

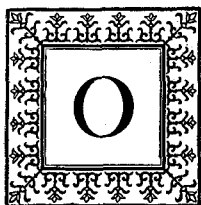
# Catherine de Medicis and St. Bartholomew

WHAT THE MASSACRE WAS AND WHAT IT WAS NOT

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ILLUSTRATIONS FROM OLD PRINTS



ON Monday, the 18th of August, 1572, the people of Paris were offered a spectacle more magnificent than usual even for the court of the Valois; the most splendor-loving of all the monarchs of Europe. Along an elevated passage leading past the side of Notre Dame to a high scaffolding erected in front of the great door, the King led his youngest sister, Margaret, clad in violet velvet, with the royal mantle broidered with lilies trailing from her shoulders, her head crowned with a coronet of costly pearls set off by rubies and diamonds. On the scaffolding stood the Cardinal of Bourbon in his red robes, uncle of the bridegroom, the young King Henry of Navarre, who was supported by his cousin, the Prince of Condé. These two were dressed, like the King of France, in pale yellow satin covered with silver embroidery in high relief, enriched with precious stones. Behind the bride walked the Queen and the court ladies clad in cloth of silver and gold, surrounded and followed by a swarm of gorgeously dressed pages and guards and musicians and gentlemen-in-waiting, which must have made a living stream of color poured along the base of those solemn buttresses. One single sombre note there was in the whole flashing train. Directly behind the bride walked her mother, Catherine de Medicis, clad, as always since the death of her husband, thirteen years before, in black velvet.

But no one saw in that single reminder of past grief any omen of coming horror. Rather, in every heart where patriotism

and religion were strong enough to stifle party hate and cruel fanaticism there was a new hope—the hope of an end of fratricidal strife which for ten years had filled France with fire and blood. The fathers of the groom and his best man had both fallen on the field of battle, and now the chief of the Huguenots was marrying the sister of the King.

The young son of the chief justice of the King's Supreme Court had made his way within the cathedral to where stood the brains of the Huguenots, Admiral Coligny. He was a stern soldier, trained from boyhood in the hard school of his uncle, the Duke of Montmorency, acknowledged head of the ancient French nobility and Constable of France. A man of intense religious conviction, Coligny was no ascetic or even puritan, but always the great French noble of the Renaissance; for he had enlarged his château on the Loing with a terraced garden, an orangery, and a stately gallery adorned by Primaticcio and filled with tapestries and works of art. In the last war a huge price had been set on his head and he was now hated by the extreme orthodox, adored by the heretics, the most distinguished uncrowned personage in Europe and the man whom the King delighted to honor. When the curious lad from whom we have this story drew near, Coligny was talking to his cousin and opponent, Marshal Damville; for it was typical of many a man on either side that Coligny had faced his uncle and his cousins on the field of battle. From the arches of the cathedral still hung the banners taken two years before at Moncontour, when the Huguenot army was all but annihilated. The grizzled Huguenot leader,

whose Fabian policy had turned that disaster into final victory and won for his co-religionists the right to worship according to their conscience, pointed to them, saying: "In a little while we shall

in patriotism and rise from a party leader to a statesman. The young King, up till very recently as wax in his mother's hands, was now tremendously impressed by the personality of the great Huguenot,



Catherine de Medici in 1570.

In the collection of the School of Clouet at the Bibliothèque Nationale.

take down those banners and put others in their place more pleasant to look at."

For he was urging the King to throw all the force of France into the Low Countries to support the insurgents against the tyranny of Spain. This would enable him to bring thirty thousand loyal Huguenot swords to the fleur de lis, and France might push her boundaries to the mouth of the Rhine, because the grateful Netherlanders would willingly return to their ancient allegiance. It was a bold plan, perhaps too bold for impoverished France, but at least it was the plan of a man who could forget hate

and he spent hours in secret conference with him. He hated and feared Spain more than he hated or feared heresy. Like all Catherine's sons, he was neurotic, but his thoughts were martial, and he was wont to point out to his valets a birthmark by which they could recognize his body if he fell in battle. It was quite possible that the King might be carried away by this imposing councillor.

And just here, in this relation between the King and Coligny, was the thing that was to spoil the hopes of the motto of the medal given as a wedding souvenir: "I announce to you Peace."

Since Catherine de Medicis assumed the regency when Charles IX became king, at ten years of age, she had pursued on the whole a conciliatory policy, and the favorite method of her statecraft was to balance one party against the

deed forced the last Huguenot war by a plot to trapan Coligny and the elder Condé, and if it had succeeded she would perhaps have sent them both to the scaffold, as any Tudor would certainly have done. But, for the many murders before



Henry IV—(Young).

Painted by François Quesnel (?) about 1582.  
In the collection of the School of Clouet at the Bibliothèque Nationale.

other, and so maintain her power. But one thing had always roused her indignation—the smallest attempt to step between her and her children, whose dependence upon her authority was so great as to make her eldest daughter say, even after she became Queen of Spain, that she never opened a letter from her mother without trembling. This fiercely jealous affection for her children and the love of power, which all who knew her called her strongest passion, drove her now into the one great crime of her life. She had in-

and after August, 1572, of which she was later accused, there is no evidence that any jury would even seriously consider as the basis of an indictment, though I have a strong personal suspicion that six months before, when she had planned a marriage for her second son, Anjou, with Elizabeth of England, and he had refused because her character was too bad, Catherine had ordered the assassination of Lignerolles, a gentleman of his suite who had urged him to make that refusal. The way to put Coligny out of the way



was easy to find. The first Huguenot war had ended nine years before with the murder of Duke Francis of Guise, the leader of the orthodox party, the best soldier of France, shot in the back on his way from the lines to his quarters by

Guise, though compelled by the King to go through formal scenes of reconciliation, never accepted the idea of his innocence, and members of it had vainly begged to be allowed to fight a duel with the Admiral. Duke Henry of Guise was



Marguerite de Valois, Queen of Navarre, about 1573.  
In the collection of the School of Clouet at the Bibliothèque Nationale.

Poltrot de Merey, a supposed deserter from the Huguenot camp. Coligny had used him as a spy and given him a hundred crowns to buy a horse. Under torture he alternately accused and acquitted Coligny of having sent him out to murder. Coligny denied the charge with indignation, but absolutely refused to express any regret for the death of so great an enemy of God, and some Huguenots wrote of the executed assassin as a martyr. The very frankness of Coligny's utterance has convinced most impartial historians of its truth. But the family of

now twenty-one and felt oppressed by the burden of dishonor of the broken vendetta; for the code of the time imposed on him the duty of avenging his father's blood. We know from the Papal Nuncio that he had even urged his mother to shoot Coligny some day while he was talking to Catherine, and showed her how easy it was to fire an arquebus. But he dared not, without some backing, touch the King's favorite, surrounded by a body of the Huguenot nobles who had come up to Paris on the King's invitation to the wedding of his sister to their chief.

A hint from Catherine, his mother's close friend, was enough to remove his hesitation. In the midst of the long-drawn-out wedding festivities the fourth day after the marriage, Coligny, returning from a meeting of the royal Council, was shot from the window of a vacant house and wounded in the forearm. The King was furious at the attempted murder, which violated his protection, and asked the Admiral whom he should appoint on a commission of inquiry. It did its work quickly and well. The circumstantial evidence was strong. The gates were closed and either one of two arrests would trace the shot to the palace of the Guise. They would not bear the blame alone, and ruin for Catherine was in sight. She called a council, not in any sense the royal council, but a little knot of people whom she could trust. The King had an abnormal tendency to kill animals, and he would not drink wine because it increased a passion he feared. Catherine, who was seldom separated from him, knew how to play on his unwholesome temperament, and with the help of her friends she persuaded him to have all the Huguenot leaders killed by his guards, and to loose the mob, through orders of the municipality, on all the heretics in Paris.

It is impossible to draw an ordered picture of those hours when murder spread with the dawn from the palace through the slums of the city, until the corpses of the King's wedding guests lay piled naked in front of his door and, in the phrase of an eye-witness, "blood ran down the gutters like water after a heavy rain." When the leaders were dead by the safe hands of soldiers, the populace was called to action by sounding the tocsin. There had been many periods during the last ten years when it was enough for a street urchin to cry out "There goes a Huguenot!" to bring about the death of any strange passer-by. But to make sure that ignorant fanaticism did its work now, the Duke of Nevers and Marshal Tavannes ran through the streets, sword in hand, calling on the people to make an end of the King's enemies. For the details of the cruel work they found other leaders, like Cruce, a watchmaker, whom the young De Thou always looked on with horror, "because of his true gallows face

and his habit of holding up his bare arms and boasting that he had killed four hundred that day." Under the lead of men like these, bands of murderers ranged the streets unchecked, killing and plundering. Many piteous scenes can be reconstructed in detail. A gang of killers met a noble lady disguised in a nun's robe. Her slippers of crimson velvet betrayed her, and she was stabbed several times and thrown into the river. Her clothes, buoyed with air, floated her down the current, and some men, putting off in a boat, followed her like a drowning rat, striking at her again and again until she sank. A book-binder was roasted to death on a heap of his own books before his house. There was a certain street called the "Valley of Misery," which ended on the bank of the river, where it was closed by a door painted red. That door, as the four leading plebeian murderers whose names have come down to us boasted, became the gate of death for over six hundred Huguenots. Two miserable women clung for a long time to piles, but were finally beaten down by stones thrown from the arch above.

Age was spared no more than sex. Anne de Terrières, one of the leading lawyers of Paris, a man over eighty, perished. Brion, the tutor of the Prince of Conti, a man with hair as white as snow, was poignarded with the little prince clinging round his neck and trying to ward off the blows with his tiny hands. Huguenot survivors tell of infants who, when the murderers took them up, laughed and played with their beards, and of boys of ten dragging a baby through the streets at the end of a string, to throw it into the river. It was believed that private hate and greed worked under cover of the carnival of blood. Certainly some Roman Catholics perished. Several heirs-at-law came prematurely into their inheritance, not without suspicion of secret aid to fate, and several lawsuits were settled by death in favor of the less scrupulous of the two parties. It was no wonder that a Swiss Roman Catholic priest wrote a friend from Paris: "I trembled at the sight of the river full of corpses, naked and horribly disfigured."

The massacre spread slowly to a number of the cities of France, in obedience to verbal orders from Paris; but the pro-

vincial killings were neither simultaneous nor general. Usually a mob was the agent and the connivance of the authorities must be assumed. For instance, no attempt was made at Orléans to prevent such a slaughter that people would not eat fish, for fear they had fed on the bodies flung into the river. Some of these subsidiary massacres occurred three or four weeks after St. Bartholomew's Day, and in violation of the royal proclamation that peaceable Protestants would not be molested. In eleven out of sixteen political divisions of France, including three provinces under strongly orthodox governors, there were no disorders. For instance, in spite of a plain hint from the governor sent from Paris that the King wanted the Huguenots killed, the city council of Nantes voted to suppress all violence and the other cities of Brittany followed their example.

It is difficult to estimate how many perished in the massacres of St. Bartholomew. The estimates of twenty-seven contemporary reporters and modern historians range from three thousand to a hundred and ten thousand. Probably between three and four thousand were killed at Paris, and about as many more in the rest of France.

The news was an astonishment to the entire world. The attitude of those who heard it varied from bitter indignation to intense joy, and the place of any given auditor in the scale of emotion was, on the whole, though not universally or entirely, determined by his sympathies in the great conflict of which the massacre was a bloody episode. The Senate of Venice voted a congratulatory message by a majority of a hundred and sixty-one to one, one man not voting. The Duke of Tuscany wrote congratulatory letters, to which Catherine replied, expressing the great pleasure which her son had in seeing himself praised by good and virtuous people for so holy a resolution as the execution of the Admiral and his adherents; from which "he hopes to draw by the grace of God the fruit necessary for the restoration of his church and the repose of all Christendom." Philip of Spain wrote to Catherine that the punishment "given to the admiral and his sect was indeed of such service, glory, and honor to God and universal benefit to all Chris-

tendom that to hear of it was for me the best and most cheerful news which at present could come to me." When the Pope received from his Nuncio a despatch describing the massacre, he assembled all the cardinals in the palace and read it to them, after which they went to the neighboring church to chant the *Te Deum*, and the city was illuminated for three nights in succession. Later the Pope had a medal struck in honor of the event, and ordered one of the distinguished painters of the day to decorate the walls of the Vatican with pictures recording it. The traces of these pictures still remain upon the walls, where, in the words of the great Roman Catholic historian, Lord Acton, "for three centuries they insulted every Pope who went into the Sistine Chapel."

In the Protestant world the condemnation was instant and overwhelming, with the exception of some of the Lutheran theologians, who thought that this punishment had fallen upon the Calvinists because of their errors in regard to the sacrament.

To the man of our day, whether he be Catholic or Protestant, an attitude of complaisance toward such a deed is so abhorrent that when it is taken by dead people whom he respects, he instinctively and half unconsciously falls back upon denying or obscuring or overlooking the facts. When this refuge is finally taken away from him by the hard work of people to whom history means just judgment and not apology, he is inclined to believe that the religion of those who approved such manifest evil was either insincere or altogether perverted. But in this conclusion he fails to take account of the pressure in the direction of perverting the moral judgment exerted by long-standing error, expressed in law and custom inherited from many generations. The degree of moral turpitude of an ancient Spartan who thrust his sickly new-born infant out into the winter's storm to die, or of the Hindu noble who burned his brother's widows on the funeral pile, is not so easy a matter to estimate as it may seem at first sight. The man of the sixteenth century had inherited an old and very pernicious doctrine, plainly taught by all the moral authorities he regarded with reverence



and definitely expressed in laws. At the time of the massacre of St. Bartholomew the code of practically all European countries punished heresy with death. The only difference between them was in the definition of heresy and a greater or less

tioned it. Pope Pius IV, for instance, had declared a few years before that he would rather pardon a criminal who had committed a hundred murders than an obstinate heretic, and Beza, Calvin's right-hand man, had written that here-



Gaspard, Admiral Coligny, 1570. By François Clouet.  
In the collection of the School of Clouet at the Bibliothèque Nationale.

willingness to apply the laws strictly. These laws rested upon the conviction, true enough in itself, that the teaching of false doctrine was a great danger to society, and the false conclusion that, therefore, for the sake of society and for the honor of God, the offender ought to be put to death. This heresy of the duty of persecution, the most dangerous heresy that ever attached itself to the teaching of Christ, still held sway over the minds of most men, although its power was beginning to be slightly weakened—more by the pressure of facts than by the abstract arguments of the few who had yet ques-

tics were worse criminals than parricides, and the good of society required a more severe punishment for heresy than for any other crime. The best starting-point for an attack upon this false doctrine is the effect which it has produced upon the history of generations of men who have held it to be true. But no just judgment can be passed upon any single instance of those effects without taking into account the whole series.

The outcome of the doctrine of persecution in eulogies of St. Bartholomew was, however, so terribly exaggerated that, all over the world, it enabled men,

even in spite of their prejudices, to see the truth. This attempt by the use of inexorable logic to push the falsehood they believed roughshod over all the sentiments of humanity and the feelings of honor, seemed to thousands a ghastly re-

France, told a French envoy six months later that "the King and his mother had done the most ill-advised and evil thing in the world." And he wrote to one of his friends: "The King of France has committed an act which will stamp upon him



Charles IX, from a portrait in the Louvre.

ductio ad absurdum. Even in Italy it was questioned. A correspondent wrote to the Duke of Savoy from Rome: "The deed has been praised, but it would have been praised very much more if it could have been done under the forms of justice." The Spanish Ambassador at Rome wrote to his master that the Frenchmen there were bragging about things in connection with St. Bartholomew which were not allowable even against rebels and heretics, and the Venetian senators privately repudiated their official congratulation. The Emperor Maximilian of Germany, who had been urged by the Pope to imitate the glorious action of the King of

a shame which cannot be easily wiped off. God forgive those who are responsible."

So much for what the Massacre of St. Bartholomew was. Let us now consider what it was not. It was inevitable that a series of deeds like the Massacres of St. Bartholomew, which were at once the climax of ten years' hate and vengeance on the part of those who committed them and the source of a yet deeper hate on the part of the friends of their victims, should have been misinterpreted by the generation which saw it. One can hardly expect judicial opinions out of an atmosphere which some years after St. Bar-



tholomew produced from the strict orthodox party this epigram to Henry III, who was inclined to compromise again with the Huguenots: "Your fleur de lis is putrid and stinks to heaven—that he may not smell it any more God has put his foot on it," or this from the Huguenots: "The dogs ate Jezebel, but when Catherine dies, not even the dogs will touch her carrion."

A short discussion of three propositions will dissipate the chief popular errors about St. Bartholomew inherited from past generations.

(1) It was not long premeditated but determined upon and planned in a few hours.

(2) It did not have its origin in religious fanaticism.

(3) It was not essentially a French crime.

(1) Seven years before the massacre, Catherine had met her daughter, the Queen of Spain, at Bayonne, on the Spanish border, and held with her and the Duke of Alva a conference. The Huguenots, who were then temporarily at peace with the Crown under one of the edicts of pacification and toleration, suspected some plot had there been formed for their treacherous suppression. There is documentary evidence, too long to be here cited, that the massacre was not planned at Bayonne. But this belief was an element in that general suspicion which led the Huguenot leaders three years after the interview of Bayonne to rise suddenly in an attempt to seize sixty cities and the King and his mother, then at Meaux—an unsuccessful plot, which began the second civil war and earned for them what they had never had before, the intense dislike of the young King. The four years since left this suspicion still vivid in many minds. Coligny had received warnings against going to Paris; to which he had replied he would rather have his dead body dragged through the streets than reopen the civil war. These false suspicions seemed to be proved true by the event.

In addition Catherine, who wove around St. Bartholomew the most astounding contradictory falsehoods to be found in the long annals of diplomatic duplicity, allowed it to be circulated in Spain and Italy as one of her semi-private

lies, that she had arranged the marriage to trap the Huguenots into the massacre. But, on the other hand, she told the Tuscan ambassador that "the whole thing had been resolved on suddenly." And the ambassador to England was ordered to tell Elizabeth that it had been the "least premeditated thing that had ever happened," for "his master had acted like one who holds the wolf by the ears."

Both of these things cannot be false, and the deliberate and agreeing judgments of the Papal Nuncio, the Spanish ambassador, the Tuscan ambassador, and the Venetian ambassador that the deed was improvised establish the balance on the truth.

(2) The leaders of the Huguenots at Paris were deliberately and carefully picked off, under the orders of the King's illegitimate brother, by the royal guards, but everywhere the mob did the bulk of the killing. The French cities of the time usually contained a debased stratum of population created by economic causes. While the artisans and the higher burghers often furnished recruits to heresy, this urban mass remained, because of its very ignorance, impervious to new ideas, and, therefore, solidly orthodox in a religion which came to the most acute emotion in a desperate hatred of heretics, about whom they believed the same reports of detestable orgies in their secret worship which were circulated against the early Christians in the Roman Empire and in China before the Boxer rebellion tried to exterminate the new religion. This dangerous part of the city population had, during the past ten years, committed in many places revolting acts of cruelty against the Huguenots, whom it regarded, not as poor Christians, but as anti-Christian criminals. In 1561 Calvin wrote to Beza: "In twenty cities the godly have been slaughtered by raging mobs." Not infrequently in these bloody riots, some Huguenots were hidden and saved by orthodox neighbors more humane because more intelligent. These mob atrocities angered the Huguenots more than anything else, and they met them with savage reprisals, for, to quote their stout captain, de la Noue, "we fought the first war like angels, the second like men, and the third like devils." Before the first war was over their sol-



The Massacre of St. Bartholomew at Paris.

Reproduced from a lithograph by A. Duruy, 1878. After a painting by Francis Dubois, who died at Geneva in 1584.



diers were killing without mercy every priest and monk on whom they could lay hands, on the mistaken assumption that they were all guilty of inciting to these crimes.

Catherine knew perfectly well by experience the terrible nature of this fanaticism, and she used it as coolly and as scientifically as the military engineer handles his masses of high explosive. No heart in the sixteenth century was more free from anything remotely resembling religious fanaticism than that of Catherine de Medicis. Her letters contain many pious phrases of trust in God and submission to God's will, and he will never understand the typical man or woman of the Renaissance who thinks them hypocritical. But there is not a single one among these pious phrases from which it would be possible to determine whether she was a Protestant or a Catholic. Perhaps the most sincere thing in the whole tissue of falsehood she wove over St. Bartholomew is that passage in one of her letters to Elizabeth where she says the Queen of England ought not to mind her execution of Huguenots who endangered the state, any more than she would if the Queen of England did execution against those who troubled her; "even if they should be all the Catholics of England."

But even this passage contains a characteristic allusion to a falsehood. The night before the massacre, which began at daybreak, the King asked the assistance of the municipal authorities of Paris to defend him against a Huguenot plot. Finally, after some shifting, he adopted this as the explanation of his action in his public assumption of responsibility for the deed, and executed for treason two Huguenots who escaped the massacre. No proof was ever alleged; the charge is against all the facts of the situation, and all well-informed people soon came to agree with the opinion of the papal legate, who wrote to Rome: "The charge that the Admiral had conspired against the King and his brothers is absolutely false, and it is shameful that any man who has sense enough to know anything should believe it."

(3) The colossal crime of St. Bartholomew was mainly carried out by the ignorant fanaticism of the lowest class of the French people, but it was not planned by

the mind nor approved by the conscience of France.

The council Catherine called to help her persuade the King to order the massacre was very limited. She dared not tell her youngest daughter or her youngest son, for they would surely warn the Huguenots. She dared not summon to such a council any of the family or vassals or friends of the Duke of Montmorency, the first baron of France, for he was the head of the Politiques or Moderate Catholics, and more friendly to his cousin the Admiral than to the House of Guise and the straightout orthodox party. His party included four of the six marshals of France. The Cardinal of Lorraine was at Rome, and she dared not summon the Cardinal of Bourbon, the uncle of the Prince of Condé and Henry of Navarre. Nor could she trust in such a plot any prince of the blood royal, unless it were the Duke of Montpensier, brother-in-law of the young Duke of Guise, and it was not certain that she asked him.

The deed was scarcely done before dismayed letters came from the sort of men who, had they been present in the dark councils of that night, would surely have spoken words of warning. The French ambassador at Venice wrote as follows:

"Madam:

"The plain and undoubtable truth is, that the massacres through all France have so strongly stirred the hearts of those here who are well disposed towards your crown, that, although they are all Catholics, they will not listen to any excuse for it, laying the blame for everything that has been done on you."

The Duke of Anjou had just declared his candidacy for the vacant elective throne of Poland. The French ambassador in charge of the negotiation writes to the secretary of state that the news from France has sunk their ship just as they were bringing it into port. "The devil take the cause," he burst out in vexation, "which has brought about so many evils and has led a good and humane King, if there ever was one on the earth, to dip his hand in blood."

One of these men had been employed by Catherine in important missions ever since she gained the leading authority in



the state, and the other, Valence, had been influential ever since the days of Francis I. There is overwhelming evidence that their attitude was typical of the feeling of the great mass of the French nobility, whether of the sword or of the robe. They abhorred St. Bartholomew in their hearts, and as soon as they dared they repudiated it. It is possible, of course, to find a number of French voices which praised and approved the deed. One of the Parisian clergy, for instance, has recorded in his journal his joy at seeing that those who destroyed the Cross of Gastines now could not make white crosses big enough to put into their hats as a sign that they had become good Catholics. The belated massacre at Bordeaux was brought about, in spite of the stand taken by the governor and the public prosecutor, by the preaching of a Jesuit who told the people repeatedly that the massacre at Paris had been done by the special help of an angel of the Lord. The Cardinal of Lorraine, as official spokesman for the French clergy, declared that Charles IX was like the good King Josiah of the ancient Jews, who had purged his kingdom of idolaters and brought his people back to believe in God. But these three voices from the clergy of Paris, the Jesuits, and the cardinals (the Cardinal of Bourbon excepted) came from what had been from the beginning the three strongest centres of the demand for the extermination of the Huguenots.

There was another class of public defenders of the massacre whose utterances must be discounted by one who wishes to estimate the true attitude of France. De Thou writes it was deplorable to see persons highly respected for their piety, wisdom, and integrity, holding the leading positions in the kingdom, like Morvillier, de Thou, Pibrac, and Bellièvre, praise an action which they detested in their hearts, under the false idea that the good of the state demanded that they should stand by what had been done and could not be undone. This testimony is the more remarkable because one of the men de Thou blames by name is his most intimate friend, and another his own father. Of him de Thou relates that he was accustomed in private to apply to St. Bartholomew this verse of Statius: "May the memory of the crimes of that day

perish; may future generations refuse to believe them; let us certainly keep silent and let the crimes of our own nation be covered by thick darkness."

While many of the French nobility of the robe thus suppressed their own moral judgment out of weakness or statecraft, the nobility of the sword found a way to express their feeling of disgust. Very few of them had taken part in it, and when Cosseins, the colonel of the Royal Guard, who had directed under the King's orders the massacre of the Admiral and most of the other killings around the palace, joined the royal camp at La Rochelle, he was sent to Coventry almost as completely as the hired assassin, Maurevert, whom no colonel in the army would receive in his regiment. Cosseins often said to Brantôme, who afterward played tennis with him: "Cursed be the day of St. Bartholomew." This incident seems to prove better than could be done by a whole volume of citation that Brantôme, a passionate hero-worshipper of the Duke of Guise, whose murder his friends had avenged on the Admiral, expressed the opinion of the fighting Catholic nobles of France when he called St. Bartholomew "a very dirty massacre."

No Politique could support St. Bartholomew, not only because it was against their policy, but also because their leaders had been in danger of perishing with the Huguenots. On the other hand, the ultra-orthodox Catholic nobility had a perfect right to feel that this great movement had been made without their knowledge and consent. The council which advised with the King on this very grave matter contained no fair representation of the marshals of France, the princes of the blood, the ancient nobility, or the clergy. The presence of a single prince of the blood, the Duke of Montpensier, is mentioned by two reporters only, Cavriana and Corbinelli, one of whom may have gotten it from the other. The same two mention the presence of a single clergyman, Jean de Morvillier, who had resigned the bishopric of Orléans to devote himself to the labors of the royal council. According to the report of these Florentines of Catherine's household, he rose from bed to answer the summons and arrived late. Informed of what had been determined, he burst into tears. Of the

remaining eight who were surely present, four—Catherine, the Duke of Nevers, the Count de Retz, and Birague were Italian—the three young men, the King (twenty-two), his brother, the Duke of Anjou (twenty-one), and the Duke of Guise (twenty-two), had spent the most impressionable part of their lives under the influence of Italian mothers. Marshal Tavannes was the only pure-blooded Frenchman we know certainly was present.

There was therefore a great deal of truth in the opinion which the ambassador extraordinary of Venice reported as prevalent immediately after St. Bartholomew; and surely he cannot be suspected of having any particular prejudice against Italians. He writes: "The Catholics are disgusted beyond measure as much as the Huguenots—not, as they say, at the deed itself so much as at the manner of doing it. . . . They call this way of proceeding by absolute power without legal process a tyrant's way, attributing it to the Queen-mother as an Italian, a Florentine, and of the House of Medicis, whose blood is impregnated with tyranny. For this reason she is detested to the highest degree, and, on her account, so is the whole Italian nation . . . from which may come her death. Because if she should die, and if that supreme authority she has over the King were gone, he would come into the hands of certain ministers of state of whom they are not afraid—on the contrary, freed from fear, they would hope to return entirely to liberty."

The thing that shocked the French nobles was not the cruelty of St. Bartholomew—they were used to that—but its treachery, because "in the middle of the marriage festivals of a daughter of France, those who had come to Paris on the solemn public word of the King were treated in that fashion." It was repeated everywhere that the Huguenot captain, Pilles, led out for slaughter from the house of the King, where he had come as an invited guest, cried out as the halberds pierced him: "Oh, what a peace! Oh, what a word of honor!"

This true story comes down from that time: In the province of Quercy there were two gentlemen, both very brave. One, named Vezins, lieutenant of the governor of the province, mingled with his bravery a ferocity which made him odious

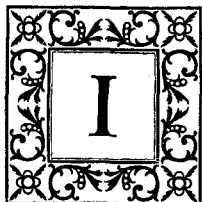
to many people. The other, Regnier, was of a more gentle and courteous spirit. These two gentlemen hated each other with a mortal hatred, and their neighbors had tried in vain to reconcile them. Regnier, who was a Protestant, came up to Paris for the marriage, and when the massacre began he remained in his room, with the fear of death before his eyes. Suddenly the door was broken in and Vezins entered, sword in hand, followed by two soldiers. Regnier, thinking that his end had come, kneeled upon the ground and implored the mercy of God. Vezins, in a terrible voice, bade him rise and mount a horse which was ready in the street. Regnier, obeying, left the city with his enemy, who exacted from him an oath to follow, and led him all the way to Guyenne, without saying a word the entire road. He simply ordered his attendants to take care of him and to see to it that he had everything that was necessary at the inns. At last they arrived at the Château of Regnier; then Vezins addressed him as follows: "It was in my hands, as you see, to take the chance which I have sought for a long time, but I should be ashamed to avenge myself in that way on a man as brave as you are. When we settle our quarrel I want the danger to be equal. You can be sure that you will always find me ready to settle our differences as gentlemen ought." Regnier answered him: "I have not, my dear Vezins, either resolution or force or courage against you. Henceforth I will follow you with all my heart wherever you want, ready to employ in your service the life which I owe to you and the little courage which you say I possess." After these words he fell on his neck. Vezins, keeping still in his attitude some of his usual ferocity, answered: "It's for you to choose whether you want me for your enemy or your friend." Without waiting for an answer he stuck spurs into his horse and rode off.

The once vivid feeling embalmed in this story, like a fly in amber, is that the massacre of St. Bartholomew was a piece of cowardly treachery a gentleman would not show to his bitterest enemy. It is the repudiation by French gentlemen of the act of a neurotic King, persuaded by an alien mother to kill the guests at his sister's wedding in his own house.

# Shelving Systems

BY ODELL SHEPARD

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CAN remember a time when the arrangement of my books gave me no trouble. There was a corner, rather remote and dusty, for volumes of metaphysics; another corner, still more dusty and farther away, for certain inherited theological tomes. Near at hand under the evening lamp were my shelves of contemporary novelists, poets, and writers of essays. All this I found quite simple and convenient. Any clever person could have made a fairly accurate guess at my interests and character by observing the geographical distribution of the various "classifications" and by measuring their respective distances from my study chair.

For several years I lived at ease in this age of innocence . . . and then I got married. Things have never since been the same. Almost immediately I was brought for the first time to consider books as furniture. It was pointed out to me that some of my best bindings were hidden away in obscure corners while certain broken-backed favorites usurped their rightful places on just those shelves to which a visitor's eye would most certainly stray. The well-dressed parvenus were, therefore, advanced to places of honor and my old companions were banished into outer darkness.

Since that day my library has not had a year of peace. I have tried a dozen different schemes of classification, striving to find a compromise between my own notions of literary merit and my wife's excellent taste in bindings. None of these has really worked. A main defect in each and all has been the difficulty of remembering where æsthetics leaves off and where system begins. I realize, however, that I have had to work under peculiar disadvantages, and so I set down here a few of my unrealized ideals for the benefit of those who may have a freer hand.

It is fundamental, I suppose, that shelving systems are devised for the convenience of readers rather than to display the ingenuity of professional cataloguers. Their primary purpose is to bring the right reader and book together with the least possible loss of time. But here, as in so many other human concerns, one is confronted by the troublesome fact that there are many different sorts of readers. Any good arrangement of books, therefore, must conform to one or more of the chief lines of variation among human beings. Before one can make an intelligent choice of a principle of classification, at least for a large public library, he must ask himself what these chief lines of variation may be.

Well, among others, there is the chronological. Most of us are astray in time . . . and considering how the centuries have been stirred and beaten together to make that hasty pudding which we call modernity, it is no wonder. Think of the procrastinating Greeks and belated Elizabethans who go up and down Fifth Avenue, trying to look at home in the twentieth century but in reality about as happy as the menagerie polar bear on a torrid August day. If we could declare a universal "home week," think of the jostle and press there would be on all the raying roads of time. Much of our modern unrest is simply nostalgia, and many of our unhappiest moderns have merely got lost among the years. Only the library stands between them and utter misery. To find one's home in space, one may travel; but if one is looking for his real temporal habitat he must have books. What chance is there for him, however, while our libraries remain mere disorderly chronological heaps, ancients and moderns promiscuously piled? Things would be simpler for the home-seeker, he would feel less like an idle vagrant, if our shelves were so arranged as to constitute legible maps of time.

I once found a book-shop in which this