

Hugh de Parale, Grand Prior of France, and the Grand Prior of Aquitaine. The Pope had reserved to himself the cognizance of their case, but ultimately devolved it on a commission, which met at the French capital. An earnest desire was entertained by the persecutors, that these illustrious Knights, who were the dignitaries of their Order, should adhere to the partial confessions which the terrors of the rack had extorted from them. All Christendom shuddered at the fires which burned in every corner of the French territory; and the Pope and King were consequently anxious to justify, by irrefutable testimony, the implacable pertinacity with which they had followed up the work of proscription. It was determined to mitigate the punishment of the four prisoners to perpetual imprisonment—if such a doom may be called a mitigation—provided they adhered to their former confessions; and under an impression that the populace of Paris required the most incontestable assurance that so many Templars had not been hurried to the grave without just and potent reasons, it was resolved that the Grand Master and his companions in misfortune should make a public declaration. A scaffold was erected in front of the Cathedral Church, on which the prisoners were exposed in sight of a pile of faggots, which, they were given to understand, was to consume them in case they recanted. An elaborate oration was then made by one of their judges, in which he dwelt with much bitterness on the abominations which had disgraced the Order; and when it concluded they were called upon to renew, in the hearing of the multitude, the confession of their crimes and errors. The Priors of France and Aquitaine, intimidated at the prospect of the stake, obeyed; but when it came to the Grand Master's turn to speak, that magnanimous Knight, shaking his chains, advanced with a countenance full of resolution to the

edge of the scaffold, and, raising his voice, exclaimed, "It is but just that, in this terrible day, and in the last moments of my life, I should expose the iniquity of falsehood, and make truth to triumph. I declare, then, in the face of Heaven and earth and to my own eternal confusion and shame, that I have committed the greatest of crimes; but it has been only in acknowledging that the atrocious charges so implacably urged against the Order to which I belong, have a shadow of justice. I made that confession to suspend the tortures of the rack and mollify my persecutors. I know that this recantation will subject me to new torments; but the horrible sight they now offer to my eyes, cannot intimidate me to confirm my first departure from truth by a second lie. Life has already become hateful to me, and, on a condition so infamous, I scorn to retain it. What good purpose would it serve me, to purchase a few miserable days by a confirmation of the blackest calumnies?"

The persecuted Knight would have spoken more, but it was deemed politic to interrupt him. Guy, Grand Prior of Normandy, made his recantation in the same solemn and forcible manner; and they were both burned alive in a slow fire the same day, on the very spot which has been adorned, in modern times, with a statue of Henry the Fourth.

The Grand Master met death with the spirit of a martyr. He repeated his protestations as to the innocence of his Order; but admitted that he deserved to suffer for having, in a moment of human weakness, maligned it.

Thus died the last of the Templars—those dauntless warrior-monks, whose banner had for two centuries been always foremost in Paynim war, and who, had they not been caught, as Fuller says, like lions in a net, would, instead of being tamely hunted down, have made good their part against all the power of France.