

Jacqueline Boucher, Pierre Champion, and Michel François, eds. *Lettres de Henri III, roi de France: Tome VII (21 mars 1585 – 31 décembre 1587)*. Société de l'histoire de France 543. Paris: Société de l'histoire de France, 2012. xix + 634 pp. €80. ISBN: 978-2-35407-136-3.

This particular volume spans a later period of Henri III's reign, from 21 March 1585 to 31 December 1587, and contains 1,496 letters from some of the most tumultuous months of the last Valois king's time. The organization of this copious correspondence shows the pattern of various issues and the evolving political and

social landscape of Henri III's regime. Part 1, "La prise d'armes de la League," takes up the issues from 21 March to 18 July 1585 involving the order for arms and protection of towns by the Catholic League. Here the King admonished dukes, bishops, counts, and town dignitaries to defend the realm. Wanting peace between church and state once and for all, as stated in letter 5861, Henri tried to negotiate with the duc de Guise and forces of the League while also urging Henri of Navarre to become Catholic. Part 2, "Le redressement de l'autorité royale," from 19 July 1585 to 26 September 1586, opens with the king's revocation of the former Edicts of Pacification, which allowed for the recognition of two faiths in the realm: that of the Reformed Church and the Catholic Church. From now on the only religion recognized would be the Catholic faith. Henri of Navarre and his coreligionists of the Reformed faith were ordered to obey in letter 6006. Soon, the king found himself on shifting ground and tried, through a flurry of correspondence, to maintain and conserve his power by pitting Guise and League forces against Navarre and the Huguenots. Part 3, "Le pouvoir royal de nouveau ébranlé," from 28 September 1586 to 21 June 1587, covers the period involving the War of the Three Henries as well as the diplomatic maneuverings with Queen Elizabeth of England and King Philip II of Spain concerning the execution of Mary, Queen of Scots as the principal issue. Part 4, "Disperser et refouler les réîtres," concludes this volume of letters with the scattering and expulsion of repeat offenders to the crown from the period 25 June 1587 to 31 December of that year. And what a year it was. German Protestant forces converged on France from the north to join Henri of Navarre while the king ordered Henri, duc de Guise, to defend France with the League against the Germans, all the while dreading Guise's growing power and popularity, especially in Paris.

Reading this volume of letters, one finds a clear organization of materials for the serious scholar reviewing this period in European history. It is an indispensable aid to research comprised of correspondence from a vast array of manuscripts as well as printed sources from various public archives as well as private collections in France, the US, the UK, Italy, and Switzerland. Footnotes for many of the letters greatly facilitate understanding and historical details mentioned in the correspondence. An especially challenging and complex time in French history, this volume serves the vital purpose of making the king's letters available and through them, showing Henri III's authentic voice in a new way as well-versed and very intelligent in the affairs of state. Debunking much of the propaganda written during the reign of Louis XIV, such as the historical narrative of Perefixe and the dialogues of Fenelon surrounding the last Valois king, these letters will offer a necessary reassessment of Henri III and the impossible situations he faced daily during the Wars of Religion in France.

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