

The dragonnades seen by a Montauban Huguenot

[Montauban, a Protestant stronghold] was filled with troops, who were quartered on the Protestants.

When the troops entered the town on the 20th of August 1685, they treated the inhabitants as if the town had been taken by assault. [...]The officers and soldiers vied with each other in committing acts of violence. [...] Tumult and disorder prevailed everywhere. Houses were broken into. Persons of the reformed religion, without regard to age, sex, or condition, were treated with indignity.

Samuel de Pechels de la Boissonade had no fewer than thirty-eight dragoons and fusiliers quartered upon him[...]we proceed to quote his own words:

"Soon after," he says, "my house was filled with officers, troopers, and their horses, who took possession of every room with such unfeeling harshness that I could not reserve a single one for the use of my family; nor could I make these unfeeling wretches listen to my declaration that I was ready to give up all that I possessed without resistance. Doors were broken open, boxes and cupboards forced. They liked better to carry off what belonged to me in this violent manner than to take the keys which my wife and I, standing on either side, continued to offer. The granaries served for the reception of their horses among the grain and meal, which the wretches, with the greatest barbarity, made them trample underfoot. The very bread destined for my little children, like the rest, was contemptuously trodden down by the horses.

"Nothing could stop the brutality of these madmen. I was thrust out into the street with my wife, now very near her confinement, and four very young children, taking nothing with me but a little cradle and a small supply of linen, for the babe whose birth was almost momentarily expected. The street being full of people, diverted at seeing us thus exposed, we were delayed some moments near the door, during which we were pitilessly drenched by the troopers, who amused themselves at the windows with emptying upon our heads pitchers of water, to add to their enjoyment of our sad condition.

"From this moment I gave up both house and goods to be plundered, without having in view any place of refuge but the street, ill suited, it must be owned, for such a purpose, and especially so to a woman expecting her confinement hourly, and to little children of too tender an age to make their own way--some of them, indeed, being unable to walk or speak--and having no hope but in the mercy of God and His gracious protection."

Quoted from *The Huguenots in France* by Samuel Smiles, Courtesy of The Project Gutenberg