

The French
Huguenots.

Viola Norton.

In the early part of the sixteenth century we find that the established church, in many places had almost reached its lowest limit in spirituality. The priesthood in these places was corrupt to the last degree. All forms of dissipation and licentiousness were indulged in by the priests, the nobles and working classes, alike. In the North however a change was taking place, and it was finally forced upon the people by Martin Luther. He saw the folly of the church and lamented it, Luther did much for reforming the church but out of Switzerland came the man who was the father of the Huguenots, John Calvin, by his writings and his

patient, untiring effort, brought the Bible to the masses of the people, not only in Switzerland, but in Germany, France and other European States. He thought the great purpose of Christianity was to improve the morals of the people; and so bent all of his powerful energies to secure this end.

At about this time, or shortly before, printing was invented, which was of almost unlimited aid to the advancement of the reformation, because the Bible could now be prepared in a form which cost so little that even the laboring classes could afford to buy it.

In the town of Meaux, on the borders of Flanders, at the begin-

ing of the reign of Francis I. we find a fair representation of many French towns of this time. Its people were coarse and rude; its priests vicious, indolent and dull; and its chief recreations were drunkenness and barbarous license. The people were ordinary laborers, as clothmakers, mechanics, wool-carders and fullers, who were ever ready for any kind of amusement.

One day there appeared in Meaux two strangers. These two went among the laborers, telling new things about religion; presenting it in a new light; and distributing the Bible freely among them. These two men were Jacques Lefevre, the man who

translated the Bible into French and
Earl, his young assistant, The result
of their work was almost immediate.
The people no longer went to mass,
but they eagerly drank in what the
missionaries said. The town was
suddenly transformed, "No profane
word was any longer uttered, no ribaldry
nor coarse jest were heard. Drunken-
ness and disorder disappeared;
vice hid in the monastery and cloister;
in every factory the gospel was read
as a message from above and the
voice of prayer was mingled with the
clamor of the shuttle and clank of
the anvil. The rude artisans be-
came refined and gentle, seeking the
pure and the true." Now on Sunday

could be seen men and women and children, walking through the fields, singing and rejoicing.

This revival of life and good came as an electric shock to the rest of France. It soon began to spread very rapidly; and continued, until more than two thousand churches sprang up in France. To these people, was given the name Huguenot. The exact origin of the word is uncertain. Some claim it came from the Gate Hugons, of the city of Tours where they often held meetings. Others claim that it came from Hugues, a Geneva Calvinist of the time. The most probable source of the word is from Geneva; where it was used

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as a nickname for the German-Swiss confederates. Regardless of its source it was used as a term of reproach for those people in France who were trying to reform the church.

Between 1557 and 1559 the Huguenot opinion advanced most rapidly; many churches being formed. Each church had its pastor, elders and deacons; each ruling itself and recognizing no common bond save that of charity and suffering. At first each was complete in itself, wanting nothing more than a simple ideal Christian faith and practice, and happiest when least observed.

But when resistance began it became

necessary to organize and to have leaders; many of these leaders were secular chiefs and lords, who used their influence for their own political purposes.

In 1559 the churches met in Paris for their first synod. There were eleven churches represented. This body drew up a confession of faith which was very much like Calvinism in style. It contained strong statements of God's election of some to eternal life. Christ crucified was the center of their faith; their cardinal doctrine being justification by faith and Christ the only mediator with the father. They recognized only two sacraments, - the

being the Lord's supper and Baptism.
The church also issued a scheme
of discipline which they were to follow.
The synod was to meet twice a year.
Each pastor was to go and take
with him at least one elder or deacon
from his church. New pastors were
to be appointed by this body. It
was ordered that there should be
provincial synods in each province
and from time to time a national
synod.

Although the reform began
among the laborers it was not
limited to them, but in its rapid
spread, nobles and even the court
became interested for a time. Many
of the nobles became prominent

leaders. Among those of the court who became Huguenots were the councillor of state and the king's sister, Margaret of Valois.

There are several reasons why France should follow the Calvinistic reform, rather than that of Luther. The French nobles had little in common with the Germans, and that was the center of Lutherism. It was also due to the fact that the political and logical temper of Calvin's theology was more natural to them; and also partly because the doctrine of election pleased the nobles, who liked to regard themselves as a class apart, for it made the elect into a religious as well as a social aristocracy.

For a while the headquarters of the Huguenots was at Meaux, where Bishop Baisconet taught them and urged the study of the scriptures. There were scattered congregations in the north and east, but the Huguenots grew to be stronger in the south and west.

Soon the Huguenots, due to increasing numbers became very bold and assumed a somewhat political aspect. They burned many Catholic images and published writings against the doctrine of Transubstantiation. Francis, who had been very tolerant and, in fact, seemed to favor them, now became afraid their boldness might lead

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to trouble like that in Germany, so he took prompt measures to put it down. At this same time, however, Francis was helping the Protestants in Germany.

Henry II. succeeded his father Francis I. to the throne. Henry now expressed his intention of exterminating the Huguenots. In 1557 he allowed the inquisition to be introduced; although it was greatly hindered by able lawyers who thought it was a dangerous tribunal. At the death of Henry II, Francis II. came to the throne. He in turn was succeeded by his brother Charles IX, who at this time was but ten years old. His mother, Catherine de Medici took the power into her

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own hands. She did not hesitate for a moment to sacrifice the interests of her children to her own faithless policy; Protestant and Catholic were all one to her. She at first took the side of the Guises who were trying to gain control of the Government, but soon she tried to favor both the Catholic Guises and the Huguenots. She even secured many concessions for the Huguenots. In 1560 due to Admiral Coligny's influence, an act was passed staying all legal proceedings against Huguenots on Religious grounds. In return for this Coligny was to convocate a national synod for the purpose of doing away

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with ecclesiastical abuses; but in return for the royal kindness a conspiracy was formed, at whose head was the Prince of Condé. When the conspiracy was found out Catherine pardoned him, and in compliance with the request of Coligny called a theological conference, at Poissy in 1561. Many heated discussions were held, but nothing accomplished.

The Guises then entered into an alliance with Anthony King of Navarre. As a result the Huguenots by an edict in 1562 secured freedom of worship and the right to hold meetings openly anywhere.

except in the principal cities of the kingdom, provided they used no violence toward Catholics. This was the first time the Huguenots had received formal recognition by the state, and had they been more prudent this might have been a great epoch in their history; but they would not listen to the edict. They daily grew more bold and daring, - murdering priests and monks, - and forcing persons passing to come in and listen to their services. These outrages justly roused the indignation of the Catholics and the long pent up wrath of both sides burst forth in a civil religious war.

In the little town of Vassy began this long and bloody war. As the church bell rang, one Sunday morning, calling the Protestants to worship, the Duke of Guise passed through the town on his way to Paris. The Duke asked the cause of the bell ringing, and then his followers began calling names; stones were thrown and soon the two sides were engaged in fighting. The duke tried in vain to quiet his men. When at last they rode away, forty Huguenots lay dead and many more were wounded.

Shortly after this the Catholics attacked the town of Toulouse where the Huguenots had succeeded

in establishing something of a military community. The Catholics were here successful also. This and the massacre of Vassy were both declared, by the Huguenots, to be violations of the edict of 1562; so with Conde' at their head, they began to fight.

The Huguenots seized town after town. When Conde' became a prisoner and the Catholic leaders were dead; France ravaged and spoiled, the edict of Amboise was signed.

This closed the war for a time. Three quiet years passed, then the Catholics broke the edict. They murdered and insulted Protestants and the court gave no redress. Matters grew worse

but, Catherine would not interfere on either side. On March 13, 1569 Conde' was killed in battle. Having now, no one to lead them to battle, they were forced to make peace. In 1570 the peace of St Germain was signed. Admiral Coligny secured much in favor of the Huguenots. They were given freedom of worship in two cities of each province; and political disabilities were removed, thereby allowing them to hold offices of trust. They were given possession of four fortified towns—La Rochelle, Montauban, Cognac and La Charité.

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saw that Coligny was ever gaining more influence. At last revenge was possible. It was arranged by Margaret de Medici to marry her youngest daughter Margaret to Henry of Navarre, who was now the Huguenot leader. She saw that to gain back her power over the king, Coligny must be disposed of and then she could work toward the suppression of the Huguenots. The marriage of her daughter was to aid her in accomplishing this.

The Huguenots flocked to Paris in large numbers to the wedding of Henry of Navarre. While they were in Paris the queen

mother attempted to murder Coligny by having him shot while passing from the council. The shot caused but a slight wound. When the king heard he declared he would avenge it. He even visited Coligny while he was sick, and talked most kindly to him. The Huguenots now made matters worse by their menaces and armed resistance, for this frightened the king and he fell completely into his mother's control. She now confessed to Charles IX. that she had planned Coligny's death and that even then the Huguenots were in arms to avenge the admiral, having sent to Germany

for help. Thus moving his fears she finally got him so aroused that he was almost eager for the terrible deed she proposed.

Between one and two o'clock Sunday morning August 24, 1572, the bell of St. Germain-l'Auxerrois gave the signal; bells of one hundred churches replied, and the massacre began. The streets were suddenly filled with soldiers and citizens wearing white crosses. The Duke of Guise, anxious to avenge the death of his father, killed Coligny with his own hand. The Catholics surrounded the homes of the Huguenots, which had been previously marked by a chalk mark. That

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night the streets flowed with blood,
and for many days following.

Henry of Navarre was offered life
if he would hear mass, and he
yielded at once. The very lowest
estimate of the number killed
is 2000 in Paris and 20000 in
the provinces.

Charles at first tried to shift
the responsibility to the Guises
but later spoke out plainly, saying
that it was done at his express
orders, to head off a Huguenot con-
spiracy. The court party had
hoped that this would weaken
the power of the Huguenots; how-
ever it had the opposite effect.
In 1573 they again began war.

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Charles having no army fit to send against them, he was forced to give them another grant of pacification.

May 30, 1574 Charles died, leaving Henry III. in power. The new king was also weak, having little decision of character, so he was forced to grant in 1576 a peace much more favorable to the Huguenots than any yet secured - giving freedom of religion in any place but Paris; complete equality in civil and political rights; and equal representation in parliament. This was so offensive to the Catholics that they formed a league with Henry of Guise at its head. Violations of

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the treaty caused war, and when peace was made some of the privileges of the last treaty were restricted.

Henry III. had no children, so Henry of Navarre would rightfully succeed him. Dreading the result if a Huguenot became king, the League decided to put Henry of Guise forward as future king. The war of the Three Henries followed; in which King Henry III. was killed and Henry of Navarre, the Huguenot, came to the throne.

Henry of Navarre was weary of war and soon after becoming king he renounced his faith and accepted that of most of his subjects, although his protestant or Catholic belief.

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neither affected him much. By
this act he won the favor of his
Catholic subjects. In April 1598
he issued the edict of Nantes which
was a decree of toleration for the
Huguenots. It gave the nobles
and citizens of a number of towns
permission to establish Protestant
worship; but excluded that worship
from certain old league towns as
Reims, Dijon and Sens. It placed
the Huguenots on a level with
the Catholic before the law; giving
them again the right to hold
office. It allowed them a
number of fortified towns, and

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established a Protestant chamber
in Parliament at Paris, this
winning for them a kind of in-
dependence.

Henry was succeeded by Louis
XIII. His minister, Richelieu, decided
to strengthen the monarchy within.
To do this the Huguenots must give
up their political power which they
had acquired. He did not object to
their religion, but to their political
power. He conquered them but
in the treaty he gave them all the
power of the edict except the political
power. While the Huguenots were
in this rather prosperous state, Louis
XIV came to the throne. When he

took the work of government upon himself he had no intention of repealing the edict of Nantes, although he was determined at all costs to secure religious and political unity at home.

Before taking up the work of Louis XIV, let us turn a moment to the people against whom he was working. The French Huguenots were mostly good, quiet, and industrious citizens and subjects. They furnished many of the best soldiers and financiers. They were industrious, showing ingenuity in trade and manufactures. One author speaks of them as

"2000000 of the slyest fingers
and readiest wit in France, compos-
ing the educated middle class."
They were now willing to serve
the king but wanted to live in
peaceful enjoyment of the few
privileges granted them by the
Edict of Nantes.

It was against this class
of people that Louis ~~worked~~ worked to
secure religious unity, which to
him seemed so important.
His power dominated all of
Europe. Religious unity at home,
to him, seemed absolutely necessary
and easy to obtain. Catholicism
was rising all over Europe and

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Louis XIV, could not let other countries out do him. He thought he might, by ridding France of her Protestants, claim as a reward, a church under direct control of the king; and free from all papal interference.

He was moderate at first in his persecutions, and might seem to be fair in his dealings. In 1656 commissioners were sent out to rectify any abuses connected with the Edict of Nantes. Two men were always sent together, one a Huguenot and the other a Catholic; but the Catholic was always far superior, and it was his opinion which was taken for

the correct representation of affairs.

One of Louis XIV's first direct thrusts at the Huguenots was a commission to see to the destruction of all Protestant churches built since the Edict of Nantes: for nowhere in the edict was there a sentence giving them power to build churches. He said the edict gave only personal religious liberty. On the same grounds burials were forbidden in the day time.

Hitherto the orders concerning the Huguenots had been scattered but at last in 1666 they were united in one, containing fifty-nine articles. Catholic priests were allowed to visit

dying Protestants and obtain from them the desire to become Catholic. It forbade Huguenots to maintain academies. In Feb 1669 the Edict of 1666 was revoked and it appeared that once more the legislation was to be made on an equal basis. The effects were but temporary however.

The Huguenots now began to flee to other countries. All kinds of influences were extended to convert those remaining. A bank of conversions was established. It was filled with one third of the income of vacant benefices. This money was used to bribe the Huguenots to accept

the Catholic faith. Many yielded to this, and the reports to the King told of many who were converted.

In 1670 school masters were forbidden to teach any subject but reading, writing and arithmetic. Many schools were closed, and those which were not had only one master. In 1675 the clergy demanded that children at the age of fourteen be converted; but in 1681 they decided that they could be at the age of seven. The children now had to choose between conversion and ignorance. If the children chose to be Catholics their parents must pay for their education at a Catholic school.

In 1680 Louis XIV. who began to fear the Huguenots in the army, ordered their number gradually decreased.

A new measure was now resorted to at the suggestion of Louvois. Soldiers were quartered on the people. Women and children were daily subject to insult by the soldiers. Such favorable reports were sent to Louis that he was led to believe few Huguenots remained. And since so few remained which the Edict of Nantes was supposed to shelter, he thought it a useless disgrace to France to have so blasphemous and disloyal an edict before the people. On October 18, 1685

he issued an ordinance revoking the edict. It first ordered all Protestant churches torn down; 2 it forbade meetings on penalty of banishment or death or loss of property. 4, 5 + 6 were concerning the Protestant ministers. They were to leave within fifteen days and in the meantime were not to preach. Those who became Catholic were exempt from taxation and were to receive annually one third more than heretofore; 7 Abolished all Protestant schools; 8 Children born hereafter of Protestant parents must be baptised by the parish priest; 9 all refugees must return within four months, or their land would

be confiscated; 10 forbade Protestants leaving the kingdom; 12 All Protestants were allowed to remain and carry on their business if they did not hold religious services.

The last articles caused trouble. Many believed that those who remained were to be undisturbed. When Louis XIV. heard of this he said it went nothing of the kind. Soldiers were immediately quartered on them to convert them. The soldiers in every city forced people to become Catholic. Papers were drawn up to the effect that the undersigned consented to be instructed, or become converted

at the king's command.

After the revocation of the Edict of Nantes the Huguenots began immigrating in large numbers. French soldiers were stationed at all the sea ports and it seemed every possible precaution was taken to keep the Huguenots from leaving France. In spite of this reports came from England and Holland of large numbers of Huguenots who had arrived. These Huguenots often underwent the severest trials and greatest dangers; but any thing was better than to remain in France and be forced to give up their religion at the command of

a tyrant king. Women and children would allow themselves to be put in barrels and put on board ships with barrels of wine. Often the ship master to whom they had trusted their lives would either give them over to the French soldiers or drown them in a most cruel manner.

In spite of this large numbers escaped to England, where Charles II, although a Catholic, was forced by his people, to give them protection. Large bands of Huguenots met and disguised themselves as peasants, then with a guide would start out for a land of safety. Many men spent all their time violating these bands

of Huguenots; often endangering their own lives in order to protect the Huguenots.

Many of the other Governments offered a home and shelter to these oppressed people, for they could bring skilled laborers in the arts and manufactures. In North Germany manufacturing was introduced by the Huguenots in towns which had never known this kind of labor. England gained entire regiments of soldiers. One colony of them went to the Cape of Good Hope.

In America colonies were everywhere welcome; and were provided for very liberally. Of all the American colonies South Carolina

being of a warmer climate attracted more of the exiles than any other. One example will show what hardships these South Carolina Huguenots were willing to undergo and yet rejoice and thank God.

Judith, wife of Pierre Manigault wrote, "We quitted our homes by night, leaving the soldiers in their beds, and abandoning the house with the furniture, we contrived to hide ourselves for ten days at Romans, in Dauphiny, while a search was made for us; but our faithful hostess would not betray us. Having embarked to London, we were sadly off. The spotted

fever appeared on board the vessel,
and many died of the disease;
Among these was our aged mother.
We touched at Bermuda, where
the vessel was seized. Our money
was all spent; with great difficulty
we procured a passage in another
vessel. After our arrival in Carolina
we suffered every kind of evil. In
eighteen months our eldest brother,
unaccustomed to the hard labor
which we were obliged to undergo,
died of a fever. Since leaving France
we had experienced every kind of
affliction - disease, pestilence,
famine, poverty and hard labor. I
have been for six months without
eating bread, knocking the ground

like a slave; and I have passed
three and four years without having
it when I wanted it. And yet God
has done great things for us, by
enabling us to bear up under so
many trials."

With the Huguenots went the
life and trade of France. They took
their manufactures and trades to
other countries and left France
in a state of decay. But who
was responsible for all this loss to
France. Louis XIV, certainly deserves
a large portion of the blame. Some
writers seem inclined to lift most
of the weight from him; but as an
absolute monarch he certainly
could have prevented much of the

persecution. Madam de Maintenon whom he married two years before the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, is generally supposed to have influenced him in trying to eradicate heresy; but she urged moderation in it. She did not approve of using force, but persuasion. One of Louis' ministers Fournvois is directly responsible for much of the cruelty connected with this. He was the one who thought of the cruel harsh measures used. The influence of the clergy is also an important factor in persecution. Even after shifting part of the blame of this awful deed upon others than Louis XIV.

the fact still remains that to France it was one of the blows which marked its decline. When we consider the thought of this persecution the thought comes - Is religious unity worth all this? France indeed had religious unity but it had lost its very life.