

**AN ADDRESS DELIVERED AT NEW
BORDEAUX, ABBEVILLE DISTRICT, S.C.,
NOVEMBER 15, 1854; ON THE 90TH
ANNIVERSARY OF THE ARRIVAL OF THE
FRENCH PROTESTANTS AT THAT PLACE..**

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An Address Delivered at New Bordeaux, Abbeville District, S.C., November 15, 1854; On the 90th Anniversary of the arrival of the french protestants at that place.. by W. C. Moragne

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W. C. MORAGNE

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AT THAT PLACE.

By W. C. MORAGNE/ Esqr.

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ADDRESS.

THE occasion which calls us together is one of no ordinary interest. We are assembled on a spot, consecrated by events which enter partially into the history of our District and State: a spot, hallowed to many of us, by the charm of tenderest association. We are met to commemorate the 90th Anniversary of the arrival at the New-Bordeaux of our Huguenot Fathers!—

Proudly do we assume the distinction which this name imparts; for it is synonymous with patient endurance, noble fortitude, and high religious purpose! Let us then be glad that we, a portion of their descendants, are permitted to meet this day under the blessed light of liberty and religious freedom, won by them, to pay some imperfect tribute to memories so justly dear, and to celebrate their fidelity to posterity and to God.

This will be a task both important and interesting; for, in reverting to that early period when a plain, but high-souled, energetic people were driven by the persecutions of the old world to take refuge in this uncultivated wild, we trace the *origin* of this community—we tread upon the ashes of the pioneers of religion, of domestic peace, and of social virtue. The feelings which such an occasion naturally inspires cannot but impress the mind with force and solemnity. To call up the scenes of other times—to revive the memory of the generous dead—to hold up ancestral virtue to praise and emulation, are performances which have their foundation deep in the sentiments of our nature, and seldom fail to achieve lasting and beneficial results. We naturally look back to our fathers for lessons of wisdom and piety. We take pleasure in calling to mind their brave deeds and their exalted virtues. We like to frequent their accustomed walks and haunts. With delight

we sit around the fire-sides at which they sat, and worship before the altars at which they worshipped. And after they are gone, we love still to dwell by their remains, and to plant the green twig upon their graves. And who will quarrel with this just principle of our nature? Who will find fault with the generous sentiments it originates? Here springs the fountain of many a noble and manly virtue. Hence emanates all our local attachments: the fond remembrance of kindred and of friends: the glorious devotion to home and country. It is, in truth, the well-spring of all enlarged and generous patriotism. He only is the true patriot who truly loves his home.

Not less interesting is it to follow up the progressive stages through which a region of country like this, once wild and uncultivated, has passed in reaching a more forward state of improvement. Trodden only by the foot of the rude Indian and the savage beast, with no marks of human skill and industry but the uncouth wigwam and the half-cultivated patch of maize, and with no religion save the low practices of a pagan Idolatry, we are to trace here the steps of civilized man, as he proceeds to empower himself of the rude materials around him, moulding them into objects subservient to his use, and erecting, in these wild woods, upon the ruins of a pagan superstition, an altar of intelligent worship to his God. In this summary, we are spared the irksome task of following up the slow developments of the human mind, or of marking man's progress from a rude, demi-civilized state to one of full intellectual growth and improvement. No! our Huguenot ancestors came out to this country in the full panoply of grown up, civilized men. They had been reared under the auspices of an old and refined civilization. Their minds and hearts had undergone the severe discipline of an improved age and of a bitter experience. They had been well tutored under the chastening influences of the Christian Religion, and they had endured the rod of a cruel persecution. They had, in short, been indoctrinated into the broad principles of social and domestic happiness, of religious and political liberty; and though the iron rule of a crafty priesthood, and a brutal despotism had sadly interrupted the even tenor of their lives, robbing them of countless blessings afforded

by the civilization by which they were surrounded, they yet saw those blessings happily enjoyed by others, and had themselves, occasionally, tasted of the social and political sweets, characteristic of their age and country. They were in a condition, therefore, to put in practice and to enjoy, in this new, virgin land, the many social virtues, the many political and religious principles imbibed in the mother country.

Thus educated and polished they presented a striking contrast to everything they beheld in these primeval forests. Here all was rudeness and barbarity. Here was a total absence of all knowledge of the living God—an utter want of all true religious worship and adoration. Moral darkness shed a gloom over the works of nature. Here only were these brave old woods, that had nobly waved their branches to the breeze for unnumbered years, breathing in mysterious whisperings a sublime and secret worship of the Author of the Universe, and inviting to their broad shade the devotional exercises of the distant and pious refugee. How nobly must the hearts of our fathers have responded to these secret mutterings of inanimate nature! How freely must they have breathed the air of liberty and religion!

Little did that small persecuted band then know of the destiny they were to carve out for themselves and their posterity! Little did they dream of the changes they were to effect in the world around them, when they planted their feet on the western shore of yonder stream.

It is our purpose to inquire briefly into the causes that led these pious men to quit their native land: to depict the trials and hardships they endured in the mother country and in their passage hither: to review their progress in this community: to recall some of their many virtues, and to exhibit the happy effects of their character and efforts in this District.

The subject of colonization is one of deep and abiding interest. Nothing is more curious than to trace the rise and fall of nations—the depopulation of old and the peopling of new countries: the various migratory excursions of homogeneous races, or the commingling of those that are dissimilar, in distant lands. Among the ancient Greeks and Romans, as among

most of the modern European Nations, colonies have usually been planted under the influences of a rapacious spirit and a love of dominion. To gratify the lusts of power, Princes have often encouraged the emigration of their own subjects in the hope of increasing their wealth, and of multiplying their possessions in distant climes. And individuals, led on by an ambitious desire to improve their personal fortunes have frequently foregone the pleasures of their native soil, and, by voluntary expatriation, have thrown themselves upon the wide world of emigration, remote from the homes of their fathers: while a few nations, like the ancient Germans and Northmen, fond of a sort of Nomadic life, have wandered from place to place, and from nation to nation, through a mere love of change and of adventure. But none of these motives prompted our Protestant ancestors to leave the delightful hills and valleys of their native France. They were no instruments in the hands of ambitious Princes for the aggrandizement of their wealth and power. They did not seek a home in America through a mere love of adventure, or through the ordinary inducement of pecuniary gain. Far higher and nobler were the motives that actuated them. They came in search of an asylum from the relentless persecution of a Catholic Hierarchy, and of an arbitrary, cruel government. They sought a home, in which they might enjoy unmolested, the transcendent sweets of religious and political liberty. They longed to bear away their altars and their household faith to a land of real freedom: of freedom to the Protestant as well as to the Catholic: a land swayed by a moderate, liberal government, allowing free scope to the exercise of conscience in the worship of their Maker. What higher motive could fill the heart—what purer sentiment, what sublimer action, could adorn the character of man!

To a proper understanding of the motives that prompted our ancestors to expatriate themselves, it will be necessary to take a brief review of Protestantism in France. In that country, "Protestant" and "Huguenot" are convertible terms. Of the word "*Huguenot*," various etymologies have been attempted. Some derive it from Hugons Tower, in Tours, where the Protestants, in early times, are said frequently to have assembled,

but the etymology most generally received ascribes the origin of the term to the word "*Eignot*," derived from the German "*Eidgenossen*," i. e. confederates, men leagued together.

So early as 1523 A. D., in the early days of John Calvin, and shortly subsequent to the first preaching of the Reformation in France, an Edict of Francis I.* against the heretics (as the Protestants were then called) was published, and a congregation at Meaux dispersed. Some fled to Metz, others to Switzerland, and their minister, LECLERC, became a martyr. He was tortured in a most horrible manner, and his mangled body burned. Many were burnt alive, and many tortured to death.†

With little respite did these persecutions continue, especially in the Southern parts of France, where the Huguenots were most numerous, up to the frightful tragedy of the St. Bartholomew, in August, 1572: when, it had been determined in the secret council of Charles IX. to make a general massacre, in one night, of all the Huguenots in France. With fearful reality was this infamous plot carried into execution. At the appointed hour, armed companies, at the dead of night, with certain passwords and countersigns, fell upon the unsuspecting Huguenots, and without regard to age, sex or condition, butchered them by hundreds and thousands, and afterwards plundered their property. The Huguenot nobility had been seduced by artifice into Paris, and many of them cruelly assassinated. The Admiral COLIGNY, a great and good man, was most inhumanly murdered in his bed, where he had lain for days of a wound inflicted by his Catholic enemies. The noble King of Navarre, and the chivalric Prince de Condé, spared only in their lives, because of their royal blood, avoided insults and threats of violence from the King himself by secretly escaping from the city. Cries and howlings and the discharge of fire

* Browning's Hist. of the Huguenots, p. 31.

† The massacre of the inhabitants of Merindole and Cabrieres about the same time was outrageous in the extreme. "It was decreed that they should be exterminated as Rebels, their goods confiscated, their houses destroyed, and even the trees of their plantations should be dug up."—*Ibid.*

arms brought the defenceless people out of their houses, unarmed and half naked, when they were inhumanly massacred. When morning came, says an intelligent eye-witness—"Paris exhibited a most appalling spectacle of slaughter: the headless bodies were falling from the windows: the gateways were blocked up with the dead and dying: and the streets were filled with carcasses which were drawn on the pavement to the River." All over France the terrible carnage raged during the whole week—and the number killed has been variously estimated from 70,000 to 100,000 souls.*

After this horrible butchery, one would suppose that the most blood-thirsty appetite would have been satiated, and that a truce, at least, would have followed to these disgusting tragedies. Not so, however. Up to the Edict of Nantes in November, A. D. 1590, (under Henry of Navarre,) continued strife, persecution and outrage were excited against the unfortunate Huguenots, and, in a few years after this, they were systematically proscribed. In the year 1669, an Edict against emigration was issued, and Edict followed Edict in rapid succession—"the degree of penalty proceeding in an awful gradation from fine to imprisonment, the galleys and death." The Huguenot public worship was openly attacked: no seats in their temples were allowed; they were prohibited from acting in any branch of the legal or medical profession—they were not even allowed to pursue the calling of apothecaries, grocers, booksellers or printers. The haughty King (Louis XIV.) gloried in the thought of converting or destroying all the Protestants; and it was boastfully said for him—"If God spares the King, there will not be a single Huguenot in twenty years."

About this period the private dwellings of the Huguenots were invaded by quartering soldiers upon them—called in history the *Dragonnades*. So thoroughly oppressive were the measures now adopted (A. D. 1681) that the forests became crowded with the wretched wanderers, and they left the kingdom by thousands for England, Holland and North America. Protestant schoolmasters were forbidden to receive boarders in

* Browning's Hist., p. 158.