

# PLEASANT HOURS

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## THE NORMANS and THE HUGUENOTS

BY THE EDITOR.

It is a curious fact that in conflicts between Northern and Southern nations, the men of the north are almost always victorious. It seems as if the milder climate and luxuries of the south enervate both the body and the mind. A striking illustration of this is shown in the invasion of France by the Northmen, under Rolf or Rollo, in the ninth century. The degenerate successors of Charlemagne—Charles the Fat, Charles the Simple, Charles the Bald—by their wealth and cowardice offered a tempting prey to the bold Norse pirates, who pillaged the coasts of Europe as far as Sicily. In the days of Charles the Fat, they swarmed up the Seine as far as Paris, with 30,000 warriors and 700 war galleys, and laid siege to the city—even then a great feudal stronghold. There is an island in the Seine, known as the

"OLD CITY,"

on which is now situated the great cathedral of Notre Dame. This the Northmen besieged for thirteen months, and were bought off only with large ransom. Eventually, they settled in the country, gave it the name of Normandy, and became, under William the Conqueror, the eighth in line of descent from Rollo or Rolf, the Norman conquerors of Britain.

No historic record presents features of more tragic and pathetic interest than that of French Protestantism. Its chief incidents may be thus summarized:

In 1521, the very year in which "the monk that shook the world" confronted the power of the Empire at Worms, the New Testament was published in French, and Lefevre and Farel were preaching throughout France the vital doctrine of the Reformation—salvation by faith. But the new doctrines fell under the ban of the Sorbonne. The persecution which began with the burning of six Lutherans in the Place de Greve spread throughout the

"INFECTED PROVINCES."

Thousands were massacred, towns and villages were burned to ashes, and some of the fairest regions of France were turned into a desert. But like the Israelites in Egypt, the Reformed, "the more they were vexed, the more they multiplied and grew." Before the death of Francis it was estimated that one-sixth of the population of France, and these its most intelligent artisans and craftsmen, were adherents of "the religion."

COLIGNY

was a scion of one of the greatest families in France. His own promotion was rapid. He became in quick succession Colonel, Captain-General, Governor of Picardy and Admiral of France. While prisoner at Antwerp he lay ill with a fever for many weeks. During his convalescence he profoundly studied the Scriptures. He had always sympathized with the Reformed faith, but now he openly espoused the Calvinist Creed. He boldly cast in his lot with this despised and hated Protestant party, choosing, like Moses, rather to suffer afflictions with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.

Relying on the edict of toleration, the Huguenots of Vassy were assembled one Sunday morning for worship. The Duke

of Guise with his men-at-arms riding by swore that he would "Huguenot them to some purpose." With his airless butchers he fell upon the unarmed congregation and slaughtered sixty-four and wounded two hundred.

THE "MASSACRE OF VASSY"

was the outbreak of the civil war, which for thirty long years rent the unhappy kingdom. As Coligny on hearing of this massacre, pondered in his bed by night the awful issue before him, he heard his wife sobbing by his side. "Sound your conscience," he said, "are you prepared

not, and by a decisive victory he won a full toleration for the long-persecuted Huguenots. The perfidious Catherine plied her subtlest craft, and fawned and smiled, and "murdered while she smiled." The young king seemed to give his full confidence to Coligny. His sister, the fair but frail Margaret of Valois, was given in marriage to the young Protestant hero, Henry of Navarre; and on the eve of the

BLACKEST CRIME OF THE AGE

all went merry as a marriage bell." The cautious fish have taken the bait," exulted the treacherous Medici. The nuptials of Navarre and Margaret of Valois at length took place—on a great scaffold in front of the even then venerable Notre Dame. Four days later, August 22nd, as Coligny was returning from a visit to the king, a shot from a window shattered his arm and cut off a finger. The king and queen-mother visited with much apparent sympathy the wounded Admiral, and disarmed his noble nature of distrust. It was, he

through the darkness," and the flash of death was caught up and echoed from belfry to belfry over the sleeping town. Then the narrow streets became filled with armed men, shouting, "For God and the king." The chief of the assassins, the Duke of Guise, with three hundred soldiers, rushed to the lodgings of the Admiral. Its doors were forced. Coligny, wakeful from his recent wound, had heard the tumult and was at prayer with his chaplain. "I have long been prepared to die," said the brave old man. "Save your lives if you can, you cannot save mine. I commend my soul to God."

"ART THOU COLIGNY?"

demand Besme, a bravo of Guise's, bursting in. "I am," said the hero soul. Then looking in the face of the assassin, he said calmly, "Young man, you should respect my gray hairs, but work your will, you abridge my life but a few short days." Besme plunged a sword into his breast, and the soldier rushing in despatched him with daggers. "Is it done?" demanded Guise, from the court-yard below. "It is done, my lord," was the answer and they threw the dead body from the window to the stone pavement. By the fitful light of a torch, Guise wiped the blood from the venerable face. "I know it," he cried joyfully, "it is he," and he spurned the dead body with his foot, and ordered the hoary head to be smitten off, that the unsexed Medici might gloat upon it in her boudoir. What became of it is not known. One story reports that it was sent, as an acceptable present, to the Pope of Rome; another, that it took its place with those of the murdered Flemish nobles, Egmont and Horn, in Philip's cabinet at Madrid. The dishonoured body, after being dragged for two days through the streets, was hung on a gibbet. When the king came to glut his revenge by gazing on his victim, as the courtiers shrank from the piteous object, "Fie," he exclaimed in the words of the monster Vitellius, "the body of an enemy is always a pleasant sight."

Through the narrow streets rushed the midnight assassins, shouting, "Kill! kill! Blood-letting is good in August.

DEATH TO THE HUGUENOTS!

Let not one escape." The sign of peace, the holy cross, was made the assassin's badge of recognition. The Huguenot houses were marked, and their inmates, men and women, maids and matrons, old age and infancy, were given up to indiscriminate massacre. The queen mother and the "dames of honour" from the palace windows feasted their eyes on the scene of blood, and the king himself, snatching an arquebuse, shot down the wretched suppliants who fled for

refuge to his merciless gates. For a week the carnival of death continued. The streets ran red with blood. The Seine was choked with corpses. Throughout the realm, at Meaux, Angers, Bourges, Orleans, Lyons, Toulouse, Rouen, and many another city and town, the scenes of slaughter were repeated till France had immolated, in the name of religion, 100,000 of her noblest sons. Young Henry of Navarre was spared only by the tears and prayers of the king's sister, his four-days' bride.

ROME HELD HIGH JUBILEE

over this deed of death. Cannon thundered, organs pealed, and sacred choirs sang glory to the Lord of Hosts for this signal favour vouchsafed his Holy Church, and on consecrated medals was perpetuated a memorial of the damning infamy forever. In the Sistine Chapel may still be seen Vesuri's picture of the tragedy, with the inscription "Pontifex Colignii necem probat." "the holy Pope approves the slaughter of Coligny."



SIEGE OF OLD PARIS.

to face confiscation, exile, shame, nakedness, hunger, for yourself and children, and death at the hands of the headsman after that of your husband? I give you three weeks to decide." "They are gone already," the brave soul replied. "Do not delay, or I myself will bear witness against you before the bar of God." He cast in his lot and fortune with the persecuted religion and rode off next morning to join the Huguenot army of Conde.

DOMESTIC BEREAVEMENTS

one after another now befell Coligny. His two brothers—"His right and left hand," he said, died, not without a suspicion of poison, and in swift succession, his wife, his first-born son, and his beloved daughter Renee, and his chateau was pillaged. Still he waged, though with heavy heart, the unequal conflict with his foes. At Moncontour a pistol shot shattered his jaw, yet he kept his saddle and brought off his army, although with the loss of six thousand men. Still his high courage faltered

thought, the private malice of the Guises, his implacable foes.

The arch-conspirators, the hardy Medici, Anjou and Guise for the king were rather the tool than a mover of the plot—urged on the preparations for their

WICKED PLOT.

Under the plea of protection the Huguenots were lodged in one quarter of the city, around which was drawn a cordon of Anjou's guards. The awful eve of St. Bartholomew, August 24th, 1572, arrived. The king sat late in the Louvre, pale, trembling, and agitated; his unwomaned mother urging him to give the signal of death. "Craven," she hissed, as the cold sweat broke out on his brow. "Begin, then," he cried, and a pistol shot rang out on the still night air. He would have recalled the signal, but the

"ROYAL TIGRESS"

reminded him it was too late, and, "even as they spoke the bell of St. Germain, l'Auxerrois tolled heavy and booming