**“The Huguenots and St. Bartholomew’s Day” The Bible Echo 7, 20, pp. 308, 309.**

A. T. JONES

THE Huguenots were the *French* Protestants of the Reformation period, a people who bore the wrath of the Papacy for more than two hundred and seventy years; yet who at times became so numerous and powerful as to endanger the supremacy of the Catholic religion in France. In fact, the means by which France was held under the sway of the Catholic religion, was that of which the fullest illustration is furnished in that dreadful scenes of St. Barthomew’s day, August 24, 1572. Charles IX. Was nominally king of France. He was scarcely more than an imbecile, and his mother, the terrible Catherine de Medici, ruled the kingdom in the spirit of a second Jezebel. Philip II. was king of Spain, and, through the Duke of Alva, was carrying on a perpetual St. Bartholomew’s in the Netherlands. Gregory XIII. was Pope at the time of the massacred, but it had been plotted under the instructions of his immediate predecessor, Pius V. Catherine and the Duke of Guise were the leaders of the Catholics; Henry of Navarre, afterward King Henry IV. of France, and Admiral Coligny were the leaders of the Huguenots. As Catherine, by years of open war, had failed to destroy, or even to very much weaken, the Protestant cause, she determined to compass the destruction of the Huguenots by treachery and massacre. It was a deeply laid scheme. It had to be, for the object was the total extirpation of Protestantism in France. The first thing was to disarm the suspicion of the Huguenots. A very plausible means presented itself. {BEST October 15, 1892, p. 308.1}

Two year before, a war of three years had closed so favorably to the Huguenots that it was in their power to indicate the terms of peace, and the treaty of St. Germain-en-Laye was made August 8, 1570, by which they were guaranteed liberty of worship outside of Paris. Catherine now proposed a close alliance of the two parties, and they united to make an armed intervention in the Netherlands in aid of the Prince of Orange, and to relieve the Netherlands from the scourge of Philip of Spain. To seal the alliance, she proposed that Henry of Navarre should marry Margaret of Valois, Catherine’s own daughter, sister to Charles IX.; and that Admiral Coligny should head the united expedition to the rescue of the Netherlands. This scheme was the most taking to the Huguenots because the marriage had been actually talked of while as yet Henry and Margaret were but children; and if by this they could secure peace in France, they would gladly help to bring deliverance to their Protestant brethren in Holland. {BEST October 15, 1892, p. 308.2}

The Huguenots were thoroughly deceived. The marriage was accomplished August 18, 1572. The massacre was to begin Sunday morning, August 24, at daybreak. What followed, we shall tell in the words of Dr. Wylie, “History of Protestantism,” book 17, chap. 16: {BEST October 15, 1892, p. 308.3}

“It was now 11 o’clock of Saturday night, and the massacre was to begin at daybreak. Tavannes was sent to bid the Mayor of Paris assemble the citizens, who for some days before had been provided with arms, which they had stored in their houses. To exasperate them, and put them in a mood for this unlimited butchery of their countrymen, in which at first they were somewhat reluctant to engage, they were told that a horrible conspiracy had been discovered, on the part of the Huguenots, to cut off the king and the royal family, and destroy the monarchy and the Roman Catholic religion. The signal for the massacre was to be the tolling of the great bell of the Palace of Justice. As soon as the tocsin should have flung its ominous peal upon the city, they were to hasten to draw chains across the streets, place pickets in the open spaces, and sentinels on the bridges. Orders were also given that at the first sound of the bell torches should be placed in all the windows, and that the Roman Catholics, for distinction, should wear a white scarf on the left arm, and affix a white cross on their hats. {BEST October 15, 1892, p. 308.4}

“‘All was now arranged,’ says Maimbourg, ‘for the carnage;’ and they waited with impatience for the break of day, when the tocsin was to sound. In the royal chamber sat Charles IX., the Queen-mother, and the Duke of Anjou. Catherine’s fears lest the king should change his mind at the last minute would not permit her to leave him for one moment. Few words, we may well believe, would pass between the royal personages. The great event that impended could not but weigh heavily upon them. A deep stillness reigned in the apartment; the hours wore wearily away; and the Queen-mother feeling the suspense unbearable, or else afraid, as Maimbourg suggests, that Charles, ‘greatly disturbed by the idea of the horrible butchery, would revoke the order he had given for it,’ anticipated the signal by sending one at two o’clock of the morning to ring the bell of St. Germain l’Auxerois,’ Above all were heard the terrible words, ‘Kill, kill!’ {BEST October 15, 1892, p. 308.5}

“The massacre was to begin with the assassination of Coligny, and that part of the dreadful work had been assigned to the Duke of Guise. {BEST October 15, 1892, p. 308.6}

“The authors of the plot having respect to the maxim attributed to Alaric, that ‘thick grass is more easily mown than thin,’ had gathered the leading Protestants that night, as we have already narrated, into the same quarter where Coligny lodged. The Duke of Guise had kept this quarter as his special preserve; and now, the admiral being dispatched, the guards of Anjou, with a creature of the duke’s for their captain, were let loose upon this *battu* of ensnared Huguenots. Their work was done with a summary vengeance, to which the flooded state of the kennels, and the piles of corpses, growing ever larger, bore terrible witness. Over all Paris did the work of massacre by this time extend. Furious bands, armed with guns, pistols, swords, pikes, knives, and all kinds of cruel weapons, rushed through the streets, murdering all they met. They began to thunder at the doors of Protestants, and the terrified inmates, stunned by the uproar, came forth in their night-clothes, and were murdered on their own thresholds. Those who were too affrighted to come abroad, were slaughtered in their bed-rooms and closets, the assassins bursting open all places of concealment, and massacring all who opposed their entrance, and throwing their mangled bodies into the street. The Huguenot as he fled through the street, with agonized features, and lacking the protection of the white scarf, was easily recognized, and dispatched without mercy. {BEST October 15, 1892, p. 308.7}

“For seven days the massacres were continued in Paris, and the first three especially with unabating fury. Nor were they confined within the walls of the city. In pursuance of orders sent from the court, they were extended to all provinces and cities where Protestants were found. Even villages and châteaux became scenes of carnage. For two months these butcheries were continued throughout the kingdom. Every day during that fearful time the poniard reaped a fresh harvest of victims, and the rivers bore to the sea a new and ghastly burden of corpses. In Rouen above 6,000 perished; at Toulouse some hundreds were hewn to pieces with axes; at Orleans the Papists themselves confessed that they had destroyed 12,000; some said 18,000; and at Lyons not a Protestant escaped. After the gates were closed they fell upon them without mercy; 150 of them were shut up in the archbishop’s house, and were cut to pieces in the space of one hour and a half. Some Roman Catholic, more humane than the rest, when he saw the heaps of corpses, exclaimed, ‘They surely were not men, but devils in the shape of men, who had done this.’ {BEST October 15, 1892, p. 309.1}

“The whole number that perished in the massacre cannot be precisely ascertained. Mezeray computes it at 25,000; De Thou at 30,000; Sully at 70,000; and Perefixe, Archbishop of Paris in the seventeenth century, raises it to 100,000; Davila reduces it to 10,000. Sully, from his access to official documents, and his unimpeachable honor, has been commonly reckoned the highest authority. Not a few municipalities and governors, to their honor, refused to execute the orders of the king. The reply of the Vicompte d’Orte has become famous. ‘Sire,’ wrote he to Charles IX., ‘among the citizens and garrison of Bayonne, you have many brave soldiers, and loyal subjects, but not one hangman.’ {BEST October 15, 1892, p. 309.2}