

Memoirs of Marguerite de Valois, the — Volume 3 [Court memoir series] eBook

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Contents

Memoirs of Marguerite de Valois, the — Volume 3 [Court memoir series] eBook.....	1
Contents.....	2
Table of Contents.....	4
Page 1.....	5
Page 2.....	6
Page 3.....	7
Page 4.....	8
Page 5.....	9
Page 6.....	10
Page 7.....	11
Page 8.....	12
Page 9.....	13
Page 10.....	14
Page 11.....	15
Page 12.....	16
Page 13.....	17
Page 14.....	18
Page 15.....	19
Page 16.....	20
Page 17.....	21
Page 18.....	22
Page 19.....	24
Page 20.....	25
Page 21.....	26
Page 22.....	27



Page 23..... 28
Page 24..... 29
Page 25..... 30
Page 26..... 31
Page 27..... 32
Page 28..... 33
Page 29..... 34
Page 30..... 35
Page 31..... 36
Page 32..... 37
Page 33..... 38
Page 34..... 39
Page 35..... 40
Page 36..... 41
Page 37..... 42
Page 38..... 43
Page 39..... 44
Page 40..... 45
Page 41..... 46
Page 42..... 47



Table of Contents

Section	Table of Contents	Page
Start of eBook		1
HISTORY OF THE HOUSE OF VALOIS.		1
ETEXT EDITOR'S BOOKMARKS:		42



Page 1

HISTORY OF THE HOUSE OF VALOIS.

[Author unknown]

Charles, comte de Valois, was the younger brother of Philip the Fair, and therefore uncle of the three sovereigns lately dead. His eldest son Philip had been appointed guardian to the Queen of Charles IV.; and when it appeared that she had given birth to a daughter, and not a son, the barons, joining with the notables of Paris and the, good towns, met to decide who was by right the heir to the throne, "for the twelve peers of France said and say that the Crown of France is of such noble estate that by no succession can it come to a woman nor to a woman's son," as Froissart tells us. This being their view, the baby daughter of Charles IV. was at once set aside; and the claim of Edward III. of England, if, indeed, he ever made it, rested on Isabella of France, his mother, sister of the three sovereigns. And if succession through a female had been possible, then the daughters of those three kings had rights to be reserved. It was, however, clear that the throne must go to a man, and the crown was given to Philip of Valois, founder of a new house of sovereigns.

The new monarch was a very formidable person. He had been a great feudal lord, hot and vehement, after feudal fashion; but he was now to show that he could be a severe master, a terrible king. He began his reign by subduing the revolted Flemings on behalf of his cousin Louis of Flanders, and having replaced him in his dignities, returned to Paris and there held high state as King. And he clearly was a great sovereign; the weakness of the late King had not seriously injured France; the new King was the elect of the great lords, and they believed that his would be a new feudal monarchy; they were in the glow of their revenge over the Flemings for the days of Courtrai; his cousins reigned in Hungary and Naples, his sisters were married to the greatest of the lords; the Queen of Navarre was his cousin; even the youthful King of England did him homage for Guienne and Ponthieu. The barons soon found out their mistake. Philip VI., supported by the lawyers, struck them whenever he gave them opening; he also dealt harshly with the traders, hampering them and all but ruining them, till the country was alarmed and discontented. On the other hand, young Edward of England had succeeded to a troubled inheritance, and at the beginning was far weaker than his rival; his own sagacity, and the advance of constitutional rights in England, soon enabled him to repair the breaches in his kingdom, and to gather fresh strength from the prosperity and good-will of a united people. While France followed a more restricted policy, England threw open her ports to all comers; trade grew in London as it waned in Paris; by his marriage with Philippa of Hainault, Edward secured a noble queen, and with her the happiness of his subjects and the all-important friendship of



Page 2

the Low Countries. In 1336 the followers of Philip VI. persuaded Louis of Flanders to arrest the English merchants then in Flanders; whereupon Edward retaliated by stopping the export of wool, and Jacquemart van Artevelde of Ghent, then at the beginning of his power, persuaded the Flemish cities to throw off all allegiance to their French-loving Count, and to place themselves under the protection of Edward. In return Philip VI. put himself in communication with the Scots, the hereditary foes of England, and the great wars which were destined to last 116 years, and to exhaust the strength of two strong nations, were now about to begin. They brought brilliant and barren triumphs to England, and, like most wars, were a wasteful and terrible mistake, which, if crowned with ultimate success, might, by removing the centre of the kingdom into France, have marred the future welfare of England, for the happy constitutional development of the country could never have taken place with a sovereign living at Paris, and French interests becoming ever more powerful. Fortunately, therefore, while the war evoked by its brilliant successes the national pride of Englishmen, by its eventual failure it was prevented from inflicting permanent damage on England.

The war began in 1337 and ended in 1453; the epochs in it are the Treaty of Breigny in 1360, the Treaty of Troyes in 1422, the final expulsion of the English in 1453.

The French King seems to have believed himself equal to the burdens of a great war, and able to carry out the most far-reaching plans. The Pope was entirely in his hands, and useful as a humble instrument to curb and harass the Emperor. Philip had proved himself master of the Flemish, and, with help of the King of Scotland, hoped so to embarrass Edward III. as to have no difficulty in eventually driving him to cede all his French possessions. While he thought it his interest to wear out his antagonist without any open fighting, it was Edward's interest to make vigorous and striking war. France therefore stood on the defensive; England was always the attacking party. On two sides, in Flanders and in Brittany, France had outposts which, if well defended, might long keep the English power away from her vitals. Unluckily for his side, Philip was harsh and raw, and threw these advantages away. In Flanders the repressive commercial policy of the Count, dictated from Paris, gave Edward the opportunity, in the end of 1337, of sending the Earl of Derby, with a strong fleet, to raise the blockade of Cadsand, and to open the Flemish markets by a brilliant action, in which the French chivalry was found powerless against the English yeoman-archers; and in 1338 Edward crossed over to Antwerp to see what forward movement could be made. The other frontier war was that of Brittany, which began a little later (1341). The openings of the war were gloomy and wasteful, without glory. Edward did not actually send defiance



Page 3

to Philip till 1339, when he proclaimed himself King of France, and quartered the lilies of France on the royal shield. The Flemish proved a very reed; and though the French army came up to meet the English in the Vermando country, no fighting took place, and the campaign of 1339 ended obscurely. Norman and Genoese ships threatened the southern shores of England, landing at Southampton and in the Isle of Wight unopposed. In 1340 Edward returned to Flanders; on his way he attacked the French fleet which lay at Sluys, and utterly destroyed it. The great victory of Sluys gave England for centuries the mastery of the British channel. But, important as it was, it gave no success to the land campaign. Edward wasted his strength on an unsuccessful siege of Tournai, and, ill-supported by his Flemish allies, could achieve nothing. The French King in this year seized on Guienne; and from Scotland tidings came that Edinburgh castle, the strongest place held by the English, had fallen into the hands of Douglas. Neither from Flanders nor from Guienne could Edward hope to reach the heart of the French power; a third inlet now presented itself in Brittany. On the death of John III. of Brittany, in 1341, Jean de Montfort, his youngest brother, claimed the great fief, against his niece Jeanne, daughter of his elder brother Guy, Comte de Penthièvre. He urged that the Salic law, which had been recognised in the case of the crown, should also apply to this great duchy, so nearly an independent sovereignty. Jeanne had been married to Charles de Blois, whom John III. of Brittany had chosen as his heir; Charles was also nephew of King Philip, who gladly espoused his cause. Thereon Jean de Montfort appealed to Edward, and the two Kings met in border strife in Brittany. The Bretons sided with John against the influence of France. Both the claimants were made prisoners; the ladies carried on a chivalric warfare, Jeanne de Montfort against Jeanne de Blois, and all went favourably with the French party till Philip, with a barbarity as foolish as it was scandalous, tempted the chief Breton lords to Paris and beheaded them without trial. The war, suspended by a truce, broke out again, and the English raised large forces and supplies, meaning to attack on three sides at once,—from Flanders, Brittany, and Guienne. The Flemish expedition came to nothing; for the people of Ghent in 1345 murdered Jacques van Arteveldt as he was endeavouring to persuade them to receive the Prince of Wales as their count, and Edward, on learning this adverse news, returned to England. Thence, in July, 1346, he sailed for Normandy, and, landing at La Hogue, overran with ease the country up to Paris. He was not, however, strong enough to attack the capital, for Philip lay with a large army watching him at St. Denis. After a short hesitation Edward crossed the Seine at Poissy, and struck northwards, closely followed by Philip. He got across the Somme safely, and at Crecy in Ponthieu stood at bay



Page 4

to await the French. Though his numbers were far less than theirs, he had a good position, and his men were of good stuff; and when it came to battle, the defeat of the French was crushing. Philip had to fall back with his shattered army; Edward withdrew unmolested to Calais, which he took after a long siege in 1347. Philip had been obliged to call up his son John from the south, where he was observing the English under the Earl of Derby; thereupon the English overran all the south, taking Poitiers and finding no opposition. Queen Philippa of Hainault had also defeated and taken David of Scotland at Neville's Cross.

The campaign of 1346-1347 was on all hands disastrous to King Philip. He sued for and obtained a truce for ten months. These were the days of the "black death," which raged in France from 1347 to 1349, and completed the gloom of the country, vexed by an arbitrary and grasping monarch, by unsuccessful war, and now by the black cloud of pestilence. In 1350 King Philip died, leaving his crown to John of Normandy. He had added two districts and a title to France: he bought Montpellier from James of Aragon, and in 1349 also bought the territories of Humbert, Dauphin of Vienne, who resigned the world under influence of the revived religion of the time, a consequence of the plague, and became a Carmelite friar. The fief and the title of Dauphin were granted to Charles, the King's grandson, who was the first person who attached that title to the heir to the French throne. Apart from these small advantages, the kingdom of France had suffered terribly from the reign of the false and heartless Philip VI. Nor was France destined to enjoy better things under John "the Good," one of the worst sovereigns with whom she has been cursed. He took as his model and example the chivalric John of Bohemia, who had been one of the most extravagant and worthless of the princes of his time, and had perished in his old age at Crecy. The first act of the new King was to take from his kinsman, Charles "the Bad" of Navarre, Champagne and other lands; and Charles went over to the English King. King John was keen to fight; the States General gave him the means for carrying on war, by establishing the odious "gabelle" on salt, and other imposts. John hoped with his new army to drive the English completely out of the country. Petty war began again on all the frontiers,—an abortive attack on Calais, a guerilla warfare in Brittany, slight fighting also in Guienne. Edward in 1335 landed at Calais, but was recalled to pacify Scotland; Charles of Navarre and the Duke of Lancaster were on the Breton border; the Black Prince sailed for Bordeaux. In 1356 he rode northward with a small army to the Loire, and King John, hastily summoning all his nobles and fief-holders, set out to meet him. Hereon the Black Prince, whose forces were weak, began to retreat; but the French King outmarched and intercepted him near Poitiers. He had the English completely



Page 5

in his power, and with a little patience could have starved them into submission; instead, he deemed it his chivalric duty to avenge Crecy in arms, and the great battle of Poitiers was the result (19th September, 1356). The carnage and utter ruin of the French feudal army was quite incredible; the dead seemed more than the whole army of the Black Prince; the prisoners were too many to be held. The French army, bereft of leaders, melted away, and the Black Prince rode triumphantly back to Bordeaux with the captive King John and his brave little son in his train. A two years' truce ensued; King John was carried over to London, where he found a fellow in misfortune in David of Scotland, who had been for eleven years a captive in English hands. The utter degradation of the nobles, and the misery of the country, gave to the cities of France an opportunity which one great man, Etienne Marcel, provost of the traders at Paris, was not slow to grasp. He fortified the capital and armed the citizens; the civic clergy made common cause with him; and when the Dauphin Charles convoked the three Estates at Paris, it was soon seen that the nobles had become completely discredited and powerless. It was a moment in which a new life might have begun for France; in vain did the noble order clamour for war and taxes,—they to do the war, with what skill and success all men now knew, and the others to pay the taxes. Clergy, however, and burghers resisted. The Estates parted, leaving what power there was still in France in the hands of Etienne Marcel. He strove in vain to reconcile Charles the Dauphin with Charles of Navarre, who stood forward as a champion of the towns. Very reluctantly did Marcel entrust his fortunes to such hands. With help of Lecocq, Bishop of Laon, he called the Estates again together, and endeavoured to lay down sound principles of government, which Charles the Dauphin was compelled to accept. Paris, however, stood alone, and even there all were not agreed. Marcel and Bishop Lecocq, seeing the critical state of things, obtained the release of Charles of Navarre, then a prisoner. The result was that ere long the Dauphin-regent was at open war with Navarre and with Paris. The outbreak of the miserable peasantry, the Jacquerie, who fought partly for revenge against the nobles, partly to help Paris, darkened the time; they were repressed with savage bloodshed, and in 1358 the Dauphin's party in Paris assassinated the only great man France had seen for long. With Etienne Marcel's death all hope of a constitutional life died out from France; the Dauphin entered Paris and set his foot on the conquered liberties of his country. Paris had stood almost alone; civic strength is wanting in France; the towns but feebly supported Marcel; they compelled the movement to lose its popular and general character, and to become a first attempt to govern France from Paris alone. After some insincere negotiations, and a fear of desultory warfare, in

Page 6

which Edward III. traversed France without meeting with a single foe to fight, peace was at last agreed to, at Bretigny, in May, 1360. By this act Edward III. renounced the French throne and gave up all he claimed or held north of the Loire, while he was secured in the lordship of the south and west, as well as that part of Northern Picardy which included Calais, Guines, and Ponthieu. The treaty also fixed the ransom to be paid by King John.

France was left smaller than she had been under Philip Augustus, yet she received this treaty with infinite thankfulness; worn out with war and weakness, any diminution of territory seemed better to her than a continuance of her unbearable misfortunes. Under Charles, first as Regent, then as King, she enjoyed an uneasy rest and peace for twenty years.

King John, after returning for a brief space to France, went back into his pleasant captivity in England, leaving his country to be ruled by the Regent the Dauphin. In 1364 he died, and Charles V., "the Wise," became King in name, as he had now been for some years in fact. This cold, prudent, sickly prince, a scholar who laid the foundations of the great library in Paris by placing 900 MSS. in three chambers in the Louvre, had nothing to dazzle the ordinary eye; to the timid spirits of that age he seemed to be a malevolent wizard, and his name of "Wise" had in it more of fear than of love. He also is notable for two things: he reformed the current coin, and recognised the real worth of Du Guesclin, the first great leader of mercenaries in France, a grim fighting-man, hostile to the show of feudal warfare, and herald of a new age of contests, in which the feudal levies would fall into the background. The invention of gunpowder in this century, the incapacity of the great lords, the rise of free lances and mercenary troops, all told that a new era had arrived. It was by the hand of Du Guesclin that Charles overcame his cousin and namesake, Charles of Navarre, and compelled him to peace. On the other hand, in the Breton war which followed just after, he was defeated by Sir John Chandos and the partisans of Jean de Montfort, who made him prisoner; the Treaty of Guerande, which followed, gave them the dukedom of Brittany; and Charles V., unable to resist, was fair to receive the new duke's homage, and to confirm him in the duchy. The King did not rest till he had ransomed Du Guesclin from the hands of Chandos; he then gave him commission to raise a paid army of freebooters, the scourge of France, and to march with them to support, against the Black Prince, the claims of Henry of Trastamare to the Crown of Castile. Successful at first by help of the King of Aragon, he was made Constable of Spain at the coronation of Henry at Burgos. Edward the Black Prince, however, intervened, and at the battle of Najara (1367) Du Guesclin was again a prisoner in English hands, and Henry lost his throne. Fever destroyed the victorious host, and the Black



Page 7

Prince, withdrawing into Gascony, carried with him the seeds of the disorder which shortened his days. Du Guesclin soon got his liberty again; and Charles V., seeing how much his great rival of England was weakened, determined at last on open war. He allied himself with Henry of Trastamare, listened to the grievances of the Aquitanians, summoned the Black Prince to appear and answer the complaints. In 1369, Henry defeated Pedro, took him prisoner, and murdered him in a brawl; thus perished the hopes of the English party in the south. About the same time Charles V. sent open defiance and declaration of war to England. Without delay, he surprised the English in the north, recovering all Ponthieu at once; the national pride was aroused; Philip, Duke of Burgundy, who had, through the prudent help of Charles, lately won as a bride the heiress of Flanders, was stationed at Rouen, to cover the western approach to Paris, with strict orders not to fight; the Aquitanians were more than half French at heart. The record of the war is as the smoke of a furnace. We see the reek of burnt and plundered towns; there were no brilliant feats of arms; the Black Prince, gloomy and sick, abandoned the struggle, and returned to England to die; the new governor, the Earl of Pembroke, did not even succeed in landing: he was attacked and defeated off Rochelle by Henry of Castile, his whole fleet, with all its treasure and stores, taken or sunk, and he himself was a prisoner in Henry's hands. Du Guesclin had already driven the English out of the west into Brittany; he now overran Poitou, which received him gladly; all the south seemed to be at his feet. The attempt of Edward III. to relieve the little that remained to him in France failed utterly, and by 1372 Poitou was finally lost to England. Charles set himself to reduce Brittany with considerable success; a diversion from Calais caused plentiful misery in the open country; but, as the French again refused to fight, it did nothing to restore the English cause. By 1375 England held nothing in France except Calais, Cherbourg, Bayonne, and Bordeaux. Edward III., utterly worn out with war, agreed to a truce, through intervention of the Pope; it was signed in 1375. In 1377, on its expiring, Charles, who in two years had sedulously improved the state of France, renewed the war. By sea and land the English were utterly overmatched, and by 1378 Charles was master of the situation on all hands. Now, however, he pushed his advantages too far; and the cold skill which had overthrown the English, was used in vain against the Bretons, whose duchy he desired to absorb. Languedoc and Flanders also revolted against him. France was heavily burdened with taxes, and the future was dark and threatening. In the midst of these things, death overtook the coldly calculating monarch in September, 1380.



Page 8

Little had France to hope from the boy who was now called on to fill the throne. Charles VI. was not twelve years old, a light-wined, handsome boy, under the guardianship of the royal Dukes his uncles, who had no principles except that of their own interest to guide them in bringing up the King and ruling the people. Before Charles VI. had reached years of discretion, he was involved by the French nobles in war against the Flemish cities, which, under guidance of the great Philip van Artevelde, had overthrown the authority of the Count of Flanders. The French cities showed ominous signs of being inclined to ally themselves with the civic movement in the north. The men of Ghent came out to meet their French foes, and at the battle of Roosebek (1382) were utterly defeated and crushed. Philip van Artevelde himself was slain. It was a great triumph of the nobles over the cities; and Paris felt it when the King returned. All movement there and in the other northern cities of France was ruthlessly repressed; the noble reaction also overthrew the "new men" and the lawyers, by whose means the late King had chiefly governed. Two years later, the royal Dukes signed a truce with England, including Ghent in it; and Louis de Male, Count of Flanders, having perished at the same time, Marguerite his daughter, wife of Philip of Burgundy, succeeded to his inheritance (1384.) Thus began the high fortunes of the House of Burgundy, which at one time seemed to overshadow Emperor and King of France. In 1385, another of the brothers, Louis, Duc d'Anjou, died, with all his Italian ambitions unfulfilled. In 1386, Charles VI., under guidance of his uncles, declared war on England, and exhausted all France in preparations; the attempt proved the sorriest failure. The regency of the Dukes became daily more unpopular, until in 1388 Charles dismissed his two uncles, the Dukes of Burgundy and Berri, and began to rule. For a while all went much better; he recalled his father's friends and advisers, lightened the burdens of the people, allowed the new ministers free hand in making prudent government; and learning how bad had been the state of the south under the Duc de Berri, deprived him of that command in 1390. Men thought that the young King, if not good himself, was well content to allow good men to govern in his name; at any rate, the rule of the selfish Dukes seemed to be over. Their bad influences, however, still surrounded him; an attempt to assassinate Olivier de Clisson, the Constable, was connected with their intrigues and those of the Duke of Brittany; and in setting forth to punish the attempt on his favourite the Constable, the unlucky young King, who had sapped his health by debauchery, suddenly became mad. The Dukes of Burgundy and Berri at once seized the reins and put aside his brother the young Duc d'Orleans. It was the beginning of that great civil discord between Burgundy and Orleans, the Burgundians and Armagnacs, which worked so much ill for France in the earlier part of the next century. The rule of the uncles was disastrous for France; no good government seemed even possible for that unhappy land.



Page 9

An obscure strife went on until 1404, when Duke Philip of Burgundy died, leaving his vast inheritance to John the Fearless, the deadly foe of Louis d'Orleans. Paris was with him, as with his father before him; the Duke entered the capital in 1405, and issued a popular proclamation against the ill-government of the Queen-regent and Orleans. Much profession of a desire for better things was made, with small results. So things went on until 1407, when, after the Duc de Berri, who tried to play the part of a mediator, had brought the two Princes together, the Duc d'Orleans was foully assassinated by a Burgundian partisan. The Duke of Burgundy, though he at first withdrew from Paris, speedily returned, avowed the act, and was received with plaudits by the mob. For a few years the strife continued, obscure and bad; a great league of French princes and nobles was made to stem the success of the Burgundians; and it was about this time that the Armagnac name became common. Paris, however, dominated by the "Cabochians," the butchers' party, the party of the "marrowbones and cleavers," and entirely devoted to the Burgundians, enabled John the Fearless to hold his own in France; the King himself seemed favourable to the same party. In 1412 the princes were obliged to come to terms, and the Burgundian triumph seemed complete. In 1413 the wheel went round, and we find the Armagnacs in Paris, rudely sweeping away all the Cabochians with their professions of good civic rule. The Duc de Berri was made captain of Paris, and for a while all went against the Burgundians, until, in 1414, Duke John was fain to make the first Peace of Arras, and to confess himself worsted in the strife. The young Dauphin Louis took the nominal lead of the national party, and ruled supreme in Paris in great ease and self-indulgence.

The year before, Henry V. had succeeded to the throne of England,—a bright and vigorous young man, eager to be stirring in the world, brave and fearless, with a stern grasp of things beneath all,—a very sheet-anchor of firmness and determined character. Almost at the very opening of his reign, the moment he had secured his throne, he began a negotiation with France which boded no good. He offered to marry Catharine, the King's third daughter, and therewith to renew the old Treaty of Bretigny, if her dower were Normandy, Maine, Anjou, not without a good sum of money. The French Court, on the other hand, offered him her hand with Aquitaine and the money, an offer rejected instantly; and Henry made ready for a rough wooing in arms. In 1415 he crossed to Harfleur, and while parties still fought in France, after a long and exhausting siege, took the place; thence he rode northward for Calais, feeling his army too much reduced to attempt more. The Armagnacs, who had gathered at Rouen, also pushed fast to the north, and having choice of passage over the Somme, Amiens being in their hands, got before King Henry, while he had to make a long round before



Page 10

he could get across that stream. Consequently, when, on his way, he reached Azincourt, he found the whole chivalry of France arrayed against him in his path. The great battle of Azincourt followed, with frightful ruin and carnage of the French. With a huge crowd of prisoners the young King passed on to Calais, and thence to England. The Armagnacs' party lay buried in the hasty graves of Azincourt; never had there been such slaughter of nobles. Still, for three years they made head against their foes; till in 1418 the Duke of Burgundy's friends opened Paris's gates to his soldiers, and for the time the Armagnacs seemed to be completely defeated; only the Dauphin Charles made feeble war from Poitiers. Henry V. with a fresh army had already made another descent on the Normandy coast; the Dukes of Anjou, Brittany, and Burgundy made several and independent treaties with him; and it seemed as though France had completely fallen in pieces. Henry took Rouen, and although the common peril had somewhat silenced the strife of faction, no steps were taken to meet him or check his course; on the contrary, matters were made even more hopeless by the murder of John, Duke of Burgundy, in 1419, even as he was kneeling and offering reconciliation at the young Dauphin's feet. The young Duke, Philip, now drew at once towards Henry, whom his father had apparently wished with sincerity to check; Paris, too, was weary of the Armagnac struggle, and desired to welcome Henry of England; the Queen of France also went over to the Anglo-Burgundian side. The end of it was that on May 21, 1420, was signed the famous Treaty of Troyes, which secured the Crown of France to Henry, by the exclusion of the Dauphin Charles, whenever poor mad Charles VI., should cease to live. Meanwhile, Henry was made Regent of France, promising to maintain all rights and privileges of the Parliament and nobles, and to crush the Dauphin with his Armagnac friends, in token whereof he was at once wedded to Catharine of France, and set forth to quell the opposition of the provinces. By Christmas all France north of the Loire was in English hands. All the lands to the south of the river remained firmly fixed in their allegiance to the Dauphin and the Armagnacs, and these began to feel themselves to be the true French party, as opposed to the foreign rule of the English. For barely two years that rule was carried on by Henry V. with inflexible justice, and Northern France saw with amazement the presence of a real king, and an orderly government. In 1422 King Henry died; a few weeks later Charles VI. died also, and the face of affairs began to change, although, at the first, Charles VII. the "Well-served," the lazy, listless prince, seemed to have little heart for the perils and efforts of his position. He was proclaimed King at Mehun, in Berri, for the true France for the time lay on that side of the Loire, and the Regent Bedford, who took the reins at Paris, was a vigorous and powerful prince, who was not likely to give way

Page 11

to an idle dreamer. At the outset Charles suffered two defeats, at Crevant in 1423, and at Verneuil in 1424, and things seemed to be come to their worst. Yet he was prudent, conciliatory, and willing to wait; and as the English power in France—that triangle of which the base was the sea-line from Harfleur to Calais, and the apex Paris—was unnatural and far from being really strong; and as the relations between Bedford and Burgundy might not always be friendly, the man who could wait had many chances in his favour. Before long, things began to mend; Charles wedded Marie d’Anjou, and won over that great house to the French side; more and more was he regarded as the nation’s King; symptoms of a wish for reconciliation with Burgundy appeared; the most vehement Armagnacs were sent away from Court. Causes of disagreement also shook the friendship between Burgundy and England.

Feeling the evils of inaction most, Bedford in 1428 decided on a forward movement, and sent the Earl of Salisbury to the south. He first secured his position on the north of the Loire, then, crossing that river, laid siege to Orleans, the key to the south, and the last bulwark of the national party. All efforts to vex or dislodge him failed; and the attempt early in 1429 to stop the English supplies was completely defeated at Bouvray; from the salt fish captured, the battle has taken the name of “the Day of the Herrings.” Dunois, Bastard of Orleans, was, wounded; the Scots, the King’s body-guard, on whom fell ever the grimmest of the fighting, suffered terribly, and their leader was killed. All went well for Bedford till it suited the Duke of Burgundy to withdraw from his side, carrying with him a large part of the fighting power of the besiegers. Things were already looking rather gloomy in the English camp, when a new and unexpected rumour struck all hearts cold with fear. A virgin, an Amazon, had been raised up as a deliverer for France, and would soon be on them, armed with mysterious powers.

A young peasant girl, one Jeanne d’Arc, had been brought up in the village of Domremy, hard by the Lorraine border. The district, always French in feeling, had lately suffered much from Burgundian raids; and this young damsel, brooding over the treatment of her village and her country, and filled with that strange vision-power which is no rare phenomenon in itself with young girls, came at last to believe with warm and active faith in heavenly appearances and messages, all urging her to deliver France and her King. From faith to action the bridge is short; and ere long the young dreamer of seventeen set forth to work her miracle. Her history is quite unique in the world; and though probably France would ere many years have shaken off the English yoke, for its strength was rapidly going, still to her is the credit of having proved its weakness, and of having asserted the triumphant power of a great belief. All gave way before her; Charles VII., persuaded doubtless



Page 12

by his mother-in-law, Yolande of Aragon, who warmly espoused her cause, listened readily to the maiden's voice; and as that voice urged only what was noble and pure, she carried conviction as she went. In the end she received the King's commission to undertake the relief of Orleans. Her coming was fresh blood to the defence; a new spirit seemed to be poured out on all her followers, and in like manner a deep dejection settled down on the English. The blockade was forced, and, in eight days the besiegers raised the siege and marched away. They withdrew to Jargeau, where they were attacked and routed with great loss. A little later Talbot himself, who had marched to help them, was also defeated and taken. Then, compelling Charles to come out from his in glorious ease, she carried him triumphantly with her to Rheims, where he was duly crowned King, the Maid of Orlans standing by, and holding aloft the royal standard. She would gladly have gone home to Domremy now, her mission being accomplished; for she was entirely free from all ambitious or secondary aims. But she was too great a power to be spared. Northern France was still in English hands, and till the English were cast out her work was not complete; so they made her stay, sweet child, to do the work which, had there been any manliness in them, they ought to have found it easy to achieve for themselves. The dread of her went before her,—a pillar of cloud and darkness to the English, but light and hope to her countrymen. Men believed that she was called of God to regenerate the world, to destroy the Saracen at last, to bring in the millennial age. Her statue was set up in the churches, and crowds prayed before her image as before a popular saint.

The incapacity and ill-faith of those round the King gave the English some time to recover themselves; Bedford and Burgundy drew together again, and steps were taken to secure Paris. When, however, Jeanne, weary of courtly delays, marched, contemptuous of the King, as far as St. Denis, friends sprang up on every side. In Normandy, on the English line of communications, four strong places were surprised; and Bedford, made timid as to his supplies, fell back to Rouen, leaving only a small garrison in Paris. Jeanne, ill-supported by the royal troops, failed in her attack on the city walls, and was made prisoner by the Burgundians; they handed her over to the English, and she was, after previous indignities, and such treatment as chivalry alone could have dealt her, condemned as a witch, and burnt as a relapsed heretic at Rouen in 1431. Betrayed by the French Court, sold by the Burgundians, murdered by the English, unrescued by the people of France which she so much loved, Jeanne d'Arc died the martyr's death, a pious, simple soul, a heroine of the purest metal. She saved her country, for the English power never recovered from the shock. The churchmen who burnt her, the Frenchmen of the unpatriotic party, would have been amazed could they have foreseen that nearly 450 years afterwards, churchmen again would glorify her name as the saint of the Church, in opposition to both the religious liberties and the national feelings of her country.



Page 13

The war, after having greatly weakened the noblesse, and having caused infinite sufferings to France, now drew towards a close; the Duke of Burgundy at last agreed to abandon his English allies, and at a great congress at Arras, in 1435, signed a treaty with Charles VII. by which he solemnly came over to the French side. On condition that he should get Auxerre and Macon, as well as the towns on and near the river Somme, he was willing to recognise Charles as King of France. His price was high, yet it was worth all that was given; for, after all, he was of the French blood royal, and not a foreigner. The death of Bedford, which took place about the same time, was almost a more terrible blow to the fortunes of the English. Paris opened her gates to her King in April, 1436; the long war kept on with slight movements now and then for several years.

The next year was marked by the meeting of the States General, and the establishment, in principle at least, of a standing army. The Estates petitioned the willing King that the system of finance in the realm should be remodelled, and a permanent tax established for the support of an army. Thus, it was thought, solidity would be given to the royal power, and the long-standing curse of the freebooters and brigands cleared away. No sooner was this done than the nobles began to chafe under it; they scented in the air the coming troubles; they took as their head, poor innocents, the young Dauphin Louis, who was willing enough to resist the concentration of power in royal hands. Their champion of 1439, the leader of the "Praguerie," as this new league was called, in imitation, it is said, of the Hussite movement at Prague, the enthusiastic defender of noble privilege against the royal power, was the man who afterwards, as Louis XI., was the destroyer of the noblesse on behalf of royalty. Some of the nobles stood firmly by the King, and, aided by them and by an army of paid soldiers serving under the new conditions, Charles VII., no contemptible antagonist when once aroused, attacked and overthrew the Praguerie; the cities and the country people would have none of it; they preferred peace under a king's strong hand. Louis was sent down to the east to govern Dauphiny; the lessons of the civil war were not lost on Charles; he crushed the freebooters of Champagne, drove the English out of Pontois in 1441, moved actively up and down France, reducing anarchy, restoring order, resisting English attacks. In the last he was loyally supported by the Dauphin, who was glad to find a field for his restless temper. He repulsed the English at Dieppe, and put down the Comte d'Armagnac in the south. During the two years' truce with England which now followed, Charles VII. and Louis drew off their free-lances eastward, and the Dauphin came into rude collision with the Swiss not far from Basel, in 1444. Some sixteen hundred mountaineers long and heroically withstood at St. Jacob the attack of several thousand Frenchmen, fighting stubbornly till they all perished.



Page 14

The King and Dauphin returned to Paris, having defended their border-lands with credit, and having much reduced the numbers of the lawless free-lances. The Dauphin, discontented again, was obliged once more to withdraw into Dauphiny, where he governed prudently and with activity. In 1449, the last scene of the Anglo-French war began. In that year English adventurers landed on the Breton coast; the Duke called the French King to his aid. Charles did not tarry this time; he broke the truce with England; he sent Dunois into Normandy, and himself soon followed. In both duchies, Brittany and Normandy, the French were welcomed with delight: no love for England lingered in the west. Somerset and Talbot failed to defend Rouen, and were driven from point to point, till every stronghold was lost to them. Dunois then passed into Guienne, and in a few-months Bayonne, the last stronghold of the English, fell into his hands (1451). When Talbot was sent over to Bordeaux with five thousand men to recover the south, the old English feeling revived, for England was their best customer, and they had little in common with France. It was, however, but a last flicker of the flame; in July, 1453, at the siege of Castillon, the aged Talbot was slain and the war at once came to an end; the south passed finally into the kingdom of France. Normandy and Guienne were assimilated to France in taxation and army organisation; and all that remained to England across the Channel was Calais, with Havre and Guines Castle. Her foreign ambitions and struggles over, England was left to consume herself in civil strife, while France might rest and recover from the terrible sufferings she had undergone. The state of the country had become utterly wretched.

With the end of the English wars new life began to gleam out on France; the people grew more tranquil, finding that toil and thrift bore again their wholesome fruits; Charles VII. did not fail in his duty, and took his part in restoring quiet, order, and justice in the land.

The French Crown, though it had beaten back the English, was still closely girt in with rival neighbours, the great dukes on every frontier. All round the east and north lay the lands of Philip of Burgundy; to the west was the Duke of Brittany, cherishing a jealous independence; the royal Dukes, Berri, Bourbon, Anjou, are all so many potential sources of danger and difficulty to the Crown. The conditions of the nobility are altogether changed; the old barons have sunk into insignificance; the struggle of the future will lie between the King's cousins and himself, rather than with the older lords. A few non-royal princes, such as Armagnac, or Saint-Pol, or Brittany, remain and will go down with the others; the "new men" of the day, the bastard Dunois or the Constables Du Guesclin and Clisson, grow to greater prominence; it is clear that the old feudalism is giving place to a newer order, in which the aristocracy, from the King's brothers downwards, will group themselves around the throne, and begin the process which reaches its unhappy perfection under Louis XIV.



Page 15

Directly after the expulsion of the English, troubles began between King Charles VII. and the Dauphin Louis; the latter could not brook a quiet life in Dauphiny, and the King refused him that larger sphere in the government of Normandy which he coveted. Against his father's will, Louis married Charlotte of Savoy, daughter of his strongest neighbour in Dauphiny; suspicion and bad feeling grew strong between father and son; Louis was specially afraid of his father's counsellors; the King was specially afraid of his son's craftiness and ambition. It came to an open rupture, and Louis, in 1456, fled to the Court of Duke Philip of Burgundy. There he lived at refuge at Geneppe, meddling a good deal in Burgundian politics, and already opposing himself to his great rival, Charles of Charolais, afterwards Charles the Bold, the last Duke of Burgundy. Bickerings, under his bad influence, took place between King and Duke; they never burst out into flame. So things went on uncomfortably enough, till Charles VII. died in 1461 and the reign of Louis XI. began.

Between father and son what contrast could be greater? Charles VII., "the Well-served," so easygoing, so open and free from guile; Louis XI., so shy of counsellors, so energetic and untiring, so close and guileful. History does but apologise for Charles, and even when she fears and dislikes Louis, she cannot forbear to wonder and admire. And yet Louis enslaved his country, while Charles had seen it rescued from foreign rule; Charles restored something of its prosperity, while Louis spent his life in crushing its institutions and in destroying its elements of independence. A great and terrible prince, Louis XI. failed in having little or no constructive power; he was strong to throw down the older society, he built little in its room. Most serious of all was his action with respect to the district of the River Somme, at that time the northern frontier of France. The towns there had been handed over to Philip of Burgundy by the Treaty of Arras, with a stipulation that the Crown might ransom them at any time, and this Louis succeeded in doing in 1463. The act was quite blameless and patriotic in itself, yet it was exceedingly unwise, for it thoroughly alienated Charles the Bold, and led to the wars of the earlier period of the reign. Lastly, as if he had not done enough to offend the nobles, Louis in 1464 attacked their hunting rights, touching them in their tenderest part. No wonder that this year saw the formation of a great league against him, and the outbreak of a dangerous civil war. The "League of the Public Weal" was nominally headed by his own brother Charles, heir to the throne; it was joined by Charles of Charolais, who had completely taken the command of affairs in the Burgundian territories, his father the old duke being too feeble to withstand him; the Dukes of Brittany, Nemours, Bourbon, John of Anjou, Duke of Calabria, the Comte d'Armagnac, the aged Dunois, and a host of other princes and nobles

Page 16

flocked in; and the King had scarcely any forces at his back with which to withstand them. His plans for the campaign against the league were admirable, though they were frustrated by the bad faith of his captains, who mostly sympathised with this outbreak of the feudal nobility. Louis himself marched southward to quell the Duc de Bourbon and his friends, and returning from that task, only half done for lack of time, he found that Charles of Charolais had passed by Paris, which was faithful to the King, and was coming down southwards, intending to join the Dukes of Berri and Brittany, who were on their way towards the capital. The hostile armies met at Montleheri on the Orleans road; and after a strange battle—minutely described by Commines—a battle in which both sides ran away, and neither ventured at first to claim a victory, the King withdrew to Corbeil, and then marched into Paris (1465). There the armies of the league closed in on him; and after a siege of several weeks, Louis, feeling disaffection all around him, and doubtful how long Paris herself would bear for him the burdens of blockade, signed the Peace of Conflans, which, to all appearances, secured the complete victory to the noblesse, “each man carrying off his piece.” Instantly the contented princes broke up their half-starved armies and went home, leaving Louis behind to plot and contrive against them, a far wiser man, thanks to the lesson they had taught him. They did not let him wait long for a chance. The Treaty of Conflans had given the duchy of Normandy to the King’s brother Charles; he speedily quarrelled with his neighbour, the Duke of Brittany, and Louis came down at once into Normandy, which threw itself into his arms, and the whole work of the league was broken up. The Comte de Charolais, occupied with revolts at Dinan and Liege, could not interfere, and presently his father, the old Duke Philip, died (1467), leaving to him the vast lordships of the House of Burgundy.

And now the “imperial dreamer,” Charles the Bold, was brought into immediate rivalry with that royal trickster, the “universal spider,” Louis XI. Charles was by far the nobler spirit of the two: his vigour and intelligence, his industry and wish to raise all around him to a higher cultivation, his wise reforms at home, and attempts to render his father’s dissolute and careless rule into a well-ordered lordship, all these things marked him out as the leading spirit of the time. His territories were partly held under France, partly under the empire: the Artois district, which also may be taken to include the Somme towns, the county of Rhetel, the duchy of Bar, the duchy of Burgundy, with Auxerre and Nevers, were feudally in France; the rest of his lands under the empire. He had, therefore, interests and means of interference on either hand; and it is clear that Charles set before himself two different lines of policy, according as he looked one way or the other.



Page 17

At the time of Duke Philip's death a new league had been formed against Louis, embracing the King of England, Edward IV., the Dukes of Burgundy and Brittany, and the Kings of Aragon and Castile. Louis strained every nerve, he conciliated Paris, struck hard at disaffected partisans, and in 1468 convoked the States General at Tours. The three Estates were asked to give an opinion as to the power of the Crown to alienate Normandy, the step insisted upon by the Duke of Burgundy. Their reply was to the effect that the nation forbids the Crown to dismember the realm; they supported their opinion by liberal promises of help. Thus fortified by the sympathy of his people, Louis began to break up the coalition. He made terms with the Duc de Bourbon and the House of Anjou; his brother Charles was a cipher; the King of England was paralysed by the antagonism of Warwick; he attacked and reduced Brittany; Burgundy, the most formidable, alone remained to be dealt with. How should he meet him?—by war or by negotiation? His Court was divided in opinion; the King decided for himself in favour of the way of negotiation, and came to the astonishing conclusion that he would go and meet the Duke and win him over to friendship. He miscalculated both his own powers of persuasion and the force of his antagonist's temper. The interview of Peronne followed; Charles held his visitor as a captive, and in the end compelled him to sign a treaty, of peace, on the basis of that of Conflans, which had closed the War of the Public Weal. And as if this were not sufficient humiliation, Charles made the King accompany him on his expedition to punish the men of Liege, who, trusting to the help of Louis, had again revolted (1469). This done, he allowed the degraded monarch to return home to Paris. An assembly of notables of Tours speedily declared the Treaty of Perrone null, and the King made some small frontier war on the Duke, which was ended by a truce at Amiens, in 1471. The truce was spent in preparation for a fresh struggle, which Louis, to whom time was everything, succeeded in deferring from point to point, till the death of his brother Charles, now Duc de Guienne, in 1472, broke up the formidable combination. Charles the Bold at once broke truce and made war on the King, marching into northern France, sacking towns and ravaging the country, till he reached Beauvais. There the despair of the citizens and the bravery of the women saved the town. Charles raised the siege and marched on Rouen, hoping to meet the Duke of Brittany; but that Prince had his hands full, for Louis had overrun his territories, and had reduced him to terms. The Duke of Burgundy saw that the coalition had completely failed; he too made fresh truce with Louis at Senlis (1472), and only, deferred, he no doubt thought, the direct attack on his dangerous rival. Henceforth Charles the Bold turned his attention mainly to the east, and Louis gladly saw him go forth to spend his



Page 18

strength on distant ventures; saw the interview at Treves with the Emperor Frederick III., at which the Duke's plans were foiled by the suspicions of the Germans and the King's intrigues; saw the long siege of the Neusz wearing out his power; bought off the hostility of Edward IV. of England, who had undertaken to march on Paris; saw Charles embark on his Swiss enterprise; saw the subjugation of Lorraine and capture of Nancy (1475), the battle of Granson, the still more fatal defeat of Morat (1476), and lastly the final struggle of Nancy, and the Duke's death on the field (January, 1477).

While Duke Charles had thus been running on his fate, Louis XI. had actively attacked the larger nobles of France, and had either reduced them to submission or had destroyed them.

As Duke Charles had left no male heir, the King at once resumed the duchy of Burgundy, as a male fief of the kingdom; he also took possession of Franche Comte at the same time; the King's armies recovered all Picardy, and even entered Flanders. Then Mary of Burgundy, hoping to raise up a barrier against this dangerous neighbour, offered her hand, with all her great territories, to young Maximilian of Austria, and married him within six months after her father's death. To this wedding is due the rise to real greatness of the House of Austria; it begins the era of the larger politics of modern times.

After a little hesitation Louis determined to continue the struggle against the Burgundian power. He secured Franche Comte, and on his northern frontier retook Arras, that troublesome border city, the "bonny Carlisle" of those days; and advancing to relieve Therouenne, then besieged by Maximilian, fought and lost the battle of Guinegate (1479). The war was languid after this; a truce followed in 1480, and a time of quiet for France. Charles the Dauphin was engaged to marry the little Margaret, Maximilian's daughter, and as her dower she was to bring Franche Comte and sundry places on the border line disputed between the two princes. In these last days Louis XI. shut himself up in gloomy seclusion in his castle of Plessis near Tours, and there he died in 1483. A great king and a terrible one, he has left an indelible mark on the history of France, for he was the founder of France in its later form, as an absolute monarchy ruled with little regard to its own true welfare. He had crushed all resistance; he had enlarged the borders of France, till the kingdom took nearly its modern dimensions; he had organised its army and administration. The danger was lest in the hands of a feeble boy these great results should be squandered away, and the old anarchy once more raise its head.

For Charles VIII., who now succeeded, was but thirteen years old, a weak boy whom his father had entirely neglected, the training of his son not appearing to be an essential part of his work in life. The young Prince had amused himself with romances, but had learnt nothing useful. A head, however, was found for him in the person of his eldest



sister Anne, whom Louis XI. had married to Peter II., Lord of Beaujeu and Duc de Bourbon. To her the dying King entrusted the guardianship of his son; and for more than nine years Anne of France was virtual King. For those years all went well.



Page 19

With her disappearance from the scene, the controlling hand is lost, and France begins the age of her Italian expeditions.

When the House of Anjou came to an end in 1481, and Anjou and Maine fell in to the Crown, there fell in also a far less valuable piece of property, the claim of that house descended from Charles, the youngest brother of Saint Louis, on the kingdom of Naples and Sicily. There was much to tempt an ambitious prince in the state of Italy. Savoy, which held the passage into the peninsula, was then thoroughly French in sympathy; Milan, under Lodovico Sforza, "il Moro," was in alliance with Charles; Genoa preferred the French to the Aragonese claimants for influence over Italy; the popular feeling in the cities, especially in Florence, was opposed to the despotism of the Medici, and turned to France for deliverance; the misrule of the Spanish Kings of Naples had made Naples thoroughly discontented; Venice was, as of old, the friend of France. Tempted by these reasons, in 1494 Charles VIII. set forth for Italy with a splendid host. He displayed before the eyes of Europe the first example of a modern army, in its three well-balanced branches of infantry, cavalry, and artillery. There was nothing in Italy to withstand his onslaught; he swept through the land in triumph; Charles believed himself to be a great conqueror giving law to admiring subject-lands; he entered Pisa, Florence, Rome itself. Wherever he went his heedless ignorance, and the gross misconduct of his followers, left behind implacable hostility, and turned all friendship into bitterness. At last he entered Naples, and seemed to have asserted to the full the French claim to be supreme in Italy, whereas at that very time his position had become completely untenable. A league of Italian States was formed behind his back; Lodovico il Moro, Ferdinand of Naples, the Emperor, Pope Alexander VI., Ferdinand and Isabella, who were now welding Spain into a great and united monarchy, all combined against France; and in presence of this formidable confederacy Charles VIII. had to cut his way home as promptly as he could. At Fornovo, north of the Apennines, he defeated the allies in July, 1495; and by November the main French army had got safely out of Italy. The forces left behind in Naples were worn out by war and pestilence, and the poor remnant of these, too, bringing with them the seeds of horrible contagious diseases, forced their way back to France in 1496. It was the last effort of the King. His health was ruined by debauchery in Italy, repeated in France; and yet, towards the end of his reign, he not merely introduced Italian arts, but attempted to reform the State, to rule prudently, to solace the poor; wherefore, when he died in 1498, the people lamented him greatly, for he had been kindly and affable, brave also on the battle-field; and much is forgiven to a king.



Page 20

His children died before him, so that Louis d'Orleans, his cousin, was nearest heir to the throne, and succeeded as Louis XII. By his accession in 1498 he reunited the fief of Orleans County to the Crown; by marrying Anne of Brittany, his predecessor's widow, he secured also the great duchy of Brittany. The dispensation of Pope Alexander VI., which enabled him to put away his wife Jeanne, second daughter of Louis XI., was brought into France by Caesar Borgia, who gained thereby his title of Duke of Valentinois, a large sum of money, a French bride, and promises of support in his great schemes in Italy.

His ministers were men of real ability. Georges d'Amboise, Archbishop of Rouen, the chief of them, was a prudent and a sagacious ruler, who, however, unfortunately wanted to be Pope, and urged the King in the direction of Italian politics, which he would have done much better to have left alone. Louis XII. was lazy and of small intelligence; Georges d'Amboise and Caesar Borgia, with their Italian ambitions, easily made him take up a spirited foreign policy which was disastrous at home.

Utterly as the last Italian expedition had failed, the French people were not yet weary of the adventure, and preparations for a new war began at once. In 1499 the King crossed the Alps into the Milanese, and carried all before him for a while. The duchy at first accepted him with enthusiasm; but in 1500 it had had enough of the French and recalled Lodovico, who returned in triumph to Milan. The Swiss mercenaries, however, betrayed him at Novara into the hands of Louis XII., who carried him off to France. The triumph of the French in 1500 was also the highest point of the fortunes of their ally, Caesar Borgia, who seemed for a while to be completely successful. In this year Louis made a treaty at Granada, by which he and Ferdinand the Catholic agreed to despoil Frederick of Naples; and in 1501 Louis made a second expedition into Italy. Again all seemed easy at the outset, and he seized the kingdom of Naples without difficulty; falling out, however, with his partner in the bad bargain, Ferdinand the Catholic, he was speedily swept completely out of the peninsula, with terrible loss of honour, men, and wealth.

It now became necessary to arrange for the future of France. Louis XII. had only a daughter, Claude, and it was proposed that she should be affianced to Charles of Austria, the future statesman and emperor. This scheme formed the basis of the three treaties of Blois (1504). In 1500, by the Treaty of Granada, Louis had in fact handed Naples over to Spain; now by the three treaties he alienated his best friends, the Venetians and the papacy, while he in fact also handed Milan over to the Austrian House, together with territories considered to be integral parts of France. The marriage with Charles came to nothing; the good sense of some, the popular feeling in the country, the open expressions of the States General of Tours, in 1506, worked against the marriage, which had no strong advocate except Queen Anne. Claude, on intercession of the Estates, was affianced to Frangois d'Angouleme, her distant cousin, the heir presumptive to the throne.



Page 21

In 1507 Louis made war on Venice; and in the following year the famous Treaty of Cambrai was signed by Georges d'Amboise and Margaret of Austria. It was an agreement for a partition of the Venetian territories,—one of the most shameless public deeds in history. The Pope, the King of Aragon, Maximilian, Louis XII., were each to have a share. The war was pushed on with great vigour: the battle of Agnadello (14th May, 1509) cleared the King's way towards Venice; Louis was received with open arms by the North Italian towns, and pushed forward to within eight of Venice. The other Princes came up on every side; the proud "Queen of the Adriatic" was compelled to shrink within her walls, and wait till time dissolved the league. This was not long. The Pope, Julius II., had no wish to hand Northern Italy over to France; he had joined in the shameless league of Cambrai because he wanted to wrest the Romagna cities from Venice, and because he hoped to entirely destroy the ancient friendship between Venice and France. Successful in both aims, he now withdrew from the league, made peace with the Venetians, and stood forward as the head of a new Italian combination, with the Swiss for his fighting men. The strife was close and hot between Pope and King; Louis XII. lost his chief adviser and friend, Georges d'Amboise, the splendid churchman of the age, the French Wolsey; he thought no weapon better than the dangerous one of a council, with claims opposed to those of the papacy; first a National Council at Tours, then an attempted General Council at Pisa, were called on to resist the papal claims. In reply Julius II. created the Holy League of 1511, with Ferdinand of Aragon, Henry VIII. of England, and the Venetians as its chief members, against the French. Louis XII. showed vigour; he sent his nephew Gaston de Foix to subdue the Romagna and threaten the Venetian territories. At the battle of Ravenna, in 1512, Gaston won a brilliant victory and lost his life. From that moment disaster dogged the footsteps of the French in Italy, and before winter they had been driven completely out of the peninsula; the succession of the Medicean Pope, Leo X., to Julius II., seemed to promise the continuance of a policy hostile to France in Italy. Another attempt on Northern Italy proved but another failure, although now Louis XII., taught by his mishaps, had secured the alliance of Venice; the disastrous defeat of La Tremoille, near Novara (1513), compelled the French once more to withdraw beyond the Alps. In this same year an army under the Duc de Longueville, endeavouring to relieve Therouenne, besieged by the English and Maximilian, the Emperor-elect, was caught and crushed at Guinegate. A diversion in favour of Louis XII., made by James IV. of Scotland, failed completely; the Scottish King was defeated and slain at Flodden Field. While his northern frontier was thus exposed, Louis found equal danger threatening him on the east; on this aide, however,



Page 22

he managed to buy off the Swiss, who had attacked the duchy of Burgundy. He was also reconciled with the papacy and the House of Austria. Early in 1514 the death of Anne of Brittany, his spouse, a lady of high ambitions, strong artistic tastes, and humane feelings towards her Bretons, but a bad Queen for France, cleared the way for changes. Claude, the King's eldest daughter, was now definitely married to Francois d'Angouleme, and invested with the duchy of Brittany; and the King himself, still hoping for a male heir to succeed him, married again, wedding Mary Tudor, the lovely young sister of Henry VIII. This marriage was probably the chief cause of his death, which followed on New Year's day, 1515. His was, in foreign policy, an inglorious and disastrous reign; at home, a time of comfort and material prosperity. Agriculture flourished, the arts of Italy came in, though (save in architecture) France could claim little artistic glory of her own; the organisation of justice and administration was carried out; in letters and learning France still lagged behind her neighbours.

The heir to the crown was Francois d'Angouleme, great-grandson of that Louis d'Orleans who had been assassinated in the bad days of the strife between Burgundians and Armagnacs, in 1407, and great-great-grandson of Charles V. of France. He was still very young, very eager to be king, very full of far-reaching schemes. Few things in history are more striking than the sudden change, at this moment, from the rule of middle-aged men or (as men of fifty were then often called) old men, to the rule of youths,—from sagacious, worldly-prudent monarchs—to impulsive boys,—from Henry VII. to Henry VIII., from Louis XII. to Frangois I, from Ferdinand to Charles.

On the whole, Frangois I. was the least worthy of the three. He was brilliant, "the king of culture," apt scholar in Renaissance art and immorality; brave, also, and chivalrous, so long as the chivalry involved no self-denial, for he was also thoroughly selfish, and his personal aims and ideas were mean. His reign was to be a reaction from that of Louis XII.

From the beginning, Francois chose his chief officers unwisely. In Antoine du Prat, his new chancellor, he had a violent and lawless adviser; in Charles de Bourbon, his new constable, an untrustworthy commander. Forthwith he plunged into Italian politics, being determined to make good his claim both to Naples and to Milan; he made most friendly arrangements with the Archduke Charles, his future rival, promising to help him in securing, when the time came, the vast inheritances of his two grandfathers, Maximilian, the Emperor-elect, and Ferdinand of Aragon; never was a less wise agreement entered upon. This done, the Italian war began; Francois descended into Italy, and won the brilliant battle of Marignano, in which the French chivalry crushed the Swiss burghers and peasant mercenaries. The French then overran the north of Italy, and, in conjunction with the Venetians,

Page 23

carried all before them. But the triumphs of the sword were speedily wrested from him by the adroitness of the politician; in an interview with Leo X. at Bologna, Francois bartered the liberties of the Gallican Church for shadowy advantages in Italy. The 'Pragmatic Sanction of Bourgea', which now for nearly a century had secured to the Church of France independence in the choice of her chief officers, was replaced by a concordat, whereby the King allowed the papacy once more to drain the wealth of the Church of France, while the Pope allowed the King almost autocratic power over it. He was to appoint to all benefices, with exception of a few privileged offices; the Pope was no longer to be threatened with general councils, while he should receive again the annates of the Church.

The years which followed this brilliantly disastrous opening brought little good to France. In 1516 the death of Ferdinand the Catholic placed Charles on the throne of Spain; in 1519 the death of Maximilian threw open to the young Princes the most dazzling prize of human ambition,—the headship of the Holy Roman Empire. Francois I., Charles, and Henry VIII. were all candidates for the votes of the seven electors, though the last never seriously entered the lists. The struggle lay between Francois, the brilliant young Prince, who seemed to represent the new opinions in literature and art, and Charles of Austria and Spain, who was as yet unknown and despised, and, from his education under the virtuous and scholastic Adrian of Utrecht, was thought likely to represent the older and reactionary opinions of the clergy. After a long and sharp competition, the great prize fell to Charles, henceforth known to history as that great monarch and emperor, Charles V.

The rivalry between the Princes could not cease there. Charles, as representative of the House of Burgundy, claimed all that had been lost when Charles the Bold fell; and in 1521 the war broke out between him and Francois, the first of a series of struggles between the two rivals. While the King wasted the resources of his country on these wars, his proud and unwise mother, Louise of Savoy, guided by Antoine du Prat, ruled, to the sorrow of all, at home. The war brought no glory with it: on the Flemish frontier a place or two was taken; in Biscay Fontarabia fell before the arms of France; in Italy Francois had to meet a new league of Pope and Emperor, and his troops were swept completely out of the Milanese. In the midst of all came the defection of that great prince, the Constable de Bourbon, head of the younger branch of the Bourbon House, the most powerful feudal lord in France. Louise of Savoy had enraged and offended him, or he her; the King slighted him, and in 1523 the Constable made a secret treaty with Charles V. and Henry VIII., and, taking flight into Italy, joined the Spaniards under Lannoy. The French, who had again invaded the Milanese, were again driven out in 1524; on the other hand, the incursions



Page 24

of the imperialists into Picardy, Provence, and the southeast were all complete failures. Encouraged by the repulse of Bourbon from Marseilles, Francois I. once more crossed the Alps, and overran a great part of the valley of the Po; at the siege of Pavia he was attacked by Pescara and Bourbon, utterly defeated and taken prisoner (24th February, 1525); the broken remnants of the French were swept out of Italy at once, and Francois I. was carried into Spain, a captive at Madrid. His mother, best in adversity, behaved with high pride and spirit; she overawed disaffection, made preparations for resistance, looked out for friends on every side. Had Francois been in truth a hero, he might, even as a prisoner, have held his own; but he was unable to bear the monotony of confinement, and longed for the pleasures of France. On this mean nature Charles V. easily worked, and made the captive monarch sign the Treaty of Madrid (January 14, 1526), a compact which Francois meant to break as soon as he could, for he knew neither heroism nor good faith. The treaty stipulated that Francois should give up the duchy of Burgundy to Charles, and marry Eleanor of Portugal, Charles's sister; that Francois should also abandon his claims on Flanders, Milan, and Naples, and should place two sons in the Emperor's hands as hostages. Following the precedent of Louis XI. in the case of Normandy, he summoned an assembly of nobles and the Parliament of Paris to Cognac, where they declared the cession of Burgundy to be impossible. He refused to return to Spain, and made alliances wherever he could, with the Pope, with Venice, Milan, and England. The next year saw the ruin of this league in the discomfiture of Clement VII., and the sack of Rome by the German mercenaries under Bourbon, who was killed in the assault. The war went on till 1529, when Francois, having lost two armies in it, and gained nothing but loss and harm, was willing for peace; Charles V., alarmed at the progress of the Turks, was not less willing; and in August, 1529, the famous Treaty, of Cambrai, "the Ladies' Peace," was agreed to by Margaret of Austria and Louise of Savoy. Though Charles V. gave up all claim on the duchy of Burgundy, he had secured to himself Flanders and Artois, and had entirely cleared French influences out of Italy, which now became firmly fixed under the imperial hand, as a connecting link between his Spanish and German possessions. Francois lost ground and credit by these successive treaties, conceived in bad faith, and not honestly carried out.

No sooner had the Treaty of Cambrai been effectual in bringing his sons back to France, than Francois began to look out for new pretexts and means for war. Affairs were not unpromising. His mother's death in 1531 left him in possession of a huge fortune, which she had wrung from defenceless France; the powers which were jealous of Austria, the Turk, the English King, the members of the Smalkald league, all looked

Page 25

to Francois as their leader; Clement VII., though his misfortunes had thrown him into the Emperor's hands, was not unwilling to treat with France; and in 1533 by the compact of Marseilles the Pope broke up the friendship between Francois and Henry VIII., while he married his niece Catherine de' Medici to Henri, the second son of Francois. This compact was a real disaster to France; the promised dowry of Catherine—certain Italian cities—was never paid, and the death of Clement VII. in 1534 made the political alliance with the papacy a failure. The influence of Catherine affected and corrupted French history for half a century. Preparations for war went on; Francois made a new scheme for a national army, though in practice he preferred the tyrant's arm, the foreign mercenary. From his day till the Revolution the French army was largely composed of bodies of men tempted out of other countries, chiefly from Switzerland or Germany.

While the Emperor strove to appease the Protestant Princes of Germany by the Peace of Kadan (1534), Francois strengthened himself with a definite alliance with Soliman; and when, on the death of Francesco Sforza, Duke of Milan, who left no heirs, Charles seized the duchy as its overlord, Francois, after some bootless negotiation, declared war on his great rival (1536). His usual fortunes prevailed so long as he was the attacking party: his forces were soon swept out of Piedmont, and the Emperor carried the war over the frontier into Provence. That also failed, and Charles was fain to withdraw after great losses into Italy. The defence of Provence—a defence which took the form of a ruthless destruction of all its resources—had been entrusted to Anne de Montmorency, who henceforward became Constable of France, and exerted great influence over Francois I. Though these two campaigns, the French in Italy and the imperialist in Provence, had equally failed in 1536, peace did not follow till 1538, when, after the terrible defeat of Ferdinand of Austria by the Turks, Charles was anxious to have free hand in Germany. Under the mediation of Paul III. the agreement of Nice was come to, which included a ten years' truce and the abandonment by Francois of all his foreign allies and aims. He seemed a while to have fallen completely under the influence of the sagacious Emperor. He gave way entirely to the Church party of the time, a party headed by gloomy Henri, now Dauphin, who never lost the impress of his Spanish captivity, and by the Constable Anne de Montmorency; for a time the artistic or Renaissance party, represented by Anne, Duchesse d'Etampes, and Catherine de' Medici, fell into disfavour. The Emperor even ventured to pass through France, on his way from Spain to the Netherlands. All this friendship, however, fell to dust, when it was found that Charles refused to invest the Duc d'Orleans, the second son of Francois, with the duchy of Milan, and when the Emperor's second expedition against the sea-power of the Turks

Page 26

had proved a complete failure, and Charles had returned to Spain with loss of all his fleet and army. Then Francois hesitated no longer, and declared war against him (1541). The shock the Emperor had suffered inspired all his foes; the Sultan and the Protestant German Princes were all eager for war; the influence of Anne de Montmorency had to give way before that of the House of Guise, that frontier family, half French, half German, which was destined to play a large part in the troubled history of the coming half-century. Claude, Duc de Guise, a veteran of the earliest days of Francois, was vehemently opposed to Charles and the Austro-Spanish power, and ruled in the King's councils. This last war was as mischievous as its predecessors no great battles were fought; in the frontier affairs the combatants were about equally fortunate; the battle of Cerisolles, won by the French under Enghien (1544), was the only considerable success they had, and even that was almost barren of results, for the danger to Northern France was imminent; there a combined invasion had been planned and partly executed by Charles and Henry VIII., and the country, almost undefended, was at their mercy. The two monarchs, however, distrusted one another; and Charles V., anxious about Germany, sent to Francois proposals for peace from Crespy Couvrant, near Laon, where he had halted his army; Francois, almost in despair, gladly made terms with him. The King gave up his claims on Flanders and Artois, the Emperor his on the duchy of Burgundy; the King abandoned his old Neapolitan ambition, and Charles promised one of the Princesses of the House of Austria, with Milan as her dower, to the Duc d'Orleans, second son of Francois. The Duke dying next year, this portion of the agreement was not carried out. The Peace of Crespy, which ended the wars between the two great rivals, was signed in autumn, 1544, and, like the wars which led to it, was indecisive and lame.

Charles learnt that with all his great power he could not strike a fatal blow at France; France ought to have learnt that she was very weak for foreign conquest, and that her true business was to consolidate and develop her power at home. Henry VIII. deemed himself wronged by this independent action on the part of Charles, who also had his grievances with the English monarch; he stood out till 1546, and then made peace with Francois, with the aim of forming a fresh combination against Charles. In the midst of new projects and much activity, the marrer of man's plots came on the scene, and carried off in the same year, 1547, the English King and Francois I., leaving Charles V. undisputed arbiter of the affairs of Europe. In this same year he also crushed the Protestant Princes at the battle of Muhlberg.

In the reign of Francois I. the Court looked not unkindly on the Reformers, more particularly in the earlier years.



Page 27

Henri II., who succeeded in 1547, "had all the faults of his father, with a weaker mind;" and as strength of mind was not one of the characteristics of Francois I., we may imagine how little firmness there was in the gloomy King who now reigned. Party spirit ruled at Court. Henri II., with his ancient mistress, Diane de Poitiers, were at the head of one party, that of the strict Catholics, and were supported by old Anne de Montmorency, most unlucky of soldiers, most fanatical of Catholics, and by the Guises, who chafed a good deal under the stern rule of the Constable. This party had almost extinguished its antagonists; in the struggle of the mistresses, the pious and learned Anne d'Etampes had to give place to imperious Diane, Catherine, the Queen, was content to bide her time, watching with Italian coolness the game as it went on; of no account beside her rival, and yet quite sure to have her day, and ready to play parties against one another. Meanwhile, she brought to her royal husband ten sickly children, most of whom died young, and three wore the crown. Of the many bad things she did for France, that was perhaps among the worst.

On the accession of Henri II. the duchy of Brittany finally lost even nominal independence; he next got the hand of Mary, Queen of Scots, then but five years old, for the Dauphin Francois; she was carried over to France; and being by birth half a Guise, by education and interests of her married life she became entirely French. It was a great triumph for Henri, for the Protector Somerset had laid his plans to secure her for young Edward VI.; it was even more a triumph for the Guises, who saw opened out a broad and clear field for their ambition.

At first Henri II. showed no desire for war, and seemed to shrink from rivalry or collision with Charles V. He would not listen to Paul III., who, in his anxiety after the fall of the Protestant power in Germany in 1547, urged him to resist the Emperor's triumphant advance; he seemed to show a dread of war, even among his neighbours. After he had won his advantage over Edward VI., he escaped the war which seemed almost inevitable, recovered Boulogne from the English by a money payment, and smoothed the way for peace between England and Scotland. He took much interest in the religious question, and treated the Calvinists with great severity; he was also occupied by troubles in the south and west of France. Meanwhile, a new Pope, Julius III., was the weak dependent of the Emperor, and there seemed to be no head left for any movement against the universal domination of Charles V. His career from 1547 to 1552 was, to all appearance, a triumphal march of unbroken success. Yet Germany was far from acquiescence; the Princes were still discontented and watchful; even Ferdinand of Austria, his brother, was offended by the Emperor's anxiety to secure everything, even the imperial crown for his son Philip; Maurice of Saxony, that great problem of the age, was



Page 28

preparing for a second treachery, or, it may be, for a patriotic effort. These German malcontents now appealed to Henri for aid; and at last Henri seemed inclined to come. He had lately made alliance with England, and in 1552 formed a league at Chambord with the German Princes; the old connection with the Turk was also talked of. The Germans agreed to allow' him to hold (as imperial vicar, not as King of France) the "three bishoprics," Metz, Verdun, and Toul; he also assumed a protectorate over the spiritual princes, those great bishops and electors of the Rhine, whose stake in the Empire was so important. The general lines of French foreign politics are all here clearly marked; in this Henri II. is the forerunner of Henri IV. and of Louis XIV.; the imperial politics of Napoleon start from much the same lines; the proclamations of Napoleon III. before the Franco-German war seemed like thin echoes of the same.

Early in 1552 Maurice of Saxony struck his great blow at his master in the Tyrol, destroying in an instant all the Emperor's plans for the suppression of Lutheran opinions, and the reunion of Germany in a Catholic empire; and while Charles V. fled for his life, Henri II. with a splendid army crossed the frontiers of Lorraine. Anne de Montmorency, whose opposition to the war had been overborne by the Guises, who warmly desired to see a French predominance in Lorraine, was sent forward to reduce Metz, and quickly got that important city into his hands; Toul and Verdun soon opened their gates, and were secured in reality, if not in name, to France. Eager to undertake a protectorate of the Rhine, Henri II. tried also to lay hands on Strasburg; the citizens, however, resisted, and he had to withdraw; the same fate befell his troops in an attempt on Spire. Still, Metz and the line of the Vosges mountains formed a splendid acquisition for France. The French army, leaving strong garrisons in Lorraine, withdrew through Luxemburg and the northern frontier; its remaining exploits were few and mean, for the one gleam of good fortune enjoyed by Anne de Montmorency, who was unwise and arrogant, and a most inefficient commander, soon deserted him. Charles V., as soon as he could gather forces, laid siege to Metz, but, after nearly three months of late autumnal operations, was fain to break up and withdraw, baffled and with loss of half his army, across the Rhine. Though some success attended his arms on the northern frontier, it was of no permanent value; the loss of Metz, and the failure in the attempt to take it, proved to the worn-out Emperor that the day of his power and opportunity was past. The conclusions of the Diet of Augsburg in 1555 settled for half a century the struggle between Lutheran and Catholic, but settled it in a way not at all to his mind; for it was the safeguard of princely interests against his plans for an imperial unity. Weary of the losing strife, yearning for ease, ordered by his physicians to withdraw from active life, Charles in the course of 1555 and 1556 resigned all his great lordships and titles, leaving Philip his son to succeed him in Italy, the Netherlands, and Spain, and his brother Ferdinand of Austria to wear in his stead the imperial diadem. These great changes sundered awhile the interests of Austria from those of Spain.



Page 29

Henri endeavoured to take advantage of the check in the fortunes of his antagonists; he sent Anne de Montmorency to support Gaspard de Coligny, the Admiral of France, in Picardy, and in harmony with Paul IV., instructed Francois, Duc de Guise, to enter Italy to oppose the Duke of Alva. As of old, the French arms at first carried all before them, and Guise, deeming himself heir to the crown of Naples (for he was the eldest great-grandson of Rene II., titular King of Naples), pushed eagerly forward as far as the Abruzzi. There he was met and outgeneraled by Alva, who drove him back to Rome, whence he was now recalled by urgent summons to France; for the great disaster of St. Quentin had laid Paris itself open to the assault of an enterprising enemy. With the departure of Guise from Italy the age of the Italian expeditions comes to an end. On the northern side of the realm things had gone just as badly. Philibert of Savoy, commanding for Philip with Spanish and English troops, marched into France as far as to the Somme, and laid siege to St. Quentin, which was bravely defended by Amiral de Coligny. Anne de Montmorency, coming up to relieve the place, managed his movements so clumsily that he was caught by Count Egmont and the Flemish horse, and, with incredibly small loss to the conquerors, was utterly routed (1557). Montmorency himself and a crowd of nobles and soldiers were taken; the slaughter was great. Coligny made a gallant and tenacious stand in the town itself, but at last was overwhelmed, and the place fell. Terrible as these mishaps were to France, Philip II. was not of a temper to push an advantage vigorously; and while his army lingered, Francois de Guise came swiftly back from Italy; and instead of wasting strength in a doubtful attack on the allies in Picardy, by a sudden stroke of genius he assaulted and took Calais (January, 1558), and swept the English finally off the soil of France. This unexpected and brilliant blow cheered and solaced the afflicted country, while it finally secured the ascendancy of the House of Guise. The Duke's brother, the Cardinal de Lorraine, carried all before him in the King's councils; the Dauphin, betrothed long before, was now married to Mary of Scots; a secret treaty bound the young Queen to bring her kingdom over with her; it was thought that France with Scotland would be at least a match for England joined with Spain. In the same year, 1558, the French advance along the coast, after they had taken Dunkirk and Nieuport, was finally checked by the brilliant genius of Count Egmont, who defeated them at Gravelinea. All now began to wish for peace, especially Montmorency, weary of being a prisoner, and anxious to get back to Court, that he might check the fortunes of the Guises; Philip desired it that he might have free hand against heresy. And so, at Cateau-Cambresis, a peace was made in April, 1559, by which France retained the three bishoprics and Calais, surrendering Thionville,



Page 30

Montmedy, and one or two other frontier towns, while she recovered Ham and St. Quentin; the House of Savoy was reinstated by Philip, as a reward to Philibert for his services, and formed a solid barrier for a time between France and Italy; cross-marriages between Spain, France, and Savoy were arranged;—and finally, the treaty contained secret articles by which the Guises for France and Granvella for the Netherlands agreed to crush heresy with a strong hand. As a sequel to this peace, Henri II. held a great tournament at Paris, at which he was accidentally slain by a Scottish knight in the lists.

The Guises now shot up into abounded power. On the Guise side the Cardinal de Lorraine was the cleverest man, the true head, while Francois, the Duke, was the arm; he showed leanings towards the Lutherans. On the other side, the head was the dull and obstinate Anne de Montmorency, the Constable, an unwavering Catholic, supported by the three Coligny brothers, who all were or became Huguenots. The Queen-mother Catherine fluctuated uneasily between the parties, and though Catholic herself, or rather not a Protestant, did not hesitate to befriend the Huguenots, if the political arena seemed to need their gallant swords. Their noblest leader was Coligny, the admiral; their recognised head was Antoine, King of Navarre, a man as foolish as fearless. He was heir presumptive to the throne after the Valois boys, and claimed to have charge of the young King. Though the Guises had the lead at first, the Huguenots seemed, from their strong aristocratic connections, to have the fairer prospects before them.

Thirty years of desolate civil strife are before us, and we must set it all down briefly and drily. The prelude to the troubles was played by the Huguenots, who in 1560, guided by La Renaudie, a Perigord gentleman, formed a plot to carry off the young King; for Francois II. had already treated them with considerable severity, and had dismissed from his councils both the princes of the blood royal and the Constable de Montmorency. The plot failed miserably and La Renaudie lost his life; it only secured more firmly the authority of the Guises. As a counterpoise to their influence, the Queen-mother now conferred the vacant chancellorship on one of the wisest men France has ever seen, her Lord Bacon, Michel de L'Hopital, a man of the utmost prudence and moderation, who, had the times been better, might have won constitutional liberties for his country, and appeased her civil strife. As it was, he saved her from the Inquisition; his hand drew the edicts which aimed at enforcing toleration on France; he guided the assembly of notables which gathered at Fontainebleau, and induced them to attempt a compromise which moderate Catholics and Calvinists might accept, and which might lessen the power of the Guises. This assembly was followed by a meeting of the States General at Orleans, at which the Prince de Conde and the King of Navarre were seized by the Guises on a charge of having had to do with La Renaudie's plot. It would have gone hard with them had not the sickly King at this very time fallen ill and died (1560).



Page 31

This was a grievous blow to the Guises. Now, as in a moment, all was shattered; Catherine de Medici rose at once to the command of affairs; the new King, Charles IX., was only, ten years old, and her position as Regent was assured. The Guises would gladly have ruled with her, but she had no fancy for that; she and Chancellor de L'Hopital were not likely to ally themselves with all that was severe and repressive. It must not be forgotten that the best part of her policy was inspired by the Chancellor de L'Hopital.

Now it was that Mary Stuart, the Queen-dowager, was compelled to leave France for Scotland; her departure clearly marks the fall of the Guises; and it also showed Philip of Spain that it was no longer necessary for him to refuse aid and counsel to the Guises; their claims were no longer formidable to him on the larger sphere of European politics; no longer could Mary Stuart dream of wearing the triple crown of Scotland, France, and England.

The tolerant language of L'Hopital at the States General of Orleans in 1561 satisfied neither side. The Huguenots were restless; the Bourbon Princes tried to crush the Guises, in return for their own imprisonment the year before; the Constable was offended by the encouragement shown to the Huguenots; it was plain that new changes impended. Montmorency began them by going over to the Guises; and the fatal triumvirate of Francois, Duc de Guise, Montmorency, and St. Andre the marshal, was formed. We find the King of Spain forthwith entering the field of French intrigues and politics, as the support and stay of this triumvirate. Parties take a simpler format once, one party of Catholics and another of Huguenots, with the Queen-mother and the moderates left powerless between them. These last, guided still by L'Hopital, once more convoked the States General at Pontoise: the nobles and the Third Estate seemed to side completely with the Queen and the moderates; a controversy between Huguenots and Jesuits at Poissy only added to the discontent of the Catholics, who were now joined by foolish Antoine, King of Navarre. The edict of January, 1562, is the most remarkable of the attempts made by the Queen-mother to satisfy the Huguenots; but party-passion was already too strong for it to succeed; civil war had become inevitable.

The period may be divided into four parts: (1) the wars before the establishment of the League (1562-1570); (2) the period of the St. Bartholomew (1570-1573); (3) the struggle of the new Politique party against the Leaguers (1573-1559); (4) the efforts of Henri IV. to crush the League and reduce the country to peace (1589-1595). The period can also be divided by that series of agreements, or peaces, which break it up into eight wars:



Page 32

1. The war of 1562, on the skirts of which Philip of Spain interfered on one side, and Queen Elizabeth with the Calvinistic German Princes on the other, showed at once that the Huguenots were by far the weaker party. The English troops at Havre enabled them at first to command the lower Seine up to Rouen; but the other party, after a long siege which cost poor Antoine of Navarre his life, took that place, and relieved Paris of anxiety. The Huguenots had also spread far and wide over the south and west, occupying Orleans; the bridge of Orleans was their point of junction between Poitou and Germany. While the strength of the Catholics lay to the east, in Picardy, and at Paris, the Huguenot power was mostly concentrated in the south and west of France. Conde, who commanded at Orleans, supported by German allies, made an attempt on Paris, but finding the capital too strong for him, turned to the west, intending to join the English troops from Havre. Montmorency, however, caught him at Dreux; and in the battle that ensued, the Marshal of France, Saint-Andre, perished; Conde was captured by the Catholics, Montmorency by the Huguenots. Coligny, the admiral, drew off his defeated troops with great skill, and fell back to beyond the Loire; the Duc de Guise remained as sole head of the Catholics. Pushing on his advantage, the Duke immediately laid siege to Orleans, and there he fell by the hand of a Huguenot assassin. Both parties had suffered so much that the Queen-mother thought she might interpose with terms of peace; the Edict of Amboise (March, 1563) closed the war, allowing the Calvinists freedom of worship in the towns they held, and some other scanty privileges. A three years' quiet followed, though all men suspected their neighbours, and the high Catholic party tried hard to make Catherine sacrifice L'Hopital and take sharp measures with the Huguenots. They on their side were restless and suspicious, and it was felt that another war could not be far off. Intrigues were incessant, all men thinking to make their profit out of the weakness of France. The struggle between Calvinists and Catholics in the Netherlands roused much feeling, though Catherine refused to favour either party. She collected an army of her own; it was rumoured that she intended to take the Huguenots by surprise and annihilate them. In autumn, 1567, their patience gave way, and they raised the standard of revolt, in harmony with the heroic Netherlanders. Conde and the Chatillons beleaguered Paris from the north, and fought the battle of St. Denis, in which the old Constable, Anne de Montmorency, was killed. The Huguenots, however, were defeated and forced to withdraw, Conde marching eastward to join the German troops now coming up to his aid. No more serious fighting followed; the Peace of Longjumeau (March, 1568), closed the second war, leaving matters much as they were. The aristocratic resistance against the Catholic sovereigns, against what is often called the "Catholic Reaction," had proved itself hollow; in Germany and the Netherlands, as well as in France, the Protestant cause seemed to fail; it was not until the religious question became mixed up with questions as to political rights and freedom, as in the Low Countries, that a new spirit of hope began to spring up.



Page 33

The Peace of Longjumeau gave no security to the Huguenot nobles; they felt that the assassin might catch them any day. An attempt to seize Condo and Coligny failed, and served only to irritate their party; Cardinal Chatillon escaped to England; Jeanne of Navarre and her young son Henri took refuge at La Rochelle; L'Hopital was dismissed the Court. The Queen-mother seemed to have thrown off her cloak of moderation, and to be ready to relieve herself of the Huguenots by any means, fair or foul. War accordingly could not fail to break out again before the end of the year. Conde had never been so strong; with his friends in England and the Low Countries, and the enthusiastic support of a great party of nobles and religious adherents at home, his hopes rose; he even talked of deposing the Valois and reigning in their stead. He lost his life, however, early in 1569, at the battle of Jarnac. Coligny once more with difficulty, as at Dreux, saved the broken remnants of the defeated Huguenots. Conde's death, regarded at the time by the Huguenots as an irreparable calamity, proved in the end to be no serious loss; for it made room for the true head of the party, Henri of Navarre. No sooner had Jeanne of Navarre heard of the mishap of Jarnac than she came into the Huguenot camp and presented to the soldiers her young son Henri and the young Prince de Conde, a mere child. Her gallant bearing and the true soldier-spirit of Coligny, who shone most brightly in adversity, restored their temper; they even won some small advantages. Before long, however, the Duc d'Anjou, the King's youngest brother, caught and punished them severely at Moncontour. Both parties thenceforward wore themselves out with desultory warfare. In August, 1570, the Peace of St. Germain-en-Laye closed the third war and ended the first period.

2. It was the most favourable Peace the Huguenots had won as yet; it secured them, besides previous rights, four strongholds. The Catholics were dissatisfied; they could not sympathise with the Queen-mother in her alarm at the growing strength of Philip II., head of the Catholics in Europe; they dreaded the existence and growing influence of a party now beginning to receive a definite name, and honourable nickname, the Politiques. These were that large body of French gentlemen who loved the honour of their country rather than their religious party, and who, though Catholics, were yet moderate and tolerant. A pair of marriages now proposed by the Court amazed them still more. It was suggested that the Duc d'Anjou should marry Queen Elizabeth of England, and Henri of Navarre, Marguerite de Valois, the King's sister. Charles II. hoped thus to be rid of his brother, whom he disliked, and to win powerful support against Spain, by the one match, and by the other to bring the civil wars to a close. The sketch of a far-reaching resistance to Philip II. was drawn out; so convinced of his good faith was the prudent



Page 34

and sagacious William of Orange, that, on the strength of these plans, he refused good terms now offered him by Spain. The Duc d'Alencon, the remaining son of Catherine, the brother who did not come to the throne, was deeply interested in the plans for a war in the Netherlands; Anjou, who had withdrawn from the scheme of marriage with Queen Elizabeth, was at this moment a candidate for the throne of Poland; while negotiations respecting it were going on, Marguerite de Valois was married to Henri of Navarre, the worst of wives [?? D.W.] to a husband none too good. Coligny, who had strongly opposed the candidature of Anjou for the throne of Poland, was set on by an assassin, employed by the Queen-mother and her favourite son, and badly wounded; the Huguenots were in utmost alarm, filling the air with cries and menaces. Charles showed great concern for his friend's recovery, and threatened vengeance on the assassins. What was his astonishment to learn that those assassins were his mother and brother! Catherine worked on his fears, and the plot for the great massacre was combined in an instant. The very next day after the King's consent was wrung from him, 24th August, 1572, the massacre of St. Bartholomew's day took place. The murder of Coligny was completed; his son-in-law Teligny perished; all the chief Huguenots were slain; the slaughter spread to country towns; the Church and the civil power were at one, and the victims, taken at unawares, could make no resistance. The two Bourbons, Henri and the Prince de Conde, were spared; they bought their lives by a sudden conversion to Catholicism. The chief guilt of this great crime lies with Catherine de' Medici; for, though it is certain that she did not plan it long before, assassination was a recognised part of her way of dealing with Huguenots.

A short war followed, a revolt of the southern cities rather than a war. They made tenacious and heroic resistance; a large part of the royal forces sympathised rather with them than with the League; and in July, 1573, the Edict of Boulogne granted them even more than they, had been promised by the Peace of St. Germain.

3. We have reached the period of the "Wan of the League," as the four later civil wars are often called. The last of the four is alone of any real importance.

Just as the Peace of La Rochelle was concluded, the Duc d'Anjou, having been elected King of Poland, left France; it was not long before troubles began again. The Duc d'Alencon was vexed by his mother's neglect; as heir presumptive to the crown he thought he deserved better treatment, and sought to give himself consideration by drawing towards the middle party; Catherine seemed to be intriguing for the ruin of that party—nothing was safe while she was moving. The King had never held up his head since the St. Bartholomew; it was seen that he now was dying, and the Queen-mother took the opportunity of laying hands on the middle party.



Page 35

She arrested Alencon, Montmorency, and Henri of Navarre, together with some lesser chiefs; in the midst of it all Charles IX. died (1574), in misery, leaving the ill-omened crown to Henri of Anjou, King of Poland, his next brother, his mother's favourite, the worst of a bad breed. At the same time the fifth civil war broke out, interesting chiefly because it was during its continuance that the famous League was actually formed.

Henri III., when he heard of his brother's death, was only too eager to slip away like a culprit from Poland, though he showed no alacrity in returning to France, and dallied with the pleasures of Italy for months. An attempt to draw him over to the side of the Politiques failed completely; he attached himself on the contrary to the Guises, and plunged into the grossest dissipation, while he posed himself before men as a good and zealous Catholic. The Politiques and Huguenots therefore made a compact in 1575, at Milhau on the Tarn, and chose the Prince de Conde as their head; Henri of Navarre escaped from Paris, threw off his forced Catholicism, and joined them. Against them the strict Catholics seemed powerless; the Queen-mother closed this war with the Peace of Chastenoy (May, 1576), with terms unusually favourable for both Politiques and Huguenots: for the latter, free worship throughout France, except at Paris; for the chiefs of the former, great governments, for Alencon a large central district, for Conde, Picardy, for Henri of Navarre, Guienne.

To resist all this the high Catholic party framed the League they had long been meditating; it is said that the Cardinal de Lorraine had sketched it years before, at the time of the later sittings of the Council of Trent. Lesser compacts had already been made from time to time; now it was proposed to form one great League, towards which all should gravitate. The head of the League was Henri, Duc de Guise the second, "Balafre," who had won that title in fighting against the German reiters the year before, when they entered France under Conde. He certainly hoped at this time to succeed to the throne of France, either by deposing the corrupt and feeble Henri III., "as Pippin dealt with Hilderik," or by seizing the throne, when the King's debaucheries should have brought him to the grave. The Catholics of the more advanced type, and specially the Jesuits, now in the first flush of credit and success, supported him warmly. The headquarters of the movement were in Picardy; its first object, opposition to the establishment of Conde as governor of that province. The League was also very popular with the common folk, especially in the towns of the north. It soon found that Paris was its natural centre; thence it spread swiftly across the whole natural France; it was warmly supported by Philip of Spain. The States General, convoked at Blois in 1576, could bring no rest to France; opinion was just as much divided there as in the country; and the year 1577 saw another



Page 36

petty war, counted as the sixth, which was closed by the Peace of Bergerac, another ineffectual truce which settled nothing. It was a peace made with the Politiques and Huguenots by the Court; it is significant of the new state of affairs that the League openly refused to be bound by it, and continued a harassing, objectless warfare. The Duc d'Anjou (he had taken that title on his brother Henri's accession to the throne) in 1578 deserted the Court party, towards which his mother had drawn him, and made friends with the Calvinists in the Netherlands. The southern provinces named him "Defender of their liberties;" they had hopes he might wed Elizabeth of England; they quite mistook their man. In 1579 "the Gallants' War" broke out; the Leaguers had it all their own way; but Henri III., not too friendly to them, and urged by his brother Anjou, to whom had been offered sovereignty over the seven united provinces in 1580, offered the insurgents easy terms, and the Treaty of Fleix closed the seventh war. Anjou in the Netherlands could but show his weakness; nothing went well with him; and at last, having utterly wearied out his friends, he fled, after the failure of his attempt to secure Antwerp, into France. There he fell ill of consumption and died in 1584.

This changed at once the complexion of the succession question. Hitherto, though no children seemed likely to be born to him, Henri III. was young and might live long, and his brother was there as his heir. Now, Henri III. was the last Prince of the Valois, and Henri of Navarre in hereditary succession was heir presumptive to the throne, unless the Salic law were to be set aside. The fourth son of Saint Louis, Robert, Comte de Clermont, who married Beatrix, heiress of Bourbon, was the founder of the House of Bourbon. Of this family the two elder branches had died out: John, who had been a central figure in the War of the Public Weal, in 1488; Peter, husband of Anne of France, in 1503; neither of them leaving heirs male. Of the younger branch Francois died in 1525, and the famous Constable de Bourbon in 1527. This left as the only representatives of the family, the Comtes de La Marche; of these the elder had died out in 1438, and the junior alone survived in the Comtes de Vendome. The head of this branch, Charles, was made Duc de Vendome by Francois I. in 1515; he was father of Antoine, Duc de Vendome, who, by marrying the heroic Jeanne d'Albret, became King of Navarre, and of Louis, who founded the House of Conde; lastly, Antoine was the father of Henri IV. He was, therefore, a very distant cousin to Henri III; the Houses of Capet, of Alencon, of Orleans, of Angouleme, of Maine, and of Burgundy, as well as the elder Bourbons, had to fall extinct before Henri of Navarre could become heir to the crown. All this, however, had now happened; and the Huguenots greatly rejoiced in the prospect of a Calvinist King. The Politique party showed no ill-will towards him; both they and



Page 37

the Court party declared that if he would become once more a Catholic they would rally to him; the Guises and the League were naturally all the more firmly set against him; and Henri of Navarre saw that he could not as yet safely endanger his influence with the Huguenots, while his conversion would not disarm the hostility of the League. They had before, this put forward as heir to the throne Henri's uncle, the wretched old Cardinal de Bourbon, who had all the faults and none of the good qualities of his brother Antoine. Under cover of his name the Duc de Guise hoped to secure the succession for himself; he also sold himself and his party to Philip of Spain, who was now in fullest expectation of a final triumph over his foes. He had assassinated William the Silent; any day Elizabeth or Henri of Navarre might be found murdered; the domination of Spain over Europe seemed almost secured. The pact of Joinville, signed between Philip, Guise, and Mayenne, gives us the measure of the aims of the high Catholic party. Paris warmly sided with them; the new development of the League, the "Sixteen of Paris," one representative for each of the districts of the capital, formed a vigorous organisation and called for the King's deposition; they invited Henri, Duc de Guise, to Paris. Soon after this Henri III. humbled himself, and signed the Treaty of Nemours (1585) with the Leaguers. He hereby became nominal head of the League and its real slave.

The eighth war, the "War of the Three Henries," that is, of Henri III. and Henri de Guise against Henri of Navarre, now broke out. The Pope made his voice heard; Sixtus excommunicated the Bourbons, Henri and Conde, and blessed the Leaguers.

For the first time there was some real life in one of these civil wars, for Henri of Navarre rose nobly to the level of his troubles. At first the balance of successes was somewhat in favour of the Leaguers; the political atmosphere grew even more threatening, and terrible things, like lightning flashes, gleamed out now and again. Such, for example, was the execution of Mary Stuart, Queen of Scots, in 1586. It was known that Philip II. was preparing to crush England. Elizabeth did what she could to support Henri of Navarre; he had the good fortune to win the battle of Contras, in which the Duc de Joyeuse, one of the favourites of Henri III., was defeated and killed. The Duc de Guise, on the other hand, was too strong for the Germans, who had marched into France to join the Huguenots, and defeated them at Vimroy and Auneau, after which he marched in triumph to Paris, in spite of the orders and opposition of the King, who, finding himself powerless, withdrew to Chartres. Once more Henri III. was obliged to accept such terms as the Leaguers chose to impose; and with rage in his heart he signed the "Edict of Union" (1588), in which he named the Duc de Guise lieutenant-general of the kingdom, and declared that no heretic could succeed to the throne.



Page 38

Unable to endure the humiliation, Henri III. that same winter, assassinated the Duc and the Cardinal de Guise, and seized many leaders of the League, though he missed the Duc de Mayenne. This scandalous murder of the “King of Paris,” as the capital fondly called the Duke, brought the wretched King no solace or power. His mother did not live to see the end of her son; she died in this the darkest period of his career, and must have been aware that her cunning and her immoral life had brought nothing but misery to herself and all her race. The power of the League party seemed as great as ever; the Duc de Mayenne entered Paris, and declared open war on Henri III., who, after some hesitation, threw himself into the hands of his cousin Henri of Navarre in the spring of 1589. The old Politique party now rallied to the King; the Huguenots were staunch for their old leader; things looked less dark for them since the destruction of the Spanish Armada in the previous summer. The Swiss, aroused by the threats of the Duke of Savoy at Geneva, joined the Germans, who once more entered northeastern France; the leaguers were unable to make head either against them or against the armies of the two Kings; they fell back on Paris, and the allies hemmed them in. The defence of the capital was but languid; the populace missed their idol, the Duc de Guise, and the moderate party, never extinguished, recovered strength. All looked as if the royalists would soon reduce the last stronghold of the League, when Henri III. was suddenly slain by the dagger of a fanatical half-wined priest.

The King had only time to commend Henri of Navarre to his courtiers as his heir, and to exhort him to become a Catholic, before he closed his eyes, and ended the long roll of his vices and crimes. And thus in crime and shame the House of Valois went down. For a few years, the throne remained practically vacant: the heroism of Henri of Navarre, the loss of strength in the Catholic powers, the want of a vigorous head to the League,—these things all sustained the Bourbon in his arduous struggle; the middle party grew in strength daily, and when once Henri had allowed himself to be converted, he became the national sovereign, the national favourite, and the high Catholics fell to the fatal position of an unpatriotic faction depending on the arm of the foreigner.

4. The civil wars were not over, for the heat of party raged as yet unslaked; the Politiques could not all at once adopt a Huguenot King, the League party had pledged itself to resist the heretic, and Henri at first had little more than the Huguenots at his back. There were also formidable claimants for the throne. Charles II. Duc de Lorraine, who had married Claude, younger daughter of Henri *II*, and who was therefore brother-in-law to Henri III., set up a vague claim; the King of Spain, Philip II., thought that the Salic law had prevailed long enough in France, and that his own wife, the elder



Page 39

daughter of Henri III. had the best claim to the throne; the Guises, though their head was gone, still hoping for the crown, proclaimed their sham-king, the Cardinal de Bourbon, as Charles X., and intrigued behind the shadow of his name. The Duc de Mayenne, their present chief, was the most formidable of Henri's opponents; his party called for a convocation of States General, which should choose a King to succeed, or to replace, their feeble Charles X. During this struggle the high Catholic party, inspired by Jesuit advice, stood forward as the admirers of constitutional principles; they called on the nation to decide the question as to the succession; their Jesuit friends wrote books on the sovereignty of the people. They summoned up troops from every side; the Duc de Lorraine sent his son to resist Henri and support his own claim; the King of Spain sent a body of men; the League princes brought what force they could. Henri of Navarre at the same moment found himself weakened by the silent withdrawal from his camp of the army of Henri III.; the Politique nobles did not care at first to throw in their lot with the Huguenot chieftain; they offered to confer on Henri the post of commander-in-chief, and to reserve the question as to the succession; they let him know that they recognised his hereditary rights, and were hindered only by his heretical opinions; if he would but be converted they were his. Henri temporised; his true strength, for the time, lay in his Huguenot followers, rugged and faithful fighting men, whose belief was the motive power of their allegiance and of their courage. If he joined the Politiques at their price, the price of declaring himself Catholic, the Huguenots would be offended if not alienated. So he neither absolutely refused nor said yes; and the chief Catholic nobles in the main stood aloof, watching the struggle between Huguenot and Leaguer, as it worked out its course.

Henri, thus weakened, abandoned the siege of Paris, and fell back; with the bulk of his forces he marched into Normandy, so as to be within reach of English succour; a considerable army went into Champagne, to be ready to join any Swiss or German help that might come. These were the great days in the life of Henri of Navarre. Henri showed himself a hero, who strove for a great cause—the cause of European freedom—as well as for his own crown.

The Duc de Mayenne followed the Huguenots down into the west, and found Henri awaiting him in a strong position at Arques, near Dieppe; here at bay, the "Bearnais" inflicted a heavy blow on his assailants; Mayenne fell back into Picardy; the Prince of Lorraine drew off altogether; and Henri marched triumphantly back to Paris, ravaged the suburbs and then withdrew to Tours, where he was recognised as King by the Parliament. His campaign of 1589 had been most successful; he had defeated the League in a great battle, thanks to his skilful use of his position at Arques, and the gallantry of his troops,



Page 40

which more than counterbalanced the great disparity in numbers. He had seen dissension break out among his enemies; even the Pope, Sixtus, had shown him some favour, and the Politique nobles were certainly not going against him. Early in 1590 Henri had secured Anjou, Maine, and Normandy, and in March defeated Mayenne, in a great pitched battle at Ivry, not far from Dreux. The Leaguers fell back in consternation to Paris. Henri reduced all the country round the capital, and sat down before it for a stubborn siege. The Duke of Parma had at that time his hands full in the Low Countries; young Prince Maurice was beginning to show his great abilities as a soldier, and had got possession of Breda; all, however, had to be suspended by the Spaniards on that side, rather than let Henri of Navarre take Paris. Parma with great skill relieved the capital without striking a blow, and the campaign of 1590 ended in a failure for Henri. The success of Parma, however, made Frenchmen feel that Henri's was the national cause, and that the League flourished only by interference of the foreigner. Were the King of Navarre but a Catholic, he should be a King of France of whom they might all be proud. This feeling was strengthened by the death of the old Cardinal de Bourbon, which reopened at once the succession question, and compelled Philip of Spain to show his hand. He now claimed the throne for his daughter Elisabeth, as eldest daughter of the eldest daughter of Henri II. All the neighbours of France claimed something; Frenchmen felt that it was either Henri IV. or dismemberment. The "Bearnais" grew in men's minds to be the champion of the Salic law, of the hereditary principle of royalty against feudal weakness, of unity against dismemberment, of the nation against the foreigner.

The middle party, the Politiques of Europe,—the English, that is, and the Germans,—sent help to Henri, by means of which he was able to hold his own in the northwest and southwest throughout 1591. Late in the year the violence of the Sixteen of Paris drew on them severe punishment from the Duc de Mayenne; and consequently the Duke ceased to be the recognised head of the League, which now looked entirely to Philip II. and Parma, while Paris ceased to be its headquarters; and more moderate counsels having taken the place of its fierce fanaticism, the capital came under the authority of the lawyers and citizens, instead of the priesthood and the bloodthirsty mob. Henri, meanwhile, who was closely beleaguering Rouen, was again outgeneralled by Parma, and had to raise the siege. Parma, following him westward, was wounded at Caudebec; and though he carried his army triumphantly back to the Netherlands, his career was ended by this trifling wound. He did no more, and died in 1592.



Page 41

In 1593, Mayenne, having sold his own claims to Philip of Spain, the opposition to Henri looked more solid and dangerous than ever; he therefore thought the time was come for the great step which should rally to him all the moderate Catholics. After a decent period of negotiation and conferences, he declared himself convinced, and heard mass at St. Denis. The conversion had immediate effect; it took the heart out of the opposition; city after city came in; the longing for peace was strong in every breast, and the conversion seemed to remove the last obstacle. The Huguenots, little as they liked it, could not oppose the step, and hoped to profit by their champion's improved position. Their ablest man, Sully, had even advised Henri to make the plunge. In 1594, Paris opened her gates to Henri, who had been solemnly crowned, just before, at Chartres. He was welcomed with immense enthusiasm, and from that day onwards has ever been the favourite hero of the capital. By 1595 only one foe remained,—the Spanish Court. The League was now completely broken up; the Parliament of Paris gladly aided the King to expel the Jesuits from France. In November, 1595, Henri declared war against Spain, for anything was better than the existing state of things, in which Philip's hand secretly supported all opposition: The war in 1596 was far from being successful for Henri; he was comforted, however, by receiving at last the papal absolution, which swept away the last scruples of France.

By rewards and kindness,—for Henri was always willing to give and had a pleasant word for all, most of the reluctant nobles, headed by the Duc de Mayenne himself, came in in the course of 1596. Still the war pressed very heavily, and early in 1597 the capture of Amiens by the Spaniards alarmed Paris, and roused the King to fresh energies. With help of Sully (who had not yet received the title by which he is known in history) Henri recovered Amiens, and checked the Spanish advance. It was noticed that while the old Leaguers came very heartily to the King's help, the Huguenots hung back in a discontented and suspicious spirit. After the fall of Amiens the war languished; the Pope offered to mediate, and Henri had time to breathe. He felt that his old comrades, the offended Huguenots, had good cause for complaint; and in April, 1598, he issued the famous Edict of Nantes, which secured their position for nearly a century. They got toleration for their opinions; might worship openly in all places, with the exception of a few towns in which the League had been strong; were qualified to hold office in financial posts and in the law; had a Protestant chamber in the Parliaments.

Immediately after the publication of the Edict of Nantes, the Treaty of Vervins was signed. Though Henri by it broke faith with Queen Elizabeth, he secured an honourable peace for his country, an undisputed kingship for himself. It was the last act of Philip II., the confession that his great schemes were unfulfilled, his policy a failure.



Page 42

ETEXT EDITOR'S BOOKMARKS:

From faith to action the bridge is short
Much is forgiven to a king
Parliament aided the King to expel the Jesuits from France
The record of the war is as the smoke of a furnace