

**THE PORTAL FAMILY.  
FROM THE  
"LONDON REVIEW",  
NO. XXXVI, JULY, 1862**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649327713

The Portal family. From the "London review", No. XXXVI, July, 1862 by Anonymous

Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilisation of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, is forbidden without the permission of the publisher, Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd, PO Box 1576 Collingwood, Victoria 3066 Australia.

All rights reserved.

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.  
Cover @ 2017

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form or binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

[www.triestepublishing.com](http://www.triestepublishing.com)

**ANONYMOUS**

**THE PORTAL FAMILY.  
FROM THE  
"LONDON REVIEW",  
NO. XXXVI, JULY, 1862**



THE  
PORTAL FAMILY.

---

FROM THE "LONDON REVIEW," No. XXXVI, JULY, 1862.

---

[PRINTED FOR PRIVATE CIRCULATION.]

---

1863.

## THE PORTAL FAMILY.

---

ART. IV.—LES DESCENDANTS DES ALBIGEOIS ET DES HUGUENOTS, OU MÉMOIRES DE LA FAMILLE DE PORTAL. PAR PIERRE PAUL FRÉDÉRIC, BARON DE PORTAL. PARIS. 1860.

THIS is one of those modest but suggestive volumes which always engage the reader's heart on the author's side. Apart from the literary merits of his pages, and irrespective of his philosophical acumen, patient research, and beautiful grouping of interesting facts, the writer's dignified principle, noble temper, and fine spirit would be a sufficient recommendation to every lover of goodness and truth. We regard the author himself with peculiar interest, as the living representative, on French soil, of a family which stood identified with evangelical doctrine and spiritual piety in times when Europe at large was darkening under the sway of lifeless formalism and corrupting error;

one of those rare French families which descend from the *Abigéois*, which remain Protestant, and have proved faithful through a course of ages to the primitive principles and creed of their fathers; one, too, which, under the dispensation of the Divine Spirit, has received its baptisms of "blood and fire." For the truth's sake broken, scattered, peeled, crushed, yet never dishonoured; always noble in its deepest depressions, rising again above each successive flood of tribulation, and, by dint of native intelligence and genius, or its own mental and moral power, building itself afresh, in still nobler proportions, on the foundation of an ancient and untarnished name.

M. F. de Portal's collection and arrangement of family traditions serve to remind us that all the historical interests of a province sometimes appear to be gathered, as into a knot, within and around a single family. There is something in this akin to the fact, that the distinctive features of a neighbourhood often derive a mystic charm from their relationship to some centre of hallowed or interesting associations. One relic, or a solitary memorial, may confer on a wide district all the rights and privileges of reputation for beauty. In some cases, too, the student of history,

in following the fortunes of an empire, finds all that seems most worthy of his attention clustering along by one distinguished ancestral line; as the pilgrim on Eastern plains enjoys the most agreeable pasture and refreshment while closely pursuing the course of some generous river. Our author has shown that the history of Languedoc, for instance, is closely interwoven with the biographies of his own house. The name of *De Portal* belongs to a truly ancient stock. Few baronial lines keep themselves so clearly and distinctly in view, back so far through changeful ages. From century to century, since the earliest historical period of Southern France, the names of this family are bound up with all that distinguishes the civil institutions, the arms, the letters, and the religion of Languedoc. Old Toulouse, especially, seems to have no stage of public life, no leading epoch, no historical turn, no significant event, which is not marked by the name of *De Portal*.

Toulouse was the birth-place of the family, and for very many generations was its home, and the seat of its honour. Among the most venerable and interesting forms of European government is the *Capitulate* of ancient Toulouse. This primitive institution, as



far as we have the means of estimating it, seems to have been remarkable for its unity of principle, and the harmonious working of all its parts in the establishment and maintenance of national power. It was popular and yet compact. It satisfied the people's vanity, while it at once built up and limited the pride of the aristocracy. Under the Counts of Toulouse, the Capitouls formed the senate of the *Languedoc*. The legislative power belonged to the sovereign Count, with the chapter of Capitouls; the council, composed of those who had passed the Capitoulate; and the people, assembled on all affairs of great importance, either on the field or in the church. The Capitouls exercised the judicial power too. They formed the court of the Count, and judged under his presidency, or under that of the Viscount, or *Viguier*. Military command was also in their hands. They were chiefs among nobles, and were generals of the army. On their own authority, and without even referring to the Count, they could declare war, command the troops, and sign treaties of peace. We are indebted to M. F. de Portal for a clear and interesting sketch of this antique municipal form. And we like the artist all the better because his lines are

drawn with something like tender affection ; for the fact is, that the oldest honours of his own lineage are inseparably one with the glory of the Capitoulate during its palmy days.

Toulouse was remarkable for the long preservation of her distinctive municipal forms under the power of her conquerors. For many ages her Counts, and even the Kings of France, were rather her patrons than her governors. Her institutions were very like those of old Venice. As in Venice the weight of the government reposed upon the Council of Ten and upon the Great Council, at Toulouse it rested on the Chapter of Capitouls and the Sworn Council, or Council of the Commune. The functions of the Capitouls were annual, like those of the Ten. There could be no re-election to office in either case, but after a certain lapse of time. No kindred ties were allowed between the members. In both republics the ancient nobility was the base of the government. The Golden Book in the one instance, and the Book of Capitouls in the other, contained all the names of the patrician houses. In all points of difference between Venice and Toulouse, the capital of Languedoc may be thought to have had the advantage. At Venice

the Council of Ten was a political tribunal whose power was a usurpation. It was nearly always in opposition to the Great Council, by which it was nominated, but whose powers it really engrossed. Its bloody despotism was the terror of the nobles, who abhorred it, while they were unable to shake off its yoke. The Toulousian *Capitoulats* was a political tribunal too, although its prerogatives included the rights of civil and criminal justice as well as military power. The right of levying troops, for instance, was not held by the Counts of Toulouse, nor even, for a time, by the Kings of France. While the English held Guienne, Toulouse, in its marked loyalty to French power, kept their frontier in check; and the army which it raised, equipped, and paid, received its orders from the Capitouls alone. They were lords of the banner. The *bas* and *arrière-ban* of the nobility fought under their colours. While, however, at Venice the Great Council elected the Ten, at Toulouse the Capitouls directly nominated their successors at first, and, at a later period, they presented each six candidates for election to the office for the following year. The Common or Sworn Council was composed of those who had filled the office of Capitoul,