

THE BAPTISM OF CLOVIS.

FROM the 30th September till the 11th October 1896, the fourteenth anniversary of the baptism of Clovis, founder of the French monarchy, was celebrated at Rheims. Clovis was baptized in 496 A.D., and the event had such important results that we do not hesitate to consecrate a few pages to it and the events that led up to it.

Clovis, the first Frank convert was descended from Pharamond of whom little is known, but under whom, it is said, the Franks first swept over Gaul about the year 420 A.D. Childeric, father of Clovis and chief of the Franks having, on account of his evil deeds, been deposed, Egidius, a Roman officer, was appointed in his stead. He ruled over the Franks for a period of eight years during which time Childeric lived at the court of the king of Thuringia whither he had fled. Before going, however, he entered into a compact with a faithful servant to the effect that the latter was to inform him of the time when the bitterness of the feeling against him would have disappeared. He is said to have cut a coin in two, keeping one-half and giving the other to the servant. The latter was to send him the half-coin when he judged it safe for Childeric to return. At the end of eight years receiving the half coin, he set out immediately for his own country. The servant had not misjudged the feeling of the people. Childeric was favorably received and restored to his dignity of chief, but was given only half the power, the other half being left to Egidius.

At the death of Childeric Clovis succeeded to the throne. Wishing to rule alone he issued a challenge to Syagrius the son and successor of Egidius, and a day was appointed on which the chiefs with their rival forces were to

meet. The battle was fought near Soissons and resulted in a complete victory for Clovis. Syagrius fled to the court of Alaric, then only a youth. Upon the demand of Clovis and with the consent of his advisers Alaric delivered up the youthful fugitive to the conqueror of Soissons. Syagrius shortly afterwards was put to death by Clovis who thus became sole ruler over the territory of the Franks.

Clovis though ambitious of supreme power wished to rule justly; he respected the conscientious scruples of his subjects. He was a pagan and the people over whom he extended his conquest after the battle of Soissons were nearly all Catholics, yet he did not molest them; on the contrary he extended to them his protection, as is shown by the following incident.

That part of the territory ruled over by Syagrius was Catholic, and in consequence many churches had been built. The soldiers of Clovis in their thirst for booty had pillaged these, and their contents formed part of the spoils which were to be distributed among the victors. Among the valuables which the Franks had taken was a precious vase, the property of the church of Rheims. The bishop begged of Clovis to save this from profanation. The king promised to attempt its recovery, and accordingly at the distribution he demanded the vase as a special favour. The soldiers unanimously replied that to him belonged all that had been taken. One only objected saying "No, you shall have only what falls to your lot." So saying he struck the precious object with his battle-axe and shattered it into fragments. Clovis carefully gathered up the pieces and handed them to the delegates sent by the bishop. The king never forgot the man, and the following year at a re-