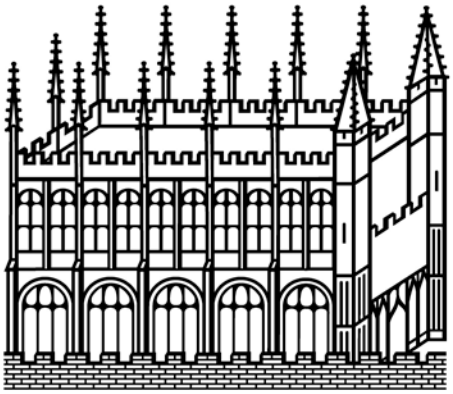

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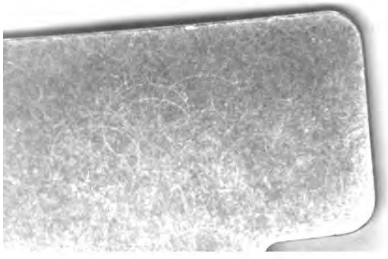

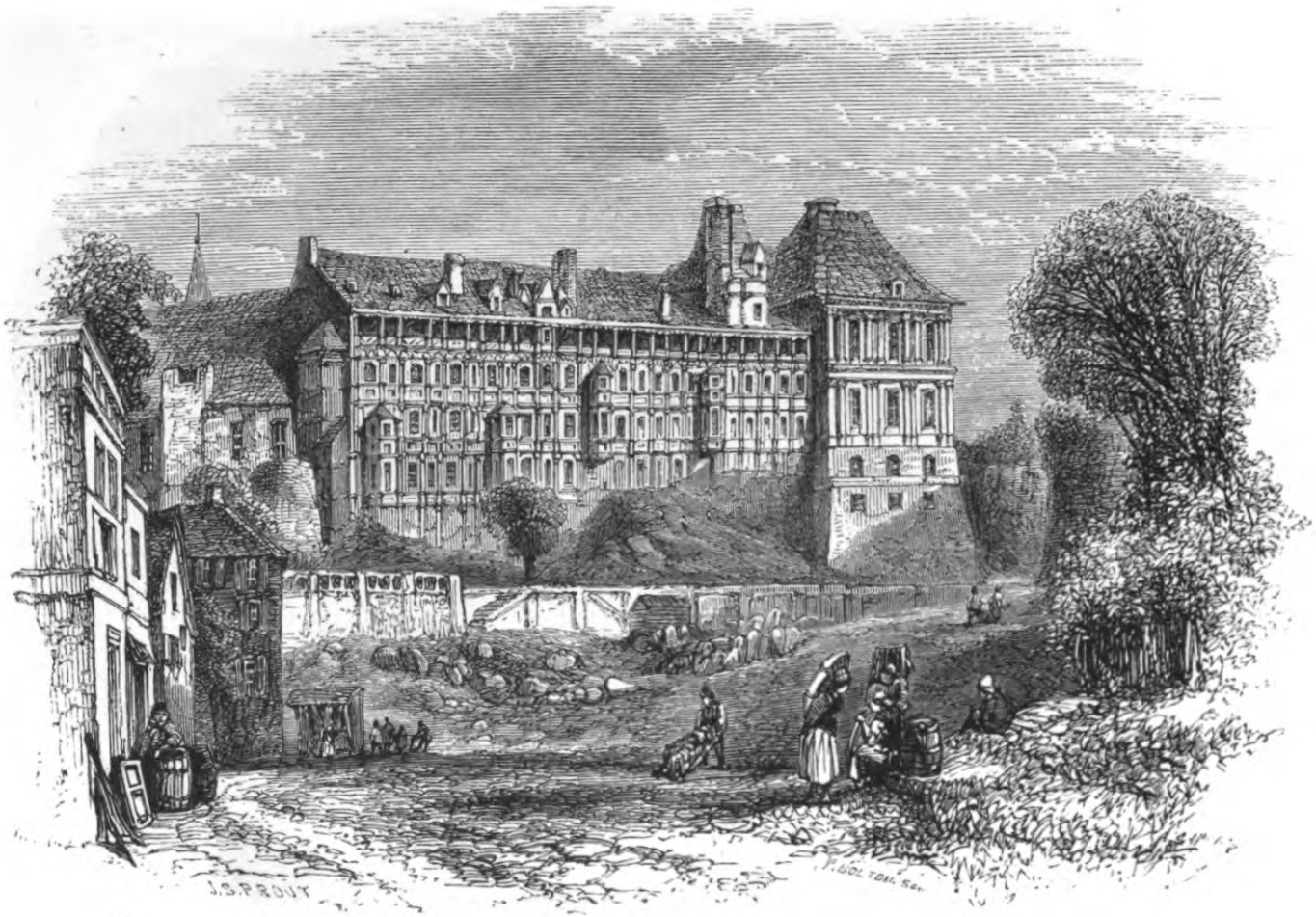

THE CASTLE OF BLOIS (BIRTHPLACE OF RENÉE).

SOME

MEMORIALS

OF

RENÉE OF FRANCE

DUCHESS OF FERRARA

I. 16. 12

London
BOSWORTH AND HARRISON, REGENT STREET
1859

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To the beloved Memory

of

S. W.

PREFACE.

MORE that ten years ago, it was suggested to me by a friend (who has since passed away) that a Memoir of Renée of France, Duchess of Ferrara, would be a desirable addition even to the already abundant stores of historical biography. It appeared that the incidents of her life and the traits of her character, preserved in the extant records of her times, were such as to excite the wish that more were known of one whose claims to be had in enduring recollection were neither few nor slight. The suggestion thus originated, was impressively seconded by the most efficient aid that my friend could afford; and I add, gratefully, that her lively interest in the execution of the scheme ceased only with her endeared and honoured life. Others, known to me in person, or by reputation only, on being appealed to, responded most readily with assistance, either indicating sources whence information might be drawn, or prosecuting researches in quarters to which at that period I had no means of access. To every one of these I beg to offer my sincere and cordial thanks. If I do not name them, it is from no inadequate sense of the services which they have rendered me. They will be more

gratified by being assured that they have efficiently helped me, and that I trust never to forget the obligations under which they have laid me.

If I did enumerate those my surviving auxiliaries, I should be impelled to specify one, "a friend of many years," who has gone into the work of research and revision of materials for me with a voluntary earnestness, relieving my mind, while it has clearly gratified his own spirit. But he who has thus aided me, will be better pleased with the consciousness of having done so as a private friend, undesirous of publicity.

My effort at authorship lays no claim to originality. It is but a compilation from various sources, some printed, some in manuscript, some old and familiar, others recently opened. Reference to the authorities which I have consulted and indicated will show at once the extent of my obligations to them, even where I may not fully have acknowledged it by the customary marks of quotation. I wish my confession of every omission of this kind, which may be discovered, to be understood in the amplest sense; for I should be indeed ashamed to incur the slightest imputation of that literary dishonesty which, availing itself of the labours of others, assumes the credit as its own.

I. M. B.

June 18th, 1859.

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RENÉE OF FRANCE.

CHAPTER I.

Renée's Birth and Baptism. — Her Personal Appearance. — Her Governess, Madame de Soubise. — Her Mother, Anne of Bretagne. —Matrimonial Projects for Renée.—Character of "the Good Queen Claude." — Renée promised in Marriage to the Prince Ercole of Ferrara.

Of the issue of Louis XII.'s ambitious marriage with Anne, heiress of the Duchy of Bretagne, two daughters only survived. The elder, born Oct. 14, 1499, and married in 1514 to the Comte d'Angoulême, afterwards Francis I., is known to all readers of French history as "the Good Queen Claude." The younger, who was born after the lapse of eleven years, on the 25th of October, 1510, at the royal residence of Blois, received the name of Renée at her baptism, by the express desire of her joyful mother.* The sponsors of the royal child were Madame de Bourbon, and Madame de Bouchaige, also the celebrated Jean-Jacques de Trivulzio, Marshal of France.†

* Bernier's Histoire de Blois.

† Histoire de Louis XII. par Messire Claude Seyssel, Archevêque de Turin, p. 383.

The young princess was called "une belle fille";* in fact, she is described in a letter of the time, as "bien belle, blanche, et toute jolie." † But this portraiture of Renée, if true at all, could only have been so during her infant years. Her personal appearance in after life is usually described as the reverse of attractive, and in more than one instance the limner has confirmed the testimony of the historian on this point.‡ The old chronicler of Blois tells us that King Louis would now and then divert himself at his child's expense, on account of the deformity of her figure, and that one day he added to his ordinary jests on this subject the remark that, for one so plain as Renée, it might be hard in future time to find a husband. But the queen, who was present, coldly reproved the saying, by replying with serious emphasis, "The love which personal beauty alone excites, passes away as quickly as its object; but that which is prompted by mental beauty is not subject to change, being fixed on that which is in itself enduring." §

It was therefore Queen Anne's wise aspiration for her young daughter, that as she grew to woman's

* Histoire de Louis XII. par Messire Claude Seyssel, Archevêque de Turin, p. 383.

† Lettres de Louis XII. t. iii. p. 36.

‡ There is a portrait of Renée in the Galerie du Louvre which certainly conveys no idea of beauty. It was probably taken before her marriage. The MS. collections of Roddi in the British Museum contain a rough sketch of her in her old age, which is even more unsightly.

§ Bernier's Hist. de Blois.

estate, the superior cultivation of her mind might compensate her deficiency in personal charms. And being enfeebled in health ever since the birth of Renée, and gradually sinking under mortal disease, she chose a Breton lady, Michelle de Saubonne, wife of the Sieur de Soubise, and one of her former maids of honour, to conduct the education of the princess when she herself should be no more. The important trust was well bestowed, duly appreciated, and faithfully discharged. The Dame de Soubise was gifted with an intellect of a high order, and was ably qualified to train "un esprit tout de feu," with which we are told that Renée was born.* Her religion too was of a purer sort than was general at that period, and she laboured with pious care to impart a better wisdom than that of this world only, to her royal pupil. So that Renée's predilections for the reformed doctrine, in later years, have been ascribed to the influence of the early lessons of Madame de Soubise.

The character of Anne of Bretagne was no ordinary one, and its better qualities were inherited by her daughter Renée. Anne was eminently virtuous and firm of purpose; her mind too had received with facility the best instruction that the age could afford. But she was also haughty, ambitious, and vindictive.†. Her ambition had been rebuked by the death of one

* Bernier's Hist. de Blois.

† Sismondi, Histoire des Français, t. xv. p. 660.

son after another, till she had the bitterness of knowing that the throne of France must pass from her husband's line to the son of Louise of Savoy, Duchess d'Angoulême, a woman whom she hated. An intense patriotism, which at times gave the semblance of ambition to her purposes, was a marked feature of Renée's disposition; otherwise the alloy of her mother's character cannot be traced in hers. On the contrary, she derived from her father Louis XII. much of that remarkable kindliness of nature, which won from the States-General assembled at Tours in 1506, the honourable title of "Father of his People."

Being deprived of heirs male to the crown of France, and the Salic Law excluding the Princesses Claude and Renée from the succession, Queen Anne employed the energies of her active mind in forming brilliant matrimonial projects for her daughters. Even before the infants Claude of France and Charles of Austria * had attained their second birthday they were affianced to each other, and the worldly inducement was a great one. If the marriage had eventually taken place, Claude would have been an empress. To secure to her child such a brilliant destiny, Anne of Bretagne cared not that the integrity of the French kingdom must in that case have been sacrificed to provide the dowry. But the wise judgment of Louis XII. accorded with the popular dislike of this alliance, and the dearest wish of

* Afterwards Charles V.

Anne's heart was disappointed. Claude was betrothed, not to Charles, but to the youthful heir of Louis, Francis, Comte de Valois, son of Charles, Comte d'Angoulême, and Louise of Savoy, amidst great rejoicings on the part of the people of France. But Anne had influence enough to hinder the conclusion of the marriage during her lifetime. It was not only her "marvellous affection for the house of Burgundy,"* but her deeply-rooted prejudice against Louise, which inspired her with an unconquerable aversion to the proposed union; and more bitter still would have been her feelings could she have foreseen the misery of Claude's wedded life, which was throughout a martyrdom "to that keenest of all woman's sufferings, a despised and neglected affection;" more persevering than ever would have been her efforts to prevent that unhappy marriage. How do the blasted schemes of the great ones of the earth, for their own aggrandisement or for that of their offspring, echo for ever the solemn words, "I charge thee, fling away ambition"!

Unchecked, however, by the failure of her plans in favour of Claude, the Princess Renée was no sooner born than Queen Anne commenced scheming on her behalf also. The natural "bonté" of Louis XII. always permitted much meddling in state affairs on the

* Anne had been affianced and married by proxy to Maximilian, King of the Romans, when she was only fourteen years of age. This marriage was nullified by her compulsory union to Charles VIII., predecessor of Louis XII.

part of his wife, whose noble qualities commanded his love, esteem, and honour. But once, when she was taking rather a high tone with respect to Renée's future prospects, he strove to repress her undue interference by a fable, which Bernier records for us. "Know, madam," said the king playfully, "that God gave horns to the hinds as well as to the stags at the creation of the world; but they, seeing the beautiful branches on their heads, endeavoured to give the law to the stags; upon which the Almighty, in wrath, took from them those ornaments to punish them for their arrogance!" Queen Anne persevered, however, in her projects; and in November, 1513, prevailed on Louis to transfer to Renée (who was at that time but three years old) his claims on Milan, Asti, and Genoa. These states were designed to constitute the dowry of Renée in the event of her marriage with either the Archduke Charles, or his younger brother Ferdinand. Such were the plans of Anne of Bretagne amidst the pangs of acute disease, and even whilst the cold shadow of approaching death lay upon her. She died at Blois on the 2nd January, 1514; on the 1st January, 1515, King Louis died also, and Renée was left an orphan.

The last testament of Anne of Bretagne committed both her children to the care of Louise of Savoy, notwithstanding the animosity which had so long subsisted between them.* Perhaps Anne hoped to conciliate her

* "En mourant," dit, parlant d'elle (Anne de Bretagne) dans ses

adversary by this mark of confidence, and avert her malice from the unoffending Claude and Renée. Or perhaps Anne really had in her inmost heart a just appreciation of the few great qualities which partially redeemed the character of the mother of Francis I. But whatever was the conduct of the appointed guardian of the young princesses in the discharge of this trust, it is certain that they both found a faithful friend in the daughter of Louise,—Marguerite de Valois.

Hardly emerged from infancy at the time of her mother's death, Renée could have known but little of the sorrow of such a bereavement; and over her childhood and youth watched the faithful governess, Madame de Soubise, and the loving sister, Claude, Queen of France. Under their care, Renée grew up; and so far were the forebodings of Louis XII. as to the consequences of her personal plainness from being realised, that she was, in fact, sought in marriage by the most celebrated personages of that period. During the first and second years of the reign of her brother-in-law, Francis I., it seemed almost certain that she would be the bride of either the one or the other of the Austrian princes. She had been contracted to the Archduke

mémoires, Louise de Savoie, "elle me laissa l'administration de ses biens, de sa fortune, et de ses filles, mêmement de Madame Claude, depuis Reine de France, femme de mon fils, laquelle j'ay honorablement conduit." See l'Art de Vérifier les Dates, where the following remark is added:—"Cela prouve que malgré son aversion pour Louise de Savoie, la reine avoit un grand fonds d'estime pour elle." T. ii.

Charles in 1514, during her father's lifetime. In 1515, on an embassy being sent by Charles to congratulate Francis I. on his accession to the crown of France and to solicit his friendship, the young monarch acknowledged the courtesies of the future emperor with the most friendly expressions, and promised to him the hand of the Princess Renée when she should have attained the age of twelve. Even her dowry was determined upon. It was to consist of 200,000 silver crowns, with the Duchy of Berri, estimated as equivalent to 400,000 more. However, this arrangement was set aside; and in 1516, the Archduke Ferdinand was spoken of as the destined husband of Renée, whilst Charles, succeeding to his grandfather's throne of Castille, strengthened his new treaty of peace with Francis I. by an article which guaranteed his marriage with Louise of France, an infant of a year old, daughter of Francis I. and Claude.

Renée's union with a prince of the house of Austria was never accomplished; but she had another illustrious suitor in Charles, Duke of Bourbon, the celebrated Constable of France. He was one of the early favourites of Francis I., and that high office had been conferred on him not only at the request of his mother Louise, but as a special mark of the young monarch's friendship. By the deaths, in rapid succession, of his wife, Suzanne, in 1521, and of her mother, Anne of Beaujeu, in the following year, Bourbon became, in his own estimation, "the sole legitimate claimant of enormous possessions." His immense wealth, his lofty position,

his relationship to the sovereign, and his many noble qualities, seemed to justify his claims to the hand of Renée, whose childish imagination he had already captivated. But the proposition did not commend itself to the mind of Francis. He regarded it merely as a proof of the soaring ambition of an already too powerful subject; and Louise, who coveted the Constable's large possessions, was also resolved to thwart this project. It is likely that, notwithstanding the disruption of their former friendship, the mother of Francis I. was still secretly attached to the person of the Constable, irrespectively of the worldly wealth which he had inherited. She was only eight years older than Charles of Bourbon, and Francis, though decidedly rejecting the alliance on behalf of his sister-in-law Renée, intimated to the Constable that it was in his power to raise himself to the highest dignity in the realm next to the kingly state, by taking advantage of the favourable sentiments entertained for him by the widowed matron Louise.* But the king and his mother, astute as she was, little knew the character of Bourbon. The Constable rejected the proffered hand of Louise with irrepressible disdain, and with words of insult. It was no wonder, therefore, that the bitterest hatred took possession of her mind,—that she vowed vengeance against Bourbon,—it was but human nature! On the pretext of being herself a Bourbon she claimed the inheritance of

* See Miss Freer's Life of Marguerite of Valois, Queen of Navarre, vol. i. p. 189.

Suzanne's rich dowry, to the total exclusion of the rights of the Constable. She went further, and "changed a wholesome heart to gall," by not only robbing him of his estates, but by alienating from him the affections of Renée. For when, with the full consent of "the Good Queen Claude," he renewed his suit to the young princess, she repelled him with the mercenary reply that it was impossible for her any longer to entertain the idea of an alliance with a noble, who must, if the legal proceedings proved fatal to his claims, become one of the poorest princes in Europe. Here we may easily trace the resentment of Louise of Savoy. Such an objection could have been no spontaneous expression of feeling on the part of a child not yet twelve years old.

Queen Claude had often much to endure from the irritable temper of her mother-in-law, who has been accused of taking pleasure in revenging upon the innocent daughter of Anne of Bretagne the virtuous dislike with which that high-souled queen had formerly regarded her. But no experience of personal indignity could have caused so much pain to Claude as the influence of the worldly Louise on the young mind of Renée. The measure of Claude's appointed griefs was, however, soon filled up, and before the completion of her twenty-fifth year, she died, in the arms of her sister Renée, on the 26th July, 1524. To that sorrowful spirit the angel of death must have been a welcome visitor. With solemn and grateful joy the purified

sufferer must have exchanged the splendid misery of her earthly palace for the holy rest of her heavenly home. But the memory of her excellence was such, as even the world, which understands it not, does "not willingly let die." The burghers and people of France long revered her as their "Good Queen Claude." Her patient endurance, her boundless charity, her unfailing self-respect, and her purity of heart and life—all these high attributes of woman's character have combined to place her name amongst those which are "had in everlasting remembrance." Even her unworthy husband Francis, who had neither requited her love nor appreciated the beauty of her character, sorrowed deeply for a while. He did not indeed attempt to solace her last hours on earth with his presence, but paused at Bourges on his way to Italy, when he heard of her increased illness, "awaiting the end." Perhaps conscience awoke and smote him when he was told that her case was hopeless, for his sister Marguerite, in a letter to the Bishop of Méaux*, relates that "he mourned exceedingly, saying to Madame (his mother), 'If my life could be given in exchange for hers, willingly would I yield it up. Never could I have believed that the bonds of marriage, confirmed by God, were so hard and difficult to sever,' and so, in tears, we separated. Since we have not had news how he (the king) fares; but I fear that he is burdened with heavy sor-

* Dated "Herbault, August 1524." — Vide Miss Freer's Life of Marguerite of Valois.

row." Nevertheless, he did not return for ever so short a time to Blois to attend his queen's funeral! He "the first gentleman of France," as he proudly styled himself, left that duty to be performed by others. To the credit of Louise it must be recorded that grief for the unexpected demise of Claude occasioned her a severe accession of illness. She immediately despatched Marguerite to Blois "to comfort the Princess Renée and Claude's poor little children by her presence." The remains of the young queen were laid to rest in St. Denis; and Francis, "after the successful expulsion of Bourbon and his invading hosts from the shores of Provence," prepared for the realisation of his dream of conquest in the plains of Northern Italy.

The Constable, in arms against his sovereign, might well have relinquished the hope of a matrimonial alliance with the blood-royal of France. But when the tide of fortune turned against Francis I., and that monarch became the prisoner of Charles V., it is certain that, more than once during his weary captivity, he was fain to promise the hand of Renée to the traitor as one of the conditions of his restoration to liberty and to his kingdom. It was but the holding out, however, of a false hope to the unhappy Bourbon. Francis I. took care to withdraw his consent to that stipulation when it ceased to be essential to his own freedom, and Renée was reserved to be disposed of in marriage hereafter as might best subserve the interests of her royal brother-in-law. She only shared the fate of many a

previous and subsequent princess in being the victim of mere political schemes and heartless ambition. In some motive of such unworthy sort, the idea of marrying her to Joachim, Electoral Prince of Brandenburg, doubtless originated; but particulars relative to this project are nowhere to be met with, nor are we told for what reason the negotiation was abandoned.

Francis I., at strife with Charles V., solaced himself with the friendship of Henry VIII. of England. The feelings of the English king had been outraged by the triumphs of Bourbon's army at Rome, and in July 1527, Cardinal Wolsey was sent to France on an embassy from Henry, accompanied by the Bishop of London, the Earl of Derby, and Sir Thomas More. Francis and his mother received the Cardinal at Amiens on the 22nd July, "with all the state and ceremonial which could have been observed towards Henry himself." "There was nothing forgot," says Holingshed, "that might doe him honor or pleasure." The treaty between Henry and Francis was renewed; and it was agreed that a joint army should be raised to march into Italy, under the command of Marshal Lautrec, to the relief of Pope Clement VII., a prisoner by Charles V.'s order, ever since the sacking of Rome. Other negotiations were also opened by the Cardinal. His master even then meditated a divorce from Catherine of Arragon, and no considerations of delicacy restrained the ambassador from prematurely soliciting the hand of Marguerite of Valois, the now widowed

Duchess of Alençon, for Henry VIII. But Marguerite, the personal friend of Henry's injured wife, sternly rejected the revolting proposition. Nothing abashed, the Cardinal next hinted at a marriage between Henry and the Princess Renée; a suggestion which found favour in the eyes of Louise of Savoy, when she heard the affirmation of Staffeleo, Dean of Rota, "that the Pope had been able to permit the marriage between Henry and Catherine only by an error of the keys of St. Peter." But it was negatived by Francis, who feared lest Renée, if the wife of so powerful a neighbour as the King of England, might be led to claim her rights as the real heiress of the duchy of Bretagne. For "the agreement which secured the perpetual independence of that duchy might be applied with as much reason to a second daughter as to a second son," and this contingent possibility proved fatal to Wolsey's scheme. It would be hard to conjecture the probable fate of Renée had she been suffered to marry the tyrant of England. The affinity of Henry's first wife to a powerful monarch did not suffice to shelter her from the insult of an unmerited divorce. But Tower Hill would hardly have counted among its victims "a true king's daughter of France." The Princess Renée would not have been subjected to the doom of Anne Boleyn or Catherine Howard.

The struggle of Francis I. against the emperor in Italy led to combinations which, at last, decided the marriage destiny of Renée. It was deemed expedient

to win from the side of Charles V. the co-operation of Alfonso I. Duke of Ferrara. An hereditary vassal of the see of Rome, he had been driven by the unjust animosity of Popes Julius II. and Leo X. to take up arms in his own defence, and to maintain against them a long and exhausting warfare. Nor had he much cause to deplore the misfortunes of Clement VII., nor to interest himself in behalf of the imprisoned pontiff. But the persuasions and menaces of the ambassadors of "the Holy League" were, at length, successful, and Alfonso joined himself to that celebrated confederacy. Adding other minor recompenses, the allies rewarded Alfonso's compliance by the promise of the investiture of the duchy of Ferrara, so long withheld by the court of Rome, and the hand of the Princess Renée in marriage to his eldest son, Ercole d'Este. By this train of events, France for a long season was deprived of one of the most illustrious of her princesses, — an acquisition of which Italy, in the end, proved herself altogether unworthy.

CHAP. II.

Character of Ercole, Prince of Ferrara.—Character of Renée.—Marriage of Renée.—Her Departure to Italy.—Her Reception at Ferrara.—Her Patronage of Literature.—Her Religious Opinions.—Favour to the Fraternity of St. François de Paul.—Birth of the Princess Anna.—Renée's charitable Disposition.—Her Visit to Venice.—Death of Alfonso I.

"On the third of April of the year 1528," says Muratori, the chronicler of the house of Este, "Don Ercole set out from Ferrara with an honourable company of nobility and with two hundred horse, to go to the court of France, and there to marry Renée, daughter of Louis XII. King of France." This was a great alliance for the son of a petty Italian prince, even though that prince was "the Magnanimous Alfonso." The French princess deserved a better fate, for Ercole did not inherit his father's noble character. The history of Alfonso I. is that of a great man struggling with adverse circumstances and finally mastering them. The history of Ercole II. is that of a feeble prince who chose to purchase a prolonged term of luxurious ease by any means, however contemptible. Such was the husband provided for Renée by the selfish policy of Francis I. She was interesting by her youth, not having at this time completed her eighteenth year, and in addition to her illustrious

parentage, she appears to have been endowed with every good gift except that of personal beauty. With all due allowance for the exaggeration of contemporaries, it is certain that her intellectual acquirements were considerable, even for an age which numbered many a learned woman amongst the ranks of the highborn. Her original powers had been developed by severe exercise. The refined trifling, which sometimes in this later age usurps the name of "study," would have been despised by Renée; and, assuredly, it would never have achieved for her the great proficiency which she attained in mathematics, astronomy, philosophy, history, and languages, both ancient and modern. Nor was she less distinguished for her moral excellence: in her noble nature were combined singleness of purpose with generosity of heart. Her charities flowed forth freely to the needy, the desolate, and the oppressed. She "loved the luxury of doing good." The candour of her disposition was so great that it soon prepared her to admit convictions adverse to many a long-revered dogma, whilst it rendered her accessible to the influences of real and ancient truths. As for her deportment, it was as courteous as (despite her personal deformity) it was majestic; she knew how to preserve the respect due to her rank, whilst she won all hearts by the graciousness of her address, the modesty of her bearing, and the charm of her conversational powers.

The marriage dowry of Renée, "besides most precious ornaments," consisted of 250,000 golden scudi, for which

an equivalent was assigned to Ercole in the French duchy of Chartres, and the viscounties of Caen, Falaise, and Bayeux. The lands thus alienated from the crown of France were not re-annexed to it until the year 1597. But they cheaply purchased the possible claims of Renée upon the fair inheritance of her mother, Anne of Bretagne; the contingency which Francis the First so much dreaded, and to prevent which had been his chief object in marrying his sister-in-law to Ercole d'Este, as we are assured in plain terms by Mezeray: — "Le roy maria cette princesse dans un pays fort éloigné et a un party foible, de peur qu'elle ne luy demandât quelque jour partage en la Bretagne et au patrimoine de Louis." *

At the Court of France, the young Prince of Ferrara was "welcomed with supreme benignity and friendship by Francis," who always loved a pretext for fêtes, which he celebrated with lavish magnificence. The English ambassadors, Clerk, Bishop of Bath, and Taylor, Master of the Rolls, thus quaintly certify their "Lord Legatte's good grace" in England of these matters: — "Here is arryvyd the Duke of Ferrara is sonne, who shall marry Madame Raynee. He hath in his trayne 300 horsis. Howbeit he came to the Court in post fasshion, and had not past ten or twelve horsis. He was mett with the great master, the Duke of Longaville, and dyvers other nobilles and gentilmen of the courte where he is lodgyd. The Kyng reecyvyd hym in his chambre. My lady upon

* Hist. de France, tom. ii. p. 959.

hir bedde, howbeit rather sytting then lying, for she was, and yette is, troublyd with hir gowte in hir arme." From Poisy, 24th day of May.* The marriage ceremony was not solemnised until Sunday, the 28th of June, more than a month having elapsed since the arrival of Ercole at the Court. The scene of the nuptials was "La Sainte Chapelle du Palais," at Paris.† Duke Alfonso signified his satisfaction at his son's connection with the blood-royal of France, by a present to Renée of jewels, valued at 100,000 golden scudi; — a splendid gift from a heavily burdened treasury.

Meanwhile at Ferrara a destructive pestilence was raging; therefore the newly married pair were in no haste to leave Paris after their espousals. "They amused themselves there all the summer," and it grew towards the end of September before they bade adieu to France, and set forth on their journey to Italy. The pestilence, though less violent, was not yet extinct at Ferrara, so they proceeded thither with lingering steps, and it was the 12th of November before they made their triumphal entry into the city of Modena, held by the Dukes of Ferrara as a fief of the empire.

Fourteen young and noble ladies of France escorted their beloved princess into Italy. She was also attended by her old and faithful friend, Madame de Soubise. Duke Alfonso, accompanied by the leading nobility of his duchies, advanced to meet his son and daughter-in-

* State Papers.

† Journal d'un Bourgeois de Paris, p. 362.

law, half way between Reggio and Bersillo. Mounted on a handsome palfrey, Renée entered Modena beneath a canopy at the Porta di S. Agostino, where she was met and welcomed by the clergy and people of the city. The prince consort preceded her on horseback. The duke rode on her right hand, and Ippolito, Archbishop of Milan (her husband's brother), on her left. Thus she went to the cathedral. Ten days were spent at Modena amidst great rejoicings and festivity. The city was magnificently embellished, and nothing was heard of but banquets, masques, and dances, whilst the community, and even private individuals, manifested their loyalty by liberal offerings to the duke and to the royal princess. Tidings came at that time to Alfonso, that the Florentines, engaged in their last struggle for liberty, had chosen his son, Ercole, to be captain-general of their republic. Ercole, who inherited none of his father's taste or genius for war, accepted the honour, but discharged the duties of the office by deputy, having, as we are told, "altra faccenda importante in casa propria" at that time. That is, he had no inclination to exchange these marriage festivities for the hardships of a camp, and the stern struggle of the battle-field.

Ferrara was now to be approached,—and the nature of the arrangements made by the duke for the reception there of Ercole and Renée, but too sadly reveal the desolations which the recent fearful pestilence had made in that city. Three edicts, of the 17th, 24th, and 28th November, ordained that all persons and families who

had fled from Ferrara to escape its ravages, should return to their own habitations; that they should lay aside their mourning vestments, in order that the public melancholy caused by the universally sombre aspect of the city might be dissipated. The markets were again to be the resort of the buyers and sellers of various merchandise; the preachers were required to reascend their pulpits, and the professors to return to the University. At the same time it was specially enjoined that on the day of the entry of the prince and princess, the shops should be closed, and that Ferrara should keep a grand holiday. The inhabitants were bidden to dress themselves in the gayest attire, and to present themselves, on horseback if possible, on the bank of the river Po, to wait the arrival of the royal barge, and to give it an honourable reception. But it was midnight on the 30th November when the royal cortége arrived at the beautiful palace of the Belvedere, without the city walls. The following day Renée, conducted upon the river in a superb "bucentoro," appeared at the gates of Ferrara, accompanied by the ambassadors of France, Venice, and Florence, the ladies of her court, and eighty noble pages, with a golden crown upon her head. Leaving her vessel at the Porta di S. Paolo, she ascended a canopied litter, and thus entered the city of Ferrara. The firing of numerous pieces of artillery from the banks of the river and the bastions of the castle, answered by the more melodious sounds of the bells of the city churches, gave the young princess

welcome. Then onward, along the grand Strada,—gorgeous with red, green, and white tapestries; her pages attired in crimson, with bonnets of rose-colour adorned with white feathers, and carrying red staves; the nobles, clergy, and doctors of Ferrara preceding her,—Renée passed to the cathedral, where she received the solemn benediction of the Bishop of Commacchio, and was presented with the keys of the city in a silver basin, by Alfonso Trotti, the castellan of Castelvecchio. The procession was then marshalled from the cathedral to the palace of the Estensi, which was richly hung with arras and cloth for the reception of the royal bride. And the sounds of mourning were hushed for a few days in Ferrara, whilst public spectacles and magnificent entertainments celebrated the arrival of the young Princess of France at the court of Alfonso.

The Ferrarese courtiers, who remembered the surpassing beauty of their former duchess, Lucrezia Borgia, must have been struck with a painful sense of contrast, when Renée, "ugly and hunchbacked," appeared amongst them. There might, too, have mingled with it an anticipation of nothing more gracious than a mere haughty condescension, on the part of a princess of France, in her intercourse with them. The daughter of Louis the Twelfth, however, speedily disappointed their expectations; conciliating their moral esteem by the purity of her character, and winning their affections by her affability and grace. It was soon felt that, though the charm of personal beauty had been withheld from

Renée, the want was compensated by the rare attainments of her mind. As soon as the pageants in honour of her arrival at Ferrara were over, her literary tastes began at once to develope themselves. Bernardo Tasso, a poet himself and the father of the great Torquato, was chosen to be her private secretary; and he held that appointment from May 27th, 1529, until the end of the year 1531. The Court quickly became "a sort of Prytaneum of learned men," * and a literary academy was opened in Renée's own apartments; "where," says an Italian writer, "letters were honoured, but not the Catholic religion." Learning received an impulse which it maintained in Ferrara during many brilliant years. Professors and scholars of the University, whom the terrors of the recent pestilence had scattered far and wide, were recalled by an edict of Alfonso, dated June 14, 1529, and that famous seat of learning "fast recovered its former lustre, after having suffered severely from the civil wars in which the family of Este had for many years been involved." †

Renée's early bias in favour of the reformed doctrines caused her at this period no molestation from the dominant Church; nor is there any ground for considering her, as yet, "a decided Protestant." The seed had probably been sown in her heart by the pious Madame de Soubise; Marguerite of Valois had fostered it by her kindly influence; the blood of the martyrs, which had

* Gerdesius.

† Dr. McCrie's History of the Reformation in Italy, p. 91.

begun to flow before Renée left France, had cried aloud in their behalf to one so easily moved as she was to pity. The enquiring nature of her own mind subsequently led her to a deeper investigation of the momentous religious questions which were then agitating the greater part of civilised Europe. But it was long before she perceived the necessity of external separation from the Roman communion; a reformation of the Church itself, both in its head and in its members, was not yet regarded as impracticable; and it is not likely that Renée's orthodoxy was even suspected during the early part of her life in Italy. The only act recorded about this time that is at all illustrative of her relations with the Church of Rome, must be taken to imply friendship rather than animosity towards it—without investing with undue significance a graceful concession to a religious fraternity which both her mother, Anne of Bretagne, and her venerable father-in-law, Alfonso, had delighted to honour. To explain this allusion, it must be mentioned that the Emperor Charles the Fifth had just decided in favour of the long-disputed claim of Duke Alfonso to the investiture of the Duchy of Ferrara. This decision, publicly declared on the 1st of April, 1531, was made known to the duke on the eve of the festival of Sta Croce (May 3rd). He was standing, at the moment when the joyful tidings reached him, hard by the Church of St. Barnabas, which had formerly been presented by Ercole I. to the Brothers of St. François de Paul. With unfeigned though superstitious gratitude,

the duke commanded the rebuilding of the church, with the monastery, under the title of Sta Croce, to which he annexed a rich endowment in lands, and conferred the whole upon the above-mentioned order. The favourable decree of the emperor was announced by the duke in person to Renée, at the Belriguardo Palace. She shared his joy at the prospect of restored prosperity to the house of Este, and immediately presented the fortunate fraternity of St. François de Paul with the cord or girdle of their illustrious founder, — a relic which she had doubtless inherited from her mother, and which she had brought with her from France.* St. François de Paul had been godfather to the first-born son of Anne of Bretagne, Charles Roland, Dauphin of France, who died at the age of four years. He was the spiritual adviser of the duchess-queen, who founded for him a monastery at Lyons, ceded to him a mansion of her own property near Chaillot, and, in 1500, began to build a house for monks of his order, near Paris, on the site of the Hôtel de Bretagne.† The trifling mark of favour shown by Renée to the fraternity of St. François de Paul, when she met with them again at Ferrara, was, therefore, as natural as it was in itself, perhaps, harmless.

The birth of the eldest child of Renée and Ercole took place on the 16th November, 1531. The infant was a daughter; nevertheless the old duke regarded the

* Frizzi, Memorie per la Storia di Ferrara, t. iv. c. 4, p. 295.

† Miss Costello's Memoirs of Anne, Duchess of Brittany, pp. 190—1 and 402—416.

event as a gleam of favourable fortune. Ever anxious to conciliate his adversary, Alfonso besought Pope Clement the Seventh to become sponsor to the new-born princess at the baptismal font. The Pope knew not how to refuse the petition of his injured vassal, but he chose as his proxy, for the occasion, Cardinal Ippolito de' Medicis, who, on his part also, selected a deputy in Francesco Guicciardini, the Historian, and the Governor of Bologna at that time.* Contemptuous as this behaviour was, Alfonso wisely concealed his displeasure at it, but it could have added little to Renée's scant measure of reverence for the dignitaries of the Papal Court. The sacred rite was performed at Ferrara, with much splendour, the infant receiving the name of Anna, in memory of her maternal grandmother, Anne of Bretagne.

The name of Renée stands first in the list of patrons of a charitable institution established at Ferrara during a period of scarcity in the year 1533. The preaching of a zealous Dominican, Fra Lorenzo da Bergamo, during the season of Lent, had directed the attention of the wealthy to the wants of their poor fellow-citizens, and the result was the founding of the "Monte delle Farine," dedicated to St. John the Baptist, to which they appropriated a mill in furtherance of the objects of the charity. Renée's patronage of this benevolent undertaking is the first recorded proof of that consider-

* Frizzi, t. iv. c. 4, p. 297.

ate care for the poor of which her future life furnished so many evidences. It was, indeed, "twice blessed" in her case, as in all. It made her the idol of her husband's subjects, and blinded them even to her alleged heresies.

On the 22nd of November of the same year, Renée gave birth to a son, which caused great rejoicings in all parts of the city of Ferrara. At the baptism of the infant prince, Ippolito d'Este, Archbishop of Milan, officiated as proxy for Francis the First, who was one of the sponsors, and the child was named Alfonso, after the duke his grandfather.

An old MS. chronicle, now preserved in the British Museum, entitled "Annali della sua Patria," by Filippo Roddi, a Ferrarese doctor of laws, furnishes us with the following quaint description of Renée's visit to "the City of the Sea."

"On the 10th day of May (1534) Madama Renée, desirous of seeing Venice, set out from Ferrara with a goodly number of ladies and horses, and with the prince her husband*, and went up to Francolino on a long barge, all covered with brocade and gold, followed by a barge like unto it, but covered with crimson-coloured satin, and by many other barges. Thus went she towards Chioggia, where she was met by the nobility of that city, with a quantity of smaller boats, and to do honour to such a noble stranger, races and maritime games were enacted in those waters, at the sight of

* Frizzi, however, says that Ercole followed her fifteen days after.

which Madama and all took great pleasure, and highly praised the inventor of such pleasant diversions, and so going onward they were met at Malamocco by the Doge and all the Signoria, and with sounds of trumpets, fifes, and drums; after disembarking with rejoicings, she was conducted to Venice, where she staid some days in divers palaces."

Meanwhile Duke Alfonso went to Milan to be present at the marriage of its duke with the daughter of the King of Denmark. His troubled life was drawing near its close. His long struggle against papal aggression, so bravely sustained for so many years, had at least secured to him the actual sovereignty of his patrimonial inheritance, though Clement the Seventh died without granting to him the investiture of the Duchy of Ferrara. His last days were disturbed by the flight of Francisco, his younger son, to France. The exaltation of his old friend, Cardinal Alessandro Farnese, to the chair of St. Peter, revived his hopes of the speedy settlement of his claims,—but he did not live to realise them. Before his son Ercole had left Ferrara on an embassy of congratulation to the new pontiff, Alfonso was seized with a sudden illness, which terminated his existence on Sunday, the 31st October, 1534.

Alfonso the First had other qualities besides those of the mere warrior, which rendered him illustrious amongst the great men of his age. Benevolence, probity, clemency, simplicity, firmness in adversity, and gentleness, notwithstanding his rugged exterior, are

freely ascribed to him by the historian, and, rare as the combination may be, none of its elements are incompatible with each other. The happiest years of Renée's married life were spent under Alfonso's reign, and the unlooked-for vicissitudes which afterwards befell her began their rapid sequence when she became partner of the throne of Ercole the Second as Duchess of Ferrara.

CHAP. III.

Accession of Ercole II.—His Acts as a Sovereign.—His Literary Sympathies with Renée.—His Journey to Rome.—Clement Marôt at Ferrara.—John Calvin.—His Influence over the Duchess.—His Character.—Anne de Parthenai and her Husband.—Men of Literature at Renée's Court.—Birth of Lucrezia, the second Daughter of Renée.—Ercole's Disappointment at Rome.—His Return to Ferrara.—Flight of Marôt.—Danger of Calvin.—His Arrest and Deliverance.—Renée compelled to conceal her Religious Opinions.

On the day following that of the death of Alfonso I., the inauguration of the new Duke of Ferrara, Ercole II., took place with the usual ceremonies. He then went in procession through the city to the cathedral, where, from their representatives, he received his people's oath of fidelity, and swore to them on his own part to govern well. On the 2nd of November, the interment of Alfonso was solemnised in the Church of Corpo Domini; the funeral oration having been previously pronounced over the body of the departed hero as it lay in state under the "loggia" of the garden of the Ducal Palace.

The first acts of Ercole, after his accession, were those of mercy and charity towards his subjects; next, directing his thoughts to the duties of government, he gave his assent to a plan which had been proposed during Alfonso's life-time for the reform of the statutes of the city of Ferrara. On succeeding to the duchy, Ercole was in his twenty-seventh year, having been born on

the 14th April, 1508. Muratori describes him as "a prince of a fine presence, above the ordinary stature, of grave speech, yet withal, pleasant, splendid, magnanimous, clement." He was pious, too, after the most approved fashion of his religion; for, besides founding churches, he aided in the formation of conventual establishments, and introduced foreign religious fraternities into Ferrara. He seems to have had a paternal feeling for his subjects, and he was, in contradistinction to his father, emphatically a man of peace. But his love of splendour soon degenerated into effeminate luxury; his desire for peace induced a policy of unworthy compliances; if he spent but little upon the operations of war, he squandered much treasure on the pageants of a day; whilst his piety soon assumed the form of a persecuting bigotry that spared in its exercise neither his subjects nor the partner of his ducal state.

Between his duchess and himself, there lay, however, the common ground of their mutual love of art, science, and letters. Such studies were cherished by Ercole, and "he wrote with elegance both in prose and verse." He formed an admirable collection of medals, and was regarded as the founder of the celebrated museum of Ferrara. He introduced the art of weaving after the Flemish manner into his capital city; rebuilt and enlarged the superb Belriguardo Palace, besides erecting two new ones at Coparo and Montegna. He also made considerable additions to Modena, which city he fortified.

But the events of the reign of Ercole II. will be

noticed in these pages only when they affect, directly or indirectly, the personal history of the Duchess Renée: and the next subject that claims attention on this account, is that of the investiture of the Duchy of Ferrara. This affair, as has been previously stated, still remained unsettled at Rome, notwithstanding the decision of Charles V. in favour of Duke Alfonso's claims. But the changes wrought by the resistless hand of time had now obviated many difficulties. Death had not only removed the daring vassal, whose reign had been a period of almost incessant resistance to the encroachments of papal ambition, but each successive Pope, against whom Alfonso's ready sword had been drawn, had also passed away. The question, therefore, was greatly simplified, and the young Duke of Ferrara had good reason to hope for an amicable arrangement with his father's old friend, Pope Paul III. Still it was no easy task to overcome the reluctance of the Roman See to grant the investiture to the comparatively unoffending Ercole, who, at length, unable to bear with patience the delays of this protracted negotiation, set off to Rome on the 19th September, 1535, to expedite, by personal effort, the much-desired conclusion.

This ducal journey was destined to result in painful consequences to Renée. Meanwhile, events of far greater importance to her than the conciliation of either papal or imperial favour were occurring within the walls of her palace, and exerting a powerful influence over her heart and mind, so that the colouring of her future

life may be said to have been derived from this very period.

The favour which Renée always showed to the restorers of literature, her interest in religious questions, as well as her enthusiastic devotion to the land of her birth, made it appear very natural that she should welcome to her court two remarkable men, who had been exiled from France on account of their religious opinions. In 1535, John Calvin and Clément Marôt were both residents at Ferrara,—the latter seeking there a temporary shelter from the malice of his enemies; the former holding Christian intercourse with a princess whose reputation as a favourer of "the new doctrines" had already reached France. Very different men they were, and posterity has faithfully discriminated between those who, at one period, seemed to be associated in behalf of the same great cause—the Poet and the Preacher of the French Reformation. In spite of all calumny, the memory of Calvin lacks not abundant honour, whilst the dark shadow of moral reprobation rests upon the character of Clément Marôt.

Yet the name of Marôt lives in the literature of his country as that of "the Prince of Poets and the Poet of Princes;" nor does it tell lightly in his favour that he enjoyed the patronage of two such women as Marguerite of Navarre, and Renée of France. At the court of Ferrara, to which he fled in 1535 from the less secure retreat of Béarn, he became at once the secretary and laureate of the duchess, acquired the friendship of

Calvin, and, apparently sobered by these influences, gave some promise of better things. His eye was opened, at least in part, to the vision of truth, and his heart seemed almost won. The concluding lines of his poetical "épître," addressed to Renée, curious as an exposition of his belief respecting his own vocation, reveal also a sense of responsibility for the talent with which he had been endowed.* While at the court of Ferrara he probably conceived the idea (which he afterwards partially executed) of a metrical version of the Psalms. Fifty of these he rendered into French verse, and they were published at Geneva, with a preface by Calvin, in 1543. Their poetical merit was generally acknowledged; even royal voices sang them at the court of France, and the versification of the rest of the psalter being subsequently completed by Theodore Beza, the joint translation formed the psalm-book of the Huguenot assemblies, and doubtless served to animate the courage of many a lowly worshipper in an age of formidable persecution.

But with all his fair seeming, Marôt, "weighed in the balances, was," at last, "found wanting." It is but matter of regret that his name was ever connected with

* "Car l'Eternel me l'ha (certes) donnée
Pour en louer premièrement son Nom:
Plus pour servir les Princes de renom
Et exalter les Princesses d'honneur,
Qui au plus hault de fortune et bonheur
S'humilier de cœur sont coustumiers,
Auquel beau rang *tu* marches des premières."

the sacred cause of the Reformation, and that Renée should have honoured one so undeserving. For he wanted what many like him in gifts of mind and graces of manner, and even in the transient exhibition of yet higher qualities, have wanted also,—a fixed principle of duty. The services were great which, with his genius, he might have rendered to the infant Reformation; but no reliance could be placed upon him, for he had no taste for that self-denial which is so sure a safeguard of moral character, whilst it is the stamp of real religion, and the yoke of indispensable obligation to every one "who names the name of Christ." In a time of universal religious ferment, his superior mental intelligence loosened his bonds of allegiance to the Church of Rome; and he found in the pure doctrine of the Reformation "the sentiment of religion" which both his imagination and feeling required him to preserve.* But his fatal love of pleasure blighted the effect of scriptural truth upon his heart; his creed witnessed against his life, and he proved at last that practical antinomianism may lead to the denial of a right faith; for there is too much cause to fear that he twice abjured the reformed faith to serve his own ends,—at Lyons first, after his return from exile, and afterwards at Turin, where he died.

The "Œuvres de Clément Marôt" contain numerous memorials of his sojourn at the court of Renée, in the shape of poetical "épîtres," addressed either to herself,

* Sismondi, Hist. des Français.

or to his former friends and patrons. In his "Epître à ses Amis,"* in which he relates his reception by the Duchess of Ferrara after leaving the court of the Queen of Navarre, he describes his new patroness in the following flattering lines: —

"Mes amis, j'ay changé ma dame :
Une autre ha dessus moi puissance,
Née deux fois de nom et d'ame,
Enfant de roy par sa naissance,
Enfant du ciel par cognaissance
De celuy qui la sauvera :
De sorte, quand l'autre sçaura
Comme ie l'ay telle choisie,
Je suis bien seur qu'elle en aura
Plus de aise, que de ialousie."

In his "épître" addressed "à Mme. la Duchesse de Ferrare" he commends himself to her favour on this ground: —

. . . . "que jadis fut serviteur mon père †
De ta Mère Anne, en son regne prospère,
Croyant aussi que tu sçais que d'enfance
Nourry ie suis en la Maison de France,
De qui tu es Royalle geniture." . . . .

Then continues in a strain of graceful compliment: —

"Les oyslets des champs en leurs langages
Vont saluant les buissons et boscages
Par ou ilz vont : quand le navire arrive
Aupres du havre, il salue le rive
Avec le son d'un canon racourcy :
Ma Muse dong passant ceste court-cy,

* Written in the year 1535.
† Jean Marôt.

Fait elle mal saluant toy, Princesse ?
Toy à qui rid ce beau pays sans cesse,
Toy qui de rare aymes toute vertu,
Et qui en as le cœur tant bien vêtu ;
Toy dessoulz qui fleurissent ces grandes plaines
De biens et gens si couvertes et pleines,
Toy qui leurs cœurs a sceu gaigner tres-bien,
Toy qui de Dieu recognois tout ce bien."

* * * * * *

But the favourite valet-de-chambre of Francis I did not forget his earliest patron whilst serving that monarch's sister-in-law, as the "Epître au Roy," also written at Ferrara in 1535, evidences. In this poem Marôt skilfully alludes to the affinity between the king and the duchess, and deprecates his sovereign's anger at his flight from France,—which the duty of self-preservation had, however, absolutely dictated.

" Enfin passay les grans froides montagnes
Et vins entrer aux Lombardes campagnes :
Puis en l'Italie, ou Dieu qui me guidoit,
Dressa mes pas au lieu ou residoit
De ton clair sang une Princesse humaine,
Ta belle-sœur et cousine germaine,
Fille du Roy tant craint et renommé,
Père du Peuple aux chroniques nommé.
En sa Duché de Ferrare venue
M'ha retiré de grace et retenu,
Pour ce bien lui plaist mon escripture,
Et pour aultant, que suis ta nourriture.
Parquoy, O Syre, estant avecque elle
Conclure puis d'un franc cœur et vray zêle
Qu'a moy ton serf ne peult estre donné
Reproche aucun, que t'ay abandonné
En protestant, si je fuis ton service,
Qu'il vient plus tost de malheur, que de vice."

It is easy to believe, with Clément Marôt, that Renée greatly enjoyed this "sweet juice" of poetic adulation, flowing, as it did, from the pen of an exile of her own nation, who was also an hereditary *serviteur* of her family, and in the melodious tones of her own beloved language. In this gratification there was nothing surprising; little, perhaps, that was blameable, but much that might eventually have injured Renée's noble simplicity of character, had it not been for a powerful counteractive, which was soon afterwards supplied. Marôt is always accused by Roman Catholic writers of having infected the duchess with his religious opinions. She was certainly prepared to give them a favourable reception. The accomplished secretary probably made no secret of his views to the sympathising audience which he found in the private apartments of Renée. There it was doubtless known for what cause he was an exile from France; and the latest intelligence of the progress of the Reformation in that country would be an interesting subject for conversation. The declaration, therefore, in Marôt's petition to the Dauphin to procure him a passport for a six months' residence in France, that "he had learned to be very cautious in his discourse, and never to open his mouth on matters of religion during his stay in Italy," must be received with considerable suspicion. If it had been true, his friendship with Calvin would probably never have been formed. No doubt the reformer had a firm conviction of Marôt's sincerity at that period, besides appreciating the value

of an adherent, to the cause of the Reformation, whose intellectual gifts were so attractive. In Calvin, however, the duchess beheld a far worthier representative of that Reformation than she had found in the versatile Marôt. One, who "knew not how to give flattering titles," now stood before her; and, from the important material of his discourse, she derived solid nourishment for her capacious and enquiring intellect.

This wonderful man, who took the lead of so large a section of the Reformed Church, and kept it with almost undisturbed authority, from the year 1535, when he published the memorable "Institutes," till the period of his death, in 1564, visited Ferrara about the end of 1535, under the assumed name of "Charles d'Espeville," and was thus known at the court of Renée.

There, "welcomed and concealed," he made diligent use of the brief opportunity afforded him of preaching the Gospel to an auditory, perhaps, the most refined in Italy; and whilst the duchess listened to a preacher "who never spoke without filling the mind of the hearer with the most weighty sentiments," * her previous convictions were confirmed and her religious knowledge enlarged by the instructions of this eminent theologian. She gained more distinct ideas of the nature of the great controversy of her age, and, making her choice between Romanism and the purer doctrine then presented to her, she became, from that time, though secretly, a sincere ally of the Reformation.

* Beza's Life of Calvin.

He who was the human instructor of the Duchess Renée in divine truths, though then only twenty-six years of age, had already compressed within the limits of mere youth the experiences, labours, and achievements of a long lifetime. Originally destined for the priesthood, but diverted from his earlier course of study by the ambition of his father, who deemed jurisprudence a surer path to wealth and honour than theology, Calvin underwent a severe and successful training by the most eminent French and foreign professors of law, at Orleans first, and afterwards at Bourges. Day and night he persevered in acquiring knowledge, studying with a laborious diligence that injured his health, originating a complaint of the stomach, which became in after years the source of intense bodily agony. Calvin's acquaintance with Pierre Robert Olivetan (the translator of the Old Testament from Hebrew into French) had introduced him to the knowledge of the reformed doctrines, and given him a taste for sacred literature, — so that those studies were not merely secular ones which he pursued with such ardour. At length, while in Paris in 1532, he abandoned law for theology, and devoted himself wholly to sacred things. Persecution quickly followed on this step, and when it burst upon him, he was indebted for his safety to the intervention alone of the enlightened Marguerite of Navarre. It was, however, but a temporary lull of the storm, and soon the affair of the Placarts, which kindled at Paris the flames of martyrdom, compelled

him to fly for his life to the secure asylum of Basle. There he published the "Institutes of the Christian Religion," with a preface of dedication to Francis I., vindicating the French reformers from the aspersions of their sovereign, in his representation of their conduct to the Protestant princes of Germany. This was in August 1535, and after this he went immediately into Italy.

Such had been Calvin's "manner of life from his youth:" it is almost needless to add, that no ordinary character emerged from such a nurturing. In its sternness it may fail to win our love, but by its fervency, uprightness, and sincerity, it commands our respect. His opinions were early fixed, and changed but little in after-life. He never permitted his keenest sufferings to hinder his varied labours, and even delivered his last sermon with asthma impeding his utterance. As to his personal appearance, we are told that "he was of a moderate stature; of a pale and dark complexion, with eyes that sparkled to the moment of his death, and showed his great intellect."

This digression has arisen out of the connection of the subject of it with Renée's history; but it is now time to return to the court of Ferrara. Here were assembled at this time, "as in a securer and more brilliant Nérac beyond the Alps,"* a group of distinguished persons, whose affection for their young

* Jules Bonnet's Vie d'Olympia Morata.

princess had drawn them from "la belle France," and detained them in a species of honourable exile around her. One of the young and noble ladies, who attended Renée into Italy, named Anne de Beauregard, died at Ferrara, whilst Marôt held the office of secretary to the duchess,—and the touching epitaph which he wrote on her must not be withheld. It is as follows:—

"De Beauregard Anne suis, qui d'enfance
Laissay Parentz, pays, amys et France
Pour suivre icy la Duchesse Renée:
Laquelle i'ay depuis abandonnée,
Futur epoux, beaulté, fleurissant aage
Pour aller veoir au Ciel mon héritage,
Laissant le monde avec moindre soucy
Qu'en laissant France, alors que vins icy."

Beside the faithful governess, Madame de Soubise, we find that lady's only daughter amongst the French attendants of the Duchess Renée. Anne de Parthenai had been the favourite companion of Renée's childhood; she was now married to the Sieur de Pons, who held office in the duke's bedchamber. Her brother, the Sieur de Soubise, was also at the court of Ferrara. Madame de Pons is celebrated as "one of the brightest ornaments of Renée's court," and, unless her panegyrists have been guilty of exaggeration, she may be allowed to have competed with her royal friend in tastes, acquirements, and religious excellence. Unsatisfied with a knowledge of Latin merely, she cultivated the study of Greek, until she could read with pleasure the authors who had written in that tongue. Beside these more

arduous pursuits, it is said that she understood all kinds of music, and that "she sang like an angel." But it is higher praise, still that "she attained to a great skill in the Scriptures, and took a pleasure in discoursing almost every day with divines, on theological subjects;" —that she was, in short, "a sincere Huguenot, and the worthy sister of Soubise."* Her husband, Antoine de Pons, Count de Marennes, and first gentleman of the bedchamber to Ercole II., was associated with her in these elevating studies, and, while she lived, he faithfully adhered to the Reformation. His theological predilections, at this time, as also those of his brother-in-law, De Soubise, were ascribed to the teaching of Calvin at the court of the Duchess.† Giraldi, who dedicated to Madame de Pons the second dialogue of his "Historia Poetarum," thus addresses her:—"Wherefore should I take knowledge of the love and affection, or rather piety, which you show towards your husband, who is justly yours, since he is adorned with the same studies and virtues as yourself?" and elsewhere it is recorded that his proficiency in religious knowledge enabled him, personally, to take part in the instruction of his poor dependants at a subsequent period. "Many of them he edified, as well officers as others, in the town of Pons," with a zeal worthy of a minister of "the Religion."

* See the Biography of Madame de Pons, in Bayle's Dictionary.

† The court at this time was quite a nursery of the reformed doctrines. "There arrived, and were read, all the books that came out against the Catholic religion." See *Frizzi.*

But, after the death of his first admirable wife, and his second marriage, to the Dame de Massay, he forsook the faith which he had hitherto professed, and became not only an enemy but a persecutor of its followers.

Other eminent individuals, not of Renée's native, but of her adopted, country, added brilliancy to her court at this period, where their learning made them welcome. One of these was Celio Calcagnini, a canon of the Cathedral of Ferrara, and Apostolic Prothonotary, whose early life had been spent in camps, as a soldier, in the service of the Emperor Maximilian and of Pope Julius II. Exchanging war for diplomacy, and, finally, adopting the ecclesiastical habit, he achieved celebrity as "one of the most learned men of the sixteenth century." He was one of the first assertors of the earth's rotation on its axis,—a glance into scientific truth which better entitles him to distinction than his catalogue of medals, in the museum of Ercole II., or than his easy and elegant verses. There was also Gregorio Giraldi, an able Greek scholar, and remarkable by reverses which often caused him to declare that "he had had to combat three powerful enemies—fortune, nature, and the injustice of men,"—who now, rescued from poverty by the liberality of his fellow-citizens, reposed in peace under the protection of Renée, and as secretary to Ercole II. To these may be added the learned physician Manardo, author of works, both in medicine and poetry, which brought their writer into local repute.

On the 16th of December, and whilst Ercole was still

absent, the birth of another daughter to the duke and duchess is recorded by the chroniclers of the House of Este, and this princess, baptized Lucrezia, became in after years the wife of the Duke of Urbino.

All that is known of Renée's married life hitherto has exhibited no shadow of trial upon its easy course, but from henceforth the picture is reversed; the clouds begin to darken the former scenes of prosperity. It has been already noticed that on the 19th of September, 1535, Duke Ercole set out to Rome, in the hope of effecting in person a speedy settlement of the long-disputed question of the investiture of the Duchy of Ferrara. Having arrived on the 9th of October, he made his public entry some days afterwards into the Papal City. Seven cardinals were promptly appointed to treat with the duke, but the former difficulties again presented themselves. The Roman court was not content with the bargain secured to it by the terms of Charles V.'s "Laudo," and proposed a modification of them which would have been wholly subversive of the imperial settlement, and entirely to the duke's disadvantage. Bitterly dissatisfied, Ercole, hearing of the emperor's arrival at Naples on his return from Africa, went thither on the 9th of December to do homage for the Duchy of Modena, and returned from thence with a renewal of the investiture of that portion of his dominions on the 17th day of the same month. On the 15th of January, 1536, he returned to Ferrara. The result of his conference with the emperor at Naples

was immediately seen in the renunciation of the interests of France in favour of those of the empire in Italy. Grievous as this must have been to the spirit of his duchess, she was doomed to a more painful, because personal, inconvenience. Ambition has no heart: policy ignores tenderness. Ercole lost not a day after his return to Ferrara in dismissing the friend of his wife's earliest childhood, the noble-minded Madame de Soubise, together with the rest of her affectionate compatriots, whose places he supplied with Italians only, which procedure must have been a painful earnest of future discomfort to the poor princess.

The witty Rabelais, writing from Italy to the Bishop of Maillezais, in 1536, alludes in piquant phrase to these transactions, in letters, portions of which are here subjoined.*

"My Lord,—The Duke of Ferrara, who went to the emperor at Naples, return'd hither this morning. I know not yet how he has determined matters relating to the investiture and homage of his lands; but I understand he is come back not well satisfy'd with the emperor. I fear he will be forced to empty his coffers of those crowns his father left him, and that the Pope and emperor will fleece him at pleasure: considering also that it was far above six months before

* Rabelais' Letters. See Ozell's Translation of the Works of Francis Rabelais, M.D. 5 vols., London, 1737. The extracts are taken from letters printed in the fifth volume.

he refus'd to espouse the king's interest, notwithstanding all the emperor's remonstrances and threats. My Lord Bishop of Limoges, who was the king's ambassador at Ferrara, seeing that the said duke, without acquainting him with his design, had gone over to the emperor, is return'd to France. 'Tis feared that my Lady Renée will suffer no little vexation by it: the duke having removed Madame de Soubise, her governess, and ordered her to be served by Italians, which don't look well.". . . p. 249.

Again, in another letter to the same, p. 262:—

"My Lord,— I writ to you that the Duke of Ferrara is returned from Naples, and retir'd to Ferrara. . . . . He could not agree with the Pope, because he demanded an excessive sum of money for the investiture of his lands. Notwithstanding he had abated 50,000 crowns for the love of the said Lady (Renée), and this by the solicitations of my Lords the Cardinals du Bellay and Mascon, still to increase the conjugal affection of the said duke towards her. This was the occasion of Lyon Jamet's coming to this town, and they only differ'd for 15,000 crowns; but they could not agree, because the Pope would have him acknowledge that he held and possessed all his lands entirely in fee of the Apostolical See, which the other would not. For he would acknowledge no more than his deceased father had acknowledged, and what the emperor had adjudged at Bolonia by a decree in the time of the deceased Pope Clement." . . .

Marôt, who had fled to the court of Renée for shelter from persecution in his beloved France, had no desire to encounter perils of a similar kind in Italy. He soon perceived that the Duke of Ferrara regarded him with "mauvais œil," and he was far too selfish to incur any personal risk by continuing in the service of his kind patroness. He delayed not, therefore, to leave Ferrara. It is stated that the duchess interceded with Francis I. to obtain permission for Marôt's return to France, and that the petition was granted on condition "that he should return to the Catholic religion." But it is most improbable that Renée would have been party to such terms of pardon; though she might have become surety for more prudent conduct on Marôt's part in future. However this may be, it is certain that early in the year 1536, he withdrew from Ferrara to Venice. There, as from a place of safety, he gave vent to his feelings of indignation against the weak tyrant Ercole, and of compassion for the afflicted duchess, in a sonnet of rare pathos addressed to Renée herself, as also in the celebrated poetic epistle to Marguerite of Navarre, which describes the mournful condition of her royal relative, separated from her early friends by the stern decree of her Italian husband.

"SONNET TO RENÉE. 1536.

"Souvenant de tes graces divines,
Suis en douleur, princesse, en ton absence,
Et si languis quand suis en ta présence,
Voyant ce Lys au milieu des épines.
O la douceur des douceurs feminines!

O cœur sans fiel ! O race d'excellence !
O dur mari rempli de violence !
Qui s'endurcit par les choses benignes !
Si seras tu de la main soutenue
De l'Eternel comme chère tenue ;
Et les nuisants auront honte et reproche.
Courage, doncs, en l'air je voye la nue
Qui çà et là s'écarte et diminue
Pour faire place au beau temps qui approche."

To the Queen of Navarre, Marôt sounds his complaint in a still more stirring strain:—"pour lui faire un portrait des maux et des afflictions que Madame Renée ait à souffrir de la part du duc, son mari."

" Plaigne les morts qui plaindre les voudra,
Tant que vivrai mon cœur si résoudra
À plaindre ceux qui douleur assauldra
En cette vie.

* * * * * * * *

" Ha, Marguerite ! écoute la souffrance
Du noble cœur de Renée de France,
Puis comme sœur plus fort que d'esperance,
Console-la.

" Tu sais comment hors son pays alla,
Et que parens et amis laissa là,
Mais tu ne sais quel traitement elle a
En terre étrange.

" De cent couleurs en une heure elle change,
En ses repas percée d'angoisse mange,
Et en son vin larmes fait melange,
Tout par ennui.

" Ennui reçu du côté de celui
Qui être dut sa joie et son appui,
Ennui plus grief que s'il venoit d'autrui,
Et plus à craindre.

" Elle ne voit ceux à qui se veut plaindre,
Son œil rayant si loin ne peut atteindre,
Et puis les Monts, pour ce bien lui eteindre,
Sont entre deux.

" Peu d'amis a quiconque est loin d'eux
Le Roi ton frère et toi et les neveux
Et les Saints où elle fait ses voeux
À chacune heure.

" De France n'a nul grand qui la sequeure,
Et de petits qui sont en sa demeure
Son Mari veut sans qu'un seul y demeure
La reboulter.

* * * * * * * * *

" Mais ce fâcheux ingrat et pire encore
Voudrait reduire en petite signore
La fleur de lys tout le monde honore
De perfection.

" Hélas ! s'il fait tout de profession
D'honneur, de loy, de réputation,
Pourquoy le train de notre nation
Veut il défaire ?

" Faute d'amour l'eguillonne à ce faire
Et lui engendre un désir de déplaire
A celle-la qui met à lui complaire
Merveilleux soin.

* * * * * * * * *

" Ni la bonté de la noble Renée,
Ni la douceur qui avec elle est née,
Ni les vertus qui l'ont environnée
N'y ont pouvoir.

* * * * * * * * *

" O doncques ! Roi, son Cousin, frère et père,
Arrête court l'entreprise impropere
Et toi, sa sœur, en qui tout elle espère,
Metz-y la main.

Une parentage autre que germaine
Y doit mouvoir ton cœur doux et humaine ;
Si n'y pensez, mourra quelque demain
Sêche et ternie.
* * * * * * * * *

It would appear that Calvin still lingered awhile at the Court of Ferrara, and that, under his assumed name, he was even presented to the duke, without incurring immediate suspicion. But Italy was not a safe place for so renowned a "heretic;" and the officials of the Inquisition soon traced him to his place of concealment. We are told that they even succeeded in arresting him, before he could effect his escape from Ferrara, but that whilst conducting him as prisoner to Bologna, they were overtaken by a troup of armed men, secretly despatched (it was believed) by the Duchess Renée, who liberated the captive and set him forward in safety on his homeward way. As to his royal patroness, it is averred by some that she contrived to conceal her sympathy with the Reformed for some time longer. Other writers, however, of greater credibility, maintain that she suffered a sharp rebuke from her husband for complicity with those of the proscribed doctrine; and that she was compelled by him to resume the external practices of that religion which she had in her heart forsaken. It may have been so,—but, with Calvin's visit to Ferrara, the Duchess Renée was lost to the Church of Rome for ever. She temporised—but she fell not finally away from the truth which she then received.

CHAP. IV.

Dawn of the Reformation in Italy.—Writings of the Reformers.— Their Preachers. — Bernardo Ochino. — Antonio Bruccioli's Italian Translation of the Bible. — Dedication to Renée. — Vittoria Colonna. — Ochino proscribed as a Heretic. — Saved by Renée's Intervention. — Birth of Renée's youngest Child, Luigi. — Education of the Princess Anna. — Olympia Morata. — Her Genius, and Friendship with Anna d'Este. — Visit of Pope Paul III. to Ferrara. — Festivities consequent thereon. — Shadows of future Persecution. — The Court of Ferrara. — Its illustrious Men and Women. — Commencement of Calvin's Correspondence with Renée.

It would be a great error to conclude that all sympathy with the religious movement which then engaged the attention of every thinking mind in Europe, was in Italy confined to the Duchess Renée, and her French attendants and visitors. The most cursory reference to the history of the Reformation in the sixteenth century would immediately correct such a supposition, and discover to us a band of devoted Italians who not only watched with deep interest the progress of religious freedom in the more northern countries of Europe, but who longed to see their own land emancipated from the ignominious mental servitude by which, in common with the rest of Western Christendom, the see of Rome had so long enthralled it. And

there was, in fact, a period in the history of Italy when it seemed highly probable that the moral desert shadowed by the Vatican, would again "rejoice and blossom as the rose." Through separate openings, as it were, in the spiritual cloud-land, the light of Heavenly Truth had begun to beam on Germany, Switzerland, France, and England. There appeared to be no reason that the glowing summits of the Alps should not reflect the sacred radiance upon those fair regions which stretched southward below them. This, the hope of many an enlightened spirit, was favoured by not a few concurrent circumstances. An important step was gained, when some, even of the Roman Cardinalate, began to look with approval upon that doctrine of justification by faith, which had been revived by Luther with such signal success from the Pauline epistles, and which, with a just sense of its intrinsic and relative value, he was wont to indicate as the test of a standing or a falling church. Amongst the eminent persons who seemed disposed at least to accept so material a modification of their former creed, may be found the name of Reginald Pole, who afterwards acquired a melancholy notoriety in the days of the English queen Mary. Others, who on tolerably authentic evidence were held to be similarly affected, were the cardinals Morone, Gasparo Contarini, and Federigo Fregoso. Not that these princes of the Roman Church ever contemplated the possibility of secession from the communion which had trained, nourished, and exalted them, but they had grace or

sense enough at one period of their lives, to perceive that if their church would substantiate her claim to be the Church Universal, she must submit to some degree of reformation. Upon the minds of humbler members of the Church of Rome this conviction had also forced itself, from the near views of the scandals of the papacy with which, as Italians, they had been outraged. The ambition of one pope after another had filled Italy with strifes in which her blood and treasure had been squandered, and her liberties seriously compromised. The ecclesiastical power came into collision with the civil powers of Europe, and at length St. Peter's throne was shaken. The celebrated motto of Louis XII. of France, "Perdam Babylonis Nomen,"* appeared to be on the point of realisation in fact, when Rome was given to pillage—the pope imprisoned, and even detained in captivity by him whose devotion to the cause of "Catholicism" was afterwards expressed less by words than by deeds. Nor were direct means wanting to effect the desired spiritual revolution. The writings of the German Reformers were largely imported into Italy, where they had a wide circulation and were read with grateful eagerness. And when these books had accomplished their mission, those who had derived benefit from their perusal hastened to supply their fellow-countrymen with scriptural instruction by the labours of their own pens. Of these writings the most remarkable was the treatise of Aonio

* Mlle. Vauvilliers' Histoire de Jeanne D'Albret, t. i. pp. 21, 22. (Note to Introduction.)

Paleario, on The Benefit of Christ's Death. The popularity of this book was attested by the sale of forty-thousand copies in the course of six years; it was moreover translated into French, Spanish, and English. These silent messengers, secretly circulating, had been however preceded by voices from the pulpits of Italy, proclaiming the doctrine of the Reformation in the ears of some who "heard the word with joy," until they began to doubt whereunto this would grow. The most eminent of these preachers were Bernardo Ochino, a Capuchin, and Pietro Martire Vermigli, an Augustinian Friar. The former, a man of venerable aspect, of great original powers, and of astonishing eloquence, "was admired and followed equally by the learned and illiterate, by the great and vulgar*." When he preached in the cathedral church of Modena in the year 1540, "there was scarcely room to stand there," and no wonder. "That man could make the stones weep," was the emphatic remark of the Emperor Charles V., who used, when in Italy, to be one of Ochino's hearers. He was elected general of his Order in 1538, and was unanimously re-elected to the same high office in 1541. The learning in which Ochino was deficient, with all his eloquence, was amply supplied by Pietro Martire Vermigli. This eminent reformer†, in conjunction with Giovanni Mollio, of the Minorite order of Friars, delivered a course of lectures at Naples on

* McCrie's History of the Reformation in Italy, p. 139.

† Incorporated into the University of Oxford in 1547.

the Epistles of St. Paul, which was eagerly attended by bishops, monks, and nobles. In fine, the Holy Bible, being rendered into the language of Italy in three versions, the most celebrated of which was that of Antonio Bruccioli, became there, as everywhere, and at all times, "its own witness," the impartial study of its contents convincing every candid mind of the discrepancy between Romanism and apostolic Christianity, and issuing, generally, in a surer knowledge and more steadfast love of the truth.

The sympathy of the Duchess Renée with "the new opinions" was a well-known fact, and the importance of such a convert was, of course, duly appreciated. Though she was compelled to refrain from an unreserved expression of her sentiments on the subject that lay so near her heart*, yet was she regarded as a patroness by those who openly professed Reformation doctrine, and were thereby exposed to persecution. They were aware that she looked with favour on every effort for the promotion of their holy cause in the dominions of her husband, and elsewhere in Italy. Thus Bruccioli, who dedicated the first volume of "The Holy Books of the Old Testament translated from the Hebrew Verity into the Italian tongue," Venice 1540†, "to the most illustrious Lady Renée of France, Duchess of Ferrara," plainly avows his conviction of the acceptability to her of his

* See chapter iii.

† A copy of this translation is preserved in the Bodleian Library.

completed undertaking, for he says: "Having most, serene duchess, by the help of the Lord, brought to a conclusion the explanation of all the Holy Books of the Old Scripture, desiring to deposit them with some pious and very Christian soul, which loves and prizes such doctrine, and, not knowing to whom holy and divine things can better be committed, I have been impelled to dedicate this first and larger part of them to your Excellence, whom I [illegible] in my present letter, eulogise at length, as is the usual practice of those who dedicate their books to a great lord, knowing how thoroughly, by piety, humility, goodness, and Christian charity, you evince yourself to be a worthy disciple and servant of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour, and by magnanimity, liberality, and greatness of soul, worthy daughter of King Louis, one of the greatest of the great." He passes at once to vindicate the course he had pursued in rendering the Scriptures into the vernacular tongue, exposing the error of those "foolish wise men of the world," who pretend that the mysteries of the Christian religion ought to be as much excluded from the common gaze as were those of the false religions of Heathenism, or Mahometanism, whereas, on the contrary, it is the fact that "truth of itself always increases in credit the more it is known," and "the more Scripture is searched to discover what it is the more one sees resplendent in it that living sun which gives light to man, and life by which he ever lives happy." He challenges the opposers of the publication of the Bible to "produce,

if they can, the smallest authority from the Scripture which makes for them," and assures the duchess that he writes "as one who grieves in sympathy with your pious and holy Christian mind over these enemies of the Word of God." He declares, however, that he means not to load her with human praise, and thus concludes. "These (results of) my very long toil, I consign to you, lady, as to a precious treasury given to the world by God, for the preservation of the like very rich jewels—and present of them to you for the benefit of all those Christians who seek the truth of the Divine Scriptures, and not the blindness of human writings."

Three years before the dedication of Antonio Bruccioli's Italian Bible to the Duchess Renée, Bernardo Ochino visited Ferrara under the auspices of his noble patroness, Vittoria Colonna, widow of the celebrated Ferdinand Davalos, Marquis of Pescara. This lady, so conspicuous by her virtues and talents, and for her early bias towards the doctrines of the Neapolitan Reformers, by whom "she was regarded as one of their most distinguished disciples," arrived at Ferrara on the 8th of April, 1537. Between herself and the Duchess Renée there were many topics which presented a common ground of agreeable intercourse. Both were capable of a high degree of intellectual enjoyment; both, amidst everything calculated to divert their minds from serious thought, had been enabled to "set their affection on things above," and both, at one period, seemed equally earnest in their support of the champions of reviving

truth. The esteem in which Renée held the Marchioness of Pescara may be inferred from the fact of her being chosen to be one of the sponsors of the infant Leonora d'Este, the youngest daughter of the Duke and Duchess of Ferrara, born on the 19th June of that year. No doubt Renée hoped much for her child from the prayers of one whose reputation for devotion was so great, and who was not yet regarded with suspicion on account of her theological predilections — for Ochino still wore the cowl of his order, and the Marchioness's veneration for him was shared, even a year later, by Cardinal Bembo, as it already was by all who had come within hearing of his eloquent orations. Vittoria Colonna, however, died within the pale of the Church of Rome, and Ochino, who forsook its distinctive errors, "abode not in the truth" of Scripture. He passed *into* the light, only to pass *out* of it into the darkness of Socinianism on the other side. And the names of both remain "to point a moral" in the pages of Church History. But no prevision of Ochino's ultimate defection dimmed the lustre of his name at the time of which we are now speaking. He was, therefore, received at Ferrara with the honour which everywhere waited on him. Influenced by the persuasion of the Marchioness of Pescara, Duke Ercole established Ochino and his companions in an oratory in the Borgo della Misericordia, on the Po, and during the advent season, of 1537, Ochino preached in the Cathedral, no doubt to the entire satisfaction of Renée, whose enlightened mind must have at once discerned the

Reformer in the Capuchin, and rejoiced in the truth from whatever quarter the sound of it reached her ears. In the summer of 1542, Ochino was again at Ferrara, but as a fugitive and a denounced "heretic;" "his death resolved on at Rome," where no mercy for such offenders was ever found. But, "being assisted in his flight by the Duchess Renée, he escaped the hands of the armed men, who had been despatched to apprehend him, and reached Geneva in safety."* This was not the first time that Renée's good offices had rescued the hunted victim of intolerance from the pursuit of relentless adversaries. A greater man than Ochino had already owed his life to her friendly intervention.

The youthful family of Ercole II. and Renée of France was rendered complete by the birth of their youngest child, a son, on Christmas Day, 1538. The duke received tidings of the approaching event as he was attending Vespers in the Cathedral, and he hastened back to the palace, where he found that his wife had again become a mother, and "che ella stava assai bene."† "And because he saw that there was no more need of his presence," says the old chronicle‡, "he returned to the cathedral, to sing the remainder of Vespers, and to return thanks to God for the received infant." The baptism was performed on St. George's

* McCrie, pp. 220, 221.

† "That she was doing well."

‡ Filippo Roddi's Annali della sua patria. (MS. British Museum Library.)

Day, April 24th, 1539, in the Cathedral, by the Bishop Ghillino, with much pomp. Galeazzo Gonzaga and Marco Pio were amongst the guests who witnessed the ceremony, standing beneath a canopy of gold brocade which was upheld by the chief nobles of Ferrara. The royal babe, borne in the arms of the Cardinal di Monte of Romagna, in the name of the Pope, to the baptismal font, received the name of Luigi, after his maternal grandfather, King Louis XII., whom he certainly resembled in after years, in the excellence of his disposition; being more honourable for his great virtues than for the Cardinal's purple which he was destined to wear.

The Italian *literati* have justly praised the Duchess Renée for the zeal with which she directed the minds of her children in those studies which she had pursued with enthusiasm in her own early youth, and which were still the solace of her existence in the land of her exile. Her eldest daughter, the princess Anna, at this time in her eighth year, already rewarded the eminent scholars to whose care her education had been confided, by attainments under their instruction which promised still greater proficiency in mature years.* But hitherto Anna's studies had not been stimulated by the loving rivalry of either sister or friend; and companionship is generally indispensable to the healthy growth of a child's mind. Therefore the duchess her mother, remembering doubtless her cheerful progress in her own youthful

* Vie d'Olympia Morata, par Jules Bonnet, p. 22.

tasks, shared with the beloved Anne de Parthenai, anxiously sought to supply that which was lacking; and in the choice of a companion for the princess Anne, found her most sanguine wishes realised in Olympia Fulvia Morata.

This bright genius, who adorned an age that yet wanted not ornaments — this true woman, whose history may be pondered in silent compassion, yet in profound admiration — this saint so tried in life, so blessed in death, has formed a favourite subject for the pen of the biographer. She was five years older than the young princess whose studies she lightened, and whose recreations she shared. But notwithstanding the difference of age, a friendship soon sprung up between them, with the harmony of which there is no ground for supposing that any intellectual jealousies ever interfered. Olympia was daughter to Fulvio Peregrino Morata, whose name was one of mark in the celebrated universities of Northern Italy, and she had enjoyed from her childhood the rarest advantages of education in her refined though humble home. The learning of her father, the piety of her mother, the society of the gifted friends of both, and the affectionate interest which she awakened in all around her, left "the marvellous child" nothing to wish for under the parental roof, except leisure to pursue the taste for study with which these favourable circumstances had naturally imbued her. To cultivate her mental powers to their full extent seemed impossible as long as the narrow means of her family required the

young Olympia to share with her mother the distasteful labours of the household*, and we can easily imagine the reluctance with which the book was laid aside for the spinning-wheel with perhaps the indignant murmur, — "My time for this — and this?"

The Estense Palace was a very temple of the Muses, and it was a welcome refuge to Olympia from the uncongenial occupations which had retarded her progress in knowledge hitherto. The kind-hearted duchess filled a mother's place to the child whom she had almost adopted as her own. From her father, Olympia was not separated. Fulvio retained the privilege of instructing his daughter even in the ducal palace†, and there, in the society of Anna d'Este, she advanced rapidly in classical learning; whilst her native talents of improvisation, composition and recitation were likewise developed. It followed, as a matter of course, that one so richly endowed by nature and education became an object of great attraction to the learned who thronged the court of Ferrara, and that they did not conceal their admiration. Olympia's example failed not to supply the required excitement to the princess Anna, who followed in her friend's steps — though it may be, far behind.‡ A dangerous illness interrupted the young enthusiast's enjoyments for a time, and banished her to the quiet of her own home, from whence she returned, as soon as she recovered, to

* Vie d'Olympia Morata, pp. 21, 23.
† Ibid, pp. 23, 24.
‡ Vie d'Olympia Morata, p. 29.

the palace, amidst the exultation of its inmates, and to those scenes of intellectual display which still enthralled her heart with their fascinations. For as yet Olympia knew not that the highest aspirations of an immortal being are spiritual rather than intellectual. To her mind the bright lights of classic literature had not yet "paled their ineffectual fires" before the true light of an assured Christian faith. In her ardent pursuit of studies purely secular, she had hitherto neglected that knowledge which "it is not good for the soul to be without." She was applauded as "the pride of Ferrara," and was not yet alive to the superior excellence of "the honour which cometh from God only."

Thus passed a few years of pleasure; and whilst Olympia was winning "deceitful favour" at court, the younger children of the ducal house, under their mother's careful instruction, gave proofs of having inherited those tastes for the *belles-lettres* which had already distinguished the family of Este amongst the patrons of restored learning in Italy. Of this an interesting illustration is preserved by the Ferrarese chronicles, who proudly relate the details of the brilliant reception given to Pope Paul III., when, at the urgent instance of Duke Ercole, he was induced to turn aside on his road from Reggio to Bologna, in 1543, to visit their city. "He embarked at Brescello," says Muratori*, "in a large bucentoro all adorned with gold, sent

* Antichità Estensi. Parte II. c. xii.

thither by the duke, with very many other barques. Two miles below Bondeno, the duke met him with sixty carriages (which were not so common then as now), and from thence conducted him to the most beautiful Belvedere palace, where, with part of his suite the pontiff passed the night, and dined the following day within sight of the city. Now this place was an island, shaped like a triangle, in the midst of the Po, which then ran close to Ferrara, girdled round with walls having battlements skilfully deposed, and beautifully painted. On first entering you behold a verdant meadow surrounded with little box-trees, a fountain being in the midst from which many jets threw upwards a vast quantity of water, which fell into a large basin of the finest marble. The most superb palace appeared in the distance; its numerous galleries, chambers, halls, and staircases all arranged with exquisite skill of architecture. Near thereunto stood the church covered with lead, enriched with paintings by Rossi and Dossi, famous painters of those times. Then there were flower gardens and kitchen gardens, umbrageous woods, thick copses, pleasant walks, and flights of steps in various places, whereby you might descend to bathe in the Po; and there were trees,—some fruit-bearing, others pleasant to the eyes, and a prodigious number of birds and animals both domestic and foreign, no longer to be seen in Italy, either for the amusement of the sight or for hunting. In short, that place was so delightful that Agostino Stenco in lib. I. of his Cos-

mopeia, compares it to a terrestial paradise—all the work of the fine genius of Alfonso I., as we have previously said." The day after his arrival at this magnificent retreat, the pontiff, with his suite of three thousand, including eighteen cardinals and forty bishops, besides several foreign ambassadors, together with the court of the duke and the nobility of the state, made his public entry into Ferrara, passing over the bridge of St. Giorgio, "which was ornamented and overhung with rich draperies, after the fashion of a hall,—and there, or at the gate of the city, Prince Alfonso, the duke's eldest son, attended by a company of eighty noble youths" (scholars of the University for the most part*) "all dressed alike, wearing stockings of rose-coloured cremisine, with *giupponi* of light silk stuff of the same colour, and with coats of similiar velvet woven with golden threads, presented the pope with the keys of the city in a gold basin, and after reciting a brief oration kissed the feet of the pontiff,—who, in reply, charged him to keep those keys, saying, that they were in good hands, and then giving the prince his benediction, he kissed his forehead."

Then commenced the procession, and through streets "superbly adorned" with tapestries, pictures and hangings of various colours, the brilliant pageant moved along. Seated on high under a lofty canopy, and preceded by the duke on foot (until graciously bidden by

* Frizzi, t. iv. cap. v. p. 321.

the sovereign pontiff to mount on horseback), Paul III. had leisure to contemplate the fair city which so many of his predecessors had coveted, and which one of his successors, at no very remote period, was destined successfully to grasp. At the Cathedral, which was decorated in a costly manner for such a grand occasion, the procession terminated, and the pontiff passed to the Estense Palace, where no less than a hundred and forty apartments had been prepared for him and his suite, with the usual lavish extravagance of upholstery — the too frequent description of which is only wearisome. There was another procession the ensuing day. The Duchess Renée, attended by seventy-two ladies dressed in black with gold embroidery, all on their horses, followed by twenty-two carriages also filled with "Signore," and by the duke and others on horseback, made a progress through the city. The third day, however, exceeded all previous days in its varied splendours, for it was St. George's day, and he was the patron saint of Ferrara. The pope first celebrated Pontifical Mass in the cathedral, and then presented the duke with the golden rose, and with the sword and hat which he had blessed. Ercole "humbly" acknowledged these favours, and kissed the feet of Paul III., who concluded these ceremonies by kissing his vassal on both cheeks*, by way of requiting that abject homage. The duchess was present on this occasion, a circumstance particularly recorded in the

* Antichità Estensi, Parte II. c. xii.

"Annali" of Filippo Roddi;—"And thither went also Madama la Duchessa, with her ladies, who sat upon a stage prepared for them." For the papal delectation after dinner, there was a tournament of sixteen nobles richly accoutred, which lasted two hours, and was witnessed by "an innumerable crowd of people," as well as by the court and the distinguished guests in whose honour it took place. "Ferrara for such spectacles was one of the most renowned cities of Italy." Nor did the fêtes of the day end thus. In the evening the literary tastes of Pope Paul were gratified by the performance of the Latin comedy of the "Adelphi" of Terence: its various characters being sustained with great vivacity by the children of the duke and duchess, all of whom are said to have taken a part in its recitation, although the youngest of the actors, the Prince Luigi, was then barely four years and a half old!* Next day the Pope returned to Bologna, presenting, at his departure, the Duchess Renée with a costly diamond, and with a jewel composed of diamonds in the form of a flower,— bestowing also rich gifts on the ducal children. Those to whom the concessions which expediency demands are the deepest of all humiliations, can best imagine the feelings of the duchess in submitting to be decorated by the hand that not a month before had signed the bull which established the Inquisition in Italy! Between the duke and the

* The Princess Anna personated a youth in love; Lucrezia recited the prologue; Leonora appeared as a young girl; the Prince Alfonso as a youth; Luigi, a slave. See Antichità Estensi.

pope, however, there can be no doubt that the closest sympathy in ecclesiastical matters subsisted. Paul III. knew how to work upon the weak mind of Ercole II., and so to prepare it for proceeding to the severest ulterior measures, if need should be, against his reformed subjects. Two years later, in 1545, "his holiness addressed a brief to the ecclesiastical authorities of Ferrara, requiring them to institute a strict investigation into the conduct of persons of every rank and order, who were suspected of entertaining erroneous sentiments, and after having taken the depositions, applied the torture, and brought the trial as far as the definitive sentence, to transmit the whole process to Rome for judgment."* It was not however, till five years after the promulgation of this rescript, that the flames of persecution were suffered to devour at Ferrara the body of the protomartyr of the Italian Reformation,—"Thanks to the gracious intervention of the duchess and to the enlightened protection which she extended over the learned."†

The lustre of Renée's Court had not yet begun to decline. Bartolomeo Ricci (Prince Alfonso's preceptor), Chilian and Jean Sinapi, who instructed the princesses in Greek, Pier Angelo Manzolli, principal physician to Duke Ercole, and the author of the "Zodiacus Vitæ," reproving the manners of the clergy, in terms which caused that work to be placed in the Index of Prohibited Books, and brought down on the writer (happily not

* McCrie's History of the Reformation in Italy, p. 247.

† Vie d'Olympia Morata, p. 43.

until after his death) the sentence of heresy, Marc Antonio Flaminio, the friend of Valdez, who was more of a Protestant than he chose to acknowledge, and Celio Secundo Curione; all these formed a bright constellation of genius, wit, and excellence, and they were all favoured by the Duchess of Ferrara. It was Curio to whom the father of Olympia Morata was indebted for the teaching which first opened his eyes to the truth, and then led him to exclaim, in a letter of fervent gratitude: — "Thy voice hath found a way to my heart! The light which shone in thy discourse has lighted me to salvation! I see my darkness, and now I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." *

Amongst "the devout and honourable women" whom Renée numbered amongst her friends, and whose religious sympathies were akin to her own, must be reckoned Lavinia della Rovere, wife of Paolo Orsini, and Donna Maddelina, and Donna Cherubina, of the Orsini family. Lavinia was not merely well-disposed towards the Reformation; she may justly be ranked amongst those who dared, in humble faith, to cast in their lot with its despised adherents. She "joined to the noblest qualities of the heart a mind of strong intelligence already trained in literary and philosophical studies, the souvenirs of which agreeably enriched her conversation." † Not only for mental acquirements but for spiritual excellence was Lavinia della Rovere distinguished. "I know not," says

* Vie d'Olympia Morata, p. 51.

† Ibid. p. 56.

Olympia Morata, of her tried friend, "a more learned, or, what is still higher praise, a more pious woman in Italy." At the court of Rome she not only contrived to keep herself pure from the idolatries of that Church, to which almost all her relatives belonged, but also to employ "the influence of her father-in-law (the celebrated Camillo Orsini), which was great with the pope and the Catholic princes, in behalf of the Protestants who fell into the hands of the Inquisition."* She never compromised the faith which she held, but held it fast, however importuned to desert it, or threatened for her constancy in cleaving to it. She stood by the calumniated and forsaken. She was a mother to the orphan, and would leave the splendours of the Estense Palace to visit the martyrs in the dungeons of Ferrara. Well does the historian†, when recounting the good deeds which marked her Christian course, recal, in reference to Lavinia della Rovere, that "promise of consolation," "a cup of cold water, given in the name of Christ, shall in no wise lose its reward."

There was yet another, whose name must not be forgotten—a lady of the court who had listened to Calvin's preaching in the private apartments of the duchess,—and who had not heard his eloquent words in vain. This was Francesca Bucyronia, who joined her fate with that of Jean Sinapi, and ultimately accompanied her husband with willing steps, to worship

* McCrie's Reformation in Italy, p. 189.

† Ibid. pp. 189, 190.

God, "after the way called heresy," in his free fatherland. She always regarded Calvin as her spiritual father, and the reformer regularly corresponded with her. It is very probable that, through this convenient and unsuspected channel, commenced that epistolary intercourse between the duchess and Calvin which, having been prolonged through a period of more than twenty years, terminated only on the death bed of that exraordinary man.*

* Vie d'Olympia Morata, pp. 45, 46.

CHAP. V.

Calvin's Epistle to Renée. — Her complicity in the Conspiracy of Fieschi at Genoa. — Death of Francis I. — Marriage of Anna d'Este with François de Guise. — Disgrace of Olympia Morata. — Faventino Fannio. — Order of the Jesuits at Ferrara. — Henry II. of France sends the Inquisitor Oriz to Ferrara to convert Renée. — Failure of his Mission. — Renée sent to the Palazzo di Consandolo. — Her attempts to "proselytize." — Imprisonment of Renée in the Castle of Ferrara. — Separation from her children. — She sends for the Jesuit Pelletario. — Her reconciliation to the Church of Rome and to her husband Ercole II. — Her return to the Palazzo di Francesco.

ONE of the earliest epistles of Calvin to the Duchess of Ferrara—a manuscript which has been referred to the date of October 1541—contains "instructions on the subject of the mass, and on the necessity of avoiding scandal." A translation of it may be read in "The Letters of John Calvin," compiled by Dr. Jules Bonnet and recently published.* It is a detailed exhortation to Renée upon a point of great importance, and it is very plain and very faithful. Highly as the reformer estimates her zeal, "which receives the truth in love and with all benign affection," he does not conceal his conviction that she yet needed instruction in the right way, and that she had been misled by one from whom she ought to have learned better things. On the last

* Vol. i. pp. 271—282.

leaf of the original document are the following words, written in another hand:—

"Against a certain almoner, Master François, who made (Madame) go to mass, and set her against those who would not go, as against scandalous persons. It treats very fully about things lawful and not lawful, and how scandals must be avoided."

Portions of this remarkable letter are good counsels for all time. Besides which, its fearless tone testifies the uprightness of Calvin, as much as to his solicitude for his former pupil. That which is wrong is not to be done, though thereby many may be offended. Better that some should take offence, than that the soul of the weak brother should perish for whom Christ died. Those in high places should avoid even more than others that fatal course of compromise in which those below them are so lamentably prone to follow them. A few extracts from the letter itself however, will show its character better than any mere digest. Thus he commences:—

"Madame,—I humbly beseech you that you would take in good part my boldness in writing these present, deeming that should you find therein a too great plainness, it proceeds not so much from rashness, or from overweening self-conceit, as from pure and true affection for your service in our Lord. For albeit that I do acknowledge myself a very unprofitable servant of the Church, it hath, notwithstanding, been found expedient to employ me in that station, according to the grace which the Lord has imparted to me; and it has even

occurred to me that there was a need-be for my doing so, if I wished to acquit myself of my duty, not merely because I feel myself obliged, in regard to you, to seek, in so far as is possible for me, and in the way of duty, your welfare and advantage, howbeit that such motive is alone sufficient to stir me up to action, but rather that, considering the state and preeminence in which the Lord has set you, it seems to us all, that we whom the Lord by His goodness has called to be ministers of His Holy Word, ought to keep in special remembrance, to apply ourselves to the bestowal of some pains for you, and the more so because, more than most princely persons, you are able to promote and advance the Kingdom of Christ. I have, besides, observed in you such fear of God, and such disposed faithfulness of obedience, that independently of the high rank which He has vouchsafed you among men, I do value the graces which He hath put upon you, even to such a degree, that I would think myself accursed should I have omitted the occasions of any profitable service, in so far as they might be presented to me. This is certainly what I can say without any feigning or flattery, but in sincerity of heart, and speaking as in His presence who knows all our secret thoughts.

"Madame, by other worthy persons who have passed through here at different times, I have been given to understand how Master François, whom you have appointed preacher to your household, after having acquitted himself well in preaching, as well at least as could be expected of him, had persuaded you that it

would not be a bad thing, after having heard mass, to hold some sort of communion, which must be somehow the Supper of our Lord: and that this proceeding, which was not approved of by one of your ladies, who, according to the knowledge which she had received of God, did not wish against her conscience to meddle with what she considered to be wrong in itself, has been the occasion, on the representation of the said Master François, to have some way or other turned away from her the good-will which you have been wont to bear her; so that matters have reached such a height, that you have intimated that all those who do as she does, ought not to be supported, inasmuch as by their importunity, they give birth to scandals to no purpose among the faithful. Wherefore, concluding that a thing of so much importance must not be concealed, seeing that you had been given to understand that matters were otherwise than they are, according as it has pleased the Lord to reveal Himself to me in Scripture, I have thought it right to communicate to you what the Lord has given me of understanding in that matter. But while I have been in some doubt and hesitation about doing so, I have been given to understand, on the part of Madame de Pons, that you wished very much to be more fully instructed, the more so that, besides the many difficulties which you see, on the other hand, it is very difficult to come to a satisfactory solution of them. This message has all the more confirmed me in my purpose to venture to essay the giving you a faithful exposition, so far as I know,

in order that afterwards you may judge for yourself, and in so far as you shall have fully understood God's truth, that you may follow in all obedience, seeing that your zeal is not of the kind that rebels against it, but receives the truth in love and with all benign affection; yet all this notwithstanding, Madame, before that I begin, I beseech you not to take up any suspicion of me, as though I did this, having been put up to it by some persons of your household, or to favour any one in particular; for I can assure you, before God, that I do so without having been requested by any one, and only on the advertisement, as I have already assured you, of persons passing through this way, who never thought that I could have the means of any direct communication. On the other hand, I would rather desire to be cast into the lowest depths of the abyss, than to twist about or wrest the truth of God, to make it suit the hatred or to procure the favour of any creature whatsoever. But what makes me speak out is, that I cannot bear that the Word of God should be thus to you concealed, perverted, depraved, and corrupted, in such essential things, by those in whom you have some confidence, to whom you have given authority." . . . . . .

Calvin then speaks his mind very distinctly "touching Master François," the duchess's "preacher." From the complete exposure which we have before us of the character of that unhappy man we gain some further insight into the disadvantages under which Renée laboured in the pursuit of the knowledge which makes wise unto

salvation. Her instructor was "a wolf in sheep's clothing:" one who with feigned words made merchandise of her desire for spiritual edification in the Divine Word; one who sought the honour that cometh from men, and who was ready either to declare the truth or to conceal it, for filthy lucre's sake. What wonder was it that, with such a teacher, the duchess should have been misled?

Having denounced the false professor in no measured terms, but, as he assures Renée, "without either envy or hatred towards him," Calvin thus proceeds:

"Now, Madame, having done with this personage, I come to the present matter. He gives you to understand that the mass is neither so wicked nor abominable but that it is allowable to say it, and to the faithful to hear it, so that those who make this a matter of conscience are the disturbers of the Church, stirring up scandals among the weak, whom we are commanded to strengthen. As regards the first point, I doubt whether I ought to stop to argue it, inasmuch as I reckon that you are so fully resolved already that the mass is a sacrilege the most execrable that one can imagine, that I fear to make myself appear ridiculous to you in taking the pains to prove to you a thing about which you can be nowise in doubt. And, besides, the small compass of a letter cannot comprise that which is enough to fill a large book, yet, notwithstanding I will touch briefly upon it, and as it were, in a cursory way, in order that you may not have any doubt. In so far as the mass is

a sacrifice, appointed by men for the redemption and salvation of the living and the dead, as their canon bears, it is an unbearable blasphemy by which the passion of Jesus Christ is quite overthrown and set aside, as if it were of no effect whatever. For that we say, the faithful have been purchased by the blood of Jesus, have obtained thereby the remission of their sins, righteousness, and the hope of eternal life, that belief must imply so far that the blessed Saviour, in offering up Himself to the Father, and presenting himself to be sacrificed, has offered Himself an eternal sacrifice by which our iniquities have been purged and cleansed, ourselves received into the grace of the Father and made partakers of the heavenly inheritance, as the Apostle declares very fully in the Epistle to the Hebrews. If, then, the death of Jesus be not acknowledged as the only sacrifice which has been once made for all, in order that it might have an eternal efficacy, what more remains except that it be effaced entirely, as being altogether ineffectual? I know well, that these liars, to cover their abomination, say, that they make the same sacrifice which Jesus has made; but from that statement there arise several blasphemies. For that sacrifice could be made by no one except by Himself. And the Apostle says, (Heb. ix. 25, 26) that if He is now sacrificed, it follows that He must suffer still. Therefore, you can see that one of two things must here take place, either to acknowedge the horrible blasphemy of the mass, and to detest it, or in approving it, to trample

under foot the cross of Jesus. How much it is contrary to the Supper of Christ, I leave you to consider with yourself, after that you have read in Scripture the words of institution. But the crowning desecration which they commit, is the idolatry which they perpetrate by adoring a creature instead of God, a thing which is altogether inexcusable. . . . . Should some one object that externals in religion are quite indifferent, that what is required is only that the heart within should be upright, to that our Lord answers, that He will be glorified in our body, which He has purchased with His blood, that He requires the confession of the mouth, and that all our prayers should be consecrated to His honour, without being any way contaminated or defiled by anything displeasing to Him. But because this would be too long to treat of here, as it ought to be, you can have recourse, for your more full information, to the treatise, where I hope that you will find reasons enough to satisfy you. The scandal still remains, which your almoner says troubles the consciences of the weak, when any one esteemed a believer holds the Mass in such horror that he would not in any way come in contact with it, that he neither wished to find it here nor to meet with it elsewhere. But he does not consider that, in reference to those things which are either commanded or forbidden of God, although it might offend the whole world, we must not go beyond His ordinances. That which is commanded us, to support and strengthen our weak brethren, by doing nothing

which may wound or offend them, refers to lesser things of no great consequence, which are of themselves indifferent and permitted of our Christian liberty, as the whole of Scripture bears. Besides, all those commands about not scandalising our neighbour tend to his edification in well-doing, as St. Paul points out in the 15th of the Romans. It follows, therefore, that we must not seek to please him in those things which do not tend to edification, but to destruction. . . . . Wherefore, Madame, I do beseech you not to permit that under the name of scandal any one should beguile you; for there is not a more pernicious scandal in this world than when our Christian brother, by our example, is entrapped in ruin, and driven forward into error. If we would avoid all scandal, we must cast Jesus Christ behind us, who is the stone of offence at which the most part of the world trips and stumbles. . . . . But since it is so, that Christ and His Evangel are a scandal to the evil disposed and malignant, we must expect, if we would follow Him, that they must always be a scandal to us. As for things which are free and indifferent, that is to say, which, according to our opportunity, we can either do or omit the doing of, we ought to suit ourselves to the convenience of our Christian brethren, in order that our liberty may be subject to choice: and even in doing so, regard must be had to support their infirmity as that they may be built up in God; for if, by our example, we lead them on and draw them in to do what they consider to be wrong, we are the means of their destruc-

tion. There are few, indeed, who have had experience of the truth of God, who do not know in some measure the iniquity of the Mass. When they well wot what sort of a thing it is, it is impossible that they should not desire to flee from it. While they scruple and are in doubt about it, whenever they perceive that we communicate, they follow our example, without caring for being further resolved in the matter. Here is the worst scandal that can happen them, seeing that their consciences are wrung unto death. If what I hear is true, that he would have you to believe that affair to be of so small importance that German Churches make no question at all about it, that is, that those of one persuasion let alone and permit the other to have the Mass, in this he inflicts a great damage and injury upon the Churches of God, in charging them with a practice which you will acknowledge to be false whenever you shall be pleased to make enquiry for yourself. For not only among all the Churches which have received the Evangel, but in the judgment of private individuals, this article is quite agreed on, that the abomination of the Mass must not continue. . . . . There is, in short, in our day, no man of any renown who is not quite agreed on that point.

"Well, then, Madame, seeing that it has pleased the Lord God, of His goodness and infinite compassion, to visit you with the knowledge of His name, and to enlighten you in the truth of His holy Evangel, acknowledge your calling to which He has called you. For

He has drawn us forth out of the depths of darkness, where we were detained captives, in order that we may follow uprightly the light of His Word, without declining either to the one side or to the other, and that we seek more and more to be instructed by Him, so that we may profit more abundantly in that holy wisdom wherein He has made some beginning among us; and, above all, to look to it carefully that we do not restrain His Spirit, as do those who shut their eyes and ears to the evident plain truth, being content to remain ignorant of that which the Lord would have them know and understand. It is not thus that He would have us to do out of mere dread that the Lord will punish such contempt and ingratitude; but rather we ought to study to profit continually in the school of this good Master, until we shall have attained perfection in His doctrine, which will be when we are free from this down weighing and earthly coil of the flesh, praying with good David that he would instruct us in the doing of His will. Certes, if we go forward advancing therein with zealous affection, He will so guide us that He will not let us go astray out of the right path. And although there are still some remains of ignorance in us, He will vouchsafe a more full revelation, when there is need for it, seeing that He knows the right season better than do we. The main point is to understand how His holy doctrine ought to become fruitful, and so bring forth fruit in us, and that is when it so transforms us by the renewal of our heart and mind, that His radiant glory, which consists

in innocence, integrity, and holiness, relumes the soul within us. If it be not thus with us we take the Name of God in vain when we glorify ourselves by making our boast that we know the Evangel. I do not say this to admonish you to do what you do not do at present, but on purpose that the work of God, which is already begun in you, may be confirmed from day to day.

"But only, as I have already at the commencement, I beseech you to pardon my simplicity. Should it be your pleasure to have more full instruction in this argument, and especially how a Christian person ought to govern herself in regard to scandals, I will attempt, so far as the Lord shall enable me, to satisfy you. In the meantime, I send you an epistle* upon the subject, as you will see, if you think it worth your while to devote some hours to it at your leisure; and besides that, a little tract†, which I have put together lately, which, as I hope, by reason of its brevity, may serve as a help to consolation, inasmuch as it contains full enough doctrine." [That the Lord may have a care over you in this your infirmity, and that He would manifest in you the efficacy of His Spirit in such a way that you may be as much honoured in His household as He has elevated you in station and in dignity among men.‡ . . . . . .]

* Letter of Calvin to Louis Duchemin, intituled "De Fugiendis impiorum illicitis sacris, et puritate Christianæ religionis." Geneva, 1537, 8vo.

† De la Cène de Nostre Seigneur.

‡ The conclusion of this letter is wanting in the original French, and has been restored from the Latin translation inserted (Calvini Epistolæ et Responsæ, edit Amsterdam, p. 93).

These words of counsel sounded also a note of warning. It was needed. Whether from "the fear of man," or from a mistaken desire to give no unnecessary offence to the opponents of the reformed doctrines, Renée was "not walking uprightly according to the truth of the Gospel." And if such was her compromising conduct in a time of comparative tranquillity, where would be her steadfastness in the storm? To the inner life of religion a timid secrecy is as injurious as a boastful and noisy profession; but never yet was the confidence of simple-hearted integrity put to shame either before God or man.

Passing from the year 1541 to 1547, during which interval there is found nothing to chronicle concerning the Duchess of Ferrara; and turning from the religious aspect of her life to the political,—history reveals Renée to us as a conspirator in the plot directed against the authority of Andrea Doria in Genoa, in the last named year. French interests were mixed up with it, and that was temptation enough to engage the participation of the duchess in the attempt. Its disastrous issue may have taught her to abstain in future from interference in political affairs beyond her own province. The story, as Sismondi relates it*, is as follows: — The conspiracy originated with Giovanni Luigi di Fieschi, Count of Lavagna and Signor of Pontremoli, in concert

* Histoire des Français, t. xvii. pp. 324—326.

with the French Government, the Duchess Renée, an Pier Luigi Farnese, Duke of Parma and Placenzia. Fieschi was perhaps the chief amongst the Genoese nobility in virtue of his important possessions and numerous vassals. His house had always been rival to that of Doria, and almost always devoted to France. His acknowledged bravery and commanding presence were however somewhat counterbalanced by his youth and his love of pleasure, so that neither Andrea Doria, then eighty years of age, nor his nephew and intended successor, Giannettino, regarded him with much apprehension. Hating each other in their hearts, the rivals nevertheless maintained the external forms of mutual politeness and respect. Fieschi, though he aspired to the sovereignty of Genoa, secured the adhesion to his cause of the friends of liberty and the chiefs of the popular party, as Verrina and the Adorni, who looked upon Doria as the mere lieutenant of the emperor in their city. Under pretext of arming a galley for a cruise, Fieschi contrived to introduce several of his vassals, armed, into Genoa; but abstained from imparting his views to many of his friends until the evening of the 2nd January, 1547, when assembling, as to a grand festival in his palace, the young men of the city, in whom he reposed confidence, he revealed his plot to them at the moment for its execution and engaged them all to take part in it. His brothers and chief friends then took the lead of the different bands charged to make themselves masters of the port and of the city gates. They

were successful in their enterprise, and slew Giannettino Doria, who was hastening to allay the tumult. The aged Andrea, weak and ill as he was, fled on horseback to a distance of sixteen miles from Genoa. Fieschi seemed triumphant, but in the very moment of victory the victor vanished. Whilst rushing, heavily armed, on board the chief galley in the harbour, to quell a revolt among its crew, the vessel which had just begun to move, escaped from below the plank which conducted to it from the shore; the plank fell into the water, and Fieschi, beneath the weight of his massive cuirass, sunk to rise no more. Thus ended the conspiracy. The brothers of Fieschi, utterly disheartened by the fatal result of his ambition, treated with the Genoese Signoria instead of attacking them. The terms which they obtained were not respected; they evacuated the city, and soon afterwards some of the conspirators, being besieged in Montoglio, were taken and executed. The rest found safety in France. Such was the fate of this enterprise, which furnished in future ages a brilliant subject for the dramatic genius of Schiller, but brought only ruin and disgrace on its actors and those concerned in its accomplishment. "Our Duchess Renée," says the industrious chronicler Frizzi, "*per impulso di sangue*, wrought secretly in that mine, in accord with Farnese, and by means of the French whom she had in her court. But the explosion did not produce the desired effect, and Renée, with this mortification, experienced afterwards that of the violent

death of her friend, Farnese*, and of the decease from natural causes of her brother-in-law the king."† This last event placed the court of Ferrara in mourning; a grand funeral service was celebrated by the duke's command, in the cathedral, and an oration in honour of the deceased monarch was pronounced on the occasion by Battisto Giraldi.

The death of Francis I. deprived Renée of a powerful protector, though a distant one. He had, indeed, done her a great injury, in consulting merely the dictates of his own selfishness, when he married her to Ercole d'Este. But the Duke of Ferrara, notwithstanding his old and not unnatural preference of Imperial to French interests in Italy, was sensible of the honour conferred on him by his alliance with the daughter of Louis XII. and the sister-in-law of Francis I. "Son mari," says Brantôme‡, "eu esgard à son sang illustre la respectoit toujours et l'honoroit fort." And more than this, whilst Francis lived, the duke must have felt himself bound to a certain degree of deference towards his wife as the near kinswoman of him who had once trodden with a conqueror's foot the soil of Italy. Even if Francis himself had been indifferent to Renée's interests, he would hardly have turned away from the intercession of the beloved Marguerite on whose ear the touching plaint of Clément Marôt from Venice, in 1536, could not have fallen in

* On the 10th September, 1547.

† March 31st, 1547.

‡ Œuvre I. art. v. Renée, Mémoires des Dames Illustres.

vain. But with the life of Francis this restraining influence was at an end.

Selfishness decided the destiny of Renée of France; favouritism that of her eldest daughter, Anna d'Este.

The infatuated attachment of Henry II. to the family of Guise, inspired him with the greatest anxiety to provide a splendid matrimonial alliance for François Duc d'Aumale, Governor of Dauphiny and Savoy. Henry found it impossible to detach the Duke of Ferrara from the cause of the emperor, but he was still more anxious to procure the hand of the duke's daughter, his own cousin, for his favourite noble, and, in spite of the repugnance of the family of Este to the proposal, his negotiations were ultimately successful. As early as January, 1548 (the Princess Anna being then in her 18th year), the Cardinal Charles of Guise left Ferrara with "fair promises," to report favourably to the King of France on the manner in which his embassy had been received. The arrival of Henry himself at Turin, in the course of the following summer, issued in the final settlement of this marriage. Thither also, in the month of August, went Duke Ercole, from Ferrara, with a splendid retinue, to welcome his nephew, and to do honour to the majesty of France. Henry received the duke "with the greatest good-will and many caresses." * Then the subject of the marriage of Francis of Guise and Anna d'Este was discussed, and its provisions finally determined. On

* Antichità Estense. Parte II.

the 2nd of September, the duke returned to Ferrara, and instantly commenced preparations for his daughter's nuptials, which were solemnised on the 29th of the same month, Prince Louis of Bourbon acting as proxy for Francis and as commissioner for the King of France in conjunction with Louis of Lorraine and another brother of the bridegroom. Jousting, tourneys, and the customary festivities followed the celebration of the marriage. But beneath the outward show of rejoicing there lurked a feeling of intense indignation in the hearts of the Ferrarese, by whom the Princess Anna was "beyond all belief" beloved and revered, for they regarded as a mésalliance her marriage with the French duke. Yet, if the House of Guise had but recently attained to power and distinction, it had no reason to be ashamed of its pedigree; and if the Princess Anna shared the lot of female royalty in being "unworthily married," remonstrances on her part would have been unavailing, but we hear of none. Her union with Francis of Guise was "a state necessity." The Duke of Ferrara owed money to the French king, and the gift of his daughter to Henry's favourite, cancelled the debt.* The duchesses, with the younger princesses Lucrezia and Leonora, accompanied the bride as far as Mantua, where they bade her farewell — how sorrowfully, it is easy to conjecture — and returned back again to Ferrara.

The departure of Anna d'Este from the parental court is not improbably connected with the disgrace

* Regnier de la Planche. (Louis.) p. 159.

which about this time clouded the fortunes of Olympia Morata. When we saw her last the sun of earthly prosperity was shining full around her. She was the delight of the Duchess Renée and the beloved friend of the Princess Anna; — the earnest, devoted, and accomplished student of classical literature, the tones of which, in the creations of her own rare genius she so successfully reproduced. But that bright "page of her life's book," was soon turned over. Happy was it for her that when earthly joys grew dim a new light arose upon her path, which shone "more and more unto the perfect day."

Her enterprising spirit was not to rest content with its already conquered dominion; after a while new thoughts began to awake within her, and her mind began to open to the great religious questions of those eventful times. In the apartments of the duchess, Olympia must have often heard the echoes of those voices which then rang in thrilling tones throughout Christendom. Nor would her tutors, Chilian and Jean Sinapi, have kept silence before her on a subject which interested them far more than their merely secular professions of philology or medicine; and often must the conversation of Olympia and Anna d'Este have wandered from the flowery paths of heathen poetry into the forbidden but fascinating region of the "new theology." More than this, the conversion of her father, Peregrino Morata, by the instrumentality of Curione, was not barren in results of inestimable importance to

his own home circle. And to the child, whose mind he had once so laboured to store with the treasures of human learning, doubtless he now strove to show "the more excellent way." But it was not in the brilliant, pleasure-loving court of Ferrara that Olympia profited much by these lessons. They suggested questionings to her spirit, but they did not reach her heart.* They were learned afterwards in sorrow and bitterness, by the dying bed of her venerable father, and amidst the painful events which followed closely on that bereavement.

The cause of Olympia's disgrace is an unexplained mystery. The displeasure of the duke may be accounted for on religious grounds. That she was the daughter and the friend of heretics would have sufficed to provoke the wrath of the bigoted Ercole. But the unappeasable anger of Renée could not have been thus excited. In the absence of information on this subject, supposition has gone to work, and suggested that the mischief was effected by Jérome Bolsec, a pretended adherent of the Reformation, who, having taken refuge at Ferrara, availed himself of opportunities afforded to him, by the office he held of almoner to the duchess†, to insinuate unworthy suspicions into the minds of Ercole and Renée, respecting some who were friends of Olympia, and hitherto in favour at court. It would seem that Olympia also was the victim of these

* Vie d'Olympia Morata, p. 59.

† For further information concerning this person, see Life of Calvin, by Beza.

calumnies, and she had now no advocate to plead her cause. The marriage of Anna d'Este had taken place during the last illness of Olympia's father, and Lavinia de la Rovere was also absent. The duke's fury, therefore, raged unrestrained, and Olympia was banished for ever from the court of Ferrara. Once indeed she reappeared there, to vindicate herself from the aspersions of her slanderers; but they had gained their point, and the duchess, interposing no friendly intercession, tacitly left her to her fate. So implacable was the indignation of the court that the orphan Olympia dared not even to reclaim the trifling possessions which she had left behind her in the palace, and it was only at the request of the daughter-in-law of Orsini that the duchess permitted the restoration of one of her robes! * Thus was the persecution of the Reformed at Ferrara inaugurated by the sufferings of one whose past life of enjoyment was but an indifferent preparation for trouble, but whose spirit met that great emergency in a strength not its own, and whose character now shines forth as clearly as the light of heaven. But it is almost impossible to account for the behaviour of Renée in this matter. Fear of her "terrible" husband might have restrained the outward show of kindly feeling, but it would not have made her act with abiding injustice. Thick indeed must have been the veil of prejudice which Olympia's enemies drew before the eye of Renée, and harsh was the dealing that resulted.

* Letter of Olympia Morata to her husband, Andrew Grunthler. Ferrara. 1550.

For this, however, there lacked not future retribution. The disgrace of Olympia Morata was, as it were, "the beginning of sorrows," in which the duchess herself was destined to share. The literary men who had been the chief ornament of the court of Ferrara began to withdraw from their insecure position. The brothers, Chilian and Jean Sinapi, speedily left the palace whence their distinguished pupil had been so cruelly spurned. The Princess Lavinia de la Rovere, indeed, on her return, exerted herself to mitigate the displeasure of the duke against Olympia Morata and her family*, and "visited the fatherless and the widow in their affliction" with a generous courage which cannot be too highly extolled. From any further consequences of Ercole's persecuting zeal, however, Olympia was happily preserved by her marriage with Andrew Grunthler, a German medical student, who admired her genius and appreciated her virtues, and also shared her faith. In the spring of 1551 he prevailed on her to exchange her once-beloved Ferrara for the safer asylum of his fatherland. Taking with her to Germany her youngest brother Emilio, she bade adieu to her widowed mother and to her sisters, and departed from Italy never more to return.

Whilst Olympia was enduring the bitter discipline of calumny at Ferrara, another was "suffering trouble unto bonds," in the horrid dungeons of the same city," "for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus

* Vie d'Olympia Morata, p. 74.

Christ." This was Faventino Fannio, of Faenza. With him a youthful period of study ripened into a maturity of Christian knowledge, for he "began to read diligently the Holy Scriptures, with the aid of translations in the vulgar tongue, as he did not well understand Latin." * Fannio could not "hold the truth," and hide its light under a bushel. He began to teach his fellow-citizens the doctrines which he had learned from that sacred source. It came to the ears of the Inquisitor, and Fannio was cast into prison. There, the entreaties of his wife and the counsels of worldly minded friends prevailed on him to save his life by a recantation. But his recovered freedom brought no happiness with it. He had "denied the faith, and pierced himself through with many sorrows." "A horror of great darkness" fell upon his soul, and he went mourning all the day long.† At last he resolved to brave the consequences of a fresh consecration of himself and his powers to the cause which he had renounced in an hour of nature's weakness, and so to glorify Him of whom he had been ashamed. In the prosecution of this design he journeyed through the whole province of Romagna, here and there instructing a few individuals in the Gospel; and then leaving these to impart in their turn of their spiritual treasure to others, he would himself proceed to other places, everywhere following the same plan of operation, "whereby

* Quotation from Crespin's Histoire des Martyrs. Vie d'Olympia Morata, p. 65.

† McCrie's Reformation in Italy, p. 315.

the number of the faithful did increase daily." Being again arrested in the territory of Ferrara, he was sent in chains to the city, and there for two years faithfully witnessed for the truth in the prison where he was bound. There Olympia Morata visited him, and Lavinia de la Rovere ministered to his necessities. No doubt the Duchess Renée knew his story. It might have taught her to beware of compromise where vital principles were at stake. But if she knew it, the lesson seems to have been forgotten when most needed.

The wife and sister of Fannio again endeavoured to work upon his weakness.* They might have spared their solicitations. "Let it suffice you that I *once* denied my Saviour," he replied with unshaken steadfastness. Great interest was made to obtain his liberation. Paul III. was dead, and Julius III. filled the Papal throne. But all intercessions were fruitless. The martyr's death was decreed, and early one morning in 1551 (after the departure of Olympia Morata) the sentence was carried into execution. Fannio was hanged upon the Piazza †; his body was afterwards burnt, and its ashes were scattered on the river. Thus died Fannio, "faithful now," unto "death," and thus to Ferrara was given the direful pre-eminence of being the scene of the first martyrdom in Italy for the cause of the Reformation.‡

* McCrie's Reformation in Italy, p. 316.

† Frizzi. Raccolte, &c. t. iv. c. v. p. 337.

‡ But it would seem doubtful whether Ferrara has been justly so

The storm which now burst raged without intermission till the last vestiges of the progress of the Reformed Faith in Italy were swept from that ill-fated peninsula, destined in the same century to undergo the destruction of its political, and the extinction of its nascent religious, liberties. It must be acknowledged that the work was effectually done. The actors were as skilful as they were unscrupulous. Nothing in history is more certain than the obligation of the See of Rome to the Jesuits, by whom so much of the spiritual revolt of this period was quelled with such success.* And no lesser genius than that of Ignatius Loyola could have sufficed to the requirements of that crisis.

In 1551, that terrible order established itself at Ferrara. Ignatius had once appeared there as a pilgrim, on his return from the Holy Land, in the spring of 1524. His lavish liberality to all who craved alms of him, as he went to pay his devotions in the cathedral, easily won for him the reputation of a saint, from the mendicants whose demands he had satisfied†, and who witnessed his fervency in prayer. Two brethren of the society, Rodriguez d'Azevedo, a Portuguese, and Claudio Jajo, of Geneva, visited Ferrara in 1537. They devoted themselves to preaching in the public places, and to works of mercy in the hospitals. They acquired great

regarded or not. "According to Scaliger, a person named Jacobin was the first martyr in Italy."—Note to McCrie's Hist. of the Reformation, p. 316.

* Ranke's Lives of the Popes.

† Frizzi, Raccolte, &c., t. iv. c. v. pp. 329—331.

popularity, and secured the favour of Duke Ercole, and the patronage of the Marchioness di Pescara. The duke petitioned the Pope to appoint Jajo "Teologo" to himself, and, on the arrival of this Jesuit in Ferrara, desired to provide him with apartments in the palace; but Jajo declined this mark of favour, and requested to be located in the Hospital di S. Anna. In the church which was connected with that institution, he heard confessions, and gave lectures, on festival days, upon the Scriptures. The selection of Jajo for Ferrara was suggested by Loyola, who craftily surmised that his partly French origin might render him acceptable to the duchess, and procure a more willing ear for his theological instructions. But the order was odious to Renée, and she never admitted Jajo to her presence, though he abode at Ferrara for two years. She probably divined the purpose of his mission, and resolved to disappoint it.

In 1550, the celebrated Francesco Borja, a relative of Ercole II., and one of the most distinguished members of the company, came to Ferrara, on his way from Spain to Rome, by the duke's special invitation. They had a conference together of four days; the result was the establishment of a college for the order in Ferrara. Broet and Pelletario settled themselves there in the summer of 1551 and immediately opened schools for the instruction, in Latin and Greek, of the youth of the city. These schools, of course, were also seminaries for the inculcation of religious tenets. The Jesuits rapidly acquired by these means a footing which they never lost.

Cherished by the duke and by several influential families in Ferrara, they waxed greater year by year, and in 1570 the first stone of their church was laid by Cardinal Luigi d'Este and his brother, Duke Alfonso II.

The 22nd of May, 1552, was marked by another martyrdom in Ferrara. The victim was a man of learning, named Giorgio Siculo. He was put to death in the night, being hanged before the windows of the Palazzo della Ragione, on the charge of heresy. Thus the work of blood proceeded. But the dispersion of the Reformed Church at Ferrara could not satisfy the cravings of its persecutors, whilst the Duchess Renée persisted in her obnoxious sentiments. Popes, Inquisitors, Prelates, Jesuits flew at higher game than widows and fatherless children and people of no note in the world. The duke, stimulated by his confessor, was more determined than ever to vindicate the claims of St. Peter's chair to the abject homage of all connected with him. The hour was nigh when Renée must make her choice,—declare her faith or deny it.

Ercole in his perplexity appears to have made known the state of the case to his wife's nephew, Henry II. of France, a man of cruel bigotry congenial to his own. Henry felt no difficulty in interfering with the delicate matter upon which he was consulted; and seems to have fully concurred with Ercole as to the necessity of the speedy reconversion of the duchess to the faith of Rome. This point ascertained, the duke's path was clear; otherwise he could not have ventured on violent

measures for effecting his purpose. Henry's part in this business cannot be better illustrated than by citing the instructions given by that monarch to Doctor Matthew Oriz, who had been designated to the office of Inquisitor of France, a post which the persevering resistance of the people to so intolerable a surveillance never suffered him to fill. He had thus plenty of leisure to prosecute the bigoted designs of Henry II. against the peace of the poor Duchess Renée. It will be acknowledged that the plan prescribed to him left no doubt as to the zeal of the king in behalf of his detestable project. Something corroborative of what is already known respecting the tender mercies of dominant Romanism may also be learned from this document, a translation of which, *in extenso*, is annexed.*

"The Doctor Oriz, one of the penitentiaries of our Holy Father the Pope, being arrived at Ferrara, where the king instantly sends him, shall deliver to Monsieur the Duke of Ferrara the letters which the said king has written to him with his own hand, and shall tell him how he has express charge from His Majesty to employ himself, and to do entirely all that he can do in the affair for which he is despatched. And thereupon he shall know from the said duke the means which he will have to take, the better and the more carefully to begin and carry on the work, so good, so holy and salu-

* Le Laboureur's Additions aux Mémoires de Castelneau, vol. i. p. 717.

tary, which by the commandment of the king he has undertaken.

"After that he shall have understood from the said lord duke what he will have to do when entering into conversation with Madame la Duchesse, and when he shall have well and diligently enquired and informed himself of the principal points upon which she has fallen into error, to the end that according thereunto he may consider the remonstrances, propositions, and allegations which he shall use to reclaim her, and to bring her back to the flock of Jesus Christ, he shall deliver to her the letter which the king has written to her with his own hand; he shall tell her that His Majesty, having heard in several places, after that they had long concealed it from him, as not daring to speak to him of it, the misfortune than which no greater could have happened to the said lady, who has suffered herself to be hurried into the labyrinths of these unhappy opinions contrary and repugnant to our holy faith and religion; — he has received in his heart from it such grief, sorrow, and annoyance as it is impossible to know how to express: this news being nothing else to him than that of the loss of the bodily and spiritual life of his only aunt, whom he has always so much loved, esteemed and honoured, as he doth singularly still; so that when he shall hear of her reconciliation, and reduction to the true obedience of the Church, the ease and pleasure that he will receive from it will not be less than if he saw her raised from death to life, and he knows of nothing in the world for which

he will render thanks to God with greater sincerity than if he see her, as he hopes shortly, reconciled and reclaimed to the pale of our Mother, the Holy Church, exempted and purged from these blameable, condemnable, and reprobated errors. To which she ought to be the more moved and incited by consideration of the great favours which God has granted to her, and amongst others of being the issue of the purest blood of the most Christian House of France, where no monster has ever existed; and to perceive now, that if instead of following in the footsteps of her progenitors, who with singular zeal have always embraced the protection of our Holy Catholic Faith, this lady should choose to remain in stubbornness and pertinacity, it would displease the king as much as anything in the world, and would cause him entirely to forget the friendship, with all the observances and demonstrations of a good nephew, he hating nothing with a greater hatred than all those of the reprobate sects, whose mortal enemy he is.

"And if, after such remonstrances and persuasions, together with those which the said Doctor Oriz shall employ of his own way and profession, to make her to know the truth, and the difference which there is between light and darkness, it shall appear that he is unable by gentle means to gain her and to reclaim her, he shall take counsel with the said lord duke as to what can possibly be done in the way of rigour and severity to bring her to reason. And in the first place, the king is of opinion, that upon the principal points, where she is

found to be most in error, the said lord duke should cause by the said Oriz to be preached sermons at which he shall be present, and shall require the presence likewise of the said lady, and all her family, whatever refusal or difficulty she may make to it; and having continued this for some days, if he perceive that by such means he can in no wise profit the said lady, the said Oriz shall declare to her, in the presence of him, the lord duke, that the king has given him express charge by this present Instruction, signed by his own hand, which he will then show to her, that if so it should be that this lady after that everything has been done that is possible in her case, should finally remain obstinate and pertinacious in such errors, without otherwise choosing to return to the obedience of the Church, and to the observance of our Holy Catholic Faith"—(then)—"His Majesty wills and approves, and indeed prays and exhorts him, the said duke, very earnestly, that he would cause the said lady to be put into a place secluded from society and conversation, where she may henceforth injure no one but herself, taking from her her own children, and the whole of her family entirely, of whatever nation they be, who shall be found burthened with, or be vehemently suspected of the said errors and false doctrines, that they may be put upon their trial, the said Oriz being sent for, who is experienced in such matters belonging to his profession; he being Inquisitor of the Faith in this kingdom.

"And these said trials being over, that exemplary

punishment be done upon the abettors and delinquents; His Majesty confiding in the said lord duke to use in such executions and procedures (as in those which shall affect the person of the said lady, and follow upon them) such discretion and mode of action, that justice may take effect without scandal or notoriety, as regards this lady and those dependent upon her."

Such was the mission of Oriz. He arrived at Ferrara, and set about the fulfilment of his congenial errand in the course of the year 1554. It was perhaps before his coming, that the duke, acting on the advice of the Jesuit Pelletario, dismissed all the suspected members of Renée's household, which included (within the Palace of St. Francesco, where she then held a separate court,) a preacher, a steward, an almoner, and the learned preceptor of the Princesses Lucrezia and Leonora, Francesco Porta da Creta, who was also suspected of having imbibed "heretical" notions. This deed of tyranny on the part of Ercole was done on the 18th of March; after which it appears that the duchess, either in disgust at the treatment to which she had been subjected, or by the command of her husband, took up her abode in the Palace of Consandolo.

The efforts of Oriz were fruitless. The inquisitor persuaded, argued, preached, threatened in vain. Nay, we are told, that the duchess "endured with obstinacy the execution of all those menaces."* In her retire-

* Le Laboureur, Add. to Castelneau.

ment, whether it were compulsory or self-chosen, she prosecuted her correspondence with Geneva; and even scrupled not to eat meat on Wednesdays, in direct contravention of the laws of the so-called Catholic Church. These were unpardonable offences. Popery could not tolerate her friendship with the Genevese reformer, nor her disobedience of its commandment "to abstain from meats." But Renée's contumacy was still further aggravated by her attempts to proselytise (as may be inferred from the phrase employed by Frizzi—"farsi degli alunni"*) in the neighbouring Terra di Argenta. Here was a perversion of the wholesome discipline of the solitude of Consandolo! All exhortations, severities, "representations," instructions, had been evidently thrown away on this incorrigible heretic, when even in her place of banishment she could not be restrained from the endeavour to disseminate her principles. The matter of the "alunni" made the full cup of the duke's indignation to overflow. He had laboured in vain for her conversion. His confessor Pelletario was compelled to acknowledge that he found her "obstinately fixed in her doctrinal opinions."† Oriz, from whose persuasion so much had been hoped, might as well have remained in Paris,—so useless had been his eloquence. These were bitter subjects of reflection to Ercole. He determined to strike a decisive blow. It is true that his powers were limited. Even the

* "To make to herself pupils," t. iv. c. v. p. 339.

† Historiæ Societatis Jesu, book xiv. § 26. 1554.

mysterious termination of the "Instruction" to Oriz could not have been interpreted to mean the infliction of the last penalities of Romish cruelty on the unfortunate duchess. Such means as had been freely resorted to in many an Italian dungeon in the case of ignobler heretics, could not be tried in hers. But solitary imprisonment—that most appalling of all punishments—the removal of her children, the inhibition of "heretical books," whereby she had been wont to nourish her proscribed opinions, these measures might be adopted with some hope of success. The duke hesitated no longer. On the night of the 7th September, (that thereby he might strike the greater terror into the soul of Renée,) he caused her to be conveyed from the Palace di S. Francesco in a carriage, under the escort of the Bishop Rossetti, and the Cavaliere Bonifazio Ruggiere da Reggio, his counsellor, to the gloomy Castle of Ferrara. There, strictly confined in the Cavallo chambers,—those looking down on the equestrian statue of Niccolo III.,—with only two attendants, and hindered from holding communication with any one except her "maestra di casa," she had time to meditate on her situation, and to anticipate still worse results. The two princesses were taken to the Convent di Corpo Cristo, where they were admitted as pupils, to be carefully educated in what was termed the Catholic Faith. Many there doubtless were, who in hope and fear waited to see what would be the issue of these events. Not for Renée's sake alone was their anxiety awakened, but

for that of the almost expiring cause of the Reformation in Italy. In spite of the duchess's occasional concessions to the demands of the dominant religion, it was well known that her heart did most truly beat in accordance with the reformed doctrines. It would now be seen if she were prepared to stand by those doctrines with unshaken fidelity, or recant them,—if she would confess boldly, or timidly disavow her deeply-rooted beliefs,—if she would maintain with firmness her inalienable rights of conscience, or compromise them to escape further persecution. And beloved as she was in Ferrara, we may easily imagine the interests which thrilled all ranks in behalf of the good Duchess Renée. When therefore it was heard that the Jesuit confessor had been summoned to the castle by her "who used to shrink from the name of Pelletario, and vehemently turned away from him,"*—that he had received the confession of the duchess†, "uttered with deep emotion of soul, and with a flood of tears," and had also administered the eucharist to the penitent according to the rites of the Church of Rome‡,—what varied feelings must these reports have excited! What a triumph was it to the bigoted zealotry which had left no stone unturned to accomplish its wretched purpose! To the suffering members of the reformed communion, what surprise and sorrow must it have occasioned,—what

* Historiæ Societatis Jesu, &c.

† Ibid.

‡ Frizzi, Raccolte, t. iv. c. v. p. 339.

prostration of hope, "as when a standard-bearer fainteth"! To others, and these probably the great majority of the inhabitants of Ferrara, the news must have been joyful tidings indeed. Now would *she* be released from that ignominious durance,—she whose life had been one continuous stream of merciful actions, and of whose faith they judged by her works.

It is impossible to believe that Renée's reconciliation to Rome was genuine; equally impossible to excuse or to palliate the dissembling course which she now pursued. Her emancipation from the dismal captivity of the castle was granted by he duke immediately on his receiving from Pelletario information of her confession, and restoration to the Roman Church. That same night they supped together in token of their renewed amity, and the next day (Sept 24th) the children, of whose presence she had been so harshly deprived, were again consigned to her maternal care.* To leave no doubt of the reality of her so-called conversion, she demanded to partake again, on the 1st of November, of the Sacrament of the Mass, and the duke being entirely persuaded of the sincerity of her repentance, permitted her to return to the Palace of St. Francesco, on the 1st of December following.

* Frizzi, Raccolte, t. iv. c. v. p. 339.

CHAP VI.

News of the Duchess Renée's Recantation received by Calvin, and by Olympia Morata. — Some further Notices of Olympia Morata's Life in Germany. — Its Joys and Sorrows. — Letter of Olympia Morata to Anna d'Este. — Olympia's last Illness and Death at Heidelberg. — Return of Prince Alfonso to Ferrara., and Reconciliation with his Father the Duke, whom he had disobliged by his Flight to France. — Partiality of Duke Ercole for Imperial Interests in Italy. — Accession of Paul IV. to the Papal Chair, and of Philip II. to the Throne of Spain. — The two Despots on Ill Terms with each other. — Paul IV. invokes another French Invasion of Italy. — The Duke of Ferrara persuaded to take the side of France by the Duke of Guise and by Paul IV. — Failure of the Enterprise in consequence of the Recal of Guise, necessitated by the Battle of St. Quentin. — Prince Alfonso of Ferrara returns to France, and nearly loses his Life by a Fall from the Duke d'Aumale's Horse. — Ercole's Refusal to carry the War into the Neapolitan Dominions. — The Review at Reggio of the Armies of France and Ferrara. — The War Distasteful to Ercole II. — Conspiracy against him, which fails. — Paul IV. omits to have the Duke of Ferrara included in his Treaty of Peace with Philip II. — Desperate State of Ercole's Affairs. — Prince Alfonso defeats the Army of Parma. — Good Offices of Cosmo, Duke of Florence. — He succeeds in bringing about a Peace between Spain and Ferrara. — Marriage of Prince Alfonso with Lucrezia, Daughter of Cosmo. — His Departure to France. — Montluc's Visit to the Ducal Family at Ferrara, and warm Reception by the Duchess Renée. — Renée's benevolent Care for the perishing Soldiery of Guise's Army in Italy. — Her liberal Provision for their Necessities. — Her Reply to the Remonstrances of her Steward.

IT soon became a matter of general notoriety that the Duchess of Ferrara had abjured the Reformed Religion.

Tidings of this event reached the ears of Calvin, who refers to so melancholy a proof of human infirmity as follows, in a letter to his coadjutor, William Farel, dated November 1st, 1554*:—"There is sad intelligence, and more certain than I would wish that it were, of the Duchess of Ferrara, that, overcome by threats and reproaches, she has fallen. What shall I say, except that instances of fortitude in nobles are rare?" With excusable severity, Olympia Morata thus comments on the duchess's "act of weakness," in a letter to Paolo Vergerio, Bishop of Capo d'Istria, dated "Heidelberg," 1555†:—"I am afflicted but not astonished at the fall of this princess whom I knew in other times. I am more surprised at the sad deflection of several others. My mother stands firm in the midst of the storm. Glory be to God, to whom all the praise is due!"

This last quotation suggests our remarking that the interest of the eventful history of the writer does not terminate with her departure from her beloved Ferrara. A life marked by so many instances of Providential interposition, is worth tracing to its close, and its once intimate connection with the Duchess Renée's family justifies a rapid glance at the narrative of her various trials from the time when Germany first gave her a home until she found in it a grave.

At Augsburg first, after their journey, Olympia and

* Catalogue des MSS. dans la Bibliothèque de Genève, par Jean Senebrès. No. 288 in the British Museum.

† Bonnet, Vie d'Olympia Morata, p. 222.

her husband enjoyed repose under the roof of George Herrman, counsellor to the King of the Romans. "I am very happy here," she writes to her friend Giraldi. "My days pass in delightful intercourse with the Muses, from which there is nothing to distract me. I devote myself also to the study of the sacred word, the reading of which affords so much peace and contentment. My husband has made the most favourable impression in this city." She received a distinguished welcome from the Fuggers, merchants of princely wealth, and of refined taste in literature and the arts. It is easy to imagine the exquisite pleasure with which Olympia must have surveyed their famous collection of antique sculptures, gathered together at a vast expense, chiefly from Greece and Sicily.* Whilst at Augsburg she wrote a letter to Celio Secundo Curione, who was then professor of Latin at Bâsle, claiming his friendship in right of her relationship to his beloved friend, Peregrino Fulvio Morato. This demand was affectionately acknowledged by Curione in a letter wherein the experienced Christian "thanks God for having withdrawn" Olympia "in the flower of her youth from the poisoned atmosphere of a court, and for having restored her to a liberty more precious than gold." He speaks with great praise of a Greek translation of one of the Psalms which she had sent him; exhorting her to prosecute her labours in that fertile field, and to "crown her brow with the sacred

* Bonnet, Vie d'Olympia Morata, p. 83.

laurel." "Write to me often," he adds, "nothing will be more agreeable to me." But the kindnesses which solaced Olympia in her exile could not alienate her affections from Ferrara and her suffering co-religionists in that city. How earnestly did she implore Lavinia de la Rovere (in a letter written from Kaufbeuren, a small town near Augsburg) to make one more effort to procure the release of the captive Fannio! Ferrara had indeed cast her out; yet Olympia could not but recur with tender anxiety to the home she had left in it — for it was her mother's home still.

From Augsburg, Olympia and her husband proceeded to Wurzburg, where Jean Sinapi was established in the office of physician to the prince bishop. The former preceptor of Olympia, and his wife, Francisca Bucyronia, received the wanderers into their own house, and here the happiest days of Olympia's exile were passed. She was with old and dear friends who loved and confided in her; and in the tranquil pursuit of her favourite studies she enjoyed a period of almost unbroken rest from trouble of every sort. But the interval of repose was brief. Grunthler accepted the post of physician to the Spanish troops which then garrisoned Schweinfurt, his native town, situated at the extremity of Bavaria, and there we find Olympia settled at the beginning of October, 1551. Now was she altogether isolated from those bright scenes which had once so conduced to her happiness; nevertheless she was grateful for the liberty which she enjoyed of worshipping God according to the

dictates of her own enlightened conscience. She was so sensible of this high privilege that she heartily concurred in her husband's refusal of a more advantageous office elsewhere,—the professorship of Medicine in the Academy of Lintz, the capital of Upper Austria,—the acceptance of which would have required a compromise of religious principle. "Our firm resolution," she wrote, "is to remain faithful to the doctrine which we have embraced." The Protestantism of Olympia Morata was not "a mere negation;" it was a true confession of faith, a system of practical piety.

At Schweinfurt Olympia devoted herself to her domestic duties; to "visiting the fatherless and widows in their affliction," and to those studies which never ceased to be the great charm of her life. She instructed her little brother Emilio, and Theodora, the daughter of Jean Sinapi and Francisca Bucyronia, who had confided their child to her tuition, when she exchanged Wurzburg for Schweinfurt. Olympia was skilful in imparting a measure of her own knowledge of the learned languages and their masterpieces, but she laboured most to give to her young pupils the taste for study in itself, aware that this point being once reached, all beyond is comparatively easy to perseverance and intelligence. But too soon the fatal sickness of Francisca Bucyronia required the recall of her daughter to Wurzburg, and separated the little companions from each other.

It was at Schweinfurt that Olympia resumed translating the Psalms into Greek. They were set to music by

her husband, and soon became popular in Germany. Thus she turned her skill as a linguist to the noblest of purposes, and soothed her mind whilst she cultivated its powers. These days of calm study of the Scriptures no doubt aided to prepare her for the trial of her faith, now rapidly approaching. The siege of Schweinfurt in 1553 brought scenes of horror to her view, of which she had previously known nothing. Into this unhappy town, the restless Albert, Margrave of Brandenburg, had thrown himself, and from thence he issued from time to time with his warrior band, striking terror into the circumjacent provinces. The army of the Bishops of Wurzburg and Bamberg, the Elector Maurice of Saxony, and the Duke of Brunswick, besieged the Margrave in his stronghold, battering the walls of the town by day and night, so that the wretched inhabitants endured all the miseries of a war of extermination.* But amidst the most dreadful ravages, both of war and pestilence, Olympia's courage faltered not. "We have but one consolation," she writes, "under the weight of so many ills, prayer and meditation on the Holy Word. I have not once turned my eyes towards the riches of Egypt. Better to perish under the ruins of this town, than to enjoy all delights in a land of unbelief." To add to her anxieties, her husband was seized with the plague, which raged during the siege, and to which the benevolent physician had unreservedly exposed himself in his efforts

* Vie d'Olympia Morata, p. 121.

to alleviate the sufferings of its victims. His case seemed hopeless,—yet he recovered, and Olympia regarded him as restored in answer to her unceasing prayers. Sorrow was doing its entreated work upon her soul; for it was her chief desire that the result of so much suffering might be increase of her faith. When at length the Margrave Albert escaped with his troops from Schweinfurt, it was immediately entered by the besiegers, and ruthlessly abandoned to fire and sword. Grunthler and Olympia were delivered from the destruction on their right hand and on their left, by the mercy of Providence favouring their flight amidst innumerable dangers, in the night, and on foot along the banks of the river, by a weary way of ten miles. Thus they were saved from apparently inevitable death, but with the loss of all their property. The hospitable castle of the Counts of Erpach (so celebrated in the history of the German Reformation), at last afforded them a welcome shelter. The Countess of Erpach and her daughters ministered to the wants of the exhausted sufferer, with the tenderness of a mother and sisters. But Olympia never recovered from the effects of that awful night, when she fled from the burning city. The seeds of mortal disease were then too deeply planted in her constitution ever again to be eradicated, and she was drawing near to the gates of death. Meanwhile a professor's chair in the University of Heidelberg requited Grunthler for his past calamities at Schweinfurt, and to Olympia, her abode in that beautiful city proved

"an hour of rest before the grave." Her friends were eager to comfort the afflicted exile with affectionate letters, and tokens of good-will. Sinapi reminds her that "her treasure is in heaven, where thieves do not break through to steal, where no flames consume." "Let us bow," says Curione, "before the judgment of God, and adore His just dispensations without seeking to comprehend them." The loss of her father's valuable library in the pillage of Schweinfurt was perhaps Olympia's greatest grief. One solitary volume alone appears to have been rescued from the conflagration.* It was afterwards restored to her. Curione and his colleagues hastened to supply her want of literary ailment. The eminent printers of Basle, were also liberal in their donations of books to the bereaved Olympia, and were amply recompensed by her hearty gratitude.

Those who would be glad to know that the Duchess Renée again remembered her former protégée with aught of her old affection, will look in vain, it is feared, for such a record. But the friendship of Olympia for Anna d'Este appears to have survived the mysterious alienation of Renée, and the time came when the wanderer in Germany dared to avail herself of the early tie which bound her to the Duchess de Guise, to intercede with her in behalf of the persecuted Huguenots, her brethren in one common faith. A translation of the beautiful

* Vie d'Olympia Morata, &c.

letter in which Olympia reminds the Duchess Anna of their early intimacy, counsels her to give an increased attention to religion, and implores her compassion for those who were suffering in France for the cause of Christ, is subjoined by permission of the kind friend who supplied it.

"Olympia Morata Grunthler offers to Anna d'Este, Duchess of Guise, wishes for her abundant health, through Jesus Christ.

"Although, illustrious Princess Anna, we have for a long while been parted by a wide distance of place from place, never yet up to the present moment have I ceased to remember thee. If I had not, for many good reasons, been afraid to do so, I would have written directly to thee. But now, an opportunity having presented itself in a visit made to us by a certain learned and pious man from Lorraine, the first use I made of it was to enquire of him how thou wert. And on his promising to take care that my letter should be conveyed to thee, I could not make up my mind to think that thou wouldst be so hard-hearted as not to read with willingness a letter coming from one who had been brought up with thee from thy early youth. For thou knowest how familiarly (though thou wert my Princess and Mistress) we lived so many years with one another, and how we pursued together literary studies which might well continually increase the mutual attachment which grew up between us. I, for my part, noble Princess, call God to witness

that I wish thee well and desire thy good always;—could I in any way be of service to thee,—not that I should be inclined to live again in a court (for that I might do here, if I would),—but if, in my absence from thee, either by a word of consolation, or in any other way, I can be of advantage to thee, be assured that I will do it with a glad mind and with special earnestness. There is nothing, however, that I long for more than that thou shouldest seriously betake thyself to the study of Holy Scripture, which alone can bring thee into union with God, and comfort thee in all the sufferings of this life. I certainly find consolation and delight nowhere else. For as soon as by the signal loving-kindness of God, I was removed from that idolatry which there was in Italy, and went into Germany, after my marriage to a physician, Andrew Grunthler, God wrought in my mind a change hardly to be believed,—so that I who before shrank back from the word of God to the farthest extent that I could, now find it all my enjoyment, and set all my love, labour, care, nay, my whole heart, on this, that as far as possible I may despise all these things, wealth, honour, pleasure, which I used once so fondly to admire. And, in very truth, I would, my best Princess, that thou wouldest again and again think on these subjects. For there is nothing lasting here below, believe me. All is changing; and as he (the poet you know of) says, 'the path of death must, once for all, be trodden by every one.' And that soon. For years are fleeting; riches are of no avail, honours of none; royal favour of none. No: only

that faith by which we cleave to Christ can rescue us from that eternal death and condemnation with it. And since that faith is 'the gift of God,' thou shouldest ask it of Him with thy most urgent prayers. For it is not enough to know the history of Christ; we must have the faith that 'works by love,' which renders thee bold to confess Christ among His enemies; otherwise (saith He), 'Whosoever shall be ashamed of me, of him shall I also be ashamed before my Father.'. Nor would any ever have stood forth to be martyrs, if they had concealed their faith. Wherefore, my sweetest Princess, since God hath so highly favoured thee as to lay His truth open to thee, and that thou knowest so many of those men, who are now being burnt there where thou art, to be entirely innocent, and to be undergoing torment in so many shapes for the sake of the Gospel of Christ, it is beyond question thy duty to show thy mind either by pleading in their defence to the king, or by interceding with him for them. For if thou art silent or connivest at these deeds, and sufferest thy fellow-Christians so to be tormented and burnt, nor showest even by a word that it grieveth thee, thou seemest by that silence to be an accomplice in their slaughter, and to agree with the enemies of Christ. But perhaps thou wilt say, If I were to do that, I might draw on me the anger of the king, and of my husband, and make myself many enemies;— consider, then, that it is better for thee to be hated of man than of God, who can torment not the body, but the soul also, in eternal fire. If He be

thy friend, none shall be able to harm thee unless He permit it. For all things are in His hand. See that thou ponder these thoughts in thy breast. Would that I might be well informed that thou art seriously cultivating piety and fearing God! Apply thyself diligently (I beseech thee) to Holy Scripture and to prayer. 'Whatsoever' (saith Christ) 'ye shall ask in my name of the Father, He will give it you.' Remember that thou wert born to die, and listen not to those who say, 'This life of ours is a very short one, therefore let us indulge our bent and enjoy this world's pleasures!' Rather listen to Paul, who says, 'If ye live after the flesh,' (that is, if ye give yourselves to the pleasures of the body) 'ye shall perish everlastingly.' At another time I will write more to thee of the same purport, if I learn that my letter has been acceptable to thee; and I will take care that little Christian books shall be conveyed to thee, if thou shalt prove willing to learn Christ. I have written all this under the constraint of intense love of thee. For since God hath called me to His high and heavenly kingdom, I desire above all things that thou shouldest be partaker of the same eternal blessings, which if I shall learn (as I wish that I may) to be the case with thee, I shall be delighted beyond measure, and render exceeding thanks to God. Farewell.

"Heidelberg, July 1, 1554."

During the short remainder of Olympia Morata's earthly existence, the literary character of her life was

almost entirely merged in the moral and the spiritual. As one who was well aware of her precarious state of health, she gave more earnest heed than ever to preparation for eternity. Not that her household duties, once so irksome, were neglected under the clear sense of a still higher feminine obligation to which she had been awakened; not that she ceased to instruct her young brother Emilio in those classical studies which once were her sole delight; but the word of God was now the subject of her meditation. All her own aspirations were heavenward. And as to things temporal, she had learned that it was "far better to endure all with Jesus Christ than to possess the whole world without Him." Though she still loved with faithful affection those friends who, amidst the storm of persecution, had never forsaken her, her letters to them reveal the gradual weaning of her soul from all human ties, and her ever-growing "desire to depart, and to be with Christ." A little while, and her desire was granted. The mortal disease under which she laboured increased during the summer of 1555, and claimed Olympia as its prey on the 7th of November following. When "all but expiring, having awoke from sleep a little while before, she appeared to me," wrote her bereaved husband to Curione, "under the influence of some joyful sensation, to be laughing as it were by stealth. I approached her, and asked what she saw that was so sweet. 'I saw,' she said, 'in my sleep just now, a spot full of the most beautiful and the brightest light.' More she could not utter through her

weakness. 'Well, my wife,' I said, 'thou wilt dwell in that beautiful light.' Smiling again, she nodded with her head, and soon after said, 'I am all gladness.' Nor did she speak again, except that just as her eyes were growing dim, she said, 'I scarcely distinguish you any longer, but all beside seems full of the loveliest flowers. These were her very last words. For not long afterward, as one sinking into a sweet sleep, she breathed her last." . . . . . She was in her twenty-ninth year when she died.

Her husband and her little brother survived her but a few weeks, and then fell victims to the pestilence which was ravaging Heidelberg. One tomb received them all. In the chapel of St. Peter's Church in that city, where the three lie interred, a monumental inscription stands to this day, recording the piety, virtues, and talents of the Exile of Ferrara.*

Returning now to the history of the Duchess Renée, we find mention made of an event which, occurring three days after her emancipation from the castle-prison, must have shed a cheering gleam across her path. This was the arrival of her eldest son, Alfonso, from Flanders, and his reconciliation to his father. The spirit of the young prince had been stirred by the sound

* From Mons. Jules Bonnet's interesting "Vie d'Olympia Morata," I have culled, chiefly, the foregoing particulars. I thus acknowledge my large obligations to a memoir which will amply repay the reader's perusal. It is probably the best that is accessible to the English student of all that have been written of her.

of war between Henry II. of France and the emperor, during the eventful year 1552, and he earnestly desired to partake in the exciting hazards of the pending contest. But he besought the permission of the duke, his father, in vain. Therefore, collecting by loans from various individuals the sum of nine thousand scudi, he left Ferrara on the 28th May, under pretext of joining in a hawking expedition without the walls of the city, accompanied as usual on such occasions by the gentlemen of his bed-chamber, and others in office about his person. At the Passo del Paolino, in the Polesine of Rovigo, he declared his intention of proceeding at once to Paris, and set forth thither, taking with him fifteen of his attendants, and dismissing the rest. The journey was successfully accomplished, and the Prince was welcomed with great distinction by his cousin of France, Henry II., who decorated him with the order of St. Michael, and gave him the command of a troop of a hundred men, with a pension in advance to provide for his necessities. This step on the part of his son and heir caused much disgust to Duke Ercole, whose ruling desire was to avoid the consequences of becoming an object of suspicion to the formidable emperor. Failing in his endeavour to have the prince overtaken and brought back to Ferrara, he marked his displeasure at his son's enterprise by causing the effigy of Gio Tommaso Lavezzuolo, a companion of Alfonso's in the pretended hawking expedition, to be suspended by one foot before the windows of the Palazzo della Ragione,

with a "cartello d'infamia" attached to it. Moreover the duke offered a reward for the capture of the offender, dead or alive, as the original counsellor of the prince's flight to Paris. But when Alfonso, probably cured of his martial tastes by participating in the hardships of a campaign, desired to return to Ferrara, he encountered no implacable resentment on the part of his father, whilst his arrival was welcomed by the citizens with great pomp and rejoicings.

The connection of the petty Italian States with the Emperor Charles V. had been rather a yoke of servitude than a bond of friendship, a state of dependance to which their weakness and not their will had subjected them. The political inclinations of the Duke of Ferrara might have been inferred to be on the side of French interests, by reason of his own marriage with the Princess Renée of France, and that of his eldest daughter with the Duke de Guise, who claimed to be of the blood royal of the same kingdom. But his allegiance to the emperor, of whom he held Modena and Reggio in fee, drew him the other way. Now, however, motives of prudence combined with the claims of relationship to produce an alteration in Ercole's policy, — a change which was effected in the following manner. Lombardy had enjoyed freedom from the scourge of war from the year 1552 until the accession of the too celebrated Cardinal Caraffa, a Neapolitan, to the Pontificate at the advanced age of eighty, under the title of Paul IV. The election of this man to the chair of St. Peter was a

woful thing for Italy. Ever since the popedom of Paul III. he had been the principal promoter of the establishment of the Roman Inquisition, and had himself filled the office of Grand Inquisitor.* The annals of his reign are written in the blood of the Italian Protestants, whose cries for mercy went up unheeded by his ears. He stimulated persecution against the Reformed in all the states of the Peninsula, and filled the prisons of Rome with victims of all ages and of both sexes. By his orders the infamous "Index Expurgatorius" was compiled,— "an engine devised to extinguish letters in Europe, and to reduce it to the barbarism from which it had lately emerged." †

Within a twelvemonth from the elevation of "the Theatine cardinal" to the papacy, the reign of another fanatical despot, Philip II., also commenced. It might reasonably have been expected that these two congenial natures would have easily preserved friendly relations with each other, but it was otherwise at first. Paul IV. was irritated at the state of humble dependance on the House of Austria to which the See of Rome had been reduced ever since the humiliation of Clement VII. To free himself from this subjection,—and to procure principalities for his nephews, the Caraffas,—he did not scruple to invoke another French invasion of Italy. He joined in a league with Henry II. of France, against

* Sismondi's Histoire des Républiques Italiennes du Moyen Âge, t. viii. p. 364.

† McCrie's History of the Reformation in Italy, p. 350.

Philip, king not only of Spain, but of Naples, and Duke of Milan, by his father's cession to him of these dependancies. The party of Philip II. in Italy being strengthened by the alliances of Cosmo de' Médici, Duke of Florence, and Ottavio Farnese, Duke of Parma, required some effective counterpoise, and the Pope and the King of France naturally had recourse to the Duke of Ferrara, the feudatory of the former, and the uncle by marriage of the latter. Vain were the prayers and arguments with which Ercole II. sought permission to maintain his life-long policy of peace. His reluctance finally gave way to the flatteries of the Duke de Guise, on the one hand, and the menaces of his ecclesiastical suzerain on the other. For Paul IV. was not a man to be trifled with, nor dared Ercole risk awakening in the mind of the new pope the animosity which, in the reigns of Julius II., Leo X., and Clement VII., had cost his father, Alfonso I., such arduous and expensive contests. He yielded to the pressure of circumstances and joined the League on the 13th November, 1556, when he was named its "Captain General," and Lieutenant-General of the army of France in Italy. As far as Paul IV. was concerned, it was but a short war. Alva, the celebrated general of Spain, marched from Naples, entered the States of the Church, and there reduced several strong forts without encountering any effective resistance. The Duke de Guise, at the commencement of the year 1557, entered Italy at the head of the French army, with which he "advanced to Rome,

bent on the conquest of Naples." But, in the meanwhile, an important diversion was being effected in the Low Countries, where Emmanuel Philibert, Duke of Savoy, one of the ablest captains of Philip II., gained the battle of St. Quentin, in which no less than 600 French gentlemen, and the flower of the French noblesse, including the great Marshal de Montmorency, were taken prisoners. It was necessary to recall the Duke de Guise, whose presence at Paris could no longer be dispensed with, although his departure from Italy left Paul IV. absolutely without resources. Philip II., however, was too superstitious in his reverence towards the triple tiara to indulge his appetite for revenge. He made peace with the Pope, on very humiliating conditions, September 14, 1557.

The operations of Duke Ercole in this war were restricted to the province of Lombardy, which he steadily refused to leave, though strongly urged by Paul IV. to turn his arms against Naples. He knew the strength of the Spanish forces in Northern Italy too well to incur the risk of losing his own states, whilst engaged in a distant and uncertain enterprise. At Reggio, whither Ercole went with the Ferrarese troops, after making all due preparations for the contest, he was joined by the Duke de Guise, his son-in-law, and by his eldest son, Alfonso. This prince appears, after the reconciliation to his father, in 1554, to have returned to France, where a fall from a horse belonging to the Duke d'Aumale, which he had persisted in mounting, nearly cost him

his life. Indeed he lay for hours as one dead. There was a grand review at Reggio, where the French army mustered 14,000 infantry, 4000 horse, and 700 men at arms. The army of Ferrara numbered 6000 infantry, 600 horse, and 200 men at arms, besides 50 gentlemen volunteers of the duke's own guard. Though Ercole obstinately refused to accompany the invading army into the Abruzzo, he agreed to furnish it with munitions of war, whilst he remained in the north, to hold in check the Spaniards of the Milanese. War had always been distasteful to Ercole II., and he certainly won no laurels in this contest. The Venetians, whose co-operation he had personally solicited, not only declined to embroil themselves in the strife, but counselled him to withdraw from it. Ercole failed in the attempt to reduce Coreggio and Guastalla, and had nearly fallen a victim with all his house to a conspiracy concerted in Ferrara, under the connivance of Cardinal Madrucci, the Marquis di Pescara, and Ferrante di Gonzaga, partisans of King Philip in Lombardy. The plot was accidentally discovered, and frustrated, and Ercole turned it to advantage by deriving from it another pretext for not carrying his army to a great distance from his own territories. Paul IV., however, punished his vassal's lukewarmness by omitting to have the Duke of Ferrara included in his treaty of peace with Philip II. Ercole therefore remained exposed to the animosity of the Spanish party in Lombardy, and to the attacks of the Dukes of Parma and Florence. Henry II. also manifested such a total indisposition to aid his un-

fortunate ally when he earnestly besought assistance in his extremity, that Ercole was well nigh desperate. At this crisis, however, Prince Alfonso, accompanied by Cornelio Bentivoglio, at the head of 4000 infantry, strengthened by four pieces of artillery, gave battle to the army of Parma on the 9th of January, 1558, and discomfited it. Shortly afterwards, Cosmo, Duke of Florence, who through fear of Francesco d'Este, the governor of the French territory in the State of Siena, had been induced to make friends with Ercole, succeeded in bringing about a pacification between the King of Spain and Ottavio Farnese on the one side, and the Duke of Ferrara on the other. The marriage of Prince Alfonso with Lucrezia, third daughter of Cosmo, on the 18th day of June in the following year, sealed the reconciliation of the Ducal Houses of Ferrara and Florence. Leaving his bride at the court of her father, Alfonso set out for Paris immediately after the nuptial ceremony, to resume military service under Henry II., and to justify Duke Ercole's withdrawal from the League.

Of the stirring events of the late resultless contest, the Duchess Renée could have been no unsympathising observer. Judging from the past, it may well be believed that she would have hailed with exultation the re-establishment of French supremacy in Italy. The celebrated warrior Montluc, whose Memoirs have come down to us, relates how, on his arrival at Ferrara (after the reverses at St. Quentin had necessitated the recall

of Guise), he was received and welcomed not only by the duke, and his brother the cardinal, but also by "Madame la Duchesse," "as if he had been their own brother." He adds: "They would that I should lodge in the castle," where they entertained him with all hospitality. And in another place, after narrating his success in throwing himself with succours into Vercelli, and his return to Ferrara, when peace was restored between the duke and Philip II., he complacently continues: "It needs not to ask if I was welcomed by Monsieur the Duke, Monsieur the Cardinal, and by Madame la Duchesse, for I do not think that they ever caressed any man, of whatever condition he might be, more than myself."

In harmony with Renée's grateful reception of her valiant compatriot, was her benevolent care for the perishing soldiery of France, the remains of the army of Guise, after their brilliant leader had forsaken his command in Italy. Their situation was pitiable in the extreme. According to Brantôme, no less than 10,000 of these destitute creatures were saved from death by the liberal hand of Renée. "For," he says, "as they passed through Ferrara, she supplied them all with money and medicines, as far as was in her power; and when her steward represented to her her heavy expenses, she only answered, 'What would you have me do? These are poor Frenchmen, and my countrymen, who, if God had given me a beard on my chin and I had been a man, would all now have been my subjects; and

would have been such nevertheless, if that unjust Salic law did not bear too hard upon me.'" It had been well, indeed, for France if Renée had reigned over her! Many a dark page in the history of that country would have shone brightly for ever, if it had been lighted with the deeds and words of such a queen as she would have made. But in her less exalted post she acquitted herself nobly, and left an example, and gained an enduring reward.

CHAP. VII.

Galeazzo Caraccioli. — Epistle of Calvin to Renée. — Her "Vexations." — Persecutions in France. — Deaths of Henry II. and of Ercole II. — Character of the latter. — Succession of Alfonso II. — His Reception and "Progress." — Renée's Retirement to France. — The Cause of it.

It has been seen that the "reconciliation" of the Duchess of Ferrara to the Church of Rome was effected during the autumn of the year 1544. There is little reason for believing that this step was anything else than an act of deception, to which she had been induced either by fear of her tyrannical husband*, or by the hope of procuring the restoration of her children to her own care. "The mask," no doubt, "soon became an instrument of torture." Pelletario and his company, however, saw not for a while the true face behind it, but there were others who did.

Of these, there was one eminent amongst the reformed Italians for his constancy to the faith, which, in direct opposition to the current of his worldly interests, he had been led to adopt, — Galeazzo Caraccioli, the eldest son of the Marquis of Vico. Through the instrumentality of Valdez at Naples, his mind had been first

opened to perceive the errors of his early creed, but the great change was fully perfected in him by Pietro Martire Vermigli's Lectures on the First Epistle to the Corinthians, of which he had been one of the auditors. There were many who hailed the conversion of this young noble, among whom was Marc' Antonio Flaminio, who addressed an edifying epistle to Caraccioli on the subject; but it was altogether distasteful to his own family. The marquis, his father, whose ruling motive was the exaltation of his house and posterity, foresaw the displeasure of his imperial master as the certain consequence of his son's "heresy." The wife of Caraccioli also resisted all his endeavours to win her from the religion of Rome, and strove on her part to turn him away from the truths which he had embraced. Finding at last that liberty to serve his God according to his conscience would be denied to him at Naples, he resolved, after much mental conflict, to separate himself from all that he held dear in this world rather than lose what was dearer to him still, his peace of mind and his religious integrity. He withdrew from the court of Charles V., and retired to Geneva in 1551, where he placed himself under the instruction of Calvin, and became not merely his pupil, but his devoted friend. It was after an abortive attempt on the part of his father in the year 1555 to recall him to Naples, that Caraccioli, "returning with a glad heart" from the useless conference to which a sense of filial duty alone had led him, "came to the city of Ferrara, where he was

joyfully received of Franciscus Portus, who afterwards taught publicly at Geneva many years. . . . . This Portus brought Galeacius (sic) into acquaintance with the noble Duchess of Ferrara, who entertained him honourably, and after much conference had with him of the alteration of his religion, and of the success of his long voyages and tedious journeys, of the Church of Geneva, of Calvin, and of many chief points of Christian religion, she dismissed him and left him to his journey, but not without all courtesies that she could afford him, and, namely, for one, to relieve the length and tediousness of the way, she sent him her own chariot, and thus Galeacius was conveyed in the chariot of so great a princess as far as to the town of Francolium."* Thus Renée did homage to that self-sacrificing spirit in another which she yet lacked in herself,—perhaps she envied it. In due time she emulated it in her own upward career.

The MS. collections of Dupuy, preserved in the Bibliothèque Impériale at Paris, contain an epistle of

* From a curious little book entitled, "The Italian Convert, &c., or the Life of Galeacius Caracciolus, the noble Marquess of Vico. Containing the story of his admirable conversion from popery, and forsaking of a rich Marquesdom for the Gospel's sake. Written first in *Italian*, thence translated into Latin by Reverend Beza; and for the benefit of our people, put into English, and now published by W. C. In memoria sempiterna justus. Psalm 112. The just shall be had in everlasting remembrance. London, printed for *Abel Roper*, at the sign of the Sun in Fleet Street, against St. Dunstan's Church, 1677."

My thanks are due to Sir Thomas Phillipps, Bart., for a sight of this picturesque little piece of biography.

Calvin to the Duchess of Ferrara, dated July 20th, 1558. This document is valuable as illustrating the character of the Reformer's correspondence with Renée at this period, and interesting on account of the light which it throws on her inner life; for it discovers some of the difficulties and trials amidst which the harassed duchess still held on her way. The warning against dissimulation contained in it, shows that Renée yet felt constrained to conceal her true sentiments on the subject of religion, or to confine her acknowledgment of her real opinions within a very limited circle of attached dependants and friends. However, Calvin, whilst seeking to fortify her mind against the perils which she had to encounter, deals gently with her troubled spirit, as one who was careful not to "break the bruised reed, nor to quench the smoking flax." The following is a translation of the Reformer's letter.* He preserves his incognito of "Charles d'Espeville," the old disguise of 1535-6, when he was a visitor at the court of the Duchess of Ferrara.

"MADAM, — I praise God that the man who I had sent to you discharged his duty so well that you are satisfied with him, for that being the case, I hope that his exertions will have served at the same time to bring you forward on the way of salvation. Now, since God has not permitted that he should on this occasion follow

* Translation from a copy made of a copy taken from vol. 101—102, of the *Collection Dupuy*, and collated with the article of the said vol. 101—102, fo. 16 Ro., of the letters of *John Calvin*.

out his employment at greater length, I beseech you, Madam, at whatever cost, to persevere in being daily taught in the school of our Lord Jesus Christ, as in fact you know well enough, without being admonished by others, that you have need to be, especially at a time when the devil is stirring up all the vexations he can in order to make you turn away from it. Nay, since you have to resist all the intrigues that this mortal enemy of our salvation plies against you, call to mind also that God uses this means for the trial of your faith. If to be thus tested seem to you a hard and rough trial, think well on what St. Peter says, 'If a corruptible metal is put into the fire that it may be known to be good and true, much more shall the faith, which is far more precious, not be spared.' If you feel in yourself more weakness than might be wished, have recourse to Him who has promised that all those who hope in Him shall be as the tree planted by the waters, having a good and living root, which never withers under any heat that may come. For it is certain that He will never suffer us to be tempted beyond that which we are able to bear, and that if He looses Satan's rein, He will increase in us, measure for measure, the power of overcoming him in all things. It is good and useful to us, that we sound well the depth of our infirmity, not that it may make us sink indolently into despair, but that we may become anxious to find the remedy for it. Wherefore, Madam, while you preserve your trust that the enemies who so furiously rage will be of no avail,

however they may strive, without the leave of the Sovereign Master, be not weary of combating with all temptations; and inasmuch as weapons are necessary to you in that combat, while you seek to Him who is able to make you strong, exercise yourself in attending to holy exhortations, and, as I have already said, take good heed not to despise the having a person daily to stir you up, which measure you have up to this time found on trial to be very useful to you, and in promoting which I hope that our friends will not be found wanting. I myself will willingly so employ myself whenever it shall be your pleasure to commission me to find you a suitable one. Only, Madam, take courage; yield not to Satan the vantage which he looks for of finding you unprepared, and take good care lest, if at any time you should count on avoiding the combat by dissimulation, such fearfulness should give that enemy the victory to which he aspires, for we ought to know his crafty ways, in order that we may be beforehand with them. Even were the condition of the children of God a hundred times harder than it is, not a thought should be entertained of abandoning the good to which God by His infinite goodness has been pleased to call us.

"I have also heard, Madam, that you are not without thorns in your own house. But still you must overcome that evil with the rest; and how great soever may appear to be the danger that those who will not amend themselves, but remain obstinate, will, if you dismiss them, revenge themselves by blasphemies and calumnies,

still it is better for once to run that risk, than go on thus flagging always. Nay, more, the chief thing is to purify your house as God commands you, and as you have an example in David in the 101st Psalm. As soon as you shall have taken pains to dedicate it simply and entirely to so good a King, dare to hope that He will be its protector! True it is that, though you should labour to that end, there will always be imperfections found. But for that very reason it behoves you so much the more to exert yourself vigorously, that you may, at least, half accomplish the work. At all events, when we are making for the right object, we have this privilege, that God accepts the will for the deed.

"I have one word more, which shall follow, to write to you, Madam, in regard to the scruples which affect you as to the presentation of benefices. If you can do no better, inasmuch as the property is not your own, at least, that you may not involve yourself in any such encumbrance, rather commit it to the management of the good abbé, who will be glad to relieve you of it. For by the purport of the letters of authorisation which you will give him concerning it, this affair may be well settled without any discredit, [those letters setting forth] that for the relief of your conscience and because you do not wish to be compromised in what concerns the state of the Church, you thus put the matter in commission. For as to making any good use whatever of the presentation itself, I see no way to it. Beside all this, I beg you, Madam, to fortify yourself in mind

against being blamed for doing good, since such is the recompence that is promised to us from on high. As to threats, which are somewhat more rough than blame, fight against all weaknesses, because if you cherish them you will fall back instead of going forward. If you find resistance in yourself, let it not astonish you, for valiant a champion as Peter was, still it is said of him, 'thou shalt be put where thou wouldest not.' In which it is shown to us that never shall we serve God without some questioning of His will, as long as our flesh has to maintain its struggle.

"The good lord, of whom I know that you will be glad to have news, had crossed the sea at the end of May, and before the middle of June had a promise that some galleys should be sent for the transport of his wife, for the passage is not long, and he had obtained that favour of the captain, who can so gratify him without trouble or cost. Nevertheless, so it is, that I think that he will soon return, if God does not miraculously change the heart of his wife, who loves him, to draw him, if she could, to his perdition, however he may have acted under a sense of duty, so as to excuse himself before God and man.

"Madam, I humbly commend myself to your good graces, having first entreated our good God to direct you always by His Spirit, to strengthen you in His righteousness, to keep you under His protection, and to enrich you in every good thing.

"This 20th July, 1558. Your very humble servant,

"CHARLES D'ESPEVILLE."

The "vexations" to which Calvin alludes in the foregoing epistle were no doubt chiefly the result of the duke's unmitigable bigotry, and of the enmity of the disappointed Jesuits. Ercole must have been well aware of Renée's inalienable attachment to the proscribed doctrine, but he must have been likewise convinced of the utter uselessness of recantations such as hers. He contented himself, therefore, with the great humiliation into which that weak or deceitful act had plunged her, and with compelling her to veil her real opinions, and gave her no other molestation on account of religion during the short remainder of his reign and life. But their domestic harmony, which was broken even before their polemical differences became so violent, was never restored again. They were outwardly reconciled, but henceforth they continued to dwell apart, contrasts to each other both in faith and practice. Unless historians have grievously slandered Ercole, he had forfeited by his disgraceful immoralities all claim to a wife's esteem and reverence.

Meanwhile, the native land of Renée, under its cruel king, Henry II., was from time to time the scene of savage persecution. What manner of man Henry was, we have seen in the instructions to Oriz. Like his father, Francis I., he loved to witness the lingering martyrdom of his victims, feasting his eyes, as it were, on sights of mortal agony, and more than mortal endurance. Henry was also as perfidious as he was cruel. The measures already adopted against heresy were not,

in his opinion, severe enough. The Parliament which had refused to sanction the establishment of the Inquisition in France, contained some suspected members. To detect them, the Cardinal of Lorraine devised a plan which his sovereign's meanness carried into execution. Henry went in subtlety to the Hall of Parliament, and there holding "a bed of justice," invited the members to state freely before him their opinions on the subject of the proper treatment of heresy. Entrapped by this simulated candour, the Presidents Harlai, Seguier, and De Thou argued in behalf of the toleration of doctrines, in the belief of which they nevertheless did not share, and two others, Louis du Faur and Anne du Bourg, boldly avowed their sympathy with the Reformation, and lifted up their voices in the cause of their persecuted brethren. The king was transported with fury at their fearless words; he commanded the two speakers to be instantly arrested and dragged to prison. Their doom was sealed. But, meanwhile, sentence went forth against the unrighteous monarch from the judgment-seat of Heaven. It was to fulfil his solemn covenant with Philip II. for the extirpation of heresy in his dominions, that the deceitful experiment had been made in the Hall of Parliament. To celebrate the royal marriages which had sealed the treaty of Cateau Cambresis, of which the above agreement was one of the conditions, a grand tournament took place in Paris, whilst the two counsellors lay in prison, awaiting a bloody death. Then it

was that the lance of Montgomery unwittingly avenged them of their adversary. Henry, so unexpectedly struck down, fell mortally wounded into the arms of Prince Alfonso of Ferrara, and after lingering for twelve days, expired. When the awful tidings were received in Ferrara, the duke caused a splendid funeral service to be celebrated for his like-minded nephew in the cathedral. In less than three months after the death of the King of France, Ercole himself was also summoned to his account. He died, after a short illness of only eight days' continuance, on the 3rd of October, 1559, — it may be said, prematurely, for he had not completed his fifty-second year. In his will, which bore the date of 1558, he assigned to the Duchess Renée the usufruct of the palace of Belriguardo, and of half of the lands appertaining thereunto, being careful, however, to hamper the bequest with this condition, "for so long as she shall live as a good Catholic." But if Ercole thought to bind her conscience with a chain of gold, he knew her not.

Partial chroniclers of the family of Este, as Roddi, Frizzi, and the more eminent Muratori, have not spared their praises of Ercole II. They were either desirous of commending themselves thereby to the reigning House of Modena, or were fascinated by Ercole's patronage of art and literature, and his burning zeal for the Church of Rome. To such fame as he is entitled on these grounds, we, at the end of 300 years, may be content to leave the husband of Renée. His eulogising bio-

graphers do but tread in the steps of those who, whilst he lived, requited his favours by flatteries of the most exaggerated description. A specimen of such sickening laudations is furnished to us in the following extract from an epistle of Calcagnini's to Bellincini: "For so do the virtues of this excellent prince vie with each other, that no one can easily decide which of them has the pre-eminence. If you are praising the seriousness of his character, his affability occurs to you; his liberality suffers not his justice to be ranked above it; nor does his eloquence sustain its part without prudence, nor his prudence without eloquence. Yet so he bears the greatness of his condition, so deports himself as a prince, that it is evident that he remembers himself to be a man."

The death of the duke immediately placed the Duchess Renée in an important position in Ferrara. The two sons of Ercole, Alfonso and Luigi, were far away, at the French Court, and Cardinal Ippolito II., their uncle, had left Ferrara on the 14th of August, to take his seat in the Roman Conclave. Francesco d'Este, the uncle of the late duke, was in the service of Spain. The reins of government, therefore, fell into the hands of Renée. Overlooked and despised as she had been for so long, she yet showed herself fully equal to the emergency which now called her forward. Having despatched a courier to Paris with the fatal intelligence, and given honourable interment to the remains of the deceased duke, she assumed with vigour the

direction of the State. She entrusted the guardianship of Modena to Don Alfonso d'Este (son of Alfonso I., and Laura Eustochia), and took measures for the defence of Ferrara, as though the enemy were actually before its walls. In fact, the Duke di Sessa, Governor of Milan, meditated offensive movements, and would most probably have carried out his intention, had not his sovereign, Philip II., desired him to desist from new undertakings.

When the tidings of his father's death reached Alfonso, he immediately sent Cornelio Bentivoglio to Ferrara with various commissions, and "most loving letters to his mother and to the city." Then he went to Escléron on the 18th of October to take his leave of the young king, Francis II., who, upon the duke's departure, issued a brevet commemorating his relationship with Alfonso, and the services rendered by that prince to his late father, King Henry, together with the expenses incurred by Alfonso in maintaining suitably the state of the Estensi by keeping up his retinue of gentlemen of various nations, also his losses in the renunciation of his company of one hundred lancers in the French army, and of all the other dignities and pensions held by the said Alfonso in France. In consideration whereof, Francis assigns him an annual gratification of 20,000 scudi d' oro del sole, to be paid to him on the surrender of Caen in Normandy, which (as will be remembered) was part of the dowry of the Princess Renée,

his mother. This grant was subsequently confirmed by Charles IX. on the 14th October, 1564.

Embarking at Marseilles, Alfonso sailed to Livorno, from whence he passed to Florence to visit his wife, Lucrezia de' Medici, whom he had so abruptly quitted after their marriage in the summer of the previous year. His father-in-law, Duke Cosmo I., bore him company on his way to his own territories as far as Castelnuovo in Garfagnana. On descending the mountains of the Modenese, Alfonso was met by his uncle of the same name, accompanied by many gentlemen and feudatories, and soon afterwards arrived the Lord of Mirandola, Ludovico Pico, with the customary congratulations to the young duke on his accession, and the Lord of Sassuolo, Ercole di Pii, who gave him a splendid reception in that small state. "And all Modena," pursues the careful annalist Muratori, "went out on November 21st to rejoice at the sight of their new prince." Alfonso, however, paused not to enter that city (destined in a few years to become the capital of his plundered successor), but continued his journey to Ferrara. It was expected that he would dismount according to custom at the Belvedere Palace without the walls, and the nobility of Ferrara there assembled to meet him. But he disappointed their expectations by going first, incognito, to visit the duchess, his mother, at her palace within the city. The next day he retired to the Belvedere, where he remained in privacy till the preparations were completed for his first public entry into Ferrara as its duke.

An act of mercy graced his arrival. He gave liberty to an aged relative, Giulio d'Este, brother of Alfonso I., who for a conspiracy in 1505 had languished for fifty-three miserable years in prison. Great, we are told, was the delight of the public, and great the joy of Giulio, in whose breast age had not extinguished feeling, nor the gloom of so long a captivity obliterated the sense of enjoyment. He appeared in public, when released from his fetters, in the same costume which he wore when, half a century previous, he had been cast into prison, creating much marvel at the change which time had made in the prevailing fashion. Giulio enjoyed his freedom for rather more than two years, and died in March, 1561.

The "savj del Magistrato" of Ferrara assembled within the Belvedere Palace on Nov. 26th, 1559, and their Giudice, Count Galeazzo Est. Tassone, delivered the ducal sceptre into the hands of Alfonso II. After which the young duke made a magnificent "progress" through the city, which was again "royally embellished" and adorned with triumphal arches in divers places. The people, with whom their new sovereign was a favourite, burst forth into loud acclamations, and the famous artillery of Ferrara kept up an incessant discharge of salutes. The oath of fidelity at the Cathedral, and the act of grace to Giulio, closed the day's proceedings. A more sombre ceremony was in store for the following day. This was the celebration of the obsequies of the deceased duke, which took place in the Cathe-

dral, the body having been already interred in the Church of Corpus Domini. A catafalque was prepared in the Ducal Chapel, illuminated by numerous tapers, and upon it was placed a bier, containing a statue representing the deceased. Accompanied by the nobility of Ferrara, the duke and his uncle Don Alfonso arrived, and took their seats under a grand canopy, where they listened to the funeral oration, composed by the Secretary Gian Battista Pigna. A procession of the whole court in mourning to the church where Ercole II. was buried concluded the ceremony.

Alfonso II. signalised his accession by conferring various favours on the city of Ferrara, and on the community of his states, and announced the commencement of his reign to the Italian courts by ambassadors sent for that purpose. The election of Pius IV. to the popedom took place on the 26th December, and great festivities were instituted on three successive evenings at Ferrara, to celebrate the event. Alfonso despatched, as extraordinary ambassador to the new Pontiff, Count Ippolito Turchi, who was charged to associate himself on his arrival with the Bishop of Anglona (the ordinary ambassador), the Cardinal Ippolito II., Alfonso's uncle, and the Cardinal of Guise, and thus strengthened, to solicit first from Pius the cardinal's hat for Luigi d'Este, and then to negotiate a small exchange of territory between the Duke of Ferrara and the Pope *, which was important to Alfonso in respect

* Frizzi, Raccolte, &c., c. vi. p. 355, t. iv.

of the defences of Commachio, but which Pius declined to concede.

Very early in his reign, Alfonso II. gave proofs that he had inherited the literary tastes which had for generations distinguished the family of Este. He restored and re-opened the University of Ferrara, which had become almost extinct during the latter years of his father's life. He made liberal additions to the Biblioteca Estense, which the noble bequests of Leonello, Borso, and Ercole I. had in old time enriched. Besides contributing MSS. to its learned stores, Alfonso commanded the purchase at any expense, however large, of all the books which had been given to the world since the invention of printing.* He also proclaimed his intention of establishing a press at Ferrara for the purpose of printing such hitherto inedited works as might be deemed advantageous to the cause of letters, but it is uncertain whether or not this munificent design was ever carried into execution.

Meanwhile the Duchess Renée, relying on her maternal influence over the young duke† for impunity in matters of conscience, "again revealed the state of her heart," by a less cautious course of conduct in religion than formerly. The result is soon told. Alfonso being at Rome in May, 1560, for the performance of the usual abject act of homage required from a vassal of the Holy See, Pio Quarto seized the opportunity to prefer a grave

* Tiraboschi, t. vii. p. 227.

† Antichità Estense, t. ii.

complaint of the scandals which the "heresy of the mother of the reigning Duke of Ferrara" was bringing upon the House of Este. The tide of opinion had turned in Italy, and the Church of Rome had everywhere recovered her lost ground in the once almost alienated peninsula. Alfonso dared not offend the Pope, nor had he learned the genial principles of toleration at such a court as that of Henry II. Therefore, on his return to Ferrara, "after vain prayers employed on his side, together with exhortations and reasonings of learned and religious persons," he enforced on his mother the stern alternatives either to change her religion or to depart from Italy; and she chose to leave Ferrara "rather than return," even in mere external show, "to the faith of the Catholic Church." And "not a little disconsolate" were the inhabitants of that city, which had been the home of Renée for more than thirty years, when the tidings spread amongst them that their beloved duchess was about to abandon it for ever. "Mightily," says Muratori, "did the loss of this royal princess displease the people of Ferrara, because, fascinating every one with the vivacity of her intellect, and the sweetness of her manners, she was beloved by every one to a high degree, and so much the more by reason of her unequalled liberality, for she never was weary of aiding the necessitous by alms."* Though hindered by bigotry

* Antichità Estense, Parte II. c. xiii. p. 389.

from conferring the best of all blessings on her people, she nevertheless "did what she could" to diminish the sum of human misery within her appointed limits. And those whom she had served requited her with their unfeigned gratitude. "Yes! they saw in her the fruits of the Spirit, and were constrained to love her, but they, being in the darkness, and preferring it to the light, desired not the knowledge of her ways. A few years more, and they became miserable vassals of the Pope in things temporal, as they already were in things spiritual." Then was the degradation of Ferrara complete.

The true cause of the dowager duchess's return to France was not generally known to the Ferrarese. "The common report was, that she went away, because dissatisfied with the duke, her son." On September 2nd, 1560, she set out on her journey; a barge conveyed her household and personal effects as far as Turin. She herself departed in a litter, accompanied by her younger son, Luigi, who went with her to France. Duke Alfonso attended his mother with a train of 300 persons, nobles, ladies and cavaliers, as far as Finale in the Modenese, where they bade each other farewell.

CHAP. VIII.

France, on Renée's Return. — Its Court. — Its religious State. — Leaders of the French Reformation. — The Constable. — The Guises. — The House of Bourbon. — Persecution of the "Huguenots." — Conspiracy of Amboise. — Its Failure. — Cruel Executions. — Anna d'Este's Grief. — Edict of Romorantin.

THE France which Renée left, as the bride of Ercole d'Este, in 1528, differed widely in many of its features from the France to which she returned, a widow and an outcast from Ferrara, in 1560. Some of the changes which had taken place were calculated to impress her mind with a painful sense of loneliness,—nay, of utter desolation. At the Court of France, amongst the members of its then existing royal family, Renée must have felt herself as belonging to a bygone generation, and was probably regarded there with curious eyes as a mere relic of the past, or with glances of dread, as one who was fulfilling the office of the monitory skeleton at the feasts of Ancient Egypt. Great, indeed, was the devastation which that period of thirty years had wrought amongst the mighty ones of France. The place which once knew Louise of Savoy, Francis I., and Marguerite, the friend of Renée's youth, knew them no more—had long ceased to know them. Many of the

intermediate generation of the Royal House had also passed away from the scene of their life's enjoyments and responsibilities. The three sons of Renée's only sister, the good Queen Claude, Francis the Dauphin, Henry Duke of Orléans (afterwards Henry II.), and Charles, who succeeded to that title when Henry became Dauphin, were all numbered with the dead. So also was their sister Magdalene, who lived long enough to marry James V. of Scotland, and fell a victim to that ungenial climate in little more than six months after the solemnization of their nuptials. Of the former celebrities of the court and camp, not of royal lineage, perhaps the Constable de Montmorency alone survived to recall to Renée's remembrance the chivalrous age of Francis I.

The political aspect of France was as much changed as the personal aspect of its court. The great and almost life-enduring animosity between Francis I. and Charles V., renewed by Henry II., and by him carried on against Philip, terminated just before the French monarch's death, in the peace of Cateau Cambresis. The interest with which foreign affairs had been regarded by the nation was now diverted to domestic broils, and the spectacle which the French Court displayed at the return of Renée was that of an intense struggle between two rival houses, each claiming affinity to royalty. These were the Houses of Bourbon and Guise, the former descending from a younger son of St. Louis, the latter from Charlemagne. They strove with

one another for the real authority of that kingly office which was so feebly sustained by the second Francis, young in years and weak in intellect, the mere shadow of a king. The place of the Duchess d'Angoulême was filled in some sort by a very different occupant, for, unlike Louise of Savoy, Catherine de' Medici had little capacity for hate*, and none at all for love. Her ambition was not less than that of the mother of Francis I., but it was more selfish, and its ultimate results were more evidently disastrous. The strifes of the great families were exasperated by, if they did not always turn upon, the religious commotion with which France was then agitated. The change was remarkable in this respect also, during the same prolific period. The word which says, "Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth," may sometimes be cited in a good sense. Thirty years had nourished a surprising growth of Protestant opinion in France. Although an incredible number of victims to the profession of the Reformed Faith had perished, they were replaced by an ever-increasing ratio of fresh converts, until "this rising party gradually came to embrace all the most intellectual and virtuous among the leaders, and nearly all the sober, orderly and intelligent of the community at large." Moreover, the body of the Reformed had become too numerous to dispense any longer with an organised system of discipline and worship, and too decided in its dissent from

* Sismondi, Hist. des Français, t. xviii. p. 102.

Romanism, to avail itself any longer with a good conscience of the ritual ministrations of the antagonist Church. At Paris, therefore, in the month of September, 1555, they formed themselves into a separate ecclesiastical communion, "by the establishment," to quote the words of Theodore Beza, "of a consistory composed of elders and deacons who should preside over it, as nearly as possible after the pattern of the primitive Church of the Apostles' times." Well might that reformer proceed to comment with wonder upon a step so fraught with danger, from the proximity of a persecuting king and court, and of the terrible "chambre ardente" of the Parliament, "like a furnace daily vomiting flames," which the Sorbonne seconded with a vigilant malignity against both the books and persons of heretics, and which the populace applauded, unbridled in its fury against those who were suspected of holding "the new opinions." The confession of faith of the French Reformed Church was agreed on at the first national Protestant Synod, held in Paris in the year 1559, and presided over by François Morel, Sieur de Coulonges, and the formation of a Protestant Church at Paris was followed by the establishment of communities, on the same model, at Méaux (already so celebrated as the see of Briconnet and the scene of the cruel sufferings of Le Clerc), at Angers, at Poitiers, in the Isle d'Arvert, in Saintonge, at Agen, Bourges, Issoudun, Blois and Tours. In the year of the first synod of Paris, churches were organised at

Chartres, at La Chastre, at St. Amand, at Maçon, at Angoulême, at Montauban, at Cahors, at Milhaud, and at Montpellier in the Cevennes; few of these were long without martyrs. It was in spite of every obstacle of the most formidable description, that the Word of God grew and multiplied in France.

Those leaders of the French Reformation who deserve to be regarded as the truest exponents of its principles were not of the blood royal. Antoine de Bourbon, Duke of Vendôme, was but a weak reed, and his brother, the Prince of Condé, though sincere in his allegiance to the Reformed Church, and a brave supporter of its cause, lacked the calmness, if not the stern virtue, which is the secret of strength in all foremost men. "But the Court of France," says Sismondi*, "had never yet presented a finer combination of bravery, talents, and virtues," than was exhibited in the brothers of the noble House of Chatillon. Odêt, the eldest, wore the cardinal's purple, perhaps, more worthily than it was ever worn at all in that or any generation. But it was to Gaspard de Coligni, Admiral of France, and François d'Andelot, Colonel-General of the French Infantry, that their Protestant fellow-countrymen could point as to the brightest ornaments of their party. The favour with which these two great men regarded the Reformation has been ascribed to the influence of their mother, Louise de Montmorency, sister of the constable. It was, however, in the day of adversity that they became real converts

* P. 105.

to its doctrines: D'Andelot first, whilst a prisoner in the Castle of Milan, through the perusal of books sent to him from Ferrara, by the Duchess Renée; Coligni—when also a captive after the battle of St. Quentin—by reading the Bible and religious treatises given to him by his brother, D'Andelot.

Liberated from captivity and "doubly free," by the emancipation of his spirit as well as his body, Coligni withdrew for a time to his inheritance of Chatillon-sur-Loing, where, at the mature age of forty-three, he devoted himself to an earnest study of the Sacred Scriptures. He was not solitary in this occupation, for his noble-hearted wife, Charlotte de Laval, gave him her full sympathy; and his brothers, the cardinal and D'Andelot, associated themselves with him in his calm examination of the great question, "What is truth?" The result of this enquiry in the case of Odêt may be traced in his renunciation, some years later, of the priestly office, and of his ecclesiastical benefices and dignities. D'Andelot had previously made his choice; Coligni was confirmed in the impressions which his mind had received during his imprisonment. From henceforth the names of these eminent men are interwoven with the French Reformation, with the history of France itself. But of the two the admiral was the greater man.

It was a sad thing for his suffering country that Coligni was amongst her "unsuccessful great men." Had one so religious, so virtuous, so self-controlled, so

unselfishly brave as he, achieved power, what blessings might not have flowed down on France through such a channel. But being totally devoid of personal ambition, and only seeking toleration for himself and his co-religionists, he never struck what seemed to him a needless blow; he laid down the sword too soon rather than prosecute hostilities for the sake of merely partisan advantages. From the very first he was unwilling to make the appeal to arms in behalf of religion. Civil war was as distasteful to his loyalty as it was to his humanity, and it must ever be deplored that the tearful entreaties of his wife persuaded him to a step which his better judgment condemned. Coligni, who knew the Bible so well, must have remembered that, whether for the advance of the Gospel or the defence of it, "all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword." From those wars of religion, which seemed necessary to purchase toleration for the Reformed, the cause of the Reformation suffered far more severely than from the most bloody persecution. Yet, though Coligni failed of his highest aim—the religious interests of his nation—his genius impressed itself in a remarkable manner on all matters of military regulation. His rules and *ordonnances* were admired and even adopted by his foes, —they prevented the effusion of much blood. To have banished murder from war, to a degree unequalled by any great leader before him, is high praise to Coligni.

The admiral's uncle, Anne de Montmorency, Constable of France, was as turbulent and bold as he was

unimpeachably brave. Born in 1493 of a long line of nobles, whose war-cry for centuries had been, "Dieu aide au premier baron Chrestien," he received his feminine name from Anne of Bretagne whose godson he was, as a mark of her royal favour. Besides these grounds of proud self-complacency, the constable could reflect, that 300 years before him a Montmorency had held the same high office of state, and that another had been sponsor to one of the monarchs of France.* At the period now treated of (1559) he was an old man, but his arm was still strong and his ambition was in full force. Nor had he learnt forbearance towards those whom he counted as his enemies. He struggled through life to gain power, or to keep it when gained, and he could brook no competitor. He certainly succeeded in possessing himself of a large share of that dangerous thing which he loved so much. He had been educated at Amboise with the young Francis, Count d'Angoulême, and the future monarch and his sister, Marguerite, regarded him with the strongest favour. Enjoying, during part of the reign of Francis, the high distinctions of Constable, Grand Master, Minister of Finance and Chief Counsellor to Queen Eleanor, it might have been thought that his ambition had been amply gratified; but the ambition of the Constable de Montmorency was never heard to say, "it is enough." It is asserted that he actually grew jealous of Mar-

* Miss Freer's Life of Marguerite d'Angoulême, Queen of Navarre, vol. i. p. 80.

guerite's influence over the mind of her royal brother, and that in endeavouring to weaken it, by suggesting doubts of her orthodoxy, he excited the king's displeasure, which displayed itself at length in his own temporary disgrace. However, the accession of Henry II. found the constable restored to favour at court, "chief of the administration, and invested with absolute powers of command over the state." He preserved unbroken the friendship of Henry, nor did his imprisonment after the battle of St. Quentin lessen his influence over the monarch's mind. The reign of Francis II., however, brought about a new order of things. The constable's power was shaken by the ascendency of rivals watching their opportunity to supersede him, "and Montmorency, received coldly at the court, was allowed to retire to Chantilly."

These formidable opponents of the constable were François Duke of Guise, and his brother Charles, Cardinal of Lorraine. The marriage of Francis II. with their niece, Mary Stuart, daughter of James V. of Scotland and his second wife, Mary of Lorraine, had given even a stronger impulse to the fortunes of these men than the bravery of Le Balafré, or the subtle genius of the cardinal. Their near connection with "the crown matrimonial" of France made them for the time absolute "masters of the king and kingdom." They also formed an intimate alliance with the Spanish Cabinet; for being now at the head of the Catholic party in France, and desiring to be regarded as the

champions of the ancient faith, they had the same interest and the same policy as Philip II.*

This François, Duke of Guise, was he whose favour with Henry II. had procured for himself the hand of Anna d'Este, daughter of Ercole II. and Renée. He was cruel and bigoted, but as a military commander he was brave and skilful, nor until the later years of his life was his character open to the charge of perfidy. He was wholly uninformed as to the merits of the great religious question of his times, regarding it in the light of a Gordian knot, to be solved by the sword rather than by free enquiry. The painful anecdote related by Beza, of the duke finding a copy of the Scriptures during the massacre of the reformed congregation at Vassy, and handing it with denunciations to the cardinal, his brother, illustrates not so much his irreligion as his ignorance, for he knew not what book it was. Yet François de Guise may be favourably compared with some of his contemporaries, for he was less guilty, less bloodthirsty than they were. His brother, the Cardinal of Lorraine, who could not plead ignorance to palliate his deeds, merited far heavier reprobation. His was indeed a fearful career, when judged by the simplest rules of justice, mercy, and truth. It is the meeting with characters in history like his, which so often induces repugnance to the study, and causes its records to be closed in horror

* Sismondi, t. xviii. p. 103.

and despair of human nature. Charles of Guise, "the Grand Inquisitor of France," can hardly be looked upon as even conscientious in his persecuting policy.* He acted the part of a bigot, but the tangible temporalities of the Church of Rome were dearer to him than its doctrines. He and his family had received so largely from that Church, the Catholic party in France seemed to be so manifestly on the winning side, that it is "no wonder that a son of the House of Guise should have defended 'the cause of Romanism' with such pertinacious vehemence."† It was but natural that he should have regarded his own selfish interests as involved in the permanence of the existing ecclesiastical arrangements, and that he was ever on the watch to check the rising spirit of innovation. "He had," we are assured, "various and splendid endowments," but "he failed in the most distinguishing quality of great men, —moral elevation and forgetfulness of self. To obtain power, all means were right in his eyes, and when he possessed it he never cared to employ it for the service or the relief of others. He was looked upon as envious and unkind, slow in the bestowal of favours, but always prepared to do an injury, not to be depended on by

* See the part taken by him at the Council of Trent, as related by Sismondi, t. xviii. pp. 380, 381. However, experience of the power of the Huguenots may have taught him forbearance for awhile. Ten years later, his reception at Rome of the news of the massacre of St. Bartholomew proves how much of the tiger still remained in him.

† Lives of the Queens of Scotland, by Miss Strickland, vol. i. p. 343.

his friends, and revengeful against his enemies."* Jeanne d'Albrêt called him "the scourge of his age," and she had reason for her detestation of him†; his contemporaries endorsed her sentence, and posterity, with one voice, echoes it.

The domination of the Guises over France and her monarch was never so firmly fixed as it seemed at least to be at the accession of Francis II. Notwithstanding their unchallenged descent from Charlemagne, and the naturalisation (so to speak) of their father, Claude, whose military valour had been awarded by the elevation of his county of Guise into a "Duché Pairie" by Francis I., they were still looked upon as foreigners by the nation, who reclaimed against their pretensions to the honours of the blood royal.‡ Nor was the House of Bourbon disposed to acquiesce in their usurped authority. Antoine de Bourbon, Duke of Vendôme, was the head of the Bourbon family. By his marriage with the admirable Jeanne d'Albrêt, daughter of Henry II. and Marguerite of Navarre, he had acquired possession of that little kingdom. Of a noble and majestic aspect, graceful, affable, and open in bearing, he yet wanted all the moral qualities which conduct to honourable distinction or exalt to successful leadership of a great party or a great cause. His love of luxury counter-

* Civil Wars and Monarchy in France, by Leopold Ranke, vol. i. p. 248.

† Histoire de Jeanne d'Albrêt, par Madlle. de Vauvilliers, t. ii. p. 435.

‡ Regnier de la Planché, p. 141, marginal note.

balanced his personal bravery. He was incapable of mental application, and even limited in intellect. His extraordinary softness and nonchalance unfitted him for the bold intrigues of a court, for rivalry with the Guises*, for the exercise of power in such an age. He was led by favourites who often betrayed him to his enemies; and though inclined to favour the Reformed Religion, he listened more to the strivings of ambition than to the voice of his conscience.† Charles, Cardinal of Bourbon, who was not less weak in character ‡, was even more obtuse in intellect. Louis, Prince of Condé, the third brother of the King of Navarre, gave promise of a nobler development, and though we may demur to the panegyric which declares him, "even by the confession of his enemies to have possessed in the highest degree all the qualities which make a hero," § it is impossible to deny that he was very nearly a great man. Tried by adversity, he stood that searching test, and bore misfortune with unshaken endurance. Alas! that he should ever have been ensnared by the fascinations of ease, and by the wiles of Catherine de' Medici.

The history of France during many years of the sixteenth century is the history of the rival Houses of Guise and Bourbon. The Guises were now "in possession of the government, and exercised it as seemed to

* Madlle. de Vauvilliers, Histoire de Jeanne d'Albrêt, t. i. pp. 28, 29.

† Sismondi, Hist. des Français, t. xviii. p. 107.

‡ Ibid. He also calls him, "très-fanatique et très-ignorant," p. 64.

§ Madlle. de Vauvilliers, Hist. de Jeanne d'Albrêt, t. ii. pp. 30, 31.

them good, whilst round the Bourbons were closely united all who were in opposition to the cardinal."* The wars which ensued have been called the wars of religion in France. And so they were. But even had there been no religious element in the matter, a sanguinary struggle between these two Houses must have resulted from their rivalry. It was too intense, and involved a stake too large, to be terminated by pacific means. At this period, however, the beginning of civil discord may be traced to the dominance of the Guises, and to the manner in which they used their acquired pre-eminence. The Reformed had nothing to hope for from the Cardinal of Lorraine, and if they expected more tolerant treatment under a new reign, and from a youthful king, they were speedily undeceived. The trial and execution of the brave Du Bourg stained the beginning of Francis II.'s short term of sovereignty with blood. Besides this significant act of cruelty, three edicts, given in the name of the young king on the 4th September and on the 1st and 14th November, 1559, and registered by the Parliament, ordained the destruction of all houses in which heretical assemblies had been held, and which were never again to be rebuilt, the punishment of death without mercy on all who had been present at these assemblies, and the appointment of a commissioner, deputed to receive secret information upon all such cases.†

* Ranke's Civil Wars and Monarchy in France, vol. i. pp. 254, 255.

† Sismondi, Hist. des Français, t. xviii. p. 116.

These persecuted people were alternately denominated Lutherans and Sacramentarians in the letters patent which denounced them. They were also known as "Christandins," and finally they themselves adopted the name of "Huguenots." There has been much controversy concerning the origin of this name, but it appears to have been derived from the connection of the Reformed French with Geneva. It had been the designation of the partisans of liberty in that republic since the year 1518, when they obtained the privilege of being comprehended with the Swiss confederates, "Eidgenossen," to ensure protection from the Duke of Savoy, whose yoke they had resolved to shake from off their necks.*

There was no disposition on the part of those in power, at this period, to relax the severity of the new edicts in their practical administration. Arrests were numerous; the property of such as sought to save themselves by flight was sequestrated and sold by public auction, whilst their forsaken children wandered homeless through the streets of the city, imploring charity in vain.† The populace were inflamed against the Huguenots by the malignant and baseless scandals which were propagated against them. Yet "the more they were afflicted, the more they multiplied and grew."

Happy would it have been for these sufferers for the truth, had they acted on the doctrine of non-resistance

* Sismondi, t. xviii. p. 117.

† Ibid., p. 120.

and passive submission, so strongly inculcated by Calvin. Two causes conspired to hinder this; first, the accession to their party of divers turbulent and discontented persons, to whose natures endurance of wrong was an impracticable virtue, and secondly, the wide-spread conviction that the authority of the Guises was unlawful, and that, without any infringement of the law of Christian duty, it might be resisted.

The result was the conspiracy of Amboise, which thus originated. The arrogance of the Cardinal of Lorraine had brought things to a crisis. An edict revoking the donations of domains made by Henry II., and a positive refusal to discharge even the legal obligations of the crown, were followed up by a proclamation in the name of the king, who was then at Fontainebleau, to the effect that all persons, of whatsoever condition, who had come to the court to solicit the payment of debts, or the fulfilment of promises, should take their departure from it in twenty-four hours, on pain of being hanged; and that this threat might wear the appearance of a real intention, a gibbet was forthwith erected near the palace, in one of the most conspicuous places. As almost all the claimants were of the rank of gentlemen, the French noblesse took fire at this insult, and meditated revenge on the authors of it.*

There was one Godefroi de Barri, Seigneur de la Renaudie, whose determined character, activity, and

* Sismondi, Hist. des Français, t. xviii. pp. 125, 126.

intelligence, fitted him for the direction of a conspiracy, and whose enmity against the Duke de Guise (who had put his brother-in-law, Gaspard de Heu, to death) guaranteed the sincerity of his proposed vengeance. Having fled from justice to Geneva, he there came into contact with some of the fugitive French Protestants, whom he strove to excite to rebel against the Guises, as "usurpers, foreigners, and tyrants." Returning to France, he contrived to assemble a large number of the most influential of the Huguenot party at Nantes, where measures were concocted without provoking suspicion. Renaudie signified to the conspirators that the Prince of Condé was really at the head of the enterprise, and that he would declare himself to be its leader in due season.

The plan proposed by La Renaudie was as follows. A large number of Huguenots were to present themselves unarmed before the king at Blois, with a petition imploring him to withdraw the persecuting edicts, and to grant the Reformed the free exercise of their religion. And, since their secret assemblies by night had afforded to their enemies a pretext for calumniating their conduct, they were to beseech the king to grant permission for their assembling in temples open to the public, and under the eye of authority. Meanwhile, when the royal attention was attracted to this crowd of unarmed petitioners at the foot of the throne, five hundred horsemen, and a thousand infantry, chosen from amongst gentlemen, the most devoted to the cause of the

Huguenots and Bourbons, were to meet from the different provinces, to advance in silence, surprise the town of Blois, seize the persons of the Guises, bring them to trial, engage Francis II. to follow from henceforth the counsels of the Bourbon princes, and to convoke the States-General.*

The conspiracy failed—being divulged, through terror or remorse, by a partisan named Avenelles, in whose house La Renaudie lodged, whilst waiting in Paris the time for its execution. The Guises being forewarned, were of course forearmed. Measures were craftily taken to lull the Huguenots into a false security, and thus to insure their after-destruction. The court removed from Blois to Amboise. It was known that the secret had transpired, but La Renaudie, judging that matters had gone too far to admit of a retreat, pushed the affair to extremity. The precautions of the Guises were, however, too well taken. La Renaudie, at the head of his troop, being encountered by a royal force in the forest of Château Renaud, was slain in the combat. Another of the leaders, Castelneau, had previously surrendered himself to the Duke of Nemours at Noizai; Mazère and Raunai were also prisoners. Then began those executions which have blackened for ever the names of those who ordered them, and of those who witnessed them. Not less than twelve hundred victims perished to glut the vengeance of the brothers of Guise.

* For all the particulars of this conspiracy, see Sismondi, t. xviii. pp. 137—148.

"The executions proceeded," says La Planché, "with the greatest diligence, for not a day nor night passed in which a great number were not put to death, and all of them personages of distinction. Some were drowned, others hanged, others beheaded. But what was strange to see, and a thing that had never happened under any form of government, was their being led to execution without any sentence publicly pronounced upon them, or any declaration made of the reason of their deaths, or even of their names . . . . One thing observed . . . was that the executions were reserved until after dinner, contrary to custom, but the Guises did this expressly to afford *some pastime for the ladies*, who had become weary of being so long in this place. And in truth they both (eux et elles) took station at the windows of the castle, as if there had been some *momeries* to be played before them, being moved neither with pity nor compassion,—at least there was no appearance of any in them. And what is worse, the king and his young brothers appeared at these spectacles, and the sufferers were pointed out to them by the cardinal, with the signs of a man who rejoiced greatly to animate the prince against his own subjects; for when they died with the greatest constancy, he would say, 'Behold, sire, these audacious infuriates! The fear of death cannot abate their pride and malice: what would they then do if they had you in their hands?'"*

* Regnier de la Planché, p. 214. Quoted by Sismondi, t. xviii. pp. 148, 149.

The Prince of Condé, who, to disarm suspicion, had gone to Amboise, dared not refuse to witness some of these murders. It is some consolation to know that there was one at least amongst the ladies of the court to whom the horrid scenes above described did not afford "pastime." Anna d'Este, Duchess of Guise, bathed in tears, rushed from the balcony where she had just beheld the slaughter of Castelneau and his companions, to the apartment of the queen-mother, from whom she looked for sympathy, because the time had not long gone by when Catherine had agreed with her in regarding the Huguenots as innocent persons. "The queen beholding her thus afflicted, demanded "what was the matter? and what had happened to distress her, and to cause such strange lamentations?" "I have," she replied, "all the occasion in the world for my grief, for I have just witnessed the most piteous tragedy, and strange cruelty in the effusion of the blood of the innocent and good subjects of the king, so that I doubt not that shortly some great misfortune will come upon our house for it, and that God will wholly exterminate us for the cruelty and inhumanities which are perpetrated." The same historian adds, that these observations being carefully noted and brought to her husband's ears, she received in consequence from him very rude treatment.*

The aged Chancellor Olivier mourned over these deeds

* Regnier de la Planché, p. 224.

of violence at Amboise, though he suffered them to be carried into execution, and dying at this period, said to the Cardinal of Lorraine, just before he expired, "O Cardinal! you will ruin the souls of us all." The execution of so many persons did not satiate the wrath of the Guises; some of the sufferers had acknowledged the Prince of Condé to be the real head of the conspirators and of course both the duke and the cardinal thirsted for his blood. Condé, however, demanded a public audience of the king, and then challenged to single combat any man who should dare to accuse him of being implicated in the conspiracy. He hoped to provoke the Duke of Guise to accept the challenge, but with great skill the duke immediately offered himself as Condé's second in any such encounter, and the prince being accounted to have purged himself from the stain of conspiring against the government by this bold step, was suffered to withdraw without molestation to his estates. Coligni and d'Andelôt, from whom the conspirators had concealed their intentions, came to declare to the king that the only way to pacify the kingdom was to establish religious toleration, after which they retired from the court. Nothing was farther from the minds of the Guises than compliance with such counsel. Their power had survived the shock which the conspiracy of Amboise had been designed to inflict upon it: while, indeed, the suppression of that conspiracy was proceeding, the Duke of Guise availed himself of the opportunity to obtain from Francis II. the office of Lieutenant-General of

the Kingdom. It vexed Catherine de' Medici greatly to see this ambitious brotherhood thus confirmed in their usurped authority; but for the present all resistance was useless. The edict of Romorantin, issued in May, 1560, forbade, in the harshest terms, the Huguenot assemblies for worship, and empowered the inferior courts to suppress them wherever they existed. The Huguenots had gained no advantage by their first resort to offensive measures. They had drawn on themselves the charge of disloyalty, had failed to deliver themselves from the oppression under which they groaned; and in the utter failure of the conspiracy of Amboise some of the best blood of France had been "poured out like water" — in vain.

CHAP. IX.

Parties in France. — Convocation of the States-General. — New Conspiracy detected. — Condé arrested and sentenced to Death. — Renée on her Arrival remonstrates. — Francis II. dies. — Fall of the Guises. — Condé released. — Renée's Communications to and from Queen Elizabeth. — Catherine's Policy. — Her Astrology and Renée's.

An eminent writer of the present day has vividly described the position of parties in France, immediately preceding the convocation of the States-General at Orléans (December, 1560), in the following words*: —

"But the blast of the new trumpet of woe was about to be heard throughout that devoted land. The wars of religion drew near, and already the hostile bands of the Huguenots and the Catholics were arrayed against each other for that deadly conflict. The civil and military conduct of the cause of the Reformers had been committed to the princes of the House of Bourbon. The Catholics acknowledged the chiefs of the House of Lorraine as their guides and champions. At the head of the mediating, or, as they were called, the political party, were the Constable of Montmorency and the Chancellor l'Hôpital. The king himself was a cypher, a mere boy in his sixteenth year, in tutelage to his

* Sir James Stephen's Lectures on the History of France. Vol. I. Lect. xii. pp. 445—447.

mother, Catherine de' Medici, whose Italian guile found ceaseless exercise in maintaining her own dominion by the adjustment of the balance between the contending factions. Nor were the other great sovereigns of Europe passive spectators of the brooding tempest. Philip II. had pledged himself to the defence of the Catholics; Elizabeth and the Reformed States of Germany to the support of the Calvinistic arms.

"But ere those pledges could be redeemed, the Duke of Guise and his brother, the Cardinal of Lorraine, by the defeat of the Protestant conspiracy of Amboise, had risen to an absolute supremacy in the administration of the government of France, and had constrained the wily Catherine, at least for the moment, to grace and to partake their triumph.

"But with the powers came the responsibilities of that high position. The public revenue was inadequate by two and a half millions to meet the annual expenditure for which the Guises had now to provide. They had to choose between the unpopularity (so hazardous at such a crisis) of raising the necessary supplies by edicts, to be issued in the name of the king alone, and the hazard (so formidable to the French Court at all times) of convening the now almost obsolete assembly of the States-General of France. Yet from such a convention the House of Lorraine not unreasonably hoped to derive at once pecuniary resources and popular support; and in that expectation they became the avowed advocates of what then seemed so bold a

policy. On the other hand, Antoine, King of Navarre, and his brother, the Prince of Condé (the two chiefs of the House of Bourbon) anticipated from the same source the triumph of their Protestant adherents, and their own elevation to the political authority which Catherine was exercising in passive subservience to the Princes of Lorraine. Catherine herself hailed the prospect of their meeting as the most probable means of depressing each of the rival houses, and of confirming her own questionable powers; while the political party believed that the authority of the constable and the eloquence of the chancellor would enable them to subjugate the deputies to their peaceable and constitutional policy. Under the influence of those opposite, though concurrent motives, the leaders of all the great rival parties in France unanimously advised the king to convene the States-General of the realm."

This was the counsel of the whole Assembly of Notables, summoned by the Guises to meet at Fontainebleau on the 21st August, 1560. At that assembly, through a manœuvre on the part of their rivals, neither the King of Navarre nor the Prince of Condé were present. The brave Coligni, however, and his brothers were there. He fearlessly undertook to plead the cause of his persecuted fellow-Protestants. He presented a petition, praying that the rigorous penalties denounced against those of "The Religion" might be suspended, and that they might be suffered to worship publicly in their own temples, instead of being compelled to have

recourse to secret and illegal assemblies. He had the courage to declare that the true remedy for the perils of the state was the reformation of the Church, and scrupled not to counsel that the guards by which the young king's person was surrounded should be dismissed, and that the States-General should be assembled.

An edict, declaring the royal compliance with the important advice of the notables, was given on the 26th August. But in the meanwhile the vigilance of the Guises detected the formation of another conspiracy, not only against their authority, but even against their lives. This startling fact was revealed by the arrest of a gentleman in the service of the Prince of Condé, and the seizure of letters which he was conveying to his master from the Montmorencys and the Vidâme de Chartres.* The Vidâme was committed to prison on the following day, from whence death only released him; and in order to get the Bourbons also into the net, the king, three days afterwards, sent the Comte de Crussol to Antoine of Navarre, to invite him to appear, together with Condé, at the assembling of the States-General which had been convoked. But, on the other hand, the prince was not unwarned of the impending danger, for the Châtillons, before they left the court, signified to their sister, Madeleine de Roye, mother of the Princess of Condé, that her son-in-law was accused of plotting against the state, and advised him to be prepared

* Sismondi, Hist. des Français, t. xviii. p. 167.

to justify his conduct, if he should resolve on attending the convocation of the States-General.*

The King of Navarre and Condé were at Nérac when thus enticed to place themselves within the power of their direst enemies. The queen, Jeanne d'Albrêt, joined her entreaties with those of the other female relatives of the Bourbon princes, that they would evade the snare which lay before them,—but in vain. Antoine of Navarre was too careless to be apprehensive of mischief. Louis of Condé was too brave to dread danger. They had both urged the French monarch to summon the States-General. With what plea could they decline to be present at its opening? Moreover, to ensure their appearance, the Guises had prevailed on the Cardinal of Bourbon to aid the object of the royal messenger, and he came in person to Nérac to press the attendance of his brothers at Orléans. With a small body of followers the two princes therefore set out on their journey, and proceeded by slow marches towards the place of rendez-vous.

Meantime the plot of the Guises was being carefully matured, and they advanced, as it seemed, with certain steps, to the attainment of their final wishes. It was not only the Bourbon princes whose destruction they meditated. Coligni and D'Andelôt were to be the next victims. Then was to follow a general extermination of the "heretics" throughout France, and even, if

* Sismondi, Hist. des Français, t. xviii.

possible, in the neighbouring states. But they designed that Condé should head the melancholy catalogue of the sacrificed. His prison in Orléans was ready for him, and the decree for his arrest and condemnation signed by the king and the lords of the court, even by the Chancellor l'Hôpital. The Guises craftily withheld their signatures, to save the appearance of taking a malignant revenge. On the 29th October the Bourbon princes entered Orléans. They might have presaged the worst from the kind of reception they met with. No one went out to greet their arrival, except their two cousins, the Duke of Montpensier and the Prince de la Roche-sur-Yon. Besides this, the warlike aspect of the whole city, the numerous soldiers, the artillery guarding not only every gate but the opening of every street, the "Place," and the fortifications, must have intimated to them that more was intended than simply the convocation at Orléans of the States-General of France. On their arrival also at the royal quarters, they were not suffered to ride into the court-yard, but were compelled to descend from their horses in the street, and to enter through a wicket which was opened to give them admission. And even here, neither knight nor noble appeared to welcome the first princes of the blood; for such hollow courtesies were no longer needed to lull suspicion, —the snare had now enclosed its intended victims. But whatever lingering doubts as to the designs of the court might remain in the minds of the Bourbon princes, those doubts were soon

dissipated upon their being ushered into the royal presence. They found Francis II. surrounded by the Guises and the captains of his guard; his manner of reception spoke no friendly welcome either to Navarre or Condé. Nevertheless the king himself conducted them to the cabinet of the queen-mother, who, true to her purpose of independent action, received the Princes of Bourbon with marks of favour, and even of simulated grief. "Then," says Davila, the historian of this treachery, "the king turned towards the Prince of Condé, and complained in bitter terms that, although he had never inflicted on him either injury or ill-treatment, the prince, in contempt of laws human and divine, had stirred up several times his soldiers against him, had commenced civil war in several parts of the kingdom, had attempted to surprise his principal towns, and, in short, had plotted against his life and that of his brothers." The brave Condé boldly replied that those were calumnies invented by his enemies, and that he could establish his own innocence. "Well, then," said Francis, "to discover the truth, it will be necessary to proceed by the ordinary modes of justice;" and then, leaving the chamber, he commanded the captains of the guard to make Condé prisoner. The queen-mother sought with fair speech to console the King of Navarre whilst Condé was led away to prison, saying that it was hard to have been deceived by his own brother, the cardinal. Antoine, taken by surprise, could only complain and remonstrate with Catherine, who, in reply,

threw all the blame on the Duke of Guise as the author of the deed. The King of Navarre, though not absolutely placed, like Condé, under arrest, was in some respects treated as a prisoner; his secretary also was seized, and compelled to deliver up the letters and papers of his master. Thus far had the measures of the Guises prospered, and no whisper of clemency seemed likely to be heard. But a few days subsequent to the imprisonment of the prince, another personage appeared on the scene at Orléans. A friend to the doomed Condé was raised up in the Duchess Renée, who, having just arrived from Ferrara, hastened to pay her respects to her grand-nephew, the young French sovereign. This event was deemed worthy of being notified to Queen Elizabeth, by her ambassador, Sir Nicholas Throkmorton, in a despatch dated "Orléans, Nov. 17," and in the following terms:—

"The Duchess of Ferrara, mother of the duke that now is, according to that I wrote heretofore to your Ma^tie, aryved the 7th of this present, and was received by the King of Navarre, the French king's brethren, and all the great persons of this court." *

Throkmorton's omission of the name of Francis II. in this account of the reception at Orléans of the Duchess Renée may be supplied from the narrative of Brantôme, who says, "I saw her arrive, the king and all

* Throkmorton Despatches in her Majesty's State Paper Office, vol. labelled "*France*, 1560."

the court going to meet her, and receiving her with great honour as she deserved." *

It would seem that Renée's return to France had happened at an inauspicious moment for herself — just as her unworthy son-in-law, Francis of Guise, was projecting the entire subversion of the Reformation. To be forced to leave Ferrara for religion's sake, and then to find, on her arrival in her own country, the cause with which she was now and from henceforth to be identified so cruelly menaced, might have appalled one whose constancy was less matured; but it did not alarm Renée. On the contrary, she did not disguise her feelings; "deploring the present state of things," she "sharply reproached her son-in-law, and declaring that if she had arrived before Condé was imprisoned, she would have hindered it, warned Guise to desist in future from offering violence to princes of the royal stock, for that such wounds would bleed long, and that it never ended well with any one who had been first in the assault upon chiefs of royal blood." †

These brave words must have inspired the Huguenot party with new hope for the future. The Bourbon princes might indeed be no more in a position to aid them, and they were already convinced that no reliance could be placed on the queen-mother's promises of favour or protection. The voice, therefore, which

* See Bayle's Dict., vol. v., where this quotation appears.

† *De Thou*, book xxvi. chap. iv.; also Bernier's *Hist. de Blois*, and Montfaucon's *Monumens de la Monarchie*, t. v. p. 91.

pleaded the cause of the oppressed so boldly before one of the most powerful of the oppressors, must have sounded cheeringly in the ears of those who had learned their own peril by the arrest of the Prince of Condé.

But notwithstanding the remonstrance of the duchess, the Guises proceeded with those forms of justice by which they tried to disguise their "intent to murder their once formidable rival." The commission appointed to sit in judgment on the prince comprised Christopher de Thou, father of the historian, its president, Barthélemy Faye and Jacques Viole, counsellors, Gilles Bourdin, procureur-général, and Jean du Tillet, "Greffier" of the Parliament. Even L'Hôpital lent the sanction of his honoured name to their proceedings, by accompanying them, on the 13th November, to the prison of the prince, for the purpose of "interrogating" him. In vain did Condé protest against the constitution of this commission, and appeal to be tried by the king, the peers, and the Chambers of the Parliament assembled. His reclamation was declared null and frivolous, and it was threatened that, if he persisted in his refusal to answer the charges preferred against him, he should be dealt with as one who was in fact convicted of high treason. "It was not to be tolerated," arrogantly exclaimed the Duke de Guise "that *un petit galant*, prince though he was, should deal in such *bravades*." The very day was fixed for Condé's sentence and execution, the Guises delaying the fulfilment of

their sanguinary purpose only that they might thereby secure a greater holocaust of victims. The constable, however, was on his guard, and refused to come to Orléans. But the brave Coligni, though warned of the impending danger whilst on his road, was "moved by none of these things." He "committed the event to God," and continued his journey. How to rid themselves of the King of Navarre, was the grand perplexity of the Cardinal de Lorraine and the Duke de Guise, — for to bring a crowned head to the scaffold was no easily-accomplished feat, even in those desperate times. Unless history universally slanders them, they contrived an expedient worthy of their unscrupulous character. They devised the assassination of Antoine by the hand of the young Francis II. This plot seemed also ripe for execution. After being repeatedly summoned to the chamber of the king, Antoine at length presented himself in the royal cabinet with a trembling apprehension of intended injury. But it is to the credit of Francis, that his nature was not ferocious enough for the perpetration of such a deed of horror. He reproached Antoine with some imaginary offence, but accepted the explanations which Navarre offered with readiness, and suffered him to depart from his presence in peace. It was then that the Guises, incensed at the failure of their bloody purpose, left the royal cabinet where they had been concealed during the interview between Francis and Antoine, exclaiming, "O le roi

lâche et poltron!" * But though the destruction of Condé appeared inevitable, in spite of human justice and mercy, and the Duchess Renée's intervention, an overruling power wrought with irresistible hand for his deliverance, and the counsels of the Guises were "turned into foolishness." Death, which they made so light of, came to the rescue of the prisoner, but in a different way from his expectation, or his enemies' intention. Francis II. expired after a short illness on the 5th December, 1560, without having completed the 18th year of his age, or the 18th month of his reign. With the death of the king, the Guises' pretensions to absolute power fell to the ground †, and a cry which spoke reprobation both of the duke and the cardinal rose up through the whole of France.‡

At that fortunate moment, the Duchess of Montpensier and the Chancellor L'Hôpital interposed in behalf of Condé with the queen-mother. Catherine "loved no one, and was beloved by none," but her self-interested objects at this time were mixed up with the cause of the Bourbons. She perceived that it was now in her power to avail herself of their co-operation against the ambitious motives of the Guises. She was convinced that the life of Condé might be more serviceable to her than his death, and that with the aid of the two brothers, whilst she guarded the regency

* Madlle. de Vauvilliers, Hist. de Jeanne d'Albrêt, t. i. p. 187.
† Sismondi, Hist. des Français, vol. xviii. chap. 16, p. 185.
‡ Madlle. de Vauvilliers, t. i. p. 192.

from falling into the hands of Antoine of Navarre, she might become the actual possessor of chief power in the realm. In the mind of Catherine such considerations had sufficient weight to procure, first, the suspension of Condé's "procès," and, subsequently, his release from imprisonment.

The States-General were opened at Orléans on the 13th December, by the new king, Charles IX., who succeeded to his brother's throne at the age of ten years and a half. The name of Renée, Duchess of Ferrara, is found among those of the royal personages who surrounded the young monarch on that occasion. There is no need to recapitulate, in this place, the proceedings of this earnestly demanded assembly, inasmuch as they have no bearing on the history of Renée. Its closing session was held on the 31st January, 1561, in the presence of the same royal and noble witnesses who attended at its "overture."

But whilst the court abode at Orléans, the Duchess Renée availed herself of the opportunity which offered itself of sending for Sir Nicholas Throkmorton, that she might through him signify to his royal mistress the sentiments of admiring esteem with which she regarded Queen Elizabeth. The record of the conversation which ensued upon this interview is contained at length in a despatch of the ambassador to the English queen*; it is full of interest, as illustrative of the earnestness with

* Throkmorton *Ambassades*, State Paper Office, vol. labelled "*France*, 1561."

which she now desired to further the cause of truth being "fully persuaded in her own mind," and no longer afraid to be known as an adherent of the Reformation.

Sir Richard Throkmorton writes to his sovereign as follows:—

"To the Queen's most excellent Ma^{tie}.

"It may please your Ma^{tie}, synce my letters to the same of the thyrd of Januari, sent by De Fariory (?), the old Dutchesse of Farare (off whose aryvall at thys courte I did advertyse your Ma^{tie} before thys tyme) did send on off hyr syrvants unto me with goode words of vysytation: who desyryd me on hyr behalffe to take the payns to come and vysyte hyr at hyr lodgyngs unto whom she then (as the messanger sayd) wold declare more off hyr mynd: wyche accordyng to hyr own order, I dyd the vjth off Januwary. The Dutchesse receavyd me wyth courtesy and goode words, and mayde me to sytt by hyr in a chayre, and sayd unto me: 'Mons^{r} l'Ambassador, bycausse I have not the cõmoditie to let the quene your M^{rs} knowe of my good wyll and affection to hyr, I have desyryd you to take the payns to come to me as the best meyne to supplie the want, beynge here hyr ambassador.' 'I tell you, Mons. l'Ambassador,' she sayd, 'I doe her that reverence bycausse she is a quene that doth belong to her estate, and doth become me: But I love and honor (her) bycausse she is, I here, a Christian and virtuos quene, and hathe in hyr realme advanced and set forthe the trew servysse, glorie,

and honor off God, by whose good example and constance thereyn I trust other pryncis will be movyd to do the lyke: So as in thys latter tyme of the world, she may (be) reputyd of goode ryghte, as good a mynyster for the restoryng and restitution of God's word off long tyme lying oppressyd and darkenyd, as ether was Josias yn the putting forthe off the old testament or Constantyne the new. 'Lo,' sayd she, 'what a lord God is that doth blemyshe the fame and estimation of the great men of the world through the doyings off a weake woman. All theyr victories and conquests,' sayd she, 'doth give place to thyse your Mystres acts. And for thys virtuos entrepryse I note,' sayd she, 'how the lord dothe blesse hyr, and give hyr moche felycitie. Fyrst, she hath the love and the obedyence of her subgetts: she hath (from the) Lord goode successe against hyr enemies: She ys indued with many good gyftes, the grettest pryncis of Christendome dothe desyer hyr yn marriage. And on thing which ys specially to be notyd, She alone hathe done more than hyr syster could do, beyng alive, with on of the grettest pryncis of the world, yea, yn that wytche never none of her ancestors could ever bring to passe. For by occasion of hyr relygion, she hath obtainyd the amytie of the realme of Scotland and moreover thereby she hathe won the favor of a grette many yn everie contrie. This prosperitie,' she sayd, 'Mons. l'Ambassador, ys of many folks moche regardyd, insomoche as I judge theyre be many of sondry estates, yea, yn those that be not of hyr relygion,

that ar perswaded that the Lord dothe sustayne hyr and prosper hyr proceedyngs, and theyreby are more inclynyd to give eare to the treuthe. I thynke,' sayd she, 'the Quene Mother, beyng a virtuos and sage lady, dothe begynn to herkynne to the treuthe, and can be contented that abusys be reformed in the Churches of thys realme, which,' sayd she, 'wold in my oppinion, take better effect yff the quene your M^rs^ would use some persuasions either by wryting or otherwyse unto hyr. You will not believe,' sayd she, 'the goode towardnes that ys in the Kyng for hys age, and yt were grett pytie that he should not be instructed in the treuthe, seyng so good a dyspocition and so grett a spryte be mette in hym together. And as the quene your Mystres is the principall mynyster of the advancement off the kyngdome of God and hys word yn hyr owne realme, and in the realme of Scotland, so may she be the anchor of the same grace, if she wyll, in this realme, and so consequently through all Europe. For,' sayd she, 'if thys realme be converted, all other contrees wyll embrace the same relygion.' I answered that I was well assuryd your Ma^tie^ wold verie thankfully accept her goode affection, and gladly embrace hyr amytie yn respecte of her vertew, wysdom, and estate. But I thought thys should be to your Ma^tie^ most acceptable, that she dyd grounde hyr goode wyll upon the occasion of relygion, your Ma^tie^ esteeming that the beste and most parfecte amytie which proceedyd from that fondation. And I dyd assuer hyr 'to advertysse your Ma^tie^ by my next dyspatche of hyr good mynd and the reasons off ytt.'

"The sayd duchesse sayd unto me, 'Mons. l'Ambassador, you for your owne parte may do some goode yn the matter. For when occasions be offeryd you to have conference with the quene mother, you may use some perswasions unto hyr to induce her thereto. Theyre is,' sayd she, 'no meyns so certayne and so goode to establysshe a perfecte and assuryd amytie betwyxte France and England, as an amytie in religgion, and by thys meyns, sayd she, you shall do your dutie to God, and do your Mrs. and hyr realme goode servysse.' I sayd to the duchesse that, 'I had a goode wyll to employ all that was yn me to so goode a conclusion.' But I dyd se yn the contrayrie religgion (that) unitie did not all ways occasion amytie.' 'That trieth,' sayd the Duchesse, 'the spryte of that relygion to be the spryte off error. But,' sayd she, 'Mons. l'Ambassador, that dyscord ys not amongste those that professe the treuthe.' I answeryd that, as thys day yn all Estates the case of relygion was estemyd so to touche the polycie (whearеoff in other pryncis contres ambassadors owght to speak warely), as I dyd take myselffe not to be a fytt instrument to have to do in that matter. But rather thowghte that she (beyng the kyng's nere kynswoman, and no stranger, and yn credytte with the quene mother, the kyng of Navarr, and all other grett personagis of thys realme, the duke of Guys havyng here in this courte a grett authorytie, beyng hyr son yn law) was in my opinyon a most convenyient meyne to worke in the matter: and methought, I sayd 'she could not but grettly promote the matter whyche she

dyd so moche dessyr the advancement off. I sayd hyr words must be takyn to procede only off zeale off relygion and tranquillytie off the realme. Peradventure an embassador's words (how well sowever they were ment) should have another interpretation.' She sayd, 'Monsr l'Ambassador, you know what you have to do, but I thynke whatsowever the quene, your Mrs. shall do in thys matter, or whatsowever you shall say cannot but take goode effecte.' Then she sayd, 'besyds these respects that dothe move me to love and honor the quene, your Mrs., wheareoff I have alredy spokyne to you, theyre is another cause wyche, thowgh yt be off les wheight, dothe worke yn me a parciall goode wyll towards hyr. Theyre was an old auquayntance betwyxte the quene hyr mother and me when she was on off my syster quene Claude's mayds of honor.' I did tell the duchesse that 'I would not forgett to advertysse your Matie of all that she sayd unto me.' And so after a few obsequious words I toke my leave of her. While the duchesse of Farare and I talked together, the duchesse of Guise her dawghter came ynto the chambre. It may please your Matie at the next dyspatche to gratifie the sayd duchesse off Farare ether with your letters or some other vysytation on your behalffe.

(Dated from Orléans, the 10th of January, 1560 (61), and signed,)

"Your Maties most humble faythfll
"obeydient servant and subgett,
"N. Throkmorton."

That Queen Elizabeth acted on the suggestion with which her ambassador concludes his letter, is evidenced by the following letters of Renée, acknowledging "the vysytation" of her "cousin" of England.

"A la tres haulte et puissante Reyne d'Angleterre.

"MADAME, MA COUSINE,— Tres haulte et tres excellent Reyne, nře honorée cousine.

"Du conte de bedford que vře M^te^ a envoye divers le Roy monseigneur, j'ay entendu la visite qu'il luy a pleu par luy me faire avec sa Lře et le contenu de la croiance d'icelle, et encores de son Ambassadeur Residant par deca. Qui m'a esté tres grand tesmoignage de la bonne opinion qu'elle a envers moy, et de la bonne grace qui me demonstre davantage celle que j'ay tousjours eu d'elle et me donne occasion non seullement de continuer selon que ses vertus bonnes et dignes qualitez le comportent, mais de l'augmenter et m'emploier pour elle, en sorte que je ne demeure ingrate, et redevable de tant d'honnestes et bonnes paroles et gracieusetez qu'elle m'a declairées. Dont pour lui en rendre les graces que je lui en doibts et l'offre qu'elles meritent, venant de vře part (Madame), j'ay prié le dit Conte de Bedford vous en repeter et dire et faire le remerciement, et offrer en mon nom (?) qui me sont convenables, en si bonne voulanté et affection qu'il vous plaist me demonstrer, et de celle que reciproquement je porte a votre M^te^, et me recommendant a sa bonne grace, je prie le createur lui

donner tres bonne et longue vie. Escript a fontainebleau ce 20 jo^{r} de fevrier.

"Vře bonne cousine,

"RENEE DE FRANCE."

"A Madame la Reyne d'Angleterre, Madame ma cousine.*

"MADAME, — Le chevalier Rimynalde gentilhomme Ferraroys, pñt portour, qui est venu en ma compaignye jusjuez ici, s'en va avec le Conte de Bedford desirant vous baiser la main. Je l'ay tres expressement chargé vous faire la reverence de ma part et pñter mes affectionnees reconnaissances (?) a votre bonnegrace. Auquel m'en remettant, je prie a dieu, Madame, vous donner tres bonne et longue vie. De Fontainebleau ce 20 jour de Fevrier.

"Vře bonne cousine,

"RENEE DE FRANCE."

In a despatch† "to the right Hon^{ble} Lords and others of the Privy Counsell," signed "T. Bedford," "N. Throkmorton," and dated Feb. 26th, 1560 (61), occurs a notice of an interview, apparently of Bedford, with the Duchess Renée, to deliver the Queen of England's letter, as follows: —

"From him (the King of France) I went to the Duchesse of Ferrara, and declared unto her that part

* This letter is in the next page to the former, labelled on the back, in a very old hand, "René de Ferrare to the Quene's Ma^{tie}."

† Throkmorton Despatches, State Paper Office.

of my instructions which was appointed me, with the delivery of the Q. Ma$^{tie's}$ lr̃e. The said duchesse gave her Ma^{tie} her heartie thanks, and said that she was ready to her to make as good proufe of her good will as any frende her Ma^{tie} had in all the worlde, as she would more at large declare unto us at more convenyent tyme and place."

It should appear that Renée lost no time in fulfilling that promise; but on the very day on which she wrote her acknowledgment to Elizabeth, she sent intelligence by her secretary, to Bedford and Throkmorton, continuing a still earlier communication with them; for, in a despatch * addressed "to the right hon^{able} and our varie good Lordes, the lords and others of the Quene's Ma$^{tie's}$ pryvie Counsel," dated "this twenty-sixth of February, 1560 (61) signed, F. Bedford. N. Throkmorton," there is this passage:

"The next daie, beying the 20th, preparing ourselves to dep̃t after our dyner, the duchesse of Ferrara sent her secretaire to tell us from her that whereas in conversation betwixt us of the general councell at our last being wth her, she sayd that she thought it was like to go forwarde, as the pope desiered to have it; since which tyme, she had heard that this morning the Quene's mother said in the affaires, that the great reasones she had heard of the Ambassadours of England, why the councell ought not to go forwarde as it was

* Throkmorton Despatches, p. 627.

publyshed, gave her occasion to call the matter againe in question to have it consulted upon, whether it were mete for the King to accept it so or not. The said duchesse said also that these persuasions and reasons used by us from the Quene's Ma^{tie}, were like to do very moch good in the matter, and wyshed also that the princes of Almaine would take the same way that her Ma^{tie} hathe done. Being thus moved by this advertissment from the said duchesse, and by suche conversation as we had with the Admirall, but especially bycause in all our former conferences with the Quene mother, and the King of Navarre about that matter, they referred their acceptance of the counsell to the agreement of the Empire, and also by other matters come to our knowledge by other good means, we thought it very expedient as well for the furtherance of the matter, as for her Ma$^{tie's}$ better sheltery (?) to send the princes of Almaine word thereof with all the best diligence we could. And finding there one Emanuel Tremelle, reader of the Hebrew lecture in King Edwarde's time in Cambridge, redy to employe him self in that service, we wrote to the said princes, and gave him instructions how to procede therein, in such sort as by the copie of our letter and instructions presently sent to yo^{r} Lordshippes may appere. And for that the matter required some spede, we sent him in post and gave him a hundred crowns to make his voyage. The said Emanuel was a suyter in this courte, recommended hither by some of the Princes of Almayne in the name of the people of Metz, to have

some tolleration in that town for matters of religion, and to places granted them to preach publicly the gospel, and to get released certain prisoners that had been imprisoned there for religion, which his suit was never graciously heard till our coming hither. And since our talking and persuasion with the Quene's mother, it is granted them that the said prisoners shall be released. As for their other request for a place to preache in, though it is not altogether granted to them, yet it is permitted that they shall meet to the number of sixty (?) and not above, in places appointed by themselves, and there preache as they shall thynke good."

At this period it was Catherine's policy to be tolerant of the Huguenots. Only ambitious of power, and, comparatively speaking, indifferent which should be the triumphant creed, so that her authority might be firmly established, she perceived in the spirit manifested by the lately assembled States-General (despite the efforts of the Guises to impart to it a decidedly Catholic colouring) that the educated majority of the French people, whether belonging to the Nobility or the Commons, were gained over to the cause of the Reformation. The ladies of the Royal Household were for the most part "devoted to the Huguenots." The upright, mild, and liberal L'Hôpital was her most trusted counsellor; after him in her confidence, stood Jean de Montluc, Bishop of Valence, who leant openly towards the reformers. No wonder that Renée thought Catherine "inclined to

hearken to the truth," until she learnt better to estimate the cunning craftiness of "that Italian woman," who only "lay in wait to deceive."

No two other individuals of exalted rank, thus, in the course of events, thrown in each other's way, could have had less in common than the Queen Mother of France, and the Duchess Dowager of Ferrara. Even at the period now alluded to, religion must have been a very insecure topic of conversation between them. Politics, so mingled with religion, were equally dangerous ground. But we are told, that a venerable superstition, in which each participated, supplied them with an interesting subject of discourse. Astrology was Renée's weakness; in the mind of Catherine it took the place of religion; "she had no faith in God, but she trusted implicitly in the stars." The observatory of Catherine still exists in an old detached tower on the south side of Château Blois. Thither she used often to retire with her astrologer, to consult the disposition of the heavenly bodies. On astrology she conversed with Renée, who in her early days "had studied that vain science under Luc Gaurie," and whose proficiency in it led the queen mother to declare one day in the hearing of the gossipping Brantôme, "that the greatest philosopher in the world could not have treated the subject better."

CHAP. X.

The "Triumvirate."— Fiercely intolerant Edict of the Parliament of Paris. — Increase of Protestantism — Jeanne d'Albrêt its Friend. — Montargis — Renée makes it a Refuge for the Persecuted. — Tolerant Edict. — Antoine of Navarre deserts the Protestant Cause — His Motive — His Presumption. — Massacre of Vassy. — Renée's prudent and courageous Conduct. — Outrages at Montargis repressed by her.

THE young King Charles IX. with the whole Court, left Orleans on the 5th of February, 1561, and proceeded to Fontainebleau. Thither also went the Duchess Dowager of Ferrara, as the dates of her letters to Queen Elizabeth inform us. The Guises, whose power was no longer paramount, departed shortly afterwards to Rheims, the archchiepiscopal see of the Cardinal of Lorraine. Fortune again smiled on the rival House of Bourbon. The Prince of Condé presented himself at Fontainebleau, when a decree of the Council speedily relieved him from the sentence which had hung over his head ever since his arrest at Orleans. The King of Navarre procured from the queen mother the office of Lieutenant-General of France. But new troubles were impending on the Huguenot party. Its antagonists were too strong to yield their point without a struggle. The jealous old Constable de Montmorency joined himself with the Duke de Guise and the Marshal St.

André, in a league "for the defence of the Catholic Religion;" an alliance which procured for its chiefs the name of "The Triumvirate." The Parliament too, formerly so liberal in its religious tendencies, now appeared disposed to rival the Sorbonne in bigotry and intolerance. It not only remonstrated against the Edict of Romorantin, but prohibited by fresh decrees the Huguenot assemblies for worship. It desired to revive the ancient ordinances against heretics, and even accused the Queen Mother of betraying both the religion and the laws of the kingdom, by permitting men to re-enter her councils who had abjured the faith of their fathers.* Its harsh policy triumphed in the edict of July, 1561, which declared the celebration of religious worship by the harassed Protestants to be punishable with death and confiscation of goods. This savage measure was carried in spite of the efforts of the excellent L'Hôpital, who strove, though unsuccessfully, to mitigate the severity of its enactments. One clause alone, which prohibited domiciliary visits of an inquisitorial character, tended to afford some alleviation of its vexatious tyranny.

The Guises, of course, exulted in this edict, and the duke loudly proclaimed his readiness to enforce it, if need were, with the sword. But Coligni and the Huguenots stoutly protested against the least encroachment on the scant measure of toleration which they

* Sismondi, Hist. des Français, t. xviii. p. 213.

had enjoyed since the beginning of the year.* Nor did popular opinion stamp its approval on the course which the Parliament had taken. The deputies of the nobility and of the tiers-état, assembled at Pontoise, were entirely opposed to the tenor of the new edict. The celebrated Colloquy of Poissy, in which the Cardinal of Lorraine and Theodore Beza consented to meet each other to discuss the doctrine of the Eucharist, seemed to promise the introduction of a milder spirit into religious controversy. Besides this, "the irresistible extension of Protestantism throughout France," inspired good hope of its ultimate victory. At this period, or a little later, more than two thousand reformed congregations existed in the kingdom. In the territory of Navarre, the cause of the Reformation was not merely tolerated by its admirable Queen, Jeanne D'Albrêt,—it was warmly cherished and promoted. For Jeanne was no waverer between two opinions like her husband Antoine, and the indomitable courage displayed by her in behalf of the cause she had espoused, stood out in remarkable contrast to his vacillating weakness. The moral influence of her character however, told upon him until the crafty Catherine de' Medici succeeded in alienating his affections from her. Into the mind of her son Henry she infused enough of her own predilections to qualify him in a great degree for the leadership of the French Huguenots, a post of

* Sismondi, Hist. des Français, t. xviii. p. 220.

honour and of difficulty, which it must be acknowledged he grandly occupied. Jeanne was worthy of her mother, Marguerite de Valois. Indeed, her unvarying adherence to the truth places her character in a less equivocal light than that in which the name of Marguerite has come down to us. Nevertheless, the Duchess Renée, who knew them both, valued each very highly. Of Marguerite, she wrote thus to Calvin, "The Queen of Navarre was the first Princess of this Kingdom who favoured the Gospel." Of Jeanne, Renée in the same letter commends "the good zeal and the good judgment," adding with affectionate warmth, "I love her with a mother's love, and praise the graces which God has bestowed upon her."

It is difficult to ascertain the precise time when Renée first took up her abode at Montargis after her return from Italy. It would seem (notwithstanding the assertions of some writers) that this city did not originally form part of her marriage dower, but, being assigned to her in compensation for any conceivable claims which she might prefer to her ancestral rights, it became the home of her widowhood. Nearly a hundred years later it was the birthplace of one with whom Renée would have rejoiced to hold communion—the devoted Madame Guyon. Montargis was a little city of the Gatinois, a district of the ancient Orléannois, about sixty miles to the south of Paris. It stood on the banks of the Loing, and was bordered by an extensive forest. Its old castle, of vast size, served as a royal

nursery, and was called the "Berceau des enfans de France." A stormy cradle it must have been, rocked amidst tumults, for the inhabitants were famed from of old for their mutinous temper and rude bearing, as much towards one another, as towards any luckless traveller who came within their reach. Nor were they amended in this respect at the period when the Dame de Montargis (the title by which Renée was commonly known) came to dwell amongst them. Beza complains that they profited but little by the amiable example of their "Lady Resident" and the good instruction which she took pains to provide for them. The revenue derived by Renée from Montargis was very small, and was entirely absorbed by the expenses contingent on the troubles of those times. It however afforded a shelter during the tempest of the civil wars, and she generously shared her asylum with many who needed her protection. Numbers of the suffering adherents of the cause which Renée loved had reason to rise up and call her blessed. She never shrunk from availing herself of her high position and of her absolute right in her own domain to hold out the hand of succour to the persecuted, and the large castle which she occupied was soon filled with many more inhabitants than those who merely ministered to her state or guarded its walls. It is asserted that not less than three hundred Huguenots were housed, clothed and fed under its roof, during the disastrous epoch of the religious wars.

In the first year of her residence at Montargis, Mons.

de Coulonges became Renée s chaplain,—the same Sieur de Coulonges who presided over the first French reformed synod at Paris, in 1559. That his ministrations were at first acceptable to Renée we may infer from the following extract of a letter from Calvin to Beza, dated Oct. 21st, 1561.

"That Coulonges might not be recalled, the Lady Duchess carefully begged of me, whose hope concerning you also it were scarcely right to frustrate. She indeed eagerly expects you and D. Martyr, whom she asserts to have been promised to her."

Of Mons. de Coulonges we shall hear again.

At the commencement of the year 1562, Catherine de' Medici, with the co-operation of L'Hôpital, convoked at St. Germain an assemblage of deputies from the eight Parliaments of France. These deputies were chosen by the chancellor himself, and their concurrence in the measure of toleration which he designed to establish by their means could therefore be relied on. The result was "The Edict of January," which granted permission to the Huguenots to assemble for worship in fields without the towns, and placed these assemblies under the protection of the law.

But acceptable as this tolerant decree must have been to the Huguenots, they were still far from being allowed to enjoy in peace the liberty of worship that it proclaimed to them. The Parliament of Paris at first refused to register the Edict, nor did it do so until the 6th March, after repeated commands from the queen

mother. Meanwhile the sky was darkening over the heads of the Reformed. Pius IV. and Philip II. were alike enraged at the Colloquy of Poissy. Not discussion, but extermination, was their remedy for religious divisions. And the apparent defection of the queen mother from the Catholic cause, emboldened some of its more zealous advocates to open a treasonable correspondence with the Court of Spain. The Cardinal Ippolito d'Este, brother of the late Duke Ercole II., had succeeded in winning over the weak Antoine of Navarre from the Huguenot to the Catholic party. Antoine pretended to have been convinced of the fallacy of the arguments in behalf of the reformed doctrine by the Colloquy of Poissy, but the true motive of his perversion must be traced to the bait held out to him of the possible restoration of that part of his ancient kingdom which Spain had formerly wrested from the Navarrese dominions and held with unrelaxed grasp ever since. Overcome by this temptation, he sent Jeanne his queen back to Béarn; dismissed Beza and the reformed preachers from his household; changed the preceptors of his son, Prince Henry*; quarrelled with the Chatillons, and even went the length of demanding their dismissal from the court. The conjunction of the Spanish ambassador

* At a later period, after severe illness in virulent small pox, the young Prince of Navarre was confided to the care of the Duchess Renée at Montargis, by the urgent entreaty of his mother. See Miss Freer's Life of Jeanne D'Albrêt, vol. i. p. 293.

with the King of Navarre in this demand, aroused Catherine's spirit, and she haughtily repulsed this foreign interference with her domestic affairs. She dismissed the Cardinal de Tournon to his province, and commanded the Marshal St. André to take his departure to Lyons. He refused obedience. To rid herself of his presence, Catherine removed with the king her son to the château of Monceau, in Brie, accompanied by the Papal Legate, the Cardinal of Ferrara, the Secretaries of State and Antoine of Navarre.

The Parliaments of Dijon and Aix refused to register the Edict of January, and their disapprobation of its merciful provisions was followed in Burgundy and Provence by revolting cruelties practised on the unhappy Huguenots. The Duke d'Aumale, another of the family of Guise, and governor of the former province, was little inclined to favour the Government scheme of toleration. Still the queen mother and the chancellor flattered themselves that the asperities of the controversy would in time be softened, and that, weary of constant strife, the partizans of the two religions would become tolerant of each other's existence. They were deceived. Already the Triumvirate, encouraged by the adherence of Antoine of Navarre, were preparing to assert the absolutism of the Catholic creed by open hostilities in the battle-field.

Being invited to return to Paris by the King of Navarre, their former foe and new ally, the Cardinal of Lorraine and the Duke de Guise set out from the

château of Joinville, on the 28th of February, and on the morrow, which was Sunday, they arrived at Vassy. In this town a Huguenot congregation had been formed about six months previously, and it now comprised between eight and nine hundred people; a large proportion of the population of the place, which consisted of not more than three thousand souls.*

On that fatal day, they were assembling for their Sabbath worship without the walls, in obedience to the regulations of the new Edict, and ignorant of the doom awaiting them. Unhappily, the sound of the bells which summoned the worshippers together, attracted the attention of La Montagne, maître d'hôtel to one of the Guises. He demanded what it meant, and was told that it announced the "prêche" of the Huguenots. The Duke de Guise heard the question and the answer. His ire was roused, and he exclaimed with an oath, "We will Huguenot them presently after a different fashion." He probably remembered the sanguinary request of his mother Antoinette de Bourbon, "that she might be delivered from the presence of a nest of heretics so near to her château of Joinville." He and his armed escort hastened at once to the barn where the simple service of the Huguenots was proceeding. La Montagne and La Brosse were the first to enter, uttering threats of massacre. The congregation, knowing that they had the sanction of the new Edict, turned out the

* Sismondi, Hist. des Français, t. xviii. p. 262.

intruders, and fastened the door against them. But the soldiers of Guise speedily burst through the insufficient barrier, and began to discharge their pistols and harquebusses amongst the terrified people. A stone thrown in self-defence by one of the Huguenots, struck the Duke de Guise on his cheek, and caused the blood to flow. This was the signal for the ever-infamous "massacre of Vassy." Sixty-four persons were slain, either in the barn, or whilst endeavouring to effect their escape, and more than two hundred were grievously wounded. In this outrage, as in the executions which followed the discovery of the "Conspiracy of Amboise," the only voice of mercy was that of Anna d'Este, Duchesse de Guise.* The horror with which the unhappy Huguenots heard of the cruel infringement of the Edict framed for their protection soon gave place to other and more formidable emotions. The slaughter of their brethren at Vassy awoke the tocsin of civil war.

Tidings of this dreadful event were not slow in reach-Montargis, and when the barbarous deed of her son-in-law was reported to Renée, she gave commandment that the gates of the town should be guarded, without preventing the ingress or egress of either Catholic or Huguenot. The duchess had good cause for this and every other precautionary measure. The seditious temper of the townspeople was instantly aroused at the sound of strife abroad in the land. There was one

* Sismondi, Hist. des Français, t. xviii. pp. 262–264.

Michel Barreau, "maitre des eaux et des forêts" of Montargis, and warden of the Magdalen Church, the largest in the town, who was at the head of the disaffected on this occasion. "He was secretly favoured," says Beza*, "by some of the magistrates, who caused a report to be circulated that they of the religion would come and throw down the images on the night of the Ascension." Under colour of this pretext, they placed in the Church a garrison of thirty men in corslets, armed with lances and harquebusses. The night previous this number was doubled, and their design was to issue from the Church at midnight, and to cut the throats of all the Protestants on whom they could lay hands in the town. "But God willed it," continues the same graphic historian, "that Madame being warned thereof, should break this blow, roughly menacing him whom she ought to have had hung, and prohibiting, by the town-bailiff, the assemblage of persons either by day or night, under pain of corporal punishment. Nevertheless, so far were the mutinous from receding on that account, that the next day, at seven o'clock in evening, from six to seven hundred of them assembled at the temple with such arms as they could get, and with noise louder than the sound of the tocsin, they rushed to the house of a poor blind 'hostelier,' intending to kill him, who nevertheless, was saved in a loft, but his wife, also aged, was wounded on her chin with a

* Histoire des Eglises de France, t. ii. livre viii.

blow from a stick, and (after being cruelly mutilated) was left for dead." The "Dame de Montargis" had need of nerve amongst such men of violence! They were not appeased with the blood of a poor old woman, and from the house of the innkeeper, they betook themselves to the dwelling of the town bailiff, Ignace Courtois, whose profession of the reformed doctrine had made him unpopular, insincere as that profession afterwards proved to be. But the bailiff's house was better defended than the former, and they were repulsed from it, as they were also from that of an elder of the religion named Claude Chaperon, who did not conceive it to be his duty to practise the virtue of non-resistance, when an infuriated mob had come to seek his life. The uproar soon reached the ears of the duchess, who sent down from the château some of the gentlemen of her household to appease the tumult, to the great peril of their lives. "Nevertheless," adds Beza, "that gave some respite to those of the religion; they kept themselves on their guard, whilst Madame, having sent in all haste to the Prince (of Condé) at Orleans, obtained from thence some horse and foot soldiers, who, on their arrival, disarmed the seditious by her commandment, their arms being carried into the castle. Some of them were imprisoned, whereof three were hung by sentence of the provost-marshal, and the rest were set at liberty some time afterwards — thanks to Renée's mildness and clemency.*

* Hist. des Eglises de France

The prompt measures and firm attitude of the duchess in the midst of these alarming circumstances, and her wisely-mingled administration of justice and mercy after the tumult was suppressed, were, at least for some time, followed by the happiest results. Her Romanist subjects learned that their Lady would suffer no intolerance, and that she was resolved to uphold her authority in Montargis. So that whilst without its walls all was agitation, a perfect tranquillity reigned within, and "Montargis became a place of refuge for the Huguenots from several parts of the kingdom, as from Paris, Melun, Nemours, Louis, Sens, Blois, Tours; nay, even of several of the Roman religion flying from the tumults of the war, of which this good duchess received several terrible assaults after that the prince, seeing the camp of his enemies approaching Orleans, had sent to recall all his men."* For the "Religious Wars" had at length actually begun. The endurance of the Huguenots had been exhausted by the massacre of Vassy. All their hopes of being suffered to enjoy religious freedom without molestation were at an end, since the Edict promulged by Royal authority on their behalf had been set at nought by the leaders of a powerful party which longed eagerly for their annihilation. Nothing seemed to be left for them but an appeal to arms. Calvin indeed had distinctly enjoined the duty of passive endurance of oppression, and con-

* Hist. des Eglises de France.

demned an armed defence of the rights of conscience. But the Protestant party reconciled their proceedings with the principles of the Reformer, by protesting that they fought not against the king or his mother, but against those who strove to usurp the lawful authority of their monarch. They had also a prince of the blood-royal for their leader, and so they justified their resort to the carnal sword. It must be confessed that they were driven into rebellion. But the means which they adopted for the preservation of their cause ensured its ultimate downfall. The sword makes no real converts to the truth, and from the hour when it was unsheathed in behalf of the Reformation in France the glory of that Reformation departed. Its progress was arrested. It became throughout the land as unpopular as it had long been in Paris. "The blood of the martyrs is" indeed "the seed of the Church," but not the blood of mail-clad warriors, poured out on the field of battle. The seed which fructifies to such a harvest of blessing is the blood of patient saints, "led as sheep to the slaughter." The fine saying of Beza*, when he remonstrated with the King of Navarre, who was justifying the Duke de Guise in the matter of Vassy—so low had Antoine fallen!—deserves never to be forgotten. "Sire, it is true that it is the part of the Church of God, in whose behalf I speak, to endure blows, not to give them—but, may it please you to remember, that

* Sismondi, Hist. des Français, t. xviii. p. 269.

it is an anvil which hath worn out many hammers." It has been said* that "Renée did not approve that religion should be used as a pretext for revolt," and that "she ceased to see the Prince of Condé when he had become the leader of the Huguenots armed to demand liberty of conscience." There is nothing in the statement that Renée disapproved of the wars of religion that is at all incredible. "A king's daughter" (and she never forgot her parentage) might very naturally object to the subjects' revolt, even in so righteous a cause. Besides, it was with reluctance that her friend Coligni agreed to take part in the first outbreak, so questionable did the step appear to him. But it can hardly be true that Renée refused to hold any intercourse with Condé, after he had assumed the command of her Huguenot forces, for it has appeared already that she availed herself of his proximity and that of his army at Orleans, a very short time after the commencement of hostilities, to apply for military aid during the sedition at Montargis. And we have seen that he granted that aid to the duchess, and continued it until necessity obliged him to recal the troop of soldiers which he had lent to her in that great emergency.

Following the order of events as Beza records them †, we read that Renée herself, on the departure of Condé's small contingent, provided for the maintenance of order within Montargis by levying a few soldiers to guard the

* Biographie Universelle.

† Histoire des Eglises de France.

château and gates of the town against all violent intrusion, whilst freely opening them to the refugees of either party, whether Huguenot or Catholic. She thus secured peace within the walls for a season. But the royal army, on its return from the siege of Bourges, which capitulated on the 31st of August, passed through Montargis, thereby causing much terror to the Protestant inhabitants of the place. The duchess, when she heard of the approach of these unwelcome visitors, became "marvellously anxious" for the safety of the poor Huguenots and their families about to be exposed to the insults of an inflamed soldiery, under the leadership of merciless men. She advised the reformed minister of Montargis, François de Morel, better known as De Coulonges, and Pierre Antin, minister of Anty, to withdraw to a château whose owner was friendly until the storm should have blown over. Accordingly they departed, and reached the desired asylum in safety, but not without encountering great dangers by the way, being surrounded by a large body of French and Scottish horsemen, and but for the friendly aid of the Scotch, who first drove them out of the way, and then guided them "to the haven where they would be," they must have perished miserably. For their countenances betrayed them, and their speech, inasmuch as that "they swore not, like other men." Honourable distinction! The Huguenot population of Montargis found shelter in their lady's château, which was filled to overflowing, and resembled an hospital. It is possible

that this spectacle moved even their enemies to compassion. The Cardinal of Lorraine, and Madame de Guise, who were with the advanced guard of the army, were the first to arrive at Montargis. They strove to allay the fears of the duchess on behalf of her poor people, by assuring her that they desired the arrest of no one on account of his religion, but merely of rebels who were occupying the towns of the king. After the cardinal and the Duchess de Guise, came the young king, followed by the Duke de Guise. Charles, it is said, "caressed much the lady, his aunt, kissing her several times and shedding tears." It was thence concluded that "these contests, at that time, pleased him not." But he was so kept under, continues the historian, that it was impossible for him to converse for a long time with her apart.

Meanwhile the army quartered in the town of Montargis, justified the dread with which its arrival had been anticipated. The Huguenots indeed, were out of the reach of its fury, but the bigoted soldiers wreaked their vengeance on the Protestant temple, tearing down the seats and demolishing the pulpit; re-erecting also as many images and altars as they could find, in the places from whence the zeal of the Reformed had removed them. Those too who had been banished from Montargis for sedition, availed themselves of this opportunity to return, uttering menaces against such as were beyond the reach of their hate, which state of things being reported to Renée, she promptly obtained from

the king a proclamation, by the sound of a trumpet, that no outrage should be offered to any partizan of either creed, under penalty of death. A soldier who ventured to transgress this ordinance being immediately hung these disorders ceased, and tranquillity was secured to the town. But the peace of the good duchess was much troubled by this formidable visitation. For the Duke de Guise, although Renée was his mother-in-law, deprived her of the guardianship of Montargis at his departure, and committed it to an archer of the Guard, named Reynaudes, an apostate from the Reformed religion, and on that account much beloved by the duke. The duchess was also forbidden to admit her own domestics to hear the instruction of the Huguenot ministers, but this decree was only observed for a little while. The boldest attack on Renée, however, was made during the siege of Orleans by the Duke de Guise. Success appeared ready at last to crown his ambition. The King of Navarre was dead of a wound received at the siege of Rouen, the Prince of Condé was a prisoner in the hands of Guise since the fatal day of Dreux.* The constable was shut up in Orleans, so that everything seemed to be in the power of the duke. Having therefore no cause to dread being called to account for anything he might choose to do, he gave orders in the council, in the king's name, that the Duchess Renée, albeit she was his mother-in-law, advanced in years,

* Fought on Dec. 19, 1562.

and diseased in body, should be removed from Montargis, "that nest of Huguenots," and be required to take up her abode in one of the three following palaces, Fontainebleau, St. Germain-en-Laye, or the Bois de Vincennes. The plea of "the king's service" coloured this odious rescript; the town and castle of Montargis, being, as the duke declared, "of very great importance." Poulin, Baron of the Guard, was charged with the execution of this commission, by letters express from the queen mother. The Sieur de Malicorne followed in his steps with four companies of horse, to strike terror into the heart of the duchess and to compel her to instant submission. The townspeople opened the gates to Malicorne on his arrival, and "immediately the populace began to rage with increased audacity."

From the windows of her château Renée looked down on the furious mob and the savage soldiery. They were wreaking a pitiful vengeance on a poor Huguenot, whom they had dragged from his sick bed, and were beating without mercy. In desperation, to rid himself of his tormenters, the miserable sufferer threw himself into the river, where a "harquebusade" was opened upon him, and he was finally despatched by dagger wounds. But there was no terror in the heart of the duchess. Her reply to the summons of surrender was as fearless as it was decisive. She said that she saw plainly that it was not for the king's service they wished to dislodge her; that there was no ground for the allegation that Montargis was a place of great importance, because neither the

town nor the castle was tenable against an assault without great repairs, and that injury to the king's cause, could not proceed from a place which was already in the hands of an archer of the Guard, who had been left by Guise in charge of it. And she denied that there was a single person in the château who was not, and had not ever had been, the king's very humble servant. She represented that to place her in either of the above mentioned palaces, which were unfortified, and two of which were at the very gates of Paris, would expose her to the risk of slaughter, which she had not merited, and which she well knew that the king her nephew did not intend. And therefore she desired to be more fully informed of the king's will, and prayed Poulin to return to the court with a gentleman of her party, for the better understanding thereof. But during the absence of Poulin on this errand, Malicorne, eager to prove himself the devoted servant of Guise, who had given him the rank of chevalier, and to whom he looked for further promotion, presumed to menace the Duchess Renée, in the hope of bringing her to unconditional obedience. He threatened an assault of the citadel by a storming party with battering engines, and even went so far as to apply to the Sieur de Biron for some pieces of cannon which he had brought from Paris to the siege of Orleans. Renée answered the upstart right royally; bidding him beware what he did, for that no one throughout the whole realm of France had any authority over her, except the

king. And she assured him that if he came against her castle with artillery, she would place herself first upon the breach, and would try, at the risk of her life, whether he or any other beside him were so foolhardy as to dare to slay the daughter of the best and mightiest of kings! She added that "she had no lack of friends and relatives who would avenge with spirit any injury done to herself on the persons of those who should incur such serious guilt, and would inflict punishment of the most signal kind, not only on them, but on their children also, even on their very babes in the cradle." Malicorne, who looked not for such an answer, quailed before the stern determination of the woman, and forbore to proceed to violent measures. It must have been with reluctance that he abandoned the prospect of expected booty, for he had designed to enrich himself with the plunder of those who had retired for safety within the castle, four of whom were officers of the king of high degree, besides the ministers of the reformed religion, for whose blood he thirsted. "But God ordained it otherwise." The mortal wound which the Duke de Guise received from the hand of Poltrôt averted the present danger. On receiving the astounding tidings, Malicorne hastened back to Orleans, and though on his return to Montargis he showed that he wanted not the will to do mischief, it was soon perceived "that it was with him as with organs that lack blowing." He withdrew altogether from the place shortly after, and "thus,"

as Beza concludes the story, "was Montargis preserved with those who had retired thither, each of whom returned afterwards to his house in hope of the enjoyment of the edict of peace." The tempest was lulled, but "the clouds returned again after the rain."

CHAP. XI.

Assassination of the Duke of Guise. — Edict of Amboise. — Coligni accused — Solemnly denies his Guilt. — Reconciliation at Moulins.— Alienation of Duchess of Guise from the Reformed. — Calvin's Letter to Renée complaining of her. — Renée suspected by the Reformed.— Long and interesting Vindication of herself in a Letter to Calvin. — Marriage of Duchess of Guise to the Duke of Nemours.

THE death of the Duke de Guise, whose wound proved mortal, on the 24th February, 1563, procured a short respite for the harassed Huguenots. Peace was signed by Condé and the queen mother on the 12th March, and this treaty was republished under the form of the "Edict of Amboise," seven days later. "Freedom to worship God," under certain restrictions, was thereby guaranteed to the privileged classes; liberty of conscience to the bourgeoisie, with permission for the celebration of the reformed worship in one town of each "bailliage," whither it was allowed them to repair that they might participate in these services. An act of amnesty and oblivion cancelled all past offences; but the wound was only skinned over. The treaty of peace was unsatisfactory to the Huguenot party. Coligni said to Condé, "You have ruined more churches by this stroke of the pen than all the forces of the enemy could have destroyed in ten years."* The assassination of the

* Sismondi, Histoire des Français, t. xviii.

Duke de Guise also, whilst it delivered the Protestants of France from a sanguinary enemy, bore bitter fruit afterwards. The murderer accused Coligni, Soubise and Beza of complicity in the deed of blood. They indignantly repulsed the accusation; but Coligni, whilst striving, in his reply to each article of Poltrôt's deposition, to establish the point that he had not seduced him to become an assassin, nor paid him to commit the deed, allows it to be understood that he was at least aware of the threats of Poltrôt, and that he felt no horror at them. But on his life and honour he declared that he had neither induced, solicited nor sought for any one to act the part of a murderer, by words, money or promises. "The admiral," writes Pasquier to me of his friends, "has defended himself so feebly that those who wish him well, wish that he had either been silent or that he had defended himself better."* We must deplore the fierce excitement of mens' minds in that stormy period, which led them to regard the act of tyrannicide as excusable under the plea of self-defence. For Coligni knew that Guise had taken counsel to kill, not him only, but also his brother D'Andelôt and the Prince of Condé. But those who, from calmer heights, judge such matters more correctly, condemned these unlawful deeds and vindicated their cause from the reproach of them. "More than once it was Calvin himself who held back the hands of those who longed

* Sismondi, Hist. des Français, t. xviii. pp. 375—7.

to embrue them in the blood of François de Guise, the ruffian of Vassy. 'I can protest,' he wrote to the Duchess of Ferrara 'that it was entirely owing to me that, before the war began, men of daring courage had not tried to rid the world of him; they were held back solely by my exhortations."* The Duchess of Guise adopted the suspicion that Coligni had incited Poltrôt to murder her husband, and presented a request to the council of the king that the admiral should be placed on his trial before the said council. When Coligni heard this, he set out from Châtillon-sur-Loing, with a retinue of six hundred gentlemen, and directed his steps to St. Germain's, where the court then was, to the great alarm of the queen mother. Catherine prayed Condé to go to meet the admiral, and induce him to return with his cortége. She knew that a spark might kindle the smouldering embers of civil war. D'Andelôt presented himself before the council alone, and protested that the deposition of Poltrôt was false and calumnious.† Made under the pressure of frightful torments, and again denied, Poltrôt's accusations were certainly not worth much. Nevertheless the Duchess Anna and the family of Guise would not consent to forego their demand for vengeance upon the admiral. The formal consideration of it had been postponed by the king, whilst yet a minor, for the queen mother desired a cessation of hostilities, and the leaders of the

* History of the Protestants of France, by G. De Félice.

† Sismondi, Hist. des Français, t. xviii. p. 377.

Huguenots contended that the murder of the duke was one of those acts of the late war which the treaty of peace had condoned. But as soon as the majority of Charles IX. had been declared, the Guises resolved to urge their suit again. Antoinette de Bourbon, mother of the late duke, and Anna d'Este his widow, presented themselves before the king in long black robes. They were followed by the children of François de Guise, by veiled women who made the air resound with their cries and groans, and by all the relations and friends of the family clad also in mourning. The two duchesses threw themselves at the feet of the king on their knees crying "Justice." Though they did not utter the name of the admiral, everyone knew that it was he on whom they invoked the vengeance of the law. The king at first promised them "justice," and consented that the Parliament of Paris should entertain the question, but the Cardinal de Châtillon, the only one of the three brothers then at Court, protested against the trial of Coligni by judges whose partiality was well known, and who were wholly swayed by their deep prejudices in all matters affecting a Huguenot. The king commanded that the decision should be suspended for three years.* But the subject was not permitted to rest. The ambassadors of the Pope, the Emperor and the King of Spain had audience of Catherine at Fontainebleau on the 12th February, 1564,

* Sismondi, Hist. des Français, t. xviii. p. 404.

to address to her a solemn invitation to be present at Nancy on the 25th March ensuing, where also the other Christian princes would be assembled to take cognizance of the Canons of the council of Trent; to swear to observe them, and to come to a mutual understanding as to the means to be employed everywhere and at the same time for the destruction of heresy. They also demanded that the king should revoke the pardon granted to the rebels by the last treaty, especially to those convicted of the crime of "lese-majesté divine," for God only, they said, and not the princes of this earth, had the right to pardon them. They urged that the king should pursue with the utmost vigour the authors and accomplices of the detestable assassination of the Duke de Guise;—and lastly, that he should abstain from alienating the goods of the clergy, inasmuch as neither the King of Spain nor the Duke of Savoy wished to be paid their wives' dowry with money derived from such a source. They offered also, for the accomplishment of these objects, to succour the king with all the forces of their respective states. It is probable, continues the historian*, that the principal end of the Pope and the King of Spain in sending this solemn embassy was to compromise the king with his Protestant subjects, and to inspire them with distrust. Catherine saw the snare, and avoided it by dictating a reply to her son which defined nothing, and left him

* Sismondi, Hist. des Français, pp. 415, 416.

unfettered. He declared his attachment to the Catholic faith; but, as to the rest, that he should conduct himself according to the counsels of the princes and lords of his kingdom. There was no conference in Lorraine on the day which the ambassadors had appointed.

The quarrel between the Châtillons and the Guises was ostensibly composed in 1566, at Moulins. The admiral cleared himself by oath from the murder of Duke François, solemnly affirming that he was not the author of it, and that he had not consented to the deed. Thereupon Anna D'Este and the Cardinal of Lorraine, by command of the king, embraced the admiral, and the reconciled parties mutually promised to nourish resentment against one another no longer.* But the young Duke Henry de Guise and D'Aumale his uncle had no share in this ceremony. On the fatal day of St. Bartholomew, Guise and his band of assassins gratified their revenge with the blood of Coligni.

The Duchesse de Guise had long retained the early bias of her mind towards the Reformed; even the Cardinal of Lorraine once declared † that "he knew his sister-in-law was a Protestant, and that she caused his son to be privately instructed in the Augsburg Confession." But from the time of the murder of her husband a change passed over her, and she became inimical to the struggling cause. The Roman Catholic ladies of the Court regarded her as their leader ‡, and Calvin, in a letter to

* Sismondi, Hist. des Français, t. xviii. p. 469.

† Bayle's Dict. vol. v. p. 632, art. Francis of Lorraine Duke of Guise.

‡ See Miss Freer's Life of Jeanne d'Albrêt, vol. ii. p. 4.

Renée, undated, but which appears to have been written subsequently to the deed of Poltrôt, complains of the course of action pursued by Madame de Guise, and entreats the maternal interference. This epistle is preserved in the MS. collection of Dupuy.

The following is a translation:—

"MADAME,—I am rejoiced to have an opportunity of writing to you with safety by the bearer; not that I have any great matter at this time, but that I may acquit myself of my duty, and also because I think that my letters are always welcome to you through your favour, when they can minister to your profit. I would, moreover, take pains to convey them to you more frequently, but that you have, thank God, in your household, one competent to exhort you, and to confirm you, wherein-soever you have need. I have no tidings to send you which you do not know already, especially none which would give you joy; and I love not to vex you, although I am constrained to unburden my heart, not without great regret, of a grief which is common to all the children of God. You know, Madame, what the enemies of the truth are plotting; witness the league of the Pope with the King of Spain, the Venetians, and potentates of Italy, in which our neighbour is comprehended; it seems, indeed, to them that they ought to exterminate all Christianity from the world. Meanwhile Madame de Guise takes a course which can only result in her confusion if she persevere, for though she thinks not of it, she seeks the ruin of the poor Churches of France, of whom

God will be the Protector, and uphold their cause. I protest once more, Madame, that I would willingly abstain from wearying you, but on the other hand, I greatly desire that she may be induced by your authority to moderate her passions, which she can only obey as she does, by fighting against God. I tell you frankly, Madame, what every one knows, that you may consider, according to your discretion, what good expedient to provide in order to persuade her not to conspire with those who only seek to abolish pure religion, and not to entangle herself in devices of which the issue can only be calamitous, inasmuch as they are contrary to God. Madame, after having very humbly recommended myself to your good grace, I will supplicate our Heavenly Father to keep you always in His protection, to strengthen you with His might, and to increase you in all wealth and prosperity.

"From Geneva, this . . . ."

The death of the Duke de Guise, as we have seen, relieved the Duchess Renée from a perplexing, if not a dangerous position, yet her perceptions of a Christian's duty were too clear to be confused even by the passionate excitements of the age of civil war. Her relationship to Guise, and her desire that his character should be dealt with fairly, seem to have caused a misunderstanding in the minds of some of the Huguenot party; and painful indeed it is to find that one so excellent as the Duchess of Ferrara was not honoured as

she deserved to be, by those whose religious creed was the same as her own. But controversy is an element of bitterness, necessary as it often is — and "wars of religion" are ever found to be destructive of the true life of Christianity. The "weapons" of Renée's "warfare" were "not carnal." She scorned to avail herself of the "arrows" and "sharp swords" of bitter words and false accusations. She knew that it mightily concerned the Reformed to show forth the superiority of their faith by the blamelessness of their lives and conversation, and thus to cut off occasion from them that desired to find occasion against them. Hence the coldness, the slights, if not the indignities, which she had to encounter from some of the Huguenot persuasion, who, in the heat of party strife could not appreciate the milder graces of religion. A very long letter from Renée to Calvin, in the MS. collection of Dupuy, which has been assigned to the year 1563, throws much light upon the difficulties of her position, and gives a graphic illustration of the petty but vexatious annoyances to which she was subjected. Bernier, in his "Histoire de Blois," referring probably to this letter, comments with surprise on the fact "qu'une si grande Princesse se soit abaissée presques à rendre compte à Calvin de sa créance et de sa conduite, ce qui paroist par une lettre écrite à Montargis le 21 Mars, 1563, que j'ay veue en bon lieu, et dont le Père Hilarion de Costa nous a donné un fragment dans ses 'Eloges des Dames Illustres.'" If Calvin had been a Romish priest, and Renée's confessor, Mons. Bernier

probably would not have been shocked at all. How blind is bigotry! how often does the stroke it aims recoil upon itself! There is no servile abasement perceptible in this letter of Renée's. It shows much Christian humility, and submission to the precept, "obey them that have the rule over you, for they watch for your souls as they that must give account;" but she carefully maintains her own integrity and justifies her own conduct. The style is involved, and a very literal translation is impossible, but the following version is presented to the reader in the firm belief that it contains a correct rendering of the sense of the original.

"Mons. Calvin,— I have received your letters of the 8th of January by M. Bude, and those of the 24th, in answer to my last by Millet, at the time when I was preparing to return to the court at Fontainebleau, to finish, in some measure, affairs of mine which were omitted at my departure from Paris, and I remained there a whole month, which has been the reason why I have not been able to reply sooner to your letters thus acknowledged. The circumstance which occasioned me to leave that place before the king, was my being forbidden to have preaching there, as I had [had] for some days; and not only in the house of the king was it refused me, but also in one which I have bought, which is in the village, which I have always lent and dedicated to that purpose even when I was not at the court: and what has grieved me more in the matter is,

that this has taken place at the request and solicitation of certain persons, husband and wife, who are communicants, and have [Protestant] ministers. Mons. the Admiral and his wife did not arrive till the day on which I departed, and were not able to do more than I did as to preaching, and departed a week afterwards, which they came to acquaint me with themselves, at this place, with the cardinal their brother. The two messengers whom I have mentioned above, who brought me your letters, which I have just acknowledged, have not yet returned to me to receive answers. However, I hope that they will repair hither again, and that they will bring news from me. Meantime, I will tell you that I have seen the exhortation which you address to me, both in regard to my subjects, and to my household. Now, as to my subjects, long is it since I began [the work], and I am now striving to complete it, if it shall so please God, and so also as to the matter of [the administration of] justice, and in regard to the daily subsistence of the poor, whether inhabitants or casual passengers, as well as with reference to the members of my own household, and the providing against vices and scandalous matters generally, in every person, and particularly in regard to members of the household of the Faith, as you will have opportunity of hearing by Soutenix, who will, I think, soon be with you, and from Mons. de Coullonges, whom I have instructed to write to you. And those [persons and matters?] settle (?) by means such as you shall adopt (?), and by a

good arrangement which you shall prescribe for the future. I hope that the interests of the Church in this place will thrive, on which point [however] I am not able to render account to you, inasmuch as De Coullonges, above mentioned, has always had the entire charge of it, and knows, before God, that I have assisted him in what he has required, and that from the first, when he demanded of me that he should be present at the consistory, I granted it to him, and he chose elders as seemed good to him, and when he told me that it was not right that women should be present at it, nor that I should be there, although I knew that the Queen of Navarre, Madame the admiral's wife, and Madame de Roye* took their place there in their houses, and that [the rights of] my own house were concerned, nevertheless I did not urge my going thither, and never ceased, when he told me to speak to any one of my household to go thither, or that, without his speaking to me, they informed me of his having summoned them thither, to exhort them always to comply with him, and there to serve God even as the same De Coullonges might there teach and bid them; except one who had charge of the expenditure of the kitchen, whom I did not allow to enter it, he having the employment which I thought sufficient for his capacity and condition, he being young, and I had fears lest he might commit some insolent act in such a place, as, in fact, after-

* Mother of Eleanor, Princess of Condé.

wards, in the kitchen itself, he struck an old man who was in bad health, and who had not adopted the [Reformed] Religion. Of persons of this city, he [De Coullonges] has put in and out whomsoever he thought proper, without any hindrance on my part, and sometimes of their own accord they have put themselves out, as they have done also with those of my household, as you may learn more particularly from the said Soutenix (?), who was one of them, and at the present time I do not know that those of the city molest anybody. I receive help and take counsel from M. the Admiral, next to the help and counsel of God, for the repression of vices and scandals; and it is manifest, that among his subjects* religion thrives and increases, (although there are some as much opposed to it as in this place,) and the greater part [of his subjects] are under [the jurisdiction of] this bailiwick, and he has established there preaching and ministers, which has not been done for my other subjects, except in one place, called Bonny, where, speaking one day with the said De Coullonges and a young minister of the said admiral, that there should be one sent thither, because when I came into this place, and before the said De Coullonges was here, there was one who withdrew himself to go to the wars; he told me

* Châtillon-sur-Loing, the beautiful domain of Coligni, was four leagues distant from Montargis. It was situated in the Gatinois. There is mention of the church and pastors of this place in a catalogue of all the Reformed Churches prepared for a synod at Rochelle in 1607, and also in the record of the 27th synod in 1627.

that he had just sent one thither, I do not know whom; and as to the members of my household, the principal ones, and those whom I most employ, are of the [Reformed] Religion, and communicants. There are, beside them, some servants and officers, fewer in number, and I hope that God will draw them to Himself (?). And, as to my privilege, or that of my house, I assure you that I have neither required nor sought any, and that I have had so little [of privilege] among the faithful, [that] that which affects me and depends on me has always been cast down, and put off into the farthest place and situation. And my attendants, and my own [waiting] women have been thrust down and driven away at banquets and festivals, even by persons of the [Reformed] Religion, into places where all the other women were, even to the weavers of the "chaperon de drap," whom they escorted, whilst they drove away mine,—treatment which I willingly endured, and considered as of no moment, and I put them into the hands of their husbands, where I respected (?) them no less than I did the others, and [so] I remained without any of my [waiting] women, which is not usually the case with persons of my quality, and was not even done to those who ought not, according to the usage of the world, to have any in attendance on them. I esteemed both mine and myself honoured by such treatment. As to the young women of my household, they gave them no trouble(?). I could wish that your eye and your person could arrive here to see and know all

things as they pass, better than one can write or relate them. I see and know that the representation which you address to me, particularly by your letter, is very requisite in order to maintain the Reformed Church, and that it would be found very necessary that there should be in it many elder superintendents and ministers in greater numbers, and that my judgment and intelligence were greater and more perfect. Nevertheless, according to what God has bestowed of those qualities on me, with the hope which I have that for a long time I have had some share of them, and [with the aid of] the representations, which in former days you have made to me, by messages and letters, it seems to me that the frequent visits here of many good persons and ministers would greatly conduce to that end, and that it would be expedient that each of them truly delivered his opinion. God grant me grace to employ myself in serving Him purely and sincerely, as you desire. I assure you that it is also my desire, and I hope that He will accomplish it, and will make you to know as well as He has by the past [course of events] those by whom the Religion is not extended.

"And as to the present and new year's gift which you have sent to me, I assure you that I have seen and received it with good will, and [I tell you] that I had never seen one like it, and I have praised God that the late king, my father, had adopted such a device.* If

* The allusion is supposed to be to the medal struck by Louis XII., with the celebrated motto, "Perdam Babylonis nomen."

God did not grant to him the privilege of executing its purport, perhaps He reserves its accomplishment for some one of his descendants occupying his place.

"M. Calvin, I will not attempt to reply to the whole of your last letter, in order that I may not delay writing to you so long as that would require. But, as briefly as possible, I will tell you that it seems to me that I have not succeeded, by my letter which preceded it, in possessing your mind with my meaning, or else that you have been prepossessed concerning it by some other person. For I wrote to you concerning two ministers, of whom one argued with me by [the use of] a process of falsehood, which I thought unlawful; the other on the ground of a judgment of election and reprobation caused by the prayers of men: that it seemed to me that by that [argument] he [the latter?] declared to me a diabolical hatred, to incite me to hate what God has not commanded me [to hate]; for although I had not forgotten the point adduced in your letter, that David hated the enemies of God with a mortal hatred, [and] I mean not to oppose or derogate from that point in any degree, for if I knew that the king, my father, and the queen, my mother, and my late husband, the duke, and all my children, were reprobates under the judgment of God, I would be willing to hate them with a mortal hatred, and desire them to have their portion in hell, and [so] entirely conform myself to the will of God, if He were pleased to grant me grace to do so. But if I see persons so

partial in their affections, and have heard such startling propositions, of which I have only reported to you [those which were] the least [so]. . . And as to my late son-in-law, it seems to me that there is more than enough evidence, by which any one may see and know whether I have swerved on his account in any situation whatever, but [rather] whether it were not he who swerved [from his course] to protect those of the [Reformed] Religion whom I have in this town, even so far as to be answerable (he and the Cardinal de Lorraine) for them to the queen, and whether God did not employ their hands for the protection of them. And [it should be seen and known] whether it was only for this spot, or whether he did not also exert his interest that Chastillon, which belongs to the admiral, and is within the jurisdiction of this bailiwick of Montargis should not be confiscated, neither that it should be sacked or oppressed; though these are facts which I am well aware that some wish neither to be understood nor known. I say it before God, who knows the truth of it. And [yet] I would not on that ground excuse the failings of my son-in-law of whom I have been speaking, in respect to his not having the knowledge of God. But as to what is asserted that it was he alone who lighted up the flame, it is well known that he had retired into his house from which he refused to stir, and [these are known also] the letters and the messages which he received to induce him to come forth from it: and [it may be seen that] even now when he is dead and is

no longer there, such [organs of] venom of hatred so pestilent will never rest from discovering themselves by [their circulating] all the falsehoods that can be invented and imagined. I must tell you that I neither hold nor consider [it possible] that such falsehoods proceed from God. I know that he did persecute, but I do not know, neither do I believe, to express myself freely to you, that he was a reprobate by Dîvine judgment. For he gave signs to the contrary before he died. Only people do not choose that it should be spoken of, and there is a wish to shut and lock up the mouths of those who know it. And as for myself, I know that I have been hated and held in abomination by many persons because he was my son-in-law, on whom they wished to lay the faults of all. Do you not see, too, that they cannot rest satisfied [with their attacks on him] even after that he is dead, and even had he been the greatest wretch and reprobate that ever existed? [Ought this to continue?] And will persons never talk of anything else? As [an instance,] a secretary of M. d'Arzy was saying to me, and to the Queen of Navarre, one day, in this place, all the evil that was possible of him, and of some others, and [it followed] that I said to him before her, and adjured him that he should speak the truth, [and say whether] what he was asserting was true or not. He confessed to us that there was no truth in it, and gave the name of the person who had taught him to tell such stories of him, [in order] to put upon him [the duke] things

which he had never thought of, and that it was in order to support the [Reformed] Religion (a procedure which the said lady approved), and that we ought to employ all sorts of defence of that cause, and that falsehood, so applied, was good and holy, as many say and hold; which view I could not but resist, saying that God is not the father of lies, but that it is the devil who is so, and that God is the God of truth, and that His word is powerful enough to defend His own people, without our taking up the arms of the devil and of his children. Nevertheless, that lady hath such good zeal and such good judgment in many things, that I desire to take example by it; and as the late Queen of Navarre, her mother, has been the first princess of this kingdom who has favoured the Gospel, it may be that the Queen of Navarre, her daughter, will complete the work by establishing it there, and it seems to me that she is as well qualified for that work as any princess or woman that I know. I love her with a mother's love, and admire and praise the graces which God has bestowed upon her. [And] to return to the subject already mentioned, M. Calvin, I must tell you that I have heard words such as I should be too long in repeating; and of a good and holy cause, [namely,] the defending the children of God and supporting them, people have sometimes made a diabolical one, and that on account of the enmities which have existed between the King of Navarre, Monsieur the Constable, and my son-in-law, we ought to put a mask on [the plain meaning of] the

word of God, and it seems that even after he has been killed, still there is no other than he who can vex those who are of the [Reformed] Religion; no other than he who can favour the Papists. [Now] the bodies of men, when the souls are out of them, do not such miracles, nor even when they are alive in the world, can one man destroy so many as he is charged with [destroying]. But those whose determination has been to enter into [a course of] partiality, and who have wanted to prove that the King of Navarre, and after him the Prince of Condé, were the King David, and that David was their resemblance, and that it was not that of Jesus Christ, and who have let simple persons be argued with, and believe to that effect, in order to cut off a minor; and those who have some lettered advocates and doctors, where are they, in consequence of their proceedings, at this time? Does not God show His power? And if there are reprobates in the world, I think that they are those who twist the truth of God, which they know and are acquainted with, in their insolent falsehoods. M. Calvin, I am sorry that you do not know how half the world conducts itself in this kingdom, nor the habits of adulation and of ill-will which prevail in it, even to the exhorting simple young women to say that they should like to kill and strangle with their own hands. That is not the rule which Jesus Christ and His Apostles have given us: and I say it with all the great regret of my heart, on account of the affection which I bear to religion and to those who bear its title, of all whom I do

not speak, but of a great part of those whom I know among them, and if they should be inclined to say that what I assert is [dictated] by passion for my late son-in-law, it is well known that I never was so passionately fond of him or of my own children, and those who accuse me have not, perchance, [considered] the proof which I have given of my sincerity by having left them, to follow the path and way which God has taught me, and the journeys by which He has conducted me. But I see that there are people who are disposed to take the side and [adopt] the passions of others, without considering whether they proceed from God or not, and to twist and pull holy Scripture to the string of their bow, which they themselves have woven, and in which course they will at last stumble: and [I see that] they are minded to continue always lying and slandering, making their delight (?) of it, and that such people give you to understand that a thing is different from what it is. I beg you, M. Calvin, to make prayer to God that He would show you the truth of all things, as I declare it to you, so far in so many matters, as I still entertain hope that by you He will expose these hidden workings of malice which I see, which prevail in this age in this world, which [state of things] makes me not only fear and have misgivings, [lest] the chastisements of God [fall] on those of His Church, but makes it seem to me that they are, as it were, manifest. I may add that I have never requested nor sought for the ministers from whom I have heard such suggestions, to pray for me or for other

persons, and I leave always at liberty and to the conscience of every one the making prayer; and as to those to whom I give, it would seem as if I wished myself recompensed, if I bade them pray for me. We all pray for one another [in other ways], and in the prayer which our Lord has taught us. Nevertheless, I cease not to pray particularly for those whom it seems to me well-pleasing to God that I should pray for, and specially for those who are of the house of faith, and those who publish the word of God, and for the king whom God has given us, and princes, lords, and judges of the earth, because God has commanded it, and in order that every one may 'lead a quiet and peaceable life,' not only in the peace which the world gives, but in that which our Lord has left to us, and I am not one of those who pray, or who cause prayer to be made, for those who are no longer in this world. I know well that there are those who say, that all those who are against [the Reformed] Religion are the bad characters [among men]. I grant it, but I do not know whether God may not be pleased to call them. I have no business (?) to complain of them to those who cannot provide (?) for the evil [that is among them], and in myself, I know before God that there are too many defects and sins; but before His creatures, God commands us to give testimony of our manner of living, and to proceed, as I am ready to do, if it shall please God; and as to what I have heard of what is charged upon the ministers and children of God, I have not held my peace, but have taken on me to

protect them with more care than I have taken to protect myself. And I know that there are those who endeavour to banish them from this kingdom, for which reason it seems to me that one ought not to yield occasion for the accomplishment of the designs of those who wish to drive them away, which has caused me to be prolix in this letter and in some others which I have from time to time written to you, which I have begged you to burn, as I also beg you to do with this present letter, and to continue to write to me and freely communicate what shall seem good to you, which I shall always hear and receive willingly. With this I shall conclude, praying to God, M. Calvin, to keep you in His holy and worthy guardianship.

"Yours, very truly,

"RENÉE OF FRANCE."

It is impossible to regret that this sadly-interesting letter escaped the doom which its writer entreated for it. Its faithful exhibition of the deteriorating effects of religious strife on the minds of those engaged therein, makes it an instructive study for every age. Happy indeed are they who are called to serve God in peace, and who only hear at a safe distance, if they hear at all, the polemical trumpet sounding "the alarm of war." Such, however, was not the blessedness of the servants of God in the sixteenth century;—such was not the privilege of any one, royal or noble, gentle or simple, whose spirit had been stirred up to attempt the solution

of the mighty problem given to that century to work out;—such was not the lot of Renée. Truth first, and then peace,—much as she craved for the latter, warmly as she detested the mistaken means adopted to advance the former,—was the order in which she would marshal those two inestimable blessings. Accordingly we find that the ordinance of preaching held a high place in her regard; and that she constantly asserted, even at the Court, her right to the enjoyment of that especial means of grace. The foregoing letter testifies to the fact, and a paragraph in a letter from the Spanish ambassador Chantonnay, to Philip II., in the early part of 1564, supplies additional evidence of it. "The Duchesse of Ferrara has quitted the Court, which is indeed a very notable good, for every day prayers and prêches were holden in her apartments." *

The reconciliation at Moulins in 1566 between Coligni and the Duchess de Guise may have been the more sincere on the part of the widow of Francis, by reason of her impending marriage with Jacques de Savoy Duke de Nemours. Her obligation to the memory of her former husband had been fully discharged. Coligni had purged himself in the most solemn manner from the reproach under which he had laboured of being the author of that foul murder. No further demand of "justice" could be made; and the Duchess de Guise had already given her affections

* See Miss Freer's Life of Jeanne d'Albrêt, vol. ii. p. 25.

to "one of the most perfect and accomplished of princes, lords, or gentlemen;" for such was the estimation in which the Duke de Nemours was held in his day.* Everybody pointed him out as worthy of the hand of "la plus belle et la plus spirituelle princesse de l'Europe," such was the age's estimate of Anna d'Este. But before this union could be accomplished, a grievous wrong had to be done. Nemours, even if not legally united to Françoise de Rohan, a near relative of the Queen of Navarre, had pledged himself in a written document to become the husband of that lady, and was bound by the strictest laws of honour to marry no other than Françoise. Antoine of Navarre had warmly espoused the cause of his kinswoman, and after his death, Jeanne d'Albrêt maintained the rights of her young relation with all the earnestness of her resolute nature. But Françoise was a Protestant, Antoine was dead, and Nemours, having applied to the supreme pontiff to be released from his solemn obligations to Mademoiselle de Rohan, found small difficulty in obtaining his request. The Court of France confirmed the favourable decision of the pope, and shortly after the assembly of notables at Moulins, Nemours wedded the Duchess of Guise. It was a marriage which highly gratified the queen mother and Charles IX. The nuptials were celebrated by the Cardinal of Lorraine at St. Maur, in May 1566. Renée was not present; and the Queen of

* Brantôme, Éloge de Jacques de Savoye, Duc de Némours (quoted in Miss Freer's Life of Jeanne d'Albrêt, vol. ii. p. 31).

Navarre quitted the Court disgusted at the injustice done to the forsaken Françoise de Rohan. The ceremonial was interrupted by a gentleman sent by Françoise to forbid the marriage: a somewhat undignified proceeding, but "who shall severely criticise a step resulting from feelings shamefully outraged, or a rebuke so signally merited by the faithless suitor?" Catherine charged the constable, Anne de Montmorency, with a letter to Renée in anticipation of the union of Anna d'Este with the Duke of Nemours, assuring her therein, "that both she and the king her son will take good care" that there shall be nothing in the marriage contract injurious to the interests of the children of the Duchess of Guise, and that everything shall be arranged to the contentment of Renée, to whose inspection she promises to submit the marriage articles, before anything shall be done, in order that her will may be made known concerning them.* The crafty Catherine avails herself of this opportunity to allude to "certain ministers" whom Renée had with her at Montargis at that period, "touching whom, the constable will converse with her;" and dexterously refers to the love which the Duchess of Ferrara has "for the laws and ordinances of the king my son," and to her desire to be foremost in setting a good example to others. What the issue of this embassy was remains unknown. But that the duchess did not deliver her ministers into the ferocious

* Recueil des Lettres de Cathérine de Médicis.

hands of the constable may be most surely believed. His friendship with the Châtillons doubtless caused him to be selected for this errand; Renée's regard for the admiral being no secret. The intolerance of the Court had been already manifested at Moulins in the attempt to arrest the Protestant minister of the Queen of Navarre. Moreover there is little doubt that a general massacre of the Huguenot leaders was already planned, and that Moulins would have been the scene of those horrors afterwards enacted at Paris in 1572," only that Coligni and the other chiefs came well attended, and the bloody deed was therefore adjourned to a better opportunity."*

* De Félice, History of the Protestants of France.

CHAP. XII.

Death of Calvin. — Letters to and from Renée. — Huguenot Project. — Its Failure.—War. —The Constable killed.—Treaty of Longjumeau. — Condé and Coligni take alarm. — Edict against the Reformed. — War resumed. — Condé killed at Jarnac. — D'Andelôt dies. — Defeat at Montcontour. — Renée at Montargis obliged to dismiss the Reformed. — Edict insidiously favourable to the Reformed. — Renée's Troubles in private Affairs. — Her Statement drawn up for her Son. — Massacre of St. Bartholomew. — Anna d'Este.— Her Guilt. — Her Sufferings. — Lucrezia d'Este. — Renée's Decay. — Her Death.

We retrace our steps to notice an event which ought not to be passed over in silence. In little more than a year after the publication of the Edict of Amboise, Renée's spiritual father, John Calvin, died at Genoa on the 27th May, 1564. It is an ascertained fact that he maintained his correspondence with the duchess to the last, and there can be no doubt that Renée sincerely mourned the bereavement which she then sustained. For who ever looks back unmoved on a friendship of many years, suspended, though not severed by death, especially if that friendship has influenced not only our temporal, but our eternal destinies? Certainly Renée was not one of those who consign the memory of faithful friends to cold oblivion. It may be that the misleadings of hearsay, the prejudices of religious antagonism, together with distance from the scene of action, occasionally diminished the value of Calvin's

counsel in some practical matters, but the earnest convictions of so vigorous a mind must have been a powerful support to Renée in many a trying hour. How striking are those words of faith which are found in the last testament of the great reformer, dated 25th April, 1564. "With my whole soul I embrace the mercy which He has exercised towards me through Jesus Christ atoning for my sins, with the merits of His death and passion, that in this way He might satisfy for all my crimes and faults, and blot them from His remembrance." Theodore Beza, who edited the "Recueil des Opuscules, c'est-a-dire, Petits Traités de M. Jean Calvin,"* recognised appropriately the long and intimate friendship which had subsisted between Calvin and Renée, by prefixing to this work, (now exceedingly rare) a very long epistle of seven pages folio, addressed "a très illustre, et très haute Princesse, Ma Dame Renée de France, Duchesse de Ferrare et de Chartres," &c., dated May 20, 1566.

But the personal influence of Calvin was not needed to hold the Duchess Renée to the profession of the Reformed faith, nor did the cessation of his earnest monitions render her one whit the less desirous for its establishment among those over whom her legitimate influence extended. Everywhere it was known that she longed for the success of the cause of truth and righteousness, and that her aid might be invoked in its

* A Genève, Imprimé par Baptiste Pinereul. 1566.

behalf, not only in her own, but also in foreign lands. Of this there is interesting evidence extant in a letter addressed to her by the ministers of the Reformed Church at Antwerp*, of which the following is a translation.

"MADAME,—Inasmuch as we doubt not that you are well-informed by the report of several trustworthy persons, what is the present condition of these Low Countries, and how necessary it is at this time to labour there for the glory of God (of which you have ever shown yourself the faithful and affectionate guardian in all your household, and the notable patron to all those without). Moreover the gentleness and kindness which are natural to you, the fruit of so many excellent gifts which it hath pleased the Lord to impart unto you, for the joy and edification of His people, are sufficiently known to us. We have made bold to write to you this present epistle to entreat your excellency to accord us this favour, which shall be to the great profit and advantage of all the country, as we hope that our brother and companion in the work of the Lord, M. Pierius, may by your means, and with your permission, come here and help us in pursuing this work, which it has pleased God to commence on this side, and that we also may communicate with him and find consolation in the Lord. For, notwithstanding that in the present day many learned men are found to whom such numerous graces have been imparted by the

* Collections Baluze, vol. 8720, fo. 80.

goodness of God, that we have occasion continually thereof to thank him; nevertheless there are many reasons which lead us to seek this benefit from your excellency, and we hope that they will weigh with you, that you may grant it to us the more freely. Especially as we desire to have a man, not only of learning and authority, but likewise of counsel, who by the usage and experience of things past, might help us, and direct our cause to some better furtherance, by the blessing of the Lord; and this we have known him of a long season to possess, as he has shown in the great need and necessity of the parts in which he has been in France. Added to which also that he is one of the natural subjects of the king to whom we belong, which may be of great avail as well for the satisfaction and edification of this Church in which he has long been known with great profit, as for the hindrance of those reproaches, scandals, and calumnies, wherewith the enemies of the truth commonly arm themselves in order to traduce the Gospel and blaspheme the sacred name of God, as you know, Madame, and have seen by so many examples, even in our own times. Having considered which, we have agreed to make known to you by letter, our desire and intention, hoping that as the Lord has long given you grace to prove by a judgment truly royal and worthy of your line so holy an affection, that also now you will effectually shew in regard to our place that this same affection is neither grown cold, nor retarded by the distance of the country or other like hindrances, but rather increased by the

contemplation of the growth and advancement of the kingdom of God, whom we pray, Madame, after having presented to your excellency all obedience from your servants, that it may please Him to increase you more and more in His grace and to endue you with His holy blessing from on high.

"From Antwerp, this Thursday, 28th May, 1566.

"Your humble and obedient servants,

(Signed) "The Ministers of the Church at Antwerp."

It was at an interesting epoch in the history of the Reformed religion in those parts, that this letter was written. The Netherlanders had long manifested their discontent with the Church of Rome, and their willingness to receive the Reformation. "The writings of Luther were early and eagerly read in those Provinces, and to quench the rising flame the Inquisition had been established, in the year 1522. A fierce persecution followed, and it was computed that during the reign of Charles V. not less than fifty thousand of his Belgian subjects lost their lives in consequence of their defection from the creed of their monarch. Yet the number of the Reformed continued to increase," in spite of the bigoted zeal of Philip II., whose oppressive edicts provoked, in 1566 (in which year the letter from Antwerp to Renée is dated), the remonstrances of the nobility of the Netherlands, who, "though generally Catholics, entered into an association to protect and defend the liberties of their country." The Protestants,

whose numbers now amounted to a hundred thousand, "petitioned the king for toleration," and even "ventured to hold their meetings for worship openly, instead of in private," as formerly.* The immediate results were such as might have been anticipated from the character of the gloomy tyrant whose subjects they had the misfortune to be. But the ferocious cruelty of the Duke of Alva and his "Bloody Tribunal," the executions on the same day of June 1568 of the Counts of Egmont and Horn, and the barbarous punishments inflicted on the so-called heretics, of whom about eighteen thousand perished during the administration of the Duke of Alva by the hand of the executioner, excited at last a revolt, which issued in the severance of "The Seven United Provinces," from the rest, and their complete emancipation, under the Prince of Orange, from the thraldom of Spain. The Belgic "Confession of Faith," first published in 1571, "was, for the most part, in unison with that adopted by the French Reformed Church . . . the causes of which will readily appear if we consider the proximity of the French and the number of them residing in the Netherlands, the high reputation of Calvin and the Genevan School, and the indefatigable industry of the Genevans in extending the boundaries of their Church." †

But we must now return to Renée and to Montargis,

* Mosheim's Ecclesiastical History, Rev. H. Soames's edition, vol. iii. pp. 142, 168, 169.

† Ibid., p. 401.

which, as her chief place of abode, was naturally the centre of her most anxious efforts for the furtherance of the Gospel in France. She was never slow to avail herself of any opportunity that occurred for the promotion of her great object, and the Archives of Genoa preserve an interesting letter from the Duchess to the authorities of that city, which at once exhibits the kindly nature of the woman and the care of the Christian administratrix for the good of those committed to her charge. If the Reformed pastor sought shelter or repose in her château, he was not, therefore, doomed to a life of idleness, but whilst reaping her carnal things she looked to him to sow to her, and to her people also, in spiritual things.

The following is the epistle referred to.*

"MESSIEURS LES SINDICTS ET CONSULS,—One of your ministers, M. Enocq, who is suffering from severe illness, having been here for some days, for the recovery of his health, has again, during the last few days, felt himself nigh unto death, and finds his stomach so weak that he does not esteem himself able, any longer, to administer the Word of God. Wherefore he requests you to release him from that charge: nevertheless, by the help of God, and of my physicians, who attend him in this said town, the air of which he has

* Archives de Genève. Portefeuilles des Pièces Historiques, dossier No. 1835.

found advantageous, I have good hope of his recovery, if not to preach, at least for counsel, and for the Consistory. And forasmuch as you have the honour of God in such singular estimation, that you seek the advancement of it, even throughout the world, and because there will be need here of a minister, concerning which I have several times written to you, I have greatly desired to write to you the present epistle, by one of my people, whom I send expressly to require that the said Sieur Enocq, on his convalescence, may serve in this place, to the glory of God, and if he be unable to minister the word, at least by his long experience to aid us in conforming our Consistory to yours. And, in the hope which I have that his presence will be of great service here for the advancement of the glory of God, I doubt not but that you will grant my request, and permit that the above-mentioned bearer should bring hither his wife and family to attend and console him during his illness. And on your conferring on me this benefit and satisfaction I will acknowledge it in any other way in which you might desire to employ me, with as good heart as I pray God to preserve you and maintain you in His holy and worthy keeping.

"From Montargis, this 16th August 1567.

"La bien vostre,

(Signed) "RENÉE DE FRANCE."

This letter was received at Geneva on the 28th August and in the minutes of the session of the "Petit Conseil"

on the same day, we find it referred to in the following manner.*

"There have been received letters from Madame the Duchess of Ferrara, in which she prays that the said Sieur Enocq may be suffered to remain with her, for the Consistory and for counsel. Agreed that the opinion of the ministers be taken on the subject.

"The next day MM. de Bèze and Colladon presented themselves to the Council on the part of the 'Compagnie des Pasteurs,' to blame the conduct of the Sieur Enocq, in seeking to remain on the other side [the mountains], and to abandon his charge, under pretence of a journey which he had been permitted to make,

"And [to advise] that the said Duchess be written to, to this effect, that they recommend her not to avail herself of his services for counsel, seeing that he is not a man of judgment, nor such as she esteems him to be.

"It was agreed to hold by their advice."

What course was taken by Renée on receipt of this discouraging communication does not appear. Whilst regretting her disappointment, however, it must be confessed that Monsieur Enocq's stern compeers at Geneva were more capable of arriving at a correct estimate of his qualifications for the post he coveted than was the warm-hearted duchess, whose acquaintance with the ailing pastor had been on her own showing so brief.

Montargis, as we see, thanks to the noble resolution

* Reg. du Conseil, année, 1567, f. 101, 102.

of Renée, was still a secure asylum for the persecuted Huguenots, but the smouldering flames of civil war were gathering strength in other quarters for a fresh outburst. The conduct of the queen mother inspired the minds of the Reformed with utter distrust. "She was seen once more assisting with her sons at the ecclesiastical processions; she removed from the Court all the ladies who had ceased to attend the Roman Catholic services and ceremonies; wherever the Court appeared, no Protestant worship was permitted for many miles round. The Edict of Pacification was limited by partial arrangements, now in one way and now in another, without any respect to the complaints of the Huguenots, however well grounded."* It was however the arrival of Alva in the Netherlands which precipitated the second war of religion in France. The Government commenced arming, under pretext of being prepared against possible invasion by the terrible general of Philip II. But it was soon understood that the new levies, both of French and Swiss soldiers, were designed to crush the doomed Huguenots. These, in their turn,—"leagued and armed in secret"—in the extremity of their apprehension, unhappily determined to take the initiative in offensive operations. They concerted to surprise the Court during its sojourn at Monceau, and to get possession of the person of the king. They hoped by this means to rid him of the

* Civil Wars and Monarchy in France, &c., by Leopold Ranke, vol. i. p. 338.

dangerous influence of the Cardinal of Lorraine, and to procure the dismissal of the Swiss. But the project failed. The Court effected its escape to Meaux, and there the counsel of the Duke of Nemours decided the king to take the road to Paris. The duke made all the required arrangements; placing the king in the centre of the Swiss battalion, which numbered 6000 men, and of which he took the command.* So bold a front did he present to the enemy, that the Prince of Condé dared not attack him, and the failure of this rash scheme only made matters worse. Who would now venture to assert the loyalty of the Huguenot party? L'Hôpital did so, but in vain. Catherine de' Medici became "zealously hostile" to them. Negotiations proved fruitless, and hostilities commenced. The battle of St. Denys, sanguinary but indecisive, was fought on 10th November, 1567. Condé commanded the Huguenots. The old Constable de Montmorency commanded the army of the king, and fell in the contest. "War was rekindled all over France." At last the Prince of Condé having received a strong auxiliary force, under John Casimir of the Palatinate, laid siege to Chartres (Renée's duchy) one of the granaries of Paris.* But as soon as fortune began to smile on the Huguenots, the Court resolved to delude them by overtures of peace. It offered the restoration of the former Edict of Pacification, but refused to grant guarantees for its performance. Condé

* History of the Protestants in France, by G. de Félice.

and Coligni were not deceived by the demonstrations of the court, and represented to their followers the imprudence of lending ear to proposals which were only designed to beguile them to their more complete destruction. But they protested in vain. The Huguenot army and the German auxiliaries loudly demanded the acceptance of the terms which the court had proposed to them. Unhappily at this juncture, the death of Charlotte de Laval, the admirable wife of Coligni, summoned him away to Chatillon-sur-Loing, where he had left her with their children, and where, no later than 23rd January, 1568, we read of her as engaged in affectionate and intimate correspondence with her attached friend, the Duchess Renée, on matters of mutual interest.* During the admiral's absence, the opposite counsels in the Huguenot camp prevailed. The Treaty of Peace was signed, in spite of his just misgivings, at Longjumeau, on the 20th March, 1568. It was nicknamed at once "La paix boiteuse et malassise," and justified the description but too soon.

Nothing indeed was further from the intention of the court than the observance of the terms on which peace had been concluded with the Huguenots. The Pope, the King of Spain, and the Catholic princes of Europe blamed Catherine de' Medici for the toleration accorded to the Reform worship, in the renewal of the Edict of Pacification; but she really did not deserve their

* Collections Béthune, 8720, fo. 36.

censure; she was playing a deeper game than they suspected. The Treaty of Longjumeau was a mere deception, intended to lull the Huguenots into security, that, when dispersed and disarmed, they might fall an easy prey to their enemies. The insincerity of the court soon became alarmingly apparent. The Swiss troops were not sent back; the Reform worship was interdicted in all places belonging either to the queen-mother, her sons, or the Duke of Montpensier. The Duke of Nemours refused to execute the conditions of the treaty in Lyons and Grenoble,—places under his jurisdiction. The Pope wrote to praise him, and Catherine did not blame him for his disobedience. The Romanist populace, unrestrained by the authority of the law, committed frightful excesses, and massacres of the helpless Huguenots, in several important towns, met with no punishment. The virtuous Chancellor L'Hôpital fell into disfavour with the court for always insisting, in the council of the king, on the faithful observance of the treaties of peace. The seals were at last taken from him on the plea of his age demanding repose, and given to another, Jean de Morvilliers. Condé and Coligni were commanded to repay to Catherine the sum of 300,000 crowns, which she had advanced to the German auxiliaries of the Reformed, at the conclusion of the treaty. The money was to be paid from their own private means; they were forbidden to avail themselves of the liberality of the Reformed Churches of France, for it was the ruin of the chiefs of

the Huguenot party at which Catherine aimed. But there was no longer any doubt of the nature of her intentions, when it became known that her ministers had demanded and obtained a Bull from Rome, authorising the sale of the temporalities of the French Church to the amount of 150,000 livres annually, the proceeds to be applied to the extermination of the Reformed religion and of its professors. Finally, Condé and Coligni received the intelligence that their arrest had been determined on, and that steps were being taken for their seizure. They immediately addressed a petition to the king, setting forth the grievances of the Huguenots and the numerous violations of the recent Treaty, the blame of which they threw on the Cardinal of Lorraine alone, acquitting their sovereign of it. They then, by a rapid movement, effected their escape, with their families, to La Rochelle. On the other hand, the council of the king promulgated an edict at St. Maur (which the Parliament of Paris registered on the 28th September), prohibiting on pain of death and confiscation of goods the exercise of the Reformed religion throughout the kingdom; its ministers were ordered to quit France within fifteen days, and it was declared that pardon to the Huguenots for their past errors should only be granted on condition of their abandoning them immediately. The edict attributed all past concessions to mere necessity, and asserted that they had been made against the will of the king, who had resolved on revoking them as soon as circumstances should permit.

There remained no alternative to the Huguenots but to try again the miserable chances of war.*

The Queen of Navarre joined the Huguenot chiefs at La Rochelle, with her son Prince Henry, and 4000 men. Normandy, Poitou, Périgord, Provence, contributed reinforcements, and Condé and Coligni found themselves at the head of the strongest army they had yet commanded. The third war of religion commenced under more favourable auspices than the preceding. The leaders of the Reformed often applied to themselves the saying of Themistocles, "we should have been lost but for our ruin;" and the court, at first astounded by such an unexpected rising, suffered them to seize on the principal cities of the west of France. The Duke of Anjou, the king's brother, commanded the Roman Catholic army, but dared not offer battle to the Huguenots through the winter of 1568–69, although he was at the head of 28,000 men. At last, on the 13th of March, the fatal battle of Jarnac deprived the Reformed of one of their gallant chiefs, Louis, Prince of Condé. D'Andelôt, brother of Coligni, died of fever at Saintes on the 27th May. The admiral gained some slight advantage over the enemy at La Roche-Abeille on the 23rd June, but suffered loss at the siege of Poitiers, which he was obliged eventually to raise. The disaster at Moncontour on the 3rd October, when Coligni received three wounds and was defeated, seemed

* Sismondi, Hist. des François, t. xix. pp. 20—33.

to crown the misfortunes of the Huguenots. It was during this, the third war of religion, that Montargis ceased for awhile to be an asylum for the oppressed. The massacre of the Reformed at Orléans in the year 1569, caused the flight of all who were of "The Religion," especially the women and children, from the towns and villages of the flat country, to their once serene retreat, in the hope of refuge from the cruel strife which was raging round them. "This last concourse of Protestants at Montargis," we are told by D'Aubigné, "stirred up the preachers of Paris, and they the king, to force Renée to turn away 460 persons, of whom two-thirds were women and children at the breast." We are not left to imagine the grief of Renée at the stern decree; it is described to us. "Bursting into tears," she said to Malicorne (who again appears as the disturber of her peace), "that if she had on her chin what he had on his, she would kill him with her own hands, as a messenger of death." The Duke of Alençon is said to have been active in this evil work*; giving the duchess to understand that plots were daily hatched at Montargis against his majesty, and desiring her not only to dismiss the Reformed and their ministers, but to leave the exercise of the Reformed religion, or else to remove to some other place. Renée answered, "that she was too nearly related to the crown to be so ill-affected to it; that those to whom she gave a shelter were only a

* D'Aubigné, livre viii. fo. 253. 1569.

harmless and poor people, who meddled with nothing that could be of the least importance to the king's state; that she could not leave a place which belonged to her, and where she was resolved to live and die, without forsaking the exercise of that religion which had been permitted to her by the king, and in which she had hitherto been brought up." However, about the end of the month of September, she was obliged to dismiss most of those helpless ones who had taken shelter at Montargis, "being threatened with having a garrison sent in very speedily." All that she could do to alleviate the hardship of their lot, she did with the generous devotion of her own noble heart. "Forasmuch as there were several families, many women, and a great number of young and old people, all unable to go the long journeys they were forced to take, or else be at the mercy of those who waited only for an opportunity to destroy them," she furnished this distressed company with a hundred and fifty waggons, eight travelling coaches, and a great many horses"*—"answering for the waggoners who carried the rest and their baggage." They had, however, hardly passed the Loire, when fresh dangers menaced these persecuted beings. A captain of the Roman Catholic army, named Cartier, with a troop of about 200 horsemen, was sent to massacre them. The ministers who escorted the fugitives, perceiving on a neighbouring hill the ap-

* D'Aubigné, Histoire Universelle (quoted by Bayle).

proach of the murderous band, threw themselves on their knees with their timid flock, exhorted them to die with constancy, and began to sing a psalm. But rescue was near. He in whom they trusted had "given commandment to save them." Suddenly from the opposite quarter there appeared between two hills a body of 800 horsemen, under command of the Captain Du Bec de Bourry, a Huguenot, who was on his way with his troop from Bourges to La Charité. He charged the foe unexpectedly, put them to flight, and escorted in safety to the latter place the trembling troop of fugitives from Montargis.*

No wonder that Renée longed, and prayed, and "laboured for peace." War—such war—without her gates, and within no security as heretofore for those whose faith she shared, must have thrilled her very soul with sorrowful dismay. To whom she wrote the following letter does not appear, for it is "sans adresse," but it forcibly expresses in few and simple words the anxiety of her mind for the pacification of the fearful strife, and is evidently written to one whose friendly co-operation was valuable.†

"My Cousin,—I do not wish to dispatch the present messenger, who has brought me tidings of you, without a word of intelligence concerning mine, praying you to

* Sismondi, t. xix. pp. 58, 59.

† Collections Béthune, 8703, fo. 68.

hear them, and entirely to believe them, and to employ yourself, as I know you are accustomed to do, in whatsoever way shall be possible to you, in striving to arrive at a good peace, in which endeavour, I, on my part, shall put forth all my power, if it shall please God. And if it cannot be a general one, at least that it shall be to those who desire it, and who belong to us; and confiding my letter to the said messenger, after recommending myself to your good remembrance, I pray God, my cousin, to keep you in His.

"From Montargis, this 20th day of August, 1569.

"Your good cousin,

"RENÉE OF FRANCE."

Peace came after awhile, at least a breathing-space from war, for thus perhaps may be more correctly characterised the interval between the Treaty of 1570, which will presently be described, and the Massacre of St. Bartholomew, which interpreted its real purpose on the part of the court. The bravery and skilful generalship of Coligni raised the Huguenot cause from the lowest depths of depression after the defeat at Moncontour. He was still enabled to maintain the struggle, for his very name inspired confidence, and brave men rallied round him, proud to fight under such a great commander. Though fearfully tried, his faith failed not, "for his heart was fixed, trusting in God." An able writer says of him, "He never indeed had that singular joyousness of spirits which Condé had, but always a

serene strength of heart, which perhaps on the whole was as effective for himself and for others, the settled determination of a man who had counted the cost of his cause before he engaged in it, and was prepared to pay it to the uttermost."* He wintered in Languedoc, and "refused two several offers of peace from the court, because they would not concede sufficient toleration." But the court was disgusted with the war; the Huguenot party was stronger in the field than ever; and the king, impatient to commence a life of festivity and indulgence, was restrained by an exhausted treasury.† He was jealous of his brother, the Duke of Anjou, and the other leaders of the Roman Catholic party were also jealous of each other. Their divisions aided the cause of peace, and Coligni having received guarantees of a satisfactory nature for the fulfilment of the treaty, signed it at La Charité on the 8th August, 1570. The Edict of Pacification was published at St. Germain-en-Laye, and was immediately registered in all the courts of the kingdom.‡ "It was more favourable to the Reformed than the preceding ones. It gave them liberty of worship in all the places which were in their possession, in addition, two towns of every province for the celebration of service, an amnesty for the past, equal right of admission to public offices, permission to reside in any

* Lectures on Great Men. Gaspard de Coligny, by the Rev. F. Myers, p. 419.

† Sismondi, t. xix. p. 81.

‡ Ibid., t. xix. p. 84.

part of the kingdom without being molested on account of religion, and four hostage-towns, to be held by the Huguenot troops for two years, La Rochelle, La Charité, Cognac, and Montauban."*

"So the land had rest from war;" but though hostilities had ceased for a space, the two parties were not reconciled. The Reformed had suffered loss in moral force, in numbers, and in political influence, by the civil wars, and the bitter strife had deepened the hatred of their adversaries against them. The enmity of Catherine de' Medici to the Huguenots was now a fixed principle in her breast. Peace had been signed,—but vengeance was intended. The cruel counsel of the Duke of Alva at the Bayonne Conference in 1565 had never been forgotten. "Kill the leaders, for ten thousand frogs are not worth the head of a salmon." Nevertheless, for awhile, a seeming calm prevailed, and the Reformed began to hope that better times were in store for them. The Seventh National Synod assembled at La Rochelle in the spring of 1571, and was the first that was held with the full consent of the king. The chiefs of the Huguenots were present, and took part in the deliberations. From the business of this conference the venerable Coligni was summoned to the councils of Charles IX., who received him with every mark of respectful affection. Popular infractions of the Edict of St. Germain were duly punished; but

* History of the Protestants of France, by G. de Félice.

as time passed on, less favourable indications manifested themselves. Meanwhile Renée dwelt at Montargis, feeble in health and advanced in years, but still earnest as ever in desiring the instruction of "ministers" for herself and others. One more glimpse of the duchess under this familiar aspect we obtain from the following interesting letter, addressed to her by a Huguenot pastor named Toussain*, which also throws a little light on the state of religion in Renée's neighbourhood at the period in which it was written.†

"MADAME,—I believe that your Excellency hears daily of the vexations which are practised on those who come hither from Orléans to hear the word of God, which cause has hindered me, and all the more that I am alone, from travelling until now, for if the means of doing so had not been cut off from me by continual occupation, I should not have delayed so long going to Montargis in order to present myself before your Excellency, since you have done me the honour to desire and command me to do so. Above all, I have greatly regretted not having been able to visit vour Excellency when you were indisposed, in consequence of having been myself seized at that very time with an illness which confined me for several days to the house. Now it appears that the Lord our God looks upon us with a

* Is he the "Good Toussain," pastor of the church at Montbéliard many years previously? See reference in Letters of John Calvin, compiled by Dr. Jules Bonnet, vol. ii. p. 161.

† Collections Béthune, 8739, fo. 114.

more favourable eye, and will vouchsafe during this springtide to revive the state of our Church, which has been, as it were, dead, for it hath pleased the majesty of our king to make so many and such express commands to the people of Orléans to leave us peaceably to enjoy the exercise of our religion in this place, that those people, hitherto so seditious, have begun to grow more gentle, so that we have been able to celebrate the Lord's Supper for two Sundays with a large company, and I hope that henceforth I may be able sometimes on the Mondays to go to Montargis to render you the very humble service which I owe you, praying the good God, Madame, that fortifying you daily in all bodily and spiritual strength, He may preserve you to a long and very happy life.

"From l'Isle les Orléans, this 15th April, 1572.

"Your Excellency's very humble and obedient servant,

"D. Toussain."

The blessings thus devoutly implored for Renée, — health and life prolonged in happiness, — were not in store for her. Her troubled existence was waning, her bodily strength was diminishing, and before her eyes were closed in the welcome repose of death, the scenes or the news of the hideous massacre of St. Bartholomew must have banished from her heart all earthly joy.

But before we trace her career of trials and woes to its solemn termination, let us for awhile leave the subject of Renée's connection with the Reformed faith

and its afflicted professors, in order to illustrate, as clearly as may be, a few other points in the sorrowful history of her life. For beside the external commotions which so sorely troubled the years of Renée's widowhood in France, there were other sources of harassing anxiety opened to her in the unsettled state of her private affairs. In temporal, as in spiritual things, she had an arduous struggle with opposing difficulties. Her perplexities arose from the injustice with which she appears to have been treated, with reference to the dowry in France settled upon her on occasion of her marriage with Ercole II. In the absence of other detailed information on this subject, it is desirable to subjoin the following translation of a statement prepared by Renée herself for the use of her son, Duke Alfonso.* The food which this document furnishes to the thoughtful reader, cannot but render its introduction acceptable. Notwithstanding the learned studies of her youth, Renée's literary powers certainly did not exceed those of average capacity, — yet whatever Renée wrote contains a deep intrinsic interest.

"The state in which my affairs are; — to be delivered to my son, Monsieur the Duke of Ferrara.

"I have before now written concerning the vast and tiresome processes which I have carried on, in the

* Collections Béthune, 8727, fo. 29, Ro. (Bibliothèque Impériale).

desire and loving inclination which I had to satisfy you, my son, in the prosecution of the business of my affairs, as the late Alvarot, your ambassador, may have told you, and borne witness of, in his lifetime, as also how I had invested in that suit the expenses which I have incurred in it with a view to success, sometimes through his hands, and then again by those of Annibal Milan and many other persons, and you know that for that express purpose I took my journeys to Lyon and Avignon*, where you found me, and were not willing that any mention should be made of my rights, (but allowed the monies due to the late Mons. your father) notwithstanding the doubts which I set before you, and my foreseeing that if the present opportunity were lost, those rights could never be recovered. Since then I have taken several journeys to the court and to Paris, and presented petitions to the king in his council, at the Louvre (of which I sent you duplicates), to which [petitions of mine] no answer was given. [I also] attended in the city of Paris, at the lodgings of the chancellor, where the council of the king was assembled, and set forth my claims as above alluded to, and demanded my 250,000 livres, since there had been taken from me Gisors and Vernon, and [they had] been made part of the appanage of Mons.

* Was this during the "progress" of Catherine de' Medici and Charles IX. through the southern provinces of France in 1565? It was then that the Duke of Ferrara was at the court (vide Colquhoun's Life in France and Italy in the Olden Time, p. 584),—a fact which seems to lend probability to this date.

the duke, my nephew, which [Gisors and Vernon] are the chief part of my revenue, for Montargis has been assigned to me at the worth of only 1900 livres of revenue; it has been demanded of me during all the troubles [of the civil war], and I was pressed to quit it with an offer of houses and other things. I have still long letters concerning it, written by the hand of the queen; I knew that it never would have been restored to me or to any of my family. There only remained to me Chartres, which was assigned to me at the worth of only 1100 livres [of revenue], and costs me every year much more. And afterwards began again the wars, during which, it was impossible to transact business; and at that interval, considering that the period of ten (?) years since the decease of the late Monsieur, my husband, was passing away, I made arrangements with my daughter, and granted to her power to act for me in effecting a composition of such sort, that I might not lose everything. I could not find any one on whom I could with more safety or surety rely in this matter, since neither you, my son, nor your brother, could take part in it, nor any one as representing you. She did so much, that my petition was signed [as granted], and that Gisors and Vernon remained to me, and were declared mine. I assure you that all these difficulties have been still much more vexatious and painful than I have been able to represent to you by letters, and [that] I should have been in danger of losing all. Nevertheless, after having toiled so hard in the

undertaking, I again found my affairs in such a state, that I have [now] to begin over again, although [in following them up] I have spared neither my trouble nor my health in various journeys which I have pursued, and others which I have again taken both to the court and to Paris, in the most inclement season of the year, at great expense and cost both to myself and to my daughter above mentioned: and we have also attended in person, both of us, and she also alone, before the king, and in his council, and at pleadings which have been made in the Court of Parliament concerning the ratification of the agreement, on which occasions the attorney-general with other parties appeared, and alleged so many doubts and difficulties against my right, that they have obstructed up to this time the confirmation of this agreement as being too prejudicial to the demesne of the king, and that I and my family were too advantageously and too favourably dealt with by this agreement, considering the little right I had in the lands which I claimed, whether on this side or on that side of the mountains *, inasmuch as by the laws and ordinances of France, according to which all this affair ought to be judged, no person having passed the age of thirty-six years is received [as a competent party] on any occasion of debate touching an agreement made during his minority, much less still in the case of those which have been transacted with the prince, and

* Louis XII. assigned to his daughter Renée, in his lifetime, his rights (or claims) to the Duchy of Milan.

on account of marriage, [even] without regard had to the term of the said years elapsed since the decease of the late already-named Monsieur, your father, it was the only way of [establishing] my good right, and nevertheless the time was about to expire without the means of remedy, because of the wars which began again, as has been said, and which were not to end so soon, as experience and expectation have shown. Moreover, in regard to 'Bretaigne,' they alleged the statutes and ordinances of the states maintained by those of the country concerning successions in [the cases in which] there are only daughters, together with the decrees pronounced between the Counts of Blois and of Montfort, which tell much to my prejudice, beside the very large debts paid at the acquittance of the late king, my father, which they demanded that I should repay, and by such means and innumerable others which cannot be fully detailed in what I am now writing, they have obstructed, as they are still doing, the ratification of my agreement, saying that the king had been circumvented, considering the slightness of the evidence for my right; and neither I, nor my daughter with me, whatever costs, exertions, and journeys we have bestowed in the matter, have been able to obtain any more, for the last two years, than an audience in the Court of Parliament, in which a decree passed in my presence and in hers, which puts me into a position of delay and misgiving in respect to my right, such that I can entertain no hope of prompt or successful despatch of my

business, being unprovided with documents, deeds of title, and agreements which are necessary to me; although before I spoke to my daughter already named, I had made every effort to recover them, and without those which were recovered by the care and diligence of my daughter De Nemours, your sister, and by means of her connexions, never would the king or his council have consented to do anything for me, nor to pass the agreement concerning which I doubt not that you understand well enough how advantageous it is, since my adversaries are not satisfied with it, nay, have been obstructing it by every means in their power for two years and more, in the confident hope which they have of showing how little right I have to the things which I claim, for [the recovery of] which I have never meant to avail myself of the authority and power of any prince, or lord, out of this realm, with whom, if one was minded to transact business, there would arise more difficulties than in France, and very much more expense and loss, and less credit, and [so] I cannot see with what safety that could be done, considering that in such quarters neither have you had so close alliance, nor your predecessors so close friendship as with this realm. Every one knows what the king, my father, and the kings Francis and Henry have done for your state, and for all those of your house, and the favours and friendly offices which you have all received from them. Beside which, I have been assured, that by the laws written and observed in the other countries, I should be much more

rigorously excluded from my right by the lapse of time, so that there would only remain [recourse to] arms, and a seed of wars, which would only bring after them divisions and disadvantages in and to our houses and states. So then, having considered all these things, and the time at [the expiration of] which I could no longer prosecute my rights, the difficulties which were thrown in my way, the few deeds of title which I found in my possession for establishing them, and being without the means of being able to recover any of them, [these reflections] made me readily submit and trust to the advice [given me] to agree to an amicable composition [of the suit], and accept the arrangements which you have seen, which I regard as more advantageous for us and all my children and descendants, than to bequeath to them, after my death, the prosecution of a suit for a right too doubtful and confused, after having, forsooth, refused a pension of sixty thousand livres from the king, which would have brought me more profit and less trouble and inconvenience; only that I knew that neither you nor any of my children would have remained satisfied, which [consideration] has induced me the sooner to come to terms and [accept] an amicable composition as the best and [most] advantageous which I have hitherto had an opportunity of obtaining. Further, you ought not to find fault with what is surrendered by this agreement to my daughter De Nemours, considering the care and diligence which she has bestowed on endeavours to recover the deeds of title and

papers which were [in quarters?] unknown to us, and [that she has] employed the interest which she and her connexions had with the lords about their Majesties and in their council, without which efforts and aids never would this agreement have been passed, as the king has declared [to his having] granted the said agreement partly in favour of your sister already mentioned, and her family, to which sister you know also that I have never supplied any monies for her marriage, notwithstanding that I intend to give some to my other daughters, so that after the ratification of the agreement she will not be able any more to make any demand on my property, whether in the duchy of Chartres, county of Gisors and Vernon, which are secured to me, although they had been before taken away from me (as I have said above), nor in the county of Gien, which is to be given to me instead of Montargis, if the ratification is passed, which arrangements cannot but turn to your advantage, as you may see and know more fully: and otherwise neither you nor I shall ever obtain anything from the king, nor in this realm, and shall only lie at utter disadvantage."

This document is without date. But there is a rough copy extant of a legal instrument, dated 1568, in which the king is declared to have appointed, on two distinct occasions, the nominees of the duchess to the office of Comptroller of the "Aides and Tailles" of Gisors. Therein also the style and title of Renée is formally set forth in the following terms:—"We, Renée of France,

Dowager of Ferrara, Duchess of Chartres, Countess of Gisors, and Lady of Montargis."* Vernon, the other contested possession, appears to have been visited by Renée in the spring of 1566; a "passport for oats," purchased at Nogent-sur-Seine, "for the provision of the horses of her stable" during her intended sojourn at Vernon, being preserved in the MS. collections of Béthune.†

The correspondence between Renée and her daughter, Anna d'Este, Duchess of Nemours, fully attests "the care and diligence" with which the latter attended to all business matters of family interest, however trivial the subject of them might appear to be. Equally vigilant and industrious, she responded to each demand for promptitude of action, and her practical mind did not disdain the details of less exalting occupations than those which once engaged her in companionship with Olympia Morata. At one time she writes to her mother in behalf of a Monsieur Miron, the Seigneur of Saint Prest, who owes Renée "a fine for his marriage, and has wished to compound for it with the Sieur Gondy, who makes his demand for it at a very high rate. However" (she continues), "the said Miron, fearing lest his lands should be seized, has offered him as much as 600 livres, which is equal to two fines, inasmuch as his predecessor, who was the Sieur de la Chesnaye, paid no more than 300 livres as his fine. And because the said

* Collections Béthune, 8739, fo. 27.

† Ibid., 8739, fo. 82.

Gondy objects to admit him at that composition, he has betaken himself to me in order to obtain some favour from you. Which I very humbly beseech you to grant him, Madame, since he and his predecessors have always been your servants, and servants of all our house, and I should like to be able to gratify them in some matter. And you will write, if you please, to the said Sieur Gondy, saying what it is your pleasure that he should do in the matter, which again I request of you very humbly, that the said Miron may know that this letter has been of some use to him, and that he may have so much the more cause to render you very humble service. From Paris, this 25th day of June, 1571."* At another time the Duchess of Nemours forwards to Renée a memorial presented to her by a serjeant of Montargis, who threatens a remonstrance to the privy council if his suit be unattended to, and implores her mother to see to the affair without delay, and to advise her as to the reply to be given, in order that she may obviate any disagreeable consequences that may possibly ensue.† Again she listens to the (probably) inefficient pleadings of Renée's proctor before the Court of Parliament, and writes to propose the appointment, in his stead, of her own, a certain Maître Julien Chauveau, "an honest man" "worthy of this office," whose "good will, probity, and diligence" are

* Collections Béthune, 8737, fo. 34.

† Ibid., 8737, fo. 93 (dated Paris, July 12th, 1572).

well known to her, and from whose services Renée will undoubtedly derive full satisfaction.* But she did not always limit her interference to matters equally harmless and legitimate: the following epistle to her mother could not have been a very welcome missive.†

"MADAME,—Whereas the king by his letters patent of the 18th June has ordered that the sister Frances du Plessis shall be brought back to her convent, near Montargis, whence she departed a considerable time since, that she may live there henceforth religiously, and according to the rules of her order, I have been entreated to write to you this short letter, in order to supplicate you very humbly that it may please you to mention this to the prioress, so that, according to the intention of his Majesty, she may be prepared to receive her, and not permit her to leave her convent so freely as she has heretofore done. And whereas those who have spoken of this to me are my intimate friends, whom I should desire to gratify in even a greater matter, I would not fail to recommend her to you, praying very humbly that it may please you to speak of it to the said prioress, in order that she may not allow her to go out, unless those who are related to her be first of all informed. And now, after having very humbly kissed your hands, I will supplicate the Creator to bestow on

* Collections Béthune, 8737, fo. 99.

† Ibid., 8737, fo. 87.

you, Madame, very good health, and a long and happy life.

"From Paris, this 8th day of July, 1572.

"Your very humble and very obedient daughter and servant,

"ANNE D'EST."

Political intrigue, the baneful companionship of Catherine de' Medici, her own relationship to the Guises, and the deplorable state of the French Court and society at that period, had all lent their pernicious influences toward the perversion of the once-promising Anna d'Este. Most sad it is to contrast what she was with what she became, when years spent in such debasing intercourse had done their work upon her. And if it be true that it is the maternal parent whose character generally decides that of her children, what might not be inferred from the history of Henri le Balafré, Duke of Guise, and from that of the Duchess of Montpensier?* Yet Anna d'Este herself was the daughter of the pious and virtuous Renée, and so furnishes, in her mature years at least, a startling exception to the rule above referred to. Faulty as she was, however, she appears from her letters to have been not wholly uninfluenced by filial love and duty; whilst it is evident that Renée clung to her with all a mother's

* It was by her that Jacques Clément was incited to assassinate Henry III. in 1589.

tenderness, such as a child's offences, however aggravated, have seldom power to diminish.

Her second husband, Jacques de Savoy, Duke of Nemours, "the flower of all chivalry," as he was in the eyes of Brantôme the flatterer, though by no means free from stain, contrasts on the whole favourably with some of the leading men of his party, perhaps because he withdrew at an early period from public life, in decaying health and disgust at the aspect of political affairs. In 1569 he had been charged, in conjunction with the Duke d'Aumale, to oppose the passage of the Loire by the troops which the Duke de Deux Ponts was leading to the succour of the Huguenots. This enterprise failed through the stubbornness of D'Aumale, and Nemours, fearing that the Guises would throw the whole blame on him, and being also worn out with fatigue, retired to his duchy of Genevois, where he sought distraction from his troubles of body and mind in the cultivation of letters and the fine arts.* The correspondence of Renée with the Duke of Nemours leaves no room to doubt the kindly regard entertained by her for her son-in-law.

The reader will not regret the insertion of one of these letters, which the Béthune collection has preserved.

"To my son, Monsieur the Duke of Nemours and of Genevois.

"My Son,—Since [the receipt of] several letters which

* Biographie Universelle, t. xxxi. pp. 60, 61.

you have written to me, and those which my daughter, your wife, brought to me (which I gave her to read, and deeply repented having done so, for it was not without her shedding many tears, on account of what you wrote to me of your illness, and being herself much distressed at having left you, and wearied with her journey; in uncertain health, and fatigued with [her exertions in] our affairs, in which she has laboured exceedingly, and I, on my part, having made a winter journey, for which I found myself the worse in health), I have again returned from another journey this summer, having been absent for a month on account of the illness of the queen-mother, of which my daughter has given you a particular account, she having remained a long time with her (not without difficulty), as I know you will have heard from all, and of the good health of her said Majesty, as also of that of my daughter, your wife, who was well the evening before I set out, when she had returned to your dwelling in Paris; but she there received letters mentioning the slight attack of gout which had unexpectedly come upon you, and the illness of your little girl, which [news] has laid your wife on her couch, where I left her, which I should not have done but for the consent of the nurse and of the physicians, who all declared that she had need of repose and to have nothing to weary her. For there have been many things against her, since the overturning of her coach, and her separation from your society,—which is so difficult and grievous for her to bear,—besides the exertions which she took upon herself to make during

the illness of the queen-mother, and then the last intelligence of your little girl and of your affairs which require your presence with her. [These considerations] have made me resolve to write to you, my son, and to pray you, that until your arrival you will prohibit your people from writing to her of the illness of your little girl, but rather to tell her that she is cured, in order to cheer her, for she has need of it. And if the illness should increase, and there should be need of a physician, I pray you to certify me of it, for I have ability to provide one sooner than she, being so much nearer. I have earnestly wished to go to you, which she will not be able to do until after her accouchement and recovery. I have hope that you will be there [with her], which will afford her the greatest consolation and satisfaction that she could have, and knowing that she has advised you of the state of your affairs, and that she has heard the intention of their Majesties, since I took leave of them, and the good will and friendship they bear to you, and their desire to hear of your return, I will not prolong this letter, except to offer and commend myself to your good grace and remembrance, praying you to employ me for you and your little children in everything that shall be agreeable to you; and I will pray God, my son, to bring you back again, with as good health, happiness, and contentment, as I desire for you.

"From Montargis, this 26th day of June, 1572."

"My Son, —I would not forget to tell you, that, if

God preserves me in health, I shall very soon be returning to the court, having been invited by the king, and the queen his mother, to the nuptials of Madame your niece, and again afterwards at Fontainebleau, where the queen* is to be confined, which will be at the time when I assure myself that, if it please God, you will also be there.

"Your good mother,

"RENÉE OF FRANCE."

Here the question presents itself, Was Renée present at the ill-omened nuptials of Henry of Navarre with the worthless Marguerite of Valois on the 18th of August, and was she doomed to witness the horrors of St. Bartholomew's Day in Paris, on the 24th of the same month? This question, interesting as it is, the writer, through insufficient information, is compelled to leave unanswered. The foregoing letter proves that Renée's speedy return to the court was designed, and that it depended only on the state of her health; also a letter is in existence from the Duchess of Nemours to her mother, dated September 11th, which intimates anxiety at not having received tidings from her "since her arrival at Montargis." But this does not afford sufficient ground for concluding that Renée was present in Paris during that "Reign of Terror." If Renée had been then at the court, would Anna d'Este have dared to plot

Charles IX. married, in 1571, Elizabeth, daughter of the Emperor Maximilian II.

with Catherine de' Medici the assassination of her mother's old and trusted friend, the brave, the venerable Coligni? * Could she have borne to risk the sight of her mother's tears—tears of mingled grief and indignation? Could she have endured to hear the impassioned condemnation with which that mother would have denounced such a dark deed of vindictive hatred? It might have been so. The men of that age in France had hard hearts, but the hearts of many of its high-born women were harder still; and the fierce blood of Italy was flowing in the veins of Anna d'Este. However, with the guilt of blood upon her soul, she had craft enough to veil the complicity which had incurred it. Who would suspect any partnership in the great crime, which had so lately been committed, in the author of the following letter?

"To Madame the Duchess Dowager of Ferrara.†

"MADAME,—Not having had any tidings of you since your arrival at Montargis, I have determined to send you this 'laquais,' by whom I very humbly entreat you to write me intelligence of yourself and of your state, also if you have heard anything of Monsieur my husband; because since the time when I was given to understand that he would be setting out on his journey hither, I have had no certain information as to whether

* Civil Wars and Monarchy in France, by Leopold Ranke, vol. ii. pp. 36, 37.

† Collections Béthune, 8747, fo. 99.

he will continue his journey, or whether, indeed, he have deferred it, having heard of what has taken place. I have indeed heard that he set out on the 25th from Chazay, and nothing more. Here things seem to be very peaceable, and no murder is committed, nor act of offence, that I have heard of, continued to be done to any person. And it is hoped that all will go on still better, by means of an ordinance which was yesterday published, whereby the king enjoins on all the wardsmen of the city to put in writing the names, titles, and residences of all those who are of 'The Religion,' and to give up to him the lists which shall be made of them, to be placed in the hands of whomsoever his Majesty shall please to ordain, with prohibition to injure them, or to slander them, on pain of death, which [edict] is only to set them free from prison, and to secure them from heavy fine. I will send you the ordinance as soon as it shall be printed, as I will not fail to do with all other edicts and ordinances which shall be issued hereupon. For the rest, Madame, having heard the pleading of your proctor in the Court of Parliament, I determined to propose to you Maître Julien Chauveau, who is our proctor, an honest man, and from whom (if it should please you to do him so much favour and honour, as to give him your letters of attorney), I would venture to assure you that you will have entire satisfaction and service; and I pray you very humbly to believe, that if I did not know him to be worthy of this charge, I would not propose him to you, nor make to you this very

humble request; but the knowledge which I have of his good will, probity, and diligence, causes me to entreat this very humbly from you, and that it may please you to do me the honour to signify to me your good pleasure hereupon. Madame, with regard to my health, it appears to me that for three nights past I have had better rest than I have been accustomed to, which has brought me much amendment, and the hope of very soon seeing myself in all health and prosperity, to do you the humble and very affectionate service which I owe to you.

"Madame, I supplicate in this place the Creator to grant you, in perfect health, a very happy and a very long life.

"From Paris, this 11th September, 1572. Your very humble and very obedient daughter and servant,

"ANNE D'EST."

"MADAME,—I have resolved, seeing that I have no tidings of Monsieur my husband, to send this 'laquais' further on, to bring me back news of him, praying you to send me yours. I have recovered the edict which I send you, and pray you very humbly to pardon me for not having written to you with my own hand. I have not yet found out how to regain [possession of] the Sœur de la ——— *, for those who detain her, when they found that we were stirring in the matter, have disclaimed knowledge of her. I send Arragon there

* The word here omitted is illegible.

every day, and I will do what I can to get her out, and I am deliberating if I can to-day send for the secretary of the Prince Dauphin, and speak to him myself, and then I will advertise you of everything. I very humbly kiss your hands."

Contemporary documents placing the assertion beyond doubt that the murder of the admiral had received the sanction of Anna d'Este, it must be acknowledged that there is something fearful in the calmness of the above epistle, in the facility with which the duchess turns from public events of such painful interest to the comparatively trivial matters which occupy the remainder of the letter, if we except from such description her evident anxiety for the safety of Monsieur de Nemours, which shows at least that all tender feeling was not yet extinct in the heart of the writer.

The edict of which she speaks so favourably to the Duchess Renée was doubtless an emanation of the crooked policy of the court, which, after the massacre of St. Bartholomew, was sorely puzzled how to explain or to justify its barbarous work in the eyes of France, and of Christian (not Popish) Europe, yet repented not of the atrocities it had ordered, but with cruel craft sought rather, by seeming mildness, to complete the enterprise it had undertaken; that of extirpating heresy from the kingdom. Hence the Letters Patent of the 28th October, "qui monstraient une tant bonne affection du Roy envers ses sujets," whilst "les lettres

closes qui furent dressées cinq jours après chantoient bien autre chanson." *

Happily there is no need to dwell at length in this place on the disgusting details of this terrible crime and great political mistake, for they have been repeatedly described by the pen of the historian. Enough to say, that Divine vengeance pursued the perpetrators; and the end which the massacre was designed to secure, the suppression of "Huguenotry," failed altogether.

Who can refuse to confess a retributive Providence in the miserable death of Henry, Duke of Guise, assassinated in the Castle of Blois in 1588 by command of Henry III., who, as Duke of Anjou, had been one of the chief accomplices of Guise in the plot against the lives of Coligni and the Reformed? . . . Then it was that Anna d'Este, when brought prisoner to Blois after the murder of her sons the Duke and the Cardinal, appealed in these somewhat quaint but touching terms to the memory of her mother (as related in old French memoirs). "O mother! when your father built these walls, you did not expect that my children would have been hacked to pieces therein!"

* * * * * *

One letter more from the correspondence between Renée and her daughter, the Duchess of Nemours, will complete the documentary portion of these memorials.†

* Bulletin de la Société de l'Histoire du Protestantisme Français, Nos. 3 et 4, p. 101.

† Collections Béthune, 8739, fo. 106.

It has reference to private matters only, but brings to our notice the name of Renée's second daughter, Lucrezia, Princess of Urbino, whose history, distinct though it be from that of her mother, ought not to be passed over without some slight allusion.

"My Daughter,—Having received your letter, and before the letters delivered by this bearer, another which I had had from you and my son, Monsieur de Nemours, to which I was meditating to send you both presently an answer, but M. Franco Nollo has returned to me to take instructions concerning the MS. books of my daughter, the Princess of Urbino, of which you have often spoken to me. He has employed so much solicitation and research about the matter that I have spent much time listening to him, and deferred writing to you until I might be able to inform you of all that took place with him, which is, that having been lately in Paris, I caused a minute to be drawn up at Versori's touching the said MS. books, which I thought at that time to have communicated to you, but your illness and my departure prevented my having the opportunity to do this: also I deferred [writing], waiting still until the confirmation was passed, that I might not further displease my son, and for the continuance of the good and perfect understanding amongst you all my children, such as I know, my daughter, to be your wish. But the solicitation which the said Novello has continued (having in his possession a power of attorney and articles with which he presented

me on his return from Paris) has been so great—added to which a packet has come to hand addressed to him, in which were letters for him from my said daughter, your sister, and also for me, advising me of what has happened there, which Bellanger will relate to you from me—all which has caused him even to redouble his urgency. I have shown to the said Novello the said minute drawn up at Paris, after his having promised me not to speak of it to any one but my said daughter, which minute when he had seen, he was sure that neither my said daughter nor any one in that quarter would be satisfied with it; likewise, that by virtue of his power of attorney and articles which he had in possession, he could not accept it. Upon which he drew up one which I could not accept. I delivered him another to take to my said daughter D'Urbino, that she may acquaint me with her opinion of it. I send to you the duplicate of the said minutes and articles, which you can look at and deliberate upon, in order to advise me of what shall seem to be for the best; and whether the consent of my son, your brother, would not be necessary, seeing the concessions that you have both made. For the rest, I experience great regret at the departure of my son, M. de Nemours, and at not having been able to see him here with our son, De Genevois. Concerning the little boy, I have charged the said Bellanger to tell you that if you will send him to me I shall most willingly receive him. I have likewise spoken to him of a plan very necessary for the

health of our said grandson, and for my own, should any pestilence or illness occur in this place, and of a certain thing which has already been promised to me.

"My daughter, I have received your letter by the bearer, Bellanger, and the duplicate of my instructions concerning the MS. books, for which I thank you to the best of my ability, and grieve much for the trouble which the said bearer tells me you have taken. We must cause the said copy to be authenticated in the 'Chambre des Comptes,' and when it is authenticated we must take counsel as to the most ready means of payment which shall present itself, whether by purchase of land or other assignments. It is true that it would be a long time to wait till the king should receive 200,000 livres, and the pious and charitable works [paid for] and the debts discharged,—but also I fear that if they valued an estate at too high a price, I could not satisfy the demand, and that the creditors would address themselves to me. I believe that nothing will be given up by the commissioners on this side [the mountains?], who will remit the whole to the king, in order to bring the affair to a close, and to come to a decision. I hope to see you soon at Fontainebleau, and to talk to you of what shall be needful for many purposes, concerning which I cannot write to you. And immediately after Easter I will hold myself in readiness to start on my journey thither, when you shall send me word to do so. Meanwhile I send you the answer to the letters, which my said son, M. de Nemours, your husband, has written to me.

Entrusting the rest to the said Bellanger, I pray God, my daughter, to give you all the happiness and satisfaction that you can desire.

"From Montargis, this 12th day of March, 1573."

(This letter is not signed. It appears to have been the rough copy of one written by Renée to her daughter, the Duchess of Nemours.)

Lucrezia d'Este had been married at Ferrara, on the 2nd January, 1571, to Francesco Maria, eldest son and heir of Guido Baldo, Duke of Urbino. "The nuptials," we are told *, "were celebrated with great splendour, and with chivalrous games and other festivities." Her dowry of 150,000 scudi had been prospectively augmented by the sum of 50,000 livres tournois, settled upon her for her sole and separate use, by her mother, but not payable until after the Duchess Renée's decease. Between the bride and bridegroom there was unfortunately a great disparity in age, Lucrezia being by thirteen years and two months senior to her husband. The marriage, distasteful from the first to Francesco Maria, proved an unhappy one, and in 1573, the year before his accession to the ducal throne of Urbino, Lucrezia left him, to return to Ferrara, and to "the elegant court of her brother, Alfonso II.† We read that "she was chiefly distinguished there as the promoter and inspirer

* Dennistoun's Memoirs of the Dukes of Urbino.

† Ibid., vol. iii. pp. 127, 128, 144, 145.

of literature and music," and as "the especial patroness of Tasso."* In 1577, Francesco Maria endeavoured to "negotiate a reconciliation" with Lucrezia, in order to her return to Urbino. He offered to her "the same establishment as had been enjoyed by his mother, besides Novilara and its dependencies, — in all about 6000 scudi a year." The attempt, however, failed, "and the affair next year being submitted to the decision of the Cardinals Farnese, Sforza, and Este, it would appear that an amicable separation was then determined on. At all events, the duchess returned no more to her husband's state."† Lucrezia interested herself in the establishment at San Matteo of an asylum for wives, who, like herself, were separated from their husbands by incompatibility of character.‡ She died on the 11th of February, 1598.

The youngest daughter of Renée, Leonora d'Este, will ever be remembered in connection with the genius and misfortunes of Torquato Tasso. She was infinitely beloved at Ferrara, and was regarded "as so pure and holy a creature, that the deliverance of that city from an inundation was ascribed to her prayers." Her physical constitution, it is said, was "delicate," and her manners "quiet and retiring," but she shared with her sister Lucrezia "the higher and stronger qualities of mind," insomuch that during the absence of her brother

* Ranke's History of the Popes, vol. ii.

† Dennistoun's Memoirs of the Dukes of Urbino, p. 145.

‡ Ibid., p. 147.

Alfonso II., in 1566, on his Hungarian expedition, she administered the affairs of government to the complete satisfaction of the people.* She alone of the three daughters of Renée appears to have been worthy of a parent at once so noble and so good.

And now, let us attend that venerable parent to the departure of her spirit from "this troublesome world!"

"I would not live alway," was the exclamation of a suffering believer of old, and we can well imagine that there was a voice within the heart of Renée saying the same words. Her health had long been infirm†; and the anxieties of her position as the protectress of the oppressed; the perplexities consequent on the state of her private affairs; the personal exertions which they demanded of her, often in journeys during the winter season and in inclement weather; the bitter sorrow with which one so excellent in every relation of life could not but have regarded the conduct of her family and kindred generally—all these causes doubtless aided in the wearing-out of the body, in the release of the spirit. The welcome hour was tolled at last. The turmoil of life ceased. The crimes she could not prevent, but could only deplore,—the cries of those

* Ranke's History of the Popes, vol. ii.

† In a letter to her secretary, Mallot, dated Paris, July 15, 1566, Renée alludes to her health as improving by exercise, and says, "I have no need of asses' milk." She adds, "But Maître François de Plumiers has so strongly advised me to take it, that I would not have you give up looking out for some, and on my return I will advise with the said Maître François about it."

who had lain helpless, but for her loving ministry,—the groans of the miserable victims of war and superstition,—the prolonged struggle in which the blood, the morals, the religion itself of France were being rapidly exhausted,—harassed her soul no longer. At Montargis, which her munificence had enriched with architectural ornamentation, and where her charities had flowed so freely,—on the 12th of June, according to one authority*,—on the 2nd July, 1575, according to another†, Renée died, in the sixty-fifth year of her age.

The Ambassador of the Duke of Ferrara notified this event to the Court of Parliament, whilst to the queen-mother the communication was made by the Duke of Nemours. The reply of Catherine is characteristic. It contains no expression of regret for the death of the illustrious princess, on whom, when living, she had abundantly lavished her hypocritical assurances of regard.‡ But the opportunity afforded for conciliating the Duke of Nemours, by the most gracious intimations of royal favour is, of course, not lost.

"The Court of Ferrara," says Litta, "put on mourning" for the Dowager Duchess, "but did not celebrate her obsequies.§ Most unmeaning, indeed, would have been such a ceremonial. Renée had died "an unshriven

* Biographie Universelle, art. Renée de France.
† Litta. Famiglie Celebri Italiane, Este.
‡ MS. Recueil des Lettres de Catherine de' Medici, Bib. Eq. 967.
§ Famiglie Celebri Italiane, &c.

heretic," and was beyond the reach of intercession, such as the disciples of Rome invoke for the departed.

Renée was interred in the church belonging to the Castle of Montargis, where she breathed her last. "One may there see," says Bernier, writing in 1682*, "her armorial bearings and cipher." The arms were those of France and Ferrara; the cipher or device an R crowned, and "accostée" with "innumerable" fleurs de lis on the right and ermines on the left; the legend containing in brief the following words:

"Renée de France, Duchesse de Chartres, Comtesse de Gisors et Dame de Montargis."†

"May many 'daughters of France' yet rise to emulate the example of her faith, patience, and charity!"

* Histoire de Blois.

† At the extinction of the legitimate line of Este in 1597, these places reverted to the crown of France.

THE END.

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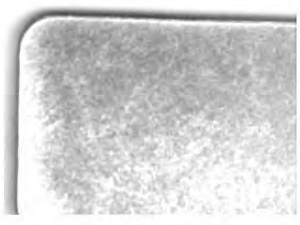
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