



MASSACRE OF ST. BARTHOLOMEW.

By a Protestant Theologian in The Sacred Heart Review.

VI.

It is commonly assumed that Catherine de Medici had formed the purpose of cutting off the Huguenot leaders and as many of their followers as possible at the very time when she invited the Protestant magnates to Paris to celebrate the wedding of their young chief, Henry of Navarre, with her daughter, Margaret of Valois. Ranke shows that there is good reason to regard this opinion as both true and false. Catherine, when she was on the point of making the young Bourbon prince her son-in-law, and when she bade her followers to the wedding, seems to have really had in mind to gain the Protestants over to her side as a support against the imperious control of the Guises, under which she had chafed during the brief reign of her eldest son, the young Francis, whose wife, Mary Stuart, was their niece, and who still were too powerful in France for Catherine's comfort. If she could gain over the Huguenots to her support, she would be independent of both sides. She seems to have meant to give the Protestants so much liberty as to keep them from rebellion, while restricting them so sharply as to hold the Guises quiet. It was a ticklish policy, but it suited her Italian and Medicean astuteness. Had she been trusted by any one, something might have come out of it. But a woman who had no French feeling, who believed in nothing, and who valued her own power above the good of her son and of France, was not likely long to hold the balance between two French parties, each profoundly convinced of the soundness of its cause.

Still, she seems really to have meant to try this policy, which afterwards Henry Bourbon himself, a person who could be trusted, carried out with such brilliant success. Yet, as Ranke remarks, tortuous and subtle natures like hers have commonly in the background of consciousness some purpose at variance with that which is at the moment prevalent with them. This is likely at any time to push to the front and take the place of control. So it seems to have been with Catherine. If, instead of trying for the uncertain adherence of the Calvinistic leaders, she should find it to her account to avail herself of their concourse in intensely Catholic Paris to entrap them and cut them off, she stood quite ready to do so. Accordingly she may be said to have meditated the massacre at the very time when she was, for the moment, planning something exactly opposite to the massacre. For the sake of the one thing which she valued in life, supreme control, she was ready to make or break promises to the Admiral, the League, the King of Spain, the Pope or anybody else.

I need not say that my cousin Coffin, in describing St. Bartholomew's, revels in blunders, for that he does everywhere. He absolutely wallows in them, although, to be sure, he does that

in so many pages of his books that I am not sure but that I am laying a false emphasis here. Of course he could not introduce the great massacre without a preliminary poisoning or two. Not long before the royal wedding, Jane d'Albret, reigning Queen of Navarre, Henry's mother, fell sick and died. Of course she was poisoned. Mr. Coffin knows all the facts so precisely, that if some difficulties of chronology did not stand in the way, I should be tempted to believe that he had enjoyed the queen mother's confidence in the matter. Mr. Lansing knows how to bring a man out of his grave 152 years late to poison a Pope, but I think that even he would shrink from bringing a man into the world 300 years early, to poison a queen. Therefore I prefer the dry remark of Guizot, that there is no probability whatever of any poisoning in the case.

One would think that the Coffins and Lansings, and such people, held, with the African negroes, that the only way to be sure that anybody has died a natural death is to hang him. Then we may be satisfied that he has gone off with that ancient and unimpeachable disease, want of breath. Otherwise, we must always assume that he has been either bewitched or poisoned. There is no surer sign of a vulgar nature, or else of one that partisan malignity has degraded into vulgarity, than the disposition to assume that persons noted in history have died of poison. The Ave Maria wittily says that poison seems to have been as convenient a medical verdict in old days as heart-failure is in ours. Or, if the doctors hesitated, the public was always certain.

However, to do these people justice, they do not think, like the negroes, that everybody in the old days was either poisoner or poisoned or both. It was only Catholics that poisoned Protestants, or else Jesuits that poisoned inconvenient popes or cardinals or kings. When Elizabeth and her ministers tried to persuade Sir Amyas Paulet to poison the Queen of Scots, of course that was merely an innocent pleasantry. To be sure, Sir Amyas gives a very serious refusal, but that, I suppose, was because, being a Puritan, he did not understand how to take a joke of his jolly sovereign. I wonder if this message of Elizabeth to the knight is one of those admirable points of "bravery in maintaining the principles of the Reformation" over which the English Methodist Doctor William Rule becomes enthusiastic.

There is one case of poisoning in the 16th century, and that a formally authenticated case, of which I do not observe that Coffin, Lansing, Edgar, or any other of these valiant champions of the pure gospel make any mention. And yet it certainly has interest enough. It is the case of a very brilliant, though very erratic king, dethroned, imprisoned, and finally poisoned by his brother, according to the solemn advice of a council of state, confirmed by the hand and seal of two successive archbishops. Of course this took place in Spain or Italy, or some other of those depraved popish countries. Unhappily, it came to pass in evangelical and godly Sweden. The poisoned king, Eric XIV., was a Calvinist, or suspected of leaning that way.

The fratricidal murderer, King John III., was a Lutheran, who held that the dethronement, imprisonment, and finally the poisoning, of his elder brother and sovereign was necessary for the good of the state, and still more for the good of the Lutheran church. If any one wishes to see the whole revolting proceeding, he may consult Bernhard Duhr's "Jesuitenfabeln," Vierte Lieferung, pp. 360-362. This design of the King and Council is supported by the first two Lutheran archbishops of Upsala, and by their suffragan bishops of Linköping, Skara, Strengnaes, Vesteras, besides two pastors and one dean. The documents are in the Swedish archives, and on the spot of the murder stands a slab inscribed: "For deeds unworthy of a king, unworthily taken off." Propter facinora rege indigna indigne sublatus

Duhr very pertinently asks, What would have been said, if a Catholic king had dethroned, imprisoned and poisoned his Calvinistic brother and sovereign, on the advice of a Catholic council, of two Catholic archbishops, of four Catholic bishops, of two Catholic divines and of a Catholic dean? Above all, what would have been said, if this case of conscience had been settled in favor of the poisoning by two successive Jesuit generals, four Jesuit provincials, and three other Jesuit divines? It would no longer have been needful to surmise Jesuit poisonings and regicides, on any evidence or on none. One such authentic and accredited case would have sufficed for all the centuries. If it had been urged that Eric was tyrannical, heretical and dangerous, what an outcry there would have been. "Only see these Jesuits!" would have been the exclamation. "They first sanctioned rebellion, and then advise fratricidal regicide, and that in the most treacherous form, and then they offer an apology which is worse than the original offence!"

How exasperating, that all this holy indignation of ours must lie idle on our hands! We can't use it against six pious Lutheran bishops, and three Lutheran theologians. How things will still go at cross purposes in this naughty world!

CHARLES C. STARBUCK.

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Sister Laurent, of the Grey Nun Mother House, will celebrate her fiftieth anniversary of religious vows next Sunday. As four years must precede the profession, this gives the venerable jubilarian 54 years of religious life. She entered the community at the early age of 15, and is still to be seen going her charitable rounds, visiting the sick, etc., every day.

IN THE OCTAVE OF ST. GEORGE.

It seems to us passing strange how disloyal almost all Catholic papers are towards England. This is a thing that puzzles us and we should be glad to have the secret unveiled, for it is a well known fact that our holy religion is more free under the British flag than under any other. Can it be that the memory of ages of persecution still rankles in the breast of these Christians of to-day? We think it is not generally known that English Catholics have suffered as much as Irish ones for their faith; they have undergone for centuries a social ostracism, but have always kept a dignified silence on the subject, which all have respected and allowed to remain unbroken. Methinks those who complain so much of the cross they carry lose somewhat of merit. It is not our converts that are so well acquainted with these things, but the old Catholic families who kept the faith through the dark days of penal times. Amongst these, it may be interesting to notice at present the Howards, the head of which house, the Duke of Norfolk, is now gone forth to join the army in South Africa.

"One little episode, probably not elsewhere unrecorded," says the London Chronicle, "of the going forth of the Duke of Norfolk to the war, recalls certain customs of knightly mediævalism never abandoned by the House of Howard. On the day of his departure from London the Duke took his sword to the private chapel at Archbishop's House, where, according to an ancient rite, it was solemnly blessed before the altar by Cardinal Vaughan. When the kneeling soldier of fortune—in a new sense—was enjoined in the accustomed formulary to accept no greater reward for his services than is their just due, it was a little difficult for either actor in the moving little ceremony to preserve a countenance quite impassive."

His Grace's sister, Lady Margaret Howard, died a few months since, regretted by all who knew her, especially the poor, for whose sake she had given up rank and fashion and for years had lived right amongst them, in the poorest part of London, the East End, so as to be nearer to them and of more comfort in their necessities. They tell us one day she lost a pet dog and inquired everywhere for it, but no dog was forthcoming. At last two big, rough-looking fellows came and asked to see Lady Margaret, one of them carried the dog and coming forward in a shame-faced manner put it into her arms. "Now, you shall have the reward," she said. "Oh! no, Lady Margaret, we stole the dawg me and my pal, but if we'd know'd 'twas yourn, Lady Margaret, we'd a died before taking it."

The father of the present Duke, one of the handsomest and most courtly men of his time, was a devout Catholic. It was indeed edifying to see him and Lady Arundel (he was at the time of which I speak Earl of Arundel and Surrey, his father being still alive) receiving Holy Communion three or four times a week

in the little chapel at Newbury, in Berkshire, near their summer residence. Once they brought Fr. Faber with them to say Mass. Shall we ever forget his angel face! The Earl always served Mass on week days, only he knelt a long way off, as if he were not worthy. On Sundays he knelt for a long time on a poor little bench right at the back to prevent the rough people from disturbing the service. This was an ideal Christian family; all the children who were old enough came to church with their parents, more simply clad than the poorest. I remember little Lord Maltravers, the present Duke, wearing a suit of green velvet, and we, children, thought the old Duke must have given it to him. "Ethel's Book," or "Tales of the Angels," by Father Faber, was written for little Lady Etheldreda Howard, and "Philip's Death," one of the tales, was about her brother, little Lord Philip, who died an infant. They say the Queen, then quite young, had taken a girlish fancy for the Earl of Arundel and Surrey, and so he was sent abroad, where he fell sick and was nursed by the daughter of Lord Lyons, commanding the Mediterranean fleet, whom he married. This dear Duchess was like the spouse in the Canticles, "the beauty of the King's daughter was within," but she had lovely little feet.

Not all of the Dukes of Norfolk have been good, though none have abandoned the faith. For generations there had been a good and then a bad one, but the spell is broken, for the two last have been excellent. One of the bad old Dukes, they say, always kept his chaplain living in the house, in case he should die suddenly, so as to repent at the last. When he was sick to death, they looked everywhere for the chaplain; impossible to find him. After all was over, a footman going into the library saw him calmly saying his Breviary "Oh! where have you been, Father? We have looked everywhere for you, the Duke is dead." "I have never left the library," he replied, "all the afternoon," and this was the first place in which they had sought him. M. T.

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