

**THE NEW PLUTARCH.
GASPARD DE
COLIGNY (MARQUIS DE
CHATILLON)**

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The New Plutarch. Gaspard de Coligny (Marquis de Chatillon) by Walter Besant

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WALTER BESANT

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(MARQUIS DE CHATILLON)

ADMIRAL OF FRANCE; COLONEL OF FRENCH INFANTRY; GOVERNOR OF
PICARDY, ILE DE FRANCE, PARIS, AND HAVRE

BY
WALTER BESANT, M.A.

"Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends"

SECOND



EDITION

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AND ROYAL ULSTER WORKS, BELFAST

1879

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PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION. 1879

IN sending forth the Second Edition of this Life of Coligny, the first of the Series which we have ventured to call the "New Plutarch," I am anxious to express my grateful sense of its reception by the press and the reading public both here and in America, and my hope that the Admiral may become, among a still wider circle of readers, a great exemplar of the highest life attainable—that in which a man accepts cheerfully the weight of his own responsibility, refuses to follow vain tradition and pretended authority, and acts according to his convictions and conscience. And for my own part, I do not know anywhere in history, unless it be that of Abraham Lincoln, a grander illustration of such a life than this wise, far-seeing, long-suffering statesman.

Some of my critics have objected to the space devoted, in so small a volume, to the colonisation projects. I am, on the whole, inclined to think that, considering how noble a conception they illustrate, the amount of space is not out of proportion to their importance. It has been my especial aim to show Coligny as a man very far in advance of his age. This dream of a trans-Atlantic France, entirely his

own, is worthy to stand beside that other vision which he had of a French alliance with the Protestant Powers, and the aggrandisement of France at the expense of Spain.

The book has been treated, by certain reviewers, as a Protestant manifesto. That is not so. That Coligny was the noblest outcome of the Protestantism of his age is perfectly true. It seems to me also true that no such man could possibly have come out of the camps of Philip, Alva, or Guise. The world was then, as it is now, divided into two classes. In the one are those who take shelter under the wing of Authority. Among them are the ignorant, the superstitious, and the timid; with all those who are ready to accept any raft which seems to offer safety, after long battling with waves of doubt. In the second class are the men who reject Authority; who have the courage to think for themselves; who are not afraid of their Father. Among these we find the men to whom the world has most reason to be grateful, and of whom mankind is most justly proud.

W. B.

UNITED UNIVERSITY CLUB,
September, 1879.

PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION.

THE murder of Admiral Coligny, on the day of Bartholomew, 1572, proved the death-blow to the French Reformation. Other things, of course, contributed to this failure. I advanced the opinion four years ago, in a paper published in the *British Quarterly*, that one great cause was the fact that the scholars and divines of France did not take part in the movement. On the contrary, they held themselves aloof or condemned it. While in England the great scholars and eminent divines all came over to the new Faith, in France we see them either openly hostile or else indifferent, coldly waiting to see the event of the struggle.

There is, in the history of every religious persecution, a dreadful monotony of enthusiasm, patience, and perseverance. All can endure who believe; but the blood of English martyrs bore fruit in English freedom, while that of their French brethren would seem to have been spilt in vain. The little volume which follows tries to show how one man, a man of indomitable patience, steadfastness, and clearness of brain, brought together the Protestantism which lay scattered loosely over the whole country, and which, had it not been for him, would have been stamped out in detail, as it was in Spain and Italy; how he fought a losing fight, but never gave way; and how, when