



Henry III, drawing by P. Quesnel, c. 1568, in the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris

Poland, to which he was finally elected in May 1573. In May 1574, however, Charles died, and Henry abandoned Poland and was crowned at Reims on Feb. 13, 1575. He was married two days later to Louise de Vaudémont, a princess of the House of Lorraine. The marriage proved childless.

The French Wars of Religion (1562-98) continued during Henry III's reign. Henry resumed the war against the Huguenots, but the Estates-General, meeting at Blois in 1576, was weary of Henry's extravagance and refused to grant him the necessary subsidies. The Peace of Bergerac (1577) ended the hostilities temporarily; the Huguenots lost some of their liberties by the Edict of Poitiers, and the Catholic Holy League was dissolved. In 1584, however, the Roman Catholics were alarmed when the Huguenot leader, Henry of Navarre (the future Henry IV), became heir to the throne on the death of Henry III's brother François, and the League was revived under the leadership of Henri, 3rd duc de Guise.

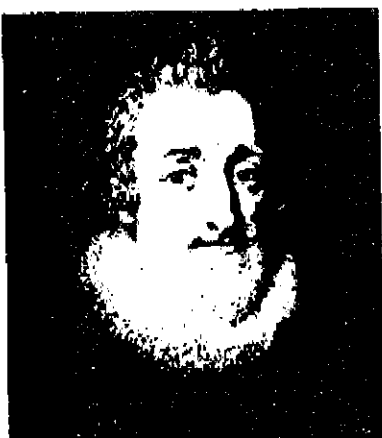
Henry III, acting on his mother's advice, tried to placate the League by revoking past edicts that had granted toleration to the Huguenots, but its members regarded him as a lukewarm defender of the faith and tried to depose him. A rising of the people of Paris, a League stronghold, on May 12, 1588 (the Estates-Day of the Barricades), caused the King to flee to Chartres. In December 1588 he took advantage of a meeting of the Estates-General at Blois to have the Duc de Guise and his brother Louis, the cardinal of Lorraine, assassinated. This, of course, exacerbated the League's hostility, and Henry III was compelled to ally himself with Henry of Navarre. Together they laid siege to Paris, but on Aug. 1, 1589, Jacques Clément, a fanatical Jacobin friar, gained admission to the King's presence and stabbed him. Before he died, Henry, who left no issue, acknowledged Henry of Navarre as his heir.

Henry III was more attentive to the trappings of power than to its substance; and he lost the sympathy of powerful elements by his aloofness at court and by the favours he conferred upon his *mignons*, a small group of handsome young men with whom he indulged in quest onable excesses. Above all he was so extravagant as virtually to bankrupt his kingdom.

• **Henry IV**, also called (until 1572) **PRINCE DE BÉARN**, byname **HENRY OF NAVARRE**, or **DE BOURBON**, French **HENRI DE NAVARRE**, or **DE BOURBON** (b. Dec. 13, 1553, Pau, Béarn, Navarre—d. May 14, 1610, Paris), king of Navarre (as Henry III, 1572-89) and first Bourbon king of France (1589-1610) who, at the end of the Wars of Religion, abjured Protestantism and converted to Roman Catholicism (1593) in order to win Paris and reunify France. With the aid of such ministers as the Duc de Sully, he brought new prosperity to France.

*Prince of Béarn.* Henry de Bourbon-Navarre was the son of Antoine de Bourbon, duc de Vendôme, and Jeanne d'Albret, queen of Navarre from 1555. Henry, through his father, was in the sole legitimate line of descent from the Capetian kings of France. It was scarcely to be expected, however, that he would one day succeed to the throne of France, since Catherine de Médicis had already borne three sons to the reigning king, Henry II, and would soon bear him a fourth. Prince Henry spent most of his early childhood in Béarn. From 1561 to 1567 he lived with his second cousins, the children of the King of France, among whom was his future wife Marguerite.

The religious crisis between Roman Catholic and Protestant forces was then coming to a head, leading to a long period of civil war. Antoine de Bourbon temporarily allied himself with the Protestants but changed sides and was mortally wounded in battle against them.



Henry IV, detail of a painting by Frans Pourbois the Younger, in the Louvre, Paris

Henry's mother, Jeanne d'Albret, held firm and announced her Calvinism on Christmas 1560.

Henry had just turned 13 when his mother brought him back to Béarn. At a crucial age in his intellectual development, he was brought up in the strict principles of Protestantism. About the same time he began his military education. In the autumn of 1567, he served as nominal head of a punitive expedition launched against the rebellious Catholic gentry of lower Navarre, which ended in an easy victory. Less than a year later Jeanne d'Albret, who had remained neutral during the first two religious wars, readily entered the third. She proceeded to La Rochelle, where she put her son into the charge of her brother-in-law Louis I de Bourbon, prince of Condé, who was leader of the Protestant (Huguenot) forces.

The Protestants were surprised and defeated near Jarnac on March 13, 1569, by the duc d'Anjou, the future Henry III, and Condé was killed. Jeanne d'Albret immediately hastened to the scene and proclaimed her son head of the army, though actual command was exercised by Gaspard de Coligny, from whom Henry would receive his military education. Henry and his cousin, Henri, the young prince of Condé, were present on October 3 at the Battle of Moncontour, when the Protestants were again defeated. Coligny, however, forbade Henry to draw his sword.

The 16-year-old general received his baptism of fire near Arnay-le-Duc on June 26, 1570, when he led the first charge of the Huguenot cavalry. The long campaign through the ravaged provinces, extending from Poitou to the heart of Burgundy, forged in him the soldierly spirit that he would retain throughout his life and made him reflect on the disaster that had befallen the kingdom.

*King of Navarre.* Peace was concluded in August 1570, and a very liberal edict was granted the Protestants. Many persons, including Catherine de Médicis, hoped the civil war had come to an end. In order to strengthen the peace, the Queen sought to arrange a marriage between Prince Henry and her daughter, Marguerite de Valois, a project that had first been considered during Henry II's lifetime, when the future couple were still children. After difficult negotiations, which lasted until the spring of 1572, the Queen Mother and the Queen of Navarre reached an agreement. The latter, who preceded her son to Paris, had scarcely arrived when she died June 9 of a respiratory illness. Prince Henry thereby became king of Navarre and sovereign lord of Béarn. He and Marguerite exchanged vows August 18 before the main portal of Notre Dame, but only Marguerite attended mass with the royal family.

On August 24 came the St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre, in which thousands of French Protestants were cut down by royal forces. The marriage was publicly styled the "scarlet nuptials" because of the bloodshed. Ordered by his brother-in-law Charles IX to abjure his Protestant faith, Henry yielded. His conversion was obviously of dubious sincerity, and he was therefore held for three and a half years at the courts of Charles IX and then Henry III. Careful to restrain his impatience, he hid his forceful personality from his detainers. The wily Catherine de Médicis was deceived along with everyone else, and it was with her secret consent that her son-in-law escaped from court.

Once free, the Prince displayed his sharp intellect and political acumen in his role as protector of the Protestant churches. His common sense—one of his outstanding traits, except in love affairs—manifested itself when civil war broke out anew at the end of 1576. The Huguenots fared badly, and Henry, evaluating the situation, was able to persuade his coreligionists to give up the struggle and accept the Treaty of Bergerac on Sept. 17, 1577, despite the sacrifices it imposed on them.

In the meantime, Catherine de Médicis went to Guyenne to return Marguerite to her husband, who had left her with alacrity, and, more important, to seek a lasting peace. While this subject was being negotiated at Nérac, Henry learned that the Catholics had seized the Château de La Rèole on the Garonne. His response, a crushing surprise attack on Fleurance, revealed him to be a born military leader. In the spring of 1580, after five days of furious street fighting, which delighted him, he subdued Cahors, emerging from battle "all blood and powder," in his own words. When his town of Mont-de-Marsan was not returned to him, he stormed it by night in 1583.

War and politics were not enough, however, for this restless man, and Henry enjoyed romantic as well as territorial conquests. In the summer of 1583, he began a love affair that lasted for several years with Corisande d'Andouins, comtesse de Guiche; a member of the highest nobility of Béarn, she was a young and beautiful widow, saluted by the essayist Michel de Montaigne as "the great Corisande."

*Heir presumptive to the throne.* On the death of Henry III's brother, François, duc d'Anjou, in 1584, Henry de Bourbon-Navarre became the heir presumptive to the throne of France. He was irrevocably opposed, however, by the militant Catholics of the Holy League, who were unwilling to accept a Protestant king, and by the Pope, who excommunicated him and declared him devoid of any right to inherit the crown. Headed by Henri, duc de Guise, and his brothers, the League claimed to be the defender of the ancestral faith of France, but its increasing reliance on Span-

ish support rapidly became a serious threat to French independence. Henry III lacked the strength to contain the League's overwhelming influence.

The King of Navarre himself could rely only on the grudging support—peppered with shrewd demands—of Elizabeth of England and on the distant German Protestant princes. In France, in addition to the Huguenots, a few enlightened and liberal Catholics, such as Montaigne, supported him. Ultimately he could depend only on himself. In this crucial episode of French history, in which the very independence of the nation was at stake, Henry's activity was the essential factor. Although too prone in peace to neglect public affairs for private pleasure, he was an unrivalled leader in times of peril. Quick to grasp the significance of every situation, he was equally prompt to act, and victory was invariably the reward of his bold swiftness. He was not a brilliant strategist but had the ability to inspire men to action, as much by his own example as by the spoken or written word. Four centuries later, his notes and speeches still have the impact and clarity of a clarion call.

The military situation drew and held Henry within an extended radius of his base at La Rochelle. Though this town was a symbol of Protestant resistance, as well as a fortress, its extreme religious atmosphere could not keep Henry away from amorous escapades.

In the fall of 1587, the outcome of the war hinged on the impending encounter between Henry and the army of the French king Henry III, who came increasingly under the influence of the League. He placed another brother-in-law, Anne, duc de Joyeuse, in command of the army. The battle took place on October 20 on the outskirts of Coutras about 30 miles northeast of Bordeaux. Joyeuse and his troops were killed. The significance of the event was more political than military, for two of the young Catholic stepbrothers of the Prince of Condé had fought with the King of Navarre.

It became clear that the struggle, initially a religious conflict, had become dynastic and national when the League accepted the daughter of Philip II of Spain and Elisabeth de Valois as the next ruler of France. Henry III had the merit to grasp the full meaning of the situation for the future of France and, after long hesitation, had the Duc de Guise assassinated. The logic of the events left him with no choice but reconciliation with the King of Navarre, which took place April 30, 1589.

Their united forces laid siege to Paris on July 30, but on August 1 Henry III, the last of the Valois, was stabbed in his headquarters at Saint-Cloud. He died the next day, after staunchly proclaiming the head of the House of Bourbon, first prince of the blood, as his successor in accordance with dynastic law.

**Henry IV.** Henry IV was now king of France, but it would take him nine years to conquer his kingdom. Many of the Catholic gentry who had remained loyal to Henry III deserted him, and his army was growing exhausted. He had to withdraw from the outskirts of Paris. A few weeks after his accession, he fought Charles de Lorraine, duc de Mayenne, in sight of the Château d'Arques in Normandy. Mayenne, who had become head of the League on the death of his brother Guise, suffered a more serious defeat at Ivry on March 14, 1590. It was at Ivry that Henry IV issued his famous call to his troops: "If your cornets fail you, rally to my white plume—you will find it on the path to honour and victory!" He was unable to break the resistance of the capital, however, despite the terrible famine that came in the wake of his long siege. He then laid siege to Chartres, which capitulated April 10, 1591. During the siege

of Chartres, Henry IV became involved with Gabrielle d'Estrees, who of all his women was to exert the most influence over him.

Soon after Chartres, Henry IV captured Noyon, but he could not conquer Rouen. The war dragged on interminably, and the King realized that it had to be ended at any cost. After long hesitation, he abjured Calvinism on July 25, 1593, in the basilica of Saint-Denis, the sepulchre of the kings of France.

Though many remained unconvinced of his sincerity, the monarch's conversion still brought quick results. Important towns, notably Orleans and Lyon, submitted in growing numbers. Reims remained loyal to the League; so the King was crowned at Chartres on Feb. 27, 1594. The conversion removed all legitimate pretext for resistance, and on March 22 he finally entered Paris. Whether or not he made the comment attributed to him—"Paris is well worth a mass!"—he went, amid cheers, to hear the Te Deum at Notre Dame. He was, as he wrote, "in his triumphal chariot."

During the spring and summer, many League towns hastened to acknowledge royal authority. Laon, however, submitted only after a difficult siege. Even after Pope Clement VIII removed the ban of excommunication from Henry IV on Sept. 17, 1595, Brittany remained in the hands of Philippe-Emmanuel de Lorraine, duc de Mercœur, the younger brother of Guise and Mayenne.

Brittany was held by the League only through Spanish support. In order to bring this situation to an end, the King had declared war on Philip II in January 1595. On June 5 at Fontaine-Française in Burgundy, he overwhelmed the Spanish cavalry. In return, Philip II's forces seized Cambrai and then Calais and Ardres. Henry succeeded, after a six-month siege, in taking La Fère, but, on the night of March 11-12, 1597, panic swept Paris, for Spain had taken Amiens by surprise.

Henry quickly responded to the situation, exclaiming, "Enough of being king of France, it is time to be king of Navarre!" He lacked both men and money but was able to raise both as if by a miracle; as one of his chief ministers, Nicolas de Neufville, seigneur de Villeroy, wrote in a private letter, "The king has enough courage for everyone." He succeeded in forcing the Spaniards to surrender Amiens on September 19, and the treaty between France and Spain was concluded at Vervins on May 2, 1598. Spain kept Cambrai, which was not returned to France until 1677.

Henry also prepared to unseat the Duc de Mercœur in Brittany. He was able to come to a bloodless agreement by arranging a marriage between Françoise de Lorraine and César de Vendôme, the eldest of his two sons by Gabrielle d'Estrees; at that time César was about four years old. The high point of Henry IV's visit to Brittany was at Nantes, where Gabrielle gave birth to a daughter, and, on April 13, 1598, Henry signed the famous edict bearing the name of the city. The Edict of Nantes proclaimed freedom of conscience and granted many places of worship and nearly a hundred places of refuge to the Protestants.

Henry IV had united the kingdom and achieved peace at home and abroad. During the remainder of his brief reign, he devoted himself to healing France's wounds. He faced the risk of having his work undone, however, should he die without leaving a universally accepted successor. Blinded by an unlucky passion and exploited by the coterie that had gathered around Gabrielle, Henry nearly married his mistress, which would have made César, the son of their double adultery, heir to the crown of Saint Louis. Such an act could not have failed to provoke a war of succession when the King died. Gabrielle's death in childbirth on April 10, 1599, however, removed all reason for Pope Clement VIII's reluctance to annul the marriage of Henry IV and Marguerite de Valois. The annulment made it

possible for the King to marry the princess of Tuscany, Marie de Médicis, in October 1600, despite the protests of his new mistress, Henriette d'Entragues. Continuing his effort to unify the kingdom, Henry went on to subdue Charles-Emmanuel, duc de Savoie, forcing him to cede Bresse and Bugy to France. The new queen gave birth on Sept. 27, 1601, to the Dauphin, the future Louis XIII, and eventually to four other children, Henriette d'Entragues, Jacqueline de Bueil, and Charlotte des Essarts also bore him many children.

Even after unification of the kingdom, Henry IV's reign was not tranquil. More than a century of impassioned religious conflict had torn France asunder, and peace was not to be easily regained. There was more than one attempt on Henry's life. In December 1594, Jean Châtel wounded the King with a dagger. Châtel was tortured, and his crime was used as a pretext to expel the Jesuits from the kingdom. The regicide attempts were born of the still-widespread belief that, behind the mask of his hypocritical conversion, Henry intended to ensure the triumph of heresy.

Nonetheless, France flourished anew. Maximilien de Béthune, duc de Sully, the most renowned of Henry's councillors, reorganized the national finances, stabilized the economy, and the country prospered. The groundwork was laid for the splendour of the next two reigns. Although Henry IV never became a sedentary or reflective man, his remarkable political insight enabled him to govern efficiently. His interest in maritime and colonial expansion led him to support Samuel de Champlain's exploration in Canada.

Henry's folly in affairs of the heart continued to stand in contrast to his wisdom in affairs of state. He finally grew tired of the scheming Henriette d'Entragues, now marquise de Verneuil, or perhaps he was motivated by a predilection for young girls: at the age of 55, he became infatuated with Charlotte de Montmorency, then 15 years old, the daughter of his friend the constable of France. Henry conceived of marrying Charlotte to his cousin the young Condé, Henri II, who was supposedly not interested in women. Once married, however, the Prince prevented the King from seeing his wife by taking her to Brussels, the capital of the Spanish Netherlands. Henry IV became furious. The argument made by many historians that the war he then prepared to launch against the Habsburgs had its cause in this unfortunate love affair is, however, unconvincing. Difficulties had arisen with the Clèves-Jülich succession. After some hesitation, Henry finally decided on a military expedition to expel the imperial troops from Jülich. He had long decided on May 19, 1610, as the date of his departure to take command of the army of the east, one of three armies he had formed for this expedition to the Rhine. Early on the afternoon of May 14, he entered his coach with the intention of visiting the ailing Sully. The coach had not gone far from the Louvre when a traffic congestion in the narrow rue de la Ferronnerie obliged the coachman to slow down. Suddenly a certain François Ravallac, a fanatic, dashed out, leaped onto Henry's carriage, and stabbed the King twice with a long knife. Too often misunderstood during his lifetime, his tragic end seemed finally to have opened the eyes of his people. They soon bestowed on him the appellation Henry the Great. (R.R.)

**BIBLIOGRAPHY.** After those of Napoleon I, the Revolution, and Louis XIV, the bibliography concerning Henry IV is the most abundant of any in French history, to the point that it fills an entire volume of the classic work of Henri Hauser, *Les Sources de l'histoire de France au XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle*, vol. 4 (1915). Pierre de Vassart, *Henri IV* (1928), is a study that remains today the best informed in its entirety; it may be supplemented by the more recent work of the Duc Antoine de Lévis-Mirepoix, *Henri IV, roi de France et de Navarre*

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