

Roman Catholics in Europe, and would gladly have given assistance to the discontented English Roman Catholics had he been in a position to do so. But fortunately for England, he was just at this time engaged in crushing a formidable rebellion in the Netherlands, and could not spare a single soldier. He had striven his utmost to stamp out Protestantism, and establish Romanism and absolute rule in that country. But the people rose against their oppressor, and he was compelled to send the **Duke of Alva**, a great but cruel soldier, to crush the rebellion. Town after town fell into the hands of the Spaniards, and the inhabitants were cruelly put to the sword. At last the rebels cut the dykes, and flooded all the low-lying country, and Alva was so disgusted with the failure of his attempt, that he returned to Spain. The rebellion proved a great advantage to England; it saved England from a Spanish invasion, it weakened Philip's power in the Netherlands, and drove 30,000 weavers to seek refuge in England, bringing with them their skill and art in weaving.

The hostility of Spain towards England compelled Elizabeth to seek an alliance with France. She had already expressed a wish to marry Henry, Duke of Anjou, but the negotiations had been broken off. In her anxiety to establish cordial relations with the two countries, she now entertained thoughts of marrying Anjou's brother, Francis, the Duke of Alençon, although he was a youth twenty-one years younger than herself, contemptible in character and intellect and repulsive in his appearance. Absurd as the idea of the marriage was, it had the effect of strengthening the alliance with France, and widening the breach with Spain.

One thing, however, almost severed the French alliance, and that was the **Massacre of St. Bartholomew**. In 1572 Catherine de Medicis, the mother of Charles IX., fearing lest the Huguenots were becoming too powerful, terrified her son into a belief that they were conspiring against him. Accordingly he gave orders for a general massacre of the Huguenots, and on the night of the 24th of August, St. Bartholomew's day, 1572, the blood-thirsty mob of Paris slaughtered no less than 20,000 Protestants. The same deeds of horror were perpetrated at Orleans, Rouen and Bordeaux.