain to restrain such excesses. In an attempt to stop the sacking of the churches after the capture of Orleans, he is said to have levelled a musket at a soldier who had ascended a ladder for the purpose of breaking an image. "Have patience until I have overthrown this idol," begged the fanatic, "and then, if it please you, I will die." Human nature in the sixteenth century was much the same on both sides, and religious toleration was practised by neither. The supremacy of one side or the other was the only solution which had been found for religious controversies. What concessions the Huguenots had won had been secured by active resistance, and where they had the upper hand they were as intolerant as the Catholics. In Béarn they had prohibited Catholic worship, and at a later period, Charles IX. said to the Prince of Condé, "Good cousin, a little while ago the Protestants were satisfied to be tolerated, now you want to be our equals; by and by you will drive us out of the country."

When Guise returned to Paris after the massacre of Vassy,

he was received with the acclamations of the populace, and at once forced Condé to retire from the capital. Montmorency went about at the head of his troops burning Huguenot conventicles, while Condé, foreseeing civil war, was busy organizing his forces and seeking the support of the German and English Protestants. To him belongs the dishonor of having been the first to call foreign mercenaries on the soil of France, although Coligny had already detected Guise in negotiations with Spain which amounted to little short of high treason. Condé wrote the admiral and D'Andelot that "Cæsar had not only crossed the Rubicon, but had already seized Rome," and La Noue writes that the admiral, who was no novice in affairs, foresaw that the game was going to be a warm one, and replied that they must reinforce themselves diligently or else prepare for flight. La Noue declares that the Protestant rising was not the result of premeditation, whatever may be said to the contrary, but that after the massacre of Vassy the usually deserted country roads were so choked with parties of Protestants, gathering to Condé's support, without orders or plans, that they felt themselves that it was an assembling of all the fools in France. "Yet," he remarks, "those who talk of luck or divine providence in these affairs do so only to conceal their ignorance."

The ascendancy the Triumvirate had gained obliged the queen-mother to support Condé, in hopes of maintaining the balance of power. Therefore, in spite of the most violent opposition of Guise and Montmorency, she granted the Protestants an edict permitting them virtual freedom of worship, but forbidding them to break images, go armed to their conventicles, or organize in military bodies. After this edict, Castelnau says that the attendance at the reformed worship increased so greatly

that the conventicles would not hold the crowds who flocked to them, and that many Catholics attended out of curiosity as well as Protestants. To satisfy the Triumvirate the queen-mother had been obliged to declare she would permit only one religion in France. Then, in order to be out of their reach, she retired with the king to Fontainebleau, whence she wrote letter after letter to the Swiss, urging them to send aid to the Huguenots. She wrote Condé no less than seven letters in three days, begging him "to hasten to the deliverance of the mother and her child."

Had Catherine succeeded in carrying out her policy, and had the Protestant cause received the royal sanction, it is not too much to say that the course of French history would have been altered. It is even possible that the civil wars might have been avoided, for Montmorency would never have drawn his sword against his king, and even Guise would have hesitated. For some unaccountable reason, Condé, usually so prompt, committed the fatal error of recruiting his army before he secured the queen-mother and her son, and thus lost the opportunity of his life. The prestige of the king's presence was worth many thousands of soldiers to his cause, an advantage which the queen-mother was daily begging him to seize, and which never again presented itself.

The Triumvirate were more prompt, and, swooping down on the king and his mother at Fontainebleau, carried them back to Paris in spite of the delays, tears, and remonstrances of Catherine, to which Guise's only answer was that "an advantage, whether it is won by love or by force, is not the less an advantage."

Condé was marching at the head of three thousand horse to the queen's assistance, when he received the intelligence of her



capture ; he drew up his horse in consternation, but Coligny exclaimed, with a sigh, "We are now so far in the water that we must drink or be drowned." So they marched on and captured Orleans ; they even threatened Paris, and issued an edict declaring that they were in arms for the release of the king and the queen-mother.

By this time the nation was in arms, and the Protestants had gained possession of Rouen, Blois, Tours, Lyons, and many other towns. But Catherine never disputed accomplished facts, and readily adapted her policy to whatever position she was in. Although she had summoned Condé to her assistance, she now, through fear of civil war and pressure from the Triumvirate, issued an edict forbidding the Protestants to take arms on the plea of her captivity, and wrote Condé urging him to prove his loyalty and appease the troubles of the kingdom by coming to court, promising that the massacre of Vassy and the demands of the Huguenots would then be considered. But the prince would not desert the cause to which he was now pledged. He made, however, the mistake which Henry IV. never committed, of putting his party before his country ; for by placing the English in possession of Havre he lost the favor of the queen-mother and many others.

The two armies came together near Orleans, and an angry interview took place between Condé and the queen-mother, which resulted in nothing except a joke as they parted. "Your people are millers, my good cousin," said Catherine, alluding to the white cassocks of Condé's troops. "To drive your asses, madame," was his prompt reply. It was noticed that the gentlemen who accompanied them separated with tears in their eyes. Indeed, the two armies were loath to come to blows, for as La Noue says, every one had a brother, a cousin, or an uncle on

the other side, and so they parted, preferring to strengthen their respective positions by the capture of towns and further negotiations before meeting in the field. In the mean time each side recruited its forces with Swiss and German mercenaries. Condé agreed to leave the kingdom if the Triumvirs would do the same, but his followers refused to allow him to abandon them, and he submitted not unwillingly. It is not probable that either side would have lived up to the agreement.

The introduction of the English into Havre and Rouen excited general indignation, and Guise made a popular move in besieging the latter town. A reinforcement of English troops fought their way from Havre to the relief of Rouen with indomitable courage, but the town was carried by storm, and the inhabitants were massacred and the place pillaged in spite of Guise's efforts to restrain his troops. It was estimated that over four thousand non-combatants were slaughtered in cold blood. The King of Navarre, mortally wounded in the attack, died in the arms of his mistress, despised and repudiated by all. One of his old Huguenot servants read the Scriptures to him during his last moments, and he changed his religion for the fifth time, declaring that he died in the Protestant faith, and that if he had lived he would have had its religion preached. He left his horses to Guise, but advised his wife and son to secure their liberty by remaining in Béarn. Henry IV. always asserted that the ball which killed his father came from his own ranks and not the enemy's, but no evidence of this exists. Antoine had "neither heart nor head." He was handsome and brave, vain of his grace and address, but dissolute and vacillating. Now that the Royalists were triumphant, they were joined by many Huguenots, but the Protestants were reinforced by La Rochefoucauld and others ; as well as by D'Andelot, who brought back

some seven thousand mercenaries from Germany, where both sides recruited impartially. Condé now advanced on Paris, which he might have captured by a bold stroke had it not been for Coligny's reluctance. The admiral's troops ridiculed him for his caution, but he grimly replied that he preferred to be laughed at by his friends rather than by his enemies.

The two armies were again approaching each other, and the Triumvirate sent to court asking whether an engagement should be risked. Catherine wished the complete success of neither side. In this dilemma the Huguenot nurse of one of her children happened to enter the room, and the queen-mother exclaimed, "It is very extraordinary that three



great and veteran commanders should send for the advice of women and children upon a point of war. Ask the nurse, she will tell you what to do." The woman thus addressed is said to have replied, "Since the Protestants will not be contented with reasonable terms, you have nothing left but to fight them." The matter was referred to the council, but they would express no opinion. Then the Triumvirate determined to fight. Condé, who had foreseen the conflict, should not have allowed them to cross the Eure unopposed; but the admiral persisted there

would be no engagement, and thereby caused many to go into battle unprepared and in their ordinary clothing against enemies in full armor.

The Protestants were superior in cavalry, but they were otherwise so inferior to the Catholics that up to the final moment Condé sought to avoid an engagement. Finding this impossible, he took advantage of the disorder in the enemy's ranks caused by their haste to come up with him. Making a furious charge with all his troops on Montmorency and the Swiss, he carried everything before him. The old Constable, with his usual bad luck, was wounded and captured after fighting hand to hand in the mêlée, and having two horses killed under him. Guise's action also was characteristic. He refused to move with the reserves to the assistance of his fellow-commanders, saying it was not yet time, until Montmorency was captured and St. André was killed. Then when Condé's troops were crying "Victory," and had dispersed in pursuit, Guise suddenly charged, captured the Protestant commander, and alone won all the glory of the battle of Dreux, wresting a victory from the very jaws of defeat. Coligny rallied his cavalry, and, after trying in vain to retrieve the day by a desperate charge, retired unmolested and in good order to the neighboring town of Neufville, carrying his uncle Montmorency as a prisoner with him. The admiral regarded the engagement as so indecisive that he would have returned to the contest the following morning if his German reiters had been willing; but their commander declined, saying it was their custom to charge "once for pay, twice for the Fatherland, and three times for religion." The day before they had charged four times.

So ended the battle of Dreux, the first encounter of the civil wars, in which, to quote Marshal de Vieilleville, "Condé was

master of the field all day long, but finally lost it through not keeping his forces sufficiently in hand, and failing to take into account those of the enemy." Among the circumstances which La Noue notes as remarkable in connection with this engagement was the courage and steadiness of the Swiss, who rallied again and again after being broken by Condé's overwhelming cavalry charges, and thus by prolonging the resistance enabled Guise ultimately to save the day; the long duration of the battle, which occupied nearly five hours, engagements in those days being ordinarily decided by a few charges, rarely lasting over an hour; the capture of the commanders of both armies; and the courtesy of M. de Guise towards the Prince of Condé. The duke insisted on his prisoner's sharing his bed and meals with him, and in every way treated him like a brother.

The first reports which reached Paris were that the battle had been won by the Huguenots, and the greatest consternation prevailed. "If it had been," says Montluc, "I think the State would have changed and so would the religion." The Catholics in general could not praise Guise enough for this victory, although some of the Constable's friends accused the duke of betraying their chief in order to secure all the glory for himself. Catherine rewarded Guise by restoring to him his title of lieutenant-general of the kingdom, but watched with ill-concealed uneasiness the popularity of the Catholic hero who bore his laurels so modestly. The young king, Charles IX., is said to have remarked to some of the courtiers, "See, now, if the Duke of Guise does not act the king well." And after reading a letter of thanks from him the king is said to have smiled, saying, in Italian, "Don't trust, and you'll not be duped."

Guise now commenced the siege of Orleans, the Protestants' stronghold, saying that after he took the foxes' den he would

chase them out of France. Orleans was on the point of succumbing, although heroically defended by D'Andelot, when the Duke of Guise was shot from behind a hedge by Jean Poltrot, who it was claimed was instigated by the admiral. This charge the admiral denied. Poltrot was in his pay as a spy, and had boasted of his intention of killing Guise, but, being a braggart, no one paid any attention to it; Coligny, however, did not hesitate to say that he believed it "the greatest blessing which could have come to this realm and to the church of God, especially to myself and all my house."

D'Aubigny says that Guise on his death-bed expressed regret for the massacre of Vassy, and advised the queen-mother to make peace with the Protestants. Catherine had been endeavoring for some time, through the blandishments of one of her maids of honor, to come to terms with Condé, the prince being far from a Christian hero when it came to questions of practical morality. Montmorency was now a prisoner in the hands of his niece, the Princess of Condé, and her persuasions were probably used to dispose the captive more favorably towards peace. But the brutal immoderation with which the Constable abused Condé in the peace conference almost defeated the treaty, which was finally concluded, subject to the approval of the various parliaments of France. Its terms were less favorable to the Protestants than those which had prevailed before the war. Coligny, who was returning to the relief of Orleans from a series of successes in Normandy, is said to have accused Condé and the nobility of making peace in their own interests rather than those of the Church, and of putting an end to his successful campaign when by delaying a little longer the Protestants could have obtained their own terms.

The death of the Duke of Guise had freed Catherine from all fears of her power being threatened from the Catholic side, but it had also left the army without a commander, and the queen-mother was anxious to come to terms with the Protestants before their demands were strengthened by military successes. It is said that at the very time she was cajoling terms from Condé she assured the Spanish ambassador that she "drew back but to take her spring the better." Catherine was probably deluding both parties. She was always a dissembler, and her only fixed aim was to preserve the balance of power.

The Royalists had been incensed by the action of the Protestants in turning over French fortresses to their foreign allies, and when peace was declared and their German mercenaries had been dismissed, the court at once turned their attention to dislodging the English from Havre. Condé rivalled the Duke of Montpensier in the activity of his exertions against his former allies, and the invaders, after being closely invested and cut off from their water supplies, were forced to surrender.

Condé now became an assiduous frequenter of the court, rendered oblivious by its fascinations, the Protestants alleged, both to the claims of his party and his wife. These were times when men's passions were hot and uncontrolled, and Condé soon deserted his wife for his mistress, as his brother had done before him; but there were circumstances which made his actions appear even more heartless. Mlle. de Limeuil, the maid of honor to whom the queen-mother had assigned the duty of worming from Condé his secrets, allowed herself to become so devoted to her lover that she became no longer useful to the queen. She gave birth to a child soon after one of the court dances, and was dismissed from court because of the scandal. The Princess of Condé was in delicate health, and her death

was undoubtedly hastened by her grief. Morally the murderer of his wife, Condé then most basely deserted the woman he had betrayed for the fresh charms of another, thereby earning the undying hatred of his discarded mistress. By some strange fatality, Mlle. de Limeuil was afterwards present on the battle-field of Jarnac, and was asked by the Duke of Anjou if she could identify the mutilated corpse which was supposed to be that of Condé. Gazing fixedly at the gory and disfigured features of her former lover, with the triumph of one whose vengeance had been long delayed, she uttered the single word, "Enfin !"



CHAPTER IV.

CONDÉ'S REBELLIONS.

PEACE had been accepted by both parties on account of the deplorable condition of the country. For a year all agriculture and commerce had been ruined in the ravages of civil war, which Castelnau says was an excuse for thieving, murder, incest, parricide, and every other wickedness that could be imagined. The conditions of the peace were satisfactory to neither party, and the Protestants claimed that as soon as the English were driven out the Catholics began to persecute them afresh, and to evade in every possible way the fulfilment of the stipulations of the treaty. Many tumults and murders ensued, and it was estimated that over three thousand Protestants perished in this manner.

Charles issued repeated orders to his governors and lieutenants to observe the edict of pacification and not to permit the Protestants to be molested. The court also made numerous progresses throughout the disturbed portions of the kingdom. At Bayonne the Queen of Spain, with a suite of Spanish grandees, including the Duke of Alva, joined her mother, Catherine de Médicis, as was only natural. But the suspicions of the Huguenots were aroused, and they declared the meeting was for the purpose of arranging between Catherine and the Duke of Alva a preconcerted extermination of the Gueux of Flanders and the Huguenots of France. It is not improbable that the Duke of Alva, who was preparing for his Flemish campaign, may have proposed some such combined action, for the court of Spain was making every effort through bribery and other influences to involve France in domestic troubles which would prevent her assisting the revolted provinces. But Catherine's policy subsequent to St. Bartholomew gives one no grounds for belief in any alliance with Alva. Her sympathies doubtless were on the side of her religion, and she feared the turbulence of Condé and his party, but there seems no adequate proof that she was plotting their destruction at this date, as the Protestant historians claim; on the contrary, her aim was always to preserve the balance of parties and prevent civil war when it was avoidable.

It had long been the aim of Spain to secure a footing in France by way of Navarre, so after endeavoring in vain to arrange a marriage between the widowed Jeanne and his son, Don Carlos or Don Juan, Philip determined, availing himself of the Pope's bull of excommunication, to seize both Jeanne and her kingdom. The plot leaked out through one of his agents and the friendly warnings of the Spanish Queen. The French

court had protested against the bull of excommunication and deprivation issued against the Queen of Navarre, and now they not only assisted Jeanne to thwart the Spanish plot, but also, by a timely intervention, prevented the Pope from proclaiming Jeanne's marriage invalid, which would have raised questions among the Catholics as to the legitimacy of Henry IV. In return, Jeanne withdrew the edicts which had so long prevailed against Catholic worship in Béarn. The court also secured an apparent reconciliation between Montmorency and the Cardinal of Lorraine, as well as between the houses of Guise and Châtillon.

The Cardinal of Lorraine had sacrificed the interests of France at the Council of Trent in his passionate desire to be avenged on his brother's murderers, and at his instance the council proclaimed a union of Catholic powers for the suppression of heresy, in which France was invited to participate. But the court declined, being resolved to keep the peace, and resisted all efforts to involve it in the Catholic League which Marshal Tavannes was instrumental in spreading through France with the assistance of the religious brotherhood. But the rancor of both religious parties had been steadily increasing in spite of the efforts of the court, and they were now eager for an appeal to arms. The Protestants claimed they had lost more in the four years of peace than in the one year of war, and that the court, by dismantling their strongholds and abridging their privileges, was reducing them gradually until they could be exterminated in the end with a single blow. At a conference which the Protestant leaders held over the situation, the fiery D'Andelot urged them to seize the advantage of striking the first blow, asking what benefit their patience would bring them if they waited until they were all imprisoned or driven from the kingdom.

Acting on this advice, the Huguenots sent agents to their allies, and Condé, piqued by the refusal of the office of Constable of France, was aroused from the security into which the Protestants claimed the court was lulling him. Coligny, whose life was threatened by the Guises, persuaded Condé that his liberty was also in danger, and that the passage of Spanish troops under the Duke of Alva to the Low Countries, together with the contemporary engagement by the court of six thousand Swiss mercenaries, a measure which the Protestants had themselves recommended as a safeguard against the Spanish, were the evidences of a plot to suppress the Huguenots. Condé was very open to impressions, and he fancied a confirmation of this in the fact that when he had asked the young Duke of Anjou what they were going to do with the Swiss, the duke had brusquely replied, "We shall find good employment for them." The Protestants now demanded the dismissal of these Swiss, offering to defend the frontier themselves. This was refused.

Condé, when his mind was made up, was quick to act. He now planned to surprise and capture the court at Monceaux, as Guise had done in his first war. The Protestant rising was accomplished secretly and rapidly. Fifty towns were captured the first day, and the court had just time to escape to the protection of the Swiss, who had been hurried up to Meaux, when a large body of Protestant horse under Condé appeared.

The court was now disposed to conciliate the Huguenots by dismissing the Swiss, but under the circumstances it was obliged to avail itself of their protection in order to reach Paris. They were closely pursued by Condé, who, with only five hundred troopers, took St. Denis, overran the surrounding country, and cut off the supplies of the capital in the face of an army of

ten thousand men. La Noue likened it to an ant attacking an elephant. The Parisians were indignant, but the Catholic leaders held that an engagement was unwise at this time when the Protestants had everything to gain and nothing to lose. Negotiations were then attempted, but were soon broken off by the irate Constable, who roared out that the king would never suffer two religions in France. In the mean time Protestant and Catholic recruits were flocking to both armies from all parts of France. Condé and the admiral were eagerly entreating the German princes for assistance, while the court was begging Alva to send a detachment of Spaniards to their rescue, a request which the duke parried by offering to come himself at the head of his army. This the court in turn evaded, fearing thereby to render the Spaniards masters of the situation. Finally, Alva sent two thousand Spaniards, and on their arrival Montmorency determined to march out and drive the Protestants from St. Denis.

It never occurred to the Constable that the Protestant army, which was only one-third of his in number and without artillery or pikes, would accept battle. They did, and would certainly have won the victory but for the absence of D'Andelot's detachment. Condé pushed his infantry forward without firing to within fifty paces of the enemy, when they fired with terrible effect. Before the Catholic line could recover it was overwhelmed by furious cavalry charges led by Condé and the admiral. The Constable fought desperately. He was now nearly eighty years old, and had never turned his back on a foe or emerged from a battle without a wound. He was destined never to fight again. Mortally wounded as he was, he still managed, with the hilt of his broken sword, to dash out the teeth of a Scottish officer who tried to make him prisoner.

When his troops rallied to carry him off, the dying veteran exclaimed, "Why waste your time here? There is still light. Pursue the enemy, for the victory is ours." But although the Catholics had recovered their ground, they were without a commander; a part of their troops had fled into Paris, and the enemy was so bold, it was thought best not to continue the engagement.

Next day the Huguenots marched up to the walls of Paris, with trumpets sounding and banners flying, before they commenced their retreat towards their German allies. They were followed by the royal army under the nominal command of the young Duke of Anjou, who delayed their march by negotiations and truces. The royalists finally gave up the pursuit on account of the bad roads, contenting themselves with having driven the Huguenots from the kingdom. When the Protestants reached Lorraine they did not find their allies, and many became disheartened in consequence, as the French will in severe adversity. But nothing could daunt Condé's buoyant spirits, and Coligny's tried resolution was proof against grumblers, one of whom was said to have asked the admiral where he was taking them.

"To meet our allies," was the terse reply.

"But suppose we don't find them?"

"Then we will blow our fingers, for it is mighty cold."

They found their allies, but the Germans refused to move unless they received a hundred thousand crowns of their pay in advance. There was nothing for it but to appeal to the generosity of the army. Officers, gentlemen, and clergy gave their plate and jewels, and even the common soldiers, who had received no pay, contributed their pittance. Winter was upon them when they turned back into France, and the most admira-

ble organization was required for the march. Now that Condé was in the field at last with an army which nothing could oppose, it seems strange that he should have begun negotiations for peace before trying what he could accomplish by arms. Coligny and the more ardent reformers were disgusted. But La Noue says it was a maxim with the Protestants that to make a favorable peace they must have an army in the field, and that their forces were often swelled for no other purpose. The condition of France required peace, the court was glad to make it, and the majority of the Protestant gentlemen, who had exhausted their resources, were anxious to return to their estates. The treaty reinstated Condé in his position at court, which had always been the main motive of his rebellions, and left the Protestants in about the same position as they had been before the rupture. But the treaty was not observed, and because it gave satisfaction to neither side it was called the peace "boiteuse et mal assise," after its negotiators, Malassise and Biron, the latter of whom was lame.

By its provisions Charles IX. promised to pay the German auxiliaries dismissed by Condé, and agreed *at a later date* to dismiss his own. It is likely the peace would have been better kept if the Huguenots had guaranteed it by keeping some of their fortresses. Many of the Protestant strongholds refused to receive royal garrisons. La Rochelle continued its fortifications, and the Huguenots sent aid to the Protestants of the Low Countries. The usual massacres of Huguenots constantly took place, and D'Aubigny claims that ten thousand Protestants perished during the six months of this so-called peace. Condé and Coligny were soon called upon to refund the payments the king had made their German allies, and things were approaching a crisis, when the court party determined to forestall another

Protestant rising by securing the person of Condé. Marshal Tavannes, who did not relish the piece of treachery he was directed to perform, is said to have warned the prince in a note which read, "The stag is in the toils, and the hunt is ready."

Condé and Coligny fled with their families and servants towards Rochelle. The Loire was guarded, and they wandered all night on its bank with their pursuers behind them, until a peasant guided them to an unsuspected ford. Condé entered the water first, with one of his children in his arms, and the rest followed him, singing the psalm, "When Israel went out of Egypt." On reaching the farther side the fugitives fell on their knees and gave thanks. The prince was enthusiastically received by the Rochellois, and after reciting to them in eloquent words the persecutions and treacheries of the Catholics, he announced his determination thenceforth to cast in his lot with them, saying, "As a pledge of my good faith, I will leave with you my wife and my children, the dearest and most precious jewels I have in this world."

The Queen of Navarre was at last drawn into the vortex of civil war, and her kingdom was overrun by the Catholics. She fled to Rochelle with her son, escaping the fierce Montluc by only four hours. Many of her followers joined her at Rochelle. Condé tendered his services to the young Prince of Béarn, who was the head of his family, and when Jeanne refused to accept this sacrifice the prince still insisted that the future hero of Ivry should accept the nominal command. This generous offer Jeanne firmly declined, saying that policy as well as gratitude and necessity made it fitting that her son should support rather than command his uncle. Great numbers of Protestants had by this time flocked into Rochelle, including D'Andelot, La Noue, Montgomery, and all their former leaders. In the mean

time the Cardinal de Châtillon crossed over to England to persuade Elizabeth to support her fellow-Protestants.

The queen-mother, lacking in decision and energy, as politic and cunning natures frequently do, allowed the Protestants to drive back the Duke of Montpensier and overrun the country. Then, although the duke was finally reinforced by an army commanded by the young Duke of Anjou, the dissensions among the Catholic leaders prevented their accomplishing anything. The two armies marched and countermarched without a battle until the severity of the weather drove them into winter quarters. The Royalists neglected several opportunities of surprising the Protestants and forcing a battle on them, while the latter lost opportunities of defeating their enemies in detail. On one of these occasions, at Loudon, it is said the young Prince of Béarn urged an attack, believing that the enemy were weaker than they seemed, "otherwise the Duke of Anjou would attack us."

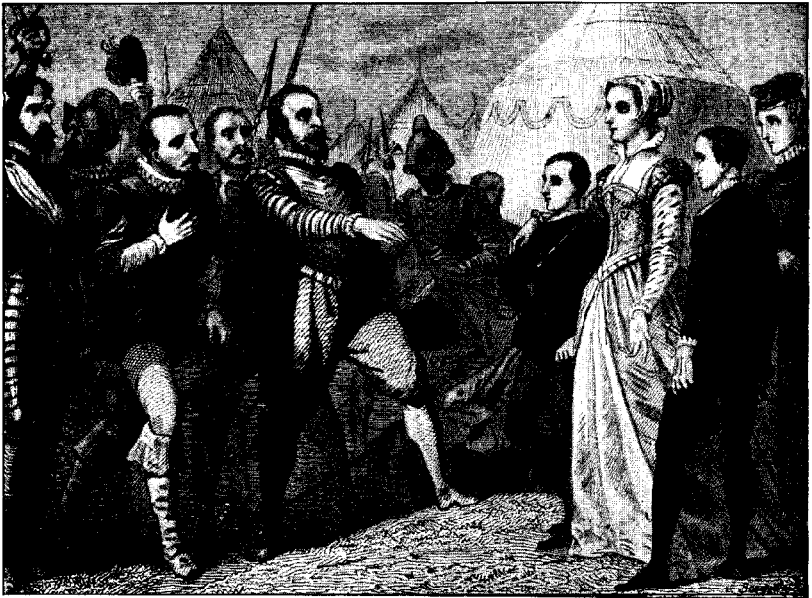
In the spring the royal army, which had been reinforced by a body of German mercenaries, resolved to force a battle on the Protestants, whose numbers had been greatly diminished by the severe winter. Condé determined to defend the line of the Charente, and for this purpose destroyed its bridges, but the negligence of a guard, which Coligny had posted near Bassac, allowed the enemy to cross on a bridge of boats during the night. The admiral endeavored to withdraw his forces, but found it impossible, and sent in hot haste to recall Condé. This resulted in the engagement of Jarnac, which was not a pitched battle, but a surprise, followed by a series of combats, worthy of the days of chivalry. Commanders, as well as their men, fought hand to hand; the fiery D'Andelot at the head of his troops charged the equally furious and skilful Martigues, and, forcing open the visor of his opponent's helmet with his birdle

hand, shot him through the head with a pistol held in his right. The fight went against the Protestants, and Coligny sent a second message advising Condé to retreat lest he should imperil the rest of the army by a fruitless effort.

“God forbid that Louis de Bourbon should turn his back to the enemy!” exclaimed Condé. Turning to his brother-in-law, La Rochefoucauld, he said, “My uncle has made an error, but the wine is drawn and it must be drunk.” One of the prince’s arms had been crushed by a fall, and just as he arrived on the battle-field his leg was broken by a kick from La Rochefoucauld’s horse, so that the bone protruded through his boot. Pointing to the device, “Sweet is danger for Christ and for Fatherland,” inscribed on the banner which fluttered over his head, he cried, “Nobles of France, this is the desired moment! Remember in what plight Louis de Bourbon enters the battle for Christ and Fatherland.”

For a moment everything gave way before Condé’s furious charge, and many Catholics believed the battle was lost, but the little troop was finally swallowed up in the masses of their enemies, and only twenty lived to fight their way out, carrying their standard with them. Condé, unhorsed and unable to mount another because of his injuries, still defended himself with his back to a tree, until he saw a friend, D’Argence, to whom he surrendered. But surrender availed little, for the captain of Anjou’s guards shouted, “Slay, slay, mordieu!” when he learned who the prisoner was, and blew Condé’s brains out with a pistol. The Duke of Anjou had the corpse brought in for the purpose of identification, and it lay two days at his quarters exposed to the insults of the courtiers, while Te Deums were chanted at court and in all the churches of France in honor of the event.

The historians of both parties recognize the magnanimity, courtesy, and brilliant courage of the Prince of Condé. He was prompt in action, and full of expedients. In battle he often seemed inspired, but he had not Coligny's sagacity, and embarrassed his party as frequently by his indecision as by his rashness. He was restless and ambitious. He encouraged rebellion to further his own ends, placed French fortresses in



the hands of his foreign allies, and changed his religion but not his morals, which even the Duke d'Aumale acknowledges were "dissolute and scandalous." He was a ready speaker, and had an intelligent face illumined by brilliant eyes. Although dwarfed in stature, he was agile and an expert horseman, but Brantôme says he had a malevolent tongue and a lascivious nature.

The Queen of Navarre now presented the two young princes to the army, solemnly dedicating her "two sons," as she called them, to the Protestant cause amidst the greatest enthusiasm. She and the nobility pledged their jewels to the Queen of England in return for supplies to continue the war, and medals were distributed to the army bearing her effigy and that of her son, with the motto, "Certain peace, complete victory, or honorable death."

The loss of Condé at this juncture was not so great a disaster to the Protestants as was anticipated. It left Coligny in undisputed command, free to conduct his retreat with his face to the foe. He guarded his lines with a caution and thoroughness which enabled him to keep an army in the field against a superior enemy and to "save the honor of the campaign." From this time Coligny was the real head of the Protestant cause, although the signatures of the two young princes figured at the bottom of all documents. They were satirically dubbed by the Catholics "the admiral's pages." Henry was now fifteen, Condé was seventeen. They had never met before. Both were active, clever, good horsemen and good swordsmen, but Condé was small like his father, slight and sensitive, while Henry was jovial and robust, with broad shoulders.

About this time a body of ten thousand Germans, under the Duke of Deux-Ponts, made a march across France, to the assistance of the Protestants, which rivalled that of Xenophon. Two large armies under the Dukes of Aumale and Nemours, reinforced by five thousand Spaniards from the Low Countries, were sent to the frontiers to prevent the Teutonic invasion at all costs. But the Catholic commanders quarrelled and would not act in concert. For seventeen days the Germans marched into the heart of France, side by side with the French armies,

crossing rivers, capturing towns, and always presenting a bold front to the enemy. Before they crossed the Loire they even besieged and captured the important stronghold of La Charité in the face of the royal armies. It is a sad commentary on the frailty of human nature that the Duke of Deux-Ponts, having contracted a fever, drank himself to death at Cars before he had completed this magnificent military exploit.

The Protestants were now strong enough to take the offensive again, and repulsed the Catholics in a bloody fight at La Roche l'Abeille. Owing to the rain, only cold steel was used, and the Protestants disgraced their victory by a butchery which the Catholics never forgot, although they themselves had set the example at Jarnac. The Protestants now left the provinces exhausted by the war and advanced towards Paris. They committed the error, however, of wasting six weeks in a fruitless siege of Poitiers, a proceeding to which the admiral was persuaded against his will. The place was defended by the young Dukes of Guise and Mayenne, who gained almost as much glory in its defence as their father had at Metz. Coligny's enemies asserted that he undertook the siege from personal motives and a desire to seize the heads of a house which had so long threatened his life, although the admiral repeatedly told his officers if the dukes were captured they should be given the same honorable treatment that he had accorded their uncle D'Elbœuf. The Duke of Anjou, who had time to reinforce his army, now advanced to the relief of Poitiers. He was repulsed before Châtelherault, where, La Noue says, the Papal troops who led the attack were received "according to the affection the Protestants bore their master."

After trying in vain to force a general engagement on Anjou, Coligny was obliged to retire. His German troops now muti-

nied for their arrears of pay, while many of the French demanded leave to visit their homes, from which they had been so long absent. Anjou, in the mean while, had been reinforced by six thousand Swiss, as well as by Guise and the defenders of Poitiers, and was ready to take the offensive when the two armies came together again at Moncontour. The admiral would have preferred to wait for Montgomery, who had just reconquered Béarn and was hurrying to his chief's support. The night before the engagement a couple of Catholic gentlemen advanced to the Huguenot outposts and called across the stream to the Protestant officers, "Gentlemen, we bear the signs of enemies, but we have no animosity against you or your party. Caution the admiral against fighting, for our army is marvellously strong. Let him temporize for a month, for all the nobles have sworn to Monseigneur that they will not wait any longer, and that he must employ them within that time." Coligny feared that this advice concealed some snare, and the council of war decided that by a retreat the advantage of the position they held would be sacrificed and the troops discouraged.

The battle of Moncontour began with a furious charge of the Catholics. The Germans fled, and the Huguenot cavalry was giving way, when Coligny came to their assistance with three regiments of arquebusiers. He and the Rhinegrave of Baden met at the head of their troops. Coligny shot the Rhinegrave dead, but the latter's ball wounded the admiral in the face, and he was compelled to leave the field nearly suffocated with blood. But his timely advance had turned the tide; the Catholics were driven back. Aumale was surrounded, and Anjou's horse was killed under him. If the main body of the Protestants had advanced, they would have secured the victory, but they were with-

out a leader and in disorder, one of the German regiments even refusing to fight. The young Prince of Béarn, who had been forced to retire, watched the combat at a distance, and burst into tears, indignantly exclaiming, "We lose our advantage, and with it the battle." Tavannes, Biron, and Cossé rallied the Catholic cavalry and brought up the Swiss to their support. This resulted in the rout of the Huguenot army, whose mutinous German troops threw down their arms before the Swiss and were slaughtered without mercy. The Duke of Anjou discredited the ferocity of which he had been accused at Jarnac by his efforts to check the slaughter which his troops made at Moncontour in retaliation for the excesses committed by the Huguenots at La Roche l'Abeille and in Béarn. La Noue himself frankly owns that his life was spared at the duke's request.

Coligny retreated with the remnants of his army to Niort, where he was joined by the Queen of Navarre, whose presence cheered and reanimated the shattered forces. Thence Coligny retired to the line of the Dordogne, joining Montgomery and fortifying what positions he could in his retreat. The admiral had just been sentenced to death by the Parliament of Paris, and hung in effigy on the Place de Grève. Fifty thousand gold crowns were offered for his capture, dead or alive, and numerous attempts had been made on his life by assassins. Death had robbed him of his two brothers,—the faithful D'Andelot, to whom he was much attached, and the Cardinal de Châtillon, who was poisoned in England. His position, as D'Aubigny touchingly describes it, was most disheartening. Saddled with the blame justly attributable to accident, his own merits passed over in silence, moneyless, surrounded by the remnants of a defeated and disheartened army, deserted by all save one woman,

the heroic Queen of Navarre, this old man, worn with fever and racked with wounds, suffered more from mental than from physical anguish. It is related that as he was borne along in a litter, he met that of an old friend, Lestrange, who was also wounded. As the litters passed, the old gray-haired nobleman looked steadily into the admiral's face, and exclaimed, with tears in his eyes, "Yet God is very merciful." We are told that this man of many battles afterwards declared that nothing ever had comforted him more than those few words.



The admiral's great abilities, and his courage and constancy under reverses, peculiarly adapted him for fighting losing battles,—a fate which he seemed to have inherited from his uncle, Montmorency, without deserving it. The Catholics accused Coligny of being a stern, intractable puritan, who aggravated the religious dissensions by his jealous disposition and his impatience of authority. This

opinion was not shared by La Noue, who gives a description of Coligny which, for its evident honesty and fairness, is worthy of repetition. "If any one in these lamentable wars worked hard," says the historian, "both with body and mind, it may be said to have been the admiral, for he carried the heaviest part of the burden of affairs and military labors with much con-

stancy and ability, and he comported himself with as much respect towards his superiors, the princes, as with modesty towards his inferiors. He always had piety in singular esteem, and a love of justice which made him prized and honored by those of the party which he had embraced. He did not seek ambitiously for commands and honors; they were forced on him because of his competency and proven ability. When he handled arms he proved that he understood them as well as any captain of his day, and he at all times exposed himself bravely to perils. In adversity he was seen to be full of courage and resources, always showing himself without affectation or parade. In fine, he was a person worthy of restoring a state enfeebled and corrupted. I would fain say these few words of him in passing, because, having known and been much with him and profited by his teaching, I should have done wrong not to have made a truthful and honorable mention of him."

"As the siege of Poitiers was the beginning of misfortunes to the Huguenots, just so did that of St. Jean arrest the success of the Catholics, and if they had not occupied themselves with this place, but had pursued the remnants of the defeated army, the Huguenots would have been annihilated everywhere." So writes La Noue, and he proceeds to explain that there were two opinions advanced in the council after the battle of Moncontour. One was that the Duke of Anjou, with two-thirds of the army, should pursue the fugitives until they capitulated and the war was ended, which would not have been difficult then, as Coligny himself acknowledged. "We know also," they said, "that the admiral is one of the most rusé captains on earth, and knows better than any one how to recover from an adversity. If he is given time he will recruit his forces."

The other opinion was that the most valuable fruits of this

victory lay in the capture of the Protestant strongholds, of which they had taken six in the last ten days, and that as long as the Huguenots had fortresses into which they could retreat, they never would be subdued. This opinion prevailed. La Noue says that the Cardinal of Lorraine, who saw him after the battle, told him that the siege of Poitiers had been the ruin of the Protestants. "Our mistakes will warn you not to make a like one," the Protestant leader remarked. "We will take good care of that," was the reply. Nevertheless, the Catholic army spent two months before St. Jean, losing heavily through the severity of the weather, by desertions and death. In the mean time Coligny made a progress through the Protestant districts of the south and east of France, in which, to use La Noue's expression, he rolled up an army "like a snowball." He was also joined by a body of German Protestants, and found himself strong enough, in the spring, to threaten Paris,—a preliminary which the Protestants always found useful in securing a favorable peace.

The court had refused to entertain the propositions of the Huguenots before Moncontour, but now besides the desire of both parties for peace, and the deplorable condition of the country, there was another factor favorable to the negotiations,—the young king's violent jealousy of his brother's military renown. The Duke of Anjou was a lad but little older than the Prince of Béarn. His victories had been won for him by his marshals, Biron and Tavannes, but as lieutenant-general of the realm he reaped the credit of them at the court, where the young king's furious temperament filled all, except his mother, with fear and apprehension. She alone had any power over her son, fascinating him with her steady gaze and unruffled suavity.

In spite of the protests of the Pope and the offers of Philip to supply nine thousand men for the continuance of the war, a peace was made with the Protestants by a treaty which was the first really satisfactory to both parties. It assured the Protestants liberty of worship, within certain restrictions, freedom from Catholic exactions, a general amnesty, with restoration of honors and estates, and its fulfilment was guaranteed to them by the possession of La Rochelle and three other strongholds for two years. Coligny was delighted, and more than once declared he would rather die than see France fall back again into the anarchy of civil war. "We had beaten our enemies again and again," writes Montluc, "but, notwithstanding, they had so much influence in the king's council that the edicts were always to their advantage. We gained by arms, but they gained by those devils of documents."



CHAPTER V.

ST. BARTHOLOMEW.

MONTPENSIER, Montluc, and others were displeased with the concessions made to the Protestants, but the king took pride in the treaty, which he often referred to as "my peace," and determined that its conditions should be enforced. Those who began to persecute and massacre the Protestants, as before, were promptly and severely punished. He also made an effort to secure the presence at his marriage of the Protestant nobles, who were still assembled in Rochelle, but they did not yet feel sufficiently assured to venture their persons at court.

The king now determined to render the peace still more stable by allying the two Protestant princes of the blood to himself by matrimonial ties. A marriage was proposed between the Prince of Condé and the Princess of Cleves, and also between Henry of Navarre and the king's sister Marguerite, while

Anjou became a suitor for the hand of Elizabeth of England. Protestant historians pretend to see in all this a deep-laid scheme to delude the Huguenots into a sense of security, but it seems more natural to attribute the actions of the court to motives obvious and apparent to all. The only secure basis for the peace of the kingdom, which was the king's as well as the queen-mother's constant desire, rested in satisfying the princes of the blood and the Protestants. The mistake Catherine had made in the beginning had been in supporting the house of Guise against the house of Montmorency and the princes of the blood. Now, Charles IX. and his advisers determined not to repeat an error which had been so costly to France, but to secure a firm foundation for a permanent peace by a close alliance with Protestant leaders. If the king all this time was planning shambles for the Huguenots, it would have seemed more natural in him to choose some other means of bringing them to court than the marriage of his own sister to their leader. Indeed, it was not even certain that this event would bring them to Paris, for it was at first proposed that the marriage should be by proxy, as was then customary among royal personages; after which Marguerite should join her husband in his kingdom. Again, nothing was more unlikely than that Catherine would poison the Queen of Navarre and excite the suspicions of the Huguenots at the very time she was trying to lull them into security, and in the midst of negotiations on the success or failure of which the fateful St. Bartholomew depended.

The court was full of rumors of the attachment existing between the handsome young Duke of Guise and Marguerite de Valois, some even claiming that it had exceeded propriety's limits. The Cardinal of Lorraine openly boasted that his nephew

would marry Marguerite. The king was furious, and actually gave orders for the assassination of Guise. The latter, who had declared he would rather marry a negress than the Princess Portien, to save his life, married her so hastily that the contract, ceremony, and all occupied less than six hours. This threw Marguerite into a violent illness, of which she nearly died, and she never forgave her brother Anjou and his favorite, Du Guast, the aspersions they threw on her character at this time, which, with her disappointment, were largely the cause of her subsequent career of profligacy.

The Queen of Navarre hesitated for fear the brilliant alliance held out to her son might conceal some snare, and declared that no worldly advancement would blind her to the cause of religion and her son's true happiness. She asked that the Guises should be exiled, and doubted whether the Pope would consent to the marriage. But the king had found a powerful ally in Coligny, who believed in his monarch's policy of pacification, and it was he who finally persuaded Jeanne to leave her son in Béarn and come to court. Charles had sent Marshal Cossé, one of the sincerest and most honorable of men, to Coligny, requesting the admiral's presence at court and his assistance in the king's schemes for consolidating the kingdom and embarrassing Spain by assisting her revolted provinces in accordance with the traditional policy of France. Coligny entered into these plans sincerely and heartily. The Guises quitted the court. When the admiral arrived the king is said to have called him "his father," and to have embraced him, saying, "I have got you now, and do not think that you shall escape again easily." The houses of Montmorency and Châtillon renewed their former alliances, and riches and honors were showered upon them. The king and Coligny were in daily consultation

over preparations for the Flemish campaign, and D'Aubigny says what was refused to others was granted on a word from Coligny. The admiral seems never to have suspected Charles's sincerity, and there can be no question of the ascendancy which Coligny's strong and grave character gained over the king's impressionable nature. The queen-mother, who was already jealous of the admiral's power, now accused him of considering himself "a second King of France."

One day the young king, in conversation over the Flemish enterprise, said to Coligny, "My dear father, there is one thing of which we must take good heed, that the queen, my mother, learns nothing of this enterprise, for she would spoil all for us."

"As you please, sire," replied the admiral, "but I take her to be so good a mother, and so devoted to the welfare of your kingdom, that she will do nothing to spoil it."

"You are mistaken, my dear father. Leave it to me only. I see quite well that you do not know my mother. She is the greatest meddler in all the world."

The king also criticised his council to the admiral's son-in-law, Teligny, saying, "I distrust all these gentry; I am suspicious of Tavannes's ambition; Vieilleville loves nothing but good wine; Cossé is too covetous; Montmorency cares only for his hunting and hawking; the Count de Retz is a Spaniard; the other lords of my council are mere blockheads."

At last the Queen of Navarre was persuaded to come to court and negotiate her son's marriage, in spite of the advice of those who warned her that "if the wedding was celebrated in Paris the liveries would be very crimson." The king received Jeanne most affectionately, called her his "dear aunt," and seemed eager to conclude the negotiations. "I gave my sister," he said, "not to the Prince of Navarre, but to all the Hugue-

nots, to marry them as it were, and take from them all doubt as to the unchangeable fixity of my edicts." But all the negotiations had to be conducted with the queen-mother. "She treats me as if I were dirt," writes Jeanne to her son, "and does nothing but make a fool of me, and tells everybody the opposite of that which I have told her. Then she denies it flatly, and laughs in my face, and uses me in such wise that you might really say that my patience passes that of Griselda. They give me empty speeches and railery instead of treating me gravely."

The endurance of the serious and truthful Jeanne must have been sorely tried. It is reported that Tavannes, whose advice Catherine had asked regarding the Queen of Navarre, had said, "Put her in a passion, but keep cool yourself, and you will learn everything from her and she nothing from you." Rosny advised the Queen of Navarre to break off the negotiations and return to Béarn. After months had passed in fruitless discussion, Jeanne appealed to the king, and matters were brought to a conclusion, although Catherine became gloomy.

Jeanne writes to her son of his bride, "She is beautiful and discreet and of good demeanor, but brought up in the most accursed and most corrupt society that ever was. I would not for anything in the world have you here to remain. That is why I desire to get you married, and you and your wife withdrawn from this corruption; for though I believed it to be very great, I find it still more so. Here it is not the men who solicit the women, it is the women who solicit the men. If you were here you would never escape without a great deal of God's grace." The prospect may not have been so appalling to Henry as to his pious mother. She had complained frequently in her letters of her health, which was worn out by

these protracted and tedious negotiations. It was still further exhausted by the serious illness of her little daughter, when she herself fell ill, and in nine days was dead.

Hardly any one died suddenly at the court of the Valois without occasioning rumors of poisoning; therefore it is not surprising to find that gossip at once ascribed the Queen of Navarre's death to the gift of a pair of gloves which Catherine de Médicis had obtained from her Florentine perfumer, René Bianchi. The obvious intent of this rumor was to cause a breach between the court and the Huguenots. The king was so incensed at this accusation that he at once ordered the queen's body to be opened and examined. The scandal-mongers then declared that the head, which would have shown the poison, had not been dissected; but the records of the surgeons prove the contrary. The cause of her death was found to have been an abscess in the lungs, and it is needless to say that no traces of poison were discovered.

The plain dress and clever repartee of the Protestant queen had created a favorable impression at court. She was graceful and bright, at times even animated, but her natural disposition was serious. Sorrow had been her heritage, from her early youth, imprisoned in gloomy Plessis, until the death of her worthless husband, and the end of her own troubled career. As a girl she was simple and straightforward, never relinquishing a resolve once made. Firm and truthful herself, she loved to expose the queen-mother's insincerity. Jeanne had a masculine intellect and courage. Indeed, D'Aubigny says, "She had nothing of a woman but the sex." When La Noue was wounded at Fontenay, and the surgeons could not persuade him to sacrifice his arm in order to save his life, it was the Queen of Navarre's determination that finally prevailed on the

grim warrior, and it was she who held the arm while the surgeons amputated it. Religion, at first, interested her only as a political study. Being threatened with excommunication on account of the spread of Protestantism in her kingdom, she not only remained a Catholic herself, but prevented her husband from committing himself to the new faith. It is even claimed that before her last visit to the court she meditated returning to the Catholic Church, and had sent an embassy for that purpose to the Pope. But it is more likely to have been for political purposes. Although she advised the inexperienced Antoine to refrain from troubling his head with religious questions, she did not hesitate herself, after his desertion to the Triumvirate, to return to Béarn and join the reformed faith. The time had come for her to take a stand. What had formerly been a peril now became a safeguard, for the new distribution of parties, on religious rather than political lines, threw the fortunes of her people with the Protestants.

Henry of Navarre adored his mother, and he showed his grief for her death by shutting himself up in his room for several days. Then, after attending the wedding of his cousin, the Prince of Condé, he proceeded to Paris, accompanied by a suite of eight hundred gentlemen.

He impressed the court as being keen and shrewd, but timid, like a young wolf suddenly surprised by the hunters. Although he could assume dignity when the occasion demanded it, he was more remarkable for freedom than polish of manner, which caused the witty Mme. de Simiers to exclaim, "I have seen the King of Navarre, but not his Majesty." He was not a handsome man even in his youth, and in later life military hardships, frequent indispositions, and cares of state gave him the appearance of an old man at forty. At the time of his marriage

he was but nineteen years of age. He had short black hair and beard, with bushy eyebrows which accentuated his keen, restless eyes. His nose was beaked like an eagle's, and had the appearance of nearly meeting a protruding chin. The expression of his countenance was frank and jovial, in spite of the sardonic smile that habitually hovered on his lips. He was spare and active, and did not seem to know what fatigue meant. Dumas says he never was seen to sit down. He did not even receive ambassadors seated, and was always on his feet in the council. Henry rarely slept over three hours at a time, and was scarcely a quarter of an hour at the table. Later in life he was accustomed to say he could win a battle while the Duke of Mayenne was putting on his boots.



Every one bears witness to his restless activity. D'Aubigny says that when he had walked every one else to a stand he would call for horses for a hunt, and when the horses could go no farther he would run the game down on foot. He was devoted to the chase, and considered by his contemporaries "the best sportsman in Europe," no small honor among the royal Nimrods of those days. He did not allow even the civil wars to interfere with his hunting. At one time, when the army of the League was in front of him, he took it into his head to ask one

of his enemies, Vitry, to a stag-hunt. "On receipt of this," he wrote, "do not fail to come and join me in a stag-hunt, for most of my people are ill." Sport makes all men akin, and "because the Béarnais was such a good sportsman," the Duke of Guise permitted Vitry to go and take his hounds with him.

The greatest ornament of Charles IX.'s court was Marguerite de Valois. She was always magnificently attired, for she adored dress and jewels like a true Valois, and all the court followed her modes. Marguerite was also one of the most learned women of her time, so much so that a visiting savant, after conversing with her in Italian, Spanish, Greek, and Latin, departed saying that "to see the court without seeing Marguerite de Valois is to see neither France nor the court." When the Polish ambassadors saw her seated at court, in a magnificent dress glittering with gold and covered with jewels and plumes, they took her for a divinity, and gazed in awe and admiration. After she had addressed them in Latin, and they had learned who she was, their chief is said to have exclaimed, "After having seen her there is nothing more to see, and I would willingly imitate those pilgrims to Mecca, who, after gazing on the tomb of their prophet, destroy their eyes, so that no other view shall ever profane them." Marguerite was of that generous, triumphant type of youthful beauty which does not last. She was well proportioned, and had a regal carriage, a lovely neck, a brilliant complexion, black hair, red lips, a beautiful, voluptuous mouth, and eyes with long lashes. No one walked, sat, or talked better than Marguerite. Indeed, she was a heathen goddess incarnate, fit to be the queen of tournaments and courts of love. She cultivated the arts of inspiring devotion, and flitted from passion to passion, incapable of deep thought, and unstable as mercury. Even as a

little girl she was a coquette, making eyes at every one, and setting her playmates by the ears.

The court anticipated a brilliant alliance for the king's sister, and was surprised at the choice of the insignificant young princeling of Navarre.

But Charles, bent on his scheme of pacification, had this alliance so much at heart that he threatened if the Pope refused his dispensation he would "take Margot by the hand and carry her off to be married in open conventicle." It is even said that he forged the letter announcing the Pope's dispensation. Marguerite protested against this marriage with tears and sobs. She shut herself



up in her room for days, where her family frightened her into spasms, the king pacing the floor like a madman, muttering curses between his teeth, while the queen-mother exclaimed without ceasing, "This marriage will be the cause of peace. What affliction this creature causes me!" Marguerite finally yielded from fear that her brothers would poison her if she resisted longer, but she avenged herself later by conspiring against them, and by deserting the husband whom they had forced upon her. She received the King of Navarre coldly, and took pains during the marriage fêtes to show her contempt for

him by turning her back on him and flirting with the courtiers. Henry himself says that during the first seven months they slept together she never spoke a word to him. She refused to speak when asked her consent in the marriage ceremony, upon which the king put his hand roughly on her head and forced her to bow it in assent. During the nuptial Mass, which took place in the choir of Notre Dame, the Protestant nobles walked about the porch and nave of the cathedral, where Marshal D'Amville pointed out to Coligny the Huguenot flags taken at Moncontour. "I hope that they will soon be replaced by others more agreeable to behold," said the admiral, thinking of the expedition against Spain.

Relying on the king's promises, Coligny had raised a body of Huguenots and sent them to the aid of the revolted provinces. They met with some success at first, but a part of them were defeated before Mons, and their commander, Senlis, was taken. "News of the defeat of Senlis comes flying to court," writes Tavannes, "and changes hearts and counsels. Disdain, despite, is engendered in the admiral, who hurls this defeat on the heads of those who have prevented the king from declaring himself. He raises a new levy of three thousand foot, and, not regarding who he is or where he is, he declares, in the presumption of his audacity, that he can no longer hold his partisans, and that it must be one of two wars, Spanish or civil. It is all thunder-storm at court." A council was held at which Tavannes complained that "the vanquished made laws for the victors," but Coligny replied that "whoever is not for the war with Spain is not a good Frenchman, and has the red cross inside him. If you want men," added he, "I have ten thousand at your service." At this, Tavannes, who was a fierce loyalist, exclaimed to the king, "Sire, whoever of your subjects uses such words

to you should have his head struck off. How is it that he offers you that which is your own?"

The king had already begun to hesitate about committing himself to a war on behalf of the Protestants against his former ally, the King of Spain, and, to gain time, had requested the admiral to draw up a memorial of his reasons for war with Spain. This Charles privately gave to Morvilliers, directing him to prepare a counter-memorial. The opinion of the council was almost unanimous against Coligny, but the admiral, whom the civil wars had rendered impatient of control, refused to be bound by their decision. "I have promised my assistance to the Prince of Orange," he said; "I hope the king will not take it ill if by means of my friends, and perhaps in person, I fulfil my promise." Such audacity in a subject dismayed the court, and the queen-mother was far from reassured when Coligny said to her, "The king is to-day shunning a war which would promise him great advantages. God forbid that there should break out another which he cannot shun!"

"Let the queen beware of her son's secret councils, or the Huguenots will have him," said Tavannes. "At any rate, let her exert herself to regain the mother's authority which the admiral has caused her to lose." It is said that Catherine was nearly persuaded by her cousin, Marshal Strozzi, into favoring the Spanish war, but was prevented by fear of the unlimited authority which it would confer on Coligny. The queen-mother and the Duke of Anjou continually warned the king of the imprudence of intrusting himself to one who had never hesitated to rebel against him and had no less than seven times brought foreign troops into France, and cautioned him against the danger of alienating Philip, who had always helped him against this very rebel. Between the factions Charles became bewildered,

furious, and distracted. He was pulled first in one direction by the admiral, and then in the other by his council, until finally he did not know what to do, and began to temporize and dissimulate like his mother. Catherine assured the Duke of Alva there would be no war with Spain, whatever he might hear to the contrary, but Alva, writing to Philip after the defeat of Senlis, says, "I have in my hands a letter from the King of France which would strike you dumb if you were to see it."

At this very moment Charles was sending Strozzi secret instructions to sail for the Low Countries with the expedition which had been preparing at Bordeaux. When this reached the ears of the queen-mother, she determined that the time for decisive action had arrived. Going to the king, she burst into tears, saying, "I should never have thought that, in return for having taken so much pains in bringing you up and preserving you the crown, you would have had heart to make me so miserable a recompense. You hide yourself from me, your mother, in order to take counsel of your enemies. I know that you hold secret counsels with the admiral. You desire to plunge rashly into war with Spain in order to give your kingdom, yourself, and the persons that are yours over as a prey to them of the new religion. If I am so miserable a creature, yet before I see that, give me leave to withdraw to the place of my birth." With this last expostulation she quitted the court and retired to Monceaux. The panic-struck king flew after his mother and begged her not to desert him in this crisis.

Catherine and Anjou now decided that the only means of regaining their power over the king was to get rid of the admiral. There were two persons at court, the young Duke of Guise and his mother, on whose assistance they could count. The Duke of Bouillon says it was arranged that the Duke of Guise

should kill the admiral in a tournament which the king was to give, but, as the tournament never took place, Catherine and the Duke of Anjou arranged to have Coligny assassinated by one of Guise's followers. Concluding, however, that this man was a braggart, they persuaded Maurevert, known as "le tueur du roi," to undertake it.

The admiral was not without warnings. Bishop Montluc advised Coligny to reconcile himself with the queen-mother, and counselled La Rochefoucauld and others to seek their strongholds. Montmorency, feigning illness, retired to Chantilly, and could not be induced to return. One of the admiral's followers took leave of him, saying, "I go because they caress you too much, and I would rather save myself with fools than perish with sages." Coligny received many letters imploring him to escape without delay. But he refused to take action which would precipitate a rebellion, and said, "I would rather be dragged dead through the muck-heaps of Paris than go back to civil war." He was anxious, however, to get away as soon as circumstances would permit. But the king had avoided him since the interview with his mother, and made the wedding fêtes an excuse for postponing the final interview, which took place a few days later at the racket-court. As the admiral was returning, occupied in reading a letter, a gunshot from a neighboring window lodged a ball in his arm and smashed two of his fingers. Raising his eyes, without any appearance of alarm or agitation, he pointed out the house whence the shot had come, and then walked calmly home. His gentlemen broke into the house, but Maurevert had mounted a swift horse and fled. They pursued the bravo for several leagues, but failed to overtake him.

The king heard the news of the attempted assassination as he was playing tennis with Teligny, the admiral's son-in-law. He

dashed down his racket with furious imprecations, and exclaimed, "Shall I never be at peace?" With terrible blasphemies he vowed he would make an example of the assassins, and dismissed the Guises from court with harsh and angry words. The queen-mother and the Duke of Anjou were deeply chagrined at the failure of their plot, but for appearance' sake exceeded even the king in their show of indignation, and, accompanying him to the admiral's bedside, heard Charles exclaim, "My dear father, the hurt is yours, the grief and the outrage mine; but I will take such vengeance that it shall never be forgotten." Coligny asked for a few minutes' private conversation with the king. Anjou and the queen-mother were left trembling with fear and surrounded by about two hundred of the admiral's angry followers, whose threatening looks so terrified Catherine that she made an excuse to interrupt the king's interview with Coligny. On the way back to the palace Charles's manner towards his mother and brother was gloomy and furious. After being long and vainly impertuned by his mother regarding the subject of his conversation with the admiral, he at length burst forth into angry denunciations, exclaiming that what Coligny had told him was the truth, "that sovereigns were recognized only for their power of good or evil, and that the power had imperceptibly slipped into their hands, but that it might some day be very prejudicial to him and to all his kingdom, and that he should hold it in suspicion and beware of it; of which the admiral, as one of his best and most faithful subjects, was anxious to warn him before he died." The queen and Anjou, after doing their best to refute this accusation and appease the king's anger, passed a sleepless night, and resolved the next day to make a last effort with the assistance of Tavannes and De Retz.

In the mean while, the thousands of Huguenots brought to-

gether in Paris by the King of Navarre's marriage were seething with excitement. They had already frightened Charles by their open threats of "Spanish or civil war." Now four hundred of them forced their way into the Louvre, and threw the court into a panic. They glared threateningly at Anjou, who was at supper with the king, and declared if they did not get justice they would take it into their own hands. The Dukes of Guise, Nevers, and others barricaded their hotels and armed their servants.

Marshal Cossé reminded the wounded admiral of his previous warnings, and advised him to take precautions for his safety. Coligny, hearing of the agitated condition of the city, asked the king for a guard, and received a detachment of fifty men, but it was afterwards remembered that their captain, De Cosseins, was a personal enemy of the admiral. Charles also advised the King of Navarre to collect his friends around him at the Louvre. The King of Navarre and the Prince of Condé had asked leave to retire from court, declaring that their lives were not safe, and it is even said that Navarre, who was physically a coward, fainted from apprehension. They planned to retire with the Huguenots in a body, carrying the admiral with them, but the king's words and actions reassured them, and they abandoned the project, though many of their followers were prudent enough to secure their safety by crossing the Seine.

Such was the position of affairs up to the night of St. Bartholomew, when Catherine de Médicis, the Dukes of Anjou and Nevers, Marshals de Retz and de Tavannes, and the Chancellor de Birague met in the king's cabinet. When they found Charles still determined to punish the Guises for their attempt on the admiral, Catherine informed him "that the Huguenots had taken advantage of this occasion to arm, and had sent despatches to

Germany to raise ten thousand reiters and to the Swiss for ten thousand foot, and that most of the Huguenot captains had already set out to raise levies in the kingdom, the time and place of meeting having already been assigned and determined ; that all the Catholics, tired of so long a war and vexed with so many kinds of calamities, had deliberated and resolved to put an end to it ; and if he did not wish to take their counsel they had determined to elect a captain-general to protect them and form a league, offensive and defensive, against the Huguenots, in which event he would remain alone and deserted, surrounded by great dangers, without power or authority ; but that in a position of so great peril to himself and his kingdom a single sword-thrust would remedy and avert all misfortunes if he would only kill the admiral, the chief and author of all the civil wars ; that the designs and enterprises of the Huguenots would die with him, and the Catholics, satisfied with the death of two or three men, would always remain in obedience.”

The king became violently enraged, and, as he still refused to allow the admiral to be touched, Marguerite de Valois says in her memoirs “that Catherine determined he should hear the truth from Marshal de Retz, from whom she knew that he would take it better than any one else, for it was necessary that Charles should know that the queen-mother and the Duke of Anjou had been concerned in the attack on the admiral as well as the Guises.” Marguerite and the son of Tavannes, neither of whom was present, assert that De Retz sided with Catherine, and also advised the killing of the princes, and that Tavannes was the only one to oppose this additional villany.

Anjou, who was there, says that De Retz disappointed their expectations. “Although there was not a man in the kingdom who had more reason to hate the admiral and his party, he

refused to avenge his private quarrels at the expense of his sovereign, by counsel so damaging to him and his entire kingdom, which posterity would consider to the great dishonor of the French and their king, and which would cause them justly to be taxed with perfidy and disloyalty, and by this single act to lose all the confidence which people felt should exist in the government, and consequently the power of pacifying the kingdom when it should fall again in civil war, as it infallibly would." Anjou goes

on to say that this unexpected counsel so astonished the conspirators that it took away their breath. But as it was seconded by no one, they returned to the charge and regained their lost ground. Still the king would not yield. The conspirators then left him, but towards midnight they returned and informed Charles that the Guises were going to denounce him and his mother and



brother to the Huguenots as the perpetrators of the attempt on the admiral, and that war was inevitable. Tavannes then exhorted the king to gain the battle in Paris, since God had put the Huguenot chiefs in his hands. While Charles still hesitated, the queen-mother and Anjou asked permission to retire

to some other part of the kingdom, insisting that their lives were not safe.

“All at once,” the Duke of Anjou says, “there was a sudden and marvellous change in the king, who not only came over to our side, but went far beyond us, and more criminally, so that from having been difficult to persuade he now became difficult to restrain.” Rising from his seat, he exclaimed, “By God’s death! since you think proper to kill the admiral, I consent; but all the Huguenots in France must be killed as well, so that there may not remain one who can reproach me afterwards. Give the orders at once.” With this he rushed furiously out of the room.

The Guises and the Prévost des Marchands were notified immediately. The latter objected, but was compelled by Tavannes to execute his orders, on penalty of being hanged. Fearing that the king might change his mind, Catherine hastened the signal for the massacre, which was to have been the tolling of the bell at the Palais de Justice, by ringing that of St. Germain l’Auxerrois, which was nearer. The king, the queen-mother, and Anjou waited in terrible anticipation; Catherine firm and unfaltering, Charles furious and vacillating, cursing his mother and brother, and threatening to warn the Huguenots, then blaming the admiral and his party for disturbing the peace of the kingdom. Suddenly they heard a pistol-shot. Anjou tells us it so filled them with apprehension that they sent a gentleman in hot haste to the Duke of Guise commanding him to do nothing. The answer came back that the order was too late, that the admiral was dead, and that the execution had begun all over the city.

As soon as the tocsin sounded, Guise had rushed to Coligny’s house like a bloodhound in pursuit of its prey. De Cosseins

and his guards opened the gates. A few of the admiral's attendants resisted and were killed. Awakened by the noise, Coligny sprang out of bed, and, knowing that his hour had come, put on his dressing-gown, and, leaning against the wall, said to his chaplain, "M. Merlin, say me a prayer; I commit my soul to my Saviour."

One of the admiral's gentlemen entered the room, and the surgeon asked him the meaning of the riot.

"My lord," said the retainer, turning to Coligny, "it is God calling us."

"I have long been ready to die," replied the admiral, "but you, my friends, save yourselves if it is still possible."

They ran up-stairs; some escaped, but most of them were picked off by the arquebusiers as they ran over the roofs. The first to enter Coligny's room was Behm, the Duke of Guise's German page.

"Art thou not the admiral?" he asked, pointing a boar-spear at his victim's breast.

"I am," fearlessly replied Coligny.

Behm plunged his weapon into Coligny's stomach, and others, who had rushed in, joined him in striking the dying man. Guise, who had been impatiently waiting in the court, called up to know if the deed was done. "'Tis all over, my lord," answered Behm. The duke then ordered him to throw the body down, saying, "M. d'Angoulême will not believe it till he sees him."

The assassins threw the body of their victim from the window, and Guise, turning it over, wiped the blood off the face with his handkerchief, exclaiming, "Faith, 'tis he, sure enough." A servant of the Duke of Nevers cut off the head and carried it to court, whence it was said to have been sent to Rome.

Guise hurried away from the admiral's house with his followers, exclaiming, "Courage, comrades, we have begun well! On to the others! The king commands it."

The principal citizens objected to the massacre, but it was found impossible to restrain the populace when they had once tasted blood. An infuriated mob rushed through the streets shrieking, "Kill! kill!" They broke into the houses of the Huguenots and massacred the occupants, men, women, and children alike. The streets ran with blood, and the Seine was choked with corpses, while the air resounded with the tolling of bells, the explosion of fire-arms, and the shrieks of the dying. Tavannes rode through the city shouting, "More blood! more blood! bleeding is as good in summer as in spring." In the confusion of the massacre, private feuds were avenged, and many Catholics perished with the Protestants. One of those prominent in the massacre kept a Catholic councillor and canon of Notre Dame in his house three days, and then murdered him for booty. This same villain boasted of having killed eighty with his own hand. Chicot, the court jester, was one of the most active of the assassins, and the king himself is authority for the statement that one of his gentlemen, Coconnas, bought as many as thirty captives from the people for the pleasure of killing them himself. After inducing them to abjure their faith by the promise of their lives, this fiend poniarded them to death, reminding them that their souls were now damned. Montgomery and the Vidame of Chartres were on the opposite side of the Seine with a body of Huguenots. When they heard the tumult they thought the Louvre was attacked, and tried to cross to the king's rescue. They were soon undeceived by being fired on from its windows, it is said by Charles himself, and, being pursued by Guise and his troops, with difficulty they

managed to escape into the country, whence Montgomery made his way to England.

The younger Tavannes saved the lives of some of his friends, as did Guise when he learned that the king was throwing the responsibility of the massacre on him. The court and galleries of the Louvre were strewn with the bodies of Huguenot gentlemen slaughtered in cold blood by the royal guards. The king spared no one but his physician, Ambroise Paré, and his nurse. A few days later he commanded Paré to abjure, but Ambroise reminded Charles that there were four things he had promised never to require of him,—“find my way back into my mother’s womb, catch myself fighting in a battle, leave your service, or go to Mass.” After a few moments of silence the king replied, “Ambroise, I don’t know what has come over me the last few days, but I feel my mind and body greatly excited, in fact just as if I had a fever; meseems every moment just as much waking as sleeping; that those massacred corpses keep appearing to me with their faces all hideous and covered with blood. I wish the helpless and the innocent had not been included.” He then gave orders for the massacre to cease, but the infuriated mob refused to obey him.

Marguerite de Valois relates that on the night before the massacre, when she was about to retire to her husband’s apartments, her sister, the Duchess of Lorraine, began to sob. Taking Marguerite by the arm, she exclaimed, “For God’s sake, sister, do not go,” which, Marguerite says, frightened her extremely. “Whereupon the queen-mother corrected the duchess severely and forbade her saying anything more, but the duchess said she could not bear to see me sent to sacrifice like that, when without doubt if anything was discovered they would avenge themselves on me. The queen-mother replied that if it

pleased God I should suffer no harm, but that whatever happened I should go, for fear they would suspect something." At day-break, Marguerite heard some one knocking on her door, crying, "Navarre! Navarre!" Thinking it was her husband, who had just gone out, she had the door opened. A wounded Protestant



gentleman rushed in, followed by four archers, and threw himself on her bed with his arms around her. She sprang out of bed with the wounded Huguenot still clinging to her, and shrieked until the captain of the guard arrived and drove his men away, although he could not restrain his laughter. The captain spared the life of the Huguenot, whom Marguerite kept until he was recovered, and then took the queen

to her brother. On the way a Protestant gentleman pursued by the archers was killed at her side. Marguerite fainted in the captain's arms and arrived more dead than alive. She found her husband and the young Prince of Condé with the king. Two of Navarre's gentlemen threw themselves at her feet as she entered; at her intercession their lives were spared. "Send those scoundrels below," the king said, pointing to the rest, and they were butchered without resistance.



L. Ouseleux
1846

The king's younger brother, the Duke of Alençon, looked on with tears in his eyes, while Charles's wife, the gentle Elizabeth of Austria, prostrated herself in tears and prayer. Then with furious imprecations the maddened tyrant ordered the Huguenot princes to make their choice between "the Mass or death." Navarre hesitated and asked for time. Condé replied "that he would remain firm in the true religion, though he should have to give up his life for it." The king was with difficulty restrained from killing them on the spot. "Seditious madman," he screamed at Condé, "rebel and son of a rebel, if within three days you do not change your language, I will have you strangled." A few days later, when the time granted for consideration had expired, the two princes heard Mass and wrote to the Pope confessing their errors; Henry having persuaded his cousin, with the aid of a Huguenot minister, that promises made under such conditions were not binding. He himself jested about religion and made light of his abjuration. It is possible that Henry and his cousin might not have been spared had Marguerite acted on the queen-mother's suggestion and consented to apply for a divorce from her husband. For some reason of loyalty or pity she declined. Marguerite was a good friend, and in many ways protected from the king the husband whom he had forced upon her.

When the butchery was finished the queen-mother and her ladies sallied forth with mirth and laughter, to view the naked corpses piled in the streets. Navarre was then forced to accompany them to view the headless trunk of Coligny hanging from the public gibbet at Montfaucon. Its odor was such, by this time, as to be disagreeable, and some made this an excuse for not lingering, whereupon Charles appropriately quoted a saying of Vitellius, "That the smell of a dead enemy was always

sweet." Henry was also obliged to accompany the king to Parliament and hear it declared that Coligny had justly suffered death for conspiring against himself as well as Charles; that the admiral should be hung in effigy, his portraits and statues destroyed, his arms disgraced, his children excluded from the ranks of the nobility, his castle razed to the ground, and his lands sown with salt. Henry managed to escape from the duty of accompanying the king in the procession made in honor of St. Bartholomew, but he was obliged to forbid the exercise of the Protestant religion in his kingdom, and had to write the Huguenots in La Rochelle to receive the king's forces under Biron.

Immediately after the massacre, Charles despatched letters throughout the kingdom, stating that the feud between the houses of Guise and Châtillon had caused a great tumult in Paris, but that he was suppressing the disorders and punishing the offenders, and that Catholic subjects elsewhere should refrain from molesting their Huguenot neighbors. It is claimed that the king reversed these orders when he found that he had nothing to fear, and that the governor of Auvergne replied, "Sire, I have received an order, under your Majesty's seal, to put all the Protestants of this province to death. I respect your Majesty too much not to believe that this letter is a forgery; and if, which God forbid, the order be genuine, I respect your Majesty too much to obey you." The Vicomte d'Orthez is also said to have replied from Bayonne, "Sire, I have communicated the commands of your Majesty to the inhabitants of the town and the soldiers of the garrison, and I have found good citizens and brave soldiers, but not one executioner."

The authenticity of these letters is disputed, and it is not even certain that the orders were issued to which they were supposed

to have replied. It is, however, certain that extensive massacres of the Protestants took place all over France after St. Bartholomew, and that the Rhone and the Loire, as well as the Seine, ran with blood. It is also certain that many of the royal governors and lieutenants, such as the Bishop of Lisieux, President Jeannin at Dijon, Maignon, Chabot, Villeneuve, Tanneguy, De Tende, De Guiche, and others, refused to participate in these butcheries.

The number of Protestants massacred in France during St. Bartholomew is variously estimated by De Thou at thirty thousand, by Sully at seventy thousand, and by Archbishop Péréfixe at one hundred thousand. The account-books of Paris record a single payment for the burial in one cemetery of eleven hundred bodies of Huguenot victims found stranded on the banks of the Seine.

In his first communications to foreign powers, the king took advantage of the well-known feud between Guise and Coligny to charge the former with the responsibility of the massacre. Guise violently resented this and accused the king. Then Charles, on the advice of his mother, acknowledged his responsibility to Parliament and foreign powers, but claimed in palliation that it was rendered necessary in order to defeat a conspiracy discovered against himself, the King of Navarre, and all his family.

The massacre of St. Bartholomew received the almost universal execration of both the Protestant and Catholic powers of Europe. The reception given the Duke of Anjou by the different courts through which he passed on his way to Poland was cold to a degree, and he met everywhere the scowls of sympathizers or the sad faces of Huguenot refugees. At Heidelberg he found a picture of the massacre in the palace,

and the Elector received him before the portrait of Coligny, on which he had caused to be written :

"Talis erat quondam vultu Colignius heros
Quam vere illustrem vitæ, morsque facit."

The Elector asked Anjou if he recognized the likeness, adding, "He was the most honest man, the wisest, and the greatest captain of Europe."

But in Rome the cannon of St. Angelo were fired, a Te Deum was celebrated by Gregory XIII., and a medal was struck representing the destroying angel smiting the Protestants, with the words, "Huguenotorum Strages, 1572." Brantôme asserts that when the Pope learned the true version of the massacre, he shed tears of regret. Philip II. alone approved, and offered Charles the use of his army to complete the extinction of the Huguenots.

Religious zeal had no part in the motives of Catherine, and Anjou afterwards combined with the Protestants against the League. The massacre of St. Bartholomew was a political expedient. Catherine was determined to retain her power at all costs, and thought the easiest way to do this was to cause the assassination of Coligny. Tavannes says that neither Huguenots nor Leaguers would have resorted to arms had it not been for her initiative, and that she made several other mistakes from the same motives, first in favoring the conspiracy of Amboise for the sake of depriving the Guises of power, again in encouraging Condé and the Huguenots to take up arms for this same purpose during the king's minority, and later in countenancing the League because she was excluded from the king's councils by the "mignons," as Henry III.'s favorites were called. In another place he says, "The truth is, that the Huguenots alone

were the cause of the massacre, putting the king to the necessity of choosing between war with them or with Spain ;” and he claims that after St. Bartholomew they never again were powerful enough to make a campaign without the assistance of Catholic allies and malcontents like the Duke of Alençon and Montmorency.

Many Protestant writers, not acquainted with the facts, have claimed that the massacre of St. Bartholomew was premeditated, and Ligneroles was said to have been assassinated by the king’s illegitimate brother because of his possessing evidence of this. Others assert that he was murdered because he had advised the king to exile the queen-mother. The king’s hysterical words to the papal legate, “Would to God I could tell your eminence all,” and his inquiry of his mother if he had not “played his partlet well,” are often quoted as evidence of his premeditation ; but when he said these words he was dissembling as much with them as with the Huguenots. His inclination was to stand by Coligny, but he played both sides in his irresolution, and his fears got the better of him in the end. Then he is said to have exclaimed, “My big sister Margot caught all those Huguenot rebels in bird-catching style. What has grieved me most is being obliged to dissimulate so long.” But that was after the deed had been accomplished. Undoubtedly a massacre of the Huguenots had been often discussed, in a general way, since the interview of Bayonne, but it was to rid herself of Coligny’s influence that Catherine urged its execution at this juncture. Her intentions were mistrusted, but the entire lack of preparation, as well as the unwillingness of the king, up to the last moment, goes far to prove that the massacre was unpremeditated on his part, even without the concurrent testimony of its chief actors, Anjou, Marguerite, and Tavannes.



CHAPTER VI.

THE CAPTIVITY.

ALL that seemed necessary now to complete the destruction of the Huguenots was the reduction of their stronghold of La Rochelle.

The presence of La Noue in Paris implies more amicable relations between the court and the Protestants than St. Bartholomew would indicate, and sustains the theory that the massacre was the accidental result of a conspiracy directed against the admiral rather than an organized effort to exterminate the Protestants. This noted Protestant leader was directed by Charles IX. to go to Rochelle and secure the submission of its inhabitants. When the Rochellois came out to meet their old comrade they pretended that they did not recognize him.

“I am astonished,” exclaimed La Noue, “that you have so soon forgotten one who has received so many wounds and lost an arm fighting for you.”

“The La Noue we remember,” they answered, “bravely defended our cause, and never invited us to conference to betray us.”

“All I ask of you,” angrily replied La Noue, “is to report to the senate what I have to say to them.”

They returned with permission for him to enter the town, but declined to treat with the king. The Rochellois offered La Noue himself the choice of three things,—first, to remain in safety with them as a private citizen; second, to become their commandant; or third, “if neither of these propositions suit you, you shall be welcome to go aboard one of our vessels and cross over to England, where you will find many of your friends.”

With the consent of the king, La Noue accepted their command, and during three months fortified the town, all the while urging its inhabitants to submit. After the siege had begun, Charles, finding La Noue was more successful in his defence of the town than in his efforts to induce its inhabitants to capitulate, summoned him to keep his promise and resign his command, which the Protestant leader did, after having in this singular manner earned the confidence and esteem of both the Rochellois and the king.

When the Duke of Anjou besieged La Rochelle, the two Protestant princes were forced to accompany the army, which consisted of forty thousand troops, and boasted sixty cannon. Anjou had become passionately devoted to the Prince of Condé's wife, and wore her portrait at his neck. It was said to be his intention to have Condé killed during the siege. The

prince knew this, but did not falter. A prisoner, forced to deny his faith in a court before whose iniquities he recoiled, surrounded with dangers and compelled to treat with courtesy the man whom he regarded as his father's murderer, and whom he now saw making daily efforts to seduce his wife, small wonder is it that Condé should court death, and exclaim, "My enemies will not have to send me into the breach with blows, for I will be there before them and expose myself to every danger." All testified that he was as good as his word.

The siege of La Rochelle lasted nearly four months. During that time nine general assaults were made, one of which was renewed five times. The Duke of Anjou conducted the siege with skill and bravery. The Duke of Aumale and De Cosseins were killed. De Retz, Nevers, Mayenne, Du Guast, and others were wounded, and thousands of the besiegers were swept away by disease. The fish in the harbor prevented the Rochellois from being starved into surrender, and Montgomery arrived outside with a fleet bearing succors from England. Anjou at last was ready to grant almost any terms which would save him from the disgrace of raising the siege. The Protestants, who had obtained some trifling successes in Languedoc and Guienne, were exorbitant in their demands. The queen-mother exclaimed that if Condé were still alive and had seventy thousand men at his back, he would not have asked the half. But the king was mortally ill and the throne was endangered by new conspiracies. La Noue acted as intermediary, and the Protestants secured the most favorable peace they had yet obtained, and this within six months after St. Bartholomew, which was to have exterminated them all.

Before Charles married Elizabeth of Austria he had offered to marry Elizabeth of England, for the same motives which

prompted Philip II.,—the desire to deprive his rebellious subjects of their English support. The king now looked to his brother to carry out his designs, but Anjou did not wish to marry Elizabeth and was enamoured of the Princess of Condé to such an extent that he was unwilling to leave France, even to take possession of the throne of Poland. The dying king, who bore the Duke of Anjou a mortal hatred, declared at this juncture that the kingdom was not large enough for them both, and that either he or his brother should go at once. Anjou, having exhausted every pretext for delay, was at length obliged to yield to Charles's fury and set out. "Go," the queen-mother said to her favorite son, "go ; you will not be long there."

A new source of disturbance to the kingdom was now evolved in the person of the king's youngest brother, the Duke of Alençon, who had sworn an alliance with his sister Marguerite, and, encouraged by a knot of reckless and turbulent young courtiers, was wild and foolish enough to plan to escape from the army before La Rochelle and rally the Huguenots to his standard. At one time he proposed to raise a party in the camp and attack the royal army or throw himself into Rochelle. At another time the conspirators planned to seize the royal fleet. They expected to be assisted by the King of Navarre and the Prince of Condé, but the Protestant princes were wise enough to seek the advice of La Noue, who dissuaded them from a project so dangerous and full of difficulties.

Peace was declared, and the Duke of Anjou departed for Poland. The Duke of Alençon was deluded with vain hopes of commanding an army in Flanders or of marrying the Queen of England, while the office of lieutenant-general of the kingdom, which he claimed as his right, was given to the Duke of Lorraine. After this disappointment, Alençon conceived that, by

escaping from court with the King of Navarre and heading a Protestant rising, he might secure the throne on the death of Charles. The occasion was propitious, on account of the mortal illness of the king and the absence of Anjou. The Protestant leaders, the Montmorencys, and the moderate faction of the Catholic party, henceforth to be known as the "Politiques," espoused it. The rising was successful, and La Noue and the other Protestant leaders captured an immense number of towns in the south, while Montgomery carried on the war in Normandy. A body of the insurgents nearly captured the court at St. Germain. Charles escaped on a litter in the middle of the night, while the courtiers fled to Paris in boats, carriages, and on horseback. Marguerite says in her memoirs that she divulged the plans of the princes to her mother on the promise that no harm should come to them. Others say that La Molé, one of Alençon's gentlemen, divulged the plot. It only failed because of the pusillanimity of Alençon, who hesitated to escape when it was still possible. Instead of flying, as the King of Navarre and Tavannes implored him to do, he confessed all to his mother.

Catherine suppressed the revolt with an unwonted energy. Two of the conspirators, La Molé and Conconnas, were executed. They were lovers of the Duchess of Nevers and the Queen of Navarre, who created a scandal by carrying away their severed heads as mementos. The gallant Montgomery was also captured and executed. Catherine had never pardoned him for being the accidental cause of her husband's death, and caused him to be barbarously tortured. He met his fate like a brave man, and with his last breath protested the innocence of Montmorency and Cossé, who had been arrested with the King of Navarre and Alençon. These two princes were kept at

court, strictly guarded, during the remainder of Charles IX.'s life.

Although Marguerite de Valois was not faithful to Henry as a wife, she was loyal to his political fortunes, which was of more importance to him. She had access to her husband and brother, and, to quote her words, determined "to risk her own fortune to save their lives," offering to carry off one of them, disguised as her maid. The only reason the plan was not carried out was that, while each was anxious to escape, neither was willing to be left behind. Marguerite was the means of keeping her husband and her favorite brother Alençon politically united. Hence the apparent unnatural inclination of the queen-mother and the Duke of Anjou to exploit the misdeeds of Marguerite for the sake of embroiling her with her husband. The Duke of Anjou, soon to become Henry III., and his favorite, Du Guast, never missed an opportunity to slander Marguerite and excite her husband's suspicions. One day when she was gone on an excursion with some friends, Anjou said to the King of Navarre, "There is your wife's empty carriage and there is Bidé's lodgings. I will wager she is there." The Béarnais was at once too good-natured and too shrewd to be played upon by his enemies. The queen-mother was in a rage, but Henry easily satisfied himself, by a few inquiries, of his wife's innocence. When she returned he only laughed and said, "Go to your mother, and I will wager you will return in a passion." As he declined to explain himself further, Marguerite sought the queen-mother, who abused her roundly for her shameless conduct, and would not listen to her denials. Marguerite came back in tears. Henry, seeing her so unhappy, told her not to trouble herself, as he had taken the precaution to have two of her companions tell where she had been. After this the King

of Navarre and the Duke of Alençon swore anew to be faithful to each other. "But of what value are vows in love affairs?" exclaimed Marguerite.

The cause of jealousy and distrust which existed between the King of Navarre and the Duke of Alençon was a lady of the court, for whose favors they were rivals. This was Mme. de

Sauves, the wife of the Secretary of State, successively the mistress of Charles IX., Henry III., the Duke of Alençon, the King of Navarre, the Duke of Guise, the Marquis du Guast, and many others. She was an intriguing little coquette, who had not even the merit of acting for herself, but served somewhat as a retriever for



the queen-mother, carrying to her the political secrets which she beguiled from her lovers. To counteract the influence of Marguerite, the queen-mother induced Mme. de Sauves to serve as an apple of discord between her son and son-in-law. The fair charmer was notoriously common property, but the King of Navarre and the Duke of Alençon became so insanely jealous of each other that they were at one time on the verge of fighting.

After the suppression of the insurrection of the "Politiques," a commission of Parliament interrogated the King of Navarre and the Duke of Alençon as to their part in it. Alençon made

a disconnected and contradictory confession, but the King of Navarre defended himself in a speech so frank, so dignified, and at the same time so pathetic, that it took every one by surprise, for no one before had supposed him possessed of any ability. Having no one to defend him, he asked Marguerite's assistance in preparing his speech. "God gave me the ability," she writes, "to put it in such shape that it satisfied him and astonished the commissioners." Others say that "the Béarnais snivelled and denied his acts with tears and protestations as usual." When brought by the queen-mother into the presence of the English ambassador, Henry adjured him, with assumed indignation, "to send his emissaries to tempt him no longer, for there never had been a traitor of the blood of D'Albret." The precarious position of the young King of Navarre would have tried an older and steadier hand. A prisoner at court, his life constantly in danger, rendered ridiculous by the moral obliquities of a wife over whom he had no control, and treated with contempt by the courtiers, it was something for him to have preserved his life if not his dignity.

The four years that Henry of Navarre remained a prisoner at court are the most discreditable of his life. His biographers, for the most part, make little mention of them. He was not there from choice, and he may not have been able to escape, but it certainly was not necessary for him to become the boon companion of his enemies and take part in all the disgraceful raids and debaucheries of the court. Condé kept uncontaminated, and stood apart gloomy and disgusted, while Henry mingled with the courtiers, defending himself from their gibes and insults with his ready repartee. He was treated with a familiarity half friendly and half contemptuous. His wife's infidelities and his own escapades and ready wit became the by-

words of the court. The courtiers accused him of having more nose than kingdom, and Lestoile says, "Many were grieved to see this little kinglet galloping around like a court lackey at every one's beck and call." It may be said in his excuse that he was only nineteen, and had inherited a susceptibility for female charms which amounted almost to a mania. The notorious infidelity of his wife might have extenuated his own amours had he appeared to have any worthier objects in life, but there seemed no trace left of the religious character and serious aims which his mother had striven to inculcate. Henry appeared to have inherited less from the fearless and energetic Jeanne than from the licentious and irresolute Antoine.

The sons of Catherine de Médicis were so under her influence that Charles IX. had even permitted her to select his mistress.



She chose a naïve and beautiful young girl of the middle classes, Marie Touchet, who made her son happy and caused the queen-mother no fear. After enduring the domination of Diane de Poitiers for twenty years, Catherine did not intend to have her place again usurped by an intriguing favorite. The massacre of St. Bartholomew was

the triumph of parental authority, but the cord had been stretched to the verge of breaking. Remorse haunted her

dying son. The Venetian ambassador says Charles would have to be told the same thing three times by his mother before he would answer. He became melancholy and sombre. He feared to look people in the face, and hung his head. Then he had violent reactions, in which his only object seemed to be to tire himself into forgetfulness by furious exertions. He hunted for days at a time, galloping his horses until exhausted, and blowing his hunting-horn until his eyes seemed ready to start from his head. Just before his death he exclaimed, "Ah, nurse, what bloodshed and what murders! Ah, what evil counsel I have had! O God! pardon me and have mercy on me! I am lost, I feel it." His old Huguenot attendant tried in vain to comfort Charles by telling him the responsibility of the murders was on the heads of those who had forced him to commit them. His last words were that he was glad he had left no child to succeed him, for he knew well that France needed a man.

During his last illness he asked to see his brother. The queen-mother sent for the Duke of Alençon. "My brother, the King of Navarre," angrily exclaimed Charles. Henry was seized with fear of assassination, and at first refused to go. He was conducted through the vaults of the castle between double lines of guards. When he saw the soldiers he tried to draw back, but their captain assured him his life was safe. He entered the chamber of the dying king with fear and trembling, and threw himself on Charles's bed in sobs, for Henry was always very ready with his tears.

"You have reason to cry," said the king, "for you lose a good friend. If I had believed all they told me, you would not now be alive. But I have always loved you. Do not trust——" He was about to name the Duke of Anjou, but

Catherine interrupted him. "To you alone I intrust my wife and daughter," he continued; "God will protect you."

The accusation that Catherine poisoned her son seems groundless. All her sons had weak constitutions, and suffered from congenital maladies. Charles IX. died of hemorrhages. His affection for his mother, and Catherine's influence over him, were undiminished to the end, and her letter describing his death to the King of Poland breathes the tenderest affection for her dead son. Catherine besought Anjou to lose no time in returning to claim the crown. In the mean time she guarded the vacant throne, increasing the army and keeping Navarre and Alençon close captives.

When the news of Charles IX.'s death arrived, the Poles suspected their monarch of a design to escape, and would not leave him until he was in bed. As soon as they were gone, Anjou dressed and escaped by a back door with some of his French gentlemen. Before long the Poles discovered his flight and set out in pursuit of the fugitive. The populace joined in the hue and cry with a turmoil which soon became riotous. Some of the king's suite lost their way in the forests and were driven into the swamps, where they had to duck their heads in the water to avoid the stones and arrows hurled at them by the mob. The king's horse dropped dead at the frontier, but after his escape he pursued his journey indolently, amusing himself for two months in Vienna, Venice, and Turin before he reached Lyons, where he was joined by the court. Henry III. received his brother and the King of Navarre most kindly. They cemented their reconciliation by taking the Sacrament together, and the king granted them an increase of liberty, which gave Alençon an opportunity to attempt his brother's murder. His plan was to waylay the coach in which Henry travelled, but the plot was

discovered, and Alençon confessed as usual. The king pardoned him after debating whether it would not be better to put him to death.

Shortly after, Henry III. was seized with an illness which was probably only a severe earache caught in church. He insisted, however, that his brother had poisoned him, and for a time seemed on the point of death. Alençon, who considered his brother had robbed him of the crown by returning from Poland, exulted openly, to the disgust of every one. When Henry believed he was dying, he called Navarre to his bedside and begged him to secure the throne by putting Alençon to death. He showed him how easily it could be done, assuring him of the support of Guise, and even called in the *Prévost des Marchands* and ordered him to obey the King of Navarre. During the conversation, the Duke of Alençon, confident that his brother's crown soon would be his, walked haughtily through the room, saluting no one. Henry of Navarre was nearer the throne than he was to be after many a year of hard campaigning. It is to his credit that he refused to do what those around him were so willing to undertake. But he sounded the Duke of Guise. "Our man is very ill," he said. The duke gave Navarre an inquiring look; then he said, "I understand you, sir. This is at your service," and he laid his hand significantly on the pommel of his sword.

But the king recovered. The first thing that did him good, he said, was the report that Marshal Damville was dead. It was false. Damville was the head of the insurrection in the south, and as long as he kept the field the lives of his brother Montmorency and Marshal Cossé were safe. Before it was known that the news was false, Catherine had given directions that Montmorency and Cossé should be strangled in their

prison. Montmorency sent word to her that it was unnecessary. "She has only to send the chancellor's apothecary," he said, "and I will take whatever he gives me." By this time the error had been corrected and the marshals' lives were preserved.

Henry III. returned to France bent on marrying the Princess of Condé, if she could be prevailed on to secure a divorce. When the news of her death reached court he became speechless with grief. For three days he shut himself in his room, and would neither see any one nor eat anything, until he was forced to it by his mother. After this he fell into a state of languid sentimentality, varied by seasons of debauchery and penance, but for years he could not hear her name mentioned without showing emotion.

Henry III. was as superstitious as Louis XI. There is a story that one of the ladies of his court took advantage of this fact to admonish him of the evil of his ways through a speaking-tube, the orifice of which was over his bed. Henry, at first, paid no attention to the mysterious warnings. But when their admonitions became more fervent and audible, the king began to tremble and count his beads. He spent the night on his knees in prayer. Gloom settled over him, and he seemed depressed the next morning. He dismissed his evil companions, who importuned him in vain for an explanation. Every night he heard the celestial voices, and he passed his days in remorse and penance. Finally he confided the secret of the divine messages to Francis d'O. D'O investigated and discovered the hidden speaking-tube, to the unconcealed delight of the "mignons." Henry was much mortified, and returned to his former habits.

One of the king's first acts, on entering France, was to join a procession of the flagellants. Henry of Navarre, the Cardinal of Lorraine, and many others took part, walking the streets with

bare feet and scourging their naked backs until the blood ran. But the pampered cardinal, handicapped with the infirmities of age and a dissolute life, was not equal to the exposure. He caught cold and died from the effects. In the delirium of his last moments he uttered obscenities and blasphemies that shocked every one, but Guise cynically remarked that he did not see why his uncle should not recover, as he had all his natural ways and language.



Catherine announced to the court that "they had lost the greatest man and most glorious intellect France had ever beheld." But to her intimates she acknowledged that her former colleague was "the very worst of mankind, and that there would soon be peace in France, now he was gone." She was conversing about him at supper, and turned to take a cup from the Duchess of Nevers. Starting from her chair with a scream, she dropped the cup and covered her face with her hands. When she had recovered her composure sufficiently to answer the inquiries of her alarmed companions, she told them that she had seen the spectre of the dead cardinal standing in the corner of the room gazing fixedly at her. For weeks the nightly vision of her former companion in wickedness haunted her, and she could sleep only with her women watching beside her.

As Charles IX. had predicted, Catherine de Médicis's favorite son proved a great disappointment to her. His coronation as Henry III. seemed to have changed his character and taken away all his energy and ambition. As Duke of Anjou he had proved that he lacked neither bravery nor ability. Now, coming to the throne after the vicissitudes of civil war and a foreign residence, his only object seemed to be to enjoy the pleasures of regal state undisturbed. He levied extraordinary taxes for the avowed purpose of putting down the disorders then rife in his kingdom, but he squandered the revenues thus raised on his own pleasures, and then urged the poverty of the treasury as an excuse for not assembling his troops. De Thou writes, "There was no longer any trace in this prince, who had been nursed, so to speak, in the lap of war, of that manly and warlike courage which had been so much admired. He no longer rode on horseback; he did not show himself among his people as his predecessors had been wont to do; he was only to be seen shut up with a few favorites in a little painted boat which went up and down the Saône." The Pope's emissary reported to his master that the king was indolent and voluptuous and spent half his life in bed. He devoted his mornings to his toilet, with his mignons and dogs about him, while he was being painted, pomaded, and perfumed. He wore jewels and rings in his ears, and frequently appeared at the court festivities in female attire, with his bosom bare, and a necklace of pearls around his throat. He gave suppers at which he and his companions were waited on by naked women or ladies of the court dressed as men. It was a common occupation for this *homme-femme* and his satellites to pass their mornings in designing dresses for the queen. She was Louise of Lorraine, a virtuous, colorless young girl, whom he had married because

she reminded him of the Princess of Condé, because she was unhappy, and because Francis of Luxembourg was in love with her. Henry said to Luxembourg, with that cynical pleasure which he derived from malicious speeches, "I have married your mistress. I wish, in exchange, that you would marry mine." He referred to Mlle. de Rieux.

The queen was far from occupying her proper position at court, as about the only attention the king paid her was occasionally to take her on solitary drives into the country. On these occasions his coach generally broke down and they had to walk, or some other accident occurred to excite the derision of the court. Henry bought magnificent missals for no other purpose than that of cutting the illuminations out and pasting them on the walls. He also spent more than a hundred thousand golden crowns a year on small dogs, maintaining a multitude of attendants to take care of them. When he tired of them he would give them away; then he would buy more. He also spent large sums on monkeys and parrots. He took a fancy to bilboquet, or cup and ball, and never went anywhere without one. All the courtiers had to do the same. He even gave audiences, and appeared before his subjects, playing with this senseless toy. When Guise came to take command of the army he found the last of the Valois playing bilboquet, and when he returned to throw Paris into an uproar, and shake the throne, he found the royal fainéant still playing bilboquet. When Sully went to Henry III. to conclude an alliance between him and the King of Navarre, he found him with a sword at his side, a hood upon his shoulders, a little bonnet on his head, and a basket of small dogs suspended from his neck by a broad ribbon. In talking, this singular individual moved neither head, feet, nor hands. He always wore a bonnet to conceal his

baldness. His forehead was broad and intellectual, his face long and saturnine with soft Italian eyes and the sensual lips



and pointed chin of the Medici. He was of middle height, a skilful fencer and horseman, a graceful dancer, with a decided taste for music. Henry spoke Latin, Italian, and English fluently, and was probably the most eloquent orator in his kingdom. Although the army went unpaid, and his enemies were overturning his throne, he continued to squander fortunes on his mignons, and sold bishoprics and a piece of the

true cross rather than curtail his pleasures. Nothing was too good for his favorites. He secured them magnificent alliances, even marrying the queen's sister to one of them, and made them royal gifts of lands, money, and jewels at their weddings. When several of his miniature Buckingham's were killed in duels, he showed immoderate grief by giving them royal funerals and erecting superb monuments to their memories. It became a saying at court, when any one had a quarrel with one of the mignons, "I will have him sculptured in marble." No wonder the mignons were devoted to so indulgent a master.

Henry III. was a fanatic in religion, and vowed to extirpate the Huguenots, but this did not prevent his joining hands with

them against the League when it became to his interest. Catherine regarded his penances and spasms of religion with contempt, the court looked upon them with derision, the people with disgust, but the monks assured the king that he was no longer himself, but Jesus Christ, who dwelt within him. Henry III. indulged in the most degrading vices known to humanity, and was believed to have induced his favorite, Villequier, to kill his wife because she refused to become his mistress. His nature was cruel and malicious. He delighted in making trouble between married people. Nothing pleased him more than to be able to inform a husband, with one of his sardonic smiles, of a rendezvous his wife had made. Subtle, penetrating the designs of all those about him, filled with contempt for mankind, and wearied with the serious occupations of life, his jaded interest occupied itself only with frivolous trifles. He had seen everything, experienced everything, and all that was left in life was lassitude and indifference. Perceiving the better part, he deliberately chose the worse. Like Charles II., he never said anything foolish nor did anything wise. He read Machiavelli for half an hour every morning, and imitated his mother in supporting and deserting all parties in turn. The result was that hardly a chronicler on either side has a good word to say of him. The Huguenots hated him, the League declared him unfit to rule, and even the courtiers despised the monarch whom, in derision, they called "Henriquet."

Navarre wrote to a friend in Béarn, "The court is the strangest you ever saw. We are all ready to cut one another's throats. We wear daggers, shirts of mail, and very often the whole cuirass under the cape." The king was crafty and murderous; Alençon weak and perfidious, conspiring against his brother; Catherine treacherous, inscrutable, and terrible in her

uncertainty ; the beautiful Marguerite the slave of unbridled passions ; Navarre supposedly weak and characterless ; Guise apparently submissive, but biding his time. The country was in a state of anarchy. The treasury was exhausted. The Huguenots and Politiques were in a state of revolt. Damville, Montpensier, and others had established governments of their own in their respective provinces, and were practically independent of the crown. Every little leader was absolute ruler in his own territory, like the robber barons of the Rhine. Condé, who had escaped from court two years before, was conferring with the Reformers in Germany, and had collected an army by promises of French territory. He hesitated to invade France. When, at length, he did, his troops mutinied for their pay and retreated to Germany, wasting the country as they went and earning the hatred of the French.

The Duke of Alençon now took advantage of the difficulties of the crown to escape from court. Joining the malcontents, he inaugurated the "war of the public good," as it was called. The king's consternation was such that for the moment his habitual indolence was disturbed. The queen-mother hastened after her truant son, pursuing him from place to place with promises and negotiations. Thoré and Damville were threatened with the death of their brother Montmorency and Marshal Cossé if they dared to move, while Alençon refused to treat until the imprisoned marshals were liberated. This was done. To avoid war, Henry was ready to make almost any terms with the malcontents. He offered to pay their mercenaries and dismiss his own, giving them a number of strongholds as security. Alençon would probably have been pacified and lured back to court by his mother's promises had it not been for an untoward event.

The escape of the Duke of Alençon had left the King of Navarre at court somewhat in the position of a hostage for the behavior of the Huguenots. The prospect of Alençon's return rendered his position still more precarious. Catherine distrusted him, and meditated removing the possibility of his embarrassing the government by depriving him of his liberty, if not his life. In the mean time she plied him with the fascinations of her maids of honor and amused him with promises of the lieutenant-general. The wily Béarnais, who was all the time planning to escape, pretended to be deceived. He recited to the Duke of Guise at great length all he intended to do when he became lieutenant-general of the kingdom, and the duke repeated his words to the king and his mignons, who enjoyed a good laugh at the expense of his simple brother-in-law.

Navarre had attached to his person a Huguenot gentleman who had been recommended to him as "one who would stop at nothing." This was Théodore Agrippe d'Aubigny, who merits more than a passing mention, both as a type of the times and on account of his own individuality. D'Aubigny claims to have known Greek and Latin at the age of six, and to have translated the *Crito* of Plato at seven. He is a great boaster when he refers to his accomplishments and his ancestry; on the other hand, he displays a curious modesty in never mentioning himself by name in his "*Histoire Universelle*." Too ill balanced to reach the first rank either as a captain, statesman, or writer, still his accomplishments both with the pen and the sword were brilliant, and Michelet pronounces his "*Tragiques*" the best work of its time. As a lad, D'Aubigny was captured with his Huguenot tutor and condemned to be burnt. He tells us that while awaiting execution he danced a *gaillard* so gracefully that his life was spared at the unanimous request of the spectators.

His tutor was obliged to take his clothes away every night to prevent his joining his friends in the army, but one night D'Aubigny escaped in his shirt, and provided himself with an equipment from the plunder of his first battle. "No one," he says, "can reproach me with having been despoiled or of coming out from the wars worse off than I entered." He must have done some pretty wild deeds during the civil wars, for when he was in the hospital he says that the mere recital of them threw a sick companion into a fever and caused his hair to stand on end with horror.

D'Aubigny was a good deal of a Gascon, but his courage was unquestionable. Regard for human life was not a characteristic of the sixteenth century, when men were always killing each other. They threw their lives away without hesitation. A word or a blow, and they fought like game-cocks until one or the other dropped. The only wonder is that any survived, so regardless were they of wounds. Times without number D'Aubigny was wounded in duels and skirmishes. If there was any desperate undertaking going, he was sure to be in it. We are told that he took off his breastplate on one occasion when with a storming party led by La Noue, simply because the others wore none. But after fighting in his shirt at Oléron, he had the mortification of seeing Henry sell the place to the Catholics. At Dormans he so far forgot his father's injunctions as to fight with Guise against the Huguenots. Possibly he imagined that he made up for it afterwards by massacring twenty-two Catholic prisoners who surrendered themselves to him at Dax. D'Aubigny escaped St. Bartholomew because he was engaged in a street brawl three days before and had to fly to escape the consequences. At court he was in general demand because of his wit and activity, but his caustic tongue

continually got him into trouble. He fought many duels, in one of which he was nearly killed, and Mme. de Carnavalet attempted to poison him, he says, because he reminded her that she had committed incest and poisoned her mother. Her paramour, Fervacques, also tried to kill him, and made things generally unpleasant for D'Aubigny. The Gascon had about decided on quitting the court, when one night he and a companion heard their master sigh in his bed and begin to hum the versicle of the eighty-eighth psalm, beginning, "Removed from friends, I sigh alone."



"Sire, it is true, then, that the spirit of God worketh and dwelleth in you still," said D'Aubigny. "As for us two, we were talking of taking to flight to-morrow, when your voice made us draw the curtain. Bethink you, sir, that, after us, the hands that will serve you would not dare refuse to employ poison and the knife."

It was arranged that Navarre should make a pretext of a hunting-party to escape to his friends, who would be in waiting at Senlis. Before the time fixed the court was alarmed by a rumor that the King of Navarre had escaped. Henry went at once to the king and queen-mother and gayly told them that he had brought them the fugitive, and would rather die at their

feet than leave them. Then he made a show of urging Guise to accompany him to the hunt. After Henry had set out, D'Aubigny saw Fervacques in close conversation with the king, and taxed him with having betrayed their secret. Fervacques did not deny it, and told D'Aubigny to make haste if he would save his master. When the King of Navarre saw him coming, he called out, "What news?"

"Sire," answered D'Aubigny, "we are betrayed; the king knows all; the road to death and shame is Paris; that to life and glory is anywhere else."

"There is no need of so many words; let us be going," cried Henry.

Navarre's followers wished to kill the guards who had accompanied them, but he would not permit it. They rode all night. Henry is said not to have spoken a word until he had crossed the Loire. "Praised be God, who has delivered me," he then said. "They killed my mother at Paris, the admiral, and all my best servants. They had no intention to do better by me, if God had not protected me. I will not return again unless I am dragged. I regret only two things I have left there,—the Mass and my wife. I will try to do without the Mass, but I cannot do without my wife, and mean to see her again."

Marguerite was innocent of her husband's flight, although she had contrived that of her brother, and taken advantage of the confusion that ensued to cause the assassination of her old enemy and traducer, Du Guast. She explains the death of the king's favorite very simply in her memoirs by saying it was a "judgment of God." Henry III. had always hated his sister, and after her husband's escape wanted to have her poisoned, but the queen-mother persuaded him to keep Marguerite as a hostage for her husband.

Alençon was not pleased at Henry's escape. As leader of both Politiques and Huguenots, he could dictate terms to his brother ; now he might be called on to divide his command with Navarre. The two princes, therefore, remained apart, and no concerted action was attempted with their separate forces, which, combined with Condé's German auxiliaries, must have amounted to nearly fifty thousand men. The king was without troops or money, yet Guise, by prompt action with such material as he could gather, routed a division of Condé's army. The King of Navarre was without consequence ; the renegade son of a renegade father, he occupied about the same place that Antoine had in the estimation of the Protestants. His presence was desired neither by the Politiques nor the Huguenots, and it is said that he went for three months after his escape without attending either Catholic or Protestant worship. His reputation and that of his following were so bad that when he appeared before La Rochelle the citizens declined to admit him until he had made a public declaration of his return to the Protestant faith. Even then his reception was cold compared with that given to the Prince of Condé.

In the negotiations for peace every inducement was offered to the Duke of Alençon, while Navarre was disregarded. The queen-mother was aware of the disaffection which existed between the malcontents, and had resolved to detach her son from them at any cost. This was accomplished by creating Alençon Duke of Anjou, and giving him almost regal powers over Anjou, Berri, and Touraine, with a pension of one hundred thousand crowns. The Huguenots obtained, *on paper*, nearly all they had fought for. Navarre and Condé were assigned the governments of Picardy and Guienne, but when Henry went to take possession of his province, its principal

city, Bordeaux, refused to admit him, and he had to retire, after reminding the citizens how Montmorency had entered. Angoulême also refused to admit Condé. The king only laughed, and told the prince that he might have St. Jean instead. On the suggestion of the King of Navarre, Condé, by secretly introducing troops in the town, surprised St. Jean before it could offer him the same insult that Angoulême had.

After Alençon had committed the mistake of detaching himself from his allies, the court very quickly showed that they did not intend to keep their promises. Nevertheless, there was an outburst of indignation among the Catholics at the terms which had been granted the Protestants. The great body of loyal Catholics were tired of seeing princes of the blood engaging in rebellion from personal motives, and the court alternately favoring one party and the other according to its strength. Years before, at the Council of Trent, Cardinal Lorraine had projected a Catholic league, which Marshal Tavannes had endeavored to propagate through France by means of the religious brotherhoods. The League, which originated in Péronne, had existed for some time in Champagne, and now spread like wildfire all over France. The Jesuits and Guisards were thought to have been instrumental in this, but there is no doubt that the movement was largely spontaneous. The Protestants had banded together under Condé to defend their religion. Why should not the Catholics follow their example? The members of this association pledged their property as well as their lives to the defence of the Catholic religion. The abilities of the Duke of Guise, as well as the position his house had taken in the religious struggles, made him the natural leader of this movement. Very soon it was hinted that this brilliant and popular nobleman's descent from Charlemagne

gave him quite as good a title to the throne as that possessed by the house of Capet. Religion was the party cry, but the real struggle between the houses of Valois, Bourbon, and Lorraine was for the crown.

Henry III. perceived at once the new danger which threatened the throne, and gave Montpensier and other of his governors strict orders to arrest the spread of the League. But by the time the States-General, which the treaty of pacification called for, had assembled at Blois, the movement had become so strong that Henry saw that it was hopeless to struggle against it. He therefore thought it safer to secure the support of this powerful organization by giving it his sanction. This involved renewing the war, which many of the moderate Catholics, who considered peace the first requirement of the country, opposed; but the court and the League succeeded in winning over a majority of the States-General to their schemes. If the Protestant leaders had yielded to the urgent demands which were made for their attendance, the king would have put it out of their power to resist. But no persuasion of the court could induce the wily Béarnais to put himself in their power again, and Condé and the Montmorencies joined him in pronouncing the actions of the States-General corrupt and illegal.

The king, who had been making levies for some time, now declared war, explaining that he had made peace only for the purpose of expelling foreign troops from France and reclaiming his brother. The Huguenots proclaimed a counter league of Protestant powers, comprising England, Germany, Sweden, and Denmark, and desultory warfare ensued all over France. Alençon, now Duke of Anjou, succeeded in capturing La Charité, because its inhabitants could not believe that the prince, who had so recently been their protector, would under-

take anything against them. After this achievement Anjou's troops turned their attention to marauding. Mayenne drove Condé into La Rochelle, where the prince wrangled with the citizens, and addressed indignant remonstrances to Elizabeth and Navarre for not coming to his assistance. Condé was a better controversialist than general, and his troops were full of dissension. The king now began to fear the Guises were getting too much credit out of the campaign, so he sent Anjou to supersede Mayenne.

In the mean time the King of Navarre was maintaining a skirmishing warfare in Guienne, varied with negotiations for peace. These negotiations conferred more importance on him than his military exploits, for they secured his first public recognition as the head of the Protestant cause. His small army comprised officers of both religions, men like Fervacques and Turenne, who frankly acknowledged that they had changed their religion and party because they were out of favor at court. The first indication of Navarre's capacity was the tact with which he handled these conflicting interests and quarrelsome followers. He feigned valor very successfully if it is true that nature made him a coward. Henry is said to have been so conscious of this physical defect that he schooled himself to bravery only by the greatest resolution, of which the following exploit is a fair example. Going with a number of his followers, dressed as if for a wolf-hunt, but with arms under their clothes, he surprised the town of Eauze. Navarre and half a dozen of his gentlemen rushed through the gate before the portcullis could be dropped. They were instantly attacked by several hundred men, crying, "Fire at the white plume and scarlet tunic; that is the king." But they defended themselves, with their backs to the wall, until their companions

broke down the gate and captured the town. On another occasion, when Henry's troops were being beaten at Marmande, he flew to their rescue, although only half armed, and fought with them until darkness intervened to save their honor. The town of Bayonne had refused to take part in the massacre of St. Bartholomew, and, as a mark of their appreciation, the Protestants released their Bayonne prisoners without ransom. Soon after, the King of Navarre took it into his head to attend a fête in Bayonne with only six companions. Although in arms against him, the citizens gave him an ovation because of his gallantry. It was acts like this which earned Henry his popularity. But while he was amusing himself with skirmishes, negotiations, and intrigues, the Protestants were losing ground in the north, and blaming the King of Navarre for selfish indifference. Henry really had not troops enough to maintain anything more than a defensive warfare, and dared not march away from Béarn to the assistance of Condé. Knowing, however, that Henry III. was weary of a war which was every day weakening his popularity and strengthening that of Guise and the League, and that the royal treasury was empty, Navarre made a pretence of marching north, and by so doing secured the Protestants terms nearly as favorable as had been granted after Alençon's rebellion.



CHAPTER VII.

THE LOVERS' WAR.

THE King of Navarre's reason for insisting on the restoration of his wife was probably a desire to embarrass the court and secure Marguerite's dower, which had never been turned over to him. Marguerite's desire to join her husband was the result of her precarious position at court. This did not prevent her, however, from doing everything in her power to embarrass her brother and his ignoble favorites in return for their insults. Therefore, peace was no sooner made than the king declared that Marguerite's desire to join her husband should be gratified. Marguerite affected an illness as an excuse for

delay and visited Spa. Don Juan took advantage of this visit to seize Namur, and nearly captured Marguerite, whose real object in visiting Flanders was to arrange for an insurrection there in favor of her brother Anjou. After her return to court she assisted Anjou to escape to Flanders, and then set out with her mother for Béarn. Henry, who had clamored persistently for his wife's return, now refused to receive her or confer with the queen-mother until Marguerite was remarried to him by the Protestant ritual, her dower paid, and the towns specified in it turned over. The meeting was not cordial, but terms were finally arranged at Nérac. The queen-mother plied the King of Navarre with the ladies of her suite, and Marguerite exerted her charms in her husband's interests with the President Pibrac.

About this time, Henry and some of his companions went to a ball at Agen, where they blew out the lights and indulged in disorderly frolic which caused great scandal. Such acts were frequent at court, where even the queens were not respected in the confusion that ensued, but in this case the citizens of Agen were so indignant that they revolted against the King of Navarre, who also lost La Réole because of the disaffection of its old governor Ussac, whose unfortunate love-affairs had served the Béarnais for a jest. Henry was at a ball with the queen-mother when the news reached him. Retiring unperceived, he and his companions disguised themselves as if for a hunt, and at daybreak surprised and captured the neighboring town of Fleurance. "I see well that this is in revenge for La Réole," said Catherine. "Henry of Navarre gives me cabbage for cabbage, but mine is the larger." Some question having arisen as to whether the town of St. Emilion belonged to Navarre or France, Henry settled the dispute by capturing

the place. This time Catherine was indignant, and claimed it was a violation of the treaty. But Henry always had a good excuse ready, and held St. Emilion as an equivalent for infractions the other side had committed. Catherine concluded a new treaty with Henry at Nérac, but the real object of her visit was to inform herself of the King of Navarre's strength, beguile him back to court if possible, and create disaffection among his followers. She succeeded in sowing considerable dissension among the latter, but in negotiation and subterfuge she was forced to acknowledge she had met her equal. Henry's apparent levity and good nature concealed a determination and acuteness which met her at every turn, and which her cunning was powerless to disarm. The affection she showed him as a lad soon turned to anxiety, but she now watched him with ill-concealed fear and hatred.

Catherine claimed that her visit had been prolonged to eighteen months on account of Henry's reluctance to part with a lady of her suite, la belle Dayelle. After her departure the King and Queen of Navarre settled down to a five years' sojourn in their kingdom. Marguerite says their court was so pleasant they did not envy that of France, and that her husband's courtiers were as gallant and attractive as those of her brother. The king and queen were mutually tolerant of each other's gallantries. Henry says his wife's favors attracted and retained at court many whose support he would not otherwise have gained, and owns he not only was wilfully blind to her amours, but smoothed over her lovers' quarrels, even persuading her against her will to recall Turenne. It was impossible, apparently, for Marguerite to be faithful to her marriage vows, but she was loyal to her husband in other ways. When he was ill at Eauze she never took her clothes off, but attended him

day and night. At another time she learned of a plot to assassinate him, as he was passing through Mazères with a few attendants, and conveyed a warning to Henry in time for him to escape by crossing the river. Marguerite was magnanimous. She not only condoned her husband's weaknesses, but encouraged them by putting her maids of honor in his way. One of them, la belle Fosseuse, became *enceinte*, and was on the point of being delivered of a child in the chamber of the maids of honor. Her screams filled the castle, and Henry came to his wife in great distress. "My dear," he said, "I have concealed something from you which I must confess. I beg you to forgive me, but oblige me by rising and going to the assistance of Fosseuse, who is in a very bad way. You know how much I love her; I beg you to oblige me in this." Marguerite advised him to get the court out of the way on pretence of a hunt, and then went to perform the part of a mother to la Fosseuse.

It was a curious little court, composed partly of Protestants and partly of Catholics, who lived most of the time in harmony, one part attending Mass with Marguerite, the other going to the Protestant service with Henry. After the service they joined each other for a walk on the terraces and allées bordering the river. Even grave Puritans like Rosny, afterwards Duke of Sully, submitted to be taught the godless dance by Marguerite, and took a mistress rather than be thought out of fashion. One of the Protestant ministers excited Marguerite's ire by injudicious protests against her Catholic services, and she was still more indignant with Henry because he declined to embroil himself with the Protestants by disciplining him. Then the king fell in love with Mlle. de Tignonville, but she proved obdurate, and Henry begged D'Aubigny on his

knees to assist his suit. D'Aubigny says because he refused the king tried to embroil him with Fervacques. D'Aubigny was finally prevailed on to accompany the king to some assignation, and Henry revenged himself by relating the fact to his companions, and cutting off D'Aubigny's supplies. It is to Henry's credit that he valued women like Mlle. de Tignonville and Mme. de Guercheville, who resisted his advances, more than those who yielded to them. Years after, he said to the latter, "Since you are a true lady of honor, you shall be one to the queen, when I place one on the throne," a promise which he fulfilled when he had secured a divorce from Marguerite and married Marie de Médicis. D'Aubigny, who was discontented and quarrelsome, constantly accused the king of ingratitude. He says that Henry permitted Catherine du Luc and the child she had by him to die of want, and that when D'Aubigny went on a mission for him, which cost him seven or eight thousand francs, the only return he ever got for it was Henry's portrait, to which D'Aubigny affixed a sarcastic inscription.

There is an oft-repeated story that D'Aubigny and a companion lay awake in Henry's chamber when they supposed the king asleep. "La Force," said D'Aubigny, "our master is a regular miser and the most ungrateful mortal on the face of the earth." "What dost say, D'Aubigny?" asked La Force, who was half asleep. "He says," called out the king, who had overheard the conversation, "that I am a regular miser and the most ungrateful mortal on the face of the earth." D'Aubigny was dumfounded. "But when daylight appeared," he says, "this prince, who liked neither rewarding nor punishing, did not for all that look any the more black at me or give me a quarter-crown more."

Another version is that it was just before the taking of Mail-

lezais, a few years later. D'Aubigny, worn out with twenty years of battles and wounds, during which time he says he had enjoyed only four days' vacation, made himself governor of the place and refused to take the field again at Henry's request. The king, after having refused the Duke of Alençon his sister's hand, was wavering between proposals from the Count of Soissons and the Prince of Bar; the alliance he really wished for her was with James I. Henry heard D'Aubigny discussing this, although his bedfellow did not, and called out, "How deaf you are! Don't you hear that he says I want to marry my sister to several brothers-in-law at once?" "Go to sleep," was D'Aubigny's cool reply; "I have plenty more things to say about you."

D'Aubigny asserts that Henry was unwilling that any besides himself should distinguish themselves in his campaigns, and was enraged because D'Aubigny captured Castelnaud with scaling ladders, telling an officer, who was describing the exploit, that he lied. It is likely that the vainglorious Gascon mistook for jealousy the disgust which his pretensions sometimes caused his master. D'Aubigny himself mentions an occasion on which Henry sarcastically greeted him as "Sertorius, Manlius Torquatus, Old Cato, and all the other virtuous heroes of antiquity rolled into one!" He also asserts that Henry planned to have him assassinated and thrown in the river. When he accused him of it at supper the discussion became so acrimonious that the king left the table. D'Aubigny's own conduct is sufficient proof of the falsity of these charges. Nothing ever satisfied him. He quarrelled with every one at court, and even threatened to throw the Count de Ségur out of a window. Navarre's advisers begged him never to intrust D'Aubigny with any command, and Marguerite, who at first had taken a great liking to

him, in the end begged her husband on her knees to dismiss him.

In Paris, Henry III. and his mignons were becoming more and more unpopular, and the capital teemed with lampoons and pasquinades upon them. Guise and his brothers showed their disgust by retiring from court in a body, and were actively engaged in organizing the League and negotiating with Spain. The king withheld the aid he had promised Anjou in Flanders and

stopped reinforcements his followers were collecting. Almost daily duels and assassinations took place in the streets, and a continual battle was waged between the followers of Anjou and the king. The intrepid Bussy, Anjou's champion and Marguerite's lover, was the chief aggressor. The mignons ambuscaded and attacked him in a body, but to no purpose. No odds could daunt him. Les-toile says this arrogant desperado was as able a captain as there was in France, but godless and vicious. He had such complete control over his master that he kept the key of his coffers and



openly boasted that he helped himself to whatever he wanted. Bussy was in the habit of saying that, although a simple gentleman, he had the heart of an emperor in his breast. When he read in Plutarch of the achievements of the great conquerors of antiquity, he exclaimed that there was nothing that they had

done which he could not do, if the occasion only offered. But he finally met his fate. The king placed a letter of his, boasting of his conquest of the Countess de Montsoreau, in her husband's hands. The count forced his wife to make an assignation with Bussy, and when the intrepid seducer arrived attacked him with his followers. Overpowered by numbers, the fearless bravo defended himself until his sword broke, and then laid about him with the chairs and table until the room became a perfect shambles and everything was in fragments. He finally perished by jumping from the window.

Three of the Duke of Guise's gentlemen fought three of the king's mignons and killed two of them, Maugiron and Caylus. The latter died speaking neither of God nor of his family, but only murmuring, "My king, my king." Henry testified the most extravagant grief, and offered the surgeons princely rewards if his favorite's life should be saved. Guise exerted his authority for the first time in opposition to the king, and saved the victors from punishment. Another of the mignons, St. Megrin, was accused of aspiring to be the paramour of the Duchess of Guise. He was killed at night, as he came out of the Louvre. The pointed beard and "shoulder of mutton" hand of the Duke of Mayenne were thought to have been recognized among the assailants, and the king wisely determined to make no investigation. Guise is said to have gone to his wife's chamber with a dagger and a bowl of poison and offered the duchess her choice. After vain tears and pleadings, she drank the contents of the bowl in an agony of fear. Then Guise informed her it had contained only gruel, and advised her to be more circumspect in the future, an admonition she never forgot.

During Catherine's visit to Béarn, Marshal Villars was removed at the request of the King of Navarre and his place

taken in Guienne by Marshal Biron. But things did not run much more smoothly in consequence. The Catholics infringed on the terms of the treaty of pacification, which the court did not enforce. Navarre took matters into his own hands in self-protection, and then both he and Biron assailed the king with complaints of each other. Things were approaching a crisis. The time had nearly come when the Béarnais was obliged by the terms of the treaty to return the towns which he held in security. He could not do this without ruining himself, so he cut a number of coins in half and distributed them among his followers, with the understanding that when they received the other half they would take up arms and hasten to his assistance. In the mean time, Anjou, who had been unable to push his Flemish projects on account of the lack of French support, returned to the court, from which he had so recently fled, and received the prodigal's welcome. The king, in his delight, promised to assist his brother to obtain the hand of Elizabeth of England, and to help him carry on his Flemish enterprises, but Anjou soon saw that Henry had no intention of keeping his word, so he determined to force him to it by stirring up trouble among the Huguenots. In this he was ably seconded by Marguerite and her maids of honor, who brought every inducement to bear on the King of Navarre and his advisers. Turenne being particularly active in this enterprise, Henry III. endeavored to create a rupture between Marguerite and her husband by writing a letter to Navarre, calling his attention to the publicity of his wife's relations with Turenne, but Henry merely laughed at this move of his brother-in-law and showed the letter to Marguerite. She and her paramour naturally redoubled their efforts for war after reading it.

The war which followed was known as "the lovers' war,"

because of the agencies which brought it about. This was not a religious war in any sense, and both Catholics and Protestants condemned it. La Rochelle and Languedoc at first refused to take part in it, while Condé and La Noue laid the blame of it on the King of Navarre. But the hopes Henry had of its improving his political position were realized. It opened with one of the most brilliant achievements on his part, one which surprised Europe, and for the first time warned the nations that a new sun had arisen above the horizon in France.

Henry had long claimed the town of Cahors as a part of his wife's dower, but as no attention had been paid to his demands he now resolved to try what force would accomplish. The city was well fortified and manned by a garrison numbering two thousand men, under the able command of De Vesscins. The place was on its guard against attack, and the attacking party numbered only fifteen hundred men, yet Navarre resolved to attempt the storming of Cahors. He approached at midnight under the protection of a thunder-storm, and halted his men in a walnut grove until petards were affixed to the city gates. When they exploded the holes they made were so small that the king and the first who entered were obliged to crawl through on their hands and knees. The noise had alarmed the garrison, and they rushed to the defence of the gate. No quarter was given or taken, and De Vesseins was killed in his shirt. The tocsin rang, and the citizens rose in arms. Navarre and his storming party were received with a heavy musketry fire, while tiles and stones were showered down on them from the house-tops. Artillery was soon brought to bear on the devoted little band. Affairs became so desperate that Henry's officers told him the assault was hopeless, and advised him to retreat, but he refused to yield. Bruised and bleeding, with

his armor battered, he replied, "It is written above what will become of me, but my honor is at stake, and I will be carried out dead or march out a conqueror." For five days the king and his followers fought from street to street, and from house to house, without daring to quit their arms for repose or refreshment. Reinforcements came to the assistance of the Catholics, but could not force their way into the town. Chouppes came to the king's rescue, and was told by Huguenot deserters that all was lost. Calling them cowards, he rushed into Cahors. With his assistance Henry carried the last barricade, and the town was his. Then, hastening to Montauban, he gathered his forces together and scoured the country, dispersing the levies which Biron was raising in Armagnac and besieging the marshal himself in Marmande. "Night and day," says D'Aubigny, "he was on horseback, and gave the enemy no repose."

The activity and determination with which the King of Navarre began this campaign were in strong contrast to the indifferent methods and sporadic efforts of the last war. When the spur of necessity or ambition urged Henry, he could play a hero's part; when the occasion did not call for it, he was prone, all through his life, to occupy himself with love-affairs or hunting instead of pressing his advantages. Civil war became to him a game, with which he was so familiar that he was apt to neglect his play unless his adversary pressed him or some important move was in progress. The King of Navarre's transcendent military and political genius was not recognized when the "lovers' war" began, and the Protestants were much divided. No concerted action could be obtained, because every little leader felt at liberty to act for himself. Guerilla warfare began all over the south, and in many places degenerated into

mere marauding. Condé acted separately from Henry, and alternately negotiated with the queen-mother for peace and treated with the Elector Palatine for German assistance. He promised the latter several French towns as security for payment of his troops. Sully says Condé's object was to form an independent principality. Whatever it was, the King of Navarre determined to frustrate it by sending Turenne and his troops to act as a check on Condé. The prince then moved across France and seized La Fère in Picardy. Its proximity to Paris gave Matignon and the mignons an opportunity of showing off their military prowess in what was called the "Velvet Siege," on account of the elegance of their accoutrements. They proved they had courage, like the Life Guards at Waterloo, but they were nearly all killed. The Prince of Condé, finding he was not supported, escaped to Germany before the town was taken, and overwhelmed the King of Navarre with reproaches for not coming to his assistance.

Henry, deprived of Turenne's troops, was not able to keep the field against Biron, but the Duke of Anjou, having obtained his object, now offered himself as a mediator between the parties, on condition that his brother would furnish him with assistance in Flanders. The King of Navarre, having stipulated that Biron should be removed from Guienne, was glad to conclude a peace on much the same terms as that of Nérac. Condé at first refused to accept the peace made by the King of Navarre. He never became completely reconciled to Henry, although he joined him at once in Béarn. Navarre refused to give his sister's hand to Anjou, and endeavored to dissuade Rosny from accompanying the duke on his campaign. "He will deceive me much," said Henry, who knew his brother-in-law well, "if he fulfils the hopes conceived of him; he has so little skill or

courage, and a heart so double and malicious, that I cannot persuade myself he will ever do anything that is great." Marguerite herself said of her favorite brother that "if all insincerity was banished from the earth there was enough in the



Duke of Alençon to replenish it." It was said the Queen of England had at last agreed to marry Anjou, but that she now withdrew her favor, believing the duke's plan was to marry the Spanish Infanta and secure the Low Countries for a wedding dowry. Philip's constant endeavor was to prevent France from assisting the revolted provinces by involving

her in internal wars. The reduction of Cahors gave him so good an opinion of the King of Navarre's abilities in this direction that he became a suitor for his sister's hand, and offered Henry in exchange that of the Infanta in the event of his securing a divorce from Marguerite. Philip is said to have sent eight hundred thousand ducats to a village of upper Navarre as a pledge of his sincerity. But hostility to Spain was the first article of Henry's political creed, and in the direst extremities of his long and stormy career he persistently refused to commit the error of allying himself to interests which he considered opposed to those of France.

Anjou inaugurated his Flemish campaign by marching to the relief of Cambrai, whose commandant gave him a banquet in gratitude for his arrival. The duke took advantage of this to secure the citadel by treacherously introducing French troops. Deaf to the entreaties of his allies, and seemingly satisfied with this dishonorable achievement, he now returned to France. Thence he crossed to England to prosecute the matrimonial suit with which the politic Elizabeth thought fit to amuse him. Three months later he returned to Antwerp and was publicly proclaimed Duke of Brabant. Henry III. was persuaded to send him eight thousand men under Montpensier and Biron. Instead of employing them against the Spaniards, Anjou determined with the assistance of these troops to seize Antwerp, Dunkirk, and other towns by the same method that he had employed at Cambrai. He first endeavored to make a prisoner of the Prince of Orange, by persuading him to visit the French camp. Failing in this, he seized one of the gates of Antwerp, under pretence of inspecting its defences, and the French rushed in shouting, "Town gained! Slay! Slay! Long live the Mass!"

The citizens flew to arms and raised the drawbridge. The French, hemmed in among narrow streets, would have been cut off to a man had not the Prince of Orange stopped the slaughter. Then the Flemings cut the dikes and compelled the Duke of Anjou, with the remnant of his army, to retreat to France in disgrace. There he soon after died of the same disease as his brother, Charles IX. Catherine de Médicis is alleged to have poisoned both of her sons, but the duke himself suspected his brother, saying that he paid dearly for the visit he made Henry in Paris.

Philip II. was indignant with Henry III. for assisting his

revolted provinces. As an offset, he endeavored, by liberal promises of assistance, to induce the King of Navarre to make a diversion in favor of the Protestants. Navarre not only declined Philip's propositions, but was loyal enough to communicate them to the king. Henry III. could not deny himself the pleasure of informing the Spanish king that his negotiations were discovered. This determined Philip to support Guise and the League, as the best means of renewing civil war in France. It was the crafty Béarnais who first discovered Guise's negotiations with Spain and warned the king of the magnitude of the conspiracy which threatened him.

The death of the Duke of Anjou made the King of Navarre heir presumptive to the French throne. Even before his brother's death the king, foreseeing events, declared in the presence of the Duke of Mayenne, "I acknowledge the King of Navarre as my sole and only heir. He is a prince well brought up, of a good disposition. My inclination has always been to love him, and I know that he loves me. He is somewhat sharp and choleric, but his heart is good." Realizing that the Catholics would never accept a Protestant king, Henry III. sent the Duke of Epernon to the King of Navarre to represent to him the necessity of abjuring the Protestant faith and returning to court. When the Guises learned this they were greatly disturbed. Many have thought that if the King of Navarre had abjured at this period he would have succeeded to the throne peaceably, and that France would have been spared the many years of civil war that followed. Henry III. anticipated no difficulty in the conversion of his brother-in-law, when it should become expedient. The King of Navarre's attachment to the reformed faith was entirely political. His private life was far from exemplary, and he treated religious matters frequently

with great levity. It is recorded that he sat in church eating cherries and snapping the stones at the preacher. The gloomy and intractable Condé regarded Henry as "lost in depravity and worldly lusts," while the Protestants accused him of playing a new rôle, in which he talked incessantly of the safety of the kingdom, and kept their interests in the background. Yet some of their most conscientious leaders advised him to abjure, believing he could be of more service to them on the throne than at the head of their armies. One of these, the Duke de La Rochefoucauld, replied to a Protestant clergyman, who was exhorting the king to hold fast to his faith, "I should like to see them place before you, in one hand two or three psalms, and in the other the crown of France. Which would you choose, minister?"

When the King of Navarre refused to abjure, the court could hardly be persuaded that his decision was final. Henry assured the king of his loyalty and devotion, declaring he would never undertake anything against him except from necessity. The cautious Béarnais was apprehensive of the far-reaching designs of the League, and did not believe that the unscrupulous Guises would allow his life to stand between them and their ambitions. After a precarious existence at court he had succeeded in escaping and establishing himself in Béarn as the recognized chief of the Protestant cause. He was asked now to sacrifice his independence, desert his allies, and commit himself, powerless again, to the vicissitudes of court intrigue. His enemies promised that if he surrendered his sword he should succeed to the throne. Perhaps he was unduly cautious; perhaps his experience at court had made him too distrustful of human nature. At any rate, he thought it safer to keep his weapon, even if forced to use it, than to surrender himself disarmed to the League. Henry III.'s promise was apparently sincere, but the possibilities

involved were complex and hazardous, and the Béarnais decided that the simplest and safest course for the present was to preserve the *status quo*. The king regretted his brother-in-law's decision, but assured him he should continue to regard him as his heir. He also approved of Navarre's opposition to the League, whose success the king deprecated.

Philip II. now made another attempt to persuade Navarre to organize a Protestant rebellion, promising to pay in advance three hundred thousand crowns towards this object, and to contribute one hundred thousand crowns each month during the war. The Béarnais declined the proposition, but was very willing to borrow five hundred thousand crowns of the Spanish king, without any political stipulations. Philip, however, had no intention of paying the piper for other people's dancing, and declined; so the matter was dropped, although he renewed his offer later, but to no purpose. Convinced of the futility of further negotiations with the King of Navarre, the Spanish king now turned his attention to Guise and the League.

Soon after the death of Anjou the Duke of Guise and a number of the Catholic leaders held a consultation at Nancy with the agents of the King of Spain. The queen-mother encouraged their designs in the hope that by excluding the King of Navarre from the succession she might secure the throne for her grandson, the Prince of Bar. The real plans of the Guises were concealed from her, although the duke, whenever he appeared, was greeted by the populace with shouts of "À Rheims!" Brave, handsome, and able, the Catholic champion was the popular hero. To compass his ends he was ready to be all things to all men. He promised one thing to the King of Spain, another to the Pope, and still another to the Cardinal de Bourbon and Catherine, but his real aim was to secure the glittering prize for

himself. He had important secrets for every one, and was courteous to all, while the king was universally detested. Guise fostered this feeling among the people by a campaign of vilification, in which Henry's foibles were the subject of almost daily lampoons and satires. The clergy were enlisted in the League's behalf, and even the confessional was suborned to its service. The monks were drilled, and their monasteries became arsenals. Guise asked the Sorbonne if they would prove as strong with the sword as they had been with the pen, and plotted to seize the king in the chapel of the Capuchins. Although Henry III. was aware of all this, he did not change the manner of his life or limit the profusion with which he squandered money on his favorites. Instead, he declared against the League in a council held at St.-Germain, where his skilful eloquence won over the Duke of Nevers. Guise called another meeting of the League in his house at Joinville. Envoys from Spain and other Catholic powers were present. A definite treaty was drawn up and signed, by which the signatories bound themselves to exclude a Protestant king from the French throne, and to suppress the Reformed religion in France and the Low Countries.

Matignon, who succeeded Biron in Guienne, was less energetic and consequently more acceptable to Navarre. But the treaty of Nérac was not observed, and the Protestants were constantly harried until they again complained that more had perished during the peace than in the war. The King of Navarre's pension was in arrears and his revenues diverted, while new imposts were levied which discriminated against Béarn. It must not be supposed that Navarre submitted to these exactions without protest, or allowed his towns to be taken without retaliation. The Béarnais was not an easy adversary to circumvent, and when it came to blows, always gave as good as he took. Al-

though he complained to the king of the League's aggressions, and feigned submission, he was in reality making a very active resistance. Foreseeing the inevitable conflict, he had taken the precaution to win over to his support the Duke of Montmorency, formerly Marshal Damville, whose rule was absolute in the adjoining province of Languedoc, as well as Lesdiguières, whose brilliant military genius had gained the ascendant over the warring factions of Dauphiny. The effect of this alliance of Huguenot and Politic leaders, from the Atlantic to the Mediterranean, was to consolidate the south against the north.

When the King of Navarre found that his protests were disregarded, his representations of the League's designs unheeded, and his offers of assistance declined, he began preparations for defence on his own account, strengthening his fortresses and recruiting his troops. He kept agents busy in Germany and England, seeking Protestant support everywhere, but at the same time declared that he would be the last to draw his sword. In the midst of these preparations the Protestants were ordered to join their troops to the royal forces. In spite of past experience, many of the Protestant leaders were blind enough to be willing to do this, but the King of Navarre objected, and now issued an able manifesto in reply to the League, in which he denied that the events of St. Bartholomew gave them the right to treat him as a relapsed heretic. He declared that, although he was open to conviction, they had made no attempt to convince him of his errors. He insisted that he was no enemy of the Catholics, and instanced as a proof of this the perfect toleration they enjoyed in Béarn. He protested his aversion to civil war, and said that when he had laid down his arms it was with no intention of taking them up again. All his actions, he continued, proved that his only wish was for the long life and prosperity of the

king, to whose crown the League held him incapable of succeeding. To spare France and settle this question, he was willing to waive the privileges of his birth and meet Guise man to man. The duke made a dignified reply, in which he declared that he bore the King of Navarre no enmity, and that matters of religion and state policy could not be decided by a duel.

As Henry III. made no move, Navarre redoubled the activity of his preparations, at the same time keeping in close communication with Montmorency and his friends in England and Germany. In a letter to Ségur he says, "Excuse me if I do not write with my own hand, for I have so much business that I have not leisure to blow my nose." To the Queen of England he writes "that whereas formerly events ran by years and months, they were now to be counted by hours and minutes." Still he restrained his restive followers, and wrote Ségur, "Our patience lasts as long as it may: God grant that it may continue."

Several attempts were made to assassinate the King of Navarre. In one of these attempts the assassin, Gaveret, was on horseback, and had pistols in the holsters of his saddle. Henry pretended to admire Gavaret's charger, and asked leave to try him. As soon as the king was in the saddle he exclaimed, "I am told that you seek to kill me; I could now, if I pleased, put you to death instead." Saying this, he discharged the pistols in the air and permitted Gaveret to escape.

The objects of the League being ostensibly religious, the Pope could not refuse it his sanction, although he privately disapproved of it. "The King of France," he said, "will soon be obliged to treat the Catholics as his greatest enemies; he will be compelled to draw his forces from Germany, England, and other Protestant countries, in order to become the strongest in his own state; he

will have to enter into a disgraceful alliance with the King of Navarre and the Prince of Condé, and inundate all France with Lutherans and Calvinists." To obviate this, if possible, the Pope issued a bull of excommunication against the King of Navarre and the Prince of Condé. But papal anathemas had outlived their efficiency, and the only result of the King of Navarre's excommunication was to encourage assassination and fanaticism. The French Catholics as well as the parliament resented the Pope's interference, and the King of Navarre issued a spirited reply, which was nailed on the very doors of the Vatican. Sixtus V. was forced to admit that Henry of Navarre and Elizabeth of England were the only two sovereigns in Europe who excited his admiration. "It would be a good thing," he said to Henry III.'s ambassador, "if the king, your master, showed as much resolution against his enemies."

Thinking that the straits in which the King of Navarre found himself might induce him to abjure, a commission of theologians and lawyers was sent to prevail upon him either to desert his religion or to abstain from its exercise for six months and surrender his towns of security. The Parisians believed that Navarre had come to the end of his resources, and his epitaph was already written. The witty Duchess of Uzès predicted that the executioner would follow the confessors, but Henry stood firm, declaring that he could not, in honor or conscience, abandon from fear a cause which he adopted from conviction. He wrote a polite but sarcastic letter to the queen-mother, who had prompted this move. "Although, madame, I am not worthy that you should take this trouble for me," he said, "I believe I am more worthy than those for whom you have taken it."



CHAPTER VIII.

THE WAR OF THE THREE HENRIES.

IN the ensuing "war of the three Henries," as it was called, Henry of Navarre had his wife, as well as the other two Henries, arrayed against him. Marguerite had been surprised in adultery with a M. de Chanvallon, and, what was worse, was said to have borne him a son, who afterwards took the vows of a Capuchin monk, and was known as Père Ange. He was said to have been one of the conspirators concerned in the desperate attempt on Henry IV.'s life, for which the Counts d'Auvergne and d'Entraques were condemned to death. Henry pardoned Père Ange. Although the King of Navarre did not openly notice his wife's conduct, it is hardly probable that their relations were improved by his discovery of it, and Marguerite soon after left for Paris with her mother. Her brother received her most unwillingly,

and the old feud between them was soon renewed. Marguerite revenged herself for the daily insults of her brother and his mignons by entering into an alliance with Guise. The king's patience was at length exhausted, and he publicly upbraided the Queen of Navarre with all the scandals and misdemeanors of which she had been guilty, repeatedly commanding her to leave the court and return to her husband. When she at length departed, he publicly insulted her by stopping her litter and arresting her attendants. He also wrote his brother-in-law a full account of his wife's misdeeds; then, fearing he had gone too far, he sent Bellièvre to the King of Navarre with a second letter, enjoining him to receive his wife, and reminding him that every one was subject to calumny, and that even Navarre's own mother had not escaped evil report. The Béarnais laughed aloud, and answered the ambassador with a retort too coarse to bear repetition. But he turned the affront offered his wife to his own advantage, by requiring the withdrawal of the royal troops in his vicinity, and insisting upon a number of other concessions before he would receive Marguerite again.

Their reunion was only temporary. Marguerite soon retired to her town of Agen, whence she waged war on her husband, and is even said to have attempted his assassination. The scandal of her conduct and the tyranny of her exactions became such that the Agenois rose against her, and she was obliged to escape to Carlat on the pillion of one of her followers' horses. There she was again forced to fly from the citizens, who planned to turn her over to her husband, and fell into the hands of the Marquis of Canillac. He took her to his château of Ussac, where she lived twenty years as his paramour. In the mean time Marguerite's place was filled by the Countess of Grammont, "La belle Corisande," who remained the recipient

of Henry's confidences and attentions until he met Mme. de Guercheville. La belle Corisande had good qualities, both of heart and head, and was devoted to Henry. She did much to further his interests, and even parted with her property in his service, raising a regiment for him at her own expense. But the remembrance of this did not retain her royal lover when she became stout and red-faced. He assured her of his affection and esteem as long as he lived, but acknowledged that fresher charms had claimed his allegiance. La belle Corisande understood Henry and accepted the situation.

After the assassination of the Prince of Orange, the United Provinces despatched ambassadors to France asking the king's protection. The Queen of England sent Henry III. the Order of the Garter, and pleaded most earnestly for the oppressed provinces, offering, it is said, to pay one-third of the expenses of any support he would give them. It was a great temptation to Henry, and Philip, fearing he would yield, called on Guise to fulfil his engagements to Spain. The duke was not ready to act, but Philip threatened to betray his negotiations to the king if he refused. As the time was not yet ripe for Guise to assert his claims to the succession, the old Cardinal de Bourbon was selected as the most available candidate. He afterwards protested that he accepted the offers of the League only in order to prevent the house of Bourbon from being passed over, and that he had, therefore, done more to secure the crown to his nephew than to deprive him of it. But the cardinal became so attached to the cause of the League that, after the King of Navarre's great victory at Coutras, in which the Duke of Joyeuse was killed, he openly regretted that his nephew had not been in the latter's place. When this remark was repeated to Henry III., he said it was worthy of him who made it.

The Cardinal de Bourbon was a simple-minded old dotard, totally unfit to cope with the Guises. When some one called the king's attention to the cardinal's religious devotion, he replied, "Yes, he is a good man. I wish all the Catholics in my kingdom resembled him; we should not then be at the trouble of mounting our horses to fight the reiters." Years before, the King of Navarre had foreseen the possibility of the cardinal's being advanced as a claimant for the throne, and had said, in his joking way, "Uncle, they say here that there are those who wish to make you king. Tell them to make you Pope. It will be more appropriate, and then you will be greater than all the kings put together." Henry III. had also sounded the old man as to whether, in the event of his death, he would claim the succession. In vain the venerable prelate protested that he had no expectation of outliving the king, and had, therefore, given the matter no thought; he was finally forced to admit that, if such an unexpected event should occur, he would consider that his claims to the throne were better than those of the King of Navarre. Henry III. slapped the old man on the shoulder, gave one of his malevolent laughs, and said that the rabble might vote him the crown, but that the nobility would wrest it from him.

The first public step the Duke of Guise took was to send a deputation of Catholic noblemen to the Cardinal de Bourbon, asking him to place himself at their head. The cardinal replied in a manifesto declaring for the League. This document was also signed by the Pope, the King of Spain, the Duke of Savoy, and many other Catholic princes, as well as those of the house of Lorraine, the Dukes of Cleves and Nemours, and the majority of the Catholic nobility. Soon after this an agent of the Guises was arrested with a boat-load of wine-barrels, which were found to contain arms. The Béarnais, who had repeatedly warned

Henry III. of his danger, now tendered his support, but the king, still hoping war might be avoided, begged his brother of Navarre to remain on the defensive, so that all the world might see who the aggressors were.

The first blow of the war was struck by the Duke of Guise in capturing Châlons. The Cardinal de Bourbon, making a triumphal entry into the city, was received with royal honors, and was flattered into believing himself the head rather than the tool of the League. Guise approached him hat in hand, but in his correspondence he contemptuously refers to him as "le petit homme." Henry III. made a feeble effort to save Orleans, but his troops were fired on and compelled to retreat. Lyons was captured by the League, Marseilles was surprised, and Thoul and Verdun were also taken. The Duke of Aumale overran all Picardy, at the head of a small body of horse, and in Anjou and Poitou town after town fell into the Leaguers' hands. It became evident that the efforts of the Guises were directed against the king rather than the Protestants; as Mathieu observed, "The League waged war against the Huguenots in attacking the best towns the Catholics possessed in the kingdom. The Reformation is in Guienne, they hasten to drive it out of Picardy. The Huguenots are at Rochelle, and the army of the League marches towards Paris."

If the king had acted promptly he could have checked the progress of the Leaguers in the beginning. During the first four months of the war they at no time had more than five thousand men in the field, and even later, when their German and Swiss mercenaries began to arrive, he could have defeated them by combining with the King of Navarre. Henry III. had assured his brother-in-law that he would consider his interests as his own, and grant nothing contrary to the edict of pacification, but the queen-mother exaggerated the danger and represented

the spread of the League as a national rising. In his terror the king decided that Navarre's cause was hopeless, and that his own safety lay in identifying himself with the Catholics. The League made their terms as exorbitant as possible, in the expectation that they would be rejected, but the king, in his alarm, was ready to yield everything. All concessions to the Protestants were revoked, and they were ordered to abjure or leave the kingdom within six months. "My uncle," said the king to the Cardinal de Bourbon, "against my conscience, but very willingly, I published the edicts of pacification because they succeeded in relieving my people. Now I am going to publish their revocation, in accordance with my conscience, but very unwillingly, because on this publication hangs the ruin of my kingdom." When Henry III. left Parliament, after revoking the edicts, he was greeted by the populace, for the first time in years, with shouts of "Vive le Roi!" The king was little moved by the applause, believing that the Guises had instigated it. This proved to be the case. He took a malicious pleasure in throwing the burden of war on the Parliament and clergy, who caused it, and abruptly silenced their remonstrances.

When the King of Navarre heard of the combination against him, and of the revocation of the edicts of pacification, he was stunned. He says the shock caused his moustache to turn white in a few minutes. For the moment he could see nothing but ruin before him. The Protestants did not know which way to turn; in their bewilderment they debated the formation of a republic under German protection, but Montmorency declared for the King of Navarre, and the Huguenots soon realized that their only hope lay in his leadership.

Never did "le roi galant" appear to better advantage than in desperate situations. When he found himself the only hope of

his party his genius and courage rose to the occasion. The friends he had cultivated in his prosperity stood by him in his need. Montmorency, Montpensier, and Lesdiguières took his side against the house of Guise, and the princes of the blood rallied to his support. The Béarnais was forced in the beginning to divide his slender forces. Condé, Rohan, and La Rochefoucauld went to the defence of La Rochelle, while Navarre kept the field in Guienne with a small body of horse. Condé drove back the Duke of Mercœur from La Rochelle and was proceeding to invest Brouage, but, hearing that one of his officers had surprised the citadel of Angers and was holding it against the citizens, he imprudently left his infantry before Brouage while he crossed the country with the cavalry to secure Angers. The citadel fell before he arrived, and Condé, instead of hastening back at once to Brouage, allowed himself to be cut off at the Loire; the only alternative left was flight. Rohan and La Trémoille escaped in different directions, and Condé succeeded in gaining the coast of Brittany, whence he embarked for England. Even in the straits to which it reduced him, the Béarnais was able to laugh at Condé's defeat. The cousins had never been on very cordial terms, and in the previous campaign Condé had blamed Navarre for the failures which were the result of his own bad judgment.

The time given the Protestants to abjure or quit the kingdom was now reduced to fifteen days. As it was believed that Matignon, under secret instructions from Henry III., had refrained from pressing the Béarnais, the League despatched Mayenne with an army to hem him in between the Garonne and the Pyrenees. Four armies, under Matignon, Mayenne, Biron, and Joyeuse, now threatened Navarre with destruction. His friends advised him to seek safety by joining Condé in England, but Henry replied that "he who quits the game loses it." "The

Duke of Mayenne," he observed, "is not so terrible a person as to stop one from walking about Guienne for some time to come." He hurried from place to place, dispersing small bodies of the enemy and strengthening his fortresses. He even relieved Castres, which Matignon was besieging with an army twice as numerous as Navarre's, and retired again, after dining within the walls, to show his contempt for the enemy. To reassure his friends, he writes, "Do not fear that I will risk anything. Such is by no means my intention. My design is only to check their fury for a time, in order to give our fortresses a better opportunity of ruining them."

If he could keep the field long enough, the King of Navarre felt certain that Henry III. would desert the League on the first favorable opportunity. He now determined to get in Mayenne's rear to escape being cut off from Poitou. It was high time. Mayenne had written to Paris that he had the King of Navarre so surrounded that it was impossible for him to escape, and the Béarnais himself wrote to one of his followers, "Monsieur de Batz: They have surrounded me like a beast of the chase, and think that they will take me by the net. For my part, I intend to pass through them or over them." The next day he writes, "Put wings to your best beast. Why? Thou shalt know at Nérac. Hurry, run, come, fly! such is the order of your master, and the prayer of your friend." Such letters had their effect, and Henry's followers stood by him. Setting out from Nérac with two hundred retainers, he plunged into the forests, whose labyrinths he had learned in hunting, and passed right through the enemy's lines to the Dordogne. There he amused himself with hunting, strengthening his fortresses while he watched the slow operations of Mayenne and Matignon. He calculated it would take them ten years to drive the Huguenots out of Guienne at

the rate of progress they were making. Then he joined the Prince of Condé, who had returned from England, at Rochelle.

The great defect of military science in the sixteenth century was that huge armies were wasted before petty fortresses, and advantages were not pressed. The result was an intermittent warfare which commanders dropped and took up again as they felt disposed, knowing that it would always end in a compromise. Biron began to advance on La Rochelle, and the King of Navarre was aroused by his approach to another spurt of activity. Against the judgment of his most experienced officers he labored day and night to fortify Marans, getting only snatches of sleep in the trenches, on a moving ox-cart, or wherever he happened to be. He exposed himself as freely to danger as to hardships; an officer bearing messages from his German allies had just time to say he was from Heidelberg, when he fell dead at the king's feet, with the rest of his message undelivered. Another officer was killed as the King of Navarre was laying his hand on his shoulder. The result at Marans justified the king's judgment, and Biron, after besieging Henry's works for a month, was forced to retire.

Navarre's success in resisting the League, single-handed, astonished Henry III., who, as the Béarnais had predicted, began to hint at a union of their forces. The Duke of Nevers, who was sent to sound the King of Navarre, wrote back to Henry III., "Such, sire, as you have known this prince, such is he even now; neither years nor difficulties change him; he is still agreeable, still merry, still devoted, as he has sworn to me a hundred times, to peace and your Majesty's service." Henry III. continued to insist on Navarre's turning Catholic, but Rosny, who was sent to confer with the king, declined for his master, and pointed out to his Majesty that by such action "Navarre would

lose all the aid which he could hope for from the Protestants, without thereby detaching a single man from the League." Henry III. finally arranged a meeting between the Béarnais and the queen-mother. Navarre and his advisers were suspicious of treachery, and hesitated to put themselves in Catherine's power. After he had set out for the meeting he was told that there would be no results unless he turned Catholic. He was about to turn back, but finally decided to go on and hear what the queen-mother had to say. Catherine received him in the midst of her "flying squadron," which she had brought with her to work on Henry's susceptibilities. After the exchange of not over-cordial greetings, she asked the Béarnais what he sought.

"Nothing that you have here, madame," replied Navarre, gazing around the circle of female loveliness.

Catherine then asked him if he had received her last message.

"I am astounded," replied Henry, "that your Majesty should have taken so much pains to tell me what my ears are split with hearing; and likewise that you, whose judgment is so sound, should delude yourself with the idea of solving the difficulty by means of the difficulty itself."

Catherine did not argue the point, but dwelt upon the inconveniences which the Béarnais must suffer during the war.

"I bear them patiently," Henry answered, "since you burden me with them in order to unburden yourself."

She then reproached him with not being able to do as he pleased in La Rochelle.

"I please only as I ought," he replied.

The Italian Duke of Nevers asserted that Navarre's authority was not sufficient to impose a tax on the Rochellois.

"Consequently we have no Italian among us," replied the Béarnais.

When he left, the queen-mother charged him with a message to his followers.

“It is just eighteen months, madame,” said Henry, “since I ceased to obey the king. He has made war on me like a wolf, you like a lioness.”

“The king and I seek nothing but your welfare.”

“Excuse me, madame, I think it would be the contrary.”

“My son, would you have the pains I have taken for the last six months remain without fruit?”

“Madame, it is not I who prevent you from resting in your bed ; it is you who prevent me from lying down in mine.”

At one time during the interview, Catherine, dropping the serious subjects under consideration, began joking with the king, and attempted to tickle his ribs. Divining her purpose in an instant, Henry opened his doublet and showed her he had no coat of mail underneath, saying, “I, madame, have nothing concealed.” Turenne was sent after the queen-mother to see if she would not change her mind, but all she had to say was that the king was determined there should be but one religion in France. “We desire it much, madame, provided it be ours,” exclaimed that reckless soldier ; “otherwise we shall fight well for it.”

The Protestant officers devised a stratagem by which the Catholics would be induced to break the truce established during the interview, giving them an excuse to capture the queen-mother and her court, but the King of Navarre would not permit its employment. His generosity was ill requited, for the moment the truce expired the Catholics surprised and cut to pieces two of his regiments. Catherine favored the League, and it is probable that her only object in treating with the King of Navarre was to entangle him in compromises and retard the

progress of his arms. The Béarnais, on his side, was quite willing to delay the campaign, in order to give his German and Swiss allies time to join.

The three Henries were in strong contrast,—the king luxurious and indolent, vindictive but pusillanimous, vilified by the League and detested by his subjects; the Béarnais daring, resourceful, and shrewd, with a body and mind never at rest,



kind-hearted, as ready with his tears as he was with his jests, making a cause rather than a practice of religion, wearied by harangues, no student, except of politics and human nature, neither too credulous nor too open, yet believing that "it does not succeed to think one thing and write another," even in times when Machiavelli's precepts were generally approved, and keeping faith even with those who broke faith

with him. The military exploits of Henry of Guise had not equalled those of his father, but his political ability was greater. Nevertheless, his father had predicted that Mayenne would prove the stay of the family, and that his more brilliant brother would be so dazzled by success as to incur ruin. It is a curious fact that the Parisians idolized Guise because of his popular manners, while his family hated him for his arrogance. The duke had

perfected his organization in Paris by appointing a committee of sixteen, corresponding to the sixteen quarters of the city. These men became the real rulers of Paris. They drilled the citizens, distributed arms among them, and several times planned to seize the king. They might have succeeded had not one of their number systematically betrayed them.

The Duke of Mayenne, whose movements had been thwarted by Matignon, and whose army had wasted away in Guienne, as Navarre had predicted, now returned to Paris indignant with the king. He held repeated consultations with the Sixteen, who begged him to join their movement. Judging from the strengthening of the garrison that their proceedings were known to the court, and being unwilling yet to act, Mayenne feigned illness, and retired to his government of Burgundy. Guise, deserted by the queen-mother, neglected by Philip, and mortally hated by the king, still retained his calm and lofty demeanor, and remained the idol of the populace. The king was afraid to arrest him, but he isolated him as far as possible from the field of action by sending him with an army to guard the German frontier.

Great events were preparing against the Protestants. The Spanish Armada was nearly ready to sail, and, in anticipation, the Queen of England had secured her position by causing the execution of her rival, the Queen of Scots. In France, Henry III. had insultingly dismissed the German Protestant princes who came to him in the interests of peace, and applied to Parliament for funds to continue the war. The deputies applauded his resolution to die in the field, but were silent when asked to pay the costs. The exhausted condition of the treasury had not prevented the king from giving his favorite, the Duke of Epemon, a most magnificent wedding, and presenting the

fortunate bridegroom with lands, jewels, and over a million crowns in money. Epernon, relying on his own abilities and the favor of the king, struck out on a new line of pacification at the head of the army to whose command he was appointed. Although friendly to the King of Navarre, and bitterly hostile to the Guises, he made no distinction between Protestants and Leaguers where they resisted the royal authority. He succeeded in suppressing the League in Provence, but when it came to the Protestants in Dauphiny his progress was not so rapid. Honors were even between Epernon and Lesdiguières, when the former found it necessary to return to court and re-establish his waning influence there.

In the mean time Navarre was fast making himself master of Poitou, and had captured the important town of Fontenoy by undermining its walls. When its defenders heard his voice summoning them to surrender, from the bowels of the earth, as it were, they capitulated at once, "the security of his word being so well known that the garrison did not require any writing." The Duke of Joyeuse was now sent to Poitou with a powerful army. The Béarnais pursued his usual tactics, flying from place to place, strengthening his fortresses, and retiring before the enemy, until his opponent's army was sufficiently wasted and his own augmented enough to warrant him in reversing their positions. Then he pursued Joyeuse into Touraine, where the duke left his army and returned to court. Henry III. welcomed his discomfited ex-favorite with derision. But Joyeuse, whose attractive personality won him friends both at court and among the people, had no difficulty in filling his depleted ranks, and returned to his army with a host of the young court nobles. The King of Navarre had also recruited his army, and was marching to meet his German allies, who had entered France.

Their junction would have made Navarre master of the situation ; therefore Joyeuse had orders to give battle to the Béarnais at once, while Guise was to stop the Germans at all hazards. Between these two armies of the League stood the king at the head of the third, ready to take advantage of any opportunity offered by the defeat of either side.

The Béarnais, whose forces were greatly inferior to those of Joyeuse, hoped to out-march his opponent, but Joyeuse, by forced advances, was able to intercept him at the junction of the Isle and the Dronne. Navarre expected to cross the river during the night, before Joyeuse could come up, but he heard that the army of the League was at hand and was marching on Coutras. Henry's officers were loath to risk battle, but the king insisted that there was no alternative. "The Béarnais was on horseback, whilst his adversary was banqueting." He brought back the portion of his troops which had crossed the river, and seized Coutras, which Joyeuse might have taken had he been more expeditious. When the duke heard of this, instead of steady-ing his troops, who had been marching all night, he pushed them forward with feverish haste. Henry is blamed for not attacking them before they had time to deploy, but his artillery and part of his troops were still on the other side of the river, and he found it necessary to retire his centre to better ground. Turenne remonstrated with him on the risk of making this manœuvre in the face of an enemy, but Henry said there was no danger from an army arriving in single column, fatigued with a night's march on a muddy road.

The two forces presented a marked contrast : on one side the brilliant armor and waving banners of the League ; on the other, the tattered ensigns and weather-worn accoutrements of the Huguenot veterans. When Henry's attention was called to the

enemy's splendor, he only replied, "We shall have the better aim when the fight begins." To his men-at-arms he grimly said, "My friends, here is a quarry for you very different from your past prizes. It is a brand-new bridegroom with his marriage-money still in his coffers; and all the cream of the courtiers are with him. Will you let yourselves go down before this handsome dancing-master and his mignons?" Then the chaplains intoned the prayers, the king uncovered, and the army chanted the twelfth verse of the hundred-and-eighteenth Psalm. A characteristic scene took place: Du Plessis-Mornay advanced to the king's side and reminded him that, having just seduced the daughter of a respectable citizen of La Rochelle, he could not expect the favor of the Almighty unless he asked forgiveness. Henry dismounted from his horse and asked pardon before the whole army, expressing his regret for what he had done and his resolve to repair the fault as far as possible. Then he called to the princes of the blood, as they galloped to their positions, "Gentlemen, remember that you are Bourbons, and, please God, I will show you this day I am your chief."

Joyeuse considered his victory certain, and gave orders that no quarter should be given, even to the Béarnais himself. "We hold the enemy between two rivers," he said; "he cannot now escape." When the Protestant forces knelt in prayer, the duke said, perhaps in jest, "The Huguenots are frightened; see, they kneel." Lavardin, who was standing by him, said, "Those men only do so when they are resolved to conquer or die." Like Napoleon, Henry opened his battles with artillery. With the intuitive glance of the born commander, he had placed the three cannon, which constituted his artillery, in a position where they decided the fate of the day, and swept away scores at every discharge. The badly placed artillery of the League could not

reach the Huguenots, and Lavardin said to Joyeuse, "We are losing the game by delay." Then he charged La Trémoille, who was forced to give way, Turenne's ranks were broken by Montigni, and Mercœur forced his way into Coutras itself.

The Catholics, seeing the Huguenot centre in confusion, believed that the battle was won, and began to cry, "Victory!" but a Huguenot officer, who saw the situation was desperate, called to the arquebusiers, "Let us die in the midst of that battalion!" They charged, firing their pieces at arm's-length from the enemy, and carried everything before them. Joyeuse had believed the field was won, and was advancing with his whole line. Condé was about to charge Lavardin, but Des Agneaux checked him in time. "That is not your affair," he said; "here it comes," pointing to the great squadrons of Joyeuse. The king adjusted his helmet and placed his lance in rest. "My companions," he cried, "we fight for the glory of God, for honor and our lives! To safety and to victory; the road is before us!" His followers crowded around him. "To your places," he cried; "do not hide me; I would be seen!" The Leaguers' horses were winded when they mounted the hill. The arquebusiers fired into them at twenty paces, and the king and his Huguenot cavalry swept them back like leaves before the storm. "What is to be done?" exclaimed the desperate St.-Luc. "Die!" replied Joyeuse, in a broken voice, and a few minutes later he fell. St.-Luc, feeling that his horse could carry him but little farther, charged Condé and unhorsed him; then he surrendered to his fallen antagonist. The king was in the thickest of the fight, and killed several with his own hand. The battle lasted only three-quarters of an hour. Navarre's forces had not all arrived on the field when the engagement began, and it was hardly finished when a body of Catholic reinforcements appeared. Some thought it was the

advance guard of Matignon's army. "Well, my friends," exclaimed Henry, unconcernedly, "this will be what was never before seen ; two battles in the same day."

The battle of Coutras was the first great Protestant victory of the civil wars, and although it was entirely due to the King of Navarre's disposition and management of his troops, he was very modest about it. When asked what terms he would demand after such a victory, he replied, "The same as before," and sent off one of his officers the day after to ask peace of Henry III. "Sire, my lord and brother, return thanks to God," he wrote ; "I have defeated your enemies and your army. You will hear from the bearer whether, though I stand sword in hand in the midst of your kingdom, it is I who am, as it is pretended, your enemy." Then, instead of making himself master of France by joining his German allies, the Béarnais allowed them to be dispersed by Guise, while he took the seventy-eight captured banners to Pau and made bed-hangings of them for the Countess de Grammont.

Condé and his officers tried in vain to induce Navarre to continue the campaign. A satisfactory explanation of Henry's inactivity after this glorious victory will probably never be given. Some account for it by the dissensions among his officers and troops, as well as his unwillingness to come into collision with the royal army, which lay between him and his allies. His position before the battle of Coutras forced him to take this risk, but after his victory the same necessity did not exist. There may have been other good reasons, with which we are not acquainted, but in their absence one must attribute the indifference through which Henry so frequently lost golden opportunities to the levity of his disposition. The Béarnais was not animated by the consuming ambition which produced in Guise such in-

tensity of purpose and continuity of action, and when the spur of necessity did not urge him to exertion, he was prone to relaxation and pleasure.

Guise was twice defeated by the Duke of Bouillon, whose territory he ravaged, while waiting for the Germans. When he was told they were at Vimory he ordered the bugles to sound "boots and saddles."

"What for?" asked his brother Mayenne.

"To go and fight."

"Pray reflect on what you are about to do," said the cautious Mayenne.

"Reflections which I haven't made in a quarter of an hour," replied Guise, "I shouldn't make in a year."

The duke came upon the Germans at midnight, and, according to the Catholics, won a great victory, but the Protestants maintained that he only defeated a lot of camp-followers, and that the two banners he captured had for devices a sponge and a curry-comb. Guise defeated the Germans again at Auneau. Henry III. was waiting with a great army to oppose their passage of the Loire, and had detached the Swiss from their support. Although the Germans had numbered thirty or forty thousand, the largest body which had yet invaded France, their troops were badly officered and their ranks were full of dissension. They finally accepted the king's terms and began their retreat to Germany, pursued and slaughtered by Guise, in utter disregard of his master's safe-conduct.



CHAPTER IX.

THE LAST OF THE VALOIS.

HENRY III. now had a powerful army, with which he could easily have re-established the royal authority, but he relapsed into indolence and left Guise to claim all the glory of the campaign. The dissatisfaction of his subjects became greater and the plots of the League grew bolder than ever. In this condition of affairs the king was startled by the news that Guise was returning to Paris. He despatched Bellièvre post-haste to forbid the duke's return. Guise required certain assurances. The king promised him everything he demanded, but still forbade his approach. It was too late, for Guise was already in Paris. He had entered the city with only eight attendants,

making a pretence of concealing his arrival, although the League had been preparing for it for days. The windows were full of ladies, who showered the Catholic hero with flowers. People held out their rosaries for him to touch as he passed, and thousands followed him, shouting, "Hurrah for Guise! hurrah for the pillar of the church!"

The queen-mother grew pale and trembled at the sight. "My dear cousin," she said, "I am very glad to see you, but I should have been better pleased at another time."

"Madame," replied Guise, "I am come to clear myself from all the calumnies of my enemies; do me the honor to conduct me to the king yourself."

Catherine sent Davila to advise the king of the duke's arrival. Henry was in a fury. "He shall die," he exclaimed, with a furious oath. Then, turning to one of his officers, he said, "Here is M. de Guise, who has just arrived, in spite of all my commands to the contrary. What would you do in my place?"

"Sire," was the reply, "there seems to me only a single question in this affair: Do you hold M. de Guise a friend or an enemy?"

The king replied with an angry gesture.

"I think I understand your Majesty," was the answer, "and if it please you to honor me with this charge, without giving yourself further trouble, I will to-day lay his head at your feet."

Henry's councillors remonstrated, and the king decided that such action was not yet necessary. In the mean time Guise was walking bareheaded beside the queen-mother's chair, talking affably with her, and acknowledging the acclamations of the masses. When they arrived at the Louvre he had to pass between a double line of guards with Crillon at their head. The duke saluted as he passed, but Crillon made no movement

in reply, and Guise turned a trifle pale. After successively passing through the guards, the Swiss, the archers, and the gentlemen of the chamber, all drawn up in arms, Guise arrived in the presence of the king, whose face betrayed his wrath. "What brings you here?" he abruptly asked. The duke attempted to excuse his action, and denied having received the king's last commands. After some angry discussion, Henry said, "It is by your conduct that you will justify yourself, and by the results I shall judge of your intentions." The queen-mother, fearing that her son was about to cause Guise's assassination, took Henry on one side to warn him of the feeling in the streets, and while the king conversed with her in the window Guise seized the opportunity to retire. The Committee of Sixteen met at his house that evening, and plans were laid for an insurrection. At the same moment the king was planning Guise's assassination at the Louvre. But when the duke appeared in the morning he was accompanied by four hundred gentlemen, who had arms and cuirasses under their cloaks, and nothing was done.

The king now ordered some French and Swiss regiments, which were outside of Paris, to march in, and directed Crillon with his guards to seize a position commanding the Sorbonne. A handful of students and boatmen resisted the troops, and Crillon was about to charge them, when he received commands from the king to refrain. A little decision in the beginning of a tumult is frequently efficacious; the lack of it has caused so many disasters that comment is needless. In a few moments the excited populace began to barricade the streets and massacre the troops. In vain the Swiss held up their rosaries and declared that they were good Catholics. The king was urged to show himself, but had not the courage. The queen-mother



hastened to Guise, but her coach was stopped at the barricades and she was forced to dismount. The duke declined to quit Paris, or to interfere with the insurrection, with which he declared he had nothing to do, although the leaders were coming and going from his house all the time. Towards noon he walked out unarmed, and soon returned as unconcernedly as if nothing was going on. Henry was forced to humiliate himself so far as to send Biron to Guise to beg him to rescue the royal troops. The duke sallied forth with a cane in his hand, and rode from quarter to quarter exhorting the people, with quiet dignity, to abstain from violence. They greeted him with shouts of "Vive Guise!" but he told them they should cry instead, "Vive le Roi!" Then the royal troops surrendered to him and were disarmed.

Guise now held the king and his capital in his hands. That night he sent off hundreds of letters to his friends urging them to join him without delay. "I have defeated the Swiss," he wrote, "and cut in pieces a part of the king's guards, and I hold the Louvre invested so closely that I will render good account of whomsoever there is in it." The next day the queen-mother was sent to deceive Guise with negotiations while the king escaped. The duke insisted that he should be lieutenant-general, that the States-General should be assembled, that the King of Navarre should be excluded from the succession, that Epernon should be banished, the king's guard disbanded, and the Catholic religion declared the only religion of the kingdom. While they were discussing these propositions, an attendant whispered something in the duke's ear. "Madame," he exclaimed, "whilst your Majesty has been amusing me here, the king is off from Paris."

Henry had sauntered out from the Louvre, dressed as if for his usual walk. When he reached the stables, he mounted a

swift horse and rode at full speed for Chartres. Du Halde had put the king's spur on wrong, and would have changed it. "That will do," said Henry. "I am not going to see my mistress; I have a longer journey to make." The guard at the gate fired on the unpopular ruler, and the crowd shouted insults after him. He pulled up on the height of Chaillot long enough to curse his ungrateful capital, and declared that he would re-enter it only through a breach in its walls. When the Pope heard of Guise's arrival in Paris he said, "What rashness, to put himself in the hands of a prince whom he has so outraged!" When he heard that the king had done nothing, he exclaimed, "Dastard prince, to let such a chance escape him of getting rid of a man who seems born to be his destruction!"

Instead of profiting by his escape from the League, the king began at once to negotiate with them, offering to concede everything demanded, and imploring his subjects to pray God for a reconciliation between himself and the Duke of Guise. He dismissed Epernon, who was the only one of his supporters whom Guise feared, and by the Decree of Reunion put himself at the head of the League again, granting them additional towns of security. He promised "that no investigation should be made into any understandings, associations, and other matters into which our Catholic subjects might have entered together," and made the Duke of Guise generalissimo of the kingdom, pledging himself and his subjects never to lay down their arms against the Protestants. He also excluded the King of Navarre from the succession, for which a *Te Deum* was celebrated at Notre Dame, and summoned the States-General. After this complete surrender the king received Guise at Chartres with the same cordiality that his brother had shown Coligny. The only thing which occurred to disturb the serenity was a toast which the

king proposed at dinner. "To our good friends the Huguenots," he said, "and to our good barricaders; let us not forget them." The duke laughed a little, Lestoile says, "but the sort of a laugh that did not go beyond the knot of the throat."

When word was brought to Navarre of Henry's predicament, he was in bed, and said nothing at first; but after a while he began to laugh, and was heard to exclaim, "They have not caught the Béarnais yet." He was busy fortifying his towns, but when he heard that the Duke of Mercœur was threatening one of them, he hastened to meet him. The duke fled at the rumor of Navarre's approach. Henry pursued him all the way to Nantes, cutting off one of his regiments, and amusing himself for a day shooting partridges under the city walls, to show his contempt for his adversary. Then, hearing that Epernon was besieged in Angoulême, he generously hastened to the royalist leader's rescue. Agents of the League had incited the citizens to surprise and massacre the duke in his castle. They succeeded in capturing the duchess, but Epernon, assisted only by a few friends and servants, defended himself with desperate bravery. He held the castle for forty hours without food, water, or sleep, until succor arrived. The duke then behaved with great magnanimity towards the rioters, although they had threatened to murder the duchess if he did not surrender.

About this time France was shocked by the sudden death of the Prince of Condé. Circumstances indicated that his wife had poisoned him to conceal the result of her adultery with an attendant. After being tried and condemned, she was ultimately pardoned by Henry IV. for state reasons, and her child legitimized. In public the King of Navarre affected to be greatly grieved at the death of his cousin; in private he probably felt relieved. He wrote the Countess de Grammont, "I mourn him

as he ought to have been to me, not as he was." Condé had hindered the King of Navarre oftener than he had helped him, and continually embarrassed him by his suspicions and insubordination, which Henry said he only overcame "by patience and straight courses." The prince inherited his father's ability as a speaker, and, like him, was liberal, gracious, and magnanimous,



but he labored under the disadvantage of being timid and deaf. Although his morals were exemplary and his religious convictions sincere, his nature tended towards obstinacy and intolerance. He was independent and intractable, and at the same time a partisan not remarkable for fairness. His career was unsuccessful both in war and in politics, be-

cause he lacked the discernment and the rapidity of action which characterized Henry IV.,—the faculty of always doing the right thing at the right time.

Two other notable events occurred before the assembling of the States-General,—the defeat of the Armada, which seemed to the Protestants a special act of Providence, and the serious illness of the King of Navarre. Henry's life was despaired of, and La Rochelle was in mourning. The bells tolled, and the churches were crowded with supplicants. The court, too, was filled with dismay, while the Leaguers were correspondingly elated. But Henry disappointed their expectations, and was

soon in the field again, the one adversary whom neither party could dupe nor defeat.

All parties were now anxiously looking forward to the assembling of the States-General, which it was felt would be the final trial of strength between the League and the royal authority. The king remained discredited and inactive, while the partisans of the League filled the provincial delegations with Guise's adherents. In September, Guise and all his family repaired to Blois. His sister, the Duchess of Montpensier, carried a pair of golden scissors at her girdle, which she openly boasted were for the purpose of tonsuring the king when he should exchange the throne for a monastery. The town was crowded with Guise's followers, confident of their power and of the impossibility of the king's resistance without endangering his life and his throne. The peril of the situation had thrown Henry into one of his austere and religious moods. He and Guise prepared for their mortal duel by receiving the Sacrament together, a custom to which the Valois were addicted when contemplating any atrocious piece of treachery. Before the opening of the States-General the king dismissed the chancellor, Villeroi, Bellièvre, and several others of his council, whom he suspected.

Henry opened the States-General with the dignity and easy grace which all the Valois seemed to have inherited from Francis I., but his face was grave and anxious. The Duke of Guise, as high steward of the household, sat at the king's feet, clad in white satin, and commanded the assembly with his keen glances. The royal address was dignified and eloquent, and repeatedly interrupted by applause. When Henry said, "Certain grandees of my kingdom have formed such leagues and associations as, in every well-ordered monarchy, are crimes of high treason," Guise turned pale with rage, and took the responsibility of ar-

resting the publication of the address until Cardinal Guise and the Archbishop of Lyons had prevailed on the king to omit the objectionable passage. Henry's object was to secure the condemnation of the League; Guise's was to have the edict of union ratified. The king was defeated at the outset, and the deputies established the edict of union as a fundamental law of the kingdom. A *Te Deum* was chanted at the Church of St.-Sauveur in honor of the victory. Between Guise and the deputies, the king was now in a fair way to lose the few remnants of royal authority which remained. Everything Guise or the League demanded was granted, administrative reforms were inaugurated, the taxes curtailed, and the royal prerogatives restricted. Henry could obtain no supplies, and his very servants were forced to leave him for lack of pay. Among the measures presented to the king to sign was one debarring from the succession all persons suspected of heresy. This aimed to exclude the princes of the blood, and Henry refused to render his crown defenceless by removing the last barrier to Guise's ambition. The duke had written to the King of Spain, "I have so much credit with this assembly that I have hitherto made it dance to my tune, and I hope that as to what remains to be decreed I shall be quite able to maintain the same authority."

Henry now realized that his struggle with Guise had reached the point where it became one for existence. Epernon had fathomed Guise's plans and sent word to his master. The king was even warned by members of the duke's own family. The Duchess of Aumale begged him for an audience and implored him on her knees to beware of her brother-in-law. The queen-mother sent to Lyons for Mayenne, hoping that he would have a restraining influence on Guise. But they quarrelled over the Marquise de Noirmoutiers, formerly the mischief-making Mme.

de Sauves. It seems the brothers mistook the hours of their appointments and met before the fair charmer's door. They drew their swords on each other, as Alençon and Navarre had done before them, and were so infuriated that a meeting was arranged for the next morning, but when they came on the ground Mayenne refused to draw against his brother, and soon after left the court, returning to Lyons. His sister, the Duchess of Montpensier, approved of this, remembering that the absence of Damville had saved the life of the imprisoned Montmorency. As soon as Mayenne reached Lyons he sent a messenger to the king, warning him to look to his safety.

Henry laid the case before five of his advisers. They took twenty-four hours for consideration, and then four reported in favor of putting the duke to death. Only one was in favor of arresting and trying him. Aside from the impossibility of arresting Guise in the midst of his adherents and in the presence of a national assembly devoted to his interests, it was pointed out that he would have to be tried before his peers in Paris, where it would be impossible to convict him. Assassination being the only expedient feasible, the next thing was to find some one to undertake its execution. The intrepid Crillon was approached by the king, but he replied that he was a soldier, and not an assassin. Overtures were then made to Loignac, the captain of the king's famous forty-five guards, who were Gascon gentlemen, recruited by the Duke of Epernon for their exceptional bravery. They were devoted to the king, and made no objection to the service he required of them. The contingency had not been unforeseen by the League. De Vins, one of their leaders, had exclaimed, "Stupid owl of a Lorrainer! has he so little sense as to believe that a king whose crown he, by dissimulating, has been wanting to take away, is not dissimulating in

turn to take away his life?" "Since they are so near each other," added his sister, "you will soon hear that one or the other has killed his companion."

Cardinal Guise had begged his brother to go away for a time to Orleans and leave them the management of affairs, but the duke had replied, "They are in such a situation that, if I saw death coming in by the window, I would not go out by the door to avoid it;" and the Archbishop of Lyons added, "He who quits the game loses it." Schomberg remonstrated, but the duke replied, "I do not know that man on earth who, hand to hand with me, would not have his full share of fear. Besides, I am always so well attended that it would not be easy to find me off my guard." A last effort to prevail on him to leave the court, or at least absent himself from council the next morning, was made through the Marquise de Noirmoutiers, with whom he passed the night before his assassination. His only reply was to hum this little ditty of Desportes :

"My little Rose, a little spell
Of absence changed that heart of thine ;
And I, who know the change full well,
Have found another place for mine.
No more such fair but fickle she
Shall find me her obedient ;
And, flighty shepherdess, we'll see
Which of the twain will first repent."

He found a note in his napkin at dinner, saying, "Take care ; they are going to play you a bad turn." He wrote on it, "They dare not," and threw it under the table. The very morning of his death he was handed a note of warning, which he put in his pocket, saying, "This is the ninth to-day."

The king called the council at an early hour in the morning,

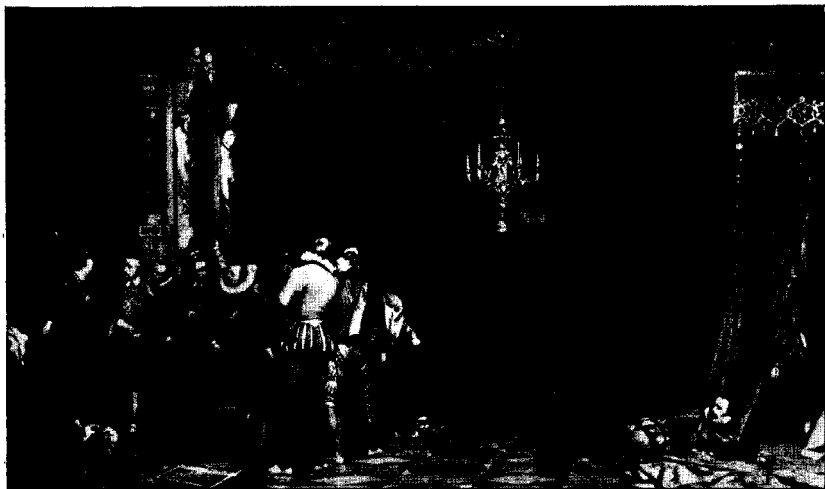
in hopes that Guise might come attended by a smaller suite than usual. When the duke arrived, his retinue was asked to wait without. Guise was surprised to find Larchant and the archers of the guard on duty, but the captain was directed to explain to him that they had come to present Guise with a petition for their pay, which was in arrears. The duke promised to give it his attention, and proceeded to the council chamber. He felt cold, and asked that a fire might be made; then he was seized with faintness, and sent his secretary, Péricard, for his sweetmeat-box, which he had left at home. In his absence Péricard learned of his master's danger and tried to smuggle a concealed note to him, but the guards would permit no one to pass. In the mean time the duke's eye began to water, and some say his nose bled. He felt in his pockets for a handkerchief, but found none. "My people," he said, "have not given me my necessaries this morning; there is great excuse for them, they were too much hurried." At his request a handkerchief and some prunes were brought him.

The king was very faint-hearted at the last moment, and would probably have drawn back if it had been possible. He had arisen at four, taken his candle, and admitted Loignac and the eight guards who were selected for the deed. After locking them in, he arranged the details of the assassination, while the royal chaplains said Mass, "that God might give the king grace to be able to carry out an enterprise which he hoped would come to an issue within an hour, and on which the safety of France depended." When all was ready, the secretary of state, Revol, was directed to summon Guise. Revol was frightened to death. "My God!" exclaimed the king; "what's the matter with you, Revol, that you are so pale? Rub your cheeks, or you will spoil all." Revol entered the council chamber and said to the

duke, "Monsieur, the king asks for you ; he is in the old cabinet." Then he fled back to Henry as fast as his legs would carry him.

The duke threw his prunes on the table, saying, "Gentlemen, who will have any?" and, gathering his mantle about him, passed unsuspectingly into the next room. Accounts vary as to what followed. Guise saluted Loignac and the guards, who rose and respectfully fell in behind him. One of them is said to have trodden on the duke's foot, either as a warning or through carelessness. Some say that Loignac remained seated on a coffer, and did not return his salute. When Guise came to the tapestry which hung before the door of the king's cabinet, no one offered to raise it for him. The duke was about to do this himself, turning half around to glance at those behind him. One of the guards, thinking Guise was about to put himself in a posture of defence, struck him in the breast with his poniard, exclaiming, "Die, traitor!" Another threw himself around his victim's legs, while the rest showered blows on him with their weapons. Taken at a disadvantage, with his sword entangled in his cloak, his arms and legs pinioned, and choked with the blood which spurted from a wound in his throat, Guise still managed to drag his assailants across the chamber. Some say that Loignac joined in the attack, others that he remained seated, and, as the duke came staggering across the room, pushed him back with the point of his sheathed sword. The duke tottered and fell, beating the air with his arms. If he uttered anything, it was only, "My friends, my friends, mercy!" The blanched face of the king now peered cautiously from behind the tapestry. "Do you think he is really dead, Loignac?" he inquired, gazing on the body of Guise, who appeared to be merely sleeping, so little was he changed. "My God! how tall he is!" exclaimed

Henry; "he looks even taller than when he was alive." The king is accused of kicking the corpse and exclaiming, "Venomous beast, thou shalt cast forth no more venom!" The same words and action were attributed to Guise in the assassination of Coligny. For the credit of human nature, it may be said that both stories are unauthenticated.



Cardinal Guise heard the struggle from the council chamber, and ran towards the door with the Archbishop of Lyons, exclaiming, "They are murdering my brother." Marshals d'Aumont and de Retz interposed with drawn swords, saying, "Let no one stir, on pain of death!" and the two prelates were arrested. The next day the cardinal was executed, although the king hesitated, through fear of the Pope's displeasure, and had difficulty in finding any one to do his bidding. The Cardinal de Bourbon was pulled out of bed and hurried into the king's presence, where he was confronted with Guise's corpse. "Fool, knave, and puppet!" cried Henry; "but for your age, old idiot, I

would treat you in the same way! You wanted to be second in the kingdom. I will make you so small that the least shall be greater than you." The cardinal spent the rest of his life in prison. In Guise's pocket was found a memorandum, in his own handwriting, stating that "it required seven hundred thousand livres a month to maintain a war in France." Among his papers were found abundant proofs of treasonable correspondence, as well as treaties with Spain and other powers. The Duchess of Montpensier had returned to Paris. Henry swore that he would have had her life if she had been within his reach. The provost-marshal was sent with a body of soldiers to announce the defeat of the conspiracy against the king, and to disperse the States-General, the leaders of which, after being shown the stains of Guise's blood, were imprisoned.

After the assassination the king repaired to the queen-mother's sick-room, where he asked after her health. Catherine replied that she felt better. "So do I," said Henry; "this morning I have become King of France again; the king of Paris is dead." "Take care that you are not soon king of nothing," was her reply; "only promptitude and resolution can save you." Catherine died a few days later, but her death had no effect on political parties. She had long been out of power. Her favorite son, for whom she had done so much, had proved a great disappointment, and ungratefully excluded her from his counsels. Her abilities, remarkable as they were, had been productive of nothing but misfortune to France, while her policy of dissimulation and tergiversation discredited her with all parties in the end. She passed away almost unnoticed by her contemporaries, although history has restored her to the place of importance which she outlived. Her last advice to her son was to grant liberty of conscience to his subjects. "Peace

is an absolute necessity to France," she said. In her will she disinherited Marguerite, but begged the king to treat her leniently.

Had Henry acted with the promptitude his mother advised, and been prepared to march on Paris, it is possible he might have captured the capital, for all was consternation and confusion there. The Duchess of Montpensier had received the news of her brother's death with paroxysms of rage and despair, tearing her hair, and filling the house with her shrieks. The Duchess of Guise had swooned. Rage soon took the place of fear, and no means of testifying their contempt and hatred for Henry III. seemed too extreme for the Parisians. The people tore down his statues and hacked his portraits to pieces. The denunciations from the pulpit became sacrilegious in their extravagance, and the clergy refused the rites of the Church to adherents of "the perfidious apostate and tyrant, Henry of Valois." Four thousand children, with bare feet and lighted tapers, went in procession to the church of Ste.-Geneviève, where they dashed their lights on the ground, crying, "Thus perish the race of Valois!" The Sorbonne published a decree declaring that all the king's subjects were released from their oaths of allegiance, to which the Pope soon added the force of a formal excommunication.

The king ordered Epernon to raise what troops he could, and directed the Duke of Nevers to bring his army to his support. Epernon and D'Aumont chivalrously abandoned their feud to support their master, but Nevers and De Retz deserted him. Owing to the king's procrastination, the officer who was sent to arrest Mayenne rode in at one gate of Lyons as the duke rode out at the other. Lyons revolted against the king, and Toulouse, Rouen, and many other places followed its example,

until it was estimated that half the cities of France had declared for the League. Although Henry's proclamations had been uncompromising in their denunciation of the League, the pusillanimous monarch now released his prisoners and attempted to conciliate his enemies. But his overtures met with no response. After failing to capture Mayenne, he tried to negotiate with him, but the duke treated the king's advances with the contempt they deserved. Mayenne was of a cautious and indolent nature, and had no sympathy with the ambitious designs of his brother. If the king had arrested Guise instead of assassinating him, Mayenne would probably have submitted to the royal authority. But Henry's action left the duke no choice now but to avenge his brother's death, while the fury of his sister, the Duchess of Montpensier, goaded his sluggish disposition to action. The Parisians gave Mayenne and his troops a triumphal reception. The seat prepared for him resembled a throne, and his picture was seen everywhere, representing him with a crown on his head. If the duke had acted on his sister's advice, and had taken advantage of the temporary enthusiasm of the Parisians, he could probably have assumed the crown, but he hesitated to take so daring a step for fear of depriving himself of foreign support, and the opportunity passed, for he was soon brought into collision with the Sixteen.

It was the Duchess of Angoulême who first suggested to the king, in his desperate situation, the policy of seeking the support of his brother-in-law, Navarre, who during all this turmoil had been making steady progress against the League. He had issued a manifesto deploring the perils of the state, and protesting against his exclusion from its councils, pointing out that in ten years ten royal armies had been sent against the Protestants and all dispersed, not by his hand, as he modestly re-

marked, for he really fought but one of them, but by the hand of God. He asked what had been the result of the million of lives and mines of gold which had been expended, except the ruin of France. He pleaded as ever for peace, and declared the willingness of the Protestants to submit, and of himself to be instructed in the Catholic faith. He called attention to his toleration of the Catholics, and spoke of Guise with esteem and regret. Then he pictured the ruin to which civil war was hurrying France, begged all her true friends to join him in averting it, and urged the king to turn his arms against all and any who resisted.

Rosny, afterwards Duke of Sully, happening to pass through Blois, the king sent for him, and opened through him negotiations for a union with his master. The Béarnais thought it over awhile and scratched his head. He had expected this, but he did not want to trust too much to Henry's sincerity.

"Do you think the king has good intentions towards me, and means to treat with me in good faith?" he asked.

"Yes, sire, for the present," answered Rosny; "and you need have no doubt about it, for his straits constrain him thereto, having nothing to look to in his perils but your assistance."

The Béarnais was convinced, but before he joined the king he prudently stipulated for the possession of one of the towns commanding a passage of the Loire, in order to secure his retreat. This being arranged, Navarre hastened forward with a few followers to meet the king. It was not without warnings that he took this risk. Even if Henry kept faith with him, there were many of his Catholic followers who would consider it a meritorious act to put a ball through the heretic leader. Before Navarre crossed the Loire he asked each of his followers in turn their opinion of his venture. The majority thought it a risk, but

worth the taking; others advised him to turn back, saying, "They are traitors; do not put yourself in their power; remember St. Bartholomew." Sully relates that, after a few moments of silent prayer and reflection, Henry exclaimed, "Let us go! my resolution is taken; there is no use for further thought." Lestoile says he exclaimed, "God has said that I shall pass, and that I shall see, and it is not in the power of man to prevent me."

When they came to Plessis-les-Tours they saw the king coming down the long avenue, accompanied by half the populace of Tours, shouting, "Hurrah for the king! Hurrah for the King of Navarre! Hurrah for the kings!" People climbed trees to witness the meeting, and the press of the crowd was such that the kings were for a quarter of an hour within a few yards of each other without being able to join hands. They embraced each other with tears in their eyes. The precise Lestoile says Navarre's rolled down his cheeks as large as peas. The king's eloquent recital of his wrongs again brought the tears, which were always ready, to the honest Béarnais's eyes. Throwing his sword at Henry's feet, Navarre dropped on one knee, in his genuine way, and swore to avenge his sovereign's wrongs. When he retired for the night he impulsively exclaimed, "To-day I would die content, since God has permitted me to look on the face of my king!" and he wrote to Du Plessis-Mornay, "The ice is broken, not without numbers of warnings that if I went I was a dead man. I crossed the water commending myself to God, who, by His goodness, not only preserved me, but caused extreme joy to appear on the king's countenance and the people to cheer, so that never was the like." "Sire," replied Du Plessis-Mornay, "you have done what you ought, but what no man should have counselled you to do." To the

Countess of Grammont Henry wrote, "I, who five months ago was condemned as a heretic, unworthy to succeed to the crown, am at this moment its principal pillar."

The next morning the Béarnais showed his confidence in the king by visiting him attended by a single page, and then went back to bring up his troops. During his absence Mayenne attacked Tours. In spite of the desperate bravery of Crillon, the royal troops were being beaten back, when Châtillon and La Trémoille, with some of Navarre's followers, rushed to their assistance, under the fire of seven thousand arquebusiers. The Leaguers shouted, "Back, brave Huguenots! it is not you we seek; it is that traitor who has betrayed you so often, and will betray you again." Some one, who recognized Coligny's son, called out, "Retire, brave Châtillon; it is not you we want, but the murderers of your father." On which the admiral's son called back, "You are all traitors to your country, and when it is a question of serving my king and country, I trample under foot all vengeance and private interests." The king heard this reply, and took Châtillon into favor from that moment. The Béarnais soon arrived with his troops, and beat off Mayenne after a fierce engagement, in which Henry III. exposed himself at his brother-in-law's side with all his old-time bravery. When Navarre remonstrated with him for his rashness, the king replied, "You have been here all day and are still safe; such may be my case." He returned from the field wearing one of the white scarfs of the Huguenots as a mark of his appreciation of their bravery.

The combined armies of the two kings now amounted to forty thousand men, and the Béarnais proposed an advance on Paris. He did not spare himself on the way. At Pontoise an officer on whose shoulder he was leaning was killed, and at Gergeau

the Duke of Epernon, "to show him his housekeeping," took him into a square swept by the enemy's musketry. The two walked slowly across the square, while the enemy, only forty paces distant, opened a tremendous fire on them. Their followers dropped all around them, until they reached a sheltering gate-way. There Epernon received a message which required his return, but the King of Navarre caught him by the collar and told him he had committed folly enough for one day. When Henry III. heard of it, he angrily asked the duke if he wished to cause his brother-in-law's death. From Etampes the Béarnais made a dash on Paris with twelve hundred of his troops. After forcing his way into the suburb of St.-Jacques, defeating a party of the enemy, and causing a panic in the capital, he returned to the main army without losing a man.

Paris was soon invested, and seemed doomed beyond possibility of escape. All was confusion and consternation within the beleaguered capital. The king sent word to the Duchess of Montpensier that he would burn her alive when the city was taken. In this desperate situation a fanatic was found, in the person of Jacques Clément, a Jacobite monk, who was willing to undertake the assassination of the excommunicated monarch. Worked on by the exhortations of his superiors and the shameless blandishments of the Duchess of Montpensier, he gained access to the king on pretence of bearing an important communication. The guards would have excluded him, but Henry ordered him to be admitted, lest the Parisians should say the king drove the monks out of his presence. Clément presented the king a letter, and while Henry was engaged in reading it he drew a long knife from his sleeve and plunged it in the king's bowels. Henry drew the knife out and struck the monk in the face with it, exclaiming, "Ah, wicked monk!

he has killed me ; kill him !” His attendants rushed in and massacred Clément, who received their blows with his arms extended in the form of a cross. It was not at first supposed that the wound was mortal, and, after sending for his brother-in-law, the king dictated a number of letters stating that an attempt had been made to assassinate him, but had failed.

When the news reached the King of Navarre he was attacking the Pré-aux-Clercs

with his troops. Seeing Rosny exposing himself too freely, the Béarnais, whose solicitude for his friends' safety was one of his best traits, said to Maignan, “Go and tell M. de Rosny to come back ; he will get taken or wounded in that rash style.” “I should not care to speak so to him,” replied Maignan ; “I will tell him that your Majesty wants him.” While he was gone, a



horseman rode up at full speed and whispered something in the King of Navarre's ear. Rosny arrived. “My friend,” said Henry, “the king has just been wounded. Come with me and let us see about it.” Followed by a few attendants, he galloped to St.-Cloud at full speed, and threw himself down at the king's bedside in tears. Henry embraced him affectionately, and assured him that he did not apprehend any

danger, but declared that in any event he left him the crown as his legitimate successor. "If my will were to have effect," he said, "it would be as flourishing upon your head as it was on that of Charlemagne." Then, addressing the throng in his chamber, he said, "I do pray you as my friends, and as your king I order you, to recognize after my death my brother here. For my satisfaction, and as your bounden duty, I pray you to swear it to him in my presence." All present took the oath. After remaining awhile at the king's bedside, Navarre thought it prudent to return to the army, lest the Parisians might seize the opportunity to make an attack. The king, at his request, was left alone with his chaplains and a few attendants. His last moments were exemplary. He prayed, "Lord God, if Thou believest my life may be useful to my people and the kingdom Thou hast intrusted to me, preserve me and prolong my days; if not, O God! take my body and save my soul. Thy will be done." He died forgiving his enemies and making submission to the Pope, on which he was granted absolution.

Henry III. was an affectionate and generous master. The sincere grief which his followers manifested at his death would almost persuade one that he could not have been the depraved and murderous villain that he is represented by his enemies.

Navarre had just sat down to supper when word was brought that if he wished to see the king alive he must come immediately. Putting on a cuirass under his clothes, he set out at once, accompanied by a few attendants similarly armed. It was a momentous journey, for the destinies of a kingdom hung in the balance as the resolute Béarnais galloped through the darkness towards the palace of the dying king. Sully, who accompanied him, says of this portentous occasion, "It was not the result of a petty negotiation or the success of a battle which was in

question. It was the finest monarchy of Europe. But how many obstacles were to be surmounted! By what labors was it to be purchased! All that the King of Navarre had hitherto undergone could be counted for nothing in comparison. How was he to overthrow a party so powerful that it had caused a monarch, already seated on the throne, almost to descend therefrom? This difficulty, already so great, appeared almost insurmountable when one reflected that the death of the king would at once detach from the person of the King of Navarre the greatest and the principal part of his forces. I trembled when the thought crossed my mind that perhaps this sudden and unexpected news was about to produce a revolution, which would leave the King of Navarre, with a handful of faithful servants, at the mercy of his ancient enemies, and in a country where he was without any resource."



CHAPTER X.

ARQUES AND IVRY.

WHEN the King of Navarre rode into the streets of St.-Cloud he was greeted with cries of "My God! we are lost." He and his followers were required to surrender their swords before they were permitted to enter the royal abode, where they found that Henry III. had just expired. Navarre, always prompt to act, lost no time in hesitation; he sent at once for Marshals Biron and D'Aumont, the Swiss, the guards, and all on whom he could depend. The Scotch guards had thrown themselves at his feet, exclaiming, "Sire, you are now our king and master;" but when he entered the chamber of the dead king no cries of "Vive le Roi!" saluted him; only execrations and curses of despair from the courtiers. In his presence

D'Entraques and D'O invoked everlasting perdition if they recognized a heretic king. Epernon checked them, saying, "Hold your tongues; you chatter like women!" Navarre retired from the presence of the mutinous crowd with Marshal Biron, who had saluted him as king on his arrival. "Now is the time," said Henry, "for you to proclaim yourself the stay and preserver of the crown." Biron expressed his willingness to do all in his power, and they arranged a plan of action, but the next day the marshal took Sancy aside and said, "If, before securing our own position with the King of Navarre, we completely establish his, he will no longer care for us. The time is come for making our terms; if we let the occasion escape us we shall never recover it." "What are your terms?" asked Sancy. "If it please the king to give me the county of Périgord," said Biron, "I shall be his forever." Henry promised it at once.

A few minutes after Henry left the king's chamber, the Duc de Longueville and a large party of the Catholic nobility came to speak with him. François d'O acted as spokesman, and in a long speech pointed out the dangers of the situation, and exhorted the king to change his religion as the only means of retaining his Catholic support. Henry turned pale, but replied, "Among the many wonders, gentlemen, with which God has pleased to visit us within the last twenty-four hours, that which is caused by your proceeding I should never have expected. Your tears, are they already dried? The memory of your loss, and of the entreaties of your king not three hours ago, has it vanished? Is it possible that all here can have agreed to take me by the throat at the first step of my accession? Can you expect such a change of faith, except from a man who has none at all? I appeal from the judgment of this

company to yourselves when you have had time to think, and when there are more peers of France and officers of the crown among you than I see here present. I shall yet have, among the Catholics, all who love France and their honor." As he was finishing, Givri entered, and, throwing himself at Henry's feet, exclaimed, "Sire, you are the king of the brave, and none but cowards will abandon you." News also arrived that the Swiss were marching to tender their oaths of fidelity. This had been brought about by liberal largess to their officers, and by the persuasive eloquence of Sancy, who had brought them from Switzerland.

The Catholics soon divided themselves into three parties. The first, influenced by Biron, D'Aumont, Humières, Givri, and Sancy, as well as by the example of the Duke of Montpensier, who hurried from Normandy to tender his allegiance, accepted their king loyally and without conditions. A second party tendered him a lukewarm allegiance on his promising to maintain the Catholic religion and receive instructions in the same within six months. D'O declared that if he was to be called "the most Christian king," it behooved him to show himself a Christian. Henry graciously acceded to their demands. The third party among the Catholics went over to the League. This included the majority of the late king's chevaliers du Saint-Esprit, who had refused to salute the new king, and the mignons, who believed nothing was to be gained except hard blows under the poor and industrious Béarnais. They had long been accustomed to gibe at his lack of elegance and the freedom of his ways. One of them, D'Auvergne, had given him the lie direct before the late king, and Epernon had accused him of "making war like a freebooter." The Béarnais replied by asking the duke if he thought he could use him as he had used

Guise. Henry felt keenly, although he had the tact to conceal it, the insolence with which the courtiers treated him. He was impatient to obliterate the past by worthier deeds, and bitterly spoke of himself as "a king without a kingdom, a husband without a wife, and a warrior without money." His tact with the courtiers, his popularity with the troops, and the confidential dexterity with which he managed the Huguenots, as if they were in the secret, accomplished wonders. Still the semi-state which Henry was obliged to assume as King of France gave offence to many of his old followers, who had been accustomed to treating the King of Navarre with the familiarity of a companion.

Sully, La Force, and Angoulême unite in stating that the king was deserted by as many Protestants as Catholics. Even Henry's old friends, Montmorency and Lesdiguières, held aloof. The Duc de la Trémoille withdrew with nine battalions of Huguenots, saying that he could not assist a prince who had engaged to protect idolatry; while Epernon departed with four thousand troops, haughtily declaring that he would never bear arms against Henry, but that he could not serve a heretic king. Both he and La Trémoille conceived ideas, cherished by so many others in those troublous times, of establishing independent principalities. It was said that Henry's too



open admiration of Epernon's wife had something to do with her husband's desertion. Others asserted that the duke, who had formerly proved his friendship for the King of Navarre, became jealous of the favor shown the latter by Henry III. after the junction of their armies, and was afraid that the necessitous Béarnais might require a loan of him. Navarre's resources were about exhausted, and he was wearing a suit of violet mourning belonging to the late king, whose wardrobe had proved a godsend to his needy brother-in-law.

The day after the king's death Henry saw that he must abandon the siege and retreat at once. His troops were clamoring for pay and deserting daily to the enemy, who were preparing to advance. Feeling that the great Catholic nobles, who supported him indifferently, would act with more vigor against the League if they had the responsibility of separate commands, he divided his army into three parts. One of these he sent into Picardy under the Duke of Longueville, another under Marshal d'Aumont into Champagne, while he retreated into Normandy with the third, to await the arrival of the troops and supplies expected from England. Many of Henry's advisers thought he was courting ruin by retreating into a corner of France surrounded by the sea, instead of recrossing the Loire into Protestant territory.

The news of the king's assassination had been received by the Parisians with transports of joy. Bonfires were lighted, tables were set at the street-corners, and the houses were decorated as if for a festival. The Duchess of Montpensier embraced the messenger who brought her the tidings. She screamed and prayed, laughed and wept, for joy. "It was my life or his," she cried. Then she drove through the streets shouting to the people, "Good news! good news! the tyrant is dead!" Even

the disinherited Marguerite exulted on her solitary rock of Usson, and the Pope eulogized the assassin in full consistory. The Duchess of Montpensier again urged her brother to assume the crown, declaring that such an opportunity might not occur again, but Mayenne lacked his brother's audacity, and preferred to declare the old Cardinal de Bourbon king. The Béarnais attempted negotiations with Mayenne through Villeroi, who was favorably disposed, and urged the duke to seize the opportunity of combining all the Catholics of France and securing Henry the throne on condition of his abjuring. But Mayenne declined to treat with a Huguenot king, although he declared he esteemed him personally and held him innocent of his brother's death.

The duke had by this time collected an army of twenty-five or thirty thousand men, and was so confident of defeating Navarre's small army that he had announced that he would bring the Béarnais back to the Bastille in chains. Windows were actually rented along the Rue St.-Antoine in anticipation of this event. Some of Henry's friends advised him to take refuge in England, but Marshal Biron said, "Sire, there is no King of France out of France," and Henry agreed with him. He summoned Longueville and D'Aumont to his support, and retreated on Dieppe, where he was daily expecting the English. The inhabitants came out to meet him with the keys of their city, and their governor said, "I am come to salute my lord and hand over to him the government of this city." "Ventre-saint-gris," ejaculated the ready Béarnais, "I know nobody more worthy of it than you are!" The citizens crowded around to present him an address, but he cried, "No fuss, my lads; all I want is your affections, good bread, good wine, and good, hospitable faces."

Henry had no idea of shutting himself up in Dieppe, and, after carefully examining the neighborhood, selected the strong position of Arques for his camp, and began working day and night to fortify it. He made it impregnable to attack except by one narrow road, along which he expected Mayenne to advance. The duke showed more strategy than Henry gave him credit for, by flanking the king's position and intercepting his communication with Dieppe and the sea. Henry was vexed, but showed his readiness of resource by seizing a position on the opposite side of the valley, which left Mayenne only one road of egress. The duke hesitated for eight days before he attacked. Henry spent the night before the engagement working on his trenches. Towards morning he and his officers saw through the mist a line of lights. They were puzzled to decide whether they were glow-worms or the arquebuse-matches of the enemy. The question was soon settled by the capture of a prisoner, M. de Belin, who was brought in just as the king was snatching a hasty breakfast in the trenches. "Good-morning, Belin," laughingly called out Henry; "embrace me for your welcome." Belin informed the king that Mayenne was advancing to the attack with thirty thousand foot and ten thousand horse, about five times Henry's numbers. "Where are your forces?" asked Belin, looking around in surprise. "Oh, you don't see them all, M. de Belin," answered the king, "for you do not reckon God and the right on my side." "Accustomed as I was to see this prince," writes Sully, "I could not help marvelling at his serene and tranquil countenance in circumstances so desperate."

All was very near being lost in the beginning, through a piece of treachery. Henry's first line was held by his German troops. When the advance guard of the League, which con-

sisted of lanzknechts, came to these works, they were alarmed at their strength, and, breaking their ranks, put their hats on their pikes and pretended to desert to their countrymen, who helped them over the ramparts. Some of their leaders were said even to have kissed the king's hand in submission ; but no sooner were they in the trenches than they began to attack and drive out the Royalists, even firing on Henry, whose armor was said to have been dented by their balls. Concealed forces of the League rushed to their comrades' assistance. The king fought among his troops, and headed charge after charge with the fury of despair. But Montpensier's troops gave way, the Swiss were broken, and the Protestant cavalry was driven back by overwhelming numbers. In endeavoring to rally them, Biron was wounded and unhorsed. The king, in passing the Swiss before the battle, had called out, "Keep a pike for me ; I intend to fight at the head of your battalion." Now, as he rode up to rally them, he called to the colonel of the regiment of So-leure, "I come to die or win honor with you." "Sire, we will die with you," was the enthusiastic response. Then Henry rallied his cavalry man by man, crying, "Cannot I find fifty gentlemen in France resolute enough to die with their king?" He was answered by shouts of "Le Béarnais !"

The struggle was renewed. Just at that moment the mist lifted, and young Coligny, seeing his master's need, came to the rescue with the two regiments of the Huguenot reserve, chanting their famous battle-hymn, "Let God arise." They fell on Aumale's rear, while their four cannon, which Henry had posted with his usual judgment, mowed great lanes in the ranks of the League. Aumale's weary troops gave way. He had called on his brother to bring up the reserves, but the inert Mayenne had replied that the Béarnais was driven from the

field, and all that remained was to bury him in his fortifications. While Mayenne was slowly advancing for this purpose, his energetic antagonist turned the fortunes of the day, and the great hosts of the League had now to advance up a narrow lane against a murderous artillery fire and an enemy protected by intrenchments. The battle lasted all day. At its close, Henry is said to have written this characteristic letter to Crillon : "Hang yourself, brave Crillon ; we have conquered at Arques, and you were not there !" It is only right, however, to say that a comparison of dates indicates that the letter was written from before Amiens, and not Arques.

The battle of Arques created a great sensation all over Europe. Before this, the King of Navarre's military reputation had been local rather than national. North of the Loire he was known only as a successful partisan leader. The Pope was not surprised ; he said he had noticed that the Béarnais wore out more boots than shoes, and spent less time in bed than Mayenne did at the table. Henry himself remarked, "Either the Duke of Mayenne is not the soldier he is supposed to be, or he respects his king and reserves his prowess for a better occasion." After the failure of the duke's attempts to surprise him, he laughingly exclaimed, "The Duke of Mayenne is without doubt a great captain, but I am the earlier riser." Mayenne explained his defeat at Arques by saying that it was due to the valor of the old Huguenot phalanx, composed of men who, from father to son, were accustomed to face death.

After the battle of Arques, Turkey and several of the Italian states recognized Henry as king. The army was enthusiastic over "le brave Béarnais ;" yet, to show the difficulties of his position, it is worth noticing that a tumult took place among his Catholic troops while the king was listening to Protestant

services in his tent. Several of his Huguenot followers were wounded, and the king, with tears of indignation in his eyes, was forced to finish his devotions outside the camp.

Five thousand English troops arrived a few days after the battle. Longueville and D'Aumont joined the king, and Mayenne retreated towards the Low Countries in search of Spanish assistance, while Henry advanced on Paris with his combined forces. He captured the five faubourgs on the left side of the Seine, and advanced as far as the Pont-Neuf, where his equestrian statue now stands. The indomitable La Noue attempted to capture the Cité by swimming the Seine on horseback, and was nearly drowned. Great consternation prevailed among the Leaguers, and Henry, as he rode through the Faubourg St.-Jacques, was greeted with shouts of "Vive le Roi!" Military writers of the time are of the opinion that the king could have captured the rest of the city by assault, but Châtillon's troops could not be restrained from massacring in retaliation for St. Bartholomew, and Henry hesitated to expose Paris to the horrors of an assault with troops in such a humor. He therefore bivouacked for the night, intending to renew the attack in the morning. The king's quarters were near a convent whose abbess, Marie de Beauvilliers, had been a former court beauty. Henry had complained that Paris was like "a beautiful mistress, whom he had only been able to kiss, without putting his hand on her bosom," but he consoled himself in the mean time so agreeably with the abbess that when he was ready to deliver the assault it was too late, the troops of Nemours and Mayenne having entered Paris during the night over the bridge of St.-Maixent, which Henry had neglected to destroy.

The king was so occupied with the conquest of Marie de Beauvilliers that his military operations suffered from being left

in charge of his lieutenants. After waiting in vain for Mayenne to come out and give battle, Henry marched away to subdue the provinces, carrying his abbess with him, to the great scandal of both parties. Although it was winter, he covered a hundred and fifty leagues in seven weeks. Town after town fell before his victorious arms. While Mayenne was bickering with the Seize in Paris, Henry established his authority in the eight principal provinces of northern France. Order was restored everywhere, and the king's magnanimity did as much as his energy towards converting his enemies. One of the Pope's counsellors remarked, "We must pray God to inspire the King of Navarre. On the day when your Holiness embraces him, and then only, the affairs of France will be adjusted." The Pope was of very much the same opinion, but he was so in the power of Spain that he was obliged to pretend unwillingness to receive Henry's ambassador. When the ambassador at length secured an audience, the cordiality with which he was received was in marked contrast to previous appearances.

Henry was besieging Dreux when he heard that Mayenne, who had been reinforced by a large body of Spanish under Count Egmont, was marching to attack him with an army twice his numbers. The king's officers advised him not to hazard an engagement under such circumstances, but Henry's confident and courageous nature decided for the risk. After the battle was won, Du Plessis-Mornay exclaimed, "Sire, you have committed the bravest folly that ever was, in staking the fate of a kingdom on one cast of the dice." But Henry wished to establish his fortunes by some brilliant stroke, and he felt that this was his opportunity. He could not keep his army together much longer, for his treasury was empty and the Swiss and Germans were clamoring for their pay. If he retreated, a large

portion of his troops were sure to disband, so he raised the siege of Dreux and marched to the field of Ivry, where he had determined he would give battle. The weather was terrible, the roads were almost impassable, and the rain poured in torrents. Yet so perfect were the discipline and forethought with which the troops were handled, that they arrived at Nonancourt in good order, and found comfortable quarters, warm fires, and abundant rations awaiting them, while the army of the League lay exposed to the elements. The night before the battle a violent thunder-storm took place, and the clouds appeared to the astonished troops to be charging each other, like struggling armies, amid the continuous roar and flash of heavenly artillery.

When the king laid the plan of attack before his council the following morning, not an alteration was suggested. He abandoned the old order of battle, with its long line and unmanageable masses, and adopted a new one, arranging his cavalry in squadrons supported by infantry. Henry's success at Coutras, and on many other fields, was largely due to the combinations and innovations his quick intelligence had suggested. As usual, he opened the battle with his artillery, which he had posted with such judgment that it did tremendous execution before the League could reply. At the last moment he wheeled his line slightly, as at Coutras, so that his troops might not have to fight with the sun and the smoke in their eyes. Henry IV. believed in his luck, and took chances, like Napoleon; but neither of them neglected any precaution that might contribute to their success. Just before the battle the king was reinforced by the garrisons of Dieppe, Evreux, and Pont de l'Arche, as well as by the Prince of Conti, Du Plessis-Mornay, Rosny, and their followers. Two companies of English horse under Colonel James rode in, and Henry was informed that Humières and Mouy

were only a mile distant, but he would not wait for them. Mayenne's ranks were confused, and Henry seems to have feared the enemy might attempt to withdraw without giving battle, so, to quote his own words, he "decided to make the entire journey, with full intention of making them pay the expenses."

Henry, clad in complete armor, but with his head bare, rode along his line, telling his troops that the crown of France depended on their swords, and that if they failed him he had nothing to fall back upon. Then, clasping his hands and lifting his eyes to heaven, he prayed, "O God, who alone knowest the intentions of man's heart, do Thy will upon me as Thou shalt judge necessary for the weal of Christendom. Preserve me so long as Thou knowest I am needful for the happiness and repose of this land, and no longer." He took his helmet, crowned with white plumes, and, before he put it on, exclaimed, "Companions, God is with us. There stand His enemies and ours. Here is your king. Upon them! and if you lose your cornets, rally to my white plume. You will always find it in the road to victory and honor." The day before, Count Schomberg had asked for his reiters' pay, which was long in arrears. "Men of honor don't ask for money on the eve of a battle," was Henry's harsh reply. Fearing this ungracious answer might be still rankling in the old veteran's breast, the king went to him just before the battle began and performed one of those graceful acts which so endeared him to his subjects. "Colonel," he said, "I hurt your feelings. This may be the last day of my life, and I can't bear to take away the honor of a brave and honest gentleman like you. Pray pardon and embrace me." Schomberg was overcome. "Sire," he replied, "you wounded me the other day, it is true, but to-day you kill me." He was as good as his word, and died fighting at the king's side. The

Béarnais did not spare himself, and killed Egmont's equerry with his own hand, but the devotion of his followers was such that young Biron, who carried the king's guidon, and others repeatedly threw themselves between Henry and his assailants.

The battle was almost entirely between the cavalry. The Swiss of both armies met with their pikes lowered, but did not strike a blow. Rosny says the League's German troops, who were Protestants, fired in the air. D'Aumont drove them back on Mayenne's centre, and the duke had to fire on them to save his line. Attacked on both sides, the Germans broke and fled. Henry's left wing was broken by Egmont's tremendous charge. If Mayenne had supported him, the battle might have been won, but the duke paused to reform his centre before advancing. The king allowed Egmont to pass through his line, to be dealt with by Biron, while he waited to receive Mayenne. Even the captious D'Aubigny is enthusiastic when he describes this charge. The king, two lengths ahead of his followers, "plunged into the forest of lances." For a quarter of an hour they appeared engulfed in the struggling masses. The king's standard-bearer was killed, and one of his followers wearing white plumes fell at his side. The report spread that the king was dead, and his army was on the verge of a panic. At this moment Henry burst through the enemy's ranks, victorious, but covered with dust and blood, his sword full of notches and his armor battered with blows. Cries of "Vive le Roi!" greeted him as he rallied his line and advanced on the retreating enemy. Marshal Biron, who had been stationed with the reserves, exclaimed, "This day, sire, you have performed the part of Marshal Biron, and Marshal Biron that of the king." "Let us praise God, marshal," replied Henry, "for the victory is His." He was as

modest as usual, and wrote the Duke of Longueville that he was "well served, but evidently assisted by God."

Great was the slaughter, and Henry is quoted as exclaiming, "Spare the French, but kill the foreigners." It is doubtful if he ever gave any such order; certainly his actions belied it, for the Swiss were spared at his own request. It was the delay caused by this errand of mercy that prevented his capturing Mayenne. As soon as he could get his cavalry together he galloped after the enemy, just as he was, with bleeding face and hands, black with dust and powder. He met Rosny, who was being carried off the field on a stretcher, and stopped long enough to express his delight that his friend's wounds were not as serious as he had been given to understand. "I should like to hug you with both arms," he said; "I shall never have any good fortune or increase of greatness but you shall share it." The king soon caught up with the enemy's rear, but Mayenne had secured his escape by breaking down the bridge over the Eure behind him. This left his routed army at the mercy of its pursuers, and those who were not captured or slaughtered by the Royalists were drowned in the river. The battle itself occupied less than an hour, but the annihilation of Mayenne's army was complete. Egmont was killed. Before the battle some one had alluded to his gallant and unfortunate father, whose cause the son had deserted. "Don't speak of him," exclaimed the count; "he was a rebel and deserved his death." It is a curious coincidence that the day the battle of Ivry was fought, two other important battles were won by the Royalists over the League, —one before Le Mans, and the other at Issoire. In the latter action the League lost over two thousand men.

Mayenne fled through Nantes, where the gates were closed against him until he declared that the Béarnais was dead and

his army routed. All was confusion and dejection in Paris when the crestfallen Leaguer arrived. The intrepid Duchess of Montpensier did her best to reanimate her brother's spirits, fearing he would open negotiations for surrender with the king, and urged him to assume command of the capital. The citizens were so demoralized that it is asserted that if Henry had said Mass they would have opened their gates to him. Mayenne did not inspire them with confidence. After dining with the garrison, the duke was so overcome with liquor that he fell off his horse, and he was so corpulent that it took twelve men to lift him into the saddle again. Henry spent the night after the battle at Rosny, where he supped with his officers, and joked about the disappointment in store for the Duchess of Montpensier. When Marshal d'Aumont arrived the king rose from the table to embrace him, and insisted on his sitting at his side. "It is quite reasonable you should share the feast," he said, "since you served so well at the marriage."

Henry was now only two days' march from Paris, and there was nothing to oppose him. His letters proved that he intended to follow up his victory vigorously. "For the first time in my life," he writes, "I am in a position to convert my desires into designs." Yet he remained inactive two weeks at Ivry, when he might have seized the capital. He did not even notify the Queen of England of his victory, to which her support had contributed so materially, until weeks after it took place. What was he doing all this time? It is said that the Swiss refused to move until they were paid, and that Henry was busy recruiting his troops and examining into the accounts of the Marquis d'O, with a view to wringing some money out of that rascally individual; but he found time enough for his hunting and love-affairs. Mme. de Guercheville won his ad-

miration by her resistance. He made her the usual offer of marriage, dependent on his securing his divorce, to which she replied that she was not high enough to be his queen, nor low enough to be his mistress. Marie de Beauvilliers and Charlotte des Essarts proved less exacting.

The king's next attachment was the most lasting and the most celebrated of his life. Its object was the beautiful Gabrielle d'Estrées, whose name lives enshrined in French poetry and song as "La charmante Gabrielle." Henry said that he would rather win her than twelve battles, and the graceful little farewell he addressed to her has outlived the monarchy, and remains to-day one of the most popular songs of France :

" Charmante Gabrielle,
 Je vous fais mes adieux ;
 La gloire, qui m'appelle,
 M'éloigne de vos yeux.
 Fatale départie !
 Malheureux jour !
 Que ne suis-je sans vie
 Ou sans amour ?"

Gabrielle was gentle and affectionate, and possessed both wit and refinement. She was fond of dress and elegance, but her ambitions harmed no one, and her influence over Henry was for his good. Gabrielle never attempted a political rôle, and the few requests she made of the king were always by letter. Her features were regular and her figure perfect. She had great masses of blonde hair, sparkling blue eyes, and a complexion likened to lilies and roses. Although she and Marie de Beauvilliers were both Bourdaisières, a family which boasted at least twenty-six *femmes gallantes* and had furnished mistresses for Pope Clement VII., Charles V., and Francis I., Gabrielle

fought against her fate, and was sincerely attached to the Marquis of Bellegarde, to whom she was betrothed.

Bellegarde vaunted the charms of his betrothed so imprudently that the court thought it strange that its Adonis should be overcome by the charms of an eighteen-year-old girl, and the king resolved to see for himself. The result was fatal to Bellegarde, for Henry told him that he "tolerated no rivals in love or war." Bellegarde, good courtier that he was, resigned his betrothed to the king, although Gabrielle offered to marry him without the royal consent. The Duke of Longueville now became a suitor for Mlle. d'Estrées's hand, and did not resign his claims so easily. The accidental discharge of a



musket ended his career, and Bellegarde thought it prudent to avoid such accidents by keeping out of harm's way. Henry had invited the d'Estrées to court and forbidden Bellegarde's attendance. They came, and Gabrielle begged the king on her knees to sanction her marriage, but he would not. She thought his conduct was outrageous, and, after telling him so, returned to her home, which was beyond his lines. Without a word to any one, Henry left his army and followed her through the enemy's lines, disguised as a peasant, and carrying a truss of straw on his head. The king did not present a very dignified appearance

in his disguise, and Gabrielle, who was with difficulty persuaded to see him, ran out of the room, exclaiming, "Oh, sire, how homely you are!" The king returned on his perilous journey as he came. When his absence from the camp was discovered, all was consternation, and on his return Rosny and Du Plessis-Mornay made him promise he would never again commit such a piece of folly.

Henry now schemed to secure Gabrielle's attendance at court by summoning her father to his council. But Monsieur d'Estrées came unaccompanied by his daughter. The father and daughter were finally made to realize the futility of further resistance, and Gabrielle was provided with a complaisant husband in the person of M. de Liancourt. Immediately after the marriage De Liancourt was ordered to repair to court with his wife. On their arrival the king carried Gabrielle away in his coach to the siege of Chartres, and when the city surrendered he at once rewarded and disposed of De Liancourt by making him its governor.

Having given the Parisians abundant opportunity to provision the city for a siege and invite the Spaniards to their rescue, the king invested his capital for the third time. The League's German mercenaries resisted bravely, but their French troops appeared disheartened by defeat, and would not fight. Notwithstanding the fact that the troops in the city several times exceeded the number of the blockading army, Paris was soon reduced to the direst extremities. All the dogs and cats were eaten, acts of cannibalism were committed, and even the dead were disinterred and ground into bread called "le pain de Mme. de Montpensier," in honor of its inventress. The houses of the Guises, the former idols of the populace, had to be guarded against the desperate rabble, who now shouted for

“peace or bread,” but the fanaticism of their leaders was unyielding, and the Seize threatened any one who talked of surrender with immediate death.

Henry’s kind heart was so moved by the sufferings of the people that he relieved their distress, but at the same time strengthened their resistance, by allowing several thousand women and children to leave the beleaguered city. He fed them as they passed through his lines until their numbers became so great that he was compelled to order his soldiers to drive them back. He even connived at the introduction of provisions, saying, “Paris must not be a cemetery. I do not wish to reign over the dead.” The citizens sent a deputation to negotiate with Henry, but their credentials were addressed to the King of Navarre. “Stop!” he exclaimed; “if I were only King of Navarre I would not be laboring to pacify France.” The Archbishop of Paris assured him that the city would not surrender until its last soldier was killed and its last citizen was dead. “Ventre-saint-gris!” exclaimed Henry; “I am like the true mother of Solomon’s judgment; I would rather not have Paris than have it in shreds.”

The Parisians were encouraged to prolong their resistance by the news that Mayenne and the Duke of Parma were marching to their relief. There was still time for Henry to have captured Paris by storm, a proceeding which did not appear difficult of accomplishment in the reduced condition of its defenders. Turenne and Châtillon urged the king to make the attempt, but Henry feared that the Huguenots would take the opportunity to avenge St. Bartholomew, and was reluctant to subject his capital to the horrors of an assault. The Catholic nobility, who supported their Huguenot king indifferently, helping him with the right hand while they hindered him with the

left, naturally opposed the undertaking. By delaying his progress they hoped to be able to force him to abjure, and in the mean time they secured a good price for their support. Henry's own plan was to leave enough troops before the enfeebled capital to keep up the blockade, and proceed with the rest of his army to check the Duke of Parma at the strong defensive position of Claye. La Noue, Givri, and Du Plessis-Mornay agreed with the king, but Marshal Biron insisted so vehemently on his raising the siege and offering battle to Parma with his whole army that Henry reluctantly yielded his better judgment. Turenne and Châtillon protested. "We all have to go to school to the marshal," replied the king. The obstinate old veteran was about the only person of whom Henry stood in any awe. The marshal would contradict his royal master with impunity, but even Biron showed the white feather before Crillon.

When Crillon flew into one of his passions, and was ready to throw any one and every one out of the window, the old marshal discreetly feigned sleep, and left the king to bear the brunt of Crillon's wrath. But Crillon loved his master, and when Henry presented him to Marie de Médicis as the first captain of the world, the shrewd Gascon exclaimed, "You lie, sire; it's you." Crillon was a character after Henry's own heart. Innumerable stories are told of his bravery and readiness. Once he was so moved by an account of our Lord's sufferings that he is said to have exclaimed, "Harnibleu! Monseigneur Jesus Christ, if Crillon had been there you would not have been crucified!" A dancing-master attempted to teach Crillon dancing, but when he called out, "Now bend, now retire," Crillon angrily replied, "Crillon never bends nor retires." One more story: Crillon was asleep, and the Duke of Guise and a lot of young courtiers, who had been supping late, thought they would have a frolic,

and at the same time find out if Crillon was as brave as he was reported; so they rushed into his room in the middle of the night, shouting that the enemy had surprised the town and all was lost. Crillon arose deliberately and began dressing. "What must we do?" cried Guise. "Die like gentlemen," calmly replied Crillon. Then they told him it was all a joke. Crillon undressed and went back to bed with the same deliberation with which he had risen, but he grimly remarked to the duke, "Harnibleu! but you played a dangerous game, my boy; if you had found me lacking I would have poniarded you."



Taking Biron's advice, Henry marched his whole army to the strong position selected at Chelles. The Duke of Parma was much surprised to see a well-ordered army of twenty-five thousand men instead of the disorderly rabble of ten thousand which Mayenne had led him to expect. To fight such an army in such a position was out of the question, so the wary Italian intrenched himself in the swamp, where he remarked that Henry could not force him to fire a pistol unless he chose. This did not please the king, whose genius was for fighting rather than manœuvring. In discussing his chances against the Spanish he had said, "Their infantry is brave and good. I do not

deny that I fear it, but I trust in God and the French nobility and cavalry." Then he laughed and added, "The Béarnais is poor, but of good family." Henry now sent a herald to Parma challenging him to come out and fight. "Tell your master," was the reply, "that if I find it to my interest to offer him battle, I will not only do so, but compel his acceptance of it." The impetuous Henry realized the impotence of his position, and bitterly regretted having taken Biron's advice. He had met his equal for the first time in the cold, dictatorial Spanish commander, whose perfect discipline and cautious manœuvring left the king no opportunity to attack. The Parisians, who had feared the Spaniards might risk a battle and be defeated, were delighted. Parma had his spies everywhere, and every night made the rounds of his camp in a chair. One misty morning he flanked the king by throwing a bridge of boats across the river and captured Lagny, which commanded the road to Paris.

Henry had the mortification of seeing his capital relieved, without being able to bring the invading army to an engagement. His nobility were like Washington's Continental volunteers in one respect: they assembled in large numbers when the conditions were favorable, but dispersed as rapidly under adverse circumstances. The king's army was now so full of dissension and discontent that he deemed it wise to disperse his troops in the provinces and leave Parma undisturbed, feeling certain that the disturbed condition of the Low Countries would soon recall the Spanish commander. Henry's treasury was empty as usual. The Marquis d'O, who revelled in luxury, neglected the king's personal wants to such an extent that his very table was unprovided, and Henry was forced on one occasion to repair to D'O's quarters for a meal. The

superintendent was in the act of sitting down to a bountiful dinner, from which, out of respect to the king, he was obliged to rise. Henry and his companions sat down and finished it, leaving D'O and his minions standing. The king asked his valet, in D'O's presence, how many shirts he possessed.

"Six, sire, but half are too ragged to put on."

"And how many pocket-handkerchiefs have I?"

"Only five, sire."

The marquis hastened to say that he had just ordered six thousand crowns' worth of fine cambric for his Majesty's use.

"I shall have my shirts, then," said Henry, "when I get into the Louvre."

The king's good humor was unailing, and his popularity with the troops was unbounded. He managed his fractious nobles with great tact, refusing to notice affronts, and giving a playful turn to their complaints by his ready answers. Parma was soon obliged to return to the Low Countries, as Henry had foreseen. The king pursued him, harassing the Spanish retreat so incessantly that only Parma's iron discipline saved his army from rout. Henry was in the saddle day and night, the heart and soul of every attack. Once Biron was unhorsed and surrounded by the enemy, but the king came to his follower's rescue in person, and saved his life. After driving Parma out of France, Henry captured Chartres and several other towns. Epernon, seeing the tide was setting in irresistibly for the king, now declared for him, fearing that if he sulked longer he would be too late.

Henry was also joined by sixteen thousand Germans and a body of English under Elizabeth's favorite, the Earl of Essex, who astonished the French by the extravagance of his equipment. They proceeded to the siege of Rouen, to whose gov-

ernor, Villars, Essex sent a grandiloquent challenge, asserting that the cause of the king was better than that of the League, that Essex was a braver man than he, and that his mistress was more beautiful than that of his opponent. The grim old marshal, after regretting that his duties obliged him to forego the pleasure of meeting Essex for the present, gave him the lie on all three propositions, but remarked that he did not disturb himself particularly regarding the last. The siege was vigorously pressed, Henry working in the trenches and leading assaults like a common soldier. At one time Villars, with five hundred troops, made a sortie on Biron and a handful of English. The king galloped to the rescue, pushing his horse across the river on the top of a weir, an exploit so reckless that even D'Aubigny and Roger Williams who were with him, two of the bravest men in the army, dared not follow. On reaching the other side the king proved that he possessed as much coolness as daring, by withdrawing the English in good order.

Paris was garrisoned by four thousand Spanish troops, and the Sixteen, who were wholly devoted to Spain, inaugurated a sixteenth-century reign of terror. They hung Brisson, the president of Parliament, and several others whom they suspected of favoring Henry. Mayenne returned to Paris, hung the murderers, and suppressed the Sixteen; but in order to secure Spanish assistance against Henry, he was obliged to accept the Infanta as Queen of France, subject to the ratification of the States-General and her marriage with a French prince within the year. Parma, whose health was so poor that he had to accompany his army in a coach, joined the cautious Mayenne, and they advanced together, slowly and with great circumspection, to the relief of Rouen. The failure of the sieges of both Paris and Rouen is attributed to the unwillingness of Biron to termi-

nate the war. When his son one day pointed out the feasibility of a bold stroke, the old marshal indignantly exclaimed, "Would you send us back to plant cabbages at Biron?" "If I were king," replied the youth, "your head would fall." Henry left Biron with the infantry and artillery to carry on the siege, and advanced with his cavalry to reconnoitre the Spanish army.

Henry hovered around Parma, cutting off outlying bodies of his troops and harassing his advance, until he reached Aumale. Here it became necessary for the king to face the enemy with a few troops while his main body executed a flank movement. Parma advanced on him in battle array. "We are at once too many and too few," said Henry, ordering eight hundred of his men to retire and wait for him while he advanced to meet the enemy with a hundred. "We looked at each other," says Sully, "astonished to the last degree at a plan, in which we saw nothing but rashness, which seemed destined to consign the king to certain death." Sully was deputed to remonstrate with him. Henry upbraided his followers with cowardice, but after they had protested their devotion, he replied, coldly, "Believe me, I am not so rash as



you imagine. I am as careful of my skin as another, and I will retire at the proper moment, so that no evil shall occur."

Parma, believing he was being led into an ambuscade, waited some time before he would permit his cavalry to charge the king's little troop. At length he gave the word; Henry retreated, followed by the Spanish cavalry, to the place where his troops should have been in waiting, and called on them to charge. But his directions had been misunderstood, and the king and his little troop were left unsupported to resist the shock of the enemy. More than half of them were killed. The rest escaped over a bridge. Henry was the last to retire, defending the bridge until all his followers had passed over. He received a carbine-ball in his body, and was in bed some days, but he was attacking Parma again at the head of his troops before his wound was healed. The Spanish commander was blamed for the over-caution which prevented his capturing the king, but he would not believe that Henry was unsupported, and said he supposed he was dealing with a general rather than a captain of horse. When asked his opinion of the king's action, he acknowledged it was heroic, but said he never placed himself in a position from which he was obliged to retreat; this was said, however, before he had encountered Henry at Caudebec.

Parma out-manceuvred the king, and relieved Rouen without fighting. Henry retired to Pont de l'Arche and summoned all his nobility to his aid. Volunteers gathered from all sides to their king's assistance, and the Spanish commander, who had been persuaded to go out to the siege of Caudebec, found himself surrounded by rivers and the sea, with his retreat cut off by the king. The Spanish army tried its best to force its way out, but it could not. Their provisions were exhausted, and

they seemed surrounded beyond escape. Henry declared he had trapped the old fox at last. Parma was wounded, and his son and Mayenne quarrelled over the command. "To fight the Béarnais a vigorous body is necessary," he sadly remarked, "and not such a bloodless carcass as mine." But, ill as he was, he accomplished an exploit which was the last and most brilliant of his life. Henry thought the enemy was checkmated and the League had made its last move, when he awoke one morning to find his adversary gone.

Parma had instructed Villars to collect all the boats and rafts he could find at Rouen, and float them down to him on the ebb-tide. Then, under cover of a cavalry advance, the Spanish commander withdrew and embarked his infantry. The night was dark and the morning misty. Before Henry discovered what was taking place, the army had crossed. Parma had long suspected Mayenne of wishing to throw off the Spanish yoke and reconcile himself to Henry, but he was obliged to leave him and return to the Low Countries. His health was failing, and, after requesting Philip's permission to retire to his Italian dominions, he went to Spa. Philip declined, and insisted upon his returning to France with an army. But Parma was doomed



to lead no more armies. He endeavored to obey, and perished in the attempt. The pallor of death overspread his face as he was dismounting from his horse, and he expired in the act of signing some despatches.

Henry IV. never lost a battle, and the Duke of Parma was the only commander who ever opposed him with any degree of success. Parma was a master of strategy,—the art of preconcerted military movements, which almost disappeared from the world with Hannibal and Cæsar, and was not thereafter practised for many centuries. The warfare of the Middle Ages was a series of hap-hazard encounters, delivered without design, and generally unproductive of results. In the opinion of the Duke d'Aumale, Henry IV. was a master of the art of war as practised in his time,—a clever but somewhat reckless general, who frequently displayed the genius of a great commander. He was an able and inventive tactician, and, although he was outmanœuvred by Parma, he excelled the Spanish commander in the disposition of his troops, the choice of ground, and the conduct of an engagement.



CHAPTER XI.

THE ABJURATION.

SULLY says no labyrinth was ever so puzzling as that complication of interests which divided the different factions composing the army of the king after the retreat of the Duke of Parma. The Protestants and Catholics were jealous of each other and distrusted the king; the Swiss and Germans refused to move until they were paid; the volunteer nobility insisted on returning to their estates with their followers; and Elizabeth withdrew her support because Henry refused to cede Calais, notifying his agents that "henceforth she could assist his Majesty only by her prayers." The new Pope was completely under Spanish influence, and declared himself ready to confirm any Catholic prince whom the States-General should elect to the vacant throne.

The young Cardinal de Bourbon, son of the first Prince of Condé, became a claimant for the throne, after the death of the old Cardinal de Bourbon, and tried to negotiate for the support of Mayenne. The Count of Soissons nourished a similar project, and hoped to strengthen his position by marrying the king's sister, Catherine, to whom he had long been engaged. The king would not consent to this, and when the count joined his *fiancée* at Pau, Henry wrote his governor there, "If anything happens contrary to my wishes, your head shall pay the forfeit." Cayet refused to perform the marriage, and, when Soissons threatened him with his sword, exclaimed, "Monseigneur, it is better to fall by your hand than by that of the headsman." Catherine was attached to her brother, but refused to surrender her lover, so the king was forced, unwillingly, to depose her from the regency of Navarre. The young Duke of Guise, who had escaped from Henry's hands, also appeared as a claimant for the throne, but the Béarnais was not disturbed by this, foreseeing it would introduce new elements of discord in the League, already weakened and divided by so many opposing interests.

France was obliged to choose between the Catholic religion and the principle of hereditary monarchy. In the abstract, the cause of religion would seem the stronger, but the king's ability and popularity won victory after victory for the legitimists. Henry's supporters were divided on the religious question, but united for their king. The League was united on the question of religion, but beyond this they had no unity of purpose. It was divided into two great parties, the Spanish and the French; then the French party was still further divided into factions for the different claimants of the throne. Gabrielle d'Estrées was eager for Henry's conversion, and even so staunch a Huguenot

as La Noue advised the king to cut the Gordian knot of all these complications and conspiracies by abjuring. Henry was afraid it would alienate his German and English allies, and he did not yet feel strong enough to meet the League without Protestant support. As long as there was no formidable enemy in the field, the king minimized the dissensions of his followers by dismissing the volunteers and dividing the army into separate commands. Henry then sought the society of his mistress, leaving the management of the campaign in the hands of the elder Marshal Biron, until that worthy's head was taken off by a cannon-ball at the siege of Champagne. The king also lost Châtillon and La Noue. The former complained bitterly of Henry's neglect, and La Noue, just before his death, plucked a sprig of laurel and handed it to a relative, remarking, "There, cousin, is all the reward that you and I may expect." Like Napoleon, Henry was almost the only survivor of his wars. His correspondence indicates that he believed each of his great battles would prove his last, and this may in part account for his inactivity at such times. When he found that his victories did not secure the triumph of his cause, he became disillusioned, but he did not consider abjuring as long as he thought there was a prospect of securing his throne otherwise.

The States-General which now assembled was as corrupt and illegal as any of its predecessors, but its meeting was fraught with great danger to Henry in case it should recognize any of the rival claimants to the throne, and the Pope, in pursuance of his promise, should confirm its choice. In this predicament Henry protested against the illegality of the assembly, and demanded a conference on the part of his Catholic officers and nobles. The Spanish faction in the States-General violently opposed this, but the citizens besieged them in crowds, shouting,

“Peace, peace; blessed be those who procure it.” The preachers of the League had lost their popularity, and the Duchess of Montpensier was hissed. Portraits of the king appeared everywhere. Secret meetings of wealthy and moderate citizens took place, and delegations waited on the governor of Paris, begging for peace. After a month’s wrangling, the States-General agreed to a conference at Suresnes, and a suspension of arms was granted for three months.

At this conference the prospect of the king’s conversion was announced. Henry had been considering this step seriously for some time. Six months before, he had sent for Rosny in the night, and, after laying the case before him, had asked him to consider it carefully for three or four days before giving him his opinion. Rosny, after long considering the difficulties of the situation, the position of the Huguenots, and the needs of France, resolved, stanch Protestant as he was, to advise the king to abjure. He represented to him that it was to the interest of both religions, whose differences had been so tragical for France, that the king should reconcile if he could not unite them. He declared that, the foundations of both religions being the same, a righteous man ought to reach heaven through either, and said that the Catholics would never be satisfied with anything short of his conversion, while the Protestants, although they might be sore over his desertion, had no other resource than to submit.

“As for advising you to go to Mass,” said Rosny, “it is a thing you ought not, it seems to me, to expect from one who is a Protestant; but frankly will I tell you that it is the easiest means of confounding all these cabals. You will never arrive at a peaceable enjoyment of this dominion but by two means: the first is by force of arms, in which case you will have to

employ strong measures, severity, rigor, and violence,—processes which are all utterly opposed to your temper and inclination; you will have to pass through an infinity of difficulties, fatigues, pains, annoyances, perils, and labors, with a horse perpetually between your legs, harness on back, helmet on head, pistol in fist, and sword in hand. You will have to bid adieu to repose and pleasure, for you will not get out of such matters but by multiplicity of town-takings, battles, and great bloodshed. By the other road, which is to accommodate yourself, as regards religion, to the wish of the greatest number of your subjects, you will not encounter so many difficulties in this world, but as to the next I don't answer for you." The king scratched his head before replying. "All you say to me is true," he said, "but I see so many thorns on every side that it will go very hard but some of them will prick me full sore. You know well enough that my cousins the princes of the blood, and ever so many other lords, such as Epernon, Longueville, Biron, D'O, and Vitry, are urging me to turn Catholic or else they will join the League. On the other hand, I know for certain that Turenne, Trémoille, and their lot are laboring daily to have a demand made, if I turn Catholic, for an assembly to appoint them a protector." Sully, years after the king's death, wrote that Henry, who had "never deceived man, was far from any intention of deceiving God. As uprightness and sincerity formed the depth of his heart, as they did of his words, I am persuaded that nothing would have been capable of making him embrace a religion which he despised or doubted."

Henry's subsequent life proves that the Catholic religion was much more congenial to him than the Protestant, and he had expressed his preference for many of its tenets before his conversion. The Béarnais was far from being a religious

man, and the Protestant ministers had given him up in despair. The only effect of the reproofs they administered to him on the error of his ways was to cause him to absent himself from their services. So they made up their minds to endure what they could not cure. "If you hear some excesses attributed to me," Henry said to them, "you may believe it, for I am a man subject to great infirmities; but if you are told that I have fallen from the religion, do not believe it." Pride and loyalty to his party had more to do with Henry's reluctance to abjure than any attachment to the reformed faith, but he was too practical to sacrifice a kingdom for a creed. He stipulated, however, that he should be required to acquiesce only in the essential points of the Catholic faith, and not in "all the rubbish, which he was quite sure that the majority of them did not believe." One of their arguments appeared to have great weight with him, and he said to the Protestant ministers, "Prudence requires that I should be of the Catholic religion, because, being of theirs, I am saved both according to them and according to you, and being of yours, I am saved according to you, but not according to them." Du Plessis-Mornay's reply was that no profession of faith in which a man was not sincere could save him.

The more moderate Protestants were persuaded of the advisability of the king's conversion, and it is believed that on that account they did not exert themselves to prevent it. Henry announced his determination in these words: "I am moved with compassion at the misery and calamities of my people; I have discovered what they desire; and I wish to be enabled, with a safe conscience, to content them." Then, turning to the Catholics, with tears in his eyes, he said, "I this day commit my soul to your keeping; I pray you take heed to it, for wheresoever

you are causing me to enter, I shall never more depart till death." To his Protestant friends he said, "Pray God for me, and love me always; as for me, I shall always love you, and I will never suffer wrong to be done to you or any violence to your religion." The morning he was received into the Catholic Church, he said to one of his Protestant ministers, Antoine de la Faye, "I have made myself anathema for the sake of all, like Moses and St. Paul."

There was a flippant as well as a serious side to Henry's nature, and which he showed depended much on the nature of the person with whom he was conversing. Lestoile says, "In good and bad fortune alike, the Béarnais jested on everything." No position was desperate enough and no matters were serious enough to repress his overflowing humor. Therefore we hear of his remarking that "Paris was well worth a Mass," and of his writing to his mistress, "Sunday will be the day when I shall make the somersault that brings down the house." Trifles betray the depth of men's convictions, and Sully relates two which occurred later in Henry's life and seem to prove the sincerity of his Catholicism. The king and Sully were standing together at the siege of Montmélian, when a cannon-shot struck a rock beside them, splitting it in fragments. Henry hastily made the sign of the cross. "Let no one tell me now that you are not a good Catholic," exclaimed Sully. On another occasion they were walking together, and met some priests carrying the host. The king prostrated himself until they had passed. "Sire," asked Sully, "do you really believe the host is the body of Christ?" "Yes," replied Henry. "How can one believe otherwise? I would give my little finger if you believed as I do." But, although Sully advised the king to abjure, he could not be persuaded to follow his example. Henry's repeated

efforts to secure his follower's conversion, as well as the fidelity with which he performed the penances prescribed by the Church, prove that he became sincere in his conversion, whatever the motives were which produced it. He often remarked that there were three facts which were true, although no one would believe them: the first was that he was a good Catholic; the second, that Queen Elizabeth was a virtuous woman; and the third, that the Archduke Albert was a good general.

The Spanish party did their best to put obstacles in the way of Henry's conversion, the Papal legate forbidding the clergy to receive him into the Church, under the severest penalties. But the French Church refused to be dictated to by the Pope in the matter of their king, and the Archbishop of Bourges, the Cardinal de Bourbon, and nine other bishops received him into the Catholic Church at St.-Denis with great ceremony. The Parisians, in spite of Mayenne's prohibition and the danger of entering the enemy's camp, were present in great multitudes, and shouted "Vive le Roi!" when Henry appeared accompanied by the princes of the blood, the officers of the crown, and the nobility. The archbishop, surrounded by the other ecclesiastics, met the king at the church door. "Who are you?" he said.

"The king."

"What do you want?"

"To be received into the bosom of the Catholic, Apostolic, and Roman Church."

After some further preliminaries, Henry knelt and made the modified profession of faith which had been agreed upon. He then attended confession, heard Mass, and was received into the Church. The enthusiasm of the people was unbounded, and the streets of St.-Denis echoed with one continual shout of "Vive

le Roi." Henry's conversion was followed by that of many of his followers, and it was easy to see that the end of the civil wars was approaching. The conversion of the king was a triumph both for the Legitimists and for the League,—as originally projected,—inasmuch as it had forced the head of the Protestant party to surrender his faith. The ostensible object of the League being accomplished, there seemed to be no further grounds for its opposition, but its plans had been diverted from their original purpose, and to these the king's conversion meant ruin.

The friends of Spain in the States-General soon showed their hand by demanding the suspension of the Salic law and the election of the Infanta to the throne. They might have succeeded but for the rivalries created when it came to selecting a French prince as her husband. The Dukes of Mayenne and Lorraine each claimed this honor for their sons, and the Duke of Nemours made the same demand; but the choice of the majority fell on the young Duke of Guise, to the great chagrin of Mayenne. To the surprise of all, the eccentric and melancholy young duke objected most strenuously to the alliance offered him, even threatening to kill himself before he would consent. His mother was also influenced in Henry's favor by her daughter, who had conceived hopes of marrying the king. The Duchesses of Nemours and Montpensier had lost interest in the League since the death of Guise, and the Duchess of Mayenne did nothing but mourn the losses the war had entailed on them. Mayenne himself was glad of the opportunity to delay action, and the Duke of Lorraine was ready now to support Henry if the king would agree to marry his sister to the duke's son, the Prince of Bar.

In the midst of these complications came two thunderbolts

which blasted all the hopes of Spain. The first was a decree of the Parliament, whose patriotism had been aroused by the efforts of Spain to seize the French crown. It declared that "no treaty should be made for the transfer of the crown to the hands of foreign princes or princesses, to the prejudice of the Salic law and other fundamental laws of this realm." Mayenne at first refused to receive this decree, gruffly declaring that "his first care had always been to defend the Catholic religion and maintain the laws of the realm." The second blow was the announcement of the king's conversion. Ville-roi, Belin, and other prominent Leaguers now determined to go over to the Royalists. Villeroi, for the second time, endeavored to persuade Mayenne to treat with the king, but the duke's demands were too great. He wanted the governments of nearly all the provinces given to his friends, and those of the king displaced, which Henry said would have meant nothing less than the triumph of the League. Mayenne summoned a meeting of the League, at which only three hundred attended. It became evident to him that he was not safe in Paris, and, after securing a further truce from the king and appointing Brissac its governor in place of Belin, he left the city. The Duke of Parma had foreseen the dissolution of the League, and had said, "Your people have abated their fury; the rest hold on but faintly, and in a short time they will have nothing to do with us." It is even said that Spain offered to recognize Henry as king if he would cede them Burgundy and Brittany, quoting the examples of Francis I. and Henry II. under similar circumstances; but Henry IV. was a monarch of a different stamp.

All the chiefs of the League who had any influence left now hastened to sell it to the king. Rosny was appalled at the sums exacted, but Henry told him to hesitate at nothing, saying

that it was much wiser to treat with them separately than to deal with them collectively, and that the very things given up would pay their demands and cost ten times less than they would if taken by force. The sum total amounted to over thirty-two million livres,—an amount worth in those days many times its present value. Of this amount, Villars got over three millions for the surrender of Rouen and Havre, besides the office of admiral, which was taken away from young Biron, the latter being compensated with the rank of marshal and one hundred and twenty thousand crowns in money. Villeroy received half a million, and Brissac a million and a half for the surrender of Paris. The Duchess of Nemours warned her son that he would lose Paris if he left it, and tried in vain to get him to surrender the city and make terms with the king while it was still in his power. But Mayenne trusted Brissac, who was one of the most virulent of the Leaguers and had been his bosom friend.

Brissac arranged the terms of surrender in an interview with his brother-in-law, St.-Luc, Henry's master of ordnance, which he pretended was for the purpose of discussing a lawsuit. He apologized to the Papal legate for committing an act so open to misconstruction, and parted from St.-Luc in apparent ill humor. The legate related the conversation to the Spanish ambassador, saying, "De Brissac is a good fellow; you have only to employ the Jesuits to make him do all you please. He takes little notice, otherwise, of affairs. One day, whilst we were deliberating, he was amusing himself by catching flies." Still, rumors were current of treachery. When Brissac's attention was called to them, the day before the surrender, he coolly remarked, "I have received the same notice, and have given all the necessary orders. Leave me to act, and keep you quiet.

To-morrow morning you will see a fine to-do and the Politiques much surprised." A committee of the Sixteen and some Spanish officers, who had orders to poniard Brissac if they discovered any signs of treachery, made the rounds of the walls with him that night. He brought them back fatigued at two in the morning and left them at the Spanish ambassador's, posting a guard in front of the house to prevent their coming out again. Then he went to the Porte Neuve, where he admitted the royal troops at five.



The king embraced Brissac, and threw his own white scarf over his neck, addressing him as "Marshal." "Render unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's," said Brissac to the provost who bore the city keys. "Oui ; rendre, pas vendre," was the reply. To some one who spoke of everything being rendered to him, Henry replied, "Nothing was rendered ; everything was sold." The Duke of Nevers requested the order of

le Saint-Esprit for the Count of Vieuville. The count, upon receiving it, pronounced the customary words, "*Domine, non sum dignus.*" "I know it well," replied the king, "but my nephew has begged me so that I couldn't refuse him."

The only opposition the royal troops encountered was from a small body of lanzknechts, who were dispersed after a few of them had been killed. The king regretted this incident, and exclaimed, "I would have given fifty thousand crowns to be able to say that I took Paris without its costing the life of a single man." The streets were choked with the crowd, who shouted "Vive le Roi!" and pressed on Henry so that he could hardly proceed. The captain of his guard tried to keep them back, warning the king of the danger of assassination, but Henry ordered him not to interfere with them. "They are famished to see a king," he said. The crowd would have torn to pieces a by-stander who refused to remove his hat as the king passed, but Henry commanded them to desist. He proceeded to Notre Dame, where he heard Mass, and then returned to the Louvre, where he found the tables set and everything in readiness, as if there had been no interruption in the royal residence.

Nothing would have pleased the people and the army better than to have massacred the Spanish troops, but Henry sent word to them that they might return to the Low Countries unmolested, on promising not to bear arms against him again. They accepted the king's offer with enthusiasm, and marched out that very afternoon. Henry witnessed their departure from a window near the Porte St.-Denis. They saluted him respectfully as they passed, and the king called out to their commander, the Duke of Feria, "Adieu, monsieur; commend me to your master, and depart in peace, but do not return." The duke exclaimed two or three times, "Ah, le grand roi!"

When the Duchess of Montpensier was informed of the capture of the city, she sprang out of bed, shrieking, "Is no one sufficiently my friend to plunge a poniard in Brissac's bosom?" But she had known Henry well in former days, and soon accommodated herself to her new circumstances. She is said by some to have been seen playing cards at the Louvre the



very evening of his arrival; but this is probably a mistake. More reliable accounts say that the king, after sending assurances to the Duchesses of Montpensier and Nemours that they would not be disturbed, anticipated their advances by calling first. When the Duchess of Montpensier tremblingly asked Henry the purpose of his visit, he affably replied, "To get

some of those excellent comfitures of yours, which I remember so well." The duchess sent for a pot, and was about to go through the precaution of tasting it first, as was the custom in those days, but the king would not suffer her to do it.

"Have I not made war on you enough for you to suspect me?" she asked.

"I do not," replied the king.

Then he asked her what she thought of events.

"Ah, sire," she replied, "you are a great king."

Henry smiled, and said, "I don't know whether you believe what you say, but one thing I will wager, you don't feel kindly towards Brissac."

"I forgive Brissac," she said; "but I only wish my brother Mayenne could have been the one to let down the drawbridge to you."

"*Ventre-saint-gris!*" exclaimed the king; "I am afraid he would have kept me waiting too long. M. de Mayenne is no believer in loyalty or early hours."

The Duchess of Nemours shed tears in expressing her regret that her sons had not taken advantage of the king's clemency. "Madame, it is yet time if they wish it," was Henry's magnanimous answer. Both duchesses watched the procession with the king, to the disgust of the Huguenots, and were soon on the best of terms at the Louvre, where the Duchess of Montpensier bandied jests with the king, and even attended Protestant services with his sister. The young Duke of Guise soon made his submission, surrendered the towns in his possession, and was in due course rewarded with the government of Provence. Not a cheer greeted him as he rode through the streets of Paris to the Louvre, his hat pulled down over his pale and haughty face. The king received him graciously, and when the duke broke down, after trying to utter a few faltering words, Henry considerately said, "I see, like myself, you are no orator." Then the king eulogized the memory of Guise's father, who, he said, had been the friend of his youth, and promised to be a father to his son. That evening the young duke was present at the court ball, of which he was a melancholy spectator, frequently hiding his face in his cloak. The position of the son of Guise, who had been offered the throne with the Infanta, must have been one full of humiliation and bitter reflections.

After establishing himself in his capital, the king turned his attention again to Mayenne and the Spaniards, who were on the northern frontier. They very nearly stole a march on him before Laon, where Henry had a notion that they were going to attempt an attack, although Biron ridiculed the idea. However, the king was not satisfied until he had sent Givri out to scour the country with a body of three hundred horse. When Givri came back with the assurance that there were no Spaniards near, Henry dismissed his suspicions and went with a party of friends to dine in the forest. Having passed the night in the trenches, the king was fatigued, and he fell asleep soon after dinner. While he was taking a nap, his companions went for a walk in the forest. They had not gone far before they came upon the whole Spanish army noiselessly advancing. Hastening back, without being discovered, they found Henry had arisen and was busy shaking the fruit from a plum-tree. "Pardi, sire," they called, "we have just seen people passing who are getting ready other plums for you, and somewhat more difficult to digest." The king, who was acquainted perfectly with the disposition of his troops, despatched his companions in different directions to them as he was mounting his horse. Then he galloped to head-quarters at full speed, giving orders to all he met "with the same precision and scope as if he had been long prepared for a battle." When the Spaniards found the French were under arms, they withdrew without attempting an attack.

After capturing Laon and Noyon, Henry returned to Paris, and had hardly dismounted in his capital before an attempt was made to assassinate him. Montigny knelt to receive him, and the king was leaning forward to raise him, when a by-stander stabbed him from behind with a knife. The blow was intended for his bosom, but it only cut his lip and broke one of his teeth.

Henry thought it was a piece of buffoonery on the part of the court fool, Mathurine, who was standing beside him, and exclaimed, "Devil take the fool! she has wounded me!" Mathurine ran to close the door, while Montigny seized the man who had struck the blow, exclaiming, "Either you or I have wounded the king." When Henry saw that his assailant was only a lad, he commanded his attendants to let him go, saying, "I pardon him." But they thought it wiser not to obey. The youth proved to be Jean Chastel, the son of a wealthy draper, and a pupil of the Jesuits, who had taught him that it was a commendable act to kill a king excommunicated by the Pope. When



Henry heard this he laughingly exclaimed, "Was it necessary that the Jesuit should be convicted by my mouth!"

Chastel was executed, and the people were so indignant with the Jesuits that the king had to send troops to protect their college. Parliament banished them from France, after executing the regent of their college, among whose papers were found writings justifying the assassination of the king. The Pope attempted to reinstate the Jesuits, but Henry said, "If I had ten lives I would willingly give one to your Holiness; but, as I have only one, I owe it to my subjects to preserve it." After

the king's conversion and coronation the number of attempts against his life increased rather than diminished. There were three the year after, and four in 1600. A pretender to the throne also appeared in Charles de la Ramée, who asserted that he was a son of Charles IX. Henry was inclined to make light of the matter, and remarked that his rival had come on the field rather late. "He should have advanced his claims before the battle of Arques," he said. Parliament took the matter more seriously, and, after exposing the falsity of De la Ramée's pretensions, sentenced him to be hanged. Another claimant appeared, but as he pretended not only to be the natural son of the queen-mother and Charles de Bourbon, but also to have been suckled by the Virgin Mary, Parliament thought his claims might safely be disregarded. The numerous attempts which had been made on the king's life filled him with gloomy forebodings, and it was some time before he recovered his usual spirits. He is said to have replied to one of the ladies of the court who was chiding him for his sadness, "How can I feel otherwise, when I see a people so ungrateful?"

Having conquered his kingdom and defeated his enemies at home, Henry was now anxious to try conclusions with those who had been so long disturbing the realm from without. France had not formally declared war against Spain since the time of Henry II. Before taking this important step the king addressed a remonstrance to the estates of Artois and Hainault, in which he said, "Philip still continues his intrigues in my kingdom. Though you have taken no share in Philip's acts of injustice, on you will fall the first blows of a war so terrible, and I thought it my duty to warn you of my purpose before I proceeded to execute it. If you can prevail on the King of Spain to withdraw the army which he is having levied on the frontier, and to give

no protection for the future to rebels of my kingdom, I will not declare war against him." As no attention was paid to this remonstrance, the king followed it up with a formal declaration of war, a step opposed by Sully and afterwards admitted by Henry himself to have been too precipitate. The treasury was empty, and France, barely pacified after thirty years of civil war, needed time for recovery. An internecine war with Spain, such as was waged in the time of Francis I., might have proved fatal to France in her exhausted condition. But Henry knew that Spain was in no position to push matters to an extremity, even if the Dutch had not promised to keep Philip's armies occupied. He was not afraid of the chances of war, and realized the advantages to be derived from it more clearly than the cautious Sully. Spain had been practically making war on France for years, by fomenting her internal dissensions. Henry wished to put an end to Spanish intrigues, and to force Philip, who still addressed him as Prince of Béarn, to recognize him as King of France. An open declaration of war strengthened Henry's position in Europe, and forced on his enemies at home the choice of serving for or against their country.

The king assumed the direction of affairs in Paris, and sent Nevers, Turenne (now Duke of Bouillon), Villars, and Longueville to the northern frontier with his armies. These commanders met with some success in the beginning of the campaign, but it soon came to an end because of the jealousies and discords the civil wars had engendered among them. Henry's lieutenants, like Napoleon's marshals, never seemed to accomplish much by themselves. Things began to look critical. Two great Spanish armies entered France, one on the northern frontier, under Fuentes, while the other, under the Constable of Castile, effected a junction with Mayenne in Burgundy.

The king gathered together what forces he could and hastened to the army of the East, with the intention of giving battle. He had advanced as far as Fontaine-Française, with a troop of three hundred horse, when he received word from the Marquis of Mirabeau that a large Spanish force was at hand. Henry sent Biron with half of his little troop to reconnoitre. Biron, seeing a small body of Spanish horse at the top of a hill, rashly charged them, and found himself in the face of the whole Spanish army. He received a sabre-cut on the head, and was driven back in confusion on the king, who had not time even to put on his helmet. Henry's companions begged him to mount a swift horse and escape, but he replied, "I want your assistance, and not your advice. There is more danger in flight than in resistance." Calling on his officers by name, the king met the Spanish onset so boldly that their first squadron was completely overthrown. He met their second squadron with equal success, and, while his troopers were driving back the fugitives, Cayet says Henry turned with only about twenty followers and defeated their remaining body of cavalry. The Constable of Castile, believing that the king was supported by his army, would not allow his infantry to attack, and retreated across the Saône, leaving Henry in undisputed possession of Burgundy.

The king wrote his sister, "You were very near becoming my heiress;" and he always declared that, while in all his other battles he had fought for victory, in this one he had fought for his life. The numbers engaged in this little skirmish were insignificant, but its results were far-reaching. The Pope, who had steadily refused to confirm Henry's absolution, at last yielded. The Duchess of Montpensier, in urging her brother to make terms with the king while it was still in his power, had predicted that the Pope would soon recognize Henry, and that

Philip would not continue the war for Mayenne's benefit. But the stolid and phlegmatic Lorrainer was as slow to relinquish a resolution as he was to make one. He and the Spaniards blamed each other for the loss of Paris and the failure of their campaigns, and it is said the archduke even meditated arresting Mayenne for betraying Spain's interests in thwarting the election of the Infanta. After the affair of Fontaine-Française, Mayenne parted from the Constable of Castile in disgust, intending to throw himself on the mercy of Philip. There can be little question as to what his fate would have been, but the kindness of Henry saved his old foe from a Spanish dungeon. With characteristic generosity, Henry sent one of his officers to Mayenne with an assurance that if he quietly retired to Châlons he would be left undisturbed until the close of the campaign afforded the king an opportunity to make a treaty with him. Mayenne gratefully accepted the truce which Henry's council did their best to prevent the king from granting. Gabrielle d'Estrées is said to have exerted herself in Mayenne's favor, in return for his promise to support her elevation to the throne. Be this as it may, Henry granted Mayenne and his partisans complete amnesty, and assumed all their financial obligations.

When the grateful Leaguer came to make his submission, he knelt and embraced the king's knees. Henry hastened to raise him, exclaiming, "What, cousin, is it you I see, or do I dream?" Mayenne thanked the king for having rescued him from Spanish arrogance and treachery. "I swear to you, sire," he said, "by the living God, on my faith, on my honor, and on my salvation, that I will be to you, all my life long, a loyal subject and a faithful servant; I will never fail nor desert you." After embracing Mayenne three times, with the greatest cordiality, Henry would not suffer him to return to the subject,

but took him by the hand and led him out to inspect the alterations which he was making in his park. The king, whose activity was incessant, walked so fast that the fat and gouty duke was soon red in the face and panting with his exertions. Henry noticed this, and whispered to Sully, who was with them, "If I walk this great carcass much longer, I shall avenge myself without much trouble, for he is a dead man."



Then, turning to Mayenne, he said, "Tell the truth, cousin, I go a little too fast for you?" The duke acknowledged he was ready to fall, whereupon the king embraced him, and said, with one of his merry laughs, "There is my hand: take it; for, on my life, this is all the vengeance I shall ever take." The king and Mayenne kept their promises. Some

of those who owed Henry the most, like Bouillon and Biron, betrayed his trust, but Mayenne for the rest of his life was his loyal and devoted friend.

The fortunes of war, which the king had so brilliantly retrieved, turned against him again, as soon as the conduct of the campaign was left to his lieutenants. Villars and Bouillon quarrelled and refused to support each other, so that Fuentes was enabled to defeat them both and capture Cambrai and Doullens. Villars was killed, Longueville met his fate in

Doullens, and D'Aumont fell soon after. Nevers was dying, and the king was obliged to hasten to the relief of Cambrai in person, but he arrived too late. Cambrai had fallen, so Henry determined to recoup himself by the capture of La Fère. He accomplished this at the end of a long siege, but in the mean time the archduke surprised and captured Calais. Elizabeth had asked for Calais as the price of her support in the Spanish war, but Henry had replied that he would rather be plundered by his enemies than by his friends. Elizabeth was offended, and made no effort to prevent the capture of Calais by the Spanish, as she might easily have done. Henry had estranged her friendship by his abjuration, and England and France no longer found their interests identical. Cecil wrote Henry that it would be more becoming in him to thank Elizabeth for the aid she had already furnished him than to ask for more, for "by dint of drawing water the well had gone dry."

Popular favor, which is always fickle, now began to desert the king in his reverses. People complained that he devoted to Gabrielle the time which should have been given to his affairs, and he found some scurrilous verses hanging from one of his orange-trees, which so angered him that he swore if he could have discovered the writer he would have had to do with an oak—rather than an orange-tree. Sancy, whose assistance the king asked to secure a divorce from Marguerite, in order that he might marry Gabrielle, bluntly replied that, "harlot for harlot, he liked the daughter of Henry II. quite as well as the daughter of Mme. d'Estrées." Gabrielle never forgave this remark, and used her influence to get Sully appointed to Sancy's place. France should be grateful to her for two of the wisest acts of Henry's life,—his abjuration, and his selection of Sully as superintendent of his finances. But the thoroughness with

which taxes were levied and embezzling officials were forced to disgorge caused dissatisfaction in many quarters. The court was full of faction and quarrels; Sully and Villeroi were jealous of each other's influence over the king; the differences between Biron and Villars rendered their armies useless; Bellegarde and D'O were at swords' points, Sancy and Cheverny squabbled over the spoils, Soisson's ill-regulated ambition embarrassed all, and Nevers, Bouillon, Trémoille, Epernon, and Montmorency struggled to erect independent governments.

During the civil wars many of the great nobles became practically independent rulers of their provinces. Although the



conditions were now altered, the ambitions thus engendered had taken root in the bosoms of many, who now thought it a favorable time to propose to the king the division of France into great fiefs, to be held subject to military service. The Duke of Montpensier was selected to urge on the king this return to feudal government. Henry listened calmly, and then exposed the folly of any such

scheme so sensibly, and declared his opposition to it so forcibly, that Montpensier was glad to acknowledge an error which he never repeated. But Turenne was not equally generous. By

marrying him to the heiress of Bouillon the king had made him Duke of Bouillon and Prince of Sedan. After his wife's death, Turenne married into the house of Nassau, and became more ambitious and arrogant than ever. He embarrassed Henry in the middle of the Spanish war by withdrawing his troops from the army on the pretence that his principality was threatened. His brother-in-law, the Duke de la Trémoille, followed his example, and retired with his Huguenot followers to Poitou, where he had hopes of establishing an independent Protestant state. Like the Duchess of Rohan, he held that the prospects of the Protestants had become worse since the king's accession than they had been before.

The turbulent D'Aubigny, who asserted that he had lost Henry's favor by opposing his abjuration, took a prominent part in the councils of the Huguenots, and declared that no reliance could be placed on the word of a renegade king. After Chastel's attempt, D'Aubigny told Henry that he had been struck in the mouth because he had denied God with his lips, but that when he renounced Him with his soul, God would strike him to the heart. D'Aubigny's friends told him the king intended to put him to death, and advised him to fly; instead of which, he went straight to Paris. Henry welcomed his old comrade cordially, and took him to see Gabrielle d'Estrées. Putting her little son in his old follower's arms, he besought him, if anything should happen, to take the child and raise him among his Huguenot friends. It was not long, however, before Henry's affection was again estranged by D'Aubigny's uncontrollable temper and the prominent part he took in Huguenot conferences and theological controversies. The king said to Sully, "We must put this troublesome fellow in the Bastile," and he summoned D'Aubigny to court. There he

allowed him to wait two months before he honored him with a word. Mme. Châtillon advised D'Aubigny to escape. Instead of doing so, he went boldly to the king, recited his services in the past, and asked for a pension. Henry embraced his old follower and granted his request, but the next day Sully showed him over the Bastile and advised him to be more circumspect in future. The king confided his "Grand Design" to his old companion in arms, and was on the point of sending him on an embassy to Germany, when he was assassinated.

After Henry's death, D'Aubigny revolted with Condé, and accused the prince of betraying his companion by his surrender. Condé called out to the bitter-tongued old Huguenot, "Go home to Doignan!" "Adieu," was the sarcastic reply; "you go to the Bastile,"—where, indeed, Condé passed the three years following. D'Aubigny escaped to Geneva, where he was given the command of the Swiss forces, but it was not long before they were glad to depose him. A book he wrote was condemned to be burnt, and finally D'Aubigny himself, at the age of seventy, was for the fourth time in his life sentenced to die. But he lived to marry a widow the year following, and, contrary to all expectations, ended his turbulent career at an advanced age and by a natural death.

In the midst of the king's embarrassment, when he was seeking in the society of Gabrielle a little respite from the contentions of his followers, news came of the fall of Amiens. For the moment Henry was appalled. When he recovered, he exclaimed, "I have played the King of France long enough; it is time to play the King of Navarre again." Turning to Gabrielle, who was in tears, he bade her good-by, and in five hours was off at the head of his troops. The faithful Mayenne had been for some time urging the king to join his army, but his council did not believe

it possible for him to recapture Amiens, now that it had fallen. Henry proved to them their mistake, after a long and obstinate siege, in which he beat back all the archduke's attempts at relief. Then he turned his attention to the Duke of Mercœur, who had taken advantage of the civil wars to establish an independent government in Brittany. One of the duke's friends had told him it was impossible this should continue. "I do not know whether it be a dream or not," was the duke's reply, "but it has lasted now over ten years." Mercœur did not wait for Henry's approach, but surrendered at once. He was said to have received more favorable terms than he deserved, through the influence of Gabrielle d'Estrées, to whose son he agreed to marry his daughter. This gave the sarcastic Sancy an opportunity to remark that "to be rewarded by the king it was necessary first to have betrayed him."

Henry now ended fifty years of almost continuous war and secured permanent peace by two of the most important acts of his reign,—the treaty with Spain and the Edict of Nantes. After the recapture of Amiens he determined that it was a favorable time to enter into negotiations with Spain; but before doing so he notified his allies of his intentions. Elizabeth, who wished to protect England by keeping Spain at war with France, was alarmed at the prospect of peace. Although she had done little for Henry in his need, she now offered him six thousand foot and five hundred horse for the continuance of the war. The Dutch also offered him four thousand foot and a train of artillery for the recapture of Calais. But the king, having secured his ends and established France's position again among the nations of Europe, had no further need of foreign support, and declined to continue the war solely for the benefit of his allies. He explained to them, with a wisdom that could not be gainsaid, the

advantages which France would derive from peace, and then began negotiations with Spain. Philip was even more eager for peace than Henry. He restored Calais, and thought it wise to agree for the future to arbitrate all differences with his royal brother rather than resort to arms. Henry remarked, as he



signed the treaty, that this stroke of his pen was worth more to France than a dozen victories. Four months later Philip died a loathsome death, acknowledging the errors of his vindictive and tortuous policy, and advising his successor to make peace with his enemies and give up the attempt to subjugate the Low Countries.

Protestant writers generally refer to the Edict of Nantes as

the most glorious act of Henry's reign. It secured the Protestants their political rights and practical freedom of worship, but in this respect it is no more liberal than many of the ordinances of the Valois ; the only real difference was, that Henry was able to enforce its observance. Strange to say, the wisdom of this edict was not appreciated at the time. Henry IV. was one of the first rulers in the world voluntarily to grant liberty of conscience to an opposing denomination. The Pope was much chagrined by this act, but the king declared that the prosperity of his people was more important than that of the Church. But now that the civil wars were ended, the people themselves did not wish a compromise. Religious partisanship made each side blind to the claims of the other. The Protestants were unwilling to accept the king's conditions, and the Catholics were furious at what they termed his unnecessary surrender. But Henry was determined, and made an eloquent speech to the Parliament, in which he declared, "There must be no more distinction between Catholics and Huguenots. All must be good Frenchmen. I will root out all factions, and punish those who foment them."

France was destined to enjoy peace and prosperity during the remainder of Henry's reign. The only disturbance of any consequence was that caused by a quarrel with Savoy. The Duke of Savoy had taken advantage of the civil wars to seize the disputed Marquisate of Saluces. Henry III. had declared he would retake it, and his successor could not do less. His cabinet did not think so trifling a matter was worth a war ; but to their indifference, the defiance of Savoy, the expostulations of the Pope, and the menaces of Spain, Henry had only one answer : "Je veux mon marquisat." The Duke of Savoy made a journey to Paris to see if he could not arrange matters with Henry in person, but the king insisted that the settlement should be left

to commissioners. The duke's cunning was as famous as were his eccentricities. He was no observer of etiquette, and bribed



the king's mistress and ministers right and left, making magnificent presents to all in favor. In his own words, his journey to France "was to sow, and not to reap." D'Aubigny relates that the duke was playing primero with the king for a stake of four thousand pistoles, and had the winning cards. He showed them to Guise, who was standing near, and then shuffled

the cards together and lost. Although he flattered Henry to his face, he ridiculed his frankness behind his back; and when the king showed him his troops, the duke was indifferent.

"You should see them in the field," Henry significantly remarked: "they are lions then."

"What do you pay them?" asked Savoy.

"Four crowns a month," replied the king.

"That is too little," answered the duke. "Allow me to make them a present of a month's pay."

"You can do as you please," replied Henry; "but any one that takes a sou from you will be hanged."

The king directed Sully to show the duke over the arsenal, and when Savoy noticed the new cannon he asked what they were for. Sully replied, "To take Montmélian." Without

appearing in the least disconcerted, the duke replied, "Have you ever been in Montmélian?" Sully said he had not. "I thought not," replied Savoy: "Montmélian is impregnable."

The duke's intrigues with Bouillon, Biron, and D'Auvergne were of no avail. Henry was inexorable, and Savoy had to agree to restore the marquisate or give up the territory known as La Bresse. When he got back to Savoy he did neither, and tried to deceive the king by new negotiations; but Henry discovered that he was treating with Spain and preparing for war. Biron was directed to invade Savoy from Burgundy, while Guise and Lesdiguières took command in Provence and Dauphiny. The Duke of Savoy had planned that Biron should desert the king and at the same moment an army should pour into France from Spain; but Henry's activity gave him no opportunity to put this plan into operation. The king hastened to Savoy himself, and, in spite of the fact that all his courtiers and generals, except Lesdiguières, worked in the interest of Savoy, to whom Biron betrayed all his moves, Henry marched from victory to victory, until there was hardly a fortified town in all Savoy that was not in his possession. The duke was then glad to purchase peace at any price, and ceded to France La Bresse and all the territory west of the Rhone.

The king had suspected Biron of negotiating with Savoy, and Biron, to escape further investigation, confessed that he had aspired to the hand of the duke's daughter. Henry freely pardoned his old companion in arms, and, to show his confidence, paid his debts and sent him on an embassy to the Queen of England. Elizabeth, who knew more of Biron's treason, perhaps, than Henry, thought fit to caution the marshal by warning him of Essex's fate. It was not long before Lafin, who had acted as go-between for Biron and the Duke of Savoy, became

involved in other conspiracies, and, to save himself, confessed everything to the king. Documents in Biron's own handwriting were produced, containing plans for inciting a rebellion, introducing Spanish troops, and dismembering France. The Duke of Savoy was to seize Provence and Dauphiny; Biron was to marry the duke's daughter, and have Burgundy and La Bresse with fifty thousand crowns dower; La Trémoille was to establish a Protestant state in Poitou, while Bouillon, Epernon, and others were to found principalities for themselves in the other provinces.

The king was astounded, and sent for Biron more in grief than in anger. The marshal contrived to evade compliance. Then Henry sent word that if Biron did not make his appearance he would seek him in person. The marshal would probably have taken to flight had the treacherous Lafin not said, "Courage! Hold your head up; they know nothing." When Biron arrived, the king embraced him and told him that treasonable reports were being circulated about him, but promised that if the marshal would make a full confession he would pardon him. Biron believed, from what Lafin had said, that Henry had no proof of his treason and was seeking to entrap him in a confession; therefore he indignantly protested his innocence and declared he had come not to ask pardon, but justice. The king, having failed to obtain any confession, then asked the Count of Soissons and Sully to undertake it, saying, "It is not I who want to destroy this man, it is he who wants to destroy himself. If he allows himself to be brought to justice, he has no mercy whatever to expect from me." Soissons and Sully were no more successful than the king had been; so that evening Henry made a final appeal to Biron, in the name of their former friendship, but in vain. The king had been warned that Biron had horses in waiting for his escape, and therefore left

the room to order his arrest. When he returned he said, "Marshal, reflect upon what I have said to you." But Biron answered not a word. "Adieu, Baron Biron," Henry then exclaimed, giving him the title with which he had entered his service. He was arrested at the door by Vitry, who asked for his sword. "Take it," exclaimed Biron; "it has done the king good service."

The marshal paced the floor of his room all night, and in the morning demanded another audience with the king, which was refused. At his trial his defence was feeble, and when he was confronted with his accomplices he nearly went into convulsions, and had to go to bed before he recovered. He denied having aimed at Henry's life, and declared that he was a victim of Sully's enmity and the king's ingratitude. He reviled Henry, and told the judges that he trusted them more than the king, who had pardoned only in order to betray him. Biron was condemned to death by the unanimous vote of one hundred and twenty-seven judges. When he heard his sentence he fell in his chair; then he burst into a fury of rage. "Why am I the only one in France to suffer justice?" he asked, with some reason. "How many times have Epernon and Bouillon betrayed the king and been pardoned?" Biron himself had confessed that there were eighty noblemen in France receiving pensions from Spain. Great efforts were made to secure his pardon, but the king was inflexible. "I never loved any one as I loved him," he said. "I would have trusted my son and kingdom to him. He has done me good service; but he cannot say that I did not save his life three times. I pulled him out of the enemy's hands at Fontaine-Française so wounded and so dazed with blows that, as I had acted soldier in saving him, I had also to act marshal as regarded the retreat." To the queen's en-

treaties he replied, "I have too great a love for you and your child to leave this thorn in the heart of the realm." It was necessary for the king to prove the stability of his government and discourage conspiracy by making an example of Biron.

The marshal behaved at his execution with the same turbulence and pusillanimity that had marked his trial. "You see a man," he shouted, "whom the king kills because he is a

good Catholic." As he approached the scaffold he called out to the guard, "My good friends, send a ball through my brain, I beg of you." When the executioner wanted to bind him, he exclaimed, "Don't touch me; if you come near me I will strangle you." He made objections to everything, and insisted on bandaging his own eyes. Then he sprang to his feet and tore the bandage off, cry-



ing, "Is there no pardon for me?" Again he was bandaged and knelt, and again he rose and took the bandage off, exclaiming, "Let me look at the sky once more." He was persuaded to kneel again for the purpose of prayer, but would have risen for the third time, had the executioner not swept off his head as he was in the act of rising.

Charles de Gontaut, Duc de Biron and Marshal of France, was a short, stout man, of dark complexion, with a treacherous

eye. He was as brave as his sword, to use a French expression, and was a colonel at fourteen, marshal at twenty, and lieutenant-general at twenty-five. Biron was in the habit of saying that he would not die without seeing his head on a crown-piece, and boasted that his sword had made Henry king, and that it could unmake him. He was a reckless gambler and spendthrift. Henry repeatedly paid his debts, in hopes of winning his attachment, but Biron thought nothing the king ever did for him was equal to his merits, and was jealous of every favor shown to any one else. He cared little for religion, and ridiculed Catholics and Huguenots alike, but he put great faith in sorcery.

La Trémoille and his brother-in-law, Bouillon, escaped to their provinces, whence Bouillon fled to Germany. The king finally pardoned him, and he was suffered to return to Sedan; but when Henry discovered that Bouillon continued his plots and was implicated in the conspiracy for which the Counts d'Auvergne and d'Entraigues were condemned to death, he resolved to give his former companion in arms a lesson in submission, and set out for Sedan at the head of his army. Bouillon put himself in a position of defence and boasted of his ability to defy the king, but his courage gave out as Henry approached, and he ended by making his submission. Henry pardoned him, to the disgust of Sully, and, when the duke fell on his knees and kissed his hand, exclaimed, "Turenne, my old friend, it was not to take Sedan that I raised this army, but to win back thy loyal services." This was the king's last military expedition.



CHAPTER XII.

STATE AND DOMESTIC AFFAIRS.

BEFORE coming to the final scenes of Henry's life, it is fit that some notice should be taken of the internal affairs of his reign. In the beginning of his career the king was badly served and but little obeyed. In the midst of constant wars and negotiations, he was obliged to organize his finances and give his personal attention to all the details of state. The difficulties and demands that assailed him would have broken down an ordinary man, but his wonderful activity and powers of organization soon brought order out of chaos and gave France the best organized and most prosperous government it had ever enjoyed. When Henry IV. came to the throne he found France dismembered by civil wars and without government. Not only did he reconquer his kingdom, town by town, province by province, but he

restored it to peace and prosperity by an administration which has had no equal in its annals. Henry's saying, "I want each of my peasants to have a fowl in the pot every Sunday," is often quoted. Another, "Who robs the people robs me," is not so well known. He reproved his captains for marauding, saying, "If you ruin the people, who will pay your pensions?" Before he became king he said to Sully, "Let us give our greatest care, when we come to power, to the amelioration of the people; it is they who make us all live." Sully owed his advancement to Gabrielle d'Estrées, but when she aspired to be queen he did not hesitate to desert her interests, and Henry exclaimed, "By God, if I must choose between losing one or the other, I could better do without ten mistresses like you than one servant like him." When Sully came to take charge of the finances, he recovered one hundred and fifty millions of livres which had been alienated from the crown. The king could scarcely believe it. In 1597 France was bankrupt, and the revenues were only twenty-three millions. In 1609 two hundred and seventy-eight millions of the national debt had been paid, and there were forty-three millions reserve in the treasury. In 1595 the country seemed ruined beyond recovery, yet in 1601 there was such an abundance that France became an exporting nation, and her manufactures increased to such an extent that workmen immigrated from all parts of Europe.

The king gave his attention chiefly to the political condition of the realm, while Sully labored over its domestic affairs and finances. Henry used to say to his minister, "I always feel stronger when I have you in council;" but he never asked Sully's opinion on religious questions. The king took the initiative in his council, but always deferred to a good reason, and was singularly open to the opinion of others. Knowing

that Bassompierre opposed his Spanish policy, he called on him to express his opinions in council, and was so pleased with the ability of his arguments that, although he did not agree with them, he requested him to write them out for the Secretary of Foreign Affairs. Henry was a great worker, and spent days at a time in his cabinet with Sully. He warned his ministers against deceiving him, and was always requiring accounts and examining statements. He had memorials drawn up of everything that interested him, and filled rooms with these documents. Sully, after describing their arrangement in cases and drawers, says, "The labor required was immense. Let one imagine everything connected immediately or remotely with the finances, with war, with the artillery, with the navy, commerce, coinage, mines, police,—in a word, with every part of government, interior and exterior, ecclesiastic, civil, political, and domestic. Every one of all these parts had its separate place in this state cabinet, so that all the documents concerning it would be found ready to the hand at a glance."

Such organization was unknown in those days. There was legislation for all classes; there were lists of the clergy, descriptions of all the crown property, regulations for the army in peace and in war, exempting artisans, traders, and farmers. The nobility were forbidden to hunt while the crops were growing, and edicts were issued against duelling and the carrying of fire-arms. The rivers were stocked with fish and many of the royal chases were ploughed and planted for the benefit of the poor, but vagabonds were forced to work. Co-operative enterprises were organized, in which one-thirtieth part of the earnings was set apart for the support of disabled workmen. Bridges and canals were built, hospitals were founded, streets

were reconstructed on a uniform model, and sanitation was attended to. There never had been such a government in France, nor such a revival of industry as took place under its auspices. The king discouraged extravagance, and set an example to his nobility by the simplicity of his own dress. He ridiculed those of his courtiers who "carried their woods and windmills on their backs," as he expressed it, but he fostered the manufacture of silk, against the advice of Sully, who thought it encouraged extravagance. The austere Sully was not sufficiently in advance of his time to see the futility of sumptuary edicts, but the king's good sense prevented most of these measures, as well as the imposts which his minister attempted to put on commerce. Of course the government made mistakes. Many of Sully's new taxes were unpopular, and one of them, known as "the tax of the sou per livre," almost caused an insurrection. The king did what he could to correct abuses, and abolished many unpopular taxes, but he was not infallible. It was an age when men still fought in plate armor and believed in alchemy. Political science was not to be evolved for some two hundred years yet. The king made abortive attempts to mine gold and silver in France, and sent colonies to the New World. He also attempted "to correct the innumerable abuses of the bar," and to abolish lawsuits between relatives and others by establishing tribunals of arbitration.

Sully was "the watch-dog of the treasury" in his day, and frequently refused to pay grants which he thought the king had inconsiderately allowed. This was convenient in cases where Henry repented his generosity and was glad to throw the burden of the refusal on his minister. If Sully was pompous and austere at court, in his cabinet he was almost unapproachable.

The courtiers hated him. It is related that several of them went once to pay him a visit. He asked them what they wanted, and when they replied they had only come to see him, he said, "That is quickly done," and shut the door in their faces. Another presented a claim to Sully for payment; the minister not only refused to honor it, but pushed the applicant out of his cabinet. The courtier went to the king, and said, "Sire, if at the end of three days I am not paid, I shall have the regret to announce to you that I have killed your Superintendent of Finances." He was paid. Sully's bearing was arrogant and unconciliatory, but his industry and fidelity were exemplary. He was scrupulously honest, and had no pleasures or interests of his own to serve. He rose before daylight, and worked in his cabinet until night. Frequently Henry called him to his bedside after midnight, if he had anything on his mind. Sully says the king was absolutely truthful, and never concealed anything from him. Henry inherited from his mother a nature which was simple and direct itself, and quick to detect insincerity in others. His frankness sometimes lacked delicacy. He once asked the pompous Spanish ambassador if his king kept a mistress. "If he does, he keeps it secret," was the answer. "I am willing to be known as I am," replied Henry. "Men who are devoid of merit are those who are afraid to avow their faults." Another ambassador found the king on all-fours playing horse with the Dauphin. "Are you a father?" asked Henry. "Yes, sire." "Then we will finish our game."

The courtiers accused the king of parsimony. He certainly was economical, in spite of three expensive tastes,—war, women, and building. He was also tolerant in an intolerant period. When a minister publicly rebuked him for unbecoming

conduct in church, the king rose and thanked him for the admonition, but advised him in the future to administer his reproofs in private. He dismissed the governor of Bois, who had resisted him, without punishment, but said, "I pardon but once." He was always counselling his officers to be moderate and conciliatory. He writes to Créqui, "You are quick, angry, high-handed. You must get rid of all that. I recommend humility. Caress and embrace all the world. I speak to you as a father to a son." To Epernon he writes, "Your letter is that of a man in a passion." Like Washington with Congress, Henry had great reason to complain of the inefficiency of Parliament. He said it only added to the confusion and increased the perplexities of his position. For this reason, perhaps, he assembled Parliament as seldom as possible, and after he had restored the kingdom to prosperity he never summoned the States-General. It was two hundred years before they met again, to inaugurate the Revolution of 1789. Henry is not to be blamed, perhaps, for the poor opinion he had of their usefulness in his time, but if parliamentary institutions had not been allowed to relapse into desuetude, Richelieu, Mazarin, and Louis XIV. would have been impossibilities, and the French Revolution might not have occurred.

The king was fond of going among the people and informing himself of their opinions and wants. Innumerable stories are told of his adventures. One of these illustrates both his easy habits and his good nature. Being alone in the country, he sent for the wisest man of the village to share his meal. A shrewd-looking peasant was brought in. "Sit down," said the king. When the peasant obeyed, Henry asked, "What is your name?" "Gaillard." "And what is the difference between Gaillard and paillard?" playfully asked the king. "The width

of the table," answered the peasant. "Ventre-saint-gris!" exclaimed the king, "I yield. I did not expect to find so great wisdom in so small a village."

The king hated long speeches, and said they had made his hair turn gray. Once when the head of a deputation was about to begin an address, he stubbed his toe and uttered an oath. "That will do," said the king: "what follows will only spoil so good a beginning." Another time a spokesman began his speech with a reference to Agesilaus, King of Lacedæmon. "Ventre-saint-gris!" exclaimed Henry, "I have heard of that Agesilaus, but he has dined and I have not." On another occasion he interrupted a long speech, and told the speaker to say the rest of it to Maître Guillaume. Again, an orator began, "O king, very benign, very great, and very clement——" "Say, also, very tired," broke in Henry.

Tradition, which accuses Henry of having lacked physical courage, also asserts that he was possessed of an irresistible inclination to steal, but that he always returned whatever he took, and was in the habit of saying, "If it had not been my fate to be a king, I should certainly have been hanged." Henry was an inveterate gambler, but, like Napoleon, he played badly, and was accused of cheating. He was too eager to win, timid when the stakes were large, and bad-tempered when he lost. A story is told that once when he was playing with Bassompierre he substituted half-pistoles for pistoles. Bassompierre noticed the half-pistoles.

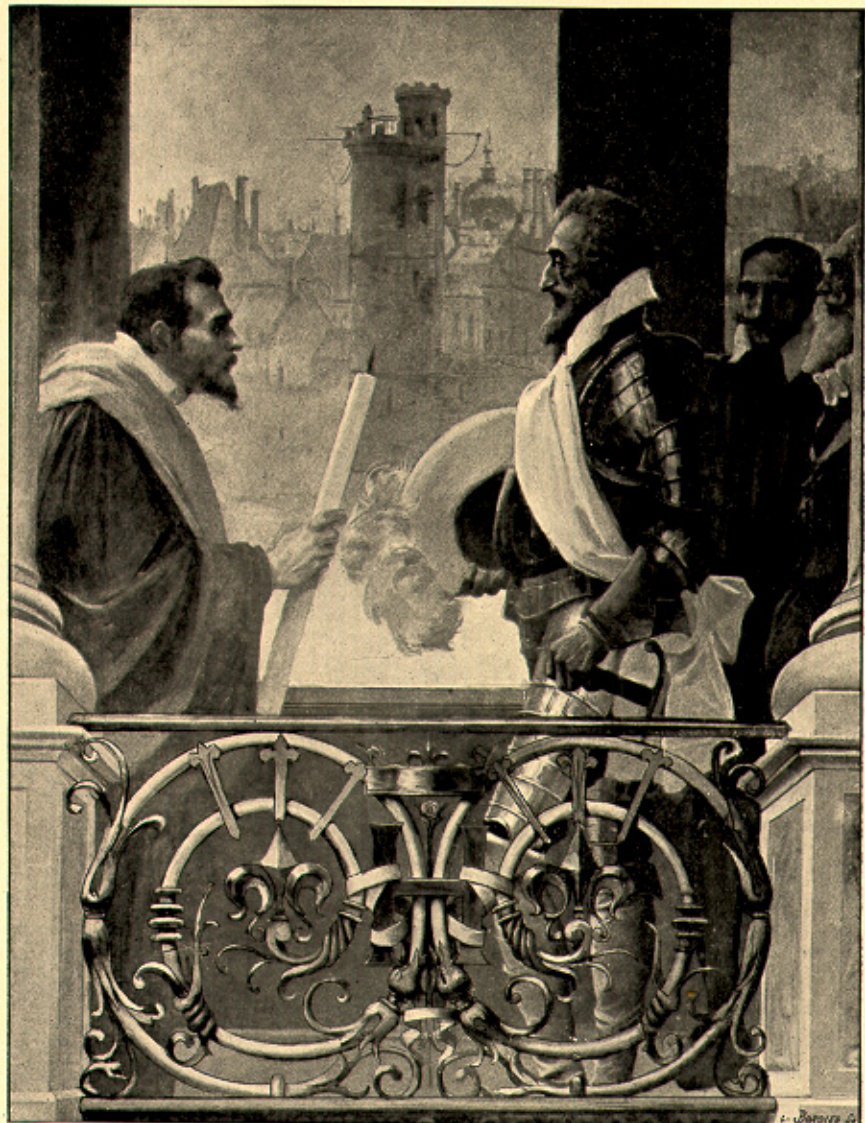
"Who put them there?" the king asked.

"You, sire."

"No, it was you, Bassompierre."

"I?"

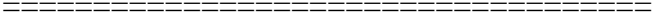
"Yes."



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Emmett F. Fields
Bank of Wisdom

Bank of wisdom
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“Very well,” said Bassompierre; then he replaced them with pistoles, and taking the half-pistoles threw them out of the window.

Every age produces great men, but the age of Henry IV. was the most fertile of modern history. It was the age of the discovery of the New World, the Renaissance in Italy, and the Reformation in Germany. Henry IV. came on the stage just as Charles V., Leo X., Francis I., and a galaxy of great contemporary warriors and statesmen were leaving it. The death of William of Orange and of Elizabeth of England left Henry IV. the only commanding figure in Europe. He had made France a great military power again, and was recognized as the greatest soldier and administrator of his time. Naturally his friendship was courted and his opinion respected by his neighbors. He secured peace for the Dutch and liberty for the Catholics; he gratified the Pope and disappointed Spain by causing the surrender of Ferrara; his influence averted a religious war between Venice and Rome; he detached Savoy from Spain, and turned his old enemy into an ally by directing her ambitions away from France to the fertile plains of Lombardy. In every direction Henry's genius triumphed. It was only in his private life that he encountered misfortune. The Duke of Tuscany once called Henry “a hero who conquered France inch by inch and yet could not manage two unruly women.” It was too true. This was the most unfortunate side of Henry's career.

But although there are traits in the character of Henry IV. which may lower him in the estimation of the reader of to-day, he could well have afforded to use the words which the great dramatist put in the mouth of Othello :

“Speak of me as I am; nothing extenuate,
Nor set down aught in malice.”

It may be said in Henry's behalf that he inherited from his father a weakness for female charms which amounted almost to mania. After the desertion of his wife he formed a number of attachments, but the only one which proved lasting was that which he contracted with Gabrielle d'Estrées. He wished to elevate her to the throne, but Marguerite, considering this match unworthy of the king, was resolute in refusing to consent to a divorce so long as the favorite was to profit by it. It was rumored that Gabrielle was not faithful to the king, his rival in her affection being the handsome and brilliant Bellegarde, of whom Racan said three things were told which were not true,—first, that he was brave; second, that he was gallant; third, that he was liberal. Bellegarde seemed to make it his business to court the king's mistresses, and is even said to have aspired to the favor of the queen. Henry suffered from transports of jealousy, during which he would exclaim, "Will no one rid me of this damned Bellegarde?" Then, after a few moments of reflection, he would add, "You have heard what I said, but let none of you dare to do it." Praslin is said one night to have offered to prove Gabrielle's infidelity to the king by surprising her and Bellegarde together. Henry dressed himself and followed the captain of his guard to her door; but when Praslin was about to knock the king's heart misgave him, and he would not permit it.

There were many at court who were jealous of Gabrielle and did not wish to see her elevated to the throne, so when she came to a sudden and untimely end it was rumored that she had been poisoned. The king, who was galloping towards Paris, fainted when he saw from his officers' faces that his mistress was dead. For days he was inconsolable, and if Gabrielle had been his lawful wife she could not have been buried in greater state.

The court went into mourning, the bells tolled, and all Paris was draped in black. Henry wrote his sister that henceforth he was dead to love, and Marguerite hesitated no longer to consent to a divorce; but hardly was this done before the king fell in love again, this time with the brilliant and witty Henriette d'Entragues, whose mother, Marie

Touchet, had been the mistress of Charles IX.

It is doubtful if the beautiful Henriette ever cared for her royal lover. She had an unbridled tongue, and her nature was quarrelsome and mercenary. Although her reputation was not immaculate, she made all sorts of conditions before she would yield to the king's passion. She asked for a



hundred thousand crowns. The king ordered Sully to pay it. Sully piled the money in his cabinet. When the king saw the great heap it made, he asked,—

“What is that?”

“Money,” answered his minister.

“I can see that well enough,” replied the king.

“Guess how much there is,” said Sully.

“How can I? All I can tell is that there is a great deal.”

“No, sire.”

“What?”

“There are only a hundred thousand crowns there.”

Henry understood, and was silent. But Mlle. d'Entraques still had scruples, and required from the king a promise of marriage. Henry had often given this before, and made no difficulty over it now ; but Henriette insisted that it should be in writing. The king wrote it out and showed it to Sully, who read it and handed it back in silence.

“Tell me what you think of it,” said the king. “Your silence offends me more than your most adverse expressions could. I promise not to be vexed at anything you can possibly say to me.”

“You promise not to be angry with me, whatever I may say or do?”

“Yes, yes, I promise all you desire, since for anything you say it will be all the same.”

Sully took the promise of marriage and tore it in two, saying, “There, sire: since you wish to know, that is what I think of such a promise.”

“What! Morbleu!” exclaimed the king; “what are you doing? I believe you are mad!”

“Would to God I were the only madman in France!” answered Sully.

“Very well,” said the king; “I understand you, and will say no more, because of my promise; but give me back that paper.”

“Your Majesty is aware,” said Sully, “that you are ruining all your preparations for divorce, and, consequently, the possibility of contracting a legitimate marriage, for as soon as this promise is known your wife will not consent to your divorce, nor will the Pope sanction it.”

The king made no answer, but went back into his cabinet, wrote out another paper like the one which had been destroyed,

and rode off with it to Mlle. d'Entragues. Marguerite bewailed the position in which she found herself, and the Pope sanctioned the king's divorce only on condition that the marriage which his ministers had projected between him and Marie de Médicis should be consummated. Henry had no intention of doing this, and when Sully brought him the news that he had been married by proxy the king was thunderstruck. He walked around his cabinet for a quarter of an hour, scratching his head and biting his nails; then he said, "Well, so be it: there is no remedy." Henriette d'Entragues, as may well be imagined, was in a fury, and her tongue was so much more than a match for both the king and Sully that the latter proposed putting her in the Bastile.

When Henriette saw the new queen, she declared she was not afraid of "the fat bankeress from Florence." Marie de Médicis brought the king an enormous dower, which, in the straitened circumstances of the crown immediately after the civil wars, was one of the chief inducements for the connection. Henry, who had just finished the war with Savoy, hastened to meet his bride at Lyons. He wished to see his wife before he was announced, but he arrived late at night in the rain, and the guards refused to open the gates to him until his voice was recognized. The stir which the king's arrival produced among the courtiers soon made Marie de Médicis aware of his presence. She knelt before him to kiss his hand, but he took her by the waist and embraced her several times. The Duchess of Nemours thought to flatter the king by saying, "Sire, you have married a beautiful wife." Henry, who did not care to confess his disappointment, replied, "Yes, it is a beautiful feature to be Queen of France." Later in the evening he intimated through one of the ladies in waiting that, as he had brought no bed with him, he would be glad to

share the queen's, to which she graciously assented. The marriage was celebrated soon after; but Henry was disappointed in the new queen, and returned in a few days to his mistress, who received him with transports of joy.

Marie de Médicis was a large, phlegmatic woman, indolent and luxurious, but entirely without taste or tact. She had the obstinate and violent temper that is often found in such natures, and soon showed it. The queen was under the absolute



control of two of her Italian attendants, Concini and Eleonora Galigai, who married later. No arguments the king, his ministers, or her family could bring to bear would prevail on her to dismiss them. Their arrogance and enmities gave mortal offence at court, and filled the king with rage. Many were the letters he received, saying that he had only to make the sign to be rid of them;

but the sign never was made until Louis XIII. came to the throne. Their first quarrel was caused by the queen's insisting that the Duchess de Richelieu should be dismissed and this Italian tire-woman of hers put in her place as *dame d'atour*, one of the proudest positions at court. The second and more frequent cause of quarrel was the king's mistress, whom Henry presented to his wife on her arrival, expecting

that they would live together peaceably at court. The queen and the mistress presented the king with children at almost the same moment, and Henry hovered between his two households with a paternal solicitude which was said to be very affecting. This resulted in open warfare between the queen and the mistress. Henriette was as exacting and capricious as the queen was violent, and Henry was the victim of constant scenes and conspiracies. Sully, who once caught a blow on his arm which the queen intended for her husband, says that never a week passed without their quarrelling.

Finally, Henriette's father and brother conspired against the king, and were condemned to death. Henriette herself was imprisoned, and Sully took advantage of their difficulties to recover the promise of marriage. The king could not condemn to death the grandfather of his children or the son of Charles IX., so, after a vain attempt to break Henriette's haughty spirit, he pardoned them all. Being unable to subdue either his wife or his mistress, Henry had to humble himself and endure the fury of both. At such times he would spend days in Sully's cabinet, trying to forget his unhappiness in work, and listening to his minister's good advice. He complained that the queen was not companionable, and met his advances so coldly that he was driven elsewhere for consolation. At one time he thought seriously of exiling her, but Sully advised the king to endure his fate for the sake of his children. Henry was a devoted father, and when his coach was upset in the river he plunged after the Dauphin and rescued him, although he had sunk for the third time. But the king believed in discipline, and when others would not punish the Dauphin he did it himself. This made the queen furious, but Henry said, with prophetic foresight, "Pray God, madame, that I may live long, for if he grew

up as headstrong as you are, you will have unhappy days together."

Henry now introduced a new element to his family circle by permitting the return of his former wife, Marguerite de Valois. But Marguerite atoned for the troubles of the past by alleviating those of the present, and made no demands on the king. Her misfortunes had taught her resignation, and her suavity and tact endeared her to all. The king sent Sully to meet her, and Marguerite shed tears on seeing him, telling him that she regretted not having taken his advice in the past, for he had always been her friend. Although she had left Paris in disgrace, she was received by all with the respect and consideration due the last of a royal race. The king called on her and conducted her to court, where he presented her to his wife. Two chairs had been placed on a dais under a canopy for the two queens. There they sat and talked together, Marguerite behaving in her difficult position with mingled humility and dignity. The general verdict was that, although her beauty was impaired, she outshone the queen in dignity of presence and grace of manner. Not only the courtiers but the greatest and best people in the land hastened to pay their respects to Marguerite, who had been the light of a court whose elegance was now a tradition. She distinguished herself by her magnificence and profusion. A contemporary writes, "She was the true heiress of the Valois. She never made a gift without offering an excuse for its limit. She was at once the protectress and delight of men of letters. She spoke better than any woman of her age, and wrote more eloquently." If she had controlled her passions, no one could have adorned the throne more nobly, but she was the slave of adulation to the last.



It was soon after Marguerite's arrival, and during the imprisonment of Mlle. d'Enragues, that the king conceived, in his old age, the most violent and deplorable passion of his life. The object of it was a beautiful and virtuous young girl, the daughter of Constable Montmorency. She was betrothed to Bassompierre, but Henry forced him to give her up, as he had made Bellegarde yield Gabrielle d'Estrées.

Here is Bassompierre's story. The king called him to his bedside one morning and told him that he had been lying awake all night, thinking of him, and had decided that he ought to marry. Bassompierre replied that he would have been married already had it not been for the Constable's gout.

"But I thought of marrying you to Mlle. d'Aumale," the king replied, "and renewing the duchy of Aumale in your favor."

"What! you wish me to marry two wives?"

The king sighed.

"Bassompierre," he said, "I wish to see if you are my friend. I have become not only enamoured, but mad, beside myself, about Mlle. de Montmorency. If you marry her and she loves you, I shall hate you; if she loves me, you will hate me. It is better that nothing should come between us to break our friendship. I am resolved to marry her to the Prince of Condé and keep her near my family. That will be the consolation and support of my old age. I will give my nephew, who loves the chase a thousand times more than women, a hundred thousand livres a year for his amusement, and I wish no other favors from her than her affection."

Bassompierre says his heart was broken, and that for two days he could neither eat nor drink because of his grief; but he was too good a courtier to make anything but a cheerful assent

to the king's proposition. Henry embraced Bassompierre, promised always to love him, and wept with joy. Not long after, Mlle. de Montmorency was married to the Prince of Condé. The daily visits and presents of the king soon gave rise to quarrels between the young couple, and the princess's head was turned by Henry's attentions. She sat for her portrait at his request, and permitted him to see her *en déshabillé*. The king was so overcome with joy that the princess exclaimed, "Jesus, he is mad!" The prince became so jealous that he retired from court with his wife. Henry followed, and attempted to visit the young wife in disguise while her husband was gone to the chase, but he was detected. He even hid behind the tapestry to watch her at her meal. Sully begged him on his knees to give up his dishonorable pursuit, but the infatuation of the gray-haired monarch was complete. He summoned Condé to court. The prince returned, but without his wife. The princess was so put out that she left his house and took refuge with Mme. d'Angoulême, but her father interfered and forced her to return. When the king upbraided Condé, the prince boldly accused him of acting the tyrant and wishing to seduce his wife. "I never but once acted the tyrant," replied Henry, in a rage, "and that was in compelling people to recognize you for what you are not."

The prince was now convinced that the only means of avoiding ruin and dishonor was by flight. Placing his wife in her coach, he started, as she supposed, for Paris. When she discovered they were making for the border, she burst into tears. It began to rain, and the coach stuck in the mud, so Condé took his wife on his horse, behind him, and they reached the border in this manner, soaked with rain and exhausted with fatigue and hunger. They just escaped Praslin, who had dashed after the

fugitives in obedience to Henry's furious commands. One of Condé's attendants had carried the news of the flight to the king. Henry, who was playing cards, left the table in the greatest agitation, summoned his council, and sent the captain of his guards after the fugitives without delay. He walked the floor all night repeating her name, asked advice of every one, and talked of nothing else for days. The king's infatuation was such that he even had the princess's monogram placed on his linen. He now sent to the archduke, demanding the return of the fugitives. This the archduke declined to do, but he thought it wise to avoid the king's displeasure by sending Condé out of the country. The prince left his wife with the archduchess at Brussels, and repaired to Cologne. The archduchess's reception was so cold that the princess shed tears after it.

In the mean time Henry sent ambassadors to Madrid to complain of the archduke's conduct. All was gloom at the French court. The king took no more interest in Henriette d'Entragues. The queen and the mistress, when they were not furious, were obstinately morose. Condé was attainted of high treason. His wife now asked for a dissolution of her marriage, at the suggestion of Henry, who maintained an active correspondence with the princess and supplied her with money. The king sent a new ambassador to the archduke, who stirred up discord between the princess and her husband until the latter refused to allow his wife to receive the ambassador. The princess then publicly announced her desire to return to France. The ambassador urged her to fly, and she consented. The palace walls were pierced, the guard was bribed, and horses and men were in readiness. At the last moment all was discovered. The archduchess, who had no love for her

ward, but who indignantly refused to pander to Henry IV., took the princess into a room next her own, from which escape was impossible.

The disputed succession of the duchies of Juliers and Cleves now gave the king an excuse for war, the real cause of which is generally supposed to have been the Princess of Condé. The roads of France became choked with troops, while sixteen thousand Dutch and twenty thousand Germans under Maurice of Nassau appeared on the Flemish frontier. The archduke and his wife began to consider whether it was not better to "allow the lady to escape" while they pretended to negotiate with the king, when they were surprised to find, to quote their own words, that it was a "state war and not a love war." To understand this it is necessary to explain what is known as the "Grand Design" of Henry IV.

The details of the "Grand Design" rest entirely on the authority of Sully, and many historians are inclined to consider the whole scheme as a fabrication of the minister's old age and vanity. But the importance of Sully's position and his apparent sincerity make one reluctant to disbelieve entirely what is vouched for with such precision of detail. Doubtless many of the arrangements contemplated in the "Christian republic" were hypothetical, and it may be that the whole fabric was only one of the king's day-dreams, which the imaginative Sully took seriously; but the foundation of the "Grand Design" corresponds exactly with the policy which Henry had been pursuing for many years. Moreover, it is reasonable to suppose that there was some purpose in the extensive political combinations and military preparations which the king had been twelve years in perfecting; therefore there can be no harm in describing the "Grand Design" as Sully outlines it.

Long before he came to the throne, Henry IV. had considered the feasibility of uniting the Protestant powers of Europe against the house of Austria, but the civil wars had prevented his attempting this project. He had meditated this scheme long before he mentioned it to Sully. At first the matter-of-fact minister was inclined to regard the king's project as too visionary for serious consideration. But as Henry unfolded his scheme in all its details the sceptical Sully became persuaded of its possibilities. About this time Sully was sent on an embassy to Queen Elizabeth, with permission to disclose to her the king's plans. To Sully's great surprise, Elizabeth not only approved of the king's projects, but informed Sully that she had conceived ideas almost identical. Henry's and Elizabeth's plans agreed on five important points: first, the elective Empire should be restored in Germany; second, the Low Countries should be liberated; third, the independence of Switzerland should be guaranteed; fourth, all Europe should be divided into a number of powers nearly equal; fifth, if possible, only three religions should be permitted in these powers. Elizabeth and Henry corresponded and Sully labored over the "Grand Design," until rooms were filled with its memoranda, and its minutest details were as carefully arranged as the campaign of a modern army corps. Elizabeth wanted to begin operations at once, but Henry had to settle his kingdom first. After the death of Philip II. everything was in readiness, when the death of Elizabeth again postponed action. Henry sent Sully to unfold his plans to James I., aptly termed "the wisest fool in Christendom." James was dazzled by the grandeur of Henry's project and the importance of the position it would confer on England in the redistribution of Continental power. But he was too timid to antagonize Spain by openly supporting

Henry, and could only be persuaded to make a secret treaty with Sully. One of James's Scotch subjects aptly described his master when he said, "Did you ever see a jackanapes, mon? If so, ye maun ken that if you hauld him in your hands ye can gar him bite me, but if I hauld him I can gar him bite you."

It was Spain's turn now to work on Elizabeth's vacillating successor. Spain could well afford to make great sacrifices, if by so doing she could separate James from his allies and deprive her revolted provinces of English support. It is humiliating to record the ease with which the policy which made England great under Elizabeth was reversed. The credulous monarch was deluded with promises of a marriage between the Infanta and his son, and hopes of reconquering England's ancient possessions in France through Spanish assistance; his prejudices were worked upon at the same time by representing the revolt of the Low Countries as a flagrant infraction of his pet theory of the divine right of kings. Prince Henry, whose early death made his brother Charles Prince of Wales, opposed his father's Spanish policy, and promised Henry ten thousand men for his project; but James allied himself to Spain. Later, the Gunpowder Plot, and the conspiracy to place Lady Arabella Stuart on the throne, enlightened James as to the real aims of Spain; but in the meantime England's support was lost to the Protestant cause, and Sully bitterly wrote, "It is certain that the English hate us, and this hatred is so general and inveterate that one would almost be tempted to number it among their natural dispositions. It is undoubtedly an effect of their arrogance and pride, for no nation in Europe is more haughty and insolent, or more conceited of its superior excellence."

Henry's Continental policy was crowned with success. Spain



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Bank of Wisdom

For the first time in human history the language of civilization is being changed from writing that can be read with the necked eye, to an electronic format that can only be read with special electronic equipment. It is the intent of the Bank of Wisdom to convert to electronic format as much old Scholarly, Historic and Freethought material as possible. We believe there are certain kinds of necessary historic, religious and philosophical information that may be left out of the data banks of the future, factual information that challenges or disproves current ideas and beliefs that the established powers of our society rest upon. Such suppressed information will be necessary for future generations to use to build an upward evolution for their society. The Bank of Wisdom intends to preserve that needed knowledge.

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**There is no superstition in Wisdom,
And no wisdom in superstition.**

tried in vain to separate him from his allies by offering to marry the Infanta to his son ; but Henry had paved the way for an invasion of Italy by projecting matrimonial alliances for his children with the houses of Savoy and Mantua, Savoy having been changed from an enemy to an ally by promises of Spanish territory in Lombardy. Treaties had been concluded with the Germans and the Dutch, and the power of the Turks was enlisted against their old enemy. The disintegration of the Ottoman Empire was not foreseen in the sixteenth century. The Moslems held sway in Europe, Asia, and Africa, from the Atlas to the Caucasus, and all Christian Europe was periodically called upon to roll back the tide of Asiatic invasion. Henry IV. was accustomed to say he had two ambitions which he hoped to realize before he died : one was to win a great battle against the Turks, the other, to lead an army into Spain ; but in the mean time he pitted these powers against each other. Great events were imminent. The face of Europe might have been changed and the Napoleonic wars anticipated by two hundred years, but not from motives of conquest. Beyond some small rectifications of the northern frontier, such as have been since accomplished, France's only gain was to have been the glory of her victories and the defeat of her hereditary enemy. The German princes offered Henry the throne of the elective Empire ; but he declined it in favor of the Duke of Bavaria, stipulating that thenceforth the same family should never be elected twice in succession. It is surprising that Henry IV. in the sixteenth century could have conceived ideas so far in advance of his age. Many of them, such as the unification of Italy and of Germany, have been realized only within the last few years.

The primary object of the "Grand Design" was the overthrow of the house of Austria and the readjustment of the

balance of power. The powers of Europe were to be reduced to fifteen, which were to unite in a "Christian republic." Spain and Austria were to be confined to their natural boundaries, the elective Empire was to be restored in Germany, separate kingdoms were to be made of Hungary and Bohemia, the Dutch and the Swiss were to be declared independent, and the Italian states were to be formed into a republic under the Pope. After the Spaniards were driven out of Italy, Germany, and the Low Countries, the Turks were to be rolled back from Hungary and Poland; then the powers forming the "Christian republic" were to do away with their armies, guarantee each other's territories, abolish boundaries, and choose their own religion. Each state was to have its own Parliament, and to be free to manage its own affairs, but international affairs were to be decided by a general senate composed of thirty-six members, summoned from the fifteen states every three years, and meeting in the different capitals by rotation. Of the fifteen powers, six were to remain hereditary monarchies, namely, France, England, Spain, Sweden, Denmark, and Savoy; five elective, Germany, Poland, Hungary, Bohemia, and Italy; and four republics, the Belgic, Swiss, Venetian, and Ducal.

Henry had raised an army of fifty thousand men for the execution of the "Grand Design." Sully estimated their maintenance for three years at ninety millions of francs, which would leave a reserve of thirty millions in the treasury. The German princes had raised thirty-five thousand men, whose support they promised the king for three years. Savoy had raised twenty thousand men, and the Swiss six thousand. The Pope had promised twelve thousand; England, Sweden, and Denmark had agreed to contribute ten thousand men each for three years, and the use of their fleets. The Dutch and Venetians had

promised fourteen thousand men each, and the Bohemians and Hungarians the same. This made a total of nearly two hundred thousand men. Henry IV. won the battle of Ivry with only ten thousand men, and, when it is remembered that the largest armies previously assembled in Europe had rarely amounted to fifty thousand men, it is not surprising that so able a statesman as Cardinal Richelieu should have pronounced the military part of Henry's design feasible. The "Christian republic" part of it may have been visionary, but Spain had good cause for alarm when the quarrel over the duchies of Cleves and Juliers suddenly disclosed the extent of Henry's preparations. The king had assembled thirty-six thousand men in Champagne under Nevers, while Lesdiguières entered Dauphiny with fourteen thousand, to join the thirty thousand Savoyards and Venetians who were to invade the Spanish possessions in Italy. In the mean time thirty thousand German troops threatened the Austrian possessions in Germany.

Everything was favorable to the execution of the "Grand Design," and Henry, who had once written Elizabeth, "I was born and raised in the fatigues and perils of war," was not afraid of a game in which he had no master, and in which, like Napoleon, he had never met defeat. The king had often remarked, when urged to embark in war without allies, that he did not care to "enter the dance alone," and during the civil wars he used to say that "he was not tired of dancing, but that he didn't wish to furnish the ball-room." Now, with all Europe on his side, he was quite ready to reopen the game and meet Austria on her own territory. Before leaving his kingdom he appointed a regency, in which the queen was disappointed to find her part so small. This and the insecurity of her position

at court made her insist on her coronation, which had never been celebrated. Henry evinced a strange repugnance to this, and exclaimed to Sully,—

“By God, I shall die in this city, and shall never get out of it. They will kill me, for I see well that they have no other remedy in their dangers excepting my death.”

“Jesus, sire,” exclaimed Sully, “what fancy have you taken now?”

“I have been told,” replied the king, “that I should be killed at the first grand ceremony which I should undertake, and that I should die in a carriage.”

Sully advised Henry, if he felt this way, to postpone the queen’s coronation and leave for the army at once. The king decided to do this, but, after arguing the matter for three days with the queen, was forced to yield. Many predictions and warnings were sent him, which increased his gloom and apprehension, although his reply to all was, “My days are in the hands of God.”

The coronation passed off without accident, but Henry did not recover his spirits. Twice the next day he lay down to sleep, but in vain; when his attendants looked through the curtains of his bed they saw him on his knees in prayer. Sully was confined to his bed in the arsenal, and the king had planned to visit him; before he went he called for his wife and children, and was more than usually tender to them. “I do not know why I cannot tear myself away,” he said. Twice he went out and twice he returned to the queen, saying, “My dear, shall I go or shall I not go?” He finally made up his mind to go, and, after embracing the queen several times, descended to his coach and entered it, after making the sign of the cross. Praslin wished to accompany him, but Henry said, “I have gone some

fifty years without a captain of guards, and can still do so." The coach had proceeded some little way when it was stopped by an obstruction in the street. The king was reading a paper which he had taken from his bosom. Just at that moment a bystander sprang on the wheel of the coach, and, leaning over, struck Henry twice with a knife; a third blow caught in Epernon's sleeve. The king uttered a cry, and the Duke de Montbazon turned to ask what was the matter. Some say that Henry replied, faintly, "It is nothing;" others assert that he never spoke again, for the second blow had pierced his heart, and he fell forward and expired on the shoulder of Epernon. It was a singular coincidence that both Henry III. and Henry IV. should have died in Epernon's arms. The attendants would have put the assassin to death, but Epernon, fortunately for himself, interfered, and this action would seem to be a conclusive proof of his innocence.

The assassin, François Ravailac, was an ignorant and superstitious fanatic, who had served a novitiate in a monastery. He was subject to periodic attacks of insanity, and his head had been affected by the seditious harangues to which he had listened. Some one told him the king was about to make war on the Pope, and Ravailac determined it would be a righteous act to kill him. He stole a knife and waited two days before he accomplished his purpose. Every effort was made to find out whether Ravailac had any accomplices. But during his trial, through his torture, and at his execution he resolutely maintained that he alone was responsible for his act. His confessor offered him absolution on condition that this statement was true. "If it is not true you will be damned," he said. "I accept it on that condition," were Ravailac's last words. Notwithstanding this, rumors implicating the queen, Epernon, and Henriette

d'Entragues were current. Color was given to these accusations by the high-handed action of Guise and Epernon in overawing Parliament, cancelling the provisions of the king's will, and securing the regency for the queen. Père Coton was overheard exhorting Ravailac to "suffer for the glory of God and implicate no one," and his trial was said to have been hurried and its details suppressed. It was rumored that on the scaffold he had asked permission to make a confession, but that the writing of this document was so illegible that no one could read it. The officers asserted that this was due to the agitation of the writer, but others said that it was so written under orders from Voisin. The king's assassination, following so closely on the queen's coronation, was said to have been the result of a bargain between the queen and Henriette d'Entragues, both of whom wished to get rid of the king, one in order to secure the regency, the other that she might be able to marry Guise. The exiled Duke of Aumale says in his memoirs that Epernon plucked the knife out of the king's side and struck him the second and fatal blow himself; he adds that Montbazon saw the act, but was prevented by the queen's commands from disclosing it. A woman named Mme. de Comant made a confession to Marguerite de Valois, and the Premier de Harlay, who examined her, believed her charges so serious that he caused the arrest of Henriette d'Entragues and others, but it was asserted that the matter was hushed up by Epernon and the queen. It was said that De Harlay yielded rather than disturb the peace of the realm, and Mme. de Comant was imprisoned for perjury. Two years later the confession of Captain Lagarde seemed to confirm that of Mme. de Comant. It was also said that the subsequent exile of Marie de Médicis was due to revelations which Vitry and others made to her son of her complicity

in the assassination of his father. Guise refused to marry Henriette d'Entragues, who returned to her estates, where she passed the rest of her life in indolence and the indulgence of her appetite, until she became so unwieldy that she seldom left her couch. Her beauty disappeared, but her wit remained as brilliant and reckless in her old age as in the days when it had captivated Henry IV.



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