

The History of Protestantism – Volume Third – Book Twenty- Second – Protestantism in France From Death of Henry IV (1610) to the Revolution (1789)

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1808-1890

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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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Henry IV – Dies in the Midst of his Great Schemes – Louis XIII – Maria de Medici Regent – Alarm of the Protestants – Character of Maria de Medici – Astrology – Governs her Son – Protestants hold a Political Convocation – Henri de Rohan – Degeneracy of the Huguenots – Synods of the French Protestant Church – New Policy of Louis XIII – The Jesuits – Toleration – Invasion of Bearn – Its Protestantism Suppressed – Jesuit Logic – Shall the Sword be Drawn? – War – Saumur – Death of Duplessis-Mornay – Siege of Montauban – of St. Jean d’Angely – A Scotch Pastor on the Ramparts – Peace – Question of the Distinct Autonomy of the Huguenots. WE resume our history of Protestantism in France at the death-bed of Henry IV. The dagger of Ravillac arrested that monarch in the midst of his great schemes.[1] Henry had abjured his mother’s faith, in the hope of thereby purchasing from Rome the sure tenure of his crown and the peaceful possession of his kingdom. He fancied that he had got what he bargained for; and being, as he supposed, firmly seated on the throne, he was making prodigious efforts to lift France out of the abyss in which he found her. He was laboring to re-establish order, to plant confidence, and to get rid of the immense debts which prodigality and dishonesty had accumulated, and which weighed so heavily upon the kingdom. He was taking the legitimate means to quicken commerce and agriculture – in short, to efface all those frightful traces which had been left on the country by what are known in history as the “civil wars,” but which were, in fact, crusades organized by the Government on a great scale, in violation of sworn treaties and of natural rights, for the extirpation of its Protestant subjects. Henry, moreover, was meditating great schemes of foreign policy, and had already dispatched an army to Germany in order to humble the House of Austria, and reduce the Spanish influence in Europe, so menacing to ‘the liberties and peace of

Christendom. It did seem as if the king would succeed; but his Austrian project too nearly touched the Papal interests. There were eyes watching Henry which he knew not of. His heretical foreign policy excited a suspicion that, although he was outwardly a Roman Catholic, he was at heart a Huguenot. In a moment, a Hand was stretched forth from the darkness, and all was changed. The policy of Henry IV perished with him.

He was succeeded on the throne by his son, Louis XIII, a youth of eight and a half years. That same evening, an edict of the Parliament of Paris made his mother, Maria de Medici, regent. The consternation of the Huguenots was great. Their hands instinctively grasped their sword-hilts. The court hastened to calm their fears by publishing a decree ratifying all the former edicts of toleration, and assuring the Protestants that the death of Henry IV would bring with it no change of the national policy; but with so many torn treaties and violated oaths, which they could not banish from their memory, what reliance could the Huguenots place on these assurances? Was it not but a spreading of the old snare around their feet? In the regent and her son they saw, under a change of names, a second Catherine de Medici and Charles IX, to be followed, it might be, by a second St. Bartholomew.

The boy of eight years who wore the crown could do only what his mother, the regent, counseled, or rather commanded. Maria de Medici was the real sovereign. That ill-fated marriage with the Pope's niece, alas! of how many wars was it destined to be the prolific source to France! Maria de Medici lacked the talent of her famous predecessor, Catherine de Medici, but she possessed all her treachery, bigotry, and baseness. She was a profound believer in witchcraft, and guided the vessel of the State by her astrological calculations. When divination failed her she had recourse to the advice of the Pope's nuncio, of the Spanish ambassador, and of Concini, a man of obscure birth from her native city of Florence, on whom she heaped high titles, though she could not impart to him noble qualities.

Under such guidance the vessel of the State was drawn farther and farther every day into the old whirlpool. When Louis XIII grew to be a few years older, he strove to break the trammels in which he was held, by banishing his mother to Blois, and instigating men to murder Concini, but he only fell under the influence of a favorite as worthless and profligate as the man he had employed assassins to rid him of. Intrigue, blood, and peculation disgraced the court. The great nobles, contemning the power of the sovereign, retired to their estates, where, at the head of their encampments, they lived like independent kings, and gave sad presage of the distractions and civil broils yet awaiting the unhappy land. But it is the Protestant thread, now becoming somewhat obscure, that we wish to follow.

The year after the king's accession (1611) the Protestant nobles met at Saumur, and held one of those political assemblies which they had planned for the regulation of religious interests after the abjuration of Henry IV.

The illustrious Duplessis-Mornay was elected president, and the famous Pastor Chaumier was made vice-president. The convocation consisted of seventy persons in all – noblemen, ministers, delegates from the Tiers Etat, and deputies from the town of La Rochelle: in short, a Huguenot Parliament. The Government, though reluctantly, had granted permission for their meeting; and their chief business was to elect two deputies-general, to be accepted by the court as the recognized heads of the Protestant body. The assembly met. They refused simply to inscribe two names in a bulletin and break up as the court wished; they sat four months, discussed the matters affecting their interests as Protestants, and asked of the Government redress of their grievances. They renewed their oath of union, which consisted in swearing fidelity to the king, always reserving their duty to "the sovereign empire of God." It was at this assembly that the talents of Henri de Rohan as a statesman and orator began to display themselves, and to give promise of the prominent place

he was afterwards to fill in the ranks of the Reformed. He strongly urged union among themselves, he exhorted them to show concern for the welfare of the humblest as well as of the highest in their body, and to display a firm spirit in dealing with Government in the way of exacting all the rights which had been guaranteed by treaty. "We are not come," he said, "to four cross-roads, but to a point where safety can be found in only one path. Let our object be the glory of God, and the security of the churches he has so miraculously established in this kingdom, providing eagerly for each other's benefit by every legitimate means. Let us religiously demand only what is necessary. Let us be firm in order to get it."

The want of union was painfully manifested at this assembly at Saumur, thanks to their enemies, who had done all in their power beforehand to sow jealousies among them. The fervent piety which characterized their fathers no longer distinguished their sons; the St. Bartholomew had inflicted worse evils than the blood it spilt, great as that was; many now cleaved to the Huguenots, whose religion was only a pretext for the advancement of their ambition; others were timid and afraid to urge even the most moderate demands lest they should be crushed outright. There was, too, a marked difference between the spirit of the Protestants in the north and in the south of France. The former were not able to shake off the terror of the turbulent and Popish capital, in the neighborhood of which they lived; the latter bore about them the free air of the mountains, and the bold spirit of the Protestant cities of the south, and when they spoke in the assembly it was with their swords half drawn from the scabbards. Similar political assemblies were held in subsequent years at Grenoble, at Nimes, at La Rochelle, and at other towns. Meetings of their National Synod were, too, of frequent occurrence during this period, the Moderator's chair being occupied not infrequently by men whose names were then, and are still, famous in the annals of Protestant literature – Chamier and Dumoulin. These Synods sought to rebuild the

French Protestant Church, almost fallen into ruins during the wars of the foregoing era, by restoring the exercise of piety in congregations, cutting off unworthy members, and composing differences and strifes among the Protestant nobles. Gathered from the battle-fields and the deserts of France, bitter memories behind and darkening prospects before them, these men were weary in heart and broken in spirit, and were without the love and zeal which had animated their fathers who sat in the Synod of La Rochelle forty years before, when the French Protestant Church was in the prime and flower of her days.

The Huguenots were warned by many signs of the sure approach of evil times. One ominous prognostic was the reversal of the foreign policy of Henry IV. His last years were devoted to the maturing of a great scheme for humbling the Austrian and Spanish Powers; and for this end the monarch had allied himself, as we have already related, with the northern Protestant nations. Louis XIII disconnected himself from his father's allies, and joined himself to his father's enemies, by the project of a double marriage; for while he solicited for himself the hand of the Spanish Infanta, he offered his sister in marriage to the Prince of the Asturias. This boded the ascendancy of Spain and of Rome once more in France – in other words, of persecution and war. Sinister reports were circulated through the kingdom that the price to be paid for this double alliance was the suppression of heresy. Soft words continued to come from the court, but the acts of its agents in the provinces were not in correspondence therewith. These were hard enough. The sword was not brought forth, it is true, but every other weapon of assault was vigorously plied. The priests incessantly importuned the king to forbid the Protestants from calling in question, by voice or by pen, the authority of the Church or of the Pope. He was solicited not to let them open a school in any city, not to let any of their ministers enter a hospital, or administer religious consolation to any of their sick; not to let any one from abroad teach any faith save the Roman; not to let them perform

their religious rites; in short, the monarch was to abrogate one by one all the rights secured by treaty to the Protestants, and disannul and make void by a process of evacuation the Edict of Nantes. The poor king did not need any importuning; it was not the will but the power that was wanting to him to fulfill the oath sworn at his coronation, to expel from the lands under his sway every man and woman denounced by the Church. At this time (1614) the States-General, or Supreme Parliament, of France met, the last ever convoked until that memorable meeting of 1789, the precursor of the Revolution. A deputy of the Tiers, or Commons, rose in that assembly to plead for toleration. His words sounded like blasphemy in the ears of the clergy and nobles; he was reminded of the king's oath to exterminate heretics, and told that the treaties sworn to the Huguenots were only provisional; in other words, that it was the duty of the Government always to persecute and slay the Protestants, except in one case – namely, when it was not able to do it.

Of these destructive maxims – destructive to the Huguenots in the first instance, but still more destructive to France in the long run – two terrible exemplifications were about to be given. The territory of Lower Navarre and Bearn, in the mountains of the Pyrenees, was the hereditary kingdom of Jeanne d'Albret, and we have already spoken of her efforts to plant in it the Protestant faith. She established churches, schools, and hospitals; she endowed these from the national property, and soon her little kingdom, in point of intelligence and wealth, became one of the most flourishing spots in all Christendom. Under her son (Henry IV) this kingdom became virtually a part of the French monarchy; but now (1617) it was wished more thoroughly to incorporate it with France. Of its inhabitants, two thirds – some say nine tenths – were Protestants. This appeared no obstacle whatever to the projected incorporation. The Bearnese had no right to be of any but the king's religion. A decree was issued, restoring the Roman Catholic faith in Bearn, and giving back

to the Romish clergy the entire ecclesiastical property, which had for a half-century been in possession of the Protestants. "These estates," so reasoned the Jesuit Arnoux, a disciple of the school of Escobar, "belong to God, who is the Proprietor of them, and may not be lawfully held by any save his priests." [2] Consternation reigned in Bearn; all classes united in remonstrating against this tyrannical decree, which swept away at once their consciences and their property. Their remonstrance was unheeded, and the king put himself at the head of an army to compel the Bearnese to submission. The soldiers led against this heretical territory, which they burned with zeal to purge and convert, were not very scrupulous as to the means. They broke open the doors of the churches, they burned the Protestant books, compelled the citizens to kneel when the Host passed, and drove them to mass with the cudgel. They dealt the more obstinate a thrust with the saber; the women dared not show themselves in the street, dreading worse violences. [3] In this manner was the Popish religion re-established in Bearn. This was the first of the dragonnades. Louis XIV was afterwards to repeat on the greater theater of France the bloody tragedy now enacted on the little stage of Bearn.

This was what even now the Protestants feared. Accordingly, at a political assembly held in La Rochelle, 1621, they made preparations for the worst. They divided Protestant France into eight departments or circles; they appointed a governor over each, with power to impose taxes, raise soldiers, and engage in battle. The supreme military power was lodged in the Duke de Bouillon, the assembly reserving to itself the power of making war or concluding peace. The question was put to the several circles, whether they should declare war, or wait the measures of the court? The majority were averse to hostilities. They felt the feeble tenure on which hung their rights, and even their lives; but they shuddered when they remembered the miseries which previous wars had brought in their train.

They counseled, therefore, that the sword should not be drawn till they were compelled to unsheathe it in self defense. This necessity had, in fact, already arisen. The king was advancing against them at the head of his army, his Jesuit confessor, Arnoux, having removed all moral impediments from his path. "The king's promises," said his confessor, "are either matters of conscience or matters of State. Those made to the Huguenots are not promises of conscience, for they are contrary to the precepts of the Church; and if they are promises of State they ought to be referred to the Privy Council, which is of opinion they ought not to be kept." [4] The Pope and cardinals united to smooth the king's way financially, by contributing between them 400,000 crowns, while the other clergy offered not less than a million of crowns to defray the war expenses.

The royal army crossed the Loire and opened the campaign, which they prosecuted with various but, on the whole, successful fortune. Some places surrendered, others were taken by siege, and the inhabitants, men and women, were often put to the sword. The Castle of Saumur, of which Duplessis-Mornay was governor, and which he held as one of the cautionary fortresses granted by the edicts, was taken by perfidy. The king pledged his word that, if Mornay would admit the royal troops, the immunities of the place should be maintained. No sooner had the king entered than he declared that he took definite possession of the castle. To give this act of ill-faith the semblance of an amicable arrangement, the king offered Mornay, in addition to the arrears of his salary, 100,000 crowns and a marshal's baton. "I cannot," replied the patriot, "in conscience or in honor sell the liberty and security of others;" adding that, "as to dignities, he had ever been more desirous to render himself worthy of them, than to obtain them." This great man died two years afterwards. His end was like his life. "We saw him," says Jean Daille, his private chaplain, "in the midst of death firmly laying hold on life, and enjoying full satisfaction where men are generally terrified." He was the last representative of that noble

generation which had been molded by the instructions of Calvin and the example of Beza.

The next exploit of the king's arms was the taking of St. Jean d'Angely. The besiegers were in great force around the walls, their shot was falling in an incessant shower upon the city, and the inhabitants, when not on duty on the ramparts, were forced to seek refuge in the cellars of their houses. Provisions were beginning to fail, and the citizens were now worn out by the fatigue of fighting night and day on the walls. In these circumstances, they sent a deputation to Mr. John Welsh, a Scottish minister, who had been exiled from his native land, and was now acting as pastor of the Protestant congregation in St. Jean d'Angely. They told him that one in particular of the enemy's guns, which was of great size, and moreover was very advantageously placed, being mounted on a rising ground, was sweeping that entire portion of the walls which was most essential to the defense, and had silenced their guns. What were they to do? they asked. Welsh exhorted them to defend the city to the last, and to encourage them he accompanied them through the streets, "in which the bullets were falling as plentifully as hail,"[\[5\]](#) and mounted the ramparts. Going up to one of the silent guns, he bade the cannonier resume firing; but the man had no powder. Welsh, seizing a ladle, hastened to the magazine and filled it with powder. As he was returning, a shot tore it out of his hand. 'Using his hat instead of a ladle, he filled it with powder, and going up to the gunner, made him load his piece. "Level well," said Welsh, "and God will direct the shot." The man fired, and the first shot dismounted the gun which had inflicted so much damage upon the defenders. The incident revived the courage of the citizens, and they resumed the defense, and continued it till they had extorted from their besiegers favorable terms of capitulation.[\[6\]](#)

Montauban withstood the royal arms, despite the prophecy of a Carmelite monk, who had come from Bohemia, with the reputation

of working miracles, and who assured the king that the city would, without doubt, fall on the firing of the four-hundredth gun. The mystic number had long since been completed, but Montauban still stood, and at the end of two months and a half, the king, with tears in his eyes, retired from before its walls. It is related that the besieged were apprised of the approaching departure of the army by a soldier of the Reformed religion, who, on the evening before the siege was raised, was playing on his flute the beginning of the sixty-eighth Psalm, "Let God arise, and let his enemies be scattered, and let them also that hate him flee before him," etc.[7] The king had better success at Montpellier, on the taking of which he judged it prudent to close the campaign by signing terms of peace on the 19th October, 1622. The peace indicated a loss of position on the part of the Protestants. The Edict of Nantes was confirmed, but of the cautionary towns which that edict had put into the hands of the Protestants, only two were now left them – Montauban and La Rochelle.

The French Protestants at this stage of their history are seen withdrawing to a certain extent from the rest of the nation, constituting themselves into a distinct civil community, and taking independent political and military action. This was a strong step, but the attitude of the Government, and its whole procedure towards them for a century previous, may perhaps be held as justifying it. It appeared to them the only means left them of defending their natural rights. We are disposed to think, however, that it would have been well had the French Protestants drawn more strongly the line which separated their action as citizens from their action as church members – in other words, given more prominence to their church organization. The theory which they had received from Calvin, and on which they professed to act, was that while society is one, it is divided into the two great spheres of Church and State; that as members of the first – that is, of the Church – they formed an organization distinct from that of the State; that this organization was constituted upon a distinct basis,

that of Revelation; that it was placed under a distinct Head, namely, Christ; that it had distinct rights and laws given it by God; and that in the exercise of these rights and laws, for its own proper ends, it was not dependence upon, or accountable to, the State. This view of the Church's origin and constitution makes her claims and jurisdiction perfectly intelligible; and gives, as the French style it, her *raison d'être*. It may not be assented to by all, but even where it is not admitted it can be understood, and the independent jurisdiction of the Church, whether right or wrong in fact, on which we are here pronouncing no opinion, will be seen to be in logical consistency with at least this theory of her constitution. This theory was embraced in Scotland as well as in France, but in the former country it was more consistently carried out than in the latter. While the French Protestants were "the Religion," the Scots were "the Church;" while the former demanded "freedom of worship," the latter claimed "liberty to administer their ecclesiastical constitution." The weakness of the French Protestants was that they failed to put prominently before the nation their rights as a divinely chartered society, and in their action largely blended things civil and things ecclesiastical. The idea of "Headship," which is but a summary phrase for their whole conception of a Church, enabled the Scots to keep the two more completely separate than perhaps anywhere else in Christendom. In Germany the magistrate has continued to be the chief bishop; in Geneva the Church tended towards being the supreme magistrate; the Scots have aimed at keeping in the middle path between Erastianism and a theocracy. Yet, as a proof that the higher law will always rule, while nowhere has the action of the Church been so little directly political as in Scotland, nowhere has the Church so deeply molded the genius of the people, or so strongly influenced the action of the State.

CHAPTER 2 [Back to Top](#) FALL OF LA ROCHELLE, AND END OF THE WARS OF RELIGION.

Cardinal Richelieu – His Genius – His Schemes – Resolves to Crush the Huguenots – Siege of La Rochelle – Importance of the Town – English Fleet Sent to Succor it – Treachery of Charles I – The Fleet Returns – A Second and Third Fleet – Famine in La Rochelle – Fall of the City – End of the Religious Wars – Despotism Established in France – Fruitless Efforts of Rohan to Rouse the Huguenots – Policy of Richelieu – His Death – Louis XIII Dies. THERE was now about to appear on the scene a man who was destined to act a great part in the affairs of Europe. The Bishop of Lucon was a member of the States-General which, as we have already said, assembled in 1614; and there he first showed that aptitude for business which gave him such unrivalled influence and unbounded fame as Cardinal Richelieu. He was a man of profound penetration, of versatile genius, and of unconquerable activity. The queen-mother introduced him to the council-table of her son Louis XIII, and there the force of his character soon raised him to the first place. He put down every rival, became the master of his sovereign, and governed France as he pleased. It was about this time (1624) that his power blossomed. He was continually revolving great schemes, but, great as they were, his genius and activity were equal to the execution of them. Although a churchman, the aim of his ambition was rather to aggrandize France than to serve Rome. The Roman purple was to him a garment, and nothing more; or, if he valued it in any degree, it was because of the aid it brought him in the accomplishment of his political projects.

Once and again in the pursuit of these projects he crossed the Pope's path, without paying much regard to the anger or alarm his policy might awaken in the Vatican. His projects were mainly three. He found the throne weak – in fact contemned – and he wished to raise it up, and make it a power in France. he found the nobles turbulent, and all but ungovernable, and he wished to break their power and curb their pride. In the third place, he revived the policy of Henry IV, which sought to reduce the power of Austria, in both the Imperial and

Spanish branches, and with this view the cardinal courted alliances with England and the German States. So far well, as regarded the great cause of Protestantism; but, unfortunately, Richelieu accounted it a necessary step toward the accomplishment of these three leading objects of his ambition, that he should first subdue the Huguenots. They had come to be a powerful' political body in the State, with a government of their own, thus dividing the kingdom, and weakening the throne, which it was one of his main objects to strengthen. The Protestants, on the other hand, regarded their political organization as their only safeguard – the bulwark behind which they fought for their religious liberties. How feeble a defense were royal promises and oaths, was a matter on which they had but too ample an experience; and, provided their political combinations were broken up, and their cautionary towns wrested from them, they would be entirely, they felt, at the mercy of their enemies. But this was what the powerful cardinal had resolved upon. The political rights of the Huguenots were an obstacle in his path, which, postponing every other project, he now turned the whole resources of the crown, and the whole might of his genius, to sweep away.

About this time all incident happened at court which is worth recording. One day Father Arnoux, the king's confessor, was preaching before his Majesty and courtiers. The Jesuit pronounced a strong condemnation on regicide, and affirmed solemnly that the Order of Jesus allowed no such practice, but, on the contrary, repudiated it. Louis XIII, in whose memory the murder of his father was still fresh, felt this doctrine to be reassuring, and expressed his satisfaction with it. A Scottish minister of the name of Primrose chanced on that day to be among the auditors of Father Arnoux, and easily saw through the sophism with which he was befooling the king.

Primrose made the Jesuit be asked if Jacques Clement had killed his king, or even a king, when he stabbed a prince excommunicated by the Pope? And further, in the event of the

Pope excommunicating Louis XIII, would the Jesuits then acknowledge him as tacit king, or even as a king? And, finally, were they disposed to condemn their disciple Ravallac as guilty of high treason? These were embarrassing questions, and the only response which they drew forth from Arnoux was an order of banishment against the man who had put them.[1]

The Huguenot body at this period had, to use the old classic figure, but one neck – that neck was their stronghold of La Rochelle, and the cardinal resolved to strike it through at a blow. La Rochelle was perhaps, after Paris, the most famous of the cities of France. It enjoyed a charter of civic independence, which dated from the twelfth century. It was governed by a mayor and council of 100. Its citizens amounted at this time to 30,000. They were industrious, rich, intelligent, and strongly attached to the Protestant faith, which they had early embraced. Not once throughout the long struggle had La Rochelle succumbed to the royal arms, though often besieged.[2] This virgin fortress was the strongest rampart of the Huguenots.

The great chiefs – Conde, Coligny, Henry of Navarre – had often made it their head-quarters. Within its gates had assembled the famous Synod of 1571, which comprised so much that was illustrious in rank, profound in erudition, and venerable in piety, and which marks the culminating epoch of the French Reformed Church. La Rochelle was the basis of the Huguenots; it was the symbol of their power, and while it stood their political and religious existence could not be crushed. On that very account Richelieu, who had resolved to erect a monarchical despotism in France, was all the more determined to overthrow it.

The first attempt of the cardinal against this redoubtable city was made in 1625. Arising under the Dukes of Rohan and Soubise, the two military leaders of the Protestants, disconcerted the plans which Richelieu was carrying out

against Austria. He instantly dropped his schemes abroad to strike a blow at home. Sending the French fleet to La Rochelle, a great naval battle, in which Richelieu was completely victorious, was fought off the coast. La Rochelle seemed at the mercy of the victor; but the discovery of a plot against his life called the cardinal suddenly to court, and the doomed city escaped. Richelieu crushed his enemies at Paris, grasped power more firmly than ever, and again turned his thoughts to the reduction of the stronghold of the Protestants. The taking of La Rochelle was the key of his whole policy, home and foreign, and he made prodigious efforts to bring the enterprise to a successful issue. He raised vast land and naval armaments, and opened the siege in October, 1627.

The eyes of all Europe were fixed on the city, now enclosed both by sea and land, by the French armies. All felt how momentous was the issue of the conflict about to open. The spirit of the Rochellois was worthy of the brave men from whom they were sprung, and of the place their city held in the great cause in which it had embarked. The mayor, Guiton, to an earnest Protestantism added all iron will and a dauntless courage. With nothing around them but armed enemies, the ships of the foe covering the sea, and the lines of his infantry occupying the land, the citizens were of one mind, to resist to the last. The attitude of the brave city, and the greatness of the issue that hung upon its standing or falling, as regarded the Protestant cause, awakened the sympathies of the Puritans of England. They raised a powerful army for the relief of their brethren of La Rochelle; but their efforts were frustrated by the treachery of the court. Charles I, influenced by his wife, Henrietta of France, wrote to Pennington, the commander of the fleet, "to dispose of those ships as he should be directed by the French king, and to sink or fire such as should refuse to obey these orders." When the sailors discovered that they were to act not for, but against the Rochellois, they returned to England, declaring that they

“would rather be hanged at home for disobedience, than either desert their ships, or give themselves up to the French like slaves, to fight against their own religion.”

Next year, after the Duke of Soubise, who commanded in La Rochelle, had visited England, the king was prevailed upon again to declare himself the protector of the Rochellois, and an army of about 7,000 marines was raised for that service. The English squadron set sail under the command of Buckingham, an incompetent and unprincipled man. Its appearance off La Rochelle, 100 sail strong, gladdened the eyes of the Rochellois; but it was only for a moment. There now commenced on the part of Buckingham a series of blunders and disasters, which, whether owing to incompetency or perfidy, tarnished the naval glory of England, and bitterly mocked the hopes of those to whom it had held out the delusive prospect of deliverance. Better, in truth, it had never come, for its appearance suggested to Richelieu the expedient which led inevitably to the fall of the city. La Rochelle might be victualled by sea, and so long as it was so, its reduction, the cardinal felt, was impracticable. To prevent this, Richelieu bethought him of the same expedient by which a conqueror of early times had laid a yet prouder city, Tyre, level with the waters. The cardinal raised a dyke or mole across the channel of about a mile's breadth, by which La Rochelle is approached, and so closed the gates of the sea against its succor. The English fleet assailed this dyke in vain. Baffled in all their attempts, they returned to their own shores, and left the beleaguered city to its fate. Famine now set in, and soon became sore in the city; but it 'would be too harrowing to dwell on its horrors. The deaths were 300 daily. The most revolting garbage was cooked and eaten. Specters, rather than men, clad in armor, moved through the streets. The houses were full of dead, which the living had not strength to bury. Crowds of old women and children went out at the gate, at times, in the hope that the sight of their great misery might move their enemies to pity, or that they might find something

by the way to assuage their hunger; but they were dealt with as the caprice or cruelty of the besiegers prompted. Sometimes they were strangled on gibbets, and sometimes they were stripped naked and scourged back into the city. Still no thought of a surrender was entertained.

For more than a year had the Rochellois waited, if haply from any quarter – the Protestants of other countries, or their brethren in the provinces – deliverance might arise. In no quarter could they descry sign or token of help; not a voice was raised to cheer, not a hand was stretched out to aid. Fifteen terrible months had passed over them. Two-thirds of the population were dead. Of the fighting men not more than 150 remained. Around their walls was assembled the whole power of France. There seemed no alternative, and on October 28th, 1628, La Rochelle surrendered at discretion. So fell the Huguenots as a political power in France. The chief obstacle in the path of Richelieu was now out of his way. The despotism which he strove to rear went on growing apace. The throne became stronger every year, gradually drawing to itself all rights, and stretching its absolute sway over all classes, the nobles as well as the peasants, till at last Louis XIV could say, "The State, it is I." And so continued matters till the Revolution of 1789 came to cast down this overgrown autocracy.

But one is curious to know how it came to pass that the great body of the Protestants in the south of France looked quietly on, while their brethren and their own political rights were so perilously endangered in the fall of La Rochelle. While the siege was in progress, the Duke of Rohan, the last great military chief of the Protestants, traversed the whole of the Cevennes, where the Huguenots were numerous, appealing to their patriotism, to the memory of their fathers, to their own political and religious privileges – all suspended upon the issue at La Rochelle – in the hope of rousing them to succor their brethren. But his words fell on cold hearts. The ancient spirit was dead.

All the ancient privileges of La Rochelle were annulled, and the Roman Catholic religion was re-established in that city. The first mass was sung by Cardinal Richelieu himself. One cannot but admire the versatility of his genius. During the siege he had shown himself the ablest and most resolute soldier in the whole camp. All the operations of the siege were of his planning; the construction of the mole, the lines of circumvallation, all were prepared by his instructions, and executed under his superintendence; and now, the bloody work at an end, he put off his coat of mail, washed his hands, and appearing before the altar in his priestly robes, he inaugurated the Roman worship in La Rochelle by celebrating the most solemn service of his Church. A Te Deum, by Pope Urban VIII, for the fall of the stronghold of the Huguenots, showed how the matter was viewed at Rome.

After this the Protestants could offer no organized resistance, and the king, by way of setting up a monument to commemorate his triumph, placed the Huguenots under an edict of grace. This was a virtual revocation of the Edict of Nantes; the father, however, left it to the son, Louis XIV., to complete formally what he had begun; but henceforward the French Protestants held their lives, and what of their political and religious rights was left them, of grace and not of fight. Had the nation of France rest now that the wars of religion were ended? No; the wars of prerogative immediately opened. The Roman Catholic nobles had assisted Richelieu to put down the Huguenots, and now they found that they had cleared the way for the tempest to reach themselves. They were humbled in their turn, and the throne rose above all classes and interests of the State. The cardinal next gave his genius and energy to affairs abroad. He took part, as we have seen, in the Thirty Years' War, uniting his arms with those of the heroic Gustavus Adolphus, not because he wished to lift up the Protestants, but because he sought to humble the House of Austria and the Catholic League. Personal enemies the cardinal readily forgave, for, said he, it is a duty to pardon and

forget offenses; but the enemies of his policy, whom he styled the enemies of Church and State, he did not pardon, "for," said he, "to forget these offenses is not to forgive them, it is to repeat them."

It was the design of God to humble one class of his enemies by the instrumentality of another, and so Richelieu prospered in all he undertook, he weakened the emperor; he mightily raised the prestige of the French arms, and he made the throne the one power in the kingdom. But these brilliant successes added little to the personal happiness of either the king or his minister. Louis XIII was of gloomy temper, of feeble intellect, of no capacity for business; and his energetic minister, who did all himself, permitted his sovereign little or no share in the management of affairs.

Louis lived apart, submitting painfully to the control of the man who governed both the king and the kingdom. As regards the cardinal, while passing from one victory to another he was constantly followed by a menacing shadow. Ever and anon conspiracies were formed to take away his life. He triumphed over them all, and held power to the last, but neither he nor the king lived to enjoy what it took such a vast amount of toil and talent and blood to achieve. The cardinal first, and six months after, the king, were both stricken, in the mid-time of their days and in the height of their career. They returned to their dust, and that day their thoughts perished.

CHAPTER 3 [Back to Top](#) INDUSTRIAL AND LITERARY EMINENCE OF THE FRENCH PROTESTANTS.

Liberty Falls with the Huguenots – Louis XIV – Mazarin at the Helm – His Character – The Nobles and the Mob – The Protestants – They Excel in Agriculture – Their Eminence in Trade and Manufactures – Their Superior Probity – Foreign Commerce in their Hands – Their Professional and Literary Eminence – Pulpit Eloquence – French Synods – Mere Shadows of Former Assemblies – French Protestant Seminaries – Montauban –

Saumur – Sedan – Nimes – Eminent Protestant Pastors – Chamier – Dumoulin – Petit – Rivet – Basnage – Blondel – Bochart – Drelincourt. THE mob and the nobles took part with the French court in its efforts to extinguish Protestantism. With their help the court triumphed. The seeds of Protestantism were still in the soil of France, covered up by a million of corpses, and these the very men who, had their lives been spared, would have enriched the nation with their industry, glorified it with their genius, and defended it with their arms. We are now arrived at the end of the religious wars. What has France gained by her vast expenditure of blood and treasure? Peace? No; despotism. The close of the reign of Louis XIII shows us the nobles and the mob crushed in their turn, and the throne rising in autocratic supremacy above all rights and classes. One class, however, is exempt from the general serfdom. The Church shares the triumph of the throne. The hand of a priest has been laid upon the helm of the State, and the king and the clergy together sway the destinies of a prostrate people. This ill-omened alliance is destined to continue for, though one cardinal minister is dead, another is about to take his place – and the tyranny which has grown out of it is destined to go on, adding year by year to its own prerogatives and the people's burdens, until its existence and exactions shall terminate together by the arrival of the Revolution, which will mingle all four the throne, the priesthood, the aristocracy, and the commonalty – in one great ruin.

Louis XIV, now king, was a child of four and a half years. His father on his death-bed had named a council of regency to assist the queen-mother in governing the kingdom during the minority of his son. The, first act of Anne of Austria was to cancel the, will of her husband, and to assume the reins of government as sole regent, calling to her aid as prime minister Cardinal Mazarin, the disciple of Richelieu. There fell to him an easier task than that which had taxed the energies and genius of his great predecessor.

Richelieu had fought the battle of the crown, and subjected to it both the nobles and the people: the work expected of Mazarin was that he should keep what Richelieu had won. This he found, however, no easy matter. Richelieu had carefully husbanded the revenues of the State; Mazarin wasted them. Extravagance created debts; debts necessitated new taxes; the taxes were felt to be grievous burdens by the people. First murmurs were heard; then, finally, insurrection broke out. The nobles, now that Richelieu was in his grave, were attempting to throw off the yoke. An oppressed, turbulent, and insurrectionary people were parading the streets of the capital, and carrying their threats to the very gates of the palace. Both nobles and mob thought the time favorable for reducing the power of the throne, and recovering those privileges and that influence of which the great minister of Louis XIII had stripped them. They did not succeed. The yoke which themselves had so large a share in fitting upon their own necks they were compelled to wear; but the troubles in which they plunged the country were a shield for the time over the small remnant of Protestantism which had been spared in France.

That remnant began again to flourish. Shut out from the honors of the court, and the offices of the State, the great body of the Protestants transferred their talents and activity to the pursuits of agriculture, of trade, and of manufactures. In these they eminently excelled. The districts where they lived were precisely those where the richest harvests were seen to wave. The farms they owned in Bearn became proverbial for their fertility and beauty. The Protestant portions of Languedoc were known by their richer vines, and more luxuriant wheat. The mountains of the Cevennes were covered with noble forests of chestnuts, which, in harvest-time, let fall their nuts in a rain as plenteous as that of the manna of the desert, to which the inhabitants compared it. In those forests wandered numerous herds, which fed on the rich grasses that flourished underneath the great trees. Era-bosomed :in one of

the mountains, the Eperon, was a plain which the traveler found green and enameled with flowers at all seasons. It abounded in springs, and when the summer had wasted the neighboring herbage, the sun touched the pastures of this plain with a brighter green, and tinted its blossoms with a livelier hue. It was not unworthy of the name given it, the Hort-Dieu, or garden of the Lord. The Vivrais produced more corn than the inhabitants could consume. The diocese of Uzes overflowed with oil and wine. The valley of the Vaunage, in the district of Nimes, became famous for the luxuriance of its fields and the riches of its gardens. The Protestants, to whose skill and industry it largely owed the exuberance that gave it renown, had more than sixty churches within its limits, and marked their appreciation of its happy conditions by calling it the "Little Canaan." Everywhere France boasts a fertile soil and a sunny air, but wherever the Huguenot had settled, there the earth opened her bosom in a seven-fold increase, and nature seemed to smile on a faith which the Government had anathematized, and which it pursued with persecuting edicts.

The Protestants of France were marked by the same superiority in trade which distinguished them in agriculture. Here their superior intelligence and application were, perhaps, even more apparent, and were rewarded with a yet greater measure of success. The wine trade of many districts, especially that of Guienne, was almost entirely in their hands. The goods of the linen and cloth weavers of Vire, Falaise, and Argentine, in Normandy, they sold to the English and Dutch merchants, thus nourishing the home industry while they enriched the foreign market. They were the main carriers between Metz and Germany. The Nimes merchants were famous all over the south of France, and by their skill and capital they provided employment and food for innumerable families who otherwise would have been sunk in idleness and poverty. "If the Nimes merchants," wrote Baviile, the Intendant of the province, in 1699, "are still bad Catholics, at any rate they have not ceased to be very

good traders.”[1] In the center of France, at Tours, on the banks of the Rhone, at Lyons, they worked in silks and velvets, and bore off the palm from every other country for the quality of their fabrics and the originality and beauty of their designs. They excelled in the manufacture of woollen cloths. In the mountainous parts of the Cevennes, families often passed their summers a-field, and their winters at the loom. They displayed not less skill in the manufacture of paper. The paper-mills of Ambert were unrivalled in Europe. They produced the paper on which the best printing of Pads, Amsterdam, and London was executed. They were workers in iron, and fabricated with skill and elegance weapons of war and implements of husbandry. In all these industries large and flourishing factories might be seen in all parts of France. If the mercantile marine flourished along the western and northern sea. board, and the towns of Bordeaux, La Rochelle, and the Norman ports rapidly grew in population and wealth, it was mainly owing to the energy and enterprise of the Huguenots. After the horrid din of battle which had so long shaken France, it was sweet to hear only the clang of the hammer; and after the fearful conflagration of burning cities which had so often lit up the midnight skies of that country, it was pleasant to see no more startling spectacle than the blaze of the forge reflected from the overhanging cloud.

The probity of the French Protestants was not less conspicuous than their intelligence. This quality could not be hidden from the quick eyes of foreign merchants, and they selected as their medium of communication with France those in whose honesty they could thoroughly confide, in preference to those whom they deemed of doubtful integrity. This tended to their further importance and wealth, by placing the foreign trade of the country in their hands. The commercial correspondents of the Dutch and English merchants were almost exclusively Huguenots. Their word was taken where the bond of a Romanist would be hesitatingly accepted or, it might be, declined. The cause of this superior integrity is to be found not only in

their higher religious code, but also in the fact that, being continually and malignantly watched by their countrymen, they found their safety to lie in Unremitting circumspection and unimpeachable integrity. There was, moreover, a flexibility about their minds which was wanting in their Romanist countrymen. Their religion taught them to inquire and reason, it awoke them from the torpor and emancipated them from the stiffness that weighed upon others, and this greater versatility and Power they easily transferred to the avocations of their daily life. The young Huguenot not infrequently visited foreign countries, sometimes in the character of a traveler impelled by thirst for knowledge, and sometimes in the character of an exile whom the storms of persecution had cast on an alien shore; but in whatever capacity he mingled with foreigners, he always carried with him a mind keen to observe, and open to receive new ideas. On his return he improved or perfected the manufactures of his own land, by grafting upon them the better methods he had seen abroad. Thus, partly by studying in foreign schools, partly by their own undoubted inventive powers, the French Protestants carried the arts and manufactures of France to a pitch of perfection which few countries have reached, perhaps none excelled, and their numbers, their wealth, and their importance increased despite all the efforts of the Government to degrade and even to exterminate them. As an additional element of their prosperity, we must add that the year of the Huguenot contained a good many more working days than that of the Romanist. The fete-days of the Church abridged the working year of the latter to 260 days; whereas that of the Protestant contained 50 days more, or 310 in all.

Agriculture, manufactures, and art did not exclusively engross the French Protestants. Not a few aspired to a higher sphere, and there their genius shed even a greater glory on their country, and diffused a brighter luster around their own names. Protestants took a foremost place among the learned physicians, the great lawyers, and the illustrious orators of

France. Their intellectual achievements largely contributed to the splendor which irradiated the era of Louis XIV. A Protestant advocate, Henry Basnage, led for fifty years the Rouen bar.[2] His friend, Lemery, father of the illustrious chemist, of whose birth within her walls Rouen is to this day proud, discharged with rare distinction, in the Parliament so hostile to the Huguenots, the duties of Procureur.[3] The glory of founding the French Academy is due to a Protestant, Valentine Conrart, a man of fine literary genius. A little company of illustrious men, who met at Conrart's house, first suggested the idea of the Academy to Richelieu. The statesman gave it a charter, but Conrart gave it rules, and continued to be its life and soul until the day of his death. In this list of Protestants who adorned the country that knew so in to appreciate their faith, was Guy Pantin. He was distinguished as a man of letters, and not less distinguished as a philosopher and a physician. Another great name is that of Pierre Dumoulin, who is entitled to rank with the best of the classical prose writers of France. "With more respect for the proprieties," says Weiss, "and less harshness of character, his style reminded the reader of the great qualities of that of Calvin, whose Institutes of Christianity had supplied France with its first model of a lucid, ingenious, and vehement prose, such as the author of the Provincial Letters would not have disowned." [4]

With the Huguenots came the era of pulpit eloquence in France. In the worship of the Church of Rome, the sermon was but the mere accessory. In the Protestant Church the sermon became not indeed the essential, but the central part of the service. The Reformation removed the sacrifice of the mass and restored the Word of God, it banished the priest and brought back the preacher. Thus the pulpit, which had played a prominent part in the early Church, but had long been forgotten, was again set up, and men gathered round it, as being almost solely the font of Divine knowledge so long as the Bible in the vernacular was scarcely accessible. The preacher had to study

that he might teach. His office was to instruct, to convince, to exhort; and the more than human grandeur of his topics, and the more than temporary issues of his preaching, tended to beget a sublimity both of thought and utterance that reached the loftiest oratory. The audiences daily grew: the preacher excelled more and more in his noble art, and the Protestant pulpit became the grand pioneer of modern eloquence.

Rome soon saw that she could not with safety to herself despise an instrumentality so powerful. Hence arose a rivalry between the two Churches, which elevated the pulpits of both, but in the end the Popish seemed to distance the Protestant pulpit. The Protestant preacher gave more attention to the truth he delivered than to the words in which he expressed it, or the gestures with which he set it forth. The preachers who filled the Roman pulpits brought to their aid the arts of a brilliant rhetoric, and the graces of an impassioned delivery, and thus it came to pass that, towards the end of the century, the Church of Rome bore off the palm of pulpit oratory in France. The Protestant preachers of that day had much to dishearten and depress them; the great orators of the Romish Church – Bossuet, Massillon, Flechier, Bourdaloue, and Fenelon – had, on the contrary, everything to awaken and reward their efforts; but it was the preachers formed in the school of Calvin that paved the way for those who so successfully and so brilliantly succeeded them. “If France had never had her Saurins,” said one of the great orators of the English pulpit, “her Claudes, her Du Plessis-Mornays, her national Church had never boasted the genius of Bossuet, and the virtues of Fenelon.”[5]

From the pulpit we turn to the Protestant Synods of France. During the wars which the ambition of Richelieu carried on in the latter end of the reign of Louis XIII, and the troubles which distracted the nation in the opening years of the reign of Louis XIV, several National Synods of the Protestant Church were held. These were but mere shadows of the numerous and

majestic assemblies of the better days of the French Church, and the hearts of the members could not but be sad when they thought how glory and power had departed from them since the days of the Queen of Navarre and of Admiral Coligny, illustrious as a warrior and statesman, but not less illustrious as a Christian. The right of meeting had to be solicited from the court; it was always obtained with difficulty; and the interval between each successive Synod was longer and longer, preparatory to their final suppression. The royal commissioner brought with him from court most commonly an ungrateful message; it was delivered in an imperious tone, and was heard in obsequious silence. The members of Synod were reminded that if the throne was powerful its authority was their shield, and that it was their wisdom to uphold, as it was their duty to be thankful for, a prerogative which in its exercise was so benignant towards them. Men who, like these French pastors, met under the shadow of a tyrannical king, with the sword of persecution hanging by a single thread above their heads, could not be expected to show much life or courage, or devise large and effective measures for the building up of their ancient Church. They were entirely in the power of their enemy, and any bold step would have been eagerly laid hold of by the Government as a pretext for crushing them outright. They were spared because they were weak, but their final extinction was ever kept in view.

Still all glory had not departed from the Protestant Church of France. Among its pastors, as we have just seen, were men of great genius, of profound erudition, and of decided piety; and these, finding all corporate action jealously denied them by the Government, turned their energies into other channels. If Protestantism was decaying and passing from view, there were individual Protestants who stood nobly out, and whose names and labors were renowned in foreign countries. French Protestant literature blossomed in the seventeenth century, which was the age of great theological writers in France, as the sixteenth had been the age of famous Synods. Of these

writers not a few keep their place after the lapse of two centuries, and their works are accounted, both in our own country and in Germany, standards on the subjects of which they treat. Their writings are characterized by the same fine qualities which distinguished the great authors of their nation in other departments of literature – a penetrating judgment, an acute logic, a rich illustrative power which makes the lights and shadows of fancy to play across the page, and a brilliant diction which enriches and purifies the thought that shines through it. These men occupied the pulpits of some of the most important towns, or they filled the chairs of the seminaries or colleges which the Protestant Church was permitted to maintain, and which she richly endowed. The French Church at that time had four such academies – Montauban, Saumur, Sedan, and Nimes.

The first of these four seminaries, Montauban, was famous for the high tone of its orthodoxy. It was a well of Calvinism undefiled. It was not less distinguished for the eminent talents of its teachers. Among others, it boasted Daniel Chamier, a remarkable man, whose name was famous in his own day, and is not unknown in ours. Combining the sagacity of the statesman with the erudition of the theologian, he had a chief hand in the drawing up of the Edict of Nantes. He was a distinguished controversialist, and bore away the prize in a public discussion at Nimes with the confessor of Henry IV. At the request of his brethren, he undertook a refutation of Bellarmine, the ablest of the Papal champions. This work, in four volumes, has received the praise of a modern German theologian, Staudlin, for the stores of knowledge its author displays, and the searching criticism which he brings to bear upon the Popish system. The manner of his death was unusual. During the siege of Montauban (1621) he was sent to preach to the soldiers on the walls, who had not been able to attend church. As he mounted the ramparts, he was struck by a cannon-ball, and expired.

Saumur was the symbol of a declining theology. Its professors conducted their labors chiefly with an eye to smoothing the descent from Calvinism to Arminianism. They were learned men in the main, and produced works which excited a various interest. A moderate theology has ever had a tendency to stereotype men in moderate attainments: the professors of Saumur are no exception. Their names would awaken no recollections now, and it is unnecessary therefore to mention them.

Sedan had a purer fame, and a more interesting history. It is associated with the name of Andrew Melville, and of numerous other Scotsmen who here taught with distinction. Pierre Dumoulin (1658), one of the greatest Protestants of his day, filled one of its chairs. As minister of Charenton, he had been the head of the Protestants of Paris, where his talents and influence were of great service to the cause in every part of France; but becoming obnoxious to the Jesuits, he fled to Sedan, then an independent principality, though under the King of France. Here the remainder of his most laborious life was passed. No fewer than seventy three works proceeded from his pen; of these the most popular were the Buckler of the Faith, and the Anatomy of the Mass. The latter still finds numerous readers. Dumoulin was a child of four years when the St. Bartholomew Massacre took place, and would, even at that tender age, have been included among its victims but for the kindness of a servant. He lived to the age of ninety. When one told him that his dissolution was near, he thanked him for bringing him such happy tidings, and broke out into a welcome to death – "that lovely messenger that would bring him to see his God, after whom he had so long aspired." And so he ceased to be seen of men. It was in this university that Daniel Tilenius taught. He was the first to introduce into France those theological controversies touching Grace and Free Will, which the celebrated Arminius had, as we have seen, begun in Holland a few years before. The progress of Arminian views gradually weakened the hold of Calvinism on the French

Reformed Church.

Of these four seats of Protestant learning, Nimes was the least famous. It numbered among its professors Samuel Petit (1643). This man, who was a distinguished Oriental scholar, filled the chair of Greek and Hebrew in this academy. An anecdote is told of him which attests the familiarity he had acquired with the latter language. One day he entered the synagogue of Avignon, and found the rabbi delivering a bitter vituperation in Hebrew' upon Christianity and Christians. Petit waited till the speaker had made an end; and then, to the no small astonishment of the rabbi, he began a reply in the same tongue, in which he calmly vindicated the faith the Jew had aspersed, and exhorted its assailant to study Christianity before again attacking it. The rabbi is said to have offered an apology. A cardinal, who had so high an esteem of his learning as to court his friendship, offered to obtain for him admission into the Vatican Library at Rome, with liberty to inspect the manuscripts. The offer must have been a tempting one to an Orientalist like Petit, but for reasons which he did not think himself obliged to state to the cardinal, he courteously declined it.

Besides the men we have mentioned, the Protestant Church of France, in the seventeenth century, possessed not a few pastors eminent for their piety and labors, whose works have long preserved their names. Among these we mention Andre Rivet (1651), a distinguished commentator. He began his career as a pastor in France, and closed it as a professor of theology in Holland. The principles of criticism which he lays down in his Introduction to the Study of the Bible he exemplifies in his Commentary on the Psalms, which is one of the best expositions .of that part of Holy Writ that we possess. Aubertin (1652) was the author of a work on the Eucharist, which those of the contrary opinion found it much easier to denounce to the Privy Council than to answer. Benjamin Basnage (1652) was a man of ability; his grandson, Jacques Basnage, was still more so.

Blondel (1655) was the ecclesiastical historian of his day, and one of the first to expose the forged decretals of Rome. Bochart (1667), a man of prodigious learning, and of equal modesty, has left behind him an imperishable name. Mestrezat (1657) wielded a logic which was the terror of the Jesuits. Drelincourt (1669) spent his days in visiting his flock, and his nights in meditation and writing. His Consolations against Death still preserves his fame, having been translated into nearly all the languages of Europe. One other name only will we here mention, that of Jean Daille (1670), who was one of Drelincourt's colleagues in Paris. The work by which the collaborator and friend of the author of the Consolations against Death is best known is his Apology for the Reformed Churches, in which he vindicates them from the charge of schism, and establishes, on irrefragable historic proofs, their claim to apostolicity.

So many were the lights that still shone in the sky of French Protestantism. The whole power of the Government had for a century been put forth to extinguish it. War had done its worst. All the great military leaders, and the 7 of the common soldiers, lay rotting on the battle-field. To war was added massacre. Again and again had the soil of France been drenched in blood. Violence had so far prevailed that the Synods of the French Church were now but a name. But the piety and learning of individual Protestants survived all these disasters; and, like stars appearing after the clouds of tempest have passed away, they lent a glory to the remnant that was spared, and proclaimed to France how inherently noble was the cause which it was striving to extinguish, and what a splendor Protestantism would shed upon the nation, had it been permitted in peace to put forth its mighty energies, and to diffuse throughout the length and breadth of France its many virtues, and ripen its precious fruits.

CHAPTER 4 [Back to Top](#) THE DRAGONNADES.

The War of the Fronde – Mazarin adopts the Foreign Policy of

Richelieu – Dies at the Height of his Power – Louis XIV now Absolute – “The State, it is I” – His Error as a King – His Error as a Man – Alternate Sinning and Repenting – Extermination of the Huguenots – Confiscation of their Churches – Arrets against Protestants – Fund for the Purchase of Consciences – Father la Chaise – Madame de Maintenon – The Dragonnades – Conversions and Persecutions. WE now resume our narrative. Louis, a mere youth, was king; his mother, Anne of Austria, was regent; but Cardinal Mazarin was the master of both, and the ruler of the kingdom. Mazarin, as we have already said, squandered with prodigal hand the treasures which Richelieu had husbanded for wars of ambition. The coffers of the State began to be empty, and had to be replenished by new taxes. This brought on insurrection, and new commenced the War of the Fronde. This war was an attempt, on the part of the nation, to raise itself out of the gulf of dependence on the crown into which Richelieu had sunk it. On the part of the crown, it was a struggle to retain its newly-acquired prerogatives, and to wield over both nobles and people that despotic away from the path of which all impediment had been removed, now that the Hugxtenots had been suppressed. The War of the Fronde divided the aristocracy, some of the nobles taking part with the court, others with the people. The two great military leaders, Conde and Turenne, brilliant in arms but uncertain in politics, passed from side to side, now supporting the court, now betraying it; now fighting for the people, now deserting them, as the caprice of the moment or the interest of the hour led them. The war extended over the provinces, and even entered the gates of Paris.

Barricades rose in the streets; the Louvre was besieged, and Mazarin and the court had to flee. But notwithstanding these successes, the arms of the insurgents did not prosper. The tide again turned; victory declared in favor of the royalists; and the court returned to Paris in triumph. The War of the Fronde was at an end. The nobles, with the people and the

municipal corporations, had signally failed to curb the despotism of the crown, and now these classes were in a worse plight than ever. Nor for 150 years thereafter was there the least attempt to resuscitate the popular liberties.

From this time forward Mazarin's power continued to grow, and remained unshaken to the close of his life. Having quieted France within, he set himself to carry out the great projects of Richelieu, so far as that great statesman had left them incomplete. He made war with Spain, and his arms were successful; for he brought to a close the protracted conflict which France had waged with the House of Austria, humbling it in both its branches, and transferring to France that political and military preponderance in Europe which its rival, the proud and powerful House of Austria, had held for a century and a half. These events it does not concern us to relate, further than to note the very significant fact that two princes of the Roman Catholic Church were employed in weakening a Power which was the main support of that Church, and in paving the way for that great Revolution which was to reverse the position of all the kingdoms of Europe, stripping the Papal nations of their power, and lifting up the Protestant kingdoms to supremacy.

Mazarin had prospered in all his plans. Abroad he had triumphed over Austria and Spain. At home he had abased the nobles. The Parliament and the municipal corporations he had reduced to insignificance. The people he had sunk into vassalage. The throne he had made supreme. But he did not live to enjoy the fruits of his anxieties and toils. Like Richelieu, he died just as his fortunes culminated. He climbed to the summit of his glory to find that he had arrived at the brink of his grave. Smitten with an incurable malady (1661), he was warned by his physicians that his end drew nigh. He sketched in outline the policy which he recommended Louis XIV to follow, he named the ministers whom he advised him to employ in his service; and then, turning his face to the

wall:, he took farewell of all his glory.

Louis XIV had already reigned eighteen years; he now began to govern. He called to him the men Mazarin had named on his death-bed – Le Tellier and the great Colbert – and told them that they were to be simply the ministers through whom he was to act. And seldom has monarch had it more in his power than Louis XIV. to do as he pleased throughout the wide extent of his realms.[1]

Abroad he was Powerful, at home he was absolute. In his person centered all rights and functions; he was the sole fountain of law. Seldom indeed has there been despotism more complete or more centralized than that now embodied in Louis XIV. His own well-known words exactly express it – “The State, it is I.” It was a fearfully responsible position. Sole master of the rights, the liberties, the lives, and we may add the consciences of the millions who were his subjects, his reign must be a fountain of untold blessings, or a source of numberless, enduring, and far extending miseries.

Nor did he lack qualities which might have enabled him to make it the former. He had a sound judgment, a firm will, a princely disposition, and great capacity for affairs. He liked hard work, and all through his long reign was never less than eight hours a day in the cabinet. He was not cruel by nature, though he became so by policy. The rock on which he split as a monarch was ambition. He had tasted of the sweets of conquest under Mazarin, and ever after he thirsted with an unappeasable desire for the spoils of the battle-field. In the course of his wars, there was scarcely a country in Europe which he did not water with French blood. By these long-continued and sanguinary conflicts he still further humbled the House of Austria, and annexed cities and provinces to his dominions, to be stripped of them before his reign closed; he crowned himself with laurels, to be torn from his brow before he died. He got the title of “the Great;” he had two triumphal arches erected in his honor in Paris; and he contracted an enormous

debt, which paved the way for the Revolution, that came like a whirlwind in his grandson's time to sweep away that throne which he had surrounded, as he believed, with a power that was impregnable and a glory that was boundless.

The error of Louis XIV, as a man, was his love of pleasure. He lived in open and unrestrained licentiousness. This laid him at the feet of his confessor, and sank him into a viler vassalage than that of the meanest vassal in all his dominions. The "Great" Louis, the master of a mighty kingdom, whose will was law to the millions who called him their sovereign, trembled before a man with a shaven crown. From the feet of his confessor he went straight to the commission of new sins; from these he came back to the priest, who was ready with fresh penances, which, alas! were but sins in a more hideous form. A more miserable and dreadful life there never was. Guilt was piled upon guilt, remorse upon remorse, till at length life was passed, and the great reckoning was in view. But how fared it with the Protestants under Louis XIV? Their condition became worse from the moment that Mazarin breathed his last and Louis began to govern in person. One of his first ideas was that Protestantism weakened France, and must be rooted out; that the Edict of Nantes was an error, and must be revoked. This was the policy on which he acted as regards the Huguenots – the goal towards which he worked – all throughout his reign: the extirpation of Huguenotism, the revocation of the Edict of Nantes. The wars of his early years interfered with the pursuit of this object, but he never lost sight of it. No sooner had he taken the government into his own hands (1661) than commissioners were appointed, and sent, two and two – a Roman Catholic and a Protestant – into all the provinces of France, with authority to hear all complaints and settle all quarrels which had sprung up between the two communions.

In almost every case the commissioners found that the Roman Catholics were in the right, and the Protestants in the wrong.

The commissioners were further instructed to examine the title-deeds of churches. In many instances none could be produced; they had gone amissing in the lapse of time, or had perished during the wars, and the circumstance was in every case made available for the suppression of the church. It is impossible to tell the number of churches pulled down, of schools suppressed, and charitable establishments confiscated for the benefit of Popish institutions.

Next came the decree against "Relapsed Heretics." This ordinance denounced against such the penalty of banishment for life. If one asked for the priest's blessing at a mixed marriage, or had been heard to say to one that he should like to enter the Church of Rome, or had done an act of abjuration twenty years before, or given any occasion in any way for a suspicion or report of being inclined to Romanism, he was held as having joined the Church of Rome, and the law against "Relapsed Heretics" was applied to him; and if ever afterwards he entered a Protestant church, he was seized and carried before the tribunals. By another ordinance, a priest and a magistrate were authorized to visit every sick person, and ask if he wished to die in the Roman faith. The scandalous scenes to which this gave rise can be imagined. The dying were distracted and tortured with exhortations to abandon their faith and pray to the Virgin. Children were capable of abjuring Protestantism at the age of fourteen; and by a subsequent decree, at the age of seven; and their parents were compelled to pay for their maintenance under a Roman Catholic roof. Spies haunted the sermons of Protestant ministers, and if the pastor spoke: a disparaging word of the Virgin, or any saint of the Romish calendar, he was indicted for blasphemy. If one pleaded a suit-at-law, and were doubtful of success, he had only to say that he was arguing against a heretic, and the magic words were instantly followed by an award in his favor. Protestants were excluded from all offices under the crown, from all municipal posts, from the practice of law and medicine, and generally of all the liberal professions. They

were forbidden to sing psalms in their workshops or at the doors of their houses. They had to suspend their psalmody when a Roman Catholic procession passed the doors of their churches. They could bury their dead only at break of day or on the edge of night. Not more than ten mourners could follow the bier; and the statutory number of a wedding procession was restricted to twelve. This did not satisfy the priesthood, however. In 1665 they declared that more zeal must be exercised in order "to cause the formidable monster of heresy to expire completely." From this time the Protestants began to flee from their native land. It was now, too, that Marshal Turenne abjured in his old age the faith he had professed through life. His virtue had declined before his Protestantism was renounced. His example was followed by the great nobles about court, and it was remarked of all of them, as of Turenne, that they had espoused the morals of the king before embracing his faith. The names of Count Schomberg, the Duke de la Force, the Marquis de Ruvigny, and also several descendants of Duplessis-Mornay stand out in noble relief from this degenerate crowd.[2]

Attempts were next made to unite the two Churches. These came to nothing, notwithstanding the numerous reforms in the Romish Church promised by the king, all the more freely, perhaps, that he had no power to fulfill them. Then, after a little space, the work of persecution was resumed; a new discharge of ordinances and arrears struck the Protestants.

We can mention only a very few of the new grievances. The Reformed were forbidden to print religious books without permission of a magistrate of the Romish communion; to celebrate worship when the bishop was holding a visitation; their domestic privacy was invaded; their rights as parents violated; their temples demolished; and if they dared to meet around the ruins and pray beside the sanctuaries in which their fathers had worshipped they were punished.

But perhaps the most extraordinary means employed was the

creation of a fund for the purchase of consciences. This fund was fed from the resources of vacant bishoprics, which were the right of the crown, but which the king now made over to this fund. In every case, when a see became vacant, a year's revenue was thus applied, but sees were often kept vacant for years that the fund for conversions: might profit thereby.

Pellisson, by birth a Calvinist, but who, having gone over to the king's religion, from a convert became a zealous converter, presided over this fund. It was, in truth, a great mercantile establishment, organized according to the rules and wielding the machinery of other mercantile establishments. It had its head office in Paris, and branch offices in all the provinces. It had its staff of clerks, its correspondents, its table of prices, its letters of credit, and its daily published lists of articles purchased, these articles being the bodies and the souls of men. A curious circular letter (June 12th, 1677) of its president, Pellisson, has been given by the historian Felice, and is as follows: – "Although you may go as far as a hundred francs, it is not meant that you are always to go to this extent, as it is necessary to use the utmost possible economy; in the first place, to shed this dew on as many persons as possible and, besides, if we give a hundred francs to people of no consequence, without any family to follow them, those who bring a number of children after them will demand far larger sums. Tiffs, however, need not hinder you from furnishing still larger assistance in very important cases, if you advise me of it beforehand, whenever his Majesty, to whom explanations will be given, thinks it proper." The daily lists of abjurations amounted to many hundreds; but those who closely examined the names said that the majority were knaves, or persons who, finding conversion profitable, thought it not enough to be once, but a dozen times converted. The king, however, was delighted with his success, and nothing was talked of at court but the miracles of Pellisson. Every one lauded his golden eloquence – less learned, they said, but far more efficacious than that of

Bossuet.

Louis XIV was now verging on old age, but his bigotry grew with his years. His great minister Colbert, whose counsels had ever been on the side of moderation, was now in his grave. There were left him the Chancellor, Le Tellier, and the Minister of War, Louvois, both stern haters of the Huguenots. His confessor was the well-known Father la Chaise. No fitter tool than Louis XIV could the Jesuit have found. His Spanish mother had educated him not to hesitate at scruples, but to go forward without compunction to the perpetration of enormous crimes. To make matters still worse, the king now fell entirely under the influence of Madame de Maintenon. This woman, who figures so prominently in these awful tragedies, was the grand-daughter of the Protestant historian Agrippa d'Aubigne. She was a Calvinist by birth, but changed her religion at an early age, and being governess in the family of one of the royal mistresses, her beauty and address fascinated the king, who privately married her on the death of the queen, Maria Theresa. Madame de Maintenon did not particularly hate her former co-religionists, but being resolved above all things to retain her influence over Louis, and seeing the direction in which his humor set – namely, that of expiating his profligacys by the sacrifice of the Huguenot heretics – she and Father la Chaise became the counselors and partners of the unhappy monarch in those deeds of tyranny and blood which shed an ever-deepening darkness and horror over the life of Louis XIV as he approached the grave.

Whether it was the number or the quality of the conversions that did not satisfy the court it is hard to say, but now greater severities were had recourse to. It was deemed bad economy, perhaps, to do with money what could be done by the sword. Accordingly the dragonnades were now set on foot. A commencement was made in Poitou. In 1681 a regiment of cavalry was sent into this province, with instructions from the Minister of War, Louvois, that the greater part of the men and

officers should be quartered on the Protestants. "If," said he, "according to a fair distribution, the Religionists ought to have ten, we may billet twenty on them." The number of soldiers allotted to each Protestant family varied from four to ten. The men were made aware that they might do as they had a mind, short of actually killing the inmates. "They gave the reins to their passions," says Migault, describing the horrors of which he was eye-witness; "devastation, pillage, torture – there was nothing they recoiled at." The details must be suppressed; they are too horrible to be read. The poor people knew not what to do; they fled to the woods; they hid themselves in the caves of the mountains; many went mad; and others, scarce knowing what they did, kissed a crucifix, and had their names enrolled among the converts. The emigration was resumed on a great scale.

Thousands rose to flee from a land where nothing awaited them but misery. The court attempted to arrest the fugitives by threatening them with the galleys for life. The exodus continued despite this terrible law. The refugees were joyfully welcomed in England and in the other Protestant lands to which, with their persons, they transferred their industry, their knowledge of art and letters, and their piety. They now made Europe resound with their wrongs – though not one of their books could cross the frontier of their native land. We quote a few sentences from Jurieu (1682), who, fleeing to Holland, became Pastor of the French Church in Rotterdam: – "We were treated as if we were the enemies of the Christian name. In those places where Jews are tolerated they have all sorts of liberties; they exercise the arts, and carry on trades; they are physicians; they are consulted, and Christians put their lives and health into their hands. But we, as if polluted, are forbidden to touch children on their entrance into the world; we are excluded from the bar, and from all the faculties; we are driven away from the king's person; all public posts are taken away from us; we are forbidden to use those means by which we save ourselves from

dying of hunger; we are given up to the hatred of the mob; we are deprived of that precious liberty which we have purchased by so many services; our children, who are part of ourselves, are taken away from us. Are we Turks or infidels? We believe in Jesus Christ, we believe in the eternal Son of God, the Redeemer of the world; the maxims of our morality are pure beyond contradiction; we respect kings; we are good subjects and good citizens; we are as much Frenchmen as we are Reformed Christians."

The Protestants thought one other attempt ought to be made, though not by arms, to recover some little from the wreck of their liberties. They agreed that such of their churches as were still standing should be re-opened for public worship on the same day in all the southern provinces of France. This they thought would prove to the king in a peaceable way that the abjurations, so loudly vaunted by his counselors, were a wholesale delusion. The project was carried into effect, but the Government pretended to see in it insurrection, and the poor Huguenots were visited with a yet heavier measure of vengeance. The dragonnades were extended to all the provinces of Southern France. The Protestants fled to the forests, to the deserts of the Cevennes, to the mountains of the Pyrenees.

They were tracked by the soldiers, and on refusing to abjure, were sabered or hanged. Some of the pastors were broken on the wheel. Many of the churches spared till now were demolished, and a hideous devastation was inflicted on private dwellings and property. Everywhere there was a Reign of Terror; and the populace, entirely in the hands of ruffians, who, if they forbore to kill, did so that they might practice excruciating and often unnamable tortures upon their victims, now came in crowds to the priests to abjure. "Not a post arrives," wrote Madame de Maintenon, in September, 1685, "without bringing tidings that fill him (the king) with joy; the conversions take place every day by thousands" Twenty thousand abjured in Bearn, sixty thousand in the two dioceses of Nimes and

Montpellier: and while this horrible persecution went on, the Edict of Nantes was still law.[3]

CHAPTER 5 [Back to Top](#) REVOCATION OF THE EDICT OF NANTES.

Edict of Revocation – Summary of its Enactments – The Protestant Churches Demolished – Charenton, etc. – The Pastors Banished – Severe Penalties – No Burial without the Sacrament – Lay Protestants Forbidden to Emigrate – Schomberg and Admiral Duquesne – The Ports and Outlets from France Closed – The Flight of the Huguenots – Their Disguises – Flight of Women – Their Sufferings on the Way – Probable Numbers of the Refugees – Disastrous Influence of the Revocation on Science and Literature – on Trade and Manufactures – on the Army and Navy – France Weakened and Other Countries Enriched – Panegyrics of the Clergy – Approval of the Pope – A Te Deum at Rome – Medals in Commemoration of the Event. THE Edict of Nantes was already in effect repealed. There was hardly one of its provisions which had not been set aside either by interpretations which explained it away, or by edicts which directly nullified it; and now scarcely anything remained of that famous charter of Huguenot rights, save the parchment on which it was written and the seals that attested its stipulations and promises, which, read in the light of the scenes that were being enacted all over France, looked like mockery.[1] But the work must be completed. The king judged that the hour had now arrived for dealing the blow which should extinguish for ever Protestantism in France. By the advice of his counselors – Father la Chaise, his confessor; Madame de Maintenon, his wife; the Chancellor Le Tellier, and Count Louvois – the king, on the 18th of October,[2] 1685, signed the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes.

The Revocation swept away all the rights and liberties which Henry IV and Louis XIII had solemnly guaranteed to the Protestants. It declared all further exercise of the Reformed worship within the kingdom illegal; it ordered the demolition of all the Protestant churches; it commanded the pastors to

quit the kingdom within a fortnight, and forbade them to perform any clerical function on pain of the galleys; all Protestant schools were closed; and all infants born subsequent to the revocation of the edict were to be baptized by priests, and educated as Roman Catholics; all refugees were required to return to France and abjure their religion within four months, and after the expiry of that term non compliance was to be punished with confiscation of all their property; all Protestants were forbidden to quit the kingdom under pain of the galleys of men, and of confiscation of body and goods if women; and, in fine, all laws against relapsed heretics were confirmed. A clause was added which occasioned a cruel disappointment: it was couched in the following seemingly clement terms: – “Those Protestants who have not changed their religion shall be allowed to dwell in the cities and places of our realm unmolested till it shall please God to enlighten them, as he has others.” This clause was interpreted as a permission to the Reformed to hold their opinions in their own breast and practice their worship in private. It was not long before they had discovered that the true reading of the clause was as follows – until they shall be converted, as others have been, by the dragoons.

On the 22nd of October the Act was registered, and on the same day the Protestants were notified by a public spectacle that its execution had commenced. The great Church of Charenton, in the neighborhood of Paris, built by the celebrated architect Jacques Debrosse, and capable of containing 14,000 persons, was razed to the ground. The first blow was dealt the detested structure by two Government commissioners; then a mob of some hundreds threw themselves upon it, with pickaxes and levers; in five days not a trace of the colossal fabric was to be seen, and a cross twenty feet high, adorned with the royal arms, rose in triumph over the demolished edifice. Other temples throughout France, venerable for their age, or imposing from their size, which had escaped the demolitions of former years, were now swept away. Alas, the sorrowful scenes that marked

the closing of these churches! Drowned in tears, the congregation assembled to hear their pastor's farewell sermon, and sing their last psalm; then, forming a long and mournful procession, they passed before the minister, who bestowed on each singly his benediction, exhorting him to be steadfast unto the death. With many a hallowed Communion Sunday lingering in their memories, they then passed out for ever. Many of these churches fell amid a confused noise of blaring trumpets, the shoutings of Romanists, and the sobbings of Protestants. Topping the ruins of the Church of Nimes might long be seen a stone which had formed the lintel of the portico of the now overthrown edifice, on which were graven the words, "This is the House of God, this is the Gate of Heaven." [3]

Though but the crowning act of a treacherous, cruel, and most tyrannical policy under which they had groaned for years, the Revocation fell upon the Huguenots like a thunder-bolt. Their eyes opened on blank desolation ! Not a single safe-guard had been left them; not a single right of conscience, or of property, or of body of which they had not been stripped. The fact seemed too terrible to be real; the crime – the folly – too stupendous for any king to commit! The Protestants amounted to between one and two millions; their factories and workshops were to be found in nearly all parts of France; their commerce and merchandise upheld its great cities, their energy and enterprise were the life of the nation; and to be all at once flung beyond the, pale of law, beyond the pale of humanity! They were stupefied.

But they soon found that the first blow was far indeed from exhausting the calamities with which this measure was pregnant. The edict opened out in a series of oppressions to which they could see neither limit nor end. Troops were sent into the provinces to execute it. As an inundation breaks in, or as a tempest sweeps onward, so did a torrent of pillagings, outrages, and murders rush upon France. Louis XIV in all this

was not persecuting, he was only converting; for had not the Savior said, "Compel them to come in"? An army of "booted apostles" scouring the country and 800 Protestant churches now in ruins attested the reality of the Revocation; but instantly came new provisions to amplify and perfect the edict. Protestant preaching had already been forbidden on land; now it was forbidden on board ship. Protestants, or new Catholics, as they were termed – for it was assumed that now there were not any more Protestants in France – were forbidden to employ as servants any save Roman Catholics, under penalty of a fine of 1,000 livres. Huguenots were absolutely forbidden to enter, in the capacity of servants, any family, whether Roman Catholic or Huguenot, under pain, if men, of being sent to the galleys, and if women, of being flogged and branded with a fleur-de-lis.

Even English families resident in France were not exempt from the operation of this law. Protestant ministers found lurking in France after the expiry of the fifteen days given them for removal were to be put to death; and, to hasten their departure and make sure that not one heretical teacher remained in the country, a reward of 5,500 livres was offered for the apprehension of ministers in hiding. Pastors who should return to their native land without a written permission from the king were to expiate their offense with their lives, while the terrors of the galleys, imprisonment for life, and confiscation of property were suspended above those who should dare to harbor such. Not a few foreigners, particularly Englishmen, were summoned to abjure, and on their refusal were thrown into prison. The English monarch sent tardy remonstrances against these insults to his crown, and the Court of Versailles responded with an equally tardy satisfaction.

Nor did these annoyances and torments terminate with life. Not only were the death-beds of all Protestants besieged, and their last moments disturbed by the presence of priests, but

no grave could receive the body of the man who died without confession and without the Sacrament of extreme unction. His corpse was a thing too vile to rest in the bosom of the earth – it must rot above ground; it was exposed on the highway, or was flung into the public sewer. The body of M. de Chevenix, a man illustrious for his learning and piety, was subjected to this indignity. Dragged away on a hurdle, it was thrown upon a dung-hill. His friends came by night, and wrapping it in linen, bore it reverently on their shoulders, and buried it in a garden, giving vent to their sorrow, as they lowered it slowly into its place of sepulture, by singing the seventy-ninth Psalm: “Save me, O Lord, for the waters are come into my soul.”[4]

While one clause of the Act of Revocation made it death for the pastor to remain in France, another clause of the same Act made it death for the layman to flee from it. The land was converted into a vast prison. The frontiers were jealously guarded; sentinels were placed at all the great outlets of the kingdom; numerous spies kept watch at the seaports; officers patrolled the shore; and ships of war hovered off the coast to prevent escape beyond those dismal limits within which the Protestant had only the terrible alternative of sacrificing his conscience, or surrendering his liberty or life. Many earnestly petitioned for leave to withdraw from a land where to obey God was to incur the wrath of the king, but they petitioned in vain. Of the native subjects of Louis, we know of only two to whom this favor was conceded. The Marshal Schomberg and the Marquis de Ruvigny were permitted to retire, the first to Portugal, and the second to England. The Admiral Duquesne was summoned into the presence of Louis XIV., and urged to change his religion. Pointing to his hairs, which tempest and battle had bleached, the hero said, “For sixty years, sire, have I rendered unto Caesar that which I owe to Caesar: suffer me still to render to God that which I owe to God.” He was permitted to live in his native land unmolested. Among the names that lent a glory to France there were none

greater than these three. Schomberg was at the head of the army, Duquesne was the creator of the navy, and De Ruvigny was equally renowned in diplomacy; the Revocation deprived France of the services of all the three. This was much, and yet it was but the first installment of that mighty sum which France was destined to pay for the Revocation in after-years.

Nothing can be imagined more appalling than was now the condition of the Protestant, as he looked around him in his native land. The king was his enemy, the law was his enemy, his fellow-countrymen were his enemies; and on all sides of him was a cordon of guards and gens-d'armes, to apprehend and subject him to terrible sufferings should he attempt to escape from the vast prison which had shut him in. But fruitless were all the means taken to prevent the flight of the Huguenots. Fruitless were the peasants that clay and night, armed with scythes and similar weapons, guarded the high-roads, and watched the fords of rivers; fruitless the troops that lined the frontier, and the ships that cruised off the ports and examined all outward-bound vessels; fruitless the offered spoils of the captured fugitives, by which it was sought to stimulate the vigilance of the guards; fruitless even the reports which were put in circulation, that no asylum was to be found in foreign countries that 10,000 refugees had died of starvation in England, and that of those who had fled, the vast majority were soliciting permission to return. In vain were all these efforts to check the emigration; danger was braved, vigilance was eluded; and the frontiers were crossed by an ever-enlarging crowd, who were even more anxious to find liberty of conscience than to escape from death.

The devices resorted to and the disguises assumed by the fugitives to avoid detection were infinite. Some attired themselves in the garb of pilgrims, and with shallop and palmer-staff pursued their journey to their much-wished-for shrine – a land of liberty. Some traveled as couriers; some as sports-men, carrying a gun on their shoulder; some as peasants

driving cattle; some affected to be porters, carrying burdens; others were attired in footmen's liveries, and others wore soldiers' uniforms. The rich in some cases hired guides, who, for sums varying from 1,000 to 6,000 livres, conducted them across the frontier. The poor, setting out alone, chose by-paths and difficult mountain-tracks, beginning each day's journey at night-fall, and when the dawn appeared, retiring to some forest or cavern for rest and sleep. Sometimes they lay concealed in a barn, or burrowed in a hay-stack, till the return of the darkness made it safe for them to continue their flight. Nobles and gentlemen, setting their servants on horseback, would put on their dress, and follow on foot as though they were lackeys.

The women were not less fertile in artifices and disguises. They dressed themselves as servants, as peasants, as nurses; even noble ladies would journey onward trundling wheelbarrows, or carrying hods, or bearing burdens. The young disfigured their faces by smearing or dyeing their skin and cutting off their hair, thus converting blooming youth into withered and wrinkled age. Some dressed themselves as beggars, some sold rosaries, and some reigned to be deaf or insane.[5] The perils that environed them on every side could not daunt their heroic resolution. They urged their fleeing steps onward through the darkness of night and the tempests of winter, through tangled forests and quaking morasses, through robbers and plunderers, forgetting all these dangers in their anxiety to escape the guards of the king and arrive at the rendezvous, and rejoin fathers, or brothers, or husbands, who had reached the appointed place by another route. The terrors of the persecutor had overcome the sense of weariness, and hundreds of miles seemed short to some who, brought up in luxury and splendor, had never before, perhaps, walked a league on foot. The ocean had no terrors to those who knew that there was a land of liberty beyond it, and many crossed the English Channel at that inclement season in open boats. Those on the sea-board got away in Dutch, in English, and in French

merchantmen, hidden in bales of goods, or buried under heaps of coal, or stowed in empty barrels, where they had only the bung-hole to breathe through. The very greatness of their misery wrought some alleviation of their hardship. Their woeful plight melted the hearts of the peasants on the frontier, and they suffered them in some instances to escape, when it was in their power to have delivered them up to the dragoons. Even the sentinels sometimes acted as the guides of those whom they had been appointed to arrest. There was hardly a country in Europe into which these men did not flee, but England and Holland and Germany were their main asylums.

It is only an approximate appreciation that can now be formed of the numbers of Protestants who succeeded in escaping from France. The official reports sent in to the Government by the Intendants are not to be relied on. Those whose duty it was to frame them had many motives for making the emigration appear less than it really was. They naturally were unwilling to falsify the provisions of the court which had buoyed itself up with the hope that only a very few would leave their native land. Besides, to disclose the real extent of the emigration might seem to be to present an indictment against themselves, as chargeable with lack of vigilance in permitting so many to escape. It is vain, then, to think of arriving at an exact estimate from these documents, and these are the only official sources of information open to us. But if we look at the dismal blanks left in France, at the large and numerous colonies planted in foreign countries, and at the length of time during which the exodus continued, which was not less than from fifteen to twenty years, it is impossible to resist the conclusion that the emigration was on a scale of gigantic magnitude. Of the one million Protestants and upwards scattered among the twenty millions of Frenchmen, it is probable that from a quarter to half a million emigrated. Jurieu estimates that in 1687, 200,000 persons had already left France.

Antoine Court, one of the preachers of the desert, makes the total 800,000 persons. Sismondi says from 300,000 to 400,000. In a celebrated memorial addressed to Louvois in 1688, Vauban says "that France had lost 100,000 inhabitants, 60,000,000 of francs in specie, 9,000 sailors, 12,000 veterans, 600 officers, and her most flourishing manufactures. The Duke de Saint Sinton says in his Memoirs that all branches of trade were ruined, and that a quarter of the kingdom was perceptibly depopulated." [6]

The face of France was changed in a day. Its framework was suddenly and violently shaken and loosened, as if an earthquake had rocked the land. The current of the nation's life was not indeed stopped outright, but its flow became languid and sluggish beyond the power of king or of parliament again to quicken it. The shock was felt in every department of national enterprise, whether mental or industrial. It was felt at the bar, which it stripped of some of its brightest ornaments. It was felt in the schools of philosophy. Some of the ablest cultivators of science it drove away. The great astronomer and mathematician, Huygens, had to quit France and seek asylum in Holland. It was felt in the ranks of literature. It chased beyond the frontier some of the finest writers and most eloquent orators that France contained. In the list of these illustrious refugees we find Claude, Jurieu, Lenfant, Saurin, Basnage, Bayle, and Rapin. It was felt in the army and navy. The Revocation drove beyond the frontier the flower of the French soldiers, and decreed that henceforth those banners which had waved so proudly on many a victorious field should be folded in humiliation and defeat. The Revocation was felt in the iron works and smelting furnaces on the Vrigne and at Poursu-Saint-Remy. It was felt in the manufactures of arms and implements of husbandry in the Sedanais. It was felt in the gold and silver lace works of Montmorency and Villiers-le-Bel. It was felt in the hat factories of Coudebec. It was felt in the wool-carding establishments of Meaux; in the cloth manufactories of

Picardy, Champagne, and Normandy; in the silk-weaving establishments of Tours and Lyons; in the paper mills of Auvergne and the Angoumois; in the tanneries of Touraine; on the shipping wharves and in the trading establishments of Bordeaux, La Rochelle, and other towns, where the foreign trade had been almost exclusively in the hands of Protestants. In short, not an art was cultivated, not a trade was carried on in France which did not suffer from this blow; not a province was there where the blight it had inflicted was not to be seen in villages half-depopulated, in habitations deserted, in fields lying unploughed, and in gardens and vineyards overgrown with weeds and abandoned to desolation. The ravages inflicted by the Revocation were to be traced not on the land only, but on the ocean also. The fleet of foreign ships which had gladdened the shores and crowded the harbors of France, to carry thence the beautiful and varied fabrics which her ingenious sons had worked on her looms and forged on her anvils, from this time all but disappeared. The art and genius which created these marvels had transferred themselves to Germany, to Holland, to England, and to Scotland, where they had taken root, and were producing those implements with which France had been accustomed to enrich other nations, but which now she had to beg from her neighbors.

Thus strangely did that country defeat what had been the grand object of her policy for half a century. Her aim all through the administrations of Richelieu and Mazarin was to consolidate her power, and lead in the councils of Europe. But this one act of Louis XIV did more to weaken France than all that Richelieu and Mazarin had done to strengthen her. Not only did Louis weaken the fabric of his own power, he enhanced the strength of that interest which it was his great object to abase. The learning, the genius, the art which were the glory of his realm, and would have been the bulwark of his throne, he drove away and scattered among Protestant nations. His folly herein was as conspicuous and as stupendous as his wickedness.

But the Revocation was not the act of the king alone. The clergy and the nation equally with Louis must bear the guilt of his great crime. The people by their approbation or their silence became the accomplice of the monarch; and the clergy made his act their own by exhausting the whole vocabulary of panegyric in its praise. According to them the past history of the world had nothing more wise or more magnanimous to show, and its author had placed himself among the heroes and demigods of fame. We might fill almost a volume with the laudations written and spoken on the occasion. "You have doubtless seen the edict by which the king revokes that of Nantes," wrote Madame de Sevigne to her daughter a few days after the publication of the decree. "There is nothing so fine as all that it contains, and never has any king done or ever will do ought so memorable!" The chancellor, Le Tellier, was so carried away by the honor of affixing the seal of state to this atrocious edict, that he declared that he would never seal another, and in a fit of devout enthusiasm he burst out in the song with which the aged Simeon celebrated the advent of the Savior: "Now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, since mine eyes have seen thy salvation." When the men of law were so moved, what might we not expect in the priests? They summoned the people to the churches to unite in public thanksgivings, and they exhausted all their powers of eloquence in extolling the deed. "Touched by so many marvels," exclaimed Bossuet, "let us expand our hearts in praises of the piety of Louis. Let our acclamations ascend to the skies, and let us say to this new Constantine, this new Theodosius, this new Marcian, this new Charlemagne, what the thirty-six Fathers formerly said in the Council of Chalcedon: 'You have strengthened faith, you have exterminated heretics; it is a work worthy of your reign, whose proper character it is. Thanks to you, heresy is no more.' God alone can have worked this marvel. King of heaven, preserve the king of earth: it is the prayer of the Church; it is the prayer of the bishops."

The other great preachers of Paris also celebrated this edict,

as throwing into the shade all past monuments of wisdom and heroism. It is in the following terms that Massillon glorifies Louis' victory over heresy: "How far did he not carry his zeal for the Church, that virtue of sovereigns who have received power and the sword only that they may be props of the altar and defenders of its doctrine! Specious reasons of state! in vain did ye oppose to Louis the timid views of human wisdom, the body of the monarchy enfeebled by the flight of so many citizens, the course of trade slackened either by the deprivation of their industry or by the furtive removal of their wealth; dangers fortify his zeal; the work of God fears not man; he believes even that he strengthens his throne by overthrowing that of error. The profane temples are destroyed, the pulpits of seduction are cast down, the prophets of falsehood are torn from their flocks. At the first blow dealt to it by Louis, heresy falls, disappears, and is reduced either to hide itself in the obscurity whence it issued, or to cross the seas, and to bear with it into foreign lands its false gods, its bitterness, and its rage." [7]

Nor was it popular assemblies only who listened approvingly to these flights of rhetoric; similar laudations of the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes were pronounced before the French Academy, and received the meed of its applause. The Abbe Tallemant, when speaking of the demolition of the Protestant church at Charenton, exclaimed – "Happy ruins, the finest trophy France ever beheld! The statues and the triumphal arches erected to the glory of the king will not exalt it more than this temple of heresy overthrown by his piety. That heresy which thought itself invincible is entirely vanquished." Bossuet had compared Louis to Constantine and Theodosius; Tallemant, discoursing to a body of learned men, seeks for a more classic prototype of the King of France. A second Hercules had arisen, he told the Academy, and a second hydra, more terrible by far than the monster which the pagan god had slain, had fallen beneath the blows of this second and greater Hercules.

In the midst of this universal chorus of applause we expect to hear one dissenting voice lifted up. Surely the Jansenists will rebuke the madness of the nation, and in some small degree redeem the honor of France. Alas! they are silent. Not one solitary protest do we hear against this great crime. But the Jansenists are not content to be silent; they must needs speak, but it is to approve of the Revocation. Through their great interpreter Arnault, they declared that "the means which had been employed were rather violent, but nowise unjust."

It remained for one other and mightier voice to speak. And now that voice is heard, from the other side of the Alps, expressing a full approval of the Revocation. All the previous inferior utterances are repeated and sanctioned in this last and greatest utterance, and thus the Roman Catholic world makes the deed its own, and accepts the Revocation with all its plunder and blood, and the punishment that is to follow it. The Pope, Innocent XI, made a Te Deum be sung at Rome for the conversion of the Huguenots, and sent a special brief to Louis XIV, in which he promised him the eternal praises of the Church, and a special recompense from God for the act of devotion by which he had made his name and reign glorious.

Art was summoned to lend her aid in appropriately commemorating the triumph of Louis over heresy. In front of the Hotel de Ville the provost and sheriffs of Paris erected a brazen statue in honor of the king.[8] It bore the proud words – Ludovico Magno, Victori perpetuo, Ecclesiae ac Regum Dignitatis Assertori (To Louis the Great, eternal Conqueror, and Assertor of the Dignity of the Church and of Kings). Its bas-reliefs displayed a frightful bat hovering above the works of Calvin and Huss, and enveloping them in its dark wings – emblematic imagery borrowed probably from one of Lesueur's masterpieces in Versailles, commemorating a similar event. Three medals were struck to perpetuate the memory of the Revocation.[9] One of them represented Religion planting a cross on a heap of ruins, denoting the triumph of truth over

error; with this legend, Religio Victrix (Religion the Conqueror); and underneath were the words, Templis Calvinianorum eversis, 1685 (The Temples of Calvin overturned, 1685). Another displays a figure holding a cross, its foot planted on a prostrate foe, while in the background rises proudly an edifice, surmounted by the motto, Haeresis Extincta, and underneath are the words, Edictum Octobris, 1685, – intimating that by the edict of October, 1685, heresy had been extinguished. A third represents Religion placing a crown on the head of Louis, who stands leaning upon a rudder, and trampling under foot a dead enemy, the symbol of heresy. The motto – which, says Weiss, “comprises at once an error and a lie” – is Ob vicies centena millia Calvinianorum ad Ecclesiam revocata, 1685 (For a hundred thousand Calvinists, twenty times told, brought back to the Church, 1685).

All these medals proclaim what Louis XIV and the Jesuits believed to be the fact, that Calvinism had been eternally extinguished. The edict of October, 1685, was the date (they imagined) of its utter overthrow. As a matter of fact, however, it was the treachery and cruelty of the Revocation that, above most things, aroused the Protestant spirit of Europe, and brought about that great Revolution which, three short years afterwards, placed William of Orange on the throne of Great Britain.

CHAPTER 6 [Back to Top](#) THE PRISONS AND THE GALLEYS.

“New Catholics” – Suspected and Watched – New and Terrible Persecutions – Described by Quick – The Dungeons – Their Horrors – M. de Marolles, and other Prisoners – Other Modes of Punishment – Transportation – Sold into Foreign Slavery – Martyrdom of Fulcran Rey – Claude Brousson – his Preaching – His Martyrdom – Drums round the Scaffold – The Galley Chain – Chateau de la Tournelle – The Galleys. Or the tens of thousands of Frenchmen, of all ranks, and in every disguise who were now hurrying along the highways and byways of France, intent only on escaping from the sod that gave them birth, all

were not equally fortunate in reaching the frontier. Many hundreds were arrested in their flight, and brought back to endure the rage of their persecutors. Their miserable fate it now becomes our duty to describe. Nor of these only shall we speak, but also of their many companions in suffering, who remained in their native land, when their brethren had fled before the awful tempest that was now thundering in the skies of France. It is a tale of woe, with scarcely one bright feature to relieve it.

Of those who remained, estimated by Sismondi at about a million, many conformed to the king's religion, impelled by the terrors of the edict, and such now passed under the name of "The New Catholics." But their downcast looks belied their professions; their sincerity was suspected, and they were constantly watched. So little faith had the Jesuits in the conversions of which they boasted so loudly in public! Inspectors were established in several parishes to examine if the new converts went regularly to mass, if they took the Sacrament at Easter, and if they paid a dutiful obedience to the commandments of the Church. This was a return, in the polished era of Louis XIV, to the regime of the tenth century. Even the monarch deemed this scrutiny somewhat too close, and issued private instructions to his agents to temper their zeal, and moderate the rigor of the Act.[1]

According to the edict, all Protestant children must attend a Roman Catholic school, and receive instruction in the catechism. A new ordinance enjoined that all children above six years of age, whose parents were suspected of being still Protestant at heart, should be taken from their homes, and confided to Roman Catholic relations, or placed in hospitals. The convents and asylums of all France were not enough to accommodate the crowd of abducted youth about to be swept into them, and the priests contented themselves with seizing only the children of the rich, who were able to pay for their maintenance.

The edicts of the king threatened books as well as persons with extermination. The Archbishop of Paris had compiled a list of works which the faithful could not read but at the risk of deadly injury. With this list in his hand the officer entered every suspected house, and whenever he found a forbidden book he instantly destroyed it. These visits were repeated so often that many books of rare value, known to have then existed, are now extinct, not one copy having escaped. The records of Synods, and the private papers and books of pastors, were the first to be destroyed. Wherever a Bible was found it ,was straightway given to the flames.[2] The edict required that the "New Catholics" should be instructed in the faith they professed to have adopted; but the priests were too few and the crowd of converts too many, so the cures lightened their labors by calling the Capuchins to share them with them. But these were rude and illiterate men. The merest youth could put them to silence. To gross ignorance they not infrequently added a debauched life, and in the case of Protestants of riper years, their approach awakened only disgust, and their teachings had no other effect on those to whom they were given, than to deepen their aversion to a Church which employed them as her ministers. When the first stunning shock of the edict had spent itself, there came a recoil. The more closely "the new converts" viewed the Church into which they had been driven, the stronger became their dislike of it. Shame and remorse for their apostasy began to burn within them. Their sacrilegious participation in the mass awoke their consciences thousands resolved, rather than lead a life of such base and criminal hypocrisy, to abandon, at whatever cost, the communion they professed to have espoused, and return to the open profession of the Protestant worship. They withdrew from the cities. They sought a dwelling in the wildernesses and forests, and practiced their worship in dark caves, in deep ravines, and sometimes on the tops of mountains. There they promised to one another to live and die in the Reformed faith.

When the king and his counselors saw the flag of defiance waving on the mountains of the Cevennes, and the Lower Languedoc, their rage rose to frenzy. New ordinances came to intensify the rigors of the persecution. Quick has grouped the horrors that now overwhelmed the poor Protestants of France, in a recital that is almost too harrowing for perusal.

“Afterwards,” says Quick, “they fell upon the persons of the Protestants, and there was no wickedness, though ever so horrid, which they did not put in practice, that they might enforce them to change their religion. Amidst a thousand hideous cries and blasphemies, they hung up men and women by the hair or feet upon the roofs of the chambers, or nooks of chimneys, and smoked them with wisps of wet hay till they were no longer able to bear it; and when they had taken them down, if they would not sign an abjuration of their pretended heresies, they then trussed them up again immediately. Some they threw into great fires, kindled on purpose, and would not take them out till they were half roasted.

They tied ropes under their arms, and plunged them once and again into deep wells, from whence they would not draw them till they had promised to change their religion. They bound them as criminals are when they are put to the rack, and in that posture putting a funnel into their mouths, they poured wine down their throats till its fumes had deprived them of their reason, and they had in that condition made them consent to become Catholics. Some they stripped stark naked, and afar they had offered them a thousand indignities, they stuck them with pins from head to foot; they cut them with pen-knives, tore them by the noses with red-hot pincers, and dragged them about the rooms till they promised to become Roman Catholics, or till the doleful cries of these poor tormented creatures, calling upon God for mercy, constrained them to let them go. They beat them with staves, and dragged them all bruised to the Popish churches, where their enforced presence is reputed for an abjuration. They kept them waking seven or eight days

together, relieving one another by turns, that they might not get a wink of sleep or rest. In case they began to nod, they threw buckets of water on their faces, or holding kettles over their heads, they beat on them with such a continual noise, that these poor wretches lost their senses. If they found any sick, who kept their beds, men or women, be it of fevers or other diseases, they were so cruel as to beat up an alarm with twelve drums about their-beds for a whole week together, without intermission, till they had promised to change.”[3]

What follows is so disgusting that it could not be quoted here unless it were covered with the decent veil of a dead language.

The Lutherans of Alsace, protected by recent diplomatic conventions, were exempt from these miseries; but with this exception the persecution raged through the whole of France. In Paris and its immediate neighborhood, matters were not urged to the same dire extremity. Those who had instigated the king to revoke the Edict of Nantes, had assured him that the mere terror of the Act would suffice to accomplish all he wished, and they now strove to conceal from Louis the formidable proportions of the actual horrors. But in other parts of France no check was put upon the murderous passions, the brutal lusts, and the plundering greed of the soldiery, and there a baffled bigotry and tyranny glutted their vengeance to the utmost. Among the dreadful forms of punishment inflicted on the Protestants was the dungeon. Such as were caught in attempts to escape, or refused to abjure, were plunged into loathsome prisons. Here generally there reigned unbroken silence and darkness. The poor prisoner could not receive a visit from pastor or relation; he could not console himself by singing a psalm or by reading his Bible: shut up with lewd and blaspheming felons, he was constrained to hear their horrible talk, and endure their vile indignities. If his meekness and patience overcame their cruelty, or softened the gaoler, he was at once shifted to

another prison, to prevent his being treated more tenderly by those whose compassion he had excited. The letters of M. le Febvre, arrested in 1686, and confined fifteen years in a solitary dungeon, have disclosed the terrible sufferings borne by those who were shut up in these places.

“For several weeks,” says he, “no one has been allowed to enter my dungeon; and if one spot could be found where the air was more infected than another, I was placed there. Yet the love of truth prevails in my soul; for God who knows my heart, and the purity of my motives, supports me by his grace.” He shows us his dungeon. “It is a vault of irregular form, and was formerly a stable, but being very damp, it was injurious to horses. The rack and manger are here still. There is no way of admitting light but by an opening with a double grating, in the upper part of the door. Opposite the opening there are iron bars, fastened at their upper ends into the wall. The place is very dark and damp. The air is noisome and has a bad smell. Everything rots and becomes moldy. The wells and cisterns are above me. I have never seen a fire here, except the flame of a candle. You will feel for me in this misery, but think of the eternal weight of glory that will follow.”

Another prisoner, M. de Marolles, a distinguished scientist, tells us that the solitude and perpetual darkness of his prison engendered, at last, the most frightful and terrifying ideas in his mind. Believing himself on the brink of insanity, he had recourse to prayer, and was delivered. A perfect calm filled his mind, and those phantoms took flight that had so troubled his soul. “He makes the days of my affliction pass speedily away,” said he in the last letter he was ever to write. “With the bread and water of affliction, He affords me continually most delicious repasts.”[4]

In the letters of M. le Febvre, cited above, mention is made of a shepherd who was removed from Fort St. Nicholas to a dungeon in the Chateau d’Ife.[5] The descent into this dungeon was by a ladder, and it was lighted only by a lamp, for which

the gaoler made the prisoners pay. The shepherd, when first consigned to it, had to lie on its miry bottom, almost without clothing. A monk, who went down into it to visit its wretched inmates, could not help declaring that its horrors made him shudder, that he had not nerve enough to go again. He could not refrain from team at the sight of the unhappy beings before him, one of whom had already, though still alive, become the prey of worms. This was the terrible fate not of a few hundreds only. It is believed that at one stage of the persecution there were from 12,000 to 15,000 persons in the prisons and dungeons of France.

Another mode of punishment was transportation to Canada – the Canada of 200 years ago. This method was resorted to in order to relieve the prisons, which, full to overflow, could not receive the crowds that were being daily consigned to them. Collected from the various prisons of France, or gathered from the country around Nimes and Montpellier, these confessors of the Gospel were brought down in gangs to Marseilles, the women strapped down in carts, and the men mounted on horses, their feet tied below the animals belly. The embarkation and voyage entailed incredible and protracted suffering. The vessels that bore them across the Atlantic were small, filthy, and often unseaworthy. Nor did their miseries end with their voyage. On their arrival in the New World they were sold into a slavery so cruel, that in most cases they speedily perished. Those who were thus dragged from the pleasant fields of France, and put under the lash of barbarous task-masters in a foreign land, were not the refuse of French society; on the contrary, they were the flower of the nation. In these manacled gangs were men who had shone at the bar, men who had been eminent in the pulpit, writers who were the glory of their country, and men and women of noble or of gentle birth; yet now we see them borne across the deep, and flung into bondage, because a sensualist king – the slave of mistresses and priests – so willed it.

The policy of the persecutors was to "wear out" the Protestants, in preference to summarily exterminating them by fire and sword. It is true the murders in the fields were numerous; there were few spots in the Cevennes which martyr-blood did not moisten, but only occasionally in the cities was the scaffold set up. We select from the Lettres Pastorales of Jurieu [6] a few instances. One of the first to suffer in this way was Fulcran Rey, a young man of Nimes. He had just finished his course of theological study when the storm burst. Does he now decline the office of pastor?

No: accepting martyrdom beforehand, he writes a farewell letter to those at his father's house, and goes forth to break the silence which the banishment of the ministers had created in France by preaching the Gospel. In a little while he was arrested. On his trial he was promised the most flattering favors if he would abjure, but his constancy was invincible.

He was sentenced to be hanged, after having been tortured. On hearing his doom, he exclaimed, "I am treated more gently than my Savior was in being condemned to so mild a form of death. I had prepared my mind to being broken on the wheel, or being burnt to death." Then, raising his eyes to heaven, he gave thanks to God for this mitigation of his anticipated agonies. Being come to the scaffold, he wished to address the crowd, and confess before them the faith in which he died; but, says Jurieu, "they were afraid of a sermon delivered by such a preacher, and from such a pulpit, and had stationed around the gibbet a number of drummers, with orders to beat their drums all at once." He died at Beaucaire, July 7th, 1686, at the age of twenty-four.

But the martyr of greatest fame of that era is Claude Brousson. Brousson had been a distinguished member of the bar at Toulouse, where he pleaded the cause of the oppressed Churches. Silenced as an advocate, he opened his lips as a preacher of the Gospel. His consecration to his office took place in the wilds of the Cevennes, which were then

continually resounding with the muskets of the murderous soldiery. The solitary hut, or the dark wood, or the deep ravine henceforth became his home, whence he issued at appointed times to preach to the flock of the desert. After awhile he was so hotly pursued that he judged it prudent to withdraw from France. But in his foreign asylum his heart yearned after his flock, and, finding no rest, he returned to those "few sheep in the wilderness." A sum of 500 louis was offered to any one who would bring him to the Intendant, dead or alive; nevertheless Brousson went on for five years in the calm exercise of his ministry. His sermons were published at Amsterdam in 1695, under the title of *The Mystical Manna of the Desert*. "One would have expected," says Felice, "that discourses composed by this proscribed man, under all oak of the forest, or on a rock by some mountain torrent, and delivered to congregations where the dead were frequently gathered as on a field of battle, would have been marked by eager and gloomy enthusiasm. Nothing of the kind is, however, to be found in this *Mystical Manna*. The preacher's language is more moderate and graceful than that of Saurin in his quiet church of the Hague; in the persecution he points only to the hand of God, and is vehement only when he censures his hearers." [7] At last, in 1698, he was arrested at Oleron and carried to Montpellier. Before his judges he freely admitted the graver charge of his indictment, which was that he had preached to the Protestant outlaws; but he repudiated energetically another accusation preferred against him, that he had conspired to bring Marshal Schomberg into France at the head of a foreign army. He was condemned to die. On the scaffold, which he mounted on the 4th of November, he would once more have raised his voice, but it was drowned by the roll of eighteen drums. Little did Louis XIV then dream that his great-grandson, and next successor save one on the throne of France, should have his dying words drowned by drums stationed round his scaffold.

Of all the punishments to which the proscribed Protestants of

France were doomed, the most dreadful was the galleys. The more famous galleys were those of Marseilles, and the journey thither entailed hardships so terrible that it was a common thing for about three-fourths of the condemned to die on the road. They marched along in gangs, carrying heavy irons, and sleeping at night in stables or vaults. "They chained us by the neck in couples," says one who underwent this dreadful ordeal, "with a thick chain, three feet long, in the middle of which was a round ring. After having thus chained us, they placed us all in file, couple behind couple, and they passed a long thick chain through these rings, so that we were thus all chained together. Our chain made a very long file, for we were about four hundred." [8] The fatigue of walking was excessive, each having to carry about fifty pounds weight of chains. One of their halting-places, the Chateau de la Tournelle, he thus speaks: "It is a large dungeon, or rather spacious cellar, furnished with huge beams of oak placed at the distance of about three feet apart. To these beams thick iron chains are attached, one and a half feet in length, and two feet apart, and at the end of these chains is an iron collar. When the wretched galley-slaves arrived in this dungeon, they are made to lie half down, so that their heads may rest upon the beam; then this collar is put round their necks, closed, and rivited on an anvil with heavy blows of a hammer. And these chains with collars are about two feet apart, and as the beams are generally about forty feet long, twenty men are chained to them in file. This cellar which is round, is so large that in this way they can chain up as many as five hundred. There is nothing so dreadful as to behold the attitudes and postures of these wretches there chained. For a man so chained cannot lie down at full length, the beam upon which his head is fixed being too high; neither can he sit, nor stand upright, the beam being too low. I cannot better describe the posture of such a man than by saying he is half lying, half sitting, — part of his body being upon the stones or flooring, the other part upon this beam. The three days and three nights which we were obliged to pass in this cruel situation so racked our

bodies and all our limbs that we could not longer have survived it – especially our poor old men, who cried out every moment that they were dying, and that they had no more strength to endure this terrible torture.”[9]

This dreadful journey was but the prelude to a more dreadful doom. Chained to a bench of his galley, the poor prisoner remained there night and day, with felons for his companions, and scarcely any clothing, scorched by the sun, frozen by the cold, or drenched by the sea, and compelled to row at the utmost of his strength – and if, being exhausted, he let the oar drop, he was sure to be visited with the bastinado. Such were the sufferings amid which hundreds of Protestants of France wore out long years. It was not till 1775, in the beginning of Louis XVI’s reign that the galleys released their two last Protestant prisoners, Antoine Rialle and Paul Archard.[10]

CHAPTER 7 [Back to Top](#) THE “CHURCH OF THE DESERT.”

Secessions – Rise of the “Church of the Desert” – Her Places of Meeting – Her Worship – Pastors – Communion “Tokens” – Night Assemblies – Simplicity yet Sublimity of her Worship – Renewed Persecutions – War of the Camisards – Last Armed Struggle of French Protestantism – No Voice – Bossuet – Antoine Court – The “Restorer of Protestantism” – Death of Louis XIV – Theological Seminary at Lausanne – Paul Rabaut – The Edict of Malesherbes – The Revolution. IT seemed in very deed as if the once glorious Protestant Church of France had fallen before the storm, and passed utterly from off the soil she had but a century before covered with her goodly boughs. Her ministers banished, her churches razed, her colleges closed, her sons driven into exile, and such of them as remained in the land languishing in prison, or dragging out a life of wretched conformity to the Romish Church – all public monument of French Protestantism had been swept away, and the place that had known it once seemed fated to know it no more for ever.

A deep spiritual decay proved the forerunner of this sore judgment. An emasculated Protestantism had taken the place of that grand Scriptural faith which had given such breadth of view and elevation of soul to the fathers of the Huguenots. This cold belief, so far from rallying new champions to the Protestant standard, could not even retain those who were already around it. The nobles and great families were apostatizing; the ministers were going over to Rome at the rate of a score or so year by year; and numbers of the people had enlisted in the armies of Louis XIV, although they knew that they should have to contend on the battle-field against their brethren in the faith, and that the king's object in the war was to make France strong that it might be able to deal a fatal blow to the Protestantism of Europe.[1] These were symptomatic of a most melancholy decline at the heart of French Protestantism, and now the axe was laid at the root of that tree which, had it been left standing in the soil, would in a few years have died of utter rottenness.

The cutting down of the trunk was the saving of the life, for that moment shoots began to spring forth from the old root. In the remote south, amid the mountains of Dauphine and the Cevennes, after the first stunning effects of the blow had abated, the Reformed began to look forth, and draw to one another; and taking courage, they met in little companies to celebrate their worship, or to partake of the Sacramental bread. Thus arose The "Church of the Desert." These assemblies speedily increased from a dozen or score of persons to hundreds, and from hundreds at last to thousands. They were ministered to by men who had learned their theology in no school or college, nor had the hands of presbyter been laid upon their head; on them had come only "the anointing of the Holy Spirit." The assemblies they addressed met on the side of a mountain, or on some lonely moor, or in a deserted quarry or gloomy cavern, or amid the great stems and overshadowing branches of a forest. Intimation of the meeting was sent round only on the evening before, and if any one had scandalized his

brethren by immorality, he was omitted in the invitation. It was the only ecclesiastical discipline which was administered. Sentinels, stationed all round, on rocks or on hilltops, signaled to the worshippers below the approach of the dragoons, indicating at the same time the quarter from which they were advancing, that the people might know in what direction to flee. While the congregation was assembling, worship was commenced by the singing of a psalm, the Hundredth being commonly selected. The elders then read several chapters of the Bible. At this stage the pastor, who had kept his place of concealment till now, made his appearance, attended by a body-guard of young men, who escorted him to and from the place of meeting, and were prepared to protect his flight should they be surprised by the soldiers. The sermon was not to exceed an hour and a quarter in length. Such were the limits which the Synods of the Church had fixed, with an obvious regard to the safety of the worshippers.

The "Church of the Desert" had been some time in existence before she had the happiness of enjoying the ministry of her exiled pastors. A few returned, at the peril of their lives, when they heard that their scattered flocks had begun to meet together for the performance of worship. About 1730 a theological academy was established at Lausanne, in Switzerland, and thence emanated all the Protestant pastors of France till the reign of Napoleon. The same forms of worship were observed in the wilderness as in the city church in former times. Public prayer formed an important part of the service, conducted either by the ministers or, in their absence, by the elders. The prayers of the pastors were commonly extemporaneous, whereas the elders usually availed themselves of the aid of a liturgy. The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper was dispensed at Christmas, at Easter, and at Pentecost, as well as at other times. The purity of the table was anxiously guarded. No one was admitted to it till first he had signified his desire to an elder, and received from him a little medal or "token."[\[2\]](#) These were made of lead, and

roughly engraved, having on one side all open Bible, with the rays of the sun, emblematic of the Spirit's light, illuminating its page, and the motto, "Fear not, little flock;" and on the other, a shepherd tending his sheep, or a Communion cup, and a cross, suggestive of persecution. The communicant put down his "token" on the table, and the bread and cup were then given to him. Often would it happen that those who had gone to mass would beg, with tears in their eyes, admission to the table, but there they could not sit till they had given ample proof of their Penitence.

These worshipping assemblies were usually convened at night, the more effectively to avoid pursuit. When they met in a wood, as very often happened, they hung lamps on the boughs of the trees, that they might see the passages of Scripture which were read, and the psalms that were sung. Afterwards, when the congregations had swelled to thousands, they met during day, selecting as their rendezvous the mountain-top, or some vast stretch of solitary moor. Their worship, how simple in its outward forms, but in spirit how sublime, and in its accessories how grand! the open vault above, the vast solitude around, the psalm and prayer that rose to heaven amidst the deep stillness, the dangers that environed the worshippers – all tended to give a reality and earnestness to the devotions, and impart a moral dignity to the worship, compared with which the splendor of rite or of architecture would have, been but desecration. The Protestant Church of France had returned to her early days. It was now with her as when Calvin administered to her the first Communion on the banks of the Claim This was her second birthday.

When the king and the Jesuits learned that the Protestants had begun again to perform their worship, they broke out into a transport of wrath that was speedily quenched in blood. More arrests, more dragoons, more sentences to the galleys, more scaffolds; such were the means by which they sought to crush the "Church of the Desert." Everywhere in Languedoc and

Dauphine the troops were on the alert for the Reformed.

"It was a chase," as Voltaire has expressed it, "in a wide ring." The Marquis de la Trousse, who commanded in the Cevennes, when he surprised a congregation, made his soldiers fire into it as if it was a covey of game. The Protestants had no arms, and could offer no resistance. They dropped on their knees, and raising their hands to heaven, awaited death.

The truthful Antoine Court says that "he was furnished with an exact list of assemblies massacred in different places, and that in some of these encounters from 300 to 400 old men, women, and children were left dead upon the spot." [3] But no violence could stop these field-preachings. They grew ever larger in numbers, and ever more frequent in time, till at last, we are assured, it was nothing uncommon, in traversing the mountain-side or the forest where they had met, to find, at every four paces, dead bodies dotting the sward, and corpses hanging suspended from the trees.

The outbreak of the Camisards came to diversify with new and even greater horrors this terrible tragedy. Driven to desperation and stung to madness by the numberless cruelties, injustices, and infamies of the Government, and permitting themselves to be directed by certain of their own number whom they regarded as prophets, the peasants of Vivarais and Languedoc rose in arms against the royal troops. Ignorant of the art of war, and provided only with such weapons as they took from their enemies, they lurked behind the bushes and crags of their mountains, and sold their lives as dearly as they were able. They never amounted to more than 10,000, but at times they held in check armies of double that number.

Tiffs guerilla warfare lasted from 1702 to 1706, and was attended with frightful slaughter on both sides. The Cevenols joined the Camisards, which enlarged the seat and intensified the fury of the war. The court took the alarm, and more soldiers were poured into the infected provinces. The more

effectually to suppress the rising, the Romanist population were removed into the cities, and the country was laid waste. And the work of devastation not proceeding rapidly enough with the musket, the sword, and the axe, the faggot was called in to expedite it; the dwellings of the peasantry were burned down, and the district, so flourishing before the Revocation, was converted into one vast gloomy wilderness. This was the last armed struggle of the Reformation in France. No noble or pastor took part in it; it was waged for liberty rather than for religion, and though it stained rather than honored the cause in the name of which it was waged, it emboldened the Protestants, who from this time were treated somewhat less mercilessly, not because the Government hated them less, but because it feared them more.

These atrocities were enacted upon no obscure stage, and in no dark age, but in the brilliant era of Louis XIV. Science was then cultivated, letters flourished, the divines of the court and of the capital were learned and eloquent men, and greatly affected the graces of meekness and charity. We wait to hear these lights of their age exclaim against the awful crimes of which France was the theater. Surely some voice will be lifted up.

Bossuet, "the Eagle of Meaux," has come to be credited with a "charity" superior to his country, and which shone all the brighter from the darkness that surrounded it. It would unspeakably delight one to find a name, otherwise so brilliant, unstained by the oppressions and crimes of the period; but the facts brought to light by M. M. Haag, in *La France Protestante*, completely disprove the truthfulness of the panegyrics which the too partial biographers of the distinguished bishop have pronounced upon his moderation. These show that Bossuet was not superior in this respect to his contemporaries. In giving vigorous enforcement to the edicts of the king within his own diocese, he but acted consistently with his avowed principles. "It behoves us to

give obedience to kings," said Bossuet, "as to Justice itself. They are gods, and participate in a certain sense in the independence of God. No other than God can judge their sentences or their persons." [4] This prepares us for the part he acted against the Protestants. The Intendant who executed the law in his diocese, and who had orders to act according to Bossuet's advice, condemned to death several Protestants of Nanteuil, and even the Abbe le Dieu admits that the bishop demanded their condemnation. True, he demanded also their pardon, but this "pardon" consisted in the commutation of the penalty of death to the galleys for life. Further, it is certified by a letter of Frotte, a former canon of St. Genevieve, and whom Bossuet himself describes as a very honest man, that the bishop caused Protestants to be dragged from the villages of his diocese, cited them before him, and with a military officer sitting by his side, summoned them to abjure their religion; that he used to have children torn from their parents, wives from their husbands, and to have dragoons quartered upon Calvinists to force them to abandon their faith. He asked for lettres de cachet to be issued against the Crochards, father and son, at the very time that the former was dying. [5] He instigated a ruthless persecution of two children, the Mitals. [6] We find him too in the memoir addressed to the minister Pontchartrain, which is published in the seventeenth volume of his works, demanding the imprisonment of two orphans, the Demoiselles de Neuville, whose father was serving in the army of William of Orange, thus punishing the children for the faults, as he deemed them, of the parent. These facts, which are beyond dispute, completely overthrow the claim for superior clemency and mildness which has been set up for the eloquent bishop.

To pursue the century year by year to its close would only be to repeat endlessly the same tale of crime and blood; the facts appertaining to the progress of Protestantism in France, from the war of the Camisards until the breaking out of the great Revolutions. group themselves around two men – Antoine

Court and Paul Rabaut. Antoine Court has received from the French Reformed the well-earned title of "Restorer of Protestantism."

He found the French Protestant Church at the close of the Camisard war at the last extremity. She needed educated pastors, she needed public instruction, she needed order and discipline, and above all a revival of piety; and he set about restoring the Protestant Church as originally constructed by the first Synod at Paris in 1559. He was then young, and his task was great, but he brought to it a sound judgment and admirable prudence, an indefatigable zeal, and a bodily constitution that sustained itself under the pressure of prodigious labors, and he succeeded in raising again the fallen edifice. Commencing with assemblies of ten or a dozen, he saw around him before ending his career congregations of eight and ten thousand. By his missionary tours he revived the all but extinct knowledge and zeal of the Protestants. He re-organized the worshipping assembly; he re-constituted the Consistory, the Colloquy, and the Synod; and he provided a race of educated and pious pastors. He convoked a Synod (October 21st, 1715), the first which had met since the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes. At that moment Louis XIV lay dying in his splendid palace of Versailles. History delights in contrasts, and we have here one that will repay our attention. On the one side is the great monarch; his children dead; his victories swept away; the commerce and industry of his kingdom ruined; many tracts lying untilled; while his subjects, crushed under enormous taxes, and cursing the man whose wars and pleasures had plunged his realm into millions of debt, waited gloomily till his remains should be borne to the grave, that they might throw stones and mud at his coffin. On the other side we behold a youth of nineteen laying anew the foundations and raising up the walls of that Protestantism to commemorate the entire destruction of which Louis XIV had caused so many medals to be struck, and a bronze statue to be erected.

Having re-constituted upon its original bases the Reformed Church of France, Antoine Court in 1730 retired to Lausanne to preside over the seminary he had there founded, and which continued for eighty years to send forth pastors and martyrs to France.[7] Paul Rabaut took his place as nourisher of that Protestantism which Antoine Court had restored. The life of Rabaut was full of labors and perils; but he had the satisfaction of seeing the Protestant Church growing from day to day in spite of bloody arrests, and in defiance of the continued operation, sometimes in greater and sometimes in less intensity, of the dragonnade, the galleys, and the scaffold. As the result of continual journeyings, during which he seldom slept more than two nights in the same hiding-place, he kept flowing the fountains that his great predecessor had opened, and streams went forth to water the weary land. But neither then nor since has the Protestant Church of France attained the glory of her former days, when sovereigns and princes sat in her Synods, when great generals led her armies, and learned theologians and eloquent preachers filled her pulpits. She continued still to wear her chains. At length in 1787 came the Edict of Malesherbes, which merely permitted the Protestants to register their births, marriages, and deaths; in other words, recognized them as subjects, and permitted them to prosecute their professions and trades, but still held them punishable for their religious opinions. At last, amid clouds of seven-fold blackness, and the thunderings and lightnings of a righteous wrath, came the great Revolution, which with one stroke of awful justice rent the fetters of the French Protestants, and smote into the dust the throne which had so long oppressed them.

FOOTNOTES

VOLUME THIRD

BOOK TWENTY-SECOND

VOLUME THIRD- BOOK TWENTY-SECOND- CHAPTER 1

[1] See ante, vol. 2., p. 624.

[2] Felice, History of the Protestants of France, vol. 1., p. 309.

[3] Elie Benoit, Histoire de l'Edit de Nantes, tom. 2., p. 295. This is a work in five volumes, filled with the acts of violence and persecution which befell the Protestants from the reign of Henry IV to the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes.

[4] Felice, vol. 1., p. 315.

[5] Serres, Gen. Hist. of France, continued by Grimston, pp. 256, 257.

[6] Ibid. Young, Life of John Welsh, pp. 396, 397; Edin., 1866.

[7] Elie Benoit, tom. 2., p. 377.

VOLUME THIRD- BOOK TWENTY-SECOND- CHAPTER 2

[1] Felice, pp. 326, 327.

[2] Felice, p. 329.

VOLUME THIRD- BOOK TWENTY-SECOND- CHAPTER 3

[1] Weiss, History of the French Protestant Refugees, p. 26; Edin., 1854.

[2] Weiss, Hist. French Prot. Refugees, p. 34.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid., p. 35.

[5] Hall's Works, vol. 6., p. 878.

VOLUME THIRD- BOOK TWENTY-SECOND- CHAPTER 4

[1] Voltaire, Age of Louis XIV., vol. 1., p. 73; Glas., 1753.

[2] Agnew, Protestant Exiles from France in the Reign of Louis XIV., vol. 1., p. 94 (a work of great research).

[3] Elie Benoit, Histoire de L'Edit de Nantes, tom. 4., livr. 17., 18.; Delft, 1695.

VOLUME THIRD- BOOK TWENTY-SECOND- CHAPTER 5

[1] See Bulletin de la Societe de l'Histoire du Protestantisme Francais: Deuxieme annee; p. 167 et seq.; Paris, 1854.

[2] Weiss says the 22nd of October. It was probably signed on the 18th and published on the 22nd of October.

[3] Weiss, p. 72.

[4] The Archbishop of Dublin, Richard Chevenix Trench, is his great-grandson. The archbishop is descended by the mother's side from the family of Chevenix, and by the father's side from another Huguenot family, that of La Tranches.

[5] Elie Benoit, vol. 5., pp. 554, 953.

[6] Felice, vol. 2., p. 63. See also Bulletin de la Societe de l'Histoire du Protestantisme Francais: Premiere Annee; pp. 316, 535; Paris, 1853.

[7] Massillon's Funeral Oration on Louis XIV.

[8] This statue was melted in 1792, and cast into cannon, which thundered at Valmy. (Weiss, p. 93.) .

[9] We say three, although there are five, because two of the number axe obviously reproductions with slight variations in the design.

VOLUME THIRD- BOOK TWENTY-SECOND- CHAPTER 6

[1] Felice, vol. 2., p. 79.

[2] Ibid., vol 2, p. 78

[3] John Quick, Synodicon in Gallia Reformata, pp. 130, 131; Lond., 1692.

[4] History of the Sufferings of M. Louis de Marolles; the Hague, 1699. See also Admiral Baudin's letter to the President of the Society of the History of French Protestantism – Bulletin for June and July, 1852.

[5] Situated on the rocky isle that fronts the harbor of Marseilles.

[6] Published by him every fortnight after the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes.

[7] Felice, vol. 2., p. 87.

[8] Autobiography of a French Protestant condemned to the Galleys for the sake of his Religion (transl. from the French), p. 209. This work was written by Jean Marteilhe, who passed some years in the French galleys. It was translated by Oliver Goldsmith, first published at Rotterdam in 1757, and has since been re-published by the Religious Tract Society, London. See also Elie Benoit, bk. 24.

[9] Autobiography of a French Protestant, etc., pp. 203, 204.

[10] Bulletin de la Societe de l'Histoire du Protestantisme Francais, pp. 176, 320; Paris, 1853.

VOLUME THIRD- BOOK TWENTY-SECOND- CHAPTER 7

[1] Weiss – Bulletin de la Societe de l'Histoire du Protestantisme Francais, pp. 231-234; Paris, 1853.

[2] These medals or “tokens” are engraved on page 324. See Bulletin de la Societe de l'Histoire du Protestantisme Francais, p. 13; Paris, 1854.

[3] Felice, vol. 2., p. 82.

[4] Politique Tiree de l'Ecriture Sainte, livr. 4., art. 1., prop. 2.

[5] Bulletin de la Societe de l'Histoire du Protestantisme Francais, vol. 4.

[6] Ibid., vol. 10. p. 50.

[7] Weiss, in his History of the Refugees, says that more than 700 pastors emanated from this famous school. M. Coquerel, in his History of the Churches of the Desert, reduces the number to 100. The most reasonable calculation would not give less than 450, among whom were Alphonse Turretin and Abraham Ruchat, the historian of the Reformation in Switzerland.