

intended victims, and to attract them to the capital. This opinion, however, rests on no historical grounds. Everything leads to the conclusion that Coligny had acquired a real mastery over the affections of Charles IX., and it is preposterous to suppose that that young monarch, so weak and vacillating and impulsive, could have been such a master of dissimulation as to deceive Walsingham and the other foreign Ambassadors, as well as his own courtiers, into the belief that he was favorable to the Huguenots, whilst in reality he meditated their destruction. There perhaps is somewhat more of probability in the opinion that Catherine de Medici had, for some months at least, planned in her own mind this plot for cutting off the leaders of the Huguenots, and possibly she had not forgotten the remarkable advice given to her by the Duke of Alva, who, at the conference of Bayonne, in 1565, as Henry of Navarre attests, put Tarquin's gesture into words, and counselled Catherine to rid herself of the obnoxious noblemen by the curious Spanish proverb, that "one salmon's head is better than a hundred frogs."* Catherine, however, was not a person to readily suppose that the Spanish statesman was disinterested in his counsel, and that his advice was solely given her in the interests of France. Whether or not, however, the Spanish proverb may have lingered in her mind, it is now generally supposed that, if any such plot existed, the Catholic leaders were likely to share in the fate of the Huguenots, and that had she been successful in the first attempt on the life of Coligny, the Duke of Guise would have been her next victim. But, now that that attempt had failed, she needed the strong arm of this brave nobleman to sustain the Government against the Huguenots, and to this circumstance alone he owed his safety. Be this as it may, Catherine, a few days after the massacre, avowed that she had given orders for the death only of a half-dozen of the Huguenot leaders, and that "she was responsible in conscience only for that number."†

For us this is not a question of great moment, and we will readily leave it to be settled by the friends and admirers of Catherine de Medici, and of the Court of Charles IX. Whether the massacre was premeditated or not, it is manifest from the line of policy pursued by Catherine, and from the principles which guided the French Court, that the Catholic Church and the Holy See had no part in it, and are in no way responsible for its terrible excesses. Paris witnessed other bloody scenes in 1792 and 1793. Religion was not responsible for them. They were decreed by an Atheistic policy in the name of the sovereign people. The St. Bartholomew massacre was the result of an equally irreligious intrigue, although it was,‡ nominally at least, carried into execution in the interests of the Crown. It was the age of classic studies, and it is possible that amid the peculiar difficulties which now beset her, Catherine may have recalled to mind the massacre so famous in Roman literature, when Scylla sought by one blow to rid himself of all his enemies, and, at his command, the streets of Rome on one day flowed with the blood of 6000 citizens. But whether or not this vision flitted before the mind of Catherine, it is unquestionable that the Catholic Church had as little part in the Parisian crime as in that of Scylla; and an eloquent writer has well remarked that were a Blanche of Castile or a St. Louis on the throne of France in 1572, such a massacre would have been impossible.

3. The important question now presents itself: How was the intelligence of the St. Bartholomew massacre received in Rome? The news, as conveyed to the eternal city, was to the effect that a widespread conspiracy of the Huguenots had been discovered only a moment before their plans were matured, that their wicked designs had recoiled upon their own heads, and that the Huguenot power was now for ever broken in France. This intelligence was hailed with the greatest

delight. The city bells rang out their merriest peals, a royal salute was given from the cannon of St. Angelo's, the Pontiff, with the court and clergy, walked in procession from the Basilica of San Marco to the French church of St. Louis, and the "Te Deum" was solemnly chanted in thanksgiving. In addition to all this, a gold medal was struck to commemorate the happy event, and the whole scene, by command of Pope Gregory XIII., was represented among the fresco decorations with which Vassari was then adorning the Sala Regia in the Vatican. All this, however, does not prove what the enemies of the Holy See contend, that the Sovereign Pontiff, or the citizens of Rome, gave expression to their joy for a cold-blooded massacre of the French Huguenots.

To fully appreciate the course pursued by the Roman Court, we must bear in mind the official intelligence relative to the massacre, which was conveyed by Charles IX. to his Holiness. A special agent was sent to Rome, and his instructions were in substance a mere repetition of the King's discourse in Parliament on August 26, setting forth the conspiracy of Coligny and his associates, and how their wicked attempt had recoiled on their own heads. The French agent also brought with him a letter to the Pope from Louis de Bourbon, Duke of Montpensier, which attested that the Huguenots had conspired against the life of the King, the Queen Mother, the King's brothers, and all the princes and Catholic gentlemen of their suite, "to the end that Coligny might create a king of his own religion, and abolish every other religion in the kingdom: that, providentially, the conspiracy was discovered, and on the day they had designed to carry out their enterprise, execution fell upon them and their accomplices, so that all the chiefs of the sect, and several of the party, were slain."* The Nunzio, Salviati, sent at the same time a full account of the massacre, and transmitted with it the substance of the King's discourse in Parliament: "that his Majesty, thanks to Christ, detected a plot which Admiral Gaspar de Coligny had prepared against the Royal authority, so that a terrible destruction and death threatened the whole family of the King; and, therefore, he inflicted on the Admiral and his followers the punishment which they deserved."†

Indeed, this account was persistently repeated by the French envoys at every Court, and those who wished to maintain friendly relations with France were of necessity obliged to accept it as an official statement of the facts and circumstances of the case. The Duke of Alva was at this time carrying on the siege of Mons, in the Netherlands: when he received the official dispatch from Paris, he at once embodied it in a circular to all the Governors of the Provinces, declaring that "the Huguenots had resolved to murder the King and the Royal Family, and to seize on the government: that for this purpose Coligny had organised a body of 4000 men in the faubourg St. Germain, but, the secret being betrayed, the King had anticipated their wicked designs and thus secured the peace of the kingdom. Four hours later the storm would have fallen upon the King and the leaders of the Catholics of France."‡ The French Ambassador in Switzerland, M. de Bellievre, was also commissioned to lay before the Swiss Diet, then assembled in Baden, the motives which prompted him to such severity against the Huguenots. His discourse on the occasion is still extant. He declares that the execution ordered by the King was an act of justice, rendered imperative by the conduct of Coligny and his associates. "They had formed a plot, he said, to introduce a dangerous tyranny into the kingdom. His Majesty therefore, seeing the imminent danger to which his crown and life were exposed, took the advice of the princes and officers of State, and with their counsel proceeded to exercise strict justice against the leading conspirators."§

* Davila, lib. 3: Mathieu, *Hist. de France*, i., 283: White, page 262.

† Ranke, *Hist. de la Papauté*, iii., 83.

‡ "The Massacre of St. Bartholomew, in 1572, was the diabolical work of the Queen, Catherine de Medici, to maintain her political power."—Seebohm, *The Era of the Protestant Revolution* (Longmans, 1874), page 211.

* This letter is published from the Vatican Archives, in continuation of the *Annals of Baronius*, by Theiner, vol. i., page 336.

† Theiner, i., 45.

‡ This document was discovered in 1842, in the State Archives of Mons, and was read by M. Gachard for the Academy of Sciences, in Brussels, on June 4, 1842.

§ MSS. National, St. Germain, 1247.