

PARADISE LOST AND LA HENRIADE.

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Let us say at once that none of the characters drawn by Voltaire can be compared in any respect, to Milton's sublime demon. He has created a Henry IV, whom all the eighteenth century believed in, but in whom we believe no more. No doubt, the *Béarnais* was a remarkable man, a great politician, beneficent by his skepticism, since he restored peace in France. He was a clever and intrepid general, a lion, if you like, but while uniting his courage with the cunning of a fox, the latter in him nearly always got the better of the former. The man who became a Roman Catholic after Saint Bartholomew, turned again a Huguenot in order to gain a party and an army, and turned once more a Roman Catholic to obtain a crown, the man who said :—"Paris is worth a mass indeed," has nothing ideal about him, and cannot be chosen as the hero for an epic. The epithet of *virtuous*, coupled with his name by Voltaire—

"Le vertueux Bourbon, plein d'une ardeur guerrière
A son prince aveuglé vint rendre la lumière."

makes us smile, even if we accept the term in its widest sense and use. That clever, unscrupulous fellow, whether from a natural disposition, or from policy, had really virtues worthy of a king. His humanity towards the prisoners on the battle-field, the food he handed to the very subjects he besieged, his tolerance, are things which the eighteenth century delighted to think and speak of, and rightly so, after the measureless selfishness and the fanaticism of Louis XIV. Henry's conversion to Roman Catholicism is totally lacking in enthusiasm. It is easy to see that Voltaire cares very little for his abjuration, and that he only speaks of it, because history compels him to do so."

"Son cœur obéissant se soumet, s'abandonne
A ces mystères saints dont son esprit s'étonne."

With regard to Mornay, that ice-cold Mentor, he is too much in advance of his age. He is Voltaire or some one of his disciples covered with an armour of the sixteenth century.

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