



King Henry IV

John Abbott

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While France was deluged with the blood of a civil war, young Henry was busily pursuing his studies in college. He could have had but little affection for his father, for the stern soldier had passed most of his days in the tented field, and his son had hardly known him. From his mother he had long been separated; but he cherished her memory with affectionate regard, and his predilections strongly inclined him toward the faith which he knew that she had so warmly espoused. It was, however, in its political aspects that Henry mainly contemplated the question. He regarded the two sects merely as two political parties struggling for power. For some time he did not venture to commit himself openly, but, availing himself of the privilege of his youth, carefully studied the principles and the prospects of the contending factions, patiently waiting for the time to come in which he should introduce his strong arm into the conflict. Each party, aware that his parents had espoused opposite sides, and regarding him as an invaluable accession to either cause, adopted all possible allurements to win his favor.

Catharine, as unprincipled as she was ambitious, invited him to her court, lavished upon him, with queenly profusion, caresses and flattery, and enticed him with all those blandishments which might most effectually enthral the impassioned spirit of youth. Voluptuousness, gilded with its most dazzling and deceitful enchantments, was studiously presented to his eye. The queen was all love and complaisance. She received him to her cabinet council. She affected to regard him as her chief confidant. She had already formed the design of perfidiously throwing the Protestants off their guard by professions of friendship, and then, by indiscriminate massacre, of obliterating from the kingdom every vestige of the reformed faith. The great mass of the people being Catholics, she thought that, by a simultaneous uprising all over the kingdom, the Protestants might be so generally destroyed that not enough would be left to cause her any serious embarrassments...

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