

of many who had previously confessed, under a protestation that they had been driven by torture to defame themselves, and that they now scorned the pardon which such cowardice had purchased. All those who relapsed in this manner were removed to Paris; and after a solemn consultation among their judges, were proclaimed recusants who had renounced Christ. The Pope having once imbrued his hands in the blood of these devoted men, showed no scrupulosity in according his unqualified suffrage to all the merciless schemes which their chief persecutor invented for their persecution. On the 12th of May, 1310, fifty-four Templars who had confessed, but afterwards recanted, were burnt alive at Paris in a slow fire. They one and all died asserting their innocence, and the honor of their Order, with their last breath.

The Grand Master, de Molai, was brought in fetters before the Commissioners, and questioned whether he had anything to say in defence of his Knights. He answered nobly that he was an illiterate soldier, more skilled in war than in forensic subtlety, and could not therefore undertake their defence as a legal advocate; but that, in any Knightly way, he should be infinitely proud to maintain their innocence in the face of the whole world. He then entreated that he might be allowed to hire counsel; but the Commissioners replied that, as heretics, the accused were not entitled to any such indulgence. They then read over to him a confession which he had made himself, vitiated by the grossest interpolations. On hearing it read, he crossed himself in great astonishment, and emphatically denounced the three Cardinals who had subscribed it, as deserving of the death which the Saracens and Tartars (with whom he had often combated) condemned liars and forgers to die.

Notwithstanding the rigor of the persecution, a few Knights were entirely acquitted. Others, whose con-

fessions had not been so unqualified, were sentenced to a canonical penance, and to shave the long beards which all the Order wore, in conformity to the custom of Eastern nations. At length the King, determined to bring the matter to a termination, held a solemn council with the Pope at Vienna, in the end of 1311. All the Bishops who attended it, with the exception of three French prelates, entreated, but in vain, that an illustrious Order, which had for nearly two centuries been one of the bulwarks of Christendom, should not be utterly swept away, without its principal functionaries being heard in their own defence. But the votes of three hundred mitred Priests were of no avail against the unjust decision of a triple-crowned dotard, and the rapacity and implacability of a merciless King. After six months of procrastination, the Pope, finding the prelates firm in their opinion, rose suddenly in the midst of them, and exclaimed that, since they would not gratify his dear son, the King of France, by passing a judicial sentence on the Templars, without a tedious and improper formality, the plenitude of the Papal authority should supply every defect. This decided the fate of the Order. In the following spring he formally promulgated its suppression, reserving to himself and the church the disposition of the persons and the estates of the whole Brotherhood.

The whole estates of the Templars, except such as were situated in Spain, which were specifically dedicated to the defence of that country against the Moors, who still retained the sovereignty of Grenada, were forthwith adjudged to the Knights of St. John.

In the following year (1313), this cruel and unjustifiable persecution terminated in the final arraignment of the Grand Master, Jacques de Molai, and the three Grand Preceptors, Guy, Grand Prior of Normandy, brother to the Prince of Dauphiny,