

the bug-bear held up by the Church when anxious to call down the wrath of the over-zealous, the credulous and the superstitious upon any sect refusing blind obedience and submission to her innovations and encroachments. The unfortunate Albigenses were, therefore, declared guilty of Manicheism and a crusade proclaimed against them. The persecution thus commenced lasted with more or less fury through the whole pontificate of Innocent III. These simple people, who inhabited the smiling plains of the Languedoc, formed a sort of Independent State, though owing allegiance to France, and were at that time under the dominion of Raymond, Count of Toulouse. Protestant writers have taken much trouble in tracing the chief characteristics of their belief, and have succeeded in establishing the fact that their faith closely resembled that of the Vaudois or Waldenses, and had in all probability reached them from those hardy mountaineers, from whom they were separated only by the Alpine ridge. If such be the case, a purer, more simple, more sincere, more beautiful form of Christian worship has never been seen elsewhere. From these hardy inhabitants of Cisalpine Italy came the pure form of faith and energetic protest against Romish innovations and popish superstitions which, in time, was to develop itself into the glorious Reformation.

Of the Albigenses themselves, it is difficult now to obtain any very correct information,—no traces are left of them; they have completely disappeared before the hot blaze of persecution, as April snows beneath the rays of the sun. Some were drowned, some beheaded, many hanged, most put to the sword, not a few burned. Simon De Montfort, a bigot and a hypocrite, was put in charge of the crusade, and he acquitted himself of his trust in a way which must have won for him the regard of his employer. At Minerba he burnt alive one hundred and fifty of these heretics; at La Vaur

he hanged the governor, drowned his wife, beheaded most of the leading citizens, and murdered a large number of women. To show the spirit in which this crusade, as it is called, was conducted, at the massacre of Bezieres, Arnold, the pope's legate, on being asked how the heretics were to be distinguished from the orthodox, replied:—"Slay all, God will find His own." And, on his order and that of De Montfort, friends and foes were put to the sword alike, and the whole population slaughtered without discrimination. The few who escaped of this unfortunate sect, found refuge among the Vaudois, among whom they were gradually merged and lost to sight. In speaking of them Hume says:—"He (Innocent III.) published a crusade against the Albigenses, a species of enthusiasts in the south of France, whom he denominated heretics, because, like other enthusiasts, they neglected the rites of the Church, and opposed the power and influence of the clergy. The people from all parts of Europe, moved by their superstition and their passion for wars and adventures, flocked to his standard. Simon De Montfort, the general of the crusade, acquired to himself a sovereignty in these provinces. The Count of Toulouse, who protected, or perhaps only tolerated the Albigenses, was stripped of his dominions; and these sectaries themselves, though the most innocent and inoffensive of mankind, were exterminated with all the circumstances of extreme violence and barbarity."

Referring to the same subject, Hallam, with some bitterness but great truth, remarks:—"Languedoc, a country, for that age, flourishing and civilized, was laid waste by these desolators, her cities burned, her inhabitants swept away by fire and sword; and this to punish a fanaticism ten thousand times more innocent than their own, and errors which, according to the worst imputations, left the laws