

The History of Protestantism – Volume Second – Book Thirteenth – From Rise of Protestantism in France (1510) to Publication of the Institutes (1536)

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"Protestantism, the sacred cause of God's Light and Truth
against the Devil's Falsity and Darkness." -Carlyle.

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A Voice from the Philadelphian Church Age by Rev. James Aitken
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BOOK FIRST

FROM RISE OF PROTESTANTISM IN FRANCE (1510) TO PUBLICATION OF
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THE DOCTOR OF ETAPLES, THE FIRST PROTESTANT TEACHER IN FRANCE

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XII. – Perdam Babylonis Nomen, – The Councils of Pisa and the Lateran Francis I. and Leo X. – Jacques Lefevre – His Birth and Education Appointed to a Chair in the Sorbonne – His Devotions – His Lives of the Saints – A Discovery – A Free Justification – Teaches this Doctrine in the Sorbonne – Agitation among the Professors – A Tempest gathering. THE area of the Reformation – that great movement which, wherever it comes, makes all things new is about to undergo enlargement. The stage, already crowded with great actors – England, Germany, Switzerland, Sweden, Denmark – is to receive another accession. The plot is deepening, the parts are multiplying, and the issues give promise of being rich and grand beyond conception. It is no mean actor that is now to step upon that stage on which the nations do battle, and where, if victorious, they shall reap a future of happiness and glory; but if vanquished, there await them decadence, and shame, and ruin. The new nationality which has come to mingle in this great drama is France.

At the opening of the sixteenth century, France held a foremost place among the countries of Europe. It might not unworthy aspire to lead in a great movement of the nations. Placed in the center of the civilized West, it touched the other kingdoms of Christendom at a great many points. On its south and south-east was Switzerland; on its east and north-east were Germany and the Low Countries; on its north, parted from it only by the narrow sea, was England At all its gates, save those that looked towards Italy and Spain, was the Reformation waiting for admission. Will France open, and heartily welcome it? Elevated on this central and commanding site, the beacon-lights of Protestantism will shed their effulgence all around, making the day clearer where the light has already dawned, and the night less dark where the shades still linger.

The rich endowments of the people made it at once desirable and probable that France would embrace the Reformation. The

French genius is one of marvelous adaptability. Quick, playful, trenchant, subtle, it is able alike to concentrate itself in analytical investigations, and to spread itself out in creations of poetic beauty and intellectual sublimity. There is no branch of literature in which the French people have not excelled. They have shone equally in the drama, in philosophy, in history, in mathematics, and in metaphysics. Grafted on a genius so elegant and yet so robust, so playful and yet so Penetrating – in short, so many sided – Protestantism will display itself under a variety of new and beautiful lights, which will win converts in quarters where the movement has not been regarded hitherto as having many attractions to recommend it – nay, rather where, it has been condemned as “a root out of a dry ground.”

We are entering on one of the grandest yet most tragic of all the pages of our history. The movement which we now behold entering France is to divide – deeply and fiercely divide the nation; for it is a characteristic of the French people that whatever, cause they embrace, they embrace with enthusiasm; and whatever cause they oppose, they oppose with an equal enthusiasm. As we pass on the scenes will be continually shifting, and the quick alternations of hope and fear will never cease to agitate us. It is, so to speak, a superb gallery we are to traverse; colossal forms look down upon us as we pass along. On this hand stand men of gigantic wickedness, on that men of equally gigantic virtue – men whose souls, sublimed by piety and trust in God, have attained to the highest pitch of endurance, of self-sacrifice, of heroism. And then the lesson at the close, so distinct, so solemn. For we are justified in affirming that in a sense France has glorified Protestantism more by rejecting it than other countries have done by accepting it.

We lift the curtain at the year 1510. On its rising we find the throne of France occupied by Louis XII., the wisest sovereign of his time. He has just assembled a Parliament at

Tours to resolve for him the question whether it is lawful to go to war with the Pope, who violates treaties, and sustains his injustice by levying soldiers and fighting battles?[1] The warlike Julius II. then occupied the chair which a Borgia had recently filled.

Ignorant of theology, with no inclination, and just as little capacity, for the spiritual duties of his see, Julius II. passed his whole time in camps and on battle-fields. With so bellicose a priest at its center, Christendom had but little rest. Among others whom the Pope disquieted was the meek and upright Louis of France; hence the question which he put to his Parliament. The answer of that assembly marks the moral decadence of the Papacy, and the contempt in which the thunderbolts of the Vatican were beginning to be held. "It is lawful for the king," said they, "not only to act defensively but offensively against such a man"[2] Fortified by the advice of his Parliament, Louis gave the command to his armies to march, and two years later he indicated sufficiently his own opinion of the Papacy and its crowned chief, when he caused a coin to be struck at Naples bearing the words, Perdan Babylonis nomen [3] These symptoms announced the near approach of the new times.

Other things were then being transacted which also gave plain indication that the old age was about to close and a new age to open. Weary of a Pope who made it his sole vocation to marshal armies and conquer cities and provinces, who went in person to the battle-field, but never once appeared in the pulpit, the Emperor Maximilian I. and Louis of France agreed to convoke a Council [4] for "the Reformation of the Church in its head and members." That Council was now sitting at Pisa. It summoned the Pope to its bar, and when Julius II. failed to appear, the Council suspended him from his office, and forbade all people to obey him.[5] The Pope treated the decree of the Fathers with the same contempt which he had shown to their summons. He convoked another Council at the Lateran, made void

that of Pisa, with all its decrees, fulminated excommunication against Louis,[6] suspended Divine worship in France, and delivered the kingdom to whomsoever had the will and the power to seize upon it.[7]

Thus Council met Council, and the project of the two sovereigns for a Reformation came to nothing, as later and similar attempts were destined to do.

For the many evils that pressed upon the world, a Council was the only remedy that the age knew, and at every crisis it betook itself to this device. God was about to plant in society a new principle, which would become the germ of its regeneration.

Julius II. was busied with his Council of the Lateran when (1513) he died, and was succeeded in the Papal chair by Cardinal John de Medici, Leo X.

With the new Pope came new manners at Rome. Underneath, the stream of corruption continued steadily to flow, but on the surface things were changed. The Vatican no longer rang with the clang of arms. Instead of soldiers, troops of artists and musicians, crowds of masqueraders and buffoons now filled the palace of the Pope. The talk was no longer of battles, but of, pictures and statues and dancers. Soon Louis of France followed his former opponent, Julius II., to the grave. He died on the 1st January, 1515, and was succeeded by his nephew, Francis I.

The new Pope and the new king were not unlike in character. The Renaissance had touched both, communicating to them that refinement of outward manners, and that aesthetical rather than cultivated taste, which it never failed to impart to all who came under its influence. The strong, wayward, and selfish passions of the men it had failed to correct. Both loved to surround themselves with pomps. Francis was greedy of fame, Leo was greedy of money, and both were greedy of pleasure, and

the characteristic passions of each became in the hand of an overruling Providence the means of furthering the great movement which now presents itself on the scene.

The river which waters great kingdoms, and bears on its bosom the commerce of many nations, may be traced up to some solitary fountain among the far-off hills. So was it with that river of the Water of Life that was now to go forth to refresh France. It had its first rise in a single soul. It is the year 1510, and the good Louis XII. is still upon the throne. A stranger visiting Paris at that day, more especially if of a devout turn, would hardly have failed to mark an old man, small of stature and simple in manners, going his round of the churches and, prostrate before their images, devoutly "repeating his hours:" This man was destined to be, on a small scale, to the realm of France what Wicliffe had been, on a large, to England and the world – "the morning star of the Reformation." His name was Jacques Lefevre. He was born at Etaples, a village of Picardy,[\[8\]](#) about the middle of the previous century, and was now verging on seventy, but still hale and vigorous. Lefevre had all his days been a devout Papist, and even to this hour the shadow of Popery was still around him, and the eclipse of superstition had not yet wholly passed from off his soul. But the promise was to be fulfilled to him, "At evening time it shall be light." He had all along had a presentiment that a new day was rising on the world, and that he should not depart till his eyes had seen its light.

The man who was the first to emerge from the darkness that covered his native land is entitled to a prominent share of our attention. Lefevre was in all points a remarkable man. Endowed with an inquisitive and capacious intellect, hardly was there a field of study open to those ages which he had not entered, and in which he had not made great proficiency. The ancient languages, the belles lettres, history, mathematics, philosophy, theology; – he had studied them all. His thirst for knowledge tempted him to try what he might be able to

learn from other lands besides France. He had visited Asia and Africa, and seen all that the end of the fifteenth century had to show. Returning to France he was appointed to a chair in the Sorbonne, or Theological Hall of the great Paris University, and soon he drew around him a crowd of admiring disciples. He was the first luminary, Erasmus tells us, in that constellation of lights; but he was withal so meek, so amiable, so candid, and so full of loving-kindness, that all who knew him loved him. But there were those among his fellow-professors who envied him the admiration of which he was the object, and insinuated that the man who had visited so many countries, and had made himself familiar with so many subjects, and some of them so questionable, could hardly have escaped some taint of heresy, and could not be wholly loyal to Mother Church.

They set to watching him; but no one of them all was so punctual and exemplary in his devotions. never was he absent from mass; never was his place empty at the procession, and no one remained so long as Lefevre on his knees before the saints. Nay, often might this man, the most distinguished of all the professors of the Sorbonne, be seen decking the statues of Mary with flowers.[9] No flaw could his enemies find in his armor.

Lefevre, thinking to crown the saints with a fairer and more lasting garland than the perishable flowers he had offered to their images, formed the idea of collecting and re-writing their lives: He had already made some progress in his task when the thought struck him that he might find in the Bible materials or hints that would be useful to him in his work. To the Bible – the original languages of which he had studied – he accordingly turned. He had unwittingly opened to himself the portals of a new world. Saints of another sort than those that had till this moment engaged his attention now stood before him – men who had received a higher canonisation than that of Rome, and whose images the pen of inspiration itself

had drawn. The virtues of the real saints dimmed in his eyes the glories of the legendary ones. The pen dropped from his hand, and he could proceed no farther in the task on which till now he had labored with a zeal so genial, and a perseverance so untiring.

Having opened the Bible, Lefevre was in no haste to shut it. He saw that not only were the saints of the Bible unlike the saints of the Roman Calendar, but that the Church of the Bible was unlike the Roman Church. From the images of Paul and Peter, the doctor of Etaples now turned to the Epistles of Paul and Peter, from the voice of the Church to the voice of God. The plan of a free justification stood revealed to him. It came like a sudden revelation – like the breaking of the day. In 1512 he published a commentary, of which a copy is extant in the Bibliotheque Royale of Paris, on the Epistles of Paul. In that work he says, “It is God who gives us, by faith, that righteousness which by grace alone justifies to eternal life.”[[10](#)]

The day has broken. This utterance of Lefevre assures us of that. It is but a single ray, it is true; but it comes from Heaven, it is light Divine, and will yet scatter the darkness that broods over France. It has already banished the gloom of monkery from the soul of Lefevre; it will do the same for his pupils – for his countrymen, and he knows that he has not received the light to put it under a bushel. Of all places, the Sorbonne was the most dangerous in which to proclaim the new doctrine. For centuries no one but the schoolmen had spoken there, and now to proclaim in the citadel and sanctuary of scholasticism a doctrine that would explode what had received the reverence, as it had been the labor, of ages, and promised, as was thought, eternal fame to its authors, was enough to make the very stones cry out from the venerable walls, and was sure to draw down a tempest of scholastic ire on the head of the adventurous innovator. Lefevre had attained an age which is proverbially wary, if not timid; he knew well

the risks to which he was exposing himself, nevertheless he went on to teach the doctrine of salvation by grace. There rose a great commotion round the chair whence proceeded these unwonted sounds. With very different feelings did the pupils of the venerable man listen to the new teaching. The faces of some testified to the delight which his doctrine gave them. They looked like men to whose eyes some glorious vista had been suddenly opened, or who had unexpectedly lighted upon what they had long but vainly sought. Astonishment or doubt was plainly written on the faces of others, while the knitted brows and flashing eyes of some as plainly bespoke the anger that inflamed them against the man who was razing, as they thought, the very foundations of morality.

The agitation in the class-room of Lefevre quickly communicated itself to the whole university. The doctors were in a flutter. Reasonings and objections were heard on every side, frivolous in some cases, in others the fruit of blind prejudice, or dislike of the doctrine. But some few were honest, and these Lefevre made it his business to answer, being desirous to show that his doctrine did not give a license to sin, and that it was not new, but old; that he was not the first preacher of it in France, that it had been taught by Irenaeus in early times, long before the scholastic theology was heard of; and especially that this doctrine was not his, not Irenaeus', but God's, who had revealed it to men in his Word.

Mutterings began to be heard of the tempest that was gathering in the distance; but as yet it did not burst, and meanwhile Lefevre, within whose soul the light was growing clearer day by day, went on with his work.

It is important to mark that these occurrences took place in 1512. Not yet, nor till five years later, was the name of Luther heard of in France. The monk of Wittemberg had not yet nailed his Theses against indulgences to the doors of the Schloss-kirk. From Germany then, most manifest it is, the

Reformation which we now see springing up on French soil did not come.

Even before the strokes of Luther's hammer in Wittemberg are heard ringing the knell of the old times, the voice of Lefevre is proclaiming beneath the vaulted roof of the Sorbonne in Paris the advent of the new age. The Reformation of France came out of the Bible as really as the light which kindles mountain and plain at daybreak comes out of heaven. And as it was in France so was it in all the countries of the Reform. The Word of God, like God himself, is light; and from that enduring and inexhaustible source came forth that welcome clay which, after a long and protracted night, broke upon the nations in the morning of the sixteenth century.

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FAREL, BRICONNET, AND THE EARLY REFORMERS OF FRANCE

A Student from the Dauphinese Alps – William Farel – Enters University of Paris – Becomes a Pupil Of Lefevre – His Doubts – Passes with Lefevre into the New Day – Preaches in the Churches – Retires to Switzerland – William Briconnet, Bishop of Meaux – Briconnet goes on a Mission to Rome – State of the City – His Musings on his Way back – Change at Meaux – The Bible – What Briconnet Saw in it – Begins the Reformation of his Diocese – Characters of Francis I. and Margaret of Valois. AMONG the youth whom we see gathered round the chair of the aged Lefevre, there is one who specially attracts our notice. It is easy to see that between the scholar and his master there exists an attachment of no ordinary kind. There is no one in all that crowd of pupils who so hangs upon the lips of his teacher as does this youth, nor is there one on whom the eyes of that teacher rest with so kindly a light. This youth is not a native of France. He was born among the Alps of Dauphine, at Gap, near Grenoble, in 1489. His name is William Farel.

His parents were eminently pious, measured by the standard of that age. Never did morning kindle into glory the white mountains, in the midst of which their dwelling was placed, but the family was assembled, and the bead-roll duly gone over; and never did evening descend, first enkindling then paling the Alps, without the customary hymn to the Virgin. The parents of the youth, as he himself informs us, believed all that the priests told them; and he, in his turn, believed all that his parents told him.

Thus he grew up till he was about the age of twenty – the grandeurs of nature in his eye all hours of the day, but the darkness of superstition deepening year by year in his soul. The two – the glory of the Alps and the glory of the Church – seemed to blend and become one in his mind. It would have been as hard for him to believe that Rome with her Pope and holy priests, with her rites and ceremonies, was the mere creation of superstition, as to believe that the great mountains around him, with their snows and their pine-forests, were a mere illusion, a painting on the sky, which but mocked the senses, and would one day dissolve like an unsubstantial though gorgeous exhalation. “I would gnash my teeth like a furious wolf,” said he, speaking of his blind devotion to Rome at this period of his life, “when I heard any one speaking against the Pope.”

It was his father's wish that he should devote himself to the profession of arms, but the young Farel aspired to be a scholar. The fame of the Sorbonne had reached him in his secluded native valley, and he thirsted to drink at that renowned well of learning. Probably the sublimities amid which he daily moved had kept alive the sympathies of a mind naturally ardent and aspiring. He now (1510) set out for Paris, presented himself at the gates of its university, and was enrolled among its students.

It was here that the young Dauphinese scholar became acquainted with the doctor of Etaples. There were but few

points to bring them together, one would have thought, and a great many to keep them apart. The one was young, the other old; the one was enthusiastic, the other was timid; but these differences were on the surface only. The two were kindred in their souls, both were noble, unselfish, devout, and in an age of growing skepticism and dissoluteness the devotion of both was as sincere as it was ardent. This was the link that bound them together, and the points of contrast instead of weakening only tended the more firmly to cement their friendship. The aged master and the young disciple might often be seen going their rounds in company, and visiting the same shrines, and kneeling before the same images.

But now a change was commencing in the mind of Lefevre which must part the two for ever, or bind them together yet more indissolubly. The spiritual dawn was breaking in the soul of the doctor of Etaples; would his young disciple be able to enter along with him into that new world into which the other was being translated? In his public teaching Lefevre now began to let fall at times crumbs of the new knowledge he had gleaned from the Bible. "Salvation is of grace," would the professor say to his pupils.

"The Innocent One is condemned and the criminal is acquitted." "It is the cross of Christ alone that openeth the gates of heaven and shutteth the gates of hell." [1] Farel started as these words fell upon his ear. What did they import, and where would they lead him? Were then all his visits to the saints, and the many hours on his knees before their images, to no purpose – prayers flung into empty space? The teachings of his youth, the sanctities of his home, nay, the grandeurs of the mountains which were associated in his mind with the beliefs he had learned at their feet, rose up before him, and appeared to frown upon him, and he wished he were back again, where, encompassed by the calm majesty of the hills, he might no longer feel these torturing doubts.

Farel had two courses before him, he must either press forward

with Lefevre into the light, or abjuring his master as a heretic, plunge straightway into deeper darkness. Happily God had been preparing him for the crisis. There had been for some time a tempest in the soul of the young student. Farel had lost his peace, and the austerities he had practiced with a growing rigor had failed to restore it. What Scripture so emphatically terms "the terrors of death and the pains of hell" had taken hold upon him. It was while he was in this state, feeling that he could not save himself, and beginning to despair of ever being saved, that the words were spoken in his hearing, "The cross of Christ alone openeth the gates of heaven." Farel felt that this was the only salvation to suit him, that if ever he should be saved it must be "of grace," "without money and without price," and so he immediately pressed in at the portal which the words of Lefevre had opened to him, and rejoined his teacher in the new world into which that teacher himself had so recently entered.[2] The tempest was at an end: he was now in the quiet haven. "All things," said he, "appear to me under a new light. Scripture is cleared up." "Instead of the murderous heart of a ravening wolf, he came back," he tells us, "quietly like a meek and harmless lamb, having his heart entirely withdrawn from the Pope and given to Jesus Christ." [3]

For a brief space Jacques Lefevre and Guillaume Farel shone like twin stars in the morning sky of France. The influence of Lefevre was none the less efficient that it was quietly put forth, and consisted mainly in the dissemination of those vital truths from which Protestantism was to spring among the young and ardent minds that were gathered round his chair, and by whom the new doctrine was afterwards to be published from the pulpit, or witnessed for on the scaffold. "Lefevre was the man," says Theodore Beza, "who boldly began the revival of the pure religion of Jesus Christ, and as in ancient times the school of Socrates sent forth the best orators, so from the lecture-room of the doctor of Etaples issued many of the best men of the age and of the Church." [4] Peter Robert Olivetan,

the translator of the first French Bible from the version of Lefevre, is believed to have been among the number of those who received the truth from the doctor of Etaples, and who, in his turn, was the means of enlisting in the service of Protestantism the greatest champion whom France, or perhaps any other country, ever gave to it.

While Lefevre scattered the seed in his lecture-room, Farel, now fully emancipated from the yoke of the Pope, and listening to no teaching but that of the Bible, went forth and preached in the temples. He was as uncompromising and bold in his advocacy of the Gospel as he had aforetime been zealous in behalf of Popery. "Young and resolute," says Felice, "he caused the public places and temples to resound with his voice of thunder." [5] He labored for a short time in Meaux, [6] where Protestantism reaped its earliest triumphs: and when the gathering storm of persecution drove him from France, which happened soon thereafter, Farel directed his steps towards those grand mountains from which lie had come, and preaching in Switzerland with a courage which no violence could subdue, and an eloquence which drew around him vast crowds, he introduced the Reformation into his native land. He planted the standard of the cross on the shores of the lake of Neuchatel and on those of the Lemane, and eventually carried it within the gates of Geneva, where we shall again meet him. He thus became the pioneer of Calvin.

We have marked the two figures – Lefevre and Farel – that stand out with so great distinctness in this early dawn. A third now appears whose history possesses a great although a melancholy interest. After the doctor of Etaples no one had so much to do with the introduction of Protestantism into France as the man whom we now bring upon the stage. [7] He is William Briconnet, Count of Montbrun, and Bishop of Meaux, a town about eight leagues east of Paris, and where Bossuet, another name famous in ecclesiastical annals, was also, at an after-period, bishop. Descended from a noble family, of good

address, and a man of affairs, Bricconnet was sent by Francis I. on a mission to Rome. The most magnificent of all the Popes – Leo X. – was then in the Vatican, and Bricconnet's visit to the Eternal City gave him an opportunity of seeing the Papacy in the noon of its glory, if now somewhat past the meridian of its power.

It was the same Pope to whom the Bishop of Meaux was now sent as ambassador to whom the saying is ascribed, "What a profitable affair this fable of Christ has been to us!" To Luther in his cell, alone with his sins and his conscience, the Gospel was a reality; to Leo, amidst the statues and pictures of the Vatican, his courtiers, buffoons and dancers, the Gospel was a fable. But this "fable" had done much for Rome. It had filled it – no one said with virtues – but with golden dignities, dazzling honors, and voluptuous delights. This fable clothed the ministers of the Church in purple, seated them every day at sumptuous tables, provided for them splendid equipages drawn by prancing steeds, and followed by a long train of liveried attendants: while couches of down were spread for them at night on which to rest their wearied frames – worn out, not with watching or study, or the care of souls, but with the excitements of the chase or the pleasures of the table. The viol, the tabret, and the harp were never silent in the streets of Rome. Her citizens did not need to toil or spin, to turn the soil or plough the main, for the corn and oil, the silver and the gold of all Christendom flowed thither. They shed copiously the juice of the grape in their banquets, and not less copiously the blood of one another in their quarrels. The Rome of that age was the chosen home of pomps and revels, of buffooneries and villanies, of dark intrigues and blood-red crimes.[8] "Enjoy we the Papacy," said Leo, when elected, to his nephew Julian de Medici, "since God has given it to us."

But the master-actor on this strange stage was Religion, or the "Fable" as the Pontiff termed it. All day long the bells

tolled; even at night their chimes ceased not to be heard, telling the visitor that even then prayer and praise were ascending from the oratories and shrines of Rome. Churches and cathedrals rose at every few paces: images and crucifixes lined the streets: tapers and holy signs sanctified the dwellings: every hour processions of shorn priest, hooded monk, and veiled nun swept along, with banners, and chants, and incense. Every new day brought a new ceremony or festival, which surpassed in its magnificence and pomp that of the day before. What an enigma was presented to the Bishop of Meaux! What a strange city was Rome – how full of religion, but how empty of virtue! Its ceremonies how gorgeous, but its worship how cold; its priests how numerous, and how splendidly arrayed! It wanted only that their virtues should be as shining as their garments, to make the city of the Pope the most resplendent in the universe. Such doubtless were the reflections of Briconnet during his stay at the court of Leo.

The time came that the Bishop of Meaux must leave Rome and return to France. On his way back to his own country he had a great many more things to meditate upon than when on his journey southward to the Eternal City. As he climbs the lower ridges of the Apennines, and casts a look behind on the fast-vanishing cluster of towers and domes, which mark the site of Rome on the bosom of the Campagna, we can imagine him saying to himself, “May not the Pope have spoken infallibly for once, and may not that which I have seen enthroned amid so much of this world’s pride and power and wickedness be, after all, only a ‘fable’?” In short, Briconnet, like Luther, came back from Rome much less a son of the Church than he had been before going thither.[9]

New scenes awaited him on his return, and what he had seen in Rome helped to prepare him for what he was now to witness in France. On getting back to his diocese the Bishop of Meaux was astonished at the change which had passed in Paris during his absence. There was a new light in the sky of France: a new

influence was stirring in the minds of men. The good bishop thirsted to taste the new knowledge which he saw was transforming the lives and gladdening the hearts of all who received it. He had known Lefevre before going to Rome, and what so natural as that he should turn to his old friend to tell him whence had come that influence, so silent yet so mighty, which was changing the world? Lefevre put the Bible into his hands: it was all in that book. The bishop opened the mysterious volume, and there he saw what he had missed at Rome – a Church which had neither Pontifical chair nor purple robes, but which possessed the higher splendor of truth and holiness. The bishop felt that this was the true Spouse of Christ.

The Bible had revealed to Briconnet, Christ as the Author of a free salvation, the Bestower of an eternal life, without the intervention of the “Church,” and this knowledge was to him as “living water,” as “heavenly food.” “Such is its sweetness,” said he, “that it makes the mind insatiable, the more we taste of it the more we long for it. What vessel is able to receive the exceeding fullness of this inexhaustible sweetness?”[[10](#)]

Briconnet’s letters are still preserved in MS.; they are written in the mazy metaphorical style which disfigured all the productions of an age just passing from the flighty and figurative rhetoric of the schoolmen to the chaster models of the ancients, but they leave us in no doubt as to his sentiments. He repudiates works as the foundation of the sinner’s justification, and puts in their room Christ’s finished work apprehended by faith, and, laying little stress on external ceremonies and rites, makes religion to consist in love to God and personal holiness. The bishop received the new doctrine without experiencing that severe mental conflict which Farel had passed through. He found the gate not strait, and entered in – somewhat too easily perhaps – and took his place in the little circle of disciples which the Gospel had already gathered round it in France – Lefevre, Farel, Roussel,

and Vatable, all four professors in the University of Paris – although, alas! he was not destined to remain in that holy society to the close.

Of the five men whom Protestantism had called to follow it in this kingdom, the Bishop of Meaux, as regarded the practical work of Reformation, was the most powerful. The whole of France he saw needed Reformation; where should he begin? Unquestionably in his own diocese. His rectors and cures walked in the old paths. They squandered their revenues in the dissolute gaieties of Paris, while they appointed ignorant deputies to do duty for them at Meaux. In other days Briconnet had looked on this as a matter of course: now it appeared to him a scandalous and criminal abuse. In October, 1520, he published a mandate, proclaiming all to be “traitors and deserters who, by abandoning their flocks, show plainly that what they love is their fleece and their wool.” He interdicted, moreover, the Franciscans from the pulpits of his diocese. At the season of the grand fetes these men made their rounds, amply provided with new jests, which put their hearers in good humor, and helped the friars to fill their stomachs and their wallets. Briconnet forbade the pulpits to be longer desecrated by such buffooneries. He visited in person, like a faithful bishop, all his parishes; summoned the clergy and parishioners before him: inquired into the teaching of the one and the morals of the other: removed ignorant cures, that is, every nine out of ten of the clergy, and replaced them with men able to teach, when such could be found, which was then no easy matter. To remedy the great evil of the time, which was ignorance, he instituted a theological seminary at Meaux, where, under his own eye, there might be trained “able ministers of the New Testament;” and meanwhile he did what he could to supply the lack of laborers, by ascending the pulpit and preaching himself, “a thing which had long since gone quite out of fashion.”[[11](#)]

Leaving Meaux now, to come back to it soon, we return to

Paris. The influence of Briçonnet's conversion was felt among the high personages of the court, and the literary circles of the capital, as well as amidst the artisans and peasants of the diocese of Meaux. The door of the palace stood open to the bishop, and the friendship he enjoyed with Francis I. opened to Briçonnet vast opportunities of spreading Reformed views among the philosophers and scholars whom that monarch loved to assemble round him. One high-born, and wearing a mitre, was sure to be listened to where a humbler Reformer might in vain solicit audience. The court of France was then adorned by a galaxy of learned men – Budaeus, Du Bellay, Cop, the court physician, and others of equal eminence – to all of whom the bishop made known a higher knowledge than that of the Renaissance.[12] But the most illustrious convert in the palace was the sister of the king, Margaret of Valois. And now two personages whom we have not met as yet, but who are destined to act a great part in the drama on which we are entering, make their appearance.

The one is Francis I., who ascended the throne just as the new day was breaking over Europe; the other is his sister, whom we have named above, Margaret of Angoulême. The brother and sister, in many of their qualities, resembled each other. Both were handsome in person, polished in manners, lively in disposition, and of a magnanimous and generous character. Both possessed a fine intellect, and both were fond of letters, which they had cultivated with ardor: Francis, who was sometimes styled the Mirror of Knighthood, embodied in his person the three characteristics of his age – valor, gallantry, and letters; the latter passion had, owing to the Renaissance, become a somewhat fashionable one. "Francis I.," says Guizot, "had received from God all the gifts that can adorn a man: he was handsome, and tall, and strong; his amour, preserved in the Louvre, is that of a man six feet high; his eyes were brilliant and soft, his smile was gracious, his manners were winning." [13]

Francis aspired to be a great king, but the moral instability which tarnished his many great qualities forbade the realization of his idea. It was his fate, after starting with promise in every race, to fall behind before reaching the goal. The young monarch of Spain bore away from him the palm in arms. Despite his great abilities, and the talents he summoned to his aid, he was never able to achieve for France in politics any but a second place. He chased from his dominions the greatest theological intellect of his age, and the literary glory with which he thought to invest his name and throne passed over to England. He was passionately fond of his sister, whom he always called his "darling;" and Margaret was not less devoted in affection for her brother. For some time the lives, as the tastes, of the two flowed on together; but a day was to come when they would be parted. Amid the frivolities of the court, in which she mingled without defiling herself with its vices, the light of the Gospel shone upon Margaret, and she turned to her Savior. Francis, after wavering some time between the Gospel and Rome, between the pleasures of the world and the joys that are eternal, made at last his choice, but, alas! on the opposite side to that of his lovely and accomplished sister. Casting in his lot with Rome, and staking crown, and kingdom, and salvation upon the issue, he gave battle to the Reformation.

We turn again to Margaret, whose grace and beauty made her the ornament of the court, as her brilliant qualities of intellect won the admiration and homage of all who came in contact with her.^[14] This accomplished princess, nevertheless, began to be unhappy. She felt a heaviness of the heart which the gaieties around her could not dispel. She was in this state, ill at ease, yet not knowing well what it was that troubled her, when Briconnet met her (1521).^[15] He saw at once to the bottom of her heart and her griefs. He put into her hand what Lefevre had put into his own – the Bible; and after the eager study of the Word of God, Margaret forgot her fears and her sins in love to her Savior. She recognized in him the Friend she had

long sought, but sought in vain, in the gay circles in which she moved, and she felt a strength and courage she had not known till now. Peace became an inmate of her bosom. She was no longer alone in the world. There was now a Friend by her side on whose sympathy she could cast herself in those dark hours when her brother Francis should frown, and the court should make her the object of its polished ridicule.

In the conversion of Margaret a merciful Providence provided against the evil days that were to come. Furious storms were at no great distance, and although Margaret was not strong enough to prevent the bursting of these tempests, she could and did temper their bitterness. She was near the throne. The sweetness of her spirit was at times a restraint upon the headlong passions of her brother. With quiet tact she would defeat the plot of the monk, and undo the chain of the martyr, and not a few lives, which other wise would have perished on the scaffold, were through her interposition saved to the Reformation.

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THE FIRST PROTESTANT CONGREGATION OF FRANCE

A Bright Morning – Sanguine Anticipations of the Protestants – Lefevre Translates the Bible – Bishop of Meaux Circulates it – The Reading of it at Meaux – Reformation of Manners – First Protestant Flock in France – Happy Days – Complaints of the Tavern-keepers – Murmurs of the Monks – The King Incited to set up the Scaffold – Refuses – The “Well of Meaux.” A MORNING without clouds was rising on France, and Briconnet and Lefevre believed that such as the morning had been so would be the day, tranquil and clear, and waxing ever the brighter as it approached its noon. Already the Gospel had entered the palace. In her lofty sphere Margaret of Valois shone like a star of soft and silvery light, clouded at times, it is true, from the awe in which she stood of her brother and the worldly society around her, but emitting a sweet and winning ray which

attracted the eye of many a beholder.

The monarch was on the side of progress, and often made the monks the butt of his biting satire. The patrons of literary culture were the welcome guests at the Louvre. All things were full of promise, and, looking down the vista of coming years, the friends of the Gospel beheld a long series of triumphs awaiting it – the throne won, the ancient superstition overturned, and France clothed with a new moral strength becoming the benefactress of Christendom. Such was the future as it shaped itself to the eyes of the two chief leaders of the movement. Triumphs, it is true, glorious triumphs was the Gospel to win in France, but not exactly of the kind which its friends at this hour anticipated. Its victories were to be gained not in the lettered conflicts of scholars, nor by the aid of princes; it was in the dungeon and at the stake that its prowess was to be shown. This was the terrible arena on which it was to agonize and to be crowned. This, however, was hidden from the eyes of Briconnet and Lefevre, who meanwhile, full of faith and courage, worked with all their might to speed on a victory which they regarded as already half won.

The progress of events takes us back to Meaux. We have already noted the Reformation set on foot there by the bishop, the interdict laid on the friars, who henceforward could neither vent their buffooneries nor fill their wallets, the removal of immoral and incapable cures, and the founding of a school for the training of pastors. Briconnet now took another step forward; he hastened to place the Reform upon a stable basis – to open to his people access to the great fountain of light, the Bible.

It was the ambition of the aged Lefevre, as it had been that of our own Wicliffe, to see before he died every man in France able to read the Word of God in his mother tongue. With this object he began to translate the New Testament.^[1] The four Gospels in French were published on the 30th October, 1522; in a week thereafter came the remaining books of the New

Testament, and on the 12th October, 1524, the whole were published in one volume at Meaux.[2] The publication of the translated Bible was going on contemporaneously in Germany. Without the Bible in the mother tongues of France and Germany, the Reformation must have died with its first disciples; for, humanly speaking, it would have been impossible otherwise to have found for it foothold in Christendom in face of the tremendous opposition with which the powers of the world assailed it. The bishop, overjoyed, furthered with all his power the work of Lefevre. He made his steward distribute copies of the four Gospels to the poor gratis.[3] "He spared," says Crespin, "neither gold nor silver," and the consequence was that the New Testament in French was widely circulated in all the parishes of his diocese.

The wool trade formed the staple of Meaux, and its population consisted mainly of wool-carders, spinners, weavers.[4] Those in the surrounding districts were peasants and vine-dressers. In town and country alike the Bible became the subject of study and the theme of talk. The artizans of Meaux conversed together about it as they plied the loom or tended the spindle. At meal-hours it was read in the workshops. The laborers in the vineyards and on the corn-fields, when the noontide came and they rested from toil, would draw forth the sacred volume, and while one read, the rest gathered round him in a circle and listened to the words of life. They longed for the return of the meal-hour, not that they might eat of the bread of earth, but that they might appease their hunger for the bread whereof he that eateth shall never die.[5]

These men had grown suddenly learned, "wiser than their teachers," to use the language of the book they were now so intently perusing. They were indeed wiser than the tribe of ignorant cures, and the army of Franciscan monks, whose highest aim had been to make their audience gape and laugh at their jests. Compared with the husks on which these men had fed them, this was the true bread, the heavenly manna. "Of

what use are the saints to us?" said they. "Our only Mediator is Christ."[\[6\]](#) To offer any formal argument to them that this book was Divine, they would have felt to be absurd. It had opened heaven to them. It had revealed the throne of God, and their way to it by the one and only Savior. Whose book, then, could this be but God's? and whence could it have come but from the skies?

And well it was that their faith was thus simple and strong, for no less deep a conviction of the Gospel's truth would have sufficed to carry them through what awaited them. All their days were not to be passed in the peaceful fold of Meaux. Dark temptations and fiery trials, of which they could not at this hour so much as form a conception, were to test them at no distant day. Could they stand when Briconnet should fall? Some of these men were at a future day to be led to the stake. Had their faith rested on no stronger foundation than a fine logical argument – had their conversion been only a new sentiment and not a new nature – had that into which they were now brought been a new system merely and not a new world – they could not have braved the dungeon or looked death in the face. But these disciples had planted their feet not on Briconnet, not on Peter, but on "the Rock," and that "Rock" was Christ: and so not all the coming storms of persecution could cast them down. Not that in themselves they could not be shaken – they were frail and fallible, but their "Rock" was immovable; and standing on it they were unconquerable – unconquerable alike amid the dark smoke and bitter flames of the Place de Greve as amid the green pastures of Meaux.

But as yet these tempests are forbidden to burst, and meanwhile let us look somewhat more closely at this little flock, to which there attaches this great interest, that it was the first Protestant congregation on the soil of France. They were the workmanship, not of Briconnet, but of the Spirit, who by the instrumentality of the Bible had called them to the "knowledge of Christ," and the "fellowship of the

saints." Let us mark them at the close of the day. Their toil ended, they diligently repaired from the workshop, the vineyard, the field, and assembled in the house of one of their number. They opened and read the Holy Scriptures; they conversed about the things of the Kingdom; they joined together in prayer, and their hearts burned within them. Their numbers were few, their sanctuary was humble, no mitred and vested priest conducted their services, no choir or organ-peal intoned their prayers; but ONE was in the midst of them greater than the doctor of the Sorbonne, greater than any King of France, even he who has said, "Lo, I am with you alway" – and where he is, there is the Church.

The members of this congregation belonged exclusively to the working class. Their daily bread was earned in the wool-factory or in the vineyard. Nevertheless a higher civilization had begun to sweeten their dispositions, refine their manners, and ennoble their speech, than any that the castles of their nobility could show. Meek in spirit, loving in heart, and holy in life, they presented a sample of what Protestantism would have made the whole nation of France, had it been allowed full freedom among a people who lacked but this to crown their many great qualities.

By-and-by the churches were opened to them. Their conferences were no longer held in private dwellings: the Christians of Meaux now met in public, and usually a qualified person expounded to them, on these occasions, the Scriptures. Bishop Briconnet took his turn in the pulpit, so eager was he to hold aloft "that sweet, mild, true, and only light," to use his own words, "which dazzles and enlightens every creature capable of receiving it; and which, while it enlightens him, raises him to the dignity of a son of God."[\[7\]](#) These were happy days. The winds of heaven were holden that they might not hurt this young vine; and time was given it strike its roots into the soil before being overtaken by the tempest.

A general reformation of manners followed the entrance of

Protestantism into Meaux. No better evidence could there be of this than the complaints preferred by two classes of the community especially – the tavern-keepers and the monks. The toppers in the wine-shops were becoming fewer, and the Begging Friars often returned from their predatory excursions with empty sacks. Images, too, if they could have spoken, would have swelled the murmurs at the ill-favored times, for few now bestowed upon them either coin or candles. But images can only wink, and so they buried their griefs in the inarticulate silence of their own bosoms. Blasphemies and quarrellings ceased to be heard; there were now quiet on the streets and love in the dwellings of the little town.

But now the first mutterings of the coming storm began to be heard in Paris; even this brought at first only increased prosperity to the Reformed Church at Meaux. It sent to the little flock new and greater teachers. The Sorbonne – that ancient and proud champion of orthodoxy – knew that these were not times to slumber: it saw Protestantism rising in the capital; it beheld the flames catching the edifice of the faith. It took alarm: it called upon the king to put down the new opinions by force. Francis did not respond quite so zealously as the Sorbonne would have liked. He was not prepared to patronize Protestantism, far from it; but, at the same time, he had no love for monks, and was disposed to allow a considerable margin to “men of genius,” and so he forbade the Sorbonne to set up the scaffold.

Still little reliance could be placed upon the wavering and pleasure-loving king, and Lefevre, on whom his colleagues of the Sorbonne had contrived to fasten a quarrel, might any hour be apprehended and thrown into prison. “Come to Meaux,” said Briconnet to Lefevre and Farel, “and take part with me in the work which is every day developing into goodlier proportions”[8] They accepted the invitation; quitting the capital they went to live at Meaux, and thus all the Reformed forces were collected into one center.

The glory which had departed from Paris now rested upon this little provincial town. Meaux became straightway a light in the darkness of France, and many eyes were turned towards it. Far and near was spread the rumor of the "strange things" that were taking place there, and many came to verify with their own eyes what they had heard. Some had occasion to visit its wool markets; and others, laborers from Picardy and more distant places, resorted to it in harvest time to assist in reaping its fields; these visitors were naturally drawn to the sermons of the Protestant preachers moreover, French New Testaments were put into their hands, and when they returned to their homes many of them carried with them the seeds of the Gospel, and founded churches in their own districts,[[9](#)] some of which, such as Landouzy in the department of Aisne, still exist.[[10](#)] Thus Meaux became a mother of Churches: and the expression became proverbial in the first half of the sixteenth century, with reference to any one noted for his Protestant sentiments, that "he had drunk at the well of Meaux."[[11](#)]

We love to linger over this picture, its beauty is so deep and pure that we are unwilling to tear ourselves from it. Already we begin to have a presentiment, alas! to be too sadly verified hereafter, that few such scenes will present themselves in the eventful but tempestuous period on which we are entering. Amid the storms of the rough day coming it may solace us to look back to this delicious daybreak. But already it begins to overcast. Lefevre and Farel have been sent away from the capital. The choice that Paris has made, or is about to make, strikes upon our ear as the knell of coming evil. The capital of France has already missed a high honor, even that of harboring within her walls the first congregation of French Protestants. This distinction was reserved for Meaux, though little among the many magnificent cities of France. Paris said to the Gospel, "Depart. This is the seat of the Sorbonne; this is the king's court; here there is no room for you; go, hide thee amid the artizans, the fullers and wool-combers of

Meaux." Paris knew not what it did when it drove the Gospel from its gates. By the same act it opened them to a long and dismal train of woes – faction, civil war, atheism, the guillotine, siege, famine, death.

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COMMENCEMENT OF PERSECUTION IN FRANCE

The World's Center – The Kingdoms at War – In the Church, Peace – The Flock at Meaux – Marot's Psalms of David universally Sung in France – The Odes of Horace – Calvin and Church Psalmody – Two Champions of the Darkness, Beda and Duprat – Louisa of Savoy – Her Character – The Trio that Governed France – They Unsheathe the Sword of Persecution – Bricconnet's Fall. THE Church is the center round which all the affairs of the world revolve. It is here that the key of all politics is to be found. The continuance and advance of this society is a first principle with him who sits on the right hand of Power, and who is at once King of the Church and King of the Universe; and, therefore, from his lofty seat he directs the march of armies, the issue of battles, the deliberation of cabinets, the decision of kings, and the fate of nations, so as best to further this one paramount end of his government. Here, then, is the world's center; not in a throne that may be standing to-day, and in the dust to-morrow, but in a society – a kingdom – destined to outlast all the kingdoms of earth, to endure and flourish throughout all the ages of time.

It cannot but strike one as remarkable that at the very moment when a feeble evangelism was receiving its birth, needing, one should think, a fostering hand to shield its infancy, so many powerful and hostile kingdoms should start up to endanger it. Why place the cradle of Protestantism amid tempests? Here is the powerful Spain; and here, too, is the nearly as powerful France. Is not this to throw Protestantism between the upper and the nether mill-stones? Yet he "who weigheth the mountains

in scales, and the hills in a balance," permitted these confederacies to spring up at this hour, and to wax thus mighty. And now we begin to see a little way into the counsels of the Most High touching these two kingdoms. Charles of Spain carries off the brilliant prize of the imperial diadem from Francis of France. The latter is stung to the quick; from that hour they are enemies; war breaks out between them; their ambition drags the other kingdoms of Europe into the arena of conflict; and the intrigues and battles that ensue leave to hostile princes but little time to persecute the truth. They find other uses for their treasures, and other enterprises for their armies. Thus the very tempests by which the world was devastated were as ramparts around that new society that was rising up on the ruins of the old. While outside the Church the roar of battle never ceased, the song of peace was heard continually ascending within her. "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in time of trouble. Therefore, will not we fear, although the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea. God is in the midst of her; she shall not be removed."

From this hasty glance at the politics of the age, which had converted the world into a sea with the four winds warring upon it, we come back to the little flock at Meaux. That flock was dwelling peacefully amid the green pastures and by the living waters of truth. Every day saw new converts added to their number, and every day beheld their love and zeal burning with a purer flame. The good Bishop Briconnet was going in and out before them, feeding with knowledge and understanding the flock over which, not Rome, but the Holy Ghost had made him overseer. Those fragrant and lovely fruits which ever spring up where the Gospel comes, and which are of a nature altogether different from, and of a quality infinitely superior to, those which any other system produces, were appearing abundantly here. Meaux had become a garden in the midst of the desert of France, and strangers from a distance came to see this new thing, and to wonder at the sight. Not

unfrequently did they carry away a shoot from the mother plant to set it in their own province, and so the vine of Meaux was sending out her branches, and giving promise, in the opinion of some, at no distant day of filling the land with her shadow.

At an early stage of the Reformation in France, the New Testament, as we have related in the foregoing chapter, was translated into the vernacular of that country. This was followed by a version of the Psalms of David in 1525, the very time when the field of Pavia, which cost France so many lives, was being stricken. Later, Clement Marot, the lyrical poet, undertook – at the request of Calvin, it is believed the task of versifying the Psalms, and accordingly thirty of them were rendered into metre and published in Paris in 1541, dedicated to Francis I [[1](#)] Three years afterwards (1543), he added twenty others, and dedicated the collection, “to the ladies of France.” In the epistle dedicatory the following verses occur:

– “Happy the man whose favor’d ear
In golden days to come shall hear
The ploughman, as he tills the ground,
The carter, as he drives his round,
The shopman, as his task he plies,
With psalms or sacred melodies
Whiling the hours of toil away!
Oh! happy he who hears the lay
Of shepherd or of shepherdess,
As in the woods they sing and bless
And make the rocks and pools proclaim
With them their great Creator’s name!
Oh! can ye brook that God invite
Them before you to such delight?

Begin, ladies, begin!...” [[2](#)] The prophecy of the poet was fulfilled. The combined majesty and sweetness of the old Hebrew Psalter took: captive the taste and genius of the French people. In a little while all France, we may say, fell to singing the Psalms. They displaced all other songs, being

sung in the first instance to the common ballad music. "This holy ordinance," says Quick, "charmed the ears, heart, and affections of court and city, town and country. They were sung in the Louvre, as well as in the Pres des Clercs, by the ladies, princes, yea, by Henry II. himself. This one ordinance alone contributed mightily to the downfall of Popery and the propagation of the Gospel. It took so much with the genius of the nation that all ranks and degrees of men practiced it, in the temples and in their families. No gentleman professing the Reformed religion would sit down at his table without praising God by singing. It was an especial part of their morning and evening worship in their several houses to sing God's praises."

This chorus of holy song was distasteful to the adherents of the ancient worship. Wherever they turned, the odes of the Hebrew monarch, pealed forth in the tongue of France, saluted their ears, in the streets and the highways, in the vineyards and the workshops, at the family hearth and in the churches. "The reception these Psalms met with," says Bayle, "was such as the world had never seen." [3] To strange uses were they put on occasion. The king, fond of hunting, adopted as his favorite Psalm, "As pants the hart for water-brooks," etc. The priests, who seemed to hear in this outburst the knell of their approaching downfall, had recourse to the expedient of translating the odes of Horace and setting them to music, in the hope that the pagan poet would supplant the Hebrew one [4] The rage for the Psalter nevertheless continued unabated, and a storm of Romish wrath breaking out against Marot, he fled to Geneva, where, as we have said above, he added twenty other Psalms to the thirty previously published at Paris, making fifty in all. This enlarged Psalter was first published at Geneva, with a commendatory preface by Calvin, in 1543. Editions were published in Holland, Belgium, France, and Switzerland, and so great was the demand that the printing, presses could not meet it. Rome forbade the book, but the people were only the more eager on that account to possess it.

Calvin, alive to the mighty power of music to advance the Reformation, felt nevertheless the incongruity and indelicacy of singing such words to profane airs, and used every means in his power to rectify the abuse. He applied to the most eminent musicians in Europe to furnish music worthy of the sentiments. William Franc, of Strasburg, responding to this call, furnished melodies for Marot's Psalter; and the Protestants of France and Holland, dropping the ballad airs, began now to sing the Psalms to the noble music just composed. Now, for the first time, was heard the "Old Hundredth," and some of the finest tunes still in use in our Psalmody.

After the death of Mater (1544) Calvin applied to his distinguished coadjutor, Theodore Beza, to complete the versification of the Psalms. Beza, copying the style and spirit of Marot, did so,[\[5\]](#) and thus Geneva had the honor of giving to Christendom the first whole book of Psalms ever rendered into the metre of any living language.

This narration touching the Psalms in French has carried us a little in advance of the point of time we had reached in the history. We retrace our steps.

A storm was brewing at Paris. There were two men in the capital, sworn champions of the darkness, holding high positions. The one was Noel Beda, the head of the Sorbonne. His chair – second only, in his own opinion, to that of the Pope himself – bound him to guard most sacredly from the least heretical taint that orthodoxy which it was the glory of his university to have preserved hitherto wholly uncontaminated. Beda was a man of very moderate attainments, but he was moderate in nothing else. He was bustling, narrow-minded, a worshipper of scholastic forms, a keen disputant, and a great intriguer. "In a single Beda," Erasmus used to say, "there are three thousand monks." Never did owl hate the day more than Beda did the light. He had seen with horror some rays struggle into the shady halls of the Sorbonne, and he made haste to extinguish them by driving from his chair the man who was the

ornament of the university – the doctor of Etaples.

The other truculent defender of the old orthodoxy was Antoine Duprat. Not that he cared a straw for orthodoxy in itself, for the man had neither religion nor morals, but it fell in with the line of his own political advancement to affect a concern for the faith. A contemporary Roman Catholic historian, Beaucaire de Peguilhem, calls him “the most vicious of bipeds.” He accompanied his master, Francis I., to Bologna, after the battle of Marignano, and aided at the interview at which the infamous arrangement was effected, in pursuance of which the power of the French bishops and the rights of the French Church were divided between Leo X. and Francis I. This is known in history as the Concordat of Bologna; it abolished the Pragmatic Sanction – the charter of the liberties of the Gallican Church – and gave to the king the power of presenting to the vacant sees, and to the Pope the right to the first-fruits. A red hat was the reward of Duprat’s treachery. His exalted office – he was Chancellor of France – added to his personal qualities made him a formidable opponent. He was able, haughty, overbearing, and never scrupled to employ violence to compass his ends. He was, too, a man of insatiable greed. He plundered on a large scale in the king’s behoof, by putting up to sale the offices in the gift of the crown; but he plundered on a still larger scale in his own, and so was enormously rich. By way of doing a compensatory act he built a few additional wards to the Maison de Dieu, on which the king, whose friendship he shared without sharing his esteem, is said to have remarked “that they had need to be large if they were to contain all the poor the chancellor himself had made.”[6] Such were the two men who now rose up against the Gospel.[7]

They were set on by the monks of Meaux. Finding that their dues were diminishing at an alarming rate the Franciscans crowded to Paris, and there raised the cry of heresy. Bishop Briconnet, they exclaimed, had become a Protestant, and not content with being himself a heretic, he had gathered round

him a company of even greater heretics than himself, and had, in conjunction with these associates, poisoned his diocese, and was laboring to infect the whole of France; and unless steps were immediately taken this pestilence would spread over all the kingdom, and France would be lost. Duprat and Beda were not the men to listen with indifferent ears to these complaints.

The situation of the kingdom at that hour threw great power into the hands of these men. The battle of Pavia – the Flodden of France – had just been fought. The flower of the French nobility had fallen on that field, and among the slain was the Chevalier Bayard, styled the Mirror of Chivalry. The king was now the prisoner of Charles V. at Madrid. Pending the captivity of Francis the government was in the hands of his mother, Louisa of Savoy. She was a woman of determined spirit, dissolute life, and heart inflamed with her house's hereditary enmity to the Gospel, as shown in its persecution of the Waldensian confessors. She had the bad distinction of opening in France that era of licentious gallantry which has so long polluted both the court and the kingdom, and which has proved one of the most powerful obstacles to the spread of the pure Gospel. It must be added, however, that the hostility of Louisa was somewhat modified and restrained by the singular sweetness and piety of her daughter, Margaret of Valois. Such were the trio – the dissolute Louisa, regent of the kingdom; the avaricious Duprat, the chancellor; and the bigoted Beda, head of the Sorbonne into whose hands the defeat at Pavia had thrown, at this crisis, the government of France. There were points on which their opinions and interests were in conflict, but all three had one quality in common – they heartily detested the new opinions.

The first step was taken by Louisa. In 1523 she proposed the following question to the Sorbonne: "By what means can the damnable doctrines of Luther be chased and extirpated from this most Christian kingdom?" The answer was brief, but

emphatic: "By the stake;" and it was added that if the remedy were not soon put in force, there would result great damage to the honor of the king and of Madame Louisa of Savoy. Two years later the Pope earnestly recommended rigor in suppressing "this great and marvelous disorder, which proceeds from the rage of Satan;"[8] otherwise, "this mania will not only destroy religion, but all principalities, nobilities, laws, orders, and ranks besides."[9] It was to uphold the throne, preserve the nobles, and maintain the laws that the sword of persecution was first unsheathed in France!

The Parliament was convoked to strike a blow while yet there was time. The Bishop of Meaux was summoned before it. Briçonnet was at first firm, and refused to make any concession, but at length the alternative was plainly put before him – abandon Protestantism or go to prison. We can imagine the conflict in his soul. He had read the woe denounced against him who puts his hand to the plough and afterwards withdraws it. He could not but think of the flock he had fed so lovingly, and which had looked up to him with an affection so tender and so confiding. But before him was a prison and mayhap a stake. It was a moment of supreme suspense. But now the die is cast. Briçonnet declines the stake – the stake which in return for the life of the body would have given him life eternal. On the 12th of April, 1523, [10] he was condemned to pay a fine, and was sent back to his diocese to publish three edicts, the first restoring public prayers to the Virgin and the saints, the second forbidding any one to buy or read the books of Luther, while the third enjoined silence on the Protestant preachers.

What a stunning blow to the disciples at Meaux! They were dreaming of a brilliant day when this dark storm suddenly came and scattered them. The aged Lefevre found his way, in the first instance, to Strasburg, and ultimately to Nerac. Farel turned his steps toward Switzerland, where a great work awaited him. Of the two Roussels, Gerard afterwards powerfully

contributed to the progress of the Reformation in the kingdom of Navarre.[[11](#)] Martial Mazurier went the same road with Briconnet, and was rewarded with a canonry at Paris.[[12](#)] The rest of the flock, too poor to flee, had to abide the brunt of the tempest.

Briconnet had saved his mitre, but at what a cost! We shall not judge him. Those who joined the ranks of Protestantism at a later period did so as men “appointed unto death,” and girded themselves for the conflict which they knew awaited them. But at this early stage the Bishop of Meaux had not those examples of self-devotion before him which the martyr-roll of coming years was to furnish. He might reason himself into the belief that he could still love his Savior in his heart, though he did not confess him with the mouth: that while bowing before Mary and the saints he could inwardly look up to Christ, and lean for salvation on the Crucified One: that while ministering at the altars of Rome he could in secret feed on other bread than that which she gives to her children. It was a hard part which Briconnet put upon himself to act; and, without saying how far it is possible, we may ask how, if all the disciples of Protestantism had acted this part, could we ever have had a Reformation?

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THE FIRST MARTYRS OF FRANCE

The Flock at Meaux – Denis, a “Meaux Heretic” – Visited in Prison by his former Pastor, Briconnet – The Interview – Men Burned and yet they Live – Pavane – Imprisoned for the Gospel – Recants – His Horror of Mind – Anew Confesses Christ – Is Burned – His the First Stake in Paris – Martyrdom of the Hermit of Livry – Leclerc, the Wool-comber – Acts as Pastor – Banished from Meaux – Retires to Metz – Demolishes the Images at the Chapel of Mary – Procession – Astonishment of Processionists – Leclerc Seized – Confesses – His Cruel Death

– Bishop Briconnet. Briconnet had recanted: but if the shepherd had fallen the little ones of the flock stood their ground. They continued to meet together for prayer and the reading of the Scriptures, the garret of a wool-comber, a solitary hut, or a copse serving as their place of rendezvous.[1] This congregation was to have the honor of furnishing martyrs whose blazing stakes were to shine like beacons in the darkness of France, and afford glorious proof to their countrymen that a power had entered the world which, braving the terror of scaffolds and surmounting the force of armies, would finally triumph over all opposition.

Let us take a few instances. A humble man named Denis, one of the “Meaux heretics,” was apprehended; and in course of time he was visited in his prison by his former pastor, Briconnet. His enemies at times put tasks of this sort upon the fallen prelate, the more thoroughly to humiliate him. When the bishop made his unexpected appearance in the cell of the poor prisoner, Denis opened his eyes with surprise, Briconnet hung his with embarrassment. The bishop began with stammering tongue, we may well believe, to exhort the imprisoned disciple to purchase his liberty by a recantation. Denis listened for a little space, then rising up and steadfastly fixing his eyes upon the man who had once preached to him that very Gospel which he now exhorted him to abjure, said solemnly, “‘Whosoever shall deny me before men, him shall I also deny before my Father who is in heaven!’” Briconnet reeled backwards and staggered out of the dungeon. The interview over, each took his own way: the bishop returned to his palace, and Denis passed from his cell to the stake.[2]

That long and terrible roll on which it was so hard, yet so glorious, to write one’s name, was now about to be unfolded. This was no roll of the dead: it was a roll of the living; for while their contemporaries disappeared in the darkness of the tomb and were seen and heard of no more on earth, those men whose names were written there came out into the light, and

shone in glory un-dimmed as the ages rolled past, telling that not only did they live, but their cause also, and that it should yet triumph in the land which they watered with their blood. This was a wondrous and great sight, men burned to ashes and yet living.

We select another from this band of pioneers. Pavane, a native of Boulogne and disciple of Lefevre, was a youth of sweetest disposition, but somewhat lacking in constitutional courage. He held a living in the Church, though he was not as yet in priest's orders. Enlightened by the truth, he began to say to his neighbors that the Virgin could no more save them than he could, and that there was but one Savior, even Jesus Christ. This was enough: he was apprehended and brought to trial. Had he blasphemed Christ only, he would have been forgiven: he had blasphemed Mary, and could have no forgiveness. He must make a public recantation or, hard alternative, go to the stake. Terrified at death in this dreadful form, Pavane consented to purge himself from the crime of having spoken blasphemous words against the Virgin. On Christmas Eve (1524) he was required to walk through the streets bare-headed and barefooted, a rope round his neck and a lighted taper in his hand, till he came to the Church of Notre Dame. Standing before the portals of that edifice, he publicly begged pardon of "Our Lady" for having spoken disparagingly of her. This act of penitence duly performed, he was sent back to his prison.

Returned to his dungeon, and left to think on what he had done, he found that there were things which it was more terrible to face than death. He was now alone with the Savior whom he had denied. A horror of darkness fell upon his soul. No sweet promise of the Bible could he recall: nothing could he find to lighten the sadness and heaviness that weighed upon him. Rather than drink this bitter cup he would a hundred times go to the stake. He who turned and looked on Peter spoke to Pavane, and reproved him for his sin. His tears flowed as freely as Peter's did. His resolution was taken. His sighings

were now at an end: he anew made confession of his faith in Christ. The trial of the "relapsed heretic" was short; he was hurried to the stake. "At the foot of the pile he spoke of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper with such force that a doctor said, 'I wish Pavane had not spoken, even if it had cost the Church a million of gold.'"[3] The fagots were quickly lighted, and Pavane stood with unflinching courage amid the flames till he was burned to ashes.

This was the first stake planted in the capital of France, or indeed within the ancient limits of the kingdom. We ask in what quarter of Paris was it set up? In the Place de Greve. Ominous spot! In the Place de Greve were the first French martyrs of the Reformation burned. Nearly three hundred years pass away; the blazing stake is no longer seen in Paris, for there are now no longer martyrs to be consumed. But there comes another visitant to France, the Revolution namely, bringing with it a dreadful instrument of death; and where does the Revolution set up its guillotine? In the same Place de Greve, at Paris. It was surely not of chance that on the Place de Greve were the first martyrs of the Reformation burned, and that on the Place de Greve were the first victims of the Revolution guillotined.

The martyrdom of Pavane was followed, after a short while, by that of the Hermit of Livry, as he was named. Livry was a small burgh on the road to Meaux. This confessor was burned alive before the porch of Notre Dame. Nothing was wanting which his persecutors could think of that might make the spectacle of his death terrible to the on-lookers. The great bell of the temple of Notre Dame was rung with immense violence, in order to draw out the people from all parts of Paris. As the martyr passed along the street, the doctors told the spectators that this was one of the damned who was on his way to the fire of hell. These things moved not the martyr; he walked with firm step and look undaunted to the spot where he was to offer up his life.[4]

One other martyrdom of these early times must we relate. Among the disciples at Meaux was a humble wool-comber of the name of Leclerc. Taught of the Spirit, he was "mighty in the Scriptures," and being a man of courage as well as knowledge, he came forward when Briconnet apostatised, and took the oversight of the flock which the bishop had deserted. Leclerc had received neither tonsure nor imposition of hands, but the Protestant Church of France had begun thus early to act upon the doctrine of a universal spiritual priesthood. The old state of things had been restored at Meaux. The monks had recaptured the pulpits, and, with jubilant humor, were firing off jests and reciting fables, to the delight of such audiences as they were able to gather round them.[5] This stirred the spirit of Leclerc; so one day he affixed a placard to the door of the cathedral, styling the Pope the Antichrist, and predicting the near downfall of his kingdom. Priests, monks, and citizens gathered before the placard, and read it with amazement. Their amazement quickly gave place to rage. Was it to be borne that a despicable wool-carder should attack the Pontiff? Leclerc was seized, tried, whipped through the streets on three successive days, and finally branded on the forehead with a hot iron, and banished from Meaux. While enduring this cruel and shameful treatment, his mother stood by applauding his constancy.[6]

The wool-comber retired to Metz, in Lorraine. Already the light had visited that city, but the arrival of Leclerc gave a new impulse to its evangelisation. He went from house to house preaching the Gospel; persons of condition, both lay and clerical, embraced the Reformed faith; and thus were laid in Metz, by the humble hands of a wool-carder, the foundations of a Church which afterwards became flourishing. Leclerc, arriving in Metz with the brand of heretic on his brow, came nevertheless with courage unabashed and zeal unabated; but he allowed these qualities, unhappily, to carry him beyond the limits of prudence.

A little way outside the gates of the city stood a chapel to Mary and the saints of the province. The yearly festival had come round, and to-morrow the population of Metz would be seen on their knees before these gods of stone. Leclerc pondered upon the command, "Thou shalt break down their images," and forgot the very different circumstances of himself and of those to whom it was originally given. At eve, before the gates were shut, he stole out of the city and passed along the highway till he reached the shrine. He sat down before the images in mental conflict. "Impelled," says Beza, "by a Divine afflatus,"[7] he arose, dragged the statues from their pedestals, and, having broken them in pieces, strewed their fragments in front of the chapel. At daybreak he re-entered Metz.

All unaware of what had taken place at the chapel, the procession marshalled at the usual hour, and moved forward with crucifixes and banners, with flaring tapers and smoking incense. The bells tolled, the drums were beat, and with the music there mingled the chant of the priest.

And now the long array draws nigh the chapel of Our Lady. Suddenly drum and chant are hushed; the banners are cast on the ground, the tapers are extinguished, and a sudden thrill of horror runs through the multitude. What has happened? Alas! the rueful sight. Strewn over the area before the little temple lie the heads, arms, legs of the deities the processionists had come to worship, all cruelly and sacrilegiously mutilated and broken. A cry of mingled grief and rage burst forth from the assembly.

The procession returned to Metz with more haste and in less orderly fashion than it had come. The suspicions of all fell on Leclerc. He was seized, confessed the deed, speedy sentence of condemnation followed, and he was hurried to the spot where he was to be burned. The exasperation of his persecutors had prepared for him dreadful tortures. As he had done to the images of the saints so would they do to him. Unmoved he

beheld these terrible preparations. Unmoved he bore the excruciating agonies inflicted upon him. He permitted no sign of weakness to tarnish the glory of his sacrifice. While his foes were lopping off his limbs with knives, and tearing his flesh with red-hot pincers, the martyr stood with calm and intrepid air at the stake, reciting in a loud voice the words of the Psalm – “Their idols are silver and gold, the work of men’s hands. They have mouths, but they speak not; eyes have they, but they see not; noses have they, but they smell not; they have hands, but they handle not; feet have they, but they walk not; neither speak they through their throat. They that make them are like unto them; so is every one that trusteth in them. O Israel, trust thou in the Lord; he is their help and their shield.” (Psalm 115:4-9.)[8] If Leclerc’s zeal had been indiscreet, his courage was truly admirable. Well might his death be called “an act of faith.” He had by that faith quenched the violence of the fire – nay, more, he had quenched the rage of his persecutors, which was fiercer than the flames that consumed him. “The beholders,” says the author of the Acts of the Martyrs, “were astonished, nor were they untouched by compassion,” and not a few retired from the spectacle to confess that Gospel for which they had seen the martyr, with so serene and noble a fortitude, bear witness at the burning pile.[9]

We must pause a moment to contemplate, in contrasted lights, two men – the bishop and the wool-comber. “How hardly shall they who have riches enter the kingdom of heaven!” was the saying of our Lord at the beginning of the Gospel dispensation. The saying has seldom been more mournfully verified than in the case of the Bishop of Meaux. “His declension,” says D’Aubigne, “is one of the most memorable in the history of the Church.”

Had Briconnet been as the wool-carder, he might have been able to enter into the evangelical kingdom; but, alas! he presented himself at the gate, carrying a great burden of earthly

dignities, and while Leclerc pressed in, the bishop was stopped on the threshold. What Briconnet's reflections may have been, as he saw one after another of his former flock go to the stake, and from the stake to the sky, we shall not venture to guess. May there not have been moments when he felt as if the mitre, which he had saved at so great a cost, was burning his brow, and that even yet he must needs arise and leave his palace, with all its honors, and by the way of the dungeon and the stake rejoin the members of his former flock who had preceded him, by this same road, and inherit with them honors and delights higher far than any the Pope or the King of France had to bestow – crowns of life and garlands that never fade? But whatever he felt, and what ever at times may have been his secret resolutions, we know that his thoughts and purposes never ripened into acts. He never surrendered his see, or cast in his lot with the despised and persecuted professors of those Reformed doctrines, the Divine sweetness of which he appeared to have once so truly relished, and which aforetime he labored to diffuse with a zeal apparently so ardent and so sincere. In communion with Rome he lived to his dying day. His real character remains a mystery. Is it forbidden to hope that in his last hours the gracious Master, who turned and looked on Peter and Pavane, had compassion on the fallen prelate, and that, the blush of godly shame on his face, and the tears of unfeigned and bitter sorrow streaming from his eyes, he passed into the presence of his Savior, and was gathered to the blessed company above – now the humblest of them all – with whom on earth he had so often taken sweet counsel as they walked together to the house of God?

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CALVIN: HIS BIRTH AND EDUCATION

Greater Champions about to Appear – Calvin – His Birth and Lineage – His Appearance and Disposition – His Education – Appointed to a Chaplaincy – The Black Death – Sent to La

Marche at Paris – Mathurin Cordier – Friendship between the Young Pupil and his Teacher – Calvin Charmed by the Great Latin Writers – Luther's and Calvin's Services to their respective Tongues – Leaves the School of La Marche. THE young vine just planted in France was bending before the tempest, and seemed on the point of being uprooted. The enemies of the Gospel, who, pending the absence of the king, still a prisoner at Madrid, had assumed the direction of affairs, did as it pleased them. Beda and Duprat, whom fear had made cruel, were planing stake after stake, and soon there would remain not one confessor to tell that the Gospel had ever entered the kingdom of France. The Reformation, which as yet had hardly commenced its career, was already as good as burned out. But those who so reasoned overlooked the power of Him who can raise up living witnesses from the ashes of dead ones. The men whom Beda had burned filled a comparatively narrow sphere, and were possessed of but humble powers; mightier champions were about to step upon the stage, whom God would so fortify by his Spirit, and so protect by his providence, that all the power of France should not prevail against them, and from the midst of the scaffolds and blazing stakes with which its enemies had encompassed it, Protestantism would come forth to fill Christendom with disciples and the world with light.

The great leader of the Reformation in Germany stepped at once upon the scene. No note sounded his advent and no herald ushered him upon the stage. From the seclusion of his monastery at Erfurt came Luther startling the world by the suddenness of his appearing, and the authority with which he spoke. But the coming of the great Reformer of France was gradual. If Luther rose on men like a star that blazes suddenly forth in the dark sky, Calvin's coming was like that of day, sweetly and softly opening on the mountain-tops, streaking the horizon with its silver, and steadily waxing in brightness till at last the whole heavens are filled with the splendor of its light.

Calvin, whose birth and education we are now briefly to trace, was born in humble condition, like most of those who have accomplished great things for God in the world. He first saw the light on the 10th of July, 1509, at Noyon in Picardy.[1] His family was of Norman extraction.[2] His grandfather was still living in the small town of Pont l'Eveque, and was a cooper by trade. His father, Gerard, was apostolic notary and secretary to the bishop, through whom he hoped one day to find for his son John preferment in the Church, to which, influenced doubtless by the evident bent of his genius, he had destined him. Yes, higher than his father's highest dream was the Noyon boy to rise in the Church, but in a more catholic Church than the Roman.

Let us sketch the young Calvin. We have before us a boy of about ten years. He is of delicate mould, small stature, with pale features, and a bright burning eye, indicating a soul deeply penetrative as well as richly emotional. There hangs about him an air of timidity and shyness [3] , – a not infrequent accompaniment of a mind of great sensibility and power lodged in a fragile bodily organisation. He is thoughtful beyond his years; devout, too, up to the standard of the Roman Church, and beyond it; he is punctual as stroke of clock in his religious observances.[4] Nor is it a mere mechanical devotion which he practices. The soul that looks forth at those eyes can go mechanically about nothing. As regards his morals he has been a Nazarite from his youth up: no stain of outward vice has touched him. This made the young Calvin a mystery in a sort to his companions. By the beauty of his life, if not by words, he became their unconscious reprover.[5] From his paternal home the young Calvin passed to the stately mansion of the Mommors, the lords of the neighborhood. The hour that saw Calvin cross this noble threshold was a not uneventful one to him. He was not much at home in the stately halls that now opened to receive him, and often, he tells us, he was fain to hide in some shady corner from the observation of the brilliant company that filled

them. But the discipline he here underwent was a needful preparation for his life's work. Educated with the young Mommors, but at his father's cost,[6] he received a more thorough classical grounding, and acquired a polish of manners to which he must ever have remained a stranger had he grown up under his father's humble roof. He who was to be the counsellor of princes, a master in the schools, and a legislator in the Church, must needs have an education neither superficial nor narrow.

The young Calvin mastered with wonderful ease what it cost his class-fellows much labor and time to acquire. His knowledge seemed to come by intuition. While yet a child he loved to pray in the open air, thus giving proof of expansiveness of soul. The age could not think of God but as dwelling in "temples made with hands." Calvin sublimely realized him as One whose presence fills the temple of the universe. In this he resembles the young Anselm, who, lifting his eyes to the grand mountains that guard his native valley of Aosta, believed that if he could climb to their summit he would be nearer him who has placed his throne in the sky. At this time the chaplaincy of a small church in the neighborhood, termed La Gesine, fell vacant, and Gerard Chauvin, finding the expense of his son's education too much for him, solicited and obtained (1521) from the bishop the appointment for his son John.[7] Calvin was then only twelve years of age; but it was the manner of the times for even younger persons to hold ecclesiastical offices of still higher grade – to have a bishop's crozier, or a cardinal's hat, before they were well able to understand what these dignities meant.[8] The young Chaplain of Gesine had his head solemnly shorn by the bishop on the eve of Corpus Christi,[9] and although not yet admitted into priest's orders, he became by this symbolic act a member of the clergy, and a servant of that Church of which he was to become in after-life, without exception, the most powerful opponent, and the foe whom of all others she dreaded the most.

Two years more did the young Chaplain of La Gesine continue to reside in his native town of Noyon, holding his title, but discharging no duties, for what functions could a child of twelve years perform? Now came the Black Death to Noyon. The pestilence, a dreadful one, caused great terror in the place, many of the inhabitants had already been carried off by it, and the canons petitioned the chapter for leave to live elsewhere during its ravages. Gerard Chauvin, trembling for the safety of his son, the hope of his life, also petitioned the chapter to give the young chaplain "liberty to go wherever he pleased, without loss of his allowance." The records of the chapter show, according to the Vicar-General Desmay, and the Canon Levasseur, that this permission was granted in August, 1523. [10] The young Mommors were about to proceed to Paris to prosecute their studies, and Gerard Chauvin was but too glad of the opportunity of sending his son along with his fellow-students and comrades, to study in the capital. At the age of fourteen the future Reformer quitted his father's house. "Flying from one pestilence," say his Romish historians, "he caught another."

At Paris, Calvin entered the school or college of La Marche. There was at that time in this college a very remarkable man, Mathurin Cordier, who was renowned for his exquisite taste, his pure Latinity, and his extensive erudition.[11] These accomplishments might have opened to Cordier a path to brilliant advancement, but he was one of those who prefer pursuing their own tastes, and retaining their independence, to occupying a position where they should to some extent have to sacrifice both. He devoted his whole life to the teaching of youth, and his fame has come down to our own days in connection with one of his books still used in some schools under the title of Cordier's Colloquies.

One day Mathurin Cordier saw a scholar, about fourteen years of age, fresh from the country, enter his school. His figure was slender, his features were sallow, but his eye lent such

intelligence and beauty to his face that the teacher could not help remarking him. Cordier soon saw that he had a pupil of no ordinary genius before him, and after the first few days the scholar of fourteen and the man of fifty became inseparable. At the hour of school dismissals it was not the play-ground, but his loving, genial instructor, who grew young again in the society of his pupil, that Calvin sought. Such was the great teacher whom God had provided for the yet greater scholar.

Mathurin Cordier was not the mere linguist. His mind was fraught with the wisdom of the ancients. The highest wisdom, it is true, he could not impart, for both master and pupil were still immersed in the darkness of superstition, but the master of La Marche initiated his pupil into the spirit of the Renaissance, which like a balmy spring was chasing away the winter of the Middle Ages, and freshening the world with the rich verdure and attractive blossoms of ancient civilization. The severe yet copious diction of Cicero, the lofty thoughts and deep wisdom of this and of other great masters of Roman literature, the young Calvin soon learned to appreciate and to admire. He saw that if he aspired to wield influence over his fellowmen, he must first of all perfect himself in the use of that mighty instrument by which access is gained to the heart and its deep fountains of feeling, and its powerful springs of action touched and set in motion – language, namely, and especially written language. From this hour the young student began to graft upon his native tongue of France those graces of style, those felt cities of expression, that flexibility, terseness, and fire, which should fit it for expressing with equal ease the most delicate shade of sentiment or the most powerful burst of feeling.

It is remarkable surely that the two great Reformers of Europe should have been each the creator of the language of his native country. Calvin was the father of the French tongue, as Luther was the father of the German. There had been a language in these countries, doubtless, since the days of their first

savage inhabitants, a “French” and a “German” before there was a Calvin and a Luther, just as there was a steam-engine before James Watt. But it is not more true that Watt was the inventor of the steam-engine, by making it a really useful instrument, than it is true that Luther and Calvin were the creators of their respective tongues as now spoken and written.

Calvin found French, as Luther had found German, a coarse, meager speech – of narrow compass, of small adaptability, and the vehicle of only low ideas. He breathed into it a new life. A vastly wider compass, and an infinitely finer flexibility, did he give it. And, moreover, he elevated and sanctified it by pouring into it the treasures of the Gospel, thereby enriching it with a multitude of new terms, and subliming it with the energies of a celestial fire. This transformation in the tongue of France the Reformer achieved by the new thinking and feeling he taught his countrymen; for a language is simply the outcome of the life of the people by whom it is spoken.

“Under a lean and attenuated body,” says one of his enemies, “he displayed already a lively and vigorous spirit, prompt at repartee, bold to attack; a great faster, either on account of his health, and to stop the fumes of the headache which assaulted him continually, or to have his mind more free for writing, studying, and improving his memory. He spoke but little, but his words were always full of gravity, and never missed their aim: he was never seen in company, but always in retirement.”[[12](#)] How unlike the poetic halo that surrounds the youth of Luther! “But,” asks Bungener, “is there but one style of poetry, and is there no poetry in the steady pursuit of the good and true all through the age of pleasure, illusion, and disorder?”[[13](#)]

That Calvin was the father of French Protestantism is, of course, admitted by all; but we less often hear it acknowledged that he was the father of French literature. Yet this service, surely a great one, ought not to be passed over in silence. It is hard to say how much the illustrious

statesmen and philosophers, the brilliant historians and poets, who came after him, owed to him. They found in the language, which he had so largely helped to make fit for their use, a suitable vehicle for the talent and genius by which they made themselves and their country famous. Their wit, their sublimity, and their wisdom would have been smothered in the opaque, undramatic, poverty-stricken, and inharmonious phraseology to which they would have been forced to consign them. Than language there is no more powerful instrumentality for civilising men, and there is no more powerful instrumentality for fashioning language than the Gospel.

“Luther,” says Bossuet, “triumphed orally, but the pen of Calvin is the more correct. Both excelled in speaking the language of their country.” “To Calvin,” says Etienne Pasquier, “our tongue is greatly indebted.” “No one of those who preceded him excelled him in writing well,” says Raemon, “and few since have approached him in beauty and felicity of language.”

Calvin fulfilled his course under Cordier, and in 1526 he passed to the College of Montaigu, one of the two seminaries in Paris – the Sorbonne being the other for the training of priests. His affection for his old master of La Marche, and his sense of benefit received from him, the future Reformer carried with him to the new college – nay, to the grave. In after-years he dedicated to him his Commentary on the First Epistle to the Thessalonians. In doing so he takes occasion to attribute to the lessons of Cordier all the progress he had made in the higher branches of study, and if posterity, he says, derives any fruit from his works, he would have it known that it is indebted for it, in part at least, to Cordier.

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CALVIN'S CONVERSION

Calvin in the Montaigu – His Devotions and Studies – Auguries

of his Teachers – Calvin still in Darkness – Trebly Armed – Olivetan – Discussions between Olivetan and Calvin – Doubts Awakened – Great Struggles of Soul – The Priests Advise him to Confess – Olivetan sends him to the Bible – Opens the Book – Sees the Cross – Another Obstacle – The “Church” – Sees the Spiritual Glory of the True Church – The Glory of the False Church Vanishes – One of the Great Battles of the World – Victory and its Fruits. ON crossing the threshold of La Montaigu, Calvin felt himself in a new but not a better atmosphere. Unlike that of La Marche, which was sunny with the free ideas of Republican Rome, the air of Montaigu was musty with the dogmas of the school-men. But as yet Calvin could breathe that air. The student with the pale face, and the grave and serious deportment, did not fail to satisfy the most scholastic and churchy of the professors at whose feet he now sat. His place was never empty at mass; no first did he ever profane by tasting forbidden dish; and no saint did he ever affront by failing to do due honor to his or her fete-day.

The young student; was not more punctual in his devotions than assiduous in his studies. So ardent was he in the pursuit of knowledge that often the hours of meal passed without his eating. Long after others were locked in sleep he was still awake; he would keep poring over the page of schoolman or Father till far into the morning. The inhabitants of that quarter of Paris were wont to watch a tiny ray that might be seen streaming from a certain window of a certain chamber – Calvin’s – of the college after every other light had been extinguished, and long after the midnight hour had passed. His teachers formed the highest hopes of him.

A youth of so fine parts, of an industry so unflagging, and who was withal so pious, was sure, they said, to rise high in the Church. They prognosticated for him no mere country curacy or rectorship, no mere city diocese, nothing less was in store for such a scholar than the purple of a cardinal. He who was now the pride of their college, was sure in time to become one

of the lights of Christendom. Yes! one of the lights of Christendom, the student with the pale face and the burning eye was fated to become. Wide around was his light to beam; nor was it the nations of Europe only, sitting meanwhile in the shadow of Rome, that Calvin was to enlighten, but tribes and peoples afar off, inhabiting islands and continents which no eye of explorer had yet discovered, and no keel of navigator had yet touched, and of which the Christendom of that hour knew nothing.

But the man who had been chosen as the instrument to lead the nations out of their prison-house was meanwhile shut up in the same doleful captivity, and needed, first of all, to be himself brought out of the darkness. The story of his emancipation – his struggles to break his chain – is instructive as it is touching. Calvin is made to feel what Scripture so emphatically terms “the power of darkness,” the strength of the fetter, and the helplessness of the poor captive, that “remembering the gall and the wormwood” he may be touched with pity for the miseries of those he is called to liberate, and may continue to toil in patience and faith till their fetters are broken.

The Reformation was in the air, and the young student could hardly breathe without inhaling somewhat of the new life; and yet he seemed tolerably secure against catching the infection. He was doubly, trebly armed. In the first place, he lived in the orthodox atmosphere of the Montaigu; he was not likely to hear anything there to corrupt his faith: secondly, his head had been shorn; thus he stood at the plough of Rome, and would he now turn back? Then, again, his daily food were the schoolmen, the soundly nutritious qualities of whose doctrines no one in the Montaigu questioned. Over and above his daily and hourly lessons, the young scholar fortified himself against the approaches of heresy by the rigid observance of all outward rites. True, he had a mind singularly keen, penetrating, and inquisitive; but this did not much help the

matter; for when a mind of that caste takes hold of a system like the Papacy, it is with a tenacity that refuses again to let it go; the intellect finds both pleasure and pride in the congenial work of framing arguments for the defense of error, till at last it becomes the dupe of its own subtlety. This was the issue to which the young Calvin was now tending. Every day his mind was becoming more one-sided; every day he contemplated the Papacy more and more, not as it was in fact, but as idealised and fashioned in his own mind; a few years more and his whole thinking, reasoning, and feeling would have been intertwined and identified with the system, every avenue would have been closed and barred against light, and Calvin would have become the ablest champion that ever enrolled himself in the ranks of the Roman Church. We should, at this day, have heard much more of Calvin than of Bellarmine.

But God had provided an opening for the arrow to enter in the triple armor in which the young student was encasing himself. Calvin's cousin, Olivetan, a disciple of Lefevre's, now came to Paris. Living in the same city, the cousins were frequently in each other's company, and the new opinions, which were agitating Paris, and beginning to find confessors in the Place de Greve, became a topic of frequent converse between them.^[1] Nay, it is highly probable that Calvin had witnessed some of the martyrdoms we have narrated in a previous chapter. The great bell of Notre Dame had summoned all Paris – and why not Calvin? – to see how the young Pavane and the hermit of Livry could stand with looks undismayed at the stake. Olivetan and Calvin are not of one mind on the point, and the debates wax warm. Olivetan boldly assails, and Calvin as boldly defends, the dogmas of the Church. In this closet there is a great battlefield. There are but two combatants before us, it is true; but on the conflict there hang issues far more momentous than have depended on many great battles in which numerous hosts have been engaged. In this humble apartment the Old and the New Times have met. They struggle the one with the other, and as victory shall incline so will the New Day rise or fade

on Christendom. If Olivetan shall be worsted and bound again to the chariot-wheel of an infallible Church, the world will never see that beautiful version of the New Testament in the vernacular of France, which is destined to accomplish so much in the way of diffusing the light. But if Calvin shall lower his sword before his cousin, and yield himself up to the arguments of Lefevre's disciple, what a blow to Rome! The scholar on whose sharp dialectic weapon her representatives in Paris have begun to lean in prospect of coming conflict, will pass over to the camp of the enemy, to lay his brilliant genius and vast acquirements at the feet of Protestantism.

The contest between the two cousins is renewed day by day. These are the battles that change the world – not those noisy affairs that are fought with cannons and sabres, but those in which souls wrestle to establish or overthrow great principles. "There are but two religions in the world," we hear Olivetan saying. "The one class of religions are those which men have invented, in all of which man saves himself by ceremonies and good works; the other is that one religion which is revealed in the Bible, and which teaches man to look for salvation solely from the free grace of God." "I will have none of your new doctrines," Calvin sharply rejoins; "think you that I have lived in error all my days?" But Calvin is not so sure of the matter as he looks. The words of his cousin have gone deeper into his heart than he is willing to admit even to himself; and when Olivetan has taken farewell for the day, scarce has the door been closed behind him when Calvin, bursting into tears, falls upon his knees, and gives vent in prayer to the doubts and anxieties that agitate him.

The doubts by which his soul was now shaken grew in strength with each renewed discussion. What shall he do? Shall he forsake the Church? That seems to him like casting himself into the gulf of perdition. And yet can the Church save him? There is a new light breaking in upon him, in which her dogmas are melting away; the ground beneath him is sinking. To what

shall he cling? His agitation grew anon into a great tempest. He felt within him "the sorrows of death," and his closet resounded with sighs and groans, as did Luther's at Erfurt. This tempest was not in the intellect, although doubtless the darkness of his understanding had to do with it; its seat was the soul – the conscience. It consisted in a sense of guilt, a consciousness of vileness, and a shuddering apprehension of wrath. So long as he had to do merely with the saints, creatures like himself, only a little holier it might be, it was all well. But now he was standing in the presence of that infinitely Holy One, with whom evil cannot dwell. He was standing there, the blackness and vileness of his sin shown in the clear light of the Divine purity; he was standing there, the transgressor of a law that says, "The soul that sinneth shall die" – that death how awful, yet that award how righteous! – he was standing there, with all in which he had formerly trusted – saints, rites, good works – swept clean away, with nothing to protect him from the arm of the Lawgiver. He had come to a Judge without an advocate. It did not occur to him before that he needed an advocate, at least other than Rome provides, because before he saw neither God's holiness nor his own guilt; but now he saw both.

The struggle of Calvin was not the perplexity of the skeptic unable to make up his mind among conflicting systems, it was the agony of a soul fleeing from death, but seeing as yet no way of escape. It was not the conflict of the intellect which has broken loose from truth, and is tossed on the billows of doubt and unbelief a painful spectacle, and one of not infrequent occurrence in our century; Calvin's struggle was not of this sort; it was the strong wrestlings of a man who had firm hold of the great truths of Divine revelation, although not as yet of all these truths, and who saw the terrible realities which they brought him face to face with, and who comprehended the dreadful state of his case, fixed for him by his own transgressions on the one hand, and the irrevocable laws of the Divine character and government on the

other.[2] A struggle this of a much more terrific kind than any mere intellectual one, and of this latter sort was the earnestness of the sixteenth century. Not knowing as yet that "there is forgiveness with God," because as yet he did not believe in the "atonement," through which there cometh a free forgiveness, Calvin at this hour stood looking into the blackness of eternal darkness. Had he doubted, that doubt would have mitigated his pain; but he did not and could not doubt; he saw too surely the terrible reality, and knew not how it was to be avoided. Here was himself, a transgressor; there was the law, awarding death, and there was the Judge ready – nay, bound – to inflict it: so Calvin felt.

The severity of Calvin's struggle was in proportion to the strength of his self-righteousness. That principle had been growing within him from his youth upwards. The very blamelessness of his life, and the punctuality with which he discharged all the acts of devotion, had helped to nourish it into rigor and strength; and now nothing but a tempest of surpassing force could have beaten down and laid in the dust a pride which had been waxing higher and stronger with every rite he performed, and every year that passed over him. And till his pride had been laid in the dust it was impossible that he could throw himself at the feet of the Great Physician.

But meanwhile, like King Joram, he went to physicians "who could not heal him of his disease;" mere empirics they were, who, gave him beads to count and relics to kiss, instead of the "death" that atones and the "blood" that cleanses. "Confess!"[3] cried the doctors of the Montaigu, who could read in his dimmed eye and wasting form the agony that was raging in his soul, and too surely divined its cause. "Confess, confess!" cried they, in alarm, for they saw that they were on the point of losing their most promising pupil, on whom they had built so many hopes. Calvin went to his confessor; he told him – not all – but as much as he durst,

and the Father gave him kindly a few anodynes from the Church's pharmacopoeia to relieve his pain. The patient strove to persuade himself that his trouble was somewhat assuaged, and then he would turn again to the schoolmen, if haply he might forget, in the interest awakened by their subtleties and speculations, the great realities that had engrossed him. But soon there would descend on him another and fiercer burst of the tempest, and then groans louder even than before would echo through his chamber, and tears more copious than he had yet shed would water his couch.[4]

One day, while the young scholar of the Montaigu was passing through these struggles, he chanced to visit the Place de Greve, where he found a great crowd of priests, soldiers, and citizens gathered round a stake at which a disciple of the new doctrines was calmly yielding up his life. He stood till the fire had done its work, and a stake, an iron collar and chain, and a heap of ashes were the only memorials of the tragedy he had witnessed. What he had seen awakened a train of thoughts within him.

"These men," said he to himself, "have a peace which I do not possess. They endure the fire with a rare courage. I, too, could brave the fire, but were death to come to me, as it comes to them, with the sting of the Church's anathema in it, could I face that as calmly as they do? Why is it that they are so courageous in the midst of terrors that are as real as they are dreadful, while I am oppressed and tremble before apprehensions and forebodings? Yes, I will take my cousin Olivetan's advice, and search the Bible, if haply I may find that 'new way' of which he speaks, and which these men who go so bravely through the fire seem to have found." He opened the Book which no one, says Rome, should open unless the Church be by to interpret. He began to read, but the first effect was a sharper terror. His sins had never appeared so great, nor himself so vile as now.[5]

He would have shut the Book, but to what other quarter could

he turn? On every side of him abysses appeared to be opening. So he continued to read, and by-and-by he thought he could discern dimly and afar off what seemed a cross, and One hanging upon it, and his form was like the Son of God. He looked again, and the vision was clearer for now he thought he could read the inscription over the head of the Sufferer: "He was wounded for our iniquities, he was bruised for our transgressions; the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed." A ray now shone through his darkness; he thought he could see a way of escape – a shelter where the black tempest that lowered over him would no longer beat upon his head; already the great burden that pressed upon him was less heavy, it seemed as if about to fall off, and now it rolled down as he kept gazing at the "Crucified." "O Father," he burst out – it was no longer the Judge, the Avenger – "O Father, his sacrifice has appeased thy wrath; his blood has washed away my impurities; his cross has borne my curse; his death has atoned for me!" In the midst of the great billows his feet had touched the bottom: he found the ground to be good: he was upon a rock.

Calvin, however, was not yet safe on shore and past all danger. One formidable obstacle he had yet to surmount, and one word expresses it – the Church. Christ had said, "Lo, I am with you alway." The Church, then, was the temple of Christ, and this made unity – unity in all ages and in all lands – one of her essential attributes. The Fathers had claimed this as a mark of the true Church. She must be one, they had said.

Precisely so; but is this unity outward and visible, or inward and spiritual? The "Quod semper, quod ubique et ab omnibus," if sought in an outward, realization, can be found only in the Church of Rome. How many have fallen over this stumbling-block and never risen again; how many even in our own age have made shipwreck here! This was the rock on which Calvin was now in danger of shipwreck. The Church rose before his eyes, a venerable and holy society; he saw her coming down from

ancient times, covering all lands, embracing in her ranks the martyrs and confessors of primitive times, and the great doctors of the Middle Ages, with the Pope at their head, the Vicar of Jesus Christ. This seemed truly a temple of God's own building. With all its faults it yet was a glorious Church, Divine and heavenly. Must he leave this august society and join himself to a few despised disciples of the new opinions? This seemed like a razing of his name from the Book of Life. This was to invoke excommunication upon his own head, and write against himself a sentence of exclusion from the family of God – nay, from God himself! This was the great battle that Calvin had yet to fight.

How many have commenced this battle only to lose it! They have been beaten back and beaten down by the pretended Divine authority of “the Church,” by the array of her great names and her great Councils, and though last, not least, by the terror of her anathemas. It is not possible for even the strongest minds, all at once, to throw off the spell of the great Enchantress Nor would even Calvin have conquered in this sore battle had he not had recourse to the Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. Ever and anon he came back to the Bible; he sought for the Church as she is there shown – a spiritual society, Christ her Head, the Holy Spirit her life, truth her foundation, and believers her members – and in proportion as this Church disclosed her beauty to him, the fictitious splendor and earthly magnificence which shone around the Church of Rome waned, and at last vanished outright.

“There can be no Church,” we hear Calvin saying to himself, “where the truth is not. Here, in the Roman Communion, I can find only fables, silly inventions, manifest falsehoods, and idolatrous ceremonies. The society that is founded on these things cannot be the Church. If I shall come back to the truth, as contained in the Scriptures, will I not come back to the Church? and will I not be joined to the holy company of

prophets and apostles, of saints and martyrs? And as regards the Pope, the Vicar of Jesus Christ, let me not be awed by a big word. If without warrant from the Bible, or the call of the Christian people, and lacking the holiness and humility of Christ, the Pope place himself above the Church, and surround himself with worldly pomps, and arrogate lordship over the faith and consciences of men, is he therefore entitled to homage, and must I bow down and do obeisance? The Pope," concluded Calvin, "is but a scarecrow, dressed out in magnificences and fulminations. I will go on my way without minding him."

In fine, Calvin concluded that the term "Church" could not make the society that monopolized the term really "the Church." High-sounding titles and lofty assumptions could give neither unity nor authority; these could come from the Truth alone; and so he abandoned "the Church" that he might enter the Church – the Church of the Bible.

The victory was now complete. The last link of Rome's chain had been rent from his soul; the huge phantasmagoria which had awed and terrified him had been dissolved, and he stood up in the liberty wherewith Christ had made him free. Here truly was rest after a great fight – a sweet and blessed dawn after a night of thick darkness and tempest.

Thus was fought one of the great battles of the world. When one thinks of what was won for mankind upon this field, one feels its issues important beyond all calculation, and would rather have conquered upon it than have won all the victories and worn all the laurels of Caesar and Alexander. The day of Calvin's conversion is not known, but the historian D'Aubigne, to whose research the world is indebted for its full and exact knowledge of the event, has determined the year, 1527; and the place, Paris – that city where some of the saints of God had already been put to death, and where, in years to come, their blood was to be poured out like water. The day of Calvin's conversion is one of the memorable days of time.

CHAPTER 8 [Back to Top](#) CALVIN BECOMES A STUDENT OF LAW

Gate of the New Kingdom – Crowds Pressing to Enter – The Few only Able to do so – Lefevre and Farel Sighing for the Conversion of Francis I. – A Greater Conversion – Calvin Refuses to be made a Priest – Chooses the Profession of Law – Goes to Orleans – Pierre de l'Etoile – Calvin becomes his Scholar – Teaching of Etoile on the Duty of the State to Punish Heterodoxy – Calvin among his College Companions – A Victory – Calvin Studies Greek – Melchior Wolmar – Calvin Prepared for his Work as a Commentator – His Last Mental Struggle. THE Reformation has come, and is setting up anew the kingdom of the Gospel upon the earth. Flinging wide open its portals, and stationing no sentinel on the threshold, nor putting price upon its blessings, it bids all enter. We see great multitudes coming up to the gate, and making as if they would press in and become citizens of this new State. Great scholars and erudite divines are groping around the door, but they are not able to become as little children, and so they cannot find the gate. We see ecclesiastics of every grade crowding to that portal; there stands the purple cardinal, and there too is the frocked friar, all eagerly inquiring what they may do that they may inherit eternal life; but they cannot part with their sins or with their self-righteousness, and so they cannot enter at a gate which, however wide to the poor in spirit, is strait to them. Puissant kings, illustrious statesmen, and powerful nations come marching up, intent seemingly on enrolling themselves among the citizens of this new society. They stand on the very threshold; another step and all will be well; but, alas! they hesitate; they falter; it is a moment of terrible suspense. What blinds them so that they cannot see the entrance? It is a little word, a potent spell, which has called up before them all imposing image that looks the impersonation of all the ages, and the embodiment of all apostolic virtues and blessings – “the Church.” Dazzled by this apparition, they pause – they reel backwards – the golden moment passes; and from the very gates of evangelical light,

they take the downward road into the old darkness. The broad pathway is filled from side to side by men whose feet have touched the very threshold of the kingdom, but who are now returning, some offended by the simplicity of the infant Church; others scared by the scaffold and the stake; others held back by their love of ease or their love of sin. A few only are able to enter in and earn the crown, and even these, enter only after sore rightings and great agonies of soul. It was here that the Reformation had its beginning – not in the high places of the world, amid the ambitions of thrones and the councils of cabinets. It struggled into birth in the low places of society, in closets, and the bosoms of the penitent, amid tears and strong cries and many groans.

Paris was not one of those cities that were destined to be glorified by the light of Protestantism, nevertheless it pleased God, as narrated in the last chapter, to make it the scene of a great conversion.[\[1\]](#) Lefevre and Farel were sighing to enrol among the disciples of the Gospel a great potentate, Francis I. If, thought they, the throne can be gained, will not the preponderance of power on the side of the Gospel infallibly assure its triumph in France? But God, whose thoughts are not as man's thoughts, was meanwhile working for a far greater issue, the conversion even of a pale-faced student in the College of Montaigu, whose name neither Lefevre nor Farel had ever happened to hear, and whose very existence was then unknown to them. They little dreamed what a conflict was at that very hour going on so near to them in a small chamber in an obscure quarter of Paris. And, although they had known it, they could as little have conjectured that when that young scholar had bowed to the force of the truth, a mightier power would have taken its place at the side of the Gospel than if Francis and all his court had become its patrons and champions. Light cannot be spread by edict of king, or by sword of soldier. It is the Bible, preached by the evangelist, and testified to by the martyr, that is to bid the Gospel, like the day, shine forth and bless the earth.

From the hour of Calvin's conversion he became the center of the Reformation in France, and by-and-by the center of the Reformation in Christendom: consequently in tracing the several stages of his career we are chronicling the successive developments of the great movement of Protestantism. His eyes were opened, and he saw the Church of Rome disenchanted of that illusive splendor – that pseudo-Divine authority – which had aforetime dazzled and subdued him. Where formerly there stood a spiritual building, the House of God, the abode of truth, as he believed, there now rose a temple of idols. How could he minister at her altars? True, his head had been shorn, but he had not yet received that indelible character which is stamped on all who enter the priesthood, and so it was not imperative that he should proceed farther in that path. He resolved to devote himself to the profession of law. This mode of retreat from the clerical ranks would awaken no suspicion.

It is somewhat remarkable that his father had come, at about the same time, to the same resolution touching the future profession of his son, and thus the young Calvin had his parent's full consent to his new choice – a coincidence which Beza has pointed out as a somewhat striking one. The path on which Gerard Chauvin saw his son now entering was one in which many and brilliant honors were to be won: and not one of those prizes was there which the marvelous intellect and the rare application of that son did not bid fair to gain. Already Gerard in fancy saw him standing at the foot of the throne, and guiding the destinies of France. Has Calvin then bidden a final adieu to theology, and are the courts of law and the offices of State henceforth to claim him as their own? No! he has turned aside but for a little while, that by varying the exercise of his intellect he may bring to the great work that lies before him a versatility of power, all amplitude of knowledge, and a range of sympathy not otherwise attainable. Of that work he did not at this hour so much as dream, but He who had "called him from the womb, and ordained him a prophet

to the nations," was leading him by a way he knew not.

The young student – his face still pale, but beaming with that lofty peace that succeeds such tempests as those which had beat upon him – crosses for the last time the portal of the Montaigu, and, leaving Paris behind him, directs his steps to Orleans, the city on the banks of the Loire which dates from the days of Aurelian, its founder. In that city was a famous university, and in that university was a famous professor of law, Pierre de l'Etoile, styled the Prince of Jurists.[2] It was the light of this; "star" that attracted the young Calvin to Orleans.

The science of jurisprudence now became his study. And one of the maxims to which he was at times called to listen, as he sat on the benches of the class-room, enables us to measure the progress which the theory of liberty had made in those days. "It is the magistrate's duty," would "Peter of the Star" say to his scholars, "to punish offenses against religion as well as crimes against the State." "What!" he would exclaim, with the air of a man who was propounding an incontrovertible truth, "What! shall we hang a thief who robs us of our purse, and not burn a heretic who steals from us heaven!" So ill understood was then the distinction between the civil and the spiritual jurisdictions, and the acts falling under their respective cognisance. Under this code of jurisprudence were Calvin and that whole generation of Frenchmen reared. It had passed in Christendom for a thousand years as indisputably sound, serving as the cornerstone of the Inquisition, and yielding its legitimate fruit in those baleful fires which mingled their lurid glare with the dawn of the New Times. Under no other maxim was it then deemed possible for nations to flourish or piety to be preserved; nor was it till a century and a half after Calvin's time that this maxim was exploded, for of all fetters those are the hardest to be rent which have been forged by what wears the guise of justice, and have been imposed to protect what professes to be religion.

The future Reformer now sits at the feet of the famous jurist of Orleans, and, by the study of the law, whets that wonderful intellect which in days to come was to unravel so many mysteries, and dissolve the force of so many spells which had enchained the soul. What manner of man, we ask, was Calvin at Orleans? He had parted company with the schoolmen; he had bidden the Fathers of the Montaigu adieu, and he had turned his face, as he believed, towards the high places of the world. Did his impressions of Divine things pass away, or did the grandeurs of time dim to his eye those of eternity? No; but if his seriousness did not disappear, his shyness somewhat did. His loving sympathies and rich genialities of heart, like a secret gravitation for they were not much expressed in words – drew companions around him, and his superiority of intellect gave him, without his seeking it, the lead amongst them. His fellow-students were a noisy, pleasure-loving set, and their revels and quarrels woke up, rather rudely at times, the echoes of the academic hall, and broke in upon the quiet of the streets; but the high-souled honor and purity of Calvin, untouched by soil or stain amidst the pastimes and Bacchanalian riots that went on around him, joined to his lofty genius, made him the admiration of his comrades.

The nation of Picardy – for the students were classified into nations according to the provinces they came from – elected the young Calvin as their proctor, and in this capacity he was able, by his legal knowledge, to recover for his nation certain privileges of which they had been deprived.

There have been more brilliant affairs than this triumph over the local authority who had trenched upon academic rights, but it was noisily applauded by those for whom it was won, and to the young victor this petty warfare was all earnest of greater battles to be fought on a wider arena, and of prouder victories to be won over greater opponents. The future Chancellor of the Kingdom of France – for no inferior position had Gerard Chauvin elected for his son to fill – had taken his

first step on the road which would most surely conduct him to this high dignity. Step after step – to his genius how easy! – would bring him to it; and there having passed life in honorable labor, he would leave his name inscribed among those of the legislators and philosophers of France, while his bust would adorn the Louvre, or the Hall of Justice, and his bones, inurned in marble, would sleep in some cathedral aisle of Paris. Such was the prospect that opened out before the eye of his father, and, it is possible, before his own also at this period of his life. Very grand it was, but not nearly so grand as that which ended in a simple grave by the Rhone, marked only by a pine-tree, with a name like the brightness of the firmament, that needed no chiselled bust and no marble cenotaph to keep it in remembrance. Calvin next went to Bourges. He was attracted to this city by the fame of Alciati of Milan, who was lecturing on law in its university. The Italian loved a good table, and a well-filled purse, but he had the gift of eloquence, and a rare genius for jurisprudence. “Andrew Alciat,” says Beza, “was esteemed the most learned and eloquent of all the jurisconsults of his time.”[3] The eloquence of Alciati kindled anew Calvin’s enthusiasm for the study of law. The hours were then early; but Calvin, Beza informs us, sat up till midnight, and, on awakening in the morning, spent an hour in bed recalling to memory what he had learned the evening previous. At Bourges was another distinguished man, learned in a wisdom that Alciati knew not, and whose prelections, if less brilliant, were more useful to the young student. Melchior Wolmar, a German, taught the Greek of Homer, Demosthenes, or Sophocles, “but less publicly,” says Bungener, “though with small attempts at concealment, the Greek of another book far mightier and more important.”[4]

When Calvin arrived in Bourges he knew nothing of Greek. His Latinity he had received at Paris from Mathurin Cordier, whose memory he ever most affectionately cherished; but now he was to be initiated into the tongue of ancient Greece. This

service was rendered him by Melchior Wolmar,[\[5\]](#) who had been a pupil of the celebrated Budaeus.

Calvin now had access to the Oracles of God in the very words in which inspired men had written them – an indispensable qualification surely in one who was to be the first great interpreter, in modern times, of the New Testament. He could more exactly know the mind of the Spirit speaking in the Word, and more fully make known to men the glory of Divine mysteries; said the commentaries of Calvin are perhaps unsurpassed to this day in the combined qualities of clearness, accuracy, and depth. They were in a sort a second giving of the Oracles of God to men. Their publication was as when, in the Apocalypse, “the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in his temple the ark of his testament.”

Before leaving Orleans his spiritual equipment for his great work had been completed. The agony he had endured in Paris returned in part. He may have contracted from his law studies some of the dross of earth, and he was sent back to the furnace for the last time. Doubts regarding his salvation began again to agitate him; the “Church” rose up again before him in all her huge fascination and enchantment. These were the very foes he had already vanquished, and left dead, as he believed, on the battle-field.

Again they stood like menacing spectres in his path, and he had to recommence the fight, and as at Paris, so again in Orleans he had to wage it in the sweat of his face, in the sweat of his heart. “I am in a continual battle,” he writes; “I am assaulted and shaken, as when an armed man is forced by a violent blow to stagger a few steps backward.”[\[6\]](#) Grasping once more the sword of the Spirit, he put his foes to flight, and when the conflict was over Calvin found himself walking in a clearer light than he had ever before enjoyed; and that light continued all the way even to his life’s end. There gathered often around him in after-days the darkness of

outward trial, but nevermore was there darkness in his soul.

CHAPTER 9 [Back to Top](#) CALVIN THE EVANGELIST, AND BERQUIN THE MARTYR.

Calvin Abandons the Study of the Law – Goes to Bourges – Bourges under Margaret of Navarre – Its Evangelisation already Commenced – The Citizens entreat Calvin to become their Minister – He begins to act as an Evangelist in Bourges – The Work extends to the Villages and Castles around – The Plottings of the Monks – His Father's Death calls Calvin away – A Martyr, Louis de Berquin – His Youth – His Conversion – His Zeal and Eloquence in Spreading the Gospel – Imprisoned by the Sorbonnists – Set at Liberty by the King – Imprisoned a Second and a Third Time – Set at Liberty – Erasmus' Counsel – Berquin Taxes the Sorbonnists with Heresy – An Image of the Virgin Mutilated – Berquin consigned to the Conciergerie – His Condemnation and Frightful Sentence – Efforts of Budaeus – Berquin on his Way to the Stake – His Attire – His Noble Behaviour – His Death. EMERGING from the furnace "purified seven times," Calvin abandons the study of the law, casts behind him the great honors to which it invited him, turns again to the Church – not her whose head is on the Seven Hills – and puts his hand to the Gospel plough, never to take it away till death should withdraw it. Quitting Orleans he goes to Bourges.

With Bourges two illustrious conquerors of former days had associated their names: Caesar had laid it in ashes; Charlemagne had raised it up from its ruins; now a greater hero than either enters it, to begin a career of conquests which these warriors might well have envied, destined as they were to eclipse in true glory and far outlast any they had ever achieved. It was here that Calvin made his first essay as an evangelist.

Bourges was situated in the province of Berry, and as Margaret, whom we have specially mentioned in former chapters,

as the disciple and correspondent of Bricconnet and Lefevre, had now become Queen of Navarre and Duchess of Berry, Bourges was under her immediate jurisdiction. Prepared to protect in others the Gospel which she herself loved, Bourges presented an opening for Protestantism which no other city in all France at that time did. Under Margaret it became a center of the evangelisation. For some time previous no little religious fermentation had been going on among its population.[1] The new doctrines had found their way thither; they were talked of in its social gatherings; they had begun even to be heard in its pulpits; certain priests, who had come to a knowledge of the truth, were preaching it with tolerable clearness to congregations composed of lawyers, students, and citizens. It was at this crisis that Calvin arrived at Bourges.

His fame had preceded him. The Protestants gathered round him and entreated him to become their teacher. Calvin was averse to assume the office of the ministry. Not that he shrunk from either the labors or the perils of the work, but because he cherished a deep sense of the greatness of the function, and of his own unworthiness to fill it. "I have hardly learned the Gospel myself," he would say, "and, lo! I am called to teach it to others."

Not for some time did Calvin comply with these solicitations. His timidity, his sense of responsibility, above all his love of study, held him back. He sought a hiding-place where, safe from intrusion, he might continue the pursuit of that wisdom which it delighted him with each studious day to gather and give up, but his friends surprised him in his concealment, and renewed their entreaties. At last he consented. "Wonderful it is," he said, "that one of so lowly an origin should be exalted to so great a dignity." [2]

But how unostentatious the opening of his career! The harvests of the earth spring not in deeper silence than does this great evangelical harvest, which, beginning in the ministry of Calvin, is destined to cover a world. Gliding along the street

might be seen a youth of slender figure and sallow features. He enters a door; he gathers round him the family and, opening the Bible, he explains to them its message. His words distil as the dew and as the tender rain on the grass. By-and-by the city becomes too narrow a sphere of labor, and the young evangelist extends his efforts to the hamlets and towns around Bourges.[3] One tells another of the sweetness of this water, and every day the numbers increase of those who wish to drink of it. The castle of the baron is opened as well as the cottage of the peasant, and a cordial welcome is accorded the missionary in both. His doctrine is clear and beautiful, and as refreshing to the soul as light to the eye after long darkness. And then the preacher is so modest withal, so sweet in his address, so earnest in his work, and altogether so unlike any other preacher the people had ever known! "Upon my word," said the Lord of Lignieres to his wife, "Master John Calvin seems to me to preach better than the monks, and he goes heartily to work too." [4]

The monks looked with but small favor on these doings. The doors open to the young evangelist were shut against themselves. If they plotted to stop the work by casting the workman into prison, in a town under Margaret's jurisdiction this was not so easy. The design failed, if it was ever entertained, and the evangelist went on sowing the seed from which in days to come a plentiful harvest was to spring. The Churches whose foundations are now being laid by the instrumentality of Calvin will yield in future years not only confessors of the truth, but martyrs for the stake.

In the midst of these labors Calvin received a letter from Noyon, his native town, saying that his father was dead.[5] These tidings stopped his work, but it is possible that they saved him from prison. He had planted, but another must water; and so turning his face towards his birth-place, he quits Bourges not again to return to it. But the work he had accomplished in it did not perish. A venerable doctor, Michel

Simon, came forward on Calvin's departure, and kept alive the light in Bourges which the evangelist had kindled.

On his journey to Noyon, Calvin had to pass through Paris. It so happened that the capital at that time (1529) was in a state of great excitement, another stake having just been planted in it, whereat one of the noblest of the early martyrs of France was yielding up his life. Providence so ordered it that the pile of the martyr and the visit of the Reformer came together. God had chosen him as the champion by whom the character of his martyrs was to be vindicated and their blood avenged on the Papacy, and therefore it was necessary that he should come very near, if not actually stand beside their stake, and be the eye-witness of the agonies, or rather the triumph, of their dying moments. Before tracing farther the career of Calvin let us turn aside to the Place de Greve, and see there "the most learned of the nobles of France" dying as a felon.

Louis de Berquin was descended of a noble family of Artois.[6] Unlike the knights of those days, who knew only to mount their horse, to handle their sword, to follow the hounds, or to figure in a tournament, Berquin delighted in reading and was devoted to study. Frank, courteous, and full of alms-deeds, he was beloved by all. His morals were as pure as his manners were polished: he had now reached the age of forty without calumny finding occasion to breathe upon him. He often went to court., and was specially welcomed by a prince who delighted to see around him men of intellectual accomplishments and tastes. Touching the religion of Rome, Berquin was blameless, having kept himself pure from his youth up. "He was," says Crespin, "a great follower of the Papistical constitutions, and a great hearer of masses and sermons." All the Church's rites he strictly observed, all the Church's saints he duly honored, and he crowned all his other virtues by holding Lutheranism in special abhorrence.[7]

But it pleased God to open his eyes. His manly and

straightforward character made the maneuvers and intrigues of the Sorbonne specially detestable to him. Besides, it chanced to him to have a dispute with one of its doctors on a scholastic subtlety, and he opened his Bible to find in it proofs to fortify his position. Judge of his amazement when he perceived there, not the doctrines of Rome, but the doctrines of Luther. His conversion was thorough. His learning, his eloquence, and his influence were from that hour all at the service of the Gospel. He labored to spread the truth among his tenantry in the country, and among his acquaintances in the city and at the court. He panted to communicate his convictions to all France. Many looked to him as the destined Reformer of his native land; and certainly his position and gifts made him the most considerable person at that time on the side of the Reform in France. "Berquin would have been a second Luther," said Beza, "had he found in Francis I. a second Elector."[\[8\]](#)

The Sorbonne had not been unobservant; their alarm was great, and their anger was in proportion to their alarm. "He is worse than Luther," they exclaimed. Armed with the authority of Parliament the Sorbonne seized and imprisoned Berquin (1523). There was nothing but a stake for the man whose courage they could not daunt, and whose eloquence they could not silence, and all whose wit and learning were employed in laughing at their ignorance and exposing their superstition. But the king, who loved him, set him at liberty.

A second time the monks of the Sorbonne seized Berquin. A second time the king came to his rescue, advising him to be more prudent in future; but such strong convictions as those of Berquin could not be suppressed. A third time Berquin was seized, and the Sorbonnists thought that this time they had made sure of their prey. The king was a prisoner at Madrid: Duprat and Louisa of Savoy were all-powerful at Paris. But no: an order from Francis I., dated 1st April, 1526, arrived, enjoining them to suspend proceedings till his return; and so

Berquin was again at liberty.

Berquin's courage and zeal grew in proportion as the plots of his enemies multiplied. Erasmus, who was trying to swim between two streams, foreseeing how the unequal contest must end, warned Berquin in these characteristic words: "Ask to be sent as ambassador to some foreign country; go and travel in Germany. You know Beda and such as he – he is a thousand-headed monster darting venom on every side. Your enemies are named legion. Were your cause better than that of Jesus Christ, they will not let you go till they have miserably destroyed you. Do not trust too much to the king's protection. At all events, do not compromise me with the faculty of theology." [9]

Berquin did not listen to the counsel of the timid scholar. He resolved to stand no longer on the defensive, but to attack. He extracted from the writings of Beda and his colleagues twelve propositions, which he presented to the king, and which he charged with being opposed to the Bible and, by consequence, heretical. [10]

The Sorbonnists were confounded. That they, the pillars of the Church, and the lights of France, should be taxed with heresy by a Lutheran was past endurance. The king, however, not sorry to have an opportunity of humbling these turbulent doctors, requested them to disprove Berquin's allegations from Scripture. This might have been a hard task; the affair was taking an ugly turn for the Sorbonne. Just at that time an image of the Virgin, at the corner of one of the streets, was mutilated. It was a fortunate incident for the priests. "These are the fruits of the doctrines of Berquin," it was exclaimed; "all is about to be overthrown – religion, the laws, the throne itself – by this Lutheran conspiracy." War to the knife was demanded against the iconoclasts: the people and the monarch were frightened; and the issue was that Berquin was apprehended (March, 1529) and consigned to the Conciergerie. [11]

A somewhat remarkable occurrence furnished Berquin's enemies with unexpected advantage against him in the prosecution. No sooner was he within the walls of his prison than the thought of his books and papers flashed across his mind. He saw the use his persecutors would make of them, and he sat down and wrote instantly a note to a friend begging him to destroy them. He gave the note to a domestic, who hid it under his clothes and departed.[12]

The man, who was not a little superstitious, trembled at the thought of the message which he carried, but all went well till he came to the Pont du Change, where, his superstition getting the better of his courage, he swooned and fell before the image of "Our Lady." The passers-by gathered round him, and, unbuttoning his doublet that he might breathe the more freely, found the letter underneath. It was opened and read. "He is a heretic," said they: "Our Lady has done it. It is a miracle." The note was given to one of the bystanders, at whose house the monk then preaching the Lent sermons was that day to dine, who, perceiving its importance, carried it to Berquin's judges.[13] His books were straightway seized and examined by the twelve commissioners appointed to try him. On the 16th April, 1529, the trial was finished, and at noon Berquin was brought into court, and had his sentence read to him. He was condemned to make a public abjuration in the following manner: – He was to walk bare-headed, with a lighted taper in his hand, to the Place de Greve, and there he was to see his books burned; from the Place de Greve he was to pass to the front of the Church of Notre Dame, and there he was to do penance "to God and his glorious mother, the Virgin." After that his tongue, "that instrument of unrighteousness," was to be pierced; and, lastly, he was to be taken back to prison, and shut up for life within four walls of stone, and to have neither books to read, nor pen and ink to write.[14] Berquin, stunned by the atrocity of the sentence, at first remained silent, but recovering in a few minutes his composure, said, "I appeal to the king." This was his way of saying, I refuse

to abjure.

Among his twelve judges was the celebrated Hellenist, Budaeus, the intimate friend of Berquin, and a secret favourer of the new doctrines. Budaeus hastened after him to the prison, his object being to persuade him to make a recantation, and thereby save his life. In no other way he knew could Berquin escape, for already a second sentence stood drafted by his judges, consigning him to the stake should he refuse to do public penance. Budaeus threw himself at Berquin's feet, and implored him with tears not to throw away his life, but to reserve himself for the better times that were awaiting the Reformation in France. This was the side on which to attack such a man. But the prisoner was inflexible. Again and again Budaeus returned to the Conciergerie, and each time he renewed his importunities with greater earnestness. He painted the grand opportunities the future would bring, and did not hesitate to say that Berquin would incur no small guilt should he sacrifice himself.[15]

The strong man began to bow. "The power of the Holy Ghost was extinguished in him for a moment," says one. He gave his consent to appear in the court of the Palace of Justice, and ask pardon of God and the king. Budaeus, overjoyed, hastened back to tell the Sorbonne that Berquin was ready to withdraw his appeal and make his recantation. How fared it the while with Berquin in the prison? His peace had forsaken him that same hour. He looked up to God, but the act which aforesaid had ever brought joy and strength into his heart filled him with terror. This darkness was his true prison, and not the stone walls that enclosed him. Could the Sorbonne deliver him from that prison, and was this the sort of life that he was reserving for the Reformation? Verily he would do great things with a soul lettered by fear and bound down by a sense of guilt! No, he could not live thus. He could die – die a hundred times, but to appear before the Sorbonne and to say of the Gospel, "I renounce it," and of the Savior, "I know him

not," that he could not do.[16] And so when Budseus returned, there was an air in the face of the prisoner which told its own tale before Berquin had had time to speak. He had weighed the two – recantation and the stake; and he had chosen the better part – though Budaeus hardly deemed it so – the stake.

The king, who it was possible might interpose at the last moment and save Berquin, was not indeed in Paris at this moment, but he was no farther away than at Blois. The Sorbonne must despatch their victim before a pardon could arrive from Blots.

A week's delay was craved in the execution of the sentence. "Not a day," said Beda.[17] But the prisoner has appealed to the royal prerogative. "Quick," responded his persecutors, "and let him be put to death." That same day, April 22nd, 1529, at noon, was Berquin led forth to die. The ominous news had already circulated through Paris, from every street came a stream of spectators, and a dense crowd gathered and surged round the prison, waiting to see Berquin led to execution. The clock struck the hour: the gates of the Conciergerie were flung open with a crash, and the melancholy procession was seen to issue forth.

The passage of that procession through the streets was watched with looks of pity on the part of some, of wonder and astonishment on the part of others. It amazed not a few to find that the chief actor in that dismal tragedy was one of the first nobles of France. But the most radiant face in all that great concourse of men was that of Berquin himself. He was going – we had almost said to the stake, but of the stake he thought not – he was going to the palace of the sky; and what though a wretched tumbril was bearing him on his way? a better chariot – whose brightness it would have blinded the beholder to look upon – stood waiting to carry him upward as soon as he had passed through the fire; and what mattered it if those who knew not what he was going to, hooted or pitied him as he passed along? how soon would the look of pity and

the shout of derision be forgotten in the presence of the "Blessed!"

The cart in which Berquin was placed moved forward at a slow pace. The crowd was great, and the streets of the Paris of those days were narrow, but the rate of progress enabled the multitude all the better to observe the way in which the martyr bore himself. As he rode along, escorted by a band of 600 bowmen, the spectators said one to another, as they marked the serenity of his looks and the triumph of his air, "He is like one who sits in a temple and meditates on holy things." [18]

"And see," said they, "how bravely he is arrayed! He is liker one who is going to a bridal banquet than one who is going to be burned." And, indeed, it was so. Berquin had that morning dressed himself in his finest clothes. He wore no weeds; sign of mourning or token of woe would have belied him, as if he bewailed his hard lot, and grieved that his life should be given in the cause of the Gospel. He had attired himself in pleasant and even gay apparel. A citizen of Paris, who wrote a journal of these events, and who probably saw the martyr as he passed through the streets, tells us that "he wore a cloak of velvet, a doublet of satin and damask, and golden hose." [19] This was goodly raiment for the fire. "But am I not," said Berquin, "to be this day presented at court – not that of Francis, but that of the Monarch of the Universe?"

Arrived at the Place de Greve, he alighted from the vehicle and stood beside the stake. He now essayed to speak a few words to the vast assembly which he found gathered at the place of execution. But the monks who stood near, dreading the effect on the multitude of what he might say, gave the signal to their creatures, and instantly the shout of voices, and the clash of arms, drowned the accents of the martyr. "Thus," says Felice, "the Sorbonne of 1529 set the populace of 1793 the base example of stifling on the scaffold the sacred words of the dying." [20]

What though the roll of drums drowned the last words of Berquin? It was his DEATH that must speak. And it did speak: it spoke to all France; and this, the most eloquent and powerful of all testimonies, no clamours could stifle.

The fire had done its work, and where a few minutes before stood the noble form of Berquin there was now only a heap of ashes. In that heap lay entombed the Reformation in France – so did both friend and foe deem. The Sorbonnists were overjoyed: the Protestants were bowed down under a weight of sorrow. There was no sufficient reason for the exultation of the one or the dejection of the other. Berquin's stake was to be, in some good measure, to France what Ridley's was to England – a candle which, by God's grace, would not be put out, but would shine through all that realm.[[21](#)]

CHAPTER 10 [Back to Top](#) CALVIN AT PARIS, AND FRANCIS NEGOTIATING WITH GERMANY AND ENGLAND.

The Death of the Martyr not the Death of the Cause – Calvin at Noyon – Preaches at Pont l'Eveque – His Audience – How they take his Sermon – An Experiment – Its Lesson – Calvin goes to Paris – Paris a Focus of Literary Light – The Students at the University – Their Debates – Calvin to Polemics adds Piety – He Evangelises in Paris – Powers of the World – Spain and France kept Divided – How and Why – The Schmalkald League holds the Balance of Power – Francis I. approaches the German Protestants – Failure of the Negotiation – Francis turns to Henry VIII. – Interview between Francis and Henry at Boulogne – Fetes – League between the Kings of France and England – Francis's Great Error BERQUIN, the peer of France, and, greater still, the humble Christian and zealous evangelist, was no more. Many thought they saw in him that assemblage of intellectual gifts and evangelical virtues which fitted him for being the Reformer of his native land. However, it was not so to be. His light had shone brightly but, alas! briefly; it was now extinguished. Of Berquin there remained only a heap of ashes, over which the friends of Protestantism mourned, while

its enemies exulted. But it was the ashes of Berquin merely, not of his cause, that lay around the stake. When the martyr went up in the chariot which, unseen by the crowd, waited to carry him to the sky, his mantle fell on one who was standing near, and who may be said to have seen him as he ascended. From the burning pile in the Place de Greve, the young evangelist of Bourges, whose name, destined to fill Christendom in years to come, was then all but unknown, went forth, endowed with a double portion of Berquin's spirit, to take up the work of him who had just fallen, and to spread throughout France and the world that truth which lived when Berquin died.

How Calvin came to be in Paris at this moment we have already explained. Tidings that his father had died suddenly called him to Noyon. It cost him doubtless a wrench to sever himself from the work of the Gospel which he was preaching, not in vain, in the capital of Berry and the neighboring towns; still, he did not delay, but set out at once, taking Paris in his way. The journey from Paris to Noyon was performed, we cannot but think, in great weariness of heart. Behind him was the stake of Berquin, in whose ashes so many hopes lay buried; before him was the home of his childhood, where no father now waited to welcome him; while all round, in the horizon of France, the clouds were rolling up, and giving but too certain augury that the Reformation was not to have so prosperous a career in his native land as, happily, at that hour it was pursuing in the towns of Germany and amid the hills of the Swiss. But God, he tells us, "comforted him by his Word."

Calvin had quitted Noyon a mere lad; he returns to it on the verge of manhood (1529), bringing back to it the same pale face and burning eye which had marked him as a boy. Within, what a mighty change! but that change his townsmen saw not, nor did even he himself suspect its extent; for as yet he had not a thought of leaving the communion of Rome. He would cleanse and rebuttress the old fabric, by proclaiming the

truth within it. But an experiment which he made on a small scale at Noyon helped doubtless to show him that the tottering structure would but fall in pieces in his hands should he attempt restoration merely.

The fame of the young scholar had reached even these northern parts of France, and the friends and companions of his youth wanted to hear him preach. If a half-suspicion of heresy had reached their ears along with the rumor of his great attainments, it only whetted their eagerness to hear him.

The Church of Pont l'Eveque, where his ancestors had lived, was opened to him. When the day came, quite a crowd, made up of his own and his father's acquaintances, and people from the neighboring towns, filled the church, all eager to see and hear the cooper's grandson. Calvin expounded to them the Scriptures.^[1] The old doctrine was new under that roof and to those ears. The different feelings awakened by the sermon in different minds could be plainly read on the faces clustered so thickly around the pulpit. Some beamed with delight as do those of thirsty men when they drink and are refreshed. This select number embraced the leading men of the district, among whom were Nicholas Picot. On that day he tasted the true bread, and never again turned to the husks of Rome. But the faces of the most part expressed either indifference or anger. Instead of a salvation from sin, they much preferred what the "Church" offered, a salvation in sin. And as regarded the priestly portion of the audience, they divined but too surely to what the preacher's doctrine tended, the overthrow namely of the "Church's" authority, and the utter drying-up of her revenues.

Many a rich abbacy and broad acre, as well as ghostly assumption, would have to be renounced if that doctrine should be embraced. Noyon had given a Reformer to Christendom, but she refused to accept him for herself. The congregation at Pont l'Eveque was a fair specimen of the universal Roman community, and the result of the sermon must have gone far to

convince the preacher that the first effect of the publication of the truth within the pale of the "Church" would be, not the re-edification, but the demolition of the old fabric, and that his ultimate aim must point to the rearing of a new edifice.

After a two months' stay Calvin quitted his native place. Noyon continued to watch the career of her great citizen, but not with pride. In after-days, when Rome was trembling at his name, and Protestant lands were pronouncing it with reverence, Noyon held it the greatest blot upon her escutcheon that she had the misfortune to have given birth to him who bore that name. Calvin had to choose anew his field of labor, and he at once decided in favor of Paris. Thither accordingly he directed his steps.

France in those days had many capitals, but Paris took precedence of them all. Besides being the seat of the court, and of the Sorbonne, and the center of influences which sooner or later made themselves felt to the extremities of the country, Paris had just become a great focus of literary light. Francis I., while snubbing the monks on the one hand, and repelling the Protestants on the other, kneeled before the Renaissance, which was in his eye the germ of all civilization and greatness. He knew the splendor it had lent to the house of Medici, and he aspired to invest his court, his kingdom, and himself with the same glory. Accordingly he invited a number of great scholars to his capital: Budaeus was already there; and now followed Danes and Vatable, who were skilled, the former in Greek and the latter in Hebrew,[\[2\]](#) the recovery of which formed by far the most precious of all the fruits of the Renaissance. A false faith would have shunned such a spot: it was the very fact of the light being there that made Calvin hasten to Paris with the Gospel.

A great fermentation, at that moment, existed among the students at the university. Their study of the original tongues of the Bible had led them, in many instances, to the Bible itself. Its simplicity and sublimity had charms for many

who did not much relish its holiness: and they drew from it an illumination of the intellect, even when they failed to obtain from it a renovation of the heart. A little proud it may be of their skill in the new learning, and not unwilling to display their polemical tact, they were ready for battle with the champions of the old orthodoxy wherever they met them, whether in the courts of the university or on the street. In fact, the capital was then ringing with a warfare, partly literary, partly theological; and Calvin found he had done well, instead of returning to Bourges and gathering up the broken thread of his labors, in coming to a spot where the fields seemed rapidly ripening unto harvest.

And, indeed, in one prime quality, at all times essential to work like his, but never more so than at the birth of Protestantism, Calvin excelled all others. In the beautiful union of intellect and devotion which characterised him he stood alone. He was as skillful a controversialist as any of the noisy polemics who were waging daily battle on the streets, but he was something higher. He fed his intellect by daily prayer and daily perusal of the Scriptures, and he was as devoted an evangelist as he was a skillful debater. He was even more anxious to sow the seed of the Kingdom in the homes of the citizens of Paris, than he was to win victories over the doctors of the Sorbonne. We see him passing along on the shady side of the street. He drops in at a door. He emerges after awhile, passes onward, enters another dwelling, where he makes another short stay, and thus he goes on, his unobtrusiveness his shield, for no one follows his steps or suspects his errand. While others are simply silencing opponents, Calvin is enlightening minds, and leaving traces in the hearts of men that are imperishable. In this we behold the beginnings of a great work – a work that is to endure and fill the earth, when all the achievements of diplomacy, all the trophies of the battle-field, and all the honors of the school shall have passed away and been forgotten.

Leaving the evangelist going his rounds in the streets and lanes of Paris, let us return for a little to the public stage of the world, and note the doings of those who as the possessors of thrones, or the leaders of armies, think that they are the masters of mankind, and can mould at will the destinies of the world. They can plant or they can pluck up the Reformation – so they believe. And true it is, emperors and warriors and priests have a part assigned them which they are to do in this great work. The priests by their scandals shook the hierarchy: the kings by their ambitions and passions pulled down the Empire; thus, without the world owing thanks to either Pope or Kaiser, room was prepared for a Kingdom that cannot be removed. The greatest monarchy of the day was Spain, which had shot up into portentous growth just as the new times were about to appear. The union of some, dozen of kingdoms under its scepter had given it measureless territory; the discovery of America had endowed it with exhaustless wealth, and its success; in the field had crowned its standards with the prestige of invincible power. At the head of this vast Empire was a prince of equal sagacity and ambition, and who was by turns the ally and the enemy of the Pope, yet ever the steady champion of the Papacy, with which he believed the union of his Empire and the stability of his power were bound up. Charles V., first and chiefly, the Protestants had cause to dread.

But a counterpoise had been provided. France, which was not very much less powerful than Spain, was made to weigh upon the arm of Charles, in order to deaden the blow should he strike at Protestantism. He did wish to strike at Protestantism, and sought craftily to persuade Francis to hold back the while. In the spring of 1531 he sent his ambassador Noircarmes to poison the ear of the King of France. Do you know what Lutheranism is? said Noircarmes to Francis one day. It means, concisely, three things, he continued – the first is the destruction of the family, the second is the destruction of property, and the third is the destruction of the monarchy. Espouse this cause,

said the Spanish ambassador, in effect, and you “let in the deluge.”[3] If Noircarmes had substituted “Communism” for “Lutheranism,” he might have been regarded as foretelling what France in these latter days has verified.

And now we begin to see the good fruits reaped by Christendom from the disastrous battle of Pavia. It came just in time to counteract the machinations of Charles with the French monarch. The defeat of Francis on that field, and the dreary imprisonment in Madrid that followed it, planted rivalries and dislikes between the two powerful crowns of France and Spain, which kept apart two forces that if united would have crushed the Reformation. Inspired by hatred and dread of the Emperor Charles, not only had the insinuations of his ambassador the less power with Francis, but he cast his eyes around if haply he might discover allies by whose help he might be able to withstand his powerful rival on the other side of the Pyrenees. Francis resolved on making advances to the Protestant princes of Germany. He was all the more strengthened in this design by the circumstance that these princes, who saw a tempest gathering, had just formed themselves into a league of defense. In March, 1531, the representatives of the Protestant States met at Schmalkald, in the Electorate of Hesse, and, as we have elsewhere related, nine princes and eleven cities entered into an alliance for six years “to resist all who should try to constrain them to forsake the Word of God and the truth of Christ.”

The smallest of all the political parties in Christendom, the position of the Schmalkalders gave them an influence far beyond their numbers; they stood between the two mighty States of France and Spain. The balance of power was in their hands, and, so far at least, they could play off the crowns of Spain and France against one another.

Accordingly next year Francis sent an ambassador – it was his second attempt – to negotiate an alliance with them. His first ambassador was a fool,[4] his second was a wise man, Du

Bellay,[5] brother to the Archbishop of Paris, than whom there was no more accomplished man in all France.

Du Bellay did what diplomatists only sometimes do, brought heart as well as head to his mission, for he wished nothing so much as to see his master and his kingdom of France cast off the Pope, and displaying their colors alongside those of Protestant Germany, sail away on the rising tide of Protestantism. Du Bellay told the princes that he had his master's express command to offer them his assistance in their great enterprise, and was empowered "to arrange with them about the share of the war expenses which his majesty was ready to pay." This latter proposal revealed the cloven foot. What was uppermost in the mind of the King of France was to avenge the defeat at Pavia; hence his eagerness for war. The League of Schmalkald bound the German princes to stand on the defensive only; they were not to strike unless Charles or some other should first strike at them. Luther raised his powerful voice against the proposed alliance. He hated political entanglements, mistrusted Francis, had a just horror of spilling blood, and he protested with all his might that the Protestants must rest the triumph of their cause on spiritual and not on carnal weapons; that the Gospel was not to be advanced by battles, and that the Almighty did not need that the princes of earth should vote him succors in order to the effectual completion of his all-wise and Divine plan. The issue was that the stipulation which Du Bellay carried back to Paris could not serve the purposes of his master.

Repulsed on the side of Germany, the King of France turned now to England. This was a quarter in which he was more likely to succeed. Here he had but one man to deal with, Henry VIII. To Henry, Protestantism was a policy merely, not a faith. He had been crossed in his matrimonial projects by the Pope, and so had his special quarrel with Clement VII., as Francis had his with Charles V. The French king sent a messenger across the Channel to feel the pulse of his "good brother" of England,

and the result was that an interview was arranged between the two sovereigns – Henry crossing the sea with a brilliant retinue, and Francis coming to meet him with a train not less courtly. Taking up their quarters at the Abbot's Palace at Boulogne (October, 1532), the two monarchs unbosomed to each other their grievances and displeasures, and concerted together a joint plan for humiliating those against whom they bore a common grudge. While Francis and Henry were closeted for hours on end, amusement was found for their courtiers. Balls, masquerades, and other pastimes common in that age occupied that gay assemblage, and helped to conceal the real business which was proceeding all the while in the royal closet. That business eventually found issue in a league between the Kings of France and England, in which they engaged to raise an army of 50,000 men, ostensibly to attack the Turk; but in reality to begin a campaign against the emperor and the Pope.[6] Now, thought Francis, I shall wipe out the disgrace of Pavia; and I, said Henry, shall chastise the insolence of Clement. But both were doomed to disappointment. This league which looked so big, and promised so much, came to nothing. Had this great army been assembled it would have shed much blood, but it would have enlightened no consciences, nor won any victories for truth. It might have humbled the Pope, it would have left the Papacy as strong as ever.

While Francis I. was looking so anxiously around him for allies, and deeming it a point of wisdom to lean on the monarch who could bring the largest army into the field, there was one power, the strength of which he missed seeing. That power had neither fleets nor armies at its service, and so Francis shunned rather than courted its alliance. It was fated, in his opinion, to go to the abyss, and should he be so imprudent as to link his cause with it, it would drag him down into the same destruction with itself. This was a natural but, for Francis, a tremendous mistake. The invisible forces are ever the strongest, and these were all on the side of Protestantism. But it is the eye of faith only that can see

these. Francis looked with the eye of sense and could see nothing; and, therefore, stood aloof from a cause which, as it seemed to him, had so few friends, and so many and so powerful enemies. Francis and France lost more than Protestantism did.

CHAPTER 11 [Back to Top](#) THE GOSPEL PREACHED IN PARIS – A MARTYR.

Margaret of Navarre – Her Hopes – Resolves to have the Gospel Preached in France – The City Churches not to be had – Opens a Private Chapel in the Louvre – A Large and Brilliant Assembly convenes – The Preachers – Paris Penitent and Reforming – Agitation in the Sorbonne – The Sorbonnists apply to the King – The Monks occupy the Pulpits – They Threaten the King – Beda Banished – Excitement in Paris – The Populace Remain with Rome – The Crisis of France – The Dominican Friar, Laurent de la Croix – His Conversion – Preaches in France – Apprehended and conducted to Paris – His Torture – His Condemnation – His Behaviour at the Stake – France makes her Choice: she will Abide with Rome. LEAVING princes to intrigue for their own ends, under cover of advancing religion, let us turn to the work itself, and mark how it advances by means of instrumentalities far different from those which kings know to employ. This brings before us, once more, a lady illustrious for her rank, and not less illustrious for her piety – Margaret, the sister of the king, and now Queen of Navarre. She saw her brother holding out his hand to the Protestants of Germany, and the King of England, and permitted herself to believe that the hour had at last come when Francis and his kingdom would place themselves on the path of the Reform, and that in the martyrdom of Berquin, which had filled her soul with so profound a sorrow, she had seen the last blood that would ever be sprit on the soil of France, and the last stake that would ever blaze in the Place de Greve for the cause of the Gospel. Full of these hopes, her zeal and courage grew stronger every day.

Reflecting that she stood near the throne, that thousands in

all parts of Reformed Christendom looked to her to stand between the oppressor and his victim, and that it became her to avert, as far as was in her power, the guilt of innocent blood from her house and the throne of her brother, she girded herself for the part which it became her to act. The Gospel, said this princess, shall be preached in France, in the very capital, nay, in the very bosom of the Roman Catholic Church. The moment was opportune. The Carnival of 1533 was just ended. Balls and banquets had for weeks kept the court in a whirl and Paris in continual excitement, and, wearied with this saturnalia, Francis had gone to Picardy for repose. Margaret thus was mistress of the situation. She summoned Roussel to her presence, and told him that he must proclaim the "great tidings" to the population of Paris from its pulpits. The timid evangelist shook like aspen when this command was laid upon him. He remonstrated: he painted the immense danger: he acknowledged that it was right that the Gospel should be preached, but he was not the man; let Margaret find some more intrepid evangelist. The queen, however, persisted. She issued her orders that the churches of Paris should be opened to Roussel. But she had reckoned without her host. The Sorbonne lifted its haughty head and commanded that the doors of the churches should be kept closed. The queen and the Sorbonne were now in conflict, but the latter carried the day. These Sorbonnists could be compared only to some of old, who professed to be the door-keepers of the kingdom of heaven, but would neither go in themselves, nor permit those that would to enter.

Margaret now bethought her of an expedient which enabled her to turn the flank of the doctors. She was resolved to have the Gospel preached in the capital of France, and to have it preached now; it might be the turning-point of its destiny, and surely it was a likelier way to establish the Reform than that of diplomatists, who were seeking to do so by leagues and battles, if the Sorbonnists were masters in the city, Margaret was mistress in the palace. She accordingly extemporised a

chapel in the Louvre, and told Roussel that he must preach in it. This was a less formidable task than holding forth in the city pulpits. The queen publicly announced that each day at a certain hour a sermon would be preached under the royal roof, and that all would be welcome from the peer downwards. The Parisians opened their eyes in wonder. Here was something till now unheard of – the king's palace turned into a Lutheran conventicle! When the hour came a crowd of all ranks was seen streaming in at the gates of the Louvre, climbing its staircase, and pressing on through the antechambers to the saloon, where, around Roussel, sat the King and Queen of Navarre, and many of the grandees of France. The preacher offered a short prayer, and then read a portion of Scripture, which he expounded with clearness and great impressiveness. The result bore testimony to the wisdom of Roussel and the power of the truth. A direct assault on the Papacy would but have excited the combative faculties of his hearers, the exposition of the truth awakened their consciences.

Every day saw a greater crowd gathering in the chapel. The saloon could no longer contain the numbers that came, and antechambers and corridors had to be thrown open to give enlarged space to the multitude. The assembly was as brilliant as it was numerous. Nobles, lawyers, men of letters, and wealthy merchants were mingled in the stream of bourgeoisie and artisans that each day, at the appointed hour, flowed in at the royal gates, and devoutly listened under the gorgeous roof of the Louvre to preaching so unwonted. Verily, he would have been a despondent man who, at that hour, would have doubted the triumph of the good cause in France.

Margaret, emboldened by the success which had attended her experiment, returned to her first idea, which was to get possession of the churches, turn out the monks, and for their ribald harangues substitute the pure Gospel. She wrote to her brother, who was still absent, and perhaps not ill-pleased to be so, making request to have the churches placed at her

disposal. Francis granted her wish to the extent of permitting her the use of two of the city churches. He was willing to do Protestantism this service, being shrewd enough to see that his negotiations with English and German Protestants would speed none the worse, and that it might equally serve his purpose to terrify the Pope by the possible instant defection of France from its "obedience" to the "Holy See." One of the churches was situated in the quarter of St. Denis, and Margaret sent the Augustine monk Courault to occupy it, around whom there daily assembled a large and deeply impressed congregation gathered from the district. Berthaud, also an Augustine, occupied the pulpit of the other church put by Francis at Margaret's disposal.[1] A fountain of living water had the Queen of Navarre opened in this high place; inexpressible delight filled her soul as she thought that soon this refreshing stream would overflow all France, and convert the parched and weary land into a very garden. It was the season of Easter, and never had Lent like this been kept in Paris. The city, which so lately had rung from one end to the other with the wild joy and guilty mirth of the Carnival, was now not only penitent, but evangelical. "The churches were filled," says the historian Crespin, "not with formal auditors, but with men who received the glad tidings with great joy.

Drunkards had become sober, the idle industrious, the disorderly peaceful, and libertines had grown chaste." Three centuries and more have rolled over Paris since then. Often, in the course of that time, has that city been moved, excited, stricken, but never in such sort as now. The same Spirit which, in the days of Noah's preaching, strove with the antediluvians, then shut up, as in prison, under the doom of the coming deluge, unless they repented, was manifestly striving, at this hour, with the men of Paris and of France, shut up, as in a prison, under a sentence which doomed them, unless they escaped by the door that Protestantism opened to them, to sink beneath the fiery billows of war and revolution.

What, meanwhile, were the doctors of the Sorbonne about? Were they standing by with shut mouths and folded arms, quietly looking on, when, as it must have seemed to them, the bark of Peter was drifting to destruction? Did they slumber on their watch-tower, not caring that France was becoming Lutheran? Far from it. They gave a few days to the hearing of the report of their spies, and then they raised the alarm. A flood of heresy, like the flood of waters that drowned the old world, was breaking in on France. They must stop it; but with what? The stake. "Let us burn Roussel," said the fiery Beda, "as we burned Berquin."[\[2\]](#) The king was applied to for permission; for powerful as was the Sorbonne, it hardly dared drag the preacher from the Queen of Navarre's side without a warrant from Francis. The king would interfere neither for nor against.

They applied to the chancellor. The chancellor referred them to the archbishop, Du Bellay. He too refused to move. There remained a fourth party to whom they now resolved to carry their appeal the populace. If they could carry the population of Paris with them they should yet be able to save Rome. With this object an agitation was commenced, in which every priest and monk had to bear his part. They sent their preachers into the pulpits. Shouting and gesticulating these men awoke, now the anger, now the horror of their fanatical hearers, by the odious epithets and terrible denunciations which they hurled against Lutheranism. They poured a host of mendicants into the houses of the citizens. These, as instructed beforehand, while they filled their wallets, dropped seditious hints that "the Pope was above the king," adding that if matters went on as they were doing the crown would not long adorn the head of Francis.

Still further to move the people against the queen's preachers, processions were organized in the streets. For nine days a crowd of penitents, with sackcloth on their loins and ashes on their heads, were seen prostrate around the statue of

St. James, loudly imploring the good saint to stretch out his staff, and therewith smite to the dust the hydra that was lifting up its abhorred head in France.

Nor did the doctors of the Sorbonne agitate in vain. The excitable populace were catching fire. Fanatical crowds, uttering revolutionary cries, paraded the streets, and the Queen of Navarre and her Protestant coadjutors, seeing the matter growing serious, sent to tell the king the state of the capital.

The issue, in the first instance, was a heavy blow to the agitators. The king's pride had been touched by the attack which the Romanists had made on the prerogative, and he ordered that Beda, and the more inflammatory spirits who followed him, should be sent into banishment.[\[3\]](#)

It was a trial of strength, not so much between Evangelism and Romanism as between the court and the university, and the Sorbonne had to bow its proud head. But the departure of Beda did not extinguish the agitation; the fire he had kindled continued to burn after he was gone. Not in a day were the ignorance and fanaticism, which had been ages a-growing, to be extirpated: fiery placards were posted on the houses; ribald ballads were sung in the streets.

"To the stake! to the stake! the fire is their home; As God hath commanded, let justice be done,"

was the refrain of one of these unpolished but cruel productions. Disputations, plots, and rumors kept the city in a perpetual ferment. The Sorbonnists held daily councils; leaving no stone unturned; they worked upon the minds of the leading members of the Parliament of Paris, and by dint of persistency and union, they managed to rally to their standard all the ignorant, the fanatical, and the selfish – that is, the bulk of the population of the capital. The Protestant sermons were confirmed for some time; many conversions took

place, but the masses remained on the side of Rome.

This was the CRISIS of France – the day of its special visitation. More easily than ever before or since might France have freed its soul from the yoke of Rome, and secured for all coming time the glorious heritage of Protestant truth and liberty. This was, in fact, its second day of visitation.

The first had occurred under Lefevre and Farel. That day had passed, and the golden opportunity that came with it had been lost. A second now returned, for there in the midst of Paris were the feet of them that “publish peace,” and that preach “the opening of the prison to them that are bound.” What all auspicious and blessed achievement if Margaret had been able to win the population of Paris to the Gospel! Paris won, France would have followed. It needed but this to crown its many happy qualities, and make France one of the most delightful lands on earth – a land full of all terrestrial good things; ennobled, moreover, by genius, and great in art as in arms. But Paris was deaf as adder to the voice of the charmer, and from that hour the destiny of France was changed. A future of countless blessings was fatally transformed into a future of countless woes. We behold woe on woe rising with the rising centuries, we had almost said with the rising years. If for a moment its sun looks forth, lo! there comes another tempest from the abyss, black as night, and bearing on its wings the fiery shower to scorch the miserable land. The St. Bartholomew massacre and civil wars of the sixteenth century, the dragonnades of the seventeenth, the revolution of the eighteenth, and the communism of the nineteenth are but the more notable outbursts of that revolving storm which for 300 years has darkened the heavens and devastated the land of France.

Paris had made its choice. And as in old time when men joined hands and entered into covenant they ratified the transaction by sacrifice, Paris sealed its engagement to abide by the Pope in the blood of a disciple of the Gospel. Had the Sorbonne

been more completely master of the situation, Roussel would have been selected as the sacrifice; but he was too powerfully protected to permit the priests venturing on burning him, and a humbler victim had to be found. A Dominican friar, known by the name of Laurent de la Croix, had come to the knowledge of the Gospel in Paris.

Straightway he threw off his cowl and cloak and monkish name, and fled to Geneva, where Farel received him, and more perfectly instructed him in the Reformed doctrines. To great natural eloquence he now added a clear knowledge and a burning zeal. Silent he could not remain, and Switzerland was the first scene of his evangelizing efforts. But the condition of poor France began to lie heavy on his heart, and though he well knew the perils he must brave, he could not restrain his yearnings to return and preach to his countrymen that Savior so dear to himself. Crossing the frontier, and taking the name of Alexander, he made his way to Lyons. Already Protestantism had its disciples in the city of Peter Waldo, and these gave a warm welcome to the evangelist. He began to preach, and his power to move the hearts of men was marvelous. In Lyons, the scene of Irenaeus' ministry, and the seat of a Church whose martyrs were amongst the most renowned of the primitive age, it seemed as if the Gospel, which here had lain a thousand years in its sepulcher, were rising from the dead. Alexander preached every day, this hour in one quarter of the city and the next in the opposite.[4] It began to be manifest that some mysterious influence was acting on the population. The agents of the priests were employed to scent it out; but it seemed as if the preacher, whoever he was, to his other qualities added that of invisibility. His pursuers, in every case, arrived to find the sermon ended, and the preacher gone, they knew not whither. This success in baffling pursuit made his friends in time less careful. Alexander was apprehended. Escorted by bowmen, and loaded with chains, he was sent to Paris.

The guard soon saw that the prisoner they had in charge was

like no other that had ever before been committed to their keeping. Before Paris was reached, the captain of the company, as well as several of its members, had, as the result of their prisoner's conversation with them, become converts to the Gospel. As he pursued his journey in bonds, Alexander preached at the inns and villages where they halted for the night. At every stage of the way he left behind him trophies of the Protestant faith.

The prisoner was comforted by the thought that his Master had turned the road to the stake into a missionary progress, and if in a few days he should breathe his last amid the flames, others would rise from his ashes to confess the truth when he could no longer preach it.

Arrived in Paris, he was brought before the Parliament. The prisoner meekly yet courageously confessed the Reformed faith. He was first cruelly tortured. Putting his limbs in the boot, the executioners drove in the wedges with such blows that his left leg was crushed. Alexander groaned aloud. "O God," he exclaimed, says Crespin, "there is neither pity nor mercy in these men! Oh, that I may find both in thee!" "Another blow," said the head executioner. The martyr seeing Budaëus among the assessors, and turning on him a look of supplication, said, "Is there no Gamaliel here to moderate the cruelty they are practicing on me?"[5]

Budaëus, great in the schools, but irresolute in the matters of the Gospel, fixing an eye of pity on Alexander, said, "It is enough: his torture is too much: forbear." His words took effect. "The executioners," says Crespin, "lifted up the martyr, and carried him to his dungeon, a cripple." [6] He was condemned to be burned alive. In the hope of daunting him, his sentence, contrary to the then usual practice, was pronounced in his presence; but they who watched his face, instead of fear, saw a gleam of joy shoot, at the instant, athwart it. He was next made to undergo the ceremony of degradation. They shaved his crown, scraped his fingertips, and tore off his

robe. "If you speak a word," said they, "we will cut out your tongue;" for about this time, according to the historian Crespin, this horrible barbarity began to be practiced upon the confessors of the truth. Last of all they brought forth the rob de fol. When Alexander saw himself about to be arrayed in this dress, he could not, says Crespin, refrain from speaking. "O God," said he, "is there any higher honor than to receive the livery which thy Son received in the house of Herod?"

The martyr was now attired for the fire. Unable to walk to the place of execution, for one of his legs had been sorely mangled in the boot, they provided a cart, one usually employed to convey away rubbish, and placed the martyr in it. As he passed along from the Conciergerie to the Place Maubert he managed to stand up, and resting his hands on the sides of the cart and leaning over, he preached to the crowds that thronged the streets, commending to them the Savior for whom he was about to die, and exhorting them to flee from the wrath to come. The smile which his sentence had kindled on his face had not yet gone off it; nay, it appeared to glow and brighten the nearer he drew to the stake. "He is going to be burned," said the onlookers, "and yet no one seems so, happy as he."

Being come to the place of execution they lifted him out of the cart, placed him against the stake, and bound him to it with chains. He begged, before they should kindle the pile, that he might be permitted to say a few more last words to the people. Leave was given, and breaking into an ecstasy he again extolled that Savior for whom he was now to lay down his life, and again commended him to those around. The executioners, as they waited to do their office, gazed with mingled wonder and fear on this strange criminal. The spectators, among whom was a goodly number of monks, said, "Surely there is nothing worthy of death in this man," and smiting on their breasts, and bewailing his fate, with plenteous tears, exclaimed, "If this man is not saved, who of the sons of men can be so?"[7]

Well might the martyr, as he saw them weeping, have said, "Weep not for me, but weep for yourselves." A few sharp pangs, and to him would come joy for ever; but for them, alas! and for their children, the cry of the blood of the martyr, and of thousands more yet to be slain, was to be answered in a future dark with woes.

Now that we find ourselves 300 years from these events, and can look back on all that has come and gone in Paris since, we can clearly see that the year 1533 was one of the grand turning-points in the history of France. Between the stake of Berquin and the stake of Alexander, there were three full years during which the winds of persecution were holden. During at least two of these years the Gospel was freely and faithfully preached in the capital; an influence from on High was plainly at work amongst the people. Five thousand men and women daily passed in at the gates of the Louvre to listen to Roussel; and numerous churches throughout the city were opened and filled with crowds that seemed to thirst for the Water of Life. Many "felt the powers of the world to come." In these events, Providence put it distinctly to the inhabitants of Paris, "Choose ye this day whom ye shall serve. Will ye abide by the Papacy, or will ye cast in your lot with the Reformation?" and the men of Paris as distinctly replied, when the period of probation had come to an end, "We will abide by the Pope." The choice of Paris was the choice of France. Scarcely were the flames of Alexander's pile extinguished, when the sky of that country, which was kindling apace, as the friends of truth fondly thought, with the glories of the opening day, because suddenly overcast, and clouds of threatening blackness began to gather. In the spring of 1534 the churches of Paris were closed, the sermons were suppressed, 300 Lutherans were swept off to prison, and soon thereafter the burnings were resumed. But the ominous circumstance was that the persecutor was backed by the populace. Queen Margaret's attempt to win over the population of the capital to the Gospel had proved a failure, and the

consequence was that the Sorbonne, with the help of the popular suffrage, again set up the stake, and from that day to this the masses in France have been on the side of Rome.

CHAPTER 12 [Back to Top](#) CALVIN'S FLIGHT FROM PARIS.

Out of Paris comes the Reformer – The Contrasts of History – Calvin's Interview with the Queen of Navarre – Nicholas Cop, Rector of the Sorbonne – An Inaugural Discourse – Calvin Writes and Cop Delivers it – The Gospel in Disguise – Rage of the Sorbonne – Cop flies to Basle – The Officers on their way to Arrest Calvin – Calvin is let down by the Window – Escapes from Paris disguised as a Vine-Dresser – Arrives in Angouleme – Received at the Mansion of Du Tillet – Here projects the Institutes – Interview with Lefevre – Lefevre's Prediction. PEPIN of France was the first of the Gothic princes to appear before the throne of St. Peter, and lay his kingdom at the feet of the Pope. As a reward for this act of submission, the "Holy Father" bestowed upon him the proud title – for so have the Kings of France accounted it – of "Eldest Son of the Church." Throughout the thirteen centuries since, and amid much vicissitude of fortune, France has striven to justify the distinction she bears by being the firmest pillar of the Papal See. But, as D'Aubigne has observed, if Paris gave Pepin to the Popedom, it is not less true that Paris gave Calvin to the Reformation. This is the fact, although Calvin was not born in Paris. The little Noyon in Picardy had this honor, or disgrace as it accounted it.^[1] But if Noyon was the scene of Calvin's first birth, Paris was the scene of his second birth, and it was the latter that made him a Reformer. In estimating the influence of the two men, the pen of Calvin may well be thrown into the scale against the sword of Pepin.

As the cradle of Moses was placed by the side of the throne of Pharaoh, the Church's great oppressor, so the cradle of this second Moses was placed by the side of the chair of Pepin, the "Eldest; Son of the Church," and the first of those vassal kings who stood round the Papal throne; and from the court of

France, as Moses from the court of Egypt, Calvin went forth to rend the fetters of his brethren, and ring the knell of their oppressor's power. The contrasts and resemblances of history are instructive as well as striking. They shed a beautiful light upon the Providence of God. They show us that the Great Ruler has fixed a time and a place for every event and for every man; that he sets the good over against the evil, maintaining a nice and equitable poise among events, and that while the laws of his working are eternal, the results are inexpressibly varied.

We have seen Calvin return to Paris in 1529. He was present in that city during those four eventful years when the novel and stirring scenes we have narrated were taking place. How was he occupied? He felt that to him the day of labor had not yet fully arrived; he must prepare against its approach by reading, by study, and by prayer. In the noisy combats with which the saloons, the halls of the Sorbonne, and even the very streets were then resounding, Calvin cared but little to mingle. His ambition was to win victories which, if less ostentatious, would be far more durable. Like his old teacher, Mathurin Cordier – so wise in his honesty – he wished solidly to lay the foundations, and was not content to rear structures which were sure to topple over with the first breeze. He desired to baptise men for the stake, to make converts who would endure the fire. Eschewing the knots of disputants in the streets, he entered the abodes of the citizens, and winning attention by his very shyness, as well as by the clearness and sweetness of his discourse, he talked with the family on the things that belonged to their peace. He had converted a soul while his friends outside had but demolished a syllogism. Calvin was the pioneer of all those who, since his day, have labored in the work of the recovery of the lapsed masses.

However, the fame he shunned did, the more he fled from it, but the more pursue him. His name was mentioned in the

presence of the Queen of Navarre. Margaret must needs see the young evangelist.[2] We tremble as we see Calvin enter the Louvre to be presented at court. They who are in king's houses wear "soft raiment," and learn to pursue middle courses. If Calvin is to be all to the Church he must be nothing to kings and queens. All the more do we tremble at the ordeal he is about to undergo when we reflect that, in combination with his sternness of principle and uprightness of aim, there are in Calvin a tenderness of heart, and a yearning, not for praise, but for sympathy, which may render him susceptible to the blandishments and flatteries of a court. But God went with him to the palace. Calvin's insight discovered even then, what afterwards became manifest to less penetrating observers, that, while Margaret's piety was genuine, it was clouded nevertheless by mysticism, and her opinions, though sound in the main, were too hesitating and halting to compass a full Reformation of the Church.

On these accounts he was unable to fully identify himself with the cause of the Queen of Navarre. Nevertheless, there were not a few points of similarity between the two which excited a mutual admiration. There was in both a beautiful genius; there was in both a lofty soul; there was in both a love of what is pure and noble; and especially there was in both – what is the beginning and end of all piety – a deep heaven-begotten reverence and love of the Savior. Margaret did not conceal her admiration of the young scholar and evangelist. His eye so steadfast, yet so keen; his features so calm, yet so expressive of energy; the wisdom of his utterances, and the air of serene strength that breathed around him – betokening a power within, which, though enshrined in a somewhat slender frame, was evidently awaiting a future of great achievements – won the confidence of the queen.[3] Calvin was in a fair way of becoming a frequent visitor at the palace, when an unexpected event drove the young scholar from Paris, and averted the danger, if ever it had existed, of the chief Reformer of Christendom becoming lost in the court chaplain.

That event fell out thus – Nicholas Cop, Rector of the Sorbonne, was the intimate friend of Calvin. It was October, 1533, and the session of the university was to open on the 1st of next month (All Saints' Day), when Cop was expected to grace the occasion with an inaugural discourse. What an opportunity, thought Calvin, of having the Gospel preached in the most public of all the pulpits of Christendom! He waited on his friend Cop and broke to him his stratagem. But Cop felt unequal to the task of composing such an address as would answer the end. It was finally agreed between the two friends that Calvin should write, and that Cop should read the oration. It was a bold experiment, full of grave risks, of which its devisers were not unaware, but they had made up their minds to the dangerous venture.

The 1st of November arrived. It saw a brilliant assembly in the Church of the Mathurins – professors, students, the elite of the learned men of Paris, a goodly muster of Franciscans, some of whom more than half suspected Cop of a weakness for Lutheranism, and a sprinkling of the friends of the new opinions, who had had a hint of what was to happen.

On a bench apart sat Calvin, with the air of one who had dropped in by the way. Cop rose, and proceeded amid deep silence to pronounce an oration in praise of "Christian Philosophy." But the philosophy which he extolled was not that which had been drawn from the academies of Greece, but that diviner wisdom to reveal which to man the Immortal had put on mortality. The key-note of the discourse was the "Grace of God," the one sole fountain of man's renewal, pardon, and eternal life. The oration, although Protestant in spirit, was very thoroughly academic. Its noble sentiments were clothed in language clear, simple, yet majestic.[4]

Blank astonishment was portrayed on the faces of the most part of the audience at the beginning of the oration. By-and-by a countenance here and there began to kindle with delight. Others among the listeners were becoming uneasy on their

seats. The monks knit their brows, and shooting out fiery glances from beneath them, exchanged whispers with one another. They saw through the thin disguise in which the rector was trying to veil the Gospel. Spoken on "All Saints' Day," yet not a word about the saints did that oration contain! It was a desecration of their festival; an act of treason against these glorious intercessors; a blow struck at the foundations of Rome: so they judged, and rightly. The assembly rose, and then the storm burst. Heresy had reached an astounding pitch of audacity when it dared to rear its head in the very midst of the Sorbonne. It must be struck down at once.

Cop was denounced to the Parliament, then the supreme judge and executioner of heretics. Summoned to its bar, he resolved, strong in the integrity of his cause, and presuming not a little on his position as head of the first university in Christendom, to obey the citation. He was already on his way to the Palace of Justice, attired in his robes of office, his beadles and apparitors preceding him, with their maces and gold-headed staves, when a friend, pressing through the crowd, whispered into his ear that he was marching to his death. Cop saw the danger of prosecuting further this duel between the Parliament and the Sorbonne. He fled to Basle, and so escaped the fate already determined on for him.[\[5\]](#)

When Cop was gone, it began to be rumored that the author of the address, which had set Parliament and the university in flames, was still in Paris, and that he was no other than Calvin. Such a spirit was enough to set all Christendom on fire: he must be burned. Already the lieutenant-criminal, Jean Morin, who for some time had had his eye on the young evangelist,[\[6\]](#) was on his way to apprehend him. Calvin, who deemed himself safe in his obscurity, was sitting quietly in his room in the College of Fortret [\[7\]](#) when some of his comrades came running into his chamber, and urged him to flee that instant. Scarcely had they spoken when a loud knocking

was heard at the outer gate. It was the officers. Now their heavy tramp was heard in the corridor. Another moment and Calvin would be on his way to the Conciergerie, to come out of it only to the stake. That would, indeed, have been a blow to the Reformation, and probably would have changed the whole future of Christendom. But God interposed at this moment of peril. While some of his friends held a parley with the officers at the door, others, seizing the sheets on his bed, twisted them into a rope, fastened them in the window, and Calvin, catching hold of them, let himself down into the street of the Bernardins.[8]

Dropped into the street, the fugitive traversed Paris with rapid steps, and soon reached the suburbs. His first agitation subsiding, he began to think how he could disguise himself, knowing that the officers of Morin would be on his track. Espying a vine-dresser's cottage, and knowing the owner to be friendly to the Gospel, he entered, and there arranged the plan of his flight. Doffing his own dress, he put on the coat of the peasant, and, with a garden hoe on his shoulder he set out on his journey. He went forth not knowing whither he went – the pioneer of hundreds of thousands who in after-years were to flee from France, and to seek under other skies that liberty to confess the Gospel which was denied them in their native land. To Calvin the disappointment must have been as keen as it was sudden.

He had fondly hoped that the scene of his conversion would be the scene of his labors also. He saw too, as he believed, the Gospel on the eve of triumphing in France. Was it not preached in the churches of the capital, taught from some of the chairs of the Sorbonne, and honored in the palace of the monarch? But God had arranged for both France and Calvin a different future from that which the young evangelist pictured to himself. The great kingdom of France was to harden its heart that God might glorify his power upon it, and Calvin was to go into exile that he might prepare in solitude those great works by which

he was to instruct so many nations, and speak to the ages of the future.

Turning to the south, Calvin went on towards Orleans, but he did not stop there. He pursued his way to Tours, but neither did he halt there. Going onwards still, he traveled those great plains which the Loire and other streams water, so rich in meadows and tall umbrageous trees, and which are so loved by the vine, forming then as they do at this day the finest part of that fine country. After some weeks' wandering, he reached Angouleme, the birth-place of Margaret of Navarre.[9] Here he directed his steps to the mansion of the Du Tilletts, a noble and wealthy family, high in office in the State, famed moreover for their love of letters, and with one of whose members Calvin had formed an acquaintance in Paris. The exile had not miscalculated. The young Du Tiller, the only one of the family then at home, was delighted to resume in Angouleme the intercourse begun in Paris. The noble mansion with all in it was at the service of Calvin.[10]

The mariner whose bark, pursued by furious winds, is suddenly lifted on the top of some billow mightier than its fellows, floated in safety over the reef on which it seemed about to be dashed, and safely landed in the harbor, is not more surprised or more thankful than Calvin was when he found himself in this quiet and secure asylum. The exile needed rest; he needed time for reading and meditation; he found both under this princely and friendly roof. The library of the chateau was one of the finest of which France, or perhaps any other country, in that age could boast, containing, it is said, some 4,000 volumes. Here he reposed, but was not idle. As Luther had been wafted away in the midst of the tempest to rest awhile in the Wartburg, so Calvin was made to sit down here and equip himself for the conflicts that were about to open. Around him were the mighty dead, with nothing to interrupt his converse with them. An occasional hour would he pass in communing with his friend the young Louis du Tillet; but even this had to be redeemed.

Nights without sleep, and whole days during which he scarcely tasted food, would Calvin pass in this library, so athirst was he for knowledge. It was here that Calvin projected his Institutes, which D'Aubigne styles "the finest work of the Reformation." Not that he wrote it here; but in this library he collected the materials, arranged the plan, and it may be penned some of its passages. We shall have occasion to speak of this great work afterwards; suffice it here to remark that it was composed on the model of those apologies which the early Fathers presented to the Roman emperors on behalf of the primitive martyrs.

Again were men dying at the stake for the Gospel. Calvin felt that it became him to raise his voice in their defense; but how could he better vindicate them than by vindicating their cause, and proving in the face of its enemies and of the whole world that it was the cause of truth? But to plead such a cause before such an audience was no light matter. He prepared himself by reading, by much meditation, and by earnest prayer; and then he spoke in the Institutes with a voice that sounded through Europe, and the mighty reverberations of which have come down the ages.

An opponent of the Reformation chancing to enter, in after-years, this famous library, and knowing who had once occupied it, cast around him a look of anger, and exclaimed, "This is the smithy where the modern Vulcan forged his bolts; here it was that he wove the web of the Institutes, which we may call the Koran or Talmud of heresy."[\[11\]](#)

An episode of a touching kind varied the sojourn of Calvin at Angouleme. Lefevre still survived, and was living at Nerac, near to Angouleme, enjoying the protection and friendship of Margaret. Calvin, who yearned to see the man who had first opened the door of France to the Reformation, set out to visit him. The aged doctor and the young Reformer met for the first and last time. Calvin was charmed with the candor, the humility, the zeal, and the loving spirit of Lefevre – lights

that appeared to shine the brighter in proportion as he in whom they dwelt drew towards the tomb. Lefevre, on his part, was equally struck with the depth of intellect and range of view exhibited by Calvin. A Reformer of loftier stature than any he had hitherto known stood before him. In truth, the future, as sketched by the bold hand of Calvin, filled him with something like alarm. Calvin's Reform went a good way beyond any that Lefevre had ever projected. The good doctor of Etaples had never thought of discarding the Pope and hierarchy, but of transforming them into Protestant pastors. He was for uniting the tyranny of the infallibility with the liberty of the Bible. Calvin by this time had abandoned the idea of Reforming Catholicism; his rule was the Word of God alone, and the hoped-for end a new structure on Divine foundations. Nevertheless, the aged Lefevre grasping his hand, and perhaps recalling to mind his own words to Farel, that God would send a deliverer, and that they should see it, said, "Young man, you will be one day a powerful instrument in the Lord's hand; God will make use of you to restore the kingdom of heaven in France." [\[12\]](#)

CHAPTER 13 [Back to Top](#) FIRST PROTESTANT ADMINISTRATION OF THE LORD'S SUPPER IN FRANCE.

Calvin goes to Poitiers – Its Society – Calvin draws Disciples round him – Re-unions – The Gardens of the Basses Treilles – The Abbot Ponthus – Calvin's Grotto – First Dispensation of the Lord's Supper in France – Formation of a Protestant Congregation – Home Mission Scheme for the Evangelisation of France – The Three First Missionaries – Their Labors and Deaths – Calvin Leaves Poitiers – The Church of Poitiers – Present State and Aspect of Poitiers. CALVIN had been half-a-year at Angouleme, and now, the storm having blown over, he quitted it and returned northward to Poitiers. The latter was then a town of great importance. It was the seat of a flourishing university, and its citizens numbered amongst them men eminent for their rank, their learning, or

their professional ability. Two leagues distant from the town is the battlefield where, in 1356, the Black Prince met the armies of France under John of Valois, and won his famous victory. Here, in the spring of 1534, we behold a humble soldier arriving to begin a battle which should change the face of the world. In this district, too, in former times lived Abelard, and the traces he had left behind him, though essentially skeptical, helped to prepare the way for Calvin. Thin, pale, and singularly unobtrusive, yet the beauty of his genius and the extent of his knowledge soon drew around the stranger a charmed circle of friends.

The Prior of Trois Moutiers, a friend of the Du Tilletts, opened his door to the traveler. The new opinions had already found some entrance into the learned society of Poitiers; but with Calvin came a new and clearer light, which soon attracted a select circle of firm friends.

The chief magistrate, Pierre de La Planche, became his friend, and at his house he was accustomed to meet the distinguished men of the place, and under his roof, and sometimes in the garden, the Basses Treilles, did Calvin expound to them the true nature of the Gospel and the spiritual glory of the kingdom of heaven, thus drawing them away from idle ceremonies and dead formulas, to living doctrines by which the heart is renewed and the life fructified. Some contemned the words spoken to them, others received them with meekness and joy. Among these converts was Ponthus, abbot of a Benedictine convent in the neighborhood of Poitiers, and head of a patrician family.[1] Forsaking a brilliant position, he was the first abbot in France who openly professed himself a disciple of the Reformed faith. Among his descendants there have been some who gave their lives for the Gospel; and to this day the family continue steadfastly on the side of Protestantism, adorning it by their piety not less than by their rank.[2]

It was at Poitiers that the evangelisation of France began in

a systematic way. The school which Calvin here gathered round him comprehended persons in all conditions of life – canons, lawyers, professors, counts, and tradesmen. They discoursed about Divine mysteries as they walked together on the banks of the neighboring torrent, the Clain, or as they assembled in the garden of the Basses Treilles, where, like the ancient Platonists, they often held their re-unions. There, as the Papists have said, were the first beginnings in France of Protestant conventicles and councils.[3] “As it was in a garden,” said the Roman Catholics of Poitiers, “that our first parents were seduced, so are these men being enchanted by Calvin in the garden of the Basses Treilles.”[4]

By-and by it was thought prudent to discontinue these meetings in the Basses Treilles, and to seek some more remote and solitary place of re-union. A deep and narrow ravine, through which rolls the rivulet of the Clain, winds past Poitiers. Its rocks, being of the limestone formation, abound in caves, and one of the roomiest of these, then known as the “Cave of Benedict,” but which from that day to this has borne the name of “Calvin’s Grotto,” was selected as the scene of the future gatherings of the converts.[5] It was an hour’s walk from the town. Dividing into groups, each company, by a different route, found its way to the cave. Here prayer was offered and the Scriptures expounded, the torrent rolling beneath, and the beetling rocks and waving trees concealing the entrance. In this grotto, so far as the light of history serves, was the Lord’s Supper celebrated for the first time in France after the Protestant fashion.[6] On an appointed day the disciples met here, and Calvin, having expounded the Word and offered prayer, handed round the bread and cup, of which all partook, even as in the upper room at Jerusalem sixteen centuries before. The place had none of the grandeurs of cathedral, but “the glory of God and the Lamb” lent it beauty. No chant of priest, no swell of organ accompanied the service, but the devotion of contrite hearts, in fellowship with Christ, was ascending from that rocky chamber, and coming up before the

throne in heaven.

Often since have the children of the Reformation assembled in the dens and caves, in the forests, wildernesses, and mountains of France, to sing their psalm and celebrate their worship; and He who disdains the gorgeous temple, which unholy rites defile, has been present with them, turning the solitude of the low-browed cave into an august presence-chamber, in which they have seen the glory and heard the voice of the Eternal.

Calvin now saw, as the fruit of his labors, a little Protestant congregation in Poitiers. This did not content him; he desired to make this young Church a basis of evangelisation for the surrounding provinces, and ultimately for the whole kingdom. One day in the little assembly he said, "Is there any one here willing to go and give light to those whom the Pope has blinded?"[7] Jean Vernon, Philip Veron, and Albert Babinot stood up and offered themselves for this work. Veron and Babinot, turning their steps to the south and west, scattered the good seed in those fertile provinces and great cities which lie along the course of the Garonne. In Toulouse and Bordeaux they made many disciples. Obeying Calvin's instructions they sought to win the teachers of the youth, and in many cases they entirely succeeded; so that, as we find the staunch Roman Catholic Raemond complaining, "the minister was hid under the cloak of the magister," "the young were lost before they were aware of their danger," and "many with only down on their chins were so incurably perverted, that they preferred being roasted over a slow fire to renouncing their Calvinism." [8] Jean Vernon remained at Poitiers, where he found an interesting field of labor among the students at the university. It was ever the aim of Calvin to unite religion and science. He knew that when these are divorced we have a race of fanatics on the one side, and of sceptics on the other; therefore, of his little band, he commanded one to abide at the university seat; and of the students not a few

embraced the Reformed faith. These three missionaries, combining prudence with activity, and escaping the vigilance of the priests, continued to evangelise in France to their dying day. Veron and Babinot departed in peace; Vernon was seized as he was crossing the Alps of Savoy, and burned at Chambery. This was the first home-mission set agoing in modern times. After a stay of barely two months Calvin quitted Poictiers, going on by way of Orleans and Paris to Noyon, his birth-place, which he visited now for the last time.

But he did not leave Poictiers as he had found it. There was now within its walls a Reformed Church, embracing many men distinguished by their learning, occupying positions of influence, and ready to confess Christ, if need were amid the flames.[[9](#)]

It is deeply interesting to observe the condition at this day of a city around which the visit of Calvin has thrown so great an interest, and whose Church, founded by his hands, held no inconspicuous place among the Protestant Churches of France in the early days of the Reformation.[[10](#)]

Poictiers, we dare say, like the city of Aosta in Italy, is in nowise proud of this episode in its history, and would rather efface than perpetuate the traces of its illustrious visitor; and, indeed, it has been very successful in doing so. We question whether there be now a dozen persons in all Poictiers who know that the great chief of the Reformation once honored it by his residence, and that there he laid the foundations of a Protestant Church which afterwards gave martyrs to the Gospel. Poictiers is at this day a most unexceptionably Roman Catholic city, and exhibits all the usual proofs and concomitants of genuine Roman Catholicism in the dreariness and stagnation of its streets, and the vacuity and ignorance to be read so plainly on the faces of its inhabitants. The landscape around is doubtless the same as when Calvin went in and out at its gates. There is the same clear, dry, balmy sky; there is the same winding and picturesque ravine, with the

rivulet watering its bottom, and its sides here terraced with vines, there overhung with white limestone rocks, while cottages perched amid fruit-trees, and mills, their wheels turned by the stream, are to be seen along its course. East and west of the town lie outspread those plains on which the Black Prince, in the fourteenth century, marshalled his bowmen, and where French and English blood flowed in commingled torrents, and where, 200 years later, Calvin restored to its original simplicity that rite which commemorates an infinitely greater victory than hero ever achieved on earth. Within its old limits, unchanged since the times of Calvin, is the town itself. Here has Poicifiers been sitting all this long while, nursing its orthodoxy till little besides is left it to nurse.

Manufactures and commerce have left it; it has but a scanty portion of the corn and wine which the plains around yield to others. Its churches and edifices have grown hoary and tottering; the very chimes of its bells have a weird and drowsy sound; and its citizens, silent, listless, and pensive, look as if they belonged to the fifteenth century, and had no light to be seen moving about in the nineteenth.

In the center of Poictiers is a large quadrangular piazza, a fountain in the middle of it, a clock-tower in one of its angles, and numerous narrow lanes running out from it in all directions. These lanes are steep, winding, and ill-paved.

In one of these lanes, but a little way from the central piazza, is a venerable pile of Gothic architecture, as old, at least, as the days of Calvin, and which may have served as the college amongst whose professors and students he found his first disciples. Its gables, turned to the street, show to the passer-by its rich oriels; and pleasant to the eye is its garden of modest dimensions, with its bit of velvet sward, and its trees, old and gnarled, but with life enough in their roots to send along their boughs, in spring, a rush of rich massy foliage.

A little farther off from the Piazza, in another lane which attains the width of a street, with an open space before it, stands the Cathedral, by much the most noticeable of all the buildings of Poitiers. Its front is a vast unrolled scroll of history, or perhaps we ought to say of biography. It is covered from top to bottom with sculptures, the subjects extremely miscellaneous, and some of them not a little grotesque. The lives of numerous Scripture heroes – patriarchs, warriors, and kings – are here depicted, being chiselled in stone, while in the alternate rows come the effigies of saints, and Popes, and great abbots; and, obtruding uncouthly among these venerable and dignified personages, are monsters of a form and genus wholly unknown to the geologist. A rare sight must this convention of antediluvians, of mediaeval Popes, and animals whose era it is impossible to fix, have presented when in the prime of its stony existence. But the whole goodly assemblage, under the influence of the weather, is slowly passing into oblivion, and will by-and-by disappear, leaving only the bare weather-worn sand-stone, unless the chisel come timeously to the rescue, and give the worthies that figure here a new lease of life.

Calvin must sometimes have crossed the threshold of this Cathedral and stood under this roof. The interior is plain indeed, offering a striking contrast to the gorgeous grotesqueness of the exterior. The walls, covered with simple whitewash, are garnished with a few poor pictures, such as a few pence would buy at a print-seller's. The usual nave and aisle are wanting, and a row of stone pillars, also covered with whitewash, run along the center of the floor and support the roof of the edifice. It had been well if Poitiers had continued steadfast in the doctrine taught it by the man who entered its gates in the March of 1534. Its air at this hour would not have been so thick, nor its streets so stagnant, nor its edifices so crumbling; in short, it would not have been lying stranded now, dropped far astern in the world's onward march.

CHAPTER 14 [Back to Top](#) CATHERINE DE MEDICI.

St. Paul – Calvin – Desire to Labor in Paris – Driven from this Field – Francis I. Intrigues to Outmanoeuvre Charles V. – Offers the Hand of his Second Son to the Pope's Niece – Joy of Clement VII. – The Marriage Agreed on – Catherine de Medici – Rise of the House of Medici – Cosmo I. – His Patronage of Letters and Scholars – Fiesole – Descendants of Cosmo – Clement VII. – Birth of Catherine de Medici – Exposed to Danger – Lives to Mount the Throne of France – Catherine as a Girl – Her Fascination – Her Tastes – Her Morals – Her Love of Power; etc. ST. PAUL when converted fondly hoped to abide at Jerusalem, and from this renowned metropolis, where the Kings of Judah had reigned, where the prophets of Jehovah and One greater than all prophets had spoken, he purposed to spread abroad the light among his countrymen. But a new dispensation had commenced, and there must be found for it a new center.

In Judaea, Paul would have had only the Synagogue for his audience, and his echoes would have died away on the narrow shore of Palestine. He must speak where his voice would sound throughout the world. He must carry the Gospel of his master through a sphere as wide as that which the Greek philosophy had occupied, and subjugate by the power of the Cross tribes as remote as those Rome had vanquished by the force of her arms.

And so, too, was it with one who has been styled the second Paul of the Christian dispensation. The plan which Calvin had formed to himself of his life's labors, after his conversion, had Paris and France as its center. Nearest his heart, and occupying the foreground in all his visions of the future, was his native land. It needed but the Gospel to make France the first of the nations, and its throne the mightiest in Europe.

And the footing the Gospel had already obtained in that land seemed to warrant these great expectations. Had not the Gospel found martyrs in France, and was not this a pledge that it

would yet triumph, on the soil which their blood had watered? Had not the palace opened its gates to welcome it? More wonderful still, it was forcing its way, despite the prejudice and pride of ages, into the halls of the Sorbonne. The many men of letters which France now contained were, with scarce an exception, favorable to the Reformation. The monarch, it is true, had not yet decided; but Margaret, so sweet in disposition, so sincere in her Protestant faith, would not be wanting in her influence with her brother, and thus there was ground to hope that when Francis did decide his choice would be given in behalf of Protestantism. So stood the matter then. Was it wonderful that Calvin should so linger around Paris, and believe that he saw in it the field of his future labors? But ever and anon, as he came back to it, and grasping the seed-basket, had begun again to sow, the sky would darken, the winds would begin to howl, and he was forced to flee before a new outburst of the tempest. At last he began to understand that it was not the great kingdom of France, with its chivalrous monarch and its powerful armies, that God had chosen to sustain the battle of the Reformation. A handful only of the French people had the Reformation called to follow it, whose destined work was to glorify it on their own soil by the heroism of the stake, and to help to sow it in others by the privations and sacrifices of exile. But before speaking of Calvin's third and last flight from Paris, let us turn to an incident big with the gravest consequences to France and Christendom.

The Pope, Spain, and France, the three visible puissances of the age, were by turns the allies and the adversaries of one another. The King of France, who was constantly scheming to recover by the arts of diplomacy those fair Italian provinces which he had lost upon the battle-field, was now plotting against Charles of Spain. The emperor, on his way to Augsburg, was at this moment closeted, as we have already related, with the Pope at Bologna.^[1] Francis, who was not ignorant of these things, would frequently ask himself, "Who can tell what evil

may be brewing against France? I shall out-manoeuver the crafty Charles; I shall detach the Pope from the side of Spain, and secure him for ever to France;" – for in those days the Pontiff, as a dynastic power, counted for more than he afterwards did.

Francis thought that he had hit on a capital device for dealing a blow to his rival. What was it? The Pope, Clement VII., of the House of Medici, had a niece, a little fairy girl of fourteen; he would propose marriage between this girl and his second son, Henry, Duke of Orleans. The Pope, he did not doubt, would grasp at the brilliant offer; for Clement, he knew, was set on the aggrandisement of his family, and this marriage would place it among the royal houses of Europe. But was Francis I. in earnest? Would the King of France stoop to marry his son to the descendant of a merchant? Yes, Francis would digest the mortification which this match might cause him for the sake of the solid advantages, as he believed them to be, which it would bring with it. He would turn the flank of Charles, and take his revenge for Pavia. Had Francis feared the God of hosts as much as he did the emperor, and been willing to stoop as low for the Gospel as for the favor of the Pope, happy had it been for both himself and his kingdom.

Clement, when the offer was made to him, could scarce believe it.[\[2\]](#) He was in doubt this moment; he was in ecstasy the next. The emperor soon discovered the affair, and foreseeing its consequences to himself, endeavored to persuade the Pope that the King of France was insincere, and counselled him to beware of the snake in the grass. The ambassadors of the French King, the Duke of Albany and the Cardinals Tournon and Gramont, protested that their master was in earnest, and pushed on the business till at last they had finished it. It was concluded that this girl, Catherine de Medici by name, should be linked with the throne of France, and that the blood of the Valois and the Medici should henceforth be mixed. The Pope strode through his palace halls, elate at the honor which

had so unexpectedly come to his house, and refused to enter the league which the emperor was pressing him to form with him against Francis, and would have nothing to do with calling a Council for which Charles was importuning him.[3] And the King of France, on his part, thought that if he had stooped it had been to make a good bargain. He had stipulated that Catherine should bring with her as her dowry, Parma, Florence, Pisa, Leghorn, Modena, Urbino, and Reggio, besides the Duchy of Milan, and the Lordship of Genoa. This would leave little unrecovered of what had been lost on the field of Pavia. The Pope promised all without the least hesitation. To Clement it was all the same – much or little – for he had not the slightest intention of fulfilling aught of all that he had undertaken.[4]

Let us visit the birth-place of this woman – the natal lair of this tigress. Her cradle was placed in one of the most delicious of the Italian vales. Over that vale was hung the balmiest of skies, and around it rose the loveliest of mountains, conspicuous among which is the classic Fiesole. The Arno, meandering through it in broad pellucid stream, waters it, and the olive and cypress clothe its bosom with a voluptuous luxuriance. In this vale is the city of Florence, and here, in the fifteenth century, lived Cosmo, the merchant. Cosmo was the founder of that house from which was sprung the little bright-eyed girl who bore the name of Catherine de Medici – a name then innocent and sweet as any other, but destined to gather a most unenviable notoriety around it, till it has become one of the most terrific in history, the mention of which evokes only images of tragedies and horrors.

With regard to her famous ancestor, Cosmo, he was a merchant, we have said, and his ships visited the shores of Greece, the harbors of Egypt, and the towns on the sea-coast of Syria. It was the morning of the Renaissance, and this Florentine merchant had caught its spirit. He gave instructions to his sailing-masters, when they touched at the ports of the Levant

and Egypt, to make diligent inquiry after any ancient manuscripts that might still survive, whether of the ancient pagan literature, or of the early Christian theology. His wishes were carefully attended to; and when his ships returned to Pisa, the port of Tuscany, they were laden with a double freight – the produce and fabrics of the countries they had visited, and the works of learned men which had slumbered for ages in the monasteries of Mount Athos, the convents of Lebanon, and in the cities and tombs of the Nile. Thus it was that Cosmo prosecuted, with equal assiduity and success, commerce and letters. By the first he laid the foundations of that princely house that long reigned over the Florentine Republic; and by the second he contributed powerfully to the recovery of the Greek and Hebrew languages, as they in their turn contributed to the outbreak of evangelical light which so gloriously distinguished the century that followed that in which Cosmo flourished. The sacred languages restored, and the Book of Heaven again opened, the pale, chilly dawn of the Renaissance warmed and brightened into the day of Christianity.

Another event contributed to this happy turn of affairs. Constantinople had just fallen, and the scholars of the metropolis of the East, fleeing from the arms of the Turk, and carrying with them their literary treasures, came to Italy, where they were warmly welcomed by Cosmo, and entertained with princely hospitality in his villa on Fiesole. The remains of that villa are still to be seen half-way between the base of the hill and the Franciscan monastery that crowns its summit, looking down on the unrivalled dome of Brunelleschi, which even in Cosmo's days adorned the beautiful city of Florence. The terrace is still pointed out, bordered by stately cypresses, where Cosmo daily walked, conversing with the illustrious exiles whom the triumph of barbarian arms had chased from their native East, the delicious vale of the Arno spread out at their feet, with the clustering towers of the city and the bounding hills in the nearer view, while the

remoter mountains, rising peak on peak in the azure distance, lent grandeur to the scene.^[5] “In gardens,” says Hallam, “which Tully might have envied, with Ficino, Laudino, and Politian at his side, he delighted his hours of leisure with the beautiful visions of the Platonic philosophy, for which the summer stillness of an Italian sky appears the most congenial accompaniment.”

His talents, his probity, and his great wealth placed Cosmo at the head of Florence, and gave him the government of the Duchy of Tuscany. His grandson Lorenzo – better known as Lorenzo the Magnificent – succeeded him in his vast fortune, his literary and aesthetic tastes, and his government of the duchy. Under Lorenzo the Medician family may be said to have fully blossomed. Lorenzo had three sons – Giuliano, Pietro, and Giovanni. The last (John) became Pope under the title of Leo X. He inherited his father’s taste for magnificence, and the Tuscan’s love of pleasure. Under him the Vatican became the gayest court in all Christendom, and Rome a scene of revelry and delights not surpassed, if equalled, by any of the capitals of Europe. Leo’s career has already come before us. He was far from “seeing the day of Peter,” but he lived to see Luther’s day, and went to the tomb as the morning-light of the Reformation was breaking over the world, closing with his last breath the halcyon era of the Papacy. He was succeeded in the chair of St. Peter, after the short Pontificate of Adrian of Utrecht, by another member of the same family of Medici, Giulio, a son of the brother of Leo X., who ascended the Papal throne under the title of Clement VII.

When Clement took possession of the Papal chair, he found a storm gathering round it. To whatever quarter of the sky his eye was turned, there he saw lowering clouds portending furious tempests in the future.

Luther was thundering in Germany; the Turk was marshalling his hordes and unfurling his standards on the borders of Christendom; nearer home, at his own gates almost, Francis and

Charles were settling with the sword the question which of the two should be master of that fair land which both meanwhile were laying waste. The infuriated Germans, now scarcely amenable to discipline, were hanging like tempest on the brow of Alp, and threatening to descend on Rome and make a spoil of all the wealth and art with which the lavish Pontificate of Leo X. had enriched and beautified it.

To complete the unhappiness of the time the plague had broken out at Rome, and with poms, festivities, and wassail, which went on all the same, were mingled corpses, funerals, and other gloomy insignia of the tomb. The disorders of Christendom had come to a head; all men demanded a remedy, but no remedy was found, and mainly for this reason, that no one understood that a cure to be effectual must begin with one's self. Men thought of reforming the world, but leaving the men that composed it as they were.

The new Pope saw very plainly that the air was thick and the sky lowering, but having vast confidence in his own consummate craft and knowledge of business, he set about, the task of replacing the world upon its foundations. This onerous work resolved itself into four divisions.

First, he had the abuses of his court and capital to correct; secondly, he had the poise to maintain between Spain and France, taking care that neither Power became too strong for him; thirdly, he had the Turk to drive out of Christendom; and fourthly, and mainly, he had the Reformation to extinguish; and this last gave him more concern than all the rest. His attention to business was unwearied; but labor as he might it would not all do. The mischiefs of ages could not be cured in a day, even granting that Clement had known how to cure them. But the storm did not come just yet; and Clement continued to toil and intrigue, to threaten the Turk, cajole the kings, and anathematise Lutheranism to no other effect than to have the advantage gained by the little triumph of to-day swept away by the terrible disaster of the morrow.

That woman who was just stepping upon a scene where she was destined long and conspicuously to figure, and where she was to leave as her memorials a throne dishonored and a nation demoralised, here demands a brief notice. Catherine was the daughter of Lorenzo II.,^[6] the grandson of Lorenzo the Magnificent, who, as we have said, was the grandson of Cosmo I., or Cosmo il Vecchio, as he is styled at Florence, the founder of the greatness of the family, and so honourably remembered as the patron of letters and the friend of scholars. Her mother was Magdeleine de Boulogne, of the Royal House of France.^[7] Her father survived her birth only a few days; her mother, too, died while she was still a child, and thus the girl, left an orphan, was taken under the care of her relative, Clement VII. An astrologer was said to have foretold at her birth that the child would be the ruin of her house; and the vaticination, as may well be believed, wrought her no good. She was but little cared for, or rather she was put, on purpose, in the way of receiving harm. She is said to have been placed in a basket, and hung outside the wall of a castle that was being besieged, in the hope that a chance arrow might rid them of her, and along with her the calamity which her continued existence was believed to portend. The missiles struck right and left, leaving their indentations on the wall, but the basket was not hit, and the child it enclosed lived on to occupy at a future day the throne of France.

When she comes before us, in connection with this marriage-scheme, Catherine de Medici was a girl of fourteen, of diminutive stature, of sylph-like form, with a fiery light streaming from her eyes. Bright, voluble, and passionate, she bounded from sport to sport, filling the halls where she played with the chatter of her talk, and the peals of her merriment. There was about her the power of a strange fascination, which all felt who came near her, but the higher faculties which she displayed in after-life had not yet been developed. These needed a wider stage and a loftier position for their display.

As she grew up it was seen that she possessed not a few of the good as well as the evil qualities of the race from which she was sprung. She had a princely heart, and a large understanding. To say that she was crafty, and astute, and greedy of power, and prudent, patient, and plodding in her efforts to grasp it, is simply to say that she was a Medici. She possessed, in no small degree, the literary and aesthetic tastes of her illustrious ancestor, Cosmo I. She loved splendor as did her great-grandfather, Lorenzo the Magnificent. She was as prodigal and lavish in her habits as Leo X.; and withal, as great a lover of pleasure. She filled the Louvre with scandals, even as Leo had done the Vatican, and from the court diffused a taint through the city, from which Paris has not been cleansed to this day.

The penetration and business habits of her uncle – we style him so, but his birth being suspicious, it is impossible to define his exact relationship – Clement VII., she inherited, and the pleasures in which she so freely indulged do not appear to have dulled the one or interrupted the other.

Above all, she was noted for the truly Medician feature of an inordinate love of power. Whoever occupied the throne, Catherine was the real ruler of France. Most of the occurrences which made the reigns of her husband and sons so tragical, and blackened so dismally that era of history, had their birth in her scheming brain. Not that she loved blood for its own sake, as did some of the Roman Emperors, but her will must be done, and whatever cause or person stood in her way must take the consequences by the dungeon or the stake, by the poignard or the poison-cup.

CHAPTER 15 [Back to Top](#) MARRIAGE OF HENRY OF FRANCE TO CATHERINE DE MEDICI.

The Pope sets Sail – Coasts along to France – Meets Francis I. at Marseilles – The Second Son of the King of France Married to Catherine de Medici – Her Promised Dowry – The Marriage

Festivities – Auguries – Clement's Return Voyage – His Reflections – His Dream of a New Era – His Dream to be Read Backwards – His Troubles – His Death – Catherine Enters France as Calvin is Driven Out – Retrogression of Protestantism – Death and Catherine de Medici – Death's Five Visits to the Palace – Each Visit Assists Catherine in her Ascent to Power – Her Crimes – She Gains no Real Success. THE marriage is to take place, and accordingly the Pope embarks at Leghorn, and sets out for the port of Marseilles, where he is to meet the King of France, and conclude the transaction. Popes have never loved ships, unless it were the bark of St. Peter, nor cared to sail in any sea save the sea ecclesiastic; but Clement's anxiety about the marriage overcame his revulsion to the waves. He sails along the coast of Italy; he passes the Gulf of Spezzia; he rounds the bold headland of Monte Fino; Genoa is passed; and now the shore of Nice, where the ridge of Apennine divides Italy from France, is under his lee, and thus, wafted along over these classic waters by soft breezes, he enters, in the beginning of October, 1533, the harbor of Marseilles. Catherine did not accompany him. She tarried at Nice meanwhile, to be at hand when she should be wanted. The interview between the Pontiff and the king terminated to the satisfaction of both parties. Francis again stipulated that the bride should bring as outfit "three rings," the Duchies of Urbino, Milan, and Genoa; and Clement had no difficulty in promising everything, seeing he meant to perform nothing. All being arranged, the little Tuscan beauty was now sent for; and amid the benedictions of the Pope, the congratulations of the courtiers, the firing of cannon, ringing of bells, and rejoicings of the populace, Catherine de Medici, all radiant with joy and sparkling with jewels, became the daughter-in-law of Francis I., and wife of the Duke of Orleans, the future Henry II.

In the banquet-chamber in which sat Catherine de Medici as the bride of the future Henry II. of France, well might there have been set a seat for the skeleton which the Egyptians in

ancient times were wont to introduce into their festal halls. Had that guest sat amid the courtiers at Marseilles, glaring on them with empty sockets, and mingling his ghastly grin with their gay merriment, all must have confessed that never had his presence been more fitting, nor his augury more truly prophetic. Or if this was not clearly seen at the moment, how plain did it become in after-years, when the bridal torches were exchanged for martyr-fires, and the marriage-songs were turned into wailings, which ever and anon rung through France, and each time with the emphasis of a deeper woe! But before that day should fully come Clement was to sleep in marble; Francis too was to be borne to the royal vaults of St. Denis, leaving as the curse of his house and kingdom the once lively laughing little girl whose arrival he signalled with these vast rejoicings, and who was yet too young to take much interest in court intrigue, or to feel that thirst for power which was to awaken in her breast with such terrible strength in years to come.

The marriage festivities were at an end, and Pope Clement VII. turned his face toward his own land. He had come as far as to see the utmost borders of the children of the Reformation, and, like another Balaam, he had essayed to curse them. He had come doubly armed: he grasped Catherine in the one hand, he held a bull of anathema in the other; the first he engrafted on France, the second he hurled against the Lutherans, and having shot this bolt, he betook him again to his galleys. A second time the winds were propitious. As he sailed along over the blue sea, he could indulge his reveries undistracted by those influences to which Popes, like other men, are liable on shipboard. He had taken a new pledge of France that it should not play the part England was now playing. France was now more than ever the eldest daughter of the Papacy. Clement, moreover, had fortified himself on the side of Spain. To the greatness of that Power he himself, above most men, had contributed, when he acted as the secretary and adviser of his uncle Leo X.,[\[1\]](#) but its sovereigns becoming less the

champions and more the masters of the Papacy, Spain caused the Pope considerable uneasiness. Now, however, it was less likely that the emperor would press for a Council, the very idea of which was so terrible to the Pope, that he could scarce eat by day or sleep by night. And so, as the coast of France sunk behind him and the headlands of Italy rose on his prow, he thought of the new splendor with which he had invested his house and name, and the happier days he was now likely to see in the Vatican.

Nevertheless, the horizon did not clear up: the storm still lowered above Rome. The last year of Clement's life – for he was now drawing toward the grave – was the unhappiest he had yet seen. Not one of all his fond anticipations was there that did not misgive him. If the dreams of ordinary mortals are to be read backwards, much more – as Clement and even Pontiffs in our own time have experienced – are the dreams of Popes.

The emperor became more pressing for a Council than ever. The Protestants of Germany, having formed a powerful league, had now a voice at the political council-table of Christendom. Nay, with his own hands Clement had been rearing a rampart round them, inasmuch as his alliance with Francis made Charles draw towards the Protestants, whose friendship was now more necessary to him. Even the French king, now his ally, could not be depended upon. Catherine's "three rings" the Pope had not made forthcoming, and Francis threatened, if they were not speedily sent, to come and fetch them. To fill up Clement's cup, already bitter enough and brimming over, as one would think, his two nephews quarrelled about the sovereignty of Florence, and were fighting savagely with one another. To whatever quarter Clement turned, he saw only present trouble and portents of worse to come. It was hard to say whether he had most to dread from his enemies or from his friends, from the heretical princes of Germany or from the most Christian King of France and the most Catholic King of Spain.

Last of all, the Pope fell sick. It soon became apparent that

his sickness was unto death, and though but newly returned from a wedding, Clement had to set about the melancholy task of preparing the ring and robe which are used at the funeral of a Pope. "Having created thirty cardinals," says Platina, "and set his house in order, he died the 25th September, 1534, between the eighteenth and nineteenth hour,[2] having lived sixty-six years and three months, and held the Papacy ten years, ten months, and seven days. He was buried," adds the historian, "in St. Peter's; but, in the Pontificate of Paul III. (his successor), his body was transferred, along with the remains of Leo X., to the Church of Minerva, and laid in a tomb of marble." [3] "Sorrow and secret anguish," says Soriano, brought him to the grave. Ranke pronounces him "without doubt, the most ill-fated Pope that ever sat on the Papal throne." [4]

Clement now reposed in marble in the Minerva, but the evil he had done was not "interred with his bones;" his niece lived after him, and to her for a moment we turn. There are beings whose presence seems to darken the light, and taint the very soil, on which they tread. Of the number of these was Catherine de Medici. She was sunny as her own Italy: but there lurked a curse beneath her gaieties and smiles. Wherever she had passed, there was a blight. Around her all that was fair and virtuous and manly, as if smitten by some mysterious and deadly influence, began to pine and die.

And, moreover, it is instructive to mark how nearly contemporaneous were the departure of Calvin from France and the entrance into that country of Catherine de Medici. Scarcely had the gates of Paris shut out the Reformer, when they were opened to admit the crafty Italian woman. He who would have been the restorer and savior of his country was chased from it, while she who was to inoculate it with vice, which first corrupted, and at last sunk it into ruin, was welcomed to it with demonstrations of unbounded joy.

We trace a marked change in the destinies of France from the day that Catherine entered it. Up till this time events seemed

to favor the progress of Protestantism in that country; but the admission of this woman was the virtual banishment of the Reformation, for how could it, ever mount the throne with Catherine de Medici sitting upon its steps? and unless the throne were won there was hardly a hope, in a country where the government was so powerful, of the triumph of the Reformation in the conversion of the great body of the nation.

True, the marriage of the king's second son with this orphan of the House of Medici did not seem an event of the first consequence. Had it been the Dauphin whom she espoused, she would have been on the fair way to the throne; but as the wife of Henry the likelihood was that she never would be more than the Duchess of Orleans. Nor had Catherine yet given unmistakable indication of those imperious passions inclining and fitting her for rule that were lodged in her. No one could have foretold at that hour that the girl of fifteen all radiant with smiles would become the woman of fifty dripping all over with blood. But from the day that she put her hand into Henry's, all things wrought for her. Even Death, as D'Aubigne has strikingly observed, seemed to be in covenant with this woman. To others the "King of Terrors," to Catherine de Medici he was but the obsequious attendant, who waited only till she should signify her pleasure, that he might strike whomsoever she wished to have taken out of her path. How many a visit, during her long occupancy, did the grim messenger pay to the Louvre! but not a visit did he make which did not assist her in her ascent to power. He came a first time, and, lo! the Dauphin lay a corpse, and Henry, Catherine's husband, became the immediate heir to the throne. He came a second time, and now Francis I. breathes his last. Henry reigns in his father's stead, and by his side sits the Florentine girl, now Queen of France. Death came a third time to the Louvre, and now it is Henry II. that is struck down; but the blow, so far from diminishing, enlarged the power of Catherine, for from this time she became, with a few brief and exceptional intervals, the real ruler of France.

Her imbecile progeny sat upon the throne, but the astute mother governed the country. Death came a fourth time to the palace, and now it is the weak-minded Francis II. who is carried out a corpse, leaving his throne to his yet weaker-minded brother, Charles IX. If her son, a mere puppet, wore the crown, Catherine with easy superiority directed the government. Casting off the Guises, with whom till now she had been compelled to divide her power, she stood up alone, the ruler of the land. Even when Death shifted the scenes for the last time by the demise of Charles IX., it was not to abridge this woman's influence. Under Henry III., as under all her other sons, it was the figure of Catherine de Medici that was by far the most conspicuous and terrible in France. Possessing one of those rare minds which reach maturity at an age when those of others begin to decay, it was only now, during the reigns of her last two sons, that she showed all that was in her. She discovered at this period of her career a shrewder penetration, a greater fertility of resource, and a higher genius for governing men than she had yet exhibited, and accordingly it was now that she adventured on her boldest schemes of policy, and that she perpetrated the greatest of her crimes. But, notwithstanding all her talent and wickedness, she gained no real success. The cause she espoused did not triumph eventually, and that which she opposed she was not able to crush.

CHAPTER 16 [Back to Top](#) MELANCTHON'S PLAN FOR UNITING WITTEMBERG AND ROME.

The Laborers Scattered – The Cause Advances – The Dread it Inspires – Calvin and Catherine – A Contrast – The Keys and the Fleur-de-Lis – The Doublings of Francis – Agreement between Francis and Philip of Hesse at Bar-le-Duc – Campaign – Wurtemberg Restored to Christopher – Francis I's Project for Uniting Lutheranism and Romanism – Du Bellay's Negotiations with Bucer – Melancthon Sketches a Basis of Union – Bucer and Hedio add their Opinion – The Messenger Returns with the Paper

to Paris – Sensation – Council at the Louvre – Plan Discussed – An Evangelical Pope. OF the evangelists who, but a dozen years before the period at which we are now arrived, had proclaimed the truth in France, hardly one now survived, or was laboring in that country. Some, like Lefevre, had gone to the grave by “the way of all men.” Others, like Berquin and Pavane, had passed to it by the cruel road of the stake. Some there were, like Farel, who had been chased to foreign lands, there to diffuse the light of which France was showing itself unworthy. Others, whose lot was unhappier still, had apostatised from the Gospel, seduced by love of the world, or repelled by the terrors of the stake. But if the earlier and lesser lights had nearly all disappeared, their place was occupied by a greater; and, despite the swords that were being unsheathed and the stakes that were being planted, it was becoming evident to all men that the sun of truth was mounting into the horizon, and soon the whole firmament would be filled with his light.

The movement caused much chagrin and torment to the great ones of the earth. They trembled before a power which had neither war-horse nor battle-axe, but against which all their force could avail nothing. They saw that mysterious power advancing from victory to victory; they beheld it scattering the armies that stood up to oppose it, and recruiting its adherents faster than the fire could consume them; and they could hardly help seeing in this an augury of a day when that power would “possess the kingdom and dominion and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven.” This power was none other than the CHRISTIANITY of the first ages, smitten by the sword of the pagan emperors, wounded in yet more deadly fashion by the superstition of Rome, but now risen from the dead, and therefore mighty works did show forth themselves in it.

The two chiefs of the great drama which was now opening in France had just stepped upon the stage – Calvin and Catherine de Medici. The one was taken from an obscure town in the north

of France; the other came from a city already glorified by the renown of its men of letters, and the state and power of its princes. The former was the grandson of a cooper; the latter was of the lineage of the princely House of Tuscany. Catherine was placed in the Louvre, with the resources of a kingdom at her command; Calvin was removed outside of France altogether, where, in a small town hidden among the hills of the Swiss, he might stand and fight his great battle. But as yet Catherine had not reached the throne, nor was Calvin at Geneva. Death had to open the way that the first might ascend to power, and years of wandering and peril had yet to be gone through before the latter should enter the friendly gates of the capital of the Genevese.

We return for a moment to Marseilles. Catheline de Medici had placed her cold hand in that of Henry of Valois, and by the act a new link had been forged which was to bind together, more firmly than ever, the two countries of Italy and France. The Keys and the Fleur-de-lis were united for better or worse. The rejoicings and festivities were now at an end. The crowd of princes and courtiers, of prelates and monks, of liveried attendants and men-at-arms, which for weeks had crowded the streets of Marseilles, and kept it night and day in a stir, had dispersed; and Francis and Clement, mutually satisfied, were on their way back, each to his own land. The winds slept, the uneasy Gulf of Lyons was still till the Pontiff's galley had passed; and as he sailed away over that glassy sea, Clement felt that now the tiara sat firmer on his head than before, and that he might reckon on happier days in the Vatican. Alas, how little could he forecast the actual future! What awaited him at Rome was a shroud and a grave.

Francis I., equally overjoyed, but equally mistaken, amused himself, on his journey to Paris, with visions of the future, arrayed in colors of equal brilliancy. He had not patience till he should arrive at the Louvre before making a beginning with these grand projects. He halted at Avignon, that old city

on the banks of the Rhone, which had so often opened its gates to receive the Popes when Rome had cast them out. Here he assembled his council, and startled its members by breaking to them his purpose of forming a league with the Protestants of Germany.[1] Fresh from the embraces of Clement, this was the last thing his courtiers had expected to hear from their master. Yet Francis I. was in earnest. One hand had he given to Rome, the other would he give to the Reformation: he would be on both sides at once.[2] This was very characteristic of this monarch; – divided in his heart – unstable in all his ways – continually oscillating – but sure to settle on the wrong side in the end, and to reap, as the fruit of all his doublings, only disgrace to himself and destruction to his kingdom.

The King of France was, in sooth, at this moment playing a double game – a political league and a religious reform. Of the two projects the last was the more chimerical, for Francis aimed at nothing less than to unite Rome and the Reformation. What a strange moment to inaugurate these schemes, when Europe was still ringing with the echoes of the bull in which the German heretics had been cursed, and which had been issued by the man with whom Francis had been closeted these many days past! And not less strange the spot chosen for the concoction of these projects, a city which was a second Rome, the very dust of which was redolent of the footprints of the Popes, and whose streets and palaces recalled the memories of the pride, the luxury, and the disorders of the Papal court.

The key of the policy of Francis was his desire to humble his dreaded rival, Charles V. Hence his approach to the Pope, on the one hand, and to the Protestant princes, on the other. For the Papacy he did not greatly care; for Lutheranism he cared still less: his own ascendancy was the object he sought.

The political project came first and sped best. An excellent opportunity for broaching it presented itself just at this time. Charles V. had carried away by force of arms the young

Duke of Wurtemberg. And not only had he stolen the duke; he had stolen his duchy too, and annexed it to the dominions of the House of Austria.[3] Francis thought that to strike for the young duke, despoiled of his ancestral dominions, would be dealing a blow at Charles V., while he would appear to be doing only a chivalrous act. It would, moreover, vastly please the German princes, and smooth his approaches to them. If his recent doings at Marseilles had rendered him an object of suspicion, his espousal of the quarrel of the Duke of Wurtemberg would be a counter-stroke which would put him all right with the princes. An incident which had just fallen out was in the line of these reasonings, and helped to decide Francis.

The young Duke Christopher had managed to escape from the emperor in a way which we have narrated in its proper place. He remained for some time in hiding, and was believed to be dead; but in November, 1532, he issued a manifesto claiming restoration of his ancestral dominions. The claim was joyfully responded to by the Protestants of Germany, as well as by his own subjects of Wurtemberg. This was the opening which now presented itself to the King of France, ever ready to ride post from Rome to Germany, and back again with even greater speed and heartier good-will from Germany to Rome.

A Diet was assembling at Augsburg, to discuss the question of the restoration of the States of Wurtemberg to their rightful sovereign. The representatives of Ferdinand were to appear before that Diet, to uphold the cause of Austria. Francis I. sent Du Bellay as his ambassador, with instructions quietly, yet decidedly, to throw the influence of France into the opposite scale.[4] Du Bellay zealously carried out the instructions of his master. He pleaded the cause of Duke Christopher so powerfully before the Diet, that it decided in favor of his restoration to Wurtemberg. But the ambassadors of Austria stood firm; if Wurtemberg was to be reft from their master, and carried over to the Protestant side, it must be by

force of arms. Philip, Landgrave of Hesse, met Francis I. at Bar-le-Duc, near the western frontier of Germany, and there arranged the terms for a campaign on behalf of the young Duke Christopher. The landgrave was to supply the soldiers, and the King of France, was to furnish – though secretly, for he did not wish his hand to be seen – the requisite money.[5] All three had a different aim, though uniting in a common action. Philip of Hesse hoped to strengthen Protestantism by enlarging its territorial area. Du Bellay hoped to make the coming war the wedge that was to separate Francis from the Pope, and rend the Ultramontane yoke from the neck of his country. Francis was simply pursuing what had been his one policy since the battle of Pavia, the humiliation of Charles V., which he hoped to effect, in this case, by kindling a war between the German princes and the emperor.

There was another party having interest; this party now stepped upon the scene. Luther and Melancthon were the representatives of Protestantism as a religion, as the princes were the representatives of it as a policy. To make war for the Gospel was to them the object of their utmost alarm and abhorrence. They exerted all their rhetoric to dissuade the Protestant princes from drawing the sword. But it was in vain. The war was precipitately entered upon by Philip. A battle was fought. The German Protestants were victorious; the Austrian army was beaten, and Wurtemberg, restored to Duke Christopher, was transferred to the political side of Protestantism.[6]

The political project of Francis I. had prospered. He had wrested Wurtemberg from Ferdinand, and through the sides of Austria had hurt the pride of his rival Charles V. This success tempted him to try his hand at the second project, the religious one. To mould opinions might not be so easy as to move armies, but the Lutheran fit was upon Francis just now, and he would try. The Reformation which the French king meditated consisted only in a few changes on the surface; these he thought would bring back the Protestants, and heal

the broken unity of Rome. He by no means wished to injure the Pope, much less to establish a religion that would necessitate a reform of his own life, or that of his courtiers. The first step was to sound Melancthon, and Bucer, and Hedio, as to the amount of change that would satisfy them. It was significant that Luther was not approached. It was Lutheranism with Luther left out that was now entering into negotiations with Rome. It does not seem to have struck those who were active in setting this affair on foot, that the man who had created the first Lutheranism could create a second, provided the first fell back into the old gulf of Romanism.

Meanwhile, however, the project gave promise of prospering. Du Bellay, in his way back from Augsburg, had an interview with Bucer at Strasburg; and, with true diplomatic tact, hinted to the pacific theologian that really it was not worth his while to labor at uniting the Zwinglians and the Lutherans. Here was something more worthy of him, a reconciliation of Protestantism and Romanism. The moment this great affair was mentioned to Bucer, other unions seemed little in his eyes. Though he should reconcile Luther and Zwingle, the great rent would still remain; but Rome and the Reformation reconciled, all would be healed, and the source closed of innumerable, strifes and wars in Christendom. Bucer, being one of those who have more faith in the potency of persons than of principles, was overjoyed; if so powerful a monarch as Francis and so able a statesman as Du Bellay had put their shoulders to this work, it must needs, he thought, progress.

A special messenger was dispatched to Melancthon (July, 1534) touching this affair. The deputy found the great doctor bowed to the earth under an apprehension of the evils gathering over Christendom. There, first of all, was the division in the Protestant camp; and there, too, was the cloud of war gathering over Europe, and every hour growing bigger and blacker. The project looked to Melancthon like a reprieve to a world doomed to dissolution. The man from whom it came had

been in recent and confidential intercourse with the Pope; and who could tell but that Clement VII. was expressing his wishes and hopes through the King of France? Even if it were not so, were there not here the "grand monarchs," the Kings of France and England, on the side of union? Melancthon took his pen, sat down, and sketched the basis of the one Catholic Church of the future. In this labor he strove to be loyal to his convictions of truth. His plan, in brief, was to leave untouched the hierarchy of Rome, to preserve all her ceremonies of worship, and to reform her errors of doctrine. This, he admitted, was not all that could be wished, but it was a beginning, and more would follow.[7] Finishing the paper, he gave it to the messenger, who set off with it to Francis.

On his way to Paris the courier halted at Strasburg, and requested Bucer also to put on paper what he thought ought to form a basis of union between the two Churches. Bucer's plan agreed in the main with that of Melancthon. The truth was the essential thing; let us restore that at the foundation, and we shall soon see it refashioning the superstructure. So said Bucer. There was another Reformer of name in Strasburg – Hedio, a meek but firm man; him also the messenger of Francis requested to give his master his views in writing. Hedio complied; and with these three documents the messenger resumed his journey to Paris.

On his arrival in the capital the papers were instantly laid before the king. There was no small sensation in Paris; a great event was about to happen.

Protestantism had spoken its last word. Its ultimatum lay on the king's table. How anxiously was the opening of these important papers, which were to disclose the complexion of the future, waited for! Were Rome and Wittemberg about to join hands? Was a new Church, neither Romanist nor Protestant, but Reformed and eclectic, about to gather once more within its bosom all the peoples of Christendom, hushing angry

controversies, and obliterating the lines of contending sects in one happy concord? Or was the division between the two Churches to be henceforward wider than ever, and were the disputes that could not be adjusted in the conference-hall to be carried to the bloody field, and the blazing stake?. Such were the questions that men asked themselves with reference to the three documents which the royal messenger had brought back with him from Germany. In the midst of many fears, hope predominated.

The king summoned a council at the Louvre to discuss the programme of Melancthon and his two fellow-Reformers. Gathered round the council-table in the palace were men of various professions, ranks, and aims. There sat the Archbishop of Paris and other prelates; there sat Du Bellay and a few statesmen; and there, too, sat doctors of the Sorbonne and men of letters. Some sincerely wished a Reformation of religion; others, including the king, made the Reform simply a stalking-horse for the advancement of their own interests.

The papers were opened and read. All around the table, were pleased and offended by turns. The color came into the king's face when he found the Reformers commencing by stating that "a true faith in Christ" was a main requisite for such a union as was now sought to be attained. But when, farther on, the Pope's deposing power was thrown overboard, the monarch was appeased. Prominence was given to the "doctrine of the justification of sinners," nor was the council displeased when this was ascribed not to "good works," nor the "rites of priests," but to the "righteousness and blood of Christ;" for had not the schoolmen used similar language? The question of the Sacrament was a crucial one. "There is a real presence of Christ in the Eucharist," said the Reformers, without defining the nature or manner of that presence; but they added, it is "faith," not the "priest," that gives communion with Christ in the Lord's Supper. The bishops frowned; they saw at a glance that if the opus operatum were denied, their power was

undermined, and the "Church" betrayed. On neither side could there be surrender on this point.

The king had looked forward with some uneasiness to the question of the Church's government. He knew that the Reformers held the doctrine of the "priesthood of all believers;" this, he thought, was fatal to order. But, replied the Reformers, the Gospel-church is a "kingdom of priests," and in a kingdom there must be officers and laws; the function of priesthood is inherent in all, but the exercise of it appertains only to those chosen and appointed thereto. The king was reassured; but now it was the turn of the Protestants at the council-board to feel alarm; for Melancthon and his fellow-Reformers were willing to go so far on the point of Church government as to retain the hierarchy. True, its personnel was to undergo a transformation. All its members from its head downwards were to become Reformed. The Pope was to be retained, but how greatly changed from his former self! He was to hold the primacy of rank, but not the primacy of power, and after this he would hardly account his tiara worth wearing. Here, said the Protestants, is the weak point of the scheme. A Reformed Pope! that indeed will be something new! When Melancthon put this into his scheme of Reform, said they, he must have left the domain of possibilities and strayed into the region of Utopia.

To these greater reforms a few minor ones were appended. Prayers to the saints were to be abolished, although their festivals were still to be observed; priests were to be allowed to marry, but only celibates would be eligible as bishops; the monasteries were to be converted into schools; the cup was to be restored to the laity; private masses were to be abolished; in confession it was not to be obligatory to enumerate all sins; and, in fine, a conference of pious men, including laymen, was to meet and frame a constitution for the Church, according to the Word of God.[8]

LUTHERANISM AND ROMANISM.

End of Conference – Francis I, takes the Matter into his own Hand – Concocts a New Basis of Union – Sends Copies to Germany, to the Sorbonne and the Vatican – Amazement of the Protestants – Alarm of the Sorbonnists – They send a Deputation to the King – What they Say of Lutheranism – Indignation at the Vatican – These Projects of Union utterly Chimerical – Excuse of the Protestants of the Sixteenth Century – Their Stand-point Different from Ours – Storms that have Shaken the World, but Cleared the Air. The conference was now over. The king was not displeased;[1] the Protestants were hopeful; but the bishops were cold. At heart they wished to have done with these negotiations; for their instincts surely told them that if this matter went on it could have but one ending, and that was the subversion of their Church. But the king, for the moment, was on the side of the Reform. He would put himself at its head, and guide it to such a goal as would surround his throne with a new glory. He would heal the schism, preserve Catholicism, curb the fanaticism of Luther, punish the hypocrisy of the monks, repress the assumptions of the Pope, and humble the pride of the emperor. To do all this would be to place himself without a rival in Europe. The King of France now took the matter more than ever into his own hands.

Francis now proceeded to sketch out what virtually was a new basis of union for Christendom. He thought, doubtless, that he knew the spirit of the new times, and the influences stirring in the world at large, better than did the theologians of Wittemberg and Strasburg; that a throne was a better point of observation than a closet, and that he could produce something broader and more catholic than Melancthon, which would hit the mark.

Summoning a commission round him,[2] he sat down, and making the papers of the three theologians the groundwork, retrenching here, enlarging there, and expunging some articles

wholly,[3] the king and his councillors produced a new basis of union or fusion, different to some extent from the former.

The king, although not aspiring like Henry of England to the repute of a theologian, was doubtless not a little proud of his handiwork. He sent copies of it to Germany, to the Sorbonne, and even to the Pope,[4] requesting these several parties to consider the matter, and report their judgment upon it to the king. To the German theologians it caused no small irritation; they recognized in the king's paper little but a caricature of their sentiments.[5] In the Sorbonne the message of Francis awakened consternation. The doctors saw Lutheranism coming in like a torrent, while the king was holding open the gates of France.[6] We can imagine the amazement and indignation which would follow the reading of the king's paper in the Vatican. Modified, it yet retained the essential ideas of Melancthon's plan, in that it disowned the saints, denied the opus operatum, and left the Papal tiara shorn of nearly all its authority and grandeur. What a cruel blow would this have been to Clement VII., aggravated, as he would have felt it, by the fact that it was dealt by the same hand which had so lately grasped his in friendship at Marseilles! But before the document reached Rome, Clement had passed from this scene of agitation, and was now resting in the quiet grave. This portentous paper from the eldest son of the Papacy was reserved to greet his successor, Paul III., on his accession to the Papal chair, and to give him betimes a taste of the anxieties and vexations inseparable from a seat which fascinates and dazzles all save the man who occupies it. But we return to the Sorbonnists.

The royal missive had alarmed the doctors beyond measure. They saw France about to commit itself to the same downward road on which England had already entered. This was no time to sit still. They went to the Louvre and held a theological disputation with the king's ministers. Their position was not improved thereby. If argument had failed them they would try

what threats could do. Did not the king know that Lutheranism was the enemy of all law and order? that wherever it came it cast down dignities and powers, and trampled them in the dust? If the altar was overturned, assuredly the throne would not be left standing. They thought that they had found the opening in the king's armor. But Francis had the good sense to look at great facts as seen in contemporaneous history. Had law and order perished in Germany? nay, did not the Protestants of that country reverence and obey their princes more profoundly than ever? Was anarchy triumphant in England? Francis saw no one warring with kings and undermining their authority save the Pope, who had deposed his Brother of England, and was not unlikely to do the same office for himself one of these days. Sorbonnists saw that neither was this the right tack. Must France then be lost to the Papacy? There did seem at the moment some likelihood of such disaster, as they accounted it, taking place. The year 1534 was drawing to a close, with Francis still holding by his purpose, when an unhappy incident occurred, all unexpectedly, which fatally changed the king's course, and turned him from the road on which he seemed about to enter. Of that event, with all the tragic consequences that followed it, we shall have occasion afterwards to speak.

As regards this union, or rather fusion, there is no need to express any sorrow over its failure, and to regret that so fair an opportunity of banishing the iron age of controversy and war, and bringing in the golden age of concord and peace, should have been lost. Had this compromise been accomplished, it would certainly have repressed, for a decade or two, the more flagrant of the abuses and scandals and tyrannies of the Papacy, but it would also have stifled, perhaps extinguished, those mighty renovating forces which had begun to act with such marked and beneficial effect. Christendom would have lost infinitely more than all it could have gained: it would have gained a brief respite; it would have lost a real and permanent Reformation. What was the plan projected? The Reformation was to bring its "doctrine," and Rome was to bring

its "hierarchy," to form the Church of the future. But if the new wine had been poured into the old bottle, would not the bottle have burst? or if the wine were too diluted to rend the bottle, would it not speedily have become as acrid and poisonous as the old wine? "Justification by faith," set in the old glosses, circumscribed by the old definitions, and manipulated by the old hierarchy, would a second time, and at no distant date, have been transformed into "Justification by works," and where then would Protestantism have been? But we are not to judge of the men who advocated this scheme by ourselves. They occupied a very different standpoint from ours. We have the lessons of three most eventful centuries, which were necessarily hidden and veiled from them; and the utter contrariety of these two systems, in their originating principles, and in their whole course since their birth, and by consequence the utter utopianism of attempting their reconciliation, could be seen not otherwise than as the progression of events and of centuries furnished the gradual but convincing demonstration of it. Besides, the Council of Trent had not yet met; the hard and fast line of distinction between the two Churches had not then been drawn; in especial, that double-partition-wall of anathemas and stakes, which has since been set up between them, did not then exist; moreover, the circumstances of the Reformers at that early hour of the movement were wholly unprecedented; no wonder that their vision was distracted and their judgment at fault. The two systems were as yet, but slowly drawing away the one from the other, and beginning to stand apart, and neither had as yet taken up that distinct and separate ground, which presents them to us clearly and sharply as systems that in their first principles – in their roots and fibres – are antagonistic, so that the attempt to harmonise them is simply to try to change the nature and essence of things.

Besides, it required a far greater than the ordinary amount of courage to accept the tremendous responsibility of maintaining Protestantism. The bravery that would have sufficed for ten

heroes of the ordinary type would scarcely have made, at that hour, one courageous Protestant. It began now to be seen that the movement, if it was to go forward, would entail on all parties – on those who opposed as well as on those who aided it – tremendous sacrifices and sufferings. It was this prospect that dismayed Melancthon. He saw that every hour the spirits of men were becoming more embittered; that the kingdoms were falling apart; that the cruel sword was about to shed the blood of man; in short, that the world was coming to an end. In truth, the old world was, and Melancthon, his eye dimmed for the moment by the “smoke and vapor” of that which was perishing, could not clearly see the new world that was rising to take its place. To save the world, Melancthon would have put the Reformation into what would have been its grave. Had Melancthon had his choice, he would have pronounced for the calm – the mephitic stillness in which Christendom was rotting, rather than the hurricane with its noise and overturnings. Happily for us who live in this age, the great scholar had not the matter in his choice. It was the tempest that came: but if it shook the world by its thunders, and swept it by its hurricanes, it has left behind it a purer air, a clearer sky, and a fresher earth.

CHAPTER 18 [Back to Top](#) FIRST DISCIPLES OF THE GOSPEL IN PARIS.

Calvin now the Center of the Movement – Shall he enter Priest's Orders? – Hazard of a Wrong Choice – He walks by Faith – Visits Noyon – Renounces all his Preferments in the Romish Church – Sells his Patrimonial Inheritance – Goes to Paris – Meets Servetus – His Opinions – Challenges Calvin to a Controversy – Servetus does not Keep his Challenge – State of things at Paris – Beda – More Ferocious than ever – The Times Uncertain – Disciples in Paris – Bartholemew Millon – His Deformity – Conversion – Zeal for the Gospel – Du Bourg, the Draper – Valetton, of Nantes – Le Compte – Giulio Camillo – Poille, the Bricklayer – Other Disciples – Pantheists – Calvin's Forecastings – Calvin quits Paris and goes to

Strasburg. WE return to Calvin, now and henceforward the true center of the Reformation. Wherever he is, whether in the library of Du Tillet, conversing with the mighty dead, and forging, not improbably, the bolts he was to hurl against Rome in future years, or in the limestone cave on the banks of the rivulet of the Clain; dispensing the Lord's Supper to the first Protestants of Poitiers, as its Divine Founder had, fifteen centuries before, dispensed it to the first disciples of Christianity, there it is that the light of the new day is breaking.

Calvin had come to another most eventful epoch of his life. The future Reformer again stood at "the parting of the ways." A wrong decision at this moment would have wrecked all his future prospects, and changed the whole history of the Reformation.

We left Calvin setting out from Poitiers in the end of April, 1534, attended by the young Canon Du Tillet, whose soul cleaved to the Reformer, and who did not discover till two years afterwards, when he began to come in sight of the stake, that something stronger than even the most devoted love to Calvin was necessary to enable him to cleave to the Gospel which Calvin preached. Calvin would be twenty-five on the 10th of July. This is the age at which, according to the canons, one who has passed his novitiate in the Church must take the first orders of priesthood. Calvin had not yet done so, he had not formally broken with Rome, but now he must take up his position decidedly within or decidedly without the Church. At an early age the initiatory mark of servitude to the Pope had been impressed upon his person. His head had been shorn. The custom, which is a very ancient one, is borrowed from the temples of paganism. The priests of Isis and Serapis, Jerome informs us, officiated in their sanctuaries with shorn crowns, as do the priests of Rome at this day. Calvin must now renew his vow and consummate the obedience to which he was viewed as having pledged himself was performed upon himself when the

rite of tonsure was performed upon him. He must now throw off the fetter entirely, or be bound yet more tightly, and become the servant of the Pope, most probably for ever.

His heart had left the Church of Rome, and any subjection he might now promise could be feigned only, not real. Yet there were not wanting friends who counselled him to remain in outward communion with Rome. Is it not, we can imagine these counsellors saying to the young cure, is it not the Reformation of the Church which is your grand aim? Well, here is the way to compass it. Dissemble the change within; remain in outward conformity with the Church; push on from dignity to dignity, from a curacy to a mitre, from a mitre to the purple, and from the purple to the tiara; what post is it to which your genius may not aspire? and once seated in the Papal chair, who or what can hinder you from reforming the Church?

The reasoning was specious, and thousands in Calvin's circumstances have listened to similar persuasion, and have been undone. So doubtless reasoned Caraffa, who, as a simple priest, was a frequenter of the evangelical re-unions in Chaija at Naples, but who, when he became Paul IV., restored the Inquisition, and kindled, alas! numerous stakes at Rome. Those who, listening to such counsel, have adopted this policy, have either never attained the dignities for which they stifled the convictions of duty, or they found that with loftier position had come stronger entanglements, that honors and gold were even greater hindrances than obscurity and poverty, and that if they had now the power they had not the heart to set on foot the Reformation they once burned to accomplish.

Calvin, eschewing the path of expediency, and walking by faith, found the right road. He refused to touch the gold or wear the honors of the Church whose creed he no longer believed. "Not one, but a hundred benefices would I give up," he said, "rather than make myself the Pope's vassal."[\[1\]](#) Even the hope of one day becoming generalissimo of the Pope's army,

and carrying over his whole force to the camp of the enemy in the day of battle, could not tempt him to remain in the Papal ranks. He arrived in Noyon in the beginning of May. On May 4th, 1534, in presence of the officials, ecclesiastical and legal, he resigned his Chaplaincy of La Gesine, and his Cursoy of Pont l'Eveque, and thus he severed the last link that bound him to the Papacy, and by the sale of his paternal inheritance at the same time,[\[2\]](#) he broke the last tie to his birth-place.

Calvin, "his bonds loosened," was now more the servant of Christ than ever. In the sale of his patrimony he had "forgotten his father's house," and he was ready to go anywhere – to the stake should his Master order him. He longed to plant the standard of the cross in the capital of a great country, and hard by the gates of a university which for centuries had been a fountain of knowledge. Accordingly, he turned his steps to Paris, where he was about to make a brief but memorable stay, and then leave it nevermore to return.

It was during this visit to Paris that Calvin met, for the first time, a man whom he was destined to meet a second time, of which second meeting we shall have something to say afterwards. The person who now crossed Calvin's path was Servetus. Michael Servetus was a Spaniard, of the same age exactly as Calvin,[\[3\]](#) endowed with a penetrating intellect, highly imaginative genius, and a strongly speculative turn of mind. Soaring above both Romanism and Protestantism, he aimed at substituting a system of his own creation, the corner-stone of which was simple Theism. He aimed his stroke at the very heart of Christianity, the doctrine of the Trinity.[\[4\]](#)

Confident in his system, and not less in his ability, he had for some years been leading the life of a knight-errant, having wandered into Switzerland, and some parts of Germany, in quest of opposers with whom he might do battle.[\[5\]](#) Having heard of the young doctor of Noyon, he came to Paris, and threw down the gage to him.[\[6\]](#) Calvin felt that should he decline the challenge of Servetus, the act would be

interpreted into a confession that Protestantism rejected the doctrine of the Trinity, and so was corrupt at the core. It concerned the Reformers to show that Protestantism was not a thing that tore up Christianity by the roots under pretense of removing the abuses that had grown up around it. This consideration weighed with Calvin in accepting, as he now did, Servetus' challenge. The day, the hour, the place – a house in the suburb of St. Antoine – were all agreed upon.

Calvin was punctual to the engagement; but Servetus – why, was never known – did not appear.^[7] “We shall not forget,” says Bungener, “when the time comes, the position into which the Spanish theologian had just thrust the leaders of the Reformation, and Calvin in particular. By selecting him for his adversary on the question of the Trinity, upon which no variance existed between Romanism and the Reformation, he, in a measure, constituted him the guardian of that doctrine, and rendered him responsible for it before all Christendom. It was this responsibility which nineteen years afterwards kindled the pile of Servetus.” ^[8]

Let us mark the state of Paris at the time of Calvin's visit. We have already had a glimpse into the interior of the palace, and seen what was going on there. Francis I. was trying to act two parts at once, to be “the eldest son of the Church,” and the armed knight of the Reformation. He had gone in person to Marseilles to fetch the Pope's niece to the Louvre, he had sent William du Bellay to negotiate with the German Protestants; not that he cared for the doctrines, but that he needed the arms of the Lutherans. And, as if the King of France had really loved the Gospel, there was now a conference sitting in the Louvre concocting a scheme of Reform. Councils not a few had labored to effect a Reformation of the Church in its head and members; but not one of them had succeeded. It will indeed be strange, we can hear men saying, if what Pisa, and Constance, and Basle failed to give to the world, should at last proceed from the Louvre. There were persons who really

thought that this would happen. But Reformations are not things that have their birth in royal cabinets, or emerge upon the world kern princely gates. It is in closets where, on bended knee, the page of Scripture is searched with tears and groans for the way of life, that these movements have their commencement. From the court let us turn to the people.

We have already narrated the sudden turn of the tide in Paris in the end of 1533. During the king's absence at Marseilles the fiery Beda was recalled from exile. His banishment had but inflamed his wrath against the Protestants, and he set to work more vigorously than ever to effect their suppression, and purge Paris from their defilement. The preachers were forbidden the pulpits, and some three hundred Lutherans were thrown into the Conciergerie. Not content with these violent proceedings, the Parliament, in the beginning of 1534, at the instigation of Beda, passed a law announcing death by burning against those who should be convicted of holding the new opinions on the testimony of two witnesses.^[9] It was hard to say on whom this penalty might fall. It might drag to the stake Margaret's chaplain, Roussel; it might strike down the learned men in the university – the lights of France – whom the king had assembled round him from other lands. But what mattered it if Lutheranism was extinguished? Beda was clamoring for a holocaust. Nevertheless, despite all this violence the evangelisation was not stopped. The disciples held meetings in their own houses, and by-and-by when the king returned, and it was found that he had thrown off the Romish fit with the air of Marseilles, the Protestants became bolder, and invited their neighbors and acquaintances to their reunions. Such was the state in which Calvin found matters when he returned to Paris, most probably in the beginning of June, 1534. There was for the moment a calm. Protestant conferences were proceeding at the Louvre; Beda could not provide a victim for the stake, and the Sorbonne was compelled meanwhile to be tolerant. The times, however, were very uncertain; the sky at any moment might become overcast, and

grow black with tempest.

Calvin, on entering Paris, turned into the Rue St. Denis, and presented himself at the door of a worthy tradesman, La Forge by name, who was equally marked by his sterling sense and his genuine piety. This was not the first time that Calvin had lived under this roof, and now a warm welcome waited his return. But his host, well knowing what was uppermost in his heart, cautioned him against any open attempt at evangelising. All, indeed, was quiet for the moment, but the enemies of the Gospel were not asleep; there were keen eyes watching the disciples, and if left unmolested it was only on the condition that they kept silence and remained in the background. To Calvin silence was agony, but he must respect the condition, however hard he felt it, for any infraction of it would be tantamount to setting up his own stake. Opportunities of usefulness, however, were not wanting. He exhorted those who assembled at the house of La Forge, and he visited in their own dwellings the persons named to him as the friends of the Gospel in Paris.

The evangelist showed much zeal and diligence in the work of visitation. It was not the mansions of the rich to which he was led; nor was it men of rank and title to whom he was introduced; he met those whose hands were roughened and whose brows were furrowed by hard labor; for it was now as at the beginning of Christianity, "not many mighty, not many noble are called, but God hath chosen the poor of this world." It is all the better that it is so, for Churches like States must be based upon the people. Not far from the sign of the "Pelican," at which La Forge lived, in the same Rue St. Denis, is a shoemaker's shop, which let us enter. A miserable-looking hunchback greets our eyes. The dwarfed, deformed, paralysed figure excites our compassion. His hands and tongue remain to him; his other limbs are withered, and their power gone. The name of this poor creature is Bartholomew Millon. Bartholomew had not always been the pitiably misshapen object we now

behold him. He was formerly one of the most handsome men in all Paris, and with the gifts of person he possessed also those of the mind.[\[10\]](#) But he had led a youth of boisterous dissipation. No gratification which his senses craved did he deny himself. Gay in disposition and impetuous in temper, he was the ring-leader of his companions, and was at all times equally ready to deal a blow with his powerful arm, or let fly a sarcasm with his sharp tongue.

But a beneficent Hand, in the guise of disaster, arrested Bartholomew in the midst of his mad career. Falling one day, he broke his ribs, and neglecting the needful remedies, his body shrunk into itself, and shrivelled up. The stately form was now bent, the legs became paralysed, and on the face of the cripple grim peevishness took the place of manly beauty. He could no longer mingle in the holiday spirit or the street brawl. He sat enchained, day after day, in his shop, presenting to all who visited it the rueful spectacle of a poor deformed paralytic. His powers of mind, however, had escaped the blight which fell upon his body. His wit was as sharp as ever, and it may be a little sharper, misfortune having soured his temper. The Protestants were especially the butt of his ridicule. One day, a Lutheran happening to pass before his shop, the bile of Millon was excited, and he forthwith let fly at him a volley of insults and scoffs. Turning round to see whence the abuse proceeded, the eye of the passer-by lighted on the pitiful object who had assailed him. Touched with compassion, he went up to him and said, "Poor man, don't you see that God has bent your body in this way in order to straighten your soul?[\[11\]](#) and giving him a New Testament, he bade him read it, and tell him at an after-day what he thought of it.

The words of the stranger touched the heart of the paralytic: Millon opened the book, and began to read. Arrested by its beauty and majesty, "he continued at it," says Crespin, "night and day." He now saw that his soul was even more deformed than

his body. But the Bible had revealed to him a great Physician, and, believing in his power to heal, the man whose limbs were withered, but whose heart was now smitten, cast himself down before that gracious One. The Savior had pity upon him. His soul was "straightened." The malignity and spite which had blackened and deformed it were cast out. "The wolf had become a lamb." [12] He turned his shop into a conventicle, and was never weary of commending to others that Savior who had pardoned sins so great and healed diseases so inveterate as his.

The gibe and the scoff were forgotten; only words of loving-kindness and instruction now fell from him. Still chained to his seat he gathered round him the young, and taught them to read. He exerted his skill in art to minister to the poor; and his powers of persuasion he employed day after day to the reclaiming of those whom his former example had corrupted, and the edification of such as he had scoffed at aforetime. He had a fine voice, and many came from all parts of Paris to hear him sing Marot's Psalms. "In short," says Crespin, "his room was a true school of piety, day and night, re-echoing with the glory of the Lord."

Let us visit another of these disciples, so humble in station, yet so grand in character. Such men are the foundation-stones of a kingdom's greatness. We have not far to go. At the entrance of the same Rue was a large shop in which John du Bourg carried on, under the sign of the "Black Horse," [13] the trade of a draper. Du Bourg, who was a man of substance, was very independent in his opinions, and liked to examine and judge of all things for himself. He had imbibed the Reformed sentiments, although he had not associated much with the Protestants. He had gone, as his habit of mind was, directly to the Scriptures, and drawn thence his knowledge of the truth. That water was all the sweeter to him, that he had drunk it fresh from the fountain. He did not hoard his treasure. He was a merchant, but not one of all his wares did

it so delight him to vend as this. "This fire," said his relations, "will soon go out like a blaze of tow." They were mistaken. The priests scowled, his customers fell off, but, says the old chronicler, "neither money nor kindred could ever turn him aside from the truth."[\[14\]](#)

It consoled Du Bourg to see others, who had drunk at the same spring, drawing around him. His shop was frequently visited by Peter Valeton, a receiver of Nantes.[\[15\]](#) Valeton came often to Paris, the two chief attractions being the pleasure of conversing with Du Bourg, and the chance of picking up some writing or other of the Reformers. He might be seen in the quarter of the booksellers, searching their collections; and, having found what he wanted, he would eagerly buy it, carry it home under his cloak, and locking the door of his apartment, he would begin eagerly to read. His literary wares were deposited at the bottom of a large chest, the key of which he carried always on his person.[\[16\]](#) He was timid as yet, but he became more courageous afterwards.

Another member of this little Protestant band was Le Compte, a disciple as well as fellow-townsmen of the doctor of Etaples, Lefevre. He had a knowledge of Hebrew, and to his power of reading the Scriptures in the original, he added a talent for exposition, which made him in no small measure useful in building up the little Church. The membership of that Church was farther diversified by the presence of a dark-visaged man, of considerable fame, but around whom there seemed ever to hover an air of mystery. This was Giulio Camillo, a native of Italy, whom Francis I. had invited to Paris. The Italian made trial of all knowledge, and he had dipped, amongst other studies, into the cabalistic science; and hence, it may be, the look of mystery which he wore, and which struck awe into those who approached him. Hearing of the new opinions, on his arrival in France, he must needs know what they were. He joined himself to the Protestants, and professed to love their doctrine; but it is to be feared that he was drawn to the

Gospel as to any other new thing, for when the time came when it was necessary to bear stronger testimony to it than by words, Camillo was not found amongst its confessors.

Humbler in rank than any of the foregoing was Henry Poille, also a member of the infant Church of Paris. Poille was a bricklayer, from the neighborhood of Meaux. Around him there hung no veil, for he had not meddled with the dark sciences; it was enough, he accounted it, to know the Gospel. He could not bring to it what he did not possess, riches and renown; but he brought it something that recommended it even more, an undivided heart, and a steadfast courage; and when the day of trial came, and others fled with their learning and their titles, and left the Gospel to shift for itself, Poille stood firmly by it. He had learned the truth from Briconnet; but, following a Greater as his Captain, when the bishop went back, the bricklayer went forward, though he saw before him in the near distance the lurid gleam of the stake.

Besides these humble men the Gospel had made not a few converts in the ranks above them. Even in the Parliament there were senators who had embraced at heart that very Lutheranism against which that body had now recorded the punishment of death; but the fear of an irate priesthood restrained them from the open confession of it. Nay, even of the priests and monks there were some who had been won by the Gospel, and who loved the Savior. Professors in the university, teachers in the schools, lawyers, merchants, tradesmen – in short, men of every rank, and of all professions – swelled the number of those who had abjured the faith of Rome and ranged themselves, more or less openly, on the side of the Reformation. But the most part now gathered round the Protestant standard were from the humbler classes. Their contemporaries knew them not, at least till they saw them at the stake, and learned, with some little wonder and surprise, what heroic though misguided men, as they thought them, had been living amongst them unknown; and, as regards ourselves, we should never have heard their

names, or learned aught of their history, but for the light which the Gospel sheds upon them. It was that alone which brought these humble men into view, and made them the heirs of an immortality of fame even on earth; for so long as the Church shall exist, and her martyr-records continue to be read, their names, and the services they did, will be mentioned with honor.

Living at the house of La Forge, such were the men with whom Calvin came into almost daily contact. But not these only: others of a different stamp, whose inspiration and sentiments were drawn from another source than the Scriptures, did the future Reformer occasionally meet at the table of his host. The avowal of pantheistic and atheistic doctrines would, at times, drop from the mouths of these suspicious-looking strangers, and startle Calvin not a little. It seemed strange that the still dawn of the evangelic day should be deformed by these lurid flashes; yet so it was.[[17](#)]

The sure forecast of Calvin divined the storms with which the future of Christendom was pregnant, unless the Gospel should anticipate and prevent their outburst. We have already said that from the days of Abelard the seeds of communistic pantheism had begun to be scattered in Europe, and more especially in France. During the cold and darkness of the centuries that followed Abelard's time, these seeds had lain silently in the frozen soil, but now the warm spring-time of the sixteenth century was bringing them above the surface. The tares were springing up as well as the wheat. The quick eye of Calvin detected, at that early stage, the difference between the two growths, and the different fruits that posterity would gather from them. He heard men who had stolen to La Forge's table under color of being favorers of the new age, avow it as their belief that all things were God – themselves, the universe, all was God – and he heard them on that dismal ground claim an equally dismal immunity from all accountability for their actions, however wicked.[[18](#)] From

that time Calvin set himself to resist these frightful doctrines, not less energetically than the errors of Rome. He felt that there was no salvation for Christendom save by the Gospel; and he toiled yet more earnestly to erect this great and only breakwater. If, unhappily, others would not permit him, and if as a consequence the deluge has broken in, and some countries have been partially overflowed, and others wholly so, it is not Calvin who is to blame.

In the meantime Calvin quitted Paris, probably in the end of July, 1534. It is possible that he felt the air thick with impending tempest. But it was not fear that made him depart; his spirit was weighed down, for almost every door of labor was closed meanwhile; he could not evangelise, save at the risk of a stake, and yet he had no leisure to read and meditate from the numbers of persons who were desirous to see and converse with him. He resolved to leave France and go to Germany, where he hoped to find "some shady nook,"[[19](#)] in which he might enjoy the quiet denied him in the capital of his native land. Setting out on horseback, accompanied by Du Tillet, the two travelers reached Strasburg in safety. His departure was of God; for hardly was he gone when the sky of France was overcast, and tempest came. Had Calvin been in Paris when the storm burst, he would most certainly have been numbered among its victims. But it was not the will of God that his career should end at this time and in this fashion.

Humbler men were taken who could not, even had their lives been spared, have effected great things for the Reformation. Calvin, who was to spread the light over the earth, was left. He served the cause of the Gospel by living, they by dying.

CHAPTER 19 [Back to Top](#) THE NIGHT OF THE PLACARDS.

Inconstancy of Francis – Two Parties in the young French Church: the Temporisers and the Scripturalists – The Policy advocated by each – Their Differences submitted to Farel – The Judgment of the Swiss Pastors – The Placard – Terrific

Denunciation of the Mass – Return of the Messenger – Shall the Placards be Published? – Two Opinions – Majority for Publication – The Kingdom Placarded in One Night – The Morning – Surprise and Horror – Placard on the Door of the Royal Bed-chamber – Wrath of the King. WE stand now on the threshold of an era of martyrdoms. Francis I. had not hitherto been able to come to a decision on the important question of religion. This hour he turned to the Reformation in the hope that, should he put himself at its head, it would raise him to the supremacy of Europe; the next he turned away in disgust, offended by the holiness of the Gospel, or alarmed at the independence of the Reform. But an incident was about to take place, destined to put an end to the royal vacillation.

There were two parties in the young Church of France; the one was styled the Temporisers, the other the Scripturalists. Both parties were sincerely devoted to the Scriptural Reform of their native land, but in seeking to promote that great end the one party was more disposed to fix its eyes on men in power, and follow as they might lead, than the other thought it either dutiful or safe. The monarch, said the first party, is growing every day more favorable to the Reformation; he is at no pains to conceal the contempt he entertains, on the one hand, for the monks, and the favor he bears, on the other, to men of letters and progress. Is not his minister, Du Bellay, negotiating a league with the Protestants of Germany, and have not these negotiations already borne fruit in the restoration of Duke Christopher to his dominions, and in an accession of political strength to the Reform? Besides, what do we see in the Louvre? Councils assembling under the presidency of the king to discuss the question of the union of Christendom. Let us leave this great affair in hands so well able to guide it to a prosperous issue. We shall but spoil all by obtruding our counsel, or obstinately insisting on having our own way.

The other party in the young Protestant Church were but little disposed to shape their policy by the wishes and maxims of the

court. They did not believe that a monarch so dissolute in his manners, and so inconstant in his humors, would labor sincerely and steadfastly for a Reform of religion. To embrace the Pope this hour and the German Protestants the next, to consign a Romanist to the Conciergerie to-day and burn a Lutheran to-morrow, was no proof of impartiality, but of levity and passion. They built no hopes on the conferences at the Louvre. The attempt to unite the Reformation and the Pope could end only in the destruction of the Gospel.

The years were gliding away; the Reformation of France tarried; they would wait no longer on man. A policy bolder in tone, and more thoroughly based on principle, alone could lead, they thought, to the overthrow of the Papacy in France.

Divided among themselves, it was natural that the Protestants should turn their eyes outside of France for counsel that would unite them. Among the Reformers easily accessible, there was no name that carried with it more authority than that of Farel. He was a Frenchman; he understood, it was to be supposed, the situation better than any other, and he could not but feel the deepest interest in a work which he himself, along with Lefevre, had commenced. To Farel they resolved to submit the question that divided them.

They found a humble Christian, Feret by name, willing to be their messenger.^[1] He departed, and arriving in Switzerland, now the scene of Farel's labors, he found himself in a new world. In all the towns and villages the altars were being demolished, the idols cast down, and the Reformed worship was in course of being set up. How different the air, the messenger could not but remark, within the summits of the Jura, from that within the walls of Paris. It required no great forecast to tell what the answer of the Swiss Reformers would be. They assembled, heard the messenger, and gave their voices that the Protestants of France should halt no longer; that they should boldly advance; and that they should notify their forward movement by a vigorous blow at that which was

the citadel of the Papal Empire of bondage – the root of that evil tree that overshadowed Christendom – the mass.

But the bolt had to be forged in Switzerland. It was to take the form of a tract or placard denunciatory of that institution which it was proposed by this one terrible blow to lay in the dust. But who shall write it? Farel has been commonly credited with the authorship; and the trenchant eloquence and burning scorn which breathe in the placard, Farel alone, it has been supposed, could have communicated to it.^[2] It was no logical thesis, no dogmatic refutation; it was a torrent of scathing fire; a thunderburst, terrific and grand, resembling one of those tempests that gather in awful darkness on the summits of those mountains amid which the document was written, and finally explode in flashes which irradiate the whole heavens, and in volleys of sound which shake the plains over which the awful reverberations are rolled.

The paper was headed, “True Articles on the horrible, great, and intolerable Abuses of the Popish Mass; invented in direct opposition to the Holy Supper of our Lord and only Mediator and Savior Jesus Christ.” It begins by taking “heaven and earth to witness against the mass, because the world is and will be by it totally desolated, ruined, lost, and undone, seeing that in it our Lord is outrageously blasphemed, and the people blinded and led astray.” After citing the testimony of Scripture, the belief of the Fathers, and the evidence of the senses against the dogma, the author goes on to assail with merciless and, judged by modern taste, coarse sarcasm the ceremonies which accompany its celebration.

“What mean all these games?” he asks; “you play around your god of dough, toying with him like a cat with a mouse. You break him into three pieces... and then you put on a piteous look, as if you were very sorrowful; you beat your breasts... you call him the Lamb of God, and pray to him for peace. St. John showed Jesus Christ ever present, ever living, living all

in one – an adorable truth! but you show your wafer divided into pieces, and then you eat it, calling for something to drink.”

The writer asks “these cope-wearers” where they find “this big word TRANSUBSTANTIATION?” Certainly, he says, not in the Bible. The inspired writers “called the bread and wine, bread and wine.” “St. Paul does not say, Eat the body of Jesus Christ; but, Eat this bread.” “Yes, kindle your faggots,” but let it be for the true profaners of the body of Christ, for those who place it in a bit of dough, “the food it may be of spiders or of mice.” And what, the writer asks, has the fruit of the mass been? “By it:” he answers, “the preaching of the Gospel is prevented. The time is occupied with bell-ringing, howling, chanting, empty ceremonies, candles, incense, disguises, and all manner of conjuration. And the poor world, looked upon as a lamb or as a sheep, is miserably deceived, cajoled, led astray – what do I say? – bitten, gnawed, and devoured as if by ravening wolves.”

The author winds up with a torrent of invective directed against Popes, cardinals, bishops, and monks, thus: – “Truth is wanting to them, truth terrifies them, and by truth will their reign be destroyed for ever.”

Written in Switzerland, where every sight and sound – the snowy peak, the gushing torrent, the majestic lake – speak of liberty and inspire courageous thoughts, and with the crash of the falling altars of an idolatrous faith in the ears of the writer, these words did not seem too bold, nor the denunciations too fierce. But the author who wrote, and the other pastors who approved, did not sufficiently consider that this terrible manifesto was not to be published in Switzerland, but in France, where a powerful court and a haughty priesthood were united to combat the Reformation. It might have been foreseen that a publication breathing a defiance so fierce, and a hatred so mortal, could have but one of two results: it would carry the convictions of men by

storm, and make the nation abhor and renounce the abomination it painted in colors so frightful, and stigmatized in words so burning, or if it failed in this – and the likelihood was that it would fail – it must needs evoke such a tempest of wrath as would go near to sweep the Protestant Church from the soil of France altogether.

The document was printed in two forms, with a view to its being universally circulated. There were placards to be posted up on the walls of towns, and on the posts along the highway, and there were small slips to be scattered in the streets. This light was not to be put under a bushel; it was to flash the same day all over France. The bales of printed matter were ready, and Feret now set out on his return. As he held his quiet way through the lovely mountains of the Jura, which look down with an air so tranquil on the fertile plains of Burgundy, no one could have suspected what a tempest traveled with him. He seemed the dove of peace, not the petrel of storm. He arrived in Paris without question from any one.

Immediately on his arrival the members of the little Church were convened; the paper was opened and read; but the assembly was divided. There were Christians present who were not lacking in courage – nay, were ready to go to the stake – but who, nevertheless, shrunk from the responsibility of publishing a fulmination like this. France was not Switzerland, and what might be listened to with acquiescence beyond the Jura, might, when read at the foot of the throne of Francis I., bring on such a convulsion as would shake the nation, and bury the Reformed Church in its own ruins. Gentler words, they thought, would go deeper.

But the majority were not of this mind. They were impatient of delay. France was lagging behind Germany, Switzerland, and other countries. Moreover, they feared the councils now proceeding at the Louvre. They had as their object, they knew, to unite the Pope and the Reformation, and they were in haste to launch this bolt, “forged on Farel’s anvil,” before so

unhallowed a union should be consummated. In this assembly now met to deliberate about the placard were Du Bourg and Millon, and most of the disciples whom we have mentioned in our former chapter. These gave their voices that the paper should be published, and in this resolution the majority concurred.

The next step was to make arrangements to secure, if possible, that this manifesto should meet the eye of every man in France. The kingdom was divided into districts, and persons were told off who were to undertake the hazardous work of posting up, each in the quarter assigned him, this placard – the blast, it was hoped, before which the walls of the Papal Jericho in France would fall. A night was selected; for clearly the work could be done only under cover of the darkness, and equally clear was it that it must be done in one and the same night all over France. The night fixed on was that of the 24th October, 1534. [3]

The eventful night came. Before the morning should break, this trumpet must be blown all over France. As soon as the dusk had deepened into something like darkness the distributors sallied forth; and gliding noiselessly from street to street, and from lane to lane, they posted up the terrible placards. They displayed them on the walls of the Louvre, at the gates of the Sorbonne, and on the doors of the churches. What was being done in Paris was at the same instant being transacted in all the chief towns – nay, even in the rural parts and highways of the kingdom. France had suddenly become like the roll of the prophet. An invisible finger had, from side to side, covered it with a terrible writing – with prophetic denunciations of woe and ruin unless it repented in sackcloth and turned from the mass.

When morning broke, men awoke in city and village, and came forth at the doors of their houses to see this mysterious placard staring them in the face. Little groups began to gather round each paper. These groups speedily swelled into crowds, comprising every class, lay and cleric. A few read

with approbation, the most with amazement, some with horror. The paper appeared to them an outpouring of blasphemous sentiment, and they trembled lest it should draw down upon the people of France some sudden and terrible stroke. Others were transported with rage, seeing in it an open defiance to the Church, and an expression of measureless contempt at all that was held sacred by the nation. Frightful rumors began to circulate among the masses. The Lutherans, it was said, had concocted a terrible conspiracy, they were going to set fire to the churches, and burn and massacre every one.[4] The priests, though professing of course horror at the placards, were in reality not greatly displeased at what had occurred. For some time they had been waiting for a pretext to deal a blow at the Protestant cause, and now a weapon such as they wished for had been put into their hands.

The king at the time was living at the Castle of Amboise. At an early hour Montmorency and the Cardinal de Tournon knocked at his closet door to tell him of the dreadful event of the night. As they were about to enter their eye caught sight of a paper posted up on the door of the royal cabinet. It was the placard put there by some indiscreet Protestant, or, as is more generally supposed, by some hostile hand. Montmorency and Tournon tore it down, and carried it in to the king.[5] The king grasped the paper. Its heading, and the audacity shown in posting it on the door of his private apartment, so agitated Francis that he was unable to read it. He handed it again to his courtiers, who read it to him. He stood pallid and speechless a little while; but at length his wrath found vent in terrible words: "Let all be seized, and let Lutheranism be totally exterminated!"[6]

CHAPTER 20 [Back to Top](#) MARTYRS AND EXILES.

Plan of Morin. – The Betrayer – Procession of Corpus Christi – Terror of Paris – Imprisonment of the Protestants – Atrocious Designs attributed to them – Nemesis – Sentence of the Disciples – Execution of Bartholomew Millon – Burning of Du

Bourg – Death of Poille – His Tortures – General Terror – Flight of Numbers – Refugees of Rank – Queen of Navarre – Her Preachers – All Ranks Flee – What France might have been, had she retained these Men – Prodigious Folly. NOW it was that the storm burst. The king wrote summoning the Parliament to meet, and execute strict justice: in the affair, he further commanded his lieutenant-criminal, Jean Morin, to use expedition in discovering and bringing to justice all in any way suspected of having been concerned in the business.[1] Morin, a man of profligate life, audacious, a thorough hater of the Protestants, and skilfill in laying traps to catch them, needed not the increase of pay which the king promised him to stimulate his zeal. A few moments thought and he saw how the thing was to be done. He knew the man whose office it was to convene the Protestants when a reunion was to be held, and he had this man, who was a sheath-maker by trade, instantly apprehended and brought before him. The lieutenant-criminal told the poor sheath-maker he was perfectly aware that he knew every Lutheran in Paris, and that he must make ready and conduct him to their doors. The man shrunk from the baseness demanded of him. Morin coolly bade an attendant prepare a scaffold, and turning to his prisoner gave him his choice of being burned alive, or of pointing out to him the abodes of his brethren. Terrified by the horrible threat, which was about to be put in instant execution, the poor man became the betrayer.[2] The lieutenant-criminal now hoped at one throw of his net to enclose all the Lutherans in Paris.

Under pretense of doing expiation for the affront which had been put upon the “Holy Sacrament,” Morin arranged a procession of the Corpus Christi.[3] The houses in the line of the procession were draped in black, and with slow and solemn pace friar and priest passed along bearing the Host, followed by a crowd of incense-bearers and hymning choristers. The excitement thus awakened favored the plans of the lieutenant-criminal. He glided through the streets, attended by his serjeants and officers. The traitor walked before him. When he

came opposite the door of any of his former brethren the sheath-maker stopped and, without saying a word, made a sign. The officers entered the house, and the family were dragged forth and led away manacled. Alas, what a cruel as well as infamous task had this man imposed upon himself! Had he been walking to the scaffold, his joy would have grown at every step. As it was, every new door he stopped at, and every fresh victim that swelled the procession which he headed, bowed lower his head in shame, and augmented that pallor of the face which told of the deep remorse preying at his heart.

Onwards went the procession, visiting all the quarters of Paris, the crowd of onlookers continually increasing, as did also the mournful train of victims which Morin and the traitor, as they passed along, gathered up for the stake. The tidings that the lieutenant-criminal was abroad spread over the city like wild-fire. "Morin made all the city quake." [4] This was the first day of the "Reign of Terror." Anguish of spirit preceded the march of Morin and his agents; for no one could tell at whose door he might stop. Men of letters trembled as well as the Protestants. If fear marched before Morin, lamentation and cries of woe echoed in his rear.

The disciples we have already spoken of – Du Bourg, the merchant; Bartholomew Millon, the paralytic; Valetton, who was ever inquiring after the writings of the Reformers; Poille, the bricklayer – and others of higher rank, among whom were Roussel and Courault and Berthaud, the Queen of Navarre's preachers, were all taken in the net of the lieutenant-criminal, and drafted off to prison. Morin made no distinction among those suspected: his rage fell equally on those who had opposed and on those who had favored the posting up of the placards. Persons of both sexes, and of various nationalities, were indeed among the multitude now lodged in prison, to be, as the lieutenant-criminal designed, at no distant day produced on the scaffold, a holocaust to the offended manes of Rome. 359

The Parliament, the Sorbonne, and the priests were resolved to turn the crisis to the utmost advantage. They must put an end to the king's communings with German and English heretics; they must stamp out Lutheranism in Paris; a rare chance had the untoward zeal of the converts thrown into their power for doing so. They must take care that the king's anger did not cool; they must not be sparing in the matter of stakes; every scaffold would be a holy altar, every victim a grateful sacrifice, to purify a land doubly polluted by the blasphemous placard. Above all, they must maintain the popular indignation at a white heat. The most alarming rumors began to circulate through Paris. To the Lutherans were attributed the most atrocious designs. They had conspired, it was said, to fire all the public buildings, and massacre all the Catholics. They were accused of seeking to compass the death of the king, the overthrow of the monarchy, and the destruction of society itself. They meant to leave France a desert. So it was whispered, and these terrible rumors were greedily listened to, and the mob shouted, "Death, death to the heretics!"[5]

With reference to these charges that were now industriously circulated against the Protestants of Paris, there was not a Lutheran who ever meditated such wickedness as this. Not a fragment of proof of such designs has ever been produced. Well; three hundred years pass away, and Protestantism is all but suppressed in France. What happens? Is the nation tranquil, and the throne stable? On the contrary, from out the darkness there stands up a terrible society, which boldly avows it as its mission to inflict on France those same atrocious designs which the disciples of the Gospel had been falsely accused of entertaining. The bugbear of that day, conjured up by hypocrisy and bigotry, has become the menace of ours. We have seen the throne overturned, the blood of nobles and priests shed like water, the public monuments sinking in ashes, the incendiary's torch and the assassin's sword carrying terror from end to end of France, and society saved only by the assertion of the soberer sense of the people.

The several stages of the awful drama we are narrating followed each other in quick succession. On the 10th November, just a fortnight after their apprehension, were Millon, Du Bourg, Poille, and the rest brought forth and presented before their judges. For them there could be no other sentence than death, and that death could come in no other form than the terrible one of burning. Nor had they long to wait. Three short days and then the executions began! The scaffolds were distributed over all the quarters of Paris, and the burnings followed on successive days, the design being to spread the terror of heresy by spreading the executions. The advantage however, in the end, remained with the Gospel. All Paris was enabled to see what kind of men the new opinions could produce. There is no pulpit like the martyr's pile. The serene joy that lighted up the faces of these men as they passed along, in their wretched tumbril, to the place of execution, their heroism as they stood amid the bitter flames, their meek forgiveness of injuries, transformed, in instances not a few, anger into pity, and hate into love, and pleaded with resistless eloquence in behalf of the Gospel.

Of this little band, the first to tread the road from the prison to the stake, and from the stake to the crown, was Bartholomew Millon. The persecutor, in selecting the poor paralytic for the first victim, hoped perhaps to throw an air of derision over the martyrs and their cause. It was as if he had said, Here is a specimen of the miserable creatures who are disturbing the nation by their new opinions: men as deformed in body as in mind. But he had miscalculated. The dwarfed and distorted form of Millon but brought out in bold relief his magnanimity of soul, The turnkey, when he entered his cell, lifted him up in his arms and placed him in the tumbril. On his way to the place of execution he passed his father's door. He bade adieu with a smile to his earthly abode, as one who felt himself standing at the threshold of his heavenly home. A slow fire awaited him at the Greve, and the officer in command bade the fire be lowered still more,

but he bore the lingering tortures of this mode of death with a courage so admirable that the Gospel had no reason to be ashamed of its martyr. None but words of peace dropped from his lips. Even the enemies who stood around his pile could not withhold their admiration of his constancy.[6]

The following day the wealthy tradesman Du Bourg was brought forth to undergo the same dreadful death. He was known to be a man of decision; and his persecutors set themselves all the more to contrive how they might shake his steadfastness by multiplying the humiliations and tortures to which they doomed him before permitting him to taste of death and depart. The tumbril that bore him was stopped at Notre Dame, and there he was made a gazing-stock to the multitude, as he stood in front of the cathedral, with taper in hand, and a rope round his neck. He was next taken to the Rue St. Denis, in which his own house was situated, and there his hand was cut off – the hand which had been busy on that night of bold but imprudent enterprise. He was finally taken to the Halles and burned alive. Du Bourg in death as in life was still the man of courage; he shrunk from neither the shame nor the suffering, but was “steadfast unto the end.”[7]

Three days passed; it was now the 18th November, and on this day Poille, the bricklayer, was to die. His stake was set up in the Faubourg St. Antoine, in front of the Church of St. Catherine; for it was the inhabitants of this quarter of Paris who were next to be taught to what a dreadful end heresy brings men, and yet with what a glorious hope and unconquerable courage it has the power to inspire them. Poille had learned the Gospel from Bishop Briconnet, but while the master had scandalised it by his weakness, the disciple was to glorify it by his steadfastness. He wore an air of triumph as he alighted from his cart at the place of execution. Cruel, very cruel was his treatment at the stake. “My Lord Jesus Christ,” he said, “reigns in heaven, and I am ready to fight for him to the last drop of my blood.” “This confession of

truth at the moment of punishment," says D'Aubigne, quoting Crespin's description of the martyr's last moments, "exasperated the executioners. 'Wait a bit,' they said, 'we will stop your prating.' They sprang upon him, opened his mouth, caught hold of his tongue, and bored a hole through it; they then, with refined cruelty, made a slit in his cheek, through which they drew the tongue, and fastened it with an iron pin. Some cries were heard from the crowd at this most horrible spectacle; they proceeded from the humble Christians who had come to help the poor bricklayer with their compassionate looks, Poille spoke no more, but his eye still announced the peace; he enjoyed. He was burnt alive." [8]

For some time each succeeding day had its victim. Of these sufferers there were some whose only crime was that they had printed and sold Luther's writings; it was not clear that they had embraced his sentiments; their persecutors deemed them well deserving of the stake for simply having had a hand in circulating them. This indiscriminate vengeance, which dragged to a common pile the Protestants and all on whom the mere suspicion of Protestantism had fallen, spread a general terror in Paris.

Those who had been seen at the Protestant sermons, those who had indulged in a jest at the expense of the monks, but especially those who, in heart, although not confessing it with the mouth, had abandoned Rome and turned to the Gospel, felt as if the eye of the lieutenant-criminal was upon them, and that, at any moment, his step might be heard on their threshold.

Paris was no longer a place for them; every day and every hour they tarried there, it was at the peril of being burned alive. Accordingly, they rose up and fled. It was bitter to leave home and country and all the delights of life, and go forth into exile, but it was less bitter than to surrender their hope of an endless life in the better country; for at no less a cost could they escape a stake in France.

A few days made numerous blanks in the society of Paris. Each blank represented a convert to the Gospel. When men began to look around them and count these gaps, they were amazed to think how many of those among whom they had been living, and with whom they had come into daily contact, were Lutherans, but wholly unknown in that character till this affair brought them to light. Merchants vanished suddenly from their places of business; tradesmen disappeared from their workshops; clerks were missing from the countinghouse; students assembled at the usual hour, but the professor's chair was empty; their teacher, not waiting to bid his pupils adieu, had gone forth, and was hastening towards some more friendly land.

The bands of fugitives now hurrying by various routes, and in various disguises, to the frontiers of the kingdom, embraced all ranks and all occupations. The Lords of Roygnac and Roberval, of Fleuri, in Briere, were among those who were now fleeing their country and the wrath of their sovereign. Men in government offices, and others high at court and near the person of the king, made the first disclosure, by a hasty flight, that they had embraced the Gospel, and that they preferred it to place and emolument. Among these last was the privy purse-bearer of the king. Every hour brought a new surprise to both the friends and the foes of the Gospel. The latter hated it yet more than ever as a mysterious thing, possessing some extraordinary power over the minds of men. They saw with a sort of terror the numbers it had already captivated, and they had uneasy misgivings as to whereunto this affair would grow.

Margaret wept, but the fear in which she stood of her brother made her conceal her tears. Her three preachers – Roussel, Berthaud, and Courault – had been thrown into prison. Should she make supplication for them? Her enemies, she knew, were laboring to inflame the king against her, and bring her to the block. The Constable Montmorency, says Brantôme, told the king that he “must begin at his court and his nearest relations,”

pointing at the Queen of Navarre, "if he had a mind to extirpate the heretics out of his kingdom." [9] Any indiscretion or over-zeal, therefore, might prove fatal to her. Nevertheless, she resolved on braving the king's wrath, if haply she might rescue her friends from the stake. Bigotry had not quite quenched Francis's love for his sister; the lives of her preachers were given her at her request; but, with the exception of one of the three, their services to the Protestant cause ended with the day on which they were let out of prison. Roussel retired to his abbey at Clairac; Berthand resumed his frock and his beads, and died in the cloister; Courault contrived to make his escape, and turning his steps toward Switzerland, he reached Basle, became minister at Orbe, and finally was a fellow-laborer with Calvin at Geneva.

Meanwhile another, and yet another, rose up and fled, till the band of self-confessed and self-expatriated disciples of the Gospel swelled to be between 400 and 500. Goldsmiths, engravers, notably printers and bookbinders, men of all crafts, lawyers, teachers of youth, and even monks and priests were crowding the roads and by-ways of France, fleeing from the persecutor. Some went to Strasburg; some to Basle; and a few placed the Alps between them and their native land. Among these fugitives there is one who deserves special mention – Mathurin Cordier, the venerable schoolmaster, who was the first to detect, and who so largely helped to develop, the wonderful genius of Calvin. Million and Du Bourg and Poille we have seen also depart; but their flight was by another road than that which these fugitives were now treading in weariness and hunger and fear. They had gone whither the persecutor could not follow them.

The men who were now fleeing from France were the first to tread a path which was to be trodden again and again by hundreds of thousands of their countrymen in years to come. During the following two centuries and a half these scenes were renewed at short intervals. Scarcely was there a

generation of Frenchmen during that long period that did not witness the disciples of the Gospel fleeing before the insane fury of the persecutor, and carrying with them the intelligence, the arts, the industry, the order, in which, as a rule, they pre-eminently excelled, to enrich the lands in which they found an asylum. And in proportion as they replenished other countries with these good gifts did they empty their own of them. If all that was now driven away had been retained in France; if, during these 300 years, the industrial skill of the exiles had been cultivating her soil; if, during these 300 years, their artistic bent had been improving her manufactures; if, during these 300 years, their creative genius and analytic power had been enriching her literature and cultivating her science; if their wisdom had been guiding her councils, their bravery fighting her battles, their equity framing her laws, and the religion of the Bible strengthening the intellect and governing the conscience of her people, what a glory would at this day have encompassed France! What a great, prosperous, and happy country – a pattern to the nations – would she have been! But a blind and inexorable bigotry chased from her soil every teacher of virtue, every champion of order, every honest defender of the throne; it said to the men who would have made their country a “renown and glory” in the earth, Choose which you will have, a stake or exile? At last the ruin of the State was complete; there remained no more conscience to be proscribed; no more religion to be dragged to the stake; no more patriotism to be chased into banishment; revolution now entered the morally devastated land, bringing in its train scaffolds and massacres, and once more crowding the roads, and flooding the frontiers of France with herds of miserable exiles; only there was a change of victims.

CHAPTER 21 [Back to Top](#) OTHER AND MORE DREADFUL MARTYRDOMS.

A Great Purgation Resolved on – Preparations – Procession – The Four Mendicants – Relics: the Head of St. Louis; the True

Cross, etc. – Living Dignitaries – The Host – The King on Foot – His Penitence – Of what Sins does he Repent? – The Queen – Ambassadors, Nobles, etc. – Homage of the Citizens – High Mass in Notre Dame – Speech of the King – The Oath of the King – Return of Procession – Apparatus of Torture – Martyrdom of Nicholas Valetton – More Scaffolds and Victims – The King and People's Satisfaction – An Ominous Day in the Calendar of France – The 21st of January. AS yet we have seen only the beginning of the tragedy; its more awful scenes are to follow. Numerous stakes had already been planted in Paris, but these did not slake the vengeance of the persecutor; more victims must be immolated if expiation was to be done for the affront offered to Heaven in the matter of the placards, and more blood shed if the land was to be cleansed from the frightful pollution it had undergone. Such was the talk which the priests held in presence of the king.[\[1\]](#) They reminded him that this was a crisis in France, that he was the eldest son of the Church, that this title it became him to preserve unsullied, and transmit with honor to his posterity, and they urged him to proceed with all due rigour in the performance of those bloody rites by which his throne and kingdom were to be purged. Francis I was but too willing to obey. A grand procession, which was to be graced by bloody interludes, was arranged, and the day on which it was to come off was the 21st of January, 1535. The horrors which will make this day famous to all time were not the doings of the king alone; they were not less the acts of the nation which by its constituted representatives countenanced the ceremonial and put its hand to its cruel and sanguinary work.

The day fixed on arrived. Great crowds from the country began to pour into Paris. In the city great preparations had been made for the spectacle. The houses along the line of march were hung with mourning drapery, and altars rose at intervals where the Host might repose as it was being borne along to its final resting-place on the high altar of Notre Dame. A throng of sight-seers filled the streets. Not only was every inch of

the pavement occupied by human beings, but every door-step had its little group, every window its cluster of faces; even the roofs were black with on-lookers, perched on the beams or hanging on by the chimneys. "There was not," says Simon Fontaine, a chronicler of that day, and a doctor of the Sorbonne, "the smallest piece of wood or stone, jutting out of the walls, on which a spectator was not perched, provided there was but room enough, and one might have fancied the streets were paved with human heads." [2] Though it was day, a lighted taper was stuck in the front of every house "to do reverence to the blessed Sacrament and the holy relics." [3]

At the early hour of six the procession marshalled at the Louvre. First came the banners and crosses of the several parishes; next appeared the citizens, walking two and two, and bearing torches in their hands. The four Mendicant orders followed; the Dominican in his white woollen gown and black cloak; the Franciscan in his gown of coarse brown cloth, half-shod feet, and truncated cowl covering his shorn head; the Capuchin in his funnel-shaped cowl, and patched brown cloak, girded with a white three-knotted rope; and the Augustine with a little round hat on his shaven head, and wide black gown girded on the loins with a broad sash. After the monks walked the priests and canons of the city.

The next part of the procession evoked, in no ordinary degree, the interest and the awe of the spectators. On no former occasion had so many relics been paraded on the streets of Paris. [4] In the van of the procession was carried the head of St. Louis, the patron saint of France. There followed a bit of the true cross, the real crown of thorns, one of the nails, the swaddling clothes in which Christ lay, the purple robe in which he was attired, the towel with which he girded himself at the last supper, and the spear-head that pierced his side. Many saints of former times had sent each a bit of himself to grace the procession, and nourish the devotion of the on-lookers – some an arm, some a tooth, some a finger, and others

one of the many heads which, as it would seem, each had worn in his lifetime. This goodly array of saintly relics was closed by the shrine of Genevieve, the patron saint of Paris, borne by the corporation of butchers, who had prepared themselves for this holy work by the purification of a three days' fast.[5]

After the dead members of the Church, whose relics were enshrined in silver and gold, came a crowd of living dignitaries, in their robes and the insignia of their ecclesiastical rank. Cardinal and abbot, archbishop and bishop were there, in the glory of scarlet hat and purple gown, of cope and mitre and crozier. Now came the heart of this grand show, the Host; and in it the spectators saw One mightier than any dead saint or living dignitary in all that great procession. The Host was carried by the Bishop of Paris under a magnificent canopy, the four pillars of which were supported by four princes of the blood – the three sons of the king, and the Duke of Vendôme.

After the Host walked the king. The severe plainness of his dress was in marked and studied contrast to the magnificence of the robes in which the ecclesiastics that preceded and the civic functionaries that followed him were arrayed. Francis I. on that day wore no crown, nor robe of state, nor was he borne along in chariot or litter. He appeared walking on foot, his head uncovered, his eyes cast on the ground, and in his hand a lighted taper.[6] The king was there in the character of a penitent. He was the chief mourner in that great national act of humiliation and repentance. He mourned with head bowed and eyes cast down, but with heart unbroken.

For what did Francis I., monarch of France, do penance? For the debaucheries that defiled his palace? for the righteous blood that stained the streets of his capital? for the violated oaths by which he had attempted to overreach those who trusted him at home, and those who were transacting with him abroad? No; these were venial offenses; they were not

worth a thought on the part of the monarch. The King of France did penance for the all but inexpiable crime of his Protestant subjects in daring to attack the mass, and publish in the face of all France their Protest against its blasphemy and idolatry.

The end of the procession was not yet; it still swept on; at slow pace, and in mournful silence, save when some penitential chant rose upon the air. Behind the king walked the queen; she was followed by all the members of the court, by the ambassadors of foreign sovereigns, by the nobles of the realm, by the members of Parliament in their scarlet robes, by judges, officers, and the guilds of the various trades, each with the symbol of penitence in his hand, a lighted candle. The military guard could with difficulty keep open the way for the procession through the dense crowd, which pressed forward to touch some holy relic or kiss some image of saint. They lined the whole route taken by the processionists, and did homage on bended knee to the Host as it passed them.[\[7\]](#)

The long procession rolled in at the gates of Notre Dame. The Host, which had been carried thither with so much solemnity, was placed on the high altar; and a solemn mass proceeded in the presence of perhaps a more brilliant assemblage than had ever before been gathered into even the great national temple of France. When the ceremony was concluded the king returned to the bishop's palace, where he dined. After dinner he adjourned with the whole assembly to the great hall, where he ascended a throne which had been fitted up for the occasion. It was understood that the king was to pronounce an oration, and the assembly kept silence, eager to hear what so august a speaker, on so great an occasion, would say.

The king presented himself to his subjects with a sorrowful countenance; nor is it necessary to suppose that that sorrow was feigned. The affair of the placards threatened to embroil him with both friend and foe; it had crossed his political projects; and we can believe, moreover, that it had shocked

his feelings and beliefs as a Roman Catholic; for there is little ground to think that Francis had begun to love the Gospel, and the looks of sadness in which he showed himself to his subjects were not wholly counterfeited.

The speech which Francis I. delivered on this occasion – and several reports of it have come down to us – was touching and eloquent. He dwelt on the many favors Providence had conferred on France; her enemies had felt the weight of her sword; her friends had had good cause to rejoice in her alliance; even when punished for her faults great mercy had been mingled with the chastisement; above all, what an honor that France should have been enabled to persevere these long centuries in the path of the Holy Catholic faith, and had so nobly worn her glorious title the “Most Christian.” But now, continued the king, she that has been preserved hitherto from straying so little, seems on the point of a fatal plunge into heresy; her soil has begun to produce monsters; “God has been attacked in the Holy Sacrament,” France has been dishonored in the eyes of other nations, and the cloud of the Divine displeasure is darkening over her. “Oh, the crime, the blasphemy, the day of sorrow and disgrace! Oh, that it had never dawned upon us!”

These moving words drew tears from nearly all present, says the chronicler who reports the scene, and who was probably an eye-witness of it.[\[8\]](#) Sobs and sighs burst from the assembly. After a pause the king resumed: “What a disgrace it will be if we do not extirpate these wicked creatures! If you know any person infected by this perverse sect, be he your parent, brother, cousin, or connection, give information against him. By concealing his misdeeds you will be partakers of that pestilent faction.” The assembly, says the chronicle, gave numerous signs of assent.

“I give thanks to God,” he resumed, “that the greatest, the most learned, and undoubtedly the majority of my subjects, and especially in this good city of Paris, are full of zeal for the Catholic religion.” Then, says the chronicle, you might

have seen the faces of the spectators change in appearance, and give signs of joy; acclamations prevented the sighs, and sighs choked the acclamations. "I warn you," continued the king, "that I will have the said errors expelled and driven from my kingdom, and will excuse no one." Then he exclaimed, says our historian, with extreme anger, "As true, Messieurs, as I am your king, if I knew one of my own limbs spotted or infected with this detestable rottenness, I would give it you to cut off. . . . And farther, if I saw one of my children defiled by it, I would not spare him... I would deliver him up myself, and would sacrifice, him to God."[9]

The king was so agitated that he was unable to proceed; he burst into tears. The assembly wept with him. The Bishop of Paris and the provost of the merchants now approached the monarch, and kneeling before him swore, the first in the name of the clergy, and the second in that of the citizens, to make war against heresy. "Thereupon all the spectators exclaimed, with voices broken by sobbing, 'We will live and die for the Catholic religion!'"[10]

Having sworn this oath in Notre Dame – the roof under which, nearly three centuries after, the Goddess of Reason sat enthroned – the assembly reformed and set forth to begin the war that very hour. Their zeal for the "faith" was inflamed to the utmost; but they were all the better prepared to witness the dreadful sights that awaited them. A terrible programme had been sketched out; horrors were to mark every step of the way back to the Louvre, but Francis and his courtiers were to gaze with pitiless eye and heart on these horrors.

The procession in returning made a circuit by the Church of Genevieve, where now stands the Pantheon. At short distances scaffolds had been erected on which certain Protestant Christians were to be burned alive, and it was arranged that the faggots should be lighted at the moment the king approached, and that the procession should halt to witness the execution.

The men set apart to death were first to undergo prolonged and excruciating tortures, and for this end a most ingenious but cruel apparatus had been devised, which let us describe. First rose an upright beam, firmly planted in the ground; to that another beam was attached crosswise, and worked by a pulley and string. The martyr was fastened to one end of the movable beam by his hands, which were tied behind his back, and then he was raised in the air. He was next let down into the slow fire underneath. After a minute or two's broiling he was raised again, and a second time let drop into the fire; and thus was he raised and lowered till the ropes that fastened him to the pole were consumed, and he fell amid the burning coals, where he lay till he gave up the ghost.[11] "The custom in France," says Sleidan,[12] describing these cruel tragedies; "is to put malefactors to death in the afternoon; where first silence is cried, and then the crimes for which they suffer are repeated aloud. But when any one is executed for Lutheranism, as they call it – that is, if any person hath disputed for justification by faith, not by works, that the saints are not to be invoked, that Christ is the only Priest and Intercessor for mankind; or if a man has happened to eat flesh upon forbidden days; not a syllable of all this is published, but in general they cry that he hath renounced God Almighty . . . and violated the decrees of our common mother, Holy Church. This aggravating way makes the vulgar believe such persons the most profligate wretches under the cope of heaven; insomuch that when they are broiling in the flame, it is usual for the people to storm at them, cursing them in the height of their torments, as if they were not worthy to tread upon the earth."

The first to be brought forth was Nicholas Valetton, the Christian whom we have already mentioned as frequently to be seen searching the innermost recesses and nooks of the booksellers' shops in quest of the writings of the Reformers. The priests offered him a pardon provided he would recant. "My faith," he replied, "has a confidence in God, which will

resist all the powers of hell.[13] He was dealt with as we have already described; tied to the beam, he was alternately raised in the air and lowered into the flames, till the cords giving way, there came an end to his agonies.

Other two martyrs were brought forward, and three times, was this cruel sport enacted, the king and all the members of the procession standing by the while, and feasting their eyes on the torments of the sufferers. The King of France, like the Roman tyrant, wished that his victims should feel themselves die.

This was on the road between the Church of Genevieve and the Louvre. The scene of this tragedy, therefore, could not be very far from the spot where, somewhat more than 250 years after, the scaffold was set up for Louis XVI., and 2,800 other victims of the Revolution. The spectacles of the day were not yet closed. On the line of march the lieutenant-criminal had prepared other scaffolds, where the cruel apparatus of death stood waiting its prey; and before the procession reached the Louvre, there were more halts, more victims, more expiations; and when Francis I. re-entered his palace and reviewed his day's work, he was well pleased to think that he had made propitiation for the affront offered to God in the Sacrament, and that the cloud of vengeance which had lowered above his throne and his kingdom was rolled away. The priests declared that the triumph of the Church in France was now for ever secured; and if any there were among the spectators whom these cruel deaths had touched with pity, by neither word nor sign dared they avow it. The populace of the capital were overjoyed; they had tasted of blood and were not soon to forego their relish for it,[14] nor to care much in after-times at whose expense they gratified it.

As there are events so like to one another in their outward guise that they seem to be the same repeated, so there are days that appear to return over again, inasmuch as they come laden with the same good or evil fortune to which they had as

it were been consecrated. Every nation has such days.

The 21st of January is a noted and ominous day in the calendar of France. Twice has that day summoned up spectacles of horror; twice has it seen deeds enacted which have made France and the world shudder; and twice has it inaugurated an era of woes and tragedies which stand without a parallel in history. The first 21st of January is that whose tragic scenes we have just described, and which opened an era that ran on till the close of the eighteenth century, during which the disciples of the Gospel in France were pining in dungeons and in the galleys, were enduring captivity and famine, were expiring amid the flames or dying on the field of battle.

The second notable 21st of January came round in 1793. This day had, too, its procession through the streets of Paris; again the king was the chief figure; again there were tumult and shouting; again there was heard the cry for more victims; again there were black scaffolds; and again the scenes of the day were closed by horrid executions; Louis XVI., struggling hand to hand with his jailers and executioners was dragged forward to the block, and there held down by main force till the axe had fallen, and his dissevered head rolled on the scaffold.

Have we not witnessed a third dismal 21st of January in France? It is the winter of 1870-71. Four months has Paris suffered siege; the famine is sore in the city; the food of man has disappeared from her luxurious tables; her inhabitants ravenously devour unclean and abominable things – the vermin of the sewers, the putrid carcasses of the streets. Within the city, the inhabitants are pining away with cold and hunger and disease; without, the sword of a victorious foe awaits them. Paris will rouse herself, and break through the circle of fire and steel that hems her in. The attempt is made, but fails. Her soldiers are driven back before the victorious German, and again are cooped up within her miserable walls. On the 21st of January, 1871, it was resolved to capitulate to the

conqueror. [[15](#)]

CHAPTER 22 [Back to Top](#) BASLE AND THE “INSTITUTES.”

Glory of the Sufferers – Francis I. again turns to the German Protestants – They Shrink back – His Doublings – New Persecuting Edicts – Departure of the Queen of Navarre from Paris – New Day to Bearn – Calvin – Strasburg – Calvin arrives there – Bucer, Capito, etc. – Calvin Dislikes their Narrowness – Goes on to Basle – Basle – Its Situation and Environs – Soothing Effect on Calvin’s Mind – His Interview with Erasmus – Erasmus “Lays the Egg” – Terrified at what Comes of it – Draws back – Calvin’s Enthusiasm – Erasmus’ Prophecy – Catherine Klein – First Sketch of the Institutes—What led Calvin to undertake the Work – Its Sublimity, but Onerousness. WE described in our last chapter the explosion that followed the publication of the manifesto against the mass. In one and the same night it was placarded over great part of France, and when the morning broke, and men came forth and read it, there were consternation and anger throughout the kingdom. It proclaimed only the truth, but it was truth before its time in France. It was a bolt flung at the mass and its believers, which might silence and crush them, but if it failed to do this it would rouse them into fury, and provoke a terrible retaliation. It did the latter. The throne and the whole kingdom had been polluted; the Holy Sacrament blasphemed; the land was in danger of being smitten with terrible woes, and so a public atonement was decreed for the public offense which had been offered. Not otherwise, it pleased the king, his prelates, and his nobles to think, could France escape the wrath of the Most High.

The terrible rites of the day of expiation we have already chronicled. Was the God that France worshipped some inexorable and remorseless deity, seeing she propitiated him with human sacrifices? The tapers carried that day by the penitents who swept in long procession through the streets of the capital, blended their lights with the lurid glare of the fires in

which the Lutherans were burned; and the loud chant of priest and chorister rose amid no cries and sobs from the victims. These noble men, who were now dragged to the burning pile, uttered no cry; they shed no tear; that were a weakness that would, have stained the glory of their sacrifice. They stood with majestic mien at the stake, and looked with calmness on the tortures their enemies had prepared for them, nor did they blanch when the flames blazed up around them. The sacrifice of old, when led to the altar, was crowned with garlands. So it was with these martyrs. They came to the altar to offer up their lives crowned with the garlands of joy and praise. Their faith, their courage, their reliance on God when suffering in His cause, their vivid anticipations of future glory, were the white robes in which they dressed themselves when they ascended the altar to die. France, let us hope, will not always be ignorant of her true heroes. These have shed around her a renown purer and brighter, a hundred times, than all the glory she has earned on the battle-field from the days of Francis I. to those of the last Napoleon.

Hardly had Francis I. concluded his penitential procession when he again turned to the Protestant princes of Germany, and attempted to resume negotiations with them. They not unnaturally asked of him an explanation of his recent proceedings. Why so anxious to court the favor of the Protestants of Germany when he was burning the Protestants of France?

Were there two true faiths in the world, the creed of Rome on the west of the Rhine, and the religion of Wittenberg on the east of that river? But the king was ready with his excuse, and his excuse was that of almost all persecutors of every age. The king had not been burning Lutherans, but executing traitors. If those he had put to death had imbibed Reformed sentiments, it was not for their religion, but for their sedition that they had been punished. Such was the excuse which Francis gave to the German princes in his letter of the

15th of February. "To stop this plague of disloyalty from spreading, he punished its originators severely, as his ancestors had also done in like cases." [1] He even attempted to induce Melanchthon to take up his abode in Paris, where he would have received him with honor, and burned him a few months afterwards. But these untruths and doublings availed Francis little. Luther had no faith in princes, least of all had he faith in Francis I. Melanchthon, anxious as he was to promote conciliation, yet refused to enter a city on the streets of which the ashes of the fires in which the disciples of Christ had been burned were not yet cold. And the Protestant princes, though desirous of strengthening their political defences, nevertheless shrank back from a hand which they saw was red with the blood of their brethren. The situation in France began to be materially altered. The king's disposition had undergone a change for the worse; a gloomy determination to crush heresy had taken possession of him, and was clouding his better qualities.

The men of letters who had shed a lustre upon his court and realm were beginning to withdraw. They were terrified by the stakes which they saw around them, not knowing but that their turn might come next. The monks were again looking up, which augured no good for the interests of learning.

Not content with the executions of the terrible 21st of January, the king continued to issue edicts against the sect of "Lutherans still swarming in the realm;" he wrote to the provincial parliaments, exhorting them to furnish money and prisons for the extirpation [2] of heresy; lastly, he indited an ordinance declaring printing abolished all over France, under pain of the gallows. [3] That so barbarous a decree should have come from a prince who gloried in being the leader of the literary movements of his age, would not have been credible had it not been narrated by historians of name. It is one among a hundred proofs that literary culture is no security against the spirit of persecution.

Of those who now withdrew from Paris was Margaret of Valois, the king's sister. We have seen the hopes that she long and ardently cherished that her brother would be won to the Reformation; but now that Francis I. had cast the die, and sealed his choice by the awful deeds of blood we have narrated, Margaret, abandoning all hope, quitted Paris, where even the palace could hardly protect her from the stake, and retired to her own kingdom of Bearn. Her departure, and that of the exiles who had preceded her, if it was the beginning of that social and industrial decadence which ever since has gone on, amid many deceitful appearances, in France, was the dawn of a new day to Bearn. Her court became the asylum of the persecuted. Many refugee families transported their industry and their fortune to her provinces, and the prosperity which had taken a long adieu of France, began to enrich her little kingdom. Soon a new face appeared upon the state of the Bearnais. The laws were reformed, schools were opened, many branches of industry were imported and very successfully cultivated, and, in short, the foundations were now laid of that remarkable prosperity which made the little kingdom in the Pyrenees resemble an oasis amid the desert which France and Spain were now beginning to become. When Margaret went to her grave, in 1549, she left a greater to succeed her in the government of the little territory which had so rapidly risen from rudeness to wealth and civilisation. Her daughter, Jeanne d'Albret, is one of the most illustrious women in history.

We return to Calvin, in the track of whose footsteps it is that the great movement, set for the rising of one kingdom and the fall of another, is to be sought. He now begins to be by very much the chief figure of his age. Francis I. with his court, Charles V. with his armies, are powers more imposing but less real than Calvin. They pass across the stage with a great noise, but half-a-century afterwards, when we come to examine the traces they have left behind them, it is with difficulty that we can discover them; other kings and other armies are busy effacing them, and imprinting their own in

their room. It is Calvin's work that endures and goes forward with the ages. We have seen him, a little before the bursting of the storm, leave Paris, nevermore to enter its gates.

Setting out in the direction of Germany, and travelling on horseback, he arrived in due course at Strasburg. Its name, "the City of the Highways," sufficiently indicates its position, and the part it was expected to play in the then system of Europe. Strongly fortified, it stood like a mailed warrior at the point where the great roads of Northern Europe intersected one another. It was the capital of Alsace, which was an independent territory, thrown in as it were, in the interests of peace, between Eastern and Western Europe, and therefore its fortifications were on purpose of prodigious strength. As kings were rushing at one another, now pushing eastward from France into Germany, and now rushing across the Rhine from Germany into France, eager to give battle and redden the earth with blood, this man in armor – the City of the Highways, namely – who stood right in their path compelled them to halt, until their anger should somewhat subside, and peace might be maintained.

A yet more friendly office did Strasburg discharge to the persecuted children of the Reformation. Being a free city, it offered asylum to the exiles from surrounding countries. Its magistrates were liberal; its citizens intelligent; its college was already famous; the strong walls and firm gates that would have resisted the tempests of war had yielded to the Gospel, and the Reformation had found entrance into Strasburg at an early period. Bucer, Capito, and Hedio, whom we have already met with, were living here at the time of Calvin's visit, and the pleasure of seeing them, and conversing with them, had no small share in inducing the Reformer to turn his steps in the direction of this city.

In one respect he was not disappointed. He much relished the piety and the learning of these men, and they in turn were much impressed with the seriousness and greatness of character

of their young visitor. But in another respect he was disappointed in them. Their views of Divine truth lacked depth and comprehensiveness, and their scheme of Reformation was, in the same proportion, narrow and defective. The path which they loved, a middle way between Wittenberg and Rome, was a path which Calvin did not, or would not, understand. To him there were only two faiths, a true and a false, and to him there could be but two paths, and the attempt to make a third between the two was, in his judgment, to keep open the road back to Rome. All the greater minds of the Reformation were with Calvin on this point. Those only who stood in the second class among the Reformers gave way to the dream of reconciling Rome and the Gospel: a circumstance which we must attribute not to the greater charity of the latter, but to their incapacity to comprehend either the system of Rome or the system of the Gospel in all the amplitude that belongs to each.

Calvin grew weary of hearing, day after day, plans propounded which, at the best, could have but patched and soldered a hopelessly rotten system, but would have accomplished no Reformation, and so, after a sojourn of a few months, he took his departure from Strasburg, and began his search for the "quiet nook"[\[4\]](#) where he might give himself to the study of what he felt must, under the Spirit, be his great instructor the Bible. The impression was growing upon him, and his experience at Strasburg had deepened that impression, that it was not from others that he was to learn the Divine plan; he must himself search it out in the Holy Oracles; he must go aside with God, like Moses on the mount, and there he would be shown the fashion of that temple which he was to build in Christendom.

Following the course of the Rhine, Calvin went on to Basle. Basle is the gate of Switzerland as one comes from Germany, and being a frontier town, situated upon one of the then great highways of Europe, it enjoyed a large measure of prosperity.

The Huguenot traveler, Misson, who visited it somewhat more than a century after the time of which we speak, says of it: "The largest, fairest, richest city now reckoned to be in Switzerland." [5] Its situation is pleasant, and may even in some respects be styled romantic. Its chief feature is the Rhine, even here within sight, if one may so speak, of the mountains where it was born: a broad, majestic river, sweeping past the town with rapid flow, [6] or rather dividing it into two unequal parts, the Little Basle lying on the side towards Germany, and joined to the Great Basle by a long wooden bridge, now changed into one of stone. Crowning the western bank of the Rhine, in the form of a half-moon, are the buildings of the city, conspicuous among which are the fine towers of the Minster. Looking from the esplanade of the Cathedral one's eye lights on the waters of the river, on the fresh and beautiful valleys through which it rolls; on the gentle hills of the Black Forest beyond, sprinkled with dark pines, and agreeably relieved by the sunny glades on which their shadows fall; while a short walk to the south of the town brings the tops of the Jura upon the horizon, telling the traveler that he has reached the threshold of a region of mountainous grandeur. "They have a custom which is become a law," says the traveler to whom we have referred above, speaking of Basle, "and which is singular and very commendable; 'tis that whoever passes through Basle, and declares himself to be poor, they give him victuals – I think, for two or three days; and some other relief, if he speaks Latin." [7]

Much as the scene presents itself to the tourist of to-day, would it appear to Calvin more than three centuries ago. There was the stream rolling its "milk-white" floods to the sea, nor was he ignorant of the fact that it had borne on its current the ashes of Huss and Jerome, to bury them grandly in the ocean. There was the long wooden bridge that spans the Rhine, with the crescent-like line of buildings drawn along the brow of the opposite bank. There were the Minster towers, beneath

whose shadow Oecolampadius, already dismissed from labor, was resting in the sleep of the tomb.[8] There were the emerald valleys, enclosing the town with a carpet of the softest green; there were the sunny glades, and the tall dark pines on the eastern hills; and in the south were the azure tops of the Jura peering over the landscape. A scene like this, so finely blending quietude and sublimity, must have had a soothing influence on a mind like Calvin's; it must have appeared to him the very retreat he had so long sought for, and fain would he be to turn aside for awhile here and rest. Much troubled was the world around; the passions of men were raising frightful tempests in it; armies and battles and stakes made it by no means a pleasant dwelling-place; but these quiet valleys and those distant peaks spoke of peace, and so the exile, weary of foot, and yet more weary of heart – for his brethren were being led as sheep to the slaughter – very unobtrusively but very thankfully entered within those gates to which Providence had led him, and where he was to compose a work which still keeps its place at the head of the Reformation literature – the Institutes.

On his way from Strasburg to Basle, Calvin had an interview with a very remarkable man. The person whom he now met had rendered to the Gospel no small service in the first days of the Reformation, and he might have rendered it ten times more had his courage been equal to his genius, and his piety as profound as his scholarship. We refer to Erasmus, the great scholar of the sixteenth century. He was at this time living at Freiburg, in Brisgau – the progress, or as Erasmus deemed it, the excesses of the Reformed faith having frightened him into leaving Basle, where he had passed so many years, keeping court like a prince, and receiving all the statesmen and scholars who chanced to visit that city. Erasmus' great service to the Reformation was his publication of the New Testament in the year 1516. [9] The fountain sealed all through the Dark Ages was anew opened, and the impulse even to the cause of pure Christianity thereby was greater than we at

this day can well imagine. This was the service of Erasmus. "He laid the egg," it has been said, "of the Reformation."

The great scholar, in his early and better days, had seen with unfeigned joy the light of letters breaking over Europe. He hated the monks with his whole soul, and lashed their ignorance and vice with the unsparing rigor of his satire; but now he was almost seventy, he had hardly more than another year to live,[\[10\]](#) and the timidity of age was creeping over him. He had never been remarkable for courage; he always took care not to come within wind of a stake, but now he was more careful than ever not to put himself in the way of harm. He had hailed the Reformation less for the spiritual blessings which it brought in its train than for the literary elegances and social ameliorations which it shed around it.

Besides, the Pope had been approaching him on his weak side. Paul III. fully understood the importance of enlisting the pen of Erasmus on behalf of Rome. The battle was waxing hotter every day, and the pen was playing a part in the conflict which was not second to even that of the sword. A cardinal's hat was the brilliant prize which the Pope dangled before the scholar. Erasmus had the good sense not to accept, but the flattery implied in the offer had so far gained its end that it had left Erasmus not very zealous in the Reformed cause, if indeed he had ever been so. Could the conflict have been confined to the schools, with nothing more precious than ink shed in it, and nothing more weighty than a little literary reputation lost by it, the scholar of Rotterdam would have continued to play the champion on the Protestant side. But when he saw monarchs girding on the sword, nations beginning to be convulsed – things he had not reckoned on when he gave the first touch to the movement by the publication of his New Testament – and especially when he saw confessors treading the bitter path of martyrdom, it needed on the part of Erasmus a deeper sense of the value of the Gospel and a higher faith in God than, we fear, he possessed, to stand courageously on the

side of the Reformation.

How unlike the two men who now stood face to face! Both were on the side of progress, but each sought it on a different line, and each had pictured to himself a different future. Erasmus was the embodiment of the Renaissance, the other was the herald of a more glorious day. In the first the light of the Renaissance, which promised so much, had already begun to wane – sprung of the earth, it was returning to the earth; but where Erasmus stopped, there Calvin found his starting-point. While the shadows of the departing day darkened the face of the sage of Rotterdam, Calvin's shone with the brightness of the morning. After a few interrogatories, to which Erasmus replied hesitatingly, Calvin freely gave vent to the convictions that filled his soul.[\[11\]](#) Nothing, he believed, but a radical reform could save Christendom. He would have no bolstering up of an edifice rotten to its foundations. He would sweep it away to its last stone, and he would go to the quarry whence were dug the materials wherewith the Christian Church was fashioned in the first age, and he would anew draw forth the stones necessary for its reconstruction.

Erasmus shrank back as if he saw the toppling ruin about to fall upon him and crush him. "I see a great tempest about to arise in the Church – against the Church,"[\[12\]](#) exclaimed the scholar, in whose ear Calvin's voice sounded as the first hoarse notes of the coming storm. How much.

Erasmus misjudged! The Renaissance – calm, classic, and conservative as it seemed – was in truth the tempest. The pagan principles it scattered in the soft of Christendom, helped largely to unchain those furious winds that broke out two centuries after. The interview now suddenly closed.

Pursuing his journey, with his inseparable companion, the young Canon Du Tillet, the two travelers at length reached Basle. Crossing the long bridge, and climbing the opposite acclivity, they entered the city. It was the seat of a

university founded, as we have already said, in 1459, by Pope Pius II., who gave it all the privileges of that of Bologna. It had scholars, divines, and some famous printers. But Calvin did not present himself at their door. The purpose for which he had come to Basle required that he should remain unknown, he wished to have perfect unbroken quietude for study. Accordingly he turned into a back street where, he knew, lived a pious woman in humble condition, Catherine Klein, who received the disciples of the Gospel when forced to seek asylum, and he took up his abode in her lowly dwelling.

The penetration of this good woman very soon discovered the many high qualities of the thin pale-faced stranger whom she had received under her roof. When Calvin had fulfilled his career, and his name and doctrine were spreading over the earth, she was wont to dilate with evident pleasure in his devotion to study, on the beauty of his life, and the charms of his genius. He seldom went out,[\[13\]](#) and when he did so it was to steal away across the Rhine, and wander among the pines on the eastern hill, whence he could gaze on the city and its environing valleys, and the majestic river whose “eternal” flow formed the link between the everlasting hills of its birth-place, and the great ocean where was its final goal – nay, between the successive generations which had flourished upon its banks:, from the first barbarian races which had drunk its waters, to the learned men who were filling the pulpits, occupying the university chairs, or working the printing-presses of the city below him.

Calvin had found at last his “obscure corner,” and he jealously preserved his incognito. (Ecolampadius, the first Reformed Pastor of Basle, was now, as we have said, in his grave; but Oswald Myconius, the friend of Zwingli, had taken his place as President of the Church. In him Calvin knew he would find a congenial spirit. There was another man living at Basle at that time, whose fame as a scholar had reached the Reformer – Symon Grynaeus. Grynaeus was the schoolfellow of

Melanchthon, and when Erasmus quitted Basle he was invited to take his place at the university, which he filled with a renown second only to that of his great predecessor. He was as remarkable for his honesty and the sweetness of his disposition: as for his learning. Calvin sought and enjoyed the society of these men before leaving Basle, but meanwhile, inflexibly bent on the great ends for which he had come hither, he forbore making their acquaintance. Intercourse with the world and its business sharpens the observing powers, and breeds dexterity; but the soul that is to grow from day to day and from year to year, and at last embody its matured and concentrated strength in some great work, must dwell in solitude. It was here, in this seclusion and retreat, that Calvin sketched the first outline of a work which was to be not merely the basis of his own life-work, but the cornerstone of the Reformed Temple, and which from year to year he was to develop and perfect, according to the measure of the increase of his own knowledge and light, and leave to succeeding generations as the grandest, of his and of his age's achievements.

The Institutes first sprang into form in the following manner: While Calvin was pursuing his studies in his retirement at Basle, dreadful tidings reached the banks of the Rhine. The placard, the outbursts of royal wrath, the cruel torturings and bumlings that followed, were all carried by report to Basle. First came tidings of the individual martyrs; scarcely had the first messenger given in his tale, when another – escaped from prison or from the stake, and who could say, as of old, "I only am left to tell thee" – arrived with yet more dreadful tidings of the wholesale barbarities which had signalled the terrible 21st of January in Paris. The news plunged Calvin into profound sorrow. He could but too vividly realize the awful scenes, the tidings of which so wrung his heart with anguish. It was but yesterday that he had trodden the streets in which they were enacted. He knew the men who had endured these cruel deaths. They were his brethren. He had

lived in their houses; he had sat at their tables. How often had he held sweet converse with them on the things of God! He knew them to be men of whom the world was not worthy; and yet they were accounted as the off-scouring of all things, and as sheep appointed to the slaughter were killed all day long. Could he be silent when his brethren were being condemned and drawn to death? And yet what could he do?

The arm of the king he could not stay. He could not go in person and plead their cause, for that would be to set up his own stake. He had a pen, and he would employ it in vindicating his brethren in the face of Christendom. But in what way should he best do this? He could vindicate these martyrs effectually not otherwise than by vindicating their cause. It was the Reformation that was being vilified, condemned, burned in the persons of these men; it was this, therefore, that he must vindicate. It was not merely a few stakes in Paris, but the martyrs of the Gospel in all lands that he would cover with his aegis.

The task that Calvin now set for himself was sublime, but onerous. He would make it plain to all that the, faith which was being branded as heresy, and for professing which men were being burned alive, was no cunningly devised system of man, but the Old Gospel; and that so far from being an enemy of kings, and a subverter of law and order, which it was accused of being, it was the very salt of society – a bulwark to the throne and a protection to law; and being drawn from the Bible, it opened to man the gates of a moral purification in this life, and of a perfect and endless felicity in the next. This was what Calvin accomplished in his *Christianae Religiois Institutio*.

CHAPTER 23 [Back to Top](#) THE “INSTITUTES.”

Calvin Discards the Aristotelian Method – How a True Science of Astronomy is Formed – Calvin Proceeds in the same way in Constructing his Theology – Induction – Christ Himself sets

the Example of the Inductive Method – Calvin goes to the Field of Scripture – His Pioneers – The Schoolmen – Melanchthon – Zwingli – The Augsburg Confession – Calvin's System more Complete – Two Tremendous Facts – First Edition of the Institutes – Successive Editions – The Creed its Model – Enumeration of its Principal Themes-God the Sole Fountain of all things – Christ the One Source of Redemption and Salvation – The Spirit the One Agent in the Application of Redemption – The Church – Her Worship and Government. We shall now proceed to the consideration of that work which has exercised so vast an influence on the great movement we are narrating, and which all will admit, even though they may dissent from some of its' teachings, to be, in point of logical compactness, and constructive comprehensive genius, truly grand. It is not of a kind that discloses its solidity and gigantic proportions to the casual or passing glance. It must be leisurely contemplated. In the case of some kingly mountain, whose feet are planted in the depths but whose top is lost in the light of heaven, we must remove to a distance, and when the little hills which had seemed to overtop it when we stood at its base have sunk below the horizon, then it is that the true monarch stands out before us in un-approached and unchallenged supremacy. So with the Institutes of the Christian Religion. No such production had emanated from the theological intellect since the times of the great Father of the West – Augustine.

During the four centuries that preceded Calvin, there had been no lack of theories and systems. The schoolmen had toiled to put the world in possession of truth; but their theology was simply abstraction piled upon abstraction, and the more elaborately they speculated the farther they strayed. Their systems had no basis in fact: they had no root in the revelation of God; they were a speculation, not knowledge.

Luther and Calvin struck out a new path in theological discovery. They discarded the Aristotelian method as a vicious one, though the fashionable and, indeed, the only one until

their time, and they adopted the Baconian method, though Bacon had not yet been born to give his name to his system. Calvin saw the folly of retiring into the dark closet of one's own mind, as the schoolmen did, and out of such materials as they were able to create, fashioning a theology. Taking his stand upon the open field of revelation, he essayed to glean those God-created and Heaven-revealed truths which lie there, and he proceeded to build them up into a system of knowledge which should have power to enlighten the intellect and to sanctify the hearts of the men of the sixteenth century. Calvin's first question was not, "Who am I?" but "Who is God?" He looked at God from the stand-point of the human conscience, with the torch of the Bible in his hand. God was to him the beginning of knowledge. The heathen sage said, "Know thyself." But a higher Authority had said, "The fear," that is the knowledge, "of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." It is in the light that all things are seen. "God is light."

In chemistry, in botany, in astronomy, he is the best philosopher who most carefully studies nature, most industriously collects facts, and most skilfully arranges them into a system or science. Not otherwise can the laws of the material universe, and the mutual relations of the bodies that compose it, be discovered. We must proceed in theology just as we proceed in natural science. He is the best theologian who most carefully studies Scripture, who most accurately brings out the meaning of its individual statements or truths, and who so classifies these as to exhibit that whole scheme of doctrine that is contained in the Bible. Not otherwise than by induction can we arrive at a true science: not otherwise than by induction can we come into possession of a true theology. The botanist, instead of shutting himself up in his closet, goes forth into the field and collects into classes the flora spread profusely, and without apparent order, over plain and mountain, grouping plant with plant, each according to its kind, till not one is left, and then his science of botany is perfected.

The astronomer, instead of descending into some dark cave, turns his telescope to the heavens, watches the motions of its orbs, and by means of the bodies that are seen, he deduces the laws and forces that are unseen, and thus order springs up before his eye, and the system of the universe unveils itself to him. What the flora of the field are to the botanist, what the stars of the firmament are to the astronomer, the truths scattered over the pages of the Bible are to the theologian. The Master Himself has given us the hint that it is the inductive method which we are to follow in our search after Divine truth; nay, He has herein gone before us and set us the example, for beginning at Moses and the prophets, He expounded to His disciples "in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself." It was to these pages that Calvin turned. He searched them through and through, he laid all the parts of the Word of God under contribution: its histories and dramas, its Psalms and prophecies, its Gospels and Epistles. With profound submission of mind he accepted whatever he found taught there; and having collected his materials, he proceeded with the severest logic, and in the exercise of a marvellous constructive genius, to frame his system – to erect the temple. To use the beautiful simile of D'Aubigne, "He went to the Gospel springs, and there collecting into a golden cup the pure and living waters of Divine revelation, presented them to the nations to quench their thirst." [\[1\]](#)

We have said that Calvin was the first to open this path, but the statement is not to be taken literally and absolutely. He had several pioneers in this road; but none of them had trodden it with so firm a step, or left it so thoroughly open for men to follow, as Calvin did. By far the greatest of his pioneers was Augustine. But even the City of God, however splendid as a dissertation, is yet as a system much inferior to the Institutes, in completeness as well as in logical power. After Augustine there comes a long and dreary interval, during which no attempt was made to classify and systematize the truths of revelation. The attempt of Johannes Damascenus,

in the eighth century, is a very defective performance, Not more successful were the efforts of the schoolmen. The most notable of these were the four books of Sentences by Peter Lombard, and the Summa of Thomas Aquinas, but both are defective and erroneous. In perusing the theological productions of that age, we become painfully sensible of strength wasted, owing to the adoption of an entirely false method of interpreting the Word of God – a method which, we ought to say, was a forsaking rather than an interpreting of the Scriptures; for in the schoolmen we have a body of ingenious and laborious men, who have withdrawn themselves from the light of the Bible into the dark chamber of their own minds, and are weaving systems of theology out of their brains and the traditions of their Church, in which errors are much more plentiful than truths, and which possess no power to pacify the conscience, or to purify the life.

When we reach the age of the Reformation the true light again greets our eyes. Luther was no systematiser on a great scale; Melanchthon made a more considerable essay in that direction. His Loci Communes, or Common Places, published in 1521, were a prodigious advance on the systems of the schoolmen. They are quickened by the new life, but yet their mold is essentially mediaeval, and is too rigid and unbending to permit a free display of the piety of the author. The Commentarius de Vera et Falsa Religione, or Commentary on the True and False Religion, of Zwingli, published in 1525, is freed from the scholastic method of Melanchthon's performance, but is still defective as a formal system of theology. The Confession of Augsburg (1530) is more systematic and complete than any of the foregoing, but still simply a confession of faith, and not such an exhibition of Divine Truth as the Church required. It remained for Calvin to give it this. The Institutes of the Christian Religion was a confession of faith,[\[2\]](#) a system of exegesis, a body of polemics and apologetics, and an exhibition of the rich practical effects which flow from Christianity – it was all four in one. Calvin takes his reader

by the hand and conducts him round the entire territory of truth; he shows him the strength and grandeur of its central citadel – namely, its God-given doctrines; the height and solidity of its ramparts; the gates by which it is approached; the order that reigns within; the glory of the Lamb revealed in the Word that illuminates it with continual day; the River of Life by which it was watered that is, the Holy Spirit; this, he exclaims, is the “City of the Living God,” this is the “Heavenly Jerusalem ;” decay or overthrow never can befall it, for it is built upon the foundation of prophets and apostles, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner-stone. Into this city “there entereth nothing that defileth, or maketh a lie,” and the “nations of them that are saved shall walk in the light thereof.”

That Calvin’s survey of the field of supernatural truth as contained in the Bible was complete; that his classification of its individual facts was perfect; that his deductions and conclusions were in all cases sound, and that his system was without error, Calvin himself did not maintain, and it would ill become even the greatest admirer of that guarded, qualified, and balanced Calvinism which the Reformer taught – not that caricature of it which some of his followers have presented, a Calvinism which disjoins the means from the end, which destroys the freedom of man and abolishes his accountability; which is fatalism, in short, and is no more like the Calvinism of Calvin than Mahomedanism is like Christianity – it would ill become any one, we say, to challenge for Calvin’s system an immunity from error which he himself did not challenge for it. He found himself, in pursuing his investigations in the field of Scripture, standing face to face with two tremendous facts – God’s sovereignty and man’s freedom; both he believed to be facts; he maintained the last as firmly as the first; he confessed that he could not reconcile the two, he left this and all other mysteries connected with supernatural truth to be solved by the deeper researches and the growing light of the ages to

come, if it were meant that they should ever find their solution on earth.

This work was adopted by the Reformed Church, and after some years published in most of the languages of Christendom. The clearness and strength of its; logic; the simplicity and beauty of its exposition; the candour of its conclusions; the fullness of its doctrinal statements, and not less the warm spiritual life that throbbed under its deductions, now bursting out in rich practical exhortation, and now soaring into a vein of lofty speculation, made the Church feel that no book like this had the Reformation given her heretofore; and she accepted it, as at once a confession of her faith, an answer to all charges whether from the Roman camp or from the infidel one, and her justification alike before those now living and the ages to come, against the violence with which the persecutor was seeking to overwhelm her.

The first edition of the Institutes contained only six chapters. During all his life after he continued to elaborate and perfect the work. Edition after edition continued to issue from the press. These were published in Latin, but afterwards rendered into French, and translated into all the tongues of Europe. "During twenty-four years," says Bungener, "the book increased in every edition, not as an edifice to which additions are made, but as a tree which develops itself naturally, freely, and without the compromise of its unity for a moment."[\[3\]](#) It is noteworthy that the publication of the work fell on the mid-year of the Reformer's life. Twenty-seven years had he been preparing for writing it, and twenty-seven years did he survive to expand and perfect it; nevertheless, not one of its statements or doctrines did he essentially alter or modify. It came, too, at the right time as regards the Reformation.[\[4\]](#)

We shall briefly examine the order and scope of the book. It proposes two great ends, the knowledge of God and the knowledge of man. It employs the first to attain the second.

“The whole sum of wisdom,” said the author at the outset, “is that by knowing God each of us knows himself also.”[5] If man was made in the image of God, then surely the true way to know what our moral and spiritual powers are, or ought to be, what are the relations in which we stand to God, and what the service of love and obedience we owe him, is not to study the dim and now defaced image, but to turn our eye upon the undimmed and glorious Original – the Being in whose likeness man was created.

The image of God, it is argued, imprinted upon our own souls would have sufficed to reveal him to us if we had not fallen. But sin has defaced that image. Nevertheless, we are not left in darkness, for God has graciously given us a second revelation of himself in his Word. Grasping that torch, and holding it aloft, Calvin proceeds on his way, and bids all who would know the eternal mysteries follow that shining light. Thus it was that the all-sufficiency and supreme and sole authority of the Scriptures took a leading place in the system of the Reformer.

The order of the work is simplicity itself. It is borrowed from the Apostles' Creed, whose four cardinal doctrines furnish the Reformer with the argument of the four books in which he finally arranged the Institutes. I. “I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth.” Such is the argument of the first book. In it Calvin brings God before us in his character of Creator and sovereign Ruler of the world. But we must note that his treatment of this theme is eminently moral. ‘It is no scenic exhibition of omnipotent power and infinite wisdom, as shown in the building of the fabric of the heavens and the earth, that passes before us. From the first line the author places himself and us in the eye of conscience. The question, Can the knowledge of God as Creator conduct to salvation? leads the Reformer to discuss in successive chapters the doctrine of the fall; the necessity of another and clearer revelation; the proofs of the inspiration

of the Bible. He winds up with some chapters on Providence, as exercised in the government of all things, and in the superintendence of each particular thing and person in the universe. In these chapters Calvin lays the foundations for that tremendous conclusion at which he arrives in the book touching election, which has been so stumbling to many, and which is solemn and mysterious to all.

II. "And in Jesus Christ, his only-begotten Son." The knowledge of God as Redeemer is the argument of book second. This ushers the author upon a higher stage, and places him amid grander themes. All that led up to the redemption accomplished on Calvary, as well as the redemption itself, is here discussed. Sin, the ruin of man, and his inability to be his own savior; the moral law; the gracious purpose of God in giving it, namely, to convince man of sin, and make him feel his need of a Savior; such are the successive and majestic steps by which Calvin advances to the Cross. Arrived there, we have a complete Christology: Jesus very God, very Man, Prophet, Priest, and King; and his death an eternal redemption, inasmuch as it was an actual, full, and complete expiation of the sins of his people. The book closes with the collected light of the Bible concentrated upon the Cross, and revealing it with a noonday clearness, as a fully accomplished redemption, the one impregnable ground of the sinner's hope.

III. "I believe in the Holy Ghost." That part of redemption which it is the office of the Spirit to accomplish, is the argument to which the author now addresses himself. The theme of the second book is a righteousness accomplished without the sinner: in the third book we are shown a righteousness accomplished within him. Calvin insists not less emphatically upon the last as an essential part of redemption than upon the first. The sinner's destruction was within him, his salvation must in like manner be within him; an atonement without him will not save him unless he have a holiness within him. But what, asks the author, is the bond of connection between the

sinner and the righteousness accomplished without him? That bond, he answers, is the Holy Spirit. The Spirit works faith in the sinner, and by that faith, as with a hand, he receives a two-fold benefit – a righteousness which is imputed to him, and a regeneration which is wrought within him. By the first he obtains the justification of his person, by the second the sanctification of his soul, and a fitness for that glory everlasting of which he became the heir in the moment of his justification. The one grand corollary from all this is that man's salvation is exclusively, and from first to last, of God's sovereign grace. Thus do Calvin and Luther meet. They have traveled by different routes; the first has advanced by a long and magnificent demonstration, the second has by a sudden inspiration, as it were, grasped the truth; but here at last the two mighty chiefs stand side by side on the ground of "Salvation of God," and taking each other by the hand, they direct their united assault against the fortress of Rome, "Salvation of man."

The moment in which Calvin arrived at this conclusion formed an epoch in the history of Christianity – that is, of the human race. It was the full and demonstrated recovery of a truth that lies at the foundation of all progress, inasmuch as it is the channel of those supernatural and celestial influences by which the human soul is quickened, and society advanced. The doctrine of justification by faith, of which St. Paul had been led to put on record so full and clear an exposition, early began to be corrupted. By the times of Augustine even, very erroneous views were held on this most important subject; and that great Father was not exempt from the obscurity of his age. After his day the corruption rapidly increased. The Church of Rome was simply an elaborate and magnificent exhibition of the doctrine of "Salvation by works." The language of all its dogmas, and every one of its rites, was "Man his own savior." Luther placed underneath the stupendous fabric of Rome the doctrine which, driven by his soul-agonies to the Divine page, he had there discovered –

"Salvation by grace" – and the edifice fell to the ground. This was the application that Luther made of the doctrine. The use to which Calvin put it was more extensive; he brought out its bearings upon the whole scheme of Christian doctrine, and made it the basis of the Reformation of the Church in the largest and widest sense of the term. In the hands of Luther it is the power of the doctrine which strikes us; in those of Calvin it is its truth, and universality, lying entrenched as it were within its hundred lines of doctrinal circumvallation, and dominating the whole territory of truth in such fashion as to deny to error, of every sort and name, so much as a foot-breadth on which to take root and flourish. IV. "I believe in the Holy Catholic Church." The term Church, in its strict sense, he applied to the children of God; in its looser sense, to all who made profession of the Gospel, for the instruction and government of whom, God had instituted, he held, pastors and teachers. Touching the worship and government of the Church, Calvin laid down the principle of the unlawfulness of introducing anything without positive Scripture sanction. "This, he thought, would go to the root of the matter, and sweep away at once the whole mass of sacramentalism and ceremonialism, of ritualism and hierarchism, which had grown up between the apostolic age and the Reformation." [6] Augustine deplored the prevalence of the rites and ceremonies of his time, but he lacked a definite principle with which to combat and uproot them. These ceremonies and rites had become yet more numerous in Luther's day; but neither had he any weapon wherewith to grapple effectually with them. He opposed them mainly on two grounds: first, that they were burdensome; and secondly, that they contained more or less the idea of merit, and so tended to undermine the doctrine of justification by faith. Calvin sought for a principle which should clear the ground of that whole noxious growth at once, and he judged that he had found such a principle in the following – namely, that not only were many of these ceremonies contrary to the first and second precepts of the Decalogue, and therefore to be condemned as idolatrous; but

that in the mass they were without warrant in the Word of God, and were therefore to be rejected as unlawful. In regard to Church government, the means which the Reformer adopted for putting an end to all existing corruptions and abuses, and preventing their recurrence, are well summed up by Dr. Cunningham. He sought to attain this end – “First, by putting an end to anything like the exercise of monarchical authority in the Church, or independent power vested officially in one man, which was the origin and root of the Papacy.

Second, by falling back upon the combination of aristocracy and democracy, which prevailed for at least the first two centuries of the Christian era, when the Churches were governed by the common council of Presbyters, and these Presbyters were chosen by the Churches themselves, though tried and ordained by those who had been previously admitted to office.

Third, by providing against the formation of a spirit of a mere priestly caste, by associating with the ministers in the administration of ecclesiastical affairs, a class of men who, though ordained Presbyters, were usually engaged in the ordinary occupations of society; and fourth, by trying to prevent a repetition of the history of the rise and growth of the prelacy and the Papacy, through the perversion of the one-man power, by fastening the substance of these great principles upon the conscience of the Church as binding *jure divino*.”[7]

CHAPTER 24 [Back to Top](#) CALVIN ON PREDESTINATION AND ELECTION.

Calvin's Views on the Affirmative Side – God as the Author of all things Ordains all that is to come to pass – The Means equally with the End comprehended in the Decree – As Sovereign, God Executes all that comes to pass – Calvin's Views on the Negative Side – Man a Free Agent – Man an Accountable Being – Calvin maintained side by side God's Eternal Ordination and Man's Freedom of Action – Cannot

Reconcile the Two – Liberty and Necessity – Tremendous Difficulties confessed to Attach to Both Theories – Explanations – Locke and Sir William Hamilton – Growth of the Institutes. WE have reserved till now our brief statement of Calvin's views on the subject of predestination and election – the shroud, in the eyes of some, in which he has wrapped up his theology; the rock, in the view of others, on which he has planted it. Our business as historians is neither to impugn nor to defend, but simply to narrate; to state, with all the clearness, fairness, and brevity possible, what Calvin held and taught on this great point. The absolute sovereignty of God was Calvin's cornerstone. As the Author and Ruler of his own universe, he held that God must proceed in his government of his creatures according to a definite plan; that that plan he had formed unalterably and unchangeably from everlasting; that it embraced not merely the grander issues of Providence, but the whole array of means by which these issues are reached; that this plan God fully carries out in time; and that, though formed according to the good pleasure of his will, it is based on reasons infinitely wise and righteous, although these have not been made known to us. Such was Calvin's first and fundamental position.

This larger and wider form of the question, to which is given the name of predestination, embraces and disposes of the minor one, namely, election. If God from everlasting pre-ordained the whole history and ultimate fate of all his creatures, it follows that he pre-ordained the destiny of each individual. Calvin taught, as Augustine had done before him, that out of a race all equally guilty and condemned, God had elected some to everlasting life, and that this decree of the election of some to life, implied the reprobation of the rest to death, but that their own sin and not God's decree was the reason of their perishing. The Reformer further was careful to teach that the election of some to life did not proceed on God's fore-knowledge of their faith and good works, but that, on the contrary, their election was the efficient cause of their

faith and holiness.

These doctrines the Reformer embraced because it appeared to him that they were the doctrines taught in the Scriptures on the point in question; that they were proclaimed in the facts of history; and that they were logically and inevitably deducible from the idea of the supremacy, the omnipotence, and intelligence of God. Any other scheme appeared to him inconsistent with these attributes of the Deity, and, in fact, a dethroning of God as the Sovereign of the universe which he had called into existence, and an abandonment of its affairs to blind chance.

Such was the positive or affirmative side of Calvin's views. We shall now briefly consider the negative side, in order to see his whole mind on the question. The Reformer abhorred and repudiated the idea that God was the Author of sin, and he denied that any such inference could be legitimately drawn from his doctrine of predestination. He denied, too, with the same emphasis, that any constraint or force was put by the decree upon the will of man, or any restraint upon his actions; but that, on the contrary, all men enjoyed that spontaneity of will and freedom of action which are essential to moral accountability. He repudiated, moreover, the charge of fatalism which has sometimes been brought against his doctrine, maintaining that inasmuch as the means were fore-ordained as well as the end, his teaching had just the opposite effect, and instead of relaxing it tended to brace the soul, to give it a more vigorous temper; and certainly the qualities of perseverance and indomitable energy which were so conspicuously shown in Calvin's own life, and which have generally characterised those communities who have embraced his scheme of doctrine, go far to bear out the Reformer in this particular, and to show that the belief in predestination inspires with courage, prompts to activity and effort, and mightily sustains hope.

The Reformer was of opinion that he saw in the history of the

world a proof that the belief in pre-destination – that predestination, namely, which links the means with the end, and arranges that the one shall be reached only through the other – is to make the person feel that he is working alongside a Power that cannot be baffled; that he is pursuing the same ends which that Power is prosecuting, and that, therefore, he must and shall finally be crowned with victory. This had, he thought, been exemplified equally in nations and in individuals.

Calvin was by no means insensible to the tremendous difficulties that environ the whole subject. The depth as well as range of his intellectual and moral vision gave him a fuller and clearer view than perhaps the majority of his opponents have had of these great difficulties. But these attach, not to one side of the question, but to both; and Calvin judged that he could not escape them, nor even diminish them by one iota, by shifting his position. The absolute foreknowledge of God called up all these difficulties equally with his absolute pre-ordination; nay, they beset the question of God's executing all things in time quite as much as the question of his decreeing all things from eternity. Most of all do these difficulties present themselves in connection with what is but another form of the same question, namely, the existence of moral evil. That is all awful reality. Why should God, all-powerful and all-holy, have created man, foreseeing that he would sin and be lost? why not have created him, if he created him at all, without the possibility of sinning? or why should not God cut short in the cradle that existence which if allowed to develop will, he foresees, issue in wrong and injury to others, and in the ruin of the person himself? Is there any one, whether on the Calvinistic or on the Arminian side, who can give a satisfactory answer to these questions?

Calvin freely admitted that he could not reconcile God's absolute sovereignty with man's free will; but he felt himself

obliged to admit and believe both; both accordingly he maintained; though it was not in his power, nor, he believed, in the power of any man, to establish a harmony between them. What he aimed at was to proceed in this solemn path as far as the lights of revelation and reason could conduct him; and when their guidance failed, when he came to the thick darkness, and stood in the presence of mysteries that refused to unveil themselves to him, reverently to bow down and adore.[\[1\]](#)

We judged it essential to give this brief account of the theology of the Institutes. The book was the chest that contained the vital forces of the Reformation. It may be likened to the living spirits that animated the wheels in the prophet's vision. The leagues, battles, and majestic movements of that age all proceeded from this center of power – these arcana of celestial forces. It is emphatically the Reformation. The book, we have said, as it first saw the light in Basle in 1536 was small (pp. 514); it consisted of but six chapters, and was a sketch in outline of the fundamental principles of the Christian faith. The work grew into unity and strength, grandeur and completeness, by the patient and persevering touches of the author, and when completed it consisted of four books and eighty-four chapters. But as in the acorn is wrapped up all that is afterwards evolved in the full-grown oak, so in the first small edition of the Institutes were contained all the great principles which we now possess, fully developed and demonstrated, in the last and completed edition of 1559.

CHAPTER 25 [Back to Top](#) CALVIN'S APPEAL TO FRANCIS I.

Enthusiasm evoked by the appearance of the Institutes—Marshals the Reformed into One Host – Beauty of the Style of the Institutes—Opinions expressed on it by Scaliger, Sir William Hamilton, Principal Cunningham, M. Nisard – The Institutes an Apology for the Reformed – In scathing Indignation comparable to Tacitus – Home-thrusts – He Addresses the King of France –

Pleads for his Brethren – They Suffer for the Gospel – Cannot Abandon it – Offer themselves to Death – A Warning – Grandeur of the Appeal – Did Francis ever Read this Appeal? THUS did a strong arm uplift before the eyes of all Europe, and throw loose upon the winds, a banner round which the children of the Reformation might rally. Its appearance at that hour greatly inspirited them. It showed them that they had a righteous cause, an energetic and courageous leader, and that they were no longer a mere multitude, but a marshalled host, whose appointed march was over a terrible battle-field, but to whom there was also appointed a triumph worthy of their cause and of the kingly spirit who had arisen to lead them. “Spreading,” says Felice, “widely in the schools, in the castles of the gentry, the homes of the citizens, and the workshops of the common people, the Institutes became the most powerful of preachers.”[1]

The style of the work was not less fitted to arrest attention than the contents. It seemed as if produced for the occasion. In flexibility, transparency, and power, it was akin to the beauty of the truths that were entrusted to it, and of which it was made the vehicle. Yet Calvin had not thought of style. The great doctrines he was enunciating engrossed him entirely; and the free and majestic march of his thoughts summoned up words of fitting simplicity and grandeur, and without conscious effort on his part marshalled them in the most effective order, and arranged them in the most harmonious periods. In giving France a religion, Calvin at the same time gave France a language.

Men who have had but little sympathy with his theology have been loud in their praises of his genius. Scaliger said of him, three hundred years ago, “Calvin is alone among theologians; there is no ancient to compare with him.” Sir William Hamilton in our own day has indorsed this judgment.

“Looking merely to his learning and ability,” said this distinguished metaphysician, “Calvin was superior to all

modern, perhaps to all ancient, divines. Succeeding ages have certainly not exhibited his equal." Dr. Cunningham, a most competent judge, says: "The Institutes of Calvin is the most important work in the history of theological science It may be said to occupy, in the science of theology, the place which it requires both the *Novum Organum* of Bacon and the *Principia* of Newton to fill up in physical science." [2] "Less learned," says Paul Lacroix of his style, "elaborate, and ornate than that of Rabelais, but more ready, flexible, and skillful in expressing all the shades of thought and feeling. Less ingenious, agreeable, and rich than that of Amyot, but keener and more imposing.

Less highly coloured and engaging than that of Montaigne, but more concise and serious and more French. [3] Another French writer of our day, who does not belong to the Protestant Church, but who is a profound thinker, has characterised the Institutes as "the first work in the French tongue which offers a methodical plan, well-arranged matter, and exact composition. Calvin," he says, "not only perfected the language by enriching it, he created a peculiar form of language, the most conformable to the genius of our country." And of Calvin himself he says: "He treats every question of Christian philosophy as a great writer. He equals the most sublime in his grand thoughts upon God, the expression of which was equalled but not surpassed by Bossuet." [4]

A scheme of doctrine, a code of government, a plan of Church organisation, the Institutes was at the same time an apology, a defense of the persecuted, an appeal to the conscience of the persecutor. It was dedicated to Francis I. [5] But the dedication did not run in the usual form. Calvin did not approach the monarch to bow and gloze, to recount his virtues and extol his greatness, he spoke as it becomes one to speak who pleads for the innocent condemned at unrighteous tribunals, and for truth overborne by bloody violence. His dedication was a noble, most affecting and thrilling

intercession for his brethren in France, many of whom were at that moment languishing in prison or perishing at the stake.

With a nobler indignation than even that which burns on the pages of Tacitus, and in a style scarcely inferior in its rapid and scathing power to that of the renowned historian, does Calvin proceed to refute, rapidly yet conclusively, the leading charges which had been advanced against the disciples of the Reformation, and to denounce the terrible array of banishments, proscriptions, fines, dungeons, torturing, and blazing piles, with which it was sought to root them out.[6] "Your doctrine is new," it was said. "Yes," Calvin makes answer, "for those to whom the Gospel is new." "By what miracle do you confirm it?" it had been asked. Calvin, glancing contemptuously at the sort of miracles which the priests sometimes employed to confirm the Romish doctrine, replies, "By those miracles which in the early age so abundantly attested the divinity of the Gospel – the holy lives of its disciples." "You contradict the Fathers," it had been farther urged. The Reformer twits his accusers with "adoring the slips and errors" of the Fathers; but "when they speak well they either do not hear, or they misinterpret or corrupt what they say." That is a very extraordinary way of showing respect for the Fathers. "Despise the Fathers!" "Why, the Fathers are our best friends." He was a Father, Epiphanius, who said that it was an abomination to set up an image in a Christian temple. He was a Father, Pope Gelasius, who maintained that the bread and wine remain unchanged in the Eucharist. He was a Father, Augustine, who affirmed that it was rash to assert any doctrine which did not rest on the clear testimony of Scripture. But the Fathers come faster than Calvin can receive their evidence, and so a crowd of names are thrown into the margin, who all with "one heart and one mouth" execrated and condemned "the sophistical reasonings and scholastic wranglings" with which the Word of God had been made void.[7]

Turning round on his accusers and waxing a little warm, Calvin demands who they are who “make war with such savage cruelty in behalf of the mass, of purgatory, of pilgrimages, and of similar follies,” and why it is that they display a zeal in behalf of these things which they have never shown for the Gospel? “Why?” he replies, “but because their God is their belly, and their religion the kitchen.”[8] –a rejoinder of which it is easier to condemn the coarseness than to impugn the truth.

If their cause were unjust, or if their lives had been wicked, they refused not to die; but the Reformer complains that the most atrocious calumnies had been poured into the ears of the king to make their tenets appear odious, and their persons hateful. “They plotted,” it was said, “to pluck the scepter from his hand, to overturn his tribunals, to abolish all laws, to make a spoil of lordships and heritages, to remove all the landmarks of order, and to plunge all peoples and states in war, anarchy, and ruin.”[9] Had the accusation been true, Calvin would have been dumb; he would have been covered with shame and confusion before the king. But raising his head, he says, “I turn to you, Sire . . . Is it possible that we, from whom a seditious word was never heard when we lived under you, should plot the subversion of kingdoms? And, what is more, who now, after being expelled from our houses, cease not nevertheless to pray to God for your prosperity, and that of your kingdom.” As regards their cause, so defamed by enemies, it was simply the Gospel of Jesus Christ. their only crime was that they believed the Gospel. They who were maintaining it were a poor, despicable people – nay, if the king liked it, “the scum of the earth;” but though its confessors were weak, the cause was great; “it is exalted far above all the power and glory of the world; for it is not ours, but that of the living God and his Christ, whom God has made King to rule from sea to sea, and from the rivers unto the ends of the earth.” he had not come before the king to beg toleration for that cause – the men of those days could no more conceive of a

government tolerating two opposing religions than of a judge deciding in favor of two rival claimants – what Calvin demanded was that their cause should receive that submission which is the right of truth; that the king should embrace, not tolerate.

But if this may not be, Calvin says in effect, if injustice shall still be meted out to us, be it known unto you, O king, that we will not abandon the truth, or bow down to the gods that Rome has set up. As sheep appointed unto the slaughter, we shall take meekly whatever sufferings you are pleased to inflict upon us. We offer our persons to your prisons, our limbs to your racks, our necks to your axes, and our bodies to your fires; but know that there is One in whose sight our blood is precious, and in shedding it you are removing the firmest defenders of your throne and of your laws, and preparing for your house and realm a terrible overthrow.

The years will quickly revolve; the cup will be filled up; and then – but let us quote the very words in which the young Reformer closes this appeal to the great monarch: “I have set before you the iniquity of our calumniators. I have desired to soften your heart to the end that you would give our cause: a hearing. I hope we shall be able to regain your favor, if you should be pleased to read without anger this confession, which is our defense before your Majesty. But if malevolent persons stop your ears; if the accused have not an opportunity of defending themselves; if impetuous furies, unrestrained by your order, still exercise their cruelty by imprisonments and by scourging, by tortures, mutilation, and the stake ... verily, as sheep given up to slaughter, we shall be reduced to the last extremity. Yet even then we shall possess our souls in patience, and shall wait for the strong hand of the Lord. Doubtless, it will be stretched forth in due season. It will appear armed to deliver the poor from their afflictions, and to punish the despisers who are now making merry so boldly.

“May the Lord, the King of kings, establish your throne in

righteousness and your seat in equity.”[10]

In penning this appeal Calvin occupied one of the sublimest positions in all history. He stood at a great bar – the throne of France. He pleaded before a vast assembly – all Christendom; nay, all ages; and as regards the cause which he sustained at this august bar, and in presence of this immense concourse of nations and ages, it was the greatest in the world, inasmuch as it was that of the Gospel and of the rights of conscience. With what feelings, one naturally asks, did Francis I. read this appeal? Or rather did he read it at all? It is commonly thought that he did not. His heart hardened by pleasure, and his ears preoccupied with evil counsellors, this cry of a suffering Church could find no audience; it swept past the throne of France, and mounted to the throne of heaven.

But before the “strong arm” to which Calvin had alluded should be “stretched forth” more than two centuries were to pass away. These martyrs had to wait till “their brethren” also should be slain as they had been. But meanwhile there were given unto them the “white robes” of this triumphant vindication; for scarcely were their ashes cold when this eloquent and touching appeal was pleading for them in many of the tongues of Europe, thrilling every heart with the story of their wrongs, and inspiring thousands and tens of thousands to brave the tyrant’s fury, and at the risk of torture and death to confess the Gospel. This was their “first resurrection.” What they had sown in weakness at the stake rose in power in the Institutes. Calvin, gathering as it were all their martyr-piles into one blazing torch, and holding it aloft, made the splendor of their cause and of their names to shine from the east even unto the west of Christendom.

The publication of the Institutes placed Calvin in the van of the Reformed hosts, he was henceforward the recognised chief of the Reformation. His retreat was now known, and this city on the edge of the Black Forest, on the banks of the Rhine,

could no longer afford him the privacy he sought. Men from every country were beginning to seek him out, and gather round him. Rising up, he hastily quitted Basle, and crossing "Italy's snowy wall" (by what route is not known), and holding on his way across the plain of Lombardy till he reached the banks of the Po, he found an asylum at the court of Renee, daughter of Louis XII. of France, and Duchess of Ferrara, who, like Margaret of Valois, had opened her heart to the doctrines of the Reformation. Calvin disappears for awhile from the scene.

FOOTNOTES

VOLUME SECOND

BOOK THIRTEENTH

VOLUME SECOND- BOOK THIRTEENTH- CHAPTER 1

[1] Fleury, Hist. Eccles., tom. 15., pp. 87, 88; Paris, 1742. 1060

[2] Mezeray, tom. 4.

[3] "I will destroy the name of Babylon." (Thauni, Hist., lib. 1., p. 11; ed. Aurel, 1626.)

[4] Platina, Vit. de Pont. Jul. II., p. 259. Fleury, Hist. Eccles., tom. 25., p. 203.

[5] Mezeray, tom. 4., p. 457.

[6] Fleury, Hist. Eccles., tom. 25., p. 204.

[7] Guicciardini, lib. 11., p. 395. Laval., vol. 1., p. 10.

[8] Beza, Hist. des Eglises Reformers au Royaume de France, tom. 1., p. 1, Lille, 1841.

[9] History of the Protestants of France, by G. D. Felice, D.D.; vol. 1., p. 2; Lond., 1853.

[10] D'Aubigne, vol. 3., p. 339.

VOLUME SECOND- BOOK THIRTEENTH- CHAPTER 2

[1] D'Aubigne, vol. 3., pp. 339 – 344.

[2] Felice, Hist. of Protestants of France, vol. 1., p. 3.

[3] Farel, Gaileoto. D'Aubigne, vol. 3., p. 345.

[4] Beza, Icones.

- [5] Felice, vol. 1., pp. 1, 2.
- [6] Beza, Hist. des Eglises Reformees, tom. 1., p. 4.
- [7] Beza, tom. 1., p. 3.
- [8] Baptista Mantuan, a Carmelite, wrote thus on Rome: "Vivere qui sancte cupiris, discedite Roma. Omnia cum liceant, non licet esse bonum" – that is, "Good and virtuous men, make haste and get out of Rome, for here virtue is the one thing ye cannot practice: all else ye may do."
- [9] Felice, vol. 1., p. 4.
- [10] MS. Bibl. Royale. Paris – ex D'Aubigne, vol. 3., p. 353,
- [11] Laval., vol. 1., p. 22.
- [12] Ben, tom. 1., p. 2.
- [13] Guizot, Hist. of France, vol. 3., p. 2; Lond., 1874.
- [14] Brantome, Vie des Femmes Illustres, p. 341.
- [15] Felice, vol. 1., p. 6. The correspondence between Margaret and Briconnet is still preserved in MS. in the Royal Library at Paris. The MS., which is a copy, bears this inscription – Lettres des Marguerite, Reine de Navarre, and is also marked Supplement Francais. No. 337, fol.1. It is a volume containing not less than 800 pp.

VOLUME SECOND- BOOK THIRTEENTH- CHAPTER 3

- [1] Beza, tom. 1., p. 1.
- [2] D'Aubigne, vol. 3., p. 337.
- [3] Felice, vol. 1., p. 5.
- [4] Beza, tom. 1., p. 4.
- [5] Acres des Martyrs, p. 182 – a chronicler of the fifteenth century, quoted by D'Aubigne, vol. 3., p. 378.
- [6] Felice, vol. 1., p. 5.
- [7] Acres des Martyrs, p. 182 – D'Aubigne, vol. 3., p. 379.
- [8] Laval. vol. 1., p. 22.
- [9] Felice, vol. 1., p. 6.
- [10] D'Aubigne, vol. 3., p. 379.
- [11] Felice, vol. 1., p. 6.

VOLUME SECOND- BOOK THIRTEENTH- CHAPTER 4

- [1] The only known copy of this work is in the Royal Library

of Stuttgart.

[2] Guizot, Hist. of France, vol. 3., p. 170; Lond., 1874.

[3] Bayle, Dictionnaire, art, Marot, notes N, O, P.

[4] Apelologic pour les Reformateurs, etc., tom. 1., p, 129; Rotterdam, 1683.

[5] M'Crie, Life of John Knox. vol. 1., p, 378; Edin., 1831.

[6] Filice, vol. 1., p. 8.

[7] Sismondi, Hist. de Francois, 16. 387. Guizot, Hist. of France, vol. 3., pp. 193, 194.

[8] Felice, vol. 1., p. 9.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Galliard, Hist. de Francois I.

[11] Laval., vol. 1., p. 8., Dedication.

[12] Ibid., vol. 1., p. 22.

VOLUME SECOND- BOOK THIRTEENTH- CHAPTER 5

[1] Felice, vol. 1., p. 17.

[2] Crespin, Martyrol., p. 102. D'Aubigne, Hist. Reform. under Calvin, vol. 1., pp. 573, 574.

[3] Felice, vol. 1., p. 11.

[4] Beza, tom. 1., p. 4.

[5] Crespin, Acres des Martyrs, p. 183.

[6] Beza, tom. 1., p. 4. Laval., vol. 1., p. 23. Felice, vol. 1., p. 10. Guizot, vol. 3., p. 196.

[7] Beza, Icones. Laval., vol. 1., p. 23. Guizot, vol. 3., p. 196

[8] Psalm 115:4-9

[9] Laval. vol. 1. p. 38.

VOLUME SECOND- BOOK THIRTEENTH- CHAPTER 6

[1] Johannis Calvin Vita a Theodora Beza; Geneva, 1575. (No paging.)

[2] "La famille Cauvin etait d'origine normande; le grand-pere du Reformateur habitait Pont l'Eveque; il etait tonnelier." Ferdinand Rossignol, Les Protestants Illustres; Paris, 1862. M. Rossignol adds in a foot-note: "Chauvin – dans le dialecte Picard on prononqait Cauvin – le Reformateur signa les oeuvres

latines Calvinus, et, faisant passer cette orthographe dans le franais, se nomma lui-meme Calvin.”

[3] “Ego qui natura subrusticus, umbram et otium semper amavi,” says he of himself in his Epistle to the Reader in his Commentarey on the Psalms. (Calvini Opp., vol 3.; Amsterdam, 1667)

[4] “Ac primo quidem quum superstitionibus Papatus magis pertinaciter addictus essem” (I was at first more obstinately attached than any one to Papal superstitions). – Calvini Opp., vol. 3.

[5] Beza, Vita Calvini.

[6] Ibid.

[7] Ibid.

[8] France had a cardinal who was only sixteen, Odel de Chatillon, brother of the famous admiral. Portugal had one of only twelve; and Leo X., who nominated him, had himself been created Archbishop of Aix at five years of age.

[9] Desmay, Vie de Calvin, p. 31.

[10] Ann. de Noyon, p. 1160.

[11] Beza, Vita Calvini.

[12] Florimond de Raemond, History of the Rise, Progress, and Decline of the Heresy of his Age.

[13] Bungener, Life of Calvin, p. 13; Edin. 1863.

VOLUME SECOND- BOOK THIRTEENTH- CHAPTER 7

[1] Beza, Vita Calvini.

[2] Calvini Opusc., p. 125.

[3] Calvini Opusc., p. 125.

[4] Ibid.: “Non sine gemitu ac lacrymis.”

[5] D’Aubigne, Reform. in. Europe, bk. 2., chap. 7.

VOLUME SECOND- BOOK THIRTEENTH- CHAPTER 8

[1] Desmay says that it was at Orleans, and Raemond that it was at Bourges, that Calvin first acquired a taste for heresy. Both are mistaken: Calvin brought that taste with him to the old city of Aurelian.

[2] He became afterwards President of the Parliament of Paris.

“He was accounted,” says Beza, “the most subtle jurisconsult of all the doctors.” (Hist. des Eglises Reformees, tom. 1., p. 6.)

[3] Beza, Hist. des Eglises Ref., tom. 1., p. 6.

[4] Bungener, Life of Calvin, p. 18.

[5] Beza, Vita Calvinii. Laval., Hist. Reform in France, vol. 1., p. 25. Beza, Hist. des Eglises Ref., tom. 1., p. 6.

[6] Calvin, Instit., lib. 3., cap. 2.

VOLUME SECOND- BOOK THIRTEENTH- CHAPTER 9

[1] Laval., Hist. Reform. in France, vol. 1., p. 24.

[2] “Me Deus ab obscuris tenuibusque principiis extractum, hoc tam honorifico munere dignatus est, ut Evangelii praeco essem ac minister.” (Comment. in Lib. Psalm. – Calvinii Opp., vol. 3., Epist. ad Lect.; ed. Amsterdam, 1667.)

[3] Beza, Hist. des Eglises Ref., tom. 1., p. 7.

[4] Beza, Hist. des Eglises Ref., tom. 1., p. 7. Galliard, Hist. de Francois I., tom. 7., p. 3; Paris, 1769.

[5] Beza, Vita Calvinii. Beza speaks of Gerard Chauvin’s death as sudden – “repentina mors.”

[6] Beza, Hist. des Eglises Ref., tom. 1., p. 5.

[7] Crespin, Hist. des Mart., p. 96. Felice, vol. 1., p. 2.

[8] Beza, Icones.

[9] Erasmi Epp., tom. 2., p. 1206.

[10] Felice, vol. 1., p. 14.

[11] D’Aubigne, Reform. under Calvin, vol. 2., p. 47.

[12] Journal d’un Bourgeois de Paris, p. 381 – quoted by D’Aubigne.

[13] Ibid.

[14] Felice, vol. 1., p. 15. Journal d’un Bourgeois de Paris, p. 382.

[15] Crespin, Hist. des Mart.

[16] “At ego mortem subere, quam veritatis damnationem, vel tacitus approbare velim.” (Beza, Icones.)

[17] Journal d’un Bourgeois de Paris, p. 383 – quoted by D’Aubigne.

[18] Erasmi Epp., p. 1277.

[19] Journal d'un Bourgeois de Paris. p. 384.

[20] Felice, Hist. of Prot., vol. 1., p. 16.

[21] Beza relates that Dr. Merlin, then Penitentiary of Paris, who had accompanied Berquin to the stake and saw him die, confessed before all the people that for a hundred years there had not died a better Christian than Berquin. The same historian also relates that on the night following his martyrdom (St. Martin's Eve) the wheat was smitten with hoar-frost, and there followed therefrom famine and plague in France. (Hist. des Eglises. Ref., tom. 1., p. 5.)

VOLUME SECOND- BOOK THIRTEENTH- CHAPTER 10

[1] Beza, Vita Calvini.

[2] Beza, Hist. des Eglises Ref., tom. 1., p. 4. Laval., Hist. Reform. in France, vol 1., p. 18.

[3] Seckendorf, lib. 3., sec. 1; additio 1.

[4] D'Aubigne, Reform. in Europe, bk. 2., chap. 19.

[5] Ibid., bk. 2., chap. 21.

[6] Herbert, Life of Henry VIII., p. 366. Du Bellay, Memoires, pp. 171 – 174. Brantome, Memoires, tom. 1., p. 235 – quoted by D'Aubigne, Reform. in Europe, bk. 2., pp. 137 – 140.

VOLUME SECOND- BOOK THIRTEENTH- CHAPTER 11

[1] Laval., Hist. Reform., vol. 1., p. 28.

[2] D'Aubigne, Hist. Reform. in Europe, vol. 2., p. 159.

[3] Laval., Hist. Reform., vol. 1., p. 29.

[4] Fromant, Actes et Gestes de Geneve, p. 74. D'Aubigne, Hist. Reform. in Europe, bk. 2., chap. 32.

[5] Crespin, Martyrologie, fol. 107.

[6] Ibid.

[7] "Quibus omnibus ita confectis rebus, erant, vel monachi, qui dicerent, Si hic salvus non esset, neminem salvum fore mortalem. Alii vero discedentes percutiebant pectus, discebantque gravem illi factam injuriam." (Acta Martyrum, ann. 1560, 4., p. 62 et seq. – ex Gerdesio, tom. 4., p. 86.)

VOLUME SECOND- BOOK THIRTEENTH- CHAPTER 12

[1] It is a curious fact that during the lifetime of Calvin a

conflagration broke out in his native town of Noyon, and destroyed the entire quarter in which the house he was born in was situated, the house itself excepted, which remained uninjured in the midst of the vast gap the flames had created.

[2] Beza, Vita Calvini.

[3] Ibid., p. 14. See also Calvini Opp.

[4] This discourse was discovered some years ago by Dr. Bonnet in the Library of Geneva, where it is still preserved. It was first given to the public by Dr. D'Aubigne, in his History of the Reformation in Europe in the Time of Calvin. (See vol. 2., bk. 2., chap. 30.)

[5] Beza, Vita Calvini.

[6] Maimbourg, Hist. du Calvinisme, p. 58.

[7] Gaillard, Hist. de Francois, tom., 1., livr. 4. p. 274.

[8] D'Au'bigne, Hist. Reform. in Europe, vol. 2., p. 279. Felice, Hist. Prot. in France, vol. 1., p. 35.

[9] Beza. Vita Calvini.

[10] Felice, Hist. Prot. In France, vol. 1., p. 35.

[11] Flor. Raemonnd, Hist. Heres., vol. 2., p. 246 – ex D'Aubigne, Hist. Reform. in Europe, vol. 3., p. 12.

[12] Beza, Vita Calvini. Lefevre is said to have expressed in his last days bitter regret for not having more openly professed the truth. See Bulletin de la Soc. de l'Hist. Prot. Fr. 11. 215.

VOLUME SECOND- BOOK THIRTEENTH- CHAPTER 13

[1] Beza, Hist. des Eglises Ref., vol. 1., p. 63. Flor. Raemonnd, Hist. Heres., vol. 7., p. 919.

[2] The late Count Alexander de St. George, for many years President of the Evangelical Society of Geneva, was a lineal descendant of Abbot Ponthus. (D'Aubigne.)

[3] "In horto illo primum Calvinisticum celebratum fuit concilium in Gallia." (Flor. Raemonnd, Hist. Heres., vol. 2., p. 252.)

[4] D'Aubigne, vol. 3., p. 59.

[5] Lievre, Hist. du Protestantisme du Poitou, vol. 1., p. 23. Flor. Raemonnd, Hist. Heres., vol. 2., p. 253. D'Aubigne, vol.

3., p. 61.

[6] "In locis illis secretis prima Calvinistea Coena celebrata fuit." (Flor. Raemond, Hist. Heres., vol. 2., p. 253.) "Raemond declares," says D'Aubigne, "that he had spared no pains to trace out all Calvin's career in France," but the historian adds "that this has not prevented him from occasionally seasoning his narrative with abuse and calumny."

[7] Flor. Raemond, Hist. Heres. vol. 2., p. 253.

[8] Ibid., vol. 2., chap. 9.

[9] This is attested by the Lettre de Ste. Marthe a Calvin, found by Jules Bonnet in the Library at Gotha (MSS. No. 401).

[10] In the autumn of 1869 the author passed along the great valley of the Loire on his way to Spain, visiting the places where Calvin had sojourned, and more especially Poitiers.

VOLUME SECOND- BOOK THIRTEENTH- CHAPTER 14

[1] Pallavicino, Istoria, etc., lib. 3., cap. 12, p. 224; Napoli, 1757.

[2] Sleidan, Hist. Reform., bk. 9., p. 169.

[3] Pallavicino, Istoria, etc., lib. 3., cap. 12. Ranke, Hist. of the Popes, bk. 1., chap. 3.

[4] Du Bellay, Memoires, p. 278; quoted by D'Aubigne, Hist. Reform. in Europe, vol. 2., pp. 198, 199. The secret articles of this treaty are in the Bibliotheque Imperiale at Paris (MSS., Bethune, No. 8,541, fol. 36. D'Aubigne).

[5] The author describes the landscape around Fiesole as he himself has noted it on repeated visits.

[6] Those of our readers who have visited Florence, and seen the statue of this Lorenzo, the father of Catherine, in the gorgeous mausoleum of the Medici in the Church of San Lorenzo, cannot but have been struck with the air of meditation and thought which it wears.

[7] Sleidan, Hist. Reform., bk. 9., pp. 163, 169.

VOLUME SECOND- BOOK THIRTEENTH- CHAPTER 15

[1] "Cardinal Medici was always on the side of the emperor," says Ranke. (Hist. of the Popes, vol. 1., p. 76.)

[2] The Romans, in the time of Clement and even to our own age, reckoned their day from one of the afternoon to the same hour next day, and, of course, went on numbering up to the twenty-fourth hour.

[3] Platina, *Hist. Sommi Pontifici*, p. 269; Venetia, 1500.

[4] Ranke, *Hist. of the Popes*, vol. 1., p. 97; Bohn's ed.

VOLUME SECOND- BOOK THIRTEENTH- CHAPTER 16

[1] D'Aubigne, *Hist. Reform. In Europe*, 2. 285.

[2] Du Bellay, *Memoires*, p. 206.

[3] Robertson, *Hist. Charles V.*, bk., 5., p. 184; Edin., 1829.

[4] Du Bellay, *Memoires*, p. 210.

[5] Robertson, bk. 5., p. 184. D'Aubigne, vol. 2., p. 301.

[6] Sleidan, *Hist. Reform.*, bk. 9., pp. 172, 173; Lond., 1689.

Robertson, *Hist. Charles V.*, bk. 5., p. 184.

[7] D'Aubigne vol. 2., pp. 347 – 350.

[8] Gerdesius, *Hist. Evang. Renov.*, tom. 4., p. 124.

VOLUME SECOND- BOOK THIRTEENTH- CHAPTER 17

[1] Gerdesius, *Hist. Evang. Renov.*, tom. 4., p. 124.

[2] Ibid.

[3] "Non integri, verum mutilati," says Gerdesius of the king's edition of the articles.

[4] Gerdesius, tom. 4., p. 124.

[5] Gerdesius, tom. 4., p 125.

[6] D'Aubigne, vol. 2., p. 379.

VOLUME SECOND- BOOK THIRTEENTH- CHAPTER 18

[1] Calvini *Opusc.*, p. 90. D'Aubigne, vol. 3., p. 76.

[2] Desmay, *Vie de Calvini Heresiarque*, pp. 48, 49. Le Vasseur, *Annal. de Noyon*, pp. 1161 – 1168. D'AuBigne, vol. 3., p. 78.

[3] Henricus Ab. Allwoerden, *Historia Michaelis Serveti*, pp. 4, 5; Helmstadt, 1727.

[4] Beza, *Hist. Eglises Rgf.*, tom. 1, p. 9.

[5] Allwoerden, *Hist. Michaelis Serveti*, pp. 9, 29.

[6] Ibid., p. 35.

[7] Beza, *Vita Calvini*, and *Hist. Eglises Ref.*, tom. 1, p. 9.

- [8] Bungener, Calvin: his Life, etc., p. 34; Edin., 1863.
- [9] Bucer to Blaarer. Strasburg MS., quoted by D'Aubigne, Hist. Reform. in Europe, vol. 2, p. 308.
- [10] Crespin, Martyrol., fol. 112. Beza, Hist. Eglises Ref., tom. 1, p. 13. D'Aubigne, vol 3, p. 83.
- [11] Crespln, Martyrol., fol. 113.
- [12] D'Aubigne, vol. 3, p. 85.
- [13] Beza, Hist. Eglises Ref., tom. 1, p. 13.
- [14] Crespin, Martyrol., fol. 113, verso.
- [15] Beza, Hist. Eglises Ref., tom. 1, p. 13.
- [16] D'Aubigne, vol. 3, p. 87.
- [17] Calvin makes special mention of Coppin from Lille, and Quentin from Hainault, who brought to the advocacy of their cause an ignorance that did not suffer them to doubt, and an impudence that would not permit them to blush. These pioneers of communism liked good living better than hard work; they made their bread by talking, as monks by singing, though that talk had neither, says Calvin, "rhyme nor reason" in it, but was uttered oracularly, and captivated the simple. (Calvini Opp., tom. 8, p. 376; Amstel, 1637.)
- [18] Inst. Adv. Libertin., cap. 15,16. Calvini Opp., tom. 8, p. 386.
- [19] "Relicta patria, in Germaniam concessi, ut in obscuro aliquo angulo abditus, quiete diu negata fruerer." (Calvini Opp., tom.3, Praef. ad Psalmos; Amstel. ed.)

VOLUME SECOND- BOOK THIRTEENTH- CHAPTER 19

- [1] Felice, Hist. Prot. France, vol. 1, p. 27.
- [2] Crespin, the martyrologist, and Florimond Raemon, the Popish historian, attribute the authorship of the placard to Farel. The latter, however, gives it as the common report: – "Famoso libello a Farelo, ut creditur, composito," are his words. (Hist. Heres., livr. 7, cap. 5, Lat. ed.) Bungener says the author "has never been known." (Calvin, p. 35; Edin., 1863.) Herminjard (Correspondance des Reformateurs, 3, 225) believes him to have been Antoine de Marcourt.
- [3] According to the Journal d'un Bourgeois de Paris, p. 440.

Fontaine in his *Histoire Catholique* gives the 18th October.
See D'Aubigne, vol. 3, p. 114.

[4] Felice, *Hist. Prof. France*, vol. 1, p. 28.

[5] Corp. Ref., 2, p. 856.

[6] Crespin, Mart. Beza, *Hist. Ref. Eglises*, tom. 1, p. 10.

VOLUME SECOND- BOOK THIRTEENTH- CHAPTER 20

[1] Laval., *Hist. Reform. France*, vol 1, p. 30. Beza, *Hist. Reform. Eglises*, tom. 1, p. 10.

[2] Beza, *Hist. Reform. Eglises*, tom. 1, p. 10.

[3] *Journal d'un Bourg.*, p. 44. D'Aubigne, vol. 3, p. 129.

[4] Crespin, *Martyrol*, fol. 112.

[5] Calvini Opp. Felice, *Hist. Prot. France*, vol. 1, p. 28.

[6] Crespin, *Martyrol.*, 43.

[7] *Journ. d'un Bourg.*, p. 445, D'Aubigne vol. 4, p. 142.

[8] Crespin, *Martyrol.*, fol. 113, verso. D'Aubigne, 3, 143.

[9] Laval., *Hist. Reform. France*, vol. 1, p. 31.

VOLUME SECOND- BOOK THIRTEENTH- CHAPTER 21

[1] *Chronique du Roi Francois I*, p. 113, quoted by D'Aubigne, vol. 3, p. 149.

[2] Felice, vol. 1, p. 29.

[3] *Chronique du Roi Francois I.*, p. 114.

[4] Felice, vol. 1, p. 30.

[5] Felice, vol. 1, p. 30. D'Aubigne, vol. 3, pp. 152-154.

[6] Garnier, *Hist. de France*, 24, p. 556. D'Aubigne, vol. 3, p. 154.

[7] This procession has been described by several French chroniclers – among others, Florimond Raemon, *Hist. Heres.*, 2:229; *Journal d'un Bourgeois de Paris*; Fontaine, *Hist. Catholique*; Maimbourg; and the *Chronique du Roi Francois I*.

[8] *Chronique du Roi Francois I*.

[9] *Ibid.*, p. 125.

[10] D'Aubigne, vol. 3, p. 161.

[11] Sleidan, bk. 9, p. 175.

[12] *Ibid.*, bk. 9, p. 178

[13] Crespin, *Martyrol*.

[14] D'Aubigne, vol. 3, p. 165.

[15] The German forces shortly afterwards left the land, and with marvellous rapidity, under the skilled guidance of the illustrious Thiers, the gallant nation recovered its position among the countries of Europe.

VOLUME SECOND- BOOK THIRTEENTH- CHAPTER 22

[1] Sleidan, bk. 9, p. 179.

[2] Bulletin de la Societe de la Histoire du Protestantisme, Francois L, p. 828 – D'Aubigne, vol. 3, p. 167.

[3] Sismondi, Hist. des Francois, 16, p. 455.

[4] "Ut in obscuro aliquo angulo abditus quiete diu negata fruerer." (Praefatio ad Psalmos-Calvini Opp.)

[5] Misson, A New Voyage to Italy, vol. 2, part 2, p. 493.

[6] The watermen when they descended the Rhine weekly sold their boats at Strasburg and returned on foot, the strength of the current not permitting them to row their craft against it. (Fynes Moryson, Travels, part 1, bk. 1, ch. 2; fol.; Lond., 1617.)

[7] Misson, New Voyage, vol. 2, part 2, p. 502.

[8] The tomb of (Ecolampadius is to be seen in the Cathedral, with the following epitaph, according to Misson: – "D. Joh. Oecolampadius, professione theologus; trium linguarum peritissimus; auctor Evangelicm doctrinse in hac urbe primus; et templi hujus verus episcopus; ut doctrina, sic vitse sanctimoniâ pollentissimus, sub breve saxum hoc reconditus est. Anno salutis ob. 21 November, 1531. Aet. 49." (Dr. John (Ecolampadius, by profession a divine; most skillful in three languages; first author of the Reformed religion in this city, and true bishop of this church; as in doctrine so in sanctity of life most excellent, is laid under this short stone. He died in the year of our Lord, 21st November, 1531, aged forty-nine years.)

[9] See ante, vol. 1, bk. 8, ch. 5, p. 428.

[10] Erasmus died in 1536; he was buried in the Cathedral of Basle, and his epitaph, on a pillar before the choir, indicates his age by the single term septaegenarius, about

seventy. The exact time of his birth is unknown.

[11] The interview has been related by a chronicler of the same century – Flor. Remond, Hist. Heres., 2, p. 251.

[12] Ibid.

[13] “Cum incognitus Basileae laterem.” (Preface to Comment on Psalms.)

VOLUME SECOND- BOOK THIRTEENTH- CHAPTER 23

[1] D'Aubigne, vol. 3, p. 203.

[2] Pro Confessione Fidei offertur, says the title-page of the first edition of the Institutes, now before us, dated Basileae 1536.

[3] Calvin: his Life, his Labours, and his Writings, p. 43.

[4] The following valuable note was communicated to the Author by the late Mr. David Laing, LL.D. Than Mr. Laing's there is no higher authority upon the subject to which it refers, and his note may be regarded as setting finally at rest the hitherto vexed question touching the publication of the Institutes: – “It is now a long while ago, when I was asked by Dr. McCrie, senior, to ascertain in what year the first edition appeared of Calvin's Institutes. At the time, although no perfect copy of the 1536 volume was accessible, the conclusion I came to was that the work first appeared in a small volume, pp. 519, with the title Christianae Religionis Institutio, etc. Joanne Calvino, Autore. Basileae, MDXXXVI. At the end of the volume are added the names of the printers at Basle and the date – ‘Mense Martio, Anno 1536.’ During the many subsequent years, with inquiries at various great public libraries, both at home and abroad, I have not been able to find anything to make me change this opinion, or to imagine that an earlier edition in French had ever existed. In the dedication there is a variation in the date between the French and Latin copies, apparently accidental. In the Latin it is dated ‘Basileae, X Calendas Septembres [1535] – that is, August 23, 1535 – while in the French translation by the author, in his last revised translation of 1559, the date is given ‘De Basle, le premier jour d'Aoust, mil cinq cens trente

cinq.'

"I have subsequently obtained a perfect copy, and have seen two or three others. The former possessor of my copy has a note written perhaps a century ago, as to its great rarity: – ' Editio ista albis corvis rarior, princeps sine dubio, quidquid dicat P. Baylius, cujus exemplaria ita sunt rarissima, ut ipsa Bibliotheca Genevensis careat integro qui ipse asservatur ibidem tantum mutilum.' [This edition, rarer than a white crow, is without doubt the first. Instances of it, as P. Bayle says, are so very rare, that in the Library of Geneva even there is not a perfect copy; the one there preserved is mutilated.] "I may add, the copy in the Library at Geneva is mutilated, the noble dedication to Francis the First having been cut out. The first enlarged edition is the one at Strasburg, 'Argenterati,' 1539, folio. Some copies have the pseudonym 'Auctore Alcuino.'

"The earliest edition of this French version has neither place nor date, but was published between 1540 and 1543; and in a subsequent edition printed at Geneva, 1553, 4to, the title reads, *Institution de la Religion Chrestienne: composee en Latin par Jean Calvin, et translatee en Francois par luymesme, et encores de nouveau reveue et augmentee*. This seems conclusive that the work was originally written in Latin, dated 1535, published 1536, and afterwards translated by the author."

[5] "Vera hominis sapientia sita est in cognitione Dei Creatoris et Redemptoris." (Calvini Opp., vol. 9.)

[6] Cunningham, *The Reformers and the Theology of the Reformation*, p. 342; Edin., 1862.

[7] Cunningham, *Reformers and Theol. of Reform.*, p. 343.

VOLUME SECOND- BOOK THIRTEENTH- CHAPTER 24

[1] This difficulty has been equally felt and acknowledged by writers on the doctrine of Philosophical Necessity. For instance, we find Locke (vol. 3, p. 487; fol. ed., 1751) saying, "I cannot have a clearer perception of anything than that I am free, yet I cannot make freedom in man consistent

with omniscience and omnipotence in God, though I am as fully persuaded of both as of any truth I most firmly assent to." Locke in philosophy was a necessitarian. Sir William Hamilton, a libertarian, expresses similar views on this question: "How, therefore, I repeat, moral liberty is possible in man or God, we are utterly unable speculatively to understand. But, practically, the fact that we are free is given to us in the consciousness of an uncompromising law of duty, in the consciousness of our moral accountability." "Liberty is thus shown to be inconceivable, but not more than its contradictory necessity; yet, though inconceivable, liberty is shown also not to be impossible." (Discussions, pp. 624, 630.)

VOLUME SECOND- BOOK THIRTEENTH- CHAPTER 25

- [1] Felice, Hist. Prof. France, vol. 1, p. 36.
- [2] Cunningham, Reformers and Theol. of Reform., p. 295.
- [3] Paul Lacroix-Bungener, Calvin, p. 57.
- [4] M. Nisard, Hist. of French Lit.
- [5] "Potontissimo Illustrissimoque Monarchae, Francisco, Francorum Regi Christianissimo, Principi suo, Joannes Calvinus, pacem ac salutem in Christo precatur." (Praefatio ad Regem Galliae—Calvini Opp., vol. 9.)
- [6] Praefatio ad Regem Galliae.
- [7] Praefatio ad Regem Galliae.
- [8] "Cur? Nisi quia illis Deus venter est, culina religio." (Praefatio ad Regem Galiae.)
- [9] Praefatio ad Regem Galiae.
- [10] Praefatio ad Regem Galliae.