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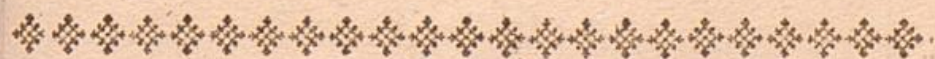
The Henriade

Voltaire

London, 1762

The Henriade. Canto the Fifth.

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THE
HENRIADE.

CANTO the FIFTH.



F 2

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THE

H E N R I A D E

CANTO THE FIFTH

..

THE ARGUMENT.

The besieged are very sharply press'd. Discord persuades Clement to go to Paris, and assassinate the king. He is conducted by Fanaticism, whom Discord calls for that purpose from the infernal regions. Sacrifice of the Leaguers to the spirits of darkness. Henry III. is assassinated. Sentiments of Henry IV. upon the occasion. He is acknowledged king of France by the army.

THE HISTORY OF THE
KINGDOM OF FRANCE
FROM THE DEATH OF CHARLES THE SEVENTH
TO THE DEATH OF HENRY THE SEVENTH
BY JOHN HENRY HALLAM
ESQ.
LONDON: PRINTED BY J. JOHNSON, ST. PAULS CHURCH-YARD, 1807.

THE
HENRIADE.

CANTO the FIFTH.

NOW marching on, those dread machines ap-
pear'd,

Which death attended, and the rebels fear'd.

A hundred mouths pour'd forth the rapid balls,

And iron tempests rattl'd on the walls.

Now was employ'd, and exercis'd in vain 5

The zeal of party, and the wiles of May'ne.

The guards of Paris, and the noisy crowd,

The prating doctors insolent, and loud,

Tried, but in vain, our hero to subdue,

Beneath whose feet victorious laurels grew. 10

By Rome, and Philip were the thunders hurl'd,

But Rome diffus'd no terrors through the world.

His native sloth the old Iberian shew'd,

And all his succours were too late bestow'd.

F 4

Through

Through Gallia's realms the plund'ring troops enjoy'd 15
 The spoils of cities which their arms destroy'd.
 An easy conquest o'er oppress'd allies
 Was first, and fairest in the traitor's eyes.
 The falling League but waited to receive
 Whate'er the pride of tyranny could give, 20
 When fate, that governs with supreme command,
 Appear'd suspended by a zealot's hand.

Forgive, ye citizens, whose peaceful days
 Are calm, and bright'ned by serener rays,
 Forgive the bard who paints the horrid crimes 25
 That stain'd the annals of preceding times.
 Yourself un sullied may the lays approve,
 Whose hearts are warm with loyalty, and love.

In ev'ry age, some venerable seer
 For heav'ns pure joys has shed the pious tear; 30
 Some rigid anchorets with vows divine
 Have heap'd their incense on religion's shrine:
 Lost to the world, to each idea lost
 That friendship loves, or charity can boast.
 Their gloomy shades, and cloisters ever rude 35
 The beams of fair humanity exclude.

Others

Others in flowing periods have display'd
 Religion's truths by learning's pow'rful aid.
 In these ambition has produc'd desires
 Mean, and unworthy virtue's sacred fires. 40

Of't have their schemes extended far, and wide,
 And all their piety been sunk in pride.
 Thus by perverse, untoward abuses still
 The highest good becomes the greatest ill.

Those, who the life of Dominic embrac'd, 45
 In Spain with wreaths of glory have been grac'd.
 From mean employments have with lustre shone,
 Like painted insects glitt'ring round the throne.
 In France they flourish'd in the days of yore,
 With equal zeal, but far unequal pow'r. 50

The kindly patronage, from kings deriv'd,
 Might still attend them, had not Clement liv'd.
 The soul of Clement, gloomy, and austere,
 Was form'd to virtues rigid, and severe.
 Soon as the torrent of rebellion flow'd; 55

The tide he follow'd, and pronounc'd it good.
 Fell Discord rising had profusely shed
 Infernal poisons o'er his youthful head.
 The long-drawn isle, and venerable shrine
 Witness what pray'rs fatigued the pow'rs divine. 60

This was their form, before the throne of grace,
While dust, and ashes sanctifi'd his face.

Almighty being, whose avenging arm
Protects religion, and her sons from harm,
How long shall justice sleep, or tyrants live, 65
The perjur'd flourish, and oppression thrive?
Let us, O God, thy gracious mercies tell,
Thy fiery scourges let the sinner feel.
Dispel death's horrid gloom, assist the brave,
And crush the tyrant, whom thy fury gave. 70
Send thy destroying angel from above,
Descend in flames, and let thy thunders move.
Descend, and quell the sacrilegious host,
Defeat their triumphs, and confound their boast.
Let ruin seize, great sov'reign lord of all, 75
Kings, chiefs, and armies in one common fall.
As gath'ring storms the leaves of Autumn bear
O'er hills, and vallies through the fields of air.
The League shall praise thy name with holy tongue,
Whilst blood, and murder elevate the song. 80

Discord, attentive, heard his hideous cries,
And swift to Pluto's dreary regions flies.

From

From thosc dark realms the worst of tyrants came,
Fanatic Dæmon is his horrid name.

Religion's son, but rebel in her cause, 85
He tears her bosom, and disdains her laws.

'Twas him that guided Ammon's frantic race,
Where silver Arnon winds his liquid maze.

When weeping mothers, with mad zeal possess'd,
Slew their fond infants clinging to the breast. 90

Through him, rash Jephtha vow'd, the fiend imbrued
The father's dagger in the daughter's blood.

By him the impious Chalchas was inspir'd,
And tender Iphigenia's death requir'd.

Thy forests, France, the cruel pow'r approv'd; 95
There smok'd the incense which Tentates lov'd.

Thy shades have seen the human victims bleed,
Whilst hoary druids authoriz'd the deed.

From Rome's proud capitol he gave the word,
When christians shudder'd at the pagan sword. 100

When Rome submitted to the son of God,
High o'er the church he wav'd his iron rod.

Christians, once doom'd to feel the tort'ring flame,
Were deaf to mercy, and unmov'd by shame.

On Thames's banks the seeds of faction grew, 105
Whose bloody arm the feeble monarch slew.

The

The same fierce genius fans the annual fire
 At Lisbon, or Madrid, when Jews expire :
 Unwilling to desert the cause of heav'n,
 Or quit the faith their ancestors have giv'n. 110

Like some high priest his part the dæmon play'd,
 In the pure vest of innocence array'd.
 Now, from the wardrobe of eternal night
 For other crimes equipp'd, he sprung to light.
 Deceit, for ever plausible, and fair, 115

Dress'd him like Guise in person, height, and air.
 The haughty Guise, whose artifice alone
 Enchain'd the listless monarch on his throne,
 Whose pow'r still working, like some fatal star,
 Foreboded ruin, and inspir'd to war. 120

The dreaded helmet glitter'd on his head ;
 The sword, prepar'd for ev'ry murd'rous deed,
 Flam'd in his hand ;—and many a wound could tell
 How once at Blois the factious hero fell.

For vengeance calling loud, the crimson tide 125
 Fast flow'd in copious streams adown his side.

Clad in this mournful garb, when night had shed
 Her peaceful slumbers over Clement's head,
 In that still hour, when horrid spectres meet,
 He fought the zealot in his calm retreat. 130

cabal,

Cabal, and ~~ir~~ superstition, nurse of sin,
Unbarr'd the doors, and let the chieftain in.

Thy pray'rs, he cried the pow'rs of heav'n receive,
But more than tears, or pray'rs should Clement give.
The Leaguer's god will other off'rings claim;
More fit, more worthy of his holy name.
Far other incense must adorn his shrine;
Off'rings more pure, and worship more divine.
Had Judith only wept with plaintive sighs,
A female's grief, and unavailing cries, 140
Had life been dearer than her country's call,
Judith had seen Bethulia's levell'd wall.
These exploits copy, these oblations bring,
Derive thy currents from that sacred spring.
I see thee blush;—go, fly at my command, 145
Let royal blood now consecrate thy hand.
Set wretched Paris from her tyrant free,
Revenging Rome, the universe, and me.
Go, murder Valois, as he murder'd Guise,
Nor deem it faulty in religion's eyes. 150
Who guards the church, and vindicates her laws,
Is bravely acting in fair virtue's cause.
When heav'n commands, then ev'ry deed is good,
Attend her accents, and prepare for blood.

When

Thrice happy, could'st thou join the tyrant's death 155
 To Bourbon's fall, and gain a nobler wreath!
 Oh could thy citizens! — but fate denies
 Thy hand the honors of that happy prize.
 Yet, should thy fame with rays inferior shine,
 Scorn not the gift, but finish heaven's design. 160

Thus spoke the phantom, and unsheath'd the blade,
 By hatred once in Stygian waters laid.
 To Clement's hand he gave the fatal steel,
 Then swiftly fled, and downward sunk to hell.
 The young recluse, too easily deceiv'd, 165
 Himself th' almighty's delegate believ'd:
 Embrac'd the gift with reverential love,
 And begg'd assistance from the pow'rs above.
 The fiend no superstitious influence spar'd,
 But all his soul for parricide prepar'd. 170
 How apt is error to mislead mankind!
 And reason's piercing eye how often blind!
 The raging Clement, happy, and at ease,
 Happy as those whom truth and virtue please;
 With down-cast looks, and virtue's clouded brow, 175
 To heav'n address'd the sacrilegious vow.
 On as he march'd, his penitential veil
 Conceal'd from view the parricidal steel.

T H E H E N R I A D E. III

The fairest now'rs each conscious friend bestow'd,
And balmy odors to perfume the road. 180

These guides, in counsel, or in praises join'd
To add new fervor to his zealous mind.

The holy calendar receiv'd his name,
Equal to saints in virtue, and in fame.

Now hail'd as patron, now ador'd as God, 185
And fed with incense by the kneeling crowd.

Transports less warm, less moving raptures fir'd
The christian heroes, and their souls inspir'd,

When pious brethren were consign'd to death,
Firm, and intrepid to their latest breath. 190

They kiss'd each footstep, thought each torture gain,
And wish'd to feel the agonizing pain.

Fanatics thus religion's ensigns bear,
Like worthies triumph, and like saints appear.

The same desire the good, and impious draws, 195
Unnumber'd martyrs fall in error's cause.

Mayne's piercing eyes beheld the future blow,
And more was known, than what he seem'd to know.

Intending wisely, when the blood was spilt,
To reap the profits, but avoid the guilt. 200

Sedition's sons were left to guide the whole,
And steel with rage the impious zealot's soul.

To

To Paris' gates they lead the traitor on:
 Whilst the Sixteen with fond impatience run
 To arts infernal, and devoutly pray 205
 That heav'n her secret counsels would display.
 This science once distinguish'd Cath'rine's reign,
 Tho' always criminal, and often vain.
 The servile people, that for ever love
 Each courtly vice, and what the great approve, 210
 Fond of whate'er is marvellous, or new,
 The same impieties with zeal pursue.

When night's still shades conceal'd the bands im-
 pure,
 Silence conducts them to a vault obscure.
 By the pale torch, which faintly pierc'd the gloom, 215
 They raise an altar on the mould'ring tomb.
 There both the royal images appear,
 Alike the objects of their rage, and fear.
 There to almighty pow'r their vows are paid,
 And hellish dæmons summon'd to their aid. 220
 High on the walls, a hundred lances stood,
 Mysterious, awful terrors! plung'd in blood.
 Their priest was one of that unhappy race
 Proscrib'd on earth, and sentenc'd to disgrace.

Slaves-

Slaves long inur'd to superstition's lore, 225
 Whose crimes, and sorrows spread from shore to shore.
 The Leaguers next the sacrifice begin
 With horrid cries, and bacchanalian din:
 Now bathe their arms within the crimson tide;
 Now on the altar strike at Valois' side. 230
 Now with more rage, the terror to compleat,
 See Henry's image trod beneath their feet.
 Death, as they thought, would aid the impious blow,
 And send the heroes to the shades below.

The Hebrew tried by blasphemy to move 235
 The depths beneath, and all the pow'rs above.
 Invok'd the spirits that in æther dwell,
 Swift light'nings, thunders, and the flames of hell.
 Endor's fam'd priestess erst such off'rings made,
 And rais'd by dire enchantments Samuel's shade' 240
 Thus in Samaria once 'gainst Judah hung
 The lying accent on the prophet's tongue.
 And thus inflexibly Ateius rose
 The high designs of Crassus to oppose.

The Leagues mad ruler waited to receive 245
 To charms, and spells what answer heav'n would give.
 Convinc'd that vows, thus offer'd, wing their way
 To the pure regions of eternal day.
 Heav'n

Heav'n heard the magic sounds, which only drew
From thence the vengeance to their errors due. 250

For them were stopt the laws which nature gave,
And plaintive murmurs fill'd the silent cave.

Successive light'nings in the depth of night
Flash'd all around, and gleam'd with horrid light.

Great Henry shone amidst the lambent flames, 255

Encircl'd round with glory's golden beams.

High on the car of triumph as he rode,

Grace on his brow the laurel wreath bestow'd,

The royal sceptre glitter'd in his hand,

Emblem of pow'r, and ensign of command. 260

Loud rolling thunders gave the fatal sign,

And op'ning earth receiv'd the flaming shrine.

The priest, and Leaguers shudder'd at the sight,

And veil'd their crimes beneath the shades of night.

The rolling thunders, and the fiery blaze 265

Declar'd that God had number'd Valois' days.

Grim death rejoic'd; and, such th' almighty's will,

Crimes were allow'd his sentence to fulfil.

Now Clement to the royal tent drew near.

And begg'd admission undismay'd by fear. 270

For heav'n, he said, had sent him to bestow

Reviving honors on the monarch's brow;

And

And secrets to unfold, which might appear
 Worthy reception from his sovereign's ear.
 All mark his looks, and many a question ask 275
 Least his attire some bad design should mask.
 He undisturb'd, with calm, and simple air
 Returns them answers plausible, and fair.
 Each accent seems from innocence to spring.
 The guards attend, and lead him to their king. 280

Calm as before, he bent the suppliant knee ;
 Unruff'd, and unaw'd by majesty :
 Mark'd where to strike, and thus, by falsehood's aid,
 With treach'rous lies his feign'd addresses paid. 284

Pardon, dread sovereign, him who trembling brings
 Submissive praises to the king of kings.
 Oh let me thank kind heav'n, whose gracious aid
 Has showr'd down blessings on thy sacred head.
 Potier the good, and Villerois the sage
 Have faithful prov'd in this rebellious age. 290
 Harlay the great, whose brave, intrepid zeal
 Was ever active in the public weal,
 Immur'd in prison, still thy cause defends,
 Confounds the League, and animates thy friends.

That

That mighty being, whose all-piercing eyes 295
 Defeat the counsels of the great, and wise :
 Whose will no human knowledge can withstand,
 Whose works are finish'd by the weakest hand :
 To Harlay guided thy devoted slave,
 That loyal subject ever good, and brave. 300
 His sage advice, and sentiments refin'd
 Diffus'd a radiance o'er my clouded mind.
 To bring these lines with eagerness I flew,
 By Harlay counsell'd, and to Valois true.

The king receiv'd the letters with surprize, 305
 And tears of holy rapture fill'd his eyes.
 Oh when, he cried, shall Valois' hand supply
 Rewards proportion'd to thy loyalty ?
 Thus spoke the monarch with affection warm,
 Love undissemb'l'd, and extended arm. 310
 Each motion well the monstrous traitor eyed,
 And fiercely plung'd the dagger in his side.
 Soon as they saw the crimson torrents flow,
 A thousand hands reveng'd the fatal blow.
 The zealot wish'd not for a happier time, 315
 But stood unmov'd, and triumph'd in his crime.
 Through op'ning skies he saw the heav'nly dome,
 And endless glories in the world to come.

Claim'd the bright wreath of martyrdom from God,
And falling, blest'd the hand that shed his blood. 320

Oh dread illusion terrible, and blind,
Worthy the hate, and pity of mankind.
Infectious preachers more deserv'd the blame,
From whom the madness, and the poison came.

The hour arriv'd when Valois' darken'd fight 325
Faintly beheld the parting, glimm'ring light.

Surrounding slaves with many a falling tear
Express'd their griefs dissembl'd, or sincere.
For some there were, whose sorrows soon expir'd,
With pleasing hopes of future greatness fir'd. 330

Others, whose safety with the king was fled,
Themselves lamented, not the royal dead.

Amidst the various sounds of plaintive cries
Tears unaffected flow'd from Henry's eyes.

Thy foe, great Bourbon, fell; but souls like thine 335

In such dread moments ev'ry thought resign,
Save those which friendship, and compassion claim:

Self-love destroys not the cælestial flame.

The gen'rous chief forgot his own renown,

Tho' to himself devolv'd the regal crown. 340

To raise his eyes the dying monarch strove,

And clasp'd his hand with tenderness, and love.

Bourbon,

Bourbon, he cried, thy gen'rous tears refrain,
 Let others weep whose conduct I disdain.
 Fly thou to vengeance, spread the dire alarm, 345
 Go reign, and triumph with victorious arm.
 I leave thee struggling on the stormy coast
 Where shipwreck'd Valois was for ever lost.
 My throne awaits thee, take it as thy due,
 Its sole protection was deriv'd from you. 350
 Eternal thunders threaten Gallia's kings,
 Then fear the pow'r from whom the glory springs.
 By thee, from impious tenets undeceiv'd,
 Be all the honours of his shrine reviv'd.
 Farewell, brave prince, and reign by all ador'd, 355
 Guarded by heav'n from each assassin's sword.
 You know the League, with us begins the blow,
 Nor stays it's fury, but would end with you.
 In future days perchance some barb'rous hand,
 Obedient slave to faction's dread command, 360
 Some arm——but oh! ye Guardian angels, spare
 Virtues so pure, so exquisite, and rare.
 Permit——no more he said; departing breath
 Consign'd the monarch to the arms of death.

Now was all Paris fill'd with joyful cries, 365
 And odious songs of triumph rent the skies.

The

The fanes are open'd wide at Valois' death,
 And ev'ry Leaguer wears the flow'ry wreath.
 All labour ends whilst faction blith, and gay,
 To mirth, and feasting consecrates the day. 370

Bourbon appear'd the object of their sport,
 And glorious valour seem'd his sole support.
 Nay, could he rise, and e'er resist again
 The strengthen'd League, the angry church, and
 Spain :

The Roman thunders with such fury hurl'd, 375
 And the bright treasures of the western world !

Some warlike few, who little understood
 What most contributes to the public good,
 Affecting scruples foolish, and refin'd,
 Calvin's defence already had resign'd. 380

Redoubl'd ardour in the royal cause
 The rest inflam'd, and rul'd by other laws.
 These gen'rous soldiers, well approv'd in war,
 Who long had rode on triumph's radiant car,
 To Bourbon give unsettl'd Gallia's throne, 385
 And all proclaim him worthy of the crown.

Those valiant knights, the Givris, and Daumonts,
 The Montmorencis, Sancis, and Crillons,

Swear

Swear to remain inviolable friends,
 And guard his person to earth's utmost ends. 390
 True to their laws, and faithful to their God,
 They boldly march where honour points the road.

From you, my friends, cried Bourbon is deriv'd
 That lot which kindred heroes have receiv'd.
 No peers have authorized our high command, 395
 No holy oil, or consecrating hand.
 All due allegiance, in the days of yore,
 Your brave forefathers on their buckler swore.
 To vict'rys laurell'd field your hands confin'd
 From thence send forth the monarchs of mankind. 400
 Thus spoke the chief, and, marching first, prepar'd
 By martial deeds to merit his reward.

THE