

and finally four fortified cities, of which La Rochelle was one, were given them as places of refuge and defense.

**121. Coligny's Project for a Huguenot Colony in America and in Holland.** — Coligny, the only surviving leader of the Protestants, earnestly counseled his followers to keep this peace. He had seen enough of the horrors and the losses of civil war. Like the brave man, true patriot, and sincere Christian that he was, he hoped that the unhappy country might now have time to heal its wounds, and that both parties, by mutual toleration, would overcome evil with good.

In case, however, that this happy result could not be attained, he had projected a Protestant colony in America. More than fifty years before the Pilgrims landed in New England to plant a free religious commonwealth, this remarkable man had begun a Huguenot settlement in Florida.<sup>1</sup> The Spaniards attacked it, hanged the colonists, and fastened above the heads of the corpses a placard on which was written, "Not because they were Frenchmen, but because they were heretics." A French Catholic, De Gourgues,<sup>2</sup> moved with righteous indignation, fitted out a ship and avenged this act by hanging their murderers, over whose bodies he put a similar placard, bearing the inscription, "Not because they were Spaniards, but because they were assassins." But Coligny's efforts failed, and he had to leave to the English race the realization of his dream of a great American Protestant state.

Although disappointed in the New World, yet Coligny was not without hope of success in a different direction. The Dutch had revolted against the tyranny of Spain, and were endeavoring to establish the independent Protestant republic of the Netherlands. Not even the ferocity of Philip II's ablest general, the Duke of Alva, had cowed the spirit of the

<sup>1</sup> See The Leading Facts of American History in this series.  
<sup>2</sup> De Gourgues (də goorg).

resolute Hollanders. Rather than yield to Spain they were ready to break down the dikes and let the water of the North Sea sweep over their country.

It was to this land, where he felt sure of a welcome, that Coligny now meditated leading his Huguenot followers. In doing this he had a double object. He would find shelter for such of the Protestants of France as were willing to go to Holland, and he would furthermore give aid to men of his own faith in their struggle against Philip II of Spain, the mildest of whose punishments for heresy was burying alive or burning.

Meanwhile Charles had become king of France, under the title of Charles IX. He was not a favorite with Catherine, who gave the preference to Charles's brother, the Duke of Anjou. The king was naturally jealous of this preference, and he was also impatient of being kept any longer in leading strings by his mother.

On one point, however, both were agreed. They dreaded the ambitious schemes of Philip, and feared that when he had crushed out the rebellion in the Netherlands he would endeavor to get control of France and make it part of a gigantic kingdom comprising nearly all western Europe.

Both mother and son would probably have consented to any scheme of Coligny's which would hold Spain in check, providing it did not involve them in open war with a monarch who was more than a match for France.

Coligny urged the king to take some decided stand, and even went so far as to intimate that the time was not far off when he would have to choose between war with Philip in behalf of the Protestants of Holland, or civil war at home.

**122. The Ill-Omened Marriage of Henry and Marguerite.** — But Charles had a plan which he hoped would keep him clear of both dilemmas. He thought that he could secure the support of the Huguenot party by marrying his sister Marguerite,

who was a Catholic like himself, to Henry of Navarre, who stood next to Coligny in the Protestant ranks. He hoped, too, to marry his brother, the Duke of Anjou, to Queen Elizabeth of England, and so get him out of the way.

The princess Marguerite was averse to the husband whom her brother had chosen for her; but that made no difference, and the wedding was arranged to come off in front of the cathedral of Notre Dame, on August 18, 1572. Henry of Navarre's mother, Jeanne d'Albret, had gone up to Paris to confer with Catherine about the marriage, and had suddenly and mysteriously died. Report said that Catherine had poisoned her. Henry, still clad in mourning for his mother, who was by far "the noblest woman of her time," was making preparations for the ill-omened nuptials.

All of the leading Huguenots had been invited to come to Paris for the event, and most of them had accepted. There were some, however, who had misgivings, and feared the festivities were only the bait of some terrible trap, and that the affair would end in blood. One prominent man of the party did not hesitate to say, "If that wedding comes off, its favors will be crimson."<sup>1</sup>

Coligny was warned by some of his friends that it would be especially dangerous for him to attend; but he replied, "I would rather be dragged through the streets of Paris on a hook than lose the chance of making peace at home and war abroad."

The wedding took place at the time appointed and on ground that might be considered neutral; for though under the shadow of the great Catholic cathedral, it was not within it. The princess Marguerite obstinately refused to take Henry for her husband, but Charles seized her head and forced her to nod an affirmative reply to the archbishop's questions, and so in this rude fashion she was made a bride.

<sup>1</sup> Wedding favors: knots of white ribbon worn at a marriage.

The marriage was no sooner over than trouble began. The pulpits of Paris denounced the unholy union of a Catholic with a heretic. The young Duke of Guise, who believed that his father had been murdered at the battle of Orléans by one of Coligny's emissaries,<sup>1</sup> was eager to take the admiral's life.

On the other hand, Charles seemed to yield more and more to Coligny's influence, and Catherine saw to her dismay that she was losing control over her irresolute and weak-minded son.

In her rage at this discovery, she willingly abetted a scheme for the assassination of Coligny and the other Protestant leaders. If the attempt succeeded she could throw the blame on the Guises. This would excite the Huguenots to rise against them, and in the bloodshed that would ensue she might get rid of the master spirits of both parties. She could then manage the weak king in her own way, with no one to hinder.

A professional assassin — for there were plenty of such in those days — was hired to dispatch Coligny. He missed his aim, and the admiral, though wounded, was not killed. As soon as the king heard of the deed, he hastened to the great Protestant general to express his horror and his sympathy. "You," said he to Coligny, "are hurt in body, but I am hurt in spirit"; and he vowed not to let the crime pass unpunished.

**123. Plot to exterminate the Huguenots.** — Catherine was now thoroughly alarmed. Her plot had failed. The king had sworn to take vengeance on its perpetrators. The Protestants would rise, the civil war would again break out, and her influence would be utterly lost. The Huguenots of Paris, fearing with good reason that their own lives were in danger, had already begun to arm in self-defense.

Torn by conflicting passions, she now resolved on the terrible deed that has ever since associated the church festival

<sup>1</sup> See Paragraph 117.

of St. Bartholomew with the darkest and the most stupendous crime recorded in the annals of French history. The stealthy, tigress nature of this desperate woman was fully roused. She knew that she could count on the help of the Guises and their followers. Her plan was to strike quick and hard; at one blow she would destroy Coligny and the chief men of the Huguenot party.

Seven years before, the Duke of Alva had met her at Bayonne,<sup>1</sup> and tried to persuade her to this step, but she had then, says Motley, resolutely refused. Now, she needed no persuasion.

But in order to carry out the conspiracy successfully she must have her son's consent.

At first the king repulsed the proposition with unfeigned horror. But Catherine was firm. "War," said she, "is inevitable. Your crown is at stake. If you do not strike first, then each side will choose its own leader and you will be left out. Remember the Italian proverb, 'There are times when kindness is cruelty, and cruelty kindness.'"

Finally, as Charles still refused his consent to the massacre, Catherine turned away, saying, "Well, I will take my other son (the Duke of Anjou) and leave you, for I will not remain to witness the ruin of my house." Then the king, touched in a jealous chord, yielded. "I consent," said he, "but on this one condition,—that you do not leave a Huguenot alive in France to reproach me."

**124. The Massacre of St. Bartholomew.**—About two in the morning of Sunday, August 24, 1572,—the day of the solemn festival of St. Bartholomew,—the bell of the church of St. Germain,<sup>2</sup> opposite the east end of the palace of the Louvre, began to toll. Immediately every church bell in Paris responded. It was the signal for the massacre. The houses

<sup>1</sup> Bayonne (bā-yōn'): in the southwestern corner of France.  
<sup>2</sup> St. Germain l'Auxerrois (sǎn-zhĕr-man' lōsār-rwā').

of the Huguenots had been marked. The attacking party and their friends wore white badges; all who were not so designated were to be slain as enemies of the government and of religion.<sup>1</sup>

Coligny was the first to fall. The Duke of Guise's men rushed into the admiral's mansion. Coligny had been awakened by the tumult. "Are you the admiral?" demanded one of the assassins, as he pointed his sword at his heart. "I am," answered Coligny calmly, "and you, young man, should respect my white hairs. But do your work; you will only shorten my life by a little."

The murderer plunged his weapon into the admiral's bosom, and threw the still living body out of the window to be insulted by the mob. The Duke of Guise looked exultingly at the corpse as it lay on the pavement, and then stamped his heel into the face. Later the body was hung on a gibbet, and the head was cut off and given to the queen mother.

Then the murder of the Huguenots in Paris became general. It was, to use an expression of the time, "a deluge of crime." The massacre extended to most of the provinces; but in some the authorities interfered to save the Huguenots, and in others they were able to protect themselves in a measure. The young Prince of Condé and the king's new brother-in-law, Henry of Navarre, were threatened with immediate destruction. "Choose," said the king, "either the mass<sup>2</sup> or death." Both were brave men, but neither possessed the martyr spirit, and so they promised compliance.

The work of slaughter went on for three days without interruption. The Seine was filled with bodies. Many who were not Huguenots were slain, and debtors settled up long accounts with importunate creditors by dagger and bullet. The whole number slain cannot be determined. Probably from two to

<sup>1</sup> See Millais' noted picture of the "Huguenot Lover."

<sup>2</sup> Mass: the Roman Catholic communion service.

four thousand perished in Paris, and four or five times that number in the provinces.

When Philip of Spain heard the good news he could not suppress his joy. It meant not only the death of multitudes of heretics, but the weakening of the power of France. He who was hardly ever known to smile, now laughed aloud. On the other hand, the Catholic emperor of Germany, Maximilian II, expressed the utmost horror at the act, which, as a later Catholic writer has said, "never had, and, if God permit, never shall have, its parallel."<sup>1</sup>

The pope ordered a thanksgiving, and caused a medal to be struck to commemorate the massacre; but later, says Guizot, "when the truth came out he was seen to shed tears. When asked why he wept at the destruction of the heretics he replied, 'I weep at the means the king used, which were exceedingly unlawful and forbidden of God.'"

In England the dreadful news created the utmost consternation. The cry was for vengeance, and the Bishop of London urged the queen to send leading Catholics to the Tower and to strike off the head of Mary Queen of Scots (then a prisoner) without delay.

**125. Renewal of the Civil War; Death of the King.**—The massacre failed to accomplish what Catherine hoped. The Protestant party, though it had met with frightful loss, was not exterminated. Those who were left fled to arms. They made good Beza's words, that their faith was an anvil equal to breaking many hammers to pieces.<sup>2</sup> Civil war now burst forth with greater fury than ever. The Huguenots intrenched themselves in La Rochelle and other walled cities, where they defended their cause so valiantly that Charles was glad to offer terms of peace. At the very time when he was receiving the congratulations of the king of Spain on the triumphant

<sup>1</sup> Péréfixe, Archbishop of Paris, seventeenth century.

<sup>2</sup> See Paragraph 114.

slaughter of St. Bartholomew, he found himself forced to grant the heretics liberty of conscience by the treaty of La Rochelle.

A year later Charles died at the age of twenty-four. His last hours, it is said, were spent in an agony of fear, begging God to forgive him for the innocent blood he had shed. He had horrible visions, and thought that he heard the groans and cries for mercy of the victims who had fallen through his consent. His old Huguenot nurse tried in vain to comfort him. "No," said he, as he turned his face to the wall, "it is of no use; I have followed evil counsel. I am lost, I am lost." If the son was thus to despair of the mercy of Heaven, what shall we say of the mother who had persuaded him to guilt?

**126. Accession of Henry III; his Policy toward the Huguenots.**—Charles was succeeded by his brother, Henry III, a man equally weak and more utterly worthless. He had no sooner taken the crown than he ordered the Protestants to give up their religion or leave the country. This command renewed the civil war. The Catholics still had the Guises as their head. The Huguenots had now no leaders left but Henry of Navarre and the Prince of Condé, both of whom renounced their compulsory Catholicism.

But the king vacillated. He had a strong court party against him who were eager for power, and he could not fight them and the Huguenots too. Presently he made up his mind to retract his edict and offer peace. Large concessions were now granted to the Huguenots. Persecution ceased. Offices of state were given to influential Protestants. Henry of Navarre was made governor of Guienne.<sup>1</sup> The young Prince of Condé received Picardy;<sup>2</sup> even the widows and orphans of St. Bartholomew were remembered, and were exempted from paying taxes.

<sup>1</sup> Guienne (gē-ēn'): a province in the southwest, on the Bay of Biscay.

<sup>2</sup> Picardy (pī-kar-dī'): a province in the northwest, on the Channel.

**127. The Holy League.** — These concessions, together with Henry's bad government and ruinous extravagance, created a powerful opposition, partly political and partly religious. Eventually the Duke of Guise and his party took advantage of the widespread feeling, and organized the Holy League (1576).

It had four chief objects: (1) to reestablish and maintain the Catholic religion; (2) to suppress Protestantism; (3) to prevent Henry of Navarre from obtaining the succession to the crown;<sup>1</sup> (4) to restore the political rights enjoyed under Clovis, the first Christian king, with such better liberties as could be found.<sup>2</sup> But there was a fifth and secret object, which the Duke of Guise had more at heart, perhaps, than any of these, and that was, under cover of piety and patriotism, to secure the royal power for himself.

Thus, like a cunning politician of modern times, he made his boasted devotion to Church and country a bid for public favor; and to further strengthen his cause, manufactured a genealogy designed to prove that he was the legitimate descendant and successor of Charlemagne.

**128. Renewal of the War; Assassination of the Duke of Guise.** — The formation of the League was the signal for the renewal of the strife. There were three Henrys in the field, — Henry III, Henry, Duke of Guise, and Henry of Navarre. In this great triangular duel each was fighting ostensibly for religion, yet fighting none the less for his own private interests. The foundations of all order seemed broken up, and the whole country was given over to anarchy and bloodshed.

Both sides quoted Scripture as a warrant for the atrocities they had committed, were committing, or were preparing to

<sup>1</sup> Henry III's brother, the Duke of Anjou (late Duke of Alençon), would have legally succeeded to the throne in case the king left no son. The king had no children and the duke died before him (1584), so that Henry of Navarre stood next heir to the crown.

<sup>2</sup> This plank in the platform was probably intended to give the chief power to the States-General; in other words, to the nobles of the League.

commit. So the war went on from bad to worse, neither party getting any decided advantage.

Many of the fortified towns were strongly Huguenot, but Paris was wholly devoted to the Duke of Guise, and looked upon the king with the contempt which his character naturally inspired. Henry forbade the duke's entering the city, but he came. The populace sided with him, and the king found himself practically a prisoner in his own capital.

After a time he succeeded in leaving Paris. At a council at the palace of Blois,<sup>1</sup> Henry got his revenge. Rendered desperate, the king incited a band of followers to assassinate the duke. "At last," said he, as he kicked the corpse, "I have killed the reptile; and to kill the reptile is to destroy his venom. Now I am king of France, for 'the king of Paris' is dead." Thus perished the man who sixteen years before had insulted the dead body of Coligny.

But Henry was mistaken, for though he had slain the originator of the League, he had not slain the League itself. Henry had abused his power to such an extent that he had alienated most of his subjects, whether Catholic or Huguenot. So when he boasted to his mother, the wily Catherine de' Medici, that by this murder he had now made himself the real king of France, she quietly said, "Ah, my son, it's one thing to cut your cloth, and another to make it up." His rival was indeed effectually got rid of, but now the question was, How unite the country?

**129. Alliance of the King with Henry of Navarre; Murder of the King.** — The king resolved to negotiate terms with both parties. The League scorned his proposals; but Henry of Navarre, whose help he next sought, threw himself at his sovereign's feet, and the king raising him up called him brother.

The Huguenot army and the royal troops now united. The king and Henry of Navarre advanced against Paris — that is,

<sup>1</sup> Blois (blwā): a city on the Loire, southwest of Orléans.

against the heart of the League — to attack it. A Dominican monk, coming from the city, begged to speak with the king on a matter of great importance. He secured admission to his presence, and then, suddenly drawing a dagger, stabbed him fatally.

The dying monarch said to Henry of Navarre, "You will never become king unless you become a Catholic." Then turning to his chief men, he made them swear to support Henry as his successor (1589). With his death the house of Valois became extinct, and the house of Bourbon obtained the crown.<sup>1</sup>

**130. Henry IV; the Battle of Ivry; Philip of Spain.** — But Henry IV was not to secure the crown without a struggle. The League proclaimed one of his uncles, the Cardinal de Bourbon, king; but the moderate Catholics united with the Huguenots in the support of Henry. In 1589 he won the battle of Arques,<sup>2</sup> and in 1590 the decisive victory of Ivry,<sup>3</sup> which opened the way to the siege of Paris. Before the battle a council of war was held. One officer wished to make some provision for a safe retreat in case of defeat. "There will be no retreat but the battlefield,"<sup>4</sup> said the king. "In the fight, follow always the white plume in my helmet." That plume led to triumph.

And in they burst, and on they rushed, while like a guiding star,  
Amidst the thickest carnage blazed the helmet of Navarre.

Hurrah! Hurrah! a single field hath turned the chance of war,  
Hurrah! Hurrah! for Ivry, and Henry of Navarre.<sup>5</sup>

After that sanguinary contest, though Paris still refused to acknowledge him, yet the greater part of the country practically accepted Henry as sovereign. Meanwhile Cardinal de Bourbon

<sup>1</sup> See Genealogical Table, Paragraph 109.

<sup>2</sup> Arques (ärk): near Dieppe, Normandy.

<sup>3</sup> Ivry (év-ré'): in Normandy, about forty-five miles west of Paris.

<sup>4</sup> Battlefield, *i.e.*, death.

<sup>5</sup> Macaulay's "Ivry."



HENRY IV AT IVRY

had died, and Philip II of Spain sent an army into France to cooperate with the League, and, in violation of all past custom and law, to place his daughter on that throne that had never yet been occupied by a woman.

For a long time Henry had all he could do to hold his enemies in check. He had the pope, the emperor of Germany, the king of Spain, the duke of Savoy, and the League, all against him. At one time he was in rags and with hardly a horse to ride; but the day of his final success was at hand.

**131. Henry becomes a Catholic.**—The Duke of Sully, Henry's wisest counselor and a steadfast and sincere Protestant, now urged the king to espouse the Catholic faith as the only certain means of securing a lasting peace to the distracted country. Henry was not unwilling. He held long debates with the Catholic theologians, and at last declared that he was fully convinced that they were right. In 1593 he entered the church of St. Denis<sup>1</sup> near Paris. "Who are you?" demanded the Archbishop of Bourges.<sup>2</sup> "I am the king." "What is your request?" "To be received into the bosom of the Catholic, Apostolic, and Roman Church." Then, kneeling at the feet of the archbishop, he said, "I swear in the presence of Almighty God to live and die in the Catholic religion, and to protect and defend it with my life."

Eight months later Paris, hungry for bread and hungry for peace, held out no longer, but threw open its gates with joy. The League now hastened to make terms with the king, and as the Huguenots did not abandon him, he received the loyal support of both parties.

**132. Edict of Nantes.**—Henry, though destitute of the moral grandeur of character displayed by Coligny, was, however, a man of great ability, and well fitted to rule in such an emergency. He henceforth devoted all his energies to the

<sup>1</sup> St. Denis (săN-dnĕ').

<sup>2</sup> Bourges (boorzĥ).

good of France. In 1598 he issued the Edict of Nantes,<sup>1</sup> which secured the Huguenots the rights they had so long demanded. This edict begins a new era in history. It was the first formal recognition of toleration in religion made by any leading power of Europe, and it anticipated a similar act in England by nearly a century.

Ten years before, England's repulse of the attempted Spanish invasion had proved that Catholics and Protestants would unite to fight for their country and their queen. Henry believed the time had come when both would likewise join forces for the honor of France. He saw then, what all admit to-day, that freedom of conscience is one of the surest guarantees of national strength.

The Edict of Nantes placed the Huguenots on the same civil footing as the Catholics. Liberty of worship was secured to them throughout France, though with some slight limitations. Their marriages, which the law had refused to sanction, were now declared valid. They were permitted to hold certain fortified cities as a pledge and means of safety. The schools, which had been closed against them, were now open for the education of their children. Finally, the Huguenots were rendered eligible to public office, and were to be represented in the parliaments or courts.

In a word, all that the magnanimous L'Hôpital<sup>2</sup> had tried to obtain for them was now definitely granted. This act of tardy justice put an end to the civil wars which had lasted for nearly forty years.

**133. Henry's Labors for France.**—Never did a country stand in greater need of peace. It had lost by massacres and civil strife over a million of its people. Thousands of houses were in ruins, the peasants were wretchedly poor, and brigands roamed everywhere.

<sup>1</sup> Nantes (nãnts or nõnt): a city on the Loire. The edict was issued there.

<sup>2</sup> See Paragraph 113.

With the help of Sully, his chief minister, the king reorganized the finances, aided the restoration of agriculture and trade, opened roads, built bridges, dug canals, established manufactures, and promoted commerce. He thus proved himself a true friend to every farmer and tradesman throughout the land. Prosperity began to smile once more on the exhausted realm. Wherever Henry went he was hailed with blessings as the "Father of his Country," and it looked as though his good-natured wish would be realized, and that he would live to see every peasant have a fowl to put in his pot for his Sunday dinner.

But beloved as Henry was, he was not safe from the hand of the assassin. In 1610, after a reign of over twenty years spent in building up France, he was murdered in the streets of Paris by the fanatic Ravaillac.<sup>1</sup> He had well earned the title of Henry the Great. No king's memory has ever been more affectionately cherished by the French people. When in the Revolution of 1789 the royal tombs at St. Denis were broken open and the contents thrown out, Henry's remains were respected even by the mob, and left inviolate.

**134. Summary.**—The whole period, covering a little more than half a century, is entirely taken up with the civil and religious wars of the Catholics and the Huguenots. These disastrous conflicts were often prompted as much by the personal ambition of the leaders as by any higher motive, though beneath the surface there was a real contest going on between the principles of religious authority on one side and of religious liberty on the other.

The massacre of St. Bartholomew, the formation of the League, the conversion of Henry IV to Catholicism, and the promulgation of the Edict of Nantes are the chief points. The period ends in the reconciliation of all parties, the establishment of liberty of worship, and the revival of the prosperity of France, checked, however, by the assassination of the king.

<sup>1</sup> Ravaillac (rä-väl-yäk' or rä-vä-yäk').