



# The Fall of the Stuarts

*Edward Hale*

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THE history of western Europe in the seventeenth century is a history of wars.

“Wars destroy the morals of mankind by habituating them to refer everything to force, and by necessitating them so often to dispense with the ordinary suggestions of sympathy and justice.” This is true of wars in general; but the demoralizing effect is much greater if wars are civil wars; or religious wars—wars, that is, between fellow-citizens to serve the ends of some political party, or to enforce the observance of some political truth; or wars between fellow-Christians to force all to follow some religious creed. Moral virtues are in these cases uprooted; military virtues, which may exist in the most depraved man or state, flourish.

The era of the great Protestant Revolution ushered in the period of religious wars, France was devastated by religious and civil wars combined in the latter half of the sixteenth, and in the beginning of the seventeenth century. It took part in the Thirty Years’ War of Germany (1618-1648); it was again the theatre of the civil war of the Fronde, in which aimless attempts were made to oppose the absolutism of the French crown (1648- 1653). Germany was almost ruined by its great civil and religious Thirty Years’ War. England had also suffered in its great civil and partly religious war, which ended in 1648, with the execution of Charles I.

The great principle of religious toleration was unknown in the sixteenth century, and taught without success by a few great thinkers in the seventeenth century. Men believed great truths, by believing which they thought they secured their salvation, and they deemed it their bounden duty to make others believe, in order that they too might be saved. So not merely were wars undertaken for the sake of religious tenets, but within the several countries there were persecutions of Christians by Christians, of Englishmen by Englishmen, Frenchmen by Frenchmen, Germans by Germans.

Nevertheless it is only through the fire of religious and civil wars, and of religious persecutions, that the cause of religious and civil liberty comes out triumphant. The fall of the Stuarts, of which we shall treat, is an event in the successful struggle for civil and religious liberty.

The latter half of the seventeenth century was occupied by wars of a less demoralizing character than civil and religious wars; by wars undertaken by one man, Louis XIV., to obtain certain personal ends, These ends were the supremacy of Western Europe, the Imperial crown, and the succession to the throne of Spain. Of what befell Louis in his attempts to secure the supremacy of Western Europe, and how the “balance of power” was eventually righted, we shall also treat...

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