

## Account of a massacre

*This account of a massacre bears all the hallmarks of the genre. The Protestant victims are notably restrained and self-denying, faced with the Catholic mob which the author clearly despises. The emphasis on the personal story of the victims, two noble brothers, largely eclipses the actual massacre, the author briefly noting that the Catholics 'killed a great number of other people'. The text reads more like a martyrdom story than a description of a massacre.*

*The text is not less interesting for its description of how events unfolded and the mechanisms that were in place to incite violence. The increase in sectarian strife is shown clearly: it is linked to a semi-clandestine religious sect (an 'improvised church' provided with a minister) and is exacerbated by a monk (the Franciscan Order had been in the front line of the fight against Vaudois heresy). Unsurprisingly from the pen of the author of l'Histoire ecclésiastique, the attitude towards the Huguenots is exemplary: confronted with the iniquity and bias of the judicial authorities, they kept to the law and made an appeal to royal justice. Another recurrent characteristic of these massacres is children, stirred up by the religious authorities, and the 'populace' who unleash the massacre. The ritual of the violence is described with horror and the reader is spared none of the detail of the Catholics' cruelty. This sectarian prejudice is here combined with social prejudice, the lower classes 'boiling and fierce' resort to barbarism*

In the year 1559, Antoine and Paul de Richiend, seigneurs of Mouvans, retired to their house in the highlands of Provence in the town of Castellane after long military service, desirous of living a godly life, with others, of whom there were so many that they employed a minister, who came in January, and shortly afterwards people of all estates joined this gathering at the house of the said Mouvans, which began when night had fallen. ....During Lent, the people of Castellane had a senior Franciscan as a preacher who, much disliking these gatherings, berated them with all sorts of insults and false accusations, such that the common people began to murmur against them, the more so because the minister had sent him certain writings that revealed his life and doctrine, which he preached against from the pulpit, saying also that he had received threats from one of the two brothers, Antoine. This angered his listeners so much that, without finding out whether the accusations were true or false, five or six hundred men took up arms and surrounded Antoine, although on this occasion he escaped. Because of this Paul made a complaint to the parlement of Aix, but the agitators also did so, and they were welcomed and supported by some of the councillors who had a grudge against these gentlemen. Commissioners were sent to investigate both sides; but instead of taking a balanced approach, the brothers were informed against purely for heresy, without looking into the facts of the case. Seeing this, and that there had already been a personal adjudication against him and his brother, Paul went to King Henri II, who was still living, from whom he obtained via the parlement of Grenoble an easement, taking into account their service, which meant that the parlement of Aix went to the Cardinal of Lorraine<sup>1</sup> who furnished them with *lettres de cachet* requiring them not to drop the case. The case having been unjustly lost, the two Mouvans brothers had the bit between their teeth and joined with co-religionists from all over Provence, who equally felt oppressed by infinite injustices, having suffered writs and orders against them and theft and major crimes on the part of their enemies in the parlement. In order to try to put a brake on this tyranny, they decided to put together a common fund in order to pursue their case with the King. To do this, they would meet up in the town of Draguignan.

At that time, Antoine was trying to make an agreement with those in Castellane and for this reason found himself in Fréjus, at the request of his closest relations and friends; he went there and, having

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1 Charles de Lorraine (1524-1574), the an influential adviser to Henri II

been unable to find the financiers he had arranged to meet, stayed the night in Draguignan, but barely had he arrived when the little children of the town (incited and spurred on by certain priests and by a councillor of the parlement of Aix) shouted so loudly at him for being a Lutheran that, in response to these solicitations, more than three thousand people surrounded his lodgings. Antoine saw that he could not save himself but resisted bravely and put himself in the hands of the town magistrate in obedience to justice. But the rage of the mob could not be contained, so that he was not killed by the magistrate, but by them, treating his person with such cruelty and inhumanity that it is impossible to describe. Amongst other barbarities, his entrails were torn from his stomach, dragged through the town, then thrown in the town ditch, a disgusting and putrid place. His heart and his liver were carved up and displayed on the bastions and gates of the town in triumph. In brief, their rage was so extreme that one of them gave a piece of that liver to his dog, which showed more humanity than men, in that it refused it and went away, its master running after it, swearing and blaspheming: 'Are you a Lutheran like Mouvans?' The parlement, asked by Paul for justice for this enormous and hateful crime, sent the councillors Henri Victoris and Esprit Vitalis to Draguignan who, instead of investigating, asked him about his life, customs and conversations rather than those of the murderers. Then having brought out the body, it was conveyed by the actual killers of Antoine, together with one who had been found in his company, called Bramaire, to the prison at Aix, and the people who did this were paid. What is more, one of these commissioners bitterly rebuked those in Castellane who opposed the death: "Come on, come on, you scum, the elder has been killed here, why don't you kill the younger one, you are worthless and cowardly Kill! Kill all this Lutheran rabble!" The people, who in themselves had only been overwhelmed by boiling rage, felt encouraged by these men and were made proud and self-valiant....and, having caught Paul, they killed a great number of other people without any motive or justification for doing so, such that anything went for this mindless mob.

Source: *Histoire ecclésiastique des églises réformées au royaume de France*, Toulouse edition published according to the editions of 1580, 1882, Vol I, pp. 205-206.