CHAPTER XI.

ADMINISTRATIONS OF CARDINALS RICHELIEU AND MAZARIN

While Germany was rent with civil commotions, and the power of the emperors was limited by the stand taken against it by the Protestant princes, France was ruled with an iron hand, and a foundation was laid for the despotism of Louis XIV. The energetic genius of Cardinal Richelieu, during the whole period of the thirty years' war, affected the councils of all the different courts of Europe. He was indisputably the greatest statesman of his age and nation. To him France is chiefly indebted for the ascendency she enjoyed in the seventeenth century. Had Henry IV. lived to the age of Louis XIV., France would probably have been permanently greater, although the power of the king might not have been so absolute.

When Henry IV. died, he left his kingdom to his son Louis XIII., a child nine years of age. The first thing to be done was the appointment of a regent. The Parliament of Paris, in whom this right seems to have been vested, nominated the queen mother, Mary de Medicis, and the young king, in a bed of justice, — the greatest of the royal prerogatives, — confirmed his mother in the regency. Her regency was any thing but favorable to the interests of the kingdom. The policy of the late king was disregarded, and a new course of measures was adopted. Sully, through whose counsels the reign of Henry IV. had been so beneficent, was dismissed. The queen regent had no sympathy with his views. Neither the corrupt court nor the powerful aristocracy cared any thing for the interests of the people, for the improvement of agriculture, commerce, and manufactures, for the regulation of the finances, or for increasing the productive industry of the country, on which its material prosperity ever depends. The greedy courtiers obtained from a lavish queen the treasures which the wise care of Henry had amassed, and which he thoughtlessly bestowed in order to secure their fidelity. The foreign policy also

was changed, and a strong alliance was made with the pope, with Spain, and with the Jesuits.

On the retirement of the able and incorruptible Sully, favorites of no talent or worth arose to power. Concini, an Italian, controlled the queen regent, and through him all her favors flowed. He was succeeded by Luynes, a mere falconer, who made himself agreeable to the young king, and usurped the power of Concini, when the king attained his majority. He became constable of France, the highest officer in the realm, and surpassed all the old nobility in arrogance and cupidity. His mismanagement and selfishness led to an insurrection of some of the great nobles among whom were Condé and D'Epernon.

While the kingdom was thus convulsed with civil war, and in every way mismanaged, Richelieu, Bishop of Luçon, appeared upon the stage. He was a man of high birth, was made doctor of the Sorbonne at the age of twenty-two, and, before he was twenty-five, a bishop. During the ascendency of Mancini, he attracted the attention of the queen, and was selected as secretary of state. Soon after the death of Luynes, he obtained a cardinal's hat, and a seat in the council. The moment he spoke, his genius predominated, and the monarch, with all his pride, bowed to the ascendency of intellect, and yielded, with a good grace, to a man whom it was impolitic to resist.

From that moment, in 1622, the reins of empire were in the hands of a master, and the king himself, were it not for the splendor of his court, would have disappeared from the eye, both of statesmen and historians. The reign of anarchy, for a quarter of a century, at least, was over, and the way was prepared for the aggrandizement of the French monarchy. When Richelieu came into power, universal disorder prevailed. The finances were deranged, the Huguenots were troublesome, and the nobles were rebellious. Such was the internal state of France, — weakened, distracted, and anarchical. She had lost her position among the great powers, and Austria threatened to overturn the political relations of all the states of Europe. Austria, in the early part of the seventeenth century, was, unquestionably, the leading power in Christendom, and her ascendency boded no good to the liberties which men were beginning to assert.

Three great objects animated the genius of Richelieu, and in the attainment of these he was successful. These were, the suppression of the Huguenots, as a powerful party, the humiliation of the great barons, and the reduction of the power of Austria. For these objects he perseveringly contended for twenty years; and his struggles and intrigues to secure these ends constitute the history of France during the reign of Louis XIII. And they affected not only France, but the whole continent. His policy was to preserve peace with England and Spain, — the hereditary enemies of France, — with Sweden, and with the Protestants of Germany, even while he suppressed their religion within his own realm. It was the true policy of England to prevent the ruin of the Huguenots in France, as before she had aided the Protestants in Holland. But, unfortunately, England was then ruled by James and Charles, and they were controlled by profligate ministers, who were the tools of the crafty cardinal. A feeble assistance was rendered by James, but it availed nothing.

In order to annihilate the political power of the Huguenots, — for Richelieu cared more for this than for their religious opinions, — it was necessary that he should possess himself of the city of La Rochelle, on the Bay of Biscay, a strong fortress, which had resisted, during the reign of Charles IX., the whole power of the Catholics, and which continued to be the stronghold of the Huguenots. Here they could always retire and be safe, in times of danger. It was strongly fortified by sea, as well as by land; and only a vigorous blockade could exclude provisions and military stores from the people. But England was mistress of the ocean, and supplies from her would always relieve the besieged.

After ineffectual but vigorous attempts to take the city by land, Richelieu determined to shut up its harbor, first by stakes, and then by a boom. Both of these measures failed. But the military genius of the cardinal was equal to his talents as a statesman. He remembered what Alexander did at the siege of Tyre. So, with a volume of Quintus Curtius in his hand, he projected and finished a mole, half a mile in length, across a gulf, into which the tide flowed. In some places, it was eight hundred and forty feet below the surface of the water, and sixty feet in breadth. At first, the besieged laughed at an attempt so gigantic and difficult

But the work steadily progressed, and the city was finally cut off from communication with the sea. The besieged, wasted by famine, surrendered; the fortifications were destroyed, the town lost its independence, and the power of the Huguenots was broken forever. But no vengeance was taken on the heroic citizens, and they were even permitted to enjoy their religion. Fifteen thousand, however, perished at this memorable siege.

The next object of Richelieu was the humiliation of Austria. But the detail of his military operations would be complicated and tedious, since no grand and decisive battles were fought by his generals, and no able commanders appeared. Turenne and Condé belonged to the next age. The military operations consisted in frontier skirmishes, idle sieges, and fitful expeditions, in which, however, the cardinal had the advantage, and by which he gained, since he could better afford to pay for them. War is always ruinously expensive, and that party generally is successful which can the longer furnish resources. It is a proof that religious bigotry did not mainly influence him, since he supported the Protestant party. All motives of a religious kind were absorbed in his prevailing passion to aggrandize the French monarchy. Had it not been for the intrigues and forces of Richelieu, the peace of Westphalia might not have been secured, and Austria might again have overturned the "Balance of Power."

The third great aim of the minister, and the one which he most systematically pursued to the close of his life, was the depression of the nobles, whose power was dangerously exercised. They had almost feudal privileges, were enormously wealthy, numerous, corrupt, and dissolute. His efforts to suppress their power raised up numerous conspiracies.

Among the earliest was one supported by the queen mother and Gaston, Duke of Orleans, brother to the king, and presumptive heir to the throne. Connected with this conspiracy were the Dukes of Bourbon and Vendome, the Prince de Chalais, and several others of the highest rank. It was intended to assassinate the cardinal and seize the reins of government. But he got timely notice of the plot, informed the king, and guarded himself. The conspirators were too formidable to be punished in a body; so he dissembled and resolved to cut them off in detail. He moreover threat

ened the king with resignation, and frightened him by predicting a civil war. In consequence, the king gave orders to arrest his brothers, the Dukes of Bourbon and Vendome, while the Prince of Chalais was executed. The Duke of Orleans, on the confession of Chalais, fled from the kingdom. The queen mother was arrested, Bassompierre was imprisoned in the Bastile, and the Duke of Guise sent on a pilgrimage to Rome. The powerful D'Epernon sued for pardon.

Still Richelieu was not satisfied. He resolved to humble the parliament, because it had opposed an ordinance of the king declaring the partisans of the Duke of Orleans guilty of treason. I had rightly argued that such a condemnation could not be issued without a trial. "But," said the artful minister to the weak-minded king, "to refuse to verify a declaration which you yourself announced to the members of parliament, is to doubt your authority." An extraordinary council was convened, and the parliament, which was simply a court of judges, was summoned to the royal presence. They went in solemn procession, carrying with them the record which showed their refusal to register the edict. The king received them with stately pomp. They were required to kneel in his presence, and their decree was taken from the record and torn in pieces before their eyes, and the leading members were suspended and banished.

The Court of Aids, by whom the money edicts were registered, also showed opposition. The members left the court when the next edict was to be registered. But they were suspended, until they humbly came to terms.

"All the malcontents, the queen, the prince, the nobles, the parliament, and the Court of Aids hoped for the support of the people, and all were disappointed." And this is the reason why they failed and Richelieu triumphed. There never have been, among the French, disinterestedness and union in the cause of liberty, which never can be gained without perseverance and self-sacrifice.

The next usurpation of Richelieu was the erection of a new tribunal for trying state criminals, in which no record of its proceedings should be preserved, and the members of which should be selected by himself. This court was worse than that of the Star Chamber.

Richelieu showed a still more culpable disregard of the forms of justice in the trial of Marshal Marrillac, charged with crimes in the conduct of the army. He was brought before a commission, and not before his peers, condemned, and executed.

In view of this judicial murder, the nobles, generally, were filled with indignation and alarm. They now saw that the minister aimed at the complete humiliation of their order, and therefore made another effort to resist the cardinal. At the head of this conspiracy was the Duke of Montmorency, admiral and constable of France, one of the most powerful nobles in the kingdom. He was governor of Provence, and deeply resented the insult offered to his rank in the condemnation of Marrillac. He moreover felt indignant that the king's brother should be driven into exile by the hostility of a priest. He therefore joined his forces with those of the Duke of Orleans, was defeated, tried, and executed for rebellion, against the entreaty and intercession of the most powerful families.

The cardinal minister was now triumphant over all his enemies. He had destroyed the political power of the Huguenots, extended the boundary of France, and decimated the nobles. He now turned his attention to the internal administration of the kingdom. He created a national navy, protected commerce and industry, rewarded genius, and formed the French Academy. He attained a greater pitch of greatness than any subject ever before or since enjoyed in his country, greater even than was possessed by Wolsey. Wolsey, powerful as he was, lived, like a Turkish vizier, in constant fear of his capricious master. But Richelieu controlled the king himself. Louis XIII. feared him, and felt that he could not reign without him. He did not love the cardinal, and was often tempted to dismiss him, but could never summon sufficient resolution. Richelieu was more powerful than the queen mother, the brothers of the king, the royal mistresses, or even all united, since he obtained an ascendency over all, doomed the queen mother to languish in exile at Cologne, and compelled the duke of Orleans to succumb to him. He was chief of three of the principal monastic orders, and possessed enormous wealth. He erected a palace as grand as Hampton Court, and appeared in public with great pomp and ceremony.

But an end came to his greatness. In 1642, a mortal malady wasted him away; he summoned to his death bed his royal master recommended Mazarin as his successor; and died like a man who knew no remorse, in the fifty-eighth year of his age, and the eighteenth of his reign as minister. He was eloquent, but his words served only to disguise his sentiments; he was direct and frank in his speech, and yet a perfect master of the art of dissimulation; he could not be imposed upon, and yet was passionately fond of flattery, which he liked in such large doses that it seemed hyperbolical; he was not learned, yet appreciated learning in others, and magnificently rewarded it; he was fond of pleasure, and easily fascinated by women, and yet was cold, politic, implacable, and cruel. But he was a great statesman, and aimed to suppress anarchy and preserve law. In view of his labors to preserve order, we may almost excuse his severity. "Placed," says Montrésor, as quoted by Miss Pardoe, "at an equal distance between Louis IX., whose aim was to abolish feudality, and the national convention, whose attempt was to crush aristocracy, he appeared, like them, to have received a mission of blood from heaven. The high nobility, repulsed under Louis XI. and Francis I., almost entirely succumbed under Richelieu, preparing, by its overthrow, the calm, unitarian, and despotic reign of Louis XIV., who looked around him in vain for a great noble, and found only courtiers. The great rebellion, which, for nearly two centuries, agitated France, almost entirely disappeared under the ministry of the cardinal. The Guises, who had touched with their hand the sceptre of Henry III., the Condés, who had placed their foot on the steps of the throne of Henry IV., and Gaston, who had tried upon his brow the crown of Louis XIII., — all returned, at the voice of the minister, if not into nothingness, at least into impotency. All who struggled against the iron will, enclosed in that feeble body, were broken like glass. And all the struggle which Richelieu sustained, he did not sustain for his own sake, but for that of France. All the enemies, against whom he contended, were not his enemies merely, but those of the kingdom. If he clung tenaciously by the side of a king, whom he compelled to live a melancholy, unhappy, and isolated life, whom he deprived successively of his friends, of his mistresses, and of his family, as a

tree is stripped of its leaves, of its branches, and of its bark, it was because friends, mistresses, and family exhausted the sap of he expiring royalty, which had need of all its egotism to prevent it from perishing. For it was not intestinal struggles merely, — there was also foreign war, which had connected itself fatally with them. All those great nobles whom he decimated, all those princes of the blood whom he exiled, were inviting foreigners to France; and these foreigners, answering eagerly to the summons, were entering the country on three different sides, — the English by Guienne, the Spaniards by Roussillon, and the Austrians by Artois.

"He repulsed the English by driving them to the Isle of Ré, and by besieging La Rochelle; the Spaniards, by creating beside them the new kingdom of Portugal; and the imperialists, by detaching Bavaria from its alliance, by suspending their treaty with Denmark, and by sowing dissensions in the Catholic league. His measures were cruel, but not uncalled for. Chalais fell, but he had conspired with Lorraine and Spain; Montmorency fell, but he had entered France with arms in his hand; Cinq-Mars fell, but he had invited foreigners into the kingdom. Bred a simple priest, he became not only a great statesman, but a great general. And when La Rochelle fell before those measures to which Schomberg and Bassompierre were compelled to bow, he said to the king 'Sire, I am no prophet, but I assure your majesty that if you will condescend to act as I advise you, you will pacificate Italy in the month of May, subjugate Languedoc in the month of July, and be on your return in the month of August.' And each of these prophecies he accomplished in its time and place, and in such wise that, from that moment, Louis XIII. vowed to follow forever the counsels of a man by which he had so well profited. Finally, he died, as Montesquieu asserts, after having made the monarch enact the secondary character in the monarchy, but the first in Europe; after having abased the king, but after having made his reign illustrious; and after having mowed down rebellion so close to the soil, that the descendants of those who had composed the league could only form the Fronde, as, after the reign of Napoleon, the successors of the La Vendée of '93 could only execute the Vendée of '32."

Louis XIII. did not long survive this greatest of ministers.

Naturally weak, he was still weaker by disease. He was reduced to skin and bone. In this state, he called a council, nominated his queen, Anne of Austria, regent, during the minority of his son Louis XIV., then four years of age, and shortly after died, in 1643.

Mazarin, the new minister, followed out the policy of Richelieu. The war with Austria and Spain was continued, which was closed, on the Spanish side, by the victory of Rocroi, in 1643, obtained by the Prince of Condé, and in which battle twenty-three thousand Frenchmen completely routed twenty-six thousand Spaniards, killing eight thousand, and taking six thousand prisoners — one of the bloodiest battles ever fought. The great Condé here obtained those laurels which subsequent disgrace could never take away. The war on the side of Germany was closed, in 1648, by the peace of Westphalia. Turenne first appeared in the latter campaign of this long war, but gained no signal victory.

Cardinal Mazarin, a subtle and intriguing Italian, while he pursued the policy of Richelieu, had not his genius or success. He was soon involved in domestic troubles. The aristocracy rebelled. Had they been united, they would have succeeded; but their rivalries, jealousies, and squabbles divided their strength and distracted their councils. Their cause was lost, and Mazarin triumphed, more from their divisions than from his own strength.

He first had to oppose a clique of young nobles, full of arrogance and self-conceit, but scions of the greatest families. They hoped to recover the ancient ascendency of their houses. The chief of these were the Dukes of Beaufort, Epernon, and Guise. They made use, as their tool, of Madame Chevreuse, the confidential friend of the queen regent. And she demanded of the minister that posts of honor and power should be given to her friends, which would secure that independence which Richelieu had spent his life in restraining. Mazarin tried to amuse her, but, she being inexorable, he was obliged to break with her, and a conspiracy was the result, which, however, was easily suppressed.

But a more formidable enemy appeared in the person of De Retz, coadjutor archbishop of Paris, and afterwards cardinal, a man of boundless intrigue, unconquerable ambition, and restless discontent. To detail his plots and intrigues, would be to describe

a labyrinth. He succeeded, however, in keeping the country in perpetual turmoil, now inflaming the minds of the people, then exciting insurrections among the nobles, and then, again, encouraging the parliaments in resistance. He never appeared as an actor, but every movement was directed by his genius. He did not escape suspicion, but committed no overt acts by which he could be punished. He and the celebrated Duchess de Longueville, a woman who had as great a talent for intrigue as himself, were the life and soul of the Fronde — a civil war which ended only in the reëstablishment of the monarchy on a firmer foundation. As the Fronde had been commenced by a troop of urchins, who, at the same time, amused themselves with slings, the wits of the court called the insurgents *frondeurs*, or slingers, insinuating that their force was trifling, and their aim mischief.

Nevertheless, the Frondeurs kept France in a state of anarchy for six years, and they were headed by some of the most powerful nobles, and even supported by the Parliament of Paris. The people, too, were on the side of the rebels, since they were ground down by taxation, and hoped to gain a relief from their troubles. But the rebels took the side of the oppressed only for their private advantage, and the parliament itself lacked the perseverance and intrepidity necessary to secure its liberty. The civil war of the Fronde, though headed by discontented nobles, and animated by the intrigues of a turbulent ecclesiastic, was really the contest between the parliament and the arbitrary power of the government. And the insurrection would have been fearful and successful, had the people been firm or the nobles faithful to the cause they defended. But the English Revolution, then in progress, and in which a king had been executed, shocked the lovers of constitutional liberty in France, and reacted then, even as the French Revolution afterwards reacted on the English mind. Moreover, the excesses which the people perpetrated at Paris, alarmed the parliament and the nobles who were allied with it, while it urged on the ministers to desperate courses. The prince of Conde, whose victories had given him an immortality, dallied with both parties, as his interests served. Allied with the court, he could overpower the insurgents; but allied with the insurgents, he could control the court. Sometimes he sided with the minister

and sometimes with the insurgents, but in neither case unless he exercised a power and enjoyed a remuneration dangerous in any government. Both parties were jealous of him, both feared him, both hated him, both insulted him, and both courted him. At one time, he headed the royal troops to attack Paris, which was generally in the hands of the people and of parliament; and then, at another, he fought like a tiger to defend himself in Paris against the royal troops. He had no sympathy with either the parliament or the people, while he fought for them; and he venerated the throne, while he rebelled against it. His name was Louis de Bourbon, and he was a prince of the blood. He contended against the crown only to wrest from it the ancient power of the great nobles; and to gain this object, he thought to make the parliament and the Parisian mob his tools. The parliament, sincerely devoted to liberty, thought to make the nobles its tools, and only leagued with them to secure their services. The crafty Mazarin quietly beheld these dissensions, and was sure of ultimate success, even though at one time banished to Cologne. And, like a reed, he was ever ready to bend to difficulties he could not control. But he stooped to conquer. He at last got the Prince of Condé, his brother the Prince of Conti, and the Duke of Longueville, in his power. When the Duke of Orleans heard of it, he said, "He has taken a good haul in the net; he has taken a lion, a fox, and a monkey." But the princes escaped from the net, and, leagued with Turenne, Bouillon, La Rochefoucault, and other great nobles reached Paris, and were received with acclamations of joy by the misguided people. Then, again, they obtained the ascendant. But the ascendency was no sooner gained than the victors quarrelled with themselves, and with the parliament, for whose cause they professed to contend. It was in their power, when united, to have deprived the queen regent of her authority, and to have established constitutional liberty in France. But they would not unite. There was no spirit of disinterestedness, nor of patriotism, nor public virtue, without which liberty is impossible, even though there were forces enough to batter down Mount Atlas. Condé, the victor, suffered himself to be again bribed by the court. He would not persevere in his alliance with either nobles or the parliament. He did not unite with the nobles because he

felt that he was a prince. He did not continue with the parliament, because he had no sympathy with freedom. The cause of the nobles was lost for want of mutual confidence; that of the parliament for lack of the spirit of perseverance. The parliament, at length, grew weary of war and of popular commotions, and submitted to the court. All parties hated and distrusted each other, more than they did the iron despotism of Mazarin. The power of insurgent nobles declined. De Retz, the arch intriguer, was driven from Paris. The Duchess de Longueville sought refuge in the vale of Port Royal; and, in the Jansenist doctrines, sought that happiness which earthly grandeur could not secure. Condé quitted Paris to join the Spanish armies. The rest of the rebellious nobles made humble submission. The people found they had nothing to gain from any dominant party, and resigned themselves to another long period of political and social slavery. The magistrates abandoned, in despair and disgust, their high claims to political rights, while the young king, on his bed of justice, decreed that parliament should no more presume to discuss or meddle with state affairs. The submissive parliament registered, without a murmur, the edict which gave a finishing stroke to its liberties. The Fronde war was a complete failure, because all parties usurped powers which did not belong to them, and were jealous of the rights of each other. The nobles wished to control the king, and the magistracy put itself forward to represent the commons, when the states general alone was the ancient and true representative of the nation, and the body to which it should have appealed. The Fronde rebellion was a failure, because it did not consult constitutional forms, because it formed unnatural alliances, and because it did not throw itself upon the force of immortal principles, but sought to support itself by mere physical strength rather than by moral power, which alone is the secret and the glory of all great internal changes.

The return of Cardinal Mazarin to power, as the minister of Louis XIV., was the era of his grandeur. His first care was to restore the public finances; his second was to secure his personal aggrandizement. He obtained all the power which Richelieu had enjoyed, and reproved the king, and such a king as Louis XIV., as he would a schoolboy. He enriched and elevated his relatives

married them into the first families of France; and amassed a fortune of two hundred millions of livres, the largest perhaps tha any subject has secured in modern times. He even aspired to the popedom; but this greatest of all human dignities he was not permitted to obtain. A fatal malady seized him, and the physicians told him he had not two months to live. Some days after, he was seen in his dressing-gown, among his pictures, of which he was extravagantly fond, and exclaimed, "Must I quit all these? Look at that Correggio, this Venus of Titian, this incomparable deluge of Carracci. Farewell, dear pictures, that I have loved so dearly, and that have cost me so much."

The minister lingered awhile, and amused his last hours with cards. He expired in 1661; and no minister after him was intrusted with such great power. He died unlamented, even by his sovereign, whose throne he had preserved, and whose fortune he had repaired. He had great talents of conversation, was witty, artful, and polite. He completed the work which Richelieu began: and, at his death, his master was the most absolute monarch that ever reigned in France.

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CHAPTER XII.

THE REIGNS OF JAMES I. AND CHARLES I.

WHILE the Protestants in Germany were struggling for religious liberty, and the Parliaments of France for political privileges, there was a contest going on in England for the attainment of the same great ends. With the accession of James I. a new era commences in English history, marked by the growing importance of the House of Commons, and their struggles for civil and religious liberty. The Commons had not been entirely silent during the long reign of Elizabeth, but members of them occasionally dared to assert those rights of which Englishmen are proud. The queen was particularly sensitive to any thing which pertained to her prerogative, and generally sent to the Tower any man who boldly expressed his opinion on subjects which she deemed that she and her ministers alone had the right to discuss. These forbidden subjects were those which pertained to the management of religion, to her particular courts, and to her succession to the crown. She never made an attack on what she conceived to be the constitution, but only zealously defended what she considered as her own rights. And she was ever sufficiently wise to yield a point to the commons, after she had asserted her power, so that concession, on her part, had all the appearance of bestowing a favor. She never pushed matters to extremity, but gave way in good time. And in this policy she showed great wisdom; so that, in spite of all her crimes and caprices, she ever retained the affections of the English people.

The son of her rival Mary Stuart, Queen of Scots, ascended the throne, (1603,) under the title of *James I.*, and was the first of the Stuart kings. He had been king of Scotland under the title of *James VI.*, and had there many difficulties to contend with, chiefly in consequence of the turbulence of the nobles, and the bigotry of the reformers. He was eager to take possession of his English inheritance, but was so poor that he could not begin his journey